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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Grammar 1 · Chapter 5 · Consonant Changes at the Joins

🔀 Consonant Changes at the Joins — Hangváltozások a toldalékoknál

*Vowels harmonise; consonants **assimilate**, which means that where a suffix meets a stem one consonant can take over the sound of the other. The changes are regular and you already met the commonest one: kéz + -val is kézzel, not kézval. This chapter gives you the rules, and the one that you will need again in Hungarian Grammar 1, chapter 7: the j of the definite verb endings.*

THE RULE IN ONE BOX

The **v** of *-val/-vel* and *-vá/-vé* becomes a copy of the last consonant of the stem: *ház* + *-val* = *házzal*. After a vowel it stays *v*: *nő* + *-vel* = *nővel*. The **j** of the definite endings *-ja, -juk, -ják, -játok* becomes *s, sz* or *z* after a stem that ends in *s, sz* or *z*: *olvas* + *-ja* = *olvassa*.

1. The v of -val / -vel

Harmony still chooses back (*-val*) or front (*-vel*), as in Hungarian Grammar 1, chapters 2 and 3. Assimilation then changes the *v* to the last consonant of the stem.

STEM	MEANING	ENDS IN	RESULT WITH -VAL / -VEL
ház	house	z	házzal (not házval)
kéz	hand	z	kézzel
kert	garden	t	kerttel
barát	friend	t	baráttal
tanár	teacher	r	tanárral
ember	person	r	emberrel

STEM	MEANING	ENDS IN	RESULT WITH -VAL / -VEL
asztal	table	l	**asztallal**
film	film	m	**filmmel**
könyv	book	v	**könyvvel** (v + v, no change)
nő	woman	vowel	**nővel** (the v stays)
autó	car	vowel	**autóval**

2. Digraphs are doubled by writing the first letter twice

A stem that ends in a two-letter consonant (*sz, cs, gy, ny, zs*) gets the **long** version of that sound, and Hungarian spelling writes a long digraph by doubling the *first* letter: *sz* becomes *ssz*, *cs* becomes *ccs*, *gy* becomes *ggy*, *ny* becomes *nny*, and *zs* becomes *zzs*.

STEM	MEANING	ENDS IN	RESULT	WHY IT IS WRITTEN THIS WAY
busz	bus	sz	**buszszal → busszal**	sz + sz = ssz
kulcs	key	cs	**kulcscsal → kulccsal**	cs + cs = ccs
hegy	mountain	gy	**hegygyel → heggyel**	gy + gy = ggy
lány	girl	ny	**lánynyal → lánnyal**	ny + ny = nny
garázs	garage	zs	**garázszsal → garázzsal**	zs + zs = zzs

> **Never three the same**
>
> If the stem already ends in a double letter, you do not write three: *toll* (pen) + *-lal* = *tollal*, not *tolllal*. The sound is still long; the spelling just stops at two.

3. -vá / -vé (becoming)

The 'translative' suffix *-vá / -vé* (the thing something turns into) follows the same assimilation as *-val/-vel*: *tanárrá*, *orvossá*, *mérnökké*, *kertté*; after a vowel it keeps its *v*: *fiúvá*. It appears with verbs like *válik* (becomes) and *tesz* (makes into).

STEM	RESULT	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
tanár	tanárrá	**Tanárrá akar válni.** She wants to become a teacher.
orvos	orvossá	**Orvossá lett.** He became a doctor.
mérnök	mérnökké	**Mérnökké lesz.** He will become an engineer.
fiú	fiúvá	**Fiúvá vált.** He turned into a boy.

4. The j of the definite endings

The definite endings of the verb *-ja, -juk, -jük, -ják, -játok* (Hungarian Grammar 1, chapter 7) begin with **j**. When the verb stem ends in **s, sz** or **z**, the j changes into a copy of that sound, which is again written double. Back verbs have a *j* in the 3rd person (*-ja, -ják*); front verbs use *-i* and *-ik* there, which have no *j*, but their 1st person plural *-jük* does, so it assimilates too: *néz* + *-jük* = *nézzük*.

VERB	MEANING	HE/SHE (IT)	WE	THEY
olvas	read	olvas**sa**	olvas**suk**	olvas**sák**
mos	wash	mos**sa**	mos**suk**	mos**sák**
hoz	bring	hoz**za**	hoz**zuk**	hoz**zák**
néz	watch (front)	néz**i**	néz**zük**	néz**ik**
lát	see	lát**ja**	lát**juk**	lát**ják**
ad	give	ad**ja**	ad**juk**	ad**ják**

The last two rows show the *other* case: the j stays when the stem ends in t, d and most other consonants.

5. Voicing in speech: the spelling keeps the stem

In ordinary speech a voiceless consonant before a voiced one is often pronounced voiced (approximately). The *spelling* does not follow it, so you do not need to change what you write; you only need to know that you may hear it. Examples: *képből* (out of the picture) sounds roughly like *kébből*, and *két gyerek* (two children) like *kéd gyerek*. Spelling stays *képből* and *két gyerek*; this is one reason Hungarian spelling is described as 'etymological'. Hungarian Alphabet 1, chapter 11 gave you the voiced and voiceless pairs.

> **Do I have to speak it this way?**
>
> No. If you say *képből* with a clear *p*, a Hungarian will understand you at once; native speakers differ in how strongly they assimilate. The point of this section is to explain why you may hear a pronunciation that does not match the spelling.

🗣️ In Use — Használatban

The rule in real sentences. Read each exchange aloud and spot the pattern.

① Who with? How?

A:

Kivel mész az orvoshoz?

Who are you going to the doctor with?

B:

A lányommal. Busszal megyünk.

With my daughter. We're going by bus.

A:

Én az autómmal megyek, a kulccsal együtt.

I'm going in my car, keys and all.

② Who reads it?

A:

Mit olvasol?

What are you reading?

B:

Egy könyvet. És az újságot ki olvassa?

A book. And who reads the newspaper?

A:

Apa olvassa, és a híreket mi is együtt olvassuk.

Dad reads it, and we read the news together too.

📋 Quick Reference — Gyorstábla

WHERE	WHAT HAPPENS	EXAMPLE
-val / -vel	v copies the last consonant	**házzal** · **kerttel** · **emberrel**
-val / -vel after a vowel	v stays	**nővel** · **autóval**
-val / -vel after a digraph	the first letter doubles	**busszal** · **kulccsal** · **lánnyal**
-val / -vel after a double letter	never three	**tollal**
-vá / -vé	same as -val	**tanárrá** · **mérnökké**
j of -ja / -juk / -ják	copies s, sz, z	**olvassa** · **hozzuk**
j after t, d, other consonants	stays	**látja** · **adjuk**

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Gyakorlás

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. *ház* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

házzal. The v becomes z.

2. *kéz* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

kézzel. Front stem, v becomes z.

3. *kert* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

kerttel. Front stem, v becomes t.

4. *busz* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

busszal. Digraph sz is doubled to ssz.

5. *tanár* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

tanárral. Back stem, v becomes r.

6. *lány* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

lánnyal. Digraph ny is doubled to nny.

7. *kulcs* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

kulccsal. Digraph cs is doubled to ccs.

8. *nő* + -val / -vel

▼ Show answer

nővel. After a vowel the v stays, and ő is front.

9. *olvas* + -ja (he/she reads it)

▼ Show answer

olvassa. The j becomes s, written double.

10. *hoz* + -juk (we bring it)

▼ Show answer

hozzuk. The j becomes z, written double.

Coming up in Chapter 6: Two Conjugations: What and Why. Why Hungarian has two sets of verb endings and the simple test that tells you which one to use.