

Te Reo Māori Pronunciation Tip Sheet



There are 15 distinct sounds within the Māori alphabet. They are:

- five vowels: a, e, i, o, u
- eight consonants: h, k, m, n, p, r, t, w
- two digraphs (two letters that combine to form one sound): wh, ng

Vowels

While there are only five vowels, combinations of vowels (diphthongs) are common.

A vowel can also have a long or short sound. A long sound is usually denoted by a macron (a bar appearing over a vowel to indicate it is lengthened during pronunciation e.g. 'ā' as in wāhi).

Vowels are pronounced as follows:

Vowel		Short	Long
A	as in	aloud	car
E	as in	entry	led
I	as in	eat	peep
O	as in	awful	pork
U	as in	to	loot

Consonants

Consonants are pronounced as they are in English, with two key exceptions:

- T** The sound depends on which vowel appears after it. When followed by an 'a', 'e' or 'o', it's pronounced with as little sibilant (s) sound as possible. When followed by an 'i' or 'u', it includes a slight sibilant sound, however not nearly as much as an English 't'.
- R** Pronounced as a soft 'rolled' r.

Digraphs

The 'ng' digraph is pronounced as it sounds in the English word 'singer'.

The 'wh' digraph originally sounded like the 'wh' in 'whisper', but in most dialects has evolved to be more like the English 'f' sound.

*For further information about reo Māori pronunciation visit:
www.koreromaori.co.nz*

