



ர	ர	ரா	ரி	ரி	ரு	ரு	ரெ	ரெ	ரை	ரொ	ரொ	ரொள
ல்	ல	லா	லி	லீ	லு	லூ	லெ	லே	லை	லொ	லோ	லொள
வ்	வ	வா	வி	வீ	வு	வூ	வெ	வே	வை	வொ	வோ	வொள
ழ்	ழ	ழா	ழி	ழீ	ழு	ழூ	ழெ	ழே	ழை	ழொ	ழோ	ழொள
ள்	ள	ளா	ளி	ளீ	ளு	ளூ	ளெ	ளே	ளை	ளொ	ளோ	ளொள
ற்	ற	றா	றி	றீ	று	றூ	றெ	றே	றை	றொ	றோ	றொள
ன்	ன	னா	னி	னீ	னு	னூ	னெ	னே	னை	னொ	னோ	னொள

. = "irregularly written" (see below)

. = not commonly used

For another version of a chart with the alphabet, [click here](#) (84 kb).

Note: The லெ, லே, and லா characters by themselves are not considered letters. What constitutes a letter is whatever appears in one of the above boxes.

## VOWEL SOUNDS

Words are said to "end in a vowel sound" because the final letter is the combination of a consonant and a vowel. Specifically, if word is said to "end in an அ sound", the final letter of the word is க, ந, ச,... If a word ends in an ஆ sound, the final letter is கா, நா, சா,... The pattern follows for the rest of the vowels.

As you can see, letters ending in an ஊ or ஊ sound are each written differently. In the chart above, letters with a green background are written much differently than the other letters ending in the same vowel sound.

## CONSONANT CLUSTERS

In Tamil, some letters often appear together. The ending vowel sound in each "consonant cluster" may vary. Some of the letters commonly seen together include:

- ங்க
- ங்த

- ண்ட
- ஞ்ச
- ன்ற
- ம்பு

## BEGINNING A WORD

Words do not begin with ண or ன. However, words may begin with ட, but words do not end with ட. As a result, ட generally appears at the beginning or in the middle of a word, while ண and ன generally appear in the middle or at the end of a word.

None of the letters ண, ர, ல, ட, ள, ற, and ன should be the first letter of a word. Instead, இ must precede the letter.

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## PRONUNCIATION

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### PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation is best learned with someone for whom Tamil is a first language. The guide provided below is just a crude approximation of Tamil sounds using English words. Even if you learn written Tamil well, having an accent when speaking can offset a lot of your hard work. If you want to be able to speak Tamil without an English (or French, German, etc.) accent, tape recording yourself speaking helps -- and you might be in for a surprise when you hear yourself.

### IMPROVING PRONUNCIATION -- USING HINTS

Although you may think of Tamil people's accents as silly when speaking English, they may help you improve your pronunciation. For (probably) at least 95% of the people who speak English with a Tamil accent, they pronounce the English words with Tamil characters. For example, when a person says the word "rice", what they really may be pronouncing is "ரைசு". Similarly, "pizza" may become "பீட்சா" and "computer" may become "கம்பியூட்டர்". Depending on the person, even more can be learned about Tamil pronunciation.

### VOWELS

VOWEL	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLE OF SOUND IN ENGLISH WORD
அ	short a	<u>a</u> nother
ஆ	long aa	<u>a</u> ll
இ	short i	<u>i</u> n
ஈ	long ee	bee <u>e</u>
உ	short oo	bo <u>o</u> k
ஊ	long oo	po <u>o</u> l
எ	short ay	<u>e</u> nter
ஏ	long ay	<u>a</u> te
ஐ	ai	li <u>f</u> e
ஓ	short o	obo <u>o</u> e
ஔ	long o	pho <u>o</u> ne
ஔள	ou,ow	fl <u>o</u> ur

## CONSONANTS

Sometimes, letters are doubled with its consonant sound. In those cases, the consonant will precede the letter, and the consonant receives an extra emphasis when the word is said aloud. Also, **ஃ** and **஄** also pronounced differently if they begin a word.

Consonant	Sounds Like	EXAMPLE OF SOUND IN ENGLISH WORD
க	k (beginning of word, or preceded by க்)	bu <u>ck</u> et
	h (not preceded by க்)	<u>h</u> allow
ங	ng	th <u>ing</u>
ச	ch (preceded by ச்)	<u>ch</u> arge
	s (not preceded by ச்)	<u>s</u> alad
ஞ	ny	co <u>gn</u> ac
ட	t (preceded by ட்)	<u>t</u> ight
	d (not preceded by ட்)	<u>d</u> oor
ண	strong n	~
த	th	to <u>th</u>
ந	n	<u>n</u> ow
ப	p (beginning of word, or preceded by ப்)	<u>p</u> ear
	b (not preceded by ப்)	<u>b</u> ear
ம	m	<u>m</u> om
ய	y	<u>y</u> ell
ர	r	<u>r</u> ed
ல	l	<u>l</u> augh
வ	v	<u>v</u> ay
ழ	~	~
ள	~	~
ற	~ (preceded by ற்)	~
	strong r (not preceded by ற்)	~
ன	n	<u>w</u> in

CONSONANTS VS. "DOUBLED" CONSONANTS

SINGLE CONSONANT	DOUBLED CONSONANTS
தாகம் <a href="#">hear word</a>	தாக்கம் <a href="#">hear word</a>
காசு <a href="#">hear word</a>	காய்ச்சல் <a href="#">hear word</a>
பாடு <a href="#">hear word</a>	பாட்டு <a href="#">hear word</a>
காது <a href="#">hear word</a>	கத்து <a href="#">hear word</a>
பண்பாடு <a href="#">hear word</a>	அப்பளம் <a href="#">hear word</a>
மாமா <a href="#">hear word</a>	அம்மா <a href="#">hear word</a>
பையன் <a href="#">hear word</a>	கொய்யா <a href="#">hear word</a>
கலை <a href="#">hear word</a>	கல்லூரி <a href="#">hear word</a>
இவன் <a href="#">hear word</a>	இவ்வளவு <a href="#">hear word</a>
புளி <a href="#">hear word</a>	பள்ளி <a href="#">hear word</a>
பறவை <a href="#">hear word</a>	பற்றி <a href="#">hear word</a>
சனி <a href="#">hear word</a>	சின்ன <a href="#">hear word</a>

## CONSONANT CLUSTER SOUNDS

Some sounds only happen in consonant clusters. They are listed below.

CONSONANT CLUSTER	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLE OF SOUND IN ENGLISH WORD	EXAMPLE IN THAMIL
ங்க	hard ng	gong	தங்கம் <a href="#">hear word</a>
ஞ்ச	soft ng	change	மஞ்சள் <a href="#">hear word</a>

## NUMBERS (1-100) & Fractions

### NUMBERS 1-19

Many words for numbers are exceptions to the general pattern of words. நான்கு is one of the few words where the "hard ng" sound is not made with ங்க. The same is true for all numbers ending in "நான்கு".

NUMBERS 1-19	
ஒன்று	1
இரண்டு	2
மூன்று	3
நான்கு	4
ஐந்து	5
ஆறு	6
ஏழு	7
எட்டு	8
ஒன்பது	9
பத்து	10
பதினொன்று	11
பனிரண்டு	12
பதிமூன்று	13
பதினான்கு	14
பதினைந்து	15
பதினாறு	16
பதினேழு	17
பதினெட்டு	18
பத்தொன்பது	19

. = irregular

## "TENS"

"TENS"	
இருபது	20
முப்பது	30
நாற்பது	40
ஐம்பது	50
அறுபது	60
எழுபது	70
எண்பது	80
தொண்ணூறு	90
நூறு	100
.	= irregular

## NUMBERS 20–100

We still need to know how to say numbers like 42 and 87. Many things determine how to form the word for these numbers, such as whether the tens digit is 9, whether the units is 9, and whether the word for the units digit begins with a vowel. Some of this can be simplified once a general pattern for [adding suffixes](#) is learned. Once you learn how to add suffixes, then go to [Appendix B](#). Until then, hold tight.

## Fractions

Fractions	
கால்	1/4
அரை	1/2
மூக்கால்	3/4