

THE SOUNDS OF CORNISH (base 1350-1800)

We have evidence¹ for 73² 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	êw, o, ô, oo, ôw	bêwnans, noth, hôk, gôy, coos, ôwnter
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	[ɥ]	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	[ɯ]	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	[ɯ]	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>en</u> , es <u>on</u> , 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>er</u> gh

Diphthongs (10)

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, ôwnter
29	[aɪ] ⁹	Short open front unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	ay	fay
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, ôwnter
32	[oɪ] ¹¹	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 ¹²
34	[æɪ] ¹¹	Short near-open front unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	a'y	a'y, mayth
35	[ɜɪ]	Short open-mid central unrounded vowel	Short near-close front unrounded vowel	y, ey	chy, seyth

Single consonant sounds (35)

No.	Symbol	IPA No.	Unicode	Descriptive Name	KS Spelling	Example
36	[p]	101	U+0070	Voiceless bilabial stop	b¹³, p, pp	glëb, aspia, cappa
37	[b]	102	U+0062	Voiced bilabial stop	b, bb	bobba
38	[t]	103	U+0074	Voiceless alveolar stop	t, tt	stordy, otta
39	[d]	104	U+0064	Voiced alveolar stop	d, dd	adran, addya
40	[k]	109	U+006B	Voiceless velar stop	c, ck, g¹³, k, q, qw	olcan, lacka, teg, ragpren, ragtho, park, qweth, qwra ¹⁴
41	[m]	114	U+006D	Voiced bilabial nasal	bm, m, mm	mabm, mos, lamm
42	[^b m]	114	U+006D	Pre-occluded voiced bilabial nasal	bm, mm	mabm, lamm
43	[g]	110	U+0261	Voiced velar stop	g, gg, gw	golow, braggya, gwra ¹⁴
44	[n]	116	U+006E	Voiced alveolar nasal	dn, n, nn	pedn, nos, splann
45	[^d n]	116	U+006E	Pre-occluded voiced alveolar nasal	dn, nn	pedn, splann
46	[ŋ̥]	116	U+006E	Voiceless alveolar nasal	n, nh	scona, canhasow
47	[^d ŋ̥]	116	U+006E	Pre-occluded voiceless alveolar nasal	dn, dnh, nn	gwednal, byhadnha, splanna
48	[ŋ]	119	U+014B	Voiced velar nasal	n, ng	mong, angùs ¹⁵ , diank
49	[f]	128	U+0066	Voiceless labiodental fricative	f, ff,¹⁶ v¹³	flour, daffar, cov, athves
50	[v]	129	U+0076	Voiced labiodental fricative	f, v, vv	an fos, cov, scovva

51	[θ]	130	U+03B8	Voiceless dental non-sibilant fricative	dh¹³, th	dēdh, yth
52	[ð]	131	U+00F0	Voiced dental non-sibilant fricative	dh, th	codha
53	[s]	132	U+0073	Voiceless alveolar sibilant fricative	c, s, sc, ss	ac <u>c</u> ceptya, sawya, ascendya, fâss
54	[z]	133	U+007A	Voiced alveolar sibilant fricative	s, z	esof, syp, zyp ¹⁷
55	[z̥]	133	U+007A	Partially devoiced alveolar sibilant fricative	s	gweres ¹⁸
56	[ʃ]	134	U+0283	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	cy, scy, sh, ssy, sy	tradycyon, conscyans, shâp, passyon, fycsyon, sy
57	[ʒ]	135	U+0292	Voiced palato-alveolar fricative	s, sy	sy, ocasyon
58	[x]	140	U+0078	Voiceless velar fricative	gh	dyghitya
59	[h]	146	U+0068	Voiceless glottal fricative	gh, h, th	margh, marhogeth, marth
60	[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
61	[ɻ]	152	U+027B	Voiced retroflex approximant	r, rr, rdh, s¹⁹	clor, carr, esof (erof), kerdhes
62	[ɻ̥]	152	U+027B	Voiceless retroflex approximant	r, rgh, rth	kefrës, margh, marth
63	[j]	153	U+006A	Voiced palatal approximant	y	yagh
64	[j̥]	153	U+006A	Voiced palatal approximant (reduced)	y, -	ponya, <u>û</u> sya, <u>u</u> hel
65	[l] ²⁰	155	U+006C	Voiced alveolar lateral approximant	l, ll	lo, dell
66	[l̥] ²⁰	156	U+026D	Voiceless alveolar lateral approximant	l, lh, ll	dyflas, pelha, pell ¹³ , gwella

67	[ɯ]	169	U+028D	Voiceless labialized velar approximant	wh	whe
68	[ʷ]	169	U+028D	Voiceless labialized velar approximant (reduced)	wh	whra
69	[w]	170	U+0077	Voiced labialized velar approximant	w	wosa
70	[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
71	[dʒ]	j, s	neyja, u <u>ʒ</u> ons ²¹
72	[tʃ]	ch, t	chauns, te ²²
73	[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 Historical evidence for [ɛ:] instead of [e:] is weak.
- 5 The [ɔ] has very little rounding.
- 6 Historical 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 [ɜɹ].
- 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] or [u], with variable length, depending on position.
- 11 The sounds [uɹ] and [æɹ] are allophones, of [oɹ] and [aɹ] respectively, that are heard in a few common words (all of them open monosyllables) and their derivatives. And [uɹ] also occurs rarely in loan-words, puysant for example.
- 12 These are alternative spellings.
- 13 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.
- 14 When w is treated as silent.
- 15 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).
- 16 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 wheghves) or thf (e.g. goffa for gothfa).
- 17 z is written as an alternative to s only at the beginning of a word (including for this purpose any compound element).
- 18 This sound originates in the plural endings -s, -ys under English influence. Its application to final s of other unstressed syllables is by levelling.

- 19 Where [z] is rhotacized, s may alternatively be written r.
- 20 [ɪ] and [ɪ̠] are 'dark' in the same environments that velarize [ɪ] in standard British English.
- 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.