How Lithuanian sounds Tarimas

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Lithuanian is read as it's written, and nothing is silent. Learn the letters with a mark and the few pairs below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a i o u	father, sit, more, put: o is nearly always long	**mama / ir** mum / and
e	open, between bed and cat	**medis / bet** tree / but
ė	a closed e, like ay in say, held without the glide	**upė / mėnuo** river / month
y, į	both a long ee, as in see	**lyja / į** it's raining / into
ū, ų	both a long oo, as in food	**sūnus / jūsų** son / your
ą, ę	a long a, a long e	**žąsis / pavargęs** goose / tired
ie, uo	two vowels glided in one beat: ee-e, oo-o	**pienas / duona** milk / bread
č	ch in church	**čia / ačiū** here / thank you
š	sh in shoe	**šeima / šalta** family / it's cold
ž	s in pleasure	**žmogus / žiema** person / winter
c	ts in cats, even at the start	**cukrus / centas** sugar / cent
j	y in yes	**jūra / jis** sea / he
ch, h	ch in loch; h is a soft breath: mostly in borrowed words	**chemija / humoras** chemistry / humour
stress	can fall on any syllable, and the spelling doesn't show it: learn it with the word	**labas / prašau** LA-bas / pra-ŠAU

č · š · ž

a small v on top turns c, s, z into ch, sh, zh

čia here · **šeima** family · **žiema** winter

ą · ę · į · ų

the little tail once meant a nasal sound: now the vowel is just long

žąsis goose · **pavargęs** tired · **į** into · **jūsų** your

A quiet i: between a consonant and a, o or u, the i only makes the consonant soft. Ačiū is A-chyoo, two beats, and čia is one beat.

Stress moves: it can fall on any syllable, and in some words it moves when the ending changes. Nothing on the page shows it, so learn it with each word and let your ear do the rest. You're understood long before it's perfect.

Very old roots: Lithuanian keeps many very old features of its language family, the big family English belongs to as well. Sūnus, son, is a distant cousin of the English word.

How words work Gramatika

No a, no the: Lithuanian has no articles, so namas is a house or the house. Context does the work.

Every noun is masculine or feminine

masculine

usually ends in -as, -is, -ys or -us

vyras, man
brolis, brother
arklys, horse
sūnus, son

feminine

usually ends in -a or -ė

mama, mum
kava, coffee
upė, river
gatvė, street

Mostly, not always: some -is words are feminine, like naktis, night, and širdis, heart. Dėdė, uncle, is masculine with its -ė, and vanduo, water, is masculine too, while sesuo, sister, is feminine. On the next pages the noun itself wears its gender colour, so you don't have to guess.

Endings change with the job in the sentence

kava coffee: the dictionary form	Geriu kavą. I drink coffee.	be kavos without coffee	su kava with coffee

That's the case system: the start of the word stays, and only the end changes. Lithuanian has seven cases. Learn the dictionary form first; listening brings the rest.

Names change too

Jonas a man's name	Jonai! Jonas, when you call him	Eglė a woman's name	Egle! Eglė, when you call her

Calling someone: when you speak to a person, the word takes a calling ending. Names in -as take -ai: Tomas, Tomai! Other words in -as take -e: draugas, drauge! And -ė becomes -e.

Tu or jūs

Kaip tau sekasi? tu: friends, family, kids, anyone your age	Kaip jums sekasi? jūs: strangers, older people, at work; jūs is also more than one person

Verbs change with the person: būti, to be, and dirbti, to work

aš esu I am	tu esi you are (casual)	jis, ji yra he, she is	mes esame we are	jūs esate you all are; polite you	jie, jos yra they are
dirbu I work	dirbi you work (casual)	dirba he, she works	dirbame we work	dirbate you all work; polite you	dirba they work

No need for aš: the ending already says who, and dirba is both he works and they work. To say no, put ne in front, joined on: nedirbu, I don't work. For būti: nesu, nesi, nėra.

The first 253 words Pirmieji žodžiai

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

Greetings and survival

Labas
hi, hello *(the everyday one)*

Sveiki
hello *(warm and polite, or to a group)*

Laba diena
hello, good day *(the safe polite one)*

Labas rytas
good morning

Labas vakaras
good evening

Labanakt
good night

Viso gero
goodbye *(it means all the best)*

Iki
bye *(casual; it means until)*

Iki pasimatymo
see you *(it means until we meet)*

Ačiū
thank you

Labai ačiū
thank you very much

Prašau
please; you're welcome; here you are

Atsiprašau
sorry; excuse me

Taip
yes

Ne
no; not

Kaip sekasi?
how's it going?

Mano vardas ...
my name is ...

Malonu susipažinti
nice to meet you

Nesuprantu
I don't understand

Nežinau
I don't know

Į sveikatą!
cheers! *(it means to health)*

Skanaus!
enjoy your meal!

Question words

kas
who; also what

kur
where

iš kur
where from

kada
when

kodėl
why

kaip
how

kiek
how much, how many

kuris
which

ar
starts a yes or no question *(Ar tu čia? Are you here?)*

Kiek kainuoja?
how much is it?

Me and you

aš
I

tu
you *(casual)*

jis / ji
he / she

mes
we

jūs
you all; also the polite you

jie / jos
they *(men or mixed / women)*

mano
my *(the same for every word)*

tavo
your *(casual)*

jūsų
your *(polite, or you all)*

šitas / šita
this *(m word / f word)*

tas / ta
that *(m word / f word)*

Little words

ir
and

bet
but

arba
or

taip pat
also, too

labai
very

daug
a lot, many

truputį
a little

tik
only, just

jau
already

dar
still, yet, more

čia
here

ten
there

su
with

be
without

nes
because

gal
maybe *(also galbūt)*

Prašau does a lot: it's please when you ask: Vieną kavą, prašau. It's you're welcome after ačiū. And it's here you are, as you hand something over.

Three hellos: labas is the everyday hi. Sveiki is warmer and a little more polite, and works for a group. Laba diena is the safe one with anyone.

People and time Žmonės ir laikas

Family

mama
mum

tėtis
dad

tėvas
father

brolis
brother

sesuo
sister *(feminine, despite the -uo)*

sūnus
son

duktė
daughter *(in speech also dukra)*

močiutė
grandma

senelis
grandpa

dėdė
uncle *(masculine, despite the -ė)*

teta
aunt

tėvai
parents *(plural)*

šeima
family

People

žmogus
person *(žmonės, people)*

vyras
man; husband

moteris
woman *(feminine, despite the -is)*

žmona
wife

vaikas
child *(vaikai, children)*

berniukas
boy

mergaitė
girl

draugas
friend *(a man)*; also boyfriend

draugė
friend *(a woman)*; also girlfriend

kaimynas
neighbour

gydytojas
doctor *(a woman: gydytoja)*

mokytojas
teacher *(a woman: mokytoja)*

Things

telefonas
phone

knyga
book

pinigai
money *(always plural)*

raktas
key

automobilis
car *(in speech: mašina)*

langas
window

durys
door *(always plural)*

bilietas
ticket

When

šiandien
today

rytoj
tomorrow

vakar
yesterday

dabar
now

vėliau
later

visada
always

niekada
never

rytas
morning

vakaras
evening

naktis
night *(feminine, despite the -is)*

diena
day

valanda
hour

laikas
time *(the weather is oras)*

savaitė
week

mėnuo
month

metai
year *(always plural)*

Days of the week

pirmadienis
Monday *(it means first day)*

antradienis
Tuesday *(second day)*

trečiadienis
Wednesday *(third day)*

ketvirtadienis
Thursday *(fourth day)*

penktadienis
Friday *(fifth day)*

šeštadienis
Saturday *(sixth day)*

sekmadienis
Sunday *(seventh day)*

Getting around

autobusas
bus

traukinys
train

stotis
station *(feminine, despite the -is)*

oro uostas
airport *(it means air harbour)*

į kairę / į dešinę
to the left / to the right

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
nulis	vienas	du	trys	keturi	penki	šeši	septyni	aštuoni	devyni	dešimt	vienuolika	dvylika

13	20	21	30	50	100	1,000
trylika	dvidešimt	dvidešimt vienas	trisdešimt	penkiasdešimt	šimtas	tūkstantis

Numbers build up: 11 to 19 end in -lika: vienuolika, dvylika, trylika. The tens add dešimt: dvidešimt is 20, and dvidešimt vienas is 21. One and two have a feminine form: viena kava, dvi kavos.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: pirmadienis, sausis. On Monday is pirmadienį.

Food, places, verbs Valgyti, eiti, daryti

Food and drink

vanduo
water *(masculine, despite the -uo)*

kava
coffee

arbata
tea

pienas
milk

alus
beer

vynas
wine

juoda duona
dark rye bread, eaten every day

sūris
cheese

mėsa
meat

vištiena
chicken *(the meat)*

žuvis
fish *(feminine, despite the -is)*

sriuba
soup

obuolys
apple

bulvė
potato

cepelinai
potato dumplings with meat inside *(plural)*

šaltibarščiai
the pink soup: cold beetroot soup *(plural)*

grietinė
sour cream, on almost everything

šakotis
a spiky cake baked on a spit

pusryčiai
breakfast *(plural)*

pietūs
lunch *(plural; it also means south)*

vakarienė
dinner

Esu alkanas
I'm hungry *(a woman says esu alkana)*

Sąskaitą, prašau
the bill, please

Places

namas
house

darbas
work, job

mokykla
school

parduotuvė
shop

turgus
market

restoranas
restaurant

kavinė
café

ligoninė
hospital

miestas
town, city

kaimas
village

gatvė
street

tualetas
toilet *(signs say WC)*

pilis
castle *(feminine, despite the -is)*

ežeras
lake

jūra
sea

miškas
forest

Lietuva
Lithuania *(lietuviškai, in Lithuanian)*

Vilnius
Vilnius, the capital

Verbs: dictionary / aš form

būti / esu
be

turėti / turiu
have

eiti / einu
go *(on foot)*

valgyti / valgau
eat

gerti / geriu
drink

matyti / matau
see

žiūrėti / žiūriu
watch, look

dirbti / dirbu
work

daryti / darau
do, make

miegoti / miegu
sleep

kalbėti / kalbu
speak, talk

suprasti / suprantu
understand

žinoti / žinau
know *(a fact)*

norėti / noriu
want

mylėti / myliu
love

skaityti / skaitau
read

rašyti / rašau
write

gyventi / gyvenu
live

pirkti / perku
buy

laukti / laukiu
wait

Describing words

geras / blogas
good / bad

didelis / mažas
big / small

karštas / šaltas
hot / cold

naujas / senas
new / old

brangus / pigus
expensive *(also dear)* / cheap

lengvas / sunkus
easy / hard; also light / heavy

gražus
beautiful

skanus
tasty

pavargęs
tired *(a woman says pavargusi)*

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -ti. For I, the verb ends in -u: dirbu, matau, noriu. Some change inside, like pirkti, perku: learn both forms together.

Describing words agree: the list shows the masculine form. With a feminine word: gera kava, brangi kava, didelė gatvė.

Show words Žodžiai iš serialų

Reactions

Oho!
wow! *(surprise)*

Tikrai?
really?

Puiku!
great! excellent!

Šaunu!
cool! awesome!

Gerai
OK, good, fine

Na
well... *(a pause word, see below)*

Nieko tokio
never mind, it's nothing *(it means nothing like that)*

Valio!
hooray!

Ai!
ouch! *(pain)*

Žinoma
of course

Aišku
sure, got it *(it means clear)*

Einam!
let's go!

Nesąmonė!
nonsense!

Sveikinu!
congratulations!

The big scenes

Aš tave myliu
I love you

Aš tavęs pasiilgau
I miss you

Palik mane ramybėje
leave me alone *(it means leave me in peace)*

Atsargiai!
careful! watch out!

Gana!
enough!

Padėkite!
help!

Kas atsitiko?
what happened?

Viskas bus gerai
everything will be all right

Nesijaudink
don't worry

Palauk!
wait!

Ką darai?
what are you doing?

What to call people

brangusis / brangioji
darling *(to a man / to a woman)*

drauge
mate, my friend *(said to a man)*

mieloji
dear, sweetheart *(to a woman)*

saulute
sunshine, sweetie *(it means little sun)*

pone / ponia
sir / madam *(pone is ponas, Mr, when you speak to him)*

Na, the pause word: you'll hear it all the time, at the start of a thought. Na, gerai. Well, OK. Na ir kas? So what?

Calling forms: drauge, pone and saulute are the calling forms from page 2: the ending changes when you speak to someone. Labas, drauge! Hi, mate!

Swear words are strong: Lithuanian 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. Ai and oho are fine in front of anyone.

Practice Praktika

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

Questions: put ar in front, and the rest stays the same: Tu kalbi angliškai. Ar tu kalbi angliškai? Do you speak English?

Saying no: ne joins the verb, and the thing after it takes the of-form: Geriu kavą. Negeriu kavos. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Labas, aš esu Rūta.
   Hi, I'm Rūta.

2. Koks tavo vardas?
   What's your name?

3. Atsiprašau, kur yra tualetas?
   Excuse me, where is the toilet?

4. Kiek kainuoja bilietas?
   How much is the ticket?

5. Vieną kavą, prašau.
   One coffee, please.

6. Aš truputį kalbu lietuviškai.
   I speak a little Lithuanian.

7. Šiandien labai šalta.
   It's very cold today.

8. Rytoj važiuojame į Vilnių.
   Tomorrow we're going to Vilnius.

9. Cepelinai labai skanūs!
   The cepelinai are really tasty!

10. Nieko tokio, turime laiko.
    Never mind, we have time.

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