

## French and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

IPA Symbol	Pronunciation	Examples
<b>Vowel sounds</b>		
i	keen	lys, <u>u</u> tile, lyre
e	closed “e” (a lengthened <u>i</u> s)	<u>e</u> t, aller, <u>e</u> té, j’ <u>a</u> i
ɛ	open “e” as in <u>p</u> et	<u>e</u> st, <u>m</u> ais, <u>p</u> ère
a	<u>h</u> at	parler (most common “a”)
ɑ	<u>f</u> arther	<u>b</u> as, <u>p</u> âte (much rarer “a”)
ɔ	<u>s</u> oft	<u>v</u> oler, <u>m</u> ort
o	<u>a</u> ll	<u>m</u> ot, <u>b</u> eau
u	<u>f</u> ool	<u>o</u> u, <u>r</u> oue
y	like a German <u>ü</u>	<u>u</u> ne, <u>r</u> ue
ə	(schwa) <u>a</u> head	<u>l</u> e, <u>d</u> emain and the mute “e” (when enunciated) as in <u>l</u> un <u>e</u> are very close to a German schwa when spoken (see ø).
ø	like a German <u>ö</u>	<u>p</u> eu, <u>d</u> eux and used instead of the schwa when sung, so <u>l</u> e, <u>d</u> emain and the mute “e”
œ	<u>f</u> ur	<u>h</u> eur <u>e</u>
<b>Semi-vowel sounds</b>		
j	yes	grenou <u>i</u> lle, <u>p</u> ied, feuille
w	<u>w</u> ant	<u>m</u> oi, <u>o</u> ui, nou <u>w</u>
ɥ	close to a passing y	<u>l</u> ui, <u>s</u> uite
<b>Nasal vowel sounds</b>		
ã		<u>v</u> ent, <u>t</u> emps, <u>a</u> ns
ẽ		<u>f</u> aim, <u>p</u> ain, <u>v</u> in
õ (or õ when spoken)	No English equivalents	<u>n</u> on, <u>l</u> ong, <u>n</u> om
œ̃		<u>u</u> n, <u>p</u> arfum
<b>Consonant sound pairs</b>		
Voiced	Unvoiced	
b	p	<u>b</u> ib <u>p</u> ipe <u>b</u> on <u>p</u> ain
d	t	<u>d</u> read <u>t</u> ight <u>a</u> dieu <u>a</u> stre
g	k	<u>g</u> ain <u>c</u> ake                      gloire <u>c</u> oin
v	f	<u>v</u> ault <u>f</u> ifty <u>v</u> in, <u>w</u> agon <u>f</u> in
z	s	<u>g</u> aze <u>c</u> ease                      o <u>s</u> er <u>s</u> oir
ʒ	ʃ	<u>v</u> ision <u>sh</u> irt                      je, gilet <u>ch</u> at
ʔ	h	glottal                      aspirate                      virtually <i>never</i> used except for emphasis
’ (apostrophe) or sometimes * (asterisk)	In French, when a word begins with an “h” such as hibou the “h” is not sounded. However there is nevertheless the concept of an aspirate “h” whose only function is to prevent liaisons. It would be indicated in phonetic dictionaries by an apostrophe, e.g. un <u>h</u> omme but un <u>h</u> ibou. This is not an IPA symbol, but it is very useful when trying to decide whether a liaison is permitted or not.	
<b>Nasal consonant sounds</b>		
m	<u>m</u> y	<u>m</u> ain
n	<u>n</u> ame	<u>n</u> ous
ŋ	mainly in English derived words as <u>camp</u> ing	
ɲ	<u>o</u> nion	ag <u>ne</u> au
<b>Other consonant sounds</b>		
l	<u>l</u> ight	<u>l</u> umière
R	use of the French guttural “r” when singing is a question of taste and tradition but should be used when saying song titles or composers’ names	
r	single flipped “r” as might be used in English very	Not used in spoken French but used instead of ʀ when singing French classical music
x	Used in imported words such as the Spanish jota	