**Nasals** [ˈneɪ. zəlz ]

Nasal consonants are produced with all the egressive pulmonic air directed via the nasal cavity. English has three nasals which occur in mummy /ˈmʌmi/; / m /, none /nʌn/; / n / and thinking /ˈθɪŋ.kɪŋ/; / ŋ /. To produce the nasals, the velum is lowered making an opening with the back wall of the pharynx, allowing air to escape completely through the nose. Like the plosives (oral stops), the nasals are considered as stops too (nasal stops) as they involve a complete closure between the articulators, preventing air from escaping from the mouth.

**English nasals (Phonetic description)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Bilabial** | **Alveolar** | **Velar** |
| **Voiced** | / m / | / n / | / ŋ / |

**Phonological description**

**1)** /m, n / can be initial followed by vowels and the consonant / j /: mail /meɪl/, mute /mjuːt/

**2)** They can be preceded by the voiceless fricative / s /, as in smile and snail

**3)** When / m / proceeds / n / in word initial position, it becomes silent: **mn**emonic / nɪˈmɒnɪk /.

**4)** The bilabial /m/ and the alveolar plosives can also be final as in the words pump /pʌ**mp**/

**5)** / n / becomes silent when being final after / m / like in the word autum**n** /ˈɔː.təm/.

**6)** The nasals remain *fully voiced* when they are initial and final except when they are preceded by / s / initially like in smile [ sm̥aɪl ] and snail [ sn̥eɪl ]; they become partially devoiced.

**7**) The velar nasal / ŋ / can *never* be initial.

**8**) The velar nasal / ŋ / occurs final before the velar plosives / k, g /, and it could solely be preceded by short vowels; it has the orthographic form of ….nk where the k is always pronounced or ….ng where the / g / is pronounced in some environments and not in others. **9**)The pronunciation of / g / depends on morphology. The rule is that the sequence (…ng) stands for / ŋ / at the end of a one morpheme word .E.g. thing /θɪŋ/, bang /bæŋ/, wrong /rɒŋ/, singer /sɪŋə/, wrongly /rɒŋli/.

**10** ) When ‘ng’ occurs in the middle of one-morpheme words, /g/ doesn’t disappear, e.g., finger /fɪŋgə/, single /sɪŋgl/, language /læŋgwɪdʒ/,bangalow /ˈbæŋɡələʊ/.

* **Exceptions:**

long /lɒŋ/, longer /lɒŋgə/, longest /lɒŋgɪst/,

strong /strɒŋ/, stronger /strɒŋgə/, strongest /strɒŋgɪst/,

Young /jʌŋ/, younger /jʌŋgə/, youngest /jʌŋgɪst/.

The chart below summarises the rules:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Orthography** | **Pronunciation** |  | **Justification** |
| Thanks | / θ æ ŋ k s / | / ŋk / | The sequence …nk is always pronounced with the velar plosive |
| Wrong  Long | / r ɒ ŋ /  / l ɒ ŋ / | / ŋ / | Final …ng in a monomorphemic word |
| Wrongful  Longing | /ˈ r ɒ ŋ. f ʊ l /  /ˈ l ɒ ŋ. ɪ ŋ / | / ŋ / | Medial …ng in a polymorphemic word wrong+ful and  Long+ing |
| Longer  Longest  Finger  Language | / ˈ l ɒ ŋ g ə /  /ˈ l ɒ ŋ g ə s t /  / ˈ f ɪ ŋ. g ə /  / ˈ l æ ŋ. g w ɪ dʒ / | / ŋ g /  / ŋ g / | One exception: comparative suffixes and  superlative suffixes  Medial …ng in a monomorphemic word |

**Dentalisation and nasalisation**

**1)** The alveolar nasal / n / is dental [n̪] when followed by the dental fricatives / θ ð /: tenth [ t e n̪ θ ], when they [ w e n̪ ð eɪ]

**2)**Nasals make the preceding vowels nasalised; pronounced with a lowered velum allowing air to escape not only from the mouth, but also from the nose like in the words from [f r ɒ̃ m], front [f r ʌ̃ n t] and fringe [f r ɪ̃ n dʒ].

**Exercise:**

The velar nasal ŋ occurs in all the words in the following list. In some of them the ŋ is followed by g, while in others there is no g. Choose ‘with g’ or ‘without g’ as appropriate.

1 angle with g / without g

2 singer with g / without g

3 strongest with g / without g

4 linger with g / without g

5 willingness with g / without g

6 springy with g / without g

**Exercise2: Transcribe the following words phonetically and phonologically**

Same sign Link wind

Next singer snack diphthong

working strong bring daunting

think King darling mitigate

