



## Hindi and English

### Language background

Hindi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by more than 600 million people, primarily across northern and central India. It belongs to the Indo-European language family, which also includes English, Spanish and French. Hindi developed historically from Sanskrit and related languages and is widely used in education, media and daily communication.

Hindi is written using the Devanagari script, which is read from left to right. Unlike English spelling, which often contains irregular patterns, Devanagari represents consonants and vowels clearly, meaning words are usually written as they are pronounced.

Hindi grammar and sound systems also differ from English. Hindi typically follows a subject–object–verb word order, whereas English usually follows subject–verb–object order. These structural differences can influence how Hindi speakers approach sentence structure, pronunciation and spelling when learning English.

### Key linguistic differences from English

- Hindi uses the Devanagari script, which differs from the Roman alphabet used in English
- Hindi spelling is highly phonetic, meaning words are usually written exactly as they sound
- Hindi typically follows subject–object–verb word order
- Hindi distinguishes between aspirated and unaspirated consonants
- Hindi has a more regular relationship between sounds and letters than English
- Hindi does not use capital letters
- English contains many more vowel distinctions than Hindi
- Hindi speakers often grow up in multilingual environments, using several languages daily

### What teachers may notice in English

Teachers may notice patterns such as:

- spelling words exactly as they sound
- difficulty with irregular English spelling patterns
- confusion between similar English vowel sounds
- sentence structures influenced by Hindi word order
- omission of capital letters in writing
- strong pronunciation of consonants due to aspirated sound patterns

These patterns are often predictable forms of language transfer between Hindi and English.



## Why this happens

Hindi spelling closely reflects pronunciation, so learners often apply similar phonetic strategies when spelling English words. Because English spelling contains many irregular patterns, this can result in phonetic spellings that differ from standard English forms.

Hindi grammar also typically places the verb at the end of a sentence, whereas English places the verb after the subject. When producing English sentences, learners may initially transfer this familiar structure.

Hindi also distinguishes between aspirated and unaspirated consonants, meaning that the amount of breath released when producing a sound changes the meaning of a word. Because English does not use aspiration in the same way, learners may emphasise consonants differently when speaking English.

Finally, Hindi writing does not use capital letters, so pupils must learn English capitalisation conventions as a new feature of written language.

## Classroom strategies

- explicitly teach irregular English spelling patterns
- highlight English vowel contrasts during reading and speaking activities
- model sentence structures that emphasise English word order
- provide sentence frames to support written expression
- practise capital letter use in writing tasks
- encourage oral rehearsal before writing

## Strengths to leverage

Hindi-speaking pupils often bring valuable strengths to the classroom, including:

- strong awareness of sound patterns in language
- strong pronunciation skills
- familiarity with structured grammar systems
- experience navigating multilingual environments
- confidence in oral discussion

## Reflective questions for teachers

- Are spelling patterns influenced by pronunciation?
- Are sentence structures reflecting Hindi word order?
- Would explicit modelling of English spelling patterns support writing?