

When another syllable is added, for instance **-en** to form the plural, the final consonant must be doubled so that the syllable remains closed:

|               |              |               |               |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>mannen</b> | men          | <b>potten</b> | pots          |
| <b>bedden</b> | beds         | <b>vullen</b> | we, they fill |
| <b>zitten</b> | we, they sit |               |               |

*Note:* Remember that (except in a few loanwords) you never see any doubled consonants at the end of a word.

When one of the above vowels occurs in a word of one syllable where it is already followed by more than one consonant, no change needs to be made when a syllable is added:

|                     |                  |                     |                          |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>arm, armen</b>   | arm, arms        | <b>word, worden</b> | I become,<br>they become |
| <b>kerk, kerken</b> | church, churches | <b>kust, kusten</b> | coast, coasts            |
| <b>ding, dingen</b> | thing, things    |                     |                          |

### 2.1.1 Summary

The short vowels **a, e, i, o, u** are always followed by at least one consonant. When another syllable follows, they must be followed by two or more consonants.

The rest of the Dutch vowels, including all the diphthongs, can (but might not!) occur in an open syllable. All such vowels are spelled with two letters when they happen to stand in a closed syllable:

|             |          |                   |       |
|-------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| <b>laan</b> | avenue   | <i>diphthongs</i> |       |
| <b>peer</b> | pear     | <b>trein</b>      | train |
| <b>boom</b> | tree     | <b>dijk</b>       | dike  |
| <b>buur</b> | neighbor | <b>ruik</b>       | smell |
| <b>fout</b> | mistake  |                   |       |
| <b>dier</b> | animal   |                   |       |
| <b>deur</b> | door     |                   |       |
| <b>boek</b> | book     |                   |       |

These vowels might stand in an open syllable (a) in a word of one syllable without a following consonant or (b) when another syllable is added. Then the vowels spelled with a double letter (the first four, above) drop one of these letters. The logic here is that the single following consonant (a) or the absence of any consonant (b) is enough to indicate that the syllable is open:

|               |           |            |         |
|---------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| <b>lanen</b>  | avenues   | <b>sla</b> | lettuce |
| <b>peren</b>  | pears     | —          |         |
| <b>bomen</b>  | trees     | <b>zo</b>  | so      |
| <b>buuren</b> | neighbors | <b>nu</b>  | now     |

Notice the blank in the second column. An *ee* at the end of a word must always be written with two letters (for instance *zee* “sea”) to distinguish it from the unaccented vowel as in English “soda” which is regularly spelled with *e* (for instance *ze* “she”). This distinction is not made inside the word, however, resulting in an occasional ambiguity such as *regeren* (*re-gee-ren*) “to govern” but *regelen* (*ree-ge-len*) “to adjust.”

Note, however, that in accordance with the rule given above, the doubled letters are used whenever the syllable is closed (that is, when the vowel is followed by two or more consonants), whether or not another syllable follows:

|                |                   |               |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>paarden</b> | <b>[paar-den]</b> | horses        |
| <b>feesten</b> | <b>[fees-ten]</b> | parties       |
| <b>hoofden</b> | <b>[hoof-den]</b> | heads         |
| <b>buurten</b> | <b>[buur-ten]</b> | neighborhoods |

The doubled vowels in the diphthongs *aai*, *ooi*, *eeu*, *oei*, *ieu* never change:

|                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>taai, taaie</b>    | tough             |
| <b>mooi, mooie</b>    | nice              |
| <b>leeuw, leeuwen</b> | lion, lions       |
| <b>groei, groeien</b> | I grow, they grow |

The vowels spelled with two different letters remain unchanged when another syllable is added. Remember that a spelling with two different letters does not necessarily indicate a diphthong!

|               |         |                |                |
|---------------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>dieren</b> | animals | <b>treinen</b> | trains         |
| <b>deuren</b> | doors   | <b>dijken</b>  | dikes          |
| <b>boeken</b> | books   | <b>fouten</b>  | mistakes       |
|               |         | <b>tuinen</b>  | yards, gardens |

### 2.1.2 Summary

- 1 The vowels **aa**, **ee**, **oo**, **uu** are spelled with two letters when in a closed syllable but with one letter when in an open syllable.
- 2 The vowels and diphthongs written with two or more different letters remain unchanged whether the syllable is closed or open.
- 3 All the vowels that can occur in an open syllable, with the exception of **ie**, **oe**, **uu**, before consonants other than **r**, are pronounced longer than the vowels that occur only in a closed syllable. For this reason, many texts call **aa**, **ee**, **oo**, **uu**, **ie**, **eu**, **oe**—the vowels that can occur only in open syllable—LONG vowels, and **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u** SHORT vowels.

Note that when we apply rule 1 of this summary and write **aa**, **ee**, **oo**, **uu** with a single letter in an open syllable, only the following consonants distinguish them from the closed-syllable short vowels, for instance:

|               |            |                |            |
|---------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| <b>zaken</b>  | affairs    | <b>zakken</b>  | pockets    |
| <b>redde</b>  | reason     | <b>redden</b>  | to save    |
| <b>bomen</b>  | trees      | <b>bommen</b>  | bombs      |
| <b>manen</b>  | moons      | <b>mannen</b>  | men        |
| <b>spelen</b> | they play  | <b>spellen</b> | they spell |
| <b>slapen</b> | they sleep | <b>slappe</b>  | flabby     |

## 2.2 The relationship between **f** and **v**, **s** and **z**

- 1 Many words end in an **f** or an **s**, such as **brief** “letter,” **huis** “house.” When we add an ending and this consonant comes to serve as the first consonant of a following syllable, it is replaced by, respectively, **v** or **z**. The consonant may be preceded by **l** or **r**:

|               |                 |              |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>raaf</b>   | <b>ra-ven</b>   | ravens       |
| <b>geloof</b> | <b>gelo-ven</b> | believe      |
| <b>brief</b>  | <b>brie-ven</b> | letters      |
| <b>wolf</b>   | <b>wol-ven</b>  | wolves       |
| <b>werf</b>   | <b>wer-ven</b>  | shipyards    |
| <b>roos</b>   | <b>ro-zen</b>   | roses        |
| <b>huis</b>   | <b>hui-zen</b>  | houses       |
| <b>gans</b>   | <b>gan-zen</b>  | geese        |
| <b>vers</b>   | <b>ver-zen</b>  | verses       |
| <b>beurs</b>  | <b>beur-zen</b> | scholarships |

This does not happen, however, when the **s** is preceded by **p**, **t** or **k**:

|                |                |              |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>rups</b>    | <b>rupsen</b>  | caterpillars |
| <b>fietsen</b> | <b>fietsen</b> | bicycles     |
| <b>heks</b>    | <b>heksen</b>  | witches      |

This should feel familiar, because we do the same in English in “wife, wives,” “wolf, wolves” and “house, houses” (though in this last example the spelling does not show how we really pronounce it).

- 2 When we double an **f** or **s** on addition of another syllable, we do not change to **v** or **z**:

|             |                |           |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|
| <b>stof</b> | <b>stoffen</b> | materials |
| <b>das</b>  | <b>dassen</b>  | neckties  |

- 3 Some exceptions to the rule given in point 1 are:

|                 |                  |             |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>biograaf</b> | <b>biografen</b> | biographers |
| <b>elf</b>      | <b>elfen</b>     | elves       |
| <b>kous</b>     | <b>kousen</b>    | stockings   |
| <b>dans</b>     | <b>dansen</b>    | dances      |

All the above words illustrating the rules for the replacement of f and s by v and z when a vowel follows have been nouns. But these are general pronunciation and spelling rules that hold for all parts of speech, especially adjectives and verbs:

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>lief</b>    | <b>lieve</b>           |
| <b>serieus</b> | <b>serieuze</b>        |
| <b>grijs</b>   | <b>grijze, grijzer</b> |

### 2.3 Pronunciation of the ending -en

In spoken Dutch, especially in the western part of the Netherlands, the -n of the common ending -en is normally dropped. So:

|                                 |                     |                    |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>lopen</b> to walk            | is pronounced as if | <b>[lope]</b>      |
| <b>spreken</b> (we, they) speak |                     | <b>[spreke]</b>    |
| <b>gesproken</b> spoken         |                     | <b>[gesproke]</b>  |
| <b>houten</b> wooden            |                     | <b>[houte]</b>     |
| <b>brieven</b> letters          |                     | <b>[brieve]</b>    |
| <b>ziekenhuis</b> hospital      |                     | <b>[ziekehuis]</b> |

These words are, however, never *written* without the -n. Notice that the remaining sound is the short vowel common in unstressed syllables (Chapter 1).

#### 2.3.1 Let's try it

Add the ending -en to the following words:

|       |      |       |       |
|-------|------|-------|-------|
| tak   | maan | reus  | brief |
| feest | kous | zoon  | pit   |
| bloem | das  | woord |       |

Add the ending -e to the following words:

|      |         |      |      |
|------|---------|------|------|
| leuk | vies    | dik  | boos |
| raar | serieus | mooi | arm  |