How Slovak sounds Výslovnosť

The trick: Slovak is read as it's written, and nothing is silent. The dĺžeň, the little line on á or Í, only makes a sound longer. The mäkčeň, the hook on č or ľ, makes a new, softer sound; on ď, ť and ľ it looks like a small comma.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a e i o u y	short and clear: cup, bed, bit, hot, book. y sounds just like i	**ruka / my** hand / we
á é í ó ú ý	the same vowels, held longer. í and ý are ee in see	**áno / víno** yes / wine
Í ŕ	a long l or r that carries the syllable on its own	**kĺb / vŕba** joint / willow
ä	e in bed; in careful speech, nearer a in cat	**mäso / päť** meat / five
ô	uo, one quick glide from u to o	**kôň / stôl** horse / table
ia ie iu	ya, ye, yu, each one beat	**piatok / mlieko** Friday / milk
č · š · ž	ch in church · sh in shoe · s in pleasure	**čaj / žena** tea / woman, wife
dž · dz	j in jam · ds in beds; each is one sound	**džús / medzi** juice / between
ď ť ň ľ	soft d, t, n, l with the tongue pressed up; ň is ny in canyon	**ďakujem / ľudia** thank you / people
de te ne le di ti ni li	soft too, with no mark: the e or i softens them	**deti / nie** children / no
c	ts in cats	**ulica / cesta** street / road
ch	ch in Scottish loch	**chlieb** bread
h	a breathy h, with the voice on	**hrad / hora** castle / mountain
j	y in yes	**jablko** apple
r	a quick tapped or rolled r	**ryba** fish
stress	always on the first syllable, long vowel or not	**ďakujem / dovidenia** ĎA-ku-jem / DO-vi-de-nia

Soft with no mark: de, te, ne, le and di, ti, ni, li are soft even with nothing written: deti is ďeťi. A few everyday words stay hard, like ten and jeden, and so do many borrowed words.

Words with no vowels: r and l can carry a syllable on their own: prst (finger), vlk (wolf), krk (neck). Say a short r or l and add nothing: PRST, one beat.

The rhythm rule: a long syllable usually makes the next one short, so it's dobrý but krásny. You'll hear it long before you need it.

How words work Gramatika

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

Every noun is masculine, feminine or neuter

ten

masculine: usually ends in a consonant

ten dom, house
ten čaj, tea
ten chlieb, bread

tá

feminine: usually ends in -a

tá žena, woman
tá káva, coffee
tá ulica, street

to

neuter: ends in -o or -e

to mesto, town
to more, sea
to mlieko, milk

Mostly, not always: ocko, dad, ends in -o but is masculine. Noc, night, and radosť, joy, are feminine with no -a. Dievča, girl, is neuter. 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

káva coffee: the dictionary form	Pijem kávu. I drink coffee.	bez kávy without coffee	s kávou with coffee

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

Ty or Vy

Ako sa máš? ty: friends, family, kids, anyone your age	Ako sa máte? Vy: strangers, older people, at work; vy is also more than one person

Verbs change with the person: byť, to be, and robiť, to do

ja som I am	ty si you are (casual)	on, ona je he, she is	my sme we are	vy ste you all are; polite you	oni sú they are
robím I do	robíš you do (casual)	robí he, she does	robíme we do	robíte you all do; polite you	robia they do

No need for ja: the ending already says who. Som doma is I'm at home, and Robím is I'm doing it.

Saying no: join ne to the verb, as one word: nerobím, I don't do it; nerozumiem, I don't understand. Byť is the one exception, written apart: nie som, nie je.

The first 236 words Prvé slová

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

Ahoj
hi; bye *(casual)*

Čau
hi; bye *(casual)*

Dobrý deň
hello *(polite, all day)*

Dobré ráno
good morning

Dobrý večer
good evening

Dobrú noc
good night

Dovidenia
goodbye *(polite)*

Ďakujem
thank you

Vďaka
thanks *(casual)*

Prosím
please; you're welcome; here you are; pardon?

Prepáčte / Prepáč
sorry, excuse me *(polite / casual)*

Áno
yes

Hej
yeah *(casual, very common)*

Nie
no; not

Dobre
OK, fine, well

Ako sa máš?
how are you? *(casual)*

Ako sa máte?
how are you? *(polite)*

Mám sa dobre
I'm fine

Teší ma
nice to meet you

Nerozumiem
I don't understand

Neviem
I don't know

Na zdravie!
cheers! bless you! *(it means to health)*

Dobrú chuť!
enjoy your meal!

Question words

čo
what

kto
who

kde
where

odkiaľ
where from

kedy
when

prečo
why

ako
how

koľko
how much, how many

ktorý
which

Koľko to stojí?
how much is it?

Me and you

ja
I

ty
you *(casual)*

on / ona / ono
he / she / it

my
we

vy
you all; Vy is the polite you

oni
they

môj / moja
my *(m word / f word)*

tvoj / tvoja
your *(casual)*

ten / tá / to
this, that *(m / f / n)*

Little words

a
and

ale
but

alebo
or

aj
also, too, even

veľmi
very

veľa
a lot, many

trochu
a little

len
only, just

už
already

ešte
still, yet, more

tu
here

tam
there

s / so
with

bez
without

lebo
because

možno
maybe

Prosím does a lot: it means please, and also you're welcome, here you are, and pardon? when you didn't catch something.
Ďakujem. Prosím. Thank you. You're welcome.

People and time Ľudia a čas

Family

matka
mother

otec
father

mama
mum

ocko
dad *(masculine, despite the -o)*

brat
brother

sestra
sister

syn
son

dcéra
daughter

babka
grandma

dedko
grandpa *(masculine, despite the -o)*

ujo
uncle; also any friendly older man

teta
aunt

rodičia
parents *(plural)*

rodina
family

People

človek
person *(ľudia, people)*

muž
man; husband

žena
woman; wife

dieťa
child *(deti, children)*

chlapec
boy

dievča
girl *(neuter, despite the -a)*

priateľ
friend; boyfriend

priateľka
friend; girlfriend

sused
neighbour

lekár
doctor

Things

mobil
mobile phone

kniha
book

peniaze
money *(always plural)*

kľúč
key

auto
car

okno
window

When

dnes
today

zajtra
tomorrow

včera
yesterday

teraz
now

vždy
always

nikdy
never

ráno
morning

popoludnie
afternoon

večer
evening

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

deň
day

hodina
hour; also a lesson

čas
time

týždeň
week

mesiac
month; also moon

rok
year

Days of the week

pondelok
Monday

utorok
Tuesday

streda
Wednesday

štvrtok
Thursday

piatok
Friday

sobota
Saturday

nedeľa
Sunday

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
nula	jeden	dva	tri	štyri	päť	šesť	sedem	osem	deväť

10	11	12	20	30	40	50	100	200	1,000
desať	jedenásť	dvanásť	dvadsať	tridsať	štyridsať	päťdesiat	sto	dvesto	tisíc

One and two change: they follow the gender: jeden dom, jedna káva, jedno pivo; dva domy, but dve kávy. 21 is one word: dvadsaťjeden.

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

Food, places, verbs Jedlo, miesta, slovesá

Food and drink

voda
water

káva
coffee

čaj
tea

mlieko
milk

pivo
beer

víno
wine

kofola
a dark herbal cola, often on tap

chlieb
bread

syr
cheese

mäso
meat

polievka
soup, the start of every lunch

bryndza
soft, salty sheep's cheese

bryndzové halušky
little potato dumplings with bryndza and bacon *(plural)*

raňajky
breakfast *(plural)*

obed
lunch, the main meal

večera
dinner

Som hladný
I'm hungry *(a woman says som hladná)*

Účet, prosím
the bill, please

Places

dom
house

doma
at home

práca
work, job

škola
school

reštaurácia
restaurant

krčma
pub, an everyday local bar

nemocnica
hospital

stanica
station

obchod
shop

mesto
town, city

ulica
street

námestie
town square

toaleta
toilet *(signs say WC)*

Slovensko
Slovakia

Out of town

hora
mountain; hory, the mountains, where the weekend goes

les
forest

jazero
lake

rieka
river

hrad
castle

chata
cottage, cabin

Verbs: dictionary / ja form

byť / som
be

mať / mám
have

ísť / idem
go

prísť / prídem
come

jesť / jem
eat

piť / pijem
drink

vidieť / vidím
see

pozerať / pozerám
watch, look

robiť / robím
do; also work

pracovať / pracujem
work

spať / spím
sleep

hovoriť / hovorím
speak

rozumieť / rozumiem
understand

vedieť / viem
know

chcieť / chcem
want

môcť / môžem
can

ľúbiť / ľúbim
love

učiť sa / učím sa
learn *(učiť alone is teach)*

bývať / bývam
live *(at an address)*

kúpiť / kúpim
buy

Describing words

dobrý / zlý
good / bad

veľký / malý
big / small

teplý / studený
warm / cold

nový / starý
new / old

drahý / lacný
expensive / cheap

ľahký / ťažký
easy / hard; also light / heavy

pekný
beautiful, nice

výborný
excellent

unavený
tired

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -ť. For I, it usually ends in -m: robím, hovorím. Learn the odd ones by heart: idem, chcem, môžem.

Describing words agree: the list shows the masculine form in -ý. Feminine ends in -á, neuter in -é: dobrý deň, dobrá káva, dobré pivo.

Show words Slová zo seriálov

Reactions

Fakt?
really? seriously?

Super!
great!

Paráda!
brilliant! lovely!

Jasné
sure, of course

No jasné!
well, obviously! of course!

Bože!
oh my God! *(when you call God, Boh becomes Bože)*

Pohoda
all good, relaxed *(see below)*

Nevadí
never mind, it's fine

Ježiš!
oh no! oh my! *(mild shock)*

Výborne!
well done! excellent!

Bomba!
fantastic! *(it means bomb)*

Hotovo
done, that's it

Fuj!
yuck!

The big scenes

Ľúbim ťa
I love you

Chýbaš mi
I miss you *(it means you are missing to me)*

Nechaj ma na pokoji
leave me alone *(it means leave me in peace)*

Pozor!
watch out!

Prestaň!
stop it!

Pomoc!
help!

Počkaj!
wait!

Čo sa stalo?
what happened?

What to call people

zlatko
sweetie, darling *(it means little gold)*

miláčik
darling, my love

kamoš
mate, buddy *(casual)*

pane / pani
sir / madam, when you speak to them

pán / pani
Mr / Mrs before a name: pán Novák, pani Nováková

Pohoda is a whole mood: it means calm, easy, all good. V pohode? Everything OK? V pohode. All fine. You'll hear it after a problem is solved, and about a good weekend at the chata.

Calling someone can change the word: a few words keep an old calling form: pán becomes pane, Boh becomes Bože, človek becomes človeče (hey, man!). Most names stay as they are: Ahoj, Jana!

Swear words are strong: Slovak has strong swear words, and you'll hear them on screen, even between friends. They hit harder than the subtitles show: recognise them, but don't say them. Bože and Ježiš are the mild ones you can say in front of most people.

Practice Cvičenie

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Slovak 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 raise your voice at the end: Máš čas? Do you have time?

First syllable first: lean on the start of every word, even a long one: DO-bré RÁ-no, VÝ-bor-né.

Read these sentences

1. Ahoj, ja som Jana.
   Hi, I'm Jana.

2. Ako sa voláš?
   What's your name?

3. Kde je toaleta?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Koľko stojí lístok?
   How much is the ticket?

5. Jednu kávu, prosím.
   One coffee, please.

6. Hovorím trochu po slovensky.
   I speak a little Slovak.

7. Dnes je pekné počasie.
   The weather is nice today.

8. Cez víkend ideme do hôr.
   At the weekend we're going to the mountains.

9. Bryndzové halušky sú výborné!
   The bryndzové halušky are excellent!

10. Nevadí, máme čas.
    Never mind, we have time.

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