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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 18 · Length Matters

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Length Matters — Hosszú és rövid

You now know all 44 letters. This chapter is about **time**. In Hungarian a sound can be **short** or **long**, and the difference can change a word's meaning: *hat* is "six", *hát* is "back". English speakers rarely hear length this way, so it deserves its own chapter.



Long Vowels

The accent marks you've been learning (á é í ó ö → ő ú ü → ű) show a **long** vowel. For **i, u, ö, ü** the long version is the same vowel held longer. For **a/á** and **e/é** the quality changes as well (you met this in Chapters 1 and 4).

SHORT	SAY IT	ENGLISH	LONG	SAY IT	ENGLISH
kar	KAWR	arm	kár	KAHR	damage; a pity
hat	HAWT	six	hát	HAHT	back (body)
ver	VEHR	beats, hits	vér	VAYR	blood
fel	FEHL	up	fél	FAYL	half; is afraid
kor	KOR	age, era	kór	KOHR	disease



Long (Double) Consonants

A **doubled consonant** is a **long** consonant: don't say it twice, **hold** it for about twice as long, like the "n" in English *unnamed* or the "t" in *hot tea* said carefully.

SHORT	SAY IT	ENGLISH	LONG	SAY IT	ENGLISH
tol	TOL	pushes	toll	TOLL	feather; pen
hal	HAWL	fish	hall	HAWLL	hears
kel	KEHL	rises, gets up	kell	KEHLL	must; is needed
sok	SHOK	many, much	sokk	SHOKK	shock

Practise the Hold

Say *kel* (rises), then *kell* (must) with a slightly longer "l". Record yourself if you can: the long one should sound clearly longer. **Stress is unchanged:** it's still on the first syllable of every word, whether the sounds are long or short.

Doubling Digraphs: ssz, ccs, tty, ggy

Digraphs (two-letter sounds) double in a special way: **only the first letter is written twice**, not the whole digraph. Doubled *sz* is **ssz**, doubled *cs* is **ccs**, doubled *ty* is **tty**, and doubled *gy* is **ggy**. The sound is simply the long version: hold it.

SHORT	LONG (WRITTEN)	EXAMPLE	SAY IT	ENGLISH
sz	ssz	hosszú	HOS-soo	long
cs	ccs	öccs	EUCH-ch	younger brother
ty	tty	hattyú	HAWT-tyoo	swan
gy	ggy	meggy	MEHD-dy	sour cherry
ny	nny	könny	KEUN-ny	tear (from the eye)

Funny Detail: Hosszú Is Long

The word *hosszú* ("long") contains a long consonant (**ssz**) and a long vowel (**ú**), so it really is long. Remember that *ssz* is a doubled *sz*, so say a long English "s", not "sh".

Read It — Words With Long Sounds

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	tessék	TEHSH-shayk	please; here you are	ss = long "sh"
2	asszony	AWS-sony	woman; married woman	ssz = long "s"
3	kettő	KEHT-teuu	two	tt; long ő
4	ennyi	EHN-nyih	this much	nny
5	hosszú	HOS-soo	long	ssz + ú
6	hattyú	HAWT-tyoo	swan	tty + ú
7	kell	KEHLL	must	ll
8	hall	HAWLL	hears	ll
9	hát	HAHT	back	long á
10	vér	VAYR	blood	long é
11	könny	KEUN-ny	tear	nny
12	meggy	MEHD-dy	sour cherry	ggy

Mini-Dialogs

① Please — Tessék!

A:

Tessék!

TEHSH-shayk!

Here you are!

B:

Köszönöm!

KEU-seu-neum!

Thank you!

② Must I? — Kell?

A:

Kell?

KEHLL?

Is it needed?

B:

Igen, kell.

IH-gehn, KEHLL.

Yes, it is.

③ Numbers — Hat és kettő

A:

Hat és kettő?

HAWT AYSH KEHT-teuu?

Six and two?

B:

Nyolc!

NYOLTS!

Eight!

Review: Chapter 17 Words

Read these aloud once more: dzsem (jam) · dzsungel (jungle) · madzag (string) · taxi (taxi) · fax (fax) · extra (extra) · web (web).



Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. Which is "six" and which is "back": **hat** or **hát**?

▼ Show answer

hat (HAWT) = six; *hát* (HAHT) = back.

2. What does a doubled consonant tell you about how to say it?

▼ Show answer

Hold it for longer. Don't say it twice.

3. How is a doubled sz written? And a doubled cs?

▼ Show answer

ssz and **ccs**: only the first letter of the digraph is doubled.

4. Read aloud and translate: **kel · kell**

▼ Show answer

KEHL (rises) · KEHLL (must, is needed): the second has a longer "l".

5. Read aloud and translate: **hosszú · hattyú · tessék**

▼ Show answer

HOS-soo (long) · HAWT-tyoo (swan) · TEHSH-shayk (please; here you are)

6. Where does the stress fall in *hattyú* and in *tessék*?

▼ Show answer

On the first syllable, always: **HAT**-tyú, **TES**-sék. A long vowel later in the word (the *ú*, the *é*) does not move the stress.

Coming Up in Chapter 19

You'll learn the **names of the letters** so you can spell words aloud, how alphabetical order treats digraphs, and how to read Hungarian place names such as Budapest, Debrecen, Szeged, Győr, Pécs and Miskolc.