How Slovenian sounds Izgovorjava

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Slovenian is read as it's written, with 25 letters and nothing silent. Learn the three with a mark, č, š and ž, and a few habits below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a i u	short and clear: father, see, food	**mama / riba** mum / fish
e	closed like they, open like bed, or a short uh in words like pes and sem: learn it with the word	**pes / sem** dog / I am
o	closed like go, or open like hot: learn it with the word	**oko / okno** eye / window
č	ch in church	**čaj / noč** tea / night
š	sh in shoe	**šola / miš** school / mouse
ž	s in pleasure	**žena / žlica** wife / spoon
c	ts in cats, even at the start	**cesta / ulica** road / street
j	y in yes	**jaz / jajce** I / egg
h	throaty, like ch in loch, but lighter	**hiša / kruh** house / bread
r	a quick tapped or rolled r	**reka / riba** river / fish
l	l in lamp; at the end of a word or syllable it often sounds like w	**bil / volk** was / wolf
v	v in van; before a consonant or at the end, a soft w	**voda / nov** water / new
stress	can fall on any syllable, and the spelling doesn't show it: learn it with the word	**hvala / prijatelj** HVA-la / pri-JA-telj

č · š · ž

the strešica, a little roof, turns c, s, z into ch, sh, zh

čaj tea · **šola** school · **žena** wife

l · v → w

at the end of a word, or before a consonant

bil was · **volk** wolf · **nov** new

Two kinds of e and o: each has a closed and an open version, and e can also be a short uh. The spelling looks the same. Don't worry about it at first: you'll be understood, and your ear picks it up word by word.

R can be a vowel: between two consonants, r carries the syllable on its own, with a tiny uh before it: prst (finger), vrt (garden), trg (square). Say it in one beat: PRST.

How words work Slovnica

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

Every noun is masculine, feminine or neuter

masculine
usually ends in a consonant

čaj, tea
kruh, bread
prijatelj, friend

feminine
usually ends in -a

žena, wife
kava, coffee
hiša, house

neuter
ends in -o or -e

mesto, town
morje, sea
mleko, milk

Mostly, not always: oče, father, ends in -e but is masculine; so is avto, car, with its -o. Noč, night, and ljubezen, love, are feminine with no -a. On the next pages the noun itself wears its gender colour, so you don't have to guess.

One, two, many: the dual

en prijatelj one friend	dva prijatelja two friends: the dual	trije prijatelji three friends: the plural	midva sva the two of us are

A form just for two: Slovenian has a special form for exactly two people or things, the dual. Few languages still use one every day, and Slovenians are rightly fond of theirs. Midva means the two of us, and two women say midve. Two coffees are dve kavi.

Endings change with the job in the sentence

kava coffee: the dictionary form	Pijem kavo. I drink coffee.	brez kave without coffee	s kavo 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.

Ti or Vi

Kako si? ti: friends, family, kids, anyone your age	Kako ste? Vi: strangers, older people, at work; vi is also more than two people

Verbs change with the person: biti, to be, and delati, to work

jaz sem I am	ti si you are (casual)	on, ona je he, she is	mi smo we are	vi ste you all are; polite you	oni so they are
delam I work, I do	delaš you work (casual)	dela he, she works	delamo we work	delate you all work; polite you	delajo they work

No need for jaz: the ending already says who. Doma sem is I'm at home. To say no, put ne before the verb: ne delam, I don't work. For biti it joins up: nisem, nisi, ni.

The first 259 words Prve besede

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

Greetings and survival

Živjo
hi; also bye *(casual, very common)*

Zdravo
hello, hi

Dober dan
hello *(polite, all day)*

Dobro jutro
good morning

Dober večer
good evening

Lahko noč
good night

Nasvidenje
goodbye *(polite)*

Adijo
bye *(casual, friendly)*

Se vidimo
see you

Hvala
thank you

Hvala lepa
thank you very much *(it means nice thanks)*

Prosim
please; you're welcome; pardon?

Izvolite
here you are *(polite)*

Oprostite
excuse me, sorry *(polite)*

Oprosti
sorry *(casual)*

Da
yes *(in everyday speech: ja)*

Ne
no; not

V redu
OK, fine *(it means in order)*

Kako si?
how are you? *(casual)*

Kako ste?
how are you? *(polite)*

Dobro sem
I'm fine

Me veseli
nice to meet you *(it means it makes me glad)*

Ne razumem
I don't understand

Ne vem
I don't know

Na zdravje!
cheers! *(it means to health)*

Dober tek!
enjoy your meal!

Question words

kaj
what

kdo
who

kje
where

od kod
where from

kdaj
when

zakaj
why

kako
how

koliko
how much, how many

kateri
which

Koliko stane?
how much is it?

Me and you

jaz
I

ti
you *(casual)*

on / ona / ono
he / she / it

mi
we

midva
we two, the two of us *(two women: midve)*

vi
you all; Vi is the polite you

oni
they

moj / moja
my *(m word / f word)*

tvoj / tvoja
your *(casual)*

ta / to
this *(ta for m and f words, to for n)*

Little words

in
and

ampak
but *(also toda)*

ali
or; also starts a yes or no question

tudi
also, too

zelo
very

veliko
a lot, many

malo
a little

samo
only, just

že
already

še
still, yet, more

tukaj
here *(also tu)*

tam
there

z / s
with

brez
without

ker
because

mogoče
maybe *(also morda)*

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

People and time Ljudje in čas

Family

mati
mother

mama
mum

oče
father *(masculine, despite the -e)*

brat
brother

sestra
sister

sin
son

hči
daughter *(in speech also hčerka)*

babica
grandma

dedek
grandpa

stric
uncle

teta
aunt

starši
parents *(plural)*

družina
family

People

človek
person *(ljudje, people)*

moški
man

ženska
woman

žena
wife

mož
husband

otrok
child *(otroci, children)*

fant
boy; boyfriend

punca
girl; girlfriend *(casual)*

dekle
girl *(neuter: the word, not the girl)*

prijatelj
friend *(a man)*

prijateljica
friend *(a woman)*

sosed
neighbour

zdravnik
doctor *(casual: doktor)*

Things

telefon
phone *(a mobile is mobitel)*

knjiga
book

denar
money

ključ
key

avto
car *(masculine, despite the -o)*

okno
window

When

danes
today

jutri
tomorrow

včeraj
yesterday

zdaj
now *(also sedaj)*

vedno
always

nikoli
never

jutro
morning

popoldne
afternoon

večer
evening

noč
night *(feminine, with no -a)*

dan
day

ura
hour; also clock, watch

čas
time *(the weather is vreme)*

teden
week

mesec
month; also moon

leto
year

Days of the week

ponedeljek
Monday

torek
Tuesday

sreda
Wednesday

četrtek
Thursday

petek
Friday

sobota
Saturday

nedelja
Sunday

Getting around

avtobus
bus

vlak
train

taksi
taxi

postaja
station; also a stop

letališče
airport

vozovnica
ticket *(in speech: karta)*

levo / desno
left / right

naravnost
straight on

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
nič	ena	dva	tri	štiri	pet	šest	sedem	osem	devet

10	11	12	13	20	22	30	50	100	1,000
deset	enajst	dvanajst	trinajst	dvajset	dvaindvajset	trideset	petdeset	sto	tisoč

Units come first: 21 is enaindvajset, one-and-twenty, and 22 is dvaindvajset, two-and-twenty. One follows the gender: en čaj, ena kava, eno pivo.

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

Food, places, verbs Hrana, kraji, glagoli

Food and drink

voda
water

kava
coffee, a reason to sit for an hour

čaj
tea

mleko
milk

pivo
beer

vino
wine

kruh
bread

sir
cheese

meso
meat

piščanec
chicken

juha
soup

jabolko
apple

kranjska klobasa
the famous smoked pork sausage, with mustard and bread

štruklji
rolled dumplings, often with cottage cheese *(plural)*

potica
rolled cake with a sweet filling, often walnut, for holidays

zajtrk
breakfast

kosilo
lunch, the main meal

večerja
dinner

Lačen sem
I'm hungry *(a woman says lačna sem)*

Račun, prosim
the bill, please

Places

hiša
house

doma
at home

delo
work *(a job is služba)*

šola
school

restavracija
restaurant

kavarna
café

bolnišnica
hospital

trgovina
shop

tržnica
market

mesto
town, city

vas
village *(feminine, with no -a)*

ulica
street

trg
town square

stranišče
toilet *(signs say WC)*

grad
castle

jezero
lake

gora
mountain

morje
sea

Slovenija
Slovenia

Ljubljana
Ljubljana, the capital

Verbs: dictionary / jaz form

biti / sem
be

imeti / imam
have

iti / grem
go

priti / pridem
come

jesti / jem
eat

piti / pijem
drink

videti / vidim
see

gledati / gledam
watch, look

delati / delam
work; also do

spati / spim
sleep

govoriti / govorim
speak

razumeti / razumem
understand

vedeti / vem
know *(a fact)*

hoteti / hočem
want

ljubiti / ljubim
love

brati / berem
read

pisati / pišem
write

živeti / živim
live

kupiti / kupim
buy

čakati / čakam
wait

Describing words

dober / slab
good / bad

velik / majhen
big / small

topel / hladen
warm / cold

nov / star
new / old

drag / poceni
expensive *(also dear)* / cheap

lahek / težek
easy / hard; also light / heavy

lep
beautiful, nice

odličen
excellent

okusen
tasty

utrujen
tired

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -ti. For I, the verb always ends in -m: gledam, govorim, grem, hočem.

Describing words agree: the list shows the masculine form. Feminine ends in -a, neuter in -o or -e: dober dan, dobra kava, dobro pivo.

Show words Besede iz serij

Reactions

Ja!
yeah! *(the everyday yes, see below)*

Res?
really? *(it means true)*

Super!
great!

Odlično!
excellent!

Kul
cool *(slang)*

Joj!
oh! oh no! *(pain, surprise or delight)*

Daj no!
come on! oh, stop it!

Ni panike
relax, don't panic *(it means there's no panic)*

Seveda
of course

Fajn
fine, nice, good *(casual)*

Gremo!
let's go!

Nič hudega
never mind, no harm done

Kaj pa vem
who knows, no idea *(a shrug in words)*

Bravo!
well done!

Čestitam!
congratulations!

The big scenes

Rad te imam
I love you *(a woman says rada te imam)*

Pogrešam te
I miss you

Pusti me pri miru
leave me alone *(it means let me be in peace)*

Pazi!
watch out!

Nehaj!
stop it!

Na pomoč!
help!

Kaj se je zgodilo?
what happened?

Vse bo v redu
everything will be all right

Ne skrbi
don't worry

Počakaj!
wait!

Kaj delaš?
what are you doing?

What to call people

stari
mate, dude *(it means old one)*

draga / dragi
darling, dear *(to a woman / to a man)*

ljubica
sweetheart *(to a woman)*

srček
sweetheart *(it means little heart)*

gospod / gospa
sir / madam; Mr / Mrs before a name

Ja, the everyday yes: da is the textbook yes, but ja is the one you'll hear. It also fills a pause: Ja, kaj pa vem. Well, who knows.

Listen for the two: couples and best friends talk in the dual all the time. Greva? Shall we go, the two of us? Midva sva skupaj. The two of us are together.

Swear words are strong: Slovenian has strong swear words, and you'll hear them on screen. They hit harder than the subtitles show: recognise them, but don't say them. Joj is the mild one you can say in front of anyone.

Practice Vaja

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

Questions: raise your voice at the end, or start with ali: Ali imaš čas? Do you have time?

Read every letter: nothing is silent, so say each one: potica is po-TI-ca, three beats.

Read these sentences

1. Živjo, jaz sem Ana.
   Hi, I'm Ana.

2. Kako ti je ime?
   What's your name?

3. Oprostite, kje je stranišče?
   Excuse me, where is the toilet?

4. Koliko stane vozovnica?
   How much is the ticket?

5. Eno kavo, prosim.
   One coffee, please.

6. Govorim malo slovensko.
   I speak a little Slovenian.

7. Danes je lepo vreme.
   The weather is nice today.

8. Jutri greva v Ljubljano.
   Tomorrow the two of us are going to Ljubljana.

9. Potica je odlična!
   The potica is excellent!

10. Ni panike, imamo čas.
    Relax, we have time.

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