


# Urdu alphabet

Urdu alphabet اردو تہجی	
	
Example of writing in the Urdu alphabet: <i>Urdu</i>	
<b>Type</b>	Abjad
<b>Languages</b>	Urdu, Balti, Burushaski, others
<b>Parent systems</b>	Proto-Sinaitic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phoenician               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aramaic                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nabataean                       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arabic                           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perso-Arabic                               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urdu alphabet اردو تہجی</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Unicode range</b>	U+0600 to U+06FF <sup>[1]</sup> U+0750 to U+077F <sup>[2]</sup> U+FB50 to U+FDFF <sup>[3]</sup> U+FE70 to U+FEFF <sup>[4]</sup>

Urdu alphabet	
ی ء ہ و ن م ل گ ک ق ف غ ع ظ ط ض ص ش س ژ ز ر ذ د خ ح چ ج ث ت پ ب ا	
<b>Extended Perso-Arabic script</b>	
•	History
•	Diacritics
•	Hamza
•	Numerals
•	Numeration

The **Urdu alphabet** is the right-to-left alphabet used for the Urdu language. It is a modification of the Persian alphabet, which is itself a derivative of the Arabic alphabet. With 38 letters and no distinct letter cases, the Urdu alphabet is typically written in the calligraphic Nasta'liq script, whereas Arabic is more commonly in the Naskh style. Usually, bare transliterations of Urdu into Roman letters (called Roman Urdu) omit many phonemic elements that have no equivalent in English or other languages commonly written in the Latin script. The National Language Authority of Pakistan has developed a number of systems with specific notations to signify non-English sounds, but these can only be properly read by someone already familiar with Urdu, Persian, or Arabic for letters such as ط غ خ

ص ح ع ظ ض or ق and Hindi for letters such as □.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## History

The Urdu language emerged as a distinct register of Hindustani well before the Partition of India, and it is distinguished most by its extensive Persian influences (Persian having been the official language of the Mughal government and the most prominent lingua franca of the Indian subcontinent for several centuries prior to the solidification of British colonial rule during the 19th century). The standard Urdu script is a modified version of the Perso-Arabic script, expanded to accommodate the phonology of Hindustani. Despite the invention of the Urdu typewriter in 1911, Urdu newspapers continued to publish prints of handwritten scripts by calligraphers known as *katibs* or *khush-navees* until the late 1980s. The Pakistani national newspaper Daily Jang was the first Urdu newspaper to use *Nasta'liq* computer-based composition. There are efforts under way to develop more sophisticated and user-friendly Urdu support on computers and the internet. Nowadays, nearly all Urdu newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals are composed on computers via various Urdu software programs. Apart from being the more or the less Persianate, Urdu and Hindi are mutually intelligible.

## Nasta'liq

The Nasta'liq calligraphic writing style began as a Persian mixture of scripts Naskh and Ta'liq. After the Mughal conquest, Nasta'liq became the preferred writing style for Urdu. It is the dominant style in Pakistan, and many Urdu writers elsewhere in the world use it. Nasta'liq is more cursive and flowing than its Naskh counterpart.

## Alphabet

A list of the letters of the Urdu alphabet and their pronunciation is given below. Urdu contains many historical spellings from Arabic and Persian, and therefore has many irregularities. The Arabic letters *yaa* and *haa* both have two variants in Urdu: one of the *yaa* variants is used at the ends of words for the sound [e:], and one of the *haa* variants is used to indicate the aspirated consonants. The retroflex consonants needed to be added as well; this was accomplished by placing a small ٷ (*tō'ē*) above the corresponding dental consonants. Several letters which represent distinct consonants in Arabic are conflated in Persian, and this has carried over to Urdu. This is the list of the Urdu letters, giving the consonant pronunciation. Some of these letters also represent vowel sounds.

خ xē खे	ح baḥī ḥē बड़ी है	چ cē चे	ج jīm जीम	ث ṭē टे	ٹ ṭē टे	ت tē ते	پ pē पे	ب bē बे	ا alif अलिफ़
ص ṣuād सुआद	ش ṣīn शीन	س sīn सीन	ژ žē झे	ز zē जे	ڑ ṛē रे	ر rē रे	ذ zāl जाल	ڈ ḍāl डाल	د dāl वाल
ل lām लाम	گ gāf गाफ़	ک kāf काफ़	ق qāf काफ़	ف fē फ़े	غ ghayn ग़ैन	ع ayn ऐन	ظ ẓōē ज़ोए	ط ṭōē तोए	ض ẓuād ज़ुआद
		ے baṛī yē बड़ी ये	ی chōṭī yē छोटी ये	ء hamzah हमज़ा	ہ dō-ḥāsmī hē दो-हस्मी हे	و chōṭī hē छोटी हे	و wāo वाओ	ن nūn नून	م mīm मीम
۰ sīfar सिफ़र	۱ ek एक	۲ dō दो	۳ tīn तीन	۴ ḥār चार	۵ pañc पांच	۶ ḥēḥē छे	۷ sāt सात	۸ āṭh आठ	۹ nō नौ

The Urdu alphabet, with names in the Devanagari and Latin alphabets

No.	Letter	Name of letter	Transcription	IPA
1	ا, آ	'alif	ā, ' , -	/ɑː/, /ʔ/, /∅/
2	ب	bē	b	/b/
3	پ	pē	p	/p/
4	ت	tē	t	/t/
5	ٹ	ṭē	ṭ	/ʈ/
6	ث	ṭē	s	/s/
7	ج	jīm	j	/d͡ʒ/
8	چ	cē	c	/t͡ʃ/
9	ح	baṛī hē	h	/h/, /ɦ/
10	خ	xē	x	/x/
11	د	dāl	d	/d̪/
12	ڈ	ḍāl	ḍ	/d̪ʱ/
13	ذ	zāl	z	/z/
14	ر	rē	r	/r/
15	ڑ	ṛē	ṛ	/r̪/
16	ز	zē	z	/z/
17	ژ	žē	zh	/ʒ/
18	س	sīn	s	/s/
19	ش	ṣīn	sh	/ʃ/
20	ص	ṣu'ād	s	/s/
21	ض	ḍu'ād	z	/z/
22	ط	iō'e	t	/t/

23	ظ	ẓō'ē	z	/z/
24	ع	'ain	ā, ō, ē, ' ,	/ɑ:/, /o:/, /e:/, /ʔ/, /ʕ/, /Ø/
25	غ	ġain	gh	/ɣ/
26	ف	fē	f	/f/
27	ق	qāf	q	/q/
28	ک	kāf	k	/k/
29	گ	gāf	g	/g/
30	ل	lām	l	/l/
31	م	mām	m	/m/
32	ن	nān	n	/n/, /ɳ/, /ŋ/ or /ɲ/
33	و	wā'ō	w, u, ō, au or ū	/ʊ/, /ʊ/, /o:/, /ɔ:/ or /u:/
34	ح	chōḥī hē	h	/h/ or /ħ/
35	چ	dō chashmī hē	h	/ʰ/ or /ʃ/
36	ء	hamzah	' , –	/ʔ/, /Ø/
37	ی	chōḥī yē	y, ī	/j/ or /i:/
38	آ	barī yē	ai or ē	/ɛ:/, or /e:/

## Vowels

Vowels in Urdu are represented by letters that are also considered consonants. Many vowel sounds can be represented by one letter. Confusion can arise, but context is usually enough to figure out the correct sound.

## Vowel chart

This is a list of Urdu vowels found in the initial, medial, and final positions.

Romanization	Pronunciation	Final	Medial	Initial
a	/ə/	اَ	اَ	اَ
ā	/a:/	آ	آ	آ
i	/ɪ/	اِ	اِ	اِ
ī	/i:/	ی	ی	ی
u	/ʊ/	اُ	اُ	اُ
ū	/u:/	و	و	و
ē	/e:/	ے	ے	ے
ai	/ɛ:/	آ	آ	ی
ō	/o:/	و	و	و
au	/ɔ:/	و	و	و

## Short vowels

Short vowels ("a", "i", "u") are represented by marks above and below a consonant.

Vowel	Name	Transcription	IPA
اَ	<i>zabar</i>	ba	/ə/
اِ	<i>zer</i>	bi	/ɪ/
اُ	<i>pesh</i>	bu	/ʊ/

## Alif

*Alif* (ا) is the first letter of the Urdu alphabet, and it is used exclusively as a vowel. At the beginning of a word, *alif* (ا) can be used to represent any of the short vowels, e.g. اب *ab*, اسم *ism*, اردو *urdū*. Also at the beginning, an *alif* (ا) followed by either *wā'o* (و) or *ye* (ی) represents a long vowel sound. However, *wā'o* (و) or *ye* (ی) alone at the beginning represents a consonant.

*Alif* also has a variant, call *alif madd* (آ). It is used to represent a long "ā" at the beginning of a word, e.g. آپ *āp*, آدمی *ādmi*. At the middle or end of a word, long ā is represented simply by *alif* (ا), e.g. بات *bāt*, آرام *ārām*.

## Wā'ō

Wā'ō is used to render the vowels "ū", "ō", "u" and "au" ([u:], [o:], [ʊ] and [ɔ:] respectively), and it is also used to render the labiodental approximant, [ʋ].

## Ye

Ye is divided into two variants: **choṭī ye** and **barī ye**.

*Choṭī ye* (ی) is written in all forms exactly as in Persian. It is used for the long vowel "ī" and the consonant "y".

*Barī ye* (ی) is used to render the vowels "e" and "ai" (/e:/ and /ɛ:/ respectively). *Barī ye* is distinguished in writing from *choṭī ye* only when it comes at the end of a word.

## Use of specific letters

### Retroflex letters

Retroflex consonants were not present in the Persian alphabet, and therefore had to be created specifically for Urdu. This was accomplished by placing a superscript ط (*to'e*) above the corresponding dental consonants.

Letter	Name	IPA
ٹ	ṭē	[ʈ]
ڈ	ḍāl	[ɖ]
ڙ	ṛē	[ɽ]

### ***Do chashmī he***

The letter *do chashmī he* (ڙ) is used in native Hindustānī words, for aspiration of certain consonants. The aspirated consonants are sometimes classified as separate letters, although it takes two characters to represent them.

Transcription	IPA
ڙ	bhā [bʰɑː]
ڙ	phā [pʰɑː]
ڙ	thā [tʰɑː]
ڙ	dhā [dʰɑː]
ڙ	jhā [d͡ʒʰɑː]
ڙ	chā [t͡ʃʰɑː]
ڙ	dhā [dʰɑː]
ڙ	q̄hā [q̄ʰɑː]
ڙ	rhā [rʰɑː]
ڙ	khā [kʰɑː]
ڙ	ghā [gʰɑː]

### **Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization**

Uddin and Begum Urdu-Hindustani Romanization is another system for Hindustani. It was proposed by Syed Fasih Uddin (late) and Quader Unissa Begum (late). As such is adopted by The First International Urdu Conference (Chicago) 1992, as "The Modern International Standard Letters of Alphabet for URDU-(HINDUSTANI) - The INDIAN Language script for the purposes of hand written communication, dictionary references, published material and Computerized Linguistic Communications (CLC)".

There are significant advantages to this transcription system:

- It provides a standard which is based on the original works undertaken at the Fort William College, Calcutta, India (established 1800), under John Borthwick Gilchrist (1789–1841), which has become the de facto standard for Hindustani during the late 1800.
- There is a one-to-one representation for each of the original Urdu and Hindi characters.
- Vowel sounds are written rather than being assumed as they are in the Urdu alphabet.
- Unlike Gilchrist's alphabet, which used many special non-ASCII characters, the proposed alphabet only utilizes ASCII.
- Since it is ASCII based, more resources and tools are available.
- Liberate Urdu–Hindustani language to be written and communicated utilizing all of the available standards and free us from Unicode conversion drudgery.
- Urdu – Hindustani with this character set fully utilizes paper and electronic print media.

#### **Countries where Urdu language has been spoken:**

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, India, Malawi, Mauritius, Nepal, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, the UAE, the UK and Zambia.<sup>[5]</sup>

## References

- [1] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0600.pdf>
- [2] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0750.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/UFB50.pdf>
- [4] <http://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/UFE70.pdf>
- [5] <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/urdu.htm>

## External links

- Download entire English to Urdu dictionary, editable, 24,000 words, urdu script ([http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English\\_to\\_Urdu\\_Dictionary](http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/411177/English_to_Urdu_Dictionary))
  - Urdu alphabet (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/urdu.htm>)
  - Urdu alphabet with Devanagari equivalents (<http://www.user.uni-hannover.de/nhtcapri/urdu-alphabet.html>)
  - NLA Urdu letters ([http://www.nla.gov.pk/urdu\\_letters\\_files/slide0001.htm](http://www.nla.gov.pk/urdu_letters_files/slide0001.htm))
  - Urdu alphabets (<http://www.urdustuff.com/forums/>)
  - Hugo's Urdu Alphabet Page (<http://users.skynet.be/hugocoolens/newurdu/newurdu.html>)
  - A resource for urdu calligraphy and script (<http://calligraphyislamic.com>)
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