

## THE POLISH ALPHABET

A researcher's need for knowledge of a foreign language and its phonetic system appears very early in the research process. It is not confined, as many perceive, to utilizing and understanding documents created in Europe. A knowledge of the phonetics of a language—that is, sounds and their values—is often needed at the inception of research at a local town hall, county courthouse, or cemetery. This need continues as we move from local to U. S. federal records, such as immigration and naturalization papers and ship arrival lists. Not only are first and last names often spelled incorrectly in American sources, but the geographical information provided by our ancestors (if any!) may be entered inaccurately, as well.

When registering a birth at a local town hall, providing data to a census taker, or giving a court clerk personal information for citizenship papers, our immigrant ancestors were dealing with English-speaking clerks who had little or no knowledge of the Polish language or Eastern European geography. If we are aware of the phonetic values of the letters of the Polish alphabet, the diacritical marks used in the orthography, and certain rules which change the pronunciation of the basic sounds represented by the letters, we are much better equipped to anticipate errors and devise strategies to search using alternative spellings of personal and place names.

<i>Printed</i>	<i>Cursive</i>	<i>Printed</i>	<i>Cursive</i>
<b>A a</b>	<i>A a</i>	<b>M m</b>	<i>M m</i>
<b>Ą ą</b>	<i>Ą ą</i>	<b>N n</b>	<i>N n</i>
<b>B b</b>	<i>B b</i>	<b>Ń ń</b>	<i>Ń ń</i>
<b>C c</b>	<i>C c</i>	<b>O o</b>	<i>O o</i>
<b>Ć ć</b>	<i>Ć ć</i>	<b>Ó ó</b>	<i>Ó ó</i>
<b>D d</b>	<i>D d</i>	<b>P p</b>	<i>P p</i>
<b>E e</b>	<i>E e</i>	<b>R r</b>	<i>R r</i>
<b>Ę ę</b>	<i>Ę ę</i>	<b>S s</b>	<i>S s</i>
<b>F f</b>	<i>F f</i>	<b>Ś ś</b>	<i>Ś ś</i>
<b>G g</b>	<i>G g</i>	<b>T t</b>	<i>T t</i>
<b>H h</b>	<i>H h</i>	<b>U u</b>	<i>U u</i>
<b>I i</b>	<i>I i</i>	<b>W w</b>	<i>W w</i>
<b>J j</b>	<i>J j</i>	<b>Y y</b>	<i>Y y</i>
<b>K k</b>	<i>K k</i>	<b>Z z</b>	<i>Z z</i>
<b>L l</b>	<i>L l</i>	<b>Ż ż</b>	<i>Ż ż</i>
<b>Ł ł</b>	<i>Ł ł</i>	<b>Ź ź</b>	<i>Ź ź</i>

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This is a modified version of the Alphabet Chart given in *In Their Words: Vol. I, Polish*, <<https://langline.com/books/in-their-words-volume-i-polish/>>. It is used here with the authors' permission.