

How to Speak Old English

Words, Phrases & Basic Sentences

STEP-BY-STEP SPEAKING PATH



OLD ENGLISH LETTERS YOU WILL USE

Æ þ ð ƿ

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A compact teacher-style workbook for learning by doing.

Quick Navigation

Jump to any learning step. Each section teaches one speaking skill and then connects it to the next.

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þ, ð, æ, sc, cg, c, g, h

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a/ā, e/ē, i/ī, o/ō, u/ū

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people, places, qualities, time

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ic, þū, hē, hēo, wē, gē, hīe

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eom, eart, is, sind(on)

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Learn the Main Sounds

Old English spelling often points more directly to sound than Modern English. Start with the letters that look or sound unfamiliar.

Þ / ð **th**
þæt / oðer
 thin / this

Æ **a**
fæder
 cat-like a

SC **sh**
scip
 ship

CG **dge**
ecg
 edge

C **k / ch**
cyning / cild
 king / child

G **g / y**
god / gearð
 God / yard

H **h / ch**
hūs / cniht
 house / knight

WHITEBOARD CHECK: SOUND BEFORE SPEED

SEE	→	SAY	→	READ	→	REPEAT
LETTER		SOUND		WORD		ALOUD

Example: SC → sh → scip → “ship”

Hear Vowel Length

A macron in learning materials marks a long vowel. Hold that vowel longer instead of treating the mark as decoration.

a  short

ā  long

e  short

ē  long

i  short

ī  long

o  short

ō  long

u  short

ū  long

y  short

ȳ  long

æ  short

ǣ  long

MEANING CAN CHANGE

god

God

≠

gōd

good

Teacher cue: when you see a macron, keep the vowel clear and longer. Do not simply add stress.

Build a Small Speaking Vocabulary

Learn words by job, not as one long list. These four groups are enough to begin making short spoken sentences.

PEOPLE

frēond	friend
fæder	father
mōdor	mother
cild	child
mann	person

PLACES & THINGS

hūs	house
land	land
bōc	book
wæter	water
hlāf	bread

QUALITIES

gōd	good
yfel	bad / evil
micel	great / large
lȳtel	little
hāl	well / whole

TIME & POSITION

nū	now
hēr	here
þær	there
dæg	day
niht	night

BUILD: **frēond** + **gōd** → useful words for a sentence

Choose the Right Pronoun

Old English distinguishes singular and plural “you.” It also changes pronouns by grammatical role, but begin with the subject forms below.

WHO IS SPEAKING?

SINGULAR

I	ic
you (one)	þū
he	hē
she	hēo
it	hit

PLURAL

we	wē
you (many)	gē
they	hīe

WHEN THE ROLE CHANGES, THE FORM MAY CHANGE

ic → **mē** → **mīn** **þū** → **þē** → **þīn**
 I me my / mine you → you → your

Master “To Be” First

These forms unlock identity, description, and location sentences. Learn them as pronoun + verb pairs.

Pronoun	Form	Meaning
ic	eom	I am
pū	eart	you are
hē / hēo / hit	is	he / she / it is
wē	sind(on)	we are
gē	sind(on)	you are
hīe	sind(on)	they are

SENTENCE BUILDER

SUBJECT

BE

WORD / PLACE

Ic

eom

hēr

pū

eart

gōd

Hē

Ic eom hēr. _{is} = I am here.

mīn frēond

Add Action Verbs

Use a small set of high-value verbs. The infinitive is the dictionary form; speaking forms may change with person and tense.

sprecan

speak

secgan

say

gān

go

cuman

come

habban

have

etan

eat

drincan

drink

sēon

see

lufian

love

þancian

thank

cunnan

know how

magan

be able

ONE VERB IN USE

sprecan = to speak

Ic sprece Englisc.

I speak English.

Speak in Short Phrases

These phrases cover greeting, naming, wellbeing, thanks, location, and ability. Say each as one complete unit.

Wes hāl!

Be well! / Greetings!

Wes hāl, frēond mīn!

Greetings, my friend!

Hwæt hætst þū?

What are you called?

Ic hāte Ælfred.

I am called Alfred.

Hū eart þū?

How are you?

Ic eom hāl.

I am well.

Ic þancie þē.

I thank you.

Hwær is þæt hūs?

Where is that house?

Meaht þū Englisc spreca?

Can you speak English?

Ic sprece Englisc.

I speak English.

Build Basic Sentences

Start with short patterns. Change only one part at a time so the grammar stays visible.

SENTENCE MACHINE

SUBJECT

Ic

VERB

eom

PLACE

hēr

Ic eom hēr. = I am here.

Identity

Þū eart mīn frēond.

You are my friend.

Description

Hē is gōd.

He is good.

Location

Ic eom hēr.

I am here.

Action

Ic sprece Englisc.

I speak English.

Statement

Þæt is mīn hūs.

That is my house.

See the Job of Each Word

Old English word order can move more than Modern English because endings help show each word's role.

START WITH THIS PATTERN

SUBJECT

lc

VERB

sprece

OBJECT / COMPLEMENT

Englisc

CASE	MAIN JOB	ASK	EXAMPLE
Nominative	subject	who does it?	hē
Accusative	direct object	what receives it?	hine / hit
Dative	indirect object	to / for whom?	him / þē
Genitive	possession	whose?	his / mīn

lc → þancie → þē

subject verb person thanked (dative)

Ask Questions

Learn the question words first. Then place them into short patterns you can say without translating every word.



Hū eart þū?

How are you?

Hwæt hæstst þū?

What are you called?

Hwær is þæt hūs?

Where is that house?

Meaht þū Englisc spreca?

Can you speak English?

Make a Sentence Negative

The common negative particle is *ne*. It normally stands before the verb or verbal form.

NEGATIVE FORMULA

ne + VERB

not / do not / cannot ...

TRANSFORM

Con ic ...



Ne con ic ...

Add *ne* before the verb form.

A COMMON COMBINATION

ne + æfre → nǣfre

not + ever → never

Keep the negative close to the verb when building short practice sentences.

Put the Pieces Together

Read the exchange aloud. The left side asks; the right side answers. Focus on rhythm and complete phrases.

A

Wes hāl!

Greetings!

B

Wes hāl!

Greetings!

A

Hwæt hætst þū?

What are you called?

B

Ic hāte Eadgar.

I am called Edgar.

A

Hū eart þū?

How are you?

B

Ic eom hāl.

I am well.

A

Meht þū Englisc spreca?

Can you speak English?

B

Gēa, ic sprece Englisc.

Yes, I speak English.

Practice Board

Use the board like a short classroom exercise. Say the answers aloud before checking the model at the bottom.

A. SAY THE SOUND

Read aloud: þæt fæder scip ecg cild

B. MATCH THE PRONOUN

I = ___ you (one) = ___ we = ___ they = ___

C. COMPLETE "TO BE"

Ic ___ hēr. þū ___ mīn frēond. Hīe ___ hēr.

D. BUILD A QUESTION

Arrange: þū / hū / eart → _____

E. MAKE IT NEGATIVE

Add ne: Con ic ... → _____

F. SAY A PHRASE

Use Old English for: "I thank you." → _____

MODEL ANSWERS

B: ic, þū, wē, hīe | C: eom, eart, sind(on) | D: Hū eart þū? | E: Ne con ic ... | F: Ic þancie þē.

One-Page Speaking Cheat Sheet

Use this page as a quick board while reading or speaking. It collects only the forms needed most often.

PRONOUN + BE

ic	eom
þū	eart
hē / hēo / hit	is
wē	sind(on)
gē	sind(on)
hīe	sind(on)

QUESTION WORDS

hwā	who
hwæt	what
hwær	where
hū	how
hwonne	when
for hwī	why

SPEAK THESE

Wes hāl!	Greetings!
Ic hāte ...	I am called ...
Ic eom hēr.	I am here.
Ic þancie þē.	I thank you.
Hū eart þū?	How are you?
Ic sprece Englisc.	I speak English.

SOUNDS → WORDS → PRONOUN + VERB → SENTENCE → QUESTION / NEGATIVE

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