

Before you start, read [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typeface\\_anatomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typeface_anatomy) so you understand the terminology.

Notes on n-head/o-head descenders etc can be found after the table further down the document.

Letter	Sound	Looks like (typed lowercases only, unless stated otherwise)	Transliteration
U u	Normal 'a' as in arm More like 'ah' than 'ar'	Some say it looks like a 'w' with curved vertices, but for technical and handwriting purposes, it is better to think of it as 3 curved 'l's stuck together	a
F f	Normal 'b' as in big	See: <b>n-head descenders</b>	b
G g	Normal 'g' as in grey or Gary NOT as in range	See: <b>o-head descenders</b>	g
D d	Normal 'd' as in danger	See: <b>n-head descenders</b>	d
E e	'ye' as in yes (beginning of words) 'eh' as in when (within words)	See: <b>the 't' group</b>	ye or e
Z z	Normal 'z' as in Zara or zoo	Kind of looks like an English 'q' with a crossbar at the bottom Also see: <b>o-head descenders</b>	z
E e	'eh' as in when Used on its own or at the beginning of words	See: <b>the 't' group</b>	e
R r	'uh' as in about or the, or 'er' without stressing the r as in sir Written at the ends of words and sounded but not written between consonants within words	See: <b>n-head descenders</b>	@ or an upside-down e
T t	Soft 't' as in turtle	An English 'p' but the bowl is like a spiral instead See: <b>sound pairs</b>	t
J j	French 'j' as in je or j'ai or 's' as in vision	See: <b>bowls with ascenders</b>	zh
I i	'ee' as in cheese	See: <b>ascender-descenders</b>	i
L l	Normal 'l' as in loopy	An English 'l' that hangs below the baseline instead of rising above the x-height (L as a descender, not ascender)	l
J j	Spanish 'j' as in Jose So, like an 'h' but with the back of your tongue pressed to the back of your throat	See: <b>ascender-descenders</b>	kh or sometimes x, which is the same sound but in the Russian alphabet
S s	Sharp 'sts' as in itsy or pizza	See: <b>bowls with ascenders</b>	ts or sts
K k	Sharp 'k' as in skin or skipping	Similar to the number 4 The left stroke is a straight ascender and the right stroke is a straight descender with an arch joining the two	k
H h	Normal 'h' as in hot	An English 'h'	H
Dz dz	'dz' as in hands	See: <b>bowls with ascenders</b>	dz
R r	French 'r' as in Paris or pardon So grind/press the back of your tongue to the roof of your mouth by the uvula to create a 'gh' sound	See: <b>n-head descenders</b>	gh
Tch tch	Somewhere between titchy and tinge Like a sharp 'ch' and 'j' combined	See: <b>bowls with ascenders</b>	tsh or tch
M m	Normal 'm' as in moon	See: <b>letter pairs</b>	m

Յ յ	Normal 'y' as in youth but not like in jelly	An English 'j' without the dot Or a mirrored 'L' descender	y
Ն ն	Normal 'n' as in necrosis	See: <b>letter pairs</b>	n
Շ շ	Normal 'sh' as in sheep	See: <b>squiggly descenders</b>	sh
Ո ո	'vo' as in volume (beginning of words) 'o' as in hollow (within words)	An English 'n'	vo or o
Չ չ	Normal 'ch' like in cheese	See: <b>squiggly descenders</b>	ch
Պ պ	Sharp 'p' as in speak	An 'ա' but with a descender on the last stem Also see: <b>sound pairs</b>	p
Ջ յ	Normal 'j' like in jump	See: <b>squiggly descenders</b>	j
Ռ ռ	Rolled/trilled Spanish 'r' that needs many drunken attempts to figure out how to pronounce	See: <b>letter pairs</b>	r or rr
Ս ս	Normal 's' as in sing	An English 'u' <b>Tip:</b> maybe think of 'yes' to remember that the u (you) is actually an s sound?	s
Վ վ	Normal 'v' like in very	See: <b>ascender-descenders</b>	v
Տ տ	Sharp 't' as in stick	See: <b>sound pairs</b>	t
Ր ր	Somewhere between 'th' as in there and 'r' keeping the tongue straight and floating (i.e. the tip of the tongue doesn't touch anything, neither the roof of the mouth nor the teeth, but stays close to the front of the mouth)	See: <b>n-head descenders</b>	r
Ց գ	'ts' as in cats	An English 'g'	ts or c
ՈՒ ու	'oo' as in boot 'ou' as in you	See: <b>letter pairs</b>	u
Փ փ	Normal 'p' as in pencil	See: <b>sound pairs</b>	p
Ք ք	Like 'k' for kitten or 'c' for cat or 'q' for quit	An English 'p' with a crossbar cutting through the descender See: <b>o-head descenders</b>	k or c but usually q
Լ լ	'yev' alone or at the beginning of words 'ev' within words Sound-wise it is a combination of ե + վ Լ is also a word on its own, meaning 'and'	See: <b>the 't' group</b>	yev or ev
Օ օ	Normal 'o' as in solo	An English 'o' Also see: <b>newest additions</b>	o
Ֆ ֆ	Normal 'f' as in football	The mirror image of a treble clef (the swirly music notation) without the inner spiral in the bottom curve. Also see: <b>newest additions</b>	f

### Newest Additions

Լ օ ֆ – these three letters are the newest additions to the Armenian alphabet, added to make foreign words easier.

**n-Head Descenders:** ր ղ ճ ղ ղ

So think of **n** as the foundation for these.

- Add a descender line to the n’s left stem: ր (r)
  - and a crossbar at the baseline: ր (b)
  - or a crossbar at the bottom of the descender: ղ (@)

Or

- Add a descender line to the n’s right stem
  - and a crossbar at the baseline: ղ (d)
  - or a crossbar at the bottom of the descender: ղ (gh)

Just as **b** and **d** can be seen as opposites, so too can **ր** and **ղ**

NB: All crossbars are added to the right-hand side of lines and do not cross over the line, unless stated otherwise.

**o-Head Descenders:** գ զ ք

Think of **o** as the foundation for these.

- Add a descender to the right side of the o and
  - add a crossbar at the baseline: գ (g)
  - or a crossbar at the bottom of the descender: զ (z)
- Add a descender to the left side of the o
  - and a crossbar just below the baseline that cuts through the descender: ք (q)

**Squiggly Descenders:** շ ջ ջ

շ (sh) – looks like an elongated ‘2’ that hangs below the line, but can also look like a reversed and elongated ‘s’ that also hangs below the line

ջ (ch) – similar to շ but the curve of the top half faces the other way and is more angular. Also looks vaguely similar to a mirror image of the tailed ‘z’(զ).

ջ (j) – this is essentially a closed bowl with a curved descender, but depending on the font used, this can just look like a շ with a closed bowl at the top or it can be quite narrow and have a kink in the left side of the bowl (ջ). It reminds me of a violin, but mainly because it is the first letter of the Armenian word for violin (jutak).

**Bowls with Ascenders:** ժ ծ ձ ճ

The main difference between these hateful letters (because I am always mixing these up) is the shape of their bowl and the number, length, and direction of their ascenders (although I do not think they are technically ascenders, but it’s the best way to describe those lines here).

Slight differences emerge with different fonts, so I have included an example for each, but I have described their fundamental elements (NB: by left and right ascenders, I am referring to what side they are currently on, not the side of the bowl that they came out of):

ծ / ծ (sts) – round bowl + 2 ascenders (left is the longest and points north/north-west, right is short and can point east or north-east depending on font)

đ / đ (zh) – round bowl with a straight right side + 2 ascenders (left is longest and points upwards, directly above the straight side of the bowl, right is short and always points directly to the side)

č / č (tch) – bottom heavy, ‘**č**’-style bowl + 2 ascenders (Right is longest and points north-east, left is short and points north-west)

ǰ / ǰ (dz) – bottom heavy, ‘**č**’-style bowl + 1 ascender (kinked, like a lightning bolt)

### Ascender-Descenders: ħ ħu ũ

For these, think of **h** as the foundation.

- add a descender: ħ (i)
- and add an x-height stem: ħu (kh)
- or flip ħ both horizontally and vertically and add a crossbar to the bottom of the descender: ũ (v) (although it might be easier to think of this as a **u** with an ascender and descender added to the right stem and a crossbar added to the bottom of the descender)

### Letter Pairs (look similar):

ŭ & ŭ – These both have **u** bases with an ascender and squiggle at the top of the ascender

- Ascender and squiggle on the **u**’s left stem: ŭ (n)
- Ascender and squiggle on the **u**’s right stem: ŭ (m)

n & nĭ – These both have **n** bases with a little protruding squiggly or straight (depending on the font) crossbar on the baseline of the right stem, but

n (rr) – sometimes has a small inwards dip at the bottom of the right stem

nĭ (u) – has a short vertical line between the n and the baseline crossbar. When typed, the line and crossbar appear as ĭ, and the whole letter is typed separately as n + ĭ

### Sound Pairs (soft and sharp versions of the same sound):

þ & un, ũ & ũ

These are technically both sound pairs and letter pairs:

þ (t) & un (t) are the soft and sharp versions of **t**, respectively

ũ (p) & ũ (p) are the soft and sharp versions of **p**, respectively

**But** it is the sharp **t** (un) and soft **p** (ũ) that look alike

- simply add an ascender and descender to the middle of the sharp **t** to create a soft **p**

The descriptions for the soft **t** and sharp **p** have been covered in the table.

### The ‘t’ Group

For these, think of **t** as the base and then

- add a tiny little line pointing upwards to the end of the outstroke: ĩ (ye/e)
- make the t more angular and point the end of the outstroke downwards: ĩ (e)
- take the ĩ, remove the crossbar and make the right stem taller: ĩ (yev/ev)