

Duilleag Mìneachaidh

1. Fàilte oirbh! | Welcome!

Learners in Scotland may be surprised by the number of Gaelic words commonly used in Scottish English. Gaelic words, or words derived from Gaelic, are often used to talk about the landscape, **loch** 'loch, lake', **beinn** 'ben, mountain', **gleann** 'glen'. Place names in Scotland are very often of Gaelic origin, with **baile** 'town', **ceann** 'head' and **caol** 'narrows' appearing frequently. Scottish cultural activities often involve Gaelic words and traditions, **cèilidh** 'ceilidh, visit', **uisge-beatha** 'whisky' and **sgian dubh** 'black knife'.

Fàilte | Welcome**Slàinte** | Cheers**Bùrach** | Bourach**Cèilidh** | Ceilidh**Clann** | Clan**Gu leòr** | Galore**Beinn** | Ben**Uisge-beatha** | Whisky**Sasannach** | Sasennach**Sluagh-ghairm** | Slogan**Bothan** | Bothy**Gleann** | Glen**Caol** | Kyle**Loch** | Loch**Càrn** | Cairn**Cabair** | Caber**Bròg** | Brogue**Sgian dubh** | Skean dhu**Sporan** | Sporrán**Capall-coille** | Capercaillie**Srath** | Strath

2. Aibidil na Gàidhlig | The Gaelic Alphabet

Although the English alphabet uses 26 letters, not all European languages use all of these. Italian for example only uses 21, but Gaelic is even more efficient, getting by with just 18. Despite using relatively few characters, Gaelic actually has more sounds than English. These additional sounds are represented by combinations of letters, with the letters **h** and **i** frequently used to represent a change in sound. English speakers will be familiar with this concept, for example, we know that a **ph** is pronounced as **f**, and that **t** in words finishing **-tion** is pronounced **sh**.

The alphabet below shows all the letters used in English, with those not used in Gaelic crossed out and marked in red:

A B C D E F G H I ~~J~~ ~~K~~ L M N O P ~~Q~~ R S T U ~~V~~ ~~W~~ ~~X~~ ~~Y~~ Z

Math or Mhath

Madainn and **Oidhche** are feminine nouns, which cause lenition where possible in any adjectives which follow them. **Feasgar** and **Latha** are masculine nouns and these do not cause lenition in adjectives which follow them.

Madainn mhath
Good morning

Oidhche mhath
Goodnight

Feasgar math
Good afternoon

Latha math
Good day

As in English, **Madainn mhath** 'Good Morning' and **Feasgar math** 'Good Afternoon' are a bit formal as greetings. A more informal greeting in Gaelic would be **Sin thu** or **Sin sibh** meaning 'That's you' or 'There you are' - we might say 'It's yourself' as an equivalent to these in English.

Halò | Hello

Haidh | Hey

Sin thu / sibh | There you are

Saying Goodbye

Beannachd leat / leibh 'Blessings with you' and **Slàn leat / leibh** 'Farewell, Go safe' are typical blessings, with the response **Mar sin leat / leibh** 'Like that with you' commonly used. **Tìoraidh** is a common informal goodbye, a Gaelic version of 'Cheerio'. **Oidhche mhath** 'Goodnight' is, like the English, only used when parting company of an evening.

Beannachd leat / leibh
Blessings with you

Slàn leat / leibh
Health with you

Tìoraidh / Tìors an-dràsta
Cheers just now

Leat VS leibh

- **leat** is the singular form for speaking to one person.
- **leibh** is the plural, for speaking to more than one person, or the polite form.

The form of a person's name changes when we are talking directly to them. This is called 'The Vocative Case', **An Tuiseal Gairmeach**. Masculine and feminine names follow different rules. Words in the vocative case are preceded by **a**, except when they start with a vowel, or **f + vowel**.

When we soften an initial consonant, this is marked by an **h**, and is called 'lenition'. The letters **l, n, r** don't show lenition in writing. Words which begin with **sg, sm, sp, st** cannot lenite as these sounds are too strong to soften. 'Slenderisation' is when we change the sound at the end of a word, adding an **i** before the final consonant, or consonant group, or when we change a final broad vowel, **ean** ending to **ein**.

FEMALE NAMES: LENITE ONLY

1. Names starting with a consonant

Madainn mhath a Mhòrag!

The name **Mòrag** changes to **A Mhòrag** in the Vocative Case, so we can see that female names lenite, shown by the **h** after the first consonant. However feminine names don't slenderise, although they often have slender endings in any case.

2. Names starting with L, N, R

Sin thu, a Raonaid!

Remember that words starting with **L, N, R**, or **Sg, Sm, St, Sp** don't lenite so no changes are made to the name **Raonaid**.

3. Names starting with a vowel

Feasgar math, Eilidh!

When a name begins with a vowel, we drop the **a** before the name. Vowels cannot lenite, so no changes are made to names here.

MALE NAMES: LENITE AND SLENDERISE

1. Names starting with a consonant

Madainn mhath a Sheumais!

The name **Seumas** changes to **A Sheumais** in the Vocative Case. From this, we can see that male names lenite, shown by the **h** after the first consonant, and also slenderise their endings, shown by the **i** before the final consonant.

2. Names starting with L, N, R

Sin thu, a Ruairidh!

Remember that words starting with **L, N, R**, or **Sg, Sm, St, Sp** don't lenite. In this example, the name **Ruaraidh** already has a slender final vowel, **i**, so we do not need to change this.

3. Names starting with a vowel

Feasgar math, Iain!

With names beginning with a vowel, we drop the **a** before the name in the Vocative Case. Again the name Iain already has a slender ending, with an **i** as the final vowel, so we don't need to change this.

4. Names starting with F+vowel

Oidhche mhath, Fhionnghal!

Again, like male names, we drop the **a** before the word as the **Fh** is silent, leaving the lenited name starting with a vowel. We don't slenderise female names in the vocative so **Fionnghal** becomes **Fhionnghal**.

4. Names starting with F+vowel

Oidhche mhath, Fhearghais!

The name **Fearghas** starts with an F+vowel and when we lenite words starting with **F** the **Fh** becomes silent. This means that the name now starts with a vowel sound and for this reason we drop the **a** before the name. We also have to slenderise the broad **as** ending, so we get **Fhearghais** in the Vocative.

5. Ciamar a tha sibh? | How are you?

Like many European languages, Gaelic has a singular, informal, and a plural, formal, form of the word 'you'. You should always check which pronouns other learners are comfortable with and use them accordingly: **thu**, **sibh**, **e**, **i**, or **iad**.

- **thu** is the informal and singular form
- **sibh** is the formal and plural form

Ciamar How	a tha that is	thu you	?
Ciamar How	a tha that is	sibh you	?

A: Ciamar a tha **thusa**?

B: Tha **mise** gu math. Ciamar a tha **sibh fhèin**?

A: Chan eil mi dona, tapadh leat.

I / me	mi
you	thu
he / him	e
she / her	i
we / us	sinn
you (pl)	sibh
they / them	iad

To add stress to a word in Gaelic, we don't use our voice like we do in English, we use an emphatic ending, or add **fhèin** 'self' as in the above dialogue. The simple pronouns all have emphatic versions, given in the table to the right.

Ciamar How	a tha that is	thusa YOU	?
Tha Am	mise /	gu math well	

mi	mise
thu	thusa
e	esan
i	ise
sinn	sinne
sibh	sibhse
iad	iadsan

6.

Dè an t-ainm a th' oirbh? | What is your name?

Dè an t-ainm a th' ort? literally means 'What is the name that is on you?' Gaelic has a feature known as prepositional pronouns, which means there is a special form when using a phrase like 'on you'. In Gaelic the preposition, in this example, 'on', comes together with the pronoun, here 'you', giving us **ort** rather than 'air + thu'.

Both **a tha air** and **a th' air** are seen, but it is common to drop a vowel when two vowels come together, known as 'elision'. **Tha** is therefore often shortened to **th'** when followed by a vowel. This is noticeable in speech where **tha** will run into the next word rather than be pronounced separately.

SINGLE

Dè What	an t-ainm the name	a th' that is	ort on you	?
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PLURAL

Dè What	na h-ainmean the names	a th' that are	oirbh on you(s)	?
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air + mi	orm
air + thu	ort
air + e	air
air + i	oirre
air + sinn	oirnn
air + sibh	oirbh
air + iad	orra

Like French and some other European languages, Gaelic has a singular and plural or formal form of the word 'you';

- **ort** is the singular form
- **oirbh** is the plural or polite form

Saying what your name is

The easiest and most common response to this question is **Is mise** ___ simply meaning 'I am ___'. There also is a way to say 'My name is ___' which follows a similar structure to the question: **'S e Mairi an t-ainm a th' orm** or **'S e Mairi a th' orm**.

Is is, am	mise I, me	Mairi Mary
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'S e It is	Mairi Mary	an t-ainm the name	a tha that is	orm on me
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