

Thai

The United Nations recommended system was first approved in 1967 (resolution I/14), based on the modified general system of the Royal Institute of Thailand. The table and notes on its application were published in vol. II of the conference reports¹. A revised version of the system was officially endorsed by the government of Thailand in 2000. This was approved at the Eighth United Nations Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names in Berlin, 2002 (resolution VIII/13), based on a document submitted by Thailand².

Thai uses an alphasyllabic script. In Thai writing word division is not ordinarily indicated which may complicate the romanization. The romanization system is not reversible to its original script form.

Romanization

I. Consonant characters

Thai characters are romanized in two ways depending on whether they denote syllable-initials or syllable-finals. The romanization of syllable-finals is indicated in parentheses.

1 ก k (k)	16 ฐ th (t)	31 ฟ f (p)
2 ข kh (k)	17 ฑ th,d (t)	32 ภ ph (p)
3 ฃ kh (k)	18 ฒ th (t)	33 ม m (m)
4 ค kh (k)	19 ณ n (n)	34 ย y
5 ฅ kh (k)	20 ด d (t)	35 ร r (n)
6 ฆ kh (k)	21 ต t (t)	36 ล l (n)
7 ง ng (ng)	22 ถ th (t)	37 ว w
8 จ ch (t)	23 ฑ th (t) ^A	38 ศ s (t)
9 ฉ ch (t)	24 ฐ th (t)	39 ษ s (t)
10 ฌ ch (t)	25 น n (n)	40 ส s (t)
11 ฎ s (t)	26 บ b (p)	41 ห h
12 ฏ ch (t)	27 ป p (p)	42 ฬ l (n)
13 ญ y (n)	28 ผ ph (p)	43 อ o ^B
14 ฎ d (t)	29 ฝ f (p)	44 ฮ h
15 ฏ t (t)	30 พ ph (p)	

^A Combination ฑ is romanized s if so pronounced.

^B See note 5.

II. Vocalic nuclei and special characters (ก stands for any consonant character)

1 กะ a	21 ก o	41 กาว ao
2 กัก a	22 โก o	42 กุย ui
3 กรรกอ a	23 เกาะ o	43 โกอย oi
4 กา a	24 กอ o	44 กอย oi
5 กรร an	25 เกอะ oe	45 เกย oei
6 กำ am	26 เกิก oe	46 เก็อย ueai
7 กิ i	27 เกอ oe	47 กวย uai
8 กี้ i	28 เกียะ ia	48 กิว io
9 กึ ue	29 เกีย ia	49 เกี้ยว eo
10 กึ ue	30 เกือะ uea	50 เกว eo
11 กือ ue	31 เกือ uea	51 แก้ว aeo
12 กุ u	32 กัวะ ua	52 แกว aeo
13 กู u	33 กัว ua	53 เกี้ยว iao
14 เกะ e	34 กวก ua	54 ฤ rue ^A
15 เก็ก e	35 ไก ai	55 ฤา rue
16 เก e	36 ไก ai	56 ฤ lue
17 แกะ ae	37 กัย ai	57 ฤา lue
18 แก็ก ae	38 ไกย ai	
19 แก ae	39 กาย ai	
20 โกะ o	40 เกา ao	

^A Also romanized *ri* and *roe*, according to pronunciation.

Notes

Notes 1-5 have been adapted from *Principles of Romanization for Thai Script by Transcription Method*.²

- In multi-syllable words, the final character of the preceding syllable and the initial character of the succeeding syllable may cause reading ambiguity. Therefore hyphen is used for syllable separation according to the following rules:
 - Hyphen is inserted when the final character of the preceding syllable is a vowel and the initial character of the succeeding syllable is *ng* (ง), e.g. **สง่า** *Sa-nga*.
 - Hyphen is inserted when the final character of the preceding syllable is *ng* (ง) and the initial character of the succeeding syllable is a vowel, e.g. **บังอร** *Bang-on*.
 - Hyphen is inserted when the initial character of the succeeding syllable is a vowel, e.g. **สะอาด** *sa-at*, **สำอาง** *sam-ang*.
- A word followed by *mai* (๑) is written twice according to the reading rules, e.g. **ทำบ่อย ๑** *tham boi boi*, **ไฟไหม้ ๑** *fai mai fai mai*.

3. Words followed by *paiyannoi* (๑), which shortens forms of a well known word or words, are written in full according to the reading rules, e.g. กรุงเทพฯ *Krung Thep Maha Nakhon*, ไพรดเกลา๑ *protkiao protkramom*.
4. An initial อ as a vowel-bearer which is phonetically a glottal stop [ʔ] is ignored.
5. One must bear in mind that the romanization of Thai in this case employs the transcription method. Thus, tone marks (◌̎, ◌̏, ◌̐ and ◌̑) and diacritical marks including the silencing mark (◌̣) and the vowel shortening mark (◌̤), are completely ignored. In order to transcribe Thai words correctly one must know how to read and pronounce them. There are many words that carry a character or characters that are not pronounced, such as สามารถ *samat* (ร is silent), พรหม *Phrom* (ห is silent), ลักษณะ *lak* (ษณม are silent), ชาติ *that* (ุ is silent), อินทรธนู *inthanu* (ทร are silent), and there are also a number of words in Thai where a syllable with an intruding vowel [a] must be inserted such as ปราบณา *pratthana* (ร is silent and [tha] is inserted), and รัตนา *rattana* ([ta] is inserted) when pronouncing them.
6. When using geographical names romanized according to the previous 1967 version of the official Thai romanization system, it is essential to know that earlier no distinction was made between the vowels *u* and *ue* (*u* was used in both cases, this applied to characters 9, 10, 11, 30, 31, 46, 54, 55, 56 and 57 in Table II) and some diphthongs were romanized differently (*iu* for character 48 /now *io*/, *ieo* for character 53 /now *iao*/ in Table II).

Other systems of romanization

The transliteration of Thai in the standard **ISO 11940:1998** (This is a modification of a document presented in 1992³) gives each Thai character a unique equivalent in the Roman script (a single letter or a combination of a letter plus a “modifier letter”). The Thai characters are transliterated strictly in the order they are written, diacritical marks accompanying a consonant are transliterated starting by the uppermost mark and finishing with the subscript mark. As an example, here are some transliteration equivalents: ก k, ข kh, ค kh, ค k’h, ฃ kh, ง ng; ะ a, ั a, ำ a, ำ a, ะ e, ะ æ, etc.

References

1. *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names*. Geneva, 4-22 September 1967. Vol. II. *Proceedings of the Conference and technical papers*, pp. 122-123.
2. *Principles of Romanization for Thai Script by Transcription Method*. Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Berlin, 27 August – 5 September 2002. Document E/CONF.94/INF.41.
3. *Romanized Transliteration of Thai*. Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Vol. II. *Technical papers*. New York, 25 August - 3 September 1992, pp. 369-379. [Some consonants have been given revised equivalents in the ISO standard.]