



# Irish Language Learners

## Basics of Pronunciation - Part 1

1. The Irish language is taught in **Gaelscoileanna** (Irish-Medium Schools) and in Public schools in Ireland. There are three main dialects of Irish (Munster, Connacht, Ulster) and a standardized form of Irish, all of which have an influence on pronunciation.
2. Irish uses the Roman alphabet letters A through U (except J, K, and Q) but you may occasionally see some of the other letters in longer words (ex. **Zú** = Zoo)
3. Irish specifically identifies long vowel sounds with a long accent mark called the **síneadh fada** or **fada** (á, é, í, ó, ú) and these vowel sounds are different from the vowel sounds that you might be accustomed to in English.
4. Vowels: a (ah), á (aw), e (eh), é (ay), i (ih), í (ee), o (uh) ó (oh), u (uh), ú (ooh)
5. Irish vowels are categorized as slender (e, é, i, í) and broad (a, á, o, ó, u, ú).
6. The consonants B through T have both a slender pronunciation and a broad pronunciation, which is determined by the vowels that are closest to them in each word. (ex. In "**Séamus**", the first S is slender being near the letter e and the last s is broad being near the letter u. Pronounced "Sh ay ~~æ~~ m uh s".)
7. When consonants are broad they are pronounced similarly to the consonants in English. (ex. **bord, cat, doras, focal, gasúr, hata, lón, madra, nó, pláta, rud, Sasana, tú**)
8. When consonants are slender the mouth becomes more slender during pronunciation and they are typically pronounced differently from the consonants in English. (b "by" **beo**, c "cy" **ceacht**, d "dJ" **Dia**, f "fy" **fearr**, g "gy" **gealach**, h\*, l "ly" **leaba**, m "my" **meán**, n "ny" **neart**, p "py" **peann**, r "ry" **riamh**, s "sh" **sé**, t "ts" **teach**)

## Basics of Pronunciation - Part 2

1. After reviewing Part 1, you should now understand that while the Irish language uses the same alphabet as the English language, the vowel sounds are different and vowels are classified as broad or slender. The type of vowel in turn makes the pronunciation of consonants fluctuate from broad to slender from word to word or even within a word. Vowel length is identified by the **fada** mark over a vowel.
2. The Irish for vowel is **guta** and the Irish for consonant is **consan**. The plural forms of these words are **gutaí** and **consain**.
3. Irish language also has diphthongs, which are vowels grouped together forming a unique blend of sound.
4. Diphthongs - **ae** "ay", **ai** "ah", **ao** "ay uh", **aoi** "ee", **ea** "@", like the short 'a' in the English word bat, **ei** "eh", **eo** "oh", **ia** "ee uh", **ua** "ooh uh"
5. Sometimes words preceding an Irish word will cause a change to the pronunciation of a consonant beginning the next word. The two types of changes are called **séimhiú** (lenition) and **urú** (eclipse).
6. Séimhiú is represented by adding the letter h after the consonant. The possible combinations and sounds are **bh** "v or w", **ch** "kH", **dh** "y or gH", **fh** "silent", **gh** "y or gH", **mh** "v or w", **ph** "f", **sh** "h", and **th** "h".
7. Urú is represented by adding various consonants before other consonants. The possible combinations and sounds are **mb** "m", **gc** "g", **nd** "n", **bhf** "v or w", **ng** "ng", **bp** "b", **dt** "d". You might also come across an urú on a vowel as 'n-' "n".
8. There are other changes which you will come across including a t prefix on the letter s as **ts** "t" or a t- "t" prefix or an h "h" prefix before a word that begins with a vowel (ex. **an tsráid, an t-arán, na héin**). Irish also has hidden vowel sounds that are pronounced in the middle of a word between certain consonants. (ex. **dorcha** "dor "uh" hKa")