

Personal pronouns and the verb

5.1 Subject forms

The subject forms of personal pronouns are:

Person	Singular			Plural		
	Stressed	Unstressed	English	Stressed	Unstressed	English
1	ik	'k	I	wij	we	we
2	jij	je	you (informal)	jullie	(je)	you (informal)
	u	–	you (formal)	u (+ verb in singular)	–	you (formal)
3	hij	ie (after verb)	he	zij	ze	they
	zij	ze	she			
	het	't	it			

Most pronouns have two forms:

- 1 The emphatic or stressed form: used regularly in writing, but used in speaking only for particular emphasis on the person.
- 2 The non-emphatic or unstressed form: used in speaking where the emphasis is usually not on the pronoun but on the accompanying verb. Non-emphatic forms are often used in less formal writing, though **ie** is almost never used in writing. All unstressed forms except **ie** are pronounced with a very short **e** sound. **'t/'k** usually merge almost completely with the following word, as in English “’twas.”

Note: In order to avoid confusion, or misuse of the unstressed form, it is best to always use the stressed form, because it is always correct to use the stressed form, but not always correct to use the unstressed form:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| A: Wie heeft dat gedaan? | A: Who did it? |
| B: Ik. | B: I did. |
| A: Jij? | A: You? |
| B: Ja, ik. | B: Yes, me. |

5.1.1 *The pronoun u, jij, jullie*

This pronoun is used as a polite form to casual acquaintances, strangers, superiors and in general to persons a generation older. Like English “you,” it can refer to one person or several people, but its accompanying verb form remains singular. The familiar **jij, jullie** are used for relatives, close friends and anyone under the age of 18. Generally speaking, it is advisable to translate English “you” by **u** unless there is a specific reason for using **jij** or **jullie**. That said, the trend is to expand the use of **jij** and **jullie**.

5.2 Use of pronouns

Since things in Dutch may have one of two genders, **het** “it” must be used only for those nouns that are neuter and **hij** for all others, even though to a speaker of English this seems to violate a feeling that inanimate objects cannot be personalized with the word “he”:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| de garage: | hij (die) is groot | the garage: it is large |
| de organisatie: | (zij) die is groot | the organization: it is large |
| het huis: | het is wit | the house: it is white |

However, **het** is used in the introductory phrase “it is,” “they are,” when the object(s) or person(s) have not been specifically named as yet:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Het is onze auto. | It is our car. |
| Het zijn onze sleutels. | They are our keys. |
| Het zijn hun collega’s | They are their colleagues. |

5.2.1 Let's try it

Fill in the appropriate personal pronoun:

- 1 Mijn neefje komt op bezoek. _____ is vier jaar.
- 2 Zijn vrouw is een beetje ziek. _____ heeft last van de hitte.
- 3 _____ ben een beetje ziek.
- 4 Wij gaan naar de dierentuin. Gaat _____ ook mee, meneer Kroes?
- 5 Jij hebt vijf kleinkinderen. Vind _____ het leuk om opa te zijn?
- 6 Tot morgen, Hans. Hoe laat kom _____?

5.3 Present tense

Dutch verbs are always cited in the infinitive form. This, with a few exceptions to be discussed in the following chapter, regularly ends in **-en**. In order to conjugate a verb this ending is removed, leaving the stem of the verb, to which the appropriate personal endings are then added. In the present tense the verb assumes only three different forms:

helpen to help

stem = infinitive – -en = help

Singular		Plural	
Ik help	Help ik?	Wij helpen	Helpen wij?
Jij helpt	Help jij?	Jullie helpen	Helpen jullie?
Hij, zij, het helpt	Helpt hij, zij, het?	Zij helpen	Helpen zij?
U helpt	Helpt u?		

Note 1: When the pronoun **u** is used, whether it addresses one or more people the verb is always singular.

Note 2: When **jij/je** follows the verb and its subject, the verb always drops the ending **-t**, but not the **t** of the stem (**zit je, praat je**):

Hij geeft je een appel.

He gives you an apple.

(Here **je** is the indirect object and doesn't change the verb form.)

Draag je die koffer zelf?Do you carry that suitcase
yourself?

Note 3: When **hij** follows the verb it is pronounced **ie** (**helpt hij** is pronounced **helpt ie**) in ordinary speech, unless the pronoun receives special emphasis, but is not usually written this way.

Note 4: The pronouns for “she” and “they” are identical, but the form of the accompanying verb always serves to indicate which is intended.

5.4 Spelling

Many verbs change their spelling in the various forms of the conjugation, regularly following the spelling rules given in Chapter 2:

<i>Infinitive</i>	leggen to lay	maken to make	schrijven to write	lezen to read
<i>Stem</i>	leg-	maak-	schrijf-	lees-
<i>Conjugation</i>	ik leg jij legt (leg jij?) u legt hij, zij, het, legt	ik maak jij maakt (maak jij?) u maakt hij, zij, het, maakt	ik schrijf jij schrijft (schrijf jij?) u schrijft hij, zij, het, schrijft	ik lees jij leest (lees jij?) u leest hij, zij, het, leest
	wij leggen	wij maken	wij schrijven	wij lezen
	jullie leggen	jullie maken	jullie schrijven	jullie lezen
	zij leggen	zij maken	zij schrijven	zij lezen

5.5 Yes/no questions

Yes/no questions are questions to which the answer can be a simple “yes” or “no.” These questions are different from question-word questions, which start with a question word such as “why,” “when,” “what.”

In asking a yes/no question (English: Do you help?) the positions of subject and verb in Dutch are simply inverted; questions are never asked with an equivalent of the English “do” plus verb:

Maak ik een taart?

Do I make a pie?

Schrijft hij een brief?

Does he write a letter?

Lezen jullie de krant?

Do you read the paper?

Helpen zij het kind?

Do they help the child?

There is no verbal form equivalent to what we call the “progressive” form.* So the above could just as well be “Am I making a pie?,” “Is he writing a letter?,” “Are you reading the paper?,” “Are they helping the child?” Accordingly “He helps,” “He is helping,” “He does help” are all rendered alike in Dutch:

Ik schrijf een briefI write a letter, I’m writing a letter,
I’ll write a letter, I do write a letter.**Wij lezen een boek**We read a book, we’re reading a
book, we will read a book, we do
read a book.

In asking question-word questions, the positions of subject and verb are inverted:

Wat zegt u?

What did you say?

Wie is dat?

Who is that?

Waar wonen de meeste buitenlanders?

Where does the largest number of foreigners live?

Welke dag is het vandaag?

What day is it today?

Hoeveel dollars heb jij nog?

How many dollars do you still have?

* A construction in Dutch somewhat analogous to the English progressive will be discussed in Chapter 15.

5.5.1

A verb is negated simply by the addition of the adverb **niet**:

Hij helpt niet.

He does not help.

Ik schrijf niet.

I do not write.

Leest hij niet?

Doesn't he read?

Here again, we see that the auxiliary “do” + main verb in English is not used in Dutch. The adverb **niet** simply follows the main verb.

Observe carefully from now on where the word **niet** is placed in a sentence. A few general rules for this will be summarized in Chapter 20.

5.5.2 Let's try it

Fill in, using the correct conjugated form.

Infinitive	Stem			
lopen	___	hij ___	het ___	wij ___
denken	___	ik ___	u ___	jullie ___
schrijven	___	jij ___	___ jij?	zij ___
zitten	___	ik ___	je ___	we ___
wandelen	___	u ___	zij ___	zij ___
maken	___	ik ___	jij ___	jullie ___
helpen	___	het ___	u ___	wij ___
fietsen	___	ik ___	___ jij?	zij ___
lezen	___	je ___	u ___	ze ___
liggen	___	ik ___	het ___	we ___

5.6 Word order in the Dutch sentence

You will find a table below showing word order in independent clauses in Dutch. Compared to English, Dutch has a different way of arranging words in different types of sentences.

Affirmative sentence

subject verb rest
Hilde **gaat** **morgen naar de markt.**

Hilde is going to the market tomorrow.

In Dutch, the verb in an affirmative sentence must be in the second position.

If the first position is not occupied by the subject, any other part of the sentence can come in its place and the subject moves to its mandatory place immediately after the verb.

Vanavond	leest	Hilde	de krant.
De krant	leest	Hilde	vanavond.
1	2	3	4

Hilde is reading the paper this evening.

Questions

a Yes/no questions

verb always in first position! = inversion

verb – subject – rest

Woon **jij** **al lang** **in Amsterdam?**

Have you lived in Amsterdam for a long time?

b Question-word questions

question word – verb – subject – rest

Wanneer **winkelt** **hij** **op de markt?**

When does he go shopping at the market?

Hoe **weet** **jij** **dat?**

How do you know that?

Waarom **vraagt** **zij** **de prijs van het boek?**

Why does she ask the price of the book?

Waar **gaat** **zij** **naar school?**

Where does she go to school?

Wie **schrijft** **het verslag?**

Who is writing the report?

c Imperative

Verb stem without personal pronoun, except when it is a polite order.

Loop hard! **Gaat u maar zitten.**

Run fast. Please sit down.

Ga snel! **Geeft u mij een kilo pruimen, alstublieft.**

Go fast. Please give me a kilo of plums.

More details on the imperative are given in Chapter 6.

5.6.1 *Let's try it*

Insert the correct form of the verb in the correct place in the sentence:

- (liggen) De kat _____ heel lekker op de bank.
- (kopen) Morgen _____ wij een nieuw woordenboek.
- (fietsen) _____ Nederlanders naar hun werk?
- (lezen) Welk boek _____ jij op dit moment?
- (denken) Hij _____ veel aan zijn vriendinnetje.
- (werken) U _____ zeker erg graag met die nieuwe computer.
- (studeren) _____ jullie Nederlands aan een Amerikaanse universiteit?

The verb; **hebben** and **zijn** and the imperative

6.1 Verbs with stems ending in -t or -d

When the stem of a verb ends in -t, the ending -t for the second and third person singular is not added:

zitten = to sit

ik	zit
jij	zit (zit jij?)
u	zit
hij/zij/het	zit
wij	zitten
jullie	zitten
zij	zitten

weten = to know

ik	weet
jij	weet (weet jij?)
u	weet
hij/zij/het	weet
wij	weten
jullie	weten
zij	weten

Verbs with a stem that ends in -d, however, *do* add the -t in the second and third person singular, even though this makes no difference to the pronunciation:

rijden = to ride

ik	rijd, rij
jij	rijdt (rijd jij?)
u	rijdt
hij/zij/het	rijdt
wij	rijden
jullie	rijden
zij	rijden

houden = to hold

ik	houd, hou
jij	houdt (houd jij?)
u	houdt
hij/zij/het	houdt
wij	houden
jullie	houden
zij	houden

6

The verb:
hebben and
zijn and the
imperative

The verbs **rijden**, **snijden** and **houden** as spoken and written normally drop the -d of the stem as well as the -t of the second person singular in the inverted form:

Rij je?	Do you ride?
Snij je?	Do you cut?
Hou je?	Do you hold?

The same is true of **vinden**, although normally this happens only in the spoken language:

Vind je (spoken: vin je)	Do you think?
Vind je niet? (vin je niet)	Don't you think so?
but: Je vindt	you think

6.2 The verbs *gaan*, *staan*, *slaan*, *doen*, *zien*

There are five verbs with an infinitive that does not end in -en but in -n. These are **gaa-n** “to go,” **staa-n** “to stand,” **slaa-n** “to strike,” **doe-n** “to do” and **zie-n** “to see”; all of them occur frequently in Dutch. Otherwise, they are regular in the present tense:

gaan = to go		doen = to do	
ik	ga	ik	doe
jij	gaat (ga jij?)	jij	doet (doe jij?)
u	gaat	u	doet
hij/zij/het	gaat	hij/zij/het	doet
wij	gaan	wij	doen
jullie	gaan	jullie	doen
zij	gaan	zij	doen

6.3 The verb *komen*

The stem vowel of the verb **komen** “to come” is short in the singular, but long in the plural.

ik	kom
jij	komt (kom jij?)
u	komt
hij/zij/het	komt
wij	komen
jullie	komen
zij	komen

6.4 The verbs *hebben* and *zijn*

Hebben “to have” and zijn “to be” show irregularities in their present tense conjugation:

ik	heb	ik	ben
jij	hebt (heb jij?)	jij	bent (ben jij?)
u	hebt/heeft	u	bent/is
hij/zij/het	heeft	hij/zij/het	is
wij	hebben	wij	zijn
jullie	hebben	jullie	zijn
zij	hebben	zij	zijn

Note that with **u** both **hebt** and **heeft** are in common use and that the same is true for **bent** and **is**, although the latter is less frequent.

6.4.1 Let's try it

Use the correct form of the verb:

De docent (zitten) op een stoel voor de klas.

In Nederland (wonen) vrij veel mensen in een rijtjeshuis.

Jij (rijden) op een zogenaamde omafiets.

Op dit schilderij van Paulus Potter (staan) een man met een stier.

(zien) je dat stoplicht? Daar moet je linksaf.

Hij (hebben) een vraag die de docent niet kan beantwoorden.

(zijn) dat de kinderen van Annet en Pieter?

6.5 The imperative

The imperative, used to give orders or commands, is merely the stem of the verb. The same forms are used to address one person or a group. As in English, no pronoun is used to address the person(s) one commands:

Kijk eens!	Look!
Wacht eens even!	Wait a minute!
Ga weg!	Get out!

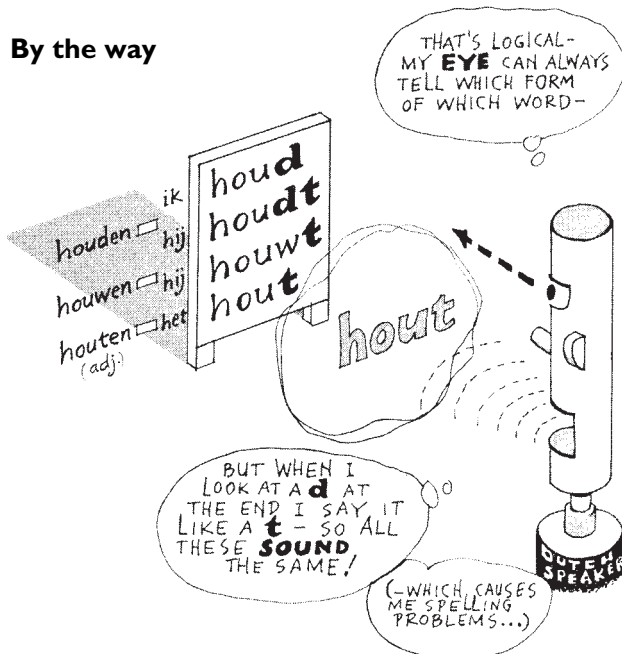
When the situation calls for more formal politeness, the pronoun **u** is used and the verb is used in the third person singular. The same form is used when one addresses one or more person(s):

Komt u binnen!	Come in.
Gaat u zitten	Have a seat.

A more preemptory form of the imperative uses the infinitive:

Doorlopen!	Move on!
Luisteren!	Listen!
Opletten!	Pay attention!

6.6 By the way



6.6.1 *Let's try it*

Test yourself on how the drawing works with these verb pairs:

winden	to wind	winnen	to win
laden	to load	laten	to let
kruiden	to season	kruien	to wheel (in a wheelbarrow)
schudden	to shake	(be)schutten	to shield from

By the way