

Lesson 1 : Lakota Sounds

The Lakota Alphabet

The English alphabet was used to write the Lakota language because Lakota was never written until recently. The English alphabet contains twenty-six letters but written Lakota uses only twenty of these. The six English consonants which are not used in Lakota orthography are *d, f, q, r, v, and x*.

<u>English letter</u>	<u>English sound</u>	<u>Lakota sound</u>	<u>Lakota word</u>
a	ah	ate	father
b	b	bubu	sound made by a drum
c	j	cistila	small
e	e	cepa	fat
g	g	ogna	in
h	ha	ha	hide, skin
i	ee	ile	burn
j	j	janjan	glass, jar
k	k	ki	the
l	l	luta	scarlet
m	m	mani	walk
n	n	ni	alive
o	o	ota	many
p	p	paha	hill
s	s	si	feet
t	t	topa	our
u	oo	u	come
w	w	wakan	holy, sacred
y	ya	yanka	sit
z	zee	waziyata	north

Vowels

The Lakota language has five vowels. Although we do not speak of long and short vowels; nevertheless, one cannot help but notice that vowels vary in duration. The same vowel may be short in one syllable and long in another.

<u>Lakota Vowel</u>	as in	<u>Lakota Word</u>	<u>English meaning</u>
a	ate		father
e	etahan		from
i	ite		face
o	ota		many
u	kuza		sick

The following are the Lakota phonics which make up the syllables of each Lakota word. You may recognize some of the syllables as Lakota words. The differences between male and female speech are in the intonation and the stress placed on the syllables.

ah	ah	bla	bla
ble	ble	bli	bli
blo	blo	bli	bli
ca	ca	ce	ce
ci	ci	co	co
cu	cu	e	e
gla	gla	gle	gle
gli	gli	glo	glo
glu	glu	ha	ha
he	he	hi	hi
ho	ho	hu	hu
i	i	ja	ja
je	je	ji	ji
jo	jo	ju	ju
ka	ka	ke	ke
ki	ki	ko	ko
ku	ku	la	la

le	le	li	li
lo	lo	lu	lu
ma	ma	me	me
mi	mi	na	na
ni	ni	nu	nu
o	o	pa	pa
pe	pe	pi	pi
po	po	pu	pu
sa	sa	se	se
si	si	so	so
su	su	ta	ta
te	te	ti	ti
tu	tu	u	u
wa	wa	we	we
wi	wi	wo	wo
wu	wu	ya	ya
ye	ye	yo	yo
yu	yu	za	za
ze	ze	zi	zi
zo	zo	zu	zu

Gutturals

ga	ga	ge	ge	gi	gi
go	go	gu	gu	ka	ka
ke	ke	ko	ko	ku	ku
pa	pa	pe	pe	po	po
pu	pu	ta	ta	te	te
to	to				

Nasalized Vowels

The sound of *n* is nasal when it occurs after the vowels : *a, e, i, o, u*. Nasalized vowels are produced in the larynx but resonated by forcing the sound through the nose as with nasalized French vowels.

The three basic nasalized vowel sounds are *an, in, un*.

anpo	anpo	daylight
anpetu	anpetu	day
ankan	ankan	or, upon
cunksa	cunksa	policeman
hanpa	hanpa	shoe
wanihan	wanihan	last winter
ins	ins	or
inyanka	inyanka	run
inkpa	inkpa	tip
nains	nains	or
kin	kin	the
wahinhe	wahinhe	snowing
ogna	ogna	perhaps
unkiye	unkiye	we
unkcela	unhccla	cactus, peyote
sunka	sunka	dog
tunkasila	tunkasila	grandfather
sunkmanitu	sunkmanitu	coyote

Velorized Consonants

The most difficult sounds for English speakers to duplicate are the velorized consonants : guttural sounds of the *h, g, k, p, t*. These sounds must be practiced because the absence of the velorization may change the meaning of the word.

g	gi	brown
	ganka	bushy
	gu	burn
	kaga	make
	gopa	snore
	pangi	wild carrot
h	hota	grey

	íhā	smile
	íhe	forest
	wahā	I bury
	hōka	badger
	h̄talehan	yesterday
í	kata	hot
	kapa	to pass up
	kunsi	grandmother
	kan	vein
	kanta	plum
	koskalaka	young man
p̄	pā	bitter
	canpa	choke cherries
	opeton	to buy
	peta	fire
	peji	grass
	p̄estola	sharp, pointed
t̄	tate	windy, wind
	tani	old, worn out
	tanka	sister
	talo	meat
	tahca	deer

Glottal Stop

A glottal stop is a consonant pronounced alone without the aid of a vowel. The sounds – *c, g, h, k, l, p, s, t, z* – can be used with stops and these will be indicated by the apostrophe after the letter. They also occur when one vowel follows another. These are not marked with an apostrophe.

The glottal stop is the sound which is produced by closing the glottis deep in the throat which interrupts the flow of sound.

c	ic'i	harness
	ic'i'blebleca	to shake oneself
	ic'i'caga	to make for oneself
k	k'u	give
	k'a	dig
	k'ega	to scrape
p	p'o	go
	p'oyela	steaming
	poiapiye	swelling medicine
t	ahata	weak
	t'a	died
	taja	rough
s	s'e	like
	was'aka	strong
	s'elececa	seems like it
h	nah'on	hear
	h'anihiya	slowly
	oh'ankoya	quickly
	lol'o'peton	to buy food
	sung'ikan	lead rope

This is the conclusion of Lesson 1. If you feel you haven't mastered the material, you may stop the tape and go back to the beginning of the lesson. Repeat until mastery of the material is achieved.