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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 4 · Front Vowels

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 4 · Front Vowels: E É

abc The Front Vowels Begin — e é

The six back vowels are done. Now come the **front vowels**, which are made with the tongue pushed forward and the lips relaxed or spread. The first pair is **e** and **é**. Like *a / á*, they differ in **both sound and length**.

Back or Front? A Quick Test

Say "oo" (as in *moon*) and then "ee" (as in *see*), slowly, a few times. Feel your tongue slide **forward** and your lips spread: that movement is the difference between a **back** vowel (*oo*) and a **front** vowel (*ee*). Hungarian has 6 back vowels (*a á o ó u ú*) and 8 front vowels (*e é i í ö ő ü ű*).

FRONT VOWELS	SHORT	LONG	REPelled
Chapter 4 (today)	e	é	eh · ay
Chapter 5	i	í	(next chapter)
Chapters 6–7	ö ü	ő ű	(rounded front vowels)

🌟 Two New Vowels — e é

e

E · e

short, like the "e" in *bed* — respelled **eh**

front vowel · short

Mouth tip: relax your lips, open your jaw a little, and say a short "eh" as in *bed* or *get*. It's a crisp vowel: don't turn it into "uh" (*the*) or "ay".

é

É · é

long and closed, like the "ay" in *day* said **without the glide** — respelled **ay**

front vowel · long

Mouth tip: hold a steady "ay" with spread lips and don't let it slide into "ee" at the end. Scottish

speakers have a good model: the vowel in Scots *day* and *say* is a pure vowel.

e and é Are Different Sounds

Just as *a* and *á* differ in quality as well as length (Chapter 1), *e* ("eh", open) and *é* ("ay", closed) are two *different* vowels. Compare *kert* (KEHRT, "garden") with *kér* (KAYR, "asks"). Say them back to back and hear the change in the vowel, not just the length.

Read It — New Words

*You can read all of these. Remember that **r** is a quick tap and that stress is on the first syllable.*

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	te	TEH	you (informal)	short e
2	ez	EHZ	this	short e
3	tér	TAYR	square; space	long é
4	kéz	KAYZ	hand	long é
5	lé	LAY	juice; sap	long é
6	ég	AYG	sky; (it) burns	two meanings
7	kert	KEHRT	garden	short e; tapped r
8	hét	HAYT	week; seven	two meanings
9	tél	TAYL	winter	long é
10	kék	KAYK	blue	long é

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
11	pénz	PAYNZ	money	long é
12	ebéd	EH-bayd	lunch	short e, then long é

Your First Negative — nem

The word for "no" and "not" is **nem** (NEHM). You can already use it: *Nem ház.* ("Not a house.") And note the pair **ez** ("this") and **az** ("that"), which you met as "the": *ez a ház* ("this house") and *az a ház* ("that house").

Back Meets Front: -ban or -ben?

In Chapter 3 you saw that back-vowel words take **-ban** for "in". Words with only **front** vowels, such as *kert* and *kéz*, take the front form **-ben**. The two endings are the same ending, just matched to the vowels of the word.

BACK-VOWEL WORD	+ BAN	FRONT-VOWEL WORD	+ BEN
ház (house)	házban (in the house)	kert (garden)	kertben (in the garden)
tó (lake)	tóban (in the lake)	kéz (hand)	kézben (in the hand)
út (road)	útban (in the way)	tér (square)	térben (in space)

Mini-Dialogs

① Where Is the Garden? — Hol a kert?

A:

Hol a kert?

HOL aw KEHRT?

② This or That? — Ez a ház?

A:

Ez a ház?

EHZ aw HAHZ?

Where is the garden?

B:

Ott a kert.

OTT aw KEHRT.

The garden is there.

A:

Jó!

YOH!

Good!

Is this the house?

B:

Nem, az a ház.

NEHM, awz aw HAHZ.

No, that's the house.

③ Where Is the Money? — Hol a pénz?

A:

Hol a pénz?

HOL aw PAYNZ?

Where is the money?

B:

Ott a pénz. Sok pénz!

OTT aw PAYNZ. SHOK PAYNZ!

The money is there. Lots of money!

Real Hungarian Tip — Ebéd, the Main Meal

Ebéd (lunch) has traditionally been the main meal of the day in Hungary, often a soup followed by a main course, and many workplace canteens and restaurants offer a fixed-price lunch menu. If you're invited to *ebéd*, come hungry.

Review: Chapter 3 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **út** (road) · **hús** (meat) · **kút** (well) · **lúd** (goose) · **búza** (wheat) · **nulla** (zero) · **ruha** (clothes) · **puha** (soft) · **hullám** (wave) · **autó** (car) · **tud** (knows) · **bunda** (fur coat).



Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. Say the two new front vowels with their respellings: e · é

▼ Show answer

e = eh (short, as in *bed*) · é = ay (long, pure, as in Scots *day*).

2. Do e and é differ only in length?

▼ Show answer

No. Like a and á, they differ in **sound** (eh against ay) *and* length.

3. Read aloud and translate: te · kéz · tér

▼ Show answer

TEH (you) · KAYZ (hand) · TAYR (square)

4. Read aloud and translate: ebéd · pénz · kék

▼ Show answer

EH-bayd (lunch) · PAYNZ (money) · KAYK (blue)

5. Choose *a* or *az*: ____ kert · ____ ég · ____ ebéd · ____ tér

▼ Show answer

a kert · az ég · az ebéd · a tér (*az* before a vowel, including é and e; *a* before a consonant).

6. Add "in": kert · kéz · ház · tér

▼ Show answer

kertben · kézben · házban (back vowel á → -ban) · térben.

Coming Up in Chapter 5

The front vowels continue with **í** and **é**. You'll then read *igen* (yes), *víz* (water), *ki* (who) and *mi* (what), and be ready to ask real questions.