

Generic African Pronunciation

Vowels

a – as a in father (aga)
e – as e in exit (ema)
i – as ea in eat (bina)
o – as o in order (bona)
u – as oo in ook (bula)

Consonants

b – as b in bat (bana)
d – like d in do (dira)
f – as f in farm (fofa)
g – as ch in loch (goga)
h – as h in ham (huduga)
j – as j in job (ja)
k – as c in clerical (kopa)
l – as l in list (lema)
m – as m in mum (mae)
n – as n in now (nna)
ng – as ng in linger (ngaka)
p – as p in pull (pitsa)
r – as r in rope (reka)
s – as s in say (sala)
š – as tion in station (seteišene) [s with an inverted circumflex]
šw – as sw in swift (mašwi)
t – as t in pot (tau)
tšh – as ch in church (ntšha)
w – as w in well (wena)
y – as y in yearn (yola)

(c, q, v, x and z are only found in loan words – see below for information on the Zulu click sounds: c, q and x.)

To pronounce the dental click, c, press the tip of the tongue against the front teeth, and then withdraw it sharply, at the same time dropping the back of the tongue from the soft palate. This sound may be compared with the sound you would make when sucking something from your upper teeth, or the sound of sympathy when someone says ts-ts.

To pronounce the palatal click, q, press the tip of the tongue against the front palate and then follow with the same procedure as with c. This sound may be compared with the sound a person would make when trying to imitate the sound of a cork being pulled from a bottle.

To pronounce the lateral click, x, place the tip of the tongue against the hard palate as if you were going to produce the n sound. Press one side of the tongue against the side of the jaw. Then, without shifting the tip of the tongue from the hard palate, withdraw the side sharply from the jaw. This sound differs from the other two in that the release takes place at the side(s) of the tongue and not at the front. This sound is sometimes made to express regret or to spur on a horse.