



# Getting to Know Your Dictionary

A dictionary is an important tool in learning a language. But as with any tool you have to learn how to use it properly, otherwise it won't be much help. It might even become a hindrance. Ask your teacher! He/she probably has some anecdotes about pupils' dictionary errors.

At this level you should reckon on having a fairly large-sized English-Norwegian/Norwegian-English dictionary. Pocket-sized ones are not good enough and only increase the risk of mistakes. You will also find an English-English dictionary useful. It is more demanding to use, but it will often clear up mysteries that your English-Norwegian/Norwegian-English dictionary won't.

In brief, a dictionary will help you with the following:

- The pronunciation of a word
- The spelling of a word
- The meaning of a word in a given context
- The setting a word or phrase is used in – e.g. whether it is a technical word, or an old-fashioned one, or slang etc.

In addition many dictionaries give you information about things like abbreviations, measurements, important dates in the calendar etc. Some also give you an overview of the basic rules of grammar and spelling.

In order to be able to use all this information you have to master a few simple skills. We are going to practise these now.

## Pronunciation

As you will have discovered, English spelling is not a very reliable guide when it comes to pronunciation. (For example, “laugh” and “half” rhyme – “weight” and “height” don't!) A good dictionary will give you the pronunciation of a word in *phonetic writing*, unless its pronunciation is obvious. Phonetic writing tells you what the word sounds like. It does this by giving each of the sounds in English a symbol.

On page 29 is a list of the sounds and their symbols, like the one you will find in your dictionary. You don't need to learn these off by heart, because you will have the key at hand every time you use your dictionary. But you should practise using it.

**anecdote** artig historie  
**reckon on** regne med /  
rekne med

**abbreviation** /əˈbrɪː  
vɪˈeɪʃən/ forkorting

**measurement** mål og vekt

**reliable** pålitelig/påliteleg

**phonetic writing** lydskrift

## Phonetic alphabet

### Vowels

[i:] as in *see*  
[ɪ] as in *sit*  
[e] as in *hen*  
[æ] as in *hat*  
[ɑ:] as in *barn*  
[ɒ] as in *pot*  
[ɔ:] as in *saw*  
[ʊ] as in *put*  
[u:] as in *you*  
[ʌ] as in *cup*  
[ɜ:] as in *fur*  
[ə] as in *letter*

### Diphthongs

[eɪ] as in *page*  
[əʊ] as in *home*  
[aɪ] as in *alive*  
[aʊ] as in *cow*  
[ɔɪ] as in *coin*  
[ɪə] as in *near*  
[eə] as in *hair*  
[ʊə] as in *sure*

### Consonants

[p] as in *pen*      [s] as in *saw*  
[b] as in *bed*      [z] as in *zoo*  
[t] as in *tea*      [ʃ] as in *she*  
[d] as in *did*      [ʒ] as in *vision*  
[k] as in *can*      [h] as in *how*  
[g] as in *got*      [m] as in *man*  
[tʃ] as in *church*      [n] as in *now*  
[dʒ] as in *June*      [ŋ] as in *sing*  
[f] as in *fall*      [l] as in *leg*  
[v] as in *voice*      [r] as in *rose*  
[θ] as in *think*      [j] as in *yes*  
[ð] as in *that*      [w] as in *wet*

Notice that phonetic writing also helps you with stress patterns, in other words which syllables are given most emphasis. Dictionaries vary in how they show stress, so you should check this in the introduction to your own dictionary.

## Parts of speech

A dictionary will also tell you which part of speech a word belongs to. This can be useful because it tells you how a word can be used in a sentence.

### Noun (n.)

A noun is a word that denotes a thing, a person, an animal or a concept.

Rule of thumb: if you can put “the” in front of a word (or -en, -a or -et after it, if it's a Norwegian word), it's a noun. Most nouns have a plural form.

**stress pattern** betoning/  
ordtone

**syllable** /'sɪləbl/ stavelse/  
staving

**emphasis** /'emfəzɪs/ trykk

**part of speech** ordklasse

**noun** /naʊn/ substantiv

**denote** betegne / peike på

**concept** begrep/omgrep

**plural form** flertallsform/  
fleirtallsform



### Adjective (adj. or a.)

As you have already learned an adjective is a word that describes a noun, and gives us more information about it. The word *exciting*, for example, tells us more about *match*. The word *tall* tells us more about *girl*. Rule of thumb: If you can put the word in front of the word *thing* with the article *a(n)* at the beginning (an exciting thing, a tall thing), then you are dealing with an adjective.

### Adverb (adv.)

Adverbs are words that describe how, when or where something is done.

*The team played well.* (How did the team play?)

*She sang beautifully.* (How did she sing?)

*He wants his dinner now.* (When does he want his dinner?)

*The accident happened here.* (Where did the accident happen?)



Adverbs can also refer to an adjective or another adverb.

*I'm terribly sorry I'm late.* (How sorry am I?)

*This album is relatively new.* (How new is it?)

*He was partially blind.* (How blind was he?)

*She was driving too fast.*

Rule of thumb: Use the how, when or where question to find out whether a word is an adverb.

### Verb (vb.)

For our purposes here, the best way to differentiate verbs from other parts of speech is to look at how they behave in sentences.

A verb is a word that can be declined in different tenses: can (could), sing (sang, sung), wander (wandered) etc.

A verb requires a grammatical subject, i.e. something or someone “doing” the verb. For example: *I can, birds sing, my thoughts wander*. If you can make a meaningful phrase by putting *I* in front of a word, you are dealing with a verb.

**differentiate** /ˌdɪfə'renʃɪ,ert/

skille/skilje

**decline** her: bøye

**tense** tid

**require** trenge

Remember that verbs are generally listed according to their infinitive form. That means that you generally won't find "dropped" in the dictionary, only "drop". (Forms of irregular verbs are often listed, with a reference to the infinitive form.)

Some dictionaries, especially English-English dictionaries, classify verbs as *v.t* or *v.i*. The *t* and *i* stand for transitive and intransitive. A transitive verb requires an object. (*Respect* is an example of a transitive verb. You can say *He doesn't respect his parents* or *He doesn't respect them*, but you can't say *He doesn't respect*.) An intransitive verb does not take an object. (*Sleep* is an example of an intransitive verb. You can't *sleep something*.) Many verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively.

### Finding the right word

Many words belong to more than one part of speech, and it is important to know which word you are looking for. The word *import*, for example, can be both a verb and a noun. So can *export* and *transport*. The word *fast* can belong to four different parts of speech and have many meanings.

**infinitive** /'ɪnfɪ,nɪtɪv/  
ubøyd/ubøygð





**1 PHONETIC SPELLING**

a Sit in pairs and take it in turns to read the sounds and their examples aloud. E.g. "i:/ as in steel, /ɑ:/ as in father ...". (Make sure you are pronouncing the sound of the symbol, not the name of a letter!)

b Using the key to help you, find out which common words are written below:

/tʃæt fəʊl/, /'deɪ dʒɒb/, /greɪt-'grændsʌn/,  
/ðe klə 'pɜ:pɪl/, /'hɔ:s-drɔ:n 'kærɪdʒ/

c Here are some words you probably don't know. Don't worry about the correct spelling or meaning. Your teacher will tell you this afterwards. Can you work out how they are pronounced?

/'si:zə(r)/, /tʃʌft/, /kə'ləʊkwɪəl/, /mɑ:'əʊpɪəl/,  
/skʌl'dʌgəri/, /r'pɪtəmi/

d In phonetic writing write the names of five English-language singers or bands and five English-language films, using the key to help you. Then swap lists with another pair and pronounce the names as they are written. Did they get them right?

**2 NOUN**

Which one of the following words is not a noun?

*feeling, dog, college, sheep, believe, machines, distance, savings*

Put a ring around the noun(s) in the following sentences:

What an exciting match!  
The tall girl is my daughter.  
Hunger is not a problem in this country.  
There's a hole in my pocket.  
My compliments to the chef!

**3 ADJECTIVE**

Which of the following words is not an adjective?

*clever, eternity, unbelievable, tiny, modest, blue*

Find the adjective(s) in the following sentences:

It was a long and tiring journey.  
Poor Alan! He's been so unlucky.  
True love is very rare.  
Young, sexy, elegant, wealthy woman seeks fat, middle-aged, hopeless man for relationship.

**4 ADVERB**

Which two of the following words are not adverbs?

*lately, slowly, often, lovely, absolutely, friendly, sweetly*

Find the adverb(s) in the following sentences:

The Austrian violinist played brilliantly.  
The deadly illness spread quickly.  
She was a hard worker, but she played hard too.  
She gets up early every morning.

**5 VERB**

Which of the following words is not a verb?

*decision, overtake, preach, learn, bring, apologize*

What is the infinitive of each of the following verb forms?

*found, kept, bought, frozen, stolen, mistook, were*

**6 FINDING THE RIGHT WORD**

Look up *import, export* and *transport* in your dictionary. Can you see any difference between the way the noun and the verb are pronounced?

Look up *fast* in your dictionary. List the various meanings and then write a meaningful sentence in which you use at least three of them.

Look up the word *bow* in the dictionary. How many basic meanings do you find? Are they pronounced the same?

Find out what the following phrases mean:

- To take the wind out of someone's sails
- To wind someone up
- To put the wind up someone
- To break wind

Was *wind* pronounced the same here?