

English spelling today - a summary

1 The Roman alphabet and English spelling

An alphabetic system of writing is based on the principle that each of the constituent sounds, or *phonemes*, of the language is represented visually by a sign, a "graphic shape", in the form of a letter. Individuals pronounce the phonemes differently, but sufficiently similarly for there to be no confusion, just as the individual handwriting or the printed typefaces of a letter can be different, but "the same letter". An alphabetic system of writing is therefore *phonemic* in principle and ideally should have one letter for each sound. English uses the **Roman alphabet**, which was originally devised over 2,000 years ago for the writing of Latin.

2 The contrastive sounds of English

26 letters for c. 44 sounds

There are 26 letters in the alphabet. <a e i o u> are the vowel letters, with <y>, and they are used in combination to represent 20 vowel sounds. The rest are the consonant letters, some of which are really redundant: <q> in the form <qu> is used for [k] or [kw] so <k> or <kw> could be used, <x> is used for [ks] or [gz] so <ks> or <gz> could be used, and <c> is used for either [s] or [k] and so could be discarded.

The answer to the question "How many sounds (phonemes) are there in English?" depends on the kind of classification that you use. For example, is a vowel like [aɪ] as in *time*, that glides from one sound to another (a *diphthong*) one phoneme or two? The usual answer is one. The generally accepted classification of the phonemes of Received Pronunciation (RP) gives us 44 - 20 vowels and 24 consonants. As the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet have to represent 44 contrastive sounds, combinations of letters are used, usually in pairs (digraphs), for sounds for which there are no single Roman letters, like <ch> <sh> <th> <ee> <ow> <aw> etc. The system has developed over a long period of time and has never been formally revised or rationalized.

Diacritics

English is the only European language which does not use additional signs as *diacritics*, like <é è ê ñ ç ü â>, though in digraphs like <ch> the letter <h> is being used as a diacritic sign, as is the letter <u> in a word like *dialogue*.

Stress

No spelling convention is normally used to mark the different pronunciations of words that are identical except for stress placement, like the noun *a record* and the verb *to record*, which would be shown in a transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet as ['rɛkɔ:d] or [rɪ'kɔ:d].

Regional accent

English spelling is neutral to accent. Novelists commonly represent regional accent by mis-spelling, so that a character who says *Wot d'yer think yer doin'?* can be recognised as working-class and vulgar. But this is a convention of fiction. *Wot* and *yer* are examples of *eye-dialect*. The pronunciation of *what* in RP

is [wɒt], and *you* in unstressed position is pronounced [jə]. Our spelling system no longer represents current speech in any accent.

You can only make accurate reference to sounds in writing by using the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Here is a list of the contrastive sounds of English for Received Pronunciation (RP). Other dialectal accents vary in the number of phonemes.

<i>IPA symbol</i>		<i>RP pronunciation</i>
<i>Vowels</i>		
<i>Simple vowels</i>		
i	bead	[bɪd]
ɪ	bid	[bɪd]
ɛ	bed	[bɛd]
ɪ	bad	[bɪd]
ɑ	bard	[bɑd]
ɒ	cod	[kɒd]
ɔ	board	[bɔd]
ʊ	put	[pʊt]
u	shoe	[ʃu]
ʌ	cup	[kʌp]
ɜ	bird	[bɜd]
ə	about, porter	[əbaʊt], [pɔtə]
<i>Diphthongs</i>		
eɪ	pay	[peɪ]
aɪ	pie	[paɪ]
ɔɪ	boy	[bɔɪ]
əʊ	go	[gəʊ]
aʊ	hound	[haʊnd]
ɪə	beer	[bɪə]
ɛə	bear	[bɪə]
ʊə	cure	[kjʊə]
<i>Consonants</i>		
p	pit	[pɪt]
b	bit	[bɪt]
t	tip	[tɪp]
d	did	[dɪd]
k	kick	[kɪk]
g	give	[gɪv]
f	five	[faɪv]
v	vine	[vaɪn]
θ	thumb	[θʌm]
ð	this	[ðɪs]
s	some	[sʌm]
z	zoo	[zu]
ʃ	shoe	[ʃu]
ʒ	measure	[meɪʒə]
h	hot	[hɒt]
tʃ	charge	[tʃɑʒ]

ɟ	gin	[dʒ in]
m	mouse	[maʊs]
n	nice	[naɪs]
ŋ	sing	[sɪŋ]
l	leaf	[lif]
r RP = [ɹ] Scots = [ɹ]	run	[ɹʌn] RP [rʌn] Scots
j	yacht	[jɔt]
w	wet	[wɛt]
?	The glottal stop , which occurs in some people's pronunciation of the medial consonant of words like <i>butter</i> , pronounced as <i>bu'er</i> , [bʌʔə] or [bʊʔə].	

3 The spelling of vowels in English

3.1 Same sound, different spellings

The following list of words contains selected examples of the range of vowel spellings that has developed in English today. Some groups of words have vowels that are spelt identically, but they are included because they derive from different older spellings that indicate a change from an earlier pronunciation. The original source words are also listed so that you can identify these changes. The variety of spellings illustrates one aspect of the problem of learning the English spelling system.

There are variant pronunciations of the vowels of many words both within RP and between the dialects. For example, *sure* may be pronounced as [ʃʊː] or [ʃʊə], *fire* as [faɪə], [faə] or [fɑː], *either* as [aɪðə] or [iːðə], *again* as [əɡeɪn] or [əɡeɪn], *old* as [ɔʊld] or [ɒʊld] etc.

You can see that few modern English words are still spelt as they were in OE or OF. When you read an OE word remember to give the vowels their “continental value” in pronunciation, as in Latin. The symbols of the IPA use these Latin values: <a> is [ɑ] or [a] (as in *father*), <æ> is [æ] (*cap*), <e> is [e] or [ɛ] (French *é* or *è*), <i> is [i] (*been*), <o> is [o] (French *eau*), <u> is [u] (*moon*), <y> is the vowel [y] (French *mur*).

1	[iː]			<eo>	people	people	AF
<ee>	geese	ges	OE	<ay>	quay	kay	OF
	sleep	slæp	OE				
	bee	beo	OE	2	[ɪ]		
<e>	be	beon	OE	<i>	sit	sittan	OE
	evil	yfel	OE		kin	cynn	OE
<e-e>	complete	complet	OF	<y>	symbol	symbolum	L
<ea>	leaf	leaf	OE	<e>	pretty	prættig	OE
	clean	clæne	OE		England	englaland	OE
	steal	stelan	OE		wicked	wicca	OE
	mead	meodu	OE		= witch + -ed		
	peace	pes	AF	<ie>	ladies	hlæfdigan	OE
<ie>	piece	piece	OF	<a-e>	village	village	OF
<ei>	seize	seizir	OF	<ui>	build	byldan	OE
<ey>	key	cæg	OE		business	bysig	OE
<i-e>	machine	machine	F		= busy + ness		

<ay>	Sunday	sunnandæg	OE	<ow>	knowledge	knaulege	ME
<o>	women	wifmenn	OE		f. cnawan + -læcan		OE
<u>	busy	bysig	OE	<au>	because		ME
<u-e>	minute	minute	OF		f. bi (OE) + cause (OF)		
3	[ɛ]			<ach>	yacht	jaghte	Du
<e>	bed	bedd	OE	7	[ɔ:]		
	seven	seofon	OE	<or>	cord	corde	OF
<ea>	dead	dead	OE		horse	hors	OE
	sweat	swætan	OE		or	ar	ON
<a>	many	mænig	OE	<ore>	before	beforan	OE
<a-e>	ate	æt	OE		more	mara	OE
<ai>	said	sægde	OE	<oor>	floor	flor	OE
<ay>	says	sægpb	OE		door	duru	OE
<u>	bury	byrgan	OE	<our>	four	feower	OE
<ie>	friend	freond	OE		court	curt	AF
<ai>	again	ongean	OE	<oa>	broad	brad	OE
4	[æ]			<oar>	oar	ar	OE
	narrow	nearwe	OE	<ou>	bought	bohte	OE
	lamb	lamb	OE	<aw>	saw	seah/sawon	OE
<ai>	plait	pleit	OF		claw	clawu	OE
					law	lagu	OE
5	[ɑ:]			<au>	cause	cause	OF
<a>	bath	bæþ	OE	<ough>	bought	bohte	OE
	ask	ascian	OE		fought	feahrt	OE
	pass	passer	OF		ought	ahte	OE
	father	fæder	OE	<augh>	daughter	dohtor	OE
<ar>	part	part	OF	<a>	talk	talkien	ME
	arm	earn	OE			f. talu	OE
	far	feor	OE		hall	heall	OE
<ear>	heart	heorte	OE		water	wæter	OE
<er>	clerk	clerc	OE		walk	wealcan	OE
<al>	calm	calmus	L	<ure>	sure	sur	OF
<au>	aunt	aunte	AF	8	[ʊ]		
<a-e>	vase	vase	F	<u>	put	putian	OE
<oir>	reservoir	réservoir	OF		butcher	bochier	OF
6	[ɒ]			<o>	wolf	wulf	OE
<o>	dog	dogga	OE		woman	wifmann	OE
	holiday	haligdæg	OE	<oo>	good	god	OE
<o-e>	gone	gan	OE		wood	wudu	OE
<a>	was	wæs	OE	<ou>	could	cuþe	OE
	wash	wascan	OE	9a	[u:]		
<ou>	cough	kuchen	MDu	<oo>	food	foda	OE

	choose	ceosan	OE		earth	eorþe	OE
	loose	lauss	ON	<err>	err	errer	OF
<o>	do	don	OE	<ur>	turn	tyrnan	OE
<oe>	shoe	scoh	OE	<urr>	purr	(<i>imitative</i>)	
<o-e>	lose	losian	OE	<or>	word	word	OE
<ou>	group	groupe	F	<our>	scourge	escorge	OF
	wound	wundian	OE	<olo>	colonel	colonello	It
<ough>	through	þurh	OE				
<ue>	blue	bleu	OF	12	[ə]		
<u-e>	rude	rude	OF	This mid-central "reduced" vowel is the most frequent in English speech, because it occurs in unstressed syllables . These words are only a few of the possible spellings:			
<ew>	chew	ceowan	OE				
9b	[ju:]				colour	colour	OF
<ew>	new	niwe	OE		borough	burh	OE
	knew	cneow	OE		doctor	doctour	OF
	few	feawe	OE		famous	fameus	OF
	lewd	læwede	OE		figure	figure	OF
<iew>	view	viewe	AF		gentleman		
<eu>	feud	feide	OF		cp gentilz hom		OF
<ueue>	queue	queue	F		oblige	obliger	OF
<ui>	juice	jus	OF		particular	particuler	OF
<ue>	sue	suer	AF		possible	possible	OF
<u-e>	tune	ton	OF		suppose	supposer	OF
					the	se etc	OE
10	[ʌ] - [ʊ]						
Varies according to dialectal area - RP is [ʌ]							
<u>	sun	sunne	OE	13	[ɛɪ]		
<o>	son	sunu	OE	<a>	lady	hlæfdige	OE
	mother	modor	OE	<a-e>	late	læt	OE
<oe>	does vb	doþ	OE		tale	talū	OE
<ou>	young	geong	OE	<ay>	day	dæg	OE
	country	cuntree	OF		way	weg	OE
<oo>	blood	blod	OE	<ai>	rain	regn	OE
<ough>	rough	ruh	OE	<eigh>	eight	eahta	OE
				<ey>	they	þeir	ON
11	[ɜ:]			<ea>	great	great	OE
In rhotic areas [r] is pronounced after a vowel, which may then not be [ɜ:].							
<ir>	bird	brid/bird	OE	<au>	gauge	gauge	AF
	shirt	scyrte	OE	<ao>	gaol	gaole	AF
	her	hire	OE				
<yr>	myrtle	myrtille	OF	14a	[aɪ]		
<er>	her	hire	OE	<i>	child	cild	OE
	herd	heord	OE		climb	climban	OE
<ear>	heard	hyrde	OE	<i-e>	time	tima	OE
					mice	mys	OE

<y>	cry	cri	OF	<au>	mauve	mauve	F
<ye>	dye	deagian	OE	<oo>	brooch	brocher	OF
<igh>	high	heah	OE	<eau>	beau	beau	F
	night	niht	OE				
<eigh>	height	hehþu	OE	17a	[aʊ]		
<ie>	lie	licgan	OE	<ou>	out	ut	OE
<ei>	either	ægþer	OE		house	hus	OE
<eye>	eye	eage	OE	<ow>	cow	cu	OE
<uy>	buy	bycgan	OE	<ough>	bough	boh	OE
<ais>	aisle	ele	OF				
(confused with <i>island</i> & OF <i>aile wing</i>)				17b	[aʊə] - [aə] - [ɑ:]		
14b	[aɪə] - [aə] - [ɑ:]			<our>	flour &		
<ire>	wire	wir	OE	<ower>	flower	flur	AF
	fire	fyr	OE	<our>	our	ure	OE
<oir>	choir	quer	OF	18	[ɪə]		
	& chorus		L	<ea>	ear	eare	OE
<iar>	liar	leogere	OE		dear	deore	OE
<ier>	briar/brier				hear	hieran	OE
	brær/brer	OE		<eer>	deer	deor	OE
				<ere>	here	her	OE
15	[ɔɪ]			<ier>	fierce	fers	AF
<oi>	coin	coin	OF	<eir>	weird	wyrd	OE
<oy>	boy	abuiæ	AF	<ea>	idea	idea	L
	= fettered < L boia						
<oi-e>	noise	noise	OF	19	[ɛə]		
	choice	chois	OF	<are>	care n	caru	OE
<uoy>	buoy	boye	MDu	<ar-e>	scarce	scars	AF
				<air>	air	air	OF
16	RP [ɜʊ]				stair	stæger	OE
Varies a lot in dialectal accents				<ear>	bear vb	beran	OE
<o>	so	swa	OE	<eir>	their	þeirra	ON
	go	gan	OE	<ere>	there	þær/þer	OE
	old	eald	OE	<aer>	aerobics	aerobie	F
	folk	folc	OE				
<o-e>	home	ham	OE	20a	[ʊə] - [ɔ:]		
<oa>	oak	ac	OE	<u>	during	cf durant	OF
	throat	þrote	OE	<oor>	poor	poure	OF
<oe>	toe	ta	OE	<ure>	sure	sur	OF
<ou>	soul	sawol	OE	<our>	tour	tour	OF
<ough>	though	þoh	ON				
<ow>	know	cnawan	OE	20b	[jʊə]		
	grow	growan	OE	<ure>	pure	pur	OF
	sow	sawan	OE				
<ew>	sew	siwan	OE				

3.2 Same spelling, different sounds

The same words from section 3.1 are arranged in different sets to show the variety of sounds which each letter may represent:

a		aisle	[aɪ]	e		bee	[i:]
n[a]rrow	[æ]	al		bed	[ɛ]	geese	[i:]
sat	[æ]	calm	[ɑ:]	s[e]ven	[ɛ]	deer	[ɪə]
ask	[ɑ:]	talk	[ɔ:]	be	[i:]	ei	
bath	[ɑ:]	walk	[ɔ:]	[e]vil	[i:]	either	[aɪ]
f[a]ther	[ɑ:]	ao		b[u]sin[e]ss	[ɪ]	seize	[i:]
pass	[ɑ:]	gaol	[ɛɪ]	pr[e]tty	[ɪ]	their	[ɛə]
hall	[ɔ:]	ar		wick[e]d	[ɪ]	eigh	
water	[ɔ:]	arm	[ɑ:]	[E]ngland	[ɪ]	eight	[ɛɪ]
l[a]dy	[ɛɪ]	far	[ɑ:]	gentlem[e]n	[ə]	height	[aɪ]
m[a]ny	[ɛ]	part	[ɑ:]	the	[ə]	eir	
was	[ɒ]	p[a]rticular	[ə]	e-e		weird	[ɪə]
wash	[ɒ]	scarce	[ɛə]	compl[e]te	[i:]	eo	
a-e		au		ea		p[eo]ple	[i:]
ate	[ɛ]	aunt	[ɑ:]	leaf	[i:]	er	
late	[ɛɪ]	bec[au]se	[ɒ]	mead	[i:]	her	[ɜ:]
tale	[ɛɪ]	gauge	[ɛɪ]	peace	[i:]	herd	[ɜ:]
vase	[ɑ:]	mauve	[ɜʊ]	steal	[i:]	clerk	[ɑ:]
care	[ɛə]	augh		clean	[i:]		
vill[age]	[ɪ]	d[augh]ter	[ɔ:]	dead	[ɛ]		
ach		aw		sweat	[ɛ]		
yacht	[ɒ]	claw	[ɔ:]	bear	[ɛə]		
ai		law	[ɔ:]	break	[ɛɪ]		
ag[ai]n	[ɛ]	saw	[ɔ:]	great	[ɛɪ]		
said	[ɛ]	ay		id[ea]	[ɪə]		
air	[ɛə]	day	[ɛɪ]	ear			
rain	[ɛɪ]	way	[ɛɪ]	dear	[ɪə]		
plait	[æ]	says	[ɛ]	ear	[ɪə]		
air		Sund[ay]	[ɪ]	earth	[ɜ:]		
stair	[ɛə]	quay	[ɪ:]	hear	[ɪə]		
ais		ee		heard	[ɜ:]		
				heart	[ɑ:]		

ere		lad ^{ie} s	[ɪ]	gone	[ɒ]	or	
here	[ɪə]	lie	[aɪ]	home	[ɜʊ]	cord	[ɔ:]
there	[ɛə]	piece	[i:]			horse	[ɔ:]
err		ier		oa		or	[ɔ:]
err	[ɜ:]	fierce	[ɪə]	broad	[ɔ:]	word	[ɜ:]
				oak	[ɜʊ]	doct ^{or}	[ə]
				throat	[ɜʊ]		
eu		iew		oar		ore	
feud	[ju:]	view	[ju:]	oar	[ɔ:]	more	[ɔ:]
ew		igh		oe		ou	
chew	[u:]	high	[aɪ]	does(vb)	[ʌ]	cough	[ɒ]
few	[ju:]	night	[aɪ]	shoe	[u:]	could	[ʊ]
knew	[ju:]			toe	[əʊ]	c ^{ou} ntry	[ʌ]
lewd	[ju:]	ir		oi		fam ^{ou} s	[ə]
new	[ju:]	bird	[ɜ:]	choice	[ɔɪ]	group	[u:]
sew	[ɜʊ]	shirt	[ɜ:]	coin	[ɔɪ]	house	[aʊ]
				noise	[ɔɪ]	out	[aʊ]
ey		ire		choir	[aɪə]	soul	[əʊ]
key	[i:]	fire	[aɪə]	oir		young	[ʌ]
they	[ɛɪ]	wire	[aɪə]	reserv ^{oir}	[ɑ:]	ough	
eye		le		ol		bough	[aʊ]
eye	[aɪ]	possib ^{le}	[ə]	folk	[əʊ]	bought	[ɔ:]
i		o		olo		fought	[ɔ:]
kin	[ɪ]	dog	[ɒ]	c ^{olo} nel	[ɜ:]	ought	[ɔ:]
sit	[ɪ]	h ^o liday	[ɒ]			rough	[ʌ]
child	[aɪ]	do	[u:]			though	[əʊ]
climb	[aɪ]	lose	[u:]	oo		through	[u:]
		go	[ɜʊ]	food	[u:]	borough	[ə]
i-e		m ^o ther	[ʌ]	loose	[u:]	our	
mach ^{ine}	[i:]	son	[ʌ]	choose	[u:]	court	[ɔ:]
mice	[aɪ]	wolf	[ʊ]	blood	[ʌ]	four	[ɔ:]
time	[aɪ]	w ^o man	[ʊ]	good	[ʊ]	flour	[əʊ]
		old	[ɜʊ]	wood	[ʊ]	our	[aʊə]
ia		so	[ɜʊ]	brooch	[ɜʊ]	scourge	[ɜ:]
briar	[aɪə]	w ^o men	[ɪ]	oor		tour	[ʊə]
liar	[aɪə]	^o blige	[ə]	door	[ɔ:]	col ^{our}	[ə]
ie		o-e		floor	[ɔ:]	ow	
friend	[ɛ]	bef ^{ore}	[ɔ:]	poor	[ʊə] [ɔ:]	cow	[aʊ]
						grow	[əʊ]

know	[əʊ]	b <u>u</u> sin <u>e</u> ss	[ɪ]		purr	[ɜː]
sow	[əʊ]	b <u>u</u> sy	[ɪ]	ui		
kn <u>ow</u> ledge	[ɒ]	d <u>ur</u> ing	[juː]	build	[ɪ]	uy
		s <u>u</u> ppose	[ə]	juice	[juː]	buy [aɪ]
ower						
flower	[aʊə]	u-e		ur		y
		min <u>ute</u> (n)	[ɪ]	turn	[ɜː]	cry [aɪ]
oy		rude	[uː]			s <u>y</u> mbol [ɪ]
boy	[ɔɪ]	tune	[juː]	ure		
		ue		sure	[ʊə]	ye
u		blue	[uː]	pure	[jʊə]	dye [aɪ]
put	[ʊ]	sue	[juː]	fig <u>ure</u>	[ə]	
sun	[ʌ]	ueue				yr
b <u>u</u> ry	[ɛ]	queue	[juː]	urr		m <u>yr</u> tle [ɜː]

3.3 Some features of the spelling of vowels

Some of the reasons for the variety and irregularity of the spelling of English vowels have been discussed in earlier chapters, and are summarized in a survey of the historical development of spelling in *The development of English spelling* following. Test your understanding of the spelling system by discussing possible answers to these questions:

- Why do the same letters represent different sounds? For example, <o> as a single letter in *rot*, [rɒt] as a double letter <oo> in *root*, [ruːt] and in the sequence <ote> in *rote*, [rəʊt]. Similar sequences are *met*, *meet*, *mete* and *cot*, *coot*, *cote*. There are many other pairs of words like *loss/loose*, *bet/beet* in which the double vowel letter is pronounced differently from the single, and *bat/bate*, *win/wine*, *rod/rode*, *cub/cube*, in which the final <e> marks a change in the vowel.
- Why is <ee> always pronounced [iː] as in *bee*, but <ea> varies widely, as in *leaf* [iː], *dead* [ɛ], *heart* [ɑː], *heard* [ɜː], *great* [ɛɪ], *ear* [ɪə], *bear* [ɛə]?
- Why is letter <o> pronounced [ʊ] in *wolf* and [ʌ] or [ʊ] in *son*?
- Why are the vowels of *busy* and *bury* spelt with <u> but pronounced [ɪ] and [ɛ] respectively?
- Why are there eight different pronunciations of the vowel of <-ough>?
- Why have many words spelt with <ir>, <er> and <ur> lost the pronunciation [ɪ] in RP and other dialectal accents, and are now pronounced [ɜː], whereas other dialects pronounce the <r> and some also differentiate the vowels, eg Scots *heard* [hɛrd], *bird* [bɛrd] etc?

4 The spelling of consonants in English

4.1 Grouped by consonant sounds - same sound, different spellings

1	[p]			<ed>	mugged	mug = -ed	?
<p>	pill	pille	MDu	5	[k]		
	hop (vb)	hoppian	OE	<k>	kind	cynde	OE
	hoping	hopian	OE	<c>	cake	kaka	ON
<pe>	hope (vb)	hopian	OE		come	cuman	OE
<pp>	hopping	hoppian	OE		magic	magique	OF
	appear	apareir	OF	<ck>	black	blæc	OE
	hiccough	hiccup	?	<ch>	stomach	stomaque	OF
	<i>(assimilated to spelling of cough)</i>				choir	quer	OF
	cupboard	cuppe + bord	OE			& chorus	L
	receipt	reçoite	OF	<cc>	accord	acord	OF
2	[b]			<q>	queen	cwen	OE
	rob	rober	OF		conquer	conquerre	OF
	robing	robe	OF	6	[g]		
	beauty	beautæ	OF	<g>	geese	ges	OE
<be>	robe	robe	OF	<gg>	ragged	roggvaðr	ON
<bb>	robbing	rober	OF	<gh>	ghost	gast	OE
	rubber	rub + -er	?	<gu>	guard	garder	OF
	debt	dette	OF		gnaw	gnagan	OE
	limb	limr	ON		diaphragm	diaphragma	Gk
3	[t]			7	[f]		
<t>	mat	matte	OE	<f>	fit	fitt	OE
	tell	tellan	OE		fan	fann	OE
	mating	mate	MLG	<ff>	off	of	OE
<te>	mate	mate	MLG		suffer	sufrir	AF
<tt>	matting	matte + ing	OE	<gh>	enough	genog	OE
	attend	atendre	OF		cough	kuchen	MDu
<ed>	looked	locode	OE	<ph>	physics	physica	L
<th>	Thomas	Thomas	Gk	8	[v]		
	castle	castel	AF	<v>	veal	vel	AF
4	[d]				vine	vigne	OF
<d>	bid (vb)	biddan	OE	<ve>	give	giefan	OE
	biding	bidan	OE		move	mover	AF
	dog	dogga	OE	<ph>	nephew	neveu	OF
<de>	bide	bidan	OE	<f>	of	of	OE
<dd>	bidding	biddan + ing	OE				
	middle	middel	OE				

9	[θ]			10	[ð]		
<th>	thick	þicce	OE	<th>	there	þær/þer	OE
	heath	hæþ	OE				
	though	þo	ON		perhaps	per +	L
	with	wiþ	OE		happ + s	ON	
	whether	hwæþer	OE	<wh>	who	hwa	OE
11	[s]				shepherd	sceaphierde	OE
<s>	so	swa	OE		hour	eure, ore	OF
	suit	siute	AF		vehicle	véhicule	F
<se>	mouse	mus	OE		honest	oneste	OF
<ss>	pass	passer	OF		hotel	hotel	F
<c>	cease	cesser	OF	16	[tʃ]		
<ce>	niece	niece	OF	<ch>	cheese	cese	OE
<ps>	psalm	sealm	OE		rich	rice	OE
<sc>	science	science	OF	<tch>	watch	wæccan	OE
12	[z]			<t>	nature	nature	OF
<z>	zeal	zelos	Gk	<ti>	question	question	OF
<zz>	dizzy	dysig	OE	<te>	righteous	rihtwis	OE
<s>	bosom	bosm	OE	17	[dʒ]		
	cows	cu (<i>cy pl</i>)	OE	<j>	jest	geste	OF
	was	wæs	OE	<g>	gin (drink)	genever	Du
<se>	rose	rose	OE	<ge>	lunge	allonge	F
13	[ʃ]			<dge>	midge	mycge	OE
<sh>	shoe	scoh	OE	<gg>	suggest	suggestere	L
<s>	sure	sur	OF	<dj>	adjacent	adjacere	L
<ss>	mission	mission	F	<d>	grandeur	grandeur	F
	assure	aseurer	OF	<di>	soldier	soldier	OF
<sch>	schedule	cedule	OF	18	[m]		
<si>	mansion	mansion	OF	<m>	meat	mete	OE
<ti>	nation	nation	OF		warm	wearm	OE
<ci>	special	especial	OF	<mm>	summer	sumor	OE
<ch>	machine	machine	F	<mn>	autumn	autompne	OF
14	[ʒ]			<lm>	salmon	saumon	OF
<ge>	beige	beige	F	19	[n]		
<s>	measure	mesure	OF	<n>	now	nu	OE
<si>	vision	vision	OF		nurse	nurice	OF
15	[h]			<nn>	dinner	diner	OF
<h>	hair	hær	OE	<kn>	knit	cnyttan	OE
	how	hu	OE	<gn>	sign	signe	OF
				<gn>	gnaw	gnagan	OE

20	[ŋ]				which	hwilc	OE
<n>	anchor	ancor	OE		wheat	hwæte	OE
	finger	finger	OE				
<ng>	sing	singan	OE		wrist	wrist	OE
	singer	singan + er			write	writan	OE
<ngue>	tongue	tunge	OE		one	an	OE
21	[l]			25	<x> = [ks] ~ [kf]		
<l>	leave	læfan	OE		axe	æx	OE
	blow	blawan	OE		luxury	luxurie	OF
<ll>	fall	feallan	OE	26	<x> = [gz]		
	silly	sælig	OE		exact	exactus	L
	talk	ME talkien					
		f. talu	OE				
	half	healf	OE				
22	[r]				Words with "silent" consonant letters		
<r>	red	read	OE		debt	dette	OF
	reed	hreed	OE		limb	limr	ON
	dairy	dæge + ery	OE	<c>	science	science	OF
<rr>	carry	carier	AF	<g>	diaphragm	diaphragma Gk	
	mirror	mirour	OF		sign	signe	OF
<rh>	rhythm	rhythme	F		gnaw	gnagan	OE
<wr>	write	writan	OE	<h>	shepherd	sceaphierde	OE
					ghost	gast	OE
	far	feor	OE		honest	oneste	OF
	fir	fyri	ON		hour	ore/eure	OF
	fur	furrer	AF		vehicle	væhicle	F
					rhythm	rhythme	F
22	[j]			<k>	knit	cnyttan	OE
<y>	year	gear	OE	<l>	half	healf	OE
	yes	gese	OE		salmon	saumon	OF
<i>	spaniel	espaigneul	OF		talk	ME talkien	
						f talu	OE
	muse	muse	OF	<n>	autumn	autompne	OF
	new	niwe	OE	<p>	cupboard	cuppe + bord	OE
					psalm	sealm	OE
24	[w]			<r>	far	feor	OE
<w>	weather	weder	OE		fir	fyri	ON
	dwindle	dwinan	OE		fur	furrer	AF
	wine	win	OE	<t>	castle	castel	AF
	witch	wicca	OE	<w>	write	writan	OE
<wh>	whine	hwinan	OE		who	hwa	OE
					wrist	wrist	OE
				<gh>	though	þoh	OE

4.1 Some features of the spelling of consonants

The spelling of consonants is more regular than that of the vowels, but there are a number of apparent anomalies which need to be explained. As before, test your present knowledge now. The next topic will help to explain. A dictionary will also help. This activity looks at only some of the anomalies in the system.

- The pronunciation of consonants spelt with single and double letters does not appear to be different, eg *hop*, *hope*, *hopping*, *hoping*. What determines the use of single or double consonant letters, or does it seem to be a random choice?
 - Is there a rule for the pronunciation of letter <c> as either [s] or [k]?
 - Why and when was OE *cwen* re-spelt *queen*?
 - <ough> words vary not only in the pronunciation of the vowel, but in some <gh> is pronounced [f] - *laugh*, *cough*, *trough*. How did this happen?
 - Explain why the <h> is not pronounced in words like *hour*, *honest*.
 - Why are there "silent" letters in the spelling of *knight*, *gnaw*, *wrist*, *debt*?
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