

# IPA Bingo

by Lynn Santelmann

IPA Bingo can be used with large or small classes to encourage students to learn the IPA symbols used for transcribing American English or to reinforce their knowledge of articulatory descriptions. This game can be used best in an introductory linguistics course, or early in a phonetics or phonology course.

In order to solve phonology problems, students need to be comfortable with the IPA and be able to match symbols to articulatory descriptions. IPA Bingo is a fun way for students to practice using the IPA symbols, and some simple variations help teach distinctive features and natural classes.

## What's included in this package

- 100 different game cards for students to use
- 2 sets of caller cards for the instructor to use

## Rules

IPA Bingo works just like regular bingo, except that IPA symbols are used instead of numbers. Each student has a different game card and a pen or pencil. The instructor calls out articulatory descriptions from the caller cards in a random order, and the students mark off the matching symbols on their game cards. When a student has marked off 5 symbols in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), the student announces "Bingo!" The first person to announce "Bingo!" wins, as long as the student has marked off the correct symbols.

The center square on every board contains a star. The star is not an IPA symbol – it's a free square which counts as already being marked off. Everyone starts off with this free square.

## Caller cards

There are two different sets of caller cards: one set with fully specified articulatory descriptions of each IPA symbol used in IPA Bingo, and one set with articulation classes. The set with articulation classes have less fully specified articulatory descriptions which generally correspond to more than one symbol used in IPA Bingo. The corresponding IPA symbols are printed right on the caller cards.

The set with articulation classes will result in a quicker game, because students can mark off more than one symbol at a time. It's important to leave more time between caller cards with this set, because it takes more time to find all the matching symbols on a game card.

The articulatory descriptions on the caller cards are based on the current IPA descriptions (see Cambridge University Press' 1999 *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*). You should check these descriptions before you start using the set to make sure that this matches the system you are using in your class, and correct any descriptions that don't match the system you are using. There is generally far more variation in how vowels are described in terms of features and articulation than in how consonants are described.

An alternative to using the caller cards with articulatory descriptions is to write short words on the board and underline one or more of the sounds in the word, telling students to mark off the corresponding IPA symbols. Make sure you say the word aloud a couple of times, to avoid confusion with students' different dialects. If you neutralize certain vowels in your dialect, such as  $\alpha$  and  $\text{ɔ}$  in *cot* and *caught*, this is a great opportunity to discuss these dialect differences.

## Variations

1. You can have students play in pairs, sharing a game card.
2. You don't have to end the round when the first student announces "Bingo!" – you can keep going until several students have marked off five in a row.
3. You can allow students to use class notes or books. This can be a good option when the IPA symbols are still very new to the students.
4. You can add caller cards based on distinctive features rather than articulatory descriptions. For example, you can add cards for [+high] vowels or [-back] vowels. This will help students learn natural classes. In the same way, you can modify the caller cards for individual symbols to provide a feature description rather than an articulatory description.

## Practical considerations

If you want to reuse game cards, students can use coins to cover symbols instead of writing on the game cards.

It is important to check that the student who announces "Bingo!" actually has marked off the correct IPA symbols. If the student has made a mistake, you can have the student skip the next caller card or the rest of the round.

Between rounds, you should redistribute the game cards or have the students trade them, so they see a different set of symbols. There are 39 IPA symbols used in this set, and only 24 squares on the game cards, so each game card has just over half the symbols.

You can photocopy the game cards in this kit, or you can print out copies of the game cards from [www.cascadilla.com/ipabingo.html](http://www.cascadilla.com/ipabingo.html) on our web site. The only thing you may not do is make commercial use of IPA Bingo.

If students want a more advanced way to play with the IPA, try Magnetic Phonetics from Cascadilla Press. Magnetic Phonetics includes IPA Crossword, where students take turns forming words from IPA symbols in a growing crossword pattern. Magnetic Phonetics works best with smaller groups of students, while IPA Bingo can be used in a large class.

Students can play for simple glory, a small prize, or even bonus grade points if you're willing to do that!

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