

Diacritics

Diacritics are the small accent marks above or below letters. They are used in most languages. English does not use them at all, except in words it has borrowed from other languages, such as *résumé* and *café*. They are useful in letting the reader know how to properly pronounce the words they are reading. Each language uses diacritics differently. Below are a few examples.

Acute **á**

The acute diacritic is used in many languages. In most European languages it adds a stress to the letter it is on. For instance, **e** is pronounced *eh*, but **é** is pronounced *ay*.

Grave **à**

The grave accent has many uses in languages around the world. In European languages it is mostly used to distinguish words that are spelled the same, but it doesn't change the pronunciation.

Cedilla **ç**

In French the cedilla is most commonly used on the letter **c**. Without the cedilla **c** is pronounced like *k*. The letter **ç** is pronounced as an *s*.

Umlaut **ä**

An umlaut is used to signify that vowels written together are pronounced separately, like in the word *noël*.

Many English words would benefit from diacritics, especially for people just learning the language. Place accents on the following words where you think they would be helpful.

Certain

Cooperate

Cop / Cop
Police Officer verb meaning "to catch"

Accent

Melee

Can you think of any others?