

Pashto Alphabets

There are forty-five characters in the Pashtu version of the Arabic alphabet. The standard order is as follows.

Pashto Symbol	Letter Name	Roman symbol
◌̣ / ◌̣̣	hamza	a
آ	Alif (mad aa)	/aa/ (ā)
ا	Alif	/a/ in the beginning /aa/ (ā) in the middle or end
ب	Bay	/b/
پ	Pay	/p/
ت	Tay	/t/
ټ	Tay	/t/ (ṭ)
س	Say	/s/
ج	Jim	/j/
چ	Chay	č /ch/
ه	Hay	/h/
خ	Khay	/kh/
ځ	tzay	/tz/ (x Ĵ)
څ	Tsay	/ts/ (c)
د	Daal	/d/
ډ	Daal	/d/
ز	Zaal	/z/
ر	Ray	/r/
ړ	Ray	/r/ (ṛ)

ز	Zay	/z/
ژ	Zhay	/zh/
ڙ	Zhay / ghay	/ zh / g / (ž)
س	Sin	/s/
ش	Shin	/sh/
ښ	Šhin/ Khin/ xin	/ Šh/
ص	Swaad	/s/ (š)
ض	dzwat	/z/ (d)
ط	Tway	/t/
ظ	Zway	/z/
ع	Ain	/a' /
غ	Ghain	/gh/
ف	Fay	/f/
ق	qaaf	/q/
ک	kaaf	/k/
گ	gaaf	/g/
ل	Laam	/l/
م	Mim	/m/
ن	Nun	/n/
ڻ	Ṇun	/N/
و	wao	/w/ as consonant /o/ or /u/ as vowel
ه	hay	/h/
ی	yay	/ay/, always used at the end

ي	yay	/y/, as consonant /i/, as vowel
ې	yay	/e/, used in the middle and at the end only
ى	yay	/ay/ (ai), used at the end of words only (for feminine)
ئ	yay	/ay/ (ai), used at the end of words only (for imperative)

Pashto Sounds Similar to English

	Pashto	English
1.	ب	b
2.	پ	p
3.	ج	j
4.	چ	ch
5.	ز	z
6.	ژ	zh/sio
7.	س	s
8.	ش	sh
9.	ک	k
10.	گ	g
11.	م	m
12.	ن	n
13.	و	w
14.	ه	h
15.	ي	y/i

Pashto Sounds different from English

1. /خ/ /tz/
The sound of /خ/ is a compound of /tz/. However, some native speakers pronounce it like English 'z'.
2. /ځ/ /ts/
The sound of /ځ/ is also a mixed compose of /ts/, nonetheless, some native speakers say it straight away like English s.

3. /خ/ /kh/
The sound of /خ/ is produced deeply in the throat such one clears one's throat.
4. /ر/ /r/
In the case of English /r/, the tongue is almost suspended in the middle of the mouth, but for Pashto /ر/ , the tip of the tongue touches the front of the mouth and very quickly rattles for more than one time.
5. /ر/ /r/
In order to produce the sound of /ر/ , the whole tongue curls back and then quickly flaps down.
6. /ش/ / sh or kh /
In order to produce the sound of /ش/, one needs to touch the back of tongue with the uvula and let the air out in order to create a hissing sound. However, in western (Kandahari) dialect, this sound is straight away produced in the fashion of /sh/.
7. /غ/ /gh/
The location of /غ/ is almost the same as the /خ/, but it is more inclined towards the sound of /g/ while the latter tends towards /k/.
8. /ن/ /nr/
The sound of /ن/ is rather a mixture of retroflex /n/ and retroflex /r/. It never comes in the beginning of a word.

Two letters pronounced differently in major Pashto dialects:

There are three major Pashto dialects. The division is based on the pronunciation of two letters in Pashto alphabet.

Western (Kandahari)	Central (Kabul)	Eastern (Nangarhari/Peshawari)
ر (zhay / ghay) retroflex	g	g
ش (Šhin/xin/khin) retroflex	x	kh

Arabic Letters/ Sounds in Pashto

The following seven letters/sounds are Arabic and became part of Pashto when Pashtoons accepted Islam as their religion.

	Arabic	English	Examples
1.	/ح/	/h/	حكومت، محكمه، نكاح
2.	/ص/	/s/	صبر، بصر، رقص
3.	/ض/	/z/ /d/	ضرب، مضمّر، مرض
3.	/ط/	/t/	طلب، مطلب، خياط
4.	/ظ/	/z/	ظرف، مظلوم، طرظ
5.	/ع/	/a/	عرب، معلم، متاع
6.	/ف/	/f/	فراه، كفر، معاف
7.	/ق/	/k/ /q/	قفس، وقف، توافق