
Guide to Pronunciation

Paiboon+ System

Tones

Because Thai is a tonal language, its pronunciation presents new challenges for English speakers. If the tone is wrong, you will not be easily understood even if everything else is correct. Thai uses five tones. For example, to pronounce a rising tone your voice starts at a low pitch and goes up (much like asking a question in English). The phonetic transliteration in this text book uses tone marks over the vowels to show the tone for each word. Note that the tone marks used for transliteration are different from those used in Thai script.

Tone Marks (Transliteration)

<u>Tone</u>	<u>Tone symbol</u>	<u>Example</u>
mid	None	maa
low	`	màa
falling	^	mâa
high	´	máa
rising	ˇ	mǎa

Vowels

Most Thai vowels have two versions, short and long. Short vowels are clipped and cut off at the end. Long ones are drawn out. This book shows short vowels with a single

letter and long vowels with double letters ('a' for short; 'aa' for long).

The 'u' has no comparable sound in English. Try saying 'u' while spreading your lips in as wide a smile as possible. If the sound you are making is similar to one you might have uttered after stepping on something disgusting, you are probably close!

Short & Long Vowels

a	like <u>a</u> in <u>a</u> miga	fan - teeth
aa	like <u>a</u> in <u>f</u> ather	maa - come
i	like <u>i</u> in <u>t</u> ip	sĭp - ten
ii	like <u>ee</u> in <u>see</u>	sĭi - four
u	like <u>oo</u> in <u>bo</u> ot	kun - you
uu	like <u>u</u> in <u>r</u> uler	sŭun - zero
u	like <u>u</u> in <u>r</u> uler, but with a smile	nàng - one
uu	like <u>u</u> but longer	m <u>uu</u> - hand
e	like <u>e</u> in <u>p</u> et	sèt - finish
ee	like <u>a</u> in <u>p</u> ale	pleeng-song
ε	like <u>a</u> in <u>ca</u> t	lé - and
εε	like <u>a</u> in <u>s</u> ad	dεeng - red
ə	like <u>er</u> in <u>te</u> acher without the <i>r</i> sound	lǎ - dirty
əə	like <u>ə</u> but longer	jəə - meet
o	like <u>o</u> in <u>n</u> ote	jon - poor
oo	like <u>o</u> in <u>g</u> o	joon -robber
ɔ	like <u>au</u> in <u>ca</u> ught	gɔ̀ - island
ɔɔ	like <u>aw</u> in <u>l</u> aw	nɔɔn - sleep

Complex Vowels

The following diphthongs are combinations of the above vowels.

ai	mâi - not	aai	saai - sand
ao	mao - drunk	aao	kâao - rice
eo	reo - fast	eeo	eeo - waist
ɛo	tɛo - row	ɛɛo	léɛo - already
əi	həi - hey	əəi	nəəi - butter
ia	đia - exactly (slang)	iaa	bia - beer
iiəo	nǎiəo - sticky		
iu	hǐu - hungry		
ɔi	nɔi - little	ɔɔi	kɔɔi - wait
ooi	dooi - by		
ua	pùə - clap!	uua	dtuua - body
ui	kui - chat	uui	uui - ouch!
uuai	ruuai - rich		
uua	rɯua - boat		
uuaɪ	nɯuaɪ - tired		

Poly-syllabic Words

In normal speech, the tone of some initial syllable is unstressed and sounds like a mid tone. In Paiboon+ system, the ~ symbol is used to show that the syllable preceding it is unstressed.

e.g. à~rai sounds like a-rai in normal speech.

The ~ symbol shows that the syllable “à” is unstressed.

Consonants

b	as in <u>b</u> aby	bin - fly
ch	as in <u>ch</u> in	ch h u - name
d	as in <u>d</u> oll	duu - look
f	as in <u>f</u> un	fai - fire
g	as in <u>g</u> old	gin - eat
h	as in <u>h</u> oney	hâa - five
j	as in <u>j</u> et	jèt - seven
k	as in <u>k</u> iss	kon - person
l	as in <u>l</u> ove	ling - monkey
m	as in <u>m</u> oney	mii - have
n	as in <u>n</u> eed	naa - rice field
ñ	as in el ni <u>ñ</u> o	kán-ñúu - umbrella (in Isaan)
p	as in <u>p</u> retty	pan - thousand
r	rolled like the Spanish <u>r</u>	riian - study
s	as in <u>s</u> ex	sǐi - four
t	as in <u>t</u> ender	tam - do
w	as in <u>w</u> oman	wan - day
y	as in <u>y</u> ou	yaa - medicine
ng	as in <u>ng</u> ing	ngaan - work
dt	as in <u>dt</u> op	dtaa - eye
bp	as in <u>bp</u> ot	bpai - go
gw	as in <u>gw</u> am	gwaang - deer
kw	as in <u>kw</u> een	kwaam - matter