## A New Phonetic Alphabet

# FOR THOSE WHO DON'T LIKE 'ALPHA', 'BRAVO', 'CHARLIE', ...

a mischievously misleading, ambiguous, phonetic alphabet using English homophones, heteronyms and given names



pref: AURAL or AUBERGINE
letter: AITCH(H), ARE(R), AYE(I)
homophone: AIR(ERE, ERR, HEIR and EYRE), AISLE(I'LL and ISLE), AIT/ATE(EIGHT,8-BALL),
AUGHT(OUGHT), AULD(OLD), AURAL(ORAL) [Source], AUKS/AUX/AWKS(OX)[aux is an abbreviation of auxillary]
(Source: this might be from Martha Wells in Network Effect), AWED(ODD)
variants: AEON/EON, AERIE/AERY/AIRY/EYRIE, AESTHETIC/ESTHETIC, AFREET/AFRIT/EFREET/IFRIT
silent initial letter\_: AEON Or AESTHETE
analogue: CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR SILVER (Ag) Or GOLD (Au)
name: AARON(ERIN), AEOFIE, AESOP [Source (Christina Pila)], AVA(EWA)
[misc.]: AEGIS, ANY(N.E.), 'AU COURANT', 'AU LAIT'('OLÉ'), AUBERGINE, AURA, AUTO(OTTO)
[notes]:

according to the OED: 'awful' and 'offal' can be pronounced almost, but not quite, identically
 \*most of the silent letters in this list represent the *forms of* the words with silent letters but not every possible word



pref: BDELLIUM

silent initial letter: BDELLIUM

description: THE INSECT THAT MAKES HONEY (APIAN)

analogue: 300 in medieval Roman numerals [source (Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian')]

[misc.]: BARYON NUMBER [source (Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian')], ARE/ESSE/EXIST/IS (as in 'be') [via an anonymous friend]



pref: CUE or CANINE letter: CAY(K) or CUE(Q)

homophone: Catarrh(Qatar), Cay(Key/Quay), Cede(Seed), Ceiling(Sealing), Cell(Sell), Cellar(Seller), Censor(Sensor), Cent(Sent/Scent), Cereal(Serial), Chaos(Kaos), Chi.(Shy), Chic(Sheik), Choir(Quire), Chute(Shoot), Cite(Sight/Site), City(Sitee), 'Cling on'(Klingon), Coal(Kohl), Coy(Koi), Crew(Krewe), Cue(Kew/Queue), Curd(Kurd), Curt(Kurt), Cygnet(Signet), Cymbal(Symbol), Ot Cynophobia(Sinophobia) [credit BBC's Brain of Britain (radio quiz programme) Semi-Final 1, 2023] Variants: Caffetan/Cafetan/Coftan/Kaftan, Carat/Karat, Catsup/Ketchup, Ceratin/Keratin, Cissy/Sissy, Cistvaen/Kistvaen, Curb/Kerb, Cashmere/Kashmir?, Csar/Czar/Tsar/Tzar [source: Lynne Murphy (Linguist at Univ. Sussex)]

silent initial letter: CTENOPHORA, CHTHONIC Or CNIDARIA

double letter phoneme: chablis, chabazite, chai, charisma, chasm, chianti, chorus

analogue: 'BIG, BLUE WOBBLY THING THAT MERMAIDS LIVE IN' [source: Ink and Incapability episode of Black Adder the Third (by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton) [record at imdb.com] [clip on YouTube] via an anonymous friend], ¢/D/PENNY [see note below], (ONE) HUNDRED in Roman numerals

name: caleigh, carol(karol), catherine(katherine), c. d.[as in C. D. Howe](seedy), chagas disease, cher(share), cheryl(sheryl), chris(kris), cisco<sup>®</sup> [computer networks company](sysco<sup>®</sup> [food services corporation]), cuba, cy[as in the late Cy Young](Greek letter PSI[ $\psi$  and  $\Psi$ ]/sigh) or cyd [as in the late Cyd Charisse](SID)

[misc.]: Canine, Ceilidh, Celery, Celtic, Chaeta, Chimera, Chi (x and X, see also X and note that 'Chi.' is an abbreviation for Chicago often pronounced identically to 'shy'), CIGAR Or CUCUMBER [notes]:

- HARD- OR SOFT-C FROM GREEK: some people pronounce English words that begin with C but are derived from Greek words beginning with kappa (x and K) with a hard-C (K) sound rather than a soft-C (S-like) sound. Two examples are 'cephalopod' and 'Celtic'.
- ¢ FOR PENNY: according to *The ocel.*, p. 93; and 'D' FOR PENCE according to <u>Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian'</u>.
- BALDRICK'S CARD in 1988's Blackadder's Christmas Carol (by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton) [record at imdb.com] reads 'Messy Kweznuz'
- SEE ALSO seize (under S)



pref: DJIN or DOUBLE-U

letter: DOUBLE-U

homophone: DJIN(GIN)

analogue: FIVE HUNDRED in Roman numerals, PENNY/PENCE [source (Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian')] [See also note

about ¢ under C]
name: DJANGO

[misc.]: DOLLAR SIGN(\$, see S)

pref: EWE or EYE

letter: EH(A), EKS(X), EL/ELL(L), EM(M), EN(N), EWE(U), EYE(I)

homophone: EYE(AYE), EARN(URN), EIGHT(AIT/ATE), EM (unit), EWE(YOU/YEW), ERE/ERR(AIR, HEIR, EYRE), ERR(UR)[See note under U], EAVE/EVE(YVES), EWER(YOUR/YOU'RE), EX (unit) Or EYELET(ISLET)

Variants: EFREET/AFRET/AFRIT/IFRIT, EMPTY (if pronounced with a silent 'p' to sound like the abbreviation 'M.T.'), EON/AEON, EYRIE/AERY/AERIE(AIRY), ESTHETIC/AESTHETIC, EITHER(with an initial long-E or long-I)

analogue: 250 in medieval Roman numerals [source (Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian')], FORMER SPOUSE (ex-)

name: eileen (when pronounced with an initial long-I), ellen, erin(aaron), euler (as in Leonhard Euler), eugene, eunice, eve(yves), ewa(ava) [link to pronunciation note (at www.pronouncenames.com)], eyre (literary character and novel by Charlotte Brontë)

homograph: see note about 'Err', under U

[misc.]: Eau-de-cologne, effluent, eider, elbow, elegiac, elevator, embrace, emcee(m.c.), emend, emmy(m.e.)[as in Emmy Award], english, envy(n.v.), escalator, eucalyptus (and eukaryote, eunuchs(unix<sup>tm</sup>) and eureka etc.), excel(x.l.), excess(x.s.), explain, extra-large(xl), exquisite, euthanasia('youth in asia'), (or earl?)

[note]: Euston (the station) and Houston (the municipality), although similar, are pronounced differently

## F

pref: FAZE

homophone: FARO(PHARAOH), FAZE(PHASE), FELT(VELD), FEW(PHEW), FIE(PHI), FILE(PHIAL), FILL(PHIL), FILLY[young female horse](PHILLY [colloquialism for city of Philadelphia]), FISH(PHISH), FLOCKS(PHLOX)

variants: FANTASM(PHANTASM) [source (Everett Howe)] analogue: CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR IRON (Fe)

[note]: according to the OED: 'faux' and 'pho' are pronounced differently (as of 2022-02-23)



pref: GNEISS

homophone: Gneiss(Nice), Gibe(Jibe), Genes(Jeans), Gest(Jest), Gym(Jim) or Gnu(New/Nu/Knew)[Nu as in the Greek letter, v, not the interjection]

variants: GAOL/JAIL, GEEZ/JEEZ, GEL/JELL[see note under J]

silent initial letter: gnarl, gnat, gnaw(nah/naw), gnocchi or gnu(knew/new/nu)

analogue: (ONE) THOUSAND ['a grand' is slang for a thousand dollars] (see also K & M)

name: Gennifer [as in Gennifer Flowers] (JENNIFER), GEOFFREY(JEFFREY), GERI(JERRY)[as in Geri Halliwell], GERMAN(JERMYN)[as in London's Jermyn St], GERRY(JERRY)[as in Gerry Adams],

GILLES(JILL/GILL) [link to sound file with pronunciation (from the Internet Archive's cache of about . com) & (see note about gill below)], GZOWSKI [as in the late CBC radio and TV show host Peter Gzowski]

homograph: see note about 'gill', below

[misc.]: GILL(GILLES/JILL), GYM(JIM), GYRO

[note]: 'gill' has a soft-G (J-like) sound when referring to the liquid measure but a hard-G when referring to breathing organs [source: *The ocel.*, p. 261]



pref: HEIR

homophone: heir(air/ere/err/eyre?), hoard/horde(whored), hole(whole) or hour(our & are)

silent first letter: HONOUR, HEIR OR HOARD

analogue: ASPIRATION(in phonetics), ETA (capital Greek letter  $\eta$  is the same grapheme as H in the Roman

alphabet) Or CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR MERCURY [Hg]

name: Heloise, Hugo/Yugo

[notes]

• Euston (the station) and Houston (the municipality), although similar, are pronounced differently

• In some dialects, 'herb' and 'urb' are pronounced identically



pref: ISLE

homophone: ISLE/I'LL(AISLE), ISLET(EYELET) or WON (as an analogue for ONE)

variants: ifrit/afreet/afrit/efreet

**description:** 'THE PERPENDICULAR PRONOUN' from The Skeleton in the Cupboard [an episode of the TV programme *Yes Minister* by Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn] or 'ME'

analogue: current(currant) from Physics, ONE (in Roman numerals and on some old typewriters, also a homophone for won)

name: I CHING, IAGO, IDA (when pronounced with an initial long-E), IWO JIMA

[misc.]: ieie, iiwi, ilala or imprévu



#### pref: JAI ALAI or JUAN

homophone: Jaeger/Jäger(Yeager), Jeans(Genes), JIM(GYM), JIBE(GIBE) or JEST(GEST) variants: Jail/Gaol, Jeez/Geez, Jell/Gel [see note below], JOOZH/TJUZS/ZHOOSH [see note below] name: Jeffrey(Geoffrey), Jennifer(Gennifer), Jermyn(German)[as in London's Jermyn St], Jerry(Geri/Gerry), Jian[as in musician and former CBC radio host Jian Ghomeshi], Jill(Gilles/Gill [see note about gill]), JIM(GYM), JIMENEZ [link to pronunciation note (at www.pronouncenames.com)], JOHANNES [as in Johannes Brahms], JUAN(WAN)

[misc.]: JAEGER/JÄGER, JAI ALAI, JIPIJAPA [source (Everett Howe)], JOJOBA, JUNTA [notes]

- THE LETTER 'J' is often 'called "jay", rhyming with "say", to match the pronounciation of K.' In Scottish English, it 'often rhymes with *high*, to match the pronounciation of *l*.' (as quoted, including italics, from p. 331 of *The ocei*).
- VARIANTS OF 'GEL': I didn't think 'jell' was a word but <u>Emily Nussbaum used it in *The New Yorker* (2013-10-28, p. 85)</u>
- VARIANTS OF 'ZHOOSH': 'Joozh' is a variant according to the *OED Online* (Entry #248070 first published in the 3rd ed., Dec. 2005); 'tjuzs' is reported as a variant by Allan Metcalf writing in <u>The Chronicle of Higher Education's</u> (Lingua Franca' blog 15 March 2017) (entry titled 'A Dash of Zhouzh')
- 'GILL' has a soft-G (J-like) sound (like the names Gilles and Jill) when referring to the liquid measure but a hard-G when referring to breathing organs [source: <u>The octl.</u>, p. 261]



#### pref: KEW or POTASSIUM

homophone: Kaos(Chaos)[see <u>Wikipedia's disambiguation page</u> for many meanings of KAOS], KERNEL(COLONEL), KEY(CAY/QUAY), KNAVE(NAVE), KNEAD(NEED), KNEW(GNU/NEW/NU), KNIGHT(NIGHT), KNIT(NIT), KNOB(NOB), KNOCK(NOCK), KNOT(NOT, NAUGHT, OT NOUGHT), KNOW(NO), KNOWS(NOSE), KOHL(COAL), KOI(COY) OT KREWE(CREW)

variants: Kaftan/Cafetan/Coftan, Karat/Carat, Kashmir/Cashmere?, Keratin/Ceratin, Kerb/Curb, Ketchup/Catsup, Kistvaen/Cistvaen, Koran/Quran

silent initial letter: knight, knife, knit, know or knot

analogue: Chemical Symbol for Potassium (K) or (ONE) thousand [SI prefix] (see also G & M)

name: KETO(QUITO), KEW(CUE/QUEUE/Q)[as in Kew Gardens], KLINGON('CLING ON'),

KNEEL(NEAL/NEIL/NIEL), KNOLL(NÖEL), KAROL(CAROL) [as in the late Karol Castillo], and KRIS(CHRIS), KURD(CURD), KURT(CURT)

[note]: some people pronounce English words that begin with C but are derived from Greek words beginning with K with a hard-C (K) sound rather than a soft-C (S-like) sound. Two examples are 'cephalopod' and 'Celtic'.



#### pref: 50 or POUND

analogue: FIFTY in Roman numerals [source], POUND (LB. or £)

[misc.]: LLINÁS?



#### pref: MNEMONIC

silent initial letter: MBAQANGA Or MNEMONIC

analogue: (ONE) THOUSAND in Roman numerals (see also G & K)]

[misc.]: M.C.(EMCEE) or M.E.(EMMY)[as abbrev. for medical examiner e.g.]

[note]: 'M.T.' and 'empty', can be pronounced identically, although I don't



#### pref: NAVE or NEW

homophone: Nah/Naw(GNAW), NAVE(KNAVE), NEW/NU (GNU/KNEW), NIGHT(KNIGHT), NIT(KNIT), NO(KNOW), NOB(KNOB), NOCK(KNOCK), NOSE(KNOWS), OF NOT/NAUGHT/NOUGHT (KNOT)

silent initial letter: NGULTRUM [source (Ben Teitelbaum's The Devil's Alphabet website)]

analogue: CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR SODIUM (Na)

name: NEIL/NIEL(KNEEL) [see Dilbert cartoon for 1989-08-01], NOËL[as in Noël Coward] (KNOLL)

[misc.]: N.E.(ANY), MOZILLA['Remember, it's spelled N-E-T-S-C-A-P-E but it's pronounced: Mozilla'], sorry I couldn't find a definitive source to confirm, N.V./NV(ENYY) [NV is the USPS abbreviation for Nevada]



pref: OURS or ZERO letter: our & ARE(R)

homophone: old(auld), one(won), odd(awed), oral(aural) [source], ought(aught), ours?(hours) or

OX(AUKS/AUX/AWKS)

Variants: OUSEL/OUZEL(WOOSEL) [Shakespeare's Henry IV Part 2 III.ii (see David & Ben Crystal's Shakespeare's Words)]

analogue: HUG (abbreviation), ZERO name: OEDIPUS, OUIJA, OTTO(AUTO)

[misc.]: OENOPHILE? OESOPHAGUS [source (Malcolm Appleby) see also Wikipedia's list of Latin alphabet digraphs], 'OLÉ' ('AU

LAIT'), ONION?

[note]: according to the OED: 'awful' and 'offal' can be pronounced almost, but not quite, identically



pref: PNEUMONIA or URINE [if you must]

homophone: Phase(FAZE), Pharaoh(FARO), Phew(FEW), Phial(FILE), Phlox(FLOCKS), Phish(FISH)[the musical troupe], Psalter(salter), Greek letter  $\Psi$ (cy/sigh), or Psis [plural of Greek letter  $\Psi$ ] (sighs, size) [credit Fraser Simpson (The Globe and Mail, 2023-09-23, clue 25D)]

variants: PHANTASM(FANTASM) [source (Everett Howe)]

silent initial letter: PNEUMONIA [Source (the great Lily Tomlin, of course)], PNEUMATIC, PSALM, PSALTER, PSYCHE, PSEUDO-, PTARMIGAN OF PTERODACTYL etc.

double letter phoneme: PHONE OF PHAROAH

analogue: PAIR/PARE/PEAR(TWO/TOO), CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR LEAD (Pb), RHO (capital Greek letter  $\rho$  is the same grapheme as P in the Roman alphabet), URINE(a puerile pun, sorry)

name: PHIL(FILL), PHISH(FISH)[the musical troupe], PHILLY [colloquialism for city of Philadelphia](FILLY [young female horse]), PSMITH [literary character from P. G. Wodehouse], PTOLEMY

[misc.]: PENNY/¢/D [see note under C], PESO SIGN(\$, see S), P.H.A.T. [abbreviation for 'pretty hot and tempting'](FAT), PHYSICS, PHYSIQUE

[note]: phial and vial, although variants of the same word, are pronounced differently



pref: QUAY

letter: QUEUE/CUE/KEW(Q)

homophone: QUAY(CAY/KEY), QUEUE(CUE/KEW), QUIRE(CHOIR) Or QAT(CAT)

variants: KORAN/QURAN

analogue: Character played by John de Lancie on *Star trek: the Next Generation*, etc. or Character played by desmond llewelyn in Many James bond movies

name: QAF[transliteration of Arabic letter & (source: <u>The occi.</u>, p. 505)], QATAR(CATARRH), QUITO(KETO) (source: Fraser Simpson in the *Globe & Mail* during October or November 2024), QUPH(KOF)[transliteration of Hebrew letter (source: <u>The occi.</u>, p. 505)]



pref: RYE

letter: r(our & Are)

homophone: RAP(WRAP), RECK(WRECK)?, REST(WREST), RIGHT/RITE(WRIGHT/WRITE), RING(WRING),

RITZ(WRITS), ROT(WROUGHT), RUNG(WRUNG), RYE(WRY)

analogue: R (prescription) [source (Tristan Miller)], THURSDAY [abbreviation (incredible but true)]

name: rennes(wren), rex(wrecks)

[misc.]: 'LIKE A PIRATE' [stereotypical but funny (to my mind) none the less in much the same way that 'P' can be

'as in urine'] **or** 'RITHMETIC [one of the 'three Rs']

## S

pref: SEE or SERIAL

letter: sea/see(c) or seize(plural of c)

homophone: salter(psalter), scent/sent(cent,¢), sealing(ceiling), seed(cede), seedy(c. d.[as in C. D. Howe]), sell(cell), seller(cellar), sensor(censor), serial(cereal), sheik(chic), shy(chi.

[abbreviation for Chicago]), SIGH(CY/Greek letter PSI[ $\psi$  and  $\psi$ ]), SIGHs/SIZE (PSIS [plural of Greek letter $\psi$ ])

SIGHT/SITE(CITE), SIGNET(CYGNET), SINOPHOBIA(CYNOPHOBIA), SITEE(CITY) Or SYMBOL(CYMBAL)

variants: sissy/cissy

analogue: \$ (dollar sign or peso sign), ROMAN NUMERAL FRACTION FOR HALF [source (Wikipedia (13 July 2022, at 18:46))], CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR ANTINOMY [Sb] Or TIN [Sn]

name: sheryl[as in Sheryl Crow](CHERYL), SID [as in the late Sid Caesar or the late Sid Vicious] (CYD), sysco<sup>®</sup> [food services corporation] (CISCO<sup>®</sup> [computer networks company])

[note]: some people pronounce English words that begin with C but are derived from Greek words beginning with K with a hard-C (K) sound rather than a soft-C (S-like) sound. Two examples are 'cephalopod' and 'Celtic'.

## T

pref: TSUNAMI or TSAR

variants: TSAR/TZAR/CSAR/CZAR, TJUZS/JOOZH/ZHOOSH [see note under J]

silent initial letter: TSUNAMI OT TSAR double letter phoneme: TSAR

analogue: JUNCTION (see also fork as an analogue for Y) or TEA [as in 'Green', 'Oolong', 'brewed beverage', '4 (o'clock)' etc.] [source (Vicki Rosenzweig and collaborators)], TWO/TO/TOO(PAIR/PARE/PEAR) [two as in a pair, and vice versa]

name: TAOISM [see Derek Lin's pronunciation note at taoism.net]



pref: URN or UIGHUR

name: UNIX<sup>TM</sup>(EUNUCHS), UR(ERR)

homophone: urn(EARN), urine(You're in), use(Yews/'Youse')

[misc.]: UCONN [abbreviation for University of Connecticut] (YUKON), UIGHUR, UKE?

[notes]:

- In some dialects, 'herb' and 'urb' are pronounced identically
- There are variant pronounciations of both 'err' (depending on which homograph is meant) and 'Ur' (I'm guessing because it is a name)



pref: 5

homophone: veld(felt)

variants: vakoof/vakuf(wakf/waqf)

analogue: FIVE in Roman numerals [source], SEE(C) as in vide [source (Alan Connor in 'the Gaurdian')]

[note]: phial and vial, although variants of the same word, are pronounced differently



pref: WHY or TUNGSTEN

letter: WHY(Y) and WISE(plural of Y)[source: NYT's Connections puzzle #350 by Wyna Liu]

homophone: wan(Juan), whole(hole), whored(hoard/horde), won(one), wrap(rap), wrest(rest), wring(ring), wright/write(right/rite), writs(ritz), wrought(rot), wrung(rung), or wry(rye)

variants: wakf/waqf(vakoof/vakuf), woosel(ousel/ouzel) [see ousel under O]

silent initial letter: whole, whored, wrangle, wrap, wreak, wreck, wrest, wright, wring, write,

WRITS, WROUGHT, WRUNG OF WRY?

analogue: CHEMICAL SYMBOL FOR TUNGSTEN [W] [aka Wolfram] name: weber [as in Max Weber], wren (RENNES), wyoming

[misc.]: WHĀNAU



pref: TWITTER or XENOPHOBIA

homophone: x.L.(EXCEL), x.s.(EXCESS)

analogue: XL (EXTRA-LARGE[abbreviation]), TEN in Roman numerals, KISS [abbreviation] also '50 proof', strike etc. [see *The Free Dictionary*'s 'What does X stand for ?' for many meanings of the abbreviation 'X'],

GREEK LETTER CHI (see also C)

name: xenon

[misc.]: Twitter, Xenophobia or Xylophone



pref: YPSILANTI or YOU

letter: you/yew(u)

homophone: yew/you(ewe), yews/'youse'(use) or your/you're(ewer)

analogue: FORK[as in 'fork in the road' or divining-rod etc. See also junction as an analogue for T] or

UPSILON [capital Greek letter v is the same grapheme as Y in the Roman alphabet]

name: Yugo/Hugo, Yeager [as in Chuck Yeager] (JAEGER/JÄGER) YUKON (UCONN [abbreviation for University

of Connecticut]), YVES(EAVE/EVE), YVETTE OF YVONNE

[misc.]: YPSILANTI, YTTRIUM OF YTTERBIUM

[note]: see also wise (under W)



pref: ZHOOSH or 2000

variants: zhoosh/joozh/tjuzs [see note under J]

analogue: Atomic Number [in Chemistry], IMPEDANCE [in Physics], 2000 in medieval Roman numerals

[source: Chamber's Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> ed.]

name: ZHIVAGO [source (Tristan Miller)]

[misc.]: ZEE?, ZHOOSH [source (Wikipedia (20 March 2018, at 13:26))], ZHUYIN ZIMU? (Or ZHUYIN), ZOQUE,

ZWIEBACK? [source (Everett Howe)], ZWITTERION?

0

NUN OH

THE OPERATOR

1

PAST OF 'TO WIN'
PERHAPS SOMETHING TO DO WITH 'BOGO'

2

HALF A BALLET DRESS

AS IN A TWO-FOUR (a case of beer or a 'beer belly' = multiple 'six-packs')

PAIR

BI- sounds like 'buy' etc.

DI- sounds like 'dye' etc.

3

AS IN 'THREE FOR A DOLLAR'?

III (Roman numeral sounds somewhat like the exclamation 'Aye Yai Yai')

4

WHAT PEOPLE YELL ON A GOLF COURSE

IV (Roman numeral sounds like abbreviation for intervenous)

5

AS IN THE NUMBER OF PINS IN FIVE-PIN BOWLING??? V (Roman numeral)

6

LATINATE SEX???
A GREEK HEX???

7

AS IN LUCKY NUMBER ... AS IN 'SEVEN ATE NINE'

8

EATEN

9

'NOT' IN GERMAN

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