

Norwegian on the Web



Olaf Husby

Norwegian speech sounds compared to **English**

English and Norwegian speech sounds compared

Below you will find a comparison between Norwegian (NO) and English (EN) speech sounds, that is consonants, vowels and diphthongs.

Consonants

The column **Consonant** in the table below demonstrates Norwegian consonant sounds of Central East Norwegian. Column 2 and 3 show words of Norwegian (NO) and English (EN) that sound similar or quite similar. The words may have different meanings. In these words the consonants in question are used. The degree of similarity is indicated by +, ~ or – in the column **Overlap**:

- + The Norwegian consonant is **quite similar** to the English one
- ~ The Norwegian consonant is **in some degree similar** to the English one
- The Norwegian consonant has **no counterpart** in English

English consonants of the two first categories may be used when speaking Norwegian. Use of the second category implies stronger degree of foreign accent.

Consonant	Norwegian	English	Overlap	Comments
/p/	på	paw	+	
/b/	bi	be	+	
/t/	tå	taw	~	NO: dental; ENG: alveolar
/d/	deg	day	~	NO: dental; ENG: alveolar
/t̪/	smart	-	–	
/d̪/	ferdig	-	–	
/k/	kåt	caught	+	
/g/	glass	glass	+	
/m/	min	mean	+	
/n/	nei	nay	+	
/ŋ̥/	barna	-	–	
/ŋ̥/	ring	ring	+	
/f/	fiks	fix	+	
/v/	vest	vest	~	ENG /v/ is more fricative
/s/	si	see	+	
/ʃ/	ski	she	+	
/ç/	kjapp	-	–	
/j/	jet	yet	+	
/h/	hi	he	+	
/r/	rein verre	rain very	~ +	ENG: /r/ is more fricative initially ENG: /r/ between vowels ~ NO
/l/	lin	lean	~	// can be velarised in EN
/l̥/	jarl	-	–	

The table above is presented below in a shorter version using colour codes:

- White: The Norwegian consonant is quite close to the English one
- Grey: The Norwegian consonant overlaps to some degree with the English one
- Black: The Norwegian consonant has no counterpart in English

p	b	t	d	t̪	d̪	k	g	l	l̥	r
m	n	ŋ̥	ŋ̥	f	v	s	ʃ	ç	j	h

The speech sounds in black and grey cells are sounds that English-speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian.

Vowels

The column **Vowel** in the table below demonstrates Norwegian vowel sounds of Central East Norwegian. Column 2 and 3 show words of Norwegian (NO) and English (EN) that sound similar or quite similar. The words may have different meanings. In these words the vowels in question are used. The degree of similarity is indicated by +, ~ or – in the column **Overlap**:

- + The Norwegian vowel is **quite similar** to the English one
- ~ The Norwegian vowel is **to a certain extent similar** to the English one
- The Norwegian vowel has **no counterpart** in English

English vowel of the two first categories may be used when speaking Norwegian. Use of the second category implies stronger degree of foreign accent.

Vowel	Norwegian	English	Overlap	Comments
/i/	sinn	sin	~	
/i:/	mi	me	+	
/y/	synd	-	–	
/y:/	lys	-	–	
/e/	send	send	+	
/e:/	ler	lair	~	
/ø/	søtt	-	–	
/ø:/	møt	-	–	
/æ/	vært	daddy	~	
/æ:/	mædi	mad	~	
/ɑ/	ta	-	–	
/ɑ:/	spa	spa	~	
/ʌ/	full	full	~	
/ʌ:/	tur	tour	~	
/u/	bodd	-	–	
/u:/	bod	-	–	
/o/	dott	dot	~	
/o:/	lån	lawn	~	

In general the duration of English vowels can be compared to short and long vowels in Norwegian.

The table above is presented below in a shorter version using colour codes:

- White: The Norwegian vowel is quite close to the English one
- Grey: The Norwegian vowel overlaps to some degree with the English one
- Black: The Norwegian vowel has no counterpart in English

i	e	æ	ɑ	y	ʌ	ø	u	o
i:	e:	æ:	ɑ:	y:	ʌ:	ø:	u:	o:

The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that English -speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian.

Diphthongs

The column **Diphthong** in the table below demonstrates Norwegian diphthongs of Central East Norwegian. Column 2 and 3 show words of Norwegian (NO) and English (EN) that sound similar or quite similar. The words may have different meanings. In these words the diphthongs in question are used. The degree of similarity is indicated by +, ~ or – in the column **Overlap**:

- + The Norwegian diphthong is *quite similar* to the English one
- ~ The Norwegian diphthong is *to a certain extent similar* to the English one
- The Norwegian diphthong has *no counterpart* in English

English diphthongs of the two first categories may be used when speaking Norwegian. Use of the second category implies stronger degree of foreign accent.

Diphthong	Norwegian	English	Overlap	Comments
/ai/	hai	hi	+	
/ei/	hei	-	-	
/øy/	høy	-	-	
/æʊ/	sau	-	-	
/oy/	soya	soya	+	
/uy/	hoie	-	-	Sjelden i norsk
/ʉy/	huie	-	-	Sjelden i norsk

The table above is presented below in a shorter version using colour codes:

- White: The Norwegian diphthong is quite close to the English one
- Grey: The Norwegian diphthong overlaps to some degree with the English one
- Black: The Norwegian diphthong has no counterpart in English

/ai/	/ei/	/øy/	/æʊ/	/oy/	/uy/	/ʉy/
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The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that English-speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian.