

Latvian Diction Primer

Vowels

<i>written</i>	<i>sung</i>	<i>equivalent</i>
a, ā	[a]	“ah”
e	[æ]	as in “cat”
ē	[ɛ]	“eh”
i	[ɪ]	“ih”
ī	[i]	“ee”
o	[uoɑ]	“oo”–“oh”–“ah”
u	[u]	“oo”
ū	[ʊ]	as in “look”

- **Diphthongs** are given equal length.
- **Short vowels** are shortened in dotted rhythms.
- Under unusual circumstances, **e/ē** becomes **broad**, in which case they trade phonemes.

Consonants

- Many consonants are as in English, or Latin: b, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, z
- Between two short vowels: p, t, and k are doubled, as in Italian.
- An unvoiced consonant becomes voiced before a voiced consonant.
A voiced consonant becomes unvoiced before an unvoiced consonant.

<i>written</i>	<i>sung</i>	<i>equivalent</i>
c	[ts]	“ts”
č	[tʃ]	“tsh”, as in “church”
ġ	[j]	like “g”, but the back of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth
j	[j]	as an English “y”
ķ	[c]	like “g”, but forward; the tongue does not touch roof of the mouth. In other words, like a German ich-laut, but plosive.
ļ	[ʌ]	as in central consonant pair of “million”
ņ	[ɲ]	as in central consonant pair of “canyon”
r	[r]	trilled or rolled “r”
š	[ʃ]	“sh”
ž	[ʒ]	“zh”, as in central consonant of “seizure”

[Prepared by Gary D. Cannon, based in part on Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt, “Baltic Languages,” in *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal*, ed. Duane Richard Karna, Scarecrow Press, 2010]