

Lenition

1. How to lenite sounds

A note to begin with - some people refer to lenition as "aspiration" - try not to do so yourself, as "aspiration" is something entirely different and should not be confused with lenition. In a nutshell, aspiration refers to a puff of air following a consonant, for example in English <pat> where the <p> is followed by a puff of air. Lenition on the other hand means that a sound is changed into something else, such as **pòg** (with a [p] sound) becoming **mo phòg** (with an f sound).

1.1 "Normal" Lenition

Not all Gaelic consonants can be lenited, but a lot of them can and some of these lenitions are not as "straightforward" as you might think. That is because there are two different kinds of lenition - "normal" and with the article. Let's look at the normal lenition first (for guidelines on how to produce these sounds, see the pages under [Phonetics](#)):

Original Sound	Lenited	IPA	Example	Example in IPA
b (broad)	bh	v	bàta > mo bhàta	mə va:ʰtə
b (slender)	bh	v vj	beul > mo bheul	mə viaʰt̪
c (broad)	ch	x	cù > mo chù	mə xu:
c (slender)	ch	ç	cìs > mo chis	mə çi:ʃ
d (broad)	dh	ɣ	doras > mo dhoras	mə ɣɔrəs
d (slender)	dh	ɟ	dìth > mo dhìth	mə ɟi:
f (br. & sl.)	fh	-	fuil > m' fhuil	mul
g (broad)	gh	ɣ	gob > mo ghob	mə ɣɔp
g (slender)	gh	ɟ	gille > mo ghille	mə ɟiːle
m (broad)	mh	v	mac > mo mhac	mə vaʰk
m (slender)	mh	v vj	meas > mo mheas	mə vɛs
p (broad)	ph	f	pòg > mo phòg	mə fɔ:ɟ̥
p (slender)	ph	f fj	piuthar > mo phiuthar	mə fju.ər
s (broad)	sh	h	solas > mo sholas	mə hɔ:ʰəs
s (slender)	sh	h	seanag > mo sheanag	mə hɛnək
t (broad)	th	h	tobar > mo thobar	mə hɔb̥ər
t (slender)	th	h	teanga > mo theanga	mə hɛŋə

Consonant Clusters:

One helpful thing to watch out for is that since there is only one broad L left, it is always [ʰ]. (Those of you who want to know how on of this and the system below make sense, [click here](#) but be warned!)

Original	IPA	Lenited	IPA	Example	Example in IPA
bl (broad)	ʙʰ	bhl	vʰ	mo bhlàr	mə vʰa:r
bl (slender)	βl	bhl	vl	bho bhliadhna	vɔ vliənə
br (broad)	βr	bhr	vr	bho bhràigh	vɔ vra:j
br (slender)	βrʲ	bhr	vrʲ	bhris	vrʲiʃ

cn (broad)	kr̃	chn	xr̃	a chnoc	ə xr̃ ^h k
cn (slender)	kr ^j ̃	chn	çr ^j ̃	chniadaich	çr ^j ̃iã ^ç iç
cr (broad)	kr	chr	xr	ro chruaidh	rɔ xrɯaj
cr (slender)	kr ^j	chr	çr ^j	mo chridhe	mə çr ^j i:ɪ
dl (broad)	ð̃ɫ	dhl	ɣ̃ɫ	ro dhlùth	rɔ ɣ̃ɫu:
dl (slender)	ð̃l	dhl	ɟ̃l	ro dhlitheach	rɔ ɟ̃li:əx
dr (broad)	ð̃r	dhr	ɣr	mo dhroma	mə ɣrɔmə
dr (slender)	ð̃r ^j	dhr	ɟr ^j	bho dhris	vɔ ɟr ^j ɪʃ
fl (broad)	f̃ɫ	fhl	ɫ	mo fhlanthanas	mə ɫahənəs
fl (slender)	fl	fhl	l	ro fhliuch	rɔ lux
fr (broad)	fr	fhr	r	mo fhraoch	mə rɯ:x
fr (slender)	fr ^j	fhr	r ^j	mo fhreiceadan	mə r ^j e ^h k ⁱ ã ^ç ãdan
gl (broad)	ġ̃ɫ	ghl	ɣ̃ɫ	ro ghlàn	rɔ ɣ̃ɫan
gl (slender)	ġ̃l	ghl	ɟ̃l	ro ghlic	rɔ ɟ̃li ^h k ^j
gn (broad)	ġr̃	ghn	ɣr̃	mo ghnùis	mə ɣr̃u:ʃ
gn (slender)	ġr ^j ̃	ghn	ɟr ^j ̃	mo ghnìomh	mə ɟr ^j ̃iãv
gr (broad)	ġr	ghr	ɣr	mo ghràdh	mə ɣra:
gr (slender)	ġr ^j	ghr	ɟr ^j	ro ghreannach	mə ɟr ^j ɛ ^ç əx
mn (broad)	mr̃	mhn	vr̃	mo mhnathan	mə vr̃ã.ən
mn (slender)	-	-	-	-	-
pl (broad)	p̃ɫ	phl	f̃ɫ	mo phlaosg	mə f̃ɫɯ:sġ
pl (slender)	pl	phl	fl	ro phliutach	mə fliu ^h ɫəx

pr (broad)	pr	phr	fr	mo phrais	mə fraɪ̯
pr (slender)	pr ^j	phr	fr ^j	mo phreas	mə fr ^j ɛs
sl (broad)	sɫ	shl	ɫ	mo sluagh	mə ɫuəɣ
sl (slender)	ʃl	shl	l	mo shlighe	mə li.ɪ
sn (broad)	sn	shn	n	mo shnaim	mə naim
sn (slender)	ʃn	shn	n	shniomh	niəv
sr (broad)	sr	shr	r	mo shràid	mə raɪ̯d ^j
sr (slender)	sr ^j	shr	r ^j	mo shreath	mə r ^j ɛ
tl (broad)	ɫɫ	thl	ɫ	ro thlachdmhor	rɔ ɫaxkvər
tl (slender)	-	-	-	-	-
tn (broad)	ɫr [~]	thn	r [~]	mo thnùth	mə r [~] ũ
tn (slender)	-	-	-	-	-
tr (broad)	ɫr	thr	r	mo thrachdas	mə raxkəs
tr (slender)	ɫr ^j	thr	r ^j	bho thrì	vɔ r ^j iː

Against popular misbelief, L, N and R can be lenited in Gaelic, even though the orthography does not reflect that. For the lenition of these sounds, check the section on [Liquids](#).