

Second Edition



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Basic Dutch

A Grammar and Workbook

Jenneke A. Oosterhoff

BASIC DUTCH

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A Grammar and Workbook

Second edition

Jenneke A. Oosterhoff

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PREFACE

This book is a basic Dutch reference grammar with exercises for absolute beginners or learners who want to refine their knowledge of grammatical structures. Each unit presents a grammatical topic with an introduction and where necessary an overview in a table, followed by clear and concise explanations in English and ending with a series of contextualized exercises. The explanations are illustrated by examples in Dutch, and some images are included to provide a humorous context.

This basic grammar workbook is suitable for independent learning as well as for classroom use. Its contents cover the materials typical for first-year curriculum Dutch as a foreign language taught at university level. Using vocabulary associated with topics featured in typical first-year Dutch language textbooks, it can accompany any such textbook used in classroom language instruction.

Spelling is very important in Dutch grammar. This edition therefore includes a separate chapter on spelling rules as well as an appendix on pronunciation. It also provides clear explanations of grammatical terms, contrasted with examples in English. The second appendix gives an overview of pronouns, and the third appendix contains strong verbs organized according to their vowel changes in past tense.

Language is best learned and practiced in context. Sample sentences and exercises in traditional grammar books often lack such context. Most examples and exercises in this book, however, are written in context, using an imaginary Dutch family of four and their circle of friends and neighbors to provide a situational context. The exercises teach the learner to first recognize the grammar structure and then apply it in more complex forms. For classroom purposes, some speaking exercises suitable for group work are also included. For immediate feedback, a key to the exercises is provided at the back of this book.

For help in writing this grammar workbook, I have consulted many excellent reference grammars and other Dutch grammar workbooks, first and foremost the *Algemene Nederlandse Spraakkunst* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1997), but also works such as *Dutch: An Essential Grammar* (Routledge, 2002), *De Regels van het Nederlands* (Wolters Noordhoff, 1994) and *Nederlandse Grammatica voor Anderstaligen* (Utrecht, 1985). I thank my colleagues and students for providing helpful feedback for this new edition.

Jenneke A. Oosterhoff
St. Paul, June 2023

Further Reading

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UNIT ONE

Spelling in Dutch

Introduction

Incorrect spelling of a word can lead to misunderstandings. The presence or absence of even one vowel or consonant can change the meaning of a word. It is therefore important to begin with a few basic spelling rules that learners of Dutch need to know specifically for verb conjugation, adjective formation, the plural of nouns, the diminutive, and other grammatical forms.¹

Syllables

Spelling is determined largely by the way words are divided into syllables, and whether syllables are open or closed. A syllable is a unit of organization for a sequence of sounds made up of at least one vowel and surrounded by (optional) consonants. Syllables help us separate words at the end of a line, for instance, and they can help learners of a language understand the conventions of the spelling of that language. For the purposes of this book, it is important to understand the difference between an open and a closed syllable. In Dutch, an open syllable ends in a long vowel or a diphthong: **lo-pen** (walk), **za-den** (seeds), **roe-pen** (call), **bui-ten** (outside). A closed syllable ends in a consonant: **tan-den** (teeth), **kaas** (cheese), **kip-pen** (chickens), **buurt** (neighborhood).

Vowels

In a closed syllable, the vowels **a**, **o**, **e**, and **u** are doubled when they are long. Making a mistake with this would change the meaning of the word. For example, in the word **kaas** (cheese), the vowel is long, while in the word **kas** (cash box, greenhouse), it is short. Similarly, **boot** (boat) is written with a double **o**, while **bot** (bone) has only one single **o**. Note also the difference between **veel** (much, many) and **vel** (skin) and between **fuut** (crested grebe) and **fut** (spunk).

In an open syllable, however, long **a**, **o**, **e**, and **u** are written single. Consider the difference between the closed syllable **taal** (language) and the open syllable **ta-len** (languages). Similarly, the long vowel **u** in the closed syllable **huur** (rent) is written double, but the long vowel **u** in **hu-ren** (to rent) is single. Examples with the other

vowels are **deel** (part) and **de-len** (parts, divide) and **boot** (boat) versus **bo-ten** (boats). Note that I have used the dashes only for clarity.

These spelling rules are important to know for verb conjugation. A long vowel in the stem of the verb is written single in the infinitive and the plural, but double in singular: **ik huur** (I rent), **wij huren** (we rent). In the plural forms of nouns, we see the same rule at work: **het raam** (the window), **de ramen** (the windows). Also, the adjective ending **-e** opens the syllable and makes the double vowel single: **een duur boek** (an expensive book), but **een dure jurk** (an expensive dress).

The vowels i and ie

When it is long, the Dutch vowel **i** as in **kip** (chicken), **zitten** (to sit), **dik** (fat), is written as **ie** or **i**. This depends on the position of the vowel in the word, and on whether the syllable is open or closed.

The long **ie** appears

- in closed syllables: **niet** (not), **fietsen** (bike), **bier** (beer), **liefde** (love)
- at the end of a word: **politie** (police), **balie** (reception desk), **industrie** (industry)
- in stressed open syllables: **dieren** (animals), **vliegen** (fly), **spiegel** (mirror).

The long **i** appears

- in unstressed open syllables: **figuur** (figure), **dimensie** (dimension), **ritueel** (ritual)
- in the suffix **-isch**: **romantisch** (romantic) Note: **-isch** is pronounced **-ies**.
- in many loan words: **taxi**, **bikini**, **alibi**.

Consonants

Closed syllables can end in more than one consonant, but they never end in two identical consonants. So you can have words and syllables that end in **-rts**, **-sch**, **-rfst**, **-ngst** such as **nerts** (mink), **tragisch** (tragic), **herfst** (autumn), and **angst** (fear), but never in **-tt** or **-ff** or **-pp**, for instance. Also, after a short vowel, a single consonant is doubled when it is followed by another unstressed syllable. This is particularly important in verb conjugation, adjective endings, and the plural of nouns.

In verb conjugation, a double consonant after a short vowel is reduced to a single consonant when the verb is conjugated in singular. For example, the double **t** in the infinitive **zitten** (to sit) becomes single in **ik zit** (I sit), **jij/u zit** (you sit), **hij/zij zit** (he/she sits), but in the plural forms, the **t** is double again: **wij/jullie/zij zitten** (we/you/they sit). A double consonant occurs between vowels, but never at the end of a word or before another consonant.

In the formation of the plural of nouns, it is important to remember to double the consonant in words and syllables with a short vowel before a single consonant, such as **kip** (chicken)–**kippen** (chickens), **zak** (bag)–**zakken** (bags), and **pan** (pan)–**pannen** (pans). If one wrote only one consonant, the meaning of the word would

change. For example, writing **zakken** with only one **k** as **zaken** changes the meaning of the word to business(es), not bags.

This rule also applies to adjective endings. With the ending **-e** added to it, an adjective with a short vowel followed by one consonant must have a double consonant. For example, the adjective **wit** (white) before **wijn** (wine) becomes **witte wijn** (white wine). Similarly, **zwak** (weak) with **schakel** (link) becomes **zwakke schakel** (weak link).

Devoicing

At the end of a word or syllable and when positioned before another voiceless consonant, voiced consonants such as **v** and **z** are written as **f** and **s**. This happens, for instance, in verb infinitives with **v** and **z** in the stem such as **geven** (give), **lezen** (read), **blijven** (stay), and **grazen** (graze). When conjugated in singular, **v** changes to **f**, and **z** changes to **s**. And so the singular forms of **geven** are **ik geef** (I give), **jij/u geeft** (you give), **hij/zij geeft** (he/she gives), and the singular forms of **lezen** are **ik lees** (I read), **jij/u leest** (you read), **hij/zij leest** (he/she reads).

Voicing

In a voiced environment, however, the hard consonants **f** and **s** become soft. For example, a voiceless consonant at the end of a word or syllable becomes voiced between vowels. This happens in the plural of nouns, for instance. In the word **druif** (grape), the **f** at the end turns into **v** to make the plural form **druiven** (grapes). Similarly, **huis** (house) becomes **huizen** (houses) in plural. The same rule applies to adjectives ending in **f** or **s**. The adjective **doof** (deaf) combined with **man** (man) turns into **een dove man** (a deaf man). The adjective **grijs** (gray) with **jurk** (dress) becomes **een grijze jurk** (a gray dress).

These are some basic spelling rules that one needs to know for many of the grammar structures in this book. As they appear in the following units, brief reminders on spelling are added for clarity.

Exercise 1.1

Divide the words into syllables. Example: boekenkast ⇒ boe-ken-kast

1 regenjas	_____	6 theekopje	_____
2 woonkamer	_____	7 eenentwintig	_____
3 lokomotief	_____	8 telefoneren	_____
4 banketbakker	_____	9 fantastisch	_____
5 herfstweer	_____	10 eenvoudig	_____

Exercise 1.2

In the following words, the plural ending is always **-en**. Just based on what you already know about Dutch spelling rules, can you form the plural of the following nouns?

1 bal _____
 2 naam _____
 3 bed _____
 4 doos _____
 5 pak _____

6 boom _____
 7 les _____
 8 schuur _____
 9 raaf _____
 10 bom _____

Exercise 1.3

Based on what you know about Dutch spelling rules, can you now form the first person singular and the first person plural of the following verbs?

1 spelen	ik _____	wij _____
2 schrijven	ik _____	wij _____
3 vallen	ik _____	wij _____
4 zeggen	ik _____	wij _____
5 lezen	ik _____	wij _____
6 zetten	ik _____	wij _____
7 raden	ik _____	wij _____
8 lopen	ik _____	wij _____
9 bakken	ik _____	wij _____
10 nemen	ik _____	wij _____

Glossary of new words

bakken to bake
bal, de ball

banketbakker, de
 pastry chef

bed, het bed

bom, de bomb

boom, de tree

doos, de box

eenentwintig twenty-
 one

eenvoudig simple

fantastisch fantastic

herfstweer, het fall
 weather

les, de lesson

lezen to read

lokomotief, de engine

lopen to walk

naam, de name

nemen to take

pak, het suit, package

raaf raven

raden to guess

regenjas, de rain coat

schrijven to write

schuur, de shed, barn

spelen to play

telefoneren to phone

theekopje, het tea cup

vallen to fall

woonkamer, de living
 room

zeggen to say

zetten to put, set

Note

1. For this introduction to spelling, I have consulted the guidelines of the Taalunie as published on their website woordenlijst.org.

UNIT TWO

Subject pronouns

Introduction

Two basic elements of a grammatical sentence are a subject and a verb: **Ik ga** ‘I go’, **Jij eet** ‘You eat’, **Peter werkt** ‘Peter works’, **We spelen** ‘We play’. And because many sentences begin with a subject in the form of a personal pronoun, this chapter is an introduction to the subject forms of the personal pronoun. This pronoun can refer to people as well as things.

Subject forms of the personal pronoun: overview

Singular		
1st person	ik	I
2nd person	jij/je (informal), u (formal)	you
3rd person	hij (masculine), zij/ze (feminine), het (neuter)	he, she, it
Plural		
1st person	wij/we	we
2nd person	jullie (informal), u (formal, verb in singular)	you
3rd person	zij/ze	they

Notes and examples

- 1 Personal pronouns refer to both persons and things. A person might be introduced by his or her name, and further statements about that person begin with the personal pronoun that corresponds in gender and number. See the following examples:

Henk woont in Zeist. Hij werkt in Utrecht.
Henk lives in Zeist. *He* works in Utrecht.

Maria is lerares. Ze werkt part-time.
Maria is a teacher. *She* works part-time.

In reference to objects, the subject pronoun **het** is used for nouns in the singular that are neuter (**het**-words), **hij** is used for nouns in the singular that are masculine and feminine (**de**-words), and **zij**, **ze** is used for nouns in the plural. The Dutch almost never refer to an object using the feminine personal pronoun **zij**, **ze**, as is sometimes done in English. Commonly, in Dutch, we use the subject pronoun **hij** or **het** where English would use ‘it’. Examples:

Waar is het boek? Het zit in mijn tas.

Where is the book? It’s in my bag.

Hoe oud is je huis? Het is 80 jaar oud.

How old is your house? It is 80 years old.

Hoe vind je de vis? Hij smaakt lekker.

How do you like the fish? It tastes good.

Wat kosten de noten? Ze kosten een euro.

How much are the nuts? They’re one euro.

- 2 Some of the pronouns have stressed and unstressed forms, such as **jij** versus **je** in the second person singular, and **zij** versus **ze** in the third person singular feminine and in the third person plural, and **wij** versus **we** in the first person plural. Whether you use the stressed or the unstressed form depends on where you place the emphasis in the (spoken) sentence. Examples:

a **Ik woon in Olst. Waar woon jij?** I live in Olst. Where do *you* live?

b **Woon je ook in Olst?** Do you *also* live in Olst?

c **Hoe heet zij?** What is her name?

d **En waar woont ze?** And where does she *live*?

In example a, the emphasis is on **jij** in order to distinguish from **ik**. In b, the second person has been introduced, and the emphasis can be placed on something else, in this case **ook**. The same principle is at work in examples c and d. The subject is introduced with emphasis in c, and in d, it is not the subject but the verb that is stressed.

- 3 In Dutch, we distinguish between the informal form for the second person singular, **jij** or **je**, and the formal **u**. In the second person plural, we use informal **jullie** versus formal **u**. While the informal **jij**, **je**, and **jullie** are becoming more and more commonplace in everyday speech, the formal **u** is still widely used as a polite form in interactions among people from different generations (although parents and children, and even grandparents and grandchildren, often use **jij**, **je**, and **jullie**), people who don’t know each other such as store or office personnel and customers, and people in different hierarchical positions or ranks. Addressing someone as **meneer** or **mevrouw** or with a formal title, one must use **u**. In formal correspondence, one must always use **u**. Examples:

Mag ik u iets vragen? May I ask you something?

Kan ik u helpen? Can I help you?

Zegt u het maar. What will it be? (literally “Please say it”).

Komt u maar even binnen. Please come inside for a moment.

- 4 In spoken Dutch in Flanders, the forms **gij** and **ge** are commonly used as equivalents for **jij** and **je**, although the preference for **gij** and **ge** versus **jij** and **je** may depend on region and dialect. In writing, **jij** and **je** are consistently used. Formal **u** is associated with distance, respect, and unfamiliarity with the person who is addressed. Examples:

Hebt ge dit weekend uw dochter gezien? Did you see your daughter this weekend?

Hebt gij honger? Are you hungry?

Ge gaat dat tof vinden. You're going to love it.

- 5 There are reduced forms of **ik**, **hij**, and **het**: **'k** for **ik**, **ie** or **tie** for **hij**, and **'t** for **het**. You will hear them in speech or see them in written (often literary) texts.

Examples:

- a **'k heb geen tijd.** (= **Ik heb geen tijd.**) I have no time.
 - b **Wat zegt-ie?** (= **Wat zegt hij?**) What is he saying?
 - c **Waar is tie?** (= **Waar is hij?**) Where is he?
 - d **'t Is een goed boek.** (= **Het is een goed boek.**) It's a good book.
- 6 While they are not (yet) official, the gender neutral subject pronouns **hen** and **die** have become widely accepted by persons of non-binary gender identities.

Waar is Ingrid? Hen heeft een afspraak bij de tandarts.

Where is Ingrid? They have an appointment with the dentist.

Exercise 2.1

Put the correct personal pronoun under each image. The neck tie indicates a formal situation.



a _____



b _____



c _____



d _____



e _____



f _____



g _____



h _____

Exercise 2.2

Enter the correct form of the subject pronoun.

Situation: Karin introduces herself, her family, her best friend.

Hoi, _____ (1) ben Karin Groeneveld. Mijn vader heet Erik, _____ (2) is advocaat, _____ (3) werkt voor een bank. Mijn moeder heet Sanne, _____ (4) is lerares en _____ (5) werkt parttime op een basisschool. Ik heb een broer, _____ (6) heet Peter. _____ (7) wonen in Haarlem. Opa en oma Groeneveld komen uit Groningen, maar _____ (8) wonen nu in Den Helder. Dan heb ik nog opa en oma Hulst. _____ (9) wonen in Leiden. Mijn beste vriendin heet Aysha. _____ (10) doen alles samen. Aysha's broer heet Hakim. _____ (11) studeert in Amsterdam. Willen _____ (12) een paar foto's zien?

Exercise 2.3

Enter the correct form of the subject pronoun. The dialogue is informal.

Situation: Karin meets a new friend at school.

- 1 Ina: Hoi, hoe heet _____?
- 2 Karin: _____ heet Karin. En _____?
- 3 Ina: _____ ben Ina. Woon _____ in Haarlem?
- 4 Karin: Ja. _____ kom met de fiets naar school.
- 5 Ina: Heb _____ broers en zussen?
- 6 Karin: Ja, een broer, Peter. _____ zit in 5 HAVO. En _____?
- 7 Ina: _____ heb een zus. _____ zit nog op de basisschool.
- 8 Karin: Kom, _____ gaan naar binnen.

Exercise 2.4

Enter the correct form of the subject pronoun. Parts of the dialogue are formal.

Situation: In the classroom. After class, the students go to the school canteen.

- 1 Karin: Meneer Kampen, kunt _____ me even helpen?
- 2 Oscar: Meneer Kampen, moeten _____ oefening 8 ook doen?
- 3 Hans: Hé Oscar, weet _____ het huiswerk voor morgen?
- 4 Joris: Meneer Kampen, heeft _____ de proefwerken van gisteren?
- 5 Oscar: Jongens, _____ gaan koffie drinken. Gaan _____ mee?
- 6 Aysha: Wacht even. Karin is naar de wc. _____ komt zo.
- 7 Karin: Hier ben _____. Waar zijn de anderen?
- 8 Aysha: _____ zijn al in de kantine. Kom _____?
- 9 Karin: Ina, ga _____ mee naar de kantine?
- 10 Ina: Nee, _____ ga even naar de bibliotheek.

Exercise 2.5

In the following dialogues, enter the correct subject pronoun as it refers to both persons and objects.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Erik | Sanne |
| 1 Is de krant er al? | _____ ligt op de tafel. |
| 2 Waar liggen m'n sleutels? | Zitten _____ niet in je jaszak? |
| Karin | Sanne |
| 3 Mam, waar ben je? | _____ ben in de kamer. |
| 4 Ik zoek m'n biologieboek. | _____ ligt op de keukentafel. |
| Karin | Aysha |
| 5 Hoe was de film gisteren? | _____ was heel goed, echt! |
| 6 Waar is Ina? | _____ praat met Joris. |
| Erik | Peter |
| 7 Wat doen jij en Patrick vanavond? | _____ gaan voetballen. |
| 8 Hoe is die nieuwe trainer? | _____ is goed. En heel aardig. |
| Sanne | Erik |
| 9 Hoe laat is er eten? | _____ is over 5 minuten klaar. |
| 10 Zal ik een fles wijn openen? | Graag! _____ staat al op tafel. |

Exercise 2.6

In the following exercise, decide for each sentence which sentence is a logical follow-up sentence: a or b.

- 1 Wij hebben een dochter en een zoon.
a: We gaan naar de middelbare school.
b: Ze gaan naar de middelbare school.
- 2 Heeft u het nieuwe boek van Stephen King?
a: Ja, het ligt daar.
b: Ja, hij ligt daar.
- 3 Hoe vind je de soep?
a: Het is erg lekker.
b: Hij is erg lekker.
- 4 Hoe heet Mia's kat?
a: Ze heet Cleo.
b: Het heet Cleo.
- 5 Wat een mooie racefiets!
a: Ja, hij rijdt fantastisch!
b: Ja, het rijdt fantastisch.

Glossary of new words

aardig nice, friendly**advocaat, de** lawyer**al** already**binnen** inside**broer, de** brother**daar** there**doen** to do**echt** really**eten** food, to eat**even** for a bit**fiets, de** bike**fles, de** bottle**gaan** to go**gisteren** yesterday**goed** good**graag** yes, please**heel** very**huiswerk, het**

homework

jaszak, de coat pocket**kat, de** cat**keuken, de** kitchen**klaar** ready**komen** to come**krant, de** newspaper**kunnen** to be able**laat** late**lekker** tasty**liggen** to lie**moeder, de** mother**moeten** must, to have to**mooi** beautiful**morgen** tomorrow**naar** to**niet** not**nieuw** new**nog** still, yet**praten** to talk**rijden** to ride, drive**samen** together**sleutel, de** key**soep, de** soup**staan** to stand**studeren** to study**tafel, de** table**vader, de** father**vanavond** tonight**vinden** to find**voor** for**vriendin, de** (girl)
friend**weten** to know**wijn, de** wine**willen** to want**zien** to see**zoeken** to look for**zoon, de** son**zullen** shall**zus, de** sister

UNIT THREE

Verb conjugation in the present tense

Introduction

The verb is the part in the sentence that indicates what the subject does, how it changes, what condition or (mental) state it is in, what happens to it, where it goes, etc. Examples:

Erik woont in Haarlem. Hij werkt voor een bank. Hij is advocaat. Hij is getrouwd. Hij heeft twee kinderen. Ze heten Peter en Karin. Peter en Karin gaan naar de middelbare school.

Erik lives in Haarlem. He works for a bank. He is a lawyer. He is married. He has two children. Their names are Peter and Karin. Peter and Karin go to high school.

The verb corresponds with its subject in person and number. In the sentence **Erik woont in Haarlem**, the subject (**Erik**) is third person singular. In the sentence **Peter en Karin gaan naar de middelbare school**, the subject (**Peter en Karin**) is third person plural. Subject–verb agreement is accomplished with verb endings.

Examples and notes

werken ¹			
Singular		Plural	
ik	werk	wij/we	werken
jij/je	werkt / werk je ²	jullie	werken
u	werkt	u	werkt ³
hij, zij/ze, het	werkt	zij/ze	werken

1 **Werken** is the infinitive, the non-conjugated form of the verb, as it appears in the dictionary. In English, the infinitive begins with ‘to’: to work, to live, to play. In most verbs, the infinitive consists of a stem (**werk-**) and the ending **-en**. When conjugated in a sentence, the stem loses the ending **-en**, which is replaced by the

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Verb conjugation in the present tense

appropriate verb ending (in italics in the table). The verb form for **ik** is the same as the verb stem.

- 2 When **jij** or **je** follow the verb, the ending **-t** is dropped. This happens, for instance, in questions or when something other than the subject takes the first place in the sentence.

Werk je in een restaurant?
Maak jij nu je huiswerk?

Do you work in a restaurant?
Are you doing your homework now?

- 3 The verb ending for formal **u** is always **-t**, whether it is singular or plural.

The verbs hebben (to have) and zijn (to be)

hebben		zijn	
ik	<i>heb</i>	ik	<i>ben</i>
jij/je	<i>hebt (heb je/jij)</i>	jij/je	<i>bent (ben je/jij)</i>
u	<i>hebt/heeft</i>	u	<i>bent</i>
hij, zij/ze, het	<i>heeft</i>	hij, zij/ze, het	<i>is</i>
wij/we	<i>hebben</i>	wij/we	<i>zijn</i>
jullie	<i>hebben</i>	jullie	<i>zijn</i>
zij/ze	<i>hebben</i>	zij/ze	<i>zijn</i>

Verbs with stems that end in -t or -d

Some verb stems end in **-t** or **-d**. In verbs with a stem ending in **-t**, we *do not* add the verb ending **-t** in the second and third person singular. In verbs with a stem ending in **-d**, we *do* add a **-t** to the second and third person singular. In the inverted form in the second person singular, some of these verbs drop the **-d**. See examples in singular:

	zetten put	weten know	houden hold	raden guess
ik	zet	weet	houd	raad
jij/je	zet/zet je	weet/weet je	houdt/hou(d) je	raadt/raad je
u	zet	weet	houdt	raadt
hij, zij/ze, het	zet	weet	houdt	raadt

Some unusual infinitives

In some frequently used, one-syllable verbs, the stem ends in **-n** instead of **-en**. The table below shows how they are conjugated in singular and plural.

		gaan go	zien see	doen do
Singular	ik	ga	zie	doe
	jij/je, u	gaat/ga je	ziet/zie je	doet/doe je
	hij, zij/ze, het	gaat	ziet	doet
Plural	wij/we, jullie, zij/ze	gaan	zien	doen

Note: **slaan** ‘hit’ and **staan** ‘stand’ follow the same pattern as **gaan**.

Spelling in verb conjugation

Note the difference between the verbs **spelen** ‘to play’ and **spellen** ‘to spell’ in conjugation in singular and plural. For simplification, the personal pronouns have been omitted from these (and the following) examples.

spelen		spellen	
speel ¹	spelen	spel ²	spellen
speelt (speel je)	spelen	spelt (spel je)	spellen
spelt	spelen	spelt	spellen

- As we have seen in Unit 1, spelling is determined largely by the way words are divided into syllables, and whether syllables are open or closed. The verb **spelen** is divided as follows: **spe-len**; the word is split after the vowel and before the single consonant. The syllable **spe-** is open. The verb **spellen** is divided as follows: **spel-len**; the word is split between the double consonant. The syllable **spel-** is closed. An open syllable ends in a vowel; a closed syllable ends in a consonant. A single vowel in an open syllable (**spe-**) is pronounced long; a single vowel in a closed syllable (**spel-**) is pronounced short. In order to keep the vowel in **spelen** long within a closed syllable (**speel**), we have to double it. Here, proper pronunciation and spelling of a word is very important. If spelled or pronounced incorrectly, the meaning of the word can change. If we didn’t double the vowel of **spelen** in first, second, and third person singular, it would be pronounced the same as in the verb **spellen**. Note: the verb **komen** (**ik kom**) is an exception to this rule.
- Closed syllables in Dutch (**spel-**) never end in two identical consonants. Furthermore, two identical consonants are never followed by a single consonant. Therefore, the double consonant in **spellen** is reduced to one in the first, second, and third person singular. In the plural, surrounded by vowels, it is once again double. See more examples of these basic spelling rules in the following table. Each time, a verb with a long vowel is contrasted with a verb with a short vowel. Only the infinitive and first person singular and plural are given. The verbs are **wonen** ‘to live’, **winnen** ‘to win’, **spreken** ‘to speak’, **trekken** ‘to pull’, **laten** ‘to let’, **zitten** ‘to sit’.

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wonen	winnen	spreken	trekken	laten	zitten
ik woon	ik win	ik spreek	ik trek	ik laat	ik zit
wij wonen	wij winnen	wij spreken	wij trekken	wij laten	wij zitten

In Dutch, **v** and **z** cannot be at the end of a syllable and are ‘hardened’ (voiceless) in front of another hard consonant. Therefore, in first, second, and third person singular, **v** turns into **f** and **z** turns into **s**. Note the differences in spelling in singular and plural in the verbs **geven** ‘to give’ and **wijzen** ‘to point’.

geven		wijzen	
geef	geven	wijs	wijzen
geeft (geef je)	geven	wijst (wijs je)	wijzen
geeft	geven	wijst	wijzen

Exercise 3.1

To practice correct spelling, enter the first person singular and the first person plural in the table.

1 vragen	2 zeggen	3 nemen	4 zwemmen	5 leven
ik	ik	ik	ik	ik
wij	wij	wij	wij	wij

6 reizen	7 hebben	8 lopen	9 zitten	10 laten
ik	ik	ik	ik	ik
wij	wij	wij	wij	wij

Exercise 3.2

Enter the correct verb forms into the table.

	1 kopen	2 passen	3 eten	4 schrijven	5 lezen
ik					
jij/je, u					
	je	je	je	je	je
hij, zij/ze, het					
wij/we					
jullie					
zij/ze					

Exercise 3.3

Jij ook? In the following exercise, enter the correct verb form in second person singular.

- 1 Ik ga naar Amsterdam. _____ je mee?
- 2 Ik koop in Amsterdam een souvenir. _____ je ook een souvenir?
- 3 Ik drink op een terras een kopje koffie. _____ je ook een kopje?
- 4 Ik bezoek het Rijksmuseum. _____ je het museum ook?
- 5 Ik eet 's avonds op het Leidseplein een pizza. _____ je ook een pizza?

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Exercise 3.4

Enter the correct forms of **hebben** and **zijn**.

Situation: Peter talks about his family.

Hoi, ik _____ (1) Peter, en dit _____ (2) mijn familie. Ik _____ (3) geen broers, maar wel een zus, Karin. Mijn vader _____ (4) advocaat, mijn moeder _____ (5) lerares. Karin en ik _____ (6) vier grootouders, opa en oma Groeneveld en opa en oma Hulst. Mijn vader _____ (7) geen broers en zussen, maar ik _____ (8) wel tantes en ooms van mijn moeders kant, want zij _____ (9) een grote familie. Een keer per jaar _____ (10) we met de hele familie bij opa en oma Hulst voor de grote jaarlijkse reünie. Dat _____ (11) altijd heel leuk. En jij? _____ (12) je een grote familie?

Exercise 3.5

For each blank, choose the right verb and enter the correct form. Select from: **wonen, werken, komen, zijn, heten, spellen, gaan, studeren**.

Situation: Meet Hanife!

Dag! Mijn naam _____ (1) Hanife. Dat _____ (2) je H-A-N-I-F-E. Ik _____ (3) uit Turkije, maar ik _____ (4) in Nederland. Ik _____ (5) aan de Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Ik _____ (6) op vrijdag- en zaterdagavond in een restaurant. Mijn beste vriendin _____ (7) Linda. Zij _____ (8) ook in dat restaurant. Maar zij _____ (9) in Alkmaar. Ze _____ (10) elke dag met de trein naar Amsterdam. Volgende week _____ (11) we samen op vakantie naar Spanje. En wie _____ (12) jij? _____ (13) je uit Nederland? Waar _____ (14) je? Wat _____ (15) je van beroep? Of _____ (16) je student?

Exercise 3.6

Conjugate the verbs correctly in the third person singular.

Situation: Erik is at the market.

Erik (zijn) _____ (1) op de markt. Hij (kopen) _____ (2) een kilo appels. Hij (vragen) _____ (3): “Wat kosten de bananen?” Hij (nemen) _____ (4) twee kilo bananen. Hij (betalen) _____ (5) met 100 euro. Hij (hebben) _____ (6) geen kleingeld. Erik (gaan) _____ (7) ook naar de kaaskraam. Hij (zeggen) _____ (8): “Een stuk oude kaas, graag.” De verkoper (wegen) _____ (9) een groot stuk kaas. Erik (vinden) _____ (10) het stuk te groot. De verkoper (snijden) _____ (11) een kleiner stuk. “Dat (zijn) _____ (12) goed.”

Exercise 3.7

What is the question with the answer? Conjugate the verb correctly. Some questions are formal.

Situation: The first day of class. The teacher, mevrouw Vos, talks to the students.

1 Aysha, _____?

Aysha: Ja, ik heb het boek.

2 Julie, _____?

Julie: Nee, ik kom niet uit Brussel, maar uit Gent.

3 Jos, _____?

Jos: Ja, ik ben de broer van Alex.

4 Mevrouw Vos, _____?

Mevrouw Vos: Ja, ik woon in Haarlem.

5 Mevrouw Vos, _____?

Mevrouw Vos: Ja, ik heb een hond. Hij heet Loki.

6 Mevrouw Vos, _____?

Mevrouw Vos: Nee, ha ha, die blauwe BMW is niet van mij. Ik fiets.

7 Kimberly, _____?

Kimberly: Nee, ik speel geen hockey. Ik speel korfbal.

8 Karin en Aysha, _____?

Karin: Ja, wij gaan naar de kantine.

9 Joke en Emma, _____?

Joke: Ja, we zijn klaar.

10 Mevrouw Vos, _____?

Mevrouw Vos: Ja, jullie krijgen huiswerk.

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Glossary of new words

beroep, het profession

betalen to pay

bezoeken to visit

blauw blue

elk(e) each

geld, het money

groot big

hond, de dog

jaar, het year

kaas, de cheese

kant, de side

keer, de time, occasion

klein small

kopen to buy

kraam, de stand

krijgen to get, receive

leven to live

ook also

oom, de uncle

oud old

passen to fit

reizen to travel

snijden to cut

stuk, het piece

tante, de aunt

terras, het terrace,
patio

uit out, from

volgend(e) next

vragen to ask

week, de week

wegen to weigh

zeggen to say

zwemmen to swim