

Resources

Some of the sources used in the creation of BASH, as well as other relevant works, are listed in

Scottish Medieval Bibliography — Languages

<http://www.MedievalScotland.org/scotbiblio/languages.shtml>

An affordable and very useful resource for Scots vocabulary and pronunciation (it indicates which forms and usages are from what century) is *The Concise Scots Dictionary* edited by Mairi Robinson. (There have been editions of this work by several different publishers, but all are essentially the same book. However, there is also at least one other book titled “Concise Scots Dictionary” that is an entirely different work, neither as authoritative nor useful. The key indicator that a book is the right Concise Scots Dictionary is that it is produced and copyrighted by the Scottish National Dictionary Association.)

What is BASH?

The **B**asic **A**ccent for **S**cottish **H**ighlanders (BASH) explains how to give the impression of speaking 16th century Scots¹ as fractured by 16th century Gaels while still being understood by 21st century Americans. It is a basic theatrical accent suitable for portraying 16th century Scottish Highland characters, including useful Gaelic phrases. Some aspects of BASH are also useful for those portraying Scottish Lowlanders, while others are useful for those portraying Irish Gaels. (The Scots used as the foundation of BASH is actual 16th century Scots. The Gaelic filter applied over this is mainly 19th & 20th century Scottish Gaelic with some specifically 16th century touches.)

Below, aspects of BASH that are also suitable for use in a Lowland accent are marked “[Also Lowland]” while those suitable for use in an Irish accent are marked “[Also Irish]”.

Useful Gaelic Phrases

Gaelic	Pronunciation ²	Modern English
B’ailleibh?	\BAAHLL-yehv\	Pardon? Could you repeat that please?
Beannachd Dé	\BEN-ahkhk JAY\	Blessing of God/God’s Blessing. <i>Used as a greeting.</i>
Beannachd leibh	\BEN-ahkhk lyev\	Blessing with you (<i>with formal/plural you</i>). <i>Used as farewell.</i>
Fáilte!	\FAALL-tcheh\	Welcome!
Ma is e bhur toil e	\mah shay voor TOLL eh\	Please. (<i>Literally If ‘tis your pleasure with formal/plural you.</i>)
Tapadh leibh	\TAH-pah lyev\	Thank you. (<i>Literally Thanks with you with formal/plural you.</i>)
Is e bhur beatha	\shay voor BAY-ah\	You’re welcome. (<i>Literally ‘Tis your life with formal/plural you.</i>)
Gabhaidh mo leiseul	\GAHV-ee moe LAESH-gu\	<i>Literally</i> Accept my half-tale/half-story <i>with formal/plural imperative. Used for Excuse me or I’m sorry in the sense of apologizing for wrongdoing or mistakes or making your way through crowds.</i>
Slàinte!	\SLAAHN-tcheh\	Health! <i>Often exclaimed when drinking toasts, etc.</i>
Glè mhath!	\glaay vah\	Very good!
A Mhuire!	\ah VOOR-eh\	O Mary! <i>Used as an exclamation or oath — the Mary in question is the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.</i>
Dè an t’ainm a tha ort?	\JAY an TEN-um a HOARSHTCH\	What is your name? (<i>Literally What is the name that is on you? with singular, informal you.</i>)

[Also Irish, although some of these are much more typical of Scottish Gaelic dialects.]

General Tips

The first day of faire is too late to start using BASH. Practice early and often! [Also Lowland & Irish]

Don’t be afraid to speak slowly and haltingly — it’s in character! [Also Irish]

Remember that 16th century Scots is very different from 21st century Scots. So while some of what you may hear in modern Scots (and Scottish English) can be used for BASH, much of what you hear in such modern dialects is just plain wrong. So while you can mimic the aspects of modern dialects that match BASH, you should ignore the rest. [Also Lowland.]

If applying a certain aspect or aspects of BASH to a word or sentence is likely to make it offensive or incomprehensible to your audience, don’t apply that aspect(s) to that word/sentence. Audience comprehension outweighs historical accuracy.

Only use the Gaelic phrases in these two situations:

When it doesn't matter whether or not your audience/patrons can understand you.

When your meaning will be clear from context.

Do **not** use Gaelic when it does matter that your audience/patrons understand you and your meaning will not be clear from context. [Also Irish]

Pronunciation Changes

Use 'pure' monothong vowel sounds. (American English has slight diphthongs for most vowels we think of as monothongs, adding a slight y or w sound to the end of vowels such as those in English *hay*, *he*, *hoe*, and *who*.) [Also Lowland & Irish]

Make Modern English Sound Like 16th Century Scots...

Home becomes **hame**. [Also Lowland]

Cow becomes **coo**. [Also Lowland]

Moon becomes **mune**, pronounced $\text{m}\text{ø}\text{ø}\text{n}$ where the $\text{ø}\text{ø}$ is a vowel sound that doesn't occur in English that I call 'whistling ee'. 'Whistling ee' is made by saying an ee sound while rounding your lips as if you were going to whistle. (Until you master the 'whistling ee', it's okay to keep using an oo sound as in English *moon*.) [Also Lowland]

Cure becomes **cuir**, pronounced $\text{c}\text{ø}\text{ø}\text{r}$. (Note that unlike English, there is no y sound between c sound and the vowel sound $\text{ø}\text{ø}$. It is $\text{c}\text{ø}\text{ø}\text{r}$, not English $\text{k}\text{yoo}\text{r}$.) [Also Lowland]

Fortune becomes **fortoun**, pronounced $\text{f}\text{or}\text{-t}\text{ø}\text{ø}\text{n}$. (Note the **t** is pronounced t , not tch .) [Also Lowland]

Measure pronounced $\text{meh}\text{-z}\text{ø}\text{ø}\text{r}$. (Note the **s** is pronounced z , not like a voiced sh or zh .) [Also Lowland]

Fir, **fer**, and **fur** don't rhyme. **Fir** is pronounced fir , **fer** is pronounced fair (only more quickly), and **fur** is pronounced foor (only more quickly). [Also Lowland]

Cup is pronounced koop . [Also Lowland]

Night becomes **nicht** and *thought* becomes **thocht**. [Also Lowland]

The **<k>** in **knicht**, **knife**, **knee**, etc. is pronounced. [Also Lowland]

Remove w sound from words like *give* (**gie**), *have* (**hae**), *devil* (**deil**), *over* (**ower**), and *harvest* (**hairst**). [Also Lowland]

Suffixes **<-tioun>**, **<-sioun>**, **<-cial>**, and **<-ciar>** have two syllables and the **<t>**, **<s>**, and **<c>** are pronounced as ss , **not** sh . [Also Lowland]

<Wh> is pronounced roughly hw (voiceless version of w), so the **<w>**s in **whether** and **weather** are pronounced differently in Scots (and modern Scottish English). [Also Lowland]

...As Mangled by Gaelic Speakers

Pronounce **<r>** as a Gaelic r — a single tap of the tip of the tongue against the ridge behind your upper front teeth. [Also Irish?]

Pronounce **<d>** and **<t>** as Gaelic d and t — with your tongue sticking out and pressed against your upper front teeth. [Also Irish?]

At the end of words and syllables, pronounce **<d>** as a d sound. [Also Irish?]

At the end of words and syllables, pronounce **** as a p sound. [Also Irish?]

At the end of words and syllables, pronounce **<g>** as a k sound. [Also Irish?]

Pronounce **<th>** as t (if voiceless as in *bath* and *thin*) or d (if voiced as in *bathe* and *thine*). [Also Irish]

Vocabulary and Phrases

No No (Nor Yes)

Exterminate *yes* and *no* (and all synonyms, including modern Scottish *aye* and *nae* and 16th century Scots **yea** and **na**³). Gaelic does not have a single word that can be used everywhere we use English *yes* and likewise with *no*. The absence of *yes* and *no* is a distinctive feature of the English of native Gaelic speakers even today — even those who are also fluent native speakers of English. Instead of using *yes* and *no*, use other English ways of communicating what needs to be communicated — there is always at least one that doesn't require either *yes* or *no*. [Also Irish]

No more becomes **nae mair**. (This context is the only in which Scots **nae** is used in BASH — this 16th century **nae** means “not any”, not “no, the negative response”.) [Also Lowland]

Common little words:

Nocht (*not*), **o** (*of*), **an** (*alan*), **a'** (*all*), **thair** (*there*), **to**, **at**, **that**, **the**, **with**. (Avoid purely modern Scots *wi'*.) [Also Lowland]

Wha (*who*) is pronounced \hwah\, **what** is pronounced \hwaht\, **when** is pronounced \hwen\, **whar** (*where*) is pronounced \hwahr\, and **why** is pronounced \hweye\. Note that **wha** is only used to ask questions; if you want to say “The boys who attacked me ...” you would use **that**: “**The laddis that attackit me ...**”. [Also Lowland]

Counting:

Gaelic	aon	dhà	trì	ceithir	còig	sì	seachd	ochd	naoi	deich
Pron.	\oon\	\ghah\	\tree\	\KAY-heer\	\KOE-ick\	\SHEE-ah\	\shahkhk\	\ahkhk\	\nooee\	\jaykh\
Scots	ane	twa	three	four	five	sax	seven	aucht	nine	ten
Pron.	\ain\	\twah\	\tree\	\foor\		\sahx\	\say-ven\	\ahkht\		

[Gaelic = Also Irish; Scots = Also Lowland except **three** is pronounced \three\.]

Time:

Our (*hour*) is pronounced \oor\. **What be the our?** \hwaht bee the oor\. **'Tis twa ouris**. Other time related words and phrases: **yesterday**, **yestreen** (*last night/evening*), **the day** (*today*), **the nicht** (*tonight*), **the morn** (*tomorrow*), **mornin** (*morning*), **nuin** \nøøn\ (*noon*), **efternuin** \ehf-ter-nøøn\ (*afternoon*), **forenicht** (*evening*), **e'en** (*evening*), **midnicht** (*midnight*), **mirk nicht** (*the dead of night*). [Also Lowland]

Clothing:

Gaelic	bròg	brògan	osan	crios \kreess\	sporan	lèine \LAIN-yeh\	triubhas	?
Scots	scho \shø\	schoun	hose	belt	purse	sark	trews	goun \goon\
English	shoe	shoes	hose	belt	pouch/purse	shirt	trews	gown
Gaelic	?	?	ionar \inn-er\	breacan \BREK-ahn\	?	brèid \braetch\		
Scots	skirt	bodyis	doublet \doo-blet\	plaid \plaed\	bonnet	courche \koortch\		
English	skirt	bodice	doublet	tartan mantle/shawl	bonnet	woman's kerchief		

[Gaelic = Also Irish for relevant items (substitute **brat** for Irish mantle); Scots = Also Lowland, including plaid (worn unbelted), but substitute **brekis** \breek-iss\ for **trews**.]

Grammar

Plural Nouns

Use <-is> (pronounced \-iss\) for <-s> and <-es> (**gaitis** not *goats*). [Also Lowland]

Possession

Use <-is> (pronounced \-iss\) for <- 's> (**Duncanis** not *Duncan's*). [Also Lowland]

Verbs

Use **be** for *am*, *are*, and *is*.

Use **was** for *was* and *were*.

Use <-and> not <-ing> for present participle ending. Use <-ing> for verbal noun ending only. Example (using otherwise standard English): *I am **writand** a letter to my mother, but my **writing** is very bad. I hope she can read it!* [Also Lowland]

Use **bene** (pronounced like English *bean*) alone instead of English *have been* and *had been*. [Also Lowland]

Use **hae** for *has* and *have* and **haid** for *had*.

Use <-is> (pronounced \-iss\) for <-s> and <-es> (**walkis** not *walks*). [Also Lowland]

Use <-it> for <-ed> (**walkit** not *walked*). [Also Lowland]

Use **do** \døø\, **dois** \døø-is\, **did**, and **dune** \døøn\ (*done*); do **not** use the modern Scots contractions and forms *dae*, *disna*, *didna*, *dinna*. [Also Lowland]

Use **will** and **wad** (*would*); do **not** use the modern Scots contractions and forms *wilna*, *winna*, *wadna*, *widna*. [Also Lowland]

Use **can** and **coud** /cood/ (*could*); do **not** use the modern Scots contractions and forms *canna*, *cudna*. [Also Lowland]

Use **sall** (*shall*) and **sould** (*should*); do **not** use any modern Scots contractions and forms. [Also Lowland]

Use **may** and **micht** \mikht\ (*might*); do **not** use any modern Scots contractions and forms. [Also Lowland]

Use **maun** (*must*); do **not** use any modern Scots contractions and forms. [Also Lowland]

Do **not** use the stage Irish verb construction “I am after walking the dog” and “I was after walking the dog”, etc. Although this is something that really does show up the English of native Gaelic speakers, it doesn’t mean what most non-Gaels guess it means and thus it fails the comprehensible to your audience test. Just say no! [Also Lowland & Irish]

Make sentences negative by adding **nocht** after the verb. **He walkis; she walkis nocht. Ye killit the coo; we killit nocht the gait.** (Essentially you are doing the same thing as one would do in archaic, formal sounding English using *not*, so if it would make sense in English using *not*, the equivalent Scots form using **nocht** should be okay.) [Also Lowland]

Pronouns

[Also Lowland]		Singular	Plural
1st Person	Subject	I	we
	Object	me	us \ooss\
	Possessive Pronoun	myne	ouris \oor-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	my	our \oor\
2nd Person Informal (“Kiss or Kick”)	Subject	thou \thoo\	ye
	Object	thee	you
	Possessive Pronoun	thyne	youris \YOOR-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	thy	your \yoor\
2nd Person Formal	Subject	ye	ye
	Object	you	you
	Possessive Pronoun	youris \YOOR-iss\	youris \YOOR-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	your \yoor\	your \yoor\
3rd Person Masculine	Subject	he	thai
	Object	him	thaim
	Possessive Pronoun	his	thairis \thair-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	his	thair
3rd Person Feminine	Subject	she	thai
	Object	hir \heer\ but more quickly	thaim
	Possessive Pronoun	hiris \heer-iss\ but more quickly	thairis \thair-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	hir \heer\ but more quickly	thair
3rd Person Neuter	Subject	it	thai
	Object	it	thaim
	Possessive Pronoun	?	thairis \thair-iss\
	Possessive Adjective	?	thair

The above is straight 16th century Scots. There are in addition some mistakes a Gael might make:

Gaelic doesn’t have a 3rd person neuter, so use **he/him/his** or **she/hir/hiris/hir** rather than **it**. [Also Irish, applied to BFA]

Gaelic doesn’t have different pronouns for subject and object, so use **me** but not **I**, **us** but not **we**, **thou** but not **thee**, **ye** but not **you**, **he** but not **him**, **she** but not **hir**, and **thai** but not **thaim** (or vice versa -- specific choice of which to eliminate speculative). [Also Irish]

¹ Scots is a language closely related to contemporary English that was spoken in the Scottish Lowlands, royal court, and towns.

² Closest English approximate pronunciation guides appear between backslashes, \, and are intended to be read as if they were Standard American English except where noted (sometimes indicated by underlining or other marking).

³ Yea, verily, it is true — *aye* and *nae* in this sense are apparently modern only. In the 16th century, Lowland Scots used **yea** and **ya** for “yes” and **na** for “no”. [Also Lowland]