

Basic Dutch words and phrases for daily life

These are the 100 Dutch phrases you need first in the Netherlands: hello and goodbye, please and thank you, and the sentences for the shop, the café, the train, the doctor and the gemeente. Each one has its English meaning, and the polite form where it matters.

Je or u?

Dutch has two words for you. Je (or jij) is for friends, colleagues, children and most people your age. U is polite: for older people, officials at the gemeente, the doctor's assistant and anyone you are not sure about. Shop staff and waiters often say je to you. You can still say u back, and switch to je when someone says zeg maar je (just call me je). Saying u is never rude, at most a little formal.

Hello and goodbye

Dutch greetings follow the time of day. Dag works for hello and for goodbye, at any time.

Greetings

Hallo. / Hoi. · Hello. / Hi (hoi is informal).

Goedemorgen. · Good morning.

Goedemiddag. · Good afternoon.

Goedenavond. · Good evening.

Dag. · Hello; goodbye.

Hoe gaat het met je? / Hoe gaat het met u? · How are you? (informal / polite)

Goed, dank je. En met jou? · Fine, thanks. And you?

Tot ziens. / Doei. · Goodbye. / Bye (doei is informal).

Tot morgen. / Tot straks. · See you tomorrow. / See you later (today).

Fijne dag. / Fijne avond. / Fijn weekend. · Have a nice day. / Have a nice evening. / Have a nice weekend.

Please, thank you and sorry

Alstublieft and alsjeblieft mean please, and also here you are: you hear them when someone hands you something. Dank u wel is polite, dank je wel informal, and bedankt works with anyone.

Being polite

Alstublieft. / Alsjeblieft. · Please; here you are (polite / informal).

Dank u wel. / Dank je wel. · Thank you (polite / informal).

Bedankt. · Thanks.

Graag gedaan. · You're welcome.

Sorry. · Sorry.

Pardon. · Excuse me (to get someone's attention or to get past).

Mag ik er even langs? · Can I get past, please?

Het spijt me. · I'm sorry (when it is serious).

Talking about yourself

About you

Ik heet Anna. / Mijn naam is Anna. · My name is Anna.

Hoe heet je? / Hoe heet u? · What's your name? (informal / polite)

Ik kom uit Polen. · I'm from Poland.

Ik woon in Utrecht. · I live in Utrecht.

Ik werk in een ziekenhuis. · I work in a hospital.

Ik leer Nederlands. · I'm learning Dutch.

Leuk je te leren kennen. / Aangenaam. · Nice to meet you. (informal / polite)

When you do not understand

Many Dutch people switch to English as soon as they hear an accent. The last phrase in this list is the one that keeps the conversation in Dutch.

Asking for help with the language

Sorry, ik begrijp het niet. · Sorry, I don't understand.

Kunt u dat herhalen? · Could you say that again?

Kunt u wat langzamer praten? · Could you speak a bit more slowly?

Wat betekent dat? · What does that mean?

Hoe zeg je dat in het Nederlands? · How do you say that in Dutch?

Spreekt u Engels? · Do you speak English?

Ik spreek een beetje Nederlands. · I speak a little Dutch.

Kunt u dat opschrijven? · Could you write that down?

Ik wil graag Nederlands oefenen. · I'd like to practice my Dutch.

In the shop and at the market

Most shops take a bank card, some take only cards, and a bag costs extra. The A2 story Op de markt, with audio, has these sentences in context.

Shopping

Hoeveel kost dit? · How much is this?

Waar kan ik de melk vinden? · Where can I find the milk?

Ik kijk even rond. · I'm just looking.

Kan ik pinnen? · Can I pay by card?

Pinnen of contant? · Card or cash? (the cashier asks)

Wilt u het bonnetje? · Would you like the receipt?

Ja, graag. / Nee, hoeft niet. · Yes, please. / No, no need.

Mag ik een tasje? · Can I have a bag?

Mag het iets meer zijn? · Is a little more OK? (the staff asks when they cut or weigh)

Anders nog iets? · Anything else?

Nee, dat was het. · No, that's all.

In a café or restaurant

In a restaurant the bill comes only when you ask for it; on a busy terrace you often pay when the drinks arrive. Paying separately is normal.

Eating out

Heeft u een tafel voor twee? · Do you have a table for two?

Mag ik bestellen? · Can I order?

Een koffie, graag. · A coffee, please.

Wat raadt u aan? · What do you recommend?

Ik ben allergisch voor noten. · I'm allergic to nuts.

Ik eet geen vlees. · I don't eat meat.

Eet smakelijk. · Enjoy your meal.

Proost. · Cheers.

Waar is de wc? · Where's the restroom?

Mag ik de rekening? · Can I have the bill?

Kunnen we apart betalen? · Can we pay separately?

Getting around

You check in before you travel and check out at the end: on buses and trams at the reader on board, for trains and the metro at the gates or card readers in the station. Use the same bank card, phone or OV-chipkaart for both. A trip without a check-out costs more.

Travel

Waar is het station? · Where is the station?

Hoe kom ik naar het centrum? · How do I get to the town center?

Linksaf, rechtsaf, rechtdoor. · Turn left, turn right, go straight ahead.

Gaat deze trein naar Utrecht? · Does this train go to Utrecht?

Moet ik overstappen? · Do I have to change (trains or buses)?

Is deze plaats vrij? · Is this seat free?

Vergeet niet uit te checken. · Don't forget to check out (with your card or phone).

Waar is de fietsenstalling? · Where is the bike parking?

At the doctor and the pharmacy

In the Netherlands you go to your huisarts (GP) first, so register with a practice near your home soon after you move, before you get sick. You call for an appointment, and the assistant on the phone asks what is wrong, so learn the phrases for pain and fever. The story Bij de huisarts follows one of those calls.

Health

Ik wil graag een afspraak maken. · I'd like to make an appointment.

Ik ben ziek. · I'm sick.

Ik heb koorts. · I have a fever.

Ik heb hoofdpijn. · I have a headache.

Het doet hier pijn. · It hurts here.

Hoe lang heeft u dat al? · How long have you had it? (the doctor asks)

Moet ik medicijnen nemen? · Do I need to take medicine?

Heb ik een recept nodig? · Do I need a prescription?

Neemt u nieuwe patiënten aan? · Are you taking new patients? (when you call a practice)

At the gemeente

The gemeente (your municipality) registers your address, and you get your burgerservicenummer (BSN) when you first register. Most visits need an appointment. Bring your passport: the BSN is the number most Dutch forms ask for.

At the town hall

Ik heb een afspraak om tien uur. · I have an appointment at ten.

Ik wil me inschrijven. · I'd like to register (my address).

Welke documenten moet ik meenemen? · Which documents do I need to bring?

Hier is mijn paspoort. · Here's my passport.

Wat is uw burgerservicenummer? · What is your BSN? (the clerk asks)

Moet ik een formulier invullen? · Do I need to fill out a form?

At work and with the neighbors

Small talk in the Netherlands is short, and often about the weather or the weekend. The story *De buurvrouw van boven* is about getting to know a neighbor.

Small talk

Hoe was je weekend? · How was your weekend?

Lekker weer, hè? · Nice weather, isn't it?

Wil je ook koffie? · Would you like a coffee too?

Ik ben je nieuwe buurvrouw. · I'm your new neighbor (a woman; a man says buurman).

On the phone

The Dutch answer the phone with their name: *met Anna* means Anna speaking.

Calls and messages

Met Anna. · Anna speaking.

Ik bel over mijn afspraak. · I'm calling about my appointment.

Kunt u mij terugbellen? · Could you call me back?

Ik stuur je een appje. · I'll send you a message (on WhatsApp).

In an emergency

112 is the number for the police, the fire department and an ambulance when every minute

counts. For urgent medical help that cannot wait until your huisarts opens, in the evening, at night or on the weekend, call the huisartsenpost first; do not just walk in.

Emergencies

Help! · Help!

Bel 112. · Call 112.

Ik heb een dokter nodig. · I need a doctor.

Er is een ongeluk gebeurd. · There's been an accident.

Ik ben mijn portemonnee kwijt. · I've lost my wallet.

Mijn fiets is gestolen. · My bike has been stolen.

Words that do not translate

A few small words carry a lot of Dutch conversation. You will hear them every day.

Everyday words

Gezellig. · Cozy, fun, nice: a good time with other people.

Lekker. · Tasty; also nice (lekker weer: nice weather).

Jammer. · What a pity, too bad.

Prima. · Fine, OK.

Hè? · Huh?; at the end of a sentence: ..., right?

Succes. · Good luck.

Gefeliciteerd. · Congratulations; at a birthday you also say it to the family.

How to learn these phrases

Learn the whole sentence, not the words one by one, and say it aloud. Pick the five you need this week and use them in the shop or on the train. Then meet them in context: the free A2 stories come with audio, and the 1,000 most common Dutch words are the words most of these phrases are made of.

What are the most useful Dutch phrases?

Hallo, dank je wel, sorry, ik begrijp het niet, hoeveel kost dit? and kan ik pinnen?. With these five you get through a greeting, a misunderstanding and a shop.

How do you say thank you in Dutch?

Dank je wel to a friend, dank u wel to someone you say u to, and bedankt to anyone. The answer is graag gedaan: you're welcome.

Why do Dutch people answer me in English?

Because they want to help, and many speak English well. Say ik wil graag Nederlands oefenen, I'd like to practice my Dutch, and many people will happily switch back.

Is hoi too informal?

Hoi is fine with friends, colleagues and shop staff your age. With older people and officials, say goedemorgen or goedemiddag.

