

FIRST AID KIT: CONSONANTS

This document is meant as a rough guide to help you with some of the most common issues in the pronunciation of Norwegian consonants. It does not provide a detailed explanation to all the sounds in Norwegian, but gives some guidelines to help you overcome some common difficulties which may cause misunderstandings.

In the explanations below, letters between slashes, like /u/, refers to the pronounced sound, not the written letter.

Norwegian consonants

These letters are counted as consonants in Norwegian: *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x* and *z*.

These are some of the most common problems when pronouncing the Norwegian consonants.

b, v

Especially speakers of Spanish should be aware of the distinction between the pronunciation of the letters *b* and *v*.

To say /b/, close your lips. There should be contact between your lips. When you say /v/, your upper teeth should have contact with your lower lip, but the lips should not meet. A *b* is always pronounced /b/, and *v* is always pronounced /v/.

d

Some learners have a tendency to make the /d/ too weak, more like English /th/ in the word *the*. This may make the /d/ hard to hear for a Norwegian. Therefore, you should make sure there is real contact between your tongue and your mouth when you say /d/.

Notice that the *d* is often (but not always!) silent in words ending in *-ld, -rd* or *-nd*: *kald, bord, rund*.

g	<p>The letter <i>g</i> is usually pronounced like in the English word <i>get</i>. It is not pronounced in the combination <i>gj</i> (<i>gjennom, igjen</i>) or in the ending <i>-ig</i> (<i>hyggelig</i>).</p> <p>In front of <i>i, y</i> and <i>ei</i> (<i>gift, begynne, geit</i>), the <i>g</i> is pronounced as a Norwegian <i>j</i>.</p> <p>The combination <i>ng</i>, is pronounced like in the English word <i>thing</i>.</p>
h	<p>The letter <i>h</i> is pronounced like a voiceless blow in the back of your throat. It is actually a voiceless /j/ (see below). The <i>h</i> is not pronounced in the combinations <i>hj</i> and <i>hv</i> (<i>hjem, hvor</i>). Otherwise, the letter <i>h</i> should always be pronounced in Norwegian, also in the beginning of a word.</p>
j	<p>A written <i>j</i> should always be pronounced as <i>y</i> in the English word <i>yes</i>. It should never start with a /d/-ish sound, like the English word <i>job</i>.</p>
m, n	<p>An <i>m</i> or an <i>n</i> in the end of a word should always be pronounced in Norwegian. Speakers of French and some other languages have a tendency to nasalize <i>n</i> and <i>m</i> in the end of a word, like in the French word <i>bien</i> and Portuguese <i>ontem</i>. You should avoid this in Norwegian and pronounce the <i>n</i> as a separate sound. The Norwegian word <i>bien</i> ("the bee") is pronounced like /bie/+n/.</p>
kj, ki, ky, tj	<p>The letter combination <i>kj</i> (like in <i>kjøpe</i>) is pronounced with "the angry cat sound". This is the sound a cat makes when it is angry. This is the same as a voiceless /j/. This sound is also used in the combinations <i>ki</i> and <i>ky</i> (<i>kino, kylling</i>), and in some words with <i>tj</i> (<i>tjue</i>).</p> <p>If you find the "angry cat sound" hard to say, you can also use <i>ch</i> as in English <i>Charlie</i>, which is used in many dialects.</p>

r	<p>The written <i>r</i> is pronounced in different ways in Norwegian. A number of representations of /r/ is used. Therefore, most likely you can use the /r/ which you are used to from your own language – whether you speak Russian, Spanish, German, French or any other language with /r/.</p> <p>Especially for learners from East Asia, the /r/ is often quite difficult to pronounce and is easily confused with /l/ (written <i>l</i>). This easily results in misunderstandings. Therefore it is important to make a clear distinction between the sounds represented by these two letters. A simple solution can be to use the American English /r/, like in the words <i>very</i> and <i>run</i> pronounced by Americans. If you speak Chinese, it may help you to know that this sound is the same as the first sound in the Chinese word for “people” (人, <i>rén</i>). This /r/ is also used in some Norwegian dialects, and it will therefore work fine as a representation of <i>r</i>.</p>
sk	<p>The letter combination <i>sk</i> is pronounced like English <i>sh</i> in the word <i>she</i> in front of <i>i</i>, <i>y</i> and <i>j</i> (<i>ski</i>, <i>sky</i>, <i>skjerf</i>). Otherwise it is pronounced like in the English word <i>skull</i>.</p>
t	<p>The <i>t</i> is always silent in the word <i>det</i> and in the definite form of neuters: <i>huset</i>, <i>universitetet</i>. It is however pronounced in the past tense of verbs and in the neuter form of adjectives.</p>