

Creating a Language

Queen Mary Inventing Languages in Schools (QUILS)

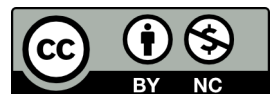
The following material is meant as a series of exercises to help get you started on creating your own language. It contains four parts, one on sounds, one on words, one on sentences, and one on making an alphabet. Each section introduces a couple of design choices.

Additional material is available on request.

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Part 1 — Picking sounds

1. What consonants do you want for your language?

	With the lips	Front of mouth	Middle of mouth	Back of mouth
Stops	<i>p, b</i>	<i>t, d, th</i>		<i>k, g</i>
Fricatives	<i>f, v</i>	<i>s, z</i>	<i>sh, zh</i>	<i>x, h</i>
Nasal	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>		<i>ng</i>
Liquids		<i>l, r</i>		
Glides		<i>y</i>		<i>w</i>

- *th* actually represents two sounds in English (the *th* in thy and thigh)
- *zh* is the sound in measure and *x* is the sound in loch
- *ng* is the sound in sing

8–12 consonants

12–15 consonants

over 15 consonants

Write down some of your consonants:

2. What vowels do you want for your language?

Vowel sound	How linguists write it		
<i>b<u>a</u>it</i>	ei	<i>b<u>o</u>at</i>	ou
<i>b<u>e</u>t</i>	ɛ	<i>b<u>i</u>te</i>	ai
<i>b<u>i</u>t</i>	ɪ	<i>b<u>oo</u>t</i>	u
<i>b<u>ee</u>t</i>	i	<i>b<u>oo</u>k</i>	ʊ
		<i>b<u>a</u>t</i>	æ
		<i>b<u>u</u>tt</i>	ʌ
		<i>b<u>o</u>t</i>	ɔ
		<i>b<u>a</u>th</i>	ɑ

3–5 vowels

5–10 vowels

Write down some of your vowels:

3. What kind of syllables do you want for your language?

Simple syllables Complex starts Complex ends Both

Using your consonants and vowels, create some syllables of your language.
Create at least 15!

Syllable type: _____

Syllable type: _____

Syllable type: _____

Part 2 — Building words

1. Circle what you want for your language:

lots of short words

medium-length words

some long words

2. How do you form the plural in your language? Write down five nouns and turn them plural!

Rule for plural:

List 1. Five nouns describing humans or animals:

Noun	Word in your language	Plural
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

3. How do you make a verb past or future in your language? Write down five verbs and make them past and future.

Rules for past and future:

List 2. Five verbs:

Verb	Word in your language	Past	Future
hug	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Part 3 — Building sentences

1. What word order do you want for your language?

2. Circle what you want for your language:

noun-possessor

possessor-noun

3. Circle what you want for your language:

prepositions

postpositions

4. Do you want determiners for your language? If so, what are they?

5. Using the nouns and verbs you created in Part 2, write down five sentences in your language that consist of a subject, verb, and object.

- Remember to put the subject and object in the right order.
- For the subject and object, remember the choices you made about number and determiners.
- For the verb, remember the choice you made about tense.

(a) Sentence: _____

Word-by-word:

Translation:

(b) Sentence: _____

Word-by-word:

Translation:

(c) Sentence: _____

Word-by-word:

Translation:

(d) Sentence: _____

Word-by-word:

Translation:

(e) Sentence: _____

Word-by-word:

Translation:

Part 4 — Making an alphabet

For each sound in your language, write down a word that begins with that sound (you may have to make up extra words!). Draw a picture representing that word. Then simplify that picture to just a few strokes. You now have a letter for that sound!

Word

Picture

Simplified picture

Word

Picture

Simplified picture
