



The Hoocak Language



Introduction to the Hoocak Alphabet

Throughout history the Hoocak language has been an oral or spoken language. In 1994 the Ho-Chunk Nation adopted the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as the formal universally applied writing system of the Hoocak Language through Resolution 7/13/94-A. This resolution states the IPA as the official written form to be used by the Ho-Chunk Nation. The IPA was adopted because the letters, combined with the diacritical marks produce the sounds of the Hoocak language.

The Hoocak alphabet does not include the English letters **d, f, l, q, and v**. The alphabet adds 20 more letters **aa al abl ee g` ii i\ i\ k; p; s; s` s; t; uu ul ul\ x; z`and ;** which is called *hiyusà jikere* and is considered a letter in the Hoocak alphabet.

Here are some pronunciation rules for the Hoocak alphabet:

- * The 11 consonant letters that stand for the same sounds as in English are: **b g h j k m n p s y z**
- * There are 7 letters that do not correspond to the English letters, they are: **c g`r s` t x z`**
 - c** sounds like the **ch** in the English word **church**
 - g`** has no English equivalent. A voiceless sound of friction is created by raising the back of the tongue up toward the back of the roof of the mouth as the airstream forced through the point.
 - r** has no English equivalent. A sound described as a rolling "rr" sound, it is a "rld" sound.
 - s`** sounds like the **sh** in the English word **show**
 - t** sounds like the letter **d** in English.
 - x** has no English equivalent. A sound described as clearing your throat, similar to the German word **achtung**
 - z`** sounds like **zh** in the English word **seizure**
- * The letter marked as **;** (*hiyusà jikere*) is a glottal stop. A special mark is a sudden pause like in the English **ah ; oh**
- * Vowels that are written with a **siḅ** (hook or tail) under the vowel indicated the vowel will have a nasal sound or pronounced through the nose. When these vowels are nasalized they carry different meanings to the word than the same vowels that are not nasalized.
- * Consonant letters with a **caron (`)** above the letter indicated the consonant will add the **h** sound to the letter's sound.
- * Since letters with diacritical marks carry independent meaning the nasal siḅ or caron should never be left off.
- * When typing Hoocak use the New Hoocak or Pan-Siouan font. You can also use a unicode font with symbols inserted for the unique diacritical marks.
- * When a vowel is written double (**aa** or **ii**) it indicated the vowel is elongated or drawn out.

These sounds are difficult for a new learner to pronounce. Listen to the examples and your instructor closely. You will have to practice the alphabet sounds often until you start pronouncing them correctly.