

Notes on handwriting for IPA symbols (British English)

This brief manual will help you make your transcriptions more legible. It points out several common mistakes and gives examples of correct and incorrect letter shapes. Some of these guidelines are not mandatory (in such cases, the word “advisable” is used). IPA symbols that are not used in the system of transcription described here¹ are given in **bold red**.

⟨ɪ⟩: Small capital I

This symbol is distinct from the dotless ⟨i⟩. Make sure to put **serifs** on it (in SPbU tradition, the top serif can be omitted).

Correct: I I

Incorrect: i i

⟨l⟩: Lowercase L

This symbol can be confused with a number of others, such as uppercase ⟨I⟩, the digit ⟨1⟩ or the vertical bar ⟨|⟩ (which is used for delimiting intonation phrases in transcription). It is therefore advisable to put a small curl at the bottom of the letter: ⟨l⟩.

Correct: l

Incorrect: l

⟨ː⟩: Length mark (triangular colon)

In handwriting, this symbol is usually replaced by the regular colon ⟨:⟩.

Correct: iː iː

⟨'⟩: Stress mark (modifier letter vertical line)

Make sure the mark is strictly vertical and placed before the start of the stressed syllable.

¹ As seen in D. Jones's and J. Wells's dictionaries.

Correct: i:

Incorrect: ´i: `i:

⟨æ⟩: Lowercase letter ash (“лягушка”)

When writing this symbol, make sure both halves are tightly connected.

Correct: æ

Incorrect: æe

⟨ſ⟩: Lowercase letter esh

This symbol has both an [ascender](#) and a [descender](#). Make sure it is different from ⟨s⟩.

Correct: ſ

Incorrect: s ſ

⟨ɑ⟩: Latin lowercase alpha (“round” A, single-storey A)

This symbol is distinct from ⟨a⟩ (double-storey A).

Correct: ɑ

Incorrect: a

⟨ɒ⟩: Latin lowercase turned alpha

There are two ways to write this symbol. Make sure it is distinct from ⟨o⟩² and ⟨p⟩.

Correct: ɒ ɐ

Incorrect: o p

² IPA: close-mid back rounded vowel.

<ɔ>: Lowercase open O

Make sure not to confuse it with <ɕ>³ (lowercase C).

Correct: ɔ

Incorrect: c

<v>: Lowercase V

Make sure it has a sharp angle and is distinct from <ʋ>⁴, <ʊ> or <u>.

Correct: v

Incorrect: ʋ

<ʌ>: Lowercase turned V (“крышка”)

Make sure it has a sharp angle.

Correct: ʌ

Incorrect: ʎ

<θ>: Latin lowercase theta

There are two ways to write this symbol. Make sure it has an ascender. The horizontal bar should **not** look like a tilde (~) and it should connect to both sides. It should be distinct from <ə>⁵.

Correct: θ θ

Incorrect: ə Θ Θ

<ð>: Lowercase letter eth

Make sure the ascender is shaped correctly.

³ IPA: voiceless palatal plosive.

⁴ IPA: labiodental approximant.

⁵ IPA: close-mid central rounded vowel.

Correct: ђ

Incorrect: đ

⟨ѳ⟩: Latin lowercase upsilon (horseshoe, “кувшинчик”)

Make sure it has both serifs and is distinct from ⟨u⟩, ⟨v⟩ and ⟨ѳ⟩.

Correct: ѳ

Incorrect: v

⟨j⟩: Lowercase J

Do not turn the curl at the bottom into a loop: it should be distinct from

⟨j⟩⁶.

Correct: j

Incorrect: j

⟨з⟩: Lowercase reversed open E (reversed epsilon, “тройка”)

Make sure not to confuse it with ⟨ε⟩⁷. Unlike the digit ⟨3⟩, it does not have an ascender.

Correct: з

Incorrect: 3 ε

⟨ə⟩: Lowercase schwa (turned E)

Make sure not to confuse it with ⟨e⟩ or ⟨ə⟩⁸. It should **not** look like the digits 6 or 9. Make sure as well it is distinct from ⟨о⟩ (i.e. the loop is large enough).

⁶ IPA: voiced palatal fricative.

⁷ IPA: open-mid front unrounded vowel.

⁸ IPA: close-mid central unrounded vowel.

Correct: ə

Incorrect: e ɐ ɛ

<r>: Lowercase R

It is not advisable to use the cursive variant <ɹ>.

Correct: r

Incorrect: ɹ

<ʒ>: Lowercase letter ezh

Make sure to keep the angle at the top sharp and to extend the descender below the baseline. It should be distinct from <ʒ>.

Correct: ʒ

Incorrect: ʒ ʒ

<a>: Lowercase A (double-story A)

Make sure it is distinct from <ə> and <d>. If you find yourself unable to produce the shape consistently, it is better to use <a> in /aɪ/ and /aʊ/.

Correct: a

Incorrect: ə d

<ɲ>: Lowercase letter eng (“слоник”)

Make sure the descender is long enough and has a leftward curl. It should be distinct from <ɲ>⁹, <ɲ>¹⁰, <ɲ>¹¹ and <ɲ>¹².

⁹ IPA: palatal nasal stop.

¹⁰ IPA: retroflex nasal stop.

¹¹ This symbol is not part of the IPA; the Greek letter eta also looks similar to this.

¹² Obsolete IPA: palatalized alveolar nasal stop (replaced by <ɲ>).

Correct: ɳ

Incorrect: ɳ ɳ ɳ ɳ

⟨w⟩: Lowercase W

It is advisable to make the angles sharp in order for it to be distinct from
⟨ω⟩¹³.

Correct: w w

Incorrect: ω

¹³ This symbol is the Greek letter omega and is not part of the IPA.