How Catalan sounds Pronunciació

1 · read it out loud

The trick: say the stressed syllable clearly and let the others go soft. Unstressed a and e both sound like uh, and unstressed o sounds like u. That one habit makes you sound Catalan.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a, e not stressed	both go soft: uh, like the a in about	**casa / pare** house (KA-zuh) / father (PA-ruh)
o not stressed	sounds like u	**dormir / Barcelona** sleep (dur-MEE) / bur-suh-LO-nuh
ç	s in sun	**plaça / França** square / France
x	sh in shoe; at the start many people say ch	**xocolata / caixa** chocolate / box (KA-shuh)
tx	ch in church	**cotxe / dutxa** car / shower
ig at the end	ch in church	**maig / mig** May (MATCH) / half (MEECH)
ny	ny in canyon	**any / senyor** year / sir, Mr
ll	lli in million: one sound	**lluna / llet** moon / milk
l·l	a double l, held a little longer	**col·legi / il·lusió** school / excitement, joy
qu, gu	before e and i the u is silent: k and hard g	**què / guitarra** what / guitar
j, g before e, i	s in pleasure	**jardí / gent** garden / people
r, rr	rolled at the start of a word and as rr; a quick tap in between	**riu / terra** river / earth, land
r at the end	often silent, above all in verbs	**menjar / fer** eat (muhn-ZHA) / do, make (FE)
s, ss	one s between vowels is z, as in zoo; ss is s	**rosa / passa** pink, rose / it happens
h	always silent	**hola / home** hi / man

à è ò

open sounds: è as in bed, ò as in hot

cafè coffee · **història** story · **mà** hand

é í ó ú

closed sounds: é as in say, ó as in so

també also · **cançó** song · **així** like this

The accent shows the stress: cafè is ca-FÈ. No accent? Words ending in a vowel, -s, -en or -in stress the last but one syllable, CA-sa; the rest stress the last, men-JAR. ï and ü say the letter on its own: veïna, pingüí.

One language, several voices: this sheet follows Central Catalan, as spoken around Barcelona. Valencian, Balearic and other varieties sound a little different, often with a clear e and o where Barcelona says uh and u.

How words work Gramàtica

Every noun is masculine or feminine

el · un
masculine
el noi, the boy
un noi, a boy

la · una
feminine: often ends in -a
la noia, the girl
una noia, a girl

l'
before a vowel or h, for both
l'home, the man
l'amiga, the friend (f)

l' hides the gender: so on the next pages every noun wears its colour, blue or pink. You never have to guess.

More than one: add -s

Gender	One	More	
masculine	el llibre	els llibres	book
feminine	la casa	les cases	house: -a becomes -es
feminine	la plaça	les places	square: ç becomes c before e
feminine	l'amiga	les amigues	friend: g becomes gu before e
masculine	el peix	els peixos	fish: words ending in s, x or ç add -os

The little words change too: el becomes els, la becomes les, and l' becomes els or les. un and una become uns and unes.

Verbs change for each person: ser, to be

jo sóc
I am

tu ets
you are (casual)

ell, ella és
he, she is

nosaltres som
we are

vosaltres sou
you all are

ells, elles són
they are

No need for jo: the ending says who. Sóc l'Anna is I'm Anna. Names often take the in Catalan: l'Anna, la Marta, en Pau. Estar is also to be, for how you are right now: estic, estàs, està. Estic cansat, I'm tired.

tu or vostè: tu is for friends, family, kids and most people your age, and Catalans use it a lot. Vostè is for older strangers and formal moments, and it takes the ell, ella verb: Com està? How are you? Not sure? Start with vostè and wait to be offered tu.

The past that looks like going: vaig means I go, but vaig + a verb is the everyday past. Vaig menjar is I ate, not I'm going to eat. Ahir vaig dormir molt, yesterday I slept a lot. The forms are vaig, vas, va, vam, vau, van. It surprises everyone at first, and then it's easy.

The first 225 words Les primeres paraules

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

Greetings and survival

Hola
hi, hello

Bon dia
good morning; hello until lunch

Bona tarda
good afternoon, good evening *(after lunch)*

Bona nit
good night; also hello once it's dark

Adéu
bye, goodbye

Fins després
see you later

Fins demà
see you tomorrow

Gràcies
thank you

Merci
thanks *(casual, very common)*

Moltes gràcies
thank you very much

De res
you're welcome

Si us plau
please

Perdó
sorry; excuse me

Disculpi
excuse me *(polite, to get attention)*

Sí
yes

No
no; not

Com estàs?
how are you? *(casual)*

Bé, i tu?
fine, and you?

Em dic ...
my name is ...

Encantat / Encantada
nice to meet you *(said by a man / a woman)*

No ho entenc
I don't understand

No ho sé
I don't know

Bon profit!
enjoy your meal!

Salut!
cheers! *(it means health)*

Question words

què
what

qui
who

on
where

d'on
where from

quan
when

per què
why *(two words; perquè is because)*

com
how

quant
how much *(quants, how many)*

quin / quina
which, what *(m / f)*

Quant costa?
how much is it?

Me and you

jo
I

tu
you *(casual)*

ell / ella
he / she

nosaltres
we

vosaltres
you all

ells / elles
they *(men or mixed / women)*

vostè
you *(polite: see page 2)*

el meu / la meva
my *(el meu pare, la meva mare)*

el teu / la teva
your *(casual)*

aquest / aquesta
this *(m / f)*

Little words

i
and

però
but

o
or

molt
very; a lot

una mica
a little

només
only, just

ja
already; now

encara
still; yet

aquí
here

allà
there

amb
with

sense
without

perquè
because

també
also, too

potser
maybe

Two thank yous: gràcies and merci both mean thank you. Merci is a little more casual, and you'll hear it everywhere in Barcelona.

Through the day: bon dia until lunch, bona tarda after it, bona nit once it's dark. All three work as hello and as goodbye.

People and time Gent i temps

Family

la mare
mother, mum

el pare
father, dad

els pares
parents *(plural)*

el germà
brother

la germana
sister

el fill
son *(els fills, children)*

la filla
daughter

l'avi
grandfather, grandpa

l'àvia
grandmother, grandma

l'oncle
uncle *(also el tiet)*

la tia
aunt *(also la tieta)*

el marit
husband

la família
family

People

l'home
man

la dona
woman; also wife

el noi
boy, young man

la noia
girl, young woman

el nen
child, kid *(la nena, girl)*

l'amic
friend *(f: l'amiga)*

la gent
people *(always singular)*

el professor
teacher *(f: la professora)*

When

avui
today

demà
tomorrow

ahir
yesterday

ara
now

després
later, after

el matí
morning

la tarda
afternoon, evening

la nit
night

el dia
day

la setmana
week

el cap de setmana
weekend *(it means end of the week)*

el mes
month

l'any
year

l'hora
hour; time *(Quina hora és? What time is it?)*

Days of the week

dilluns
Monday

dimarts
Tuesday

dimecres
Wednesday

dijous
Thursday

divendres
Friday

dissabte
Saturday

diumenge
Sunday

Numbers

zero
0

u, un / una
1 *(u to count; un or una before a noun)*

dos / dues
2 *(m / f)*

tres
3

quatre
4

cinc
5

sis
6

set
7

vuit
8

nou
9 *(also means new)*

deu
10

onze
11

vint
20

vint-i-u
21

trenta
30

cent
100

mil
1,000

Numbers build up: the twenties join with -i-: vint-i-u, vint-i-dos. From 30 on it's just a hyphen: trenta-u, quaranta-cinc. 1 and 2 have a feminine form: dos nois, dues noies.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: dilluns, gener. El dilluns means on Monday, and els dilluns means on Mondays.

Food, places, verbs Menjar, llocs, verbs

Food and drink

l'aigua
water

el cafè
coffee

el tallat
coffee with a little milk

el te
tea

la llet
milk

la cervesa
beer

el vi
wine

el cava
sparkling wine, made in Catalonia

el pa
bread

el pa amb tomàquet
bread rubbed with tomato, olive oil and salt

el formatge
cheese

el pollastre
chicken

el peix
fish

l'ou
egg

la carn
meat

la crema catalana
custard with a crunchy burnt sugar top

l'esmorzar
breakfast

el dinar
lunch, the main meal

el sopar
dinner

Tinc gana
I'm hungry

El compte, si us plau
the bill, please

Places

la casa
house

a casa
at home, home

l'escola
school

la feina
work, job

el restaurant
restaurant

el lavabo
toilet

la botiga
shop

la ciutat
city, town

el carrer
street

la plaça
square

l'estació
station

l'hospital
hospital

la platja
beach

Things

els diners
money *(always plural)*

el mòbil
mobile phone

la clau
key

el cotxe
car

el llibre
book

Verbs: dictionary / I do it

ser / sóc
be

estar / estic
be *(how you are)*, stay

tenir / tinc
have

anar / vaig
go

venir / vinc
come

menjar / menjo
eat

beure / bec
drink

veure / veig
see

fer / faig
do, make

dormir / dormo
sleep

parlar / parlo
speak

entendre / entenc
understand

saber / sé
know *(a fact)*

voler / vull
want

poder / puc
can

aprendre / aprenc
learn

treballar / treballo
work

viure / visc
live

comprar / compro
buy

Describing words

bo / dolent
good / bad *(bon before a noun: bon dia)*

gran / petit
big / small

calent / fred
hot / cold

nou / vell
new / old

car / barat
expensive / cheap

fàcil / difícil
easy / hard

content / trist
happy / sad

bonic
beautiful, pretty

cansat
tired

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -ar, -er, -re or -ir. Most -ar verbs make the I form with -o: parlar, parlo. The everyday verbs are irregular, so learn both forms together.

Describing words agree: they usually come after the noun and match it. The list shows the masculine form: un noi content, una noia contenta, uns nois contents.

Show words Paraules de sèries

Reactions

Home!
oh, come on! hey! *(see below)*

Déu n'hi do!
wow, that's a lot! *(see below)*

Ostres!
wow! blimey! *(the mild one)*

Mare meva!
oh my! *(it means my mother)*

Va!
come on! go on!

Vinga!
come on! right, let's go!

Doncs ...
well ..., so ...

Vaja!
oh dear! oh well!

Molt bé!
very good! well done!

Que bé!
how nice! great!

Que fort!
no way! that's crazy!

De debò?
really? seriously?

I tant!
of course! you bet!

Quina il·lusió!
how lovely! I'm so excited!

Quin pal!
what a drag! I can't be bothered

The big scenes

T'estimo
I love you

Et trobo a faltar
I miss you

Deixa'm en pau
leave me alone

Ajuda!
help!

Compte!
watch out!

Espera!
wait!

No te'n vagis!
don't go!

Què ha passat?
what happened?

Calla!
be quiet! shut up! *(rude)*

What to call people

maco / maca
sweetie, love *(it means nice, pretty)*

carinyo
darling, love

tio / tia
mate, dude, girl *(casual, between friends)*

senyor / senyora
sir / madam; Mr / Mrs

Déu n'hi do: word for word it's a little prayer, but nobody hears that any more. Say it when something is a lot, big or impressive: a long queue, a huge meal, a great view. Déu n'hi do! Wow, that's quite something.

Home! and Ostres!: home means man, but Home! is said to anyone, women too: Home, no! Oh, come on, no! Ostres means oysters, and it's the polite way to say wow or damn.

Swear words are strong: Catalan has some very strong swear words, and you'll hear them a lot in films and series. Recognise them, but don't say them. Ostres, vaja and mare meva are the mild ones, fine in front of anyone.

Practice Pràctica

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

Questions: keep the same word order and raise your voice at the end: Vens? Are you coming?

Saying no: put no before the verb: No bec cafè. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Hola, sóc l'Anna.
   Hi, I'm Anna.

2. Com et dius?
   What's your name?

3. On és el lavabo?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Quant costa això?
   How much is this?

5. Un tallat, si us plau.
   A coffee with a little milk, please.

6. Parlo una mica de català.
   I speak a little Catalan.

7. Avui fa molt de fred.
   It's very cold today.

8. Demà vaig a la platja.
   Tomorrow I'm going to the beach.

9. Ahir vaig menjar pa amb tomàquet.
   Yesterday I ate bread with tomato.

10. Va, anem a casa!
    Come on, let's go home!

Going or gone? Vaig a la platja is I'm going to the beach. Vaig menjar is I ate. vaig + a place is going, vaig + a verb is the past.

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