

Drum Publication Group
Transliteration of common, spoken Sgaw Karen to English

Consonants	
က	g
ခ	k
ဂ	gh
ဃ	hk
င	ng
စ	s
ဆ	hs
ရှ	sh
ည	ny
တ	t
ထ	ht
ဒ	d
န	n
ပ	p
ဖ	hp
ဘ	b
မ	m
ယ	y
ရ	r
လ	l
ဝ	w
ဆ	th
ဟ	h
အ	(not written)
ဇ	ahh

Consonant Clusters	
ၼ	r
ခ့	ch
က့	j
ၼ	l
ၼ	y
မ့	mw
ဆ့	hsg
ဖ့	hpw
ဖ့	sg
ပ့	pw
ဘ့	bw
ၼ	w
ၼ	gh
ခိ	di
မိ	maw










Vowels	
ၼ	uh
ၼ	ah
ၼ	eh
ၼ	ay
ၼ	ee
ၼ	oo
ၼ	u
ၼ	oh
ၼ	aw
no vowel	a







Tones	
ၼ	<u>a</u>
ၼ	ḁ
ၼ	ä
ၼ	à
ၼ	ā

Pronunciation

Consonants and consonant clusters




Some, but unfortunately not all, consonant sounds in Karen have a fairly close equivalent sound in English.

ဂ	g		like g as in gate
ခ	k		like k as in kite
င	ng		like ng as in sing
ရှ	sh		like sh as in shoe
တ	d		like d as in door
န	n		like n as in nest
ပ	b		like b as in ball
မ	m		like m as in mile
ယ	y		like y as in yellow


ရ or ဝ	r		like r as in rat
လ	l		like l as in lake
ဝ	w		like w as in watch
ဆ	th		like th as in thanks
ဟ	h		like h as in house
ဇ			silent consonant, used to take on the sound of the accompanying vowel
ဆ	ch		like ch as in church

Aspirated and non aspirated sounds.




Aspirated sounds, (consonants with a "huh" sound in them) are common in English and there are examples in Karen. It is important to recognize these sounds as aspirates, because some Karen letters also have an non aspirated version, which is not the case in English. In keeping with the most commonly used forms of transliterating Karen to English, these aspirated which also have an un-aspirated version, are written here with the equivalent English consonant preceded with the letter 'h'.

∞	hs		like s as in sight
∞	ht		like t as in truth
∞	hp		like p as in pie





The unaspirated versions of these sounds are written here a the single letter

∞	s		pronounced like a sharp s with the "uh" sound removed
---	----------	---	--

Also, some of the sounds can best be described as somewhere better two sounds found in English.







∞	t		begans to be pronounced like a sharp t with the "uh" sound removed and ends with a sound more like d
∞	p		begans to be pronounced like a sharp b with the "uh" sound removed and ends with a sound more like p
∞	j		begans to be pronounced like a sharp j with the "uh" sound removed and ends with a sound more like ch

For the following sounds, you will need to work with a native speaker of Karen to get them correct.




∞ or ∞	gh		A fricative/guttural sound like "r" in French. Something like " g-er-ah " said together quickly
∞	hk		A guttural sound like the German "ch" as in "ach".
∞	ny		sounds like " nee y_ " said quickly using the vowel sound that follows the y . As the Spanish "ñ", in "España".
∞	ahh		like ahh , the sound you would make after sitting down in a comfortable chair after a long days work only shorter.

Consonant clusters



Generally, these are pronounced by combining the previous listed sounds together but said quickly. Many will dispute these transliterations but our aim here is to simplify and give non native speakers a start at communicating in Karen language.

ᵛ	mw		sounds something like "m-w" said quickly
ᵛᵛ	hsg		sounds something like "hs-g" said quickly. <i>(For more advanced learners, hsg would be more accurate)</i>
ᵛ	hpw		sounds something like "hp-w" said quickly. <i>(For more advanced learners, hpgh would be more accurate)</i>
ᵛ	sg		sounds something like "s-g" said quickly. <i>(For more advanced learners, sg would be more accurate)</i>
ᵛ	pw		sounds something like "p-w" said quickly. <i>(For more advanced learners, pgh would be more accurate)</i>
ᵛᵛ	bw		sounds something like "b-w" said quickly. <i>(For more advanced learners, bgh would be more accurate)</i>

The following are used in combination with single consonants and always follow the accompanying sound.











ᵛ	w		sounds something like "w" said quickly
ᵛ	r		Like r as in rat
ᵛ	gh		A fricative/guttural sound like "r" in French. Something like "g-er-ah" said together quickly

The two combinations below are always pronounced as follows.

ᵛ	di		sounds like the letter "D"
ᵛ	maw		as read

Vowels

The following are the basic vowel sounds when spoken with the "neutral tone". The length and pitch of the sounds will of course vary according to the tone of each word.






ᵛ	uh		pronounced with k', t', n', p', m', y', l', s'. Similar to a weak a in quota or the "ə" swah sound
ᵛ	ah		like a in star
ᵛ	eh		like ai as in air or in the letter A
ᵛ	ay		like ay as in day
ᵛ	ee		like ee as in see
ᵛ	oo		like oo as in too
ᵛ	u		like u as in put
ᵛ	oh		like oe as in toe
ᵛ	aw		like aw as in law
(with no vowel)	a		like a as in "artist"

Tones

Sgaw Karen is a tonal language with basically six different tones represented by five tone marks and a lack of a mark. Every syllable may be pronounced in the six different tones of voice, the meaning varying according to the tone in which it is pronounced.

As and example: နှဲ သဲ = Frog  နှဲ သဲ = Navel 

In the phonetic transcription devised for this phrase book, the tonal system is represented by the following tone marks above or below the vowel of each syllable, (the vowel eh is used as an example with the consonant m):

Tone	Pitch	Karen	Symbol	e.g.	e.g. word	sound
low tone	Normal length, low tone	–၍	<u>eh</u>	မဲ meh	အမဲ aw meh	
low-short tone	Fairly short, low tone, ending with a glottal stop	–ၵ	ḗh	မဲ meh	မဲသဲ meh thá	
short tone	very short, high-mid tone, ending with a glottal stop – a bit like: “Ah!, I forgot my glasses.”	–း	ëh	မဲး meh	မဲးမုခိ meh mu kòh	
falling tone	falling tone	–ၶ	èh	မဲ meh	မဲသူမဲဂီ meh thoo mēh ghāw	
long tone	long, mid tone	–ၷ	ēh	မဲ meh	မဲတဲ meh tā	
no tone	Slightly rising tone	-	eh	မဲ meh	မဲတဲ meh tā	