

PHONEMES AND ORTHOGRAPHIC SYMBOLS

EXAMPLES

/p/	p	/m/	m	/f/	f
/b/	b	/mb/	mb	/v/	v
/t/	t	/mv/	mv	/s/	s
/d/	d	/n/	n	/ʃ/	sh
/tʃ/	ch, c	/nd/	nd	/z/	z
/j/	j	/nz/	nz	/l/	l
/k/	k	/ɲ/	ny	/r/	r
/g/	g	/ɲj/	nj	/x/	kh*
		/ŋ/	ng'	/y/	gh*
		/ŋg/	ng	/θ/	th*
				/ð/	dh*
				/h/	h
				/w/	w
				/y/	y

*th, dh, kh, and gh are found in Arabic loanwords only.

/i/	i	/u/	u
/e/	e	/ɔ/	o
		/a/	a

Any sequence of two like or unlike vowels is to be interpreted as two separate syllables.

Palatalization: CyV

Labialization: CwV

Tone:

Swahili is not a tone language but has predictable stress on the penultimate syllable of every polysyllabic word.

a	mpaka	boundary
b	barua	letter
ch	chumvi	salt
d	dada	sister
dh	dhahabu	gold
e	pete	ring
f	fagio	broom
g	mgeni	guest
gh	lughā	language
h	homa	fever
i	ndizi	banana
j	jembe	hoe
k	kikombe	cup
l	lughā	language
m	meza	table
mb	mbegu	seeds
mv	mvua	rain
n	nazi	coconut
nd	ndizi	banana
ng	nguo	clothes
ng'	ng'ombe	cow
nj	njaa	hunger
ny	nyoka	snake
nz	nzige	locust
o	ndoto	dream
p	paka	cat
r	rafiki	friend
s	sikio	ear
sh	shamba	plantation
t	twiga	giraffe
th	hadithi	story
u	ndugu	brother
v	viazi	potatoes
w	wimbo	song
y	yai	egg
z	mzigo	luggage

ALPHABET

a b ch d dh e f g gh h i j k kh l m mb mv n nd ng
ng' nj ny nz o p r s sh t th u v w y z

number of graphemes 37

Alphabets of Africa

edited by

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