How Swedish sounds Uttal

The trick: Swedish is mostly read as it's written. It has three extra letters, å, ä and ö, and they come at the end of the alphabet. Learn these sounds, and you can read almost any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
å	o in more, with round lips	**två / båt** two / boat
ä	e in bed; before r, more open, like a in cat	**äta / här** eat / here
ö	like ur in British fur, lips rounded	**öl / öga** beer / eye
a	long, a in father; short, a quick bright a	**dag / katt** day / cat
o	usually oo in food, lips tight; sometimes like å	**sol / bo** sun / live
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 / village
e, i	e is ay in day without the y; i is ee in see	**se / vi** see / we
j, hj, gj, dj, lj	y in yes: the h, g, d or l in front is silent	**ja / hjälp** yes / help
g + e, i, y, ä, ö	the g softens to y in yes	**göra / ge** do / give
k + e, i, y, ä, ö	in most words, the k softens to the tj-sound below	**köpa / kyss** buy / kiss
rs	sh in much of Sweden	**torsdag / mars** Thursday / March
r	a tap or roll of the tongue; at the back of the throat in the far south	**röd** red
jag, och, mig	said short: ja, å, mej; dig is dej, and de and dem are dom	**jag / mig** I / me
stress	usually on the first syllable; loanwords often on the last	**lördag / station** Saturday / station

The sj-sound

sj, skj, stj, and sk before e, i, y, ä, ö

sju seven · **skjorta** shirt · **sked** spoon · **stjärna** star

Round your lips as for oo and breathe out a soft, hollow sh from the back of your mouth. A plain sh is understood everywhere.

The tj-sound

tj, kj, and k before e, i, y, ä, ö

tjugo twenty · **kjol** skirt · **kär** in love · **köpa** buy

A thin sh, lips spread, tongue tip behind your lower teeth, as in a whispered sheep. It's a different sound from sj: sju and tjugo start differently.

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

A little tune: Swedish words have a pitch, a sing-song you'll hear right away. Anden can mean the duck or the spirit, and only the tune tells them apart. Context almost always does the work, so don't worry about it yet.

How words work Grammatik

Every noun is an en word or an ett word

en
about three nouns in four
en bil, a car · en kvinna, a woman · en bok, a book

ett
the rest
ett hus, a house · ett barn, a child · ett äpple, an apple

No rule to guess it: learn every noun with en or ett, as one word. The colours on the next pages do the remembering for you.

For "the", the article goes on the end

en bil
bilen
the car

en flicka
flickan
the girl

ett hus
huset
the house

ett äpple
äpplet
the apple

Plurals: learn them with the word

Ending	One	Many	Often for
-or	en flicka	flickor girls	most en words ending in -a
-ar	en bil	bilar cars	many en words
-er	en sak	saker things	many words, loanwords too
-n	ett äpple	äpplen apples	ett words ending in a vowel
no change	ett hus	hus houses	most ett words ending in a consonant

Patterns, not rules: some words break them, like en man, två män. When you learn a noun, say its plural too: en bil, bilar.

Verbs stay the same for everyone

jag är
I am

du är
you are

hon är
she is

vi är
we are

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

The verb comes second

Idag
today

dricker
drink

jag
I

kaffe
coffee

Second place: in a normal sentence the verb is the second thing. Start with Idag, today, and the verb jumps ahead of jag: Idag dricker jag kaffe, never Idag jag dricker. It's the same as Jag dricker kaffe idag.

The first 231 words De första orden

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

Hej
hi, hello *(with anyone)*

Hej hej
hi! or bye! *(cheerful)*

Hej då
bye

Hallå
hello; hello? on the phone

God morgon
good morning

God kväll
good evening

God natt
good night

Vi ses
see you

Tack
thanks

Tack så mycket
thank you very much

Varsågod
here you are; help yourself *(when you give something)*

Ingen orsak
you're welcome, no problem

Snälla
please *(asking a favour)*

Ursäkta
excuse me

Förlåt
sorry

Ja
yes

Nej
no

Ja tack / Nej tack
yes please / no thanks

Hur mår du?
how are you?

Bra, tack
fine, thanks

Jag heter ...
my name is ...

Trevligt att träffas
nice to meet you

Jag förstår inte
I don't understand

Jag vet inte
I don't know

Skål!
cheers!

Question words

vad
what

vem
who

var
where

vart
where to

när
when

varför
why

hur
how

hur mycket
how much

hur många
how many

vilken
which

Me and you

jag
I *(said ja)*

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

ni
you all; to one person, very formal

han
he

hon
she

hen
he or she *(when you don't say which)*

den / det
it *(en word / ett word)*

vi
we

de
they *(said dom)*

mig / dig
me / you *(said mej / dej)*

min / mitt
my *(en word / ett word)*

din / ditt
your *(en word / ett word)*

Little words

och
and *(said å)*

men
but

eller
or

inte
not

också
also, too

mycket
a lot; very

bara
only, just

redan
already

här
here

där
there

med
with

utan
without

för
for; too *(för varmt, too hot)*

eftersom
because

kanske
maybe

Du is for everyone: Swedes say du to almost anyone, a boss or a doctor too. Ni is for more than one person. To one person, it sounds very formal.

No word for please: Swedes add tack, thanks: En kaffe, tack. A coffee, please. Snälla is for asking a favour.

People and time Människor och tid

Family

en mamma
mom, mother

en pappa
dad, father

en bror
brother

en syster
sister

en son
son

en dotter
daughter

en förälder
parent *(föräldrar, parents)*

ett syskon
brother or sister

en familj
family

People

en människa
person, human

en man
man, husband

en kvinna
woman

ett barn
child *(barn, children)*

en tjej
girl, young woman *(casual)*

en kille
guy, boy *(casual)*

en vän
friend

en pojkvän
boyfriend

en flickvän
girlfriend

en granne
neighbour

en lärare
teacher

en kollega
colleague

When

idag
today

imorgon
tomorrow

igår
yesterday

nu
now

sen
later; then

en morgon
morning

en eftermiddag
afternoon

en kväll
evening

en natt
night

en dag
day

en timme
hour

en vecka
week

en helg
weekend

en månad
month

ett år
year

klockan
o'clock: klockan tre, at three

Days of the week

måndag
Monday

tisdag
Tuesday

onsdag
Wednesday

torsdag
Thursday

fredag
Friday

lördag
Saturday

söndag
Sunday

Mum's side, dad's side

Mum's side: mor

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

Dad's side: far

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

Mor is mother and far is father, and Swedish just glues them: mormor is mum's mum, farfar is dad's dad, moster is mum's sister.

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
noll	ett or en	två	tre	fyra	fem	sex	sju	åtta	nio said nie

10	11	12	13	20	21	30	40	100	1,000
tio said tie	elva	tolv	tretton	tjugo said tjugu	tjugoett	trettio said tretti	fyrtio said förti	hundra	tusen

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: måndag, januari. On Monday is på måndag. One is en or ett, like the article: en bok, ett hus.

Food, places, verbs Mat, platser, verb

Food and drink

ett vatten
water

ett kaffe
coffee *(a cup is often en kaffe)*

ett te
tea

en mjölk
milk

en öl
beer

ett vin
wine

ett bröd
bread

en ost
cheese

ett kött
meat

en kyckling
chicken

en fisk
fish

ett ägg
egg

ett äpple
apple

en frukost
breakfast

en middag
dinner

en kanelbulle
cinnamon bun

en fika
coffee break with something sweet

godis
sweets, candy

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

Places

ett hus
house

hemma
at home

en skola
school

ett jobb
job, work

ett kontor
office

en restaurang
restaurant

ett sjukhus
hospital

en toalett
toilet *(casual: toa)*

en affär
shop

en stad
town, city

en gata
street

Sverige
Sweden

Verbs: dictionary form / present

vara / är
be

ha / har
have

gå / går
go, walk

åka / åker
go *(by bus, car, train)*

komma / kommer
come

äta / äter
eat

dricka / dricker
drink

se / ser
see

göra / gör
do, make

sova / sover
sleep

prata / pratar
talk, speak

förstå / förstår
understand

veta / vet
know *(a fact)*

känna / känner
know *(a person)*; feel

vilja / vill
want

kunna / kan
can

gilla / gillar
like

älska / älskar
love

bo / bor
live *(somewhere)*

köpa / köper
buy

heta / heter
be called

Describing words

bra / dålig
good / bad

stor / liten
big / small

varm / kall
warm / cold

ny / gammal
new / old

dyr / billig
expensive / cheap

lätt / svår
easy / hard

glad / ledsen
happy / sad

god
tasty *(food and drink)*

trött
tired

Fika: coffee and something sweet, with friends or at work. It's a verb too: Ska vi fika?

Two forms: the dictionary form most often ends in -a, the present in -r: prata, pratar. Learn the odd ones by heart: vara, är; vilja, vill; kunna, kan.

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

Show words Ord från serier

Reactions

Va?
what? huh?

Typ
like, sort of *(a filler: det var typ kul, it was like, fun)*

Lagom
just right: not too much, not too little

Ska vi fika?
shall we have a fika?

Jaha
oh, I see *(said flat, it can mean oh... right)*

Precis
exactly

Ja visst
sure, of course

Nej men!
oh! no way! *(happy surprise: Nej men hej!)*

Herregud
oh my God

Okej
OK

Oj!
oh! oops!

Usch!
ugh, yuck

Gärna
gladly, I'd love to

Tyvärr
sorry, unfortunately

Mysigt
cosy, nice *(a warm, candles-and-blankets word)*

Det är lugnt
it's fine, no worries

The big scenes

Jag älskar dig
I love you *(strong: for partners and family)*

Jag saknar dig
I miss you

Lämna mig ifred
leave me alone

Hjälp!
help!

Akta dig!
watch out!

Sluta!
stop it!

Kom igen!
come on!

What to call people

älskling
darling

hjärtat
sweetheart *(it means the heart)*

gubben
old man; warmly, to a little boy: little man

tjejen
to a girl or woman, warmly: Hej tjejen!

kompis
mate, buddy

polare
pal, mate *(casual)*

Lagom: a very Swedish word with no English match. It means just the right amount: Hur mycket mjölk? Lagom. How much milk? Just right.

Ja on a breath in: you'll hear people say ja, or a quick jo, while breathing in. It just means yes, I'm listening.

Swear words are strong: many Swedish swear words are about the devil and hell, and they hit harder than they look in subtitles. You'll hear them on screen: recognise them, but don't say them. Oj and herregud are the mild ones you can say in front of anyone.

Practice Öva

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Swedish 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: Pratar du engelska? Do you speak English?

Saying no: put inte after the verb: Jag dricker inte kaffe. I don't drink coffee.

Read these sentences

1. Hej, jag heter Elsa.
   Hi, my name is Elsa.

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

3. Var är toaletten?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Vad kostar det?
   How much is it?

5. Kan jag få en kanelbulle?
   Can I have a cinnamon bun?

6. Jag pratar lite svenska.
   I speak a little Swedish.

7. Idag är det väldigt kallt.
   It's very cold today.

8. Imorgon åker jag till Stockholm.
   Tomorrow I'm going to Stockholm.

9. Det här är jättegott!
   This is really tasty!

10. Kom, nu går vi!
    Come on, let's go!

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