How Hungarian sounds Kiejtés

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Hungarian is read exactly as it's written. Some sounds take two letters, like sz or gy, but they're still one sound. Learn the rows below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a	o in hot, lips a little rounded	**alma / ablak** apple / window
á	a in father, long and open	**ágy / kávé** bed / coffee
e, é	e in bed; é like ay in say, held, with no glide	**este / kérem** evening / please
i, o, u	ee, o, oo: with an accent, í, ó, ú, hold them longer	**kicsi / bor / út** small / wine / road
ö, ő	like ur in British fur, lips rounded; ő is longer	**öt / nő** five / woman
ü, ű	like German ü: say ee, round your lips; ű is longer	**üveg / tűz** glass / fire
sz	s in see	**szia / szép** hi / beautiful
s	sh in shoe: the famous trap (see below)	**sör / Budapest** beer / BU-da-pesht
cs	ch in church	**csak / csirke** only / chicken
zs	s in pleasure	**zseb / Zsuzsa** pocket / Susie
gy	a soft d, like d in duke said quickly	**egy / magyar** one / Hungarian
ny	ny in canyon	**nyár / anya** summer / mother
ty	a soft t, like t in tune said quickly	**kutya / tyúk** dog / hen
j, ly	y in yes: two spellings, one sound	**jó / hely** good / place
c	ts in cats	**utca / cica** street / kitty
stress	always on the first syllable, every word	**köszönöm / Budapest** KÖ-szö-nöm / BU-da-pest

Long vowels

an accent makes a new letter: hold it

kor age · **kór** illness · **öt** five · **őt** him, her

Two letters, one sound

sz, cs, zs, gy, ny, ty, ly

magyar is ma-gyar, never mag-yar

The s trap: s is sh, and sz is the plain s. So Budapest is said Budapesht, and szia is see-ya. ő and ű have two small strokes on top, not a wave or a hat.

Stress is easy: always on the first syllable, even in long words: BU-da-pest, MA-gyar-or-szág, VI-szont-lá-tás-ra. Keep the rest of the word light and even.

How words work Nyelvtan

No gender: Hungarian has no masculine or feminine. One word, ő, means he and she. The is a before a consonant and az before a vowel: a ház, az alma. A or an is egy: egy ház.

Endings do the work of little words

Where English puts in, from or into before the word, Hungarian adds an ending to it.

ház house	házak houses	házban in the house
házból from the house, out of it	házba into the house	háznál at the house

Try it: iskola, a school: iskolában, at school; iskolából, from school; iskolába, to school. A final a or e gets an accent before the ending. Most Hungarian towns take -n instead: Budapesten, in Budapest.

Vowel harmony

Most endings come in two versions. The word chooses: if it has a, o or u, use the a or o version. If not, use the e or ö version.

Vowels in the word	Endings	Example
a, o, u (also á, ó, ú)	-ban, -ból, -ba	**házban, házból** in the house, from the house
e, i, ö, ü (and long)	-ben, -ből, -be	**kertben, kertből** in the garden, from the garden

Verbs change for each person: lenni, to be

én vagyok I am	te vagy you are (casual)	ő van he, she is
mi vagyunk we are	ti vagytok you all are	ők vannak they are

Van takes a break: to describe someone, just leave van out. Ő magas. He or she is tall. Anna tanár. Anna is a teacher. For where, it stays: Hol van? Where is it?

te or ön: te is for friends, family, kids and people your age. Ön is the polite you for strangers, shops and work. Maga is polite too, but can sound sharp. Both take the ő verb: Hogy van? How are you? Not sure? Start polite and wait to be offered te.

The first 230 words Az első szavak

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

Greetings and survival

Szia
hi; also bye *(to one friend)*

Sziasztok
hi, bye *(to a group of friends)*

Szervusz
hi, bye *(friendly, a little old-fashioned)*

Jó reggelt
good morning

Jó napot
hello, good day *(polite; in full, Jó napot kívánok)*

Jó estét
good evening

Jó éjszakát
good night

Viszontlátásra
goodbye *(polite)*

Viszlát
bye *(short for viszontlátásra)*

Köszönöm
thank you

Köszi
thanks *(casual)*

Kérem
please *(polite)*

Kérlek
please *(to a friend)*

Szívesen
you're welcome

Tessék
here you are; also pardon? yes?

Bocsánat
sorry; excuse me

Elnézést
excuse me *(polite)*

Igen
yes

Nem
no; not

Hogy vagy?
how are you? *(casual)*

Jól, köszönöm
fine, thanks

A nevem ...
my name is ...

Nagyon örülök
nice to meet you *(it means I'm very glad)*

Nem értem
I don't understand

Nem tudom
I don't know

Jó étvágyat!
enjoy your meal!

Question words

mi
what

ki
who

hol
where

hova
where to

honnan
where from

mikor
when

miért
why

hogyan
how *(often just hogy: Hogy vagy?)*

mennyi
how much, how many

melyik
which

Me and you

én
I

te
you *(casual)*

ő
he and she: one word

mi
we *(also what: the sentence tells you)*

ti
you all

ők
they

ön / maga
you *(polite: see page 2)*

az enyém / a tiéd
mine / yours *(casual)*

ez / az
this / that

Little words

és
and

de
but

vagy
or *(also you are)*

is
also, too *(after the word: én is, me too)*

nagyon
very

sok
a lot, many

egy kicsit
a little

csak
only, just

már
already

még
still; yet

itt
here

ott
there

mert
because

talán
maybe

nélkül
without *(after the word: cukor nélkül)*

Two pleases: kérlek is for a friend, kérem for anyone you'd call ön. Köszi is the quick, casual thanks.

Szia does two jobs: it's hi and bye, to one friend. To a group of friends it's sziasztok. Jó napot is the polite hello.

People and time Emberek és idő

Family

anya
mother, mum

apa
father, dad

báty
older brother

öcs
younger brother

nővér
older sister

húg
younger sister

testvér
brother or sister *(tesó for short)*

fiú
son; also boy

lány
daughter; also girl

szülők
parents

nagymama
grandmother

nagypapa
grandfather

nagynéni
aunt

nagybácsi
uncle

család
family

férj
husband

feleség
wife

gyerek
child

People

ember
person, human

férfi
man

nő
woman

barát
friend; boyfriend

barátnő
friend *(f)*; girlfriend

tanár
teacher

szomszéd
neighbour

When

ma
today

holnap
tomorrow

tegnap
yesterday

most
now

később
later

reggel
morning

délután
afternoon

este
evening

éjszaka
night

nap
day; also sun

hét
week; also seven

hétvége
weekend

hónap
month

év
year

óra
hour; also clock, lesson

Days of the week

hétfő
Monday *(it means head of the week)*

kedd
Tuesday

szerda
Wednesday

csütörtök
Thursday

péntek
Friday

szombat
Saturday

vasárnap
Sunday *(it means market day)*

Numbers

nulla
0

egy
1; also a, an

kettő
2 *(két before a noun: két kávé)*

három
3

négy
4

öt
5

hat
6

hét
7; also week

nyolc
8

kilenc
9

tíz
10

tizenegy
11

húsz
20

huszonegy
21

harminc
30

száz
100

ezer
1,000

Numbers build up: 11 to 19 start with tizen-: tizenhárom is 13. 21 to 29 start with huszon-: huszonegy is 21. After that, just join them: harmincöt is 35.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: hétfő, január. On Monday is hétfőn.

Food, places, verbs Étel, helyek, igék

Food and drink

víz
water

kávé
coffee

tea
tea

tej
milk

sör
beer

bor
wine

kenyér
bread

sajt
cheese

csirke
chicken

hal
fish

tojás
egg

gulyás
goulash: in Hungary, a paprika beef soup

pörkölt
paprika meat stew *(what others call goulash)*

paprika
paprika; also a pepper, the vegetable

lángos
fried dough with sour cream and cheese

pálinka
strong fruit brandy

reggeli
breakfast

ebéd
lunch

vacsora
dinner

Éhes vagyok
I'm hungry

A számlát, kérem
the bill, please

Places

ház
house

otthon
at home; home

iskola
school

munka
work, job

bolt
shop

étterem
restaurant

kávézó
café

mosdó
toilet, washroom

város
town, city

utca
street

állomás
station

kórház
hospital

Magyarország
Hungary

Things

pénz
money

telefon
phone

kulcs
key

autó
car

könyv
book

Verbs: he, she does / to do

van / lenni
be *(is)*

jön / jönni
come

megy / menni
go

eszik / enni
eat

iszik / inni
drink

lát / látni
see

csinál / csinálni
do, make

alszik / aludni
sleep

beszél / beszélni
speak

ért / érteni
understand

tud / tudni
know; can, know how

akar / akarni
want

szeret / szeretni
love; like

lakik / lakni
live *(somewhere)*

vesz / venni
buy; take

tanul / tanulni
learn, study

dolgozik / dolgozni
work

olvas / olvasni
read

kér / kérni
ask for *(Kérek egy kávét)*

Describing words

jó / rossz
good / bad

nagy / kicsi
big / small

meleg / hideg
warm / cold

új / régi
new / old *(for things)*

drága / olcsó
expensive / cheap *(drága is also dear)*

könnyű / nehéz
easy / hard *(also light / heavy)*

boldog / szomorú
happy / sad

szép
beautiful, nice

fáradt
tired

finom
tasty, delicious

Two forms: dictionaries list the he, she form: beszél, he or she speaks. Add **-ni** for to: beszélni, to speak. For I, add -ok, -ek or -ök: beszélek, I speak. Verbs that end in -ik take -m instead: eszem, I eat.

Describing words stay put: they come before the noun and don't change. Only the noun takes the ending: a nagy ház**ban**, in the big house.

Show words Szavak filmekből

Reactions

Szuper!
great!

Komolyan?
seriously?

Tényleg?
really?

Persze
of course, sure

Naná!
you bet!

Na!
come on! well? *(see below)*

Hát...
well... *(see below)*

Jaj!
oh! ouch! oh no!

Ajjaj
uh-oh, oh dear

Mindegy
whatever, never mind

Rendben
all right, OK

Ügyes!
well done! clever!

A fenébe!
damn! *(mild)*

Egészségedre!
cheers! also bless you, after a sneeze

The big scenes

Szeretlek
I love you

Hiányzol
I miss you *(it means you are missing)*

Hagyj békén!
leave me alone!

Segítség!
help!

Vigyázz!
watch out!

Várj!
wait!

Ne menj el!
don't go!

Mi történt?
what happened?

Fogd be!
shut up! *(rude)*

What to call people

drágám
darling *(it means my dear one)*

szívem
sweetheart *(it means my heart)*

haver
mate, buddy

tesó
bro, sis *(short for testvér)*

uram / hölgyem
sir / madam

Na and hát: Na! is the little push word: Na, gyere! Come on! Na és? So what? Hát... is well..., the word for thinking out loud, often just before a no: Hát, nem tudom. Well, I don't know.

Egészségedre: it means to your health. Say it as you raise a glass, and when someone sneezes. To someone you call ön, it's egészségére.

Swear words are strong: Hungarian has some very strong swear words, and you'll hear them a lot in films and series. Recognise them, but don't say them. Jaj, ajjaj and a fenébe are the mild ones, fine in front of anyone.

Practice Gyakorlás

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

Questions: keep the same words and change the tune. Your voice goes up near the end, then drops on the last syllable: Beszélsz angolul? Do you speak English?

Saying no: put nem before the verb: Nem iszom kávét. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Szia, a nevem Anna.
   Hi, my name is Anna.

2. Hogy hívnak?
   What's your name?

3. Hol van a mosdó?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Mennyibe kerül?
   How much is it?

5. Egy kávét kérek.
   A coffee, please.

6. Beszélek egy kicsit magyarul.
   I speak a little Hungarian.

7. Ma nagyon hideg van.
   It's very cold today.

8. Holnap Budapestre megyek.
   Tomorrow I'm going to Budapest.

9. Ez a lángos nagyon finom!
   This lángos is really tasty!

10. Na, menjünk!
    Come on, let's go!

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