

Name Pronunciation Guide

Correctly pronouncing someone's name fosters a sense of belonging and a recognition of the unique identity of the individual. Ultimately, sincere effort and a willingness to learn are more important than perfection. You may find it helpful to record your students saying their own names for your reference.

The following guide provides basic information about the pronunciation of names from the most common language backgrounds at DePauw, as well as links to helpful websites with audio recordings. It is meant to provide an accessible and easy-to-understand reference to name pronunciation rather than a comprehensive, expert guide.

NameShouts – A helpful resource for a variety of names

<https://www.nameshouts.com/>

- Requires a login after a few searches
- Provides names from 17 languages, pronounced by native speakers
- Allows users to request that names be added to the database
- Has a mobile app

China

- Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language, with tones affecting both pronunciation and meaning.

Sounds

Q = Ch

X = Sh

Zh = J

C = Ts

Some combinations of letters frequently occur together:

- Ou sounds like *oh*, so the name Zhou is pronounced Joe
- Iu sounds like *eeyo*, so the name Liu is pronounced Leeyo

- Ui sounds like *way*, so the name Cui is pronounced Tsway

Examples

Qing is pronounced Ching (rhymes with ring)

Xu is pronounced Shoe

Zhang is pronounced Jang (rhymes with rang)

Cai is pronounced Tsai (rhymes with lie)

Helpful links

Cal Poly Pomona Asian Name Pronunciation Guide (including recordings of specific names)

<https://www.cpp.edu/~pronunciation/mandarin.html>

* Thank you to Dr. Danielle Kane for providing the guide to Chinese names.

Japan

- Japanese pronunciation is highly regular; exceptions are rare.
- Typically, syllables in a word or name are equally stressed.

Sounds

A = ah, as in Amish

I = ee, as in Egypt

U = oo, as in moo

E = eh, as in *flambé*

O = oh, as in solo

These are some combinations of letters that frequently occur together:

- Ai = ah + ee, so the name Mai sounds like my
- Ei = eh + ee, so the name Kei is pronounced Kay

Consonant sounds are very similar to English, with a few exceptions.

- R and L are the same sound in Japanese and are formed more with the tongue placed on the ridge behind the front teeth rather than with the lips or with the tongue on the teeth. In certain words, the pronunciation of R may sound similar to a /d/ sound to a native English speaker's ear.
- Fu sounds more like Hu.
- G is always pronounced as in game or gorilla

Examples

Reiko is pronounced Reh--koh (Ray-koh)

Takashi is pronounced Tah-kah-shee

Inoue is pronounced Ee-noh-oo-eh

Chiyoda is pronounced Chee-yo-dah

Helpful links

Cal Poly Pomona Asian Name Pronunciation Guide (including recordings of specific names)

<https://www.cpp.edu/~pronunciation/japanese.html>

Vietnam

- Names are monosyllabic
- Vietnamese has both tones and accents which affect pronunciation and meaning.
- The pronunciation of certain letter combinations varies depending on the name, in part because the marks denoting tone and accent have been removed from the romanized version.
- The most common surnames are Le, Nguyen, and Tran

Sounds

Ph = f, so the name Phan is pronounced Fan

Th = th, so the name Thi is pronounced Thee (a soft th or t sound)

Vy = Vee (Vi would be the same pronunciation)

Le = Lay, but stopped half way (with a dropped jaw rather than a smiling jaw)

Tr = j as in judge (a strong /j/ sound)

Pham = fam as in family

Nhi = ni but with an n as in Español

Examples

Tran is pronounced Jun (rhymes with sun)

Minh is pronounced Min

Hoang is pronounced Hwang

Nguyen is pronounced Nwen

Khoa is pronounced Kwa

Mai is pronounced My

My is pronounced Me (rhymes with see)

Duy is pronounced Zwee

<https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Vietnamese/Ng>

Helpful links

Cal Poly Pomona Asian Name Pronunciation Guide (including recordings of specific names)

<https://www.cpp.edu/~pronunciation/vietnamese.html>

*Thank you to Vy Le for providing help with Vietnamese sounds and names.

Pakistan

- Urdu is the official language of Pakistan. There are also many regional languages.
- Many Pakistani given names are derived from Arabic.

Sounds

I = ee

Q = k

Ei = ay

Ai = eye

Sounds may be different depending on the placement in the name. For example, the final *a* in a name is often extended and emphasized, while the initial *a* is pronounced more like /uh/.

Examples

Salman is pronounced Suhl-maan

Rabia is pronounced Ra-bee-yaa

Shahid is pronounced Sha-HEED

Tariq is pronounced TA-rik

Syed is pronounced Say-eed

Daud is pronounced Da-ood

Helpful links

VOA News pronunciation guide

<http://pronounce.voanews.com/browse-oneregion.php?region=Pakistan>

More about Urdu and other languages in Pakistan

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Pakistan

*Thank you to Salman Haider for providing help with the sounds and examples of Pakistani names.

India

- Hindi is India's official language. Each state also has an official language.
- The easiest way to approach longer Indian names is to break them down into syllables.

Sounds

A = ah or uh

D = dhe or th (almost a cross between a /d/ sound and a /th/ sound)

I = short /i/ as in sit or long ee as in see, depending on placement

U = oo

Th = t

Examples

Sanjay is pronounced Sun-jay

Ravi is pronounced Rah-vee

Pratibha is pronounced PRAH-tih-bah

Srinivasan is pronounced Sree-nee-vah-sun

Gupta is pronounced Goop-tah

VOA News pronunciation guide

<http://pronounce.voanews.com/browse-oneregion.php?region=India>

More about Indian family names

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_family_names

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