

Român

The Romanian Alphabet

Printed	Cursive
A a	A a
Ă ă	Ă ă
Â â	Â â
B b	B b
C c	C c
D d	D d
E e	E e
F f	F f
G g	G g
H h	H h
I i	I i
Î î	Î î
J j	J j
K k	K k
L l	L l
M m	M m
N n	N n
O o	O o
P p	P p
Q q	Q q
R r	R r
S s	S s
Ș ș	Ș ș
T t	T t
Ț ț	Ț ț
U u	U u
V v	V v

Printed	Cursive	Printed	Cursive
W w	W w	Y y	Y y
X x	X x	Z z	Z z

Romanian uses the Roman alphabet, modified for the phonetic needs of the language. The Romanian language has undergone a series of spelling reforms, the most recent in 1992, so older documents may well contain orthographic renditions which conflict with a current dictionary, as is evident in many of the documents you will find. The letters *k*, *q*, *w*, *x*, and *y* can be considered part of the alphabet, but appear only in foreign words and certain surnames. The alphabet as shown at the left is given in a form to acquaint readers with the various letters one sees, but generally *ă*, *â*, *ê*, *ș* and *ț* are not considered separate letters in their own right. Some letters not normally seen at the beginning of words are shown here in upper- as well as lower-case forms because documents often capitalize entire words for emphasis and one might see upper-case forms of those letters in that context. In addition to the cedilla under *ș* and *ț*, Romanian uses two other diacritical marks, a caret over the vowels *â* and *î* and a breve over the vowel *ă*. In older documents other possibilities may be seen; for instance, *đ* and *ě* appear in some records.

Many people have the notion that Romanian is a Slavic language, perhaps because Romania is located in southeastern Europe and was long a Communist state. In fact Romanian is a Romance language, specifically, a representative of the eastern Romanic branch of the Romance language family; it exhibits the most complicated grammar of any of the Romance literary languages. As the only survivor of the Latin language as spoken in the Eastern Roman Empire whose evolution was not as influenced by medieval Latin as its western cousins, Romanian conserves more of the features of the Romance mother language.

The evolution of Romanian was influenced by the Slavic and other languages spoken by its immediate neighbors. Thus one finds Serbian, Turkish, Hungarian, Albanian, and Greek influences in the language; but a significant chunk of its core vocabulary remains of Latin origin.

The vowels *e*, *o* and *u* resemble the sounds in the English words "ten," "home," and "moon"; *a* and *i* without diacriticals are similar to English "father" and "deep." The other vowel sounds are more complicated and may vary depending on the position in which they're found. The *ă* represents a central mid vowel close to the English sound in "dental," and *â* and *î* are also central vowels somewhat like the sound in "bottom."

Many Romanian consonants require no special remarks, but several deserve attention. Usually *c* is pronounced as in English "cool" but *ce* is pronounced as in English "chain" and *ci* as in "cheek." To conserve the *k*-sound with these consonants an *-h-* is inserted, so that *che* sounds like the sound in "kept" and *chi* like that of "key" (much as in Italian). The *g* behaves the same way; normally it is pronounced as in "gold" but *ge* and *gi* are pronounced much like the *je* sounds in "jet" and "jeep," respectively, while *ghe* and *ghi* resemble the sounds in "gay" and "geese." The letter *j* is pronounced like the *si* in English "collision," and the *r* is trilled as in Spanish. The *ș* is like the *sh* in "ship" and *ț* is rendered as the *ts* sound heard in the English word "cats."

Source: Shea, Jonathan D., and William F. Hoffman. *Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide*. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, Inc., 1994.