

## Complete Reference — 44 Letters & Digraphs

**Hungarian Alphabet Overview:** Hungarian has 44 letters in its alphabet, consisting of **14 vowels** (the familiar a, e, i, o, u plus ö and ü, each with a long version: á, é, í, ó, ú, ő, ű) and **30 consonants and consonant digraphs** (including unique combinations like gy, ny, sz, zs that are considered single letters).

This page serves as a pronunciation and reference guide for all letters. The logical and consistent structure of Hungarian's vowel system is one reason for the language's elegant predictability!

Hungarian distinguishes between **short vowels** (a, e, i, o, u, ö, ü) and their **long counterparts** (á, é, í, ó, ú, ő, ű). Long vowels are held longer when pronounced, and changing from short to long changes the meaning of a word. This is one of the most important patterns in Hungarian!

### A & Á

SHORT

#### A a

Aw, what a pity. This letter looks like an A but is pronounced more like aw or like the a in "what."

LONG

#### Á á

Same aw sound as "A" but held longer. Example: vár (castle, holds the á) vs. var (waits, short a).

### E & É

SHORT

#### E e

Like the "e" in "bet" — a short, open vowel sound.

LONG

#### É é

Same as "E" but held longer, with a higher pitch. Example: ég (burns) vs. meg (past marker).

### I & Í

SHORT

### O & Ó

SHORT

**I i**

Like the "i" in "bit" — a short, front vowel sound.

LONG

**Í í**

Same as "I" but held longer, clearer and more pronounced. Example: írni (to write).

**O o**

Like the "o" in "not" — a short, rounded back vowel.

LONG

**Ó ó**

Same as "O" but held longer, deeper and more pronounced. Example: só (salt).

**U & Ú**

SHORT

**Ű ű**

Like the "oo" in "book" — a short, rounded back vowel.

LONG

**Ú ú**

Same as "U" but held longer, deeper and more pronounced. Example: út (road).

**Ö & Ő**

SHORT

**Ö ö**

No equivalent in English; similar to German ö. Pronounce like "uh" with lips rounded, between "oh" and "ee."

LONG

**Ő ő**

Same as "Ö" but held longer. The double accent marks it as a distinct long vowel.

**Ü & Ű**

SHORT

**Ü ü**

No equivalent in English; similar to German ü. Pronounce like "ee" with lips rounded, a high front vowel.

LONG

**Ű ű**

Same as "Ű" but held longer. The double accent marks it as a distinct long vowel.

Hungarian consonants include familiar single letters (b, d, f, h, k, etc.) and several important digraphs — letter pairs that are considered single letters of the Hungarian alphabet. The most common digraphs are **cs**, **gy**, **ly**, **ny**, **sz**, **ty**, **zs**. These must be treated as indivisible units.

## CONSONANTS A–L

### B b

Like English "b" in "bed."

### C c

Always "ts" (like in "cats"), never soft "s" as in English "city."

### CS cs

A single letter! Pronounced like English "ch" in "church" or "choose." Example: csak (only).

### D d

Like English "d" in "dog."

### F f

Like English "f" in "fire."

### G g

Always hard "g" (like in "go"), never soft "j" sound as in English "gem."

### GY gy

A single letter! Pronounced like "dy" in "dye" or "duty." Example: magyar (Hungarian), vagyok (I am).

### H h

Like English "h" in "hat."

**J j**

Like English "y" in "yes," not like English "j" in "jump."

**K k**

Like English "k" in "kick."

**L l**

Like English "l" in "light."

**LY ly**

A single letter! Pronounced like English "y" in "yes" (similar to J). Example: lyuk (hole).

## CONSONANTS M–Z

**M m**

Like English "m" in "mother."

**N n**

Like English "n" in "no."

**NY ny**

A single letter! Pronounced like "ny" in "canyon" or Spanish "ñ." Example: nyomás (pressure).

**P p**

Like English "p" in "pen."

**Q q**

Rare in Hungarian; used mostly in borrowed words. Pronounced "kv" (like English "qu").

**R r**

Rolled or lightly tapped (not guttural like German or French). Like a "flipped r" or the "r" in Spanish or Italian.

**S s**

Like English "sh" in "ship" — always this sound. (The English "s" in "sit" is represented by SZ in Hungarian!)

**SZ sz**

A single letter! Pronounced like English "s" in "sit." This is in your surname, Osztromok! (os-TROM-ok)

**T t**

Like English "t" in "tip."

**TY ty**

A single letter! Pronounced like "ty" in "tune" or Italian "tia." Example: tyúk (chicken).

**V v**

Like English "v" in "victory."

**W w**

Rare in Hungarian; used in borrowed words. Typically pronounced like "v."

**X x**

Rare in Hungarian; used in borrowed words. Pronounced "ks."

**Y y**

Like English "y" in "yes," not the vowel sound in English "fly."

**Z z**

Like English "z" in "zoo."

**ZS zs**

A single letter! Pronounced like "zh" in "measure" or English "s" in "vision." Example: zseb (pocket).

## ✦ THE VOWEL SYSTEM'S LOGICAL BEAUTY

Hungarian's vowel system is remarkably consistent: 5 basic vowels (a, e, i, o, u) + 2 unique vowels (ö, ü) = 7 short vowels. Each has a long counterpart marked with an accent: á, é, í, ó, ú, ő, ű. This 7+7 structure is one reason Hungarian is considered a beautifully logical language — and possibly one reason for the prevalence of Hungarian mathematical geniuses!

## DIGRAPHS ARE SINGLE LETTERS

Remember: **CS, GY, LY, NY, SZ, TY, ZS** are each a **single letter** of the Hungarian alphabet, not two letters. You can't split them! This is similar to how English speakers understand "th" phonetically, but Hungarian officially recognizes these digraphs as distinct letters. When alphabetizing or counting letters, treat each digraph as one unit.

#### ⚠ **CONSONANTS THAT DIFFER FROM ENGLISH EXPECTATIONS**

- **C** = "ts" (never soft "s" as in "city")
- **S** = "sh" (like English "sh" in "ship")
- **SZ** = "s" (like English "s" in "sit")
- **G** = **always hard** (like "go," never soft like "gem")
- **J and LY** = "y" (not like English "j" or "l")
- **ZS** = "zh" (like "measure" or "vision")