

'Ask' List

The 'ask' list of words is spoken with the intermediate /a/ sound in Mid-Atlantic, not /æ/ (that) as in Neutral and Classical American, or /ɑ/ (father) as in Standard British.

AUDIO 74 ► ask list words spoken with /a/

To which boarding school, might I ^aask? (Strindberg: The Father)

I am not fit for the ^atask. (Ibsen: A Doll's House)

For you and I are ^apast our ^adancing days. (Romeo and Juliet: I, v, 31)

Which words are included in the 'ask' list? There is no distinct rule for inclusion, but spellings can offer a fairly reliable indication.

aft abaft, aft, after, aftermath, afternoon, afterward, behalf, craft, daft, draft, graft, raft, shaft, Shaftesbury, Taft, waft, witchcraft

ampl ample, example, sample

ance /ans advance, answer, chance, chancellor, chancery, dance, enhance, France, freelance, glance, lance, prance, trance

anch avalanche, blanch(e), branch, ranch, stanch

and Chandler, command(o), countermand, demand, reprimand, slander

ant¹ /aunt advantage, aunt, can't, chant, chantry, enchant, grant, implant, plant, shan't, slant, supplant, transplant, vantage

¹ Though 'ant' spelling can indicate inclusion on the 'ask' list of words, the word 'ant' (the insect) is pronounced /ænt/.

<u>as(s)</u>	alas, brass, class, Glasgow, glass, grass, pass, Passover, trespass
<u>ask</u>	ask, bask, basket, cask, flask, mask, task, rascal, vast
<u>asp</u>	clasp, gasp, grasp, hasp, rasp, raspberry
<u>ast</u>	aghost, alabaster, avast, blast, broadcast, cast, caste, castle, contrast, disaster, fast, ghastly, last, mast, master, nasty, past, pastor, pasture, plaster, repast, telecast, vast, vasty
<u>ath</u>	bath, lath, lather, path, rather, wrath
<u>aff /affe</u>	chaff, distaff, Falstaff, gaff, giraffe, quaff, staff
<u>alf /aph</u>	autograph, behalf, calf, half, epitaph, graph, telegraph
<u>augh</u>	laugh, laughter, draught

In the previous three lines above, all the consonant spellings listed are pronounced /f/ (af, aff, affe, alf, aph, augh).

Finding the Mid-Atlantic /a/ sound: This vowel sound is not used on its own in Neutral American speech, but is spoken as the first element of the /aɪ/ (my) diphthong.¹ Begin as if saying the pronoun "I", but do not pronounce the second element, so that only the first element /a/ is spoken.

*For 'twas your heaven she should be adv^aanc'd,
And weep ye now, seeing she is adv^aanc'd
Above the clouds, as high as heaven itself?*

(Romeo and Juliet IV: v, 72)

The American Southern dialect often uses the vowel sound /a/ rather than the diphthong /aɪ/. It may help you to just think of pronouncing the word 'hi' using the Southern dialect, written phonetically: /ha/. Pronounce this same vowel sound in the word 'half' for the Mid-Atlantic pronunciation of that word.

¹ The /a/ sound, is also an important sound in many other dialects, including Northern England, Ireland and Boston.

In the exercise that follows, isolate the /a/ sound on the word listed in the first column by using a slightly exaggerated Southern pronunciation. Then apply this vowel sound to words listed in the second column. *Read across.*

WORDS /a/ (laugh) in Mid-Atlantic

'I'	/a/ in southern	/ask/	ask, after
'bye'	/ba/ in southern	/bask/	bask, bath
'die'	/da/ in southern	/daft/	daft, dance
'pie'	/pa/ in southern	/past/	past, path
'lie'	/la/ in southern	/laf/	laugh, lather
'my'	/ma/ in southern	/mask/	mask, master
'rye'	/ra/ in southern	/raft/	raft, rascal
'tie'	/ta/ in southern	/taft/	Taft, task
'sigh'	/sa/ in southern	/sav/	salve, sample
'dry'	/dra/ in southern	/draft/	draft, drafted
'fie'	/fa/ in southern	/fast/	fast, fasting, faster
'guy'	/ga/ in southern	/gasp/	gasp, ghastly
'sly'	/sla/ in southern	/slant/	slant, slander

If you are familiar with the Boston dialect, think of the phrase: "Park the car in Harvard Yard"—'r' coloring is dropped, and the remaining vowel sound is the shorter, brighter /a/, as in:

"Pahk the cah in Hahvahd yahd."

PHRASES /a/ (laugh)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. on his beh <u>alf</u> | 6. Nasty Fran <u>ces</u> |
| 2. good rasp <u>berries</u> | 7. just h <u>alf</u> a glass |
| 3. holds ste <u>adfastly</u> | 8. adv <u>anced</u> at l <u>ast</u> |
| 4. cutting the gr <u>ass</u> | 9. filling empty fl <u>asks</u> |
| 5. a p <u>ath</u> in Fl <u>anders</u> | 10. entr <u>ancing</u> s <u>ampling</u> |

WORDS comparing the three vowel sounds /æ/ /a/ /ɑ/ *Read across.*

/æ/	/a/	/ɑ/	/æ/	/a/	/ɑ/
apt	ask	ah	has	hasp	hah
Sam	sample	Samba	patch	past	papa
back	bask	Bach	shank	shan't	shah
catch	casket	calm	dram	draft	drama
factor	faster	father	pad	path	palm
savage	salve	saga	slack	slant	Slavic
clap	class	koala	stack	staff	Stalin
cafe	calf	Kafka	Dan	dance	Dante
pack	pass	papa	tack	task	taco
mass	mask	macho	and	aunt	almond
gnash	nasty	nachos	can	can't	Kahn
brats	brass	bras	lamb	laugh	lama

*I want to have it a bit lively-like in the evenings, with
 a
 singing and dancing, and so on.*

(Ibsen: Ghosts)

PRACTICE comparing the three vowels /æ/ /a/ /ɑ/

/æ/	/a/	/ɑ/	/æ/	/a/	/ɑ/
Cathy sampled tacos.			That koala is trespassing.		
Dad ate half the pasta.			Vampires calmly advanced.		
Hand Francis the corsage.			Thank Sinatra for the dance.		
Chad was cast in the drama.			Slather on the avocado lather.		
Marigolds are planted in Tahoe.			Ann's sonata is a masterpiece.		

/a/	/ɑ/	/æ/	/a/	/æ/	/ɑ/
Ask if father is angry.			Fast on apples and guava.		
Cast the drama in Athens.			Demand fantastic dramas.		
The staff at the spa is athletic.			Dance the tango or samba.		
A disastrous scenario is planned.			My glasses shattered in Bali.		
Any chance the armada has landed?			Auntie examined the hibachi.		

/ɑ/	/æ/	/a/	/ɑ/	/a/	/æ/
Tanya's cat is nasty.			Massages can't be bad.		
Gandhi's classical chants.			Palm branches crashed.		
Iago sang from the rafters.			Debutants laughed in Paris.		
The suave man is enchanting.			Picasso's epitaph is romantic.		
Mama's the family commander.			The calamari is rather rancid.		

MID ATLANTIC TEXT ask list words spoken with /a/. Mark the following and speak out loud.

Get me a ^aglass!
(Strindberg: Miss Julie)

The gold of France did not seduce,
Although I did admit it as a motive.
(Henry V: II, ii, 155)

You said that idle weeds are fast in growth.
(Richard III: III, i, 103)

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
(The Merchant of Venice: I, i, 80)

Mean time but ask
What you would have reform'd that is not well,
And well shall you perceive how willingly
I will both hear and grant you your requests.
(King John: IV, ii, 43)

We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd.
(Othello: I, i, 43)

But more in Troilus thousandfold I see
Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;
Yet hold I off.
(Troilus and Cressida: I, ii, 284)

No, no, my dream was lengthen'd after life.
(Richard III, I, iv, 43)

My legs like loaden branches bow to th' earth.
(Henry VIII: IV, ii, 2)

I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than
it does your Aunt Julia.
(Ibsen: Hedda Gabler)