

**THE OFFICIAL
IGBO ORTHOGRAPHY**

as recommended by

THE ONWU COMMITTEE IN 1961

**NOTES
ON SCRIPT AND SPELLING
FOR TEACHERS**

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The specimen stories on pp. 7 - 9 should be carefully studied in connection with these notes.

The official script uses the letters of the English (Roman) alphabet, with diacritic marks (dots) where they are necessary for the sounds of Igbo.

CONSONANTS :

b gb ch d f g gw gh h j k kw kp l m
n nw ny ñ p r s sh t v w y z.

VOWELS :

a (i_.za "to sweep")
e (i_.de "to write")
i (i_.si "to cook")
i̇ (i̇ri "to creep")
o (i_.lo "to swallow")
ȯ (i̇lo "to return")
u (i_.bu "to carry")
u̇ (i̇tu "to throw").

These eight vowels, all of which are needed in Igbo, can be arranged according to their pronunciation and compared with those of the old orthography and of the former "new", to make clear their use in the official script.

	<u>Official</u>		<u>Old</u>		<u>Former "new"</u>		
(1)	i	u	(1)	i	u	i	u
(2)	i̇	u̇	(2)	i	u	e	o
(3)	e	o	(3)	e	o	ɛ	o
(4)	a	ȯ	(4)	a	ȯ	a	ɔ

The levels of the vowels are numbered for convenience, to show the vowel harmony which is so strong a characteristic

of Igbo. Thus, vowels of the uneven levels, 1 and 3, combine with each other, as in ezi, iwu, udo, ebe, isi. In the same way, vowels of the even levels also combine, as in anu, uta, udọ, ikpa, ozo.

VOWEL HARMONY AND SPELLING :

PRONOUNS :

The singular pronouns i(i) and o(o) and the impersonal pronoun e(a) are written in harmony with the vowel of the verb stem which follows them.

Examples :

2nd Person Singular.	{	I dere akwukwo gi.	"You wrote your letter."
	{	I zara ezi anyi.	"You swept our compound."
3rd Person Singular.	{	O bu ibu ya.	"He is carrying his load."
	{	O huru m.	"He saw me."
Impersonal Pronoun.	{	E siri ji unu	"Your yams were cooked."
	{	A korọ ji ha.	"Their yams were planted."

It is important to note that all the pronouns are written separately, whether they come before a verb or after it or after a noun.

THE PRONOMINAL PREFIX :

The 1st person singular and the 3rd person plural pronouns are often found in a prefixed form. This prefix e(a) is called the pronominal prefix to distinguish it clearly from the verbal vowel prefix (see below).

Examples of the pronominal prefix :

1st Person Singular	{	Esiri m ji.	"I cooked yam."	(Esiele m ji. "I have cooked yam".)
	{	Azara m ulọ.	"I swept the house."	(Azaala m ulọ. "I have swept the house")
3rd Person Plural	{	Esiri ha ji.	"They cooked yam"	(Esiele ha ji. "They have cooked yam.")
	{	Azara ha ulọ.	"They swept the house."	(Azaala ha ulọ. "They have swept the house!")

Note carefully that the pronominal prefix is written joined to the verb but the pronoun, as always, is written separately. This can be seen again with the auxiliary verb.
 Ex.:- Ana m esi ji. "I am cooking yam." Ana m azu ji. "I am buying yam." Ana ha esi ji. "They are cooking yam." Ana ha azu ji. "They are buying yam."

THE VERBAL VOWEL PREFIX :

The verbal vowel prefix e(a) harmonises with the vowel of the verb stem and is always written joined to the verb. It is thus kept quite distinct from the impersonal pronoun.

Examples of the verbal vowel prefix :

Erile nri ahụ.	"Don't eat that food."
Azala ụlọ.	"Don't sweep the house."
Anyi agawala ọrụ	"We have set out to the farm."
Ha esiele ji.	"They have cooked yam."
Unu erighi ya.	"You did not eat it."
Ha azughị ji	"They did not buy yam."

SPECIAL POINTS TO NOTE ABOUT SPELLING :

The following words and constructions give rise to constant mistakes among Igbo writers and are therefore specially noted here.

A. The spelling of na :

i) Na Conjunction. Written in full, na.

Ex.:- Ji na ede dị mma. "Yam and cocoyam are good."

Echere m na ọ ga-abia echi. "I think he will come tomorrow".

ii) Na Preposition. Written n' before a vowel.

Ex.:- Nna m nọ n'ụlọ. "My father is in the house."

Ite dị n'ala. "The pot is on the ground."

Uwe dị n'ime igbe. "The clothes are in the box."

Nnụnyụ be n'elu osisi. "The bird is perching on the tree."

The preposition is written na before a consonant.

Ex.:- Anyị na-aga na chi ọbụbọ.

iii) Na From the auxiliary verb ina. Written with a hyphen. Ex.:- Ada na-esi ji. "Ada is cooking yam." Ada na-azụ anyị.

B. The auxiliary verb :

There is a further point to note about the spelling of the auxiliary verb which causes trouble to Igbo writers. In the following sentences the auxiliary verb should in each case be written in the same way.

Examples :

Anyị na-agụ nkwa.	"We are singing."
Anyị na-agụ nkwa ha ana-agba.	"As we are singing they are dancing."
Onye na-agụ nkwa bụ nwanne m.	"The one who is singing is my sister."
Nkwa anyị na-agụ di uto.	"The songs we sing are sweet."

Igbo speakers rightly realise that in the examples above we have four different types of construction, and they attempt to show the distinction by writing na-agụ in different ways. But the difference is in tone and syntax and not in spelling. The correct spelling is na-agụ in each case.

C. The spelling of compound verbs :

We have seen that vowel harmony is an important characteristic of Igbo. But there are some compound words where the vowel harmony is broken. The most important of these words are to be found among the compound verbs. A compound verb is made up of two or more single verb stems.

Ex.:- ituba "to throw into", compounded of itu "to throw and iba "to enter."
imechi "to shut", compounded of ime "to do, make" and ichi "to block".

In both of these compound verbs the vowels of the two verb stems are in harmony. But there are many cases where this is not so.

Ex.:- ikufu "to kick away", compounded of iku "to knock" and ifu "to lose."

Here the vowels of the two verb stems are not in harmony; u is an even level vowel and i is an uneven one. In speech they may be heard harmonising and one may hear kufu, and many people make the mistake of writing them like this. But the verbal prefix shows us that this is incorrect. Ex.:- Anyị akufuole ya. 'We have kicked it away.' We know from the prefix that the vowel of the first verb stem must be u and not i. The suffixes also help us to recognise the vowel of the second verb stem. We have o and le and we know that they harmonise with u and not with i. Therefore the vowel of the second verb stem must be written u and not i. We thus see clearly that the spelling ikufu is correct.

D. Suffixes :

Suffixes are joined to verbs in writing but not to other parts of speech. Thus we write, Adi m mma, ma gi kwa ? Here, where kwa follows a pronoun and not a verb, it is written separately. It is only to verbs that suffixes are joined. Many examples of this can be found in the story that follows, and two short passages with examples are given below :-

- 1) Otu mgbe n'ala Iduu na Oba oke unwu dara, nke mere na o dikwaghi nri o bula di; ahijia nile kponwuchaa, miri nile takoro.

dara ra (time) suffix.

mere ra (time) suffix.

dikwaghi kwa and ghi suffixes

bula la suffix

kponwuchaa open vowel suffix.

takoro ra (time) suffix.

ii) Mbe sikwa ya, "I matabeghi na o na-abu madu
ghuputa anya ya ابو, taa, na o na-epuchikwa ?"
Enyi wee si na ya amatabeghi.

sikwa kwa suffix.

matabeghi ta, be and ghi suffixes.

ghuputa ta suffix.

taa open vowel suffix.

na-epuchikwa kwa suffix.

wee open vowel suffix.

amatabeghi ta, be and ghi suffixes.

E. The spelling of the following words should be noted.

ma o bu "or".

n'ime "in".

otu a "thus, in this way".

onye o bula "anybody at all".

I. Ekeresimesi ruru onye n'Oru na Onye n'Ọgwa :
E sitere n'Ekeresimesi nke G.E. Igwe dere họta ya.

"Ọgụ madu na-enweghi ike ịgbalaha, ya guzo buru mma." Ekeresimesi bu ememme ukwu. Ukoru ya na-ekosa madu nile ma onye bi nso ma onye bi anya. Ndi gara Oru na ndi gara Ọgwa na-ekuru ya mgbe o malitere ife. Mgbe Ekeresimesi bu mgbe a na-eceta ikwu na ibe. Ndi no n'ulo na-eceta ndi no n'uzo ije, ndi no n'ije ecetakwa ndi no n'ulo. Ma ha ecetaghi, e cetara ha. Ugbu a ka umu madu na-ajutasi di ka Aisai onye amuma juru, "M ga-eduighe onye ? Onye ga-agara anyi ?" O bu n'oge a ka otutu ndi na-amata uru igu na ide akwukwo bara. Ndi na-amaghi ya, nweghi ndi maara ya, na-asi ndi maara ya, "Biko enyi m, ma o bu nwa di m, ndii mgbe i ga-enwe efe bia deere m mkpuru akwukwo ole na ole, mu eposiere nwa m ma o bu nwanne m ?" Ndi no Lagos, ndi no Kaduna, Sokoto, Kano; ndi no Port Harcourt, Opobo, ebe o bula ha no, ozi na-erucha ha aka. Ndi na-anataghi leta na-anata ozi onu a na-ezi ndi na-aga ebe ha no.

Na mgbe ahụ, ugbo na moto anaghi aba ndi madu. Madu na-afacha n'ime ha, faa cighi cighi. Di ka a na-ekwu, igurube na-ebeji aka nkwi. Ya buru ebe posi ofis a maara aha ya di, i ga na ya, ebelebe egbuo. O dighi ihe e ji madu eme ebe ahụ. Madu na-azogbu ibe ha. Ndi na-eposi leta, ndi na-eposi ngwugwu, ndi na-agbara nke e positeere ha. Madu na-eze ghata ghata mana ijere. Onye na-achọ ime ngwa ngwa na-ama awo ga ma o buru onye isi mbu a ga-elebara anya mgbe oge ruru. Ndi klaki posi ofis na-efe ajirija mgbe ahụ n'ihia a ruwa e zughi ike diri ha.

O na-agu ndi no n'ije aguo irute ulo n'Ekeresimesi. Ndi no n'ozu Bekee nwere ike iloru ulu na-alo ma ha nwee liiv (leave). Ndi na-enweghi ike, ndi nwe ha nwere ike iga leta ha ma ha noo nso. Ogo bi uhaanya na-aga leta ogo ya ma o kwere ya. Ngwugwu na madu na-agaghare ngaghare ngaghare, ndi na-aga n'ugbo ala, ndi na-aga na moto, ndi na-aga n'ukwu ala.

A hapu ngaghare madu na ngwugwu, ihe ozo na-eme bu ikpu n'onu a na-akpu Ekeresimesi n'onwe ya. A na-ata aku, a na-eji Ekeresimesi na-ata ya. A na-aju nkwi, a na-eji Ekeresimesi na-aju ya. A gawa nku, Ekeresimesi na-eso. A gawa iyi, Ekeresimesi na-eso. N'uzo oru a na-ekwu gini ? Ekeresimesi. N'uzo ahia a na-akpa gini ? Ekeresimesi. Ma ebe o na-aka ihia udu a bu n'aka umu nwanne na umu ntakiri.

II.

MBE NA AKPAPĪA.

E sitere n'akukọ ife nke J.O. Iroaganachi
dere hota ya.

Otu ubochi Mbe na nwa ya si oru lota aguo guru ha nke ukwu. Mbe edunye nwa ya ka o ga muta oku n'ama. Nwa ya aputa n'ulo Akpapia juo ma oku o di kwa. Akpapia asi ya na oku di. Nwa Mbe aga n'usekwu Akpapia ebe oku di imuru oku.

Mgbe o muruchara oku Akpapia enye ya otu akpuru nkwi ka o juo. Nwa Mbe na-aju nkwi ahụ ruo n'ulo nna ya. Mgbe nna ya huru ya, ya ajuo ya onye nyere ya nkwi o na-aju. Nwa ya akaara ya.

Mbe anara ya oku ahụ sonyuo, were ukwu ya gaa n'ulo Akpapia imuru oku. Akpapia enye ya nkwi, ya ajuo. Ya amuru oku ya lawa. Mgbe o puru n'uzo ya asonyuo oku ya, laghachi ozo n'ulo Akpapia. Akpapia enye kwa ya nkwi, ya ajuo. O bu otua ka o mere tutu nkwi ahụ agwu.

Mbe ajuo Akpapia ebe o na-aga ahota ezi osukwu di otu a. Akpapia agwa ya na o bu n'ama mmuo. Mbe asi na ya ga-esoro ya gaa ihu nkwi n'ama mmuo n'eci ya na-abia abia. Akpapia asi ya o dighi, na ebe o na-enweghi nku, olee otu o si efe ma ihe oso mee. Mgbe Mbe kpekatarara ire hu na o dighi ihe mechara Akpapia ekwe ka o soro ya, ya asi Akpapia. "I choro ihuju akpa gi ngwa ngwa echi, were ya dote n'elu ulo n'anyasi taa, ka ijiriji ma ya pem, ma ya pegherim. I gawa n'isi ututu eci, elebala anya n'akpa gi. I leba ya anya, ihu ojo ga-akpo gi. Ma i lebaghi ya anya, i ga-ahu ihe ga-eme n'ama mmuo echi". Akpapia ekwe.

N'anyasi ya, Akpapia eweputa akpa o ji aga, mee ihe Mbe si ya mee. N'isi ututu ya, Akpapia ekoro akpa ya fere gawa n'ama mmuo ihu nkwi. O lebaghi anya nime ya. Ma akpa ahụ di ya arọ mgbe o na-agaje. O maghi na Mbe ribara nime ya n'anyasi.

Mgbe Akpapia ruru n'ama mmuo ya ahwa nkwi ya ngwa ngwa ngwa ngwa otu umu mmuo na-agaghi ipukwute ya. Ya na-etinye nkwi ya n'akpa, akpa anaghi eju eju. Ya ahogha nkwi tutu ike agwu ya. Ya eleba anya nime akpa ya, hu Mbe ebe o no na-aju nkwi o hotara. Iwe were ya. Ma nke kacha iwe ya iwe bu na Mbe tapuru akpa ya, na-atupu nkwi ndi o juru aju. Akpapia asi ya puta. Mbe aputa. Akpapia agwa ya ka o horowa nkwi nke ya. Mbe enweghi ike ihota nkwi n'onwe ya n'ihini na Akpapia mere nkwi ahụ ogwu, si, "Nkwu nke m na-ahọ, osukwu, nke Mbe okpuruka !" Mgbe Mbe no na-agigaghari aka, Akpapia

ahojuo akpa ya, fere laa. Mbe nani ga no n'elu nkwi
tutu umu mmuo aputa.

Ha ahụ ya, hugide ya, gwa ya ka o loda. Elu
erughi ya aka, ala erughi ya aka. O dighi uzọ o si
agbalaha umu mmuo. Ya anokata n'elu nkwi tutu ike agwu
ya. Umu mmuo alasaa, hoputa ndi ga na-ece ya ka o rida.

/nkwi

Mbe anokata n'elu/aka akwachapụ ya, ya esi n'elu
nkwi daa n'ala, dawasa okpukpuru ya. Ya etiere nsiko na
eji no n'ebe ahụ mkpu si, "Nsiko mkpa, eji nra!" Nsiko
abia kpachikotaa okpukpuru ya. Eji ewere ire ya rakotaa
ya, ya adi ka o di na mbu.

O bu ya mere okpukpuru azu mbe ji di otu o di ugba a.