

Correspondences between Old Norse and English Cognates

While the sound changes that have affected Old Norse and English, respectively, have often been complex, the relationship between the languages is still close enough that regular correspondences between their sounds can be observed. The table below is not comprehensive and it is not without exceptions, but it highlights some of the more consistent correspondences that can be observed in cognate words.

Old Norse words are usually listed as roots (ending in a dash) rather than any specific inflected form.

	<u>Old Norse</u>		<u>English</u>	Vowels
au	aust-, hlaup-, kaup-	= ea	east, leap, cheap	
ei	ein-, heim-, leið-, reið, stein-	= o_e/ oa	one, home, loathe, rode, stone	
i	hitt-, vinn-, vit	= i	hit, win, wit	
í	bíð-, hvít-, ís-, ríð-	= i_e	bide, white, ice, ride	
ó	bók, fót-, rót	= oo	book, foot, root	
ú	brún-, hús, mús	= ow/ ou_e	brown, house, mouse	
Consonants				
b	bát-, ber-, lamb	= b	boat, bear, lamb	
d	dag-, dey-, hund-	= d	day, die, hound	
ð	bað, feðr-, leðr, leið-, veðr	= th	bath, feather, leather, loathe, weather	
	bíð-, ríð-, reið	= d	bide, ride, rode	
f ¹	faðir, fall, far-, fisk-	= f	father, fall, fare, fish	
	haf-, hqfn, hrafn	= v	have, haven, raven	
g ²	gap, geit-, grá-	= g	gap, goat, gray	
	dagan, lag-, sag-	= w	dawn, law, saw	
	dag-, girn-, gjall-, seg-	= y	day, yearn, yell, say	
h	haf-, heim-, heyr-, hqfn	= h	have, home, hear, haven	
	hlaup-, hlut-, hrafn, hring-	= _	leap, lot, raven, ring (before <i>l</i> and <i>r</i>)	
hv	hval-, hvat, hven-, hvít-	= wh	whale, what, when, white	
j	gjall-, hjart-, jqrð	= _	yell, heart, earth	
k	kall-, kú, vak-	= k/ c	call, cow, wake	
	kaup-, kinn-, kist-	= ch	cheap, chin, chest	
l	kall-, lag-, loft	= l	call, law, loft	
m	mat-, mán-, mið-	= m	meat, moon, mid-	
n	ein-, mann-, net, norð-	= n	one, man, net, north	
p	hlaup-, spar-, spreng-, upp	= p	leap, spare, spring, up	
r	reið, reyk-, ríð-, verk	= r	rode, reek, ride, work	
	dagar, hrafnar, hundar, skýtr	= s	dags, ravens, hounds, shoots ³	
s	aust-, ís-, manns, sæ-, snjó-	= s	east, ice, man's, sea, snow	
sk	fisk-, skó-, skyrt-, skýtr	= sh	fish, shoe, shirt, shoots ⁴	
t	aust-, net, stand-, tá, tré	= t	east, net, stand, toe, tree	
v	vant-, veðr, verk, verp-	= w	want, weather, work, warp	
x	sex, vax-, øx	= x	six, wax, axe	
þ	þorn, þrí-, þykk-	= th	thorn, three, thick	
— ⁵	orð, úlf-, óp-	= w	word, wolf, weep	
—	ér, ár, ung-	= y	ye (you), year, young	

¹ /f/ in ON is usually equivalent to Eng. /f/ word-initially, and to Eng. /v/ elsewhere.

² /g/ in ON is usually equivalent to Eng. /g/ word-initially. After vowels, it is usually /y/ in Eng. if next to a front vowel, and /w/ if it followed a back vowel in Old English. *Egg*, *get*, *give* appear to be exceptions, but are borrowed from ON.

³ Only in the ending of plural nouns, and the 3rd-person singular present tense of verbs (ON *-r*, Eng. *-s* < Germanic **-z*).

⁴ Words that have *sk-* in English are always loanwords, typically from Old Norse. Examples: *sky* (Old Norse *ský*), *skill* (ON *skil-*), and *skirt* (from ON *skyrt-*, the same root that appears in the native English word *shirt*).

⁵ Initial *v* (= Eng. *w*) is always lost before round vowels in ON, and every initial *j* from Proto-Germanic (= Eng. *y*) is lost.