

The specific peculiarities of the letter D

Below is some information about the way the letter “D” can be expressed in Danish. You’ll notice that there are a lot of options and rules! Don’t get bogged down in memorizing the rules. Just read through them and then leave it. As you hear more and more Danish words, the patterns will naturally arise in your sense of how words should be pronounced. You can refer back here every once in a while to see if a given word is following the general patterns. There are always exceptions!

Test yourself! Translations of the sample words are given in parentheses unless the word is found in chapter 1 of *Colloquial Danish*. Can you translate the ones found in chapter 1?

D: This letter may have 1 of 4 sounds associated with it (two of which are defined as an absence of sound!).

/d/: “D” as in “Delta”. Danish words: **det**, **derovre**, **du**, **dig**, **dansk(er)**, **dag**, **Danmark**, **De**, **de**, **den**, **arbejder**, **goddag**, **badminton**.

General pattern: 1) beginning of a word
2) often at the beginning of a syllable in the middle of a word

/ð/: “TH” as in “Thy”. Danish words: **hedder**, **både**, **mødes**, **bide** (bite), **bad** (bath), , **mad**, **sted** (place), **rød** (red)

General pattern: 1) between vowels
2) at the end of a word after a vowel

“silent”: Sometimes the “d” is completely ignored in pronunciation. Danish words: **spilde** (spill), **derinde**, **inde**, **mindst** (smallest), **skænde** (scold), **tusind**, **plads** (place, seat), **gods** (goods/property), **gidsel** (hostage), **sidst**, **bidt** (bit), **mareridt** (nightmare), **lidt** (a little).

General pattern: 1) between “L” or “N” and a vowel
2) before “S” or “T”

/ʔ/: “glottal stop” (called a *stød*, in Danish). A glottal stop is a sudden stopping of sound at the vocal cords. It is found in the utterance “uh-oh” and is represented by the hyphen. It is also found at the end of Homer Simpson’s famous “doh!” Without a glottal stop, that word would sound like “dough.” Danish words: **ind**, **englænder**, **hund** (dog), **bord** (table), **kold** (cold), **fyld** (stuffing, filling), **indhold** (contents, ingredients), **undtagen** (except, unless)

General pattern: after “L” or “N” but not before a vowel (see general pattern for “silent D”)

Puzzle Exercises: How do you think the “D” is pronounced in these words?

ud, mund, dygtig, brød, Øresundsbroen, hoved, til fods, hinanden, midt, pludselig, lad, lade, ladt, out,
mouth, clever, bread, The Øresund Bridge, head, by foot, each other, middle, suddenly, let, to let, (has) let,

middag, tid, hundred, kæde, end, datter, født, god, hvid, hvide, hvidt, kælder, kedelig, ild, stadig,
midday, time, hundred, chain, than, daughter, born, good, white, white, white, basement, boring, fire, still

undskyld, drikke

excuse (me), drink

/d/

/ð/

“silent”

/ʔ/

/d/	/ð/	“silent”	/ʔ/