

## Symbols and abbreviations

▶ This indicates that the recording can be used for the following section.

Abbreviations used in this book are: adj. = adjective, n. = noun, part. = participle, cond. = conditional, neg. = negative, gen. = genitive.

## General remarks about Finnish

Finnish is a phonetic language. Each sound is represented by one letter and each letter represents only that one sound (see later for nk and ng). There are eight letters for vowels in Finnish:

i e ä y ö a u o

and 13 letters for consonants:

p t k d g s h v j l r m n

The consonants b, c, f, w, x and z appear only in words of foreign origin.

All the vowels can appear in short or long form.

For example u or uu, a or aa, etc.

The consonants can also be long or short. This means they can appear single or double – k or kk, t or tt, p or pp. When the consonants appear in double, they always belong to two different syllables: kuk-ka, tyt-tö, pap-pi (- indicates syllable division). The consonants d, h, v and j appear only in the short form, that is singly.

It is important to distinguish between the short and the long forms! The number of vowels and consonants is important as you can see in this example:

tuli	fire
tuuli	wind
tulli	customs

## Finnish has no gender

There are no separate feminine, masculine or neuter words.

## Finnish has no article

The difference between *a* and *the* is expressed for instance by the word order.

For example (kukka *flower*, pöydällä *on the table*):

Kukka on pöydällä.      *The flower is on the table.*  
Pöydällä on kukka.      *There is a flower on the table.*

## The stress

The stress is always on the first syllable. The stress is not marked in writing:

Suomi, Helsinki, sisu, sauna

In a compound word the first syllable of the second component is also stressed:

matkasekki, pankkikortti, huoltoasema

In longer words a secondary stress is placed on the third or sometimes the fourth syllable.

suomalainen, helsinkiläinen

## Syllable division

Syllable division marks the natural break in the word. When you know where the syllables divide you can divide a word into its natural sections. This makes saying words, particularly those famous Finnish long words, much easier. You also acquire a natural speech rhythm. The dash - is used below to indicate the syllable division.

## Finnish words divide into syllables:

Before one consonant

ta-lo	house
Suo-mi	Finland
ku-va	picture

Between two consonants

tyt-tö	girl
kuk-ka	flower
Lah-ti	Lahti (town in Southern Finland)
Mik-ke-li	Mikkeli (town in Eastern Finland)

**Before the last consonants in a group of three**

pank-ki *bank*  
 mark-ka *mark*  
 kort-ti *card*

**Between two vowels that do not form a diphthong (see below for the list of diphthongs)**

rus-ke-a *brown*  
 lu-en *I read*  
 ha-lu-ai-sin *I would like*  
 ra-di-o *radio*  
 pi-an *soon*

A syllable which ends in a consonant is called a closed syllable.  
 A syllable which ends in a vowel is called an open syllable.

**Harjoitellaan! Let's practise!**

Read the following phrases. Pay particular attention to the rhythm of the word and remember the stress.

O-len suo-ma-lai-nen. *I am Finnish.*  
 A-sun Jo-en-suus-sa. *I live in Joensuu.*  
 Pu-hun suo-me-a. *I speak Finnish.*  
 O-len työ-sä *I work in a computer*  
 tie-to-ko-ne-fir-mas-sa. *company.*

Divide the words below into syllables and then practise saying them.

Suomen Yleisradio *Alkoholiiliike*  
 Koskenkorva *Rauma-Repola*  
 Tarja Haloneu *Neste*  
 Nokia *Outokumpu*  
 Marimekko *Kone*  
 Aarikka *Mannerheimintie*

**Ääntäminen Pronunciation****Vokaalit The vowels**

Here are the Finnish vowels:

a o u ä ö ö y i e

All approximations of the sounds are given as in standard Southern English. The sounds are best learned from a native speaker or from the recording which accompanies this book. Do listen carefully to the sounds on the cassette, if you have it. Whenever possible practise them with a native speaker. Reading aloud will increase your confidence, so try it. If possible, record your own voice and try to compare your pronunciation to that of a native speaker. Pay particular attention to the short and long vowels and the single and double consonants.

The long vowel is a continuous sound, where the two vowels glide into one.

Comparisons in English are given, as guidelines only, where there is a close enough approximation to the Finnish sound.

**Short vowel****Long vowel**

a as in *hut*, but broader aa as in *calm*, but slightly longer

mutta *but* taas *again*  
 ja *and* ahaa *ahh ...*

o as in *rot*, but more open oo as in *taught*, but more open

jo *already* joo *yes*  
 no ... *well ...* haloo *hello (on the phone)*

u as in *book*, but more open uu as in *boom*, but longer

kuka *who?* mitä *muuta?* *what else?*  
 usein *often* muuten ... *by the way ...*

ä as in *cat* ää as in *cat*, but double the length

missä? *where?* hyvää *päivää good day!*  
 tässä *here* sisään! *come in!*

ö as in *better* öö as in *murder*, but longer and broader

höpöhöpö *nonsense* insinööri *engineer*  
 söpö *cute* likööri *liqueur*

y as in *French bureau*, yy as in *bureau*,  
 but more open but double the length

ykäsi *one* tyyli *style*  
 yleensä *generally speaking* myyjä *sales assistant*

i	as in sit	kippi!	cheers!
		hyvin	well
e	as in net		
		ehkä	perhaps
		hetkinen!	just a moment!

Vowels also appear in set combinations. These are called diphthongs. They are two vowel sounds pronounced one after the other as a continuous sound. They always belong to the same syllable.

ai ei ui oi yi äi öi au eu iu ou äy öy ie uo yö

► ai	as in bike	ei	as in eight
vain	only	ei	no
aina	always	okei	ok
oi	as in boy	ui	as in French Lui
noin	approximately	kuinka monta?	how many?
voi	oh, dear	kuitenkin	however
yi		äi	
hyi!	yuk!	näin	like this
lyijytön	lead-free	äiti	mother
öi		ie	as in French ciel
silloin	tällöin now and then	vielä	still
öisin	at night time	siellä	there
uo	as in poor	yö	
Suomi	Finland	myös	also
tuo	that	hyvää yötä!	good night!
au	as in South	eu	
sauna	sauna bath	seuraava	next
kaunis	pretty, beautiful	seura	company
tu		ou	
tiukka	tight	kokous	meeting
hiukset	hair	joulu	Christmas

äy		öy	
täynnä	full	löyly	steam in a sauna
sisääkäynti	entrance	köyhä	poor

## Konsonantit Consonants

There are 13 consonants in Finnish. As you will discover, many of them are similar to English ones.

Notice however the consonants **k**, **p**, **t** are pronounced without aspiration (an explosion of air at the end of the sound). To practise this, you could try holding a piece of paper in front of your mouth and saying the sounds **k**, **p**, **t**, in such a way that you do not make the paper flutter! Listen to the pronunciation on the recording or imitate a native speaker.

Consonants appear in short and long form. The short form is represented by one consonant and the long form by two consonants. The long form of the consonant **kk**, **pp**, **tt**, etc. always divides into two different syllables. For instance **kuk-ka**, **tyt-tö**, **kaup-pa**. Make sure you say them both! There is a very slight break between them. The first of the pair finishes a syllable and the second begins the next syllable.

► **k** like in English but without the aspiration  
**kk**

kukka? *who?* kukka *flower*  
mitä kuuluu? *how are you?* sekki *cheque*

**p** like in English but without aspiration  
**pp**

kuinka paljon? *how much?* kippis *cheers*  
puhelin *telephone* kauppa *shop*

**t** like in English but without aspiration  
**tt**

terve! *hello!* totta kai! *of course!*  
tervetuloa *welcome* hei sitten! *bye then!*

**m** as in English

**m** *mm*

moi! *hi!* aikaisemmin *earlier*  
miten menee? *how are things?* myöhemmin *later*

n as in English

n

nyt *now*  
no, niin ... *well ...*

l as in English

l

ale *sale*  
lisää *more*r as in English sound **brr** ... when shuddering with cold. This is only an approximation. R is a rolling sound in Finnish.

r

baari *bar*  
perkele! *devil!*

s as in stereo. S is a slightly hissing s in Finnish.

s

ylös *up*  
alas *down*

The following consonants appear only in short form.

d as in door

video *video*  
radio *radio*

h as in bello

hei! *hi!*mihin aikaan? *at what time?*

h in front of a consonant sounds slightly stronger:

lehti *leaf; newspaper*

v as in video

hyvää viikonloppua! *Have a nice weekend!*  
vai niin! *Is that so?*

j as in yes

joo, joo ... *yes, yes ...*  
juuri niin *exactly***nk and ng**This is a nasal sound. It is represented by **nk** when it is short and **ng** when it is long. So here the two letters in fact represent just one sound, cf. singing.

ng

Helsinki *Helsinki* in Helsinki  
kaupunki *town* in a town

Listen to the recording and get a native Finnish speaker to help you with the pronunciation, if possible. The guidelines given above can only be approximations. Examples are given in English only when a similar sound or a combination of sounds exist in English.

**Non-native consonants**These consonants appear only in loan-words. There are a lot of new loan-words in Finnish from English. Older loan-words come from Swedish and some from German. There are also words of Latin and Greek as well as Russian origin in Finnish. Many of the Greek and Latin loan-words are in fact translation loans. For example: *international* = *kansainvälinen* (Lit. *between nations*).

g as in gate

grilli *grill*  
groggi *tote*  
galleria *gallery*  
gallup-tutkimus *Gallup poll*  
gramma *gram*  
gangsteri *gangster*

c as in cell

c-vitamiini *vitamin C*  
cd-soitin *CD player*  
celsiusaste *Celsius degree*  
\*camping-alue *camping place*  
(\* pronounced c as in camp)

b as in bun

baari *bar*  
bussi *bus*  
bakteeri *bacteria*  
byrokraatti *bureaucrat*  
bensini *petrol*  
bestselleri *bestseller*

f as in film

festivaalit *festival*  
farkut *jeans*  
firma *firm, company*  
faxi *fax*  
finaali *final*  
semi-finaali *semi final*