

1 - Bezhiḡ

Ezhi-giigidaang How We Say it Pronunciation

Nsostamokiiwans To Understand Little Things Explanation

Before moving forward in Ojibwe, it is important to practice pronunciation and understand the most common spelling system. The double vowel system was created by Charles Fiero and is used by Anishinaabe teachers, elders, translators, administrators, language activists, and students seeking a common Anishinaabemowin orthography. It is currently used in over 200 Anishinaabe communities in and around Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, North Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Although this is a system of writing that the Anishinaabeg use on both sides of the international boundary, they also recognized the value and importance of syllabics and folk-phonetics as part of their linguistic heritage.

The list below is designed to give English speakers a clear description of Anishinaabe phonetics. Time spent getting these sounds correct will help you recognize and write words you have heard and sound out new words you encounter on the page. On the left is the sound as it is spelled in Nichols and Nyholm (using Charles Fiero's double vowel system). The <> brackets indicate a letter or spelling convention. On the right are example words in which the sound occurs, along with a translation into English. Bear in mind that dialect variation exists. Symbols enclosed in square brackets [] indicate the IPA symbol for the sound; this is most useful for people who have some experience using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

VOWELS

a This is the sound "schwa" as in English **but**, **cup**, **among**, **tuba**.

anishinaabe	'anishinaabe'
namadabi	'sits down'
baashkizigan	'gun'

aa In English, this sound occurs in words like **father**, **pot**, **opposite**. Note that slight variation may exist between speakers, and a single English speaker might not pronounce the vowels in these words exactly the same way.

aagim	'one snowshoe'
maajaa	'goes away'
waabaamaa	'to see him / her'

- e This sound has no exact counterpart in English, but occurs in the French word *café*. In English, we tend to pronounce *café*, as if it rhymes with *obey* or *say*; we diphthongize it, pronouncing it with two vowels -- [e] plus an sound - spoken together quickly. This is a mark of an American accent. Try to produce a clear simple [e]. To an English speaker, this vowel may sound more like the vowel in *bet*.

epiichaak	'time'
zheba	'early'
biindige	'to enter'

- i In English, this sound occurs in words like *bit*, *little*, *sip*. It is not difficult for English speakers to say, but in English this sound never occurs at the ends of words, as it does in Anishnaabemowin. English speakers will tend to mispronounce the *at the ends of the words above, turning them into <ee>, rhyming with knee*.

nini	'man'
mawi	'cries'

- ii This sound occurs in the English word *knee*, *peach*, *beat*, *each*.

niin	'I'
giizhigak	'day'
googii	'dives'

- o The letter <o> in Anishnaabemowin represents a variety of sounds in English. It may sound like the <au> in *caught*, or the <u> in *put*. In some dialects, it is pronounced as <a> (see above). Listen to the recordings on the website, and you might hear some of this subtle variation.

objikaaz	'to use'
nokii	'works'
bigizo	'to swim'

- oo This combination represents the long <o> sound as in “boat,” “know,” or “toe.”

oodenang	'town'
goon	'snow'
pimbatoo	'runs along'

NASAL VOWELS

aanh	nokiiyaanh	'I work'
enh	nisawenh	'my older brother'
	gii'enh	'I was told'

iinh wesiinh 'wild animal'
gaachiinh '(someone) is small'

oonh giigoonh 'fish'

CONSONANTS

b bakade 'is hungry'
niibiish 'leaf'
gizheb 'in the morning'

ch mchaamigad 'it is big'
miigwech 'thanks'

d debwe 'tells the truth'
biidoon 'bring it!'
waagaakwad 'ax'

g giin 'you'
waagosh 'fox'
kwewag 'women'

h nahaw 'ok''

j jina 'a little while'
ingiikaj 'I'm cold'
biingej 'I'm cold'

k makizin 'moccasin'
mik 'beaver'

m miinan 'blueberries'
jiimaan 'kiss, canoe'
mijim 'food'

n naanan 'five'

p pin 'potato'
baap 'I laugh'

s sin 'stone, rock'
wiiyaas 'meat'

sh	shigan nimosh	'bass' 'dog'
t	temigad	'(something) is there'
w	waabang bizindaw	'tomorrow' 'listen to someone!'
y	wiiyoo nday	'someone's body' 'my dog'
z	ziibi zid indaakoz	'river' 'someone's foot' 'I am sick'
zh	zhaabonigan biizh	'needle' 'bring someone!'

CONSONANT CLUSTERS

sk	mskwaa	'is red'
shp	shpiming	'up above, in heaven'
sht	shtigwaaning	'my head'
shk	shkode gaashkashenh	'fire' 'gull'
mb	wiimbaa	'is hollow'
nd	aanind	'some'
nj	biinjiying ninj	'it is inside' 'my hand'
ng	bangii waabang	'a little bit' 'tomorrow'

Ezhichigen
You Do it
Practice

Here are the words grouped for reading practice:

1.		3.	
anishinaabe	'anishinaabe'	waagosh	'fox'
namadabi	'sits down'	kwewag	'women'
baashkizigan	'gun'	nahaw	'ok''
aagim	'one snowshoe'	jina	'a little while'
maajaa	'goes away'	ingiikaj	'I'm cold'
waabaamaa	'to see him / her'	biingej	'I'm cold'
epiichaak	'time'	makizin	'moccasin'
zheba	'morning'	mik	'beaver'
biindige	'to enter'	miinan	'blueberries'
nini	'man'	jiimaan	'kiss, canoe'
mawi	'cries'	miijim	'food'
niin	'I'	naanan	'five'
giizhigak	'day'	pin	'potato'
googii	'dives'	baap	'I laugh'
objikaaz	'to use'	sin	'stone, rock'
nokii	'works'	wiiyaas	'meat'
bigizo	'to swim'	shigan	'bass'
2.		4.	
oodenang	'town'	nimosh	'dog'
goon	'snow'	temigad	'it is there'
pimbatoo	'runs along'	waabang	'tomorrow'
nokiiyaanh	'I work'	bizindaw	'listen to him/her!'
nisawenh	'my older brother'	wiiyoo	'someone's body'
gii'enh	'I heard'	nday	'my dog'
wesiinh	'wild animal'	ziibi	'river'
gaachiinh	'he/she is small'	zid	'someone's foot'
giigoonh	'fish'	indaakoz	'I am sick'
bakade	'is hungry'	zhaabonigan	'needle'
niibiish	'leaf'	biizh	'bring someone!'
gizheb	'in the morning'	miskwaa	'is red'
mchaamigad	'it is big'	shpiming	'up, in heaven'
miigwech	'thanks'	shtigwaaning	'my head'
debwe	'tells the truth'	shkode	'fire'
biidoon	'bring it!'	gaashkashenh	'gull'
waagaakwad	'ax'	wiimbaa	'is hollow'
giin	'you'	aanind	'some'
		biinjiying	'it is inside'
		ninj	'my hand'
		bangii	'a little bit'
		waabang	'tomorrow'

Gikendaan
You know
Summary

Try sounding out these phrases:

1. Mii maampii binji zhaa'aa wii gjitoowaanh wii Anishinaabemyaanh.
I came here to try to speak Anishinaabemowin.
2. Giishpin igo getin wiikijitoo'aa gonemaa gwa n'da shkiton ji Anishinaabemyaanh.
If I try really hard maybe I can speak Anishinaabemowin.