# How Polish sounds Wymowa



**The trick:** Polish is read exactly as it's written. Letters with marks are letters of their own, and some pairs of letters make one sound. Before a vowel, an i only softens the letter in front: siostra sounds like ś-ostra, nie like ń-e. Learn these, and you can read any word aloud.

| Letters | Sounds like | Example |
|---|---|---|
| sz | sh in shoe | **szkoła** school |
| cz | ch in church | **czekolada** chocolate |
| rz, ż | s in pleasure: two spellings, one sound | **rzeka / żaba** river / frog |
| ś, si | a soft sh, with the tongue high | **środa / siostra** Wednesday / sister |
| ź, zi | a soft zh | **źle / zima** badly / winter |
| ć, ci | a soft ch, like ch in cheap | **ćma / ciocia** moth / aunt |
| ń, ni | ny in canyon | **koń / nie** horse / no |
| dż, dź, dzi | j in jam; dź and dzi are a softer j | **dżem / dzień** jam / day |
| ł | w in water | **mały** small |
| w | v in van | **woda** water |
| j | y in yes | **jajko** egg |
| c | ts in cats | **co** what |
| ch, h | h in hot, a little rough: two spellings, one sound | **chleb / herbata** bread / tea |
| ą | a nasal o, like French on | **są** they are |
| ę | a nasal e; at the end of a word, often just e | **proszę** please |
| ó, u | oo in food: two spellings, one sound | **góra / ulica** mountain / street |
| y | i in bit, said further back | **my** we |
| e | e in bed, never silent, even at the end | **ale** but |
| stress | on the second to last syllable, almost always | **dziękuję** thank you |

**Long clusters:** Szczecin, chrząszcz (a beetle) and przepraszam look scary, but they're only the sounds above in a row: Szcz-e-cin is sz + cz, chrzą-szcz is ch + rz + ą + sz + cz. Say it slowly, one piece at a time, then speed up. Poles love it when you try.

## ten

masculine: often ends in a consonant

dom, chleb, ojciec

## ta

feminine: often ends in -a

mama, kawa, szkoła

## to

neuter: often -o, -e, -ę, -um

okno, morze, imię, muzeum

**No a, no the:** Polish has no articles, so dom is a house or the house. On the next pages the noun itself wears its gender colour, and ten, ta, to (this) show it too: ten dom, ta kawa, to okno. The ending usually tells you. A few break the rule: tata, dad, and mężczyzna, man, are masculine; noc, night, is feminine.

# The first 223 words Pierwsze słowa



**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

Cześć
hi, bye *(casual)*

Dzień dobry
good morning, hello *(all day)*

Dobry wieczór
good evening

Dobranoc
good night

Do widzenia
goodbye *(polite)*

Na razie
see you, bye *(casual)*

Dziękuję
thank you

Dzięki
thanks *(casual)*

Proszę
please, here you are, you're welcome

Przepraszam
sorry, excuse me

Tak
yes

Nie
no, not

Dobrze
OK, fine, well

Jak się masz?
how are you? *(casual)*

Co słychać?
what's up? how's it going?

Miło mi
nice to meet you

Nie rozumiem
I don't understand

Nie wiem
I don't know

Na zdrowie!
cheers! bless you!

Smacznego
enjoy your meal

## Question words

co
what

kto
who

gdzie
where

skąd
where from

kiedy
when

dlaczego
why

jak
how

ile
how much, how many

który
which

czy
*(starts a yes or no question)*

## Me and you

ja
I

ty
you *(casual)*

on
he

ona
she

ono
it

my
we

wy
you all

oni / one
they *(with a man in the group / without)*

pan / pani
you *(polite, to a man / to a woman)*

mój / moja
my *(m word / f word)*

twój / twoja
your *(casual)*

ten / ta / to
this *(m / f / n)*

## Little words

i
and

a
and, but *(for a contrast)*

ale
but

albo
or

też
also, too

bardzo
very, a lot

tylko
only

już
already

jeszcze
still, yet, more

tu
here

tam
there

z
with, from

bez
without

dla
for

bo
because

więcej
more

**ty or pan, pani:** ty is for friends, family, kids and anyone your age. To strangers, in shops and at work, say pan to a man and pani to a woman, with the verb for he or she: Czy pani wie? Do you know? If you're not sure, use pan or pani and wait to be offered ty.

# People and time Ludzie i czas



## Family

**matka**
mother

**ojciec**
father

**mama**
mom

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

**brat**
brother

**siostra**
sister

**syn**
son

**córka**
daughter

**babcia**
grandmother

**dziadek**
grandfather

**wujek**
uncle

**ciocia**
aunt

rodzice
parents

**rodzina**
family

## People

**człowiek**
person, human

ludzie
people *(the plural of człowiek)*

**mężczyzna**
man *(masculine, despite the -a)*

**kobieta**
woman

**dziecko**
child

**chłopak**
boy, boyfriend

**dziewczyna**
girl, girlfriend

**przyjaciel**
close friend *(a man)*

**przyjaciółka**
close friend *(a woman)*

**kolega**
mate, colleague *(m, despite the -a)*

**sąsiad**
neighbour

**nauczyciel**
teacher *(a man)*

## When

dzisiaj
today

jutro
tomorrow

wczoraj
yesterday

teraz
now

rano
in the morning

wieczorem
in the evening

**dzień**
day

**noc**
night *(feminine, with no -a)*

**popołudnie**
afternoon

**czas**
time

**godzina**
hour

**tydzień**
week

**weekend**
weekend

**rok**
year

## Days of the week

**poniedziałek**
Monday

**wtorek**
Tuesday

**środa**
Wednesday

**czwartek**
Thursday

**piątek**
Friday

**sobota**
Saturday

**niedziela**
Sunday

**No need for ja:** the verb ending already says who: mam is I have, masz is you have. ja and ty are only added for stress.

**Days are small:** days and months have no capital letter: poniedziałek, styczeń. On Monday is w poniedziałek.

# Numbers and food Liczby i jedzenie



## Numbers

zero
0

jeden
1

dwa
2

trzy
3

cztery
4

pięć
5

sześć
6

siedem
7

osiem
8

dziewięć
9

dziesięć
10

jedenaście
11

dwanaście
12

dwadzieścia
20

trzydzieści
30

sto
100

tysiąc
1,000

## Food and drink

**woda**
water

**kawa**
coffee

**herbata**
tea

**mleko**
milk

**piwo**
beer

**wino**
wine

**chleb**
bread

**ser**
cheese

**mięso**
meat

**kurczak**
chicken

**ryba**
fish

**jabłko**
apple

**cukier**
sugar

**śniadanie**
breakfast

**obiad**
lunch *(the main meal, mid-afternoon)*

**kolacja**
dinner, supper

pierogi
dumplings *(plural)*

pyszny
delicious

Jestem głodny
I'm hungry *(a woman says głodna)*

Rachunek, proszę
the bill, please

**Joining numbers:** tens first, then units, as in English: dwadzieścia jeden is 21, trzydzieści pięć is 35.

**Endings change:** Polish nouns change their ending with their job in the sentence: kawa, but poproszę kawę and bez kawy. That's the case system. Don't learn the tables yet: learn the dictionary form first, the endings come with listening.

# Places, things, verbs Miejsca i rzeczy



**Two forms:** the dictionary form ends in -ć. For I, the ending is usually -ę or -m: robić, robię; oglądać, oglądam. The odd ones (jestem, jem, wiem, mogę) are worth learning by heart.

## Places

**dom**
house, home

w domu
at home

**szkoła**
school

**praca**
work, job

**biuro**
office

**restauracja**
restaurant

**szpital**
hospital

**łazienka**
bathroom

**toaleta**
toilet

**dworzec**
train or bus station

**sklep**
shop

**miasto**
town, city

**ulica**
street

**Polska**
Poland

## Things

**telefon**
phone

**książka**
book

pieniądze
money *(plural in Polish)*

**klucz**
key

**samochód**
car

**okno**
window

**plecak**
backpack

## Verbs: dictionary / ja form

być / jestem
be

mieć / mam
have

iść / idę
go *(on foot)*

jechać / jadę
go *(by car, bus, train)*

jeść / jem
eat

pić / piję
drink

widzieć / widzę
see

oglądać / oglądam
watch

robić / robię
do, make

spać / śpię
sleep

mówić / mówię
speak, say

uczyć się / uczę się
learn

kochać / kocham
love

lubić / lubię
like

wiedzieć / wiem
know *(a fact)*

znać / znam
know *(a person, a place)*

chcieć / chcę
want

móc / mogę
can

## Describing words

dobry / zły
good / bad

duży / mały
big / small

gorący / zimny
hot / cold

nowy / stary
new / old

szybki / wolny
fast / slow

ładny / brzydki
pretty / ugly

łatwy / trudny
easy / hard

zmęczony
tired

**Describing words agree:** the list shows the masculine form. With a feminine noun -y becomes -a, with a neuter one -e: dobry dom, dobra kawa, dobre piwo.

# Words every Polish show uses Słowa z seriali



## Reactions

**Hej!**
hey! hi!

**No!**
yeah! *(careful: it's not no)*

**Serio?**
seriously?

**Naprawdę?**
really?

**Super!**
great!

**Spoko**
no worries, cool, OK

**Jasne**
sure, of course

**Dokładnie**
exactly

**Nie ma sprawy**
no problem

**Masakra!**
a disaster! awful! *(it means massacre)*

**Kurczę!**
darn! *(mild, it means chick)*

**Ojej!**
oh dear! oops!

**Szkoda**
what a pity

**Daj spokój!**
come on! give it a rest!

**Chodźmy!**
let's go!

## The big scenes

**Kocham cię**
I love you

**Tęsknię za tobą**
I miss you

**Zostaw mnie w spokoju**
leave me alone

**Pomocy!**
help!

**Uważaj!**
watch out! careful!

**Dość!**
enough!

## What to call people

**kochanie**
darling, honey *(it means loving)*

**skarbie**
sweetheart *(it means treasure)*

**stary**
dude, mate *(it means old)*

**ziomek**
bro, homie *(slang)*

**mamo, tato**
mum, dad *(when you call them)*

**proszę pana / pani**
excuse me, sir / madam

**No! isn't no:** on its own, no means yeah or well: No, jasne! Yeah, sure! The Polish no is nie.

**Swear words are strong:** Polish swearing hits much harder than English. You'll hear kurwa a lot on screen, and it's very strong: recognise it, but don't say it. Kurczę is the safe one you can say in front of anyone.

# Practice Ćwiczenia



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

**Stress it right:** the stress falls on the second to last syllable: dzię-KU-ję, prze-PRA-szam, re-stau-RA-cja.

**Questions:** a yes or no question can start with czy: Czy masz czas? Do you have time? In speech, raising your voice is enough: Masz czas?

## Read these sentences

1. Cześć, mam na imię Ania.
   Hi, my name is Ania.

2. Jak masz na imię?
   What's your name?

3. Gdzie jest łazienka?
   Where is the bathroom?

4. Ile to kosztuje?
   How much is it?

5. Poproszę kawę.
   A coffee, please.

6. Lubię pierogi.
   I like pierogi.

7. Dzisiaj jest bardzo zimno.
   It's very cold today.

8. Jutro spotykam się z przyjacielem.
   Tomorrow I'm meeting my friend.

9. To jest pyszne!
   This is delicious!

10. Chodźmy do domu!
    Let's go home!

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