

KLINGON SOCIETY

Matters of Honor

Honor is a central theme of Klingons and a foundational concept in Klingon culture. There are two words for “honor” in the Klingon language, *quv* and *batlh* which are subtly different things. According to *HolQeD*, the journal of the Klingon Language Institute, here is the difference between them.

... quv was a sort of personal honor, the kind over which, by one's behavior, one has some control. This sort of honor is earned, can be bestowed on one, and is associated with reputation, dignity and respect. batlh on the other hand, is a grander, more general, more philosophical concept, associated with integrity, rectitude, scruples, and principles. Unfortunately he didn't give any examples or elaborate any further. He did add, however, that neither ... was the same as pop, usually translated as reward but sometimes translated as honor in the sense of token of esteem, that is, formal recognition of an accomplishment or accomplishments ...

-- HolQeD (vol 12, num 3, page 9)

Social Rankings

Klingon society is highly stratified and concerned with standing and social facing.

- **chuQun:** At the top of Klingon society are the nobles, those who belong to one of the Houses and who lead society through the High Council. They control the lands of the Empire and serve as the local authority and military for their holdings. *chuQun* are expected to be the most honorable members of society but in practice, of course, this is not always true.
- **Suvwl':** Warriors and soldiers of the Empire are held in high regard, just under the nobles of the Klingon Houses. They follow the path of the warrior, serving in the army of a particular House, and gaining honor from association with the *chuQun* they serve. They are not truly “of the House” but instead are retainers who serve the nobles.
- **vumwl':** The professionals of the Empire are under the warriors but they still hold all the rights of a citizen. They are respected but, lacking the mettle of a warrior, are not usually allowed into the service of a House. Without the opportunity to serve in an army and fight, they don't have the chance to gain fame and glory to advance themselves.
- **Ha'Dlbah:** The bottom of the Klingon social ladder are the *Ha'Dlbah*, those with no social standing or rights. They may not serve in the military, may not bring a grievance against another Klingon, and cannot even move without the permission of local officials. For the most part, the *Ha'Dlbah* are alien subjects of the Empire, treated with contempt due to the Klingons' adversarial past with outsiders. To call a Klingon by this term (which translates to “cur” or “inferior person”) is a grave insult. Sometimes subject peoples are called *jeghpu'wl'* (“conquered people”) but this is a more insulting term.

The Houses

The Klingons organize themselves into *tuq* (a word which is usually translated as “house” but can also be read as “clan” or “tribe”) which is a complicated yet essential concept. On the surface, the House is a family: its lineage stretches back generations and it is named for its current head (or sometimes for a famous recent ancestor). The House of Mogh, the House of Duras, and the House of Martok should all be familiar to fans of *Star Trek* and when these houses are depicted the family members are the stars of the action. The eldest male of the dominant family is the Head of the House or “joH”. There might be other patriarchs in cousins and lesser lines but usually the line of

inheritance is established well before the current *joH*'s death. If a distant relative or orphan is to be brought into the *joH*'s family (or any Klingon family, for that matter) the ritual of *R'uustai* makes them legally and spiritually one blood.

A lord is expected to be a strong warrior, though, so if he is not able to fulfill his duties he either makes sure to die honorably in battle or perform the ritual suicide known as *Hegh'bat* for an infirm or crippled individual. If there is a doubt as to the *joH*'s ability to lead, he might be challenged to a duel of honor by someone else in the House. If the challenger is victorious, he becomes the new *joH* and names his new heir. The previous *joH*'s immediate family is still part of the House but is removed from all matters of importance for the House's future.

The Lower Classes

In these ways, a Klingon House resembles a noble family such as one might find in an old Earth monarchy. However, this is only a small number of the Klingons that make up a House, the *chuQun* at its head. Underneath them are common warriors, *Suvwl'*, and professionals, *vumwl'*, who are pledged to the house. These Klingons do not speak for the House on any state matters but they make up the majority of people in the House's territory and their contributions go much farther towards the stability and success of the House than the politics and honor-duels of the *chuQun* do.

A *Suvwl'* warrior can also challenge a *joH* for leadership of the house and, if he is victorious, his immediate family will be elevated to the social rank of *chuQun* through a ritual called *brek'tal*, supplanting the previous *joH*'s family. Of course, those no longer in power are not likely to sit by and let this usurpation happen without challenge so the newly-elevated *joH* can expect to face many duels from relatives of the previous *joH* wishing to restore their family's honor.

Klingon Women

While women are relegated to secondary positions in Klingon society, this doesn't mean that they are completely powerless. The wife of the *joH*, called the Mistress of the House, manages finances, oversees marriages, and administers discipline with an iron fist. They run the household of the *tuq* but since the "household" could include huge tracts of land and even whole planets the territory that they manage is more than just dusting and pantries. In fact the title used by this woman in the Klingon language is also *joH*, marking her status above others.

Additionally, if a *joH* dies suddenly without a male heir, his wife can become the head of the House with the approval of the High Council. Of course, the future on the house depends on heirs so she should quickly choose one to inherit her title or otherwise ensure the succession of leadership to avoid a fight for control or, as an ultimate loss, the dissolution of the House. If she remarries, her new husband becomes *joH* and she renews her position as Mistress of the House

The Great Houses

The number of Great Houses has varied throughout the life of the Empire but the number has always hovered around 24. There are two dozen Great Houses currently and they each send a representative to the High Council (see below) to guide the direction of the Klingon Empire. Great Houses are decided by the strength of their armies, the prosperity of their lands, and the glory of their deeds in service to the Empire. This is often a self-fulfilling process, of course, since a large army means more territory and more glory to the Empire while also providing more prosperity. In practice, then, the Great Houses are a stable group barring betrayals (like the House of Duras working with the Romulans) or dismissals (such as the ejection of the House of Mogh following Worf's refusal to join the invasion of Cardassian space).

Below the Great Houses, of course, are dozens and dozens of Lesser Houses who might still have vast territories and resources to their name. A powerful Lesser House might have an entire planet as part

of its purview, for example, but if that planet is on the fringes of Klingon space it is still less prestigious than a smaller territory close to Qo'noS. In some cases, a Lesser House might have acquired great wealth and glory to its name, but for reasons of politics is still not recognized to the High Council and remains in lesser status. For this reason, the Lesser Houses are usually allied with a Great House, offering their support in exchange for the *joH* of the Great House letting the smaller houses know what happens in the High Council and bringing their grievances to the Council with their support.

The Klingon High Council

At the top of Klingon society is the High Council, made up of the *joH* from each of the Great Houses. Since the overthrow of the last Emperor in 2069, these representatives appoint the Chancellor by weighing matters of loyalty, honor, and alliances between Great Houses and Lesser Houses. This process is not always easy, as the recent civil war after the ascension of Gowron shows, but any disagreements are usually handled between members of the High Council. They might be handled by duels to the death, but they are handled.

The power of the Chancellor is absolute where the powers of the Councilors is not explicitly stated. He may raise a House to the High Council or reduce a Great House to a Lesser House. He establishes foreign policy and appoints operational commanders in times of war. However, he cannot dictate the ruling of a judgement voted on by the High Council or usurp their decision on matters of inheritance, legal grievance, military tribunals, and other issues brought before the High Council. Likewise, the High Council decides on legal matters throughout the Empire but the laws of a territory are up to the House that controls it. Tax rates, punishments, the use of land, and even the method of calculating income are decided by the *joH* for their particular territory.

The Chancellor, the High Council, and the Houses represent all aspects of government within the Empire and their right to rule on their particular purviews cannot be questioned. However, they are entrusted with these tasks as a matter of honor and if they are perceived to be abusing that power there are consequences. Like all Klingon consequences, the method is blunt and violent. If the High Council decides that the Chancellor has acted without honor, they will appoint a new Chancellor and if this move is contested a duel to the death is required. If there is an unpopular treaty, the High Council will determine a champion that better represents them to challenge the Chancellor and if he is victorious he will ascend and reverse the decision. At the same time, dishonorable or cruel laws in the territory of a House could easily result in the intervention of warriors and battleships to force the House to change course. Other Houses might encourage a junior member of the House to challenge and replace his *joH* in order to set the House on a new course. These are not actions taken lightly and slow pressure is preferred to give the offenders a chance to regain honor.

Finally, the recent return of the Emperor (literally) as the cloned Kahless came to the Klingon homeworld initially caused panic within the High Council but in the end Kahless showed no wish to assume autocratic power. The Emperor speaks on spiritual matters and questions of honor from a respected but personal standpoint. Laws remain firmly in the hands of the High Council and the individual Houses.

Klingon Defense Force

The KDF is the army of the Klingon Empire, made up of ships from the private armies of all the Empire's Houses, both Great and Lesser. Although its individual elements are under the control of individual Houses, the top-level command structure is entirely within the command of the Chancellor. They appoint generals to command the KDF and those generals approve the command of captains throughout the fleet. The loyalty of the captains to the generals and the crews to the captains follows the adherent that holds much of Klingon society together: personal reputation. If a general loses the respect of his captains their command will be challenged as a matter of duty. During

war, the power structure of the KDF usually transforms several times over as superior officers are killed and replaced by their subordinates.

The KDF was headquartered for a long time on Qo'noS but Chancellor Gowron moved its command to the fortified planetoid of **Ty'Gokor** during the Dominion War. This system already contained strong orbital fortresses of the KDF and a massive shipyard that produces more Klingon starships than any other facility in the Empire. Although the KDF has been moving more and more of its facilities there over the years, officially moving the headquarters there was a risky move. Having the headquarters in the First City on Qo'noS meant that the High Council and Chancellor could watch the generals. Now the organization is physically removed from the government and many worry that it will start to act independently.

Klingon Religion

The mythology of the Klingons has so many details from the various *Star Trek* series that you could write a book on it. Many have, in fact, as well as websites, story arcs, video games, etc. This book will *not* try to recreate all of that and if you want a thorough grounding in Klingon myth you should check out those resources. Instead, what follows is a quick glossary of some particularly important terms from the mythology as seen in *Star Trek* series.

- **Ak'voh:** The ritual vigil where warriors watch over the body of the deceased to keep away predators and ensure the soul's safe departure for *Sto-Vo-Kor*.
- **Cavern of Despair:** The cave in *Gre'thor* where the souls of the forgotten dead languish. Klingons who are no longer honored by the living can be condemned to this place even if they were honorable warriors, requiring prayers and worship of a Klingon's ancestors to save them from this fate.
- **Fek'thr:** A horrific monster resembling a deformed, feral Klingon who tortures the souls of the dishonored dead in *Gre'thor*.
- **Gre'thor:** The torturous afterlife for the dishonored including cowards and suicides. The dishonored dead were carried across a blood-red river filled with pale, serpent-like *kos'karii* to the Gates of *Gre'thor*.
- **Kahless the Unforgettable:** The ultimate hero of the Klingons who united them into an Empire during the Age of Heroes. Recently cloned by zealous clerics. See the Klingon History section for more information.
- **Kuvah'magh:** The mythical savior of the Klingons, referred to in prophecy that is followed by a minority within the Empire. A group of these zealots left Klingon space in the mid-23rd century to travel into the Delta Quadrant in search of the *kuvah'magh*, eventually finding the *U.S.S. Voyager* and the quarter-Klingon infant Miral Paris whom they claimed was their savior.
- **Kortar:** The first Klingon created by the Klingon gods of old. He grew more powerful than the gods and slew them, so they condemned him to pilot the Barge of the Dead carrying souls to *Gre'thor*.
- **Mauk-to'Vor:** If a Klingon is disgraced and believes there is no way to regain their honor and reach *Sto-Vo-Kor*, this ritual may be undertaken by a sibling to ritually kill them and restore their honor.
- **Qui'Tu:** A beautiful world full of promise which was said to lie hidden somewhere in the galaxy. How this fits into the rest of Klingon religion is unclear but it is this place that Sybok likens to Eden in *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*.
- **Sto-Vo-Kor:** The afterlife for the honored dead, surrounded by the River of Blood, where these true warriors fight an eternal battle against great enemies. When a Klingon dies gloriously in battle or has a glorious act committed in their name after their death their soul arrives in *Sto-Vo-Kor* to the halls guarded by Kahless.

KLINGON SPACE

Klingon History

The Age of Heroes

While records of Klingon history might be confused at times and prone to exaggeration and poetic language as much as cold facts. Still, everyone can agree where Klingon history begins: with **Kahless the Unforgettable**. This hero united the Klingons into the First Empire by defeating a tyrant called Molor who was said to be unbeatable. Kahless raised an army against Molor and secured his forces in the city of Qam-chEE to make a stand. The garrison fled, however, and according to legend it was only Kahless and his love, the Lady Lutara, who stood against Molor's army. Against all odds they were victorious and the traditional attack with *ma'Stakas* clubs during Klingon weddings commemorates the strength of their love against adversity.

After this victory, Kahless finally defeated Molor and his allies the *Fek'Ihri* at the River Skral, slaying the tyrant with the first *bat'leth*. This final victory, celebrated annually by the *Kot'baval* Festival, brought together the Klingon people and established the code of honor they live by still. It also preceded a period of growth and expansion as the Empire developed **warp drive** soon afterwards. Kahless and Lutara had many children and it is from these lines that the *chuQun* (the Klingon aristocratic class) and their noble houses are descended from. Innumerable stories are told about Kahless but his final story would become incredibly important in the 24th century. At the end of his life, seeing his work was done, Kahless bid farewell to the Klingon people.

"You are Klingons. You need no one but yourselves. I will go now, to Sto-Vo-Kor. But I promise one day I will return." Then Kahless pointed to a star in the sky and said, "Look for me there, on that point of light."

- TNG: "Rightful Heir", Episode 6x23

KLINGON	TERRAN	EVENT
-520	854	Kahless the Unforgettable unites the Klingon people into the Empire.
-452	922	Klingons develop their first warp drives.
-302	1072	The Hur'q invade Qo'noS and pillage the Empire's treasures.
0	1374	After nearly more than three centuries of occupation, the Hur'q leave Qo'noS. The Second Dynasty re-establishes the Klingon Empire.
141	1515	The Second Dynasty ends when General K'Trelan murders Emperor Reclaw and his family. The Dark Time begins.
151	1525	The Dark Time ends and the Emperor is restored under the Third Dynasty.
667	2041	War with the Romulans.
695	2069	The last Emperor dies and the office of Chancellor is established. The First Klingon Civil War begins.
719	2093	The Second Empire begins.
728	2102	An invasion fleet sent into Breen space is lost forever.
771	2145	The Empire is nearly pushed to civil war again.
777	2151	First contact between Klingons and Humans.
779	2153	The <i>Enterprise</i> rescues refugees fleeing the Empire and Captain Archer is captured.
780	2154	The Augment Crisis nearly leads to war and causes a deforming affliction among the Klingons
871	2245	The Battle of Donatu V.
893	2267	The Treaty of Organia is signed and Nimbus III is colonized.
897	2271	Battle of <i>Klach D'Kel Brakt</i> is won against the Romulans.
911	2285	The Genesis Device test leads to tension between the Empire and Federation.
919	2293	The moon Praxis is destroyed and Chancellor Gorkon organizes the Khitomer Conference but is assassinated.
970	2344	Battle of Narendra III.
972	2346	Khitomer Massacre.
993	2367	Gowron becomes Chancellor, leading to the Second Klingon Civil War.
995	2369	A clone of Kahless is created on the holy planet of Boreth, eventually taking the (now symbolic) position of Emperor.
998	2372	General Martok leads an invasion of the Cardassian Union. The Empire withdraws from the Khitomer Accords.
999	2373	Martok is revealed as a changeling spy and the Cardassian Union joins the Dominion, prompting the Empire to resign the Khitomer Accords.
1520	2374	The Battle of Chin'toka.
1521	2375	Martok becomes Chancellor. Cardassia Prime falls to Alliance forces.

This story became known as “The Promise” and the star, orbited by the planet of Boreth, is a holy site for Klingons and the clerics known as the Followers of Kahless waited for his return there for much of Klingon history.

The Hur'q

The Age of Heroes when Kahless's memory was still fresh was the most glorious period in Klingon history, but it was immediately followed by the darkest. The Klingons' first contact with an alien species nearly became their last as Qo'noS was invaded by a species known as the **Hur'q** (now known to be from the Gamma Quadrant, though their means of travel to the Beta Quadrant is unknown).

Little is known by outsiders about the *Hur'q*, and Klingon records from the time are likely to be filled with holes and mysteries. What is known is that the Hur'q occupied Qo'noS for over three hundred years, enslaving the Klingons and strip-mining Qo'noS for all of its resources. When they **eventually left** it was just as abrupt as their arrival. There was no war with the Klingons, they were just abandoned as quickly as they were conquered. Because of the shame of defeat and the devastation the Hur'q left behind, Klingons have a view that could generously be called “xenophobic and paranoid” towards outsiders. There is a cultural memory of alien species destroying the Klingon homeworld and Klingons expect this to happen again on some level and wish to be ready for it. Not by coincidence, the modern Klingon word for “outsider” is related to the name Hur'q.

The Second Dynasty

After the departure of the Hur'q, the Klingons had few natural resources left on their homeworld. All they had, in fact, were the machines and technology left behind by the invaders. Using this technology and their newfound freedom, the Klingon Empire began to rapidly expand in an effort to secure new resources and establish their dominance so as not to be conquered again.

In 2041, the Empire was engaged in the first substantial enemy they'd encountered in their expansion: the **Romulan Star Empire**. Skirmishes with the Romulans were bloody and led to the death of many warriors and the destruction of much of the Empire's fleet. When **Emperor Koth was killed** fighting the Romulans, a crisis of succession rocked the Empire. The Klingon High Council, not wanting to let this weakness lead to the Romulans invading the Empire itself, took command of the state and appointed a **Chancellor** as the new head of the Empire. This created a rift between traditionalists and supporters of the new regime, resulting in the **First Klingon Civil War**.

The Second Empire

When the civil war ended, the Chancellor had firm control of the state. The **Second Klingon Empire** began, setting the political system that would rule the Klingons throughout their interactions with Humans. The Second Empire quickly rebuilt and decided to push for a show of power with their new forces. Chancellor Mow'ga sent a fleet to **Breen space**, but the ships were never heard from again.

Instead of a show of power, this failed invasion pushed Mow'ga from power. A series of quick regimes came and went and the disruption **nearly led to another civil war** in less than a century (partially due to manipulations by the Suliban Cabal as part of the Temporal Cold War). Discovering the truth of these matters inadvertently led to **first contact between Klingons and Humans** when a courier carrying the message to the Klingon High Council crash-landed on Earth. Initially, the relationship between these two powers seemed promising when the *Enterprise NX-01* rescued a bird-of-prey from the atmosphere of a gas giant, but when the *Enterprise* next encountered the Klingons it was to rescue a ship full of **refugees** fleeing Klingon conquest of their home planet. Captain Archer refused to release the refugees and was charged by the Empire and eventually captured and sentenced to the penal colony on Rura Penthe.

This sort of interaction marked the interactions between Klingons and Humans through the remainder of the 22nd century and into the 23rd. No matter how the two interact, the result seems to be further mounting tension. In 2154, a group of augmented humans tried to destroy a Klingon colony on Qu'Vat but were stopped by the *Enterprise* in a matter known as the **Augment Crisis**. The Klingons began experimenting with genetic augmentation themselves but the result is an affliction which destroys Klingon cranial ridges. Matters finally boiled over into open war starting with the inconclusive **Battle of Donatu V**. The result is the **Treaty of Organia** where rules are set for further disagreements to prevent future conflicts.

In an effort to promote cooperation, the Klingon Empire, along with the Federation and Romulan Star Empire, established the colony on **Nimbus III** as a shared "planet of galactic peace." Even this was marred by the interference of the rogue Vulcan Sybok who hijacked the proceedings for his own purposes. Still, the Federation and Star Empire signed the Treaty of Algeron in 2311 as the sign of a new era in the Beta Quadrant.

Still, matters between the Klingons and Romulans were far from certain. A series of border raids, including the famous **Battle of Klach D'Kel Brakt** (called *Dumok'azen* by the Romulans) which was a decisive Klingon victory, leads to increased hostility between those states and the defensive position affected Federation relations as well when the **Genesis Device** convinced many on the High Council that the Federation was designing a superweapon.

Praxis and Aftermath

Some negotiations are attempted on Korvat in 2289 between the Federation and Klingon Empire but without real results and Romulans are declared "blood enemies" of the state three years later. The following year, however, Klingon foreign policy makes an abrupt shift when an industrial accident destroys the only moon around Qo'noS, **Praxis**, and the majority of Klingon energy-production facilities are destroyed in an instant. **Chancellor Gorkon** decided that the time had come to negotiate a stronger peace as Qo'noS struggled with radioactive fallout in its atmosphere.

He called for a peace conference on **Khitomer**, attended by observers from the Star Empire and other states, where he hoped to forge a strong treaty. Just prior to the conference, a discontented Klingon general named Chang disabled the Chancellor's ship and sent warriors in environmental suits to kill Gorkon. The incident seemed like it was orchestrated by the *Enterprise* so when Captain James Kirk and Dr. McCoy beamed over to help they were arrested and sent to the Rura Penthe penal colony. Despite the calls for war, Gorkon's daughter, Azetbur, succeeded him as Chancellor and upheld her father's wishes for peace. She opposed action from the High Council until the truth was learned and talks could continue unhindered.

Matters remained tense but were helped immensely by the sacrifice of the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise-C* at the **Battle of Narendra III** against a Romulan attack. A devastating loss of life and symbolic blow to the Empire's honor occurred with the **Khitomer Massacre** where Romulan warbirds killed more than 4,000 people (an estimated 78% of the colony's people). Again, the Federation stood by the Empire and the *U.S.S. Intrepid* was first on the scene to help survivors. When Chancellor K'mpec died of poisoning, **Gowron** assumed the position of head of state which proved to be a divisive appointment.

A **Second Klingon Civil War** began, this time with strong involvement by the Federation. This was individual involvement at the beginning, mostly due to the unprecedented appointment of Captain Jean-Luc Picard as Arbiter of Succession and the personal implications of Picard's chief of security Worf. However, when it became clear that the Khitomer Massacre was a conspiracy between the Romulans and Ja'rod of the House of Duras, the Federation fully supported Gowron as the chief rival of Duras. Duras of House Duras was the chief political rival of Gowron and the involvement of the Romulans on the Duras side and the Federation on Gowron's made for a very messy war. Gowron prevailed, however, and the Empire continued to grow closer with the Federation.

KLINGON PHRASES

The following everyday phrases and the pronunciation guide come from the Klingon Language Institute.

ENGLISH	KLINGON
Klingon Language	<i>tlhIngan Hol</i>
Yes (answer to yes/no question)	<i>Hlja' or HlSlaH</i>
No (answer to yes/no question)	<i>Qo'</i>
Traditional Greeting	<i>nugneH</i> (lit. "What do you want?")
What's happening?	<i>qaStaH nuq?</i>
Huh?	<i>nuqjatlh?</i>
I understand.	<i>jlyaj</i>
I don't understand.	<i>jlyajbe'</i>
Good!	<i>maj</i>
Well done!	<i>majQa'</i>
Come in.	<i>yl'el</i> (one person) <i>pe'el</i> (more than one person)
Come here.	<i>HlghoS</i>
Go away.	<i>naDevvo' ylgHoS</i> (one person) <i>naDevvo' pegHoS</i> (more than one person)

ENGLISH	KLINGON
Open the door!	<i>lojmlt ylpoSmoH!</i>
Your mother has a smooth forehead!	<i>Ha SoSli' Quch!</i>
Today is a good day to die	<i>Heghlu'meH QaQ jajvam.</i>
We are Klingons!	<i>tlhIngan maH!</i>
What time is it?	<i>'arlogh Qoylu'pu'?</i> (lit. "How many times ahs it been heard?")
Shut up!	<i>bljatlh 'e' ylmev</i> (one person) <i>Sujatlh 'e' ylmev</i> (more than one person)
That's great news!	<i>buy' ngop</i> (lit. "the plates are full")
Do you speak Klingon?	<i>tlhIngan Hol Dajatlh'a'?</i>
You are wrong.	<i>blughbe'.</i>
Revenge is a dish best served cold.	<i>bortaS blr jablu'DI' reH</i> <i>QaQqu' nay'.</i> (li. "When cold revenge is served, the dish is always very good.")

Klingon Pronunciation Guide

Provided below are the Klingon and English characters used for writing Klingon words (the so-called "Okrand writing-system") and their pronunciation. This guide is borrowed from the Klingon Language Institute.

- Ⓐ (a) [a] Like the "a" sound in English "father." Never like in "acid" (American pronunciation).
- Ⓑ (b) [b] Like in English "bob" or "playbill."
- Ⓒ (ch) [tʃ] Like in English "chew" or "chocolate."
- Ⓓ (D) [d] Not quite like the English "d" sound. Touch the tip of your tongue to the very top of your mouth, the highest point on your palate, instead of near the teeth like for an English "d." Then do the same thing you'd do to make a "d."
- Ⓔ (e) [ɛ] Like the "e" in English "bed."
- Ⓕ (gh) [ɣ] A gargled sound, at the back of the throat. Like the Klingon H, only voiced. It's very much like the French gargled "r."
- Ⓖ (H) [x] A harsh sound in the throat, found in German (as in "Bach") or the Hebrew toast "l'chayim." Make sure you pronounce this harshly and unvoiced.
- Ⓘ (I) [i] Like the "i" sound in English "bit."
- Ⓝ (j) [dʒ] Like the "j" in English "junk." Never like in French "jour."

- ᐱ (l) [l] Like in English “lunch.”
- ᐱ (m) [m] Like in English “mother.”
- ᐱ (n) [n] Like in English “nose” or “any.”
- ᐱ (ng) [ŋ] The same sound as occurs at the end of English “thing,” only in Klingon it can also come at the beginnings of words. Be careful when starting a word or syllable with this sound. It’s against the rules of English, and it may take some practice.
- ᐱ (o) [o] Like in English “note” or “mosaic.” As with other letters, don’t get distracted by English words spelled with the same letters. The Klingon word not sounds like English “note,” not like “not” (which in Klingon lettering would be spelled nat).
- ᐱ (p) [p^h] Like in English “pipe” or “pop.” Pronounce it with a puff of air.
- ᐱ (q) [q] A little like English “k,” but not really. This sound is to be made as far back in your mouth as possible, with the back of your tongue actually touching your uvula (the fleshy blob that hangs down over your throat). It sounds a little like you’re choking.
- ᐱ (Q) [qX] A little like a Klingon q immediately followed by a Klingon H. Close off your mouth as far back as you can, like with q, and force air up, like you’re trying to dislodge food stuck in your throat. It sounds a lot like you’re choking.
- ᐱ (r) [r] A lightly trilled or rolled “r.” If you can’t trill with the tip of your tongue, just do a flap (or even a regular English r will be understood), but don’t gargle the “r,” or it’ll sound like a gh. Note that your friendly sound-pronouncer for these pages does a rotten job of rolling r’s. Don’t let that stop you from doing it right, nor should you worry about not doing it perfectly. Notably, Marc Okrand, the creator of the language, doesn’t roll his r’s consistently on the audio tapes he made. Also, be careful not to let the r “overshadow” nearby vowels. Klingon syllables *mlr*, *mer*, *mur* sound approximately like English “mere, mare, moor”; none of them rhyme with English “fur”.
- ᐱ (S) [ʃ] A sound somewhat like an English “sh,” but made farther back. Put your tongue where you did for the Klingon D, but don’t quite touch the roof of your mouth. Make an “s” sound with your tongue up there.
- ᐱ (t) [t^h] Like English “t” in “tip.” Pronounce it powerfully, with a puff of air.
- ᐱ (tlh) [t^h] This is a tough one to describe. Put your tongue in position to say a “t,” but instead of pulling the tip of your tongue away from your palate, drop the *sides*, sort of like what happens near the end of the word “waddle” in English. This should leave you in position to say an “l,” but make sure you don’t use your voice: whisper the “l”; hiss it out between your teeth. The dropping of the sides of your tongue should be done forcefully; this is another spitter.
- ᐱ (u) [u] Like in English “prune” or “fool.”
- ᐱ (v) [v] Like in English “vicious.”
- ᐱ (w) [w] Like in English “wisdom.” Sometimes this sound will follow an a, an e, or an l, yielding:
- aw, rhyming with English “cow.”
 - ew, not like anything in English. Basically the “e” in “bed” run into a “w.” A good way to get to this is to think of Elmer Fudd saying “tewwible.”

- Iw, also unlike anything in English. Again, it's like the "i" in "bit" run into a "w." It's close to "Eww!" the expression of disgust.

◀ (y) [j] Like in English "yet." This sound, like w, forms diphthongs:

- ay, rhyming with English "why."
- ey, rhyming with English "may" (*Note:* The Klingon word may, of course, sounds like English "my." See above).
- Iy, rhyming with English "key."
- oy, rhyming with English "boy."
- uy, sort of like English "gooey," but not quite. It's one syllable, while "gooey" is two. Think of English "Do you" and drop off the last vowel sound.

◌' (') [ʔ] A sound we use in English, but don't consider a sound. It's the catch in the throat we put in the beginnings of words that start with vowels, or in phrases like "uh-oh." In Klingon, it can also come at the ends of syllables, where it has to be pronounced carefully (e.g. the words tl and tl' have very different meanings). This one takes practice to get right in all positions.