

## Serbian alphabet with pronunciation

### Orthography

Serbian uses mainly Cyrillic alphabet, but the Latin script is also used. So, you should try to learn both – starting with the Latin script. Unlike English, where the spelling is complicated, Serbian spelling is much easier, since orthography is largely phonemic. In Serbian **each letter corresponds to the distinctive sound**. For example, the letter 'g' is always pronounced as [g] (as in 'groom'), regardless where it appears in the word, unlike English where 'g' in 'groom' and 'George' are pronounced differently. We have separate letters for each sound.

### Serbian Sounds

The table below shows an inventory of Serbian sounds. I provide both the Latin and Cyrillic counterparts for each character.

There is a total of 30 letters (and sounds) in the Serbian alphabet: 5 vowels and 25 consonants.

- Note that **r** can be both a consonant and a vowel. For example, in the first syllable of the word, **Srbin** 'Serb', 'r' acts as a vowel. You can hear a super short and weak 'a' (like a schwa in the English word 'sister') followed by trilled [r].
- Stressed vowels tend to be pronounced more clearly and distinctly than their unstressed counterparts. Stressed vowels are designated with 'ː'
- In general, in two-syllable words, the main stress or accent is on the first syllable. In longer words, the stress may fall on any syllable except the last.
- Consonants: **t, d, s, z, l** are dental, which means that the tip of the tongue touches back of the upper teeth.
- Consonants: **p, t** are unaspirated at the beginning of the syllable. So, in this position, **p** and **t** sound like soft English **b** and **d** respectively.
- The following consonants sounds have no English equivalents: **ћ, љ, њ**. They are palatal sounds. The sound **ć/ћ** is a blend of the English 'ty', (as in the British pronunciation of 'dew') and 'ch' (as in 'church'). The sound **lj/љ** is a mix of 'l' and 'y', as in the British pronunciation of 'million'. Finally the sound **nj/њ** is a mix of 'n' and 'y', as in the English pronunciation of 'minion'.
- To hear either a Serbian or English pronunciation, just click over the words.

**Table 1: Serbian and English pronunciation**

<b>Aa / Aa</b>	<b>Bb / Бб</b>	<b>Cc / Цц</b>	<b>Čč / Чч</b>	<b>Ćć / Ћћ</b>
[a:] 'father'	[b] big	[ts] 'cats'	[ch] 'chocolate'	No English equivalent; [ty] 'tune' in B. English
'Ana'	'Beograd'	'cipela'	'čokolada'	Zlatić
<b>Dd / Дд</b>	<b>Dž/ Џџ</b>	<b>Đđ / Ђђ</b>	<b>Ee / Ee</b>	<b>Ff/ Фф</b>
[d] dog	[ ] 'George' [ ] 'junk'	[dj] 'juice'	[e] 'bed' [ei] 'make'	f] 'father'
'danas'	'džak'	'đak'	'ekser'	'Filip'
<b>Gg/ Гг</b>	<b>Hh / Хх</b>	<b>I i/ Ии</b>	<b>Jj / Јј</b>	<b>Kk/ Кк</b>
[g] god	[h] 'hot'	[i:] 'police' [i] 'fit'	[j] 'you' [j] 'boy'	[k] 'king'
'gibanica'	'hvala'	'ima'	'ja'	'kralj'
<b>Ll/ Лл</b>	<b>Lj lj/ Љљ</b>	<b>Mm/ Мм</b>	<b>Nn / Нн</b>	<b>Nj nj / Њњ</b>
[l] 'loop', 'cool'	[ly] 'million' (as in British English)	[m] 'mother'	[n] 'no'	[ny] 'onion' (n followed by short 'y')
'lopov'	'ljubav'	'mama'	'ne'	'njen'
<b>Oo/ Оо</b>	<b>Pp / Пп</b>	<b>Rr/ Рр</b>	<b>Ss / Сс</b>	<b>Š š/ Шш</b>
[o:] 'bowl' [o] 'pot'	[p] 'spot'	[r] 'berry'	[s] 'sun'	[ ] 'shop'
'ono'	'pismo'	'Srbin', 'trava'	'sunce'	'ništa'
<b>Tt / Тт</b>	<b>Uu/ Уу</b>	<b>Vv / Вв</b>	<b>Zz / Зз</b>	<b>Žž / Жж</b>
[t] 'tone'	[u:] 'food' [u] 'put'	[v] victory	[z] 'zero'	[ ] 'pleasure', 'Zhivago'
'tata'	'uvo'	'veliki'	'zec'	'život'