

ch	machine machine	[ʃ]	The sound in this spelling occurs only in words borrowed from French.
tj	katje kitten	[tʃ]	Resulting from t and j standing next to each other; roughly similar to English “ch.”
ch	acht eight	[x]	
g	geel yellow	[x], [ɣ]	In parts of the east and south of the Netherlands, as well as in Flanders, a voiced sound is often heard. It is pronounced [ɣ] only in loanwords.
	logies lodging	[ʒ]	This pronunciation (the sound of the “s” in English “measure”) is heard in words borrowed from French.
sch	schip ship	[sx]	Note that this spelling represents a succession of two distinct sounds.
	praktisch practical	[s]	At the end of a word and in suffixes, the ch is not heard.
v	veel much	[v]	This is pronounced fully voiced (like English “veil”) in the south and in Flanders, but in much of the rest of the Netherlands it is not distinguished from f .
z	zout salt	[z]	
l	laat late	[l]	

r	room cream	[ʀ] [r]	The pronunciation most often heard in the north, especially in the cities, is the “guttural” one, phonetically called “uvular.” But in much of the country and throughout Flanders, the tongue tip trill (the “Spanish r”) is heard.
m	maan moon	[m]	
n	niet not	[n]	
ng	tong tongue zingen to sing	[ŋ]	As “ng” in English “singer,” never as in “finger.”
j	ja yes	[j]	
w	wat what	[v] [w]	In the Netherlands, a slight contact of lower lip and upper teeth, lighter than English “v”; in Flanders, normally pronounced similar to – but not exactly the same as – English “w.”

1.3.1 Summary

- 1 **b** and **d** are pronounced as **p** and **t** at the end of a word, i.e. they become voiceless. The voiced sounds **v** and **z** likewise do not occur at the ends of words, but here—as we’ll see in the next chapter—the spelling does indicate this.
- 2 **ch**, **sch**, **g** and **r** require special attention, since the pronunciations they represent are not the ones suggested to speakers of English by their spellings.

1.4 Assimilation

Two or more consecutive consonants (except **l**, **m**, **n** and **r**) must be pronounced either all voiced or all voiceless. This is true whether the consonants occur within one word or at the end of one word and the beginning of the next.

- 1 When a spirant (a “continuant”) **f**, **s**, **ch**, **g**, **v** or **z** is combined with one of the stop consonants **b**, **d** (voiced) and **p**, **t** or **k** (voiceless), the stop consonant controls the voicing or voicelessness of the entire group:

<i>Spelled</i>		<i>Pronounced as if written</i>
hoofden	heads	[hoovden]
ijsbeer	polar bear	[ijzbeer]
opvouwen	to fold up	[opfouwen]

Remember that spelling notwithstanding, a **b** or **d** at the end of a word is voiceless:

ik heb veel	I have many . . .	[ik hep feel]
zij had zeker	she had certainly . . .	[zij hat seker]

- 2 When two stop consonants are combined in a group, if either one is voiced they are both voiced:

uitbreiden	to extend	[uidbreiden]
op duizenden	on thousands	[ob duizenden]

- 3 When two spirant consonants are combined, the group is voiceless:

afzetten	to remove	[afsetten]
het is veel	it is a lot	[het is feel]

- 4 Final voiceless consonants often become voiced when followed immediately by a vowel:

heb ik	have I	[heb ik] (i.e. hep + ik)
lees ik	do I read	[leez ik]

1.5 Stress

The main stress (“accent”) in Dutch is generally on the first syllable of a word, as in English. Prefixes and suffixes containing the unstressed vowel *e* (*be-*, *er-*, *ge-*, *her-*, *ver-*, *-e*, *-en*, *-er*), as well as the prefix *ont-*, are not stressed.

In all cases where the position of the stress is ambiguous, it will be indicated by a line under the stressed syllable, e.g. **stadhuis**, **toevallig**, **Amsterdam**.

Spelling

2.1 Spelling rules: closed and open syllables

You will find that the Dutch spelling system is a very consistent one. That is, by and large, each sound is spelled in only one way, and each symbol represents only one sound. But part of its logic is the spelling of vowel sounds and here Dutch does things in a way no other language does. The spelling system is based on the distinction between what we call closed and open syllables. First we need to understand what is meant by these terms.

A word may consist of only a single syllable (**kat**, **ga**), but many words consist of two or more syllables (**za-ken**, **aan-ko-men**), each one of which follows this rule: we call any syllable closed when it ends in a consonant and open when it ends in a vowel:

- When two consonants stand between vowels (**mannen**, **armen**), the syllable division usually comes between them, so we divide **man-nen**, **ar-men**. The first syllable ends in a consonant and is therefore closed.
- When one consonant stands between vowels (**bomen**, **deuren**), the syllable division comes before the consonant, so here we divide **bo-men**, **deu-ren**. It must begin the second of the two syllables and the first thus ends in a vowel and is open.

The spelling rules are as follows.

The Dutch short vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u** are always written with one letter and can occur in closed syllables:

man	man	pot	pot	bed	bed
vul	l, he fills	zit	l, he sits		