

Cestun Niugcit?

A a Pronounced like the short a in father.

C c Pronounced like the ch sound in chicken. When c appears in a word between two single vowels, a, i, or u, it sounds more like an English j, as in macaq, “mah-jahq” (sun).

E e Sounds like the uh in Uh-oh! E is known as a “reduced vowel” because its sound is shorter than the other vowels, a, i, and u, (there is no “o” in the Alutiiq language). Unlike the other three vowels, e cannot be doubled, and cannot be part of a “diphthong” (see next page), and does not work to change the sounds of certain consonants (see c, t, k, g, s, and p).

F f Equivalent to the English f. It appears in words borrowed from Russian and English.

G g Position your tongue as you would for English g, then try to pronounce a drawn out English h with your mouth open enough to make the sound without grating. When g appears between two single vowels a, i, or u, Sugt’stun g becomes frictive, meaning the mouth opening becomes smaller and creates friction when air passes through.

Gw gw Equivalent to the English letter combination gw, but using the Sugt’stun g (above). It sounds almost like English hw, but with a smaller mouth opening.

Hm hm Similar to m, except preceded by a slight nasal breath, or h sound. It is pronounced hm (but with your mouth closed).

Hn hn Similar to n, except preceded by a slight nasal breath, or h sound. It is pronounced hn.

Hng hng Similar to ng, except it is preceded by a slight nasal breath, or h sound.

I i Sounds like the ee in see. However if i is next to r or q, it sounds more like the i in English sit.

K k Similar to k, but a bit softer and less explosive. It sounds like the k in skirt than the harsh k in kite. When k occurs between two single vowels a, i, or u, it sounds more like an English g, as in akit, “ah-geet” (money).

Kw kw Equivalent to the English letter combination kw; sounds like qu in queen.

L l Equivalent to the English l sound.

Ll ll The “double l” in Sugt’stun is less familiar to English speakers. To make this sound, hold your tongue against the front roof of your mouth as with an English l. Then force air out so that it escapes out from the sides of your tongue, making a hissing-like sound.

M m Equivalent to the English m sound.

N n Equivalent to the English n sound.

Ng ng Considered one letter in Sugt’stun. It sounds like the ng in sing. When single letters n and g appear together in a word, they are separated by an apostrophe to show they are not the one-letter ng. For example: un’gani, “oong-ah-nee” (his own whiskers) vs. un’gani, “un-hhah-nee” (out there).

P p Usually sounds like English p, but less explosive. When p is found between two single vowels, a, i, or u, it sounds more like English b, as in napaq, “nah-bahq” (tree).

Q q Pronounced by bringing the back of your tongue up to the rear roof of your mouth (where your uvula hangs down) and making a q sound. Similar to the sound of a k, but is produced further back in the throat.

R r Similar to English h, but is pronounced back in the throat, rather than in the mouth cavity, in the same area as the q (where your uvula hangs down). Hint: constrict the opening at the back of the mouth where the air rushes through to make a louder sound. Note: In older orthographies, r was written as h.

R R Known as “Russian R” sounds like English r. It only appears in words borrowed from Russian and English. For example, fRuuk’taaq, “frook-tock” (fruit). When small caps R cannot be used to represent a lower case letter, it is written as a regular capital R.

S s Sounds like English s. In some areas of the Sugpiaq Culture, like in Karluk and Afognak, s is pronounced more like sh. When s falls between two single vowels a, i, or u, in a word, it sounds more like z.

T t Sounds much like the English t except that it is pronounced with less force. When t occurs between two single vowels a, i, or u, in a word, it sounds more like English d, as in patuq, “pah-dooq” (lid).

U u The prime vowel u in Sugt’stun sounds like the oo sound in the English name Sue. When u is found next to a q or an r, it sounds more like the o in open.

W w Equivalent to English w sound.

Y y Equivalent to English y.