

Na'vi phonology is different from English and has a few restrictions. This guide breaks down the differences and offers solutions for transliterating words into Na'vi (which is especially useful for names and loan words)

Vowels

Na'vi is a phonetic language: the letters are always pronounced the same way. In English, an "A" for example can have multiple pronunciations (such as in the word "Avatar"), or a sound typically associated with an "A" can be spelled differently (i.e. "famous" makes the same sound as "hey" despite using none of the same letters).

When transliterating vowel sounds, ignore the vowel used in the original word. Your goal is to match the **SOUND** to the corresponding Na'vi letter.

Na'vi Vowel	Sounds like...*
A, a	f <u>a</u> ther, <u>o</u> n, <u>o</u> ffice, c <u>a</u> r, h <u>o</u> t,
Ä, ä	c <u>a</u> t, h <u>a</u> d, c <u>a</u> mera, s <u>a</u> d,
E, e	s <u>a</u> id, m <u>e</u> t, b <u>e</u> d, <u>e</u> nd, l <u>e</u> nd, fri <u>e</u> nd
I, i	n <u>ee</u> d, m <u>ee</u> t, mach <u>i</u> ne, b <u>ea</u> d, sh <u>ee</u> t
Ì, ì	m <u>i</u> nt, h <u>i</u> d, l <u>i</u> ttle, th <u>i</u> n
O, o	<u>o</u> pen, kn <u>o</u> w, th <u>o</u> ugh, l <u>o</u> ad
U, u	f <u>oo</u> d, gl <u>ue</u> , b <u>oo</u> t, r <u>u</u> ne, fl <u>u</u> te
AW, aw	h <u>ow</u> , n <u>ou</u> n, r <u>ou</u> nd, <u>ou</u> t
AY, ay	h <u>i</u> de, fl <u>y</u> , g <u>uy</u> , <u>i</u> ce, t <u>i</u> re,
EW, ew	(does not appear in English, combine E and U).
EY, ey	p <u>a</u> y, h <u>ey</u> , f <u>a</u> mous, <u>a</u> im

*: consult an audio reference to be certain, as these examples may be different depending on your English accent or dialect

Missing Consonants

Na'vi does not have a handful of sounds that English has. Here are some common alternatives!

English Letter	English Example	Na'vi uses...	Na'vi Example
B	Toby	P, V	Topi / Tovi
C	Cameron	K, sometimes Kx	Kämìran
D	David	T, sometimes Tx	Teyvìt
G	Gabby	K	Käpi
J	Jake	Tsy-	Tsyeyk

Q	Quincy	Kìw-	Kìwìnsì
X	Xavier	Z, Ekz-	Zeyvia, Ekzeyvia

Common Clusters

These clusters of sounds are common in English, but don't exist in Na'vi. As with all the previous examples, we're looking to emulate the sounds as closely as possible.

English Sound	English Example	Na'vi uses...	Na'vi Example
Ch-	<u>Ch</u> arlie	Tsy-	Tsyarli
Cl-, Sl-,	<u>Cl</u> aus	Kìl-	Kìlawsi
Cr-, Gr-, Kr-	<u>Gr</u> ace	Kìr-	Kìreysi
Sh-	<u>Sh</u> aron	Tsy-	Tsyeran
Th-	<u>Th</u> ey	S-, Sy-, Tsy-,	Käsi, Käsyi, Kätsyi
Tr-	Trey	Tìr-	Tìrey

Illegal Endings

There are certain sounds that Na'vi syllables can't end on. In most situations, Na'vi will add the sound ì to make the sound into a new syllable. ì is Na'vi's go-to "dummy" sound. Here's just a handful of examples.

English Sound	English Example	Na'vi uses...	Na'vi Example
-Ch, -Sh	Hut <u>ch</u>	Tsyì	Hatsyì
-F	Gandol <u>f</u>	Fì	Käntalfì
-H	Noah <u>h</u>	(usually dropped)	Noa
-S, -Ce,	Grac <u>e</u>	Sì	Kìreysi
-Th	Earth	Ta	'rrta
-Z, -Ze	Hays, Haze	Zì	Heyzì

Stylistic Choices

There's multiple ways to go about transliterating words, and here are some common options.

English Sound	English Example	Na'vi uses...	Na'vi Example
-er	Hun <u>t</u> er	rr, ìr, a(r)	Hantrr, Hantir, Hanta(r)
"Uh" - U	Hun <u>u</u> ter	A, U	Hanta, Hunta

Ck, K	Mack	K, Kx	Mäk, MäKx
-Le	Lyle	il, LL	Layil, Layll
hard P	Kipp	P, Px	Kip, Kipx

Other "Gotcha"s

A grab-bag of relevant Phonology rules.

- RR and LL must have a consonant before them. They also end their syllable.
 - If they begin a syllable, usually ' is used as the consonant (Earth → 'rrta)
- Every syllable must have a vowel, and only one vowel. "ao" is two syllables (a-o). Consider "aw" instead.

Flowchart

When in doubt, follow this flowchart when constructing a Na'vi syllable.

