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Alphabet and Pronunciation

The Dutch alphabet uses the same letters as English. Dutch spelling is highly phonetic. A list of the most common Dutch sounds as they are commonly spelled follows.

Vowels

a	(short) as in dot
a, aa*	(long) not unlike " aaaaah "
e	(short) as in hen
e, ee*	(long) as in spray or Monet
eu	formed like ee , but with rounded lips
i	(short) as in is or miss
ie	(long) as in fleet and bee
o	(short) as in hot or often
o, oo*	(long) as in go or doe
oe	(short) as in foot or soot (if before an -r, long)
u	(short) as in bus or stir
u, uu*	(long) like French u or German ü
y	(short) as Dutch i in: gym (long) as Dutch ie in: psyche
e, i, ij	as belief or saved ; in unstressed syllables, such as prefixes or suffixes. Example: maken (make), dertig (thirty), gemakkelijk (easy).

Diphthongs

Combinations of two sounds.

ei, ij	sound combination of e (short) and ie ; formed not unlike English ai , but start with e instead of a .
au, ou	as in mouse
ui	formed like ei sound, but instead of starting with e (short), start with unstressed e .
aai	start with aa moving to ie .
ooi	not unlike boy , but longer
oei	not unlike gooey
eeu(w)	start with ee move toward u , ending in a w .
ieu(w)	start with ie move toward u , ending in a w .

* See Also
[Spelling Rules](#)

Consonants

b	as in bread after a consonant, at the end of a syllable or word as in lip
c	as s before an e or i ; as k before a , o , u ; as in civil and cold
d	as in drive after a consonant or at the end of a word as in bent
f	as in fun
g, ch	as in Scottish loch ; a deep guttural sound produced in the back of ones throat
h	as in hand

j	as in y es
k	as in k ilo
l	as in l and
m	as in m ilk
n	as in n ight
p	as in p ast
q	as in q uick (q is always followed by u)
r	guttural rolled r as in the ggrrr
s	as in s oap
t	as in t ell
v	as in v ery
w	as in w hat
x	as in x ox
z	as in z ero

Consonant Combinations

-tj-	in words like katje. A sharp version of the English gotcha .
-sj-	in words like huisje. As in machine .
-ng	as in English song .

Spelling Rules

Dutch makes a distinction between open and closed syllables with consequences for the spelling and pronunciation.

An **open** syllable is a syllable that ends in a **vowel**.

A **closed** syllable is a syllable that ends in a **consonant**.

Closed	Open	
maan	ma -nen (manen)	(moon/moons)
groot	gro -te (grote)	(great/great)

1. In closed syllables, the long sounds 'a,' 'e,' 'o,' and 'u' are spelled as **aa**, **ee**, **oo**, and **uu**; in open syllables as **a**, **e**, **o**, and **u**.

Closed	Open	
lk maak.	maken	(I make/ to make)
meer	meren	(lake/lakes)
groot	grote	(big)
zuur	zure	(sour)

2. The short sounds 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o' and 'u' are kept short in the plural and before adjective endings by doubling the consonant to keep the syllable closed.

Closed	Closed	
mat	matten	(mat/mats)
gek	gekke	(crazy)
wit	witte	(white)

kom	kommen	(bowl/bowls)
lk ruk	rukken	(I pull/ to pull)

Conversely, the second double consonant is dropped, when there is no necessity for it to keep the vowel short.

zeggen	lk zeg	(to say/ I say)
straffen	Hij straft	(to punish/ He punishes)

3. Nouns ending in **a, i, o, u** and **y** form the plural with the ending **-s**. To maintain an open syllable or long sound an apostrophe (') is inserted.

paprika	paprika's	(bell pepper)
alibi	alibi's	(alibi)
piano	piano's	(piano)
menu	menu's	(menu)
baby	baby's	(baby)

The same is true for the genitive **-s** after proper names ending in a vowel.

Sonja's auto	(Sonja's car) BUT:
Jans auto	(Jan's car)

4. a) **f** at the end of a syllable and before a vowel is pronounced and spelled **v**.

druif	druiven	(grape/grapes)
gaaf	gaave	(intact)

b) **s** at the end of a syllable and after a vowel is pronounced and spelled as **z**.

kaas	kazen	(cheese/cheeses)
reis	reizen	(trip/trips)

5. The same principles that govern the spelling of nouns, also apply to verbs. It is important to keep in mind that for spelling the point of departure is the infinitive of the verb, whereas for the conjugation one works from the stem or root.

a.) in open syllables the long sounds "a", "e", "o" and "u" are spelled as **a, e, o** and **u**; in closed syllables as **aa, ee, oo**, and **uu**.

maken	ik maak	(to make/ I make)
spelen	ik speel	(to play/ I play)
horen	ik hoor	(to hear/ I hear)
turen	ik tuur	(to look into the distance/ I look into the distance)

b.) Infinitives that have a double consonant that keep the vowel short before the **-en** infinitive ending, drop one of the consonants when conjugated. Dutch does not have double consonants at the end of words.

straffe	ik straf	(to punish/ I punish)
n		
trekke	ik trek	(to pull/ I pull)
n		
fokken	ik fok	(to raise...animals/ I raise... animals)

rukken ik ruk (to pull...violently/ I pull...
violently)

c.) Infinitives that have **-v** or **-z** before the -en infinitive ending change that consonant into **-f** or **-s** respectively, as Dutch words cannot end in **-v** or **-z**.

durven ik durf (to dare/ I dare)

lezen ik lees (to read/ I read)

Nouns

Nouns (het zelfstandig naamwoord) name persons, places, things or concepts: **boom** (tree), **man** (man), **straat** (street), **verlangen** (longing).

Dutch nouns have gender (common or neuter) and number (singular or plural). Common gender nouns are the historically feminine and masculine nouns grouped together. Nouns can be used with definite and indefinite articles. They are the center of nominal phrases in sentences and can function as subjects of sentences and phrases, direct/indirect objects of verbs and of prepositional or adverbial phrases.

Gender: Neuter and Common

Number: Singular and Plural

Diminutive Nouns

See also

Definite and Indefinite Articles

Gender

Each noun in Dutch has one of two genders: **common or neuter**.

Singular common gender nouns (the old masculine and feminine nouns grouped together) use **de** as the definite article, singular neuter nouns use **het** as the definite article.

In the plural all nouns use **de**, as the definite article.

The indefinite article for both genders is **een**.

There are no easy descriptive rules to indicate which nouns are common or neuter. Some easy categories are:

Neuter Nouns, the following are always neuter:

1. All diminutives, i.e. all nouns ending in **-je**.

het hondje (the doggie), **het eitje** (the little egg), **het boompje** (the small tree), **het meisje** (the little girl), **het jongetje** (the little boy)

2. Infinitives used as nouns.

het wandelen (the hiking), **het zeilen** (the sailing), **het geven** (the giving)

This list is by no means complete. There are many more neuter nouns. It is always best to learn nouns with the appropriate article, which will indicate its gender.

Diminutives

Dutch makes frequent use of diminutives (verkleinwoorden). Besides indicating that an object is small, the diminutive form of a noun can sometimes also change its meaning or indicate a portion.

de stoel (the chair)
de kaart (the map)
het ijs (ice, ice cream)

het stoeltje (the little chair)
het kaartje (the ticket)
het ijsje (the ice cream cone)

Diminutives are always neuter!

The diminutive is formed by adding the suffix **-je**, **-tje**, **-etje** or **-pje** to the noun.

1. Basic form: add **-je**

de aap (monkey)
het boek (book)
de voet (foot)

het aapje
het boekje
het voetje

het huis (house)
het oog (eye)
de zak (bag)

het huisje
het oogje
het zakje

2. Add **-tje** when

A. Nouns ending in a long vowel or diphthong; or a long vowel or diphthong followed by **-l**, **-n** or **-r**.

het ei (egg)
de vrouw (woman)
de trein (train)

het eitje
het vrouwtje
het treintje

de oma (grandma)
de teil (pail)
de deur (door)

het omaatje*
het teiltje
het deurtje

B. the noun ends in the unstressed syllable **-el**, **-en** or **-er**:

de tafel (table)
de deken (blanket)
de kamer (room)

het tafeltje
het dekentje
het kamertje

de kachel (heater)
de toren (tower)
de knijper (clothes
pin)

het kacheltje
het torentje
het knijpertje

3. Add **-etje** to nouns with a short vowel ending in **-l**, **-r**, **-m** or **-ng**. (NOTE: See Spelling rules for closed syllables with short vowels!)

de bal (ball)
de kom (bowl)

het balletje
het kommetje

de tor (beetle)
de ring (ring)

het torretje
het ringetje

4. Add **-pje** when the noun ends in **-m**, but is not preceded by a stressed short vowel.

het raam (window)
de bezem (broom)

het raampje
het bezempje

de riem (belt)
de bloem (flower)

het riempje
bloempje

*See Also
[Spelling Rules](#)
[Suffixes](#)

Number: Singular and Plural

A noun can be singular (one person or thing) or plural (more than one person or thing). Dutch nouns form the plural by adding either **-en** or **-s** to the noun.

1. **-en**: Most nouns form the plural by adding **-en**.

singular	plural	
paard	paarden	(horse/horses)
straat	straten*	(street/streets)
ui	uien	(onion/onions)
zee	zeeën*	(sea/seas)
pen	pennen*	(pan/pans)
brief	brieven*	(letter/letters)
glas	glazen*	(glass/glasses)

2. **-s**: The plural is formed with the ending **-s**, if a noun ends in the unstressed syllables **-el**, **-em**, **-er**, **-je** or in the vowels **-a**, **-i**, **-o**, **-u** or **-y**.

singular	plural	
tafel	tafels	(table/tables)
bezem	bezems	(broom/brooms)
kamer	kamers	(room/rooms)
meisje	meisjes	(girl/girls)
firma	firmas*	(firm/firms)
tosti	tostis*	(grilled sandwich)
auto	autos*	(car/cars)
menu	menus*	(menu/menus)
baby	babys*	(baby/babies)

3. Some exceptions:

- some nouns take the ending **-eren**

singular	plural	
kalf	kalveren*	(calf/calves)
kind	kinderen	(child/children)
ei	eieren	(egg/eggs)

- some nouns change the vowel

singular	plural	
stad	steden	(city/cities)
schip	schepen	(ship/ships)

* See Also
[Spelling rules](#)

Definite and Indefinite Articles

Articles (**lidwoorden**) that refer to specific persons or objects are called definite articles (English: the). The Dutch definite articles are **de** for the common singular noun and **het** for the neuter singular noun. The Dutch definite article for plural nouns (common and neuter) is **de**.

Articles that refer to unspecified persons or objects are called indefinite articles (English: a, an). The Dutch indefinite article for both common and neuter nouns is **een**.

Gender	number	definite article	indefinite article
common	singular	de	een
	plural	de	
neuter	singular	het	een
	plural	de	

NOTE:

- Nouns not preceded by an article, possessive or demonstrative pronoun are treated as if they were preceded by an indefinite article. This affects both the ending of the adjectives that modify them and the word order of the phrase or sentence.

Pronouns

Pronouns (**voornaamwoorden**) are words which replace or stand for people, places, things or concepts already named: **hij** (he), **zij** (she), **haar** (her), etc.. There are several kinds of pronouns: personal (subject and object), possessive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, indefinite and reflexive. In Dutch, the pronoun agrees in number and gender with the noun referred to and with whether the noun is animate or inanimate.

The most important difference with English is that pronouns which, in English, are strictly reserved for persons can, in Dutch, also refer to things. While English reserves **it** for things, Dutch uses personal pronouns (**hij**, **haar**, etc.) to refer to things.

Ziet u het boek? Ik zie **het**. (Do you see the book? I see it.)

Wat vindt u van deze jas? Prima, ik koop **hem**. (What do you think of this coat?

Fine, Ill buy it.)

Another major difference is that pronouns for inanimate objects (**het**, **hij** or **haar**) cannot be used as objects of prepositions. This is not the case when they refer to people. Dutch, instead, uses the object pronoun **er** or **daar**. Cf. archaic English usage: thereof, therein, therewith, etc.

Ik wacht op de bus. Ik wacht **erop**. (I am waiting for the bus. I am waiting for it.)

Ik zit op dat krukje. Ik zit **daarop**. (I am sitting on that stool. I am sitting on it.)

See Also:

[Person](#)

[Number](#)

[Personal Pronouns](#)

[Reflexive Pronouns](#)

[Relative Pronouns](#)

[Possessive Pronouns](#)

[Demonstrative Pronouns](#)

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[Indefinite Pronouns](#)

Personal Pronouns

Subject and Object Forms

Pronouns have different forms according to their function (subject or object) in the sentence. Subject pronouns are the subject of a sentence. Object pronouns are used for both direct and indirect objects and with prepositions.

Subject: **Ik** loop naar school. (I walk to school.)

Object: Jan ontmoet **haar** daar. (Jan meets her there.)

The Dutch subject and object pronouns are:

Singular Subject	Object	
ik	mij/me*	(I, me)
jij/je*	jou/je	(you, informal)
u	u	(you, formal)
hij	hem	(he, him/it)
zij/ze*	haar	(she, her/it)
het	het	(it)
Plural Subject	Object	
wij/we*	ons	(we, us)
jullie	jullie	(you, informal)
u	u	(you, formal)
zij/ze*	hen, hun, ze	(they, them)

* The unstressed forms (**me**, **je**, **ze**, and **we**) are commonly used. The stressed forms (**mij**, **jij**, **jou**, and **zij**) are used to add emphasis.

Use of Personal Pronouns

3rd Person pronouns can be used for both persons and things.

3rd Person Singular: When referring to things, **hij** (subject) and **hem** (object) refer to singular nouns of common gender, **het** refers to singular neuter nouns. **Zij** (subject) and **haar** (object) are used for things that are obviously female.

Waar is de krant? Daar ligt **hij**. (Where is the newspaper? There it is.)

Waar? Ik zie **hem** niet. (Where? I don't see it)

Hoe vind je het boek? Ik vind **het** erg goed. (How do you like the book. I think it is very good.)

3rd Person Plural: **zij/ze** (both subject and object) are used to refer to persons and things in the plural. As an object **ze** can be used for persons and things. **Hen** and **hun** can only be used for persons. **Hun** is reserved for the dative indirect object (instances where the preposition *to* would be used in English - give a present to them). In all other situations use **hen**.

Hoe duur waren die bloemen? **Ze** waren 5 gulden. (How much did those flowers cost? They were 5 guilders.)

Waar heb je die bloemen gekocht? Ik heb **ze** op de markt gekocht. (Where did you buy those

flowers. I bought them at the market.)

Wacht jij op Jan en Marieke? Nee, ik wacht niet op **hen**. (Are you waiting for Jan and Marieke? No, I am not waiting for them.)

Geef je die bloemen aan Jan en Marieke? Ja, ik geef **hun** de bloemen. (Are you giving those flowers to Jan and Marieke. Yes, I'm giving them the flowers.)

Daar and **er**: The object pronouns **hem**, **haar** and **ze** can NEVER be used in combination with a preposition when they refer to things! Dutch uses **er** or **daar** in those situations.

Houd jij van voetballen? Nee, **daar** houd ik niet **van**.
(Do you like soccer? No, I don't like it.)

Kijk jij graag naar de televisie? Ja, ik kijk **er** graag **naar**.
(Do you like to watch soccer? Yes, I like to watch it.)

See also:

The Word **er**

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used with reflexive verbs which direct the action of the verb back to the subject. Reflexive pronouns can serve as either direct or indirect objects. Many verbs are reflexive in Dutch, where English does not use a reflexive pronoun.

Ik was **me**. (I wash up.)

Wij haasten **ons**. (We are hurrying.)

The Dutch reflexive pronouns are:

Singular	
me	(myself)
je	(yourself, familiar)
u/zich	(yourself, formal)
zich	(himself, herself, itself, oneself)
Plural	
ons	(ourselves)
je	(yourselves, familiar)
u/zich	(yourselves, formal)
zich	(themselves)

Some very common reflexive verbs:

zich haasten	De man haastte zich naar de trein. The man hurried to the train.
zich herinneren	Ik herinner me die dag nog goed. I still remember that day well.
zich verheugen	Ed verheugt zich op zijn verjaardag. Ed is looking forward to his birthday.
zich vergissen	Zij vergist zich zo vaak. She is often mistaken.
zich vervelen	Zij vervelen zich dood. They are bored to tears.
zich voelen	Ik voel me ziek. I feel sick.

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns introduce subordinate clauses that modify a word (the antecedent) in the preceding main clause. The relative pronouns in Dutch are: **die** or **dat**, **waar** + preposition and preposition + **wie**, and **wat**.

die refers to nouns of common gender (singular and plural) & plural neuter nouns.

dat refers to singular neuter nouns.

Dit is **de** stoel **die** Rietveld ontwierp. (This is the chair that Rietveld designed.)

De Nachtwacht van Rembrandt is **het** bekendste schilderij **dat** in het Rijksmuseum hangt. (Rembrandt's Nightwatch is the most famous painting that hangs in the National Museum.)

Die and **dat** can never be combined with a preposition. In that case Dutch uses:

waar + preposition: to refer to things

preposition + **wie**: to refer to people

Verdi's Aida is een opera **waarvan** ik erg veel houd. (Verdi's Aida is an opera which I love very much.)

Dat is het meisje **met wie** hij getrouwd is. (That is the girl to whom he is married.)

NOTE: **waar** + preposition, if standing together, are always written as one word.

Very often, however, **waar** and the preposition are split.

Verdi's Aida is een opera **waar** ik erg veel **van** houd. (Verdi's Aida is an opera which I love very much.)

wat as a relative pronoun stands for the antecedents: **niets** (nothing), **iets** (something), **veel** (much), and **alles** (everything). **wat** is also used when the entire preceding clause is the antecedent.

Niets wat ik zeg, is belangrijk. (Nothing that I say is important.)

Dit is nou **iets wat** ik mooi vind. (This is something that I really like.)

Veel van wat jij zegt, is onzin. (Much of what you say is nonsense.)

Alles wat ik koop, is erg duur. (Everything that I buy is very expensive.)

Possessives

Possessives indicate ownership. Dutch has possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns.

Dat is mijn boek. (That is my book.)

Dat boek is van mij. (That is a book of mine.)

Dat boek is het mijne. (That book is mine.)

Possessive Adjectives

The possessive adjectives in Dutch are:

singular	mijn	my
	jouw	your (familiar)
	uw	your (formal)
	zijn	his/her/its
plural	ons/onze*	our
	jullie	your
	hun	their

*ons/onze is the only possessive that still acts like an adjective with adjective endings. **ons** is used with singular neuter nouns, all other nouns take **onze**. The other possessive adjectives never change their form.

de jas	onze jas	(our coat)
het boek	ons boek	(our book)
de boeken	onze boeken	(our books)

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are forms of the possessive adjective that can replace the possessive adjective and its noun.

Dat is zijn oude auto. Dat is de zijne. (That is his old car. It is his.)

Wij verkopen onze oude boeken. Wij verkopen de onze. (We sell our old books. We sell ours.)

The substantivized possessive adjective is preceded by the definite article **de** (common gender) or **het** (neuter) and takes the ending **-e**.

mijn trui (de)	de mijne	(my sweater/mine)
mijn overhemd (het)	het mijne	(my shirt/mine)

As well as **de** or **het** **jouwe**, **zijne**, **hare**, **uwe**, **onze** and **hunne**.

NOTE: The possessive adjective **jullie** cannot be used in this manner.

It is not very common in Dutch to express ownership with the possessive pronoun. Much more common is the use of the demonstrative pronoun **die** (common gender) or **dat** (neuter) with **van** followed by the object pronoun.

mijn trui (de)	die van mij	(my sweater/that of me)
mijn overhemd (het)	dat van mij	(my shirt/that of me)
onze truien (de)	die van ons	(my sweaters/those of us)
jullie overhemden (de)	die van jullie	(your shirts/those of you)

Dutch -like English- can add an **-s** ending to a name to form a possessive. Unlike English, however, Dutch allows this only with proper names, not with regular nouns!

de auto van Jan	Jans auto	(Jans car)
de fiets van Sonja	Sonjas fiets	(Sonjas bike)
het huis van Klaas	Klaas huis	(Klaas house)

Note the spelling. Proper names ending in a consonant add the **-s** without an apostrophe. If a name ends in a vowel, add **-s**. Use only an apostrophe after names ending in an **s** sound (names ending in **s**, **z** or **x**).

Demonstratives

Demonstratives refer to someone or something that has been previously mentioned or to indicate distance.

Ik wil met deze man trouwen. (I want to marry this man.)
Niet dit huis, maar dat huis is lelijk. (Not this house, but that house is ugly.)

Demonstrative Adjectives

There are four demonstratives in Dutch:

neuter nouns (het-words)	common nouns (de-words)	
dit	deze	this
dat	die	that
deze	deze	these
die	die	those

de man (the man)	deze man (this man)	deze mannen (these men)
de vrouw (the woman)	die vrouw (that woman)	deze vrouwen (those women)
het kind (the child)	dit kind (this child)	deze kinderen (these children)
het bed (the bed)	dat bed (that bed)	die bedden (those beds)

Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative **die** and **dat** can be used independently as pronouns to refer to a thing mentioned in an earlier sentence.

die is used to refer to nominal phrases, singular nouns of common gender and all plurals.

dat is used to refer to a neuter nominal phrase or a singular neuter noun.

Vind jij **de rode broek** mooi? (Do you like the red pants?)

Ik vind **die** erg mooi. (I think they are very pretty.)

Jan koopt **de witte rozen** voor zijn vriendin. (Jan buys the white roses for his girlfriend.)

Jan koopt **die** voor zijn vriendin. (Jan buys those for his girlfriend.)

Ken je **het laatste boek** van John Le Carre? (Do you know the latest book by John Le Carre?)

Nee, **dat** ken ik niet. (No, I don't know that one.)

NOTE: The demonstrative pronouns **die** and **dat** can NEVER be the object of a preposition. When a demonstrative pronoun has to be used as the object of a preposition, Dutch requires **er** (or **daar**) + **preposition**.

Houd jij van Rock & Roll? Nee, **daar** houd ik niet **van**. / Nee, ik houd **er** niet **van**. (Do you like Rock & Roll? No, I don't like that/it.)

In cases like these, **er** and **daar** can only refer to things.

See also

[Object Pronouns](#)

[The Word er](#)

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns ask for a person or a thing. They introduce a question. The most important Dutch interrogative pronouns are:

wie (who/whom), **wat** (what), **waar** + preposition, **welk/welke** (which).

Wie (who/whom) asks for persons

Wie is die man? (Who is that man?)

Wie zijn die mensen? (Who are those people?)

Met **wie** ga jij naar de film? (With whom are you going to the movie?)

Aan **wie** geeft hij dat geld? (To whom does he give that money?)

wat (what) asks for things, if not accompanied with a noun

Wat eten jullie vanavond? (What are you eating tonight?)

waar (where) + preposition: the pronoun **wat** cannot be combined with a preposition. Dutch uses **waar** in these cases.

Waarvoor heb jij die dingen gekocht? (What did you buy those things for?)

NOTE: **Waar** and the preposition are written together as one word.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to persons or objects that have no clear referent, cf. English one. The Dutch equivalent of English one is **men**.

Dat doet **men** niet! (One doesn't do that!)

Dutch also uses the 2nd person singular **je** (you) and the 3rd person plural **ze** (they) to express the same kind of general unspecified subject or object.

Dat doe **je** toch niet! (You don't do that! [One doesn't do that.])
Ze zijn gek! (They're crazy!)

Other common indefinite pronouns are:

iemand	somebody
niemand	nobody
iedereen	everybody
iets	something
niets	nothing/anything
alles	everything

Some indefinite pronouns can also be used as adjectives:

veel/vele	many
verscheidene	several
sommige	some
andere	other
enkele	a few
een paar	a couple of
alle	all

As adjectives these pronouns have the regular adjective ending. When they refer to people and are used independently as subject or object pronouns they take the ending **-en**.

Velen gingen naar het concert. (Many went to the concert)

Allen vonden we het concert erg mooi. (All of us found the concert very beautiful.)

Indefinite Relative Pronouns

The Dutch indefinite relative pronoun is **wat**. **Wat** refers to the antecedents: **iets**, **niets**, **alles**, **veel**.

Niets wat ik zeg, is belangrijk. (Nothing that I say is important.)

Dit is nou **iets wat** ik mooi vind. (This is something that I really like.)

Veel van wat jij zegt, is onzin. (Much of what you say is nonsense.)

Alles wat ik koop, is erg duur. (Everything that I buy is very expensive).

See also:

[Relative Pronouns](#)

The Word Er

The word **er** (and its more emphatic synonym **daar**) has 4 distinct functions in Dutch.

1. **er** (or **daar**) as adverb of place (cf. English: there).

Kees werkt nu in Amerika. Hij zit **er (daar)** al drie maanden.
(Kees is working in the U.S. now. He has been there for three months already.)

2. **er** as the indefinite subject (cf. English: there).

Is **er** nog wijn? (Is there any wine left?)
Er komen honderd mensen. (There will be a hundred people coming.)

Er as indefinite subject is very common in passive constructions.

Er wordt aan gewerkt. (They are working on it. [Literally: There is being worked on.])

3. **er** is used as a partitive with numerals and words indicating quantities, such as enige/verscheidene (some), veel (many), een paar (a couple), etc. (English: of them)

Hoeveel eieren wilt u? (How many eggs do you want?)
Ik wil **er een** dozijn. (I want a dozen [of them].)

Hoeveel postzegels hebt u nodig? (How many stamps do you need?)
Ik heb **er** veel nodig. (I need a lot [of them].)

4. **er** (or **daar**) as the object pronoun with prepositions to refer to things. See also object pronouns and demonstrative pronouns.

Wacht je op die bus? (Are you waiting for that bus?)
Ja, ik wacht **erop**. (Yes, I'm waiting for it.)
Ja, **daar** wacht ik op. (Yes, I'm waiting for it.)

Because of its many functions, Dutch does not allow **er** more than two times in one sentence.

See Also

[Demonstrative Pronouns](#)

[Object Pronouns](#)

Verbs

Verbs (werkwoorden) describe an action, a process or a state of being. Verbs agree with the person (1st, 2nd or 3rd) and number (singular or plural) of their subject. There are two parts to all Dutch verbs: the stem, and the ending. A stem with the ending **-en** forms the infinitive, which is the form given in dictionaries. When conjugated, verbs indicate tense (present, past or future), voice (active or passive), person (1st, 2nd, and 3rd person), and number (singular and plural.) There are weak verbs, strong verbs, and irregular verbs (mixed verbs.) Weak verbs do not change the stem vowel in the past tense and the past participle. Strong verbs do change the stem vowel in the past tense and the past participle. Irregular verbs may at times change the stem vowel.

Many dictionaries will list the principal parts of the verb:

infinitive	past tense singular	past participle
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Using the principal parts, as a guide, any tense of the verb can be formed.

The stem

The verb conjugation in Dutch is based on the **stem** of the verb. The stem is the infinitive without the **-en** ending. Removing the ending can cause the spelling to change. Which also changes the quality (sound) of the stem vowel.

Infinitive	Stem	
maken	maak	(to make)
spellen	spel	(to spell)
durven	durf	(to dare)
lezen	lees	(to read)

Prefixes

Present Tense

Past Tense (Imperfect)

Present Perfect Tense

Past Perfect Tense (Pluperfect)

Future Perfect Tense

Future

Conditional Mood

Past Participle

Present Participle

Auxiliary Verbs (Helping Verbs)

Modal Verbs

Imperative

Active and Passive Voice

Spelling Rules

Verbs: Strong Conjugation

Verbs: Weak Conjugation

Present Tense

The present tense (onvoltooid tegenwoordige tijd) is used to express what happens or what is happening in the present time.

Ik loop (I walk. / I am walking.)

Dutch also frequently uses the present tense to express what will happen in the future.

Ik vlieg morgen naar New York. (I fly/am flying to New York tomorrow.)

The present tense is formed by adding an ending to the stem, that agrees in person and number with the subject (subject-verb agreement.).

NOTE: Adding an ending to the stem can change the way the last vowel in the stem is spelled. It does not change the sound of the vowel.

Infinitive Stem		to make maken maak	to find vinden vind	to be called heten heet	to sit zitten zit
Singular	Ending				
1. ik	-	maak	vind	heet	zit
2. jij (informal)	- t*	maakt	vindt	heet	zit
	- jij*	maak jij	vind jij	heet jij	zit jij*
u (formal)	- t	maakt	vindt	heet	zit
3. hij/zij	- t	maakt	vindt	heet	zit
Plural					
1. wij	- en	maken	vinden	heten	zitten
2. jullie	- en	maken	vinden	heten	zitten
3. zij	- en	maken	vinden	heten	zitten
		make	find	to be called	sit

When the infinitive ending -en is added, stems that end in -s change to -z and stems that end in -f change to -v :

Infinitive Stem		to travel reizen reis	to live leven leef
Singular	Ending		
1. ik	-	reis	leef
2. jij	- t*	reist	leeft
	- jij*	reis jij	leef jij
u	- t	reist	leeft
3. hij/zij	- t	reist	leeft
Plural			
1. wij	- en	reizen	leven
2. jullie	- en	reizen	leven
3. zij	- en	reizen	leven
		to travel	to live

* When jij (or je) follows the verb, the ending - t is dropped.

Maak jij? Vind jij? Heet jij? Zit jij?

when the stem ends in t, there is no need to add another t to the stem.

Some infinitives do not end in -en, e.g. gaan (to go), zien (to see), or doen (to do). The stem of these verbs is simply formed by dropping the **-n**.

Infinitive	gaan	zien	doen
Stem	ga	zie	doe

See Also

[Spelling Rules](#)

Past Tense

The simple past tense (onvoltooid verleden tijd) is used to narrate a series of events in the imperfect. To recount a singular event in the past, Dutch uses the present perfect tense.

Marieke bakte iedere week een taart. (Marieke baked a pie every week.)
Ik liep vaak door het park. (Often, I walked through the park.)

Weak verbs have regular endings in the past tense.

Singular: stem + **-de** or **-te**
Plural: stem + **-den** or **-ten**

	to make	to answer	to travel	to place
Infinitive	maken	antwoorden	reizen	zetten
Stem	maak	antwoord	reis	zet
Singular	maakte	antwoordde	reisde	zette
Plural	maakten	antwoordden	reisden	zetten

NOTE: Most of the time, the **-de/-den** ending is used. If the stem ends in **t, k, f, s, ch, or p**, the **-te/-ten** ending is required. The Dutch remember these consonants with the aid of the mnemonic device: 't kofschip (a sailing ship) It contains all the letters that take **-te/-ten** in the past tense.

Strong verbs change the stem vowel in the past tense.

Infinitive	past tense singular	past tense plural	
gaan	ging	gingen	(to go)
doen	deed	deden	(to do)
lopen	liep	liepen	(to walk)
schrijven	schreef	schreven	(to write)

There is not much regularity in these vowel changes and strong verbs are best learned by heart.

Mixed verbs are irregular because they have some features of a weak verb and some of a strong verb. Since they are irregular, they should be regarded as strong and are best learned by heart.

Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense (voltooid tegenwoordige tijd) is usually equivalent to the English past tense (e.g. "I went") rather than to the English perfect tense (e.g. "I have gone") which it resembles. It is the tense most often used when speaking about the past. The present perfect tense is a compound tense and is formed using the present tense of the auxiliary verb **hebben** or **zijn** and past participle of the main verb:

Hij heeft gelachen (he has laughed)

Zij is gekomen (she has come)

Most times, **hebben** is the required auxiliary verb. The verb **zijn** is called for when the verb indicates motion and a destination is either mentioned expressly or implied.

For the conjugation of the verbs **hebben** and **zijn**, see Auxiliary Verbs.

In Dutch the past participle of weak verbs is formed as follows:

ge- + **stem+d** or **t**.

Infinitive	stem	Past participle	
werken	werk	gewerkt	(worked)
maken	maak	gemaakt	(made)
antwoorden	antwoord	geantwoord	(answered)
zetten	zet	gezet	(placed)

The **d** or **t** choice is based on the same rules as the **-de/-den** or **-te/-ten** ending in the past tense, i.e. if the stem ends in **t, k, f, s, ch** or **p**, **-t** is the correct ending; in all other cases **-d** is required. The Dutch remember these consonants with the aid of the mnemonic device: 't kofschip (a sailing ship). It contains all the letters that take **-t** in the past.

NOTE: There is no need to add a **-d** or **-t** if the stem already ends in these consonants, hence **geantwoord** and **gezet**.

See also

[Auxiliary Verbs](#)

Past Perfect Tense (Pluperfect)

The past perfect tense (voltooid verleden tijd) is a compound tense and is formed using the past tense of the auxiliary verb **hebben** or **zijn** and a past participle of the main verb:

Hij had gelachen. (He had laughed.)

Zij was gekomen. (She had come.)

The past perfect is used for events that occurred in a sequence one after another in the past.

Past Tense	Marjo ging naar de bakker. (Marjo went to the baker.)
Past Perfect	Marjo was naar de bakker gegaan, voordat zij naar de slager ging. (Marjo had gone to the baker, before she went to the butcher.)

Future Perfect

The use and formation of the future perfect tense ("voltooid verleden toekomstige tijd") is similar to English. In sentences using the present perfect, either **hebben** or **zijn** is the verb that agrees with the subject, which is followed by a past participle. In sentences using the future perfect, the verb that agrees with the subject is **zullen**. It is followed by the past participle of the main verb, which, in turn, is followed by the infinitive of **hebben** or **zijn**, depending on whether the main verb shows motion (**zijn**) or not (**hebben**). (See present perfect tense.)

Present Perfect (hebben/zijn conjugated + past participle)

De man **is** naar huis **gelopen**. (The man has walked home.)

De vrouw **heeft** de misdaad **gepleegd**. (The woman has committed the crime.)

Future Perfect (zullen conjugated + past participle + infinitive hebben/zijn)

De man **zal** naar huis **gelopen zijn**. (The man will have walked home.)

De vrouw **zal** de misdaad **gepleegd hebben**. (The woman will have committed the crime.)

zullen is an irregular verb, even in its present tense conjugation.

Singular

ik
jij
u
hij/zij/het

zal
zal/zult
zal/zult
zal

Plural

wij
jullie
u
zij

zullen
zullen
zal/zult
zullen

See Also

[Present Perfect Tense](#)

Future

The future tense (toekomende tijd) is used to indicate happenings that are anticipated or intended. There are three ways in Dutch to express the future.

1. A common way to express the future is the use of the present tense with an adverb of time to indicate the future.

Ik vlieg morgen naar Washington. (I am flying to Washington tomorrow.)

2. The auxiliary verb **zullen** and the infinitive of the main verb at the end of the sentence.

Ik zal morgen naar Washington vliegen. (I will fly to Washington tomorrow.)

zullen is an irregular verb, even in its present tense conjugation.

Singular

ik

zal

jij

zal/zult

u

zal/zult

hij/zij/het

zal

Plural

wij

zullen

jullie

zullen

u

zal/zult

zij

zullen

3. The auxiliary verb **gaan** and the infinitive of the main verb at the end of the sentence.

Ik ga volgende week een marathon lopen. (I am going to run a marathon next week.)

Past Participle

The past participle (voltooid deelwoord) is used to form the perfect tense and as an adjective to modify nouns.

The past participle of weak verbs is formed in the following manner:

ge + stem of the verb + **d/t**

Infinitive	stem	Past participle	
werken	werk	gewerkt	(worked)
maken	maak	gemaakt	(made)
antwoorden	antwoord	geantwoord	(answered)
zetten	zet	gezet	(placed)

The choice of -d or -t is based on the 't kofschip rule.

Strong verbs have an irregular past participle:

Infinitive	stem	Past participle	
doen	doe	gedaan	(done)
kopen	koop	gekocht	(bought)

NOTE: If the infinitive of the verb starts with an unstressed prefix (such as **be-**, **ge-**, **her-**, **ont-** or **ver-**), the past participle is formed without the **ge-**.

Infinitive	Past Participle
beroven	berooft (robbed)
gelooven	geloofd (believed)
herinneren	herinnerd (remembered)
ontdekken	ontdekt (discovered)
verhuizen	verhuisd (moved)

If a past participle is used as an adjective, it takes an adjective ending as required.

de ongeschreven wet	the unwritten law
de gekookte aardappelen	the boiled potatoes
het afgebrande huis	the burned down house

*See Also

[Spelling Rules](#)

[Adjectives](#)

[Past Tense](#)

Present Participle

The present participle (tegenwoordig deelwoord) corresponds to the English "-ing" form of the verb. Contrary to English, the Dutch present participle is never used to create a verb phrase, but only as an adjective or adverb.

The present participle is formed by adding a **-d** to the infinitive.

Infinitive	Present Participle	
spelen	spelend	(playing)
leven	levend	(living)
zingen	zingend	(singing)

The present participle used as an adjective takes an adjective ending as required. (See Adjectives.)

het spelende kind	(the playing child)
een levend wezen	(a living being)

The present participle used as adverb.

Luid zingend liep hij naar huis. (Singing loudly, he walked home.)

See Also

[Adjectives](#)

[Adverbs](#)

Auxiliary Verbs (Helping Verbs)

The main auxiliary verbs (hulpwerkwoorden) in Dutch are: **hebben** (to have) and **zijn** (to be). They are used in conjunction with other verbs to form the compound tenses, but can also be used independently. The conjugation of both **hebben** and **zijn** is very irregular and should be learned by heart.

Present tense:

	hebben	zijn
ik	heb	ben
jij	hebt	bent
u	hebt/heeft	bent/is
hij/zij	heeft	is
wij	hebben	zijn
jullie	hebben	zijn
u	hebt/heeft	bent/is
zij	hebben	zijn

Note: If **jij** follows the verb, the -t is dropped.
Heb jij? Ben jij?

Past tense:

Singular	had	was
Plural	hadden	waren
Past Participle	gehad	geweest

See also

[Modal Verbs](#)

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Modal verbs (modale hulpwerkwoorden) express possibility, ability, desire, permission, necessity of an action. Modal verbs are generally combined with an infinitive, which is located at the end of the sentence. The most common Dutch modal verbs (besides *zullen* for the future tense) are: **kunnen (can)**, **willen (want)**, **mogen (may, allowed to)**, and **moeten (must)**.

Possibility: Ik kan een fiets kopen. (I am able to (can) buy a bike.)
Ability: Ik kan erg hard fietsen. (I am able to (can) bike really fast.)
Desire: Ik wil patat bestellen. (I want to order French fries.)
Permission: Ik mag snoep kopen. (I am allowed to buy candy.)
Necessity: Ik moet belasting betalen. (I have to pay taxes.)

NOTE: When an infinitive is combined with a modal verb, the infinitive, unlike English, is never preceded by the preposition **te** (to).

The conjugation of modal auxiliaries is irregular both in the present and in the past tense and should be learned by heart.

Present	Past	Present	Past
kunnen (can; be able to)		willen (want; wish)	
ik kan	kon	ik wil	wilde/wou
jij kan/kunt	kon	jij wil/wilt	wilde/wou
u kunt	kon	u wilt	wilde/wou
hij kan	kon	hij wil	wilde/wou
we kunnen	konden	we willen	wilden
jullie kunnen	konden	jullie willen	wilden
zij kunnen	konden	zij willen	wilden
mogen(may; be allowed)		moeten (have to; must)	
ik mag	mocht	ik moet	moest
jij mag	mocht	jij moet	moest
u mag	mocht	u moet	moest
hij mag	mocht	hij moet	moest
wij mogen	mochten	wij moeten	moesten
jullie mogen	mochten	jullie moeten	moesten
zij mogen	mochten	zij moeten	moesten

NOTE: In the future tense, **zullen (shall)** is the working verb while **kunnen**, **moeten**, **mogen** and **willen** are combined with the verb, which describes the action, in a double infinitive at the end.

Possibility: Ik zal een fiets kunnen kopen. (I will be able to buy a bike.)
Ability: Ik zal erg hard kunnen fietsen. (I will be able to bike really fast.)
Desire: Ik zal patat willen bestellen. (I will want to order French fries.)
Permission: Ik zal snoep mogen kopen. (I will be allowed to buy candy.)
Necessity: Ik zal belasting moeten betalen. (I will have to pay taxes.)

The perfect tenses also use this double infinitive construction, but the working verb is **hebben**.

Possibility: Ik heb een fiets kunnen kopen. (I was able to buy a bike.)
Ability: Ik heb erg hard kunnen fietsen. (I was able to bike really fast.)
Desire: Ik had patat willen bestellen. (I had wanted to order French fries.)
Permission: Ik heb snoep mogen kopen. (I have been allowed to buy candy.)

Necessity: Ik heb belasting moeten betalen. (I have had to pay taxes.)

See Also

Present Perfect

Past Perfect

Future

Imperative

The imperative form ("gebiedende wijs") is used for polite commands and requests for action. In an imperative construction, the verb is the first word of the sentence. Generally the stem of the verb (without an ending) functions as the imperative.

Doe de deur dicht. (Close the door. Infinitive: dicht-doen)

Geef mij de suiker, alsjeblieft. (Give me the sugar, please. Infinitive: geven)

The tone of the command can be made less strident by adding the ending -t and using the formal second person pronoun u. (See Pronouns)

A butler to a guest: **Volgt u mij, mijnheer.** (Follow me, sir.)

A businessman to a client: **Gaat u zitten.** (Sit down.)

An imperative can also be softened by the addition of the adverb maar, which is normally translated as but. When used this way, however, it can best be translated as please.

A customer in a bakery: **Geeft u maar twee witte bolletjes.**

(Give me two white rolls, please.)

An imperative can be tempered by the addition of the particle eens/ns.

A doctor to a patient: **Zeg ns aaaa.** (Say aaaa, please.)

One friend to another: **Kom eens langs als je tijd hebt.** (Drop by, if you have the time.)

The infinitive can also be used as an imperative, but this use is very unfriendly.

A supervisor in a factory: **Werken, niet kletsen!** (Get to work, no gossiping!)

An exasperated mother to a child: **En nu slapen!** (And now go to sleep!)

See Also

[Pronouns](#)

Conditional Mood

The conditional mood of the verb qualifies the action of the verb to show that it is possible, but not certain. It can also be used to express a wish that something happen; or to indicate that something will happen if a certain condition is met.

The conditional mood is formed with **zullen** (shall/should).

To express doubt that an action took place, the past tense of **zullen** is used. It agrees with the subject of the sentence in number and person. The verb that is being qualified is placed at the end of the sentence in the infinitive.

Hij gaat naar de bioscoop. (PRESENT: He is going to the movies.)

Hij zou naar de bioscoop gaan. (CONDITIONAL: He was going to go to the movies.)

Zij koopt een brood. (PRESENT: She buys a loaf of bread.)

Zij zou een brood kopen. (CONDITIONAL: She was going to buy a loaf of bread.)

To express a wish, the verb **willen** (to want or to wish) is combined with the verb **zullen**. Zullen agrees with the subject of the clause or sentence in number and person. The infinitive of willen and its object are the last items in the sentence. When the object of willen is a clause, the verb of the clause is in the past tense.

Ik zou willen dat mijn zus dichterbij woonde. (I wish that my sister lived closer.)

The object of willen being the clause that my sister

Ik zou de loterij willen winnen. (I would like to win the lottery.)

The object of willen being the infinitive to win.

To indicate that something will happen if a certain condition is met, the regular past tense is used together with the conjunction **als**. Als is the first word in the clause that states the condition. The verb that is being qualified agrees with the subject of the sentence in person and number. The clause that describes the action that will occur if the condition is met, uses the past tense of the verb **zullen**. In this clause **zullen** agrees with the subject of the clause in person and number.

Als ik jou was, zou ik dat niet doen. (If I were you, I would not do that.)

Als ze op tijd vertrokken waren, zouden ze hier al geweest zijn. (If they had left on time, they would have been here already.)

De auto zou gisteren gerepareerd zijn, als ze een onderdeel gehad hadden. (The car would have been repaired yesterday, if they had had a part.)

Conditional Perfect

The Conditional Perfect is formed with the verb **zou/zouden**, the past participle and **hebben** or **zijn**. In other words, the normal conjugated auxiliary verb of the regular perfect tense sentence (hebben or zijn) becomes an infinitive at the end of the sentence or clause and zou/zouden become the conjugated verb.

Zij zouden graag thui gebleven zijn. (They would have liked to stay home.)

Prefixes

The meaning of a verb can be changed by adding a prefix

schrijven	to write
afschrijven	to deduct (in an account ledger)
inschrijven	to register (for a course)
opschrijven	to write (something) down
overschrijven	to copy (by writing)
beschrijven	to describe (orally as well as written)
herschrijven	to rewrite
verschrijven	to make a mistake in something you have written

Prefixed verbs are found in the dictionary under the prefix, not under the verb.

Prefixes that look like prepositions (af-, in-, op-, over-, etc.) and which are accented, can be separated from the root verb when the verb is the working verb in the sentence.

afschrijven	De bankbediende schreef het bedrag van de rekening af . (The teller debited the amount from the account.)
inschrijven	De directeur schrijft de nieuwe leerlingen in . (The director is registering the new students.)
opschrijven	Ik schrijf je telefoonnummer op . (I am writing your telephone number down.)
overschrijven	Ik schrijf de oefening over . (I am copying the exercise.)

When these prefixed verbs are used in the infinitive, the prefix and the root are written together:

afschrijven	De bankbediende moet het bedrag van de rekening afschrijven . (The teller has to debit the amount from the account.)
inschrijven	De directeur moet de nieuwe leerlingen inschrijven . (The director has to register the new students.)
opschrijven	Ik moet je telefoonnummer opschrijven . (I have to write your telephone number down.)
overschrijven	Ik moet de oefening overschrijven . (I have to copy the exercise.)

Past participles of verbs with separable prefixes are written with the participle -ge- inserted between the prefix and the verb (See Past Participles):

afschrijven	De bankbediende heeft het bedrag van de rekening afgeschreven . (The teller debited the amount from the account.)
inschrijven	De directeur heeft de nieuwe leerlingen ingeschreven . (The director registered the new students.)
overschrijven	Ik heb de oefening overgeschreven . (I copied the exercise.)

Prefixes that do not look like prepositions (be-, her-, ver-, ont-, etc.) are never separated from the root verb. These verbs do not use the particle -ge- to form the past participle.

beschrijven	Ik beschrijf wat er gebeurd is. (I am describing what happened.) Ik heb beschreven wat er gebeurd is. (I described what had happened.)
herschrijven	De journalist herschrijft zijn artikel. (The journalist rewrites his article.) De journalist heeft zijn artikel herschreven . (The journalist has rewritten his article.)
verschrijven	Ik heb me in die brief verschreven . De datum klopt niet. (I made a mistake in that letter. The date is wrong.)

See Also

[Past Participles](#)

Adjectives

Adjectives (bijvoegelijke naamwoorden) describe or modify nouns.

When an adjective modifies a noun it commonly receives the ending **-e**.

de hoge dijken	the high dikes
de snelle treinen	the fast trains
zijn nieuwe broek	his new pants
het vlugge hert	the quick deer

NOTE: The addition of the ending -e can cause spelling changes. (See spelling rules)

There are four instances in which the adjective does **not** take an ending:

1. If an indefinite neuter noun (i.e. a neuter noun with the indefinite article **een** or a noun phrase without an article (\emptyset) [see definite and indefinite articles]) is modified by an adjective, the adjective does not have an -e ending.

een mooi boek	a beautiful book
(\emptyset) Nederlands geld	Dutch money

But: **het** mooie boek and **zijn** Nederlandse geld

2. Adjectives that end in **-en** never take the ending -e.

het houten paard	the wooden horse
de gebakken aardappels	the baked potatoes
een ijzeren hek	an iron fence

3. If the adjective ends in -e, there is no need to add another -e.

het rose strikje	the pink bow
oranje truitjes	orange polo shirts

4. Adjectives used as adverbs or predicate adjectives do not take the ending -e. (See also adverbs.)

Adverb : De man liep snel. (The man ran fast.)

Predicate Adjective: Bill Gates is rijk. (Bill Gates is rich.)

After the pronouns **iets** (something), **niets** (nothing), **veel** (many), **wat** (some), and **weinig** (little) the adjective takes the ending **-s**. The -s is an old partitive genitive case and indicates "of it."

niets leuks (nothing fun)
iets geels (something yellow)

Adjectives have comparative and superlative forms.

See also
[Comparison](#)
[Spelling Rules](#)
[Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)
[Sentences](#)
[Adverbs](#)

Adverbs

Adverbs ("bijwoorden") modify the action of the verb, adjectives or other adverbs, and, generally, describe the when, where, how and why within the sentence.

Jan liep snel naar de bakker. (Jan ran quickly to the baker.)

Mijn auto staat daar. (My car is there.)

Een ontzettend grote auto (an incredibly big car)

There are specific adverbs of place, time, intensification, etc., but most adjectives can also be used as adverbs. Contrary to English, adjectives used adverbially do not have a special adverb ending.

Some common adverbs:

Intensifying adverbs:

heel/erg/zeer (very), **ontzettend/vreselijk** (terribly). These are very common adverbs, used to intensify the meaning of adjectives.

Hij was heel erg/ontzettend ziek. (He was very/terribly ill.)

Adverbs of time:

vandaag (today), **gisteren** (yesterday), **morgen** (tomorrow)

's morgens (in the morning), **'s middags** (in the afternoon), **'s avonds** (in the evening), **overdag** (during the day), **'s nachts** (at night)

onmiddellijk/meteen (immediately), **daarna** (after that), **nooit** (never)

Adverbs of cause:

daarom (therefore), **dientengevolge** (consequently)

Adverbs of place:

hier (here), **daar/er** (there), **overal** (everywhere), **ergens** (somewhere), **nergens** (nowhere),

daarnaartoe/daarheen (motion to there), **daarvandaan** (motion from there)

See Also

[Comparison](#)

Suffixes

There are many words in Dutch that are formed by adding a suffix to the end of a verb, noun, adjective or adverb. Knowing the meaning of a suffix can help to understand a word you have never seen before

There are also some suffixes that form feminine nouns when added to a masculine noun. The usage of these feminine nouns is rare. They are generally seen in employment advertisements.

-in

Masculine	Feminine
baas (boss)	bazin (boss)
held (hero)	heldin (heroine)
kok (chef)	kokkin (cook)

-e

Masculine	Feminine
analist (analyst)	analiste (analyst)
loketist (teller)	loketiste (teller)
pianist (pianist)	pianiste (pianist)
student (student)	studente (student)

-ster

Masculine	Feminine
recordhouder (record holder)	recordhoudster (record holder)
sociaal werker (social worker)	sociaal werkster (social worker)
wielrijder (bicycle rider)	wielrijdster (bicycle rider)

-baar (comparable to English -able)

buigen	(to bend)	buigbaar	(bendable)
leveren	(to deliver)	leverbaar	(deliverable)
dragen	(to wear)	draagbaar	(portable)
voorspellen	(to predict)	voorspelbaar	(predictable)

-erij (comparable to indicating a shop)

bakken	(to bake)	bakkerij	(bakery)
slagen	(to butcher)	slagerij	(butcher shop)
stomen	(to dry clean)	stomerij	(dry cleaners)

-lijk (forming an adjective and an adverb)

duiden	(to point to something)	duidelijk	(clear/clearly)
plaatsen	(to place)	plaatselijk	(local/locally)
natuur	(nature)	natuurlijk	(natural/naturally)
gevaar	(danger)	gevaarlijk	(dangerous/dangerously)

-loos (comparable with English -less)

hopen	(to hope)	hopeloos	(hopeless)
waard	(worth)	waardeloos	(worthless)
tijd	(time)	tijdloos	(timeless)
adem	(breath)	ademloos	(breathless)

-naar (comparable with English -er)

molen	(mill)	molenaar	(miller)
winnen	(to win)	winnaar	(winner)
kunst	(art)	kunstenaar	(artist)
toveren	(to practice magic)	tovenaar	(magician)

-schap (comparable with English -ship or -hood)

vriend	(friend)	vriendschap	(friendship)
kampioen	(champion)	kampioenschap	(championship)
lidmaat	(member)	lidmaatschap	(membership)
vader	(father)	vaderschap	(fatherhood)

-teit (comparable with English -ty)

kwalitatief	(qualitative)	kwaliteit	(quality)
loyaal	(loyal)	loyaliteit	(loyalty)
stabiel	(stable)	stabiliteit	(stability)
mobiel	(mobile)	mobiliteit	(mobility)

-tie (comparable with English -tion)

installateur	(installer)	installatie	(installation)
ventiel	(valve)	ventilatie	(ventilation)
isoleren	(to insulate)	isolatie	(insulation)

-heid (comparable to English -ability or -ness)

buigen	(to bend)	buigbaarheid	(bendability)
dragen	((to wear)	draagbaarheid	(predictability)
duiden	(to point to something)	duidelijkheid	(clearness)

-ing (creates a noun from the verb)

uitdrukken	(to express)	uitdrukking	(expression)
overleven	(to survive)	overleving	(survival)

-en (creates a verb from the noun)

fiets	(bicycle)	fietsen	(to bicycle)
groet	(greeting)	groeten	(to greet)

Comparison

The Dutch **comparative** and **superlative** are formed by adding the endings **-(d)er** and **-st** to the adjective or adverb. Unlike English, and this is a very common mistake among native speakers of English, Dutch almost never creates the comparative and superlative using the adverbs more and most.

NOTE: When used as adjectives, comparative and superlative forms take the adjective ending as necessary. See Adjectives.

To form the Comparative: add **-er** to the adjective; if the adjective ends in **-r**, add **-der**.

To form the Superlative: add the ending **-st** to the adjective.

	comparative	superlative	
snel	sneller	snelst	(fast)
groot	groter	grootst	(large)
mooi	mooier	mooist	(beautiful)
ver	verder	verst	(far)
duur	duurder	duurst	(expensive)
braaf	braver	braafst	(sweet/good)
los	losser	lost	(loose)
vies	viezer	viest	(dirty)

NOTE: The addition of the ending **-er** can cause spelling changes. See Spelling rules.

Irregular Forms of Comparatives and Superlatives:

Some adjectives and adverbs have irregular forms of the comparative and superlative. Because these words are so common, their comparative and superlative should be learned by heart.

positive	comparative	superlative	
goed	beter	best	(good-better-best)
weinig	minder	minst	(little-less-least)
veel	meer	meest	(very-more-most)

See Also

[Adjectives](#)

[Spelling Rules](#)

Conjunctions

Conjunctions ("voegwoorden") are connecting words which combine two or more phrases or clauses into a compound sentence. There are two kinds of conjunctions: coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Coordinating conjunctions link two phrases or sentences of equal value. Subordinating conjunctions join two clauses of unequal value. The subordinate clause modifies the main clause, giving more information about it.

Coordinating:	Ik ga naar de winkel en ik moet melk kopen. (I go to the store and I have to buy milk.)
Subordinating	Ik ga naar de winkel, omdat ik melk moet kopen. (I go to the store, because I have to buy milk.)

There are four **coordinating conjunctions**:

en (and), **of** (or), **want** (because) and **maar** (but).

Coordinating conjunctions have no effect on the word order. The conjugated verb remains the second item in the clause. See Sentences.

Some of the most common **Subordinating conjunctions** are:

Conjunctions introducing a cause:
omdat (because), **daar/doordat** (therefore)

Conjunctions contrasting two or more elements:
hoewel/ofschoon (though/even though), **zowel ... als** (as well as), **noch ... noch** (neither ... nor)

Conjunctions introducing a conditional clause:
als/wanneer (if, when), **indien** (if), **tenzij** (if)

Conjunctions expressing a relation in time:
voordat (before), **nadat** (after), **totdat** (until), **zodra** (as soon as), **terwijl** (while), **als/wanneer** (when)*, **toen** (when)*

* **als** and **wanneer** are used with sentences in the present tense; **toen** is used with sentences in the past tense.

Subordinating conjunctions do have an effect on the word order. In a subordinating clause all the verbs are at the end of the clause. See Word Order.

See Also

[Sentences](#)

[Word Order](#)

Prepositions

Prepositions ("voorzetsels") are put together with a noun phrase to form a prepositional phrase.

Ik ga naar de stad. (I am going to town.)

Often prepositions are used in combination with intransitive verbs (verbs that cannot take a direct object) to express the verbs relation to a person, place or thing.

De man wachtte op de bus. (The man waited for the bus.)

Very often verbs that are intransitive in Dutch are transitive in English.

(Hij keek naar de wedstrijd. He watched the game.)

Dutch verb-preposition combinations are fixed and should be learned together: **kijken naar**, **wachten op**, etc.

The translation of a Dutch preposition into English depends on its context. A single Dutch preposition can have a number of English equivalents.

Some common prepositions and their meanings:

- aan** (on, at, to)
Aan het begin/einde (at the beginning/end)
Ik zit aan de tafel. (I am sitting at the table.)
Het schilderij hangt aan de muur. (The painting is hanging on the wall.)
Ik geef het boek aan hem. (I give the book to him.)
- op** (on: spatially used in the meaning of: on top of)
Het boek ligt op de tafel. (The book is on the table.)
- achter** (after/behind in terms of space)
Het huis is achter die bomen. (The house is behind those trees.)
- na** (after in terms of time)
Hij is na mij aan de beurt. (His turn is after me.)
- bij** (near/close to, with)
Hij woont bij een tramhalte. (He lives close to/near a streetcar stop.)
Jan eet vanavond bij ons. (Jan is eating with us tonight.)
- door** (through, because of/by)
De bus reed door de tunnel. (The bus drove through the tunnel.)
Door hem komen we te laat. (Because of him we are late.)
- in** (in)
We zitten in de auto. (We are in the car.)

- langs** (along)
Langs de weg stonden prachtige bomen. (There were beautiful trees along the road.)
- naast** (next to)
Naast mij zat een deftige heer. (There was a distinguished gentleman next to me.)
- met** (with, by)
Ik ga met Marieke naar de stad. (I am going to town with Marieke.)
Ik ga er met de auto naartoe. (I am going there by car.)
- naar** (to)
Ik ga naar Washington D.C. (I am going to Washington D.C.)
- om** (around, at in time expressions)
Om de hoek is een bank. (There is a bank around the corner.)
Ik zie je om drie uur. (I'll see you at three o'clock.)
- uit** (from, out of)
Ik kom uit Nederland. (I am from the Netherlands.)
- van** (of: possession, from)
Hier is het boek van Jan. (Here is Jan's book.)
Ik kreeg het boek van hem. (I got the book from him.)
- voor** (in front of, for)
Hij staat voor mij in de rij. (He is in front of me in line.)
Ik koop een cadeau voor mijn moeder. (I am buying a present for my mother.)

Numbers

Cardinal numbers, **één** (one), **twee** (two), etc., are used to express precise quantities.

Cardinal numbers from 1 to 20 are:

0	nul	zero
1	één	one
2	twee	two
3	drie	three
4	vier	four
5	vijf	five
6	zes	six
7	zeven	seven
8	acht	eight
9	negen	nine
10	tien	ten
11	elf	eleven
12	twaal	twelve
13	dertien	thirteen
14	veertien	fourteen
15	vijftien	fifteen
16	zestien	sixteen
17	zeventien	seventeen
18	achttien	eighteen
19	negentien	nineteen
20	twintig	twenty

For English speakers, numbers above twenty are put together backwards. The Dutch say one and twenty instead of twenty-one.

Numbers from 21 to 99 are formed by the numbers **één** through **negen** plus the **tientallen** (twenty, thirty, etc.) joined by the conjunction **en**:

eenentwintig (twenty-one), **tweeëntwintig** (twenty-two).

20	twintig	twenty
30	dertig	thirty
40	veertig	forty
50	vijftig	fifty
60	zestig	sixty
70	zeventig	seventy
80	tachtig	eighty
90	negentig	ninety

100 **honderd**
1000 **duizend**
1000000 **miljoen**

Ordinal numbers, such as **eerste** (first) and **tweede** (second), refer to a position in a series.

1ste	eerste	first
2de	tweede	second
3de	derde	third
4de	vierde	fourth
5de	vijfde	fifth
6de	zesde	sixth
7de	zevende	seventh
8ste	achtste	eighth
9de	negende	ninth
10de	tiende	tenth

Negative Construction

There are two ways to negate a sentence in Dutch. In general, sentences are negated with the aid of the adverb **niet** (not). However, indefinite noun phrases, i.e. noun phrases with the indefinite articles **een** or a noun phrase without an article (**Ø**), are negated with **geen** (no).

Ik ga vanavond niet naar de bioscoop. (I am not going to the cinema tonight.)
Ik koop geen nieuwe auto. (I am not buying a new car. Literally: I am buying no new car.)

Negation with geen

geen is substituted for the indefinite article **een** or inserted before a noun phrase without an article (**Ø**).

Ik heb vanavond **een** afspraakje.
(I have a date tonight)

Ik heb vanavond **geen** afspraakje.
(I dont have a date tonight.)

Literally: I have no date tonight.)

Ik spreek (**Ø**) goed Nederlands.
(I speak Dutch well.)

Ik spreek **geen** goed Nederlands.
(I dont speak Dutch well.)

Literally: I speak no good Dutch.)

Negation with niet

The only problem commonly associated with **niet** is where to put it in the sentence. The general rule is that **niet** precedes the element of the sentence one wants to negate. If the sentence as a whole is to be negated, **niet** stands

after

- the conjugated verb
- the definite objects
- single adverbs of time (morgen, vandaag, etc.)
- single adverbs of space (hier, daar, er.)
- predicate nouns.

before

- prepositional phrases
- adverbs (except single adverbs of time and space)
- predicate adjectives
- past participles, infinitives.

Die man is de burgemeester **niet**. (That man is not the mayor.)

Hamburgers zijn **niet** lekker. (Hamburgers are not tasty.)

Ik wil morgen **niet** met mijn moeder in Amsterdam gaan winkelen.

(I dont want to go shopping with my mother in Amsterdam tomorrow.)

Interrogatives

Interrogatives (vraagwoorden) are words that introduce a question. They are normally the first element in the sentence immediately followed by the verb and the subject.

Wat doe je daar? (What are you doing?)

Wie bent u? (Who are you?)

The most common interrogatives in Dutch are:

- wie** (who) **wie** refers to persons and is used both in the singular and the plural.
Wie is die man? (Who is that man?)
Wie zijn die mensen? (Who are those people?)
- wie** can be combined with a preposition.
Met **wie** ga jij vanavond uit? (With whom are you going out tonight?)
- wat** (what) **wat** asks for things and is used both in the singular and in the plural.
Wat is dat voor een auto? (What kind of car is that?)
Wat zijn die dingen? (What are those things?) **Wat** cannot be combined with a preposition, **waar** is used instead.
- waar** (what) **waar** is used instead of **wat** when combined with a preposition. The preposition follows **waar** and is written as one word.
Waaraan denk je? (What are you thinking of?)
Waarop wachten jullie? (What are you waiting for?)
- (where) **Waar** used without a preposition simply means where.
Waar woon jij? (Where do you live?)
- welk/ welke** (which)
welk refers to singular neuter nouns (het-words) and declines like an adjective (See adjectives).
welke refers to singular nouns of common gender and all plurals.
Welk boek vind jij goed? (Which/What book do you like?)
Welke straat is dat? (Which/What street is that?)
- waarom** (why)
Waarom ga jij weg? (Why are you leaving?)
- wanneer** (when)
Wanneer kom jij? (When are you coming?)
- hoe** (how)
Hoe weet je dat? (How do you know?)
hoe can be combined with adjectives in various ways:
hoeveel (how much)
hoe lang (how long)
hoe hoog (how high)

See Also

[Interrogative Pronouns](#)
[Adjectives](#)

Sentences

Sentences are made up of one or more clauses. A clause consists of a subject (a noun or pronoun) and a predicate (what is said about the noun or pronoun). The predicate always contains a verb. In this simple sentence: **De man loopt over de brug.** (The man walks over the bridge.); **De man** is the subject and **loopt** is the predicate.

Adjectives or nouns used along with the verb in order to describe what is being asserted about someone or something, are in the predicative position. In the sentence **De man is een buitenlander.** (The man is a foreigner.); **een buitenlander** is a predicate noun. In the sentence **De man is rijk.** (The man is rich.), **rijk** is a predicate adjective.

Nouns or pronouns which are the target of the action of a verb or of a preposition are called objects. In Dutch there are direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. The direct object of a verb is a noun or pronoun which receives the action of a verb directly. In the sentence **De man koopt tulpen.** (The man buys tulips.), **tulpen** is the direct object of the verb. In Dutch, indirect objects are nouns or pronouns for whom, to whom, or in whose interest something is done, given, or said. In the sentence **De man geeft zijn vrouw tulpen.** (The man gives his wife tulips.), **zijn vrouw** is the indirect object. Indirect objects are often expressed with the aid of the preposition **aan (to)**. **De man geeft tulpen aan zijn vrouw.** (The man gives tulips to his wife.)

Word Order

Normal and Inverted Word Order

Main Clause

Word order rules for the main clause:

1. In a simple sentence, the main clause occupies the first position and the conjugated verb occupies the second position; the subject and the conjugated verb are inseparable. If a sentence does not begin with the subject, inversion occurs: the subject immediately follows the conjugated verb.

De man schildert zijn huis blauw. (The man paints his house blue.)

Gisteren schilderde hij de ramen. (Literally: Yesterday painted he the windows.)

The only exception to this rule are questions without interrogatives, in which case the conjugated verb takes the first position.

Ga je vanavond nog uit? (Are you still going out tonight?)

2. Infinitives and past participles occupy the last position in the sentence or clause.

Ik ben gisteren per trein naar Amsterdam gegaan. (Literally: I have yesterday with the train to Amsterdam gone.)

Hij wil voor de wedstrijd nog erg veel trainen. (Literally: He wants before the game a lot to train.)

3. The elements in between the subject/verb position and, if present, infinitives and the past participle are, in most cases, ordered as follows:
indirect object-(definite) direct object-adverbial phrases/prepositional phrases.

Hij gaf zijn vrouw het cadeau vorige week al. (literally: He gave his wife the present last week already.)

Subordinating clause

1. The conjugated verb moves to the end of the clause; otherwise the same word order as the main clause.

De man moest een lening afsluiten, omdat hij zijn vrouw de duurste bontjas wilde geven. (The man had to get a loan, because he wanted to give his wife the most expensive fur coat.)

NOTE: Since the subordinating clause has a function in the main clause, the subordinating clause as a whole counts as a position in the main clause. If a sentence starts with a subordinating clause, the conjugated verb still has to be in the 2nd position or immediately after the subordinating clause.

Omdat hij zijn vrouw de duurste bontjas wilde geven, moest de man een lening afsluiten. (Because he wanted to give his wife the most expensive fur coat, the man had to get a loan.)

Position of Adverbs

When several adverbs or adverbial phrases occur in a sentence, they tend to be arranged in the order: time, manner, place:

Ik ga morgen met de trein naar Duitsland.
(I am going tomorrow by train to Germany.)

Dates

The days (dagen) of the week (de week) in Dutch are:

maandag	Monday
dinsdag	Tuesday
woensdag	Wednesday
donderdag	Thursday
vrijdag	Friday
zaterdag	Saturday
zondag	Sunday

The names of the months (maanden) are:

januari	January
februari	February
maart	March
april	April
mei	May
juni	June
juli	July
augustus	August
september	September
oktober	October
november	November
december	December

The names of the seasons (seizoenen) are:

de lente/het voorjaar	Spring
de zomer	Summer
de herfst/het najaar	Autumn
de winter	Winter

NOTE: The seasons, months and days of the week always start with a lower case letter.

Grammar Pages

Number

Person

Gender

Strong Verb Conjugation

Weak Verb Conjugation

Number

There are two numbers in Dutch: **singular** and **plural**.

The conjugation of the verb in the present tense and the past tense agrees with the subject of the sentence in person and number (subject-verb agreement):

Ik draag bruine schoenen.

(I am wearing brown shoes.)

draag is 1st person singular, present tense of the verb **dragen** and agrees in number with the 1st person singular subject pronoun **ik**.

See Also

[Number: Singular and Plural](#)

[Pronouns](#)

[Adjectives](#)

[Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)

[Verbs](#)

[Active and Passive Voice](#)

[Past Participle](#)

[Present Participle](#)

Person

Grammatical person indicates the relationship of speaker or writer to the rest of the sentence. First person refers to the speaker or to the speaker group. Second person refers to whomever is being spoken to. Third person refers to the entity being spoken about.

1st person singular	1st person plural	2nd person singular	2nd person plural	3rd person singular	3rd person plural
ik (I)	wij (we)	u/jij (you)	jullie (you)	hij, zij, het (he she, it)	zij (they)

See

[Personal Pronouns](#)

[Reflexive Pronouns](#)

[Possessives](#)

Gender

There are two genders in **Dutch**: **common** and **neuter**.

All nouns in Dutch are either common or neuter.

There are no rules by which the gender of all nouns can be determined. The best way to memorize the gender of words is to memorize the article when learning a new word.

Knowing the gender of every noun is important because adjectives, articles, and pronouns agree in gender and in number with the noun.

See

[Nouns](#)

[Gender: Neuter and Common](#)

[Adjectives](#)

[Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)

[Past Participle](#)

[Present Participle](#)

Conjugation: Strong Verbs

Infinitive
dragen (to carry or to wear)

Present Participle
dragend
Past Participle
gedragen

Singular	Present	Past
1st Person	ik draag	ik droeg
2nd Person Familiar	jij draagt	jij droeg
	draag jij	droeg jij
2nd Person Polite	u draagt	u droeg
3rd Person	hij draagt	hij droeg
3rd Person	zij draagt	zij droeg
3rd Person	het draagt	het droeg

Plural		
1st Person	wij dragen	wij droegen
2nd Person Familiar	jullie dragen	jullie droegen
2nd Person Polite	u draagt	u droeg
3rd Person	zij dragen	zij droegen

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1st Person	ik heb gedragen	ik had gedragen
2nd Person Familiar	jij hebt gedragen	jij had gedragen
	heb jij gedragen	had jij gedragen
	u hebt gedragen	u had gedragen
2nd Person Polite	u heeft gedragen	u had gedragen
3rd Person	hij heeft gedragen	hij had gedragen
3rd Person	zij heeft gedragen	zij had gedragen
3rd Person	het heeft gedragen	het had gedragen

Plural		
1st Person	wij hebben gedragen	wij hadden gedragen
2nd Person Familiar	jullie hebben gedragen	jullie hadden gedragen
2nd Person Polite	u heeft gedragen	u had gedragen
3rd Person	zij hebben gedragen	zij hadden gedragen

Singular	Future Tense	Future Perfect
Singular	zal dragen	zal gedragen hebben
Plural	zullen dragen	zullen gedragen hebben

Conditional

Conditional Perfect

Singular	zou dragen	zou gedragen hebben
Plural	zouden dragen	zouden gedragen hebben
	Imperative	
jij	draag	
jullie	dragen	
u	draagt	

Passive Voice

Present Tense	worden +gedragen	Present Perfect	zijn + gedragen
Past Tense	werden + gedragen	Past Perfect	was/waren + gedragen
Future Tense	zullen + gedragen worden	Future Perfect	zullen + gedragen zijn
Conditional	zou/zouden + gedragen worden	Conditional Perfect	zou/zouden + gedragen zijn

Conjugation: Weak Verbs

Infinitive
leren (to learn)

Present Participle
lerend
Past Participle
geleerd

Active Voice

Singular	Present	Past Tense
1st Person	ik leer	ik leerde
2nd Person Familiar	jij leert leer jij	jij leerde leerde jij
2nd Person Polite	u leert	u leerde
3rd Person	hij leert	hij leerde
3rd Person	zij leert	zij leerde
3rd Person	het leert	het leerde
Plural		
1st Person	wij leren	wij leerden
2nd Person Familiar	jullie leren	jullie leerden
2nd Person Polite	u leert	u leerde
3rd Person	zij leren	zij leerden

Singular	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
1st Person	ik heb geleerd	ik had geleerd
2nd Person Familiar	jij hebt geleerd u hebt geleerd	jij had geleerd u had geleerd
2nd Person Polite	u heeft geleerd	u had geleerd
3rd Person	hij heeft geleerd	hij had geleerd
3rd Person	zij heeft geleerd	zij had geleerd
3rd Person	het heeft geleerd	het had geleerd
Plural		
1st Person	wij hebben geleerd	wij hadden geleerd
2nd Person Familiar	jullie hebben geleerd	jullie hadden geleerd
2nd Person Polite	u heeft geleerd	u had geleerd
3rd Person	zij hebben geleerd	zij hadden geleerd

Singular	Future Tense	Future Perfect
Singular	zal leren	zal geleerd hebben
Plural	zullen leren	zullen geleerd hebben

Singular	Conditional	Conditional Perfect
Singular	zou leren	zou geleerd hebben`

Plural

zouden leren

zouden geleerd hebben

	Imperative
jij	leer
jullie	leren
u	leert u

Passive Voice

Present Tense

worden + geleerd

Past Tense

werden + geleerd

Future Tense

zullen + geleerd worden

Conditional

zou/zouden + geleerd worden

Present Perfect

zijn + geleerd

Past Perfect

was + geleerd

Future Perfect

zullen + geleerd zijn

Conditional Perfect

zou/zouden + geleerd zijn

