

Finnish Diction

Vowels

- Mostly “pure” vowels as in Italianate Latin.
- Doubled vowels (i.e., “aa” or “ää”) do not change the vowel when singing.
- Umlaut vowels (ä, ö, y) are more forward than in German.
- Diphthongs. For short notes, divide rhythmic values in half.
 - For long notes, spend more time on the more open vowel.
 - This is usually the first vowel, but for “ie”, “uo”, and “yö”, the second vowel is longer.
- Vowels that begin a word should be preceded by glottal stop.

written	sung	equivalent
a	[ɑ]	“ah”
e	[e]	as in “take”
i	[i]	“ee”
o	[o]	“oh”
u	[u]	“oo”

written	sung	equivalent
ä	[æ]	as in “sad”
ö	[ø]	German “ö”, British “hurt”
y	[y]	German “ü”

Consonants

- Many consonants are as in English, or Latin: b, d, f, m, n, s, v
- Consonants are unaspirated, as in Italian: k, p, t
- Some require mild consideration: c [k] — g [g] — j [j] — w [v] — x [ks] — z [ts]
- Doubled consonants are sustained longer, even if it breaks a *legato* line.
- If word ends with [e], an initial consonant in the next word is doubled.
 - Also applies between constituent roots of compound nouns, and before some suffixes.

written	sung	equivalent
h	[h]	at start of syllable
	[x]	at end of syllable, if vowel was a, o, u (as in German “ach”)
	[ç]	at end of syllable, if vowel was ä, e, i, ö, y (as in German “nicht”)
l	[l]	darker than English; almost, but not quite, sounding Russian
ng	[ŋŋ]	sustained as if a double consonant
nk	[ŋk]	applies even across word separations
r	[r]	rolled
š, sh	[ʃ]	as in “shy”
ž, zh	[ʒ]	as in “treasure”

Words

- Word stress is always the initial syllable.
- Secondary stresses occur in compound words, at the first syllable of each constituent root.

[Prepared by Gary D. Cannon, based on Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, “Finnish and IPA,” in *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal*, ed. Duane Richard Karna, Scarecrow Press, 2010]