

# Ligature names in the Initial Teaching Alphabet

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[L2/24-273](#) requested several ligatures for the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA). It now seems that some of the proposed names were overly descriptive. I recommend making them more generic to accommodate allographs seen in recent publications.

In ITA programs over the past decade, teachers complained that the traditional ITA symbols were not sufficiently similar to the letters of the English alphabet. The shapes of several were therefore modified. Some were restored to forms they had had in the 1960s, such as  $\langle\text{æ}\rangle$  and  $\langle\text{œ}\rangle$  becoming  $\langle\text{æ}\rangle$  and  $\langle\text{œ}\rangle$ , whereas others were changed from stretched or lunate shapes to more typical ones. The words 'stretched' and 'lunate' should therefore be removed from the names. The word 'digraph' is probably also not necessary, except in two cases where it's needed for disambiguation.

## Names to be changed

The ligatures below are set in (1) the serif PitmanITA font, (2) the sans-serif 'Phonemics' font used by the ITA Foundation until recently, and (3) the sans-serif 'Phonemic ita' font used today.

1DF5B	$\text{ch}$	$\text{ch}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED C-H DIGRAPH → LATIN SMALL LETTER CH.
1DF5C	$\text{ee}$	$\text{ee}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER LUNATE EE → LATIN SMALL LETTER EE.
1DF62	$\text{sh}$	$\text{sh}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER ESH-H DIGRAPH → LATIN SMALL LETTER SH.
1DF63	$\text{th}$	$\text{th}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED T-H DIGRAPH → LATIN SMALL LETTER TH.
1DF64	$\text{th}$	$\text{th}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED T-H DIGRAPH → LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED T-H.
1DF65	$\text{wh}$	$\text{wh}$	LATIN SMALL LETTER WH DIGRAPH → LATIN SMALL LETTER WH.

## References

James Pitman & John St. John (1969) *Alphabets and Reading: The Initial Teaching Alphabet*.

Jane Anderson (2017) ITA Linguistic Readers, book 1. Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, New York.

——— (2025) ITA First Readers, book 1: The numbers kids. Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, New York.

# Figures

a	apple	æ	acorn	b	bell	h	horse	n	l	v	violin
e	elephant	ɛɛ	bird	c	cat	j	red coat	p	pencil	w	watch
i	insect	ie	ice cream	d	duck	k	key	r	rat	y	knit
o	octopus	œœ	leaf	f	fish	l	lion	s	sun	z	zebra
u	umbrella	ue	sweater	g	girl	m	monkey	t	table		

  

a	ostrich	au	dog	r	bird	ɛ	babies	ʃh	shoe	th	thumb
ω	book	ω	spoon	ʒ	tv	ɛg	ring	ch	chair	ʒh	feather
ou	owl	ɔɪ	boy					wh	whale		

Figure 1. The typeface used from 1993 by the ITA Foundation of New York. This is still the alphabet chart posted on their website at [What is ITA?](http://What%20is%20ITA%20%3F).

a	apple	æ	acorn	b	bell	h	horse	n	l	v	violin
e	elephant	ee	bird	c	cat	j	red coat	p	pencil	w	watch
i	insect	ie	ice cream	d	duck	k	key	r	rat	y	knit
o	octopus	œœ	leaf	f	fish	l	lion	s	sun	z	zebra
u	umbrella	ue	sweater	g	girl	m	monkey	t	table		

  

a	avocado	au	dog	r	bird			sh	shoe	th	thumb
ω	book	ω	spoon	zh	tv	ɛg	ring	ch	chair	ʒh	feather
ou	owl	ɔɪ	boy					wh	whale		

Figure 2. Anderson (2017: 54, 2025: 111) A second typeface used by the ITA Foundation since at least 2017 for a literacy project in Puerto Rico. ⟨a⟩ and ⟨æ⟩ are swapped, and the ligatures look more like standard Latin letters. ⟨ʒ⟩ is replaced by a ligature ⟨zh⟩; this is requested in a separate proposal.