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HUNGARIAN LESSON

Hungarian Grammar 3 · Chapter 5 · Future and Helpers

⏩ The Future — A jövő idő

*Hungarian has no future ending. It has three ways to talk about what will happen: a helper verb **fog** plus the infinitive, the plain present with a time word, and **lesz** for "will be". The same infinitive that follows fog also follows a family of helper verbs (akar, tud, kell, lehet, szabad), and kell and its relatives have a special form, the **personal infinitive** (mennem kell, "I have to go"). This chapter puts all of that together.*

THE RULE IN ONE BOX

The future is **fog + infinitive** (*fogok olvasni*, I will read). The helper verbs also take the infinitive: *akarok menni* (I want to go). For *have to*, *may* and *be allowed*, the infinitive takes **personal endings** that show who has to act: *mennem kell* (I have to go), *menned kell* (you have to go), *mennie kell* (he or she has to go).

1. The future with fog

The helper *fog* carries the person ending. It has two sets, as every verb does: the **indefinite** set when there is no object or an indefinite one, and the **definite** set when the object is definite. The main verb stays in the infinitive.

PERSON	INDEFINITE FOG	DEFINITE FOG
I	**fogok**	**fogom**
you (sg)	**fogsz**	**fogod**
he, she	**fog**	**fogja**
we	**fogunk**	**fogjuk**
you (pl)	**fogtok**	**fogjátok**
they	**fognak**	**fogják**

HUNGARIAN	ENGLISH	NOTE
Fogok olvasni.	I will read.	no object
Fogok olvasni egy könyvet.	I will read a book.	indefinite object
Fogom olvasni a könyvet.	I will read the book.	definite object: *fogom*
Nem fogsz jönni?	Won't you come?	negative question
Mit fogtok csinálni?	What will you (pl) do?	question word

The word order is flexible. *Fog* usually comes first in a neutral sentence (**Fogok olvasni**), and the infinitive can come first when it carries the emphasis (**Olvasni fogok**, I will READ). Negation stands before *fog*: **Nem fogok olvasni**. Word order and focus have a course of their own later.

> **Watch out: fog also means "hold"**
>
> *Fog* is also an ordinary verb meaning "hold, catch": **Fogom a kezét** means "I am holding his/her hand". With an infinitive it is the future: **Fogom olvasni a könyvet** (I will read the book). If there is no infinitive, it is "hold".

2. Other ways to talk about the future

The present with a time word

For a fixed plan, Hungarian often uses the plain present and a time word: **Holnap megyek moziba** (Tomorrow I'm going to the cinema). The time word does the work that *fog* does elsewhere. Verbs with a prefix such as *meg-* or *el-* often have a future meaning in the present form; that belongs to the course on prefixes and aspect.

TIME WORD	MEANING	EXAMPLE
holnap · holnapután	tomorrow · the day after tomorrow	**Holnap dolgozom.**
jövő héten · jövőre	next week · next year	**Jövőre Szegedre költözöm.**

TIME WORD	MEANING	EXAMPLE
hamarosan · nemsokára	soon · before long	**Hamarosan jövök.**
majd	later, then (a loose future)	**Majd hívlak.**

lesz: will be

The future of *van* is **lesz**, and it is a full verb, not a helper: **leszek, leszel, lesz, leszünk, lesztek, lesznek**.

HUNGARIAN	ENGLISH
Holnap otthon leszek.	Tomorrow I'll be at home.
Orvos leszek.	I'll be a doctor.
Lesz időm.	I'll have time.
Mi lesz?	What will happen?

3. Helper verbs with the infinitive

These verbs take an infinitive and are conjugated for the person. They use the indefinite set when the verb has no object and the definite set when the object is definite.

VERB	MEANING	EXAMPLE
akar	want	**Akarok menni.** · I want to go.
tud	can, know how to	**Tudok úszni.** · I can swim.
szeret	like to	**Szeretek olvasni.** · I like reading.
kezd	begin to	**Kezdek tanulni.** · I'm beginning to learn.
próbál	try to	**Próbálok aludni.** · I'm trying to sleep.
fog	will	**Fogok jönni.** · I will come.

The present of *akar* and *tud* is regular: **akarok, akarsz, akar, akarunk, akartok, akarnak** and **tudok, tudsz, tud, tudunk, tudtok, tudnak**. With a definite object the definite set appears: **Akarom a könyvet** (I want the book). For the past of these verbs, see Chapter 4.

4. kell, lehet, szabad and the personal infinitive

Three words say what you **must**, **may** and are **allowed** to do. They never change for person: the person is shown by putting the **infinitive in a personal form**.

WORD	MEANING	IMPERSONAL (GENERAL)	PERSONAL
kell	must, have to	**Menni kell.** · One has to go.	**Mennem kell.** · I have to go.
lehet	it is possible, may	**Lehet kérdezni?** · May one ask?	**Lehet kérdeznem?** · May I ask?
szabad	be allowed	**Szabad ülni.** · One may sit.	**Szabad kérdeznem?** · May I ask?

The personal infinitive

Take the infinitive and add a personal ending after *-ni*: *-nom, -nod, -nia, -nunk, -notok, -niuk* (back) or *-nem, -ned, -nie, -nünk, -netek, -niük* (front). The endings look like the possessive endings of Hungarian Grammar 2 8.

PERSON	MENNI (FRONT)	OLVASNI (BACK)	DOLGOZNI (BACK)	ENNI (FRONT)
I	**mennem**	**olvasnom**	**dolgoznom**	**ennem**
you (sg)	**menned**	**olvasnod**	**dolgoznod**	**enned**
he, she	**mennie**	**olvasnia**	**dolgoznia**	**ennie**
we	**mennünk**	**olvasnunk**	**dolgoznunk**	**ennünk**
you (pl)	**mennetek**	**olvasnotok**	**dolgoznotok**	**ennetek**

PERSON	MENNI (FRONT)	OLVASNI (BACK)	DOLGOZNI (BACK)	ENNI (FRONT)
they	menniük	olvasniuk	dolgozniuk	enniük

The person who must act is often named in the dative (Hungarian Grammar 2 3), but it can be left out because the personal infinitive already says who.

HUNGARIAN	ENGLISH
(Nekem) mennem kell.	I have to go.
(Neked) dolgoznod kell.	You have to work.
(Neki) olvasnia kell.	He/she has to read.
(Nekünk) várnunk kell.	We have to wait.
Mennem kellett.	I had to go.
Nem kell mennem.	I don't have to go.
Nem szabad menned.	You mustn't go.

> **Watch out: "don't have to" and "mustn't" are different words**
>
> **Nem kell** means "need not": **Nem kell mennem** (I don't have to go). **Nem szabad** means "must not, not allowed": **Nem szabad dohányoznod** (You mustn't smoke). English "must not" uses *szabad*, not *kell*.

> **kell has a second job: "need"**
>
> With a noun and the dative, *kell* means "need": **Nekem kell egy telefon** (I need a phone, Hungarian Grammar 2 3). With an infinitive it means "have to". The structure tells you which.

🗣️ In Use — Használatban

The future and the helper verbs in short exchanges.

① Tomorrow

A:

Mit fogsz csinálni holnap?

What will you do tomorrow?

B:

Dolgozni fogok, de este moziba megyek.

I'll be working, but in the evening I'm going to the cinema.

A:

Én is moziba megyek. Majd hívlak.

I'm going to the cinema too. I'll call you.

② Have to

A:

Mehetünk?

Can we go?

B:

Sajnos még dolgoznom kell.

Unfortunately I still have to work.

A:

Mennyi ideig kell még dolgoznod?

How much longer do you have to work?

B:

Egy órát.

An hour.

③ Can you swim?

A:

Tudsz úszni?

Can you swim?

B:

Igen, szeretek úszni. Holnap is fogok úszni.

Yes, I like swimming. I'll swim tomorrow too.

A:

Hol leszel szombaton?

Where will you be on Saturday?

B:

Szegeden leszek, a szüleimnél.

In Szeged, at my parents'.

📋 Quick Reference — Gyorstábla

IDEA	FORM	EXAMPLE
Future	fog + infinitive	**Fogok olvasni.** · **Fogom olvasni a könyvet.**
fog (indefinite)	fogok, fogsz, fog, fogunk, fogtok, fognak	
fog (definite)	fogom, fogod, fogja, fogjuk, fogjátok, fogják	
Future of van	lesz: leszek, leszel, lesz, leszünk, lesztek, lesznek	**Otthon leszek.**
Helper verbs	akar, tud, szeret, kezd, próbál + infinitive	**Tudok úszni.**
Must, may, allowed	kell, lehet, szabad + personal infinitive	**Mennem kell.**
Personal infinitive	-ni + -m, -d, -a/-e, -unk/-ünk, -otok/-etek, -uk/-ük	**mennem** · **olvasnod** · **dolgoznia**
Don't have to · mustn't	nem kell · nem szabad	**Nem kell mennem.** · **Nem szabad menned.**

🖍️ Try It Yourself — Gyakorlás

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. "I will read": *olvasni*.

▼ Show answer

Fogok olvasni.

2. "You (sg) will go": *menni*.

▼ Show answer

Fogsz menni.

3. "We will work": *dolgozni*.

▼ Show answer

Fogunk dolgozni.

4. "I will read the book" (definite object).

▼ Show answer

Fogom olvasni a könyvet. The definite object calls for *fogom*.

5. "Tomorrow I'll be at home."

▼ Show answer

Holnap otthon leszek.

6. "I have to go."

▼ Show answer

Mennem kell.

7. "You (sg) have to work."

▼ Show answer

Dolgoznod kell.

8. "He/she has to read."

▼ Show answer

Olvasnia kell.

9. "You (sg) mustn't go."

▼ Show answer

Nem szabad menned.

10. Fix the sentence: *Fogok olvasom a könyvet* (I will read the book).

▼ Show answer

Fogom olvasni a könyvet. The helper takes the definite ending, and the main verb stays in the infinitive.

Coming up in Chapter 6: The Conditional. The marker *-na / -ne* and the first person *-nék*, indefinite and definite paradigms, polite requests such as *szeretnék* and *kérnék*, *ha … -na* clauses and the past conditional.