

Latin Pronunciation Guide

[Ecclesiastical or Church Latin](#) follows essentially the same spelling and pronunciation rules as those of modern Italian, with some minor variations; eg. consonants are never held. (Classical Latin has its own rules.)

This is the pronunciation used when singing Ecclesiastical Latin. The pronunciation of Ecclesiastical Latin follows fairly straightforward rules as follows.

Consonants

c, when it comes before e, ae, oe, i or y, is pronounced like the 'ch' in 'charm': [IPA: /tʃ/](#).

cc, when it comes before e, ae, oe, i or y, is pronounced like 'tch': [IPA: /tʃ/](#)

sc, when it comes before e, ae, oe, i or y, is pronounced like the 'sh' in 'shelter': [IPA: /ʃ/](#)

g, when it comes before a, o, or u, is hard like the 'g' in 'gate' or 'gull': [IPA: /g/](#)

gn is pronounced like 'ny' in the English 'can you' or like the ñ in Spanish: [IPA: /ɲj/](#),

Otherwise g is like the 'g' in giant: [IPA: /dʒ/](#)

j is pronounced like the 'y' in 'yellow': [IPA: /j/](#)

qu is pronounced, as it nearly always is in English, like 'kw': [IPA: /kw/](#)

s has the sound of 's' in 'soft' or 'silly' - though when it comes between two vowels, it is closer to the sound of 'z' but softer, like the 's' in 'misery'.

ti, when it comes before a vowel and follows any letter except s, x, or t, is pronounced 'tsee': [IPA: /ts/](#)

th is pronounced like the English 't': [IPA: /t/](#)

x is pronounced like 'ks': [IPA: /ks/](#)

xc, when it comes before e, ae, oe, i, or y, is pronounced 'ksh': [IPA: /kʃ/](#)

h at the beginning of a word is a light whispered breath, eg. hosanna; but is silent when it is preceded by a word ending in a consonant, eg. in hac;

h in the middle of a word is often slightly heavier as in english; eg. nihil.

r is flipped when it is preceded by or followed by a vowel.

r is trilled when it is preceded by or followed by another consonant.

The other consonants are pronounced as in English.

Vowels

a, when short, is pronounced like the 'a' in 'sat': IPA: /æ/

a, when long, is pronounced like the 'a' in 'rather': IPA: /ɑ/

e, when short, is pronounced like the 'e' in 'red': IPA: /e/

e, when long, is pronounced like the 'ay' in 'say': IPA: /eɪ/

i, when short, is pronounced like the 'i' in 'bin': IPA: /ɪ/

i, when long, is pronounced like the 'ee' in 'reed' but shorter: IPA: /i:/

o, is always long, either pronounced like the 'ou' in 'ought': IPA: /ɔ/

or can also be pronounced like the 'o' in 'phone': IPA: /o/

u, when short, is pronounced like the 'u' in 'pull': IPA: /ʊ/

u, when long is pronounced like the 'oo' in 'moon': IPA: /u:/

y, which is always a vowel, is pronounced the same as the long 'i', i.e., like the 'ee' in 'reed' but shorter: IPA: /i:/

ae and **oe** are both pronounced like the 'ay' in 'say': IPA: /eɪ/

In the other combinations of vowels (**ai**, **au**, **ay**, **ei**, **eu**, **ui** and **ou**) each vowel keeps its own sound, though the first vowel is usually more prominent than the second.

Accent

Ecclesiastical Latin is pronounced with a stress accent. If a word has two syllables, the accent is almost always on the first (as in 'regnum', 'dona', 'pater', 'panis'). If a word has more than two syllables, the accent is on the second syllable from the end if the syllable is long (as in 'perdona', 'regina', 'divinus'), but if this syllable is short, the accent is on the third syllable from the end (as in 'loquitur', 'dominus', 'populus').

To illustrate the above rules here are some phrases commonly encountered in Ecclesiastical Latin with an indication of their correct pronunciation:

gloria in excelsis Deo - 'GLOR-i-a in eks-CHEL-sees DAY-o' – Glory to God in the highest.

descendit de coelis - 'day-SHEN-dit day CHAY-lees' - He came down from heaven.

pax hominibus bonae voluntatis - 'paks hom-IN-ib-us BON-ay vol-un-TAHT-is' - Peace to men of good will.

exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum - 'eks-PEK-to re-surr-EKS-ee-ON-em mort-u-AWE-rum' - I hope for the resurrection of the dead.