



Yankunytjatjara sounds and spelling

The Yankunytjatjara alphabet has 24 letters. Each letter corresponds to one sound. It is important to learn the Yankunytjatjara alphabet to accurately read and write the language. Here is the full alphabet.

m, w, y, n, l

p, k, t

ng, tj, ny, ly

t, n, !

r, r

a, i, u, aa, ii, uu

m

This is a sound that is like the English 'm' as in **mat**.

Example:

maku grub

w

This is a sound that is like the English 'w' as in **w**ing.

Example:

u**w**a yes

y

This is a sound like the English 'y' as in **y**ou, never like funny

Example:

ka**y**aya emu

n

This is a sound like the English 'n' as in **n**ever

Example:

ini name

l

This is a sound like the English 'l' as in **l**ike.

Example:

milt**l**ji fingernail, toenail

p

This is a sound that is in between an English 'p' as in **p**ark and 'b' as in **b**ig.

Example:

puu wood, plants

k

This is a sound that is in between an English 'k' as in **k**ite and 'g' as in **g**ate.

Example:

kapi water

t

This is a sound that is in between an English 't' as in **t**op and 'd' as in **d**og.

Example:

kutu really

ng

These two letters stand for one sound, like the 'ng' sound in the English **si**ng

Example:

ngura camp

tj

These two letters stand for one sound, similar to the English 'dg' as in **ju**dge.

Example:

tjamu grandfather

ny

These two letters stand for one sound as in English **ca**nyon. Never like the 'ny' sound in **po**ny.

Example:

puriny slowly, gently

ly

These two letters stand for one sound as in English **million**. Never like the 'ly' sound in **silly**.

Example:

ngalya this way

t

The underlined 't' represents a sound similar to that in the word **heart**, as said with a North American accent to emphasise the 'r' quality of the t.

Example:

tjuta many

n

The underlined 'n' represents a sound similar to that in the word **barn**, as said with a North American accent to emphasise the 'r' quality of the n.

Example:

tjana back (of body)

l

The underlined 'l' represents a sound similar to that in the word **curl**, as said with a North American accent to emphasise the 'r' quality of the l.

Example:

kalpi leaves

r

The underlined 'r' sounds like an English 'r', as in the words burrow or road

Example:

waru fire, firewood

r

The 'r' in Yankunytjatjara doesn't sound like the 'r' found in English. Rather, it is a tapped or rolled 'r', which is quick, light and almost sounds like the 'tt' in **butter** if said quickly.

Example:

waru black-faced wallaby

Vowels

a

This sounds like the English 'a' as in father, never like the 'a' in hat or ate.

Example:

wangkanyi talking

i

This sounds like the 'i' sound in an English word like pit, never like the 'i' sound found in a word like bite.

Example:

pira moon

u

This sounds like the 'u' sound in the English **put**. Never like **but** or **cup**.

Example:

kuka meat, eggs

Long vowels

aa

This sounds like the English 'a' as in **father** only longer, never like **hat** or **ate**.

Example:

kaaka crow

ii

This sounds like English **feel**, only longer. Never like **bite**.

Example:

nyii take this

uu

This sounds like the 'u' sound in the English **put**, only longer. Never like **but** or **cup**.

Example:

yuu windbreak