

# Thai Writing – Essential List of the 44 Thai Alphabet Characters



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### The Importance of Thai Writing in Language Learning

Writing, reading, and speaking are all key parts of learning any language. While many Thai learning resources focus mostly on speaking, developing writing skills is essential for truly understanding and mastering Thai.

### Introduction to Thai Writing

Thai writing comes from the ancient Khmer script, known as 'aksorn Thai' (อักษรไทย), created by King Ramkhamhaeng the Great in 1283. It might look like a mix of squiggles, circles, and lines at first, but the Thai script is full of unique and beautiful characters. Thai is written from left to right, and sometimes, you need to look above or to the right for proper reading. Traditionally, Thai is written without punctuation or spaces between words, but modern usage includes some punctuation and spacing.

## Thai Alphabet: Basics and Structure

The Thai alphabet consists of 72 characters: 44 consonants and 28 vowels. These are divided into 3 consonant classes, 12 long vowels, and 16 short vowels. Interestingly, six characters from old Thai, Sanskrit, or Pali are no longer in use.

Pronunciation in Thai can be a bit tricky at first because there's no official transliteration system, and the Latin alphabet can be used in different ways. But here's some good news: Thai doesn't have uppercase or lowercase letters, which makes it simpler to learn. Plus, Thai consonants are often associated with words that start with the same sound, making them easier to remember.

### Getting Started with Thai Writing: Consonants and Pronunciation

Let's dive into Thai consonants and their pronunciations. Understanding these basics will help you get a solid grasp of the Thai language. Here's a handy list to get you started:

English Word	Thai Consonant	Example	Pronunciation	English Sound
chicken	ก	ก ไก่	go-kày	g
egg	ข	ข ไข่	kǒ-khày	k
bottle (unused)	ช	ช ขวด	kǒ-khùat	k
buffalo	ค	ค ควาย	ko-khwaay	k
person (unused)	ค	ค คน	ko-khon	k
bell	ฆ	ฆ ระฆัง	ko-rákhanj	k
snake	ง	ง งู	ngo-nuu	ng
plate	จ	จ จาน	jo-caan	j
cymbals	ฉ	ฉ ฉิ่ง	chǒ-chìŋ	ch
elephant	ช	ช ช้าง	cho-cháaŋ	ch
chain	ซ	ซ โซ่	so-sôo	s
tree	ฅ	ฅ ฅอ	cho-chœe	ch

English Word	Thai Consonant	Example	Pronunciation	English Sound
woman	ญ	ญ หญิง	yo-yǐŋ	y
headdress	จ	จ ชฎา	do-chadaa	d
goad	จ	จ ปู้จุก	to-patàk	t
pedestal	ฐ	ฐ ฐาน	tǔ-thǎan	t
Montho	ท	ท มณโฑ	to-montoo	t
elder	ฒ	ฒ ผู้เฒ่า	to-phûu thâw	t
novice monk	ณ	ณ เณร	no-neen	n
child	ด	ด เด็ก	do-dèk	d
turtle	ด	ด เต่า	to-tàw	t
sack	ถ	ถ ถุง	tǔ-thŭŋ	t
soldier	ท	ท ทหาร	to-thahǎan	t
flag	ธ	ธ ธง	to-thoŋ	t
mouse	น	น หนู	no-nŭu	n
leaf	บ	บ ใบไม้	bo-baymáay	b
fish	ป	ป ปลา	po-plaa	p
bee	ผ	ผ ผึ้ง	pǔ-phŭŋ	p
lid	ฝ	ฝ ฝา	fǔ-fǎa	f
tray	พ	พ พาน	po-phaan	p
teeth	ฟ	ฟ ฟัน	fo-fan	f
junk boat	ภ	ภ ลำภา	po-sǎmphaw	p
horse	ม	ม ม้า	mo-máa	m
giant	ย	ย ยักษ์	yo-yák	y
boat	ร	ร เรือ	ro-rŭa	r
monkey	ล	ล ลิง	lo-liŋ	l
ring	ว	ว แหวน	wo-wǎen	w

English Word	Thai Consonant	Example	Pronunciation	English Sound
pavilion	ศ	ศ ศาลา	sǎ-sǎalaa	s
hermit	ษ	ษ ฤๅษี	sǎ-rusǎi	s
tiger	ส	ส เสือ	sǎ-sǎa	s
chest	ห	ห หีบ	hǎ-hiip	h
kite	ฬ	ฬ จุฬา	lo-cùlaa	l
basin	อ	อ อ่าง	o-daaŋ	o
owl	ฮ	ฮ นกฮูก	ho-nókhúuk	h

You might have spotted that some Thai characters look almost identical. For instance, "ศ" and "ษ" are nearly identical except for an extended line. This can make it tricky to distinguish them, especially in handwriting or different fonts. But don't worry! With practice and patience, you can tell them apart quickly.



## Understanding Thai Vowels:

Thai has 28 vowels, categorized into long and short sounds, but there are actually 32 in total, with 4 no longer in use. There's no official transliteration system, so different sources might represent Thai words differently in the Latin alphabet.

Thai vowels are unique because they can be placed above, below, to the left, or to the right of consonants, sometimes in combinations. Learning the consonants first is helpful, as they serve as a base for the vowels.

The word for vowel in Thai is 'sara' (สระ). For instance, 'sara a' (สระอะ) is like saying 'vowel a' in English.

Here's a quick look at the vowels:

Pronunciation	Vowel	Vowel Name	Short/Long Sound
a	อะ	sara a	Short
aa	อา	sara aa	Long
i	อิ	sara i	Short
ii	ีย	sara ii	Long
ue	อุ	sara ue	Short
ue	ูย	sara ue	Long
u	อุ	sara u	Short
uu	ูย	sara uu	Long
e	เออะ	sara e	Short
ee	เอ	sara ee	Long
ae	แอะ	sara ae	Short
ae	แ	sara ae	Long
o	โอะ	sara o	Short

Pronunciation	Vowel	Vowel Name	Short/Long Sound
o	โ-	sara o	Long
o	เ-าะ	sara o	Short
o	-อ	sara o	Long
ua	-ัวะ	sara ua	Short
uua	-ัว	sara uua	Long
ia	เ-ียะ	sara ia	Short
iia	เ-ีย	sara iia	Long
uea	เ-ือะ	sara uea	Short
uea	เ-ือ	sara uea	Long
oe	เ-ือะ	sara oe	Short
oe	เ-ือ	sara oe	Long
am	-ำ	sara am	Long
ai	ไ-	sara ai	Long
ai	ใ-	sara ai	Long
ao	เ-า	sara ao	Short

Some vowels change form when followed by a consonant to avoid confusion, but their pronunciation stays the same.

Thai distinguishes between long and short vowel lengths, which can change the meaning of a word. Be mindful of vowel length to ensure you're understood correctly.

## Understanding Thai Punctuation

Thai punctuation is different from English but serves similar purposes. While full stops (periods) can be used to end a sentence, blank spaces are more commonly used. You'll also see commas, brackets, and quotation marks, just like in English. One unique Thai punctuation mark is the 'kho mut' คฺ (โคมุดร), which signifies the end of a story or document. There are other special Thai characters you'll come across as you learn to read and write in Thai.

## Why Learning the Thai Alphabet is Important

Reading and writing are crucial skills in language learning, and understanding the Thai Alphabet is key. While speaking can get you far, being able to read and write opens up many more opportunities.

Learning the Thai Alphabet will also boost your speaking skills. It allows you to read documents, books, and other materials, speeding up your learning and improving your vocabulary. Plus, you'll gain a deeper insight into Thai culture.

When you visit Thailand, you'll find that many authentic experiences, like local menus and signs, are written in Thai. Knowing how to read Thai will enrich your travel experience and help you engage more fully with the local culture.



## Quick Tips for Learning the Thai Alphabet

Learning the Thai Alphabet takes time, but here are some tips to make it easier and more fun:

1. **Practice Each Sound:** Start by practicing the sound of each letter. Pay attention to vowel lengths to avoid funny mispronunciations.
2. **Create Associations:** Connect sounds with familiar things. For example, think of the letter (ต) as a 'tooth.' This helps you remember them better.
3. **Focus on Main Letters First:** Vowels can be tricky since they can be placed next to, above, or behind main letters. Master the main letters first to make finding vowels easier.
4. **Write by Hand:** Practice writing the letters by hand. It's rewarding to see your handwriting improve over time, and it keeps you motivated!

Remember, learning a new alphabet is a journey. Be patient with yourself and enjoy the process. With consistent practice and these handy tips, you'll be reading and writing in Thai in no time. Happy learning with Ling!

If you are looking for an efficient resource to learn the **Thai language**, the Ling app is here for you! **The Ling app is a language learning app** that has been used and loved by millions of language learners around the world.

