

Vowels

Sound	Description of the Sound	Finnish Examples Click on word to hear sound
a	like a in <i>father</i>	banaani , radio
e	like e in <i>set</i>	tee , englanti
i	like i in <i>sit</i>	Helsinki , viisi
o	like o in <i>toy</i>	soolo
u	like u in <i>book</i> (but lips more pursed)	ruusu , puu
y	like German ü or French u ; i.e. like i but with tightly rounded lips	hyvä , yksi
ä	like a in <i>hat</i>	päivää
ö	like German ö or French eu ; i.e. like e but with more strongly rounded lips	öljy , söpö

Consonants

Sound	Description of Sound	Finnish Examples
b	like b in <i>ball</i>	banaani , baari
d	like d in <i>do</i>	kahdeksan , yhdeksän
f	like f in <i>fan</i>	filmi , filosofia
g	like g in <i>guide</i>	geologia
h	like h in <i>hen</i>	Helsinki
j	like y in <i>yes</i>	joo , marja
k	like k in <i>pumpkin</i> (softer k than in <i>kit</i> , no aspiration)	kahvi , markka
l	like l in <i>let</i>	litra , nolla
m	like m in <i>moon</i>	markka
n	like n in <i>no</i>	neljä , numero
ng	like ng in <i>singing</i> but longer	Helsingissä
p	like p in <i>spin</i> (softer p than in <i>pin</i> , no aspiration)	päivää , piano
r	like Spanish r (slightly rolled), r should not affect the quality of the adjacent vowels	radio
s	like s in <i>stop</i>	soolo , viisi
t	like t in <i>stop</i> (softer t than in <i>top</i> , no aspiration)	tee
v	like v in <i>van</i>	viisi

Length

The distinction between *long* and *short* consonant and vowels is very important in Finnish. Long sounds are indicated by doubling a letter. For an idea of the difference between long and short sounds, compare the p sounds in *top part* with *to part* or the vowels in *feed* and *fit*. In Finnish, a difference in length can make a difference in meaning.

Diphthongs

Finnish has a large number of diphthongs, i.e. combinations of two different vowels in one syllable. A few Finnish diphthongs are very much like diphthongs in English, others are less familiar.

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ai	like ai in <i>aisle</i>	laiva
ei	like ey in <i>hey</i>	hei
oi	like oi in <i>voice</i>	moi
ui	like uy in Spanish <i>muy</i>	uida
yi	resembles ui in French <i>suis</i> but Finnish y slightly less rounded than French u	kysyi
äi	ä followed by a short i in the same syllable	päivää
öi	ö followed by a short i in the same syllable	töihin
au	resembles ow in <i>cow</i>	auto
eu	e followed by a short u in the same syllable	leuka
iu	i followed by a short u in the same syllable	viulu
ou	like o in <i>so</i> but more rounded	koulu
äy	ä followed by a short y in the same syllable	täynnä
öy	ö followed by a short y in the same syllable	pöytä
ie	like ie in Spanish <i>bien</i>	mies
uo	like uo in Italian <i>buona</i>	Suomi
yö	y followed by a short ö in the same syllable	Hyvää yötä