Turkish Alphabet and Pronunciation

A   f**a**ther

B   b

C   j

Ç   ch

D   d

E   b**e**t, but a little more "open," sometimes heard as "b**a**t". Sometimes higher. We'll talk.

F   f

G   **g**et

Ğ   Lengthens back vowels with a hint of long-lost "g". After front vowls, more like "y" *

H   h

I   Vowel in between b**u**g and w**oo**d. Note: no dot on lower case either.

İ   Close to b**i**t. Note: dotted in upper case as well.

J   zh

K   k*

L   l, dark with back vowls, light with front vowels and â

M   m

N   n

O   Back, open "o", no glide as in English.

Ö   Like German "ö" but lower

P   p

R   flap at beginning and within words; gets "blown" on at end of words.

S   s

T   sh

U   Like "p**oo**r"

Ü   Like German ü but not as high

V   Like a "w" pronounced with the upper teeth.

Y   y

Z   z, closer to "s" at end of words.

* In standard Turkish, this letter is a bit of a "relic" of a gutteral sound. However in eastern dialects, it still exists, especially after back vowels.

** Similarly to ğ, k is affected by vowels. In western dialects it is "k" after back vowels but palatized (with a hint of a "y") after front vowels. In the east, depending on region, it shifts from regular k back to a uvular ("q") around back vowels, and on the end of a word, can be pronounced like German "ch" but farther back. This fact is sometimes used as a bargaining chip in the q and x (and especially w) wars.

Turkish Vowel Weirdness

Without going too deep into phonetics, Turkish vowels can be divided into six overlapping groups: High, Low, Front, Back, Rounded and Unrounded. It looks more complicated than it is, and understanding what means makes pronouncing them a lot easier.

	Back		Front	
	Low	**High**	**Low**	**High**
Unrounded	A	I	E	İ
Rounded	O	U	Ö	Ü

Turkish is built on suffixes, and suffixes change according to the nature of the vowel in the root of words, and in two different ways. That's not too relevant if you aren't actually learning to speak Turkish (although it does explain why there are words like "müdürlüğünüzün" and "ışıldadırdığımız") but every rounded vowel has its unrounded counterpart, every back vowel has its front counterpart, and ever low vowel has its high counterpart. This helps "locate" the vowel sounds with no exact English counterpart, namely ı, ö and ü.