

INTRODUCTION

Devanagari script

In this lesson you can learn about:

- How to write Devanagari script
- The Hindi sound system
- The traditional order of Devanagari
- Table of Devanagari characters
- The Devanagari script and the Hindi sound system
- Common conjunct characters and other sounds and symbols
- Vowels combined with consonants (*mātrās*)
- Conjunct consonants
- Nasalization and nasal consonants

📖 Topic 0.1: What this lesson contains

The idea of learning a new script may seem forbidding to begin with but actually the script in which Hindi is written is fairly easy to learn, fun to draw and quite beautiful. Hindi is mostly written in a script called Nagari or Devanagari. Hindi is normally spoken using a combination of around 52 sounds, ten vowels, 40 consonants, nasalisation and a kind of aspiration. These sounds are represented in the Devanagari script by 13 characters traditionally regarded as vowels and 40 consonants. In addition you need to learn four common conjunct consonants, a term which I will explain later.

You need to learn to recognise characters and the sounds they represent and to learn to draw characters and pronounce their sounds. The main activity which you will have to do is essentially a creative one. You have to learn to associate sounds and images and so as you are working your way through this lesson and discover what, for you, acts as a clue to help you associate a character and its sound. For instance, to me it seems that the character for क *ka* looks a bit like a key, which is convenient because I can put the sound and shape of the character together. Whilst for me the swirling shape of the

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character च *cha* reminds of churning, and so I can associate the character and the sound.

You should bear two things in mind as you study Devanagari script and Hindi sounds. First, although Hindi is written in just a limited number of characters, traditionally 33 or 52 characters, they do in practice combine in quite a lot of ways, however, most of the common combinations are easy to learn once you know the basic characters. Second, don't worry if you can't pronounce all the sounds correctly to begin with (or even hear the differences in some cases) as you learn your ear will 'tune in' to the sounds and you will gradually learn to pronounce them correctly.

📖 Topic 0.2 How to write Devanagari script

To practise writing Devanagari it is best to use lined paper and to write on alternate lines. Note the following points.

- Devanagari characters hang from a horizontal line (called the head stroke) written at the top of the character. Unlike English letters which are written up from a line below them.
- The body of the Devanagari characters should occupy about two thirds of the space between the lines.
- In general the first stroke, or strokes, in a character are written from the left to the right and are then followed by any down strokes and finally the head stroke is added. Note that in some characters the head stroke is broken.
- The following pages show the characters with arrows added indicating the direction of the strokes as they are drawn and the order they are drawn in.
- It is important to learn the correct stroke order for Devanagari characters as when, hopefully, you start to write quickly the character will be recognisable even if its form gets more cursive than is the case for printed Hindi.
- It normally takes between three and five strokes to write a Devanagari character. On separate sheets of paper practise writing the characters on the following pages noting the order and direction of strokes indicated for each character.

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📖 Topic 0.3 The Hindi sound system

The sound system (phonology) of modern spoken Hindi can be represented in a number of different scripts including Devanagari. In English Devanagari is often called a syllabary, rather than an alphabet, because each Devanagari character normally represents a consonant and a vowel combination or a vowel on its own. Devanagari consonants are normally considered to have a basic form which consists of a consonant pronounced with an inherent 'a' sound similar to the vowel sound in the English words *but* or *son*. In other words each Devanagari character normally represents a complete syllable. Devanagari is relatively easy to learn because it is largely phonetic, that is to say that mostly the script is a representation of the actual sounds.

Before starting to learn to pronounce Hindi you should be aware of two ways in which Hindi distinguishes sounds which are not familiar to English speakers. Most Hindi consonants are in pairs in which one form of the consonant is unaspirated and the second is aspirated. The unaspirated consonants are pronounced with no, or very little, out breath with the sound, and the aspirated consonants with a very strong out breath. Whereas in English almost all consonants are partly aspirated.

Hindi also distinguishes between dental 't' and 'd' consonants and retroflex 't' and 'd' consonants. Dental consonants are made by touching the tip of your tongue on the upper part of your top teeth, whereas retroflex consonants are made by curling the tip of the tongue against the palate and then releasing it. Again English 't' and 'd' sounds are somewhere between Hindi dental and retroflex consonants. As you practice you will start to hear the differences and gradually learn how to pronounce the different sounds for yourself.

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Topic 0.4: The traditional order of Devanagari

It is very useful to become familiar with the traditional order of Devanagari. This is because mother tongue speakers will tend to recite it to you in this order and because dictionaries are arranged in this order. You read the table as if it were text, left to right, top to bottom.

1	अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ
2	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः	
3	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ		
4	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ		
5	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण		
6	त	थ	द	ध	न		
7	प	फ	ब	भ	म		
8	य	र	ल	व			
9	श	ष	स				
10	ह						
11	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	फ़	ड़	

Note that in the traditional order of Devanagari the characters modified by under dots are not listed separately but regarded as variants of their base characters.

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Topic 0.5 Devanagari characters and their transliteration

1	अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ
	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥
2	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः	
	e	ai	o	au	aṁ	aḥ	
3	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ		
	ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa		
4	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ		
	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña		
5	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण		
	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa		
6	त	थ	द	ध	न		
	ta	tha	da	dha	na		
7	प	फ	ब	भ	म		
	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma		
8	य	र	ल	व			
	ya	ra	la	va			
9	श	ष	स				
	śa	ṣa	sa				
10	ह	क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ	श्र		
	ha	kṣa	tra	jña/gya	śra		
11	क़	ख़	ग़	ज़	फ़	ड़	ढ़
	qa	<u>k</u> ha	g̥a	za	fa	ṛa	ṛha

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Topic 0.6 The Devanagari script and the Hindi sound system

The sounds of spoken Hindi are generally written in Devanagari script, which is also used to write Sanskrit, Nepali, and Marathi. The precise number of Devanagari characters is not easy to work out.¹ Sometimes people say there were in Sanskrit 52 characters. In Hindi people often say there are 13 vowel and 33 consonant symbols. However, it all depends what you define as a character, in practice there are 13 vowels, 33 consonants, four common conjuncts and seven characters with dots under them that represent sounds not found in Sanskrit.

There are ten² vowel sounds in Devanagari. All the vowels apart from अ *a* have two written forms. The full form of a vowel is written when it appears at the beginning of a word or when it directly follows another vowel. The *mātrā* form is a symbol that represents the vowel when it is pronounced in place of the अ *a* vowel which is considered to be inherent in each consonant. The *mātrās* are written variously above or below, or to the left or the right of the consonant.

ॐ उ अ अँ

अ *a* is similar to the *u* in *but*, as in अखबार *akhbār* 'newspaper'.

It has no *mātrā* form.

आँ

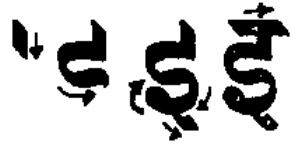
आ *ā* is similar to the *a* in *father*, as in आदमी *ādmī* 'man'.

Its *mātrā* form is ◌ँ written after characters.

¹ How many English letters are there? You may say 26, but then what about the capital letters, wouldn't that make 52? Also do you include characters like æ in the number of letters?

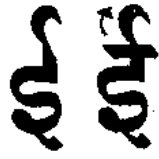
² Eleven according to tradition, but ऋ *rī* is normally pronounced *ri* by most Hindi speakers.

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इ *i* is similar to the *i* in *sit*, as in इमारत *imārat* 'building'.

Its *mātrā* form is ि written before characters. Note that even though its *mātrā* form is written before characters, it is still pronounced after the character.



ई *ī* is similar to the *ee* in *need*, as in ईमानदार *īmāndār* 'honest'. Its *mātrā* form is ी written after characters.



उ *u* is similar to the *oo* in *book*, as in उत्तर *uttar* 'north'. Its *mātrā* form is ु written under characters except when it is written with र when it is written like this रू.



ऊ *ū* is similar to the *oo* in *soon*, as in ऊन *ūn* 'wool'. Its *mātrā* form is ू written under characters except when it is written with र when it is written like this रू.

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र *r* is similar to *ri* in *rip*, as in ऋषि *ṛṣi* 'a sage'. Its *mātrā* form is ृ written under characters. In Sanskrit ऋ *r* is a vowel sound, like *r* in *purdy*, but most Hindi speakers pronounce it as if it were the sound रि *ri*.



ए *e* is similar to the initial part of the sound of *a* in *mane*, as in एक *ek* 'one'. Its *mātrā* form is े written above characters.



ऐ *ai* is similar to the *a* in *hay*, as in ऐनक *ainak* 'spectacles'.

Its *mātrā* form is ै written above characters. Some Hindi speakers pronounce it like the diphthong *ei* in *height*.



ओ *o* is similar to the *o* in *both*, as in ओला *olā* 'hail'.

Its *mātrā* form is ो written after characters.

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औऔ

औ *au* is similar to the *a* in *saw* as in औरत *aurat* 'woman'

Its *mātrā* form is औ written after characters. Some Hindi speakers pronounce it like the diphthong *ou* in *ouch*.

ककक

क *ka* is similar to the *k* in *speaker*, as in कान *kān* 'ear'. Note that there is less breath expressed when saying क *ka* than is normal with *k* in English. क़ *qa* (क with a dot under it) is a similar sound produced further back in the throat than क, Some Hindi speakers do not differentiate between the two sounds.

खखख

ख *kha* is the aspirated form of क *ka*, as in खाना *khānā* 'food'. To check if you are aspirating this consonant place your hand in front of your mouth when you pronounce it. As with all *aspirated* consonants, you should be able to feel a breath of air when you say it. Note that the *h* in the transliteration signifies that it is aspirated, never say it as *k-ha*. ख़ *kha* (ख with a dot under it) is a bit like the sound *ch* in the Scottish word *loch*. It is found only in loan words from Persian and Arabic and is often not distinguished from ख by many Hindi speakers.

गगग

ग *ga* is similar to the *g* in *go*, as in गाय *gāy* 'cow'. ग़ *gā* (ग with a dot under it) it is pronounced further back in the throat. It only occurs in Persian and Arabic loan words and many Hindi speakers do not differentiate between ग *ga* and ग़ *gā*,

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“ घ धर्घ

घ *gha* is the *aspirated* form of ग *ga*, as in घर *ghar* ‘house’. Like ख *kha* you breathe out while saying it.

“ ङ ङै ङु

ङ *ṅa* is similar to the *ng* in *king*, as in अंगूर *aṅgūr* ‘grape’. It does not occur at the beginning or end of words and occurs only as the nasalization of the consonants: क *ka*, ख *kha*, ग *ga* and घ *gha*.

“ च चर्च

च *ca* is similar to the *ch* in *church*, as in चम्मच *cammac* ‘spoon’. This is the first of the palatal consonants. That is to say the tip of the tongue touches the palate of the mouth as you are saying it.

“ छ छै छु

छ *cha* is the aspirated form of च *ca*, as in छत *chat* ‘roof/ceiling’. It is pronounced a little like the *ch* in *church-hill* but strongly aspirated.

“ ज जै जू

ज *ja* is similar to the *j* in the *jail*, as in जगह *jagah* ‘place’.

ज़ *za* (ज with a dot under it) is similar to the *z* in *zebra*, This sound occurs only in English, Arabic and Persian loan words in Hindi. Some Hindi speakers do not distinguish between the pronunciation of ज and ज़.

“ झ झै झु

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झ *jha* is the *aspirated* version of ज *ja*, as in झोला *jholā* 'shoulder bag'. It is similar to the *-dgeh-* in *hedgehog*. There are two variant forms of this character but the variant झ is more common in printed in Hindi.

ञ *ña* is similar to the *n* in *inch*, as in पंजाब *pañjāb* 'Panjab'. It is pronounced with the back of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. It does not occur at the beginning or end of words and occurs only as the nasalization of the consonants: च *ca* छ *cha* ज *ja* and झ *jha*.

ट *ṭa* is a form of *t* sound, as in टोपी *ṭopī* 'a cap or hat'. When saying ट *ṭa* the tip of the tongue should touch the ridge of the mouth and then be flicked back.

ठ *ṭha* is the *aspirated* version of ट *ṭa*, as in ठीक *ṭhīk* 'fine, okay', It is slightly similar to the *t* in *train*, but is pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the ridge of the mouth and is strongly aspirated.

ड *ḍa* is a little like the *d* in *hard*, as in डिब्बा *ḍibbā* 'box, container'. The tongue should touch the ridge of the mouth while saying it and then be quickly flapped down. ढ *ḍa* (ढ with a dot underneath it) is type of *r* sound. To say ढ *ḍa* the tongue should touch the roof of the mouth before quickly flapping down during the production of the sound. Some Eastern Hindi speakers pronounce it like र *ra*, some Western Hindi speakers pronounce it pretty much like ड *ḍa*.

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ढ *dha* is the *aspirated* version of ढ *ḍa*, as in ढाबा *dhābā* 'a small restaurant'. It should be pronounced like ढ *ḍa* but strongly aspirated. ढ़ *ḍha* (ढ *dha* with a dot under it) is the *aspirated* version of ढ़ *ḍṛa*, It should be pronounced like ढ़ *ḍṛa* but strongly aspirated.



ण *ṇa* is a *n* said fairly far back in the mouth, as in ब्रह्मण *brāhmaṇ* 'Brahman'. As a consonant in its own right ण *ṇa* does not occur at the beginning of words. It also occurs as the nasalization of the consonants: ट *ṭa* ठ *ṭha* ड *ḍa* ढ *dha*..



त *ta* is similar to the *t* in *time*, as in तश्तरी *taṣṭrī* 'saucer'. When saying त *ta* the tip of the tongue should touch the base of the upper teeth.



थ *tha* is the *aspirated* partner of त *ta*, as in थाली *thālī* 'a kind of plate' . It should be pronounced like त *ta* but strongly aspirated.



द *da* is similar to the *d* in *does*, as in दरवाज़ा *darvāzā* 'door'. When saying द *da* touch the base of the upper teeth with the tip of the tongue.

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ॐ ध धा धै

ध *dha* is the *aspirated* form of द *da*, as in धन्यवाद *dhanyavād* 'thank you'. It should be pronounced like द *da* but with a strong out breath.

न ना नै

न *na* is similar to the *n* in *not*, as in नाक *nāk* 'nose'. When saying न *na* your tongue should touch the base of the upper teeth. Note: it is important to put a *little loop* in the 'nose' of the *na* to distinguish it from *ta*.

प पा पौ

प *pa* is similar to the *p* in *spit*, as in पानी *pānī* 'water'. प *pa* is different from initial *p* sounds in English because English initial *p* is more voiced than प *pa* which is never voiced.

फ फा फौ

फ *pha* is an *aspirated* form of प *pa*, as in फल *phal* 'fruit'. It is a little like the *p* in *power* but with more emphasis on the expulsion of breath with the consonant. फ *fa* is similar to the *f* in *fly*. Strictly speaking फ *fa* only occurs in Persian, Arabic and English loan-words. However, some Hindi speakers pronounce both फ *pha* and फ *fa* the same and say *fa* for both characters,

ब बा बौ

ब *ba* is similar to the *b* in *bet*, as in बाल *bāl* 'hair'.

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१। भ भ॒भ

भ *bha* is the *aspirated* form of ब *ba*, as in भारत *bhārat* 'India'. It should be spoken like ब *ba* but with a strong out breath as you say it.

॥। म॒म

म *ma* is similar to *m* in *mind*, as in मकान *makān* 'house' Note: it is important to put a loop in the front lower corner of *ma* to distinguish it from *ya*.

५। य॒य

य *ya* is similar to the *y* in *young*, as in यात्री *yātrī* 'traveller/pilgrim'.

६। र॒र

र *ra* is similar to *r* in *ridge*, as in राजा *rājā* 'king'. It is pronounced with more of a 'trill' or 'tap' than English *r*, but not very much.

७। ल॒ल

ल *la* is similar to the *l* in *long*, as in लाल *lāl* 'red'.

८। व॒व

व *va* is something between the sounds *v* and *w*, as in वाराणसी *vārāṇasī* 'Varanasi'. Sometimes it is similar to the *v* in *van* and sometimes it is similar to the *w* in *wow*.

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श श श श

श *śa* is similar to the *sh* in *shoe*, as in शब्द *śabd* 'word'.

ष ष ष ष

ष *ṣa* is similar to *sh* in *flush*, as in कृष्ण *kr̥ṣṇa* 'Krishna'. This should be pronounced like श *śa* but in the palate of the mouth, however, most Hindi speakers actually pronounce ष *ṣa* as श *śa*.

स स स स

स *sa* is similar to the *s* in *song*, as in सेब *seb* 'apple'.

ह ह ह ह

ह *ha* is similar to the *h* in *perhaps* or *behind*, as in हाथ *hāth* 'hand'.

Topic 0.7 Common conjunct characters and other symbols

The following symbols represent combinations of characters and are traditionally included in lists of the base characters in Devanagari script.

क्ष क्ष क्ष क्ष

क्ष *kṣa* a combination of *k* + *ṣa*, as in क्षत्रिय *kṣatriya* 'the warrior caste'.
Actually spoken as *k+śa* by most Hindi speakers

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त्र

त्र *tra* a combination of *t + ra*, as in त्रुटि *truṭi* 'mistake'.

ज्ञ

ज्ञ *gya*, as in ज्ञान *gyān* 'wisdom, knowledge'. In Sanskrit pronounced *jñā* but in Hindi always pronounced *gya*.

श्र

श्र *śra* a combination of *ś+ra*, as in श्री *śrī* 'Mr'.

The *Bindu* ◌̣ and *Candrabindu* ◌̣̣ symbols

These symbols look like 'dots' and 'dots in half moons' written over characters and they indicate nasalization. That is to say that you should either add an 'n' sound before the consonant they are written over, like the sound in the English 'sing.' Or they indicate you nasalize the vowel sign they are above, that is you say it in your nose. See the section below on 'Nasalization and nasal consonants'.

The *विसर्ग* *visarga* symbol ◌̣:

This symbol, which looks like a colon, written after a vowel represents an echo of that vowel with a breath very similar to 'h.' It only occurs in Sanskrit words borrowed into Hindi. For instance: अतः *ataḥ* therefore.

The *हलन्त* *halant* symbol

The symbol beneath this character क् is called a *हलन्त* *halant*, Writing the *halant* symbol under a consonant is a way to represent the omission of the inherent अ *a* vowel that normally follows any consonant.

The *विराम* *virām* symbol

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This is a vertical bar like this | and it was the traditional form of a full stop in Hindi. However, nowadays full stops are often used in printed Hindi, along with all the other punctuation marks found in English.

Topic 0.8 Vowels combined with consonants

Vowels in combination with consonants (*mātrās*) always appear with one of the consonants. These examples are shown with क *ka*.

अ	<i>a</i> after a consonant is not indicated by any symbol. If there is no vowel sign after a consonant it is normally pronounced with an <i>a</i> ,	क <i>ka</i>
आ	<i>ā</i> after a consonant is: ा	का <i>kā</i>
इ	<i>i</i> after a consonant is: ि Note it is pronounced <i>after</i> the consonant but it is written <i>before</i> the consonant.	कि <i>ki</i>
ई	<i>ī</i> after a consonant is: ी	की <i>kī</i>
उ	<i>u</i> after a consonant is: ु	कु <i>ku</i>
ऊ	<i>ū</i> after a consonant is: ू	कू <i>kū</i>

Note that when उ *u* and ऊ *ū* are combined with र *ra* they take special forms: उ *u* combined with र *ra* is: रु *ru* ऊ *ū* combined with र *ra* is: रू *rū*

ऋ	<i>r</i> after a consonant is: ृ	कृ <i>kr</i>
ए	<i>e</i> after a consonant is: े	के <i>ke</i>
ऐ	<i>ai</i> after a consonant is: ै	कै <i>kai</i>
ओ	<i>o</i> after a consonant is: ो	को <i>ko</i>
औ	<i>au</i> after a consonant is: ौ	कौ <i>kau</i>

The next two characters are not vowels but are normally grouped with vowels in Devanagari and can be combined with a consonant or a vowel.

अं	<i>m</i> after a consonant or vowel is: ँ	कं <i>kaṁ</i>
अः	<i>h</i> after a consonant or vowel is: इ	कः <i>kaḥ</i>

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Topic 0.9 Conjunct consonants

As was mentioned earlier the basic Devanagari characters can be combined to indicate combinations of sounds. It is not necessary to learn all of these combinations to begin with. Some are very common and you will quickly learn them, others are very rare and you may hardly ever see them. So it does not make sense to learn them all by heart. This section should be used mostly for reference to help you work out what some of the unfamiliar characters are that you meet in the course.

A conjunct consonant is a combination of two or more consonants which are pronounced together without the pronunciation of the inherent अ *a* vowel between them. To represent this the form of the consonants may be slightly modified and they may be joined together. When the form of one or both of the consonants is changed and they are joined together, this is called a conjunct consonant,

Conjunct consonants can be divided into six different groups depending on the type of modification of a consonant that takes place. All conjunct consonants are pronounced and written from left to right and top to bottom, that is, first left to right, then top to bottom. I shall call the forms of consonants that do not contain the inherent -अ *-a* sound half consonants,

First group: consonants ending in a half-stroke

Consonants in the first group end in a horizontal half-stroke. The consonants in this group are: क् and फ्. For instance:

क् = क् as in क्या *kyā* int. what

फ् = फ् as in मुफ्त *muft* adj. free

Second Group: consonants ending in vertical line

Consonants in the second group drop their vertical line when they become half consonants. The consonants in this group are:

ख	ग	घ	च	ज	त	थ	ध	प
ब	भ	य	ल	व	श	ष	स	

For instance:

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- ख्याल *khyāl* nm. idea. thought
ग्यारह *gyārah* num. eleven
अच्छा *acchā* adj. good
राज्य *rājy* nm. state
त्याग *tyāg* nm. renunciation
कुत्ता *kuttā* nm. dog (त् + त = त्त)
पृथ्वी *pr̥thvī* nf. earth
अध्यापक *adhyāpak* nm. teacher
प्यास *pyās* nf. thirst.
शब्द *śabd* nm. word.
अभ्यास *abhyās* nm. practice.
अय्यर *ayyar* nm. a name.
दिल्ली *Dillī* nf. Delhi.
वयापार *vyāpār* nm. business.
नाश्ता *nāštā* nm. snack. breakfast.
कष्ट *kaṣṭ* nm. difficulty. pain.
नमस्कार *namaskār* nm. greeting.

Third group: the nasal consonants ङ, ञ, ण, न and म

ङ and ञ are usually represented by a dot above the line in modern Hindi. For instance:

- शंकर *śaṅkar* nm. Shiva.
कंघी *kaṅghī* nf. comb.
पंखा *paṅkhā* nm. fan.
संजय *saṅjay* nm. Sanjay (a name).
चंचल *caṅcal* adj. restless, fickle.

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Note that the use of शङ्कर etc. is not a common practice in modern Hindi.

ण sometimes appears in a half form and sometimes as a dot above the line.

अण्डा / अंडा *aṇḍā* nm. egg

ठण्डा / ठंडा *ṭhaṇḍā* adj. cold

घण्टा / घंटा *ghaṇṭā* nm. hour, bell

न with त थ द or ध can be written in half form or as a dot, With श or स, it should be written as a dot and before ह् it should be written in its half form,

Note that न् + न = न्न For instance: मुन्नी / मुन्नी *munnī* nf. dear, darling

संत *sant* nm. a saint

नन्हा *nanhā* adj. tiny, wee, small

म with प फ ब भ may be written as a dot above the line but with म न य ल or ह् the conjunct form म् is used.

चम्मच *cammac* nm. spoon

कम्बल / कंबल *kambal* nm. blanket

तुम्हारा *tumhārā* pr. your

Fourth group: rounded characters: ट ठ ड ढ द and ह्

These can be made into half characters by the use of the हलन्त halant symbol (्) or by the use of a modified form.

चिट्ठी / चिट्ठी *ciṭṭhī* nf. letter.

छुट्टी / छुट्टी *chuṭṭī* nf. holiday.

लड्डू / लड्डू *laḍḍū* nm, laddu, an Indian sweet

कद्दू / कद्दू *kaddū* nm, pumpkin.

चिह्न / चिह्न *cihn* nm, sign.

ब्राह्मण / ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇ* nm, Brahman.

Fifth group: the consonant र

र as the first consonant in a conjunct consonant is written above the line **after** the consonant it is joined to (including any vowel *mātrā* that may be attached to the second consonant).

धर्म *dharm* nm, *dharmā*.

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सर्दी *sardī* nf. cold, winter.

र as the second consonant in a conjunct consonant cluster is written as a diagonal stroke at the bottom of the consonant it follows.

चक्र *caḅr* nm, circle.

ग्राहक *grāḅak* nm, customer.

र after ट ठ ड ढ द ह छ is written as a 'stroke' or 'hat' under the consonant

ट्रेन *ṭren* nf. train

राष्ट्र *rāṣṭr* nm, nation

द्रव्य *dravy* nm, substance, money

र after ह is written in the consonant, for instance: ह्रास *hrās* nm, decay

Sixth group: exceptional forms

The final group of conjunct consonants are forms that sometimes are quite distinct from the consonants they are formed from.

क् + ष = क्ष as in परीक्षा *parīkṣā* nf. examination

क् + र = क्र as in क्रिया *kriyā* nf. action, verb

त् + र = त्र as in मित्र *mitr* nm./nf. friend

ज् + ञ = ज्ञ as in ज्ञान *jñān* nm. knowledge³

क् + त = क्त as in भक्त *bhakt* nm. devotee

श् + र = श्र as in श्री *śrī* adj. Mr.

श् + ऋ = शृ as in शृंगार *śṛṅgār* nm. beautification

द् + व = द्व as in द्वार *dvār* nm. door

द् + द = द्व as in उद्देश्य *uddeśy* nm. purpose

द् + ध = द्ध as in शुद्ध *śuddha* adj. pure, auspicious

श् + व = श्व as in ईश्वर *īśvar* nm. God

ह् + ऋ = हृ as in हृदय *hṛday* nm. heart

श् + च = श्च as in निश्चय *niścay* nm. decision

The pronunciation of inherent -अ -**a**

³ Remember this character is pronounced in Hindi as 'gya' not 'jña' as it is in Sanskrit.

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Note that inherent अ *-a* is not pronounced with the consonant in some contexts including: before a *mātrā* for instance: क् $k + ā = का kā$; in conjunct consonants, for instance: क्या *kyā* int. what?; at the end of words. Generally when a consonant with an inherent अ *-a* appears at the end of a word the अ *-a* is not pronounced. For instance: कम *kam* adj. less.

Frequently asked question: why does 'ha' becomes 'o' in वह *vah*?

Most Hindi speakers pronounce the pronoun वह *vah* as *vo*, the *o* being similar to that in the word *low* and before ह *ha*. This is an instance of an irregularity in the language which is best regarded as just an example of usage.

Frequently asked question: why does the 'a' before 'ha' sound like 'e'?

Most Hindi speakers change the inherent अ *-a* vowel that directly precedes ह *ha* when it's the second letter in a word into a vowel similar to the *e* in *get*, for instance: पहला *pehlā* adj, first, foremost, primary, कहना *kehnā* vt. to say. This is another instance of an irregularity in the language which is best regarded as just an example of usage.

☞ Topic 0.10 Nasalization and nasal consonants

Nasalization

Nasalization of vowels (अनुनासिक) in Hindi can be represented by two symbols written above the line: the symbol ँ called चंद्रबिन्दु *candrabindu*, and the symbol ं called बिंदु *bindu*. If a vowel *mātrā* written above the line crowds the space then the *candrabindu* is reduced to a dot (*bindu*). Nowadays there is a tendency in written Hindi to use *bindu* in place of *candrabindu*. For instance आँख = *āmkh*, हाँ (or हं) = *hām*, हूँ (or हूं) = *hūm*, हैं = *hāī*.

Traditionally if there was no other *mātrā* above the line people used to use *candrabindu*, however, increasingly the use of *bindu* alone is growing common.

Nasal consonants

Nasal consonants (called अनुस्वार) can be represented by a dot above the head stroke of the character preceding the following characters:

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before क ख ग घ represents ङ for instance: अंक represents अङ्क.

before च छ ज झ represents ञ for instance: अंचल represents अञ्चल.

before ट ठ ड ढ represents ण for instance: ठंड represents ठण्ड,

before त थ द ध represents न for instance हिंदी represents हिन्दी.

before प फ ब भ represents म for instance लंबा represents लम्बा.

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