

THE SOUNDS OF CORNISH (base 1350-1800)

We have evidence¹ for 71² distinguishable sounds.

Symbols according to the International Phonetic Alphabet

Pure vowel sounds (25)

No. ³	Symbol	IPA No.	Unicode	Descriptive Name	KS Spelling	Example
1	[i:]	301	U+0069	Long close front unrounded vowel	i, î, u, y, ÿ	mis, cîder, tus, chy, prÿs
2	[i]	301	U+0069	Short close front unrounded vowel	i, î	lies, lînednor
3	[e:] ⁴	302	U+0065	Long close-mid front unrounded vowel	a, â, ai, e, ê, ë, eu	pras, fâss, prais, ker, les, êsy, bës, leur
4	[e]	302	U+0065	Short close-mid front unrounded vowel	e	eos, cudhlen
5	[ɛ]	303	U+025B	Short open-mid front unrounded vowel	e, è, ê, eu	pell, yêhes, deuthons
6	[ɔ] ⁵	306	U+0254	Short open-mid back rounded vowel	o, ò	cot, gròn
7	[o:] ⁶	307	U+006F	Long close-mid back rounded vowel	o, ô, oo	noth, hôk, gôy, coos
8	[o]	307	U+006F	Short close-mid back rounded vowel	o	loas, minfron
9	[u:]	308	U+0075	Long close back rounded vowel	oo, ou, u, û	coos, doust, a-ugh, gûn
10	[u]	308	U+0075	Short close back rounded vowel	ou, ow, ù	doustya, Kernowek, perpetùal
11	[y:]	309	U+0079	Long close front rounded vowel	u	lus

12	[y]	309	U+0079	Short close front rounded vowel	u	truan
13	[ø:]	310	U+00F8	Long close-mid front rounded vowel <i>This vowel is often realized as intermediate between [ø:] and [e:]</i>	eu	leur
14	[œ]	311	U+0153	Short open-mid front rounded vowel <i>This vowel is often realized as intermediate between [œ] and [ɛ]</i>	eu	deuthons
15	[ɔ:]	313	U+0252	Long open back rounded vowel	â, au, aw	brâs, dauns, cawl
16	[ɒ]	313	U+0252	Short open back rounded vowel	a, au	talkya, auctoryta
17	[ɨ]	317	U+0268	Short close central unrounded vowel	i, y	isella, gwelys
18	[ʊ]	318	U+0289	Short close central rounded vowel	ou, u, ù	auctour, uhella, pùb
19	[ɪ]	319	U+026A	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	i, u, y	isel, usons, warbydn
20	[ʏ]	320	U+028F	Short near-close near-front rounded vowel	u	ancombrus, usons
21	[ʊ]	321	U+028A	Short near-close back rounded vowel	ou, u, ù	auctour, uhel, tùchya
22	[ə] ⁷	322	U+0259	Short mid central vowel (schwa)	a, à, e, è, o, y	an, pàn, on <u>e</u> n, es <u>o</u> n, yma
23	[æ:]	325	U+00E6	Long near-open front unrounded vowel	a, â	pras, dâ, brâssa
24	[æ]	325	U+00E6	Short near-open front unrounded vowel	a, à	<u>a</u> val, màn
25	[ɜ] ⁷	326	U+025C	Short open-mid central unrounded vowel	e	berr, adhel <u>e</u> rgh

Diphthongs (9)

No.	Symbol	First element	Second element	KS Spelling	Example
26	[iʊ]	Short close front unrounded vowel	Short near-close back rounded vowel	u, ew, uw, yw	tu, dew, pluw, dyw
27	[ɛɪ] ⁸	Short open-mid front unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	a, â, ay	pras, fâss, fay
28	[ɛʊ]	Short open-mid front unrounded vowel	Short near-close back rounded vowel	ew, êw, ôw	bew, bêwnans, dôwys
29	[aɪ] ⁹	Short open front unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	ay	may
30	[aʊ] ⁹	Short open front unrounded vowel	Short near-close back rounded vowel	aw	maw, awel
31	[oʊ] ¹⁰	Short open-mid back rounded vowel	Short near-close back rounded vowel	ow, êw, ôw	pow, bêwnans, dôwys
32	[oɪ]	Short close-mid back rounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	oy	moy
33	[uɪ]	Short close back rounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	oy, ùy	moy / mùy ¹¹
34	[ɜɪ]	Short open-mid central unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	y, ey	chy, seyth

Single consonant sounds (34)

No.	Symbol	IPA No.	Unicode	Descriptive Name	KS Spelling	Example
35	[p]	101	U+0070	Voiceless bilabial stop	b¹², p, pp	glëb, aspia, cappa
36	[b]	102	U+0062	Voiced bilabial stop	b, bb	bobba
37	[t]	103	U+0074	Voiceless alveolar stop	t, tt	stordy, otta
38	[d]	104	U+0064	Voiced alveolar stop	d, dd	adran, addya
39	[k]	109	U+006B	Voiceless velar stop	c, ck, g¹², k, q, qw	olcan, lacka, teg, ragpren, ragtho, park, qweth, qwra ¹³
40	[m]	114	U+006D	Voiced bilabial nasal	bm, m, mm	mabm, mos, lamm
41	[^b m]	114	U+006D	Pre-occluded voiced bilabial nasal	bm, mm	mabm, lamm
42	[g]	110	U+0261	Voiced velar stop	g, gg, gw	golow, braggya, gwra ¹³
43	[n]	116	U+006E	Voiced alveolar nasal	dn, n, nn	pedn, nos, splann
44	[^d n]	116	U+006E	Pre-occluded voiced alveolar nasal	dn, nn	pedn, splann
45	[ŋ]	116	U+006E	Voiceless alveolar nasal	n, nh	scona, canhasow
46	[^d ŋ]	116	U+006E	Pre-occluded voiceless alveolar nasal	dn, dnh, nn	gwednal, byhadnha, splanna
47	[ŋ]	119	U+014B	Voiced velar nasal	n, ng	mong, angùs ¹⁴ , diank
48	[f]	128	U+0066	Voiceless labiodental fricative	f, ff,¹⁵ v¹²	flour, daffar, cov, athves
49	[v]	129	U+0076	Voiced labiodental fricative	f, v, vv	an fos, cov, scovva

50	[θ]	130	U+03B8	Voiceless dental non-sibilant fricative	dh¹³, th	dēdh, yth
51	[ð]	131	U+00F0	Voiced dental non-sibilant fricative	dh, th	codha
52	[s]	132	U+0073	Voiceless alveolar sibilant fricative	c, s, sc, ss	ac <u>c</u> eptya, sawya, ascendya, fâss
53	[z]	133	U+007A	Voiced alveolar sibilant fricative	s, z	esof, syp, zyp ¹⁷
54	[z̥]	133	U+007A	Partially devoiced alveolar sibilant fricative	s	gweres ¹⁸
55	[ʃ]	134	U+0283	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	cy, scy, sh, ssy, sy	tradycyon, conscyans, shâp, passyon, fycsyon, sy
56	[x]	140	U+0078	Voiceless velar fricative	gh	dyghtya
57	[h]	146	U+0068	Voiceless glottal fricative	gh, h, th	margh, marhogeth, marth
58	[h̥]	146	U+0068	Voiceless glottal fricative (added aspiration)	h, -	<u>p</u> elha, sconha, <u>k</u> erha, why, <u>c</u> lock, <u>t</u> ap, <u>c</u> ot, <u>u</u> hel, <u>r</u> ag
59	[ɻ]	152	U+027B	Voiced retroflex approximant	r, rr, rdh, s¹⁸	clor, carr, esof (erof), kerdhes
60	[ɻ̥]	152	U+027B	Voiceless retroflex approximant	r, rgh, rth	kefrës, margh, marth
61	[j]	153	U+006A	Voiced palatal approximant	y	yagh
62	[j̥]	153	U+006A	Voiced palatal approximant (reduced)	y, -	ponya, <u>û</u> sya, <u>u</u> hel
63	[l] ¹⁹	155	U+006C	Voiced alveolar lateral approximant	l, ll	lo, dell
64	[l̥] ¹⁹	156	U+026D	Voiceless alveolar lateral approximant	l, lh, ll	dyflas, pelha, pell ¹² , gwella
65	[ʍ]	169	U+028D	Voiceless labialized velar approximant	wh	whe

66	[^h]	169	U+028D	Voiceless labialized velar approximant (reduced)	wh	whra
67	[w]	170	U+0077	Voiced labialized velar approximant	w	wosa
68	[^w]	170	U+0077	Voiced labialized velar approximant (reduced)	w	gwil, gwra

Double sounds that are treated as single consonants (3)

No.	Symbol	KS Spelling	Example
69	[dʒ] ²⁰	j, s	neyja, u <u>ʒ</u> ons ²¹
70	[tʃ]	ch, t	chauns, te ²²
71	[ks]	x	box

Notes

- 1 Specifically Cornish evidence. Revived traditional Cornish does not rely on purely comparative evidence from Breton or Welsh.
- 2 In terms of phonetics. Not all of these sounds are phonemes. And it is likely that any single speaker employed only a partial set. Nonetheless we must acknowledge that the sound inventory of Cornish is a relatively large one; this can be attributed in part to uptake of sounds from English.
- 3 These numbers have no official status: they are purely for teaching convenience.
- 4 Evidence for [ɛ:] instead of [e:] is weak.
- 5 The [ɔ] has very little rounding.
- 6 Evidence for [ɔ:] instead of [o:] is weak.
- 7 These two short vowels are very similar. Characteristically, [ə] occurs in unstressed syllables; [ɜ] in stressed syllables before [ɹ] and [ʃ], and in the diphthong [ɜɪ].
- 8 This sound is a borrowing of the English Great Vowel Shift, with development to a diphthong as in modern English.
- 9 The first element [a] is IPA symbol 304, Unicode U+0061.
- 10 This sound was replaced for some speakers by [ɒ], [o:], [o] or [u] depending on position.
- 11 These are alternative spellings.
- 12 When there is devoicing at the end of a monosyllable; or in a cluster such as gp or gth where regressive assimilation applies; or in the cluster thv where progressive assimilation (perhaps more accurately described as fricative cluster devoicing) applies.
- 13 When w is treated as silent.
- 14 ng is pronounced [ŋg] except (a) at the end of a stand-alone word or compound element (e.g. **hang**, **mong**) and (b) immediately preceding a suffix or an ending (e.g. **hangya**, **hangys**, **mongen**, **mongow**).
- 15 One use of ff in KS spelling is optionally to represent the idiomatic pronunciation of clusters which may also be spelled ghv (e.g. **wheffes** for **whaghves**) or thf (e.g. **goffa** for **gothfa**).
- 16 z is written as an alternative to s only at the beginning of a word (including for this purpose any compound element).
- 17 This sound originates in the plural endings -s, -ys under English influence. Its application to final s of other unstressed syllables is by levelling.
- 18 Where [z] is rhotacized, s may alternatively be written r.
- 19 [ɪ] and [ɪ̠] are 'dark' in the same environments that velarize [ɪ] in standard British English.

- 20 The second element [ʒ] is IPA symbol 135, Unicode U+0292, the voiced palato-alveolar fricative.
- 21 Speakers who pronounce [dʒ] often write j rather than s in relevant words.
- 22 When [tʰ] is palatalized in this pronoun, t may alternatively be written ch.