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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 12 · Consonants II

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 12 · Consonants You Know II: F V H M N L Z

Seven More Familiar Letters — f v h m n l z

Seven more consonants look and mostly sound like English. Four of them (**f**, **m**, **n**, **z**) are exactly as you'd expect. The other three have small differences that make your Hungarian sound much more natural: **v** (never "w"), **h** (always pronounced, and sometimes a rasp), and **l** (always a clear, light "l").

The Seven Letters

LETTER	SOUNDS LIKE	WATCH OUT FOR
f	English <i>f</i> in <i>fish</i>	nothing special
v	English <i>v</i> in <i>very</i>	always a real "v", never a "w"
h	English <i>h</i> in <i>hat</i>	never silent ; after a vowel it can be a soft rasp (see below)
m	English <i>m</i> in <i>man</i>	nothing special
n	English <i>n</i> in <i>no</i>	tongue just behind the upper teeth
l	a light, clear "l" as in <i>leaf</i>	stays light even at the end of a word: <i>dal</i> , <i>tál</i>
z	English <i>z</i> in <i>zoo</i>	a buzzing "s"; you've used it in <i>ház</i> , <i>víz</i> , <i>tűz</i>

H Is Never Silent

English drops the *h* in *hour* and *honest*, and French drops it everywhere. Hungarian **always pronounces h**. At the start of a word it's the English "h" (*hold*, *ház*), and between two vowels it's a gentle, breathy "h" (*ruha*, *tehén*). After a vowel at the end of a word or before another consonant, it

becomes a soft **rasp**, a little like the "ch" in Scottish *loch*, as in *méh* (bee). Scottish speakers have a head start with this one.

The Light "L"

In many English accents (and especially Scots), the *l* at the end of a word, as in *hill* or *ball*, is "dark": the back of the tongue pulls up. Hungarian *l* is always **light**, made with the tip of the tongue just behind the upper teeth, as in the English *l* of *leaf*. Say *dal* (DAWL) and *tál* (TAHL) with that light "l".

Read It — New Words

You can read all of these. Stress is on the first syllable; the respellings use the vowel keys from earlier chapters.

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	fehér	FEH-hayr	white	<i>f, h between vowels</i>
2	fekete	FEH-keh-teh	black	<i>three short e's</i>
3	vonat	VO-nawt	train	<i>v as in English</i>
4	vendég	VEHN-dayg	guest	<i>short e, long é</i>
5	hold	HOLD	moon	<i>light l</i>
6	tehén	TEH-hayn	cow	<i>gentle h between vowels</i>
7	mozi	MO-zih	cinema	<i>z as in zoo</i>
8	metró	MEH-troh	metro, underground	<i>tapped r</i>
9	ember	EHM-behr	person; man	<i>short e's</i>

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
10	levél	LEH-vayl	letter; leaf	both l's are light
11	zene	ZEH-neh	music	two short e's
12	zöld	ZEULD	green	z and ö

Colours You Can Read Now

HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
piros	PIH-rosh	red	s is said "sh"
fehér	FEH-hayr	white	today
zöld	ZEULD	green	today
kék	KAYK	blue	Chapter 4
fekete	FEH-keh-teh	black	today

Real Hungarian Tip — The Flag

The Hungarian flag is three horizontal stripes: **piros**, **fehér**, **zöld** (red, white, green), from top to bottom. It's a good way to remember three colours at once, and you may hear "*piros-fehér-zöld*" at football matches and national holidays.

Mini-Dialogs

① Cinema and Metro — Hol a mozi?

A:

Hol a mozi?

② The Traffic Light — Piros a lámpa?

A:

Piros a lámpa?

HOL aw MO-zih?

Where is the cinema?

B:

Ott.

OTT.

There.

A:

És a metró?

AYSH aw MEH-troh?

And the metro?

B:

A téren.

aw TAY-rehn.

In the square.

PIH-rosh aw LAHM-paw?

Is the light red?

B:

Nem, zöld!

NEHM, ZEULD!

No, green!

A:

Jó!

YOH!

Good!

③ Who Is This? — Ki ez?

A:

Ki ez?

KIH EHZ?

Who is this?

B:

Ez a vendég.

EHZ aw VEHN-dayg.

This is the guest.

A:

És ő?

AYSH EUU?

And she/he?

B:

Ő a tanár.

EUU aw TAW-nahr.

He/She is the teacher.

A Peek Ahead — n and l Before y

You'll sometimes see *n* or *l* followed by *y*, as in *nyár* or *lyuk*. That isn't an *n* plus a *y*: **ny** and **ly** are separate letters with their own sounds (Chapter 16), just like *gy* and *ty* (Chapter 15).

Review: Chapter 11 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **bolt** (shop) · **bátor** (brave) · **pék** (baker) · **kép** (picture) · **dal** (song) · **idő** (time; weather) · **adó** (tax) · **tanár** (teacher) · **tea** (tea) · **gól** (goal) · **gép** (machine) · **kapu** (gate).

Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Which three of today's letters have small differences from English?

▼ Show answer

v (always "v", never "w"), **h** (never silent; a soft rasp after a vowel) and **l** (always light and clear).

2. How should you say the *l* in **dal** and **tál**?

▼ Show answer

With a light, clear "l" (tongue tip behind the upper teeth), even at the end of the word, not a dark "l".

3. Read aloud and translate: **fehér** · **fekete** · **zöld**

▼ Show answer

FEH-hayr (white) · FEH-keh-teh (black) · ZEULD (green)

4. Read aloud and translate: **vonat** · **mozi** · **metró**

▼ Show answer

VO-nawt (train) · MO-zih (cinema) · MEH-troh (metro)

5. What are the three colours of the Hungarian flag?

▼ Show answer

piros, fehér, zöld (red, white, green), from top to bottom.

6. Does Hungarian drop the **h** in words like **hold** or **tehén**?

▼ Show answer

No: **h** is never silent in Hungarian. Say it at the start of a word (HOLD) and gently between vowels (TEH-hayn).

Coming Up in Chapter 13

The big swap: in Hungarian, **s** is said "sh" and **sz** is said "s", the reverse of what you'd expect. Chapter 13 teaches **r**, **s**, **sz**, **zs**, and finally lets you read *köszönöm* ("thank you") and *szia* ("hi/bye").