Dutch greetings: hallo, hoi, goedemorgen and when to use which

The basic Dutch greetings are hallo (hello, fine with anyone), hoi (hi, for friends and people your age) and, by the time of day, goedemorgen, goedemiddag and goedenavond. Dag works for hello and for goodbye. To say goodbye, say doei to friends and tot ziens to everyone else. Below: which greeting fits which situation, the handshake and the three kisses, greetings in a shop, on the phone and in a message, how to start and end an email, and the mistakes English speakers make.

Dutch greetings at a glance

Most Dutch greetings are neutral: hallo, dag and the greetings for the time of day work with anyone, from a friend to the clerk at the gemeente. Only a few are informal and belong with friends, colleagues and people your age.

Dutch greetings for hello, from neutral to informal

hallo
English: hello
Use it with: anyone: the safe choice

goedemorgen, goedemiddag, goedenavond
English: good morning, good afternoon, good evening
Use it with: anyone; a little more polite than hallo

dag
English: hello; also goodbye
Use it with: anyone, at any time of day

goedendag
English: good day
Use it with: anyone; formal, for any time of day

hoi
English: hi
Use it with: friends, colleagues, people your age

hé, hey
English: hey
Use it with: friends; in speech and in messages

Hoi is the everyday hi of the Netherlands. With an older person you do not know, an official or a doctor, it sounds too casual: say goedemorgen or hallo. In Belgium you hear hoi much less; Flemish speakers say dag or hey. Hallo also calls for attention: in the A1 story De deur, Luca is locked out on his balcony and shouts ‘Hallo! Hallo!’ to the street below.

Some regions have greetings of their own. In Groningen people say moi for hello, and in

North Brabant houdoe is the goodbye. You do not need them to get by, but you will hear them. The standard greeting words, with please, thank you and sorry, are also among the everyday words on the 1,000 most common Dutch words.

Goedemorgen, goedemiddag, goedenavond: the times

The Dutch greeting follows the clock. The day is split at noon and at about six in the evening:

Dutch greetings by time of day

goedemorgen
English: good morning
When: until 12 noon

goedemiddag
English: good afternoon
When: from 12 noon to about 6 pm

goedenavond
English: good evening
When: from about 6 pm

welterusten
English: good night, sleep well
When: when someone goes to bed

Goedenavond is a greeting, for when you arrive or meet someone. It does not mean good night: when you leave in the evening, say fijne avond (have a nice evening) or dag, and keep welterusten for bedtime. Among family and friends, slaap lekker (sleep well) is just as common, and a little warmer.

In speech the greetings get shorter: goeiemorgen, goeiemiddag, goeienavond, or just morgen! among colleagues. To greet a group, add allemaal: Goedemorgen allemaal (good morning, everyone). To be extra polite, add meneer or mevrouw: Goedemiddag, mevrouw.

In writing, each of these three greetings is one word. Goedemorgen and goedemiddag have no n in the middle, while goedenavond keeps an old n from the time when Dutch had case endings.

Saying goodbye in Dutch

For goodbye, dag and tot ziens fit every situation, and doei is the informal bye. Many Dutch goodbyes say when you will meet again, with tot (until) and a time: tot morgen, tot maandag, tot volgende week.

Dutch goodbyes

dag
English: bye
Use it: with anyone

tot ziens
English: goodbye
Use it: with anyone; the polite one in a shop or an office

doei
English: bye
Use it: friends, family, colleagues; informal

tot straks
English: see you later
Use it: when you meet again later, usually the same morning, afternoon or evening

tot zo
English: see you soon
Use it: when you meet again shortly, within half an hour or so

tot morgen, tot maandag
English: see you tomorrow, see you on Monday
Use it: with anyone

fijne dag, fijne avond, fijn weekend
English: have a nice day, evening, weekend
Use it: with anyone; in a shop often fijne dag nog

welterusten, slaap lekker
English: good night, sleep well
Use it: at bedtime; slaap lekker is informal

Straks usually stays within the same part of the day. Said in the morning, tot straks means later this morning; for the afternoon or the evening, say tot vanmiddag or tot vanavond. At the end of the A2 story Geen Engels, alstublieft, Maria leaves the bakery with a plan to come back on Saturday: ‘Tot zaterdag!’ roept Maria terug. (See you on Saturday, Maria calls back.)

When someone wishes you a nice day, the answer is jij ook or u ook (you too), often with a thank-you: Dank je, jij ook. Insgelijks (likewise) is a formal, rather old-fashioned answer.

Je or u in a greeting

The greeting words themselves are mostly neutral: goedemorgen, hallo, dag and tot ziens work whether you say je or u to someone. Only the informal ones, hoi, hé, hey and doei, belong with je. The choice shows in what comes after the greeting:

Greetings with je and with u

Hoi, hoe gaat het met je?
Polite (u): Goedemorgen, hoe gaat het met u?
English: Hi, how are you? / Good morning, how are you?

Goed, en met jou?
Polite (u): Goed, en met u?
English: Fine, and you?

Hoe is het? Alles goed?
Polite (u): Hoe is het met u?
English: How are things? All good?

Fijne dag! Jij ook.
Polite (u): Fijne dag! U ook.
English: Have a nice day! You too.

Doei!
Polite (u): Tot ziens!
English: Bye! / Goodbye!

The two forms can be mixed in one conversation. In the A1 story Gefeliciteerd, Kofi says u to the mother of his neighbor: ‘Gefeliciteerd met uw dochter!’ zegt hij. She answers with je : ‘Dank je,’ zegt ze. ‘En gefeliciteerd met je buurvrouw!’ And Kofi stays polite: ‘Dank u wel,’ zegt Kofi.

When to say je and when u is explained on basic Dutch words and phrases, and the forms of the pronouns, with the verb after u, are on Dutch pronouns.

Meeting someone: a handshake and your name

When you meet someone for the first time, at work, at a job interview or at a party, the usual greeting is a handshake while you say your name. In new or formal contacts, people often give their full name: Hallo, ik ben Anna de Vries. The other person answers with their own name, or with Aangenaam (nice to meet you; polite). A Dutch handshake is firm.

In Solliciteren: het eerste gesprek, the baker meets Olena for her job interview: Peter de Groot geeft haar een hand. ‘Dag Olena, ik ben Peter de Groot. Zeg maar Peter.’ (Peter de Groot shakes her hand. Hello Olena, I am Peter de Groot. Just call me Peter.) With zeg maar Peter he offers his first name, and with it je.

When you move house, it is usual to introduce yourself to the neighbors. The KNM text Omgangsvormen, waarden en normen (in Dutch) puts it simply: Dan stel je je vaak even voor aan de buren. Je zegt je naam en je huisnummer. (Then you often go and introduce yourself to the neighbors. You say your name and your house number.)

At a birthday

A Dutch birthday at home has its own greeting. The guests often sit in a circle, and a new guest goes around it, shakes hands with everyone and says gefeliciteerd (congratulations): to the person whose birthday it is, and also to the family and friends, with met:

Gefeliciteerd met je zus! (congratulations on your sister's birthday). In Gefeliciteerd, Kofi watches a guest arrive: Ze gaat de kring rond en geeft iedereen een hand. (She goes round the circle and shakes everyone's hand.) Then she stops in front of him and congratulates him too.

The three kisses

Family and close friends often greet each other with three kisses on the cheek, for example at a birthday. Since the pandemic many people kiss less, so you will meet a hug or one kiss as often as three. Between men, a handshake or a hug is more usual, and many younger people give one kiss or none. With someone you have just met, or at work, a handshake is the safe choice; if you are not sure, let the other person lead.

In a shop or at the market

At a bakery, a market stall or any counter, the greeting and the question often come together: the staff say goedemorgen or hallo and ask what you would like. Greet back, then give your order with graag (please).

Greetings at the counter

Goedemorgen, zegt u het maar.
English: Good morning, what can I get you?
Who says it: the staff

Wat mag het zijn?
English: What would you like?
Who says it: the staff

Wie is er aan de beurt?
English: Who is next?
Who says it: the staff

Goedemorgen. Een bruin brood, graag.
English: Good morning. A brown loaf, please.
Who says it: you

Dank u wel, fijne dag.
English: Thank you, have a nice day.
Who says it: you, when you leave

Fijne dag nog!
English: Have a nice day!
Who says it: the staff, when you leave

Dank je, jij ook. / Dank u, u ook.
English: Thanks, you too.
Who says it: you

Two A2 stories have the counter greeting word for word. At the market: Dan gaat ze naar

de kaaskraam. ‘Zegt u het maar,’ zegt de verkoper. (Op de markt) At the bakery: ‘Goedemorgen!’ zegt hij. ‘Wat mag het zijn?’ (Geen Engels, alstublieft) The rest of the shopping, from Kan ik pinnen? to Anders nog iets?, is on basic Dutch words and phrases.

On the phone: met and your name

Dutch people answer the phone with their name, usually after met: Met Anna or Met Anna de Vries means Anna (de Vries) speaking. (Met means with; on the phone it means this is.) At work, the name of the company or the practice comes first. This is the doctor’s assistant in Bij de huisarts: Hij hoort een stem: ‘Praktijk De Linde, met Sandra.’ (He hears a voice: De Linde practice, Sandra speaking.)

When you call, give your name first too: it is polite in the Netherlands. In Storing, a manager calls Yara: Op dat moment ging haar telefoon. ‘Goedemorgen, met De Boer.’ (At that moment her phone rang. Good morning, De Boer speaking.) A more formal start is Goedemiddag, u spreekt met Anna de Vries (good afternoon, this is Anna de Vries). To end the call: Dank u wel, dag! or, with a friend, Doei! To spell your name on the phone, see the Dutch alphabet, with the spelling alphabet the Dutch use for it.

Greetings in a message

In a WhatsApp message to a friend, a colleague you know well or a group, the informal greetings come back: Hoi Anna!, Hey!, or Hallo allemaal for a group. At the end, a short word does the work of a goodbye:

- **Groetjes**: cheers (informal), for friends and people you know well.
- **Liefs**: love, for family, a partner and close friends.
- **Tot straks!**, **Tot zo!**, **Doei!**: the spoken goodbyes work in a message too.

A message to a teacher, a landlord or a company is closer to an email: Goedemorgen meneer Jansen or Beste meneer Jansen at the start, and Met vriendelijke groet and your name at the end.

Writing an email: Beste, Geachte and Met vriendelijke groet

A Dutch email opens with Beste or Geachte and a name, followed by a comma; the first sentence starts on a new line, with a capital letter. Beste is the usual opening, also at work. Geachte is the formal one, for official letters and a first contact.

How to open an email in Dutch

Beste Anna,
English: Dear Anna,
Use it for: colleagues and people you know: the usual opening

Beste mevrouw De Vries,
English: Dear Ms. De Vries,
Use it for: someone you know by name and say u to

Geachte mevrouw De Vries, / Geachte heer De Vries,
English: Dear Ms. De Vries, / Dear Mr. De Vries,
Use it for: formal letters: the gemeente, a job application, a first contact

Geachte heer, mevrouw,
English: Dear Sir or Madam,
Use it for: formal, when you do not know who will read it; also Geachte dames en heren,

Hoi Anna, / Hallo Anna,
English: Hi Anna,
Use it for: friends and colleagues you know well

Geachte goes with a surname: Geachte mevrouw De Vries, or, when you do not know how someone wants to be addressed, the full name: Geachte Anna de Vries. Never with a first name alone. Write heer and mevrouw with a small letter, and give the first part of a surname a capital when no first name or initial comes before it: mevrouw De Vries, Geachte heer Van Dijk, but Jan van Dijk. Do not write Beste or Geachte on its own: without a name, use Geachte heer, mevrouw.

How to end an email in Dutch

Met vriendelijke groet
English: Kind regards
Use it for: the standard closing, formal and neutral; also Met vriendelijke groeten

Vriendelijke groet
English: Kind regards
Use it for: a little shorter, still neutral

Hartelijke groet
English: Warm regards
Use it for: people you know; warmer

Groet, Groeten
English: Regards
Use it for: colleagues; short and informal

Groetjes
English: Cheers (informal)
Use it for: friends; too informal for a formal email

Hoogachtend
English: Yours faithfully
Use it for: very formal letters; rare in email

Write the closing in full: abbreviations such as mvg for met vriendelijke groet look careless. In a long thread of replies, you can leave the closing out and end with just your name.

A first name and u can go together. The bakery's email in Solliciteren begins: 'Beste Olena, bedankt voor uw brief. Kunt u donderdag om tien uur komen voor een gesprek?' And in Een gedicht voor de baas, In his first week, Sasha spends an hour on an email to his boss: De mail begon met 'Beste Ingrid, ik hoop dat het goed met u gaat'. Aan het eind stond: 'Met vriendelijke groet en alvast hartelijk dank.' (The email began with "Dear Ingrid, I hope you are well". At the end it said: "Kind regards and many thanks in advance.") Her reply has four words: Na twee minuten kwam haar antwoord: 'Kort en krachtig, Sasha.' (After two minutes her answer came: "Short and to the point, Sasha.")

Typical mistakes with Dutch greetings

1. **Goedemorgen after lunch.** From 12 noon it is goedemiddag, and from about six in the evening goedenavond.
2. **Goedenavond for good night.** It is a greeting. When you leave in the evening, say fijne avond or dag; at bedtime, welterusten.
3. **Two words, or an extra n.** Goede morgen and goedenmiddag are wrong: goedemorgen, goedemiddag, and goedenavond with its n.
4. **Hoi and doei at the gemeente.** With officials, older people you do not know and in formal situations, say goedemorgen or hallo, and tot ziens or dag when you leave.
5. **Only hallo when you call.** Say who you are: Goedemorgen, met Anna de Vries.
6. **Geachte Anna.** Geachte goes with heer or mevrouw and a surname; with a first name, write Beste Anna.
7. **Geachte Mevrouw de Vries.** A small letter for mevrouw and a capital for De: mevrouw De Vries.
8. **Mvg or gr under an email.** Write Met vriendelijke groet or Groeten in full.

See it in a text

The free texts on this site are full of greetings. A few more, word for word:

- **Hij zegt 'hoi' en 'goedemorgen'. Maar hij is nog nooit bij de buren binnen geweest.** He says hi and good morning. But he has never been inside his neighbors' houses. (Gefeliciteerd, A1)
- **Soms fietst Selam langs hem, op weg naar school. 'Doei, papa!' roept ze.** Sometimes Selam cycles past him on her way to school. "Bye, Dad!" she calls. (Fietsles, A1)
- **Een vrouw loopt voorbij. 'Help! Ik ben dicht!' roept Luca. 'Fijne dag!' zegt ze, en**

ze loopt ook door. A woman walks past. "Help! I am closed!" Luca shouts (he means locked out). "Have a nice day!" she says, and she walks on too. (De deur, A1)

- **Op haar werk zegt Bram: 'Goedemorgen! Lekker weer, hè?'** At work Bram says: "Good morning! Nice weather, isn't it?" (Het weer in Nederland, A2)
- **'Dag, ik ben Ana. Ik woon beneden,' zegt ze.** "Hello, I am Ana. I live downstairs," she says to the neighbor upstairs. (De buurvrouw van boven, A2)
- **'Goedemorgen, ik ben Joost,' zegt hij. 'Pasfoto?'** "Good morning, I am Joost," he says. "Passport photo?" (De pasfoto, A2)
- **Anouk begint het overleg zoals altijd in het Nederlands: 'Goedemorgen allemaal. Deze week moeten we…'** Anouk starts the meeting in Dutch, as always: "Good morning, everyone. This week we have to…" (Moet je op je werk Nederlands spreken?, B1)

Read next

For a whole story about greeting in Dutch, read Gefeliciteerd, a free A1 text: Kofi has lived in Apeldoorn for a year, and at his neighbor's 40th birthday every new guest shakes his hand and congratulates him, although it is not his birthday. More stories at this level are on Dutch reading practice A1.

The A1 book is Fairy Tales: eight fairy tales everyone knows, from Little Red Riding Hood to The Little Mermaid, retold in easy A1 Dutch, with an English glossary and questions. It is out as a paperback on Amazon.

How do you say hello in Dutch?

The safe word is hallo, which works with anyone. Hoi is the informal hi for friends and people your age. By the time of day you can also say goedemorgen (until noon), goedemiddag (until about 6 pm) or goedenavond (in the evening), and dag works as hello and as goodbye.

How do you say goodbye in Dutch?

Dag and tot ziens work with anyone; doei is the informal bye. To say when you will meet again, use tot: tot straks (later, in the same part of the day), tot morgen, tot maandag. In a shop you will hear fijne dag nog, have a nice day, and you answer u ook or jij ook.

How do Dutch people answer the phone?

With their name, usually after met: met Anna means Anna speaking. At work the company or the practice comes first: Praktijk De Linde, met Sandra. When you call, start with a greeting and your own name: Goedemorgen, met Anna de Vries.

How do you start and end an email in Dutch?

Start with Beste and the name (Beste Anna, Beste mevrouw De Vries), or, in a formal letter, with Geachte heer or Geachte mevrouw and the surname. End with Met vriendelijke groet and your name; with friends, Groetjes is fine.

https://dutchreaders.com/vocabulary/greetings/ · Dutch Readers