

Shavian Guide

This guide provides a practical overview of the Shavian alphabet, a purely phonemic writing system designed by Kingsley Read to fulfill the testamentary wishes of George Bernard Shaw. Use this as a quick reference to letter forms, structural mechanics, and core spelling rules.

The Shavian Character System

The Shavian alphabet is an alternative, purely phonetic script for English. The characters are classified into four structural types: **Tall** (voiceless consonants extending above the x-height), **Deep** (voiced consonants extending below the baseline), **Short** (vowels and liquids fitting within the x-height), and **Compound** (ligatures combining vowels and the R sound).

Tall & Deep Consonant Pairs

Consonants are organized in voiceless and voiced pairs, where a Tall voiceless character flips or rotates to form its corresponding Deep voiced character.

Sound Pair	Tall (Voiceless)	Deep (Voiced)
/p/ – /b/	Ɑ (peep)	Ɱ (bib)
/t/ – /d/	ⱦ (tot)	Ⱨ (dead)
/k/ – /g/	ⱪ (kick)	ⱬ (gag)
/f/ – /v/	Ᵽ (fee)	Ɽ (vow)
/θ/ – /ð/	ⱥ (thigh)	ⱦ (they)
/s/ – /z/	Ⱨ (so)	ⱨ (zoo)
/ʃ/ – /ʒ/	Ⱪ (sure)	ⱪ (measure)
/tʃ/ – /dʒ/	ⱬ (church)	Ɱ (judge)
/h/ – /w/	Ɒ (he)	Ⱳ (woe)

Vowels, Liquids, and Compounds

Shavian standard spelling maintains the vowel count of British Received Pronunciation while retaining the rhoticity (R-pronouncing) common in North American English. Short characters and compound ligatures handle the vocalic core of the script.

Short Characters: Liquids, Nasals & Vowels

Type	Characters
Liquids/Nasals	Ᵽ (/l/ loll), Ɽ (/m/ mime), ⱦ (/n/ nun), Ⱨ (/ŋ/ hung), ⱨ (/r/ roar), Ⱪ (/j/ yea)
Short Vowels	ⱪ (/ɪ/ if), ⱬ (/e/ egg), Ɱ (/æ/ ash), Ɒ (/ə/ ado), Ⱳ (/ʌ/ up), ⱴ (/ɒ/ on), ⱶ (/ʊ/ wool)
Long Vowels	ⱷ (/i:/ eat), ⱸ (/ei/ age), ⱹ (/ɑ:/ ah), ⱺ (/ɔ:/ awe), ⱻ (/oʊ/ oak), ⱼ (/u:/ ooze)
Diphthongs	ⱽ (/aɪ/ ice), Ȿ (/ɔɪ/ oil), Ɀ (/aʊ/ out)

Compound Ligatures

Eight ligatures combine rhotic (r) vowels and common vocalic sound clusters:

- **ɹ** (/ɑːr/ are)
- **ɔ** (/ɔːr/ or)
- **ɑ** (/ɛər/ air)
- **ʊ** (/ɜːr/ err)
- **ɒ** (/ər/ array)
- **ɐ** (/ɪər/ ear)
- **r** (/iə/ or /jə/ Ian)
- **ɰ** (/juː/ yew)

Core Spelling & Voicing Rules

Shavian spelling strictly follows sound, meaning orthodox English orthography and silent letters must be entirely disregarded.

Voicing Consistency in Clusters

You must strictly maintain voicing assimilation within consonant clusters. Never pair a voiceless (Tall) character with a voiced (Deep) character in the same blend.

- **Exile:** Pronounced /ɛgzairl/, so it must be written with voiced characters as ᠡᠭᠵᠠᠢᠷᠯ (NOT ᠡᠭᠵᠢᠷᠯ).
- **Exposed:** Pronounced /ɪkspəʊzd/, so it is written as ᠢᠭᠰᠡᠭᠡᠷᠠᠯ, ensuring the /k/ and /s/ stay voiceless, and the final /z/ and /d/ stay voiced.
- **Past Tenses & Plurals:** Pay close attention to word endings. Plurals that sound like a Z take ᠵ (e.g., "logs|ᠤᠯᠭᠵ"), and past tense verbs ending in a T sound take 1 (e.g., "mixed|ᠮᠢᠭᠢᠳ1").

Abbreviations and Proper Nouns

The Big Four Abbreviations

To maximize reading speed, four highly frequent grammatical words are **always abbreviated as single letters**:

- **the** $\rightarrow \theta$
- **of** $\rightarrow \tau$
- **and** $\rightarrow \wedge$
- **to** $\rightarrow 1$

Note: "Too" and "two" are written in full as 1λ

The Namer Dot

Because Shavian does not feature upper- and lower-case letter forms, proper nouns are designated using a **Namer Dot** (•) placed immediately before the word.

- **Personal Names:** **Ջորջ Բեռնարդ Շո** (*George Bernard Shaw*), **Տ. Տմ** (*Mr. Smith*)
- **Geographic Locations:** **Լոնդոն** (*London*), **Ամերիկա** (*America*)
- **Languages & Nationalities:** **Անգլերեն** (*English*), **Շավերեն** (*Shavian*)
- **Acronyms & Spoken Initialisms:** **ՆԱՏՕ** (*NATO*), **ԲԲԸ** (*BBC*)