

Using Gurmukhi to write English words

To write English using Gurmukhi, you need to know the differences between the two writing systems.

English Roman text is a set of visual clues to vowels and consonants so that somebody who knows the language and a particular word's context, can read it.

So, live (*v*) and live (*n*) sound different but you know how to pronounce the word from the context – 'if the wire is live, you might not live to tell the tale.'

Also, your knowledge of the language lets you know when letters together are pronounced differently, so the 'ea' in 'reap' is one sound whereas in 'react', it is two. You don't need to know that react is in effect 're-act', you just know it from your familiarity with the language.

Gurmukhi is slightly different. Gurmukhi is one writing system in a group called 'abugidas'.

A letter in an abugida writing system is a consonant that normally has a vowel sound after it. In Gurmukhi, this is a short, neutral 'a' but you can modify this by using the vowel symbols which are, in effect, diacritical marks. Where a word starts with a vowel, you use a carrier for the diacritical mark (with one exception).

So, armed with this knowledge, you can work out how to write English in Gurmukhi.

You can see from the above text that some words are longer and others, not so.

ਟੂ ਰਾਇਟ ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ ਯੂਜ਼ਿੰਗ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ, ਯੂ ਨੀਡ ਟੂ ਨੋ ਢਾ ਡਿਫ਼ਰੈਂਸਜ਼ ਬੀਟ੍ਰੀਨ ਢਾ ਟੂ ਰਾਇਟਿੰਗ ਸਿਸਟੈਮਜ਼।

ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ (ਰੋਮਨ ਟੈਕਸਟ) ਇਜ਼ ਅ ਸੈਟ ਆਵ ਵਿਜ਼ੂਅਲ ਕਲੂਜ਼ ਟੂ ਵਾਉਲਜ਼ ਐਂਡ ਕਾਂਸਾਂਨੰਟਸ ਸੋ ਢੈਟ ਸੁਮਬਾਡੀ ਹੂ ਨੋਜ਼ ਢਾ ਲੈਂਗੁਇਜ਼ ਐਂਡ ਅ ਪਰਟਿਕਯੂਲਰ ਵੈਰਡਜ਼ ਕਾਂਟੈਕਸਟ, ਕੈਨ ਰੀਡ ਇਟ।

ਸੋ, ਲਿਵ (ਵੈਰਬ) ਐਂਡ ਲਾਈਵ (ਨਾਉਨ) ਸਾਉਂਡ ਡਿਫ਼ਰੈਂਟ ਬੁਟ ਯੂ ਨੋ ਹਾਉ ਟੂ ਪ੍ਰੋਨਾਉਂਸ ਢਾ ਵੈਰਡ ਫ੍ਰਾਮ ਢਾ ਕਾਂਟੈਕਸਟ – 'ਇਫ ਢਾ ਵਾਇਰ ਇਜ਼ ਲਾਈਵ, ਯੂ ਮਾਇਟ ਨਾਟ ਲਿਵ ਟੂ ਟੈਲ ਢਾ ਟੇਲ'।

ਐੱਲਸੋ, ਯੌਰ ਨਾਲੈਜ ਆਵ ਢਾ ਲੈਂਗੁਇਜ਼ ਲੈਟਸ ਯੂ ਨੋ ਵ੍ਹੈਨ ਲੈਟਰਜ਼ ਟੂਗੇਥਰ ਆਰ ਪ੍ਰੋਨਾਉਂਸਡ ਡਿਫ਼ਰੈਂਟਲੀ, ਸੋ ਢਾ 'ਈ ਏ' ਇਨ 'ਰੀਪ' ਇਜ਼ ਉਆਂਨ ਸਾਉਂਡ ਵ੍ਹੈਰਐਜ਼ ਇਨ 'ਰੀਅਕਟ', ਇਟ ਇਜ਼ ਟੂ। ਯੂ ਡੌਂਟ ਨੀਡ ਟੂ ਨੋ ਢੈਟ ਰੀਅੈਕਟ ਇਜ਼ ਇਨ ਐਫੈਕਟ 'ਰੀ-ਐਕਟ', ਯੂ ਜੁਸਟ ਨੋ ਇਟ ਫ੍ਰਾਮ ਯੌਰ ਫਮਿਲਿਅਰਿਟੀ ਵਿਢ ਢਾ ਲੈਂਗੁਇਜ਼।

ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਇਜ਼ ਸਲਾਇਟਲੀ ਡਿਫ਼ਰੈਂਟ। ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ ਇਜ਼ ਉਆਂਨ ਰਾਇਟਿੰਗ ਸਿਸਟੈਮ ਇਨ ਅ ਗ੍ਰੁਪ ਕੌਲਡ 'ਅਬੁਗਿਡਜ਼'।

ਅ ਲੈਟਰ ਇਨ ਐਨ ਅਬੁਗਿਡਾ ਰਾਇਟਿੰਗ ਸਿਸਟੈਮ ਇਜ਼ ਅ ਕਾਂਸਾਂਨੰਟ ਢੈਟ ਨੌਰਮੈਲੀ ਹੈਜ਼ ਅ ਵਾਉਲ ਸਾਉਂਡ ਐਫਟਰ ਇਟ। ਇਨ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ, ਢਿਸ ਇਜ਼ ਅ ਸ਼ੌਰਟ, ਨਿਯੂਟ੍ਰਲ 'ਏ' ਬੁਟ ਯੂ ਕੈਨ ਮਾਡਿਫਾਈ ਢਿਸ ਬਾਈ ਯੂਜ਼ਿੰਗ ਢਾ ਵਾਉਲ ਸਿਮਬਾਲਜ਼ ਵਿਚ ਆਰ, ਇਨ ਐਫੈਕਟ, ਡਾਇਅਕ੍ਰਿਟਿਕੈਲ ਮਾਰਕਸ। ਵ੍ਹੈਰ ਅ ਵੈਰਡ ਸਟਾਰਟਸ ਵਿਢ ਅ ਵਾਉਲ, ਯੂ ਯੂਜ਼ ਅ ਕਰੀਅਰ ਫੌਰ ਢਾ ਡਾਇਅਕ੍ਰਿਟਿਕੈਲ ਮਾਰਕ (ਵਿਢ ਉਆਂਨ ਐਕਸੈਂਪਸ਼ਨ)।

ਸੋ, ਆਰਮਡ ਵਿਢ ਢਿਸ ਨਾਲੈਜ, ਯੂ ਕੈਨ ਵੈਰਕ ਆਉਟ ਹਾਉ ਟੂ ਰਾਇਟ ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ ਇਨ ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ।

Spelling

In Punjabi, there are a number of ways to write down words – largely from the fact that the Punjab is around the size of England and Wales and you can only expect that there is as much variation within the way the language is pronounced as there is with English (think Comish and Geordie).

Similarly, there are a number of different ways that you can write down an English word in Gurmukhi.

One well-known example is the place-name 'Southall'. You would expect this to be written 'ਸਾਊਥਹਾਲ' but, on the railway station and one or two other places, it is spelled 'ਸਾਊਥਹਾਲ'. You can only guess at why it is written this way – mine would be that somebody was given the job of translating into Gurmukhi various words and they had a crib sheet that said that an oordaa with dulaenkarday was equivalent to a 'u' and that a kannaa was equivalent to an 'a'. There are, of course, many ways of pronouncing 'ou' and 'a'.

So, what letters do we choose? Thankfully, most of them are obvious and where there isn't a letter, we use two - 'x' (as in 'fix') usually being replaced by 'ਕਸ' (as in 'ਫਿਕਸ'). Some Roman letters are redundant, such as 'c' which can be either 'ਕ' or 'ਸ', depending upon the circumstances.

Choice

However, there are 35 letters in the Gurmukhi alphabet so where is the redundancy? The biggest area is lines 4 and 5 – ਟਠਡਢਣ and ਤਥਦਧਨ. Normally...

- 't' is represented by 'ਟ' - 'ਤ' has the tongue too far forward in the mouth;
- 'th' (unvoiced as in 'think') is represented by 'ਥ';
- 'th' (voiced as in 'this') is represented by 'ਢ';
- 'd' is represented by 'ਡ' for the same reason as with 'ਟ';
- 'dh' doesn't appear much but where it does 'Sandhurst' it is a 'ਧ'; and,
- 'n' is represented by 'ਨ'.

Combining letters

Some words in English (usually place names) have a consonant followed by an 'h'. This is an opportunity to use those letters that do the same.

- GH - Egham (in Surrey) can be written 'ਐਘਮ'.
- DH - Sandhurst can be spelled 'ਸੰਧੈਸਟ'
- BH - Cobham can be spelled 'ਕਾਭਮ'

'...ing'

We have a choice - 'ਬਿੰਗ' or 'ਬਿਠ' (thing). Take your pick.

Combining with 'h' takes away the choice - 'ਨਾਟਿੰਘਮ' for 'Nottingham' (GH).

Transcribing spelling or preferring pronunciation

Remember that Gurmukhi is a phonetic form of writing so go for pronunciation – so, for 'purpose' where you have a choice of 'ਧੈਰਪੁਸ' or 'ਧੈਰਪੋਸ', go for 'ਧੈਰਪੁਸ'.

Paer forms

Combine letters using paer forms where appropriate - there are quite a few:

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| PR - preparation - 'ਪ੍ਰੈਪਰੇਸ਼ਨ' | 'KR' - crisps - 'ਕ੍ਰਾਸਪਸ' |
| DR - drink - 'ਡ੍ਰਿੰਕ' | TR - truck - 'ਟ੍ਰੁਕ' |
| WH - white - 'ਵ੍ਹਾਇਟ' | SW - sweet - 'ਸ੍ਵੀਟ' |