

Absolute beginner #1 - Hej! An introduction to Swedish

ABE

LESSON CONTENT

The Swedish language

Swedish is a small Scandinavian language spoken in northern Europe. It's the administrative language in Sweden and some regions in Finland and belongs to the Germanic language family. This means that Swedish is related to German, Dutch, and English but also, more closely, to Danish and Norwegian. In fact these languages are more or less mutually intelligible (depending on how much exposure the listener has had to the languages) because of the common origin in Old Norse.

If you already know one of these languages, Swedish will definitely feel somewhat familiar to you.

Greetings

Now, let's learn your first bit of Swedish! To greet someone in Swedish, you use the word
, which sounds much like

hey
in English. However, this is not an informal expression but the most common neutral greeting. It's one of the most important bits of Swedish that you could ever learn.

Simple sentences

Swedish is considered easy to learn in that sense, that you don't need to modify words depending on whom you are talking about. In English, for instance, you have to conjugate the verb, as it's called in fancy linguistic lingo, depending on who performs the action.

be
vara

(I) am
är

(you) are

är

(she) is
är

(we) are
är

Can you spot which word är is related to?

So to start constructing sentences in Swedish you only have to have a subject: a thing that IS something. Jag and are good words to start with. Then you move on with är and then you add something that your subject is going to be.

In spoken Swedish, you'll mostly hear being realized as /ja/ and är as /e/ or /ä/. That is, both words lose their ending consonant.