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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 • Chapter 15 • Soft Consonants I

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 15 · The Soft Consonants I: GY and TY

The Soft Consonants — gy ty

Hungarian has four "**soft**" consonants, written *gy*, *ty*, *ny*, *ly*. They're made with the **middle of the tongue** pressed against the roof of the mouth, a position English doesn't use as its own sound. Today you'll meet the first two, **gy** and **ty**, which appear in some of the most common Hungarian words, including *magyar* ("Hungarian") and *egy* ("one"). By the end, you'll be able to say *Magyar vagyok*: "I am Hungarian".

🌟 Two New Letters

gy
Gy gy

a soft "**dy**", like the "d" in *duke* as many Scottish speakers say it ("dyuke")

respelled **dy**

Mouth tip: say "d" and "y" together as one quick sound, with the middle of the tongue pressed up against the roof of the mouth. It is **one letter**: *nagy* is NAWDY, not "nag-y".

ty
Ty ty

a soft "**ty**", like the "t" in *tune* as many Scottish speakers say it ("tyune")

respelled **ty**

Mouth tip: the unvoiced partner of *gy*: the same tongue position, but no buzz. It is also one letter: *kutya* is KU-tyaw.

A Good Model for Scottish Speakers

Many Scottish speakers say *tune* as "tyune" and *duke* as "dyuke", keeping a small "y" glide after the consonant. That is almost exactly the Hungarian *ty* and *gy*. If your accent doesn't do this, try "*did you*" and "*got you*" said fast, as in "didja" and "gotcha", and slow the middle down: that's the zone.

gy Is Not g + y

Compare **ág** (AHG, "branch") with **ágy** (AHDY, "bed"). The extra *y* changes the sound completely: *gy* is a different letter, not *g* followed by *y*. The same is true of *ty* (not *t + y*), *ny* and *ly*.

Read It — New Words

You can read all of these. Stress is on the first syllable.

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	nagy	NAWDY	big; great	<i>gy</i>
2	egy	EHDY	one; a, an	<i>gy</i>
3	hegy	HEHDY	mountain	<i>gy</i>
4	magyar	MAW-dyawr	Hungarian (person or language)	<i>gy in the middle</i>
5	gyerek	DYEH-rehk	child	<i>gy at the start</i>
6	ágy	AHDY	bed	<i>long á, then gy</i>
7	gyár	DYahr	factory	<i>gy, long á</i>
8	gyors	DYORSH	fast	<i>s = sh</i>
9	kutya	KU-tyaw	dog	<i>ty</i>
10	tyúk	TYOOK	hen	<i>ty + long ú</i>
11	hattyú	HAWT-tyoo	swan	<i>tty = a long ty</i>
12	gyertya	DYEHR-tyaw	candle	<i>gy and ty together</i>

Doubled Soft Consonants

A doubled soft consonant keeps the pattern from Chapter 2 and writes only the **first** letter twice: the long *ty* in *hattyú* is spelled **tty**, and a long *gy* is **ggy**. (Not "tyty".) You hold the sound for an extra beat. Chapter 18 returns to this.

Your First "I Am..." — Magyar vagyok

With *gy* in hand, you can say who you are. Hungarian uses *vagyok* ("I am") and *vagy* ("you are"), and it doesn't need the word for "I" or "you".

HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH
Magyar vagyok.	MAW-dyawr VAW-dyok.	I am Hungarian.
Magyar vagy?	MAW-dyawr VAWDY?	Are you Hungarian?
Nem vagyok magyar.	NEHM VAW-dyok MAW-dyawr.	I am not Hungarian.
Tanár vagyok.	TAW-nahr VAW-dyok.	I am a teacher.

Real Hungarian Tip — Magyarország

Magyar means "Hungarian" (the people and the language), and **ország** (OR-sahg) means "country", so **Magyarország** (MAW-dyawr-or-sahg) is "Hungary", literally "the land of the Magyars". The English word "Hungary" comes from a different root, which is why the two names look so unlike.

Numbers Readable So Far

NUMBER	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	NOTE
0	nulla	NUL-law	Chapter 3
1	egy	EHDY	new today

NUMBER	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	NOTE
2	kettő · két	KEHT-teuu · KAYT	két before a noun
3	három	HAH-rom	long á
5	öt	EUT	Chapter 6
6	hat	HAWT	Chapter 6
7	hét	HAYT	Chapter 4
9	kilenc	KIH-lehnts	c = ts
10	tíz	TEEZ	Chapter 5

The missing numbers, 4 (négy) and 8 (nyolc), use the letter ny, which is next chapter.



Mini-Dialogs

① A Big Dog — Nagy a kutya?

A:

Mi ez?

MIH EHZ?

What is this?

B:

Ez a kutya.

EHZ aw KU-tyaw.

This is the dog.

A:

Nagy?

NAWDY?

Is it big?

B:

② Where Is the Child? — Hol a gyerek?

A:

Hol a gyerek?

HOL aw DYEh-rehk?

Where is the child?

B:

Az ágyban.

awz AHDY-bawn.

In bed.

A:

És a kutya?

AYSH aw KU-tyaw?

And the dog?

B:

Igen, nagy!

IH-gehn, NAWDY!

Yes, big!

A kertben.

aw KEHRT-behn.

In the garden.

③ Are You Hungarian? — Magyar vagy?

A:

Magyar vagy?

MAW-dyawr VAWDY?

Are you Hungarian?

B:

Igen, magyar vagyok.

IH-gehn, MAW-dyawr VAW-dyok.

Yes, I am Hungarian.

A:

Jó!

YOH!

Good!

Review: Chapter 14 — Days

Cover the English and read the week aloud: hétfő · kedd · szerda · csütörtök · péntek · szombat · vasárnap. Then say "on Monday" and "on Saturday": hétfőn · szombaton.



Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. What sounds do **gy** and **ty** make?

▼ Show answer

A soft "dy" and a soft "ty", made with the middle of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, like the "d" in *duke* and the "t" in *tune* with a "y" glide.

2. Read aloud and translate: nagy · egy · hegy

▼ Show answer

NAWDY (big) · EHDY (one) · HEHDY (mountain)

3. Read aloud and translate: kutya · tyúk · hattyú

▼ Show answer

KU-tyaw (dog) · TYOOK (hen) · HAWT-tyoo (swan)

4. How do ág and ágy differ in sound and meaning?

▼ Show answer

AHG means "branch" (a hard g); AHDY means "bed" (the soft gy).

5. Say "I am Hungarian" and "Are you Hungarian?"

▼ Show answer

Magyar vagyok. · Magyar vagy?

6. Count in Hungarian: 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10.

▼ Show answer

egy · öt · hat · hét · kilenc · tíz

Coming Up in Chapter 16

The other two soft consonants: **ny** (like the "ny" in *canyon* or Spanish ñ) and **ly** (which is pronounced exactly like *j*, a "y"). You'll then be able to say 4 and 8 (*négy*, *nyolc*), and read *anya* (mother) and *nyár* (summer).