

Norwegian on the Web



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Norwegian speech sounds compared to **French**

French and Norwegian speech sounds compared

Below you will find a comparison between Norwegian (NO) and French (FR) 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 French (FR) 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 French one
- ~ The Norwegian consonant is **to a certain extent similar** to the French one
- The Norwegian consonant has **no counterpart** in French

French 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	French	Overlap	Comments
/p/	på	pot	~	Not aspirated in FR
/b/	ba	bas	+	
/t/	to	tout	~	Not aspirated in FR
/d/	det	des	+	
/t̥/	smart	-	–	
/d̥/	ferdig	-	–	
/k/	kor	cour	~	Not aspirated in FR
/g/	gårds	gauche	–	
/m/	mi	mis	+	
/n/	ni	nid	+	
/n̥/	barna	-	–	
/ŋ/	lang	-	+	
/f/	fe	fée	+	
/v/	viss	vice	+	
/s/	si	si	+	
/ʃ/	skikk	chic	+	
/ç/	kjapp	(oui)	~	May occur in the end of FR "oui"
/j/	lojal	loyal	+	
/h/	hatt	-	–	
/r/	rir	rire	+	NO /r/ is often apical (tongue tip)
/l/	lår	lors	+	
/l̥/	jarl	-	–	

Below you will find the same data in a shorter version using colour codes:

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

p	b	t	d	t̥	d̥	k	g	l	l̥	r
m	n	ŋ	ŋ	f	u	s	ʃ	ç	j	h

The speech sounds in black and grey cells are sounds that French-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 French (FR) 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 French one
- ~ The Norwegian vowel is **to a certain extent similar** to the French one
- The Norwegian vowel has **no counterpart** in French

French 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	French	Overlap	Comments
/i/	piff	pif	+	
/i:/	rire	rire	+	
/y/	pytt	pute	~	
/y:/	ly	lu	~	
/e/	penn	peine	+	
/e:/	mer	mer	+	
/ø/	bør	beurre	+	
/ø:/	sør	sœur	+	
/æ/	merk	-	–	
/æ:/	pære	-	–	
/a/	bass	basse	~	NO /a/ is more back than FR /a/
/ɑ:/	ar	are	~	
/ʉ/	gull	-	–	
/ʉ:/	gul	-	–	
/u/	bom	boum	+	
/u:/	to	tous	+	
/o/	post	poste	+	
/o:/	lår	lors	+	

In general the duration of French 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 French one
- Grey: The Norwegian vowel overlaps to some degree with the French one
- Black: The Norwegian vowel has no counterpart in French

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

The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that French-speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian. Observe that /æ/ and /ɑ/ are two different sounds in Norwegian. The French /ɑ/ is somewhere in between, maybe a little closer to Norwegian /ɑ/.

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 French (FR) 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 French one
- ~ The Norwegian diphthong is *to a certain extent similar* to the French one
- The Norwegian diphthong has *no counterpart* in French

French 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	French	Overlap	Comments
/ɑi/	kai	caille	+	
/æi/	vei	veille	+	
/øy/	øy	œil	+	
/æu/	sau	-	–	
/oy/	koye	-	–	
/uy/	hoie	ouille	+	Rare in NO
/ɥy/	huie	-	–	Rare in NO

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

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

/ɑi/	/æi/	/øy/	/æu/	/oy/	/uy/	/ɥy/
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The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that French-speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian.