

Special Characters and Diacritical Marks

A handy reference and some good reasons they matter

Special characters

This is not an exhaustive list. A Unicode chart will show you more. Always check the text to make sure you have the characters right.

Mark	What it stands for	Examples	How to make on a Mac	How to make in Windows
' (opening single quote)	glottal stop; pharyngeal continuant	Arabic (transliterated) ' amal 'work' vs ' amal 'hope'	Option]	Alt 0145
' (closing apostrophe)	glottal stop; ejective consonant; palatalization	Czech sít 'net' vs sít 'sow'	Option }	Alt 0146
æ (æsc, ash)	"ah" or "ai" sound	Icelandic hætta 'stop' vs hátt 'go to bed'	Option ' (single quote)	Alt 0230, Alt 0198 (cap)
œ (oe ligature, ethel)	"ö" or "e" sound	French cour 'court' vs cœur 'heart'	Option q	Alt 0156, Alt 0140 (cap)
ð (eth)	voiced "th"	Icelandic hlýði '[I] obey' vs hlýddi '[I] obeyed'	Character menu	Alt 0240, Alt 0208 (cap)
đ (dyet)	"d" or voiced "th"	Vietnamese đang (present active marker) vs dang 'stretch out'	Character menu	Character menu
þ (thorn)	voiceless "th"	Icelandic þína 'your' vs þína 'torture'	Character menu	Alt 0254, Alt 0222 (cap)
ı (dotless i)	like unrounded "u" or like "i" much farther back	Turkish sık 'often' vs sik 'penis'	Character menu	Character menu
İ (dotted capital I)	capital of i, in contrast with ı	Turkish İsi 'The fume' vs Isi 'Heat'	Character menu	Character menu
ł (barred l)	"w" or similar	Polish ława 'bench' vs ława 'lava'	Character menu	Character menu
ø (slashed o)	"ö"	Norwegian bør 'should' vs bor 'live'	Option o	Alt 0248, Alt 0216 (cap)
ħ (barred h)	pharyngeal continuant	Maltese ħu 'brother' vs hu 'he'	Character menu	Character menu
ß (eszett)	"s" (where an s would be said as "z"); often replaced with ss ; don't confuse with beta	German daß 'that' vs das 'the'; haßen 'hate' vs haben 'have'	Character menu	Alt 0223

Diacritical marks

This is not an exhaustive list. A Unicode chart will show you more. Always check the text to make sure you have the accents right.

Mark	What it stands for	Some examples	How to make on a Mac	How to make in Word for Windows
ó (acute accent)	long or stressed or variant vowel; palatalized consonant; high or rising tone	French lancé 'thrown' vs lance 'lance' Icelandic háttur 'mode, manner' vs hattur 'hat' Polish późna 'late' vs pozna 'will meet' Chinese bá 'pull out' vs ba (suggestion marker)	Option e	Ctrl '
ò (grave accent)	stressed or variant vowel; low or falling tone	Italian però 'but' vs pero 'pear tree' French où 'where' vs ou 'or' Chinese lè 'happy' vs le (completion marker)	Option `	Ctrl `
õ (tilde)	nasalization of a vowel; different quality vowel; palatalization of n	Portuguese maçã 'apple' vs maca 'stretcher' Spanish año 'year' vs ano 'anus' Estonian kõrk 'haughty' vs kork 'cork'	Option n	Ctrl ~
ö (umlaut or diaeresis)	change in vowel (usually fronting); pronunciation of vowel that would be silent	Swedish sätt 'manners' vs satt 'short and wide' German träumen '[he/she] dreams' vs Traumen 'traumas' Albanian fëje 'sin' vs feje 'nostrils'	Option u	Ctrl :
ő (double acute)	different quality and length of vowel	Hungarian kőr 'heart' vs kör 'circle' vs kór 'disease' vs kor 'age'	Character menu	Character menu
ó (overdot)	different quality of vowel or consonant	Polish żądanie 'request' vs zadanie 'task'	Character menu	Character menu
ọ (underdot)	different quality of vowel or consonant	Yoruba kọ 'write' vs ko 'never' Vietnamese mọi 'every' vs moi 'drag out'	Character menu	Character menu
ō (macron)	long vowel; high level tone	Latvian mālā 'in the clay' vs malā 'on the shore' Mandarin mā 'mother' vs ma (question particle)	Character menu	Character menu
ö (breve)	short or reduced vowel	Romanian măi 'hey' vs mai 'more'	Character menu	Character menu
ř (caron)	different quality, e.g., palatalization of consonant	Czech řek 'of the rivers' vs rek 'hero' Mandarin mǎ 'horse' vs ma (question marker)	Character menu	Character menu
ô (circumflex)	different quality of vowel	French fûmes '[we] were' vs fumes '[you] smoke' Nakoda û 'be' vs u 'come'	Option i	Ctrl ^
ȧ (ogonek, hook)	nasalization and shift	Polish ma̧ki 'flours' vs maki 'poppies'	Character menu	Character menu
ç (cedilla)	different consonant sound	Portuguese maçã 'apple' vs maca 'stretcher' Albanian koçe 'decorations' vs koce 'girl' Latvian ziņa 'message' vs zina 'knows'	Option c for ç; character menu for others	Ctrl , or character menu
ỏ (hoi)	different vowel quality	Vietnamese hỏi 'ask' vs hói 'bald'	Character menu	Character menu
å (ring)	different vowel quality	Swedish får 'sheep, fool' vs far 'father' Czech krůty 'turkeys' vs kruty 'torsions'	Option a	Ctrl @
ơ (horn)	different vowel quality	Vietnamese hơi 'slightly' or 'gas' vs hói 'bald'	Character menu	Character menu