

**PFE 101 - Introduction to Pāli Grammar****Pāli Alphabet**

The Pāli Alphabet consists of 41 letters, out of which 8 are vowels (sara) and the rest 33 are consonants (vyañjana).

**i. 8 Vowels (Sara):**

Short Vowels (rassa sara)	a	i	u		
Long Vowels (dīgha sara)	ā	ī	ū	e	o

The vowels “e” and “o” are usually long (e.g. narena, evaṃ, okāsa, sakopa) except when followed by a double consonant (e.g. ettha, oṭṭha, sotthi, pessa)

**ii. 33 Consonants (Vyañjana) – 25 consonants divided into 5 groups (vagga)**

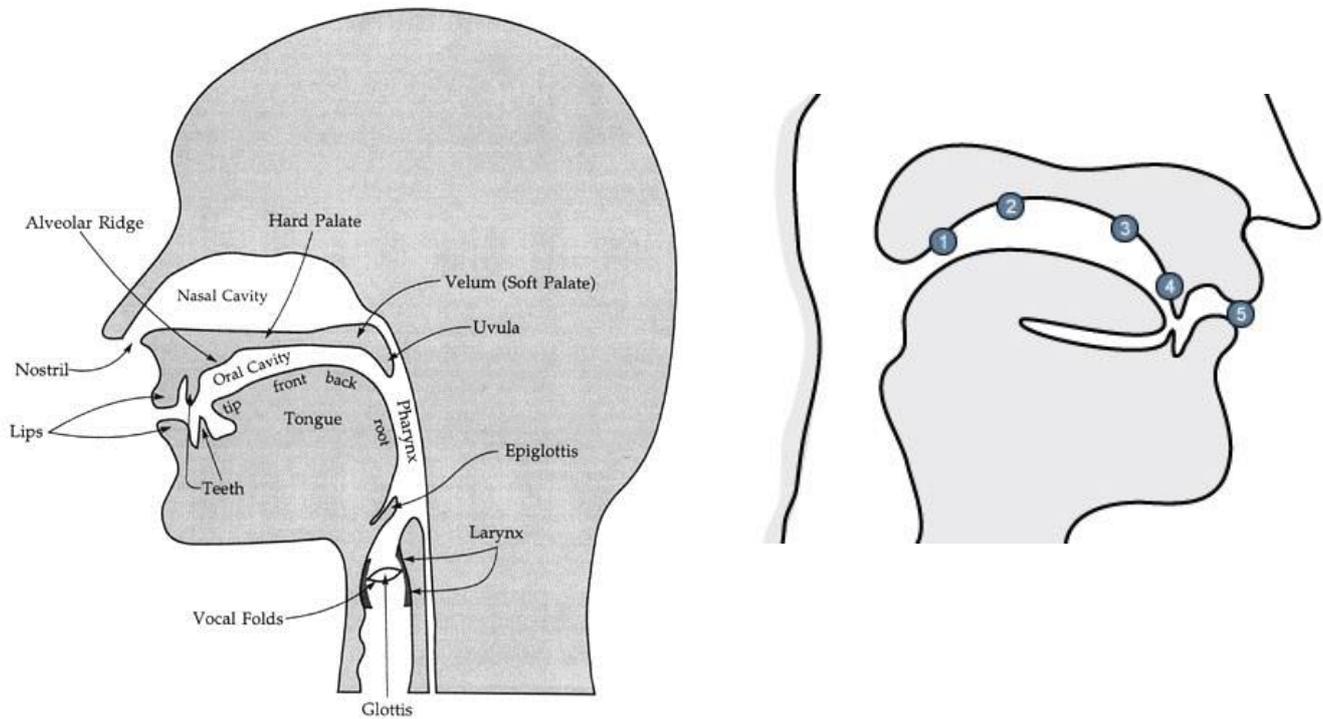
Group (Vagga)	Un-aspirated (Sithila)	Aspirated (Dhanita)	Un-aspirated (Sithila)	Aspirated (Dhanita)	Nasal (Nāsika)
<b>ka</b> group [ <b>ka</b> vagga]	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
<b>ca</b> group [ <b>ca</b> vagga]	c	ch	j	jh	ṅ
<b>ṭa</b> group [ <b>ṭa</b> vagga]	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
<b>ta</b> group [ <b>ta</b> vagga]	t	th	d	dh	n
<b>pa</b> group [ <b>pa</b> vagga]	p	ph	b	bh	m

<i>non-grouped letters</i>	y	r	l	v	s	h	ḷ	m̐
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- Un-aspirated (sithila) letters: 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> letter of each group (k, g, c, j, t, ḍ, t, d, p, b), nasals (ṅ, ṅ, ṇ, n and m) and the ungrouped letters (y, r, l, v, s, h, ḷ)
- aspirated (dhanita) letters: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> letters of each group (kh, gh, ch, jh, ṭh, ḍh, th, dh, ph, bh)
- Voiceless (agghosa) 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> letters of each group and letter s (sibilant)
- Voiced (ghosa): 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of each group and h, y, r, l, ḷ and v
- Nasal (nāsika)– last 5 letters of each group (ṅ, ṅ, ṇ, n, m)
- Semi Vowels – y, v
- Niggahīta – ṃ/ ṃ/ ṇ (corresponding to anusvāra and anunāsika in Sanskrit) is a pure nasal always found after a short vowel
- Sibilant – s

### Classification of Letters According to the places of Formation/Origin/Articulation

This is a very scientific classification and this method of classification was first introduced by Pānini in his Sanskrit Grammar book.



1. **Velar | Guttural** consonants are pronounced with the back of the tongue touching the soft palate. Examples of velar consonants in English include "k" as in "keep", and "g" as in "good".
2. **Palatal** consonants are pronounced with the tongue touching the hard palate. Examples of palatal consonants in English include "ch" as in "change" and "j" as in "job".
3. **Retroflex | Cerebral** consonants are pronounced with the tongue curled slightly backward and touching the front portion of the hard palate. There are no retroflex consonants in English. As an example, try pronouncing the "t" in "tip", yet curl your tongue backward.
4. **Dental** consonants are pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the upper front teeth. Examples of dental consonants in English include the "th" in "the", and the "th" in "thin".
5. **Labial** consonants are pronounced with the lips. Examples of labial consonants in English include the "p" in "pit", the "b" in "boy", and the "m" in "man".

**Pāli Alphabet according to the formation/place of articulation (NPC II Pg. 2)**

1. <b>Guttural</b> [kaṇṭhajā]: Gutturals are articulated using the back of the tongue against the soft palate (velum)	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	a	ā	h
2. <b>Palatal</b> [tālujā]: Palatals are articulated with the flat of the tongue touching the hard palate	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	i	ī	y
3. <b>Cerebral/Lingual</b> [muḍhajā]: Cerebrals are articulated with the tip of the tongue touching the hard palate.	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ḷ	
4. <b>Dental</b> [dantajā]: Dentals are articulated with the tip of the tongue placed against the front upper teeth.	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s	
5. <b>Labial</b> [oṭṭhajā]: Labials are the letters in which one or both lips are the <u>active articulator</u> .	p	ph	b	bh	m	u	ū	
6. <b>Guttural-palatal</b> [kaṇṭha-tālujo] Articulated with both throat and soft palate.	e							
7. <b>Guttural-labial</b> [kaṇṭha-oṭṭhajo] Articulated with both throat and lips	o							
8. <b>Dental-labial</b> [dant-oṭṭhajo] Articulated with both tip of the tongue and lips	v							
9. <b>Pure nasal</b> [niggahīta]	m̐							

**Meter**

Pāli is pronounced with a rhythm of short and long syllables. Short syllables are held for half the time that long syllables are held. Generally, the length of a syllable is determined by the vowel. Long vowels are: *ā, e, ī, o,* and *ū*. Short vowels are: *a, i* and *u*.

However, when a short vowel (*a i* or *u*) is followed by two or more consonants, the syllable is pronounced long. Thus, “Buddha” is spoken as a long syllable followed by a short one:

— | •  
Bud | dha

When a short vowel (*a i* or *u*) is followed by the nasal sound *m̐* the syllable is pronounced long. The nasal word ending is sometimes pronounced short, for example in poetry or certain common phrases. This is indicated by a normal *m*.

Here are examples:

— | • | — | — | • | — | — | •  
Nat|thi|jhā| nam̐| a|pañ|ñas|sa

— | — | • | • | • | — | • | —  
E | tam̐| sa | ra| nam̐| ut | ta | mam̐,

When the rules of meter are followed, the chanting of the Vandanā verses flows beautifully. Many of these verses are believed to have been uttered spontaneously by the Buddha; when well chanted, his skill in poetic expression is revealed.

Formation of Pāli Words

With rare exceptions:

1. Words must begin with a single vowel or a single consonant.  
some exceptions – vyāpāda (enmity), plava (floating), dvāra (door), dvanda (pair/couple), Brāhmana (Brahmin), 'tvam'(you)
2. They must end in a vowel or niggahīta.
3. At any point in a word or compound there cannot be more than two consonants together.
4. There cannot be two vowels together at any point in a word
5. An aspirated consonant cannot be followed by another consonant
6. A long vowel cannot be followed by a double consonant (Law of mora), except for very rare examples, where the law of mora is broken when there are consonant and a semi vowel (this is considered as one and a half consonants and not two.)  
e.g.: vākya (sentence) , bhūtvā (abs. of 'bhavati')
7. An aspirated consonant cannot be followed by another consonant. (even in compounds, when two words join and, if the first letter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> word is an aspirated, it is always double with the respective un-aspirated.  
e.g.: pañca + khanda → pañcakkhanda (five aggregates)

**Exercise 1** Observe the differences in articulation of the following word groups

<b>Aṭṭhi</b> (bone) <b>Atthi</b> (to be / exist)	<b>eṭṭha</b> (here) <b>eṭṭhi</b> (search)	<b>Aḍḍha</b> (wealthy) <b>Addha</b> (half)
<b>Caṇa</b> (crowd) <b>Gāna</b> (song) <b>Ghana</b> (thick) <b>Ghāna</b> (nose)	<b>Saṅkara</b> (blissful) <b>Saṅkhāra</b> (mental formation) <b>Saṅkāra</b> (rubbish)	<b>Kaya</b> (purchase) <b>Kāya</b> (body) <b>Khaya</b> (waste)
<b>Pala</b> (a certain weight) <b>Phala</b> (fruit) <b>Pāla</b> (guard/ protector)	<b>Kala</b> (sweet low sound) <b>Khala</b> (threshing floor) <b>Khaḷa</b> (rough)	<b>Kira</b> (indeed) <b>Kīra</b> (parrot) <b>Khīra</b> (milk)
<b>Yoga</b> (bond) <b>Yogga</b> (suitable)	<b>Khaṇati</b> (digs) <b>Khanti</b> (patience)	<b>Iṭṭha</b> (pleasing) <b>Itthi</b> (woman)
<b>Neka</b> (several/ many) <b>Nekkha</b> (big gold coin)	<b>Desa</b> (region/country) <b>Dessa</b> (disagreeable)	<b>Dasa</b> (ten) <b>Dāsa</b> (slave)
<b>Canda</b> (moon) <b>Caṇḍa</b> (fierce) <b>Chanda</b> (impulse/wish)	<b>Sura</b> (deity) <b>Surā</b> (intoxicating liquor) <b>Sūra</b> (courageous/ hero)	<b>Gaṇḍa</b> (boil) <b>Gandha</b> (smell)
<b>Aṭṭha</b> (eight) <b>Attha</b> (welfare/gain) <b>Aṭṭa</b> (lawsuit) <b>Atta</b> (soul/ oneself)	<b>Koci</b> (someone) <b>Koccha</b> (brush/ broom) <b>Koṭi</b> (10 million) <b>Koṭṭeti</b> (pounds/smashes)	<b>Vaṭṭa</b> (circular / round) <b>Vatta</b> (duty) <b>Vaṭṭha</b> (wet with rain) <b>Vattha</b> (cloth /garment)
<b>Pacati</b> (cooks) <b>Pacanti</b> (cook) <b>Na</b> (not)	<b>Avaharati</b> (takes away/ steals) <b>Āgacchati</b> (comes) <b>Ekādasa</b> (eleven)	<b>Anatta</b> (soul-less) <b>Aṇana</b> (debtless) <b>Kamalaṃ</b> (lotus)

Parts of Speech in Pāli

1. **Nāma:** All declinable words such as Nouns, Pronouns, and Adjectives are summed up under the term 'nāma'.  
e.g.: assa (horse), putta (son), muni (sage), senāni (army general), garu (preceptor), vidū (wise man), go (ox), ahaṃ (I), kusala (merits), anicca (impermanent), seta (white)
2. **Ākhyāta:** Verbs come under this term. Verbs are formed from adding terminations to verbal roots or bases.  
e.g.: dhāvati (runs), deseti (preaches), karoti (does), kiṇāti (buys)
3. **Nipāta:** All those words which are incapable of any grammatical inflection, that is: Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions and Interjections (exclamation) come under the term 'nipāta (indeclinables)  
e.g.: addhā (indeed), vā (or), ca (and), viya (like), pi (too/also), na (not), sace (if), pana (but), mā (do not), ajja (today), sanikaṃ (slowly)
4. **Upasagga:** Prefixes come under this category (e.g. similar to 'un', 'pre', 'co' etc. in English). In Pāli they are 20 in number and some of these prefixes are: ā, apa, u, ati, pati, pa, ni, su, anu, du etc.  
e.g.: gacchati (goes)  
ā + gacchati → āgacchati (comes)  
apa + gacchati → apagacchati (goes away)  
gandha (smell)  
su + gandha → sugandha (fragrance)  
du + gandha → duggandha (bad odour)

Inflection/Inflexion

- In grammar, inflection (or inflexion) is the modification of a word to express different grammatical categories such as tense, voice, person, number, gender and case.
- English retain some forms of inflection, but it is not a central category in English grammar.
- It is however vital in Pāli. (also in Latin, German etc.)
- Languages such as Mandarin Chinese that never use inflections are called analytic or isolating.

There are two main forms of inflection:

1. Declension: In modern English, nouns, pronouns (and perhaps comparative and superlative of adjectives) are subject to declension.  
e.g.: he, him, his / girl, girls, girl's, girls'

In Pali, all nāma are subject to declined according to their person, number and case etc.

2. Conjugation: The inflection of verbs  
e.g.: go, goes, went, gone, going

In Pali, all verbs (ākhyāta) are conjugated according to their person, tense, voice and number etc.

## **Classification of Nouns** (NPC I Page 48)

Nouns (Nāma) are divided into 5 classes and they are all declined accordingly.

1. Nāma-nāma (substantives and proper nouns)  
e.g.: mitta (friend), putta (son), kapi (monkey), vanitā (woman), rukkha (tree), phala (fruit), Ānanda, Sāvatti
2. Sabba-nāma (pronouns)  
e.g.: ahaṃ (I), mayaṃ (we), so (he), sā (she), taṃ (it), ko (who?), yo (who)
3. Samāsa-nāma (compound nouns)  
Compound nouns are formed by the combination of two or more words  
e.g.: nīlaṃ (blue) + uppalaṃ (water-lily) → nīluppalaṃ (blue water-lily)  
pañca (five) + indriyāni (senses) → pañcindriyāni (the five senses)
4. Kitaka-nāma (primary/verbal derivatives)  
These are formed from the verbal root itself by adding suffixes.  
e.g.: √kar (to do) + aṇīya → karaṇīya (that should be done)
5. Taddhita-nāma (Secondary derivatives)  
These are formed from a substantive or primary derivative by adding another suffix (denoting a special meaning) to it.  
e.g.: ratha (chariot) + ṇika → rathika (one who goes in a chariot)  
pañca (five) + ma → pañcama (fifth)

## **Declension of Nouns** (NPC I Page 5)

In Pāli, just as in Latin and Greek, certain case-endings are added to Nouns, Adjectives and Pronouns (declinable words) to show different eight cases. There are 8 such cases in Pāli. Western scholars has given these them names taken from Latin Tradition.

The ending of the case changes depending on the ending of the noun stem as well as the gender.

- e.g.: 'a' ending masculine nouns – nara (man)/ 'a' ending neuter nouns – nayana (eye)  
'i' ending masculine nouns – muni (sage)/ 'i' ending feminine nouns – yuvati (maiden)

Usage of Eight Cases:

1. Nominative Case : This is used for the subject (agent) of an active sentence.
2. Accusative Case: This is used as the direct object (patient) which undergoes the action of an active transitive verb in a sentence. The goal of motion is also expressed by the accusative case.
3. Instrumental Case: This case denotes the instrument by means of which an action is done (**with** whom/what, **by** whom/what, **'because of'** whom/what, **through** whom/what)
4. Dative Case: This is used to express the purpose for which an action is done and the person to whom something is given (indirect or remote object of the action of the verbs- 'to whom/what', 'for whom/ what')
5. Ablative Case: It is used to express the point from (a place or time) which an action begins. It also expresses the cause or origin from which something arises. (**from** whom/what, **'out of'** whom/what).
6. Genitive Case: This case expresses normally a relation between two nouns. This case may often be translated by 'of' and serves as a 'possessive' case. It expresses possession or relationship.
7. Locative Case: Expresses the place where, the time when or the situation in which an action takes place. This case may often be translated into English by the prepositions '**on**', '**in**', '**at**' or '**upon**'.
8. Vocative case: It is used to express address or invocation

**Exercise 1** Decline the following noun stems in given cases:

(Refer: Declension Table for declension of different genders(masculine, feminine and neuter), different ending vowels (a, ā, I, ī, u and ū) and pronouns

Noun	gender	Case and number	Declined form
Nara (man)	Masculine	Locative Plural	
Kavi (poet)	Masculine	Ablative Plural	
Latā (creeper)	Feminine	Dative Singular	
Sakuṇa (bird)	Masculine	Genitive Singular	
Pakkhī (bird)	Masculine	Genitive Singular	
Kumārī (girl)	Feminine	Genitive Singular	
Yuvati (maiden)	Feminine	Genitive Singular	
Aṭṭhi (bone)	Neuter	Genitive Singular	
Cakkhu (eye)	Neuter	Genitive Singular	
Akkhi (eye)	Neuter	Genitive Singular	
Bhikkhu	Neuter	Dative Singular	
Vadhū (woman)	Feminine	Locative Singular	
Kaṇeru (she elephant)	Feminine	Locative Singular	

**Exercise 2** Translate into English and identify the cases of the underlined words

Pāli	English	Case
1. <u>Sattu</u> pharasunā <u>tava</u> taravo chindissati		
2. Bhagavā suve <u>sotārānaṃ</u> dhammaṃ desessanti (Ref. NPC I Pg. 24)		
3. <u>Viduno</u> bhānumantaṃ passati		
4. Deviyo <u>Buddhassa</u> dhammaṃ suṇanti		
5. <u>Tumhe</u> magge <u>kassakaṃ</u> oloketha		
6. Gahapatī <u>adhipatinā</u> maṇiṃ labhati		
7. Vyādhi <u>atithino</u> puttaṃ piḷeti		
8. Tadā kavayo <u>kapīnaṃ</u> phale dadimsu		
9. <u>Kassakassa</u> puttā <u>vihīnaṃ</u> rāsīṃ miṇṇāti		
10. Munayo <u>kapīno</u> odanaṃ dadimsu		

**Exercise 3**

Translate in to English:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa

Pañca Sīla (Five Precepts)

1. Panātipatā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
2. Adinnādanā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
3. Kamesu micchacara veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
4. Musāvadā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
5. Surāmerayamajja pamadatthānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi