

# Norwegian on the Web



Olaf Husby

**Norwegian** speech sounds compared to **German**

## German and Norwegian speech sounds compared

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

German 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	German	Overlap	Comments
/p/	pastor	Pastor	+	
/b/	berg	Berg	+	
/t/	tasse	Tasse	+	
/d/	da	da	+	
/t̥/	smart	-	–	
/d̥/	ferdig	-	–	
/k/	kam	Kamm	+	
/g/	galla	Gala	+	
/m/	man	man	+	
/n/	nett	nett	+	
/n̥/	barna	-	–	
/ŋ/	lang	lang	+	
/f/	fink	Fink	+	
/v/	viking	Wiking	+	
/s/	vass	was	+	
/ʃ/	ski	Ski	+	
/ç/	kjapp	ich	+	
/j/	ja	ja	+	
/h/	hulle	Hülle	+	
/r/	rang	Rang	~	Norsk /r/ is often apical
/l/	leser	Leser	+	
/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 German one
- Grey: The Norwegian consonant overlaps to some degree with the German one
- Black: The Norwegian consonant has no counterpart in German

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

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

German 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	German	Overlap	Comments
/i/	finger	Finger	+	
/i:/	vi	wie	+	
/y/	dynn	dünn	~	
/y:/	lyge	lüge	~	
/e/	nett	nett	+	
/e:/	leser	Leser	+	
/ø/	børse	Börse	~	
/ø:/	øse	Öse	~	
/æ/	vært	-	–	
/æ:/	lær	-	–	
/a/	bakken	backen	~	
/ɑ:/	al	Aal	~	
/ʌ/	rust	-	–	
/ʌ:/	tur	-	–	
/u/	dum	dumm	+	
/u:/	do	du	+	
/o/	pop	pop	+	
/o:/	båt	Boot	+	

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

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

The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that German-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 German /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 German (GE) 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 German one
- ~ The Norwegian diphthong is *to a certain extent similar* to the German one
- The Norwegian diphthong has *no counterpart* in German

German 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	German	Overlap	Comments
/ai/	kai	Kai	+	
/æi/	hei	-	–	
/øy/	høy	-	–	
/æu/	sau	-	–	
/oy/	soya	Soya	+	
/uy/	hoie	-	–	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 German one
- Grey: The Norwegian diphthong overlaps to some degree with the German one
- Black: The Norwegian diphthong has no counterpart in German

/ai/	/æi/	/øy/	/æu/	/oy/	/uy/	/ɥy/
------	------	------	------	------	------	------

The sounds in black and grey cells are speech sounds that German-speaking students should practice more in order to obtain a proper pronunciation of Norwegian.