

THE SOUNDS OF THE ENGLISC LETTERS

Mostly not far off the modern ones. Sounds are hard to explain in writing, assuming you have the cassette/CD, listen and imitate. But in any case note a few really important things.

- I The letters are very much the same as today, but *j, k, q, v, x* and *z* never occur, or very rarely.
- II The letters *do* all sound. The word “write” in Englisc has five clear sounds; the same spelling now represents only three, *w* and *e* being silent. There are no silent letters in Englisc.
- III CONSONANTS
- c Beside *e, i* or *æ*, usually like modern “*ch*”: *cild* (“child”).
- f Between vowels, like modern “*v*”: *lifer* (“liver”).
- g Beside *e, i* or *æ*, usually like modern “*y*”: *geolo* (“yellow”), *dæg* (“day”).
- h In the middle or end of a word, like Scots “*ch*” in “*loch*”: *riht* (“right” – our “gh” comes from a time when the sound was still there).
- sc Usually like modern “*sh*”: *scip* (“ship”).
- þ Like modern “*th*”: *þorn* (“thorn”) – which is the name of the letter. The same sound can also be written *ð* (“eth”), but only *þ* is used in this course. The essential thing in writing *þ* is to make the vertical strokes go up *and* down from the loop.
- IV VOWELS
- æ Like modern “*a*” in “*ash*”: (*æsc*, the name of the letter).
- a Like modern “*a*” in “*can’t*”: *nama* (now pronounced *name*).
- y Like French “*u*” in “*tu*”: *cyning* (now pronounced *king*).
- u Like modern “*u*” in “*put*”: *lufu* (now pronounced “love”). When long (*ū*), like the “*u*” in “*crude*”: *hūs* (now pronounced “house”).

The other long vowel to note specially is *ī*, like the “*i*” in “*machine*”: *wīn* (now pronounced “wine”) – but in general notice that there *is* a difference between a “short” and a “long” vowel.

WORD FORMS

I The “class I weak” VERB *hīer-an* “hear”.

	<i>Present Tense</i>	<i>Past Tense</i>
<i>Singular</i>		
<i>1st person</i>	(ic) <i>hīer-e</i> “(I) hear”	(ic) <i>hīer-de</i> “(I) heard”
<i>2nd person</i>	(þū) <i>hīer-st</i> “(you) hear”	(þū) <i>hīer-dest</i> “(you) heard”
<i>3rd person</i>	(hē) <i>hīer-þ</i> “(he) hears”	(hē) <i>hīer-de</i> “(he) heard”
<i>Plural</i>	(wē/gē/hīē) <i>hīer-aþ</i> “(we/you/they) hear”	(wē/gē/hīē) <i>hīer-don</i> “(we/you/they) heard”

II The “strong” masculine NOUN (se) *cyning* “(the) king”

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>nominative case</i>	(se) <i>cyning</i>	(þā) <i>cyning-as</i>
<i>accusative case</i>	(þone) <i>cyning</i>	(þā) <i>cyning-as</i>
<i>genitive case</i>	(þæs) <i>cyning-es</i>	(þāra) <i>cyning-a</i>
<i>dative case</i>	(þæm) <i>cyning-e</i>	(þæm) <i>cyning-um</i>

III The 3rd person masculine PRONOUN *hē* “he”

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>nominative (nom.)</i>	<i>hē</i>	<i>hīe</i>
<i>accusative (acc.)</i>	<i>hine</i>	<i>hīe</i>
<i>genitive (gen.)</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>hiera</i>
<i>dative (dat.)</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>him</i>

FORMA LEORNUNG DÆL
(LESSON 1)

1. VERBS

Englisc calls a verb simply a word. The verb is the one essential word in a sentence; it defines the action that the sentence is about. Look again at *Æþelred cyning fēþ tō Æscesdūne*.

A verb can change its ending for *tense*, *number* and *person*, while its *stem* stays the same. The verb *fēþ* is present *tense* (“goes”, not “went”), singular *number* (*he* goes, only one of him, not *they* go), and third person (not *I* go, 1st person; or *you* go, 2nd person; anybody else is 3rd person). The present singular 3rd person ending is *-þ*. The stem is *fēr-*.

þær hē hīerþ his biscop [there he hears (“hearþ”) his bishop].

Write this last sentence again, but make it say he looks for his bishop. Use the verb “seek”, whose stem in Englisc is *sēc*:

.....

Look at this sentence: *Æþelred cyning and Ælfred his brōþor fēraþ tō Æscesdūne* (...and his brother Alfred go...).

Now the verb is present *plural*; the present plural ending is *-aþ*.

Æþelred and Ælfred mētaþ Wulfstān biscop þær (...meet bishop Wulfstan...)

Rewrite this one, again making them look for Wulfstan:

.....

Æþelred fērde fram Æscesdūne.

The verb is singular again, but *past* [...went (“fared”) from...]. The past singular 3rd person ending is *-de*.

On Æscesdūne hē flīemde Bagsecg cyning [in Ashdown he put to flight king Bagsecg (a Viking invader)].

Hē and his brōþor flīemdon Bagsecg cyning and Sidroc eorl... [...and earl Sidroc...]

Now the verb is past plural; the past plural ending is *-don*.

...and fērdon ongēan fram Æscesdūne [...and went (back) again from...]

Put into Englisc “he taught king Bagsecg”. Use a verb whose stem, *lær-*, appears in *lærunggewritu* “correspondence course”:

.....

And now “he and his brother taught king Bagsecg”:

.....

There's a fuller table of verb endings in the Grammar for the lesson, but -þ, -aþ, -de, and -don are the most important ones. The present tense endings are more complex than the past; there's a practice session on them in the Grammar Drills booklet, pages 49-69. It can't help containing other things than verbs, but the only ones you need to notice are the pronouns. Ic, þū, hē, wē, and gē are obviously modern I, thou, he, we, and ye, leaving only hīe strange – modern English has substituted “they”.

II NOUNS

Englisc calls a noun nama, a “name”. It labels a person or thing, either by proper name (Ælfred) or description (brōþor). A noun can change its ending for *case* and *number*.

CASE (1)

Æpelredes brōþor was Ælfred (Ethelred's brother was...).

In modern English we mark possession of the ending -'s, which is just a slightly simplified form of the -es of Englisc. Grammarians call this the *genitive case* of the noun. Englisc used it more thoroughly than we do.

Æpelredes cyninges brōþor wæs Ælfred. (King Ethelred's brother...).

Not only do two nouns like this both add genitive endings, but in Englisc if there's a definite article (the modern “the”), it changes too.

Se cyning was Æpelred (The king was...).

Þæs cyninges nama was Æpelred (The king's name was...).

Rewrite it, making it “the bishop's name...”.

.....

CASE (2)

Englisc showed by another case-change a relationship that we usually show only by word order in Modern English.

Wē hīerdon Dūnstān biscop (We heard bishop Dunstan).

Dūnstān biscop hīerde ūs (Bishop Dunstan heard us).

Here we too change from wē (doing the hearing, *subject* of the sentence) to ūs (being heard, *object* of the sentence). If the subject and the object are nouns, however, we make no difference. But Englisc can. If there's a definite article, it changes.

Se cyning flīemde Bagsecg (...put Bagsecg to flight).

Se cyning is the subject of the sentence.

Bagsecg fliemde þone cyning (...put the king to flight).

þone cyning is the object of the sentence.

Æpelred and Ælfred mētaþ þone biscop (...meet the bishop).

þone biscop is the object of the sentence.

Grammarians call the case marking the subject (se cyning) the *nominative case*; the case marking the object (þone cyning) is the *accusative case*. The noun here does not change between nominative and accusative.

Rewrite the last sentence, making “the king and bishop” the subject and “the earl” the object:

.....

CASE (3)

When the object is an *indirect* one (as in our “give it to *me*”, where the simple “me” has the sense “to me”), Englisc uses yet another case, the *dative case*. Here the noun does change.

Æpelred and Ælfred befæstaþ þone tūn þæm biscope [...entrust the “town” to the bishop (but a tūn needn’t be as big as a “town”; it’s any enclosed dwelling area, from a stockade farm upwards)].

The same case is used after the proposition tō:

Æpelred and Ælfred sendaþ þone biscop Dūnstān tō þæm tūne (...send bishop Dunstan to the “town”).

And after other prepositions:

Se eorl Sidroc wæs þær on þæm tūne (was there, in the “town”).

Say that bishop Dunstan went (fēr-) from (spelt fram) the king:

.....

You must get used to the significance of these cases, because they can show what the sense is even when the order of words is unusual. For special emphasis Englisc can say:

þone eorl fliemde se cyning Ælfred (King Alfred put the earl to flight – we can’t reproduce the heavy emphasis the abnormal word order gives to þone eorl in any easy way).

NUMBER

Biscopas and abbodas and prēostas fērdon mid þæm cyninge Ælfrede
(Bishops and abbots and priests...)

We mark *plural number* by the ending –s (or –es); again, a simplified form of the Englisc –as. But again, Englisc also changes the definite article if there is one:

Þā cyningas Ælfred and Æþelred hīeraþ þā biscopas (King Alfred and king Ethelred hear the bishops).

Notice that in the plural the subject (nominative case) and the object (accusative case) have the same form, both article and noun.

But the genitive case is marked in the plural, and much more clearly than we manage with our awkward -s':

Þāra cyninga þēowas hīeraþ þone biscop (the kings' servants...).

Hē lædde þāra prēosta þēow tō þæm abbode [He took (the stem læd- is our verb "lead") the priests' servant].

Rewrite it, making it the bishops' servant that he took to the abbot:

.....

The dative case, too, is marked in the plural. After prepositions:

Dūnstān biscop fērde tō þæm beorgum [...to the mountains (beorg is "berg", as in "iceberg", an "ice mountain").

Hē fērde mid his prēostum (...with his priests).

And as an indirect object:

Þā cyningas befæstaþ þā tūnas þæm abbodum (...entrust the "towns" to the abbots).

Again, there's a full table of these noun forms, with the appropriate forms of the article, in the Grammar. This time they're all important. The first drill in the Grammar Drills booklet (pages 1-49) practices them.

III PRONOUNS

A pronoun is in Englisc naman speliend, that is, "representing a noun". The noun it represents depends on how you use it. The modern third person pronoun "he" can represent any single male except the speaker and the person spoken to. It's unchanged from Englisc, but Englisc could use it for *things* as well as male persons; all the things you've met in this lesson would be hē. Pronouns, like nouns, change for case and number.

The possessive (*genitive*) form of hē is his, just as in Modern English.

The *dative* form is him. In Modern English this form is also used as an accusative form.

The *accusative* form in Englisc is distinct: hine.

Ælfred cyning flīemde þone cyning Bagsecg fram his tūne (...drove out king Bagsecg...)

Hē flīemde hine tō þæm mōre (He drove him out to the moorland).

Hē flīemde hine tō him mid his þegnum (He drove him out to it, with his retainers).

And the *plural* forms in Englisc are quite different from modern ones, because we've adopted ones used by the Norse settlers in England. The plural *nominative* and *accusative* are the same as each other (as in the noun and the article): hīe. So here for once we make a distinction that Englisc didn't, and in writing Englisc you have to be careful of this sort of thing, or it becomes obscure:

Hīe flīmdon hīe to þæm mōre. (They drove them out...).

The *plural genitive* is hiera. Remember:
Hē lǣdde þāra prēosta þēow tō þæm abbode.

Make it "he took their servant to the abbot":

.....

Now "they took his servant..." (remember, you'll have to change the verb ending; it must be plural this time);

.....

The *plural dative* is the same as the singular dative, him. So Dūnstān biscop fērdē tō him would have to be put in Modern English "...went with them" or "went to him", depending what noun was in the previous sentence for him to represent. Or of course "...went to it" if the noun had referred to a thing, like se mōr.

The Grammar sets out these forms of the Third Person Masculine Pronoun in a tidy table; the third Grammar Drill (pages 69-89) practices them.

Note that all verbs are given in the *infinitive* form: that's the one used after "auxiliary" verbs like "will". In Modern English it has no ending; in Englisc it normally ends –an.

I WORDS NO LONGER IN USE IN ENGLISH

ac	conjunction	"but"
befæstan	verb	would be "befast" if it survived, = "entrust"
(se) beorg	noun	"berg" = "(the) mountain"
fēran	verb	"go" (related to the verb "fare")
flieman	verb	"put to flight" etc. (related to the verb "flee")
(se) þēow	noun	"(the) servant"

II WORDS STILL IN USE IN ENGLISH

(se) abbod	noun	"(the) abbot"
and	conjunction	"and"
(se) biscop	noun	"(the) bishop"
(se) brōþor	noun	"(the) brother"
(se) cyning	noun	"(the) king"
(se) eorl	noun	"(the) earl"
fram	preposition	"from"
hē	pronoun	"he" (but used for some <u>things</u> too). For other forms of this pronoun see the Grammar.
hīeran	verb	"hear"
lædan	verb	"lead" (also = "take", "conduct" etc.)
mētan	verb	"meet"
mid	preposition	"(a)mid" (but used just = "with")
(se) mōr	noun	"(the) moor"
(se) nama	noun	"(the) name"
on	preposition	"on" (also = "in")
ongēan	adverb	"(back) again"
(se) prēost	noun	"(the) priest"
sēcan	verb	"seek"
sendan	verb	"send"
tō	preposition	"to"
(se) tūn	noun	"(the) town" (but used also of much smaller places of habitation)
þr	adverb	"there"

FORMA LEORNUNGÐÆL: FUNDUNG
(LESSON 1 – EXERCISES)

1. Put these into Modern English. Watch what the word-*forms* tell you about who is doing what, not just the word-*order*.
 - (a) Se biscop flīemde þā prēostas fram þæm tūne, ac hiera þēow fērde tō Æscesdūne tō þæm cyninge. Hine þæs cyninges þēowas læddon tō Æþelrede, and hē flīemde þone biscop.
 - (b) Ælfred cyning fērþ tō þæm beorgum mid þæm abbode Dūnstāne. Þær sēþ hīe Ōswulf biscop, and him hīe befæstaþ þone tūn.

2. Put these into Englisc (no need to change any word-orders):
 - (a) The bishop looks for his priests.
 - (b) The priests' servants meet the king, and conduct him to the abbot.
 - (c) The earl expels the abbot from his estate (use tūn), and he and the bishop entrust it to his servants. [Note that the use of "to" here isn't the same as in (b); this affects how Englisc puts it.]
 - (d) The abbot's brother went to Ashdown to king Ethelred, but the king took him to his estate in the moors. [There's a word here you won't at once know what to do with. Make a guess from something in 1(a).]
 - (e) The priests went to the mountain with their servants, and they heard the bishop there.