

Thinking about Spelling - What will you use?

consonants

Sound Description	Usual Spellings
Lip sounds	p & b p & b People usually choose either b or p for this sound, and use just the one letter every time. If you would prefer to use both, it is probably best to be consistent. For example, in some languages the sound at the end of a word sounds more like 'p'. So you could have a 'spelling rule' that says this sound is written p at the ends of words.
	m m
Tongue-tip sounds A	t & d t or d (or both) see explanation for b & p
	n n
	l l
	r r or rr Unfortunately, in many languages being revived, we cannot usually tell from the old sources what kind of 'r' is in a word. You may know some Elders who still use different sorts of 'r'. If not, you could just choose either r or rr and use it for every 'r'.
Tongue-tip sounds B	retroflex t & d rt or rd (or both) This letter-pair is often used because the retroflex sounds have a bit of an 'r' sound to them. Some communities use dots or lines above and below the letter for retroflex sounds. The problem with this is, they are difficult to type.
	retroflex n rn
	retroflex l rl
Tongue-middle sounds	teeth t or d dh This letter-pair is often used because the only sound in English with the tongue between the teeth is spelt with an h: th. Some communities use th for this sound. The problem with this is, it looks like the English sound in 'the' or 'think'.
	teeth n nh
	teeth l lh
	roof of mouth t or ty or dy (or both) tj or dj (or both) ch or j (or both) These spelling choices depend partly on whether you think this sound has a bit of a 'y' in it, or a bit of a 'j' in it. The sound has changed in many Aboriginal languages, and now people often say it like an English j (or ch). Any of these spelling choices will work well, so long as you are consistent.
	roof of mouth n ny or yn ny is often used because the sound has a bit of a 'y' in it. The problem with this is, it looks like the sound in English 'any'. So you will sometimes see it written at the ends of words the other way around: yn. Some people now say this sound as just 'n' followed by 'y'. Some linguists have used nj for this sound, because j is used for the 'y' sound in the linguists' phonetic script (and Spanish!). The problem with this is, it looks like it has English 'j' in it.
	roof of mouth l ly or yl
Tongue back sounds	k or g k or g (or both)
	ng ng Some communities use the linguistics letter ŋ for this sound. There are problems with this because it is hard to type (and most people don't know the letter). This is the soft sound in singer – the hard sound in hunger is usually spelt ngg or ngk.