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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 • Chapter 5 • Front Vowels Continued

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 5 · Front Vowels: I Í

abc More Front Vowels — i í

The next front-vowel pair is **i** and **í**. They are the **same sound** at two lengths, like o / ó and u / ú. Once you know them, you can read the Hungarian question words (*mi, ki, hol, mikor, miért*) and ask your first real questions.

FRONT VOWELS	SHORT	LONG	RESPELLED
Chapter 4	e	é	eh · ay
Chapter 5 (today)	i	í	ih · ee
Chapters 6–7	ö ü	ó ú	(rounded front vowels)

🌟 Two New Vowels — i í

i
I · i

a short, tight "ee" — respelled **ih**

front vowel · short

Mouth tip: spread your lips as if smiling and say a *quick* "ee". It's tenser and closer than the English "i" in *bit*, so aim for a clipped "ee", not a lazy "ih".

í
Í · í

long, like the "ee" in *see* — respelled **ee**

front vowel · long

Mouth tip: the same smile and the same tongue position as *i*, but hold it for about twice as long.

i and í: Only the Length Changes

Unlike *a / á* and *e / é*, the pair **i / í** has the **same vowel quality**. The short one is simply a shorter version of the long one, so you only have to remember how long to hold it. The accent is your "hold it" signal.

Read It — New Words

You can read all of these. As before, *s* is said "sh" (Chapter 13) and stress is on the first syllable.

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	igen	IH-gehn	yes	short i, short e
2	ki	KIH	who	short i
3	mi	MIH	what; we	two meanings
4	ti	TIH	you (plural)	"you all"
5	ír	EER	writes; an Irish person	tapped r
6	víz	VEEZ	water	long í
7	hír	HEER	news	long í
8	tíz	TEEZ	ten	long í
9	hideg	HIH-dehg	cold	short i, short e
10	fiú	FIH-oo	boy	short i, then long ú
11	mikor	MIH-kor	when	a question word
12	tilos	TIH-losh	forbidden	s is said "sh"

The Question Words

With *i* in hand, you now know nearly all the basic question words. Notice that they all start with **m** or **k** (apart from *hol*).

HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	EXAMPLE
mi	MIH	what	Mi ez? (What is this?)
ki	KIH	who	Ki ez? (Who is this?)
hol	HOL	where	Hol a víz? (Where is the water?)
mikor	MIH-kor	when	Mikor? (When?)
miért	MIH-ayrt	why	Miért? (Why?)

A Neutral Vowel — i and í in Vowel Harmony

i and **í** are *neutral* vowels: they're front vowels, but they can sit comfortably next to back vowels in the same word. In practice, a word whose vowels are **only** i, í, e or é takes the front ending: **víz** → **vízben** (in the water), **hír** → **hírben** (in the news). There are a few well-known exceptions, such as **híd** ("bridge", HEED) which takes the *back* ending: **hídban** (in the bridge). Chapter 10 returns to these.

Mini-Dialogs

① What Is This? — Mi ez?

A:

Mi ez?

MIH EHZ?

What is this?

B:

Ez víz.

EHZ VEEZ.

This is water.

② Who Is This? — Ki ez?

A:

Ki ez?

KIH EHZ?

Who is this?

B:

Ez a fiú.

EHZ aw FIH-oo.

This is the boy.

③ Cold Water — Hideg a víz?

A:

Hideg a víz?

HIH-dehg aw VEEZ?

Is the water cold?

B:

Igen, hideg!

IH-gehn, HIH-dehg!

Yes, it's cold!

Real Hungarian Tip — "Tilos" on Signs

Tilos ("forbidden, not allowed") appears on signs all over Hungary, for example on no-entry and no-parking signs, so it's one of the most useful words to be able to read. You'll recognise it as soon as you see it.

Review: Chapter 4 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **te** (you) · **ez** (this) · **tér** (square) · **kéz** (hand) · **lé** (juice) · **ég** (sky) · **kert** (garden) · **hét** (week) · **tél** (winter) · **kék** (blue) · **pénz** (money) · **ebéd** (lunch).

Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. Say the two new vowels with their respellings: **í** · **í**

▼ Show answer

í = ih (a short, tight "ee") · **í** = ee (long, as in *see*).

2. Do **í** and **í** differ in sound, or only in length?

▼ Show answer

Only in length: they're the same vowel, short and long (like o/ó and u/ú).

3. Read aloud and translate: ki · mi · igen

▼ Show answer

KIH (who) · MIH (what; also "we") · IH-gehn (yes)

4. Read aloud and translate: víz · tíz · hír

▼ Show answer

VEEZ (water) · TEEZ (ten) · HEER (news)

5. Say in Hungarian: "What is this?" · "Who is this?" · "Is the water cold?"

▼ Show answer

Mi ez? · Ki ez? · Hideg a víz?

6. Add "in": víz · ház. Why do they take different endings?

▼ Show answer

vízben (front ending: víz has only the neutral vowel í) and házban (back ending: ház has the back vowel á).

Coming Up in Chapter 6

The **rounded front vowels** begin with ö and ő. These are made with the tongue in the "ee" position and the lips in the "oo" position, like the German ö or French *eu*. You'll then read ő (he/she), nő (woman), öt (five), kör (circle) and köd (fog).