

NAMECIPHER

How to Say Irish Names

A printable pronunciation guide to 40 of the Irish names people most often get wrong, with meanings.

How to read this guide

Irish spelling follows its own rules, so a name can look nothing like it sounds. A few patterns explain most of the surprises. Each name in the guide shows an English-friendly respelling, with **capital letters** on the syllable to stress.

bh and mh

Usually sound like **V** or **W**.

Niamh → NEEV

Dearbhla → DER-vla

Siobhán → shi-VAWN

ao

Often sounds like **EE**.

Aoife → EE-fah

Caoimhe → KEE-vah

Saoirse → SEER-sha

dh and gh

Often **silent** or very soft.

Tadhg → TIGE

Eoghan → OH-an

Darragh → DAR-ah

fh

Usually **silent**.

Caoilfhionn → KEE-lin

The fada (á é í ó ú)

The accent **lengthens** the vowel, and can pull the stress onto that syllable.

Sinéad → shin-AYD

Róisín → ro-SHEEN

Stress

Usually falls on the **first** syllable, with exceptions like the ones above.

Máireád → MY-rayd

These respellings are a guide, not a rule: Irish has regional dialects, and the same name can be said slightly differently in Donegal, Kerry and Connemara. Hear every name spoken aloud at namecipher.net.

Names, A to Z (1 of 3)

NAME	SAY IT	MEANING	GENDER
Áine	AWN-ya	Radiance	Girl
Aisling	ASH-ling	Dream, vision	Girl
Aoibheann	EE-van	Beautiful, radiant	Girl
Aoife	EE-fah	Beauty, radiance	Girl
Caitríona	kah-TREE-nah	Pure	Girl
Caoilfhionn	KEE-lin	Slender and fair	Girl
Caoimhe	KEE-vah	Gentle, kind, precious	Girl
Cathal	KAH-hal	Battle ruler	Boy
Ciarán	KEER-awn	Little dark one	Boy
Cillian	KIL-ee-an	Church, or strife; debated	Boy
Clodagh	KLOH-da	Named for a river	Girl
Cúchulainn	koo-HULL-in	Hound of Culann	Boy
Darragh	DAR-ah	Oak, fertile	Boy
Dearbhla	DER-vla	True desire, uncertain	Girl

Capital letters show the syllable to stress. Hear each name at namecipher.net.

Names, A to Z (2 of 3)

NAME	SAY IT	MEANING	GENDER
Deirdre	DEER-dra	Uncertain, possibly sorrowful	Girl
Diarmuid	DEER-mid	Uncertain, perhaps without envy	Boy
Dónal	DOH-nal	World ruler	Boy
Eimear	EE-mer	Possibly swift, quick	Girl
Eithne	ETH-nya	Kernel	Girl
Eoghan	OH-an	Born of the yew, debated	Boy
Eoin	OH-in	God is gracious	Boy
Fiadh	FEE-ah	Wild, deer	Girl
Fionn	FYUN	Fair, white, bright	Boy
Gráinne	GRAWN-ya	Uncertain, possibly grain	Girl
Laoise	LEE-sha	Radiant	Girl
Lorcan	LOR-kan	Little fierce one	Boy
Mairéad	MY-rayd	Pearl	Girl
Muireann	MWIR-an	Sea-born, sea-white	Girl

Capital letters show the syllable to stress. Hear each name at namecipher.net.

Names, A to Z (3 of 3)

NAME	SAY IT	MEANING	GENDER
Niamh	NEEV	Radiance, brightness	Girl
Odhrán	OH-rawn	Little pale green one	Boy
Oisín	UH-sheen	Little deer	Boy
Pádraig	PAW-drig	Noble, patrician	Boy
Róisín	ro-SHEEN	Little rose	Girl
Ruairí	ROO-ree	Red king	Boy
Sadhbh	SIVE	Sweet, goodly	Girl
Saoirse	SEER-sha	Freedom	Girl
Sinéad	shin-AYD	God is gracious	Girl
Siobhán	shi-VAWN	God is gracious	Girl
Sorcha	SOR-ah-kha	Bright, radiant	Girl
Tadhg	TIGE	Poet, philosopher	Boy

Hear every name

Scan to open the NameCipher pronunciation guide, where each name has a recording by a native speaker.



namecipher.net

Meanings and pronunciations from NameCipher, which has more than 490 names with origins, meanings and audio.