

Méníshè (Mothertongue) Pronunciation Guide

Below is the romanization (or spelling) system we'll use to write our new language, Méníshè. Each letter or letter sequence below will always have the same pronunciation, so there will be no surprises or irregular spellings you'll have to deal with: Each word will always be pronounced exactly as it looks.

- *A, a*: Pronounced like the "a" in "father".
- *Aa, aa*: Pronounced like the "a" in "father", but held for slightly longer.
- *B, b*: Pronounced like the "b" in "bad".
- *Ch, ch*: Pronounced like the "ch" in "charge".
- *Ch', ch'*: There's no English equivalent to this sound. This is an *ejective* consonant. In the case of *ch'*, it's pronounced just like *ch*, but with one's breath held. The result is a little "popping" sound that immediately follows the production of the *ch*. You can think of it as a *ch* that's followed by a glottal ' sound. Producing those two sounds in short succession will result in a sound very close to *ch'*. Continue to practice and you should be able to get it.
- *D, d*: Pronounced like the "d" in "diet".
- *E, e*: Pronounced like the "e" in "get".
- *Ee, ee*: Pronounced like the "e" in "get", but held for slightly longer.
- *F, f*: Pronounced like the "f" in "fog".
- *G, g*: Pronounced like the "g" in "goat" (never like the "g" in "genius").
- *Gh, gh*: Pronounced like the "r" in French "rouge" (never like the "gh" in "ghost").
- *I, i*: Pronounced like the "i" in "machine".
- *Ii, ii*: Pronounced like the "i" in "machine", but held for slightly longer.
- *J, j*: Pronounced like the "j" in "jam".

- **K, k**: Pronounced like the "k" in "kite".
- **Kh, kh**: Pronounced like the "ch" in the German pronunciation of "Buch". In English, this sound is commonly used with onomatopoeic words associated with disgust, like "blech!" or "ich!" To pronounce it correctly, put your tongue in position to pronounce a *k*, but release it slowly; allow the air to pass through the constricted space. The result should be a sound like white noise.
- **K', k'**: There's no English equivalent to this sound. This is an *ejective* consonant. In the case of *k'*, it's pronounced just like *k*, but with one's breath held. The result is a little "popping" sound that immediately follows the production of the *k*. You can think of it as a *k* that's followed by a glottal ' sound. Producing those two sounds in short succession will result in a sound very close to *k'*. Continue to practice and you should be able to get it.
- **L, l**: Pronounced like the "l" in "love".
- **M, m**: Pronounced like the "m" in "matter".
- **N, n**: Pronounced like the "n" in "never".
- **Ng, ng**: Pronounced like the "ng" in "finger".
- **O, o**: Pronounced like the "o" in "tote".
- **O, o**: Pronounced like the "o" in "tote", but held for slightly longer.
- **P, p**: Pronounced like the "p" in "pike".
- **R, r**: Pronounced like the "r" in Spanish "pero". Nearly identical to the "r" or "d" sound in English "matador" (pronounced quickly). At the beginning or end of a word, pronounced like *rr*, for which see below.
- **Rr, rr**: Pronounced like the "rr" in Spanish "pero". It's a nice trilled "r", so be sure to get the trill in there.
- **S, s**: Pronounced like the "s" in "sad".
- **Sh, sh**: Pronounced like the "sh" in "shade".

- **T, t**: Pronounced like the "t" in "take".
- **T', t'**: There's no English equivalent to this sound. This is an *ejective* consonant. In the case of **t'**, it's pronounced just like **t**, but with one's breath held. The result is a little "popping" sound that immediately follows the production of the **t**. You can think of it as a **t** that's followed by a glottal ' sound. Producing those two sounds in short succession will result in a sound very close to **t'**. Continue to practice and you should be able to get it.
- **U, u**: Pronounced like the "u" in "ruminate".
- **Uu, uu**: Pronounced like the "u" in "ruminate", but held for slightly longer.
- **V, v**: Pronounced like the "v" in "van".
- **W, w**: Pronounced like the "w" in "walk".
- **Y, y**: Pronounced like the "y" in "yet".
- **Z, z**: Pronounced like the "z" n "zebra".
- **Zh, zh**: Pronounced like the "z" n "azure".
- **ʔ**: This is referred to as a glottal stop, and is pronounced just like the catch in one's throat that occurs in between the "uh" and "oh" in English "uh_oh". This isn't a difficult sound to produce; it just requires a bit of practice to insert it into words. It will occur naturally in a string of vowels pronounced separately in English (e.g. if one were to say "A A A A A A A" [saying the actual name of the letter each time] over and over, a glottal stop will naturally occur before each instance of the vowel). If one simply stops pronouncing a word mid-vowel and starts again, it will naturally occur. (Note: It is important to remember that this apostrophe is ***not*** a stray mark, and ***not*** simply there for decoration. The apostrophe stands for a consonant which has the same status as **g** or **k** or any other consonant.)
- **Double Consonants**: Doubled consonants, or geminates, occur frequently in Ménìshè. To pronounce a doubled consonant, simply pronounce it twice. You might think of it as lingering over the consonant. Think of the "s" sound you pronounce in "Miss Sally". It's a longer "s" than if you pronounce the similar phrase "Miss Ally". The same goes for the doubled consonants of Ménìshè. One important note about the romanization: If a digraph (e.g. **kh**, **gh**, etc.) is *doubled*,

only the first letter will be doubled (hence, *kkh* not *khkh*). The consonant is pronounced like a doubled consonant, though, as actual combinations such as *k* followed by *kh* are impossible.

- **Tones:** Méníshè is a level tone language, which means that each syllable is pronounced with a unique pitch. There are three tones that are marked as follows: *á* is a high tone that has a high pitch; *à* is a low tone that has a low pitch; and *a* (with no mark) is a neutral tone that kind of just flows into whatever the next tone is. Listen carefully to the recording and copy the intonational pattern you hear to get the tone right. In the Final Draft document, the tone level will be approximated with capital and lower case letters applied to syllables in the PHONETIC line. For example, the name of the language, Méníshè, would look like this if it were used in a script: **ME-NI-she**.