How Albanian sounds Shqiptimi

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Albanian is read as it's written: one letter, one sound, every time. Learn the 36 letters below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a e i o u	plain and clear: a as in car, e in bed, i in see, o in hot, u in put	**mal / det** mountain / sea
ë	the uh in about; at the end of a word it's often barely said	**është / nënë** is / mother
y	say ee with rounded lips, like the French u	**dy / yll** two / star
c, ç	ts in cats; ch in church	**ca / çaj** some / tea
q, gj	soft cousins of ch and j: close to the t in tune and the d in dune	**qen / gjumë** dog / sleep
x, xh	ds in kids; j in jam	**nxënës / xhaketë** pupil / jacket
dh, th	th in this; th in thin	**dhe / thikë** and / knife
sh, zh	sh in shop; s in pleasure	**shtëpi / zhurmë** house / noise
nj	ny in canyon	**një / njeri** one / person
l, ll	l is light, as in leaf; ll is thick and dark, as in full	**lule / mollë** flower / apple
r, rr	r is a quick tap; rr is a strong roll	**mirë / rrugë** good / street
j	y in yes	**jo / ju** no / you all
g, s	g is always hard, as in go; s is always s, as in see	**gotë / sot** glass / today
k, p, t	plain, without the puff of air English gives them	**kam / pak** I have / a little
stress	mostly on the last syllable, but never on a final ë	**qytet / mollë** qy-TET / MOL-lë

ë · ç

the only two letters with a mark

është is · **nënë** mother · **çaj** tea · **çelës** key

dh gj ll nj rr sh th xh zh

nine letter pairs, each one letter

dhe and · **gjuhë** language · **një** one · **shtëpi** house

Pairs are letters: dh, gj, ll, nj, rr, sh, th, xh and zh each count as one letter, which is how the alphabet gets to 36. Dictionaries list them on their own, so the sh words come after all the s words.

The quiet ë: inside a word it's the uh in about, as in është. At the end it's often barely said, so nënë sounds close to nën. Don't drop the dots: e and ë are different letters.

Foreign names go Albanian: they're spelt as they sound, so Shakespeare is Shekspir and London is Londër.

Po and jo: po is yes and jo is no. Watch the head too: many Albanians, especially older ones, shake the head for yes and nod for no.

How words work Gramatika

The is an ending: Albanian puts the at the end of the word. For a, as in a house, it uses një, one.

një mik a friend	miku the friend	një shtëpi a house	shtëpia the house

Every noun is masculine or feminine

masculine

usually ends in a consonant; the is -i, or -u after k, g and h

qen, qeni, dog
libër, libri, book
mik, miku, friend

feminine

usually ends in -ë, -e or -i; the is -a, or -ja after -e

nënë, nëna, mother
lule, lulja, flower
shtëpi, shtëpia, house

Mostly, not always: djalë, boy, ujë, water, and baba, dad, are masculine: djali, uji, babai. Zemër, heart, is feminine: zemra. On the next pages the noun itself wears its gender colour, so you don't have to guess.

Describing words take i or e

një djalë i mirë a good boy	djali i mirë the good boy	një vajzë e mirë a good girl	vajza e mirë the good girl

After the noun: the describing word follows the noun, with i for a masculine word and e for a feminine one.

Endings change with the job in the sentence

miku the friend	me mikun with the friend	nëna the mother, mum	me nënën with mum

That's the case system: the start of the word stays, and only the end changes. After me, with, a word with the on it takes this -n form. Learn the dictionary form first; listening brings the rest.

Ti or ju

Si je? ti: friends, family, kids, anyone your age	Si jeni? ju: strangers, older people, at work; ju is also more than one person

Verbs change with the person: jam, I am, and punoj, I work

unë jam I am	ti je you are (casual)	ai, ajo është he, she is	ne jemi we are	ju jeni you all are; polite you	ata, ato janë they are
punoj I work	punon you work (casual)	punon he, she works	punojmë we work	punoni you all work; polite you	punojnë they work

Who's working? The ending often says it, so punojmë alone is we work. But punon is you work and he works, so keep ti or ai with it. To say no, put nuk in front: nuk punoj, I don't work; nuk jam, I'm not.

The first 256 words Fjalët e para

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

Greetings and survival

Përshëndetje
hello *(safe with anyone)*

Ç'kemi?
hi, what's up? *(casual)*

Tungjatjeta
hello *(warm and traditional)*

Mirëmëngjes
good morning

Mirëdita
good day, hello *(the polite one)*

Mirëmbrëma
good evening

Natën e mirë
good night

Mirupafshim
goodbye

Shihemi
see you

Faleminderit
thank you

Ju lutem
please *(to a friend: të lutem)*

S'ka përse
you're welcome *(it means there's no reason)*

Më falni
excuse me; sorry *(to a friend: më fal)*

Po
yes

Jo
no

Si jeni?
how are you? *(to a friend: si je?)*

Quhem ...
my name is ... *(it means I'm called)*

Gëzohem
nice to meet you *(it means I'm glad)*

Mirë se vini!
welcome!

Nuk kuptoj
I don't understand

Nuk e di
I don't know

Gëzuar!
cheers!

Ju bëftë mirë!
enjoy your meal!

Question words

kush
who

çfarë
what

ku
where

nga
where from; also from *(Nga je? Where are you from?)*

kur
when

pse
why

si
how

sa
how much, how many

cili / cila
which *(m word / f word)*

a
at the start it makes a yes or no question *(A je këtu? Are you here?)*

Sa kushton?
how much is it?

Me and you

unë
I

ti
you *(casual)*

ai / ajo
he / she; also that

ne
we

ju
you all; also the polite you

ata / ato
they *(men or mixed / women)*

im / ime
my, after the word: miku im, nëna ime

yt / jote
your *(casual)*: miku yt, nëna jote

juaj
your *(polite, or you all)*: libri juaj

ky / kjo
this *(m word / f word)*

Little words

dhe
and

edhe
also, too; and

por
but

shumë
very; a lot, many

pak
a little

vetëm
only, just

tashmë
already

ende
still, yet

këtu
here

atje
there

me
with

pa
without

sepse
because

ndoshta
maybe

Please and thanks: ju lutem is please, and to a friend it's të lutem. Faleminderit is thank you, and the answer is s'ka përse: there's no reason to thank me.

Three hellos: ç'kemi? is the casual hi between friends. Përshëndetje works with anyone. Tungjatjeta is warm and traditional: it wishes you a long life.

People and time Njerëz dhe kohë

Family

nënë
mother

mama
mum

baba
dad *(masculine, despite the -a)*

vëlla
brother *(masculine, despite the -a)*

motër
sister

djalë
son; also boy

vajzë
daughter; also girl

gjyshe
grandma

gjysh
grandpa

xhaxha
uncle *(your dad's brother)*

dajë
uncle *(your mum's brother)*

teze
aunt *(your mum's sister)*

hallë
aunt *(your dad's sister)*

prindër
parents *(plural)*

familje
family

People

njeri
person *(njerëz, people)*

burrë
man; also husband

grua
woman; also wife

fëmijë
child

shok
friend, mate *(a man)*

shoqe
friend, mate *(a woman)*

mik
friend

fqinj
neighbour *(a woman: fqinje)*

mjek
doctor *(a woman: mjeke)*

mësues
teacher *(a woman: mësuese)*

Things

telefon
phone

libër
book

para
money *(always plural)*

çelës
key

makinë
car

dritare
window

derë
door

biletë
ticket

çantë
bag

When

sot
today

nesër
tomorrow

dje
yesterday

tani
now

më vonë
later

gjithmonë
always

kurrë
never

mëngjes
morning; also breakfast

mbrëmje
evening

natë
night

ditë
day

orë
hour; also clock, watch

kohë
time; also the weather

javë
week

muaj
month

vit
year

Days of the week

e hënë
Monday *(hëna is the moon)*

e martë
Tuesday

e mërkurë
Wednesday

e enjte
Thursday

e premte
Friday

e shtunë
Saturday

e diel
Sunday *(dielli is the sun)*

Getting around

autobus
bus

tren
train

stacion
station

aeroport
airport

majtas / djathtas
to the left / to the right

drejt
straight on

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
zero	një	dy	tre	katër	pesë	gjashtë	shtatë	tetë	nëntë	dhjetë	njëmbëdhjetë	dymbëdhjetë

13	20	21	30	40	100	1,000
trembëdhjetë	njëzet	njëzet e një	tridhjetë	dyzet	njëqind	një mijë

Numbers build up: 11 to 19 add mbë, on: njëmbëdhjetë is one on ten. 21 is njëzet e një, twenty and one, and 40 is dyzet, two twenties. Three has a feminine form: tre djem, three boys, but tri vajza, three girls.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter, and the days come with e: e hënë, e diel. On Monday is të hënën.

Food, places, verbs Ha, shko, bëj

Food and drink

ujë
water *(masculine, despite the -ë)*

kafe
coffee

çaj
tea

qumësht
milk

birrë
beer

verë
wine; also summer

bukë
bread; also a meal

djathë
cheese *(masculine, despite the -ë)*

mish
meat

peshk
fish

supë
soup

mollë
apple

patate
potato

kos
yoghurt

byrek
a pie of thin pastry with cheese, spinach or meat

tavë kosi
lamb baked with yoghurt and eggs

fërgesë
peppers, tomatoes and cottage cheese, cooked together

drekë
lunch

darkë
dinner

Kam uri
I'm hungry *(it means I have hunger)*

Llogarinë, ju lutem
the bill, please

Places

shtëpi
house, home

punë
work, job

shkollë
school

dyqan
shop

treg
market

restorant
restaurant

kafene
café

spital
hospital

qytet
town, city

fshat
village

rrugë
street, road

tualet
toilet *(signs often say WC)*

plazh
beach

det
sea

mal
mountain

liqen
lake

lumë
river *(masculine, despite the -ë)*

Shqipëri
Albania *(shqip, in Albanian)*

Tiranë
Tirana, the capital

Verbs, in the I form

jam
be

kam
have

shkoj
go

vij
come

ha
eat

pi
drink

shoh
see

shikoj
watch, look

punoj
work

bëj
do, make

fle
sleep

flas
speak, talk

kuptoj
understand

di
know *(a fact)*

dua
want; also love

lexoj
read

shkruaj
write

jetoj
live

blej
buy

mësoj
learn; also teach

Describing words

i mirë / i keq
good / bad

i madh / i vogël
big / small

i nxehtë / i ftohtë
hot / cold

i ri / i vjetër
new *(also young)* / old

i shtrenjtë / i lirë
expensive / cheap

i lehtë / i vështirë
easy *(also light)* / hard

i bukur
beautiful

i shijshëm
tasty *(with a feminine word: e shijshme)*

i lodhur
tired

One form to learn: Albanian has no to-form, so a verb is listed as you say it about yourself: punoj, I work. Two verbs join with të: dua të punoj, I want to work.

Describing words agree: the list shows the masculine form with i. With a feminine word it's e, and some endings change too: kafe e mirë, a good coffee; rrugë e madhe, a big street.

Show words Fjalë nga serialet

Reactions

Vërtet?
really?

Shumë mirë!
great! very good!

Bukur!
nice! *(it means beautiful)*

Bravo!
well done!

Mirë
OK, good, fine

Në rregull
all right, OK

Hajde!
come on! let's go! *(see below)*

S'ka problem
no problem

Sigurisht
of course

Patjetër
for sure, absolutely

Urime!
congratulations!

Pra
so, well *(a pause word)*

Ja!
there! here it is!

Hë?
so? well? *(casual)*

The big scenes

Të dua
I love you

Më mungon
I miss you *(it means you're missing to me)*

Lërmë rehat
leave me alone

Kujdes!
careful! watch out!

Mjaft!
enough!

Ndihmë!
help!

Çfarë ndodhi?
what happened?

Gjithçka do të shkojë mirë
everything will be all right

Mos u shqetëso
don't worry

Prit!
wait!

Çfarë po bën?
what are you doing?

What to call people

i dashur / e dashur
darling, dear *(to a man / to a woman)*

zemër
sweetheart *(it means heart)*

shpirt
darling *(it means soul)*

zotëri / zonjë
sir / madam

more / moj
hey, you *(casual, to a man / to a woman)*

Hajde, the word you'll hear most: come on, let's go, come here. Hajde, shkojmë! Come on, let's go! Hajde këtu! Come here!

More and moj: a casual hey, you between friends: more to a man, moj to a woman. Ç'bën, moj? How are you doing? To a stranger it can sound rude, so keep it for friends.

Swear words are strong: Albanian has strong swear words, and you'll hear them in films and series. They hit harder than the subtitles show: recognise them, but don't say them. Bravo and urime are fine in front of anyone.

Practice Ushtrime

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

Questions: put a in front, and the rest stays the same: Ti flet anglisht. A flet anglisht? Do you speak English?

Saying no: nuk goes before the verb: Pi kafe. Nuk pi kafe. I don't drink coffee. In everyday speech it's often just s': S'kam kohë. I have no time.

Read these sentences

1. Përshëndetje, unë jam Ana.
   Hi, I'm Ana.

2. Si quhesh?
   What's your name?

3. Më falni, ku është tualeti?
   Excuse me, where is the toilet?

4. Sa kushton bileta?
   How much is the ticket?

5. Një kafe, ju lutem.
   One coffee, please.

6. Flas pak shqip.
   I speak a little Albanian.

7. Sot bën shumë ftohtë.
   It's very cold today.

8. Nesër shkojmë në Tiranë.
   Tomorrow we're going to Tirana.

9. Byreku është shumë i shijshëm!
   The byrek is really tasty!

10. S'ka problem, kemi kohë.
    No problem, we have time.

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