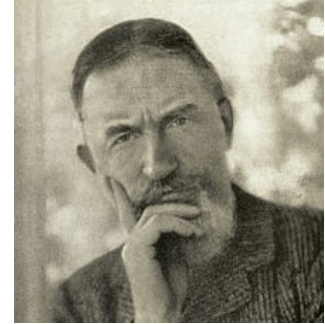


The Shavian Alphabet

The Shavian alphabet (also known as the “Shaw alphabet”) is an alphabet constructed to provide a simple, **phonemic** representation of the English language. It was funded by, and named after, the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950).



George Bernard Shaw was a vocal critic of English spelling because it is not consistent, has no rules for pronunciation and makes learning English difficult for non-English speakers. He desired and advocated a spelling reform and a new alphabet.

Shaw’s interest in spelling and alphabet reform was made clear in his will, in which provision was made for James Pitman to establish a “Shaw Alphabet”. Following Shaw’s death in November 1950, the Shaw Trust announced a competition to design a new alphabet, with the aim of producing a system that would be an economical way of writing the English language. The winner’s design became the new “Shaw” alphabet.

Shaw’s Trust could afford to publish only one book – a version of Shaw’s play “Androcles and the Lion”, in a bi-alphabetic edition using conventional English spelling (the Latin alphabet) and Shavian spelling (the Shaw alphabet). It was published in 1962. Copies were sent to all major libraries in English-speaking countries.

The new Shaw (or Shavian) alphabet has 48 letters, and no capital letters. Each character in the alphabet requires only a single stroke to be written on paper. The pen needs to be lifted only once when writing each character, thus enabling faster writing.

Additionally, five common words are written as single letters:

- the (ϱ)
- of (r)
- and (ʌ)
- to (1)
- for (J)

Using the Shavian alphabet makes it easy to pronounce any word, since there is no ambiguity about the pronunciation of letter groups (for example, there are 9 ways to pronounce ‘ough’). Another advantage is that it eliminates homographs (written words which have more than one pronunciation). For example:

- produce (verb): ʌrɪʌʃ
- produce (noun): ʌrɪʌʃ

More details: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavian_alphabet

Recommended video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D66LrlotvCA>

English to Shavian converter: <https://nwah.github.io/to-shavian/>

