

Shavian In a Day

You may be thinking that learning something new is hard and isn't worth the time it takes. But as you will see, that is not the case. Learning Shavian is fun and, once you have it down, it will make your written life a whole lot easier.

Wait, what?

Shavian is an alphabet that was designed in the early 1960s at the request of George Bernard Shaw, the author of *Pygmalion*, *Androcles and the Lion*, and quite a few other things. The Shavian alphabet was designed by Kingsley Read, who wanted to make it unique, easily recognizable, and very functional.

Erm, why?

The way we write English most of the time is very, very inefficient and can be quite confusing to learn. The current system also limits functional vocabulary because many times people will have heard a word, but do not know its spelling; or will have read a word with a misleading spelling and fear mispronouncing it.

Shavian has no such problems. What you see is what you hear, and what you say is what you write.

Alright, how?

ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵀ	ᵈ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
pip	bob	tot	did	cake	gag	thin	this	fife	vat	sis	zone
ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ
she	Zhang	cheer	judge	yes	win	sing	he	little	right	mile	near
ᵀ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ	ᵇ
it	eat	end	ate	as	ice	setup	upper	on	oak	would	boot
ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ	ᶜ
out	oil	father	awe	far	more	air	fur	other	ear	lan	you

Extra notes: To save space, four common words are abbreviated all the time to one letter each.

1 (to)

q (the)

r (of)

ʌ (and)

/r/ is only used in unstressed positions and in indefinite articles (“**a** way”, “**an** elephant”) /ʀ/ is used when the stress falls on the sound.

/o/ is used when unstressed, /ʊ/ is used when stressed.

/i/ makes two sounds, depending on its location. If it’s at the end of a word, it represents a sound like at the end of “family” (Jʃɪci). Everywhere else it represents a sound like at the beginning of “it” (iɪ).

The first step to learning Shavian is to forget everything that you have been taught about writing English, unless you have some experience in phonetics. When reading words in Shavian, it doesn’t hurt to sound them out (even if it’s just in your head). When writing in Shavian, think of the word you want to write and sound it out. Writing will take a while at first, but within a matter of hours you’ll be wondering why you didn’t learn this way in the first place. It also helps to go back and read what you’ve written.