

## Tamil spelling

The Tamil script is used for writing Tamil, a language native to South India which has a written tradition dating back at least 2,000 years. Tamil is spoken by about 60 million speakers worldwide. The script derives from the ancient Indian script Brahmi (as do most modern Indian scripts). The modern script has changed in relatively minor ways during the last thousand years. The early Tamil script was exported and then modified to create Burmese and other scripts still used in South-East Asia.

**Important hint:** Like English, Tamil spelling represents some sounds using combinations of letters in certain positions. For example, English often represents the single "long I" sound using the letter "i" in the middle of the word/syllable and the letter "e" at the end of the word/syllable, as in the word "bite". The letter "e" is not actually pronounced, but indicates that the letter "i" is pronounced differently from the "i" in "bit." Unlike English, Tamil spelling is completely consistent.

The symbols "ṇ" and "ṅ" represent sounds for which there is no English or Latin letter. Knowing the actual pronunciation of these letters is not necessary for solving the puzzle.

*Read the following words:*

விதம்	vitam	"destruction of evil"	பற	para	"to fly"
பொங்கல்	ponkal	"boiled rice"	வந்தது	vantatu	"it came"
காற்று	kaarru	"wind"	அவன்	avan	"he"
அப்போது	appootu	"then"	பேய்	peey	"demon"

*Now that you can read Tamil, write the following words in the Tamil script:*

vaayillaa "dumb, mute"

konreen "I killed"

Puzzle by Eric Pederson, UofO Linguistics