

MINI GRAMMAR BOOK

ENGLISH

DANISH

UNIVERB

English
Danish
minigrammar

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make it easier to teach yourself languages!***

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The course is bilingual: Each phrase is first pronounced in English, then repeated slowly in Danish, leaving you a chance to catch the proper pronunciation. A short interval in the recording gives you an opportunity to repeat the sentence yourself, upon which the sentence is repeated at normal speed.

The course is easy to follow and it is you alone who choose where and when you want to practise.

To make the course as interesting and as viable as possible, we have concentrated on words and phrases which you will often need when travelling abroad.

Each course consists of approx. three hours' training, two training books and this miniature grammar showing the fundamental grammatical rules of the Danish language.

The UNIVERB language courses
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or to brush up your existing knowledge.

You practise your pronunciation and enhance your vocabulary.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 7 |
| Spelling and Pronunciation..... | 9 |
| Nouns | 20 |
| Adjectives..... | 23 |
| Adverbs | 25 |
| Verbs | 26 |
| Pronouns..... | 33 |
| Prepositions..... | 40 |

Preface

Danish is the official language in Denmark and an official language on the Faeroe islands and in Greenland. Danish is taught as a foreign language in Iceland. In the rest of Scandinavia including Finland, people with a working knowledge of Danish will always be able to understand, at the very least, official notices, and to make themselves understood, as the differences between Norwegian and Swedish lie mainly in the pronunciation. Swedish is one of the official languages in Finland.

In Denmark, Danish is spoken by approx. 5 million people. Danish belongs to the Germanic language group, and many scholars believe that English has its origin in Danish. Even though this is not immediately evident in the everyday language, striking similarities are definitely there and can be easily observed in the structure as well as in the vocabulary of the two languages. Thus, English-speaking people can rest assured that acquiring a working knowledge of Danish is by all means possible.

The purpose of this book is to present an easily comprehensible survey of Danish grammar. A strictly practical approach has been followed. In the hope that this book can encourage further studies, we wish you good luck as you set out.

Spelling and Pronunciation

The alphabet

Danish uses the same alphabet as English, with three additional letters which are placed at the end of the alphabet:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V X Y Z Æ Ø Å
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v x y z æ ø å

Spelling

To most foreigners, the relation between pronunciation and spelling is not immediately clear. In Danish, an extensive use is made of mute letters and in some cases, the distinction between letters is decided only by a very fine margin. E.g. we write *dukke* (doll), but pronounce it *dåke*; we write *pege* (point), but we pronounce it *peje*. However, this should not discourage you, as the Danes — with whom you share your difficulties — will allow you a wide margin for mistakes, and also because spelling is only rarely essential to comprehension.

Stress

Like in English, stress on syllables in Danish does not follow a regular pattern. As a rule, however, stress is normally placed on the first syllable, e.g. **o**vertale (persuade), **m**øde (meeting).

Common exceptions are words with the prefixes *be-*, *ge-*, *er-*, and *for-*; the latter prefix, however, is stressed when it has an independent meaning:

Compare for example:

for**kl**are (explain) and for**var**me (preheat).

Other exceptions are a number of place names, e.g.:

Kø**be**h**av**n, and foreign words, e.g.: poli**t**i.

Pronunciation

Danish is the only Germanic language that has preserved the *glottal stop*, in Danish: *stød*. It appears only in stressed syllables where it falls either on a long vowel or on a voiced consonant immediately following a vowel. A stressed syllable can lose its glottal stop when the syllable is the first element of a compound.

The glottal stop can also be dropped when suffixes are added. (This, however, does not apply to the enclitic article).

Examples:

with glottal stop

skå**l** (bowl)

land (country)

hjem (home)

lang (long)

without glottal stop

skåle (bowls)

lande (to land)

hjemme (at home)

langsom (slow)

but

skib – skib**e**t (ship – the ship)

skibe – skibe**n**e (ships – the ships)

stol – stol**e**n (chair – the chair)

stole – stole**n**e (chairs – the chairs)

Glottal stops can sometimes have an essential bearing in a phrase. In Danish, this is known as *betoning* which is best translated as *accentuation*.

Compare for example:

with glottal stop

Stå på bus**s**en

(stand on top of the bus)

without glottal stop

Stå på bus**s**en

(get on the bus)

Letters

Vowels

Length

Normally, vowels are *long*:

a) before a single consonant, e.g.: ba**d**e (bathe), læ**s**e (read)

b) in monosyllables with a final vowel, e.g.: ske (spoon),
p**å** (on)

Vowels are normally *short*:

a) before a double consonant, e.g.: ko**mm**e (come),
m**æ**lk (milk)

But there are numerous exceptions, e.g.:

Short vowel: ko**p** (cup), bus (bus), da (when), vi (we)

Long vowel: æb**l**e (apple), sp**i**ste (ate)

The vowels one by one

| | vowel | writing | pronun- ciation | | vowel | writing | pronun- ciation | |
|---|--|---------|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| A | 1) when long, like "a" in car | [aa] | klare [klaarer] (clear) | 3) when short, also like "e" in " met " | [eh] | let (easy/light) | [lehd] | |
| | 2) when short, more like "a" in " cart " | [ah] | hat (hat) | 4) when unstressed, like | [e'] | hjælpe (help) | [yeh]per | |
| | 3) you will also hear, as an alternative to the above, a more or less "flat" pronunciation of "a", almost like "a" in "hat" or tending towards e as in " let "; it can be long or short | [ææ] | ja (yes) | I | 1) when long, like "ee" in " bee " | [ee] | ile (hurry) | [eeler] |
| | 4) A city phenomenon is the "a" pronounced at the back of the tongue, almost like adding an "r" like "ar" in " barn " | [ai] | tale [talk] | | 2) when short, like "ee" in " meet " or | [ee] | liter (liter) | [leeder] |
| | | [eh] | kan (can) | | 3) like "e" in " letter " or | [æ] | drikker (drinks) | [drægger] |
| E | 1) when long, the same quality as "a" in " plate " only longer, and a pure vowel, <i>not</i> a diphthong | [ay] | rede (ready) | | 4) like "i" in " think " | [e] | ligger (lies) | [legger] |
| | 2) when short, somewhere between the "a" in " plate " and the "i" in " hit " | [ei] | fedt (lard) | O | 1) when long, like "oa" in " boat ", but a pure vowel, <i>not</i> a diphthong | [oa] | sol (sun) | [soal] |
| | | | | | 2) when short, more or less the same quality of sound | [oa] | bonde (peasant) | [boaner] |
| | | | | | 3) when short, also like "o" in lot | [o] | godt (well/nice) | [god] |
| | | | | U | 1) when long, like "oo" in " pool " | [oo] | frue (Madam) | [froer] |
| | | | | | 2) when short, like "oo" in " loot " | [oo] | nu (now) | [noo] |

| | | vowel | writing | pronun- ciation |
|---|--|--------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Y | 1) put your tongue in the position for “ee” as in “bee”, but round your lips as for the “oo” in “pool” | [ew] | nyde (enjoy) lytte (listen) | [newdher] [lewder] |
| Æ | 1) when long, vowel quality fluctuates between that of “ai” in “air” and “ai” in “tailor” | [ai] | sæbe (soap) | [saiber] |
| | 2) when short, like “e” in “get” | [ah] | ægte (real/genuine) | [eghter] |
| | 3) preceding an “r”, it sounds more like “a” in “hat”; (long or short) | [æ] | ært (pea) | [ært] |
| Ø | 1) like “ur” in “fur”, but with the lips rounded; (long or short) | [ur] [u’] | frøken (Miss) øl (beer) | [frurken] [u’l] |
| Å | 1) when long, like “aw” in “saw” | [aw] | såre (hurt) | [sawer] |
| | 2) when short, like “o” in “on” | [o] | bånd (tape/band) | [bon] |
| | 3) or closed like “o” in “open” (but <i>not</i> a diphthong) | [o’] | åben (open) | [o’ben] |

Diphthongs

| | | diph- thong | writing | pronun- ciation |
|----------|--|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| AV AF | like “ow” in “now” | [ow] | hav (sea) | [how] [ll] |
| EJ IJ EG | like “I” | [i] | ej (not) | [ll] |
| EV | like “e” in “pet” followed by a short “oo” sound | [æo’] | levned (lifestyle) | [læoned] |
| OU OV | like “o” in “pot” followed by a short “oo” sound | [o’] | sjov (fun) | [sjo’] |
| ØI ØJ ØG | like ‘oi’ in “coil” | [oi] | løgn (untruth) | [loin] |
| ØV | like “ur” in “curl” followed by a short “oo” sound | [ur] | søvn (sleep) | [sur’n] |

Consonants

Mute letters

In specific combinations, certain consonants are not pronounced, e.g.:

- d in the combination “nd”, “ld”, “rd”, and before “t” and “s”
land (country), *kold* (cold), *bord* (table), *kendt* (known),
plads (place)
- g in the suffix *-ig*, and in most cases after “e”, “i”, “u”, and
“y” and as a final sound
farlig (dangerous), *lige* (straight), *fugl* (bird), *syg* (sick),
dag (day)
- h before “v” and “j”
hvor (where), *hjerte* (heart)
- f in the prepositions “af” (of, by, for, off, from) and “ad” (by)
det er pant af dig (it is kind of you)
- v in the words
gulv (floor), *tolv* (twelve)

The consonants one by one

B C F

H L M as in English

N S V }
}

| | conso- nant | writing | pronun- ciation | |
|---|--|---------|--------------------|-----------|
| D | 1) when at the end of the word after a vowel, or between a vowel and unstressed “e” or “i”, like “th” in “ th is” | [th] | mad (food) | [math] |
| | 2) in all other cases as in English | | | |
| G | 1) at the beginning of a word or a syllable, as as go | [g] | god (good) | [go’] |
| | 2) before “r” and “l”, like like “w” in dawn | [w] | daglig (daily) | [dawli] |
| J | 1) like “y” in “yet” | [y] | ja (yes) | [yæ] |
| K | 1) between vowels, and sometimes at the end of a word, like “g” in “goal” | [g] | frakke (coat) | [fragger] |
| | 2) otherwise like “k” in “kilo” | [k] | kilo (kilo) | [kilo’] |

| | <i>conso- nant</i> | <i>writing</i> | <i>pronun- ciation</i> |
|--|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| L 1) always as in "live", never as in "well" | [l] | sal (hall/floor) | [sahl] |
| NG 1) as in "king", never as in "longer", unless "n" and "g" are in separate syllables | [ng] [ngg] | ingen (nobody) ingre- diens (ingredient) | [ingern] [inggray- deehns] |
| P 1) between vowels, and sometimes at the end of a word, generally like "b" in "ball" | [b] | tippe (tip/do the pools) | [tibbe] |
| 2) otherwise like "p" in "Paul" | [p] | pakke (pack) | [pagge] |
| R 1) pronounced in the back of the throat, as in German, at the beginning of a word, but otherwise often omitted (but in this case prolonging a preceding vowel) | [r] | rask (rapid) | [rahsk] |
| SJ 1) usually like "sh" in "shower", but may also be pronounced as the com- bination of "ss" and "y" in "bless you" | [sh] | sjov (fun) | [shorv] |

| | <i>conso- nant</i> | <i>writing</i> | <i>pronun- ciation</i> |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| T 1) between vowels, and sometimes at the end of a word, like "d" in "dog" | [d] | bytte (exchange) | [bewder] |
| 2) otherwise like "t" in "tee" | [t] | tal (numbers) | [ta'l] |

Pronunciation is by many, experts as well as laymen, considered the main difficulty in Danish. The Danes, who are aware of this, and delighted by any foreigner learning Danish, will therefore allow you a margin for mistakes. Danes will have absolutely no trouble understanding you, as a correct pronunciation is but rarely essential to comprehension.

We recommend that you spend some time with this chapter, before you proceed with your textbook.

Nouns

Gender

Most Danish nouns are either common or neuter. The easiest way to learn the gender of a noun is to learn the noun together with its indefinite article.

A few nouns may be either common or neuter as you please, e.g.:

“en cirkus” or “et cirkus” (circus)

“en indeks” or “et indeks” (index)

Other nouns may get a different sense when the gender is changed:

“en vår” (springtime)

“et vår” (pillow case)

Cases

The only noticeable case declination in Danish nouns is the Genitive (possessive form). Like in English, it is indicated by adding an “s” to the word:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Peter is reading | Peter læser |
| Peter is reading a book | Peter læser en bog |
| It is Peter's book | Det er Peters bog |
| Give the book to Peter | Giv Peter bogen |

Number

Generally, nouns of either gender are provided with the ending *-e*, *-r* or *-er* to indicate the plural:

| | <i>Common</i> | <i>Neuter</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Singular</i> | kvinde (woman) | hus (house) |
| | drøm (dream) | sted (place) |
| <i>Plural</i> | kvinder drømme | huse steder |

Which ending to choose is a rather complex matter. We suggest a method of trial and error or that you remember the endings together with the words as you enhance your vocabulary. One thing is clear, though: A stressed syllable ending in a consonant will double the consonant before adding another ending.

Nouns ending in *-el*, *-en-* or *-er*:

In most cases, the *-e* will disappear when forming the definite form or the plural:

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| artikel – artiklen – artikler | (article) |
| hilsen – hils(e)nen – hils(e)ner | (greeting) |
| neger – negeren – neg(e)re | (negro) |
| lærer – læreren – lærere | (teacher) |

A few words change vowel in the plural, e.g.:

| <i>Singular</i> | <i>Plural</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|
| mand (man) | mænd (men) |
| ko (cow) | køer (cows) |

(Again, you will notice the resemblance with English).

Articles

The Indefinite Article

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Common gender: "en" | en mand | (a man) |
| | en kvinde | (a woman) |
| Neuter gender: "et" | et hus | (a house) |

The Enclitic Article (definite article added as an ending)

In Danish, unlike most European languages, the definite article is enclitic, i.e. attached to the end of the word instead of placing it before the word, so the equivalent of the English "the" will be as follows:

| | <i>Common</i> | <i>Neuter</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Singular</i> | manden (the man) | huset (the house) |
| <i>Plural</i> | mændene | husene |

Adjectives

Adjectives ending in *-el*, *-en* or *-er* lose the "e" before *-l*, *-n*, and *-r* when an ending starting with a vowel is attached to it:

ædel – ædle – ædlere – ædlest
(noble *sing.* – noble *plur.* – nobler – noblest)

doven – dovne
(lazy *sing.* – lazy *plur.*)

Two identical consonants can not exist before an *-l*, *-n* or *-r*:

gammel – gamle (old)
rådden – rådne (rotten)
sikker – sikre – sikrere – sikrest (safe)

Normally, a "t" is added when the noun, that the adjective relates to, is of neuter gender:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| en gammel bil | et gammelt hus |
| (<i>common</i>) | (<i>neuter</i>) |
| (an old car) | (an old house) |

Adjectives ending in *-sk* do normally not add a "t" in the neuter gender:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| et persisk marked | (a Persian market) |
| et musikalsk eventyr | (a musical tale) |
| et elektrisk hegn | (an electrical fence) |

Adjectives ending in a stressed vowel are, as a rule, left undeclined:

et ru bræt (a rough board)
de tro tjenere (the faithful servants)

Exceptions from this rule:

words ending in "å" and the words "ny" and "fri" add a "t" in the neuter gender:

et blå tørklæde (a blue scarf)
et nyt ur (a new watch)
et frit liv (a free life)

The comparative is formed either by adding "-ere" as an ending or by placing the word "mere" (more) before the adjective (notice again the resemblance to English usage). Don't forget to leave out the "t" in the neuter when forming the comparative!

Likewise, the superlative is formed by adding "-est" as an ending or by placing the word "mest" (most) before the adjective (again like in English).

Generally, words of two syllables or more, tend to take "mere" and "mest" instead of the "-ere" and "-est" version.

Adverbs

Adverbs come in two kinds:

- 1) those that are "genuine adverbs":
e.g. "aldrig" (never), "gerne" (willingly), "sandelig" (indeed). "ret" (rather), and
- 2) those that are formed by adding a "-t" to an adjective, eg. "stort" (big), "hurtigt" (fast), "relativt" (relatively) – like the English "-ly" in fact.

Adverbs formed on the basis of adjectives ending in "-ig" or "-lig" do not always add a "-t" — if they indicate a degree, you can choose to leave out the "-t":

Der var afsindig(t) mange mennesker til receptionen.
(An incredibly large number of people attended the reception.)

Besøget var væsentlig(t) større end beregnet.
(The number of visitors was much larger than expected.)

Filmen var utrolig(t) spændende.
(The film was incredibly exciting.)

Whereas the "-t" should not be left out when the adverb indicates the way in which things behave or exist:

Hun kan ikke stave rigtigt. (She is unable to spell properly.)

Hunden vendte sig velbehageligt om på ryggen.
(The dog rolled pleasingly to its back)

Manden smilede venligt til mig. (The man smiled kindly at me.)

So generally, you may choose to use the -t or to omit it!

Verbs

Conjugations

Apart from the fact that Danish — like most languages — has regular and irregular verbs, the conjugation of Danish verbs is easy:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| I walk | jeg går |
| you walk | du går |
| he, she, it walks | han, hun, den, det går |
| we walk | vi går |
| you walk | I, De går |
| they walk | de går |

You see – it is “går” all the way!

This present tense is formed by adding an “-r” to the infinitive:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| infinitive: | at gå (to walk) |
| present tense, active form: | jeg går |
| present tense, passive form: | der går |

In verbs ending in a stressed vowel, you have two categories:

1. Ending in *-e*, *-o*, *æ*, *-ø* or *-å*:

In these verbs, the *-r* is added directly to the vowel:

Active form:

Det sneer – jeg tror – han ler – vi får
(It is snowing – I believe – he laughs – we get)

Passive form:

Det ses – maden tøs op – det kan nås
(It is seen – the food is being defrosted – it can be reached)

2. Ending in *-i*, *-u* or *-y*:

Here, the *-r* or *-s* may be added directly, or you may insert an *-e* before the *-r* or *-s*:

“Saften sis” or “saften sies”
(The juice is being strained)

“Det dur ikke” or “det duer ikke”
(It is no use)

“Knappen skal sys i” or “knappen skal syes i”
(The button has to be sewn on)

(but you may also choose not to add the “e”!)

The trend is a declining use of “e”.

The Past Tense

The regular verbs add *-ede* (so called “weak” ending):

tror – troede (believe – believed)

or *-te* (so called “strong” ending):

læser – læste (read – read)

The irregular verbs change vowel:

giver — gav (give – gave)

or take no ending at all:

sover – sov (sleep – slept)

The easiest way to learn which solution to choose, is to learn the past tense together with the present tense as you develop your vocabulary.

The imperative

As a rule, the stem of the verb (the infinitive minus the “-e” ending) will form the imperative form:

Hils din mor! (Give my regards to your mother!)

Skriv til mig! (Please write me!)

Glem det! (Forget it!)

Unless the stem would then end in two identical consonants, in which case one of the consonants is erased:

Tak for mad! (Thank you for the food!) – (Thanking the hostess for the food is a special Scandinavian phenomenon which takes place after each meal)

Kom snart igen! (Please come back soon!)

Spil musikken igen! (Play the music again, please!)

Verbs ending in a stressed vowel will remain unchanged in the imperative:

Sy selv knappen i! (Sew on the button yourself!)

Se op! (Look up!)

Gå ikke over sporet! (Don’t cross the track!)

Even to the Danes, imperatives ending in odd letter combinations such as *-bn* (åbn), *-sl* (pensl), *-str* (klistr), *-gt*n (sagtn), *-ndl* (behandl) should be avoided. Most Danes would use an equivalent expression instead.

Modal auxiliary verbs

“kan”, “må” and “bør” (can, may, ought to) are – like other verbs – not conjugated.

Compound Tenses

are constructed by means of the auxiliary verbs “er” and “har” plus the participle form of the verb:

The perfect tense

indicates concluded actions seen from the present:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Han <i>har spist</i> | (He has eaten) |
| <i>Jeg har taget</i> toget hertil | (I travelled by train to get here) |
| De <i>er blevet</i> snydt | (You have been fooled) |

The pluperfect tense

indicates concluded actions seen from the past:

| | |
|---|---|
| Vi <i>havde spist</i> , da han kom | (We had already eaten when he arrived) |
| De <i>havde lejet</i> en bil i ferien | (They had rented a car for the holidays) |
| Hun var <i>omkommet af kulde</i> , inden redningen nåede frem | (She had died from cold before the rescue team reached her) |

The future tense

is originally constructed from an auxiliary verb plus the infinitive.

There is a growing tendency to use the present tense instead of future, also because it seems awkward always to use another verb to indicate the future tense:

| <i>Future</i> | <i>Present</i> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Jeg <i>skal køre</i> om fem minutter | (jeg kører om fem minutter) |
| (I'll be going in five minutes) | |
| Han <i>vil ikke kunne</i> klare det | (han klarer det ikke) |
| (He will not be able to make it) | |
| Du <i>vil komme</i> en time for sent | (du kommer en time for sent) |
| (You will be one hour late) | |

A large number of participle forms are used as adjectives – and are conjugated accordingly:

| | |
|---|--|
| Bilerne er <i>lejet</i> or <i>lejede</i> | (The cars are rented) |
| Han sælger <i>brugte</i> biler | (He sells second hand cars) |
| Plakaterne solgtes i <i>nummererede</i> eksemplarer | (The posters were sold in numbered copies) |

Negation

Only one word: “ikke”. In most cases placed in connection with the verb:

Han kommer **ikke** i aften. (He will not be here tonight.)

Jeg synes **ikke**, (I don't think you should go.)
du skal tage afsted.

In some cases, however, English would place the negation logically: I hope you *don't* mind, where Danish places the negation in the first part of the sentence: Jeg håber *ikke*, du har noget imod det.

Pronouns

Personal pronouns

| Singular | Plural |
|--|-----------|
| 1. jeg (I) | vi (we) |
| 2. du, De (you) | I (you) |
| 3. han, hun, den, det (he, she, it) | de (they) |

Personal pronouns are used together with verbs (just like in English).

“Du” or “De”?

The general trend since the last few decades is an increasing use of the more familiar form “du”. Observe however, that the polite form “De” is used with people you don't know and with people *whom* you want to show your respect. If, in English, you would use “Sir” or “Madam” choose the Danish “De”.

“I” may be used without any regard to familiarity when addressing more than one person.

Do observe that “De” and “I” are written in capital letters – the latter to distinguish it from the “de” indicating “they”.

These pronouns may be declined in case (like in English):

– Either as a result of their function in the sentence (object):

Singular

1. mig (Han redder *mig*) (He saves me)
2. dig/Dem (Han redder *dig/Dem*) (He saves you)
3. ham/hende/den/det (He saves him/her/it)
(Han redder *ham/hende/den/det*)

Plural

1. os (Han redder *os*) (He saves us)
2. jer (Han redder *jer*) (He saves you)
3. dem (Han redder *dem*) (He saves them)

– or directed by a preposition:

Singular

1. for mig (for me)
2. for dig/Dem (for you)
3. for ham/hende/den/det (for him/her/it)

Plural

1. for os (for us)
2. for jer (for you)
3. for dem (for them)

The reflexive pronoun

“sig” is used in the singular as well as in the plural, otherwise these pronouns are identical with the declined personal pronouns:

Singular

Jeg vasker *mig* (I wash)
du vasker *dig* (you wash)
han vasker *sig* (he washes)

Plural

vi vasker *os* (we wash)
I vasker *jer* (you wash)
de vasker *sig* (they wash)

The impersonal pronoun

“man” is used very much like the English “you” or “they” (or “one”) to indicate a general view:

Man mener, at ilden var påsat. (They think it is arson.)

Man siger, at det snart bliver forår. (They say that spring is near.)

Man har aldrig fundet årsagen. (They never found the reason.)

Man bliver aldrig træt af det. (You never get fed up with it.)

Man kan aldrig vide. (You’ll never know/
one can never know.)

The same effect may often be obtained by using the indefinite pronoun “det” plus the passive form of a verb:

Det menes, at ilden var påsat.

Det siges, at det snart bliver forår.

Det forventes at ske i morgen.

“Man” is never declined.

Demonstrative pronouns

| | <i>Singular</i> | <i>Plural</i> |
|---------|-----------------|---------------|
| (here) | | |
| common | denne | disse |
| neuter | dette | |
| (there) | | |
| common | den | de/dem |
| neuter | det | |

Denne bil er bedre end *den* derhenne.

(This car is better than the one over there.)

Disse stole er for hårde, ad os prøve *dem*, der står ved siden af.

(These chairs are too rigid, let us try the ones next to them.)

De sko, jeg har på, klemmer.

(The shoes I am wearing hurt.)

There is a tendency, however, to use “dem” instead of “disse” (but mostly together with “her”):

Kan du lide den her?

(Do you like this one?)

“de” is used as a subject, whereas “dem” is used as a direct or indirect object:

De æbler ser gode ud, skal vi købe dem?

(Those apples look delicious, should we buy some?)

Possessive pronouns

| | <i>Singular</i> | <i>Plural</i> |
|----|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | mit/min | vor/vores |
| 2. | din/dit/Deres | jeres |
| 3. | hans/hendes/ dens/dets | deres |

These pronouns, of course, depend on what they relate to. If they relate to a neuter noun, you use the “-t version”, otherwise you use the “-n version”:

Min taske (my bag) *Mine* tasker (my bags)

Dit hus (your house) *Dine* huse (your houses)

Dens pels (its fur) *Dens* kløer (its claws)

Dets dør (its door) *Dets* vinduer (its windows)

“hans”, “hendes”, “jeres” and “deres” are always the same:

Hans taske – *hendes* tasker – *jeres* hus – *deres* huse

Whether to use “vor” or “vores” is more or less a matter of taste.

Vor store datter – vores børn

(Our eldest daughter – our children)

vores datter – vore fælles børn

(Our daughter – our children)

The relative pronouns

“som” and “der” both relate to a previous sentence or word.

In most cases the two words are equivalent:

Manden, *der* (or “som”) bor i dette hus, er blind (relates to “manden”, i.e. sing.)

(The man who lives in this house is blind.)

De katte, *der* (or “som”) bor i baggården (relates to “katte”, i.e. plur.)

(The cats that live in the backyard.)

However, you can always use “som” whereas “der” can never be used as a direct or indirect object.

Bordet, *som* vi spiste ved, var rundt (relates to “bordet”, i.e. neuter)

(The table at which we ate was round.)

Båden, *som* vi sejlede med, var hvidmalet (relates to “båden”, i.e. common).

(The boat that we sailed with was painted white.)

Interrogative pronouns

All start in “hv-”.

“Hvem” relates to persons (Who)

“Hvad” relates to things (What)

“Hvilken/hvilket/hvilke” relates to both kinds (Which)

“Hvis” relates to a person in the genitive case:

Hvem er den man? (Who is that man?)

Hvad er det for en farve? (What colour is this?)

Hvilken øl kan du bedst lide (Which beer do you prefer – Carlsberg eller Tuborg?)

Hvilken vej skal vi gå? (Which way do we choose?)

Hvilket af disse to flag er det danske? (Which of these two flags is the Danish one?)

Hvilke sko synes du bedst om – de røde eller de sorte? (Which shoes do you prefer – the red ones or the black ones?)

Hvis frakke er det? (Whose coat is this?)

Indefinite pronouns

| <i>Common</i> | <i>Neuter</i> | <i>Plural</i> | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|
| al/hele | alt | alle | (all) |
| anden | andet | andre | (other) |
| nogen | noget | nogle/nogen | (some) |
| ingen | intet | ingen | (none) |
| | | mange | (many) |
| | | flere | (several) |

Prepositions

In every language, prepositions follow their own logic. Also in Danish, you should give them thorough attention as you meet them. We recommend that you learn them as your vocabulary grows. See for instance the following examples:

Drengen går i skole

(in)

(The boy goes to school)

Lærlingen går på skole

(on)

(The apprentice attends a course)

Publikum går i teatret

(in)

(The audience goes to the theatre)

Skuespilleren går på teatret

(on)

(The actor goes to the theatre)

When in doubt: choose the preposition that you would have chosen in English – the two languages are very much alike.



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