

- The late Old English consonant system was:

stops/aff	p	t	tʃ	k	p:	t:	tʃ:	k:
	b	d	dʒ	g	b:	d:	dʒ:	g:
fricatives	f	θ s	ʃ	x	f:	θ:	s:	x:
nasals	m	n			m:	n:		
liquids	r l				r:	l:		
glides	w		j					

FEATURES WORTH NOTING:

- While stops and affricates were paired for voice, the fricatives were not; /f θ s/ were in most dialects voiceless except medially in the foot (between two voiced sounds). Thus [v ð z] appeared in native words only preceded by a stressed vowel (followed by an optional liquid or nasal) and followed by an unstressed vowel; /f θ s/ were always voiceless initially, finally and in clusters.
- Old English had neither an /h/:/x/ contrast nor a phonemic velar nasal; [h] was the word - initial allophone of /x/, and [ŋ] an allophone of /n/ before velars.
- OE /g/ had the fricative allophone [ɣ] (voiced velar fricative) between back vowels as in *dagas* 'day (nom./acc. pl.)' /dagas/ = [daɣas]; intervocalically if preceded by a front vowel it had the allophone [j], as in *dæge* 'day (dat. sg.)' /dæge/ = [dæje].
- gemimates
- /r/ appears in all positions in OE

Fricatives

- OE distribution –

		Foot-initial	Foot-medial	Final
labial	short	f	-	f
		-	v	-
long		-	f:	f:
		-	-	-
dental	short	θ	-	θ
		-	ð	-
long		-	θ:	θ:
		-	-	-
alveolar	short	s	-	s
		-	z	-
long		-	s:	s:
		-	-	-

- PdE distribution –

		Foot-initial	Foot-medial	Final
labial		f	f	f
		v	v	v
dental		θ	θ	θ
		ð	ð	ð
alveolar		s	s	s
		z	z	z

- To achieve the modern distribution there had to be the following changes:

- allowing /v, ð, z/ initially;
- allowing /v, ð, z/ finally;
- allowing /f, θ, s/ medially,
- disallowing C/C: opposition.

This was attained through:

- (a) Kentish voicing;
- (b) French loans (by around 1250 /v/ and /z/ were established as separate phonemes word-initially);
- (c) degemination (resulted in the s/z; f/v contrast word-medially; begins in the north around 1200 and extends southwards reaching London around 1400);
- (d) ð/θ (initial voicing of θ around the 14th c., resulting in *the, this, that, then, though*, etc. Parallel development in late ME *is, of, was*, and plural *-es* endings;
- (e) /ə/ loss (begins in the north and north midlands in the 12th c. and spreads southwards). By the 15th c. all final /ə/ dropped except in names (*Cynthia*), or loans (*sauna, sonata*). PDE has final /ə/ also **from the loss of postvocalic /r/** (*mother, victor*, etc.)

Treatment of the glottal [h] and velar fricatives [x, ɣ, ʁ]

initially			medially				finally	
			intervocally		preconsonantly			
before front V	before back V	before C			after front V	after back V	after front V	after back V
h	h	h	x:	ɣ	ç	x	ç	x
heorte	hām	hnutu	hlæhhan	lagu	niht	bōhte	hēh	dāh, rūh
<u>heart</u>	<u>home</u>	<u>nut</u>	<u>laugh</u>	<u>law</u>	<u>night</u>	<u>bought</u>	<u>high</u>	<u>dough, rough</u>

INITIALLY

- /h/ dropping in initial position before a vowel began in the 12/13th c. It spread in the 14-16th c to most dialects. The present /h/-fullness of standard dialects is due to a late restoration via spelling and influence of schools, which wasn't firmly established until the 18th c. In some words it seems never to have been restored, e.g. *honour, heir, hotel* (for older speakers).
- [h] dropping in initial position before a consonant (hn-, hl-, hr-) started in the 11th c, completed in the 16/17th c.

MEDIALY

- ɣ → w → u (the formation of new diphthongs)
- degemination: begins in the north around 1200 and extends southwards reaching London around 1400);

FINALLY

- loss of final [ç] and [x] started around 1400, completed by 17th c.
- some instances of [x] → [f]; started in the 14th c; completed by mid 18th c. OE rūh → *rough*
- loss of preconsonantal [ç]¹ and [x] began around the 15th c; loss of [ç] is accompanied by compensatory lengthening of /i/: OE [niçt] → [ni:t] → (GVS) PdE [nait].

The PDE distribution - /h/ only in foot-initial position was achieved at the close of the 16th c.

initially			medially				finally	
			intervocally		preconsonantly			
before front V	before back V	before C			after front V	after back V	after front V	after back V
h	h		foot-initially only					
heart	home		ve'hicular vs vehicle		night	bought	high	dough, rough

Onset-cluster reduction

- **[hn, hl, hr]** simplification started in the 11th c;
EXAMPLES: OE hnutu > nut, OE hlūd > loud, OE hracu > rake
- **[hw]** simplification is somewhat later than the above three and applies only to some dialects: remained in some standard southern speakers well into the 20th c and is stable in Scotland, Ireland and parts of North America.
EXAMPLES: OE hwīt > white
- **[wr]**, simplified in the 17th c.
EXAMPLES: OE wītan > write
- **[kn, gn]** began to simplify in 17th c.
EXAMPLES: gnat, gnaw
- **[wl]** was reduced to [l] by IME.
EXAMPLES: OE wlispan > lisp

Loss of postvocalic /r/

In the southern British standard and related dialects historical /r/ appears only before vowels. In OE it could appear in all positions.

- The earliest /r/-loss occurs mainly before coronals, especially /s/. These early forms have short vowels → they must predate the lengthenings in most words with deleted /r/.
EXAMPLES: OE ears > ME ars/ers > PdE ass ‘arse’.
- The second main phase (in informal speech) begins with **sporadic** and **lexically variable** deletion in the 15th c; in the 17th c. /r/ had a weakened allophone in postvocalic positions but in late 17/early 18th c /r/ was generally still **pronounced in all positions**. By the end of the 18th c /r/ was commonly **deleted** except in sandhi before a following vowel. Where it was lost, the relic in stressed syllables was always either a centring diphthong, or a long vowel.

The establishment of the definitively non-rhotic character of the southern standard, perhaps more than any other single feature defines the transition to a fully modern form.

The velar nasal

In OE and ME [ŋ] appears only before /k, g/. It has become an independent phoneme through **loss of /g/ in certain environments**. It happened in two stages:

STAGE I: **late 16th c** Deletion of /g/ in **final** positions: *sing, strong*: ŋ
 Stage II: **17th c** Deletion at **morpheme boundary** except if the following suffix is an adjective inflection: *singer*: ŋ
stronger, finger ŋg

Palatalisation and the origin of /ʒ/

The PdE palatoalveolar series /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/ is not a Germanic inheritance.

PrGmc-OE

*k → /tʃ/	OHG kinni	OE cinn ‘chin’	} palatalisation before front vowels
*g:j → /dʒ/	OS muggia	OE mycg ‘midge’	

¹ Spencer (1596) rhymes *night, knight, despit* (de’spi:t) spelled <spight>; PDE *despite*. Also *delight* <delite>.

*sk → /ʃ/

OE scōh ‘shoe’, fisc ‘fish’

ME - MnE:

sj/i → /ʃ/	} beginning in the 15 th c in weak syllables established only in the 17 th c	<i>cautious</i>
tj/i → /tʃ/		<i>christian</i>
dj/i → /dʒ/		<i>soldier</i>
zj → /ʒ/	17 th c	<i>vision</i>

▪ PdE consonant system

stops/aff	p	t	tʃ	k	<table><tr><td>p:</td><td>t:</td><td>tʃ:</td><td>k:</td></tr><tr><td>b:</td><td>d:</td><td>dʒ:</td><td>g:</td></tr><tr><td>f:</td><td>θ:</td><td>s:</td><td>x:</td></tr><tr><td colspan="4"></td></tr><tr><td>m:</td><td>n:</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr><tr><td>r:</td><td>l:</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr></table>	p:	t:	tʃ:	k:	b:	d:	dʒ:	g:	f:	θ:	s:	x:					m:	n:			r:	l:		
p:	t:	tʃ:	k:																										
b:	d:	dʒ:	g:																										
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fricatives	f	θ s	ʃ	h																									
	v	ð z	ʒ																										
nasals	m	n		ŋ																									
liquids	r l																												
glides	w		j																										

FEATURES WORTH NOTING:

1. Stops, affricates and fricatives are now paired for voice.
2. No fricative sound in the velar region; all we have is /h/.
3. Phonemic velar nasal.
4. No geminates.
5. Limited distribution of /r/.

Sound change and spelling

hat, hate, hatter, hater

The four words illustrate a new set of spelling possibilities that arose in late ME from the combined effects of a number of changes especially:

- 1) PRE-CLUSTER SHORTENING
- 2) DEGEMINATION
- 3) OPEN SYLLABLE LENGTHENING
- 4) LOSS OF FINAL /ə/

The principle – the switch from ‘direct representation’ to ‘diacritic spelling’.

hat <VC> = /VC/

hate <VCe> = /VVC/

hatter <VCC> = /VC/

hater <VCe> = /VVC/ but here <e> has a phonetic value



How would you pronounce the following non-existent words:

- a) sotting vs. soting
- b) pon vs. pone
- c) todder vs. toder

Invent more such pairs.

Form infinitives from the verbs in a) and c) and present participles from the verbs in b).

Think about the rules of doubling the final consonant and deleting the final –e in present participles.