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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 6

· Rounded Front Vowels

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 6 · Rounded Front Vowels: Ö Ö

abc The Rounded Front Vowels — ö ő

Today's pair, **ö** and **ő**, is the one that surprises English speakers most. They're **front** vowels (tongue forward, like e) made with **rounded** lips (like o). English has no standard vowel like this, but German (schön) and French (peu) do, and some Scots speakers have one in words like guid.

FRONT VOWELS	SHORT	LONG	RESPELLED
Chapter 4	e	é	eh · ay
Chapter 5	i	í	ih · ee
Chapter 6 (today)	ö	ő	eu · euu
Chapter 7	ü	ű	(next chapter)

🌟 Two New Vowels — ö ő

Ö
ö · ö

short, like German *ö* or French *eu* — respelled **eu**
front vowel · rounded · short

Mouth tip: say "eh" (as in *bed*) and, without moving your tongue, **round your lips** as if about to say "oh". That's *ö*. It is **not** the "er" of English *fur*: your tongue stays forward.

Ő
ő · ő

the same vowel, held about twice as long — respelled **euu**
front vowel · rounded · long

Mouth tip: same tongue and the same rounded lips as *ö*, held steady for a longer beat. Keep the lips still: no slide to "oo".

ö Is Just "o" with the Tongue Moved Forward

Here's a trick: say **o** (lips rounded), then, *keeping your lips exactly where they are*, push your tongue forward as if saying "e". The sound that comes out is **ő**. In the same way, **ó** is a front version of **ó**. Every back rounded vowel has a front partner: *o* → *ö*, *ó* → *ő*, and in the next chapter *u* → *ü*, *ú* → *ű*.

The Double Acute: ő Is Not õ

The accent on **ő** (and **ű**) is a **double acute**: two little slanted strokes. It's a different mark from the tilde on **õ** or the circumflex on **û**, which don't exist in Hungarian. Those wrong characters show up in badly encoded text, so if you see **õ** in a Hungarian word, it's a mistake for **ő**.

Read It — New Words

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

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ő	EUU	he; she	one word for both (people)
2	nő	NEUU	woman	long ő
3	kő	KEUU	stone	long ő
4	kör	KEUR	circle; round	short ö; tapped r
5	köd	KEUD	fog	short ö
6	tök	TEUK	pumpkin; marrow	short ö
7	ökör	EU-keur	ox	two short ö's
8	öt	EUT	five	a number
9	sör	SHEUR	beer	s is said "sh"

#	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	ENGLISH	NOTE
10	öröm	EU-reum	joy	two short ö's
11	kövér	KEU-vayr	fat; plump	short ö, long é
12	főnök	FEUU-neuk	boss	long ő, short ö

Numbers You Can Read Now

With the vowels you know, several Hungarian numbers are now readable.

NUMBER	HUNGARIAN	SAY IT	NOTE
0	nulla	NUL-law	Chapter 3
2	két	KAYT	the form used before a noun (két ház)
5	öt	EUT	new today
6	hat	HAWT	short a
7	hét	HAYT	Chapter 4; also "week"
10	tíz	TEEZ	Chapter 5

Real Hungarian Tip — "Ő" Means He, She and It

Hungarian has **no grammatical gender** and no separate "he" and "she": the single word **ő** covers both. (For things, Hungarian uses *az*, "that".) So *Ő a főnök* means "He is the boss" or "She is the boss", and you learn which from context. It's one of the ways Hungarian is easier than German or French.

A Preview: Three-Way Endings

Because ö is a front rounded vowel, a few endings have **three** forms: back, front unrounded and front rounded. For "to / towards", the ending is **-hoz** / **-hez** / **-höz**.

WORD'S VOWELS	ENDING	EXAMPLE
back (a, o, u ...)	-hoz	házhoz (to the house)
front unrounded (e, é, i, í)	-hez	kerthez (to the garden)
front rounded (ö, ő, ü, ű)	-höz	körhöz (to the circle)

Mini-Dialogs

① Who Is She? — Ki ő?

A:

Ki ő?

KIH EUU?

Who is he/she?

B:

Ő a főnök.

EUU aw FEUU-neuk.

He/She is the boss.

② A Stone or a Pumpkin? — Mi ez?

A:

Mi ez? Kő?

MIH EHZ? KEUU?

What is this? A stone?

B:

Nem, ez tök!

NEHM, EHZ TEUK!

No, it's a pumpkin!

③ Cold Beer — Hideg a sör?

A:

Hideg a sör?

HIH-dehg aw SHEUR?

Is the beer cold?

B:

Igen, hideg! Jó!

IH-gehn, HIH-dehg! YOH!

Yes, it's cold! Good!

A Word to Look Forward To — Köszönöm

The most useful Hungarian word of all, **köszönöm** ("thank you"), is made of letters you now almost know: *k-ö-sz-ö-n-ö-m*. It has three ö's (KEU-seu-neum), and it uses the letter sz (said "s") from Chapter 13. Practise the ö in it now: the rhythm is KEU-seu-neum, stress on the first syllable.

Review: Chapter 5 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **igen** (yes) · **ki** (who) · **mi** (what) · **ti** (you all) · **ír** (writes) · **víz** (water) · **hír** (news) · **tíz** (ten) · **hideg** (cold) · **fiú** (boy) · **mikor** (when) · **tilos** (forbidden).

Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

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

▼ Show answer

ö = eu (short) · ő = euu (long): the same rounded front vowel at two lengths.

2. How do you make an **Ö**?

▼ Show answer

Say "eh" (tongue forward) and round your lips as for "o" without moving your tongue. (Or say "o" and move your tongue forward.)

3. Read aloud and translate: **nő · kő · sör**

▼ Show answer

NEUU (woman) · KEUU (stone) · SHEUR (beer)

4. Say these numbers in Hungarian: **5 · 6 · 7 · 10**

▼ Show answer

öt (EUT) · hat (HAWT) · hét (HAYT) · tíz (TEEZ)

5. What does Ó mean, and why is it unusual compared with English?

▼ Show answer

"He" or "she": Hungarian has one word for both because it has no grammatical gender.

6. Add "to": ház · kert · kör

▼ Show answer

házhöz (back) · kerthez (front unrounded) · körhöz (front rounded).

Coming Up in Chapter 7

The last pair of vowels is **ü** and **ű**, the front partners of *u* and *ú*, said like French *u* or German *ü*.

You'll then read *tű* (needle), *tűz* (fire), *fű* (grass), *üveg* (glass) and *fül* (ear), and see the full 14-vowel chart.