From iOS to SQL: The world’s most incorrectly pronounced tech terms



Enlarge / Eye Oh Ess.
Aurch Lawson

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A lot of people pronounce common tech terms wrong, from iOS to SQL to Qi. It’s understandable: Some of the proper or official pronunciations of these terms are counterintuitive at best. Still, we think it’s time to clear the air on a few of them.

It’s something of a trope on tech sites to run vocabulary lists with definitions for common terms, and that makes sense. Reviewers addressing general audiences will often have to define their terms, as not everyone is as thoroughly immersed

as they are.

But it’s less common to see effort put into clarifying pronunciation, as differences on this front go well beyond the classic, written-about-to-death, hard-versus-soft-G GIF debate. To that end, we’re going to go over a few commonly disputed pronunciations and ask Ars readers to share your insights, as well as any additional examples you think are worth discussing.

Below are a handful that have come up within the Ars staff. Again, dear readers, feel free to discuss and debate, and to introduce some others of your own. For some of these and other terms suggested, we’ll follow up with an article making the case for some correct (or, at least official) pronunciations versus incorrect ones, sourced as best as we can.

iOS and beOS

Apple’s widespread mobile operating system used to be called iPhoneOS, but it’s been called iOS for years now. Nonetheless, you’ll often hear two different pronunciations: eye-oh-ess, or eye-oss (rhyming with the name Ross). On a related note, what about beOS? Do you pronounce these two instances of “OS” the same way or differently?

OS X and iPhone X

Anecdotally, it seems about half of people say OS Ex and about half say OS Ten. It’s even more confusing with iPhone X, though, as this phone launched alongside the iPhone 8 rather than following a phone called the iPhone 9. And what about iPhone XS? Is it iPhone 10 Ess, or is it, as the joke goes, “iPhone Excess”?

SQL and MySQL

A trademark snafu made this one more complicated than it needed to be, but even if that had never happened, it might

still be contentious. Some people say SQL like “sequel,” while others speak out the letters “ess-cue-ell.” The same of course goes for MySQL: MySequel or MyEssCueEll.

Linux

Lie-nux or Lihh-nux? Most people say this one the same way, but there’s always somebody going on their own way when it comes to all things Linux.

Qi

Kee? Chee? Everyone just appreciates wireless charging.

Huawei

Many English-speakers pronounce this brand Hoo-ah-why. Others say wah-way, or wow-way.

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