How Afrikaans sounds Uitspraak

The trick: Afrikaans is read almost exactly as it's written. A double vowel is a long one, and the little hat on ê, ô and û makes a vowel long and open. Learn these, and you can read most words aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
g	throaty, like ch in Scottish loch, at the start too	**goed / dag** good / day
v	f in fun	**vis / vyf** fish / five
w	v in van	**water / wyn** water / wine
j	y in yes	**ja / jy** yes / you
r	rolled or tapped with the tip of the tongue	**rooi / brood** red / bread
sj	sh in shoe	**Sjoe!** phew! wow!
ie	ee in see, short	**die / nie** the / not
oe	oo in food, short	**boek / skoen** book / shoe
ui	ay in say, with rounded lips	**huis / uit** house / out
ei, y	like ay in say: two spellings, one sound	**klein / wyn** small / wine
aa	a in father, long	**kaas / maand** cheese / month
ee	a glide, like ear in near	**een / twee** one / two
oo	a glide, like oor in poor	**oor / brood** ear / bread
eu	like ear in near, with rounded lips	**neus / deur** nose / door
ê	e in bed, held long	**sê / wêreld** say / world
ô	aw in law, held long	**môre** morning; tomorrow
û	u in British fur, held long	**brûe / rûe** bridges / backs
ë, ï	the two dots start a new syllable	**re-ën / na-ïef** rain / naive
stress	usually on the first syllable; ge- and be- never take it	**Saterdag / gesien** SA-ter-dag / ge-SIEN

The throaty g: in almost every word, g is the rasp, never the g in go. Goed, good, starts with the same sound as the end of dag. You'll hear it in Goeie môre every morning.

'n is a word: it means a or an, and it sounds like the a in about: 'n huis, a house. It's always written with the apostrophe, and a sentence starting with it puts the capital on the next word: 'n Koppie koffie, asseblief.

How words work Grammatika

Good news: Afrikaans grew from Dutch, and its grammar is famously simple. This page is most of it.

No gender: one word for the, one for a

die the, for every noun: die man, die vrou, die huis	’n a or an, said like the a in about: ’n man, ’n huis	die huise the houses: plurals take die too

Verbs don't change for the person

ek is I am	jy is you are (casual)	hy, sy is he, she is	ons is we are	julle is you all are	hulle is they are

Learn one form: it works for everyone. Ek praat, jy praat, hulle praat: I talk, you talk, they talk. Only wees, to be, and hê, to have, use other words: is and het.

The past is simply het + ge-

Ek het gesien. I saw, I've seen (sien)	Ons het geëet. we ate (eet)	Hulle het gewerk. they worked (werk)

Two shortcuts: is becomes was: Ek was moeg, I was tired. Verbs that start with be-, ver- or ont- skip the ge-: Ek het verstaan, I understood.

Ek is **nie** moeg **nie**.

I'm not tired.

The double negative: Afrikaans says no twice. The first nie comes after the verb, the second closes the sentence: Ek het nie geslaap nie, I didn't sleep. When the first nie is already the last word, one is enough: Ek weet nie, I don't know.

Plurals: add -e or -s

boek, boeke book, books	tafel, tafels table, tables	ouma, oumas grandma, grandmas	kind, kinders child, children: an odd one

Jy or u

Hoe gaan dit met jou? jy (jou): friends, family, kids, anyone your age	Hoe gaan dit met u? u: strangers, older people, formal moments

The first 236 words Die eerste woorde

How: learn five a day, then listen for them in shows. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Greetings and survival

Hallo
hello

Haai
hi *(casual)*

Goeie môre
good morning

Goeienaand
good evening

Lekker slaap
sleep well, good night

Hoe gaan dit?
how are you? *(it means how goes it)*

Goed, dankie
fine, thanks

Dankie
thank you

Baie dankie
thank you very much

Asseblief
please

Plesier
you're welcome *(it means pleasure)*

Totsiens
goodbye

Sien jou later
see you later

Ja
yes

Nee
no

Jammer
sorry

Verskoon my
excuse me

Aangename kennis
nice to meet you

Ek verstaan nie
I don't understand

Ek weet nie
I don't know

Gesondheid!
cheers! bless you! *(it means health)*

Question words

wat
what

wie
who

waar
where

wanneer
when

hoekom / waarom
why

hoe
how

hoeveel
how much, how many

watter
which

Hoe laat is dit?
what time is it?

Me and you

ek
I

jy / jou
you *(casual)*

u
you *(polite)*

hy
he

sy
she; also his

dit
it

ons
we, us, our

julle
you all

hulle
they, them

my
my, me

haar
her

hierdie / daardie
this / that

Little words

en
and

maar
but

of
or

nie
not *(see page 2)*

ook
also, too

baie
very, a lot, many

net
only, just

al
already

nog
still, more

hier
here

daar
there

met
with

sonder
without

vir
for

omdat
because

dalk
maybe

Lekker is everywhere: it means nice, tasty, fun, great. Lekker kos is good food, 'n lekker dag is a great day, and Lekker slaap! is sleep well. If you like something, it's lekker.

People and time Mense en tyd

Family

ma
mother, mum

pa
father, dad

ouers
parents

broer
brother

suster
sister

seun
son; boy

dogter
daughter

ouma
grandma

oupa
grandpa

oom
uncle

tante
aunt

familie
family, all the relatives

People

mens
person *(mense, people)*

man
man; husband

vrou
woman; wife

kind
child *(kinders, children)*

meisie
girl

vriend
friend; boyfriend

vriendin
friend; girlfriend

buurman
neighbour

dokter
doctor

onderwyser
teacher

When

vandag
today

môre
tomorrow; also morning

gister
yesterday

nou
now

altyd
always

nooit
never

oggend
morning

middag
afternoon

aand
evening

nag
night

dag
day

uur
hour

tyd
time

week
week

naweek
weekend

jaar
year

Days of the week

Maandag
Monday

Dinsdag
Tuesday

Woensdag
Wednesday

Donderdag
Thursday

Vrydag
Friday

Saterdag
Saturday

Sondag
Sunday

Things

selfoon
mobile phone

boek
book

geld
money

sleutel
key

kar
car

tas
bag

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
nul	een	twee	drie	vier	vyf	ses	sewe	agt	nege

10	11	12	20	30	40	50	100	1,000	1,000,000
tien	elf	twaalf	twintig	dertig	veertig	vyftig	honderd	duisend	miljoen

Numbers back to front: 21 is een-en-twintig, one-and-twenty, and 35 is vyf-en-dertig. The tens end in -tig: twintig, dertig, veertig.

Days are big: days and months take a capital letter: Maandag, Januarie. On Monday is op Maandag.

Food, places, verbs Kos, plekke, werkwoorde

Food and drink

water
water

koffie
coffee

tee
tea

melk
milk

bier
beer

wyn
wine

brood
bread

kaas
cheese

vleis
meat

hoender
chicken

vis
fish

ontbyt
breakfast

aandete
dinner

braai
a barbecue: the fire, the meat and the friends around it *(also to braai)*

boerewors
a thick, spiced sausage, coiled on the braai

biltong
dried, spiced meat, the favourite snack

beskuit
rusks: hard, dry biscuits to dunk in coffee

melktert
milk tart, a custard tart with cinnamon

pap
maize porridge, often with the braai

Ek is honger
I'm hungry

Die rekening, asseblief
the bill, please

Places

huis
house

tuis
at home

kombuis
kitchen

skool
school

werk
work, job

winkel
shop

hospitaal
hospital

toilet
toilet

stad
city

dorp
town, village

straat
street

strand
beach

plaas
farm

Suid-Afrika
South Africa

Namibië
Namibia

Verbs: one form for everyone

wees / is
be *(ek is, I am)*

hê / het
have *(ek het, I have)*

gaan
go; also going to

kom
come

eet
eat

drink
drink

sien
see

kyk
look, watch

doen
do

maak
make

slaap
sleep

praat
talk, speak

sê
say

leer
learn; also teach

woon
live *(at an address)*

weet
know *(a fact)*

ken
know *(a person, a place)*

wil
want

kan
can

moet
must, have to

hou van
like *(Ek hou van kaas)*

koop
buy

Describing words

goed / sleg
good / bad

groot / klein
big / small

warm / koud
hot / cold

nuut / oud
new / old

vinnig / stadig
fast / slow

mooi / lelik
pretty / ugly

maklik / moeilik
easy / hard

duur / goedkoop
expensive / cheap

moeg
tired

Describing words can change before a noun: die groot huis, but 'n goeie dag (goed), 'n nuwe kar (nuut), 'n ou huis (oud).

Show words Woorde uit reekse

Reactions

Ag nee!
oh no!

Eish!
oh dear! ugh! wow! *(shared by many South African languages)*

Lekker!
great! nice! tasty!

Jislaaik!
wow! gosh!

Sjoe!
phew! wow!

Regtig?
really?

Ja-nee
well, yes; that's how it is *(it means yes-no)*

Nou-nou
in a little while *(see below)*

Sies!
yuck! gross!

Toemaar
never mind, it's OK

Mooi so!
well done! nice one!

Hoor hier!
listen here!

The big scenes

Ek is lief vir jou
I love you

Ek mis jou
I miss you

Los my uit!
leave me alone!

Help!
help!

Pasop!
watch out!

Hou op!
stop it!

Wag!
wait!

Moenie!
don't!

Wat het gebeur?
what happened?

What to call people

skat
darling, sweetheart *(it means treasure)*

my bru
my friend, bro *(very casual)*

ou / ouens
guy / guys: 'n ou, a guy; die ouens, the guys

tannie / oom
auntie / uncle: what you call any older woman or man *(see below)*

meneer / mevrou
sir / madam; Mr / Mrs before a name

Nou-nou is not now: nou is now, but nou-nou means in a little while. That could be five minutes, or after lunch. Ek kom nou-nou: I'll be there soon. Just now means the same in South African English.

Tannie and oom: say them to any older woman or man, family or not. They're warm and respectful, and often used instead of u: Wil Oom koffie hê? Would you like coffee? (to an older man)

Swear words are strong: Afrikaans has strong swear words, and you'll hear them on screen. Recognise them, but don't say them, least of all in front of a tannie. Jislaaik and Sies are the mild ones you can say.

Practice Oefen

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Afrikaans out loud, then slide it down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Questions: put the verb first: Praat jy Engels? Do you speak English? Kom jy saam? Are you coming along?

The ge- word goes last: with het, the verb waits for the end of the sentence: Ons het gister lekker gebraai.

Read these sentences

1. Hallo, ek is Anri.
   Hi, I'm Anri.

2. Hoe gaan dit met jou?
   How are you?

3. Waar is die toilet?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Hoeveel kos die biltong?
   How much is the biltong?

5. ’n Koppie koffie, asseblief.
   A cup of coffee, please.

6. Ek praat ’n bietjie Afrikaans.
   I speak a little Afrikaans.

7. Ons het gister lekker gebraai.
   We had a great braai yesterday.

8. Ek het nie geslaap nie.
   I didn't sleep.

9. Sy kom nou-nou.
   She's coming in a little while.

10. Die kos is baie lekker!
    The food is really tasty!

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Afrikaans subtitles to see what it means.