How Turkish sounds Telaffuz

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Turkish is read exactly as it's written. Every letter has one sound, and every letter is said. Learn the few below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
c	j in jam, never k or s	**cuma** Friday
ç	ch in church	**çay** tea
ş	sh in shoe	**şeker** sugar
ğ	soft g: not said, it makes the vowel before it longer; never starts a word	**dağ** mountain (say daa)
ğ after e, i	often a light y	**değil** not (say deyil)
ı	dotless i: like the e in roses, lips spread	**kırmızı** red
i	ee in see, but short	**iki** two
ö	as in German: say e with rounded lips	**göz** eye
ü	as in German: say ee with rounded lips	**üç** three
j	s in pleasure; rare, mostly in borrowed words	**plaj** beach
r	lightly tapped, like tt in American butter; softer at the end	**araba** car
g	always hard, as in go	**gel** come
y	y in yes	**yok** there isn't
h	always said, never silent	**hava** weather, air
a, e	a in father and e in bed, both short	**anne** mother
o, u	o in sport and u in put	**okul / su** school / water
double letters	said long: hold the sound a moment	**elli** fifty
stress	usually on the last syllable	**kitap** book (ki-TAP)

i İ

with a dot, small and capital: ee in see

iki, İstanbul, İzmir

ı I

without a dot, small and capital: e in roses

kız, ılık, Irmak

Two different i's: they are separate letters, and mixing them changes the word: kır is the countryside, kir is dirt. Watch the capitals too: the capital of i is İ, with its dot, so it's İstanbul, never Istanbul.

Where the stress goes: usually on the last syllable: ki-TAP, ar-ka-DAŞ, and it moves along when you add a suffix: ki-tap-LAR. Common exceptions: place names (AN-ka-ra, is-TAN-bul) and some everyday words: MER-ha-ba, LÜT-fen, NE-re-de.

How words work Dilbilgisi

No gender, no the: Turkish has no masculine or feminine and no word for the. ev is a house or the house. bir, one, also means a: bir ev, a house. Even o is he, she and it.

Suffixes stack

Turkish builds words like a train: a stem first, then endings, one after another, always in the same order.

ev	evler	evlerim	evlerimde
a house, the house	houses	my houses	in my houses

ler more than one · im my · de in, at, on

I am is a suffix too: öğretmen is a teacher, öğretmenim is I'm a teacher. And iyi is good, iyiyim is I'm fine.

Try it: okul, a school; okullar, schools; okullarım, my schools; okullarımda, in my schools. The endings changed their vowels to match okul: that's vowel harmony, below.

Vowel harmony

A suffix changes its vowel to match the last vowel of the word. There are two kinds: two-way endings pick e or a, four-way endings pick i, ı, ü or u.

Last vowel	e / a	i / ı / ü / u	Example: -ler (more than one), -im (my)
e, i	e	i	evler, evim houses, my house
a, ı	a	ı	kızlar, kızım girls, my daughter
ö, ü	e	ü	gözler, gözüm eyes, my eye
o, u	a	u	okullar, okulum schools, my school

After a vowel the my ending is just -m: annem, my mother; arabam, my car. **After a hard sound** (ç, f, h, k, p, s, ş, t) the d of -de turns into t: kitapta, in the book.

The verb goes last

Ben	şimdi	çay	içiyorum
I	now	tea	am drinking

Subject, object, verb: I'm drinking tea now is Ben şimdi çay içiyorum. The ending -um already says I, so ben is usually left out: Şimdi çay içiyorum.

The first 232 words İlk kelimeler

How: learn five a day, then hunt for them in Kitsumi subtitles. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means. Orange is a suffix stuck to the word.

Greetings and survival

Merhaba
hello *(MER-ha-ba)*

Selam
hi *(casual)*

Günaydın
good morning

İyi akşamlar
good evening

İyi geceler
good night

Hoşça kal
bye *(said by the one who leaves)*

Güle güle
bye *(said to the one who leaves)*

Görüşürüz
see you

Teşekkür ederim
thank you

Sağ ol
thanks *(casual)*

Lütfen
please *(LÜT-fen)*

Rica ederim
you're welcome

Evet
yes

Hayır
no

Nasılsın?
how are you? *(casual)*

İyiyim
I'm fine

Memnun oldum
nice to meet you

Pardon
sorry, excuse me

Özür dilerim
I'm sorry

Anlamıyorum
I don't understand

Bilmiyorum
I don't know

Afiyet olsun
enjoy your meal

Şerefe!
cheers!

Kolay gelsin
hope it goes easy *(said to someone working)*

Question words

ne
what

kim
who

nerede
where *(NE-re-de)*

nereye
where to

ne zaman
when

neden
why

nasıl
how

kaç
how many

ne kadar
how much

hangi
which

Me and you

ben
I

sen
you *(casual)*

o
he, she, it; also that

biz
we

siz
you *(polite, or you all)*

onlar
they

benim
my

senin
your *(casual)*

bu / şu
this / that *(close by)*

Little words

ve
and

ama
but

veya
or

var
there is, there are

yok
there isn't, no

değil
not *(it isn't)*

de / da
also, too *(ben de, me too)*

çok
very, a lot

biraz
a little

sadece
only

daha
more, still

burada
here

orada
there

ile
with

için
for

çünkü
because

sen or siz: sen is for friends, family, kids and people your age. Say siz to strangers, older people and at work. siz is also you all, so it's never wrong to be polite.

People, time, numbers İnsanlar ve zaman

Family

anne
mother

baba
father

kardeş
brother or sister

erkek kardeş
brother

kız kardeş
sister

oğul
son *(my son is oğlum)*

kız
daughter, girl

anneanne
grandma *(mum's mother)*

babaanne
grandma *(dad's mother)*

dede
grandpa

amca
uncle *(dad's brother)*

dayı
uncle *(mum's brother)*

hala
aunt *(dad's sister)*

teyze
aunt *(mum's sister)*

eş
husband, wife

aile
family

People

insan
person, human

insanlar
people *(-lar, more than one)*

adam
man

kadın
woman

erkek
man, boy, male

çocuk
child

arkadaş
friend

sevgili
boyfriend, girlfriend

komşu
neighbour

öğretmen
teacher

öğrenci
student

When

bugün
today

yarın
tomorrow

dün
yesterday

şimdi
now

sabah
morning

akşam
evening

gece
night

gün
day

hafta
week

hafta sonu
weekend

ay
month; also moon

yıl
year

saat
hour, clock *(Saat kaç? What time is it?)*

zaman
time

Days of the week

pazartesi
Monday

salı
Tuesday

çarşamba
Wednesday

perşembe
Thursday

cuma
Friday

cumartesi
Saturday

pazar
Sunday; also market

Numbers

sıfır
0

bir
1; also a, an

iki
2

üç
3

dört
4

beş
5

altı
6

yedi
7

sekiz
8

dokuz
9

on
10

on bir
11

yirmi
20

yirmi bir
21

otuz
30

kırk
40

elli
50

yüz
100; also face

bin
1,000

Two grandmas, two uncles: Turkish says which side of the family: anneanne is mum's mother, babaanne is dad's mother. The same for uncles (dayı, amca) and aunts (teyze, hala).

Numbers add up: say the tens, then the units, as two words: yirmi bir is 21, otuz beş is 35. After a number, no plural: iki kitap, two books.

Food, places, verbs Yemek ve yerler

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -mek or -mak. Take that off and add -iyorum for I'm doing it: gel-mek, gel-iyorum. The i follows the four-way harmony: yap-ıyorum, gör-üyorum, konuş-uyorum. A last e or a drops: izle, izliyorum.

Food and drink

su
water

çay
tea

kahve
coffee

süt
milk

ayran
salty yogurt drink

ekmek
bread

peynir
cheese

et
meat

tavuk
chicken

balık
fish

elma
apple

şeker
sugar; also sweets

kahvaltı
breakfast

öğle yemeği
lunch

akşam yemeği
dinner

yemek
food, a meal; also to eat

simit
sesame bread ring

lokum
Turkish delight

Acıktım
I'm hungry *(it means I got hungry)*

Hesap, lütfen
the bill, please

Places

ev
house, home

evde
at home *(-de, in, at)*

okul
school

iş
work, job

restoran
restaurant

hastane
hospital

tuvalet
toilet

istasyon
train station

market
grocery shop

şehir
city

sokak
street

cami
mosque

Türkiye
Turkey

Things

telefon
phone

kitap
book

para
money

anahtar
key

araba
car

çanta
bag

bilet
ticket

Verbs: dictionary / I'm doing it

gelmek / geliyorum
come

gitmek / gidiyorum
go *(t turns to d)*

yemek / yiyorum
eat

içmek / içiyorum
drink

görmek / görüyorum
see

izlemek / izliyorum
watch

yapmak / yapıyorum
do, make

uyumak / uyuyorum
sleep

konuşmak / konuşuyorum
speak, talk

öğrenmek / öğreniyorum
learn

sevmek / seviyorum
love, like

bilmek / biliyorum
know

istemek / istiyorum
want

anlamak / anlıyorum
understand

almak / alıyorum
take, buy

çalışmak / çalışıyorum
work, study

okumak / okuyorum
read

söylemek / söylüyorum
say

yaşamak / yaşıyorum
live

Describing words

iyi / kötü
good / bad

büyük / küçük
big / small

sıcak / soğuk
hot / cold

yeni / eski
new / old

hızlı / yavaş
fast / slow

güzel / çirkin
beautiful / ugly

kolay / zor
easy / hard

yorgun
tired

mutlu
happy

Describing words never change: they go before the noun and stay the same: güzel ev, a beautiful house; güzel evler, beautiful houses.

Show words Dizi kelimeleri

6 · heard on screen

Reactions

Hadi!
come on! let's go!

Aman!
oh no! careful! *(worry or alarm)*

Vay be!
wow!

Yok artık!
no way! you're kidding!

Tamam
OK, fine; also enough

Peki
alright, well then

Eyvallah
thanks, cheers *(casual)*

Ciddi mi?
seriously?

Aynen
exactly *(casual)*

Olur
sure, OK

Boş ver
forget it, never mind

Yazık!
what a shame! poor thing!

Geçmiş olsun
get well soon; sorry that happened

Çok yaşa!
bless you! *(after a sneeze)*

İnşallah
hopefully, I hope so

Maşallah
how wonderful *(praise for a baby, a meal, a success)*

The big scenes

Seni seviyorum
I love you

Seni özledim
I missed you, I miss you

Beni rahat bırak
leave me alone

İmdat!
help!

Dikkat et!
watch out! be careful!

Yeter!
enough!

Gitme!
don't go!

What to call people

canım
my dear *(it means my soul)*

hayatım
my love *(it means my life)*

abi
big brother; any older man, friendly

abla
big sister; any older woman, friendly

kardeşim
bro *(it means my sibling)*

hocam
teacher; also casual: boss, mate

Bey / Hanım
Mr / Ms, after the first name: Ali Bey

Efendim?
pardon? yes? *(also on the phone)*

İnşallah and Maşallah: both come from Arabic and mention God, but in Turkey they're everyday words, said by almost everyone. İnşallah is for something you hope will happen. Maşallah praises a baby, a new home or a good meal.

Swear words are strong: Turkish swearing is harsh and often about someone's family. You'll hear it in dizi and films: recognise it, but don't say it. Of! (ugh) and Hay Allah! (oh, for goodness' sake) are the mild ones you can say in front of anyone.

abi and abla for strangers: people call a shopkeeper, a waiter or a taxi driver a little older than them abi or abla. It's warm and normal, not odd.

Practice Alıştırma

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

Questions: add mi after the word you ask about. It follows the four-way harmony and is written apart: Çay mı? Tea? Geliyor musun? Are you coming?

Saying no: -me or -ma after the stem makes a verb no. Before -iyor it turns into mi, mı, mü or mu: bil-mi-yorum, I don't know; anla-mı-yorum, I don't understand. For isn't, use değil: Bu çay değil, this isn't tea. For there isn't, use yok: Para yok, there's no money.

Read these sentences

1. Merhaba, benim adım Elif.
   Hello, my name is Elif.

2. Senin adın ne?
   What's your name?

3. Tuvalet nerede?
   Where is the toilet?

4. Bu ne kadar?
   How much is this?

5. Bir çay, lütfen.
   A tea, please.

6. Türk kahvesini çok seviyorum.
   I love Turkish coffee.

7. Bugün hava çok soğuk.
   It's very cold today.

8. Yarın arkadaşımla sinemaya gidiyorum.
   Tomorrow I'm going to the cinema with my friend.

9. Bu çok güzel!
   This is really nice!

10. Hadi, gidelim!
    Come on, let's go!

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