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About the Author

Margreet Kwakernaak is a language teacher and the director of the language school *Suitcase talen* in Almere, near Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. She is the producer of courses for Dutch as a Second Language, Dutch as a First Language, German, English, and Spanish. During her many years of teaching students of all ages and nationalities she has learned a lot about the needs of students and how to give them confidence to speak and write.

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Introduction

As life becomes more and more global, knowing how to say at least a few words in other languages is becoming increasingly useful. Students do part of their studies abroad, and many businesses not only need overseas communication but travel as well. While English will do for business dealings in the Netherlands, people will open up if you know some words and phrases in Dutch. Wouldn't it be fun to talk to your neighbours, colleagues, and new friends in Dutch and have a good laugh together?

Whatever your motivation is, *Dutch For Dummies* can help. You'll not only find materials for basic communication such as greeting or ordering a meal, but also for telephoning or writing an e-mail. Some basic grammar provides you with the building blocks for your personal communication. *Dutch For Dummies* uses a clear and simple notation system for the pronunciation of each word, while pronunciation and accent come alive in the downloadable content that supplements the book.

About This Book

This book is more than just a compilation of practical sentences and words. It will prove useful when your goal is to learn some words and phrases just to get around, but also when you intend to stay longer in the country and want to communicate with neighbours, new friends and colleagues. You can go through the book at your own pace and in your order of preference, reading and skipping as much or as little as you like. *Dutch For Dummies* is your personal guide: always ready for help.

Note: If you're a novice to Dutch, you may want to read the chapters in Part I, before you start talking. This part will give you the basics, such as how to pronounce the various sounds, which will help you to take the next steps.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easier to navigate through, we have set up a set of conventions:

- ✓ Dutch terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciations are set in *italics*, following the Dutch terms. Stressed syllables are underlined.

Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order: the 'I' form, the 'you' (singular, informal) form, the 'you' (singular and plural, formal) form, the 'he/she/it form', the 'we' form, the 'you' (plural, informal) form, and the 'they' form. Pronunciations follow in the second column. Here's an example of the verb **werken** (to work):

Conjugation	Pronunciation
<i>ik werk</i>	ik vehrk
<i>jij werkt</i>	yay vehrkt
<i>u werkt</i>	uw vehrkt
<i>hij/zij/het werkt</i>	hay/zay/het vehrkt
<i>wij werken</i>	vay <u>vehr</u> -kern
<i>jullie werken</i>	<u>yuw</u> -lee <u>vehr</u> -kern
<i>zij werken</i>	zay <u>vehr</u> -kern

Language learning is a specialty, so this book includes a few elements that other *For Dummies* books do not. These are the new elements:

- ✓ **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** Most language is oral, or spoken, and most speaking is done in dialogues between two persons, so we include dialogues throughout the book. The dialogues come under the heading 'Talkin' the Talk' and show you the Dutch words, their pronunciation and the English translations. A lot of these dialogues can be found in the downloadable content that comes with the book.
- ✓ **Words to Know blackboards:** Memorising words and phrases is also important in language learning, so we collect all the new words in the dialogues on a blackboard, under the heading 'Words to Know'. Dutch nouns have a gender, which determines the (definite) article each noun takes. In the Words to Know lists, we include the article for each noun so that you memorise it together with the noun.

Also note that, because each language has its own ways of expressing ideas, the English translation that we provide for the Dutch terms may not be a literal one. We want you to understand the gist of what someone is saying, not just the words that are being said. For example, you can translate the Dutch phrase 'Ik moet nu snel weg' literally as 'I have to leave soon' but the phrase really means 'I have to go now'. This book gives you the 'I have to go now' translation.

Foolish Assumptions

To write his book, we had to make some assumptions about who you are and what you want from a book called *Dutch For Dummies*. Here are some assumptions that we have made about you:

- ✓ You know little to no Dutch – and if you do know some words and phrases, you don't know how to organise them.
- ✓ You are not looking for a book that will make you fluent in Dutch: you just want to know some words, phrases and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in Dutch.
- ✓ You want to learn real-life Dutch for real-life use, in a life that you have already started or will start soon. You make your own choices of the material that the book offers, not only deciding which parts and how much, but also when, where, and how you study.
- ✓ You want to have fun and learn some Dutch at the same time.

If these statements apply to you, you have found the right book!

How This Book Is Organised

This book is divided by topics into five parts. Each part is divided into chapters. The following sections will show you what types of information you can find in each part.

Part I: Getting Started

This part is not to be missed, as it's like the foundations of a house. As the ground work is never as exciting as what comes later, you might prefer to start with some real communication like greeting. Do as you like, and go back to the basics when you notice that you need them. In Part I you'll find Dutch words that you probably already know, as well as the alphabet, pronunciation and some 'first aid' expressions. It gives you the structure of verbs, tenses and sentences and all you need to know about numbers, time, the days of the week and the different seasons.

Part II: Dutch in Action

In this part you begin learning and using Dutch. Instead of focusing on grammar points, this part focuses on everyday situations, such as talking to people, enjoying a meal, shopping, leisure, and work.

Part III: Dutch on the Go

This part hands you the tools you need to find your way in Dutch in a bank, in a hotel, on the road, on a plane, a train or a taxi. This part covers all aspects of getting around in the Netherlands, and includes a chapter on handling emergencies.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

If you're looking for small, easily digestible pieces of information about Dutch, this part is for you. Here, you can find ten ways to learn Dutch quickly, five things never to say, ten favourite Dutch expressions, 10 public holidays that you should not miss and ten phrases that make you sound professional.

Part V: Appendixes

The last part of the book includes important information which you can use for reference. It starts with verb tables, which show you how to conjugate regular verbs as well as those that don't fit into any pattern. You'll also find a list of the tracks that appear in the downloadable content that comes with this book, so that you can find out where in the book those dialogues are and follow along. Finally, you'll find a mini-dictionary with both Dutch to English and English to Dutch formats. If you encounter a Dutch word that you don't understand or if you need to know the specific word in Dutch, you can look it up here.

Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information more easily accessible, you'll find the following items in the left-hand margins widely throughout the book:



This icon highlights tips that can make learning Dutch easier.



This icon points to some grammar rules that are not essential but 'nice to know'.



If you're looking for information and advice about culture and how to deal with the Dutch, look for these icons.

Where to Go from Here

Learning a language is all about jumping in and just trying. So start now! You can start reading at the beginning, pick a chapter that interests you, or download the audio tracks and listen to a few dialogues. Who knows, in a short time you may ask a Dutchman talking to you in English: **Ik studeer Nederlands, wilt u Nederlands praten?** (*ik stuw-dayr nay-der-lans vilt uw nay-der-lans praa-tern* (I'm studying Dutch, would you mind talking Dutch?).

Part I

Getting Started

The 5th Wave

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'Learning Dutch should be easy for you. A word sounding a lot like 'duh' seems to appear quite a bit.'

In this part . . .

You have to start somewhere, but we bet that you already jumped in. This part is a lifeboat that you can use whenever you fear that drowning is near. This part contains the alphabet, pronunciation, and some basic grammar – why not check your lifeboat before trying out the rest of the book?

Chapter 1

You Already Know Some Dutch

In This Chapter

- ▶ The Dutch you already know
- ▶ Useful responses and wishes
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- ▶ Pronouncing vowels
- ▶ Pronouncing Dutch diphthongs
- ▶ Trying the ‘ch’ and the ‘g’
- ▶ Pronunciation and stress
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The best way to learn a language is simply to start. In this chapter you jump into the Dutch language. This chapter shows you the Dutch you probably know already, explains how to pronounce Dutch words and introduces you to some popular Dutch expressions.

The Dutch You Know Already

Dutch is an Indo-European language. Among the families of Indo-European languages, Dutch, like German and English, belongs to the German group. Many words are identical with German words or look-alikes. Though English is not as close a relative as German, English-speaking people will recognise many words as well. These words either have their roots in the same family or belong to the growing group of internationally used words.

Close relatives

The words listed below are the same in Dutch, English, and German and mean the same. The only difference is the pronunciation and the spelling. German nouns start with a capital letter.

<i>Dutch</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>English</i>
de arm	<i>der arm</i>	der Arm	the arm
de bank	<i>der bank</i>	die Bank	the bank
fantastisch	<i>fan-tas-tees</i>	fantastisch	fantastic
het glas	<i>het khlas</i>	der Glas	the glass
de hand	<i>der hant</i>	die Hand	the hand
de sport	<i>der sport</i>	der Sport	the sport
de tunnel	<i>der tuw-nerl</i>	der Tunnel	the tunnel
de wind	<i>der vint</i>	der Wind	the wind

Kissing cousins

More and more English words and phrases are used in Dutch, in an area such as sports but also in daily life. The Dutch usually make small adaptations, generally in spelling. Some elderly people and purists dislike the growing influence of English but all those who make use of new products and innovations cannot avoid the English expressions. There are no completely Dutch words for **de digitale tv** (*der dee-khee-taa-ler tay-fay*) (digital TV) or **de megastore** (*der may-khaa-stoar*) (the megastore)! Some more frequently used words with small adaptations are:

de supermarkt (*der suw-per-markt*) the supermarket

de fitnessclub (*der fit-ners-klup*) the fitness club

Dunghlish

As Dutch-speaking people are internationally orientated, the Dutch use a lot of English verbs and expressions, especially in sports, IT, and business. They adapt the verbs to Dutch rules, which results in a combination of Dutch and English, or Dunghlish. For example, you might hear: **Ik ga dat even checken** (*ik khaa dat ay-fern cheh-kern*) (I'm going to check that) or **Het vliegtuig was overboekt** (*het fleekh-toaikh vas oa-fer-bookt*) (The plane was overbooked). The Dutch find it very difficult to write this kind of verb!

Some verbs that are used in sports:

fitnessen (*fit-ner-vern*) to go to a fitness centre

joggen (*jo-vern*) to jog

stretchen (*stret-shern*) to stretch

trainen (*tray-vern*) to train, to work out

Some words from the IT world:

deleten (*der-lee-tern*) to delete

downloaden (*down-loa-dern*) to download

inloggen (*in-lo-khern*) to log in/on

printen (*prin-tern*) to print

English is very popular in management and business. Check the following verbs:

coachen (*koa-tchern*) to coach

managen (*meh-ner-ger*) to manage

marketen (*mar-ker-tern*) to market

pushen (*poo-shern*) to push

Find more about the Dutch way of conjugating English verbs in chapter 8.

Talkin' the Talk

Don't think that the following conversation gives you an idea of how the average Dutchman talks. However, you might overhear a similar conversation between two young men in the street:

- Marcel: **Hi, hoe is 't? Hoe is je nieuwe job?**
hi hoo is het. hoi is yer nee-wer job
 Hi, how are you, how is your new job?
- Jacco: **Prima! Ik ben HR manager bij Lease Consult en leasing is een spannende business.**
pree-maa. ik ben haa-ehr meh-ner-ger bay lees kon-suhlt en lee-sing is ern spa-ner-der bis-nis
 Fine! I'm a Human Resource manager at Lease Consult and leasing is an exciting business.
- Marcel: **Echt waar? Lease Consult is een Major Account van ons!**
ekht vaar? lees kon-suhlt is ern may-ger er-kownt fan ons
 Really? Lease Consult is one of our Major Accounts!
- Jacco: **Ik kom je dus nog wel eens tegen in de Board Room.**
ik kom yer duhs nokh vel erns tay-khern in der bort room
 So we're bound to meet in the Board Room.
- Marcel: **Wie weet!**
vee vayt
 Who knows!
- Jacco: **En ben jij weer happy?**
en ben yay vayr heh-pee

- Marcel: So, are you happy again?
Ja, maar Renate zit in een dip. Fulltime werken met een kid is nogal heavy en ze wil graag parttime werken.
yaa maar rer-naa-ter zit in ern dip. fool-taim vehr-kern met ern kit is no-khal heh-fee en zer vil khraakh par-taim vehr-kern
 Yes, but Renate is in a dip. Working full-time with a kid is rather heavy and she wants to work part-time.
- Jacco: **Ik begrijp het. Is parttime werken een optie?**
ik ber-khrayp het. is par-taym vehr-kern ern op-see
 I see. Is working part-time an option?
- Marcel: **Op dit moment niet. Ze zitten midden in een reorganisatie.**
op dit moa-ment neet. zer zi-tern mi-dern in ern ray-or-kha-nee-saa-see
 Not at the moment. They are in the middle of a reorganisation.
-

Street language for Dummies



Young people in the street use their own language which changes everyday. This lingo is influenced by languages such as American English, Surinam, Antillean, Turkish, and Moroccan. Street language reflects the multicultural society, while trends from music (hip-hop) and TV give it an international sound. In the big cities you might overhear the following street language words:

<i>Dutch word</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Translation</i>
nakken	<u>na</u> -kern	to nick, to steal
doekoe	<u>do</u> o-koo	money
flex	fleks	OK, good
loesoe	<u>loo</u> -soo	away
een chickie checken	ernt <u>chi</u> -kee <u>cheh</u> -kern	to observe a girl

Family members, teachers, and bosses have adopted parts of the language of the youngsters they live and work with. You might hear them saying things like: **Wie is die weirdo?** (*vee is dee vayr-doa*) (Who is that strange person?).

Words from other languages have found their way in the **Van Dale Groot woordenboek van de Nederlandse taal** (the main dictionary of the Dutch language). Some 330,000 Surinam people live in the Netherlands and about 150 phrases from their language have found their way into the dictionary. Some funny ones are: **het okseltruitje** (*het ok-serl-troi-tyer*) (the sleeveless T-shirt) which literally means 'armpit T-shirt' and **de handknie** (*der hant-knee*)

(the elbow), literary translated ‘the hand knee’. Not only Surinam words, but also words from Japanese, like **tsunami** (*tsoo-naa-mee*) (seaquake), Belgian, like **onthaalouder** (*ont-haal- ow-der*) (host parent), Arabic, like **felouka** (*fer-loo-kaa*) (Egyptian sailboat) and Hebrew, like **bollebof** (*bo-ler-bof*) (chief of police) can be found in a Dutch dictionary.

Useful Responses and Wishes

All language students get into the stage in which they understand a lot, but still speak poorly. People notice that you understand and they start talking to you, expecting a response. But you don’t know how to react! Learning by heart at least one positive and one negative response can be helpful in a difficult situation.

Learn a positive term like: **prima** (*pree-maa*) (excellent), a neutral one that you can use in almost any occasion without insulting anybody, like **interessant** (*in-ter-rer-sant*) (interesting), and have one ready in case somebody tells you something negative: **wat jammer** (*vat ya-mer*) (what a pity). Here are some examples of useful responses and when to use them:

- ✓ **Wat vind je van dit restaurant? – Prima!** (*vat fint yer fan dit res-toa-rant. pree-maa*) (How do you like this restaurant? – Excellent!)
- ✓ **Heb je zin om dit weekend mee te gaan zeilen? – Fantastisch!** (*hep yer zin om dit wee-kent may ter khaan zay-lern. fan-tas-ees*) (Would you like to go sailing this weekend? – Great!)
- ✓ **Zullen we even pauzeren? – OK.** (*zuh-lern ver ay-fern pow-zayr-rern. oa-kay*) (Shall we take a short break? – Okay.)
- ✓ **Dit zijn foto’s van Amsterdam twintig jaar geleden. – Wat interessant!** (*dit zayn foa-toas fan am-ster-dam twin-tikh jaar kher-lay-dern. vat in-ter-rer-sant*) (These are photographs of Amsterdam 20 years ago. – How interesting!)
- ✓ **Het concert is afgelast. – Wat jammer!** (*het kon-sehrt is af-kher-last. vat ya-mer*) (The concert has been cancelled. – Too bad!)
- ✓ **Mijn auto is stuk. – Wat een pech!** (*mayn ow-toa is stuhk. vat ern pekh*) (My car broke down – Bad luck!)

In case somebody asks you to do something, you may use the next positive answers:

- ✓ **Help je me even? – Natuurlijk.** (*help yer mer ay-fern. naa-tuur-lerk*) (Can you help me for a moment? – Of course.)
- ✓ **Kunt u mij om 11 uur bellen? – Geen probleem.** (*kuhnt uw may om elf uur beh-lern. khayn proa-blaym*) (Could you call me at 11 o’clock? – No problem.)

In case you need a negative answer, try the next safe ones:

- ✓ **Bent u morgen op kantoor? – Nee, het spijt me** (*bent uw mor-khern op kan-toar. nay het spayt mer*) (Are you at the office tomorrow? – No, I am sorry.)
- ✓ **Gaan jullie met ons mee? – Misschien de volgende keer.** (*khaan yuu-lee met ons may. mi-skheen der fol-khern-der kayr*) (Are you accompanying us? – Maybe next time.)

For special occasions use one of the following wishes:

- ✓ **Fijne avond.** (*fay-ner aa-font*) (Have a nice evening.)
- ✓ **Goed weekend.** (*khoot vee-kent*) (Have a nice weekend.)
- ✓ **Goede reis.** (*khoo-der rays*) (Have a good trip.)
- ✓ **Veel plezier.** (*fayl pler-zeer*) (Have fun.)
- ✓ **Beterschap.** (*bay-ter-skhap*) (I wish you a speedy recovery.)
- ✓ **Sterkte.** (*stehrk-ter*) (All the best.)

When drinking alcohol in company you can raise your glass, saying:

Proost! (*proast*) (Cheers!)

As your understanding of Dutch grows and you're making friends, conversations may become more personal. In chapter 17 you'll find useful responses to confidential or hilarious stories.

A Mouthful of Pronunciation Rules

The key to pronouncing a new language is overcoming your fear of sounding awkward and never getting it right. Don't be afraid to sound silly and do not think that you will never succeed!

In the beginning you won't understand a word when people are speaking a language you don't know, but after a while you'll start to distinguish sounds and repeating patterns. Later on you will recognise some of the patterns, like greetings and how people start and finish a phone call. Most language learners start imitating the popular patterns, repeating them as well as they can. As soon as they get a reaction, this stimulates them to go ahead and try more complex phrases. At this stage, pronunciation becomes important. The Dutch will not understand you when they don't recognise the words you're trying to say.

When mastering a language it speeds up the process when you learn some basic rules about how to pronounce the written words. On the road, in the streets and in the shops you will not only hear but also read words and when

you know how people pronounce them, you can add them to your personal vocabulary. The following sections present you the alphabet and some basic guidelines for proper pronunciation.

Dealing with pronunciation in this book

Throughout this book, you can find the pronunciation of a Dutch word next to it in parenthesis, which we call *pronunciation brackets*. Within the pronunciation brackets, we separate all the words that have more than one syllable with a hyphen, like this: **goedemorgen** (*khoo-der-mor-khern*) (good morning). An underlined syllable within the pronunciation brackets tells you to accent, or stress, that syllable. You'll find more about stress in the section 'Pronunciation and Stress' in this chapter.

In this book the phonetic script (the script that shows you how to pronounce a word) uses letter combinations that are the English equivalents of the Dutch letter's pronunciation.

Reciting Your ABC

The Dutch alphabet has the same number of letters as the English and German alphabets, 26. However, many of the letters are pronounced differently. English-speaking people will find the Dutch G difficult to pronounce. You'll find some extra words to exercise.

Track 1 of the audio files gives you the sounds of the Dutch letters.

The Dutch alphabet:

A ah **H** hah

B bay **I** ee

C say **J** yay

D day **K** kah

E ay **L** el

F ef **M** em

G khay **N** en

O oa	U uw
P pay	V fay
Q kuw	W way
R ehr	X ix
S es	Y ehy
T tay	Z zet

Pronouncing Vowels

Dutch has many vowel and diphthong (combined vowels) sounds, and some will be unfamiliar to your ear. We give the best approximation here, but listening to Dutch speakers will help you to get a more accurate picture. Check out Table 1-1 for the full story.

The vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u** can have both long, drawn-out vowel sounds and shorter vowel sounds. Luckily, there are some general rules that apply:

- ✓ A vowel is short when it's followed by one or more consonants at the end of a word or a syllable (a part of a word), as in *de dag* (*der dakh*) (the day), *geld* (*khelt*) (money), *ik* (*ik*) (I), *kort* (*kort*) (short), *druk* (*druhk*) (busy).
- ✓ A vowel is long when it's doubled, as in *gaan* (*khaan*) (to go) *geen* (*khayn*) (no), *ook* (*oak*) (too) and *uur* (*uwr*) (hour).
- ✓ A vowel is long when it's the last letter of a syllable, as in **dragen** (*draa-khern*) (to carry), **eten** (*ay-tern*) (to eat), **roken** (*roa-kern*) (to smoke), **juni** (*yuu-nee*) (June).

The vowel a

The **a** has a short sound in closed syllables, that is if they are followed by one or more consonants at the end of a word or syllable. Try out the sound of these words:

- ✓ **de bal** (*der bal*) (the ball)
- ✓ **de dag** (*der dakh*) (the day)
- ✓ **het gras** (*het khras*) (the grass)

A single letter **a** in an open syllable, that is at the end of a syllable or word, is pronounced like a long, drawn-out vowel sound. Try out the sound of these words:

- ✓ **dragen** (*draa-khern*) (to carry)
- ✓ **de dagen** (*der daa-khern*) (the days)
- ✓ **de lanen** (*der laa-nern*) (the lanes)

Whether it occurs in a closed syllable or a long syllable, **aa** (double a) always gives that same long, drawn-out sound. Try practising the sound with these words:

- ✓ **gaan** (*khaan*) (to go)
- ✓ **staan** (*staan*) (to stand)
- ✓ **de laan** (*der laarn*) (the lane)

Open and closed syllables



Words can be divided into parts or syllables. Syllables are essential when you are willing to spell and pronounce words well. Knowing how to divide words in syllables will speed up your learning process, as well as knowing how to distinguish an **open syllable** from a **closed syllable**.

A syllable is a part of a word and you can find it by clapping your hands when pronouncing the word. Each clap is a syllable. You can also have a look in your dictionary. A good one will show you the words divided in syllables.

In order to be able to distinguish an open syllable from a closed syllable, you need to remember the difference between **vowels** and **consonants**. Vowels are the letters that form the central sound in a word: **a, e, i, o, and u**. The other letters of the alphabet are called **consonants**. These letters accompany the vowels: **b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x z**.

Syllables that end with one or more consonants are **closed syllables**. For instance, both syllables in the word **paspoort** (*pas-poort*) (passport) are closed syllables.

Syllables that end with a vowel are **open syllables**, as the first syllable in the word **model** (*moa-del*) (model) or the first syllable in the word **euro** (*u-roa*) (euro).

The difference between open and closed syllables is the key to understanding the pronunciation of Dutch words: open syllables have long vowels, and, when only one vowel is written in a closed syllable, the vowel sounds short.

Also, when you start writing Dutch, understanding open and closed syllables helps you to know when to write double vowels and consonants.

The vowel *e*

When followed by one or more consonants at the end of a word, the **e** has a short sound. Try it out on these words:

- ✓ **gek** (*khek*) (mad)
- ✓ **het geld** (*het khelt*) (the money)
- ✓ **de herfst** (*der hehrfst*) (autumn)

When the **e** is at the end of a syllable you pronounce it like a long, drawn-out vowel sound. Try the sound in these words:

- ✓ **geven** (*khay-fern*) (to give)
- ✓ **eten** (*ay-tern*) (to eat)
- ✓ **beter** (*bay-ter*) (better)

Note that when in an unstressed syllable, the **e** sounds like the English vowel sound in *sister*. It is transcribed -*er*.

Whether or not it's a long syllable or a closed syllable, **ee** always gives a long sound. Try it, practising on these words:

- ✓ **geen** (*khayn*) (no)
- ✓ **geel** (*khayl*) (yellow)
- ✓ **de neef** (*der nayf*) (the nephew/cousin)

The vowel *i*

When followed by one or two more consonants at the end of a word or syllable, **i** has a short vowel sound. Try it out on these words:

- ✓ **ik** (*ik*) (I)
- ✓ **het ding** (*het ding*) (the thing)
- ✓ **dicht** (*dikht*) (closed)

When you find the **i** at the end of a word or syllable, you pronounce it like a long, drawn-out vowel sound. Try practising the sound on these words:

- ✓ **juni** (*juw-nee*) (June)
- ✓ **de activiteit** (*der ak-tee-vee-tayt*) (the activity)

As we have seen, the four vowels **a**, **e**, **u**, **o** are sometime doubled (**aa**, **ee**, **uu**, **oo**) to spell the long version of the vowel. Now you might suppose that the long **i** will be written as **ii**. Sadly, the Dutch happen to be less rational than you are: they don't spell **ii**, but instead they spell **ie**.

- ✓ **drie** (*dree*) (three)
- ✓ **het bier** (*het beer*) (the beer)
- ✓ **de fiets** (*der feets*) (the bike)

The vowel o

When followed by one, two or more consonants at the end of a syllable the **o** has a short sound. Try to pronounce these words:

- ✓ **op** (*op*) (on)
- ✓ **kort** (*kort*) (short)
- ✓ **de pot** (*der pot*) (the pot)

When you find **o** at the end of a word or a syllable, you pronounce it like a long vowel sound. Try practising the sound on these words:

- ✓ **boven** (*boa-fern*) (above)
- ✓ **roken** (*roa-kern*) (to smoke)
- ✓ **het document** (*het doa-kuw-ment*) (the document)

Oo is always a long vowel, as in the next words:

- ✓ **ook** (*oak*) (also)
- ✓ **mooi** (*mooy*) (beautiful)
- ✓ **de persoon** (*der per-soan*) (the person)

The vowel u

When followed by one more consonants at the end of a syllable or word the **u** has a short sound. Try the next list of examples:

- ✓ **dun** (*duhn*) (thin)
- ✓ **de hulp** (*der huhlp*) (the help)
- ✓ **de club** (*der klup*) (the club)

When you find the **u** in a syllable that ends in a vowel, you pronounce the **u** like a long, drawn-out vowel sound. Try out the sound practising on these words:

- ✓ **u** (*uw*) (you, formal)
- ✓ **de studie** (*der stuu-dee*) (the studies)
- ✓ **juni** (*juu-nee*) (June)

Uu always gives a long vowel sound. Try to pronounce these **uu** words:

- ✓ **het uur** (*het uur*) (the hour)
- ✓ **het excuus** (*het ek-skuus*) (the excuse)
- ✓ **het kostuum** (*het kos-tuum*) (the costume)

Pronouncing Dutch Diphthongs

Diphthongs are combinations of two vowels in one syllable. Dutch has a lot of them, and, depending on your native language, some will be difficult for you as you don't know them in your own language. Different sounds create different words, so Dutch people might not understand you if you don't know how to pronounce the sounds. Observe how the Dutch do and ask them to help you!

Pronouncing the diphthongs ei and ij

The diphthong **ei** is a sound which does not occur in English, nor in any other major European language, and it may be a bit hard to pronounce. You will come close if you take the sound of *ay* in English *day*. Try to open your mouth a little bit more than you would do in English. Some examples of this sound:

- ✓ **het ei** (*het ay*) (the egg)
- ✓ **mei** (*may*) (may)
- ✓ **klein** (*klayn*) (small)