

# **OLD ENGLISH CONSONANTS**



# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

According to the type of obstruction consonants are divided into occlusive and constrictive. Occlusive consonants may be noise consonants and sonorants.

According to the manner of noise production occlusive noise consonants are divided into plosive consonants and affricates.

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

Constrictive consonants are produced with an incomplete obstruction and may be fricatives and sonorants.

According to the place of obstruction consonants are divided into labial, lingual and glottal.

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

According to the work of vocal cords and the force of articulation consonants are divided into voiced and voiceless.

OE consonants may be short and long.

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

Way of articulation	Length	Work of vocal cords	Place of obstruction
Occlusive	Short	Voiceless s	p      t      k' sk' k
		Voiced	b      d      g

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

Occlusive	Long	Voiceless	p: t: k': k:
		Voiced	b: d: g': g:

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

Constrictive	Short	Voiceless	f-v θ-ð s-z X' X h
		Voiced	f-v θ-ð s-z γ 'γ
	Long	Voiceless	f: θ: s: X' X

# DIVISION OF OE CONSONANTS

---

Sonorants m, n, r, l, w, j.



# WEST GERMANIC GEMINATION (LENGTHENING) OF CONSONANTS

In WG languages all consonants but r lengthened after a short stressed vowel before /j/. The letter was doubled in writing.

E.g. OE \*fuljan > fyllan “to fill”

OE \*sætjan > settan “to set”

# VELAR CONSONANTS

The velar consonants /k, g, X, ɣ/ were palatalised before and sometimes after a front vowel, e.g. OE cild [kʰild]. At the end of the OE period the palatal consonants developed into sibilants and affricates, e.g. cild [kʰild] > [tʃild], scip [skʰip] > [ʃip].

# FRICATIVES

The labial and forelingual fricatives were as voiced or voiceless in accordance with their position in the word. In the initial or final position they were pronounced as voiceless (f, θ, s); between vowels they were pronounced as voiced (v, ð, z). The letter f denoted /f/ and /v/, s - /s/ and /z/, þ - /θ/ and /ð/, e.g. wīf, wīfes.

The letter g was pronounced as /g/ after n and at the beginning of the word before consonants and back vowels, e.g. singan, gōd. It was pronounced as /ɣ/ after back vowels and after l and r, e.g. dagas, sorg.

It was pronounced as /j/ before front vowels at the beginning of the word and after front vowels at the end of the word, e.g. dæg, gear.

# LOSS OF CONSONANTS

Nasal sonorants were lost before fricatives,  
e.g. OHG fimf - OE fīf, Goth uns, OHG uns –  
OE us.

# CHANGES OF CONSONANTS

In a cluster of two consonants ending in t a preceding changes its pronunciation.

A velar consonant +t > ht, e.g. sēcan “to seek” – sōhte (past), tæcean “to teach” – tāhte (past).

A velar consonant +t > ft, e.g. /leven/ - laft.

A dental consonant + t > ss, e.g. witan – wisse.

# CHANGES OF CONSONANTS

The clusters fm, fn > mm, mn, e.g. stefn > stemn “voice”, wifman > wimman.

The cluster dp > t in the 3d person singular, present indicative, e.g. bindp > bint.

# METATHESIS

The process during which 2 sounds exchange their places is called metathesis, e.g. *pridda* > *pirda*.