

# LONG AND SHORT VOWELS

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In Norwegian, any vowel may be long or short. This distinction is important as the length of the vowel can change the meaning of the word. For instance, *tiger* (long /i/) means “tiger”, whereas *tigger* (short /i/) means “beggar”.

A vowel is long if it

- a) is followed by just one or no consonant, *and*
- b) carries stress

Both criterias must be present for the vowel to be long. Vowels which fails to fulfill one of the criterias or both, are short, as illustrated with these underlined vowels:

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|-----------------|---|
| sk <u>o</u> le  | - long o: carries stress, one consonant behind        |
| forst <u>å</u>  | - long å: carries stress, no consonant behind         |
| vas <u>ke</u>   | - short a: carries stress, but two consonants behind  |
| but <u>i</u> kk | - short u: no stress – short i: two consonants behind |

## How short and how long?

How short should a short vowel be? Like one clap of the hands.

To get the right length of the long vowels, pretend you are stretching a rubber band while saying the vowel. (Or better: do it!) The rubber band should be slightly stretched. When you start feeling the tension in the rubber band, your long vowel has probably got the right length.