

TAUTONYMIC SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

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Most tautonymic words, as well as consisting of a repeated letter/group of letters, are also phonetically tautonymic, the 2 identical letter groups having identical pronunciations. eg **pawpaw** (pɔ: pɔ:).

On the other hand, there exist **tautonymic words with a difference in pronunciation between the 2 identical letter groups**. The degree of audible difference varies. It may be obvious as in **ISIS**, a river in Oxford, and in the **TSETSE** fly; or the difference may be more subtle.

The phonetic symbols are taken from the phonetics list in the Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd. Ed.

Phonetic symbols: ɔ: (as in born) ə (as in pat) æ (as in pat) ɑ: (as in barn) ɪ (as in pit)
ɛ (as in pet) eɪ (as in ate) ɜ: (as in burn) ɪŋ (as in sing) aʊ (as in now)

4-LETTER TAUTONYMS

| | | | | | | |
|------|----------|------------------|------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| adad | (əd æd) | and its reversal | dada | (dæ də or də dɑ:) | | |
| anan | (ən æn) | and its reversal | nana | (næ nə) | | |
| eyey | (aɪ ɪ) | | gaga | (gæ gə) | Isis | (aɪs ɪs) |
| mama | (mə mɑ:) | | papa | (pə pɑ:...father) | (pɑ: pə...Pope) | |
| tata | (tæ tɑ:) | | tête | (tɛ t or tɛɪ t) | wawa | (weɪ wə) |
| | | | | (a woman's head of hair) | | |

6-LETTER TAUTONYMS

| | | | | | |
|--------|----------------------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|-------------|
| berber | (bɜ: bɛ{r}) | furfur | (fɜ: fɛ{r}...scurf) | murmur | (mɜ: mɛ{r}) |
| gangan | (gæŋ gæn) an Australian cockatoo | palpal | (pæl pəl) | | |
| tartar | (tɑ: tɛ{r}) | testes | (tɛs ti:z) | tsetse | (tɛt sɛt) |

8-LETTER TAUTONYMS

colocolo (kɑ:ləʊ kəʊləʊ) wild cat of South America
caracara (kəra kɑ:ra) vulture-like birds
hotshots (hɑ:t ʃ ɑ:ts) here, sh (ʃ) straddles the 2 tautonymic halves of the word.

So far, we have looked at words which are tautonyms but not phonetic tautonyms. By way of contrast, there exist a few words which are **not tautonyms but which are phonetic tautonyms**. The pick of the bunch is probably the word **COCOA**.

co coa (kəʊkəʊ)

In these seven words, the letters I and Y are, in each case, both represented by the phonetic symbol **I**. In six of the seven, the first letter and its doubled letter both equate to the same phonetic symbol.

| | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| di ddy | (dɪ dɪ) | li ly | (lɪ lɪ) | ni nny | (nɪ nɪ) |
| pi ppy | (pɪ pɪ) | si ssy | (sɪ sɪ) | ti tty | (tɪ tɪ) |

In **ki cky** (kɪ kɪ), the second **k** is not duplicated. Rather, it is preceded by a different letter, **c**.