

MARTU WANGKA ALPHABET AND PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Martu Wangka has 23 sounds with important differences between them. The sounds of Martu Wangka are written like this:

a aa i ii j k l ly m n ng ny p r rl rn rr rt t u uu w y

This is the alphabet of Martu Wangka. It uses some of the same letters as the English alphabet. The letters of the English alphabet are

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

When the sounds in both languages are the same or approximately the same, the letters in the two alphabets are written the same.

The Martu Wangka alphabet includes several sounds that are written with two letters (also called digraphs): aa, ii, ly, ng, ny, rl, rn, rr, rt, uu. English also uses two letters for some sounds, for example ch in children and ng in sing, but these sounds are not written as separate symbols in the English alphabet.

Most of the words in Martu Wangka begin with one of the following consonants: j, k, l, m, n, ng, ny, p, r, t, w, y. However, some Martu Wangka speakers say words which begin with i or u.

In this dictionary the headwords of the entries are listed according to English alphabetical order since most people using this dictionary are familiar with this system. This means that for the purposes of arranging in alphabetical order, the fact that Martu Wangka sometimes uses two letters to represent one sound is ignored. For example, wangkangu [w a ng k a ng u] is alphabetised as if it were w a n g k a n g u. When the headword has a hyphen in it, as in kirti-kirti, the word is alphabetised as if the hyphen was not there, that is, k i r t i k i r t i.

Here is a pronunciation guide for people who do not speak Martu Wangka. However, a person could not learn to say Martu Wangka words very well just by reading this guide. A person would need to listen to the Martu saying these words and then copy their pronunciation.

Sounds which are the same as English:

- l as in English *lame*; Martu Wangka *lunki* ‘grub’
- m as in English *man*; Martu Wangka *mama* ‘father’
- n as in English *now*; Martu Wangka *nanpa* ‘hair belt’
- r as in English *run*; Martu Wangka *rawa* ‘a long time’
- w as in English *win*; Martu Wangka *wana* ‘digging stick’
- y as in English *you*; Martu Wangka *yuu* ‘yes’

Martu Wangka vowel sounds:

- a similar to a in English *father*, but with some variation. Martu Wangka *jamu* ‘grandfather/grandson’. After w it is rounded as in English *watch*; Martu Wangka *wangka* ‘language’.
- i similar to i in English *police*, but with some variation; Martu Wangka *miku* ‘jealous’
- u similar to u in English *put*, but with some variation; Martu Wangka *jurra* ‘leave it!’

There are three long vowels, aa, ii, uu.

- aa similar to Martu Wangka a but held longer; Martu Wangka *nyaaku* ‘for what reason?’
- ii similar to Martu Wangka i but held longer; Martu Wangka *jiinya* ‘that one there’
- uu similar to Martu Wangka u but held longer; Martu Wangka *wuungku* ‘a windbreak’

Other consonant sounds:

- j similar to j in English *jar*; Martu Wangka *japu* ‘small’ and *majala* ‘wait!’
- k almost the same as in English *skid*, not as in *kid*, which has a puff of air accompanying k. In the middle of words it sounds almost like g. Martu Wangka examples are *kaja* ‘son’ and *jikila* ‘drink it!’
- ly sounds a bit like the lli in English *million*; Martu Wangka examples are *mulya* ‘nose’ and *palulyu* ‘that’s all’. This sound never comes at the beginning of a word.
- ng as in English *sing*; Martu Wangka *junga* ‘correct/the right side’. Unlike in English, this sound often comes at the beginning of words; Martu Wangka *ngala* ‘eat it!’ and *ngana* ‘who/what’
- ny a bit like the sound of n in English *new* and *nuisance* and ni in *onion*. Martu Wangka examples are *nyupa* ‘husband/wife’ and *wanyu* ‘slow’.
- p almost the same as in English *spot*, not as in *pot* which has a puff of air accompanying p. In the middle of words it sounds almost like b. Martu Wangka examples are *puwa* ‘hit it!’ and *nyaparu* ‘substitute name’.

- rl is a sound in which the tongue tip moves toward the roof of the mouth. The sound is a bit like the sound of rl in American English *curly*. Martu Wangka examples are *purli* ‘stone’ and *kurlu* ‘later’. This sound never comes at the beginning of a word.
- rn is a sound in which the tongue tip moves toward the roof of the mouth. The sound is a bit like the sound of rn in American English *corner*. Martu Wangka examples are *parna* ‘earth/ground’ and *purnu* ‘the bush’. This sound never comes at the beginning of a word.
- rr is a flapped or trilled r as in Scottish English *turkey*. Martu Wangka examples are *karru* ‘creek’ and *karrpu* ‘daytime’. This sound never comes at the beginning of a word.
- rt is a sound in which the tongue tip moves toward the roof of the mouth. The sound is a bit like the sound of rd in American English *pardon*. Martu Wangka examples are *martu* ‘Aboriginal person’ and *mirta* ‘not’. This sound never comes at the beginning of a word.
- t almost the same as in English *stop*, not as in *top* which has a puff of air accompanying t. In the middle of words it sounds almost like d. Martu Wangka examples are *takala* ‘climb up!’ and *yutirringu* ‘it became visible’

Word stress is almost always on the first syllable of a word in Martu Wangka: MA-rtu ‘Aboriginal person’; YA-rra-rni ‘come here!’; MA-ja-la-ju ‘wait for me!’.