

Vandaag heb ik *eigenlijk* helemaal geen zin.

I don't *really* feel like it today.

Ben je *eigenlijk* al in New York geweest?

Have you *actually* been to New York?

Als je nu eens opgelet had, had je het antwoord geweten.

If you had *just* paid attention, you've have known the answer.

Kom *toch* nog *maar* even binnen.

Come on in a minute.

Houd je mond *nou* eens dicht!

It's time you kept your mouth shut!

Je voelt je *zeker* niet lekker?

You don't feel very well, do you?

Heb jij *dan* je huiswerk niet gemaakt?

Have you really not done your homework?

Particles are especially tricky to explain because they can never be defined or translated in a straightforward fashion. But they are important, because they not only add shades of meaning but also contribute to the rhythm and cadence of natural speech. In this chapter, we will take a look at five of the most common of them: *eens*, *even*, *maar*, *toch* and *wel*.

16.1.1 *Particles in imperative sentences*

Particles have the general function of adding a tone that softens the abruptness of a command. A polite request often adds *eens*:

Kijk eens! Kom eens kijken!

Just look! Come and have a look!

Wacht eens even.

Hold on a minute.

Drink je melk eens op.

Go on, drink your milk.

Geef het zout eens door.

Please pass the salt.

Geef eens antwoord.

Come on, let's have an answer.

Mild encouragement or permission is conveyed with **maar**:

Begin *maar* te eten, anders wordt het koud.

Go *ahead* and start eating, otherwise the food will get cold.

Zeg *maar* Anneke, hoor.

Call me Anneke, *please do*.

Gaat u *maar* zitten.

Please take a seat.

Kom *maar* binnen.

Please come on in.

Ga *maar* naar bed: ik ruim wel op.

Go on to bed, I'll clean up.

The word *even* adds a tone of casualness (as does our word “just”) that suggests that only a short time is involved:

Kom *eens even* hier.

Come over here *for a minute*.

Wil je dit *even* lezen?

Will you *take a moment* to read this?

Hij vroeg of ze *even* wilde tekenen.

He asked if she would *just* sign.

Haal jij Lotte *even* op?

Can you (swing by and) pick Lotte up?

Kunt u mij *even* helpen?

Can you help me *a moment*?

The word *toch* adds a tone of urgency or irritation:

Kom *toch*!

Come on, *for heaven's sake*!

Gaat u *toch* zitten.

Please, take a seat.

Wees *toch* niet zo bang!

Come on, don't be so afraid.

Hou *toch* op!

It's time to stop that.

Zeg *toch* ook eens wat!

Come on, say something.

16.1.2 Let's try it

Make the command according to the instructions between brackets:

Kom binnen. Eet je bord leeg. (less abrupt)

Kijk in het woordenboek. Kom een keertje langs. (mild encouragement)

Ga zitten. Bel hem op. (casual)

Hou op! Ga weg! (irritation)

16.1.3 Other uses of particles

These little words are also very common in declarative sentences and questions:

eens, unstressed and in the Netherlands often spelled 's or es, adds something like "sometimes" or "for a change":

Je hoort nog al eens iets over dit probleem.

Now and then you hear about that problem.

Hebt u dit al eens meer gedaan?

Have you ever done this before?

Ben je wel eens in Brussel geweest?

Have you ever been to Brussels?

even adds a sense of "just a moment" or simply softens the force of a verb:

Zal ik morgen even komen?

Shall I *just* drop by tomorrow?

Ik bel u nog even over die rekening.

I'm *just* going to give you a call about that bill.

Ik zal even kijken of hij al thuis is.

I will *just* have a look to see if he is home yet.

eens even often occurs as a combination:

Mag ik eens even naar je knie kijken?

Let me *just* have a look at that knee.

Kom eens even hier.

Come on over here *for a moment*.

maar is also something like “just” often with a tone of “went ahead and”/or “something unwelcome”:

Als het *maar* niet regent!

If it *just* doesn't rain!

Je doet *maar* wat je niet laten kunt.

Go ahead and do it, if you have to.

Ik at het *maar* op.

I just went ahead and ate it.

Ik zou *maar* een dikke jas aantrekken.

I'd advise wearing a heavy coat.

toch **maar** often occurs as a combination:

Doe *toch* *maar* wat de dokter zegt.

You'd better do what the doctor says.

Ik ga *toch* *maar* wel naar het congres.

I've decided to go to that conference *after all*.

wel (unstressed) expresses very mild reassurance:

Ze zullen vandaag *wel* komen.

They will *no doubt* come today.

Morgen maken we dat *wel* in orde.

We'll *just* fix that up tomorrow.

Ja, dat is *wel* zo, maar . . .

Yes, *it really is*, but . . .

wel (stressed) expresses the opposite of what was expected:

Nederlands is *wel* moeilijk, zeg. Dat had ik niet verwacht.

Say, Dutch is really hard. I hadn't expected that.

De pannenkoek was *wel* lekker. Zo lekker zag hij er helemaal niet uit.

The pancake really tasted good. It didn't look all that tasty.

wel (stressed) directly contradicts a negation:

Ik vind margarine niet lekker. Zij *wel*.

I don't like margarine. *She does*.

16.1.4 The word *toch*

toch (unstressed) = after all:

Dat heb ik je *toch* gisteren gezegd.

I told you that yesterday, *after all*.

Ik ga naar die mantels kijken. Ik sta hier nu *toch*.

I'm going to look at those coats. *After all* I'm right here anyway.

Hoe is het *toch* met je?

Well now, how are you?

toch (stressed) = an expressed or implied negative; nevertheless:

Het mocht niet, maar ze hebben het *toch* gedaan.

They weren't allowed to, but they did it *anyway*.

toch as a forceful confirmation following a negation:

Je gelooft het niet, maar het is *toch* waar.

You don't believe it, but it *really* is true.

Ik had geen hoop meer, maar ik heb het *toch* gevonden.

I had given up hope, but I found it *after all*.

Nee, dat kan helemaal niet. Jawel, het kan *toch*!

No, that can't be done at all. *Oh yes*, it can!

There are many more ways to use the particle *toch*, as in the following sentences:

Kijk *toch* uit: straks val je!

You'd better watch out, you're about to fall.

Let *toch* op: je hebt daar geen voorrang!

Hey, watch out! It's not your turn there (you don't have the right of way).

Ik was mijn portemonnee kwijt, dacht ik. Maar hij zat *toch* in mijn tas.

I thought I'd lost my wallet, but there it was in my purse.

Hij had beloofd te wachten, maar hij was *toch* al weg.

He said he'd wait, but it turned out he was already gone.

Ik ga *toch* naar Nederland.

I'm going to the Netherlands *after all*.