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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 3 · Back Vowels Completed

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 3 · Back Vowels Completed: U Ú

abc The Last Back Vowels — u ú

Two more letters complete the family of **back vowels**: **u** and **ú**. Like o / ó, they're the **same sound** at two lengths. With them you'll know all six back vowels, and you'll get a first taste of how they control the endings of Hungarian words (vowel harmony).

BACK VOWELS	SHORT	LONG	RESPELLED
Chapter 1	a	á	aw · ah
Chapter 2	o	ó	o · oh
Chapter 3 (today)	u	ú	u · oo

🌟 Two New Vowels — u ú

u

U · u

short, like the "oo" in *book* or *foot* — respelled **u**
(always as in *put*, **never** as in *cup*)

back vowel · short

Mouth tip: push your lips forward into a small rounded opening and keep the sound short and tight. In Scottish English, the vowel in *pull* is very close to the Hungarian *u*.

ú

Ú · ú

long, like the "oo" in *moon* — respelled **oo**

back vowel · long

Mouth tip: same lip position as *u*, but hold it for twice as long. It's a steady "oo" with no glide to another vowel.

A Respelling Reminder: "u" Is Not "uh"

In the respellings, **u** always stands for the short Hungarian *u*, which is the "oo" of *put*. It never stands for the vowel in *cup*. So *nulla* (zero) is NUL-law with a short "oo" sound, not "nuh-law". If you're unsure, think of *u* as a short, tight *oo*.

The Six Back Vowels — The Whole Family

The back vowels differ in how open the mouth is. From the most closed to the most open:

MOUTH POSITION	SHORT	LONG	SOUNDS LIKE
closed (small gap)	u	ú	"oo" in <i>book</i> · "oo" in <i>moon</i>
half-closed	o	ó	pure "o" · pure "oh"
open (wide gap)	a	á	"o" in <i>hot</i> · "a" in <i>father</i>

Read It — New Words

*With six vowels, you can read a lot. As before, **s** is said "sh" (Chapter 13), and doubled letters (ll) are held for an extra beat. Stress is always on the first syllable.*

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	út	OOT	road; way	long ú
2	hús	HOOSH	meat	s is said "sh"
3	kút	KOOT	well (for water)	long ú
4	lúd	LOOD	goose	long ú
5	búza	BOO-zaw	wheat	z as in English
6	nulla	NUL-law	zero	double l: held

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
7	ruha	RU-haw	clothes, clothing	tapped r
8	puha	PU-haw	soft	short u
9	hullám	HUL-lahm	wave	double l; long á
10	autó	AW-u-toh	car	three syllables: a-u-tó
11	tud	TUD	knows; can	a verb ("he/she knows")
12	bunda	BUN-daw	fur coat	short u

Real Hungarian Tip — Út on Street Signs

You'll see **út** ("road, avenue") on street signs all over Hungary, as in Budapest's famous *Andrássy út*. In Hungarian, the street type usually follows the name, as in *Andrássy út*, so **út** is a handy word to read.

A Preview of Vowel Harmony

Hungarian endings change to match the vowels in the word, and **all six back vowels** take the same ending. For "in", the back-vowel ending is **-ban**: **házban** (in the house), **tóban** (in the lake), **útban** (in the way). After the *front* vowels (next chapters), the same ending becomes **-ben**. That pairing is **vowel harmony**, and Chapters 8–10 are all about it.

Mini-Dialogs

① Where Is the Car? — Hol az autó?

A:

Hol az autó?

HOL awz AW-u-toh?

Where is the car?

② Where Is the Well? — Hol a kút?

A:

Hol a kút?

HOL aw KOOT?

Where is the well?

B:

Ott az autó.

OTT awz AW-u-toh.

The car is there.

B:

Ott a kút. Jó!

OTT aw KOOT. YOH!

The well is there. Good!

③ Where Is the Road? — Hol az út?

A:

Hol az út?

HOL awz OOT?

Where is the road?

B:

Ott az út. Sok autó!

OTT awz OOT. SHOK AW-u-toh!

The road is there. Lots of cars!

Review: Chapter 2 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **ló** (horse) · **tó** (lake) · **hó** (snow) · **jó** (good) · **óra** (hour; clock) · **hol** (where) · **bor** (wine) · **kor** (age) · **ott** (there) · **orr** (nose) · **rokon** (relative) · **sok** (many).



Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. Say the six back vowels with their respellings: **a · á · o · ó · u · ú**

▼ Show answer

aw · ah · o · oh · u (as in *put*) · oo (as in *moon*).

2. Do **u** and **ú** sound the same apart from length, like **a** and **á**?

▼ Show answer

Yes, they're the **same sound**, short and long, like o and ó. Only a and á differ in quality as well.

3. Read aloud and translate: út · hús · lúd

▼ Show answer

OOT (road) · HOOSH (meat) · LOOD (goose)

4. How is autó pronounced, and how many syllables does it have?

▼ Show answer

AW-u-toh: three syllables (a-u-tó), with stress on the first.

5. Say in Hungarian: "Where is the car?" and "Where is the well?"

▼ Show answer

Hol az autó? and Hol a kút? (*az* before a vowel, *a* before a consonant.)

6. Add **-ban** ("in") to each word: ház · tó · út

▼ Show answer

házban (in the house) · tóban (in the lake) · útban (in the way). All back-vowel words take *-ban*.

Coming Up in Chapter 4

The **front vowels** begin with **e** and **é**. You'll then read *te* (you), *tér* (square), *kéz* (hand) and *lé* (juice), and see why they take a different ending from the back vowels.