



## Disc 1, Part 1: Pronunciation of the Hawaiian Alphabet

In this section, we will be listening to the sounds that make up the Hawaiian alphabet of thirteen letters. If you can become familiar enough through repetition that your pronunciation is as you hear on this disc, then you will be able to easily pronounce all of the words in the Hawaiian language!

In the Hawaiian alphabet, the vowels come first, and then the consonants follow. In English, we would say that the alphabet consists of the vowels A, E, I, O, and U; and the consonants H, K, L, M, N, P, W, and the glottal stop, or 'okina, which is a break in the voice. When we get to the 'okina, we just say its name. Are you ready to listen to the sounds in the alphabet? Mākaukau?

In Hawaiian, the alphabet sounds like this:

‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū, H, K, L, M, N, P, W, ‘okina

Now let's say the alphabet together. Be sure to keep the sounds "pure", without gliding one letter into another or mixing vowels together to make a single letter. Your mouth should be in one shape only for each letter and not change that shape until you stop making the sound. Ho'omākaukau (get ready)!

‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū, H, K, L, M, N, P, W, ‘okina

The last consonant is the only one that may be new to you. It is the 'okina, or glottal-stop. It is written like a single open-quotation mark, not as an apostrophe. It is the same sound we would make in English when we say "uh-oh". In English, we would think that "uhoh" sounds strange, because it is missing its 'okina in the middle.

This is the same for the countless number of words in Hawaiian which use the 'okina; if they were pronounced without 'okina, they would mean something completely different! For example, in the two island names often mispronounced as "Molokai" and "Lanai", there should be 'okina. They should be pronounced "Moloka'i" and "Lāna'i". Say then after me, "Moloka'i", "Lāna'i". Say them to yourself the wrong way and then the right way a few times, and try to isolate how the 'okina is formed in your mouth. This will help you to recreate it later on in more difficult words. Molokai - Moloka'i. Lanai - Lāna'i.

As we now know, words will have a totally different meaning if the 'okina is either mistakenly added or removed. In our example of Lāna'i, if the 'okina is removed and you say "lānai", you'll be talking about a porch or a veranda or deck! Lānai = a deck. Lāna'i = the island. Say them after me: Lānai, Lāna'i.

In a final note about the 'okina, it can only come before a vowel, either 'Ā, 'Ē, 'Ī, 'Ō, or 'Ū. Therefore, it will never come at the end of a word, but it can and often does come at the start of one.

Let's practice a few words. While doing so, recognise that all Hawaiian words follow two basic rules: each consonant is always separated by a vowel, and every word ends in a vowel. Thus, there are never two consonants joined together. Ready to try? Ho'omākaukau!

‘Ā - anuanu  
 ‘Ē - ehuehu  
 ‘Ī - iwiiwi  
 ‘Ō - omoomo  
 ‘Ū - uluulu  
 H - holoholo  
 K - kilakila  
 L - likelike  
 M - manamana  
 N - nahenahe  
 P - poupou  
 W - waiwai  
 ‘okina - ‘a‘ali‘i

In the next series of exercises, we will practise sounds in the same way that native speakers have learned them for many generations. If you would like to visualise what we are doing, then write the sounds down and practice them by yourself, using this disc as a guide.

In this first exercise, we’ll say the single vowels in order 5 times over. Ho‘omākaukau!

‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū  
 ‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū  
 ‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū

The second exercise will help us get some vowel combinations in order. Be sure to pronounce each vowel distinctly and completely, with no ‘okina glottal-stops in between. We’ll save that for the next exercise! Each combination repeats five times. Ho‘omākaukau!

ae - ae - ae - ae - ae  
 ei - ei - ei - ei - ei  
 io - io - io - io - io  
 ou - ou - ou - ou - ou  
 uo - uo - uo - uo - uo-a

In this third exercise, we shall practice the same set of sounds as in the second exercise, but this time we will put an ‘okina inside each vowel pair. Be sure to note that there are no ‘okina at the start of each vowel pair, so let those sounds run into each other as you did in the last exercise. Ho‘omākaukau!

a‘e - a‘e - a‘e - a‘e - a‘e  
 e‘i - e‘i - e‘i - e‘i - e‘i  
 i‘o - i‘o - i‘o - i‘o - i‘o  
 o‘u - o‘u - o‘u - o‘u - o‘u  
 u‘o - u‘o - u‘o - u‘o - u‘o-a

Now in the fourth exercise, let's try the same set of vowels again, but this time add 'okina both before and inside each vowel pair. Ho'omākaukau!

'a'e - 'a'e - 'a'e - 'a'e - 'a'e  
 'e'i - 'e'i - 'e'i - 'e'i - 'e'i  
 'i'o - 'i'o - 'i'o - 'i'o - 'i'o  
 'o'u - 'o'u - 'o'u - 'o'u - 'o'u  
 'u'o - 'u'o - 'u'o - 'u'o - 'u'o-a

Whenever you find two vowels next to each other in a word, they will often have an 'okina between them. Let's try pronouncing a set of these and some words in which they are used:

a'a - pua'a - pig  
 'a'a - Ma'a'a - the name of a wind  
 e'e - ne'e - to move  
 'e'e - 'e'ena - shy like a wild animal  
 i'i - ali'i - a chief  
 'i'i - hulu'i'i - a type of seaweed  
 o'o - malo'o - dry  
 'o'o - o'o'o - parsimonious, careful with one's property  
 u'u - mau'u - grass  
 'u'u - 'u'upekupeku- to sway, as a ship's mast

Sometimes, vowels are stretched to be almost twice as long as their unlengthened counterparts. For example “papa” means a flat surface, whereas “pāpā” means to forbid. So, a lengthened vowel could be thought of as another letter completely from the unlengthened one, giving the word a completely different meaning. When long vowels are written, a macron is added on top of the vowel; it looks like a short line right above the letter itself. Let's explore a few of these lengthened vowels in this next exercise. Ho'omākaukau!

koa - a type of tree  
 kōā - a gap  
 pa'u - to work very hard on something  
 pa'ū - moist  
 pā'ū - a hula skirt  
 hua - fruit  
 huā - jealousy  
 Nana - the name of a month  
 nāna - belonging to him or her  
 nanā - to provoke  
 nānā - to look