

Basic Swedish

A Grammar and Workbook

Ian Hinchliffe and Philip Holmes

BASIC SWEDISH

Basic Swedish: A Grammar and Workbook combines an accessible basic reference grammar and related exercises in one volume, and covers most of the topics that students might expect to deal with in their first year of learning Swedish.

Each of the 25 units discusses one or more grammar topics, with examples that are subsequently practised in the exercises that follow.

The book introduces the contemporary language against a backdrop of Swedish culture, society, geography, customs and history. Each unit ends with a cultural text that outlines an aspect of Swedish culture and exemplifies and consolidates the grammar topic examined in the unit.

Features include:

- clear grammatical explanations with examples in Swedish and English
- vocabulary based on a major corpus of written Swedish in order to guarantee authenticity and relevance
- cross-references to other units
- over 100 exercises with a key to all the correct answers
- full vocabulary list at the end of the book.

The book is suitable both for independent study and for class use. It can be used by absolute beginners and those who have advanced a little further.

Dr Ian Hinchliffe is a translator based in Sweden and has previously taught Swedish at universities in the UK, as well as in Norway.

Dr Philip Holmes is Reader Emeritus in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Hull, UK, and is now a translator and language editor.

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Ian Hinchliffe and Philip Holmes

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PREFACE

Basic Swedish is aimed at beginners and learners seeking to improve their skills in Swedish. Each of the 25 units discusses one or more grammar topics, contrasted with English where appropriate. After working systematically through the book, the user should be able to read, write and understand Swedish, and, with a little practice and confidence, hold a simple conversation in Swedish.

For simplicity's sake, grammatical explanations are deliberately kept brief; for a more exhaustive treatment of exceptions and idiosyncrasies, readers are advised to consult one of the other reference works on Swedish published by Routledge:

Colloquial Swedish by Philip Holmes, Jennie Sävenberg and Gunilla Serin
Swedish: An Essential Grammar by Philip Holmes and Ian Hinchliffe
Swedish: A Comprehensive Grammar by Philip Holmes and Ian Hinchliffe

Structure of the book

The order of the grammar topics follows what the experience of the authors as teachers has led them to consider to be the natural requirements of the learner, with a logical progression from the simple building bricks of the language to more complex applications of grammar. The importance of learning word order and sentence structure at an early stage is emphasised throughout the book, which is why no fewer than five units deal with this. There are also units introducing pronunciation and word formation.

The vocabulary has been carefully selected to include the thousand most common words in Swedish, and is introduced on a cumulative basis. There is a full vocabulary list at the end of the book.

The exercises that accompany each unit allow the user to practise and consolidate the respective topic. A key to the exercises follows Unit 25.

To aid understanding, grammatical terms that are italicised in the text are briefly explained in the glossary of grammatical terms at the end of the book.

Cultural texts

Swedish is a living language reflecting a vibrant and distinctive culture and history, one that is often relatively unfamiliar to many English-speakers. The cultural texts that accompany the units offer brief insights into relevant aspects of contemporary life and society, language, customs and some key periods in Swedish history. They are written in such a way as to include a number of examples of the specific grammar topic dealt with in the respective unit.

These cultural texts often include more advanced vocabulary than that used in the exercises. However, with the help of the workbook's vocabulary list, learners should be able to read and understand these texts, which are usually introduced with a Swedish flag.



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UNIT 1

What makes Swedish familiar? . . . and a few challenges

Introduction

Swedish is spoken by around 10 million people, which means that it is not a major world language. Nevertheless, it is still a language spoken by a relatively large number of people, coming 85th out of about 6,000 languages spoken in the world. Swedish is spoken in a geographically clearly distinct and restricted area; it is the language of more than 90% of people living in Sweden and about 5% of those living in Finland, where it is also an official language. It is also a language that has been cultivated and studied assiduously over the centuries, possessing standardised spelling conventions and reliable reference books in the form of dictionaries and grammars. Swedish has a rich literature and is used in a wide range of literary and technical fields.

English and Swedish are cousin languages; Swedish is a North Germanic language, closely related to Norwegian and Danish, as well as historically to Icelandic and Faeroese. Norwegian and Swedish are regarded as mutually intelligible. Spoken Danish and Swedish are more difficult to understand for their neighbours because of differences that have emerged in pronunciation.

Pronunciation

Generally speaking, Swedish spelling reflects its sounds; it is largely a phonetic language, unlike English or French (see Unit 2).

Swedish has three vowels not found in English: **å**, **ä**, **ö**. There is a major distinction in length between long and short vowels: compare the first **a** sound in **bada** ‘bathe’ and **badda** ‘dab’, respectively (see Unit 2).

The consonants only present one major challenge: **g–**, **k–**, **sk–** are pronounced either ‘hard’ [g], [k], [sk] or ‘soft’ [j], [ç], [ʃ], depending on the vowel that follows:

- ‘hard’ before **a**, **o**, **u**, **å** in **gas** ‘gas’; **kontrast** ‘contrast’; **kung** ‘king’; **gås** ‘goose’; **skandal** ‘scandal’
- ‘soft’ before **e**, **i**, **y**, **ä**, **ö** in **genetik** ‘genetics’; **gäst** ‘guest’; **Kina** ‘China’; **kyss** ‘kiss’; **köld** ‘cold’; **skidlift** ‘ski lift’.

Stress and accent

As in English, an important distinction occurs between stressed and unstressed words in the sentence (all significant words are stressed) and stressed and unstressed syllables in these words. Notice, for example, the unstressed prefixes in **be'tala** 'pay' and **för'stå** 'understand', and the stressed negative prefix in words beginning in **o**–: '**olycklig** 'unhappy'.

In compound nouns (those made up from two or more nouns), there is stress on both the first and last part of the noun, and in the spoken language in central Sweden this also shows a falling and rising tone:

↘ ↗
hus|geråd

household utensil

When two stresses occur in a single word – not a compound, but one with two syllables – they also have a distinctive tone pattern, with a rise at the end of the word that makes Swedes sound as if they are singing. This falling–rising tone pattern is often called Accent 2:

↘ ↗ ↘ ↗
Talar du svenska?

Do you speak Swedish?

↘ ↗ ↘ ↗
Hon är en gammal kvinna.

She is an old lady.

However, many bisyllabic words – including verbs in the present tense and words ending in **–er**, **–el**, **–en** – only have one rising tone, called Accent 1:

↗ ↗
Han låser sin cykel.

He is locking his bike.

This is the same as in monosyllabic words:

↗ ↗ ↗ ↗ ↗
bil ny fort på kör
car new quickly in drives

Vocabulary

One feature that makes Swedish easy to learn is its vocabulary. English and Swedish share a great deal of their core Germanic vocabulary, thus making many words recognisable: **arm**, **fot**, **finger**, **knä**, **kniv**. This includes words for family relationships (**broder**, **dotter**, **syster**, **moder**, **son**) and for rural life and nature (**fisk** 'fish'; **gås**

‘goose’; **hund** ‘dog’; **lamm** ‘lamb’; **ask** ‘ash tree’; **hassel** ‘hazel’; **äpple** ‘apple’; **gräs** ‘grass’; **sten** ‘stone’), as well as some numerals (**en**, **två**, **tre** . . .).

Historically, Swedish has borrowed a large number of words from German, for example:

<i>Swedish</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>English translation</i>
rådhus	Rathaus	town hall
ungefär	ungefähr	approximately
utvecklingsland	Entwicklungsland	developing country

Many affixes on late medieval German loans were later used in forming new Swedish words:

anfall	Anfall	attack
betala	bezahlen	pay
förstå	verstehen	understand
omkomma	umkommen	die
omständighet	Umständlichkeit	circumstance
läsbar	lesbar	readable

In the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, French provided many loans. These are now recognisable as such more by their sounds than by their spelling, which was adapted to Swedish orthographic conventions in the early nineteenth century:

<i>Swedish</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>English translation</i>
assiett	assiette	side plate
byrå	bureau	office
fabrik	fabrique	factory
kusin	cousin(e)	cousin
garderob	garderobe	wardrobe
pjäs	pièce	play

Over the past 200 years or so, English has exerted a profound and growing influence on Swedish, especially since the Second World War. Modern Swedish has many loanwords from British and US English:

biff	beef
intervju	interview
mejla	to send an email
paj	pie
strejk	strike

Swedish also has many words that may be pronounced differently from their English cognates but retain English spelling: **blazer**, **hobby**, **lunch**, **manager**, **radio**.

Simple verb forms

Swedish has the same verb form throughout the tense (see Unit 3):

jag cyklar 'I cycle'; **du cyklar** 'you cycle'; **han cyklar** 'he cycles'; **hon cyklar** 'she cycles'; **vi cyklar** 'we cycle'; **ni cyklar** 'you cycle'; **de cyklar** 'they cycle'

Swedish does not have a continuous tense as in 'I am cycling'. Instead, it uses the simple present: **jag cyklar**.

Similar tenses

Swedish uses tenses in much the same way as English (see Units 4 and 19f.), namely the present, past (imperfect), perfect and pluperfect. The past tense of weak verbs often ends in **-de/-te**: **jag cyklade** 'I cycled'; **jag läste** 'I read'. There are also strong verbs with a vowel change in the stem:

jag dricker ‘I drink’; **jag drack** ‘I drank’; **jag har druckit** ‘I have drunk’; **jag hade druckit** ‘I had drunk’

Similar adjective use

As in English, adjectives used attributively always come in front of the noun:

en pittoresk kyrka a picturesque church

Swedish adjectives often compare by adding **-(a)re**, **-(a)st** or with **mer**, **mest** (see Unit 17):

rik rich	rikare richer	rikast richest
praktisk practical	mer praktisk more practical	mest praktisk most practical

Some irregular comparisons are like English:

god	bättre	bäst
good	better	best

Grammar that is (quite) unlike English

Gender

Whereas English nouns have biological gender, ‘the house – it; the girl – she; the boy – he’, Swedish nouns have grammatical gender, which shows in their indefinite

and definite (or end) articles. There are two *genders*, non-neuter (**en** gender) and neuter (**ett** gender), a system that therefore requires two words corresponding to 'it':

en kvinna 'a woman' – **kvinnan** 'the woman' – **hon** 'she'
en man 'a man' – **mannen** 'the man' – **han** 'he'
en skog 'a forest' – **skogen** 'the forest' – **den** 'it'
ett fjäll 'a mountain' – **fjället** 'the mountain' – **det** 'it'

Gender also shows in the form of the adjective, as adjectives agree, i.e. reflect the gender and *number* (singular/plural) of the noun with which they belong:

en stor skog	a big forest	stora skogar	big forests
ett stort fjäll	a big mountain	stora fjäll	big mountains

Gender is to a great extent predictable; as Unit 4 will show, there are clues to be gleaned from meaning or form.

Plurals

Swedish nouns form their plural in one of seven different ways:

gata	→ gator	streets
tidning	→ tidningar	newspapers
park	→ parker	parks
ko	→ kor	cows
äpple	→ äpplen	apples
barn	→ barn (no change)	children
partner	→ partners	partner

While this complexity may initially seem daunting to an English-speaker, most Swedish plurals can be predicted from a few straightforward clues that will be explained in Unit 6.

Word order

Word order is quite different from English, but follows a fixed structure, with the finite verb (the verb showing the tense) always coming in the second position in the clause. Word order is dealt with throughout this book (see Units 5, 8, 12, 18 and 23). For now, just notice one common difference:

Han läser en bok.	He is reading a book.
Ibland läser han en bok.	Sometimes he reads a book.

Notice that in the second example, where a non-subject (**Ibland**) begins the *sentence*, the finite verb (**läser**) comes immediately after the non-subject in the second position in Swedish and is followed by the subject, so-called *inversion*.

The adverb comes in different positions in the main clause and subordinate clause (sub clause) (see Unit 18).

In the main clause, the adverb comes *after* the verb:

Han läser *inte* boken. He isn't reading the book.

In the sub clause, the adverb comes *before* the verb:

Jag sa att han *inte* läser boken. I said that he isn't reading the book.

Exercise 1.1

The following Swedish words are borrowed from English, though their spelling may have changed and some words have been translated. What are their English equivalents?

biff, bojkott, bokmärke, bordtennis, chattlinje, diskriminera (verb), doping, elektricitet, flörta (verb), fejka, flashig, frilans, hamburgare, hemsida, intervju, jogging, karaktär, konservativ, kedjereaktion, korsord, krasch, mejla (verb), nörd, okej, potatis, skajpa (verb), snobbig (adjective), stalkning, tajt, tejp, tränare, tuff, turist, vajer, virtuell, webbsajt

Exercise 1.2

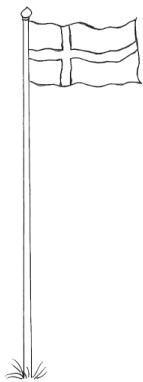
The following Swedish words are borrowed from French, though their spelling may have changed. What are their English equivalents?

applåder, balkong, butik, byrå, ceremoni, chef, fars, filé, gentil, jargong, kritik, löjtnant, migrän, parfym, poesi, populär, revy, salong, scen, teater, terrass

Exercise 1.3

The following Swedish words are borrowed from German, though their spelling may have changed. What are their English equivalents?

advokat, amiral, definiera, fantastisk, fest, källare, porslin, ryggsäck, soldat, tomat, valnöt, vals, ångest



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Befolkning	ca. 10 miljoner
Huvudstad	Stockholm
Statsöverhuvud	Kung Carl XVI Gustaf
Parlament	Riksdagen (349 platser)
Valuta	svensk krona (SEK)
Nationaldag	6 juni
Språk	svenska

1

What makes Swedish families?

UNIT 2

Pronunciation

For a general account of pronunciation, see, for example, Holmes and Hinchliffe, *Swedish: An Essential Grammar*, and to hear the sounds, see: www2.hhs.se/isa/swedish/chap9.htm.

Letters of the alphabet

The Swedish language has three vowels that English does not have. The letters Å, Ä, Ö come last in the Swedish alphabet, after Z.

The letter Ä comes from a long ‘a’ sound and was originally written as aa in the Scandinavian languages. The letter Å was formed when a little circle (‘o’) was placed above the A.

The letters Ä and Ö were originally written as ae and oe. A change took place in the 1500s when the letter E was placed above the A and the O instead. This E was replaced later by two dots.

The letter W is new in Swedish word lists. The letter W was regarded for a long time as a variant of V, as it is often pronounced as [v] in Swedish. The first time that V and W were listed as separate letters in the Swedish Academy’s word list was in 2006. Now you find loanwords from English such as **webb**, **windsurfing** and **workshop** under W, not under V as before.

Lip-rounding

A number of Swedish vowels have lip-rounding or over-rounding (extreme lip-rounding or ‘pouting’):

	<i>Amount of rounding</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Long å	Lip-rounding	båt	[bo:t]
Long o	Extreme lip-rounding ends in w	ro	[røː]
Short o	Lip-rounding	trott	[trøt]

Long u	Extreme lip-rounding ends in w	ful	[fʌ ^w :l]
Short u	Lax lip-rounding	full	[ful]
Long y	Open lip-rounding ends in Sw. j	ny	[ny ^j :]
Long ö	Lip-rounding	kö	[kø:]

Vowel length and syllables

Differences in vowel length are important in Swedish pronunciation. Short vowels are very short, shorter than in English. Long vowels are very long, much longer than in English. Using the wrong vowel length when pronouncing a word can lead to misunderstanding. In the case of two Swedish vowels (**a** and **u**), the quality of the vowel also changes with length: hence, **hal** [hɑ:l] but **hals** [hals]; **bus** [bæ:s] but **buss** [bus]. So it is important to learn how to distinguish vowel length at the outset. The following simple rules apply:

A stressed vowel not followed by a consonant is long:	bī	[bi:]
A stressed vowel followed by a single consonant is long:	bīt	[bi:t]
A stressed vowel followed by two or more consonants is short:	biff	[bif]
	bild	[bild]
	bitsk	[bitsk]
An unstressed vowel (here e) is always short:	söker	[sø:kər]

In other words, stressed syllables are always long, comprising:

A long vowel not followed by a consonant (open syllable):	<u>V</u>
A long vowel followed by a single consonant:	<u>VC</u>
A short vowel followed by two or more consonants:	VCC, VCCC

Exercise 2.1

Underline the long vowel in the words below (not all the words in this list have a long vowel).

Examples: hö, höst, höra, höft

1 hata	8 förr	15 nysta
2 hatt	9 före	16 rita
3 havet	10 fönster	17 ring
4 ha	11 först	18 river
5 baka	12 ny	19 ris
6 backar	13 nytt	20 rida
7 band	14 nysa	