

Old English Names

with Meanings and Pronunciation

A step-by-step visual book for learning Anglo-Saxon name elements, meanings, pronunciation, and modern forms.

NAME BUILDER

Ælf + **ræd** = **Ælfræd**

elf counsel **Alfred**

10 learning steps

Meaning charts

Pronunciation board

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See the Old English name pattern

Most traditional Old English personal names can be read as two meaningful elements.

TWO-PART NAME

Ælf + **ræd** → **Ælfræd**



ælf = elf



ræd = counsel

Ead + **weard** = **Eadweard**

prosperity + guardian

God + **gifu** = **Godgifu**

God + gift

Wulf + **stan** = **Wulfstan**

wolf + stone

Remember the pattern

element 1 + element 2 = a complete personal name

Learn the first elements

These elements often appear at the beginning of Old English names.

Ælf

elf

Example: Ælfræd

Æthel

noble

Example: Æthelstan

Ead

prosperity

Example: Eadweard

God

God

Example: Godwine

Leof

dear / beloved

Example: Leofric

Os

god / divine

Example: Oswald

Sige

victory

Example: Sigeberht

Cyne

royal

Example: Cynewulf

Wulf

wolf

Example: Wulfstan

Cūp

famous / known

Example: Cūpbeorht

Learn the ending elements

The second element completes the name and often carries ideas such as counsel, protection, battle, or friendship

ræd counsel	weard guardian	wine friend	gar spear
mund protection	ric rule / power	stan stone	beorht bright
gifu gift	gyth battle	thryth strength	burh fortress
wyn joy	hild battle	bald bold	flæd name element

Use the element meaning as a decoding clue - not as a literal description of the person.

Build complete Old English names

Read each name from left to right. First identify the two elements, then combine their meanings.

Ælfræd

Ælf + **ræd** → **elf + counsel**

two elements

Eadweard

Ead + **weard** → **prosperity + guardian**

two elements

Eadmund

Ead + **mund** → **prosperity + protection**

two elements

Godwine

God + **wine** → **God + friend**

two elements

Leofric

Leof + **ric** → **beloved + rule / power**

two elements

Wulfstan

Wulf + **stan** → **wolf + stone**

two elements

Æthelthryth

Æthel + **thryth** → **noble + strength**

two elements

Eadgyth

Ead + **gyth** → **prosperity + battle**

two elements

Use the pronunciation as a learner approximation. Historical pronunciation varied by time and dialect.

Name	Say it	Element meaning
Ælfræd	ALF-raed	elf + counsel
Ælfric	ALF-rik	elf + rule
Ælfwine	ALF-wee-neh	elf + friend
Æthelstan	ADH-el-stahn	noble + stone
Æthelwulf	ADH-el-woolf	noble + wolf
Cynewulf	KÜ-neh-woolf	royal + wolf
Dunstan	DOON-stahn	hill + stone
Eadgar	AE-ahd-gaar	prosperity + spear
Eadmund	AE-ahd-moond	prosperity + protection
Eadred	AE-ahd-red	prosperity + counsel
Eadric	AE-ahd-rik	prosperity + rule
Eadweard	AE-ahd-ward	prosperity + guardian
Eadwine	AE-ahd-wee-neh	prosperity + friend
Godric	GOD-rik	God + rule
Godwine	GOD-wee-neh	God + friend
Leofric	LAY-ov-rik	beloved + rule
Osweald	OHSS-waeld	divine + rule
Wulfstan	WOOLF-stahn	wolf + stone

Look for repeated elements. The same building blocks appear in many different names.

Name	Say it	Element meaning
Ælfstan	ALF-stahn	elf + stone
Ælfweard	ALF-ward	elf + guardian
Æthelræd	ADH-el-raed	noble + counsel
Æthelweard	ADH-el-ward	noble + guardian
Æthelwine	ADH-el-wee-neh	noble + friend
Cūþbeorht	KOOTH-bay-orkht	famous + bright
Cyneric	KÜ-neh-rik	royal + rule
Leofwine	LAY-ov-wee-neh	beloved + friend
Oswine	OHSS-wee-neh	divine + friend
Sigeberht	SEE-yeh-berkht	victory + bright
Wulfgar	WOOLF-gaar	wolf + spear
Wulfric	WOOLF-rik	wolf + rule

Pattern scan

wine = friend Ælfwine • Æthelwine • Leofwine • Oswine

stan = stone Ælfstan • Æthelstan • Wulfstan

Female names often use the same first elements with endings such as -gifu, -gyth, -thryth, -burh, and -wyn.

Name	Say it	Element meaning
Ælfgyfu	ALF-yee-voo	elf + gift
Ælfgyth	ALF-yeeth	elf + battle
Ælfthryth	ALF-threeth	elf + strength
Ælfwyn	ALF-wün	elf + joy
Æthelburh	ADH-el-boorkh	noble + fortress
Æthelgifu	ADH-el-yee-voo	noble + gift
Æthelthryth	ADH-el-threeth	noble + strength
Cynethryth	KÜ-neh-threeth	royal + strength
Eadburg	AE-ahd-boorg	prosperity + fortress
Eadgifu	AE-ahd-yee-voo	prosperity + gift
Eadgyth	AE-ahd-yeeth	prosperity + battle
Godgifu	GOD-yee-voo	God + gift
Godgyth	GOD-yeeth	God + battle
Leofgifu	LAY-ov-yee-voo	beloved + gift
Leofgyth	LAY-ov-yeeth	beloved + battle
Osgyth	OHSS-yeeth	divine + battle
Osthryth	OHSS-threeth	divine + strength
Wulfwyn	WOOLF-wün	wolf + joy

Group names by meaning

Meaning groups make long name lists easier to remember and compare.

NOBILITY

Æthelstan, Æthelræd, Æthelwulf, Æthelthryth

Æthel = noble

PROSPERITY

Eadgar, Eadmund, Eadweard, Eadwine, Eadgyth

Ead = prosperity / good fortune

FRIENDSHIP

Ælfwine, Eadwine, Godwine, Leofwine, Oswine

wine = friend

STRENGTH & BATTLE

Ælfthryth, Eadgyth, Cynethryth, Osthryth

thryth = strength; gyth = battle

WOLF NAMES

Æthelwulf, Cynewulf, Wulfgar, Wulfric, Wulfstan

wulf = wolf

Use these as practical learner approximations, not a claim of one exact accent for every Old English speaker.

æ

a in "cat"

Ælfræd

þ / ð

th sound

Æthel / Æþel

sc

often "sh"

scip

c

k or ch

position changes sound

g

g or y-like

position changes sound

f

f; sometimes v-like

between voiced sounds

Name practice

Ælfræd

→

ALF - raed

Eadweard

→

AE-ahd - ward

Godgifu

→

GOD - yee - voo

Æthelthryth

→

ADH-el - threeth

Match Old English names to modern forms

Some names survived through centuries of spelling and sound change. Compare the older form with the familiar modern form.

Ælfræd → **Alfred**

older form

modern form

Eadgar → **Edgar**

older form

modern form

Eadmund → **Edmund**

older form

modern form

Eadweard → **Edward**

older form

modern form

Eadwine → **Edwin**

older form

modern form

Eadgyth → **Edith**

older form

modern form

Godgifu → **Godiva**

older form

modern form

Osweald → **Oswald**

older form

modern form

Cūpbeorht → **Cuthbert**

older form

modern form

Æthelthryth → **Audrey**

older form

modern form

Key idea

A modern spelling may look very different even when it descends from an Old English name.

Practice questions by topic

Answer from the charts before checking the answer board on the next page.

NAME FORMATION

1. Split Ælfræd into its two elements.
2. Split Eadweard into its two elements.

MEANINGS

3. What does Ead mean?
4. Which element means “friend”?
5. Which element means “wolf”?

PRONUNCIATION

6. What sound can æ approximate for learners?
7. Which letters can represent the “th” sound?

MODERN FORMS

8. What is the modern form of Eadgyth?
9. What is the modern form of Ælfræd?
10. Which Old English name developed into Godiva?

Check answers →

Use the element charts to explain each answer, not just memorize the final word.

1

Ælf + ræd

2

Ead + weard

3

Prosperity / good fortune

4

wine

5

wulf

6

A vowel similar to the a in “cat”

7

þ and ð

8

Edith

9

Alfred

10

Godgifu

Learning chain

spot the elements → read the meanings → say the name → match the modern form

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