

1. THE SOUNDS OF KLINGON

It is difficult to describe accurately the sounds of the Klingon language without using complex phonological and anatomical terminology. What follows, therefore, is intended to give only a guide to pronunciation. The best way to learn to pronounce Klingon with no trace of a Terran or other accent is to become friends with a group of Klingons and spend a great deal of time socializing with them. Very few non-Klingons speak Klingon without an accent.

The system of writing Klingon used in this dictionary has been developed so people who already know how to read English will have a minimum of difficulty approximating the sounds of Klingon words and sentences.

1.1 Consonants

- b** As in English *bronchitis* or *gazebo*. Some Klingons pronounce this sound as if it were **m** and **b** articulated almost simultaneously. Speakers of English can approximate this sound by saying *imbalance* without the initial *i* sound. A very small number of Klingons pronounce **b** as if it were **m**.
- ch** As in English *chew* or *artichoke*.
- D** This sound is close to English *d* in *dream* or *android*, but it is not quite the same. The English *d* sound is made by touching the tip of the tongue to that part of the roof of the mouth just behind the upper teeth. Klingon **D** can best be approximated by English-speakers by touching the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth at a point about halfway between the teeth and the velum (or soft palate), that part of the roof of the mouth that is rather gooshy. As with Klingon **b**, some speakers pronounce **D** as if it were more like *nd*, and a distinct minority as if it were **n** - but, of course, with the tongue in the same position as for **D**.
- gh** This is not like anything in English. It can be produced by putting the tongue in the same position it would be in to say English *g* as in *gobble*, but relaxing the tongue somewhat and humming. It is the same as Klingon **H** (see below), but with the vocal cords vibrating at the same time.
- H** This is also not like anything in English, but it is just like *ch* in the name of the German composer *Bach* or in the Yiddish toast *l'chaim*, or the *j* in the Mexican city of *Tijuana* in *Baja California*. It is produced in the same way as Klingon **gh**, but is articulated with a very coarse, strong rasp. Unlike Klingon **gh**, the vocal cords do not vibrate in saying Klingon **H**.
- j** As in English *junk*; never ever as in French *jour*.
- l** As in English *lunge* or *alchemy*.
- m** As in English *mud* or *pneumatic*. Those few Klingons who pronounce **b** as **m** would say Klingon **baH** *fire (a torpedo)* and **maH** *we* the same way, and have to memorize which word is spelled which way.

- n** As in English *nectarine* or *sunspot*. Those Klingons who pronounce **D** more like **n** can easily articulate and hear the two sounds differently. Even a **D** that sounds like **n** is pronounced with the tongue in the Klingon **D** position, not in the English *d* position. Klingon **n** is produced with the tongue in the same position as English *d*.
- ng** As in English *furlong*; never as in English *engulf*. The **g** is never pronounced as a separate sound. This sound never occurs at the beginning of an English word, but it does come at the beginning of a number of Klingon words. English-speakers may practice making this sound at the beginning of a word by saying English *dang it!*, then saying it again without the **da**.
- p** As in English *parallax* or *opprobrium*. It is always articulated with a strong puff or pop, never laxly. Speakers of English may want to exercise care to avoid discharging saliva while articulating this sound. It should be noted, however, that Klingons do not worry about this.
- q** Similar to English *k* in *kumquat*, but not quite that. The tongue position for English *k* is like that for Klingon **gh** and **H**. To produce Klingon **q**, the main body of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth at a point farther back than it does for **gh** or **H**. Indeed, the tongue reaches for or touches the uvula (the fleshy blob that dangles down from the back of the roof of the mouth), so articulating **q** approximates the sound of choking. The sound is usually accompanied by a slight puff of air. English speakers are reminded that Klingon **q** is never pronounced *kw* as in the beginning of English *quagmire*.
- Q** This is like nothing particularly noteworthy in English. It is an overdone Klingon **q**. It is identical to **q** except that it is very guttural and raspy and strongly articulated, somewhat like a blend of Klingon **q** and **H**.
- r** This is not like the *r* in American English, but it does resemble the *r* in some dialects of British English, as well as the *r* in many languages of Europe. It is lightly trilled or rolled.
- S** This sound is halfway between English *s* and *sh*, as in *syringe* and *shuttlecock*. It is made with the tip of the tongue reaching toward that part of the roof of the mouth which it touches to produce Klingon **D**.
- t** As in English *tarpaulin* or *critique*. It differs from Klingon **D** in two ways: (1) like **p**, it is accompanied by a puff of air; and (2) the tongue touches a position on the roof of the mouth farther forward than that for **D**.
- tlh** This sound does not occur in English, but it is very much like the final sound in *tetl*, the Aztec word for *egg*, if properly pronounced. To produce this sound, the tip of the tongue touches the same part of the roof of the mouth it touches for **t**, the sides of the tongue are lowered away from the side upper teeth, and air is forced through the space on both sides between tongue and teeth. The sound is produced with a great deal of friction, and the warning given in the description of Klingon **p** might be aptly repeated here.
- v** As in English *vulgar* or *demonstrative*.

- w** Usually as in English *worrywart* or *cow*. On rare occasions, especially if the speaker is being rather deliberate, it is pronounced strongly, more like **Hw** or even **Huw**.
- y** As in English *yodel* or *joy*.
- '** The apostrophe indicates a sound which is frequently uttered, but not written, in English. It is a glottal stop, the slight catch in the throat between the two syllables of *uh-oh* or *unh-unh*, meaning “no.” When Klingon **'** comes at the end of a word, the vowel preceding the **'** is often repeated in a very soft whisper, as if an echo. Thus, Klingon **Je'** *feed* almost sounds like **je'e**, where the articulation of the first **e** is abruptly cut off by the **'**, and the second **e** is a barely audible whisper. When **'** follows **w** or **y** at the end of a word, there is often a whispered, echoed **u** or **I**, respectively. Occasionally the echo is quite audible, with a guttural sound like **gh** preceding the echoed vowel. For example, **yIII'** *transmit it!* can sound more like **yIII'ghl**. This extra-heavy echo is heard most often when the speaker is particularly excited or angry.

1.2. Vowels

There are five vowels in Klingon.

- a** As in English *psalm*; never as in American English *crabapple*.
- e** As in English *sensor*.
- I** As English *i* in *misfit*. Once in a while, it is pronounced like *i* in *zucchini*, but this is very rare and it is not yet known exactly what circumstances account for it.
- o** As in English *mosaic*.
- u** As in English *gnu* or *prune*; never as in *but* or *cute*.

Note that when a vowel is followed by **w** or **y**, the combination of letters may not represent the same sound it does in English spelling:

<u>KLINGON</u>	<i>RHYMES WITH ENGLISH</i>	<i>AS IN</i>
Aw	<i>ow</i>	<i>cow</i>
Ay	<i>y</i>	<i>cry</i>
Ey	<i>ay</i>	<i>pay</i>
ly	<i>ey</i>	<i>key</i>
oy	<i>oy</i>	<i>toy</i>

Klingon **uy** resembles *ooey* in English *goosey*. Klingon **ew** resembles nothing in English, but can be approximated by running Klingon **e** and **u** together. Likewise, Klingon **Iw** is **I** and **u** run together. No words in Klingon have **ow** or **uw**. If they did, they would be indistinguishable from words ending in **o** and **u**, respectively.

1.3. Stress

Each Klingon word of more than one syllable normally contains one stressed (or accented) syllable. The stressed syllable is pronounced at a slightly higher pitch and with a little more force than the nonstressed syllable(s). In a verb, the stressed syllable is usually the verb itself, as opposed to any prefix or suffix. If, however, a suffix ending with ' is separated from the verb by at least one other suffix, both the verb and the suffix ending in ' are stressed. In addition, if the meaning of any particular suffix is to be emphasized, the stress may shift to that syllable. Suffixes indicating negation or emphasis (section 4.3) are frequently stressed, as is the interrogative suffix (section 4.2.9).

In a noun, the stressed syllable is usually the syllable right before the first noun suffix, or the final syllable if there is no suffix. If, however, a syllable ending in ' is present, it is usually stressed instead. If there are two syllables in a row both ending in ', both are equally stressed. Finally, it should be noted that there are some words which seem to have variable stress patterns, with the stress sometimes heard on one syllable and sometimes on another. This phenomenon is not yet understood. The rules given above do not account for this variability, but if they are followed, stress will wind up on acceptable syllables. In the system used to transcribe Klingon in this dictionary, stress is not indicated.