

HOW TO USE YOUR DICTIONARY

Dictionaries can be organised in many different ways, and not using them correctly can get you into trouble. Here are some general guidelines to help you.

What to look for

The words in the dictionary always appear in these forms:

Nouns: Singular, indefinite form
Verbs: Infinitive
Adjectives: Singular (masculine form), positive

Therefore, to find the words in the sentence *I saw the friendliest men*, you must look up *I*, *see*, *friendly* and *man*.

To find *Jeg så de gamle mennene* in a Norwegian dictionary, look for *jeg*, *se*, *gammel* og *mann*.

Homonyms

Homonyms are identical words with different meanings. In English there are many homonym pairs in which one word is a verb and the other a noun. In Norwegian these verbs and nouns have different translations:

to joke	= å spøke	a joke	= en vits
to dance	= å danse	a dance	= en dans
to fly	= å fly	a fly	= ei flue

The same goes for nationalities and national adjectives:

an Italian	= en italiener	Italian	= italiensk
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Therefore, you should always check the word class of the word in your dictionary. The word classes can be indicated in different ways, so you should find out how this works in your dictionary. Here are some common abbreviations:

Verbs: v, vb, vi, vt
Nouns: n, s, sb, indications of gender: m, f, c, n

Adjectives: a

A word can also have different meanings – and different translations – even if the word class doesn't change:

to think 1) to use your brain: å tenke
 2) to have an opinion: å synes, å mene
 3) to believe: å tro

a field 1) a meadow: et jorde, en mark
 2) for sports: en bane, en plass
 3) a topic, subject: et felt, et område
 and several other meanings

A good dictionary should give definitions and explanations for each translation when the word has many meanings. Take time to read these explanations.

Grammatical information

A decent dictionary should at least include the gender of the noun. This is usually indicated by these abbreviations:

m	= masculine	} or: c = masculine and feminine
f	= feminine	
n	= neutral	

or by indicating the singular, definite form:

bil, -en = en bil – bilen
 bok, -en/-a = en bok – boken *or* ei bok – boka
 hus, -et = et hus – huset

Some dictionaries also give irregular declensions and conjugations for nouns, verbs and adjectives. However, this is not very common.

Dictionaries published in Norway are usually meant for Norwegians learning a foreign language. Therefore, they may have a lot of grammatical information about the words in English, French, German etc., but not about the Norwegian words.

In some two-way dictionaries, one part gives information on the Norwegian word, and the other part gives information on the words in the other language. In this case, you may have to find the translation in i.e. the English-Norwegian part, and then look up the same word in the Norwegian-English part to find the grammatical information.