alphabet Barkley Sound

Lesson 1. The alphabet

The Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet has forty-five letters. This is a phonetic alphabet, which means that each letter represents a different sound, and every sound is represented by only one letter.

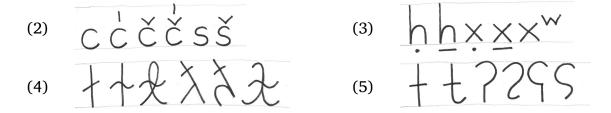
(1)	a	aa	c	ċ	č	č	e	ee	h	ķ	i	ii	k	$\mathbf{k}^{\mathbf{w}}$	ķ
	Κ̈́w	ł	λ	え	m	ṁ	n	'n	O	00	p	ģ	q	$\boldsymbol{q}^{\boldsymbol{w}}$	S
	š	t	ť	u	uu	w	ŵ	X	$\mathbf{x}^{\mathbf{w}}$	X	$\mathbf{x}^{\mathbf{w}}$	V	ý	?	ſ

Pronunciation tips

- The common consonants h k m n p s t w y are pronounced the same as in English.
- The barred el (ℓ) is a continuous, hissing el sound, and can be said for a long time. The barred lambda (λ) begins in silence, and can be said only briefly.
- The back consonants $h q q^w x x^w$ f tend to deform adjacent vowels, especially the high vowels (i ii u uu), because they pull the tongue back.
- The hard plosives \vec{c} \vec{c} \vec{k} \vec{k}^w $\vec{\lambda}$ \vec{p} \vec{t} have a stronger release than plain plosives. To practise them, say them with your mouth without exhaling from the lungs.

Handwriting tips

These diagrams illustrate some handwritten Nuu-chah-nulth letters.



- The underdot in $h \dot{x}$ can be written as a line in handwriting.
- To make them easy to tell apart, give l a loop, λ a hook, and t a tail.

Quick reference

Below is a quick reference to every letter. It includes each letter's name, a brief clue to its pronunciation, and a Nuu-chah-nulth example word that uses that sound.

Letter	Name	Pronunciation	Word	Translation
a	short a	uh	patpat	inboard motorboat
aa	long a	long ah	waa	say
c	plain cee	ts	caapin	sawbill duck

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ċ	hard cee	explosive ts	ċawaak	one		
č č	cee wedge	ch	čakup	man		
č	hard cee wedge	explosive <i>ch</i>	čapac	canoe		
e	short e	as in pet	we?ič	sleep		
ee	long e	as in eh, and long	?eepinis	apple		
h	aitch	h	husmin	kelp		
ķ	back aitch	like breathing on glass	ḥayu	ten		
i	short i	as in pit	hisit	sockeye salmon		
ii	long i	as in <i>ski</i> , and long	tiičma	heart		
k	kay	k	kuuk	packed lunch		
$\mathbf{k}^{\mathbf{w}}$	round kay	<i>k</i> with rounded lips	k ^w istuup	something different		
ķ	hard kay	explosive <i>k</i>	, kee?in	crow		
$\mathbf{\dot{k}^{w}}$	hard round kay	\vec{k} with rounded lips	, k ^w iis	snow		
ł	barred el	a hissed <i>l</i> , like <i>lth</i>	łuucsma	woman		
λ	barred lambda	tl	λama	house post		
χ̈́	hard barred lambda	explosive <i>tl</i>	λisuk	white		
m	em	m	maamaati	bird		
ṁ	hard em	m with a catch	maamiiqsu	older sibling		
n	en	n	nunuuk	sing		
'n	hard en	n with a catch	huuńii	drift whale		
O	short o	oh or aw	_			
00	long o	long oh or aw	?ooyinčas	orange (fruit)		
p	pee	p	puupuuca	dreaming		
ģ	hard pee	explosive <i>p</i>	р́ар́іі	ear		
q	cue	back k	qawii	salmonberry		
q^{w}	round cue	q with rounded lips	q ^w inii	seagull		
S	ess	S	saasin	hummingbird		
š	ess wedge	sh	šuuk ^w aa	sugar		
t	tee	t	tupkuk	black		
ť	hard tee	explosive <i>t</i>	ťaťuus	star		
u	short u	as in <i>put</i>	susaa	swimming		
uu	long u	as in due, and long	muu	four		
W	double-u	W	witwaak	warrior		
ŵ	hard double-u	w with a catch	suwa	you		
X	front ex	like a cat's hiss	xa?uumin	pigeon		
$\mathbf{x}^{\mathbf{w}}$	round front ex	<i>x</i> with rounded lips	x ^w akak	swollen		
Ÿ	back ex	like hissing to spit	<u>xaxaš</u> kuk	pilot biscuit		
$\dot{\textbf{X}}^{\textbf{W}}$	round back ex	\dot{x} with rounded lips	mux ^w aškin	soapberry		
y ỷ	wye	у	yačaa	dogfish		
	hard wye	y with a catch	siỷa	me		
?	glottal stop	a catch, as in <i>uh-oh</i>	?aama	loon		
?	pharyngeal stop	a catch plus <i>r</i>	Saanus	heron		