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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Alphabet 1 · Chapter 9

· Vowel Harmony 2

Hungarian Alphabet 1

Chapter 9 · Vowel Harmony 2: Three-Way Endings

When Rounded Vowels Get Their Own Ending

In Chapter 8, the front rounded vowels (ö ő ü ű) took the same endings as the front unrounded ones. But some endings treat them differently, with **three** forms instead of two: one for **back** vowels, one for **front unrounded** vowels, and one for **front rounded** vowels. This chapter covers the two three-way endings you'll use most, and then arranges everything you know into three neat sets of "where" endings.

The Three-Way Rule

Look at the vowel family of the word, as before: **back** → back form (-hoz, -on), **front unrounded** (e é i í) → -hez, -en, and **front rounded** (ö ő ü ű) → -höz, -ön. The rounded form has the lips rounded, like the vowel it goes with.

The Two Main Three-Way Endings

MEANING	BACK	FRONT UNROUNDED	FRONT ROUNDED	SAY IT
to, towards, next to	-hoz	-hez	-höz	-hoz · -hehz · -heuz
on (on a surface)	-on	-en	-ön	-on · -ehn · -eun

Words Ending in a Vowel: Just -n

The "on" ending is **-on** / **-en** / **-ön** after a consonant, but after a vowel it shrinks to just **-n**: autó → autón (on the car), hűtő → hűtőn (on the fridge). The "to" ending -hoz / -hez / -höz doesn't change after a vowel: autóhoz, hűtőhöz.

Practice Words

Back-vowel words are in green, front unrounded in blue, and front rounded in purple.

WORD	TO (-HOZ / -HEZ / -HÖZ)	ON (-ON / -EN / -ÖN)
ház (house)	házhoz	házon
út (road)	úthoz	úton
autó (car)	autóhoz	autón
kert (garden)	kerthez	kerten
víz (water)	vízhez	vízen
tér (square)	térhez	téren
kör (circle)	körhöz	körön
fül (ear)	fülhöz	fülön
tűz (fire)	tűzhöz	tűzön
hűtő (fridge)	hűtőhöz	hűtőn



Three Sets of "Where" Endings

Every place-ending in Hungarian belongs to one of three sets, and each set answers the same three questions: **Hol?** (where?), **Hová?** (where to?) and **Honnan?** (where from?). You already know the first set. Now you have all three.

SET	HOL? (WHERE)	HOVÁ? (WHERE TO)	HONNAN? (FROM WHERE)
Inside	-ban / -ben	-ba / -be	-ból / -ből
On a surface	-on / -en / -ön	-ra / -re	-ról / -ről
Near, at a person or place	-nál / -nél	-hoz / -hez / -höz	-től / -től

WORD	SET	HOL?	HOVÁ?	HONNAN?
ház (house)	inside	házban	házba	házból
	on	házon	házra	háztól
	near	háznál	házhoz	háztól
kert (garden)	inside	kertben	kertbe	kertből
	on	kerten	kertre	ketről
	near	kertnél	kerthez	kerttől
kör (circle)	inside	körben	körbe	körből
	on	körön	körre	körről
	near	körnél	körhöz	körtől

Which Set Do I Use?

Think about the *place*. **Inside** something (a house, a garden, a bottle) → the *-ban* set. **On** a surface or in an open place (a road, a square, a table) → the *-n / -ra / -ról* set: *az úton* (on the road), *a téren* (in the square). **At or next to** something or someone → the *-nál / -hoz / -tól* set. This is why *téren* is "in the square" (an open surface), whereas *térben* means "in space".

Mini-Dialogs

① To the Fridge — A hűtőhöz

A:

Hová?

HO-vah?

Where to?

B:

A hűtőhöz.

aw HUUE-teuu-heuz.

To the fridge.

② On the Road — Az úton

A:

Hol a kő?

HOL aw KEUU?

Where is the stone?

B:

Az úton.

awz OO-ton.

On the road.

A:

Miért?

MIH-ayrt?

Why?

B:

Hideg a sör!

HIH-dehg aw SHEUR!

The beer is cold!

A:

És a tök?

AYSH aw TEUK?

And the pumpkin?

B:

A téren.

aw TAY-rehn.

In the square.

③ The Lake — A tóhoz

A:

Hová?

HO-vah?

Where to?

B:

A tóhoz.

aw TOH-hoz.

To the lake.

A:

Hideg a víz?

HIH-dehg aw VEEZ?

Is the water cold?

B:

Igen, hideg!

IH-gehn, HIH-dehg!

Yes, it's cold!

The Plural Is Also Harmonic, but Trickier

The plural ending **-k** also uses a linking vowel that harmonises: házak, kertek, körök (houses, gardens, circles), and after a vowel it's just **-k**: autók, hűtők. But which linking vowel a word takes (*-ak*, *-ok*, *-ek*, *-ök*) and whether the stem changes (*víz* → *vizek*) has to be learned **with each word**. The plural is taught properly in the Hungarian conversation courses.

Review: Chapter 8 Words

Cover the English and read these again: **itt** (here) · **ott** (there) · **otthon** (at home) · **hol** (where) · **hová** (where to) · **honnan** (from where) · **és** (and) · **is** (also).



Try It Yourself — Gyakorlatok

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

1. Which vowel family takes *-höz* and *-ön*?

▼ Show answer

The front rounded vowels: *ö, ő, ü, ú*.

2. Add "to" (*-hoz* / *-hez* / *-höz*): *tó* · *víz* · *kör* · *fül*

▼ Show answer

tóhoz · *vízhez* · *körhöz* · *fülhöz*

3. Add "on" (*-on* / *-en* / *-ön*, or *-n* after a vowel): *ház* · *kert* · *kör* · *út* · *autó* · *hűtő*

▼ Show answer

házon · *kerten* · *körön* · *úton* · *autón* · *hűtőn*

4. Give the "on / onto / off" trio (*Hol?* *Hová?* *Honnan?*) for *tér* and *ház*.

▼ Show answer

téren · *térre* · *térről*, and *házon* · *házra* · *háziról*.

5. Give the "at / to / from" trio (*-nál*, *-hoz*, *-tól*) for *kert*.

▼ Show answer

kertnél · *kerthez* · *kerttől* (front vowel → *-nél*, *-hez*, *-től*).

6. What is the difference between **téren** and **térben**?

▼ Show answer

téren = on / in the square (an open surface); *térben* = in space (inside a three-dimensional area).

Coming Up in Chapter 10

Chapter 10 handles the **tricky cases**: words with a mix of back and front vowels (*papír*, *hotel*), the neutral vowels *i í e é*, and the exceptions to the rule, such as *híd* → *hídban*.