

Install IPA Fonts for Mac

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Installing fonts to type IPA symbols into your documents, emails and anywhere else you want on a Mac is actually quite a challenging, multi-step project. In the old days, typing IPA characters on any computer was extremely difficult. Today, it is somewhat easier, especially with the Unicode fonts that are readily available, either built-in to the operating system, or that may be downloaded for free. Though the Mac does come installed with *some* fonts¹ that have good IPA coverage, such as Lucida Grande, Arial, or Geneva, some users want more choices. Users of the Microsoft Office suite have access to good fonts in the standard Times New Roman, Cambria and Calibri fonts. The most commonly used IPA fonts that users download from the internet are those provided from by the Summer Institute of Linguistics from their website, sil.org. The IPA fonts that they provide include:

- [Charis SIL](#)
- [Doulos SIL](#)
- [Gentium](#)

You can safely download any of these fonts for use in your documents. Once you've downloaded them, double-click on them and Mac OS X will automatically open the fonts in the Font Book app. Choose "install" for each font, and they will then be available to use

¹ Though the actual typographic design of the glyphs is part of what is called a "typeface," what we're talking about here is the computer file that contains that face, which is correctly called a "font."

instructions are included in the .zip file. My design avoids using “dead keys,” and accesses the majority of the symbols I need by using shift, option, or shift+option. For example, ʌ is **shift + a**, ɐ is **option + a**, and ɒ is **shift+option+a**. If my layout doesn’t work for you, feel free to use Ukelele to modify the layout to something that does!

Or, you could use SIL’s alternate [Mac keyboard layout](#) (.dmg). You can download it, along with [documentation](#) (.pdf) which includes a map to where all the symbols are—note that the installation instructions in this document are for the PC, but the keyboard map still works the same. (Use [my installation instructions](#), if you prefer, but substitute their files for mine.) SIL’s method uses a “dead key”, a key you press which switches the symbol beneath the keys. For example, retroflex symbols are accessed with the dead key “<”, so the symbol ʌ is access by typing “<” followed by “z”.

Other Ways to Insert (Obscure) Symbols

Maybe typing isn’t your only choice... Typing IPA symbols isn’t always the fastest way to enter them into your document. With obscure symbols, you probably don’t want to bother memorizing what key combination is required. Instead, you should use a symbol picker. While there is one built into OS X, called the Emoji & Symbol Viewer, it isn’t laid out in a very convenient manner. I recommend that people download a utility from the web called “[IPA Palette](#)” from Moses Hall’s site. He has documentation there, that explains how to install it.

Another option is to use an online tool for this. The site typeit.org has both a [phonemic](#) and [full IPA](#) symbol picker that works quite well. You will find a number of web-based IPA input helpers at <http://www.vasta.org/vasta-links#fonts>. My favourite is the [Type-It](#) picker, because it is fairly condensed, so I can get to the symbols fairly quickly. For people who still rely on the IPA chart to identify which symbol is appropriate to use, the [Rishida](#) picker does a good job of

putting the symbols into a compact layout, while representing them in the format that the IPA (association) uses.

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