

POLISH LANGUAGE



The Polish language is spoken by around 38 million people in Poland and several million people outside Poland in Europe, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. Polish ranks 17th among world languages as to number of speakers.

Polish belongs to the West Slavic group of Indo-European languages. Slavic (Slavonic) languages are spoken in most of Eastern Europe, much of the Balkans, parts of Central Europe, and the northern part of Asia. Polish is most closely related to Slovak and Czech and is the second most widely spoken Slavic language, after Russian.

The Polish alphabet derives from the Latin script but includes some additional letters formed using diacritics. It consists of 32 letters: a, ą, b, c, ć, d, e, ę, f, g, h, I, j, k, l, ł, m, n, ó, o, ó, p, r, s, ś, t, u, w, y, z, ź, ż. The letters q, x and v do not exist in the Polish alphabet; they are used only in foreign words. Besides single letters, there are also digraphs used; they are letter combinations representing single sounds: ch, cz, dz, dź, dż, rz, sz.

Because of the big number of consonants, foreigners often describe Polish as the “rustling” language. (And they claim they hurt their tongue using Polish consonants...).

Polish orthography is largely phonemic. It means that, in theory, reading Polish words is simple, as they are written in the same manner as they are spoken. However, there are numerous rules and principles which complicate the whole thing... The stress in a Polish word falls generally on the second-to-last syllable, although there are exceptions.

Here comes short grammar summary: There are three tenses (past, present, future), two numbers (singular and plural), three genders for nouns (masculine, feminine, neuter). Polish is a highly inflected language. There are seven cases for nouns, defining their usage in a sentence. Adjectives agree with nouns in terms of gender, case and number. Verbs are of imperfective or perfective aspect. There is a different conjugation (inflection) of verbs for each tense, gender, etc. There are no articles. Subject pronouns are often dropped. Word order is relatively free. Double negation is used.

Linguistically, Poland is a homogeneous country; nearly 97% of Poland's citizens declare Polish as their mother tongue. It is the official language of Poland. There are a few regional dialects from the standard Polish language, although the differences are slight and mostly based on pronunciation and vocabulary changes (for example Silesian and Podhale highlanders' dialect).