How Norwegian sounds Uttale

The trick: Norwegian is mostly read as it's written. It has three extra letters, æ, ø and å, at the end of the alphabet. This sheet is Bokmål, the written Norwegian most people use. Nynorsk is the other written form, and many dialects exist; shows use them all.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
æ	a in cat, a little longer; very open before r	**være / lærer** be / teacher
ø	like ur in British fur, lips rounded	**øl / brød** beer / bread
å	o in more, with round lips	**på / båt** on / boat
a	long, a in father; short, a quick bright a	**dag / takk** day / thanks
o	usually oo in food, lips tight; often like å	**sol / ost** sun / cheese
u	no English match: oo with the tongue forward, lips pushed out	**hus / ut** house / out
y	say ee, then round your lips tightly	**ny / by** new / town
ei, øy, au	ei is ay in day; øy and au are glides, roughly oy and ow	**nei / øy** no / island
j, hj, gj	y in yes: the h or g in front is silent	**ja / hjelp** yes / help
g + i, y, ei	the g softens to y in yes	**gi / geit** give / goat
k + i, y, ei	the k softens to the kj-sound below	**kino / kyss** cinema / kiss
hv	the h is silent	**hva / hvor** what / where
silent letters	d in god (said go), t in det (said de), g in -ig and -lig (hyggelig, said hyggeli)	**god / det** good / it
rs	sh in eastern Norway, around Oslo	**norsk / torsdag** Norwegian / Thursday
r	a tap of the tongue; in the west and south, from the throat	**rød** red
jeg, meg, deg, og	jeg sounds like yai, meg and deg like my and die; og is said å	**jeg / og** I / and
stress	usually on the first syllable; loanwords often on the last	**lørdag / stasjon** Saturday / station

The sj-sound

sj, skj, and sk before i, y, ei, øy

sju seven · **skjorte** shirt · **ski** ski · **sky** cloud

A plain sh, as in she. It's one of the easy ones.

The kj-sound

kj, tj, and k before i, y, ei, øy

kjøre drive · **kino** cinema · **tjue** twenty · **kylling** chicken

A soft, thin sh, lips spread, like the Swedish tj or the ch in German ich. Many young people say plain sh.

Long or short: a vowel is long before one consonant and short before two. Tak, with a long a, is roof. Takk, with a short a, is thanks. That's why so many Norwegian words have a double letter.

A little tune: Norwegian words have a pitch, a sing-song you'll hear right away. Bønder, farmers, and bønner, beans, sound alike except for the tune. Context does the work, so don't worry about it yet.

How words work Grammatikk

Every noun is an en, ei or et word

en
most nouns
en bil, a car · en gutt, a boy · en stol, a chair

ei
some, often female
ei jente, a girl · ei bok, a book · ei hytte, a cabin

et
the rest
et hus, a house · et barn, a child · et eple, an apple

Ei is optional: many speakers, in Bergen and much of Oslo too, use en for ei words: en bok, boken. Others say ei bok, boka. Both are correct Bokmål, so en is never wrong for an ei word.

For "the", the article goes on the end

en bil
bilen
the car

ei jente
jenta
the girl

et hus
huset
the house

et eple
eplet
the apple

Plurals: learn them with the word

Ending	One	Many	Often for
-er	en bil	biler cars	most en and ei words
-r	ei jente	jenter girls	words ending in -e
-er	et kontor	kontorer offices	longer et words
no change	et hus	hus houses	short et words

Patterns, not rules: some words break them, like en mann, to menn, and ei bok, to bøker. When you learn a noun, say its plural too: en bil, biler.

Verbs stay the same for everyone

jeg er
I am

du er
you are

hun er
she is

vi er
we are

One form: whoever is talking, the verb doesn't change. Most present forms end in -r: jeg snakker, du snakker, de snakker.

The verb comes second

I dag
today

drikker
drink

jeg
I

kaffe
coffee

Second place: in a normal sentence the verb is the second thing. Start with I dag, today, and the verb jumps ahead of jeg: I dag drikker jeg kaffe, never I dag jeg drikker. It's the same as Jeg drikker kaffe i dag.

The first 235 words De første ordene

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

Hei
hi, hello *(with anyone)*

Hei hei
hi! or bye! *(cheerful)*

Ha det
bye *(in full: ha det bra)*

God morgen
good morning

God kveld
good evening

God natt
good night

Vi ses
see you

Takk
thanks

Tusen takk
thanks a lot *(it means a thousand thanks)*

Vær så god
here you are; help yourself *(when you give something)*

Bare hyggelig
you're welcome

Vær så snill
please *(asking a favour)*

Unnskyld
excuse me; sorry

Beklager
sorry, I apologise

Ja
yes

Nei
no

Ja takk / Nei takk
yes please / no thanks

Hvordan går det?
how are you? *(how's it going)*

Bra, takk
fine, thanks

Jeg heter ...
my name is ...

Hyggelig å møte deg
nice to meet you

Jeg forstår ikke
I don't understand

Jeg vet ikke
I don't know

Skål!
cheers!

Question words

hva
what

hvem
who

hvor
where

når
when

hvorfor
why

hvordan
how

hvor mye
how much

hvor mange
how many

hvilken
which

hva slags
what kind of

Me and you

jeg
I *(said yai)*

du
you *(to anyone: the normal you)*

dere
you all

han
he

hun
she

den / det
it *(en or ei word / et word)*

vi
we

de
they *(said di)*

meg / deg
me / you *(said like my / die)*

min / mitt
my *(en word / et word; for an ei word, mi)*

din / ditt
your *(en word / et word; for an ei word, di)*

Little words

og
and *(said å)*

men
but

eller
or

ikke
not

også
also, too

veldig
very

mye
a lot, much

bare
only, just

allerede
already

her
here

der
there

med
with

uten
without

for
for; too *(for varmt, too hot)*

fordi
because

kanskje
maybe *(said kansje)*

Du is for everyone: Norwegians say du to almost anyone, a boss or a doctor too. Dere is for more than one person.

No word for please: Norwegians add takk, thanks: En kaffe, takk. A coffee, please. Kan jeg få, can I have, is the polite way to ask.

People and time Mennesker og tid

Family

en mamma
mom

en pappa
dad

en bror
brother

ei søster
sister

en sønn
son

ei datter
daughter

en forelder
parent *(foreldre, parents)*

et søsken
brother or sister *(søsken, siblings)*

en familie
family

en mann
man; husband

ei kone
wife

People

et menneske
person, human

en kvinne
woman

et barn
child *(barn, children)*

ei jente
girl

en gutt
boy

en venn
friend

en kjæreste
boyfriend or girlfriend

en nabo
neighbour

en lærer
teacher

en kollega
colleague

When

i dag
today

i morgen
tomorrow

i går
yesterday

nå
now

senere
later

en morgen
morning

en ettermiddag
afternoon

en kveld
evening

ei natt
night

en dag
day

en time
hour *(not time: that's tid)*

ei uke
week

en helg
weekend

en måned
month

et år
year

klokka
o'clock: klokka tre, at three

Days of the week

mandag
Monday

tirsdag
Tuesday

onsdag
Wednesday

torsdag
Thursday

fredag
Friday

lørdag
Saturday

søndag
Sunday

Mum's side, dad's side

Mum's side: mor

ei mormor	en morfar	ei moster	en morbror
grandma	grandpa	aunt	uncle

Dad's side: far

ei farmor	en farfar	ei faster	en farbror
grandma	grandpa	aunt	uncle

Mor is mother and far is father, and Norwegian just glues them: mormor is mum's mum, farfar is dad's dad. You'll also hear bestemor and bestefar, grandma and grandpa, and tante and onkel for any aunt or uncle.

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
null	en (ei, ett)	to	tre	fire	fem	seks	sju (or syv)	åtte	ni

10	11	12	13	20	21	30	40	100	1,000
ti	elleve	tolv	tretten	tjue (kj-sound)	tjueen	tretti	førti	hundre	tusen

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: mandag, januar. On Monday is på mandag. One is en, ei or ett, like the article, but ett has two t's: et hus, a house; ett hus, one house.

Food, places, verbs Mat, steder, verb

Food and drink

et vann
water

en kaffe
coffee

en te
tea

en melk
milk

et øl
beer

en vin
wine

et brød
bread

en ost
cheese

en brunost
brown cheese: sweet, like caramel

et kjøtt
meat

en kylling
chicken

en fisk
fish

et egg
egg

et eple
apple

ei pølse
sausage, hot dog

en vaffel
waffle

en frokost
breakfast

en middag
dinner

ei matpakke
packed lunch *(open sandwiches in paper)*

Takk for maten
thanks for the food *(said after a meal)*

Places

et hus
house

hjemme
at home

ei hytte
cabin *(in the mountains or by the sea)*

en skole
school

en jobb
job, work

en restaurant
restaurant

et sykehus
hospital

et toalett
toilet *(casual: do)*

en butikk
shop

en by
town, city

ei gate
street

et fjell
mountain

Norge
Norway

Verbs: dictionary form / present

være / er
be

ha / har
have

gå / går
go, walk

dra / drar
go, leave *(to a place)*

komme / kommer
come

spise / spiser
eat

drikke / drikker
drink

se / ser
see

gjøre / gjør
do, make

sove / sover
sleep

snakke / snakker
talk, speak

forstå / forstår
understand

vite / vet
know *(a fact)*

kjenne / kjenner
know *(a person)*

ville / vil
want

kunne / kan
can

like / liker
like

elske / elsker
love

bo / bor
live *(somewhere)*

kjøpe / kjøper
buy

hete / heter
be called

Describing words

bra / dårlig
good / bad

stor / liten
big / small

varm / kald
warm / cold

ny / gammel
new / old

dyr / billig
expensive / cheap

lett / vanskelig
easy / hard

glad / trist
happy / sad

god
good; tasty *(food and drink)*

trøtt
tired

snill
kind, nice

Two forms: the dictionary form comes with å, like to in English: å snakke, to speak. The present adds -r: snakker. Learn the odd ones by heart: være, er; vite, vet; ville, vil; kunne, kan.

Describing words change a little: add -t for an et word and -e for many: en stor bil, et stort hus, store hus.

Show words Ord fra serier

Reactions

Hæ?
what? huh?

Herregud
oh my God

Kos
cosy time together *(fredagskos, a cosy Friday night in)*

Koselig
cosy, nice, lovely *(you'll hear it all the time)*

Ja vel
oh, OK; I see *(said flat: oh... right)*

Nettopp
exactly

Sånn
like that; there we go *(when something is done)*

Uff
oh dear, ugh *(uff da!)*

Jaså
oh really? is that so?

Skikkelig
really, properly *(skikkelig bra, really good)*

Digg
delicious; great *(casual)*

Altså
like, I mean *(a filler)*

Ikke sant?
right? isn't it?

Å nei!
oh no!

Greit
OK, fine

Gjerne
gladly, I'd love to

Dessverre
sorry, unfortunately

Det går bra
it's fine, no worries

The big scenes

Jeg elsker deg
I love you *(strong: for partners and family)*

Jeg savner deg
I miss you

La meg være i fred
leave me alone

Hjelp!
help!

Pass på!
watch out!

Slutt!
stop it!

Kom igjen!
come on!

Hva skjer?
what's up? what's going on?

What to call people

kjære
dear; darling *(kjære deg, my dear)*

vennen min
my friend; to a child or partner: sweetie

kompis
mate, buddy

skatten min
darling *(it means my treasure)*

jenter / gutter
girls! / guys! *(to a group)*

Kos and koselig: kos is warm time together: candles, a blanket, waffles, people you like. Koselig is anything that feels that way, a room, an evening or a person.

Everyone speaks their dialect: on screen, people talk the way they do at home, and the subtitles write it in Bokmål. Jeg can sound like je, eg or æ, so trust the subtitles.

Swear words are strong: Norwegian has strong swear words, many about the devil and hell, and you'll hear them a lot on screen. Recognise them, but don't say them. Uff and herregud are the mild ones you can say in front of anyone.

Practice Øving

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

Questions: for a yes or no question, put the verb first: Snakker du engelsk? Do you speak English?

Saying no: put ikke after the verb: Jeg drikker ikke kaffe. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Hei, jeg heter Ingrid.
   Hi, my name is Ingrid.

2. Hva heter du?
   What's your name?

3. Hvor er toalettet?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Hva koster det?
   How much is it?

5. Kan jeg få en kaffe, takk?
   Can I have a coffee, please?

6. Jeg snakker litt norsk.
   I speak a little Norwegian.

7. I dag er det veldig kaldt.
   It's very cold today.

8. I morgen drar jeg til Bergen.
   Tomorrow I'm going to Bergen.

9. Denne brunosten er skikkelig god!
   This brown cheese is really good!

10. Det var veldig koselig!
    That was really lovely! (said after a visit)

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