

DAY 2:

A Matter of Life and Death

Live and dead syllables and why they matter

More low class consonants and long vowels today. You'll learn about final consonant sounds, also the concept of live and dead syllables and how they affect tones.

It's time we learned the second group of low class consonants:



<TRACK 13>

LOW CLASS CONSONANTS (Group 2)

ค ท ช ฅ พ ฟ ฮ

k t ch s p f h
[k^h] [t^h] [tɕ^h] [s] [p^h] [f] [h]

stylised font

ค ท ช ฅ พ ฟ ฮ

cursive handwriting

ค ท ช ฅ พ ฟ ฮ

Why we say “I lerp you”

In English, when you pronounce words like ‘search’, ‘cliff’ or ‘tick’, there’s a little puff of noise ‘chhh’, ‘fff’ or ‘kuh’ at the end of the word, right? But in Thai, **final consonants** (i.e. the consonant at the end of syllable, after the vowel) are “**unreleased**”; meaning we don’t release these little puffs, so sometimes it sounds like we don’t pronounce final consonants at all. Compare the English and Thai ways to say these words:



<TRACK 14>

โซฟ

sóhp (soap)

เคฟ

káyp (cave)

รูท

róot (root)

วอช

พีช

แฮค

wórt (watch)

péet (peace)

háκ (hack)

Did you hear anything at the end of each word? Exactly, nothing! And as a result of not releasing final consonants it makes **some final consonants sound EXACTLY the same**; both พ and ฬ sound like [-p] and the consonants ท, ช and ฌ all sound like [-t]!

ATTENTION!**ฮ NEVER OCCURS AT THE END OF A SYLLABLE**

Here's the summary of the consonant sounds up until now. You don't need to waste your time memorising these tables. If you finish the word without releasing the final sound, you are already doing it right.

	ง	ม	น	ร	ล	ย	ว
Initial	ng	m	n	r	l	y	w
Final	-ng	-m		-n		-i	-o

	ค	ท	ช	ฌ*	พ	ฬ*	ฮ
Initial	k	t	ch	s	p	f	h
Final	-k		-t		-p		

You probably noticed that all the words on pages 12-13 have a high tone, but almost all borrowed words from foreign languages have highly irregular tones which you can't really apply any rule to anyway, therefore just ignore this.

* ฌ and ฬ only appear as final consonants in borrowed words from foreign languages.

ค ค

ท ท

ช ช

ช ช

พ พ

ฟ ฟ

ฮ ฮ

Here are some more long vowels. These vowels are special because they don't take a final consonant, meaning that if you see them in words, they will mark the end of a syllable and no final consonant will follow.



<TRACK 15>

LONG VOWELS

◌-ำ ◌-ไ ◌-ใ ◌-เ-า ◌-เ-ย

-um

[am]

-ai

[ai]

-ai

[ai]

-ao

[ao]

-eui

[ɛi]

stylised font

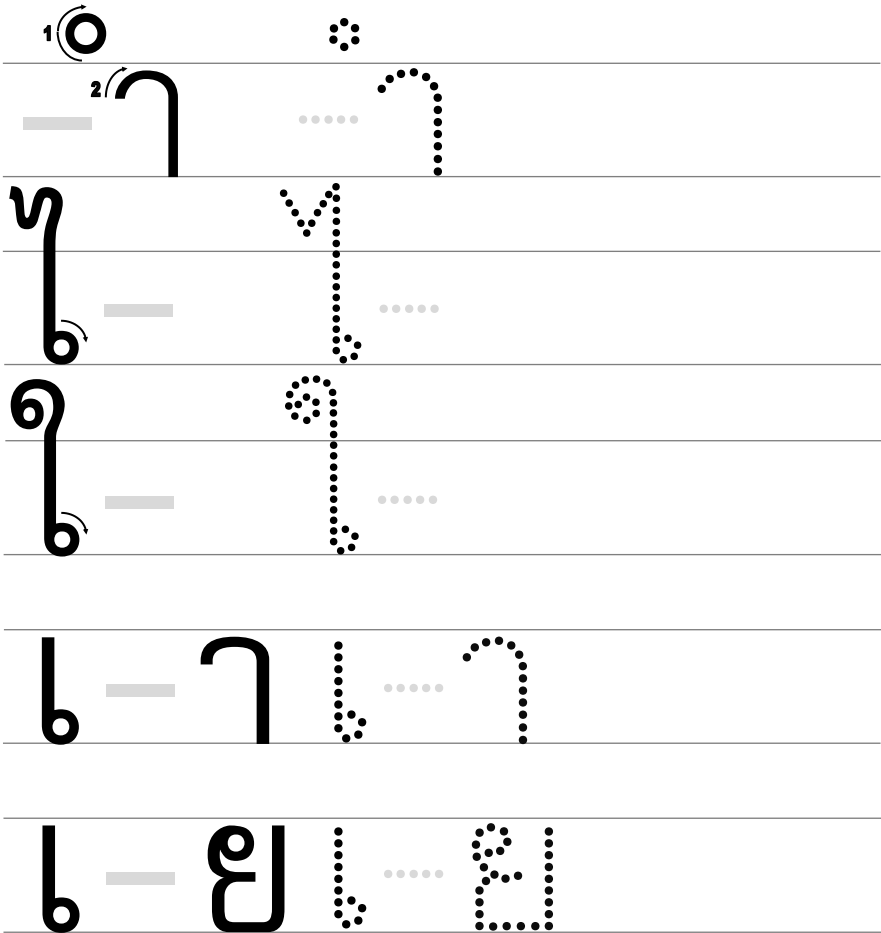
◌-ำ ◌-ไ ◌-ใ ◌-เ-า ◌-เ-ย

cursive handwriting

◌-ำ ◌-ไ ◌-ใ ◌-เ-า ◌-เ-ย

‘Wavy’ [ai] (ไ-) and ‘curly’ [ai] (ใ-), or their proper names, ไอ่หมั่นลาย [ai máai malaai] and ไอ่หมั่น่วน [ai máai múan] respectively, sound exactly the same. However, ไ- is only used in a number of words (20 words to be precise, find out more about it in the Appendices of this book) and the rest of the words with the [-ai] sound are written with the ใ- vowel. Why? These 2 [ai]’s used to have different sounds, but now it’s just a spelling convention.

Some vowels above are ‘sandwich’ vowels which basically wrap around initial consonants. Pretty weird, eh?



Give it a go!

Read the following words. Remember that final consonants are unreleased so some of them end up sounding the same.



<TRACK 16>

ทำ ซอง ไว ฮา ชาย
เคย ใน เพล ที่ เรา
ไฟ แพง โคน ไย ชุม
นาค เทพ โรค ชีพ ยาท

<track 16>: tum, sornɔŋ, wai, haa, chaai, keui, nai, payn, tee, rao, fai, pang, kohm, yai,
soom, náak, táyp, rǒhɔk, chéep, yáat

Before you move on, make sure you remember all the low class consonants that we have learnt so far and which group they belong to (group 1 or 2). You'll need it later!

The last 5 words have a falling tone because they are “dead” syllables; they end with a [-k] [-t] [-p] sound. The concept of live-dead syllables is important for the determination of tones (we'll talk about that on DAY 4). We will explore the concept of live-dead syllables and their effect on tones over the next section.

As quiet as death

Drag the end of these words on as long as possible:



<TRACK 17>

ថា

ແທນ

haa

tan

“Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—————” “Tannnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn—————”

Too easy. Now try doing the same with these words:

โชค

ภาพ

chôhk

wâat

“Chôhk...”

“Wâat...”

Impossible, right? And don't cheat by extending the vowel sound instead like "chôoooooooohk" or "wâaaaaaaat"! The first two words are **'live' syllables** which you can, in theory, keep humming forever, therefore they're **live**. On the other hand, the last two words are **'dead' syllables** because as soon as you utter the last unit of sound, it has to stop. There's nothing you can do to keep the syllable going, so it's **dead**. And If you need rules: **live syllables** are syllables that either end with [-ng], [-m], [-n], or a **long vowel*** as a final sound, because they can be droned out until you're out of breath. Whereas **dead syllables** end with [-k], [-t], or [-p] as a final consonant, there's no way to elongate them.

* That includes *y* and *z*, because at the final position they sound like vowels, as we have learnt on DAY 1

A simplified version of my explanation looks like this:

...is a syllable that ends with...

LIVE SYLLABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [-ng] [-m] [-n] (or any LC1 consonant) • a LONG vowel
DEAD SYLLABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [-k] [-t] [-p] (or any LC2 consonant)

ATTENTION!

โชค [CHÔHK] OR วาฬ [WÂAT] ARE DEAD BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH THEY CONTAIN A LONG VOWEL, THEY STILL FINISH WITH AN LC2 CONSONANT WHICH MAKES THEM DEAD ANYWAY.



Look at these live and dead syllables below. Ignore all the tone changes, they will only distract you.



<TRACK 18>

ลาม

laam (LIVE)

เยา

yao (LIVE)

โมท

môht (DEAD)

พูน

poon (LIVE)

เพช

pâyht (DEAD)

ราฟ

râap (DEAD)

ไซ

sai (LIVE)

โชค

chôhk (DEAD)

Give it a go!

Read the following phrases. Remember that final [-k] [-t] [-p] consonants are unreleased so don't go on and pronounce the final puffs. Next, separate each syllable and tell me if they're live or dead.



<TRACK 19>

เคยทำงาน

ทายาทเลว

แถมนอนเมา

ทำไมยาโรคเราแพง

รอเวลาในซูชิฟ

มามองเทพนาคทองคำ

<track 19>: keui tum ngaan (LIVE-LIVE-LIVE) // taa yáat leo (LIVE-DEAD-LIVE) // sam
norm mao (LIVE-LIVE-LIVE) // tum mai yaa rôhk rao pang (LIVE-LIVE-LIVE-DEAD-LIVE-
LIVE) // ror way laa nai choo chéep (LIVE-LIVE-LIVE-LIVE-LIVE-LIVE-DEAD) // maa morning
táyp náak toring kum (LIVE-LIVE-DEAD-DEAD-LIVE-LIVE)

TODAY'S RECAP

- ★ REMEMBER ALL LC2 CONSONANTS AND 5 MORE LONG VOWELS
- ★ IN THAI, CONSONANTS AT FINAL POSITION ARE UNRELEASED AND CAN CONSEQUENTLY SOUND SLIGHTLY OR SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM THEIR ORIGINAL SOUND
- ★ MULTIPLE CONSONANTS CAN SHARE THE SAME FINAL SOUND
- ★ -ᵒᵛ, ᵒᵛ-, ᵒᵛ-, ᵒᵛ-ᵒᵛ AND ᵒᵛ-ᵒᵛ DO NOT TAKE FINAL CONSONANTS
- ★ ᵒᵛ- AND ᵒᵛ- ARE PRONOUNCED THE SAME WAY BUT ᵒᵛ- IS ONLY USED IN CERTAIN WORDS
- ★ LIVE SYLLABLES ARE SYLLABLES IN WHICH THE FINAL SOUND CAN BE ELONGATED, BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT WITH DEAD SYLLABLES
- ★ THE LIVE-DEAD FACTOR AFFECTS THE TONE OF THE SYLLABLE