

1.1 Yr wyddor Gymraeg / The Welsh alphabet:

Mae gan yr wyddor Gymraeg 28 llythyren / The Welsh alphabet has 28 letters:

A

B

C

Ch

D

Dd

E

F

Ff

G

Ng

H

I

L

Ll

M

N

O

P

Ph

R

Rh

S

T

Th

U

W

Y

Llythyren Letter	Enw'r Llythyren Name of Letter	Symbolau'r IPA IPA symbols
a	<i>â</i>	/a, a: /
b	<i>bî</i>	/b /
c	<i>èc</i>	/k /
ch	<i>èch</i>	/x /
d	<i>dî</i>	/d /
dd	<i>èdd</i>	/ð /
e	<i>ê</i>	/ε, ε: /
f	<i>èf</i>	/v /
ff	<i>èff</i>	/f /
g	<i>èg</i>	/g /
ng	<i>èng</i>	/ŋ /
h	<i>âets,</i>	/h /

i	<i>î</i>	/ɪ, i:, j/
l	<i>èl</i>	/l/
ll	<i>ell</i>	/t/
m	<i>èm</i>	/m/
n	<i>en</i>	/n/
o	<i>ô</i>	/ɔ, o:/
p	<i>pî</i>	/p/
ph	<i>ffî</i>	/f/
r	<i>èr</i>	/r/
rh	<i>rhî, rhô</i>	/r̥/
s	<i>ès</i>	/s/
t	<i>tî</i>	/t/
th	<i>èth</i>	/θ/
u	<i>û</i>	/ɨ, ɨ:/ (North), /ɪ, i:/ (South)
w	<i>ŵ</i>	/ʊ, u:, w/
y	<i>ŷ</i>	/ɨ, ɨ:, ə/ (North), /ɪ, i:, ə/ (South)

Although not part of the traditional Welsh alphabet, by now **J, j** is also accepted as a Welsh letter, coming between **I, i** and **L, l** in the alphabet.

1.2 Llafariaid a chytseiniaid / Vowels and consonants:

Seven letters of the Welsh alphabet function as vowels, namely:

A, a	E, e	I, i	O, o	U, u	W, w	Y, y
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Of these, two letters, namely **I, i** and **W, w** are also **semivowels**. For example, **i** is a vowel in the word **inc** but a semivowel in the word **iâr**. In the same way, **w** is a vowel in the word **wrth** and a semivowel in the word **wal**. Vowels can be short or long.

Examples of short vowels:

tan	pen	cip	ffon	sut	dwrn	bryn
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Examples of long vowels:

tân	tref	pib	ffôn	crud	dŵr	dyn
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Sometimes a circumflex (^) is used to represent a long vowel, but not every time.

Two vowels can be combined to form a **diphthong**.

Examples of diphthongs:

ae	ai	au	ei	ew	eu	ey
iw	oe	oi	ow	wy	ŵy	yw

Every other letter in the Welsh alphabet is a **consonant**, but it can be seen that some of these 'letters', e.g. **ch, ng, ph** etc, consist of more than one symbol:

B, b	C, c	CH, ch	D, d	DD, dd	F, f	FF, ff
G, g	NG, ng	H, h	L, l	LL, ll	M, m	N, n
P, p	PH, ph	R, r	RH, rh	S, s	T, t	TH, th

One of the features of Welsh consonants is that they always represent one sound only.

There are three letters in Welsh, namely **dd ff** ac **ll**, which include doubled symbols but are treated as individual letters. Apart from these, the only letters which double (and are treated as two letters) are **n** and **r**.

1.3 Treigladau / Mutations

Under certain circumstances, some consonants in Welsh undergo a change known as **mutation**. The causes of these changes will be learned as we come across them, but below is a list of the consonants which are affected.

Initial consonant	Soft mutation	Nasal mutation	Aspirate mutation
C	G	Ngh	Ch
P	B	Mh	Ph
T	D	Nh	Th
G	Is dropped	Ng	
B	F	M	
D	Dd	N	
M	F		
Ll	L		
Rh	R		

1.4 Talfyriadau / Abbreviated forms

Many words have abbreviated forms in Welsh, but here are some of the most common and most important:

The word for **and** in Welsh is **ac**. For example, **apple and orange** in Welsh is **afal ac oren**. In front of consonants (with some exceptions), **ac** is shortened to **a**. For example, **bechgyn a merched** (*boys and girls*), **pysgod a sglodion** (*fish and chips*).

The word **ag** in Welsh can mean **with** or **as**, depending on circumstance. In front of a vowel, this word abbreviates to **â** (note the circumflex distinguishing it from **a**).

Mor wyn ag eira	As white as snow
Mor ddu â glo	As black as coal

The definite article in Welsh (i.e. the word for **the**) is **yr**. However, this can shorten either way to **y** or **'r**.

Yr is used before a vowel and the letter **h**, e.g.

Yn yr ysgol (in the school)
Yn yr haf (in the summer)

Y is used before all other consonants, e.g.

Yn y tŷ (in the house)

'r is used after a vowel, regardless of what follows, e.g.:

Yr ysgol a'r tŷ
(the school and the house)

The word **yn** has two functions in Welsh. One is to translate the English word **in** as in the examples above. The other function has no translatable meaning in English and will be discussed further below. This **yn** shortens to **'n** after a vowel.

1.5 Mae

The word **mae** is a form of the present tense in Welsh (equivalent to **is**, **are** or **does**). One important difference between Welsh and English is that in Welsh the verb (usually) comes before the **subject** (the person in question). For example:

Mae Tom yma	<i>Tom is here</i>
Mae Tom yn yr ysgol	<i>Tom is in the school</i>
Mae Sian gartref	<i>Siân is home</i>

Mae is the word that means **is** in the above.

It can also be seen after question words such as **sut** (*how*) and **ble** (*where*):

Sut mae? (*how is it? i.e. how's things?*)

Ble mae Tom? (*where is Tom?*)

1.6 Yn

There are two **yn** words in Welsh. Although spelt the same (sometimes), they are not the same word.

The first is the word for **in**. We have seen some examples above, but this **yn** causes nasal mutation (thankfully, only two words do this – the other one is **fy** which means **my**). **Yn** also alters its shape to match words which have undergone mutation, e.g.

Yng Nghymru	<i>In Wales</i>
Ym Mhen-y-bont	<i>In Bridgend</i>
Yng Ngwynedd	<i>In Gwynedd</i>
Ym Mangor	<i>In Bangor</i>

The other **yn** is less straightforward and better to introduce by way of examples.

When stating what someone is, or what someone is doing, the predicative **yn** is placed before a **noun**, an **adjective** or a **verbnoun**. In order to apply this correctly, we need to find an easy way to identify these words, and so:

A **noun** is any word which can be placed after **the** (or **a** in English). So, can we talk about **the cat**? Yes, so **cat** is a noun. What about **table**? Yes, we can refer to **the table**, so table is a noun. Please note that nouns are not identical to 'things' or 'objects' as we can also talk about **the misunderstanding** we had the other day, so **misunderstanding** is also a noun. This is the simplest way to identify a noun.

An **adjective** is a word which describes a noun (or a pronoun), e.g. *The cat is **big**; the table is **round**; the misunderstanding is **understandable***. Not all describing words are adjectives. Some, which describe actions, such as *driving **quickly** or sleeping **soundly*** are **adverbs**.

A **verbnoun** in Welsh is similar to an **infinitive** (such as **to work**) or a gerund (such as **working**) in English. These words are not full verbs because they lack a **tense** of their own.

So here are some examples of sentences using the predicative **yn**:

Before a noun:

Mae Tom yn athro	<i>Tom is a teacher</i>
Mae Sian yn athrawes	<i>Sian is a teacher</i>

An **athro** is a male teacher and an **athrawes** is a female teacher. Note that **yn** does not mean **a** or **an**. There is no word in Welsh for **a** or **an**.

When placed before a noun in this way, **yn** causes soft mutation (but not to **ll** or **rh**), e.g.

Mae Tom yn fachgen	<i>Tom is a boy (bachgen is Welsh for boy)</i>
Mae Sian yn ferch	<i>Sian is a girl (merch is Welsh for girl)</i>
Mae Tom yn ddyn	<i>Tom is a man (dyn is Welsh for man)</i>
Mae Sian yn fenyw	<i>Sian is a woman (menyw is Welsh for woman)</i>

Before an adjective:

Yn works in exactly the same way before an adjective, so:

Mae Tom yn fawr	<i>Tom is big (mawr is Welsh for big)</i>
Mae Sian yn fach	<i>Sian is small (bach is Welsh for small)</i>
Mae Tom yn dawel	<i>Tom is quiet (tawel is Welsh for quiet)</i>
Mae Sian yn barod	<i>Sian is ready (parod is Welsh for ready)</i>

Before a verbnoun:

Yn does **not** cause mutation to a verbnoun:

Mae Tom yn gweithio	<i>Tom is working (gweithio is Welsh for to work)</i>
Mae Sian yn cysgu	<i>Sian is sleeping (cysgu is Welsh for to sleep)</i>
Mae Tom yn darllen	<i>Tom is reading (darllen is Welsh for to read)</i>
Mae Sian yn bwyta	<i>Sian is eating (bwyta is Welsh for to eat)</i>

One way of looking at this usage is to think of **yn** as corresponding to the **-ing** ending in English, i.e. **gweithio** = to work but **yn gweithio** = working.

The Welsh sentence **Mae Tom yn gweithio** translates the English **Tom is working** and also **Tom works** or **Tom does work**.

Yn can also be used to turn an adjective into an adverb (most, but not all, adverbs in English end in *-ly*), for example:

Mae Tom yn darllen **yn dawel**

Tom is reading *quietly*

Here's a sentence with three forms of **yn** in it:

Mae Tom **yn** darllen **yn** dawel **yn** yr ysgol Tom is reading quietly in the school

The first is being used before a verbnoun to show what Tom is doing, the second is turning an adjective into an adverb to show how he's doing it, and the third is the *other* word for **yn** (the one meaning in) which shows where he's doing it.

1.7 Sgwrs syml / A simple conversation

For the moment, any unfamiliar points can be remembered parrot-fashion.

Sian:	Bore da, pwy dych chi?	<i>Good morning, who are you?</i>
Tom:	Helo, Tom dw i	<i>Hello, I'm Tom</i>
Sian:	Helo Tom, sut dych chi heddiw?	<i>Hello Tom, how are you today?</i>
Tom:	Dw i'n iawn diolch, pwy dych chi?	<i>I'm fine thanks, who are you?</i>
Sian:	Sian dw i, a dw i'n iawn hefyd	<i>I'm Sian, and I'm fine too</i>
Tom:	Ble dych chi'n byw Sian?	<i>Where do you live Sian?</i>
Sian:	Dw i'n byw yng Nghaerdydd	<i>I live in Cardiff</i>
Tom:	Hyfryd, dw i'n byw yn Abertawe	<i>Lovely, I live in Swansea</i>
Sian:	Ydych chi'n gweithio, Tom?	<i>Are you working, Tom?</i>
Tom:	Ydw, dw i'n athro ym Mhen-y-bont?	<i>Yes, I'm a teacher in Bridgend</i>
Sian:	Diddorol, dw i'n athrawes yn y Barri	<i>Interesting, I'm a teacher in Barry</i>

1.8 Ychydig o bethau i'w cofio / A few things to remember

- From time to time, grammatical terms will be used. Don't worry if you're not familiar with these, there's no need to remember them and there's no test on them. They are just shorthand, but they can be useful on occasion when trying to explain things.
- Sometimes more than one word can mean more or less the same thing. For instance, in Welsh we have the word 'dechrau' and we have the word 'cychwyn', and in the English language we have the words 'begin' 'start' and 'commence'.
- Not everyone speaks the same language in the same way everywhere. For instance, the people of Gwynedd don't speak Welsh with the same accent as people from Ceredigion. It's important to be prepared to accept differences, but there's nothing strange about them. After all, people from Newcastle don't speak English in the same way as people from Devon.
- Abbreviated forms are common (in all languages).