

## Pronunciation Guidelines

What follows are the 'basic' rules – there are some further very minor rules and exceptions that are not detailed here.

### STRESS

1. Words of one syllable are stressed – DEN, RI, DROG

2. Except for:

the definite article – an

possessives – ow, dha, y, hy, aga (also two-syllabled agas and agan are unstressed)

verb particles – a, ny(ns), na(g), y(th), re

conjunctions – ha, po, mar, may(th), kyn(th), pan, dell, etc.

prepositions – rag, war, bys, dhe, yn, etc.

3. And the suffixed pronouns are mostly stressed, but sometimes not:

vy, jy/sy/ta, ev, hi, ni, hwi, i

(note that when ev, hi, hi, hwi and i are subject pronouns they are always stressed)

4. Words of more than one syllable are stressed on the syllable before the last one:

BENyn, benYNes, baramANynn, baramanYNNow

5. Except for a handful of words that are stressed on the last syllable, the most common of which are:

agES, avEL, poKEN, ythO, byttegYNS, dohaJYDH, myghtERN, nammnyGEN, seulaBRYS, sowETH, ymA, ynWEDH.

Plus verbs that end in '-he' – berrHE, omlowenHE, klerHE.

### VOWEL LENGTH

Vowels have three possible lengths – long, half-long, and short. The important distinction to make is between short vowels and either long or half-long vowels. For the latter two aim for a long vowel – the half-long vowels will on the whole just happen 'naturally'.

In the examples long vowels are shown by following them with a colon and half-long vowels are shown by following them with a semi-colon

1. In unstressed syllables vowels are always short:

an, dha, nyns, rag

BE;Nyn, benY;Nes, baramA;Nynn, dalle;THor, omlowenHE:

2. In stressed syllables vowels are short IF they come before double consonants (like 'nn', 'mm', 'tt') or consonant groups (like 'dr', 'gl', 'tr') except 'sk', 'sp' and 'st'.

Note that 'ch', 'dh', 'gh', 'th', 'sh' (when it sounds like 'sh' in English 'ship') are written with two letters but represent a single sound and are not consonant groups.

So:

KAMM, HENNa, baramanYNNow, NANS, LADRon, SETTYa, DROGLamm,  
drogLAMMow, EBRon, KANN

3. In stressed syllables vowels are long in words of one syllable or in the final syllable of a word, if they come before a single consonant sound (including 'ch', 'dh', 'gh', 'th', 'sh') or 'sk', 'sp' and 'st':

KA:N, TO:N, DE:N, TRE:, STE:N, berrHE:, despl:T

and

LE:SK, KO:SK, KO:ST, KROU:ST

4. In stressed syllables vowels are half-long in words of more than one syllable if they come before a single consonant sound (including 'ch', 'dh', 'gh', 'th', 'sh') or 'sk', 'sp' and 'st':

KA;Na, lowE;Na, POE;Nya, U;Vel

and

A;SKus, aDHY;SKans, A;Sper, KRY;Spows

## VOWEL SOUNDS

1. Most vowels have the same sound quality whether they are long, half-long or short. It is only the duration of the vowel sound that changes. However, for English speakers there is a tendency (that must be avoided) to turn long vowel sounds into diphthongs. So Cornish 'den' is made to sound like English 'Dane' when it should sound like English 'den', but with an 'e' of longer duration.

2. These vowels have a sound quality that is the same whether they are short, half-long or long:

e – when short, like the English 'e' in 'bet', extended for long and half-long

a – when short, like the English 'a' in 'bat', extended for long and half-long

o – when long, like the English 'ough' in 'bought', shortened for half-long and short

ou – when long, like the English 'oo' in 'boot', shortened for half-long and short

u – when short like the French 'u' in 'tu', extended for long and half-long

3. Four vowels have some slight peculiarities:

i – in stressed syllables, when long, like English 'ee' in 'beet', shortened for half-long and short.

y – in stressed syllables, when short, like English 'i' in 'bit', extended for long and half-long.

In unstressed open syllables (ones ending with a vowel) both 'i' and 'y' sound like 'ee' in English 'beet' and in unstressed closed syllables (ones ending in a consonant) both sound like 'i' in English 'bit'. So 'gwelys' and 'gwelis' are pronounced the same, as if they both contained 'y'.

oe – when long and half-long, like French 'eau'. When short like 'u' in English 'but' with the mouth not so open

eu – long and half-long, like French 'eu' in 'peur'. Has no short variant.

## DIPHTHONGS

1. There are nine. The two vowels that make up each diphthong are both short and their length does not change:

ey – like 'ey' in English 'grey'

ay – like 'ie' in English 'die'

oy – like 'oy' in English 'boy'

iw – like 'ew' in English 'few' but with a closer first element. Like the English abbreviation 'E.U.' but without the 'y' sound between the two letters.

yw – like 'ew' in English 'few'

ew – like 'e' in English 'bet' followed quickly by 'oo' in English 'boot'

aw – like 'ow' in English 'cow'

ow – similar to English 'ow' in 'blow', but with the mouth more closed

uw – like French 'u' in 'tu', followed quickly by English 'oo' in 'boot'

## CONSONANTS

1. Most of these are just as in English. Care needs to be taken, however, with:

dh / th – 'dh' like English 'th' in 'this', 'th' like English 'th' in 'think'.

gh – like the 'ch' in Scottish 'loch' everywhere except when it comes before a stressed vowel or after a stressed 'i', 'y', or 'u' when it has a voiced 'h' sound.

s – this is mostly like English 's', except between vowels when it is like English 'z'.

Unstressed at the end of a word it is usually 'z' ('gweles') but can be 's' ('genes') and sometimes it can be either – 'z' in 'kas' meaning 'battle' but 's' in 'kas' meaning 'hatred'. A dictionary needs to be consulted to determine whether 'z' or 's' is required.

r – must always be sounded, whether in the English fashion or as more of a flap or very short trill.

2. Double consonants are not pronounced 'doubled' (longer) in unstressed syllables.

The double consonants 'll', 'mm', 'nn', 'rr' are pronounced doubled in stressed syllables between vowels and at the end of a word.

The double consonants 'ff', 'ggh' (double 'gh'), 'kk', 'pp', 'tt', 'tth' (double 'th'), and 'ss' are pronounced double in stressed syllables between vowels but not elsewhere.

3. The 'voiced' consonants (but not their doubled versions) 'b', 'd', 'dh', 'g', 'j', 'v' are 'devoiced' to sound like 'p', 't', 'th', 'k', 'ch', 'f' when they occur at the end of a sentence or utterance. There are other similar sound changes (see Wella Brown's grammar, paragraphs 18-20 but these will mostly happen 'naturally').

## CONNECTED SPEECH

1. Words should be run together into a single stream! They should not be separated by little pauses. So 'dydhda', 'fatlagenes', 'pandravynntadheva'.

2. Alongside the above rules for individual words, stress is still a means of emphasis in a sentence or utterance. So in 'gorthugher da' there is extra stress on 'da' because a **'good evening'** is being wished rather than a 'good **evening'**.

## Exercise

1. Underline the stressed syllables (in Cornish a syllable usually ends with a consonant or consonant cluster).
2. Mark the long/half-long vowels by placing a <sup>v</sup> over them, leaving short vowels unmarked.

Peder: Gorthugher da! Fatla genes?

Jenefer: Gorthugher da! Yn poynt da, meur ras. Ha ty?

Peder: Da lowr. Pyth yw dha hanow?

Jenefer: Jenefer yw ow hanow. Ha piw os?

Peder: Peder ov. Ottomma ow hwoer.

Jenefer: Pyth yw hy hanow hi?

Peder: Morwenna yw hy hanow.

Jenefer: Hag ottomma ow broder.

Peder: Pyth yw y hanow ev?

Jenefer: Wella yw y hanow.

Wella: Dydh da!

Peder: Medhow yw ev!

Jenefer: Gwir yw. Medhow yw ev, ha medhow yw dha hwoer Morwenna ynwedh!

Peder: Nyns yw gwir! Nyns yw hi medhow. Pur vedhow yw hi! Drog yw genev.

Dha weles!

Jenefer: Duw genes!

3. Check your answer against this suggested solution (which may or may not be accurate!):

Peder:           v       v       v  
Gorthugher da! Fatla genes?

Jenefer:       v       v               v   v   v       v  
Gorthugher da! Yn poynt da, meur ras. Ha ty?

Peder:       v       v               v  
Da lowr. Pyth yw dha hanow?

Jenefer:       v               v               v  
Jenefer yw ow hanow. Ha piw os?

Peder:       v   v                       v  
Peder ov. Ottomma ow hwoer.

Jenefer:       v               v       v  
Pyth yw hy hanow hi?

Peder:                               v  
Morwenna yw hy hanow.

Jenefer:                               v  
Hag ottomma ow broder.

Peder:       v               v       v  
Pyth yw y hanow ev?

Jenefer:                               v  
Wella yw y hanow.

Wella:       v   v  
Dydh da!

Peder:       v               v  
Medhow yw ev!

Jenefer:       v       v               v       v                       v                       v  
Gwir yw. Medhow yw ev, ha medhow yw dha hwoer Morwenna ynwedh!

Peder:                       v               v   v               v   v               v   v       v  
Nyns yw gwir! Nyns yw hi medhow. Pur vedhow yw hi! Drog yw genev.

                     v  
Dha weles!

Jenefer:                       v  
Duw genes!

4. Listen to the audio (courtesy Dan Prohaska). The notes explain what to listen for in particular:

**ha ty** – the short 'a' in 'ha' and the long 'y' in 'ty', which is not the 'i' vowel.

**da lowr** – the long 'a' in 'da', the diphthong 'ow' which is not like 'ow' in English 'cow', and the clear 'r' following it.

**pyth** – the long 'y'

**dha** – the short 'a' and voiced 'dh', not 'th'

**hanow** – the long 'a' and diphthong 'ow'

**pyth yw dha hanow** – the diphthong 'yw', which is not like English 'you', and the running together of the words into a stream without pauses

**ha piw os** – the diphthong 'iw', which is clearly not the same as 'yw', the long 'o', and the 's' which is voiced to sound as a 'z'

**peder** – the long 'e'

**ov** – the long 'o' and the clear voicing of 'v'

**pyth yw hy hanow hi** – the long 'y' in 'pyth, the long 'a' in 'hanow' and the extra stress on 'hi' rather than 'hy', as the possessive pronouns are never stressed

**ottomma ow broder** – the short 'o' and single 't' sound in the unstressed first syllable, the short 'o' but double 'm' in the second syllable of 'ottomma', the difference between the 'ow' and the 'o' in 'broder'

**pyth yw y hanow ev** – as for 'pyth yw hy hanow hi', and note the running together of words

**wella yw y hanow** – the double 'l' sound

**dydh, pyth, dydh** – the long 'y' in both words and the contrast between 'dh' and 'th'

**medhow yw ev** – the long 'e' in 'medhow' and in 'ev', the running together of 'yw' and 'ev' to give 'ywev', but note this speaker does not 'devoice' the 'v' of 'ev' to 'ef'

**gwir yw** – the long 'i', and the clearly pronounced 'r' (avoiding something that sounds more like 'gwi-a yw' as it would in standard English), which is joined to the 'yw'

**medhow, medhow yw ev** – as above

**ha medhow yw dha hwoer** – the long vowel 'oe', the running together of the words

**ynwedh** – the irregular stress ynWEDH

**medhow yw ev ha medhow yw dha hwoer morwenna ynwedh** – as above

**nyns yw gwir nyns yw hi medhow** – the short 'y' vowel before two consonants in 'nyns', the long 'i' in 'hi' (could possibly be a little longer?)

**pur vedhow** – the long 'u' in 'pur' (should be longer and more 'French tu')

**drog yw genev** – the long 'o' in 'drog', the long (first) 'e' in 'genev' and the devoicing of 'v' to 'f' at the end of 'genev'

**dha weles, duw genes** – the (first) long 'e' in 'weles' and 'genes', the 'uw' sound, the devoicing of 's' to 'z' in both 'weles' and 'genes'

**du** )

**duw** )

**diw** ) Listen to the difference in the sounds of the vowels and the

**dyw** ) diphthongs in this list. The 'o' in 'do' sounds a little like 'oor'

**dew** ) in English 'door', however, and should perhaps be more like

**dou** ) 'ough' in English 'bought'.

**doe** )

**do** )

5. Practice reading the marked text, taking account of stress and vowel length.