



Sound Transfer

Between **English &**
Pacific Languages



Sound transfer

Speech sounds vary greatly between languages. The shaded boxes below indicate English phonemes that do not exist in these Pacific languages. Speakers of these languages may need more time and practice to hear and pronounce these sounds clearly.

English consonant sounds	Tongan	Samoan	Cook Islands	Tuvaluan	Niuean	Tokelauan	Fijian	Papua NG	Kirabati
PLOSIVES OR STOPS									
/b/ as in <i>boy</i>									
/d/ as in <i>dog</i>									
/g/ as in <i>girl</i>									
/k/ as in <i>key</i>									
/p/ as in <i>pan</i>									
/t/ as in <i>tie</i>									
MIXED SOUNDS									
/ch/ as in <i>chair</i>									
/j/ as in <i>jam</i>									
NASAL SOUNDS									
/m/ as in <i>moon</i>									
/n/ as in <i>net</i>									
/ng/ as in <i>sing</i>									
CONTINUOUS SOUNDS (FRICATIVES)									
/f/ as in <i>fan</i>									
/h/ as in <i>hen</i>									
/s/ as in <i>sun</i>									
/sh/ as in <i>shoe</i>									
/th/ as in <i>thin</i>									
/th/ as in <i>this</i>									
/v/ as in <i>van</i>									
/z/ as in <i>zebra</i>									
/zh/ as in <i>vision</i>									
CONTINUOUS SOUNDS (APPROXIMANTS)									
/l/ as in <i>lion</i>									
/r/ as in <i>red</i>									
/w/ as in <i>wet</i>									
/y/ as in <i>yellow</i>									
CONSECUTIVE SOUNDS									
/k/ /s/ as in <i>fox</i>									
/k/ /w/ as in <i>queen</i>									

English vowel sounds	Tongan	Samoan	Cook Islands	Tuvaluan	Niuean	Tokelauan	Fijian	Papua N G	Kirabati
SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS									
/a/ as in <i>hat</i>									
/e/ as in <i>net</i>									
/i/ as in <i>sit</i>									
/o/ as in <i>hot</i>									
/u/ as in <i>cup</i>									
/oo/ as in <i>book</i>									
LONG VOWEL SOUNDS									
/ā/ as in <i>day</i>									
/ē/ as in <i>be</i>									
/ī/ as in <i>pie</i>									
/ō/ as in <i>road</i>									
/ū/ as in <i>few</i>									
/ōō/ as in <i>blue</i>									
OTHER VOWEL SOUNDS									
/air/ as in as in <i>chair</i>									
/ar/ as in <i>park</i>									
/ear/ as in <i>hear</i>									
/er/ as in <i>herd</i>									
/or/ as in <i>form</i>									
/ow/ as in <i>how</i>									
/oy/ as in <i>boy</i>									



Pacific alphabets and sounds

There are 43 sounds in English plus the two consecutive sounds /k//w/ (qu) and /k//s/ (x).

Tongan

These are the letters in the Tongan alphabet:

a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, s, t, u, v, ' (glottal stop).

There are 24 English sounds that are not present in Tongan.

Samoa

These are the letters in the Samoan alphabet:

a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, v, ' (glottal stop).

There are 28 English sounds that are not present in Samoan.

Cook Islands Māori

These are the letters in the Cook Islands Māori alphabet:

a, e, i, k, m, n, ng, o, p, r, t, u, v.

There are 28 English sounds that are not present in Cook Islands Māori.

Tuvaluan

These are the letters in the Tuvaluan alphabet:

a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, s, t, u, v.

There are 25 English sounds that are not present in Tuvaluan.

Niuean

These are the letters in the Niuean alphabet:

a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, v.

There are 28 English sounds that are not present in Niuean.

Tokelauan

These are the letters in the Tokelauan alphabet:

a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, t, u, v.

Some letters are pronounced differently from English — **f** is pronounced /h//w/ and **h** is pronounced /h//y/.

There are 31 English sounds that are not present in Tokelauan.

Fijian

These are the letters in the Fijian alphabet:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, y.

Some letters are pronounced differently from English — **b** is pronounced /m//b/, **c** is pronounced /th/, **d** is pronounced /n//d/, **q** is pronounced /n//g/, **j** is pronounced /ch/, and **t** can be pronounced /ch/ when it is before **i**.

There are 23 English sounds that are not present in Fijian.



New Guinea Pidgin

These are the letters in the Pidgin alphabet:

a, b, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, v, w, y.

There are 24 English sounds that are not present in New Guinea Pidgin.

Kiribati

These are the letters in the Kiribati alphabet:

a, b, e, i, k, m, n, ng, o, r, t, u, w.

Some letters are pronounced differently from English — **k** is pronounced /g/, **r** is rolled, **t** is pronounced /d/ and when **t** is followed by **i**, it is pronounced /s/.

There are 31 English sounds that are not present in Kiribati.

Ref: <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/publications-resources/resources/pacific-language-cards/>

