

Wintu contains 30 consonants and 6 vowels. There are bilabial, apical, lateral affricate, palatal affricate, velar, and uvular obstruents in plain, aspirated, and ejective series, plus glottal stop: *p, t, ʦ, k, q; pʰ, tʰ, c; p̚, t̚, ʦ̚, k̚, q̚; ʔ*. (The apicals are dental for older speakers, alveolar for younger ones. The lateral affricate *ʦ* alternates with fricative *ʃ*.) Voiced obstruents are *b, d, r*. Fricatives are postalveolar *ʃ*, velar *x*, uvular *χ*, and *h*. Resonants occur only in a plain series, with *m, n, l, r, w*, and *y*. In addition there is a *θ* which is original but rare, arising only through a certain morphophonemic rule, as well as *f* and *ʃ* in loans. There is a basic five-vowel system with contrastive length: *i, e, a, o, u; iː, eː, aː, oː, uː*, plus *æ* in loans.

The regular syllable canon is CV(·)(C). Stress depends on syllable weight. Vocalic ablaut involves alternations in both quantity and height of root vowels, producing dissimilation with certain suffixes: *lil-a* 'to transform', *lel-u* 'transform!'. There is syncope at morpheme boundaries to preserve the syllable canon. Some suffix vowels show complete harmony with the preceding syllable: *cew-eleleha* 'many to be wide open', *bo-loloha* 'to pulverize', *xi-n-ililiha* 'many to sleep separately'.