

I - ALPHABET

The Maltese Alphabet consists of 29 letters, i. e. 5 vowels (a, e, i, o, u); 2 semi-consonants (j, w); and 22 consonants (the rest).

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Example</i>
a	A	Alla (God)	Dar (house)	Mara (woman)
b	Be	Barri (Ox)	Abjad (white)	Ktieb (book)
ċ	Ċe	Ċarruta (rag)	Ċafċaf (splash)	Wiċċ (face)
d	De	Dnub (sin)	Midfun (buried)	Id (hand)
e	E	Elf (thousand)	Rebħa (victory)	Le (no)
f	Fe	Fqir (poor)	Tifel (boy)	Tarf (end)
ġ	Ġe	Ġobon (cheese)	Tiġieġ (hens)	Taraġ (stairs)
g	Ge	Giddieb (liar)	Niggeż (prick)	Legleg (drink)
għ	Għajn	Għorfa (cottage)	Bagħal (mule)	Bejgħ (sale)
h	Akka	Hena (happiness)	Deheb (gold)	Ibleh (fool)
ħ	He	Helu (sweets)	Taħt (below)	Ruħ (soul)
i	I	Isfar (yellow)	Tin (figs)	Idi (my hand)
j	Je	Jum (day)	Tajjeb (good)	Haj (living)
k	Ke	Kelb (dog)	Tikteb (write)	Ismek (your name)
l	Il	Laham (meat)	Telgħa (ascend)	Artal (altar)
m	Im	Mera (mirror)	Tama (hope)	Omm (mother)
n	In	Nemla (ant)	Dinja (world)	Din (religion)
o	O	Ogħla (higher)	Hobż (bread)	Ġo (inside)
p	Pe	Plajja (shore)	Ċpar (mist)	Tapp (cork)
q	Qe	Qattus (cat)	Tieqa (window)	Għerq (tendon)
r	Ir	Raħal (village)	Marid (sick)	Bir (well)
s	Se	Salib (cross)	Muħmar (nail)	Ras (head)
t	Te	Toqba (hole)	Pitazz (copy-book)	Art (land)
u	U	Ugħiħ (suffering)	Hut (fish)	Dudu (worm)
v	Ve	Vistu (mourning)	Iva (yes)	Vwajjev (little child)
w	We	Wied (valley)	Tewba (penitence)	Sew (correct)
x	Xe	Xemx (sun)	Kaxxa (box)	Raxx (aspersion)
z	Ze	Zalzett (sausage)	Tazza (glass)	Mazz (bundle)
ż	Że	Żaqq (belly)	Żurżieqa (declivity)	Hobż (bread)

II - SIGNS

Signs in Maltese Orthography are used :

- (A) To give sounds to vowels (Accent)
- (B) To show where a letter is missing (Apostrophe)
- (C) To join words (Hyphen)
- (D) To separate phrases and give to same expression (Full-stop, comma, semi-colon, etc.)

A - ACCENT: There are three: 1. Short-acute (´); 2. Short-grave (`); 3. Long-circumflex (^).

Rule 1. - Accents are not marked in writing and are here inserted only for the convenience of the student.

Example - *Féhem*, he understood; *gèwnak*, wing; *súf*, wool.

R. 2. - Accents always fall on a vowel.

Ex. - *Twíl*, tall; *fjár*, flower.

R. 3 - No words can have more than one accent.

Ex. - *Ghàda*, to-morrow; *ghàdda*, he passed; *ghàda*, usage.

R. 4 - The sound *ie* (a long *a*) has always a long accent. If therefore a long syllable is added to a word or if the syllable becomes long, the accent moves forward.

Ex. - *Missier*, father; *missirijiet*, fathers.

R. 5 - After a short-acute accent there should be only one consonant.

Ex. - *Méra*, mirror; *rigel*, leg.

R. 6 - After a short-grave accent there should be two consonants.

Ex. - *Batejt*, I suffered; *sibt*, I found.

R. 7 - After a long accent there should be one consonant or nothing.

Ex. - *Dnàb*, sin; *ħa*, he took.

R. 8 - The accent does not occur earlier than the penultimate syllable.

Ex. - *Ċaqlembùta*, see-saw; *ħissirniħomlu*, we broke them for him.

R. 9 - The accent, therefore, moves forward if the prolongation of a word would otherwise leave the accent further back than the penultimate.

Ex. - *Qtilna*, we killed; *qtilniħom*, we killed them.

R. 10 - Loaned words are generally adapted to the genius of the language by omitting the short vowel of the penultimate syllable or by moving the accent.

- Ex. -- Canònicu - from Sicilian (Canon) becomes *Kanònku*.
Caràmbola - from Italian - (Cannon - In Billiards game)
becomes *karambòla*.

B - APOSTROPHE :

- R. 11 - The apostrophe denotes the omission of a letter.
Ex. - *F'rasu*, in his head, for *fi rasu*. *X'ghandu*, what is
the matter with him, for *xi ghandu*. *Rafa'*, he raised,
for *rafagh*. *'Il fuq*, above, for *lil fuq*.

- R. 12 - Here it is important to note that there is only one article
in the Maltese Language (L) used for both genders and
also for both numbers.

- Ex. - *Il-kebb*, the dog. *Il-mara*, the woman. *Il-qtates*, the
cats. *Il-baqar*, the cows. *L-eghdewwa*, the enemy.
L-armla, the widow.

In the first four examples the *i* (*l*) is prosthetic and is
added for euphony's sake ; therefore is not required
before vowels or letters commencing with an *h* or *gh*.
E. g. *L-ghamla*, the form. *L-hena*, the happiness.
L-omm, the mother.

From this follows that the apostrophe should never be
shown between the article and the noun, but always
the hyphen.

C - HYPHEN :

- R. 13 - The Hyphen is used to join words which are so closely
united in sense and pronounciation as to constitute a unity.

- Ex. - *Il-ghamla*, the form. *Ix-xatt*, the shore. *L-eghdewwa*,
the enemy. *Baxx-baxx*, secretly. *Hmistax-il sena*,
fifteen years.

D - OTHER SIGNS : Comma, full-stop, etc.

Are those in general use in European languages.

III - SOUNDS

- R. 14 - The five vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, have two sounds :
(a) Long and (b) Short, and are all pronounced as in Italian.

- Ex. - Long sound : *Dâr*, house. *Ċêna*, supper. *Hin*, time.
Kôk, cook. *Sûr*, bastion. Short sound : *Habib*, friend.
Feles, wedge. *Bidla*, change. *Hobb*, breast. *Kull*, every.

R. 15 - The semi-consonants *j* and *w* have always the same sound wherever they are passed.

The *j* has the consonantal value of the English *y* ; and the *w* that of the English *w*.

Ex. - *Jum*, day. *Tajjeb*, good. *Ġej*, coming. *Wara*, behind. *Sewwa*, truth. *Sew*, correct.

R. 16 - Consonants have normally the same sound if are preceded or followed by a vowel.

Ex. - *Gajdra*, oyster. *Gendus*, bull. *Gidba*, lie. *Godli*, fleshy. *Gumna*, cable.

N. B. In English the same letter may have different sounds e.g. *Gate* and *General*.

As also in Italian e. g. *Gallo* and *Genuino*.

Following is a list of all consonants and their respective sounds as compared with the same letter in English :

R. 17 - The consonants *b*, *d*, *f*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *t*, and *v*, have the same value as their corresponding characters in English.

Ex. - *Barra*, outside, as in *blow*. *Dawl*, light, as in *door*. *Far*, rat, as in *full*. *Lejl*, night, as in *long*. *Mera*, mirror, as in *mirror*. *Nar*, fire, as in *night*. *Plajja*, shore, as in *puppet*. *Ras*, head, as in *rival*. *Salib*, cross, as in *sun*. *Toqba*, hole, as in *time*. *Vistu*, mourning, as in *velvet*.

R. 18 - The sound of the remaining consonants are not represented in English with *one* consonant.

Ex. - *Ġajta*, joke, as in *church*. *Ġenna*, paradise, as in *general*; *Gajdra*, oyster, as in *gate*. *Ġhajjur*, jealous, as in *borrough*. *Hena*, joy, as in *hour*. *Halliel*, thief, as in *horse*. *Kelb*, dog, as in *kettle*. *Qalb*, heart. No equivalent. Is a strong guttural "k".

Xemx, sun, as in *shine*. *Zokk*, trunk, as in *hats*. *Żejt*, oil, as in *zebra*, or *muzzle*.

N.B. Note this exception : The aspirated "h" sounds as "ħ" in these three words.

Hejja, he prepared. *Hieni*, happy. *Jixxielhu*, they resemble each other.

IV - COGNATE CONSONANTS

Consonants have one sign for each sound, and only one sound is represented by each sign except where assimilation occurs. Consonants are therefore to be classified into : *A - Sonants. B - Surds. C - The rest.*

A - Sonants : *b, v, d, ž, ġ..... g, ġħ, h.*

B - Surds : *p, f, t, s, ċ or x, k, h.....*

C - The rest : *l, m, n, q, r, z.*

R. 19 - Sonants when final or followed by a surd, by an *ħ* or by a *q* take on the sound of the surds which correspond to them.

Ex. - *Bieb*, door, sounds *biep*. *Btieħi*, yards, sounds *ptieħi*. *Ĉerv*, deer, sounds *Ĉerf*. *Hadid*, iron, sounds *Hadit*. *Dħalt*, I entered, sounds *tħalt*. *Qbiž*, jumping, sounds *qbis*. *Žfin*, dancing, sounds *sfīn*. *Tieġ*, marriage, sounds *tieċ*. *Ġfien*, men-of-war, sounds *ċfien*. *Spaġ*, string, sounds *spak*. *Bejġħ*, selling, sounds *bejħ*. *Taħ*, he gave him, sounds *taħ*.

R. 20 - A surd when followed by a sonant takes the sound of the sonant which corresponds with it.

Ex. - *Fdal*, residue, sounds *vdal*. *Tbatija*, suffering, sounds *dbatija*. *Sdieri*, waistcoats, sounds *zdieri*. *Xbajt*, I am fed up, sounds *ġbajt*.

R. 21 - *X* when preceded by *D* or *T* assumes the sound of *Ĉ*; and when preceded by *S* or *Ž* kills their sound.

Ex. - *Għawdxċ*, a Gozitan, sounds *Għawċi*. *Ma ridtx*, I did not want, sounds *ma ricċ*. *Ma jorħosx*, will not be cheaper, sounds *ma jorħos*. *Taqbižx*, do not jump, sounds *taqbiž*.

R. 22 - *T* and *D* if preceded by an *S* assume the sound of a *Z*.

Ex. - *Għadsa*, a dive - from *ghodos*. *Għatsa*, a sneeze - from *ghatas*, and *ghazza*, a lentil, all sound as the latter.

R. 23 - *H* if preceded by *GH* or *H* assumes the sound of an *H*.

Ex. - *Tagħħom*, theirs, sounds *takħħom*; *mohħom*, their brains, sounds *mohħom*.

R. 24 - If semi-consonants are preceded by another consonant one is dropped.

- Ex. - From *sawwat*, he struck, follows *sawtu*, they struck, for *sawwtu*.
From *mejjet*, dead, follows *mejta*, dead - feminine gender, for *mejta*.
- R. 25 - If double consonants are preceded by a third consonant of the same sound, one is dropped.
- Ex. - *Mohhhom*, their brains - Vide Rule 23, becomes *mohhom*.
Gedddu from *gedded*, they renewed, becomes *geddu*.
- R. 26 - Consonants should also be divided into : **A - Solar** (Ć, D, N, R, S, T, X, Z, Ž) and **B - Lunar** (B, F, Ġ, G, GH, H, Ħ, K, L, M, P, Q, V).
The article "l" through assimilation assumes the sounds of the Solar Consonants which precede it.
- Ex. - *Iċ-ċraret*, the rags, and not *il-ċraret*; *id-dar*, the house, and not *il-dar*; *ix-xemx*, the sun, and not *il-xemx*; *iż-żejt*, the oil, and not *il-żejt*. And *il-gajdra*, the oyster, *il-qalb*, the heart, etc.
- R. 27 - It follows from all preceding rules that in Maltese the radical letters of a word should be preserved even when pronunciation is altered, not like in English.
- Ex. - *Bitha*, *btiċċi* (pronounced *ptiċċi*) - *Inscribe*, *scripture*, both from *scribere*.
- R. 28 - If difficulty arises as to the correct way in which certain words should be spelled the student should insert a vowel after the doubtful consonant.
- Ex. - *Żfin*, pronounced *sfin*, as in *żifen*; *qalb*, pronounced *qalp* as in *qalbi*; *marridx* pronounced *marric* as in *marridux*.
- R. 29 - Students are also liable to make mistakes when placing the silent *GH* or *H* in words. In such cases they should take as a model an identically formed letter containing an *H*.
- Ex. - *Bagħal*, mule; *bghula*, mules; as in *raħal*, village, *rħula*, villages. *Għamel*, he made - Past tense, *aħmel*, make - Imperative; as in *ħalef*, he swore, *aħlef*, swear. *Fehma*, opinion, and *hena*, happiness; as in *xehħta*, throw, and *ħelu*, sweets.

V - DIPHTHONGS

A diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds and

in Maltese there are no real diphthongs. However the letters *ie*, *aj*, *aw*, *ow*, *ja*, *wa* are often heard, so an explanation about them is not out of place.

R. 30 - *Ie* is frequently derived from a long *a* and should be considered as representing *one letter* and pronounced like a long *i*, equivalent in English to a long *e*.

Ex. - *Bieb* pronounced *Bee-ep* - Vide Rule 19.

R. 31 - *Aj*, *aw*, *ow*, *ja*, *wa* being composed of a vowel and a semi-consonant, cannot be considered, therefore, as diphthongs.

Ex. - *Sewwa*, truth. *Ejja*, come. *Gew*, they came. *Haj*, living.

R. 32 - When an *i* or a *u* follow the consonant *gh* they are pronounced *aj* and *ow*.

Ex. - *Tiegħi*, mine, pronounced in Maltese *tiegħaj*, which sounds in English like *tee-i*. *Għuda*, a piece of wood, pronounced in Maltese *għowda*, which in English sounds *ow-da*.

VI - SYLLABLES

R. 33 - A word can have one or more syllables.

Ex. - 1. *Dar*, house; 2. *Ri-ħa*, smell; 3. *Twis-si-ja*, warning; 4. *Ċaq-lem-bu-ta*, see-saw; etc. etc.

R. 34 - A syllable can consist of one vowel or a vowel with one or more consonants.

Ex. - *I-keġ*, *a-ra*, *fiħ*.

R. 35 - It therefore follows that in each syllable there should be a vowel and only one vowel.

Ex. - *Bir*, well; *gat-tus*, cat; *qis-sir-ni-ħom-la*, we broke them for him; *twiġl*, tall, and not *tūiġl* (Vide Rule 2); *cong*, maimed, and not *ċiong*; *xu-xa*, head of hair, and not *xu-xia*.

R. 36 - Between the vowel of a syllable and that of another syllable there should be a consonant.

Ex. - *Tar-bi-ja*, baby, and not *tar-bi-a*.

R. 37 - The consonant between a vowel of a syllable and that of another syllable may be the aspirated *b* and should not be confused with the consonant *gh* or semi-consonant *j*.

Ex. - *De-ħeb*, gold; *blu-ħa*, foolishness; *fi-ħa*, in it, and not *fi-gha* or *fi-ja*.

- R. 38 - If a word which begins with *i* or *u*, is preceded by a word which ends by a vowel the *i* and the *u* shall be exchanged by the semi-consonant *j* and *w*.
- Ex. - *Malli jqum*, as soon as he wakes, and not *malli iqum*.
Hafna wcuħ, several faces, and not *hafna ucuh*.
- R. 39 - If however the initial vowel is accented or the word derives from a foreign language, the exchange does not apply.
- Ex. - *Aghtini jdeħ*, shake hands, and not *aghtini jdeħ*.
Mara ingliza, an English woman, and not *mara ngliza*.
- R. 40 - A word of two syllables is divided immediately after the long vowel.
- Ex. - *Râ-gel*, a man; *qrâ-ti*, tribunals; *mie-ta*, tariff.
- R. 41 - The liquid consonants *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *gh*, go with the long vowel when they occur before another consonant.
- Ex. - *Diel-ja*, vine; *ħar-su*, look; *qiegħ-da*, she is situated.
- R. 42 - The liquid consonant *m* goes however with any of the liquids immediately following it.
- Ex. - *Do-mna*, devotional medal.
- R. 43 - Compound words consisting of a word and a suffix beginning with a consonant, are divided by separating both words.
- Ex. - *Had-hom*, he took them; *ras-na*, our head.
- R. 44 - A suffix consisting of only one consonant goes with the last syllable in the division of words.
- Ex. - *Hal-ħ*, leave him.
- R. 45 - A word of two syllables having a short stressed vowel in the first syllable is divided from the consonant immediately following the stressed vowel.
- Ex. - *Jig-bor*, he collects; *déh-er*, he appeared; *qâgh-ad*, he stood; *qâs-ba*, cane.
- R. 46 - A word of two syllables having a long or a short strong accent on the last syllable, is divided after the consonant following the unstressed vowel of the first syllable.
- Ex. - *Sub-ien*, boys; *xit-ân*, devil; *ghod-ðst*, I dived.
- R. 47 - A word of more than two syllables is divided by the principle of counting the syllables rhythmically. For words ending in a suffix apply also Rule 44.
- Ex. - *Twis-si-ja*, warning; *gho-tor-na*, we stumbled; *ħat-lej-nih*, we demolished it.