How Romanian sounds Pronunția

The trick: Romanian is mostly read the way it's written. Learn the five special letters, ă, â, î, ș and ț, and what c and g do before e and i, and you can read nearly any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
ă	uh, like the a in about	**casă / mamă** house / mum
â, î	one sound, two letters: a deep i, said with the tongue pulled back (see below)	**câine / în** dog / in
ș	sh in shoe	**școală / șase** school / six
ț	ts in cats	**țară / mulțumesc** country / thank you
ce, ci	che, chee, as in cherry and cheese	**ce / cinci** what / five
che, chi	ke, kee: the h makes the c hard	**chiar / unchi** really / uncle
ge, gi	je, jee, as in jam and jeep	**gem / magie** jam / magic
ghe, ghi	ge, gee, as in get and geese	**ghid / Gheorghe** guide / George
final -i	often barely said, just a breath after the consonant	**pomi / lupi** trees / wolves
j	s in pleasure	**joi / jos** Thursday / down
h	always said, a breathy h	**hai / hartă** come on / map
e at the start	ye in yes, in a few small words	**el / este** he / is: YEL, YES-te
ea, oa	glide into one beat: ya, wa	**seară / oameni** evening / people
r	a quick tap or roll of the tongue	**roșu / mare** red / big, sea
stress	it moves from word to word: learn it with the word	**casă / cafea** CA-să / ca-FEA

â

in the middle of a word

câine dog · **pâine** bread · **România**

î

at the start or the end of a word

în in · **înțeleg** I understand · **a urî** to hate

The deep i: say ee in see, then pull your tongue back and keep your lips flat, as if you're unsure. â and î are the same sound; only the place in the word changes the letter.

A comma under the letter: ș and ț have a small comma below them. Some old websites show a little hook instead. It's the same letter, so read it the same way.

How words work Gramatica

Every noun is masculine, feminine or neuter

un · doi
masculine

un băiat, a boy
doi băieți, two boys

o · două
feminine: often ends in -ă or -e

o fată, a girl
două fete, two girls

un · două
neuter: half and half

un oraș, a town
două orașe, two towns

Neuter is simple: one thing acts like a masculine word, with un. Two or more act like a feminine word, with două. On the next pages each noun wears its colour, so you don't have to guess.

The goes on the end

un băiat a boy	o fată a girl	un oraș a town
băiatul the boy	fata the girl: -ă becomes -a	orașul the town

Plurals: learn them with the word

Gender	One	More	
masculine	pom	pomi	tree
masculine	frate	frați	brother
feminine	casă	case	house
feminine	floare	flori	flower
feminine	cafea	cafele	coffee
neuter	tren	trenuri	train
neuter	oraș	orașe	town

Letters inside can change too: băiat, băieți; fată, fete; carte, cărți. That's why the plural is worth learning with the word.

Verbs change for each person: a fi, to be

eu sunt I am	tu ești you are (casual)	el, ea este / e he, she is
noi suntem we are	voi sunteți you all are; polite you	ei, ele sunt they are

No need for eu: the ending says who. Sunt acasă is I'm at home. In speech, este is often just e: E bine. It's fine.

tu or dumneavoastră: tu is for friends, family, kids and anyone your age. Dumneavoastră is for strangers, older people and work, and it takes the voi verb: Ce faceți? How are you? Not sure? Start polite and wait to be offered tu.

The first 232 words Primele cuvinte

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

Bună
hi *(casual, very common)*

Salut
hi; also bye *(casual)*

Bună ziua
hello, good day *(polite)*

Bună dimineața
good morning

Bună seara
good evening

Noapte bună
good night

La revedere
goodbye

Pa
bye *(casual)*

Mulțumesc
thank you

Mersi
thanks *(casual, from French)*

Cu plăcere
you're welcome

Vă rog
please *(polite)*

Te rog
please *(to a friend)*

Scuze
sorry *(casual)*

Scuzați
excuse me *(polite)*

Îmi pare rău
I'm sorry

Da
yes

Nu
no; not

Ce mai faci?
how are you? *(casual)*

Bine, mulțumesc
fine, thanks

Mă numesc ...
my name is ...

Încântat / Încântată
nice to meet you *(said by a man / a woman)*

Nu înțeleg
I don't understand

Nu știu
I don't know

Poftă bună!
enjoy your meal!

Noroc!
cheers! good luck!

Question words

ce
what

cine
who

unde
where

de unde
where from

când
when

de ce
why

cum
how

cât
how much, how many

care
which

Me and you

eu
I

tu
you *(casual)*

el / ea
he / she

noi
we

voi
you all

ei / ele
they *(men or mixed / women)*

dumneavoastră
you *(polite: see page 2)*

meu / mea
my *(after the word: fratele meu, mama mea)*

tău / ta
your *(casual)*

ăsta / asta
this one *(m / f, everyday)*

Little words

și
and; also, too

dar
but

sau
or

foarte
very

mult
a lot, much

puțin
a little

doar
only, just

deja
already

încă
still; yet

aici
here

acolo
there

cu
with

fără
without

pentru că
because

poate
maybe

Two pleases: te rog is for a friend, vă rog for anyone you'd call dumneavoastră. Mersi is the quick, casual thanks.

Bună is everywhere: it means good, and on its own it's a friendly hi. Bună ziua is the polite hello, from late morning to evening.

People and time Oameni și timp

Family

mamă
mother, mum

tată
father, dad *(masculine, despite the -ă)*

frate
brother

soră
sister

fiu
son

fiică
daughter

părinți
parents *(plural)*

bunică
grandmother

bunic
grandfather

mătușă
aunt

unchi
uncle

familie
family

soț
husband

soție
wife

copil
child *(copii, children)*

People

om
person, human *(oameni, people)*

bărbat
man

femeie
woman

băiat
boy

fată
girl

prieten
friend; boyfriend

prietenă
friend *(f)*; girlfriend

profesor
teacher *(f: profesoară)*

When

azi
today *(also astăzi)*

mâine
tomorrow

ieri
yesterday

acum
now

mai târziu
later

dimineață
morning

seară
evening

noapte
night

zi
day *(zile, days)*

săptămână
week

weekend
weekend

lună
month; also moon

an
year *(ani, years)*

oră
hour

ceas
clock, watch

Days of the week

luni
Monday

marți
Tuesday

miercuri
Wednesday

joi
Thursday

vineri
Friday

sâmbătă
Saturday

duminică
Sunday

Numbers

zero
0

unu
1 *(un or o before a noun)*

doi / două
2 *(m / f and n)*

trei
3

patru
4

cinci
5

șase
6

șapte
7

opt
8

nouă
9

zece
10

unsprezece
11 *(said unspe)*

douăzeci
20

douăzeci și unu
21

treizeci
30

o sută
100

o mie
1,000

Numbers build up: 20 is douăzeci, two tens. Add și and the units: douăzeci și unu is 21. From 11 to 19 add -sprezece: treisprezece is 13. In speech it shrinks to -spe.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: luni, ianuarie. Luni also means on Monday, and lunea means on Mondays.

Food, places, verbs Mâncare, locuri, verbe

Food and drink

apă
water

cafea
coffee

ceai
tea

lapte
milk

bere
beer

vin
wine

pâine
bread

brânză
cheese

pui
chicken

pește
fish

ou
egg *(ouă, eggs)*

carne
meat

ciorbă
sour soup

mici
grilled sausages, no skin *(always plural)*

sarmale
cabbage rolls *(one is a sarma)*

mămăligă
cornmeal mash, like polenta

cozonac
sweet bread for Easter and Christmas

mic dejun
breakfast

prânz
lunch

cină
dinner

Mi-e foame
I'm hungry

Nota, vă rog
the bill, please

Places

casă
house

acasă
at home, home

școală
school

serviciu
work, job *(la serviciu, at work)*

restaurant
restaurant

cafenea
café

toaletă
toilet

magazin
shop

oraș
town, city

stradă
street

gară
train station

spital
hospital

România
Romania

Things

bani
money *(always plural)*

telefon
phone

cheie
key

mașină
car

carte
book

Verbs: dictionary / I do it

a fi / sunt
be

a avea / am
have

a merge / merg
go, walk

a veni / vin
come

a mânca / mănânc
eat

a bea / beau
drink

a vedea / văd
see

a face / fac
do, make

a dormi / dorm
sleep

a vorbi / vorbesc
speak

a înțelege / înțeleg
understand

a ști / știu
know *(a fact)*

a vrea / vreau
want

a putea / pot
can

a iubi / iubesc
love

a învăța / învăț
learn

a lucra / lucrez
work

a locui / locuiesc
live *(somewhere)*

a cumpăra / cumpăr
buy

Describing words

bun / rău
good / bad

mare / mic
big / small

cald / rece
hot / cold

nou / vechi
new / old

scump / ieftin
expensive / cheap

ușor / greu
easy / hard *(also light / heavy)*

fericit / trist
happy / sad

frumos
beautiful

obosit
tired

Two forms: the dictionary form starts with a, like to in to go: a merge. For I, many verbs add -ez or -esc: lucrez, vorbesc. Learn both forms together.

Describing words agree: they come after the noun and match it. The list shows the masculine form: un băiat frumos, o fată frumoasă, două orașe frumoase.

Show words Cuvinte din seriale

Reactions

Super!
great!

Serios?
seriously? really?

Pe bune?
for real?

Bine
OK, fine, good

Gata!
done! that's it! enough!

Hai!
come on! let's go! *(see below)*

Doamne!
oh God! *(it means Lord)*

Vai!
oh no! oh dear! also oh wow

Nașpa
lame, awful *(slang)*

Mișto
cool, nice *(slang)*

Ce tare!
how cool!

Ce faci?
how are you? what are you doing?

Normal!
of course!

Bravo!
well done!

Lasă!
never mind! leave it!

La naiba!
damn! *(mild)*

The big scenes

Te iubesc
I love you

Mi-e dor de tine
I miss you *(dor is longing)*

Lasă-mă în pace
leave me alone

Ajutor!
help!

Atenție!
watch out!

Stai!
wait! stop!

Nu pleca!
don't go!

Ce s-a întâmplat?
what happened?

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

What to call people

dragă
dear *(to anyone you like)*

iubire
love, my love

frate
bro, mate *(it means brother)*

puiule
sweetie, to a child or a partner *(it means little chick)*

domnule / doamnă
sir / madam

Hai does a lot: Hai! is come on. Hai să mergem is let's go. Hai, pa! is right, bye. Said slowly, haaai, it's oh, come on, really?

Mișto and nașpa: the two slang words you'll hear most. Mișto is cool, nașpa is lame. Fine with friends, not at a job interview.

Swear words are strong: Romanian has some very strong swear words, and you'll hear them a lot in films and series. Recognise them, but don't say them. Doamne, vai and la naiba are the mild ones, fine in front of anyone.

Practice Exerciții

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Romanian 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: Vii? Are you coming?

Saying no: put nu before the verb: Nu beau cafea. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Bună, mă numesc Ana.
   Hi, my name is Ana.

2. Cum te cheamă?
   What's your name?

3. Unde este toaleta?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Cât costă?
   How much is it?

5. O cafea, vă rog.
   A coffee, please.

6. Vorbesc puțin românește.
   I speak a little Romanian.

7. Azi e foarte frig.
   It's very cold today.

8. Mâine merg la mare.
   Tomorrow I'm going to the seaside.

9. Sarmalele sunt delicioase!
   The cabbage rolls are delicious!

10. Gata, hai acasă!
    That's it, let's go home!

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