A NEW INTRODUCTION TO OLD NORSE

PART I: GRAMMAR
Preface

This Grammar is intended for university students with no previous knowledge of Old Norse. It covers considerably more than the essentials, however, and is suitable for study up to first degree level. Full account is taken of the fact that grammatical concepts may be unfamiliar to many using the work, and all but the most basic are explained. Comparison is made with English where helpful, and a glossary of grammatical terms included at the end. Although it is possible to study the Grammar on one’s own, the guidance of a tutor is strongly recommended.

The bulk of the Grammar was available in draft by the time of the 1998–99 session, and was tried out by several teachers at British universities. Content and presentation have benefited greatly from the comments and suggestions of both teachers and students. I would like in particular to thank Alison Finlay, Judith Jesch and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, who offered many valuable insights, Peter Foote, who read the whole work and improved it in countless ways, and finally Anthony Faulkes, who not only commented on numerous points of detail but designed the layout and saw the production of the book through from start to finish. Needless to say, such faults as remain are my responsibility.

Michael P. Barnes
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July 1999

Preface to second edition

The necessity for a further reprint has made it possible to introduce a number of corrections and changes, and to add a new section on points of syntax (3.9.9).

Users will also be pleased to know that there is now a CD that can be obtained from the Viking Society containing extracts I, II, IV, VIIB, VIII (b) and (e), IX and X from NION II read with Modern Icelandic pronunciation by Icelanders: Selected Readings from A New Introduction to Old Norse, published by The Chaucer Studio, 2003.

April 2004
Preface to third edition

The book has been corrected and revised throughout, and a postscript added (pp. 262–3).

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Abbreviations and Symbols

acc. accusative
act. active
adj. adjective
art. article
aux. auxiliary
comp. comparative
COMP complementiser
dat. dative
def. definite
f. feminine
gen. genitive
imp. imperative
indic. indicative
inf. infinitive
interrog. interrogative
m. masculine
n. neuter
NION I–III *A New Introduction to Old Norse I: Grammar; II: Reader; III: Glossary and Index of Names*
nom. nominative
NP noun phrase
ON Old Norse
pass. passive
pl. plural
pos. positive
pp. past participle
pres. present
refl. reflexive
REFL. POSS. reflexive possessive
sg. singular
subj. subject; subjunctive
sup. superlative
vb. verb
* reconstructed form; ungrammatical sentence
> develops to
< develops from
~ zero ending
1 Introduction

1.1 The aim of the Grammar

From the point of view of the student, many existing grammars of Old Norse suffer from two major defects. First, they are largely constructed on historical principles and thus contain detail about earlier stages of the language and linguistic development, little of which is of direct use to someone seeking to acquire a reading knowledge of Old Norse. Second, they assume a level of linguistic sophistication which the school system no longer cultivates, and so leave unexplained many things which to the modern student are opaque.

The present Grammar has been written with one aim only: to facilitate the learning of Old Norse for as wide a range of students as possible. It therefore eschews historical digressions except where they throw essential light on the workings of the language, and an attempt is made to explain all but the most basic ideas, concepts and terms on their first appearance or, failing that, in the Select Glossary (pp. 264–6). The emphasis throughout is pedagogical, and the work thus represents not so much a re-think of Old Norse grammar as a re-think of the ways in which the basics of Old Norse may be best presented to the learner.

1.2 What is Old Norse?

The term ‘Old Norse’ has been used in various ways. For some it is a broad concept covering the language of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as Iceland and the other Scandinavian colonies, throughout the Viking Age (c. 750–1050) and the early and high Middle Ages (c. 1050–1350). At the other extreme it has been taken to mean only the Old Norwegian of the early and high Middle Ages. In the present context it is used principally to signify the language of Norway in the period c. 750–1350 (after which Norwegian changes considerably) and of Iceland from the settlement (c. 870) to the Reformation (c. 1550 — a date that sets a cultural rather than a linguistic boundary). Known in modern Icelandic as norræna, in Norwegian as norrønt and in English sometimes as Old West Norse, this type of speech is a western variety
of Scandinavian. Scandinavian itself represents the northern branch of the Germanic group of languages, whose western branch includes Dutch, English and German.

As a result of Viking-Age expansion, Old Norse (in the sense just defined), which had its origins in Norway, came to be spoken in such widely different places as Faroe, Greenland and Ireland, but it was only in Iceland and Norway — especially the former — that a significant scribal culture developed, and it is upon manuscripts in Icelandic and Norwegian written with the roman alphabet that our knowledge of Old Norse is chiefly based. The earliest Icelandic and Norwegian vernacular manuscripts that have survived are dated to c. 1150, but the bulk are from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and many Icelandic manuscripts are later still. For insights into Old Norse prior to 1150 we are dependent on runic inscriptions, bits and pieces preserved in foreign language sources, and verse composed in the Viking Age but recorded in medieval manuscripts.

Although Icelandic c. 870–1550 and Norwegian c. 750–1350 are here given the designation ‘Old Norse’, it would of course be wrong to think of this language as entirely uniform, without variation in time or space. The form of Scandinavian spoken in Norway around 750 differed in a number of important respects from that spoken around 1350, and by the latter date the Norwegian carried to Iceland by the original settlers had begun to diverge from the mother tongue. Nevertheless, in the period c. 1150–1350, when the great medieval literature of Iceland and Norway was created, there existed an essential unity of language in the western Scandinavian world, and it is on that unity that the present Grammar is based.

1.3 Old Norse and modern English

A major difference between Old Norse and modern English is that Old Norse is a much more highly inflected language. Modern English still has certain inflexions, by which is meant that words change their form according to their function in a sentence (e.g. she came, I saw her; sg. cat, pl. cats; pres. run, past ran), but Old Norse has a far greater number. In English the function of a word can often be deduced from its position in relation to other words. We understand:
Olav saw the old woman

to mean that Olav was the one who saw and the old woman the one
who was seen because Olav precedes saw. Reverse the order and the
opposite applies. In a corresponding Old Norse sentence it would be
perfectly possible for the order to be reversed without a change in
meaning. Everything would depend on the inflexions. Thus:

Óláfr sá konu þá ina gömlu

and

Konu þá ina gömlu sá Óláfr

both mean ‘Óláfr saw the old woman’, because the forms Óláfr and
konu þá ina gömlu are unchanged. If we wish the sentence to mean
‘the old woman saw Óláfr’, we must alter the forms of the words so that
Óláfr becomes Óláf and konu þá ina gömlu becomes kona só in gamla.

It is obvious, therefore, that from the very start the student will
have to pay the closest attention to inflexions. Failure to do so will
result in the regular misunderstanding of Old Norse texts.

1.4 Pronunciation

Even in the case of dead languages, pronunciation is of some impor-
tance. If students cannot translate letters on the page into sounds, it
becomes well-nigh impossible for them to discuss the language they
are trying to learn. Furthermore, for those without an exclusively visual
memory, the association of image and sound is a valuable aid to
learning.

The pronunciation of Old Norse, like that of Latin, varies from coun-
try to country and sometimes from teacher to teacher. In the English-
speaking world a widespread practice is to adopt modern Icelandic
pronunciation. Although it is often claimed there is little difference
between modern Icelandic and Old Norse (and this is true enough as
regards the inflexional system and the basic vocabulary), the pronun-
ciation has changed a great deal since the first centuries of the settle-
ment of Iceland. The adoption of modern pronunciation, while putting the learner at some distance from the speech of those who wrote the literature s/he is reading, nevertheless has the great advantage that one can in effect listen to native speakers reproducing the language, and thus learn to read aloud not only with fluency but with natural intonation (patterns of voice pitch). For those whose chief interest is Old Norse literature, modern Icelandic pronunciation has much to recommend it. The pure language student, on the other hand, will find the modern pronunciation frustrating: not only does it obscure the relationship between several common sounds — and thus also between large numbers of words or word-forms — it can render meaningless rules involving syllable length (especially important in poetry). In the present work, therefore, an outline is given of the pronunciation both of Old Norse and of modern Icelandic. For the former we can rely to a considerable extent on a twelfth-century work, the so-called First Grammatical Treatise (ed. Haugen 1972; Hreinn Benediktsson 1972), which discusses in some detail the vowel and consonant sounds of the Icelandic of that age. This, together with what we can deduce from spelling, historical comparisons and modern pronunciation (Icelandic and different varieties of Norwegian) means that guidance on the essentials of Old Norse pronunciation during the golden years of literary production can be offered with reasonable confidence.

1.5 Orthography

The scribes who wrote Old Norse did not conform to standardised rules of spelling, any more than their counterparts in medieval England and elsewhere. They wrote words more or less as they had been trained to do at the scriptorium where they studied, although they might also be influenced by forms in an exemplar from which they were copying — and occasionally by their own pronunciation. The result is that most Old Norse words appear in manuscripts in a variety of spellings. In order to facilitate the making of grammars, dictionaries and text books, therefore, and to help the learner, modern scholars have adopted a normalised orthography for Old Norse. Some editions of Old Norse writings, designed more for the philologist and linguist than the literary reader, follow closely the spelling of the manuscript
or manuscripts on which they are based, while in others the normalised orthography may be adapted to bring it into greater harmony with that of the manuscript source. This last practice means that normalisation of Old Norse does not conform to an immutable standard. Even between grammars, text books and dictionaries a degree of variation can be found. The present *Grammar*, for example, does not always acknowledge the lengthening of *a*, *o*, *q*, *u* which took place in twelfth–thirteenth century Icelandic before various consonant clusters beginning with *l* (e.g. *hjalpa* > *hjálpa*, *folk* > *fólk*, *hjalmr* > *hjálmr*), although such lengthening is generally indicated in Parts II and III (*Reader* and *Glossary and Index of Names*) of *A New Introduction to Old Norse*. The conventions adopted here are in the main those found in E. V. Gordon, *An Introduction to Old Norse* (1957), which deviates little from usage in many of the major editions and dictionaries. It should be noted, however, that the two dictionaries most used by English-speaking students, Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (1957) and Geir Zoëga, *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic* (1910), make a few concessions to modern Icelandic orthography (for which see, for example, Stefán Einarsson 1945, 1–31).

### 1.6 General advice to the student

The present *Grammar* is intended primarily for university students, and how it is used will be determined largely by individual tutors. Nevertheless, it may be helpful to both students and staff, and to anyone studying on their own, to offer outline guidance on the learning process — not least because it is the author’s understanding of how Old Norse can most effectively be learnt that has determined the structure of the *Grammar*. With the emphasis on learning, the following remarks are addressed direct to the student.

Decide at the outset which pronunciation to adopt, and stick to it. Vacillating between rival pronunciations is confusing. Having decided, read through the relevant part of section 2. Do not attempt to learn all the rules of pronunciation at once. Read words, then phrases, then whole sentences aloud, referring to the rules as and when necessary. If you adopt modern Icelandic pronunciation, try to obtain recordings of native speech.
Your learning of morphology and syntax should initially be concentrated on the basics of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. These are the most highly inflected word classes in Old Norse, and the most central to the understanding of what you are reading.

Begin with the nouns. If you are uncertain about concepts like ‘number’, ‘case’ and ‘gender’, read sub-sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 and do the accompanying exercise. Now learn the endings given in 3.1.4, noting the patterns. If you find this material too abstract, you can compare the endings with those of the actual nouns listed in 3.1.8. There is much greater variety of inflexion there, though, and that may confuse rather than help you in the early stages. The noun paradigms of 3.1.8 are meant primarily for reference as the learning proceeds. When you are satisfied you have mastered everything in 3.1.4, do the exercise. Next, study in detail the examples of noun usage given in 3.1.5, paying particular attention to the accompanying notes. This is your introduction to the basics of Old Norse syntax, and you should be prepared to spend a fair amount of time on it. When you have assimilated all the information in 3.1.5, do the exercise. Then read through 3.1.6 and answer the questions at the end of it. Now try the exercise in 3.1.8, using a dictionary or the Glossary in NION III and the noun paradigms listed in this sub-section. Do not worry if you do not get all the answers right straight away; this exercise is part of the learning process as well as a test of knowledge. Sub-section 3.1.7 on the most important variations in noun inflexion is not intended to be read at one go and learnt, but is there to be consulted as and when problems arise. You should, however, familiarise yourself with the fundamentals of labial mutation as soon as possible.

Following the nouns, section 3.1.9 on the suffixed definite article should be studied and the accompanying exercise completed.

Now go on to section 3.2. Learn the pronoun paradigms set out here, noting the correspondences between them, and follow this by doing the exercise covering 3.2.1–3.2.5. Next, study in detail the examples of pronoun usage given in 3.2.6, paying due attention to the accompanying notes. When you have assimilated all the information in 3.2.6, do the exercise.

Section 3.3 on adjectives follows largely the pattern of 3.1 on nouns, and the various items should be tackled in the same order and manner (with 3.3.8 for consultation as necessary, and the paradigms in 3.3.9
Introduction

for reference). Note, however, that the free-standing definite article is treated immediately after basic adjective inflexions; it should be studied before you go on to the examples of adjective usage, where this form of the article occurs quite widely.

From adjectives proceed to section 3.6 on verbs. Work through subsections 3.6.1 to 3.6.8 in the order they appear (3.6.1 to 3.6.4 may be omitted if you are familiar with the concepts discussed). 3.6.9 is for consultation as necessary. The paradigms in 3.6.10 are for reference; the exercise at the end of this section is, however, an essential task.

Having assimilated the basic forms and functions of Old Norse nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs, you should go on to tackle numerals (3.4) and adverbs (3.5). When studying the numerals, note in particular similarities with other inflexional types and the various idiomatic usages detailed in both 3.4.1 and 3.4.2. Regarding the adverbs, pay particular attention to adverb formation and inflexion for degree (3.5.1, 3.5.2).

As soon as practicable, you should begin to read an Old Norse text. It is recommended you start with the extract from Hrólfssaga kraka in Part II of A New Introduction to Old Norse, which has word-for-word linguistic commentary on the first 40 lines. While reading this (or another) text you will meet prepositions, conjunctions, and various syntactic structures not dealt with in sections 3.1 to 3.6 of the Grammar. That is where sections 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 come in. As you read, you should consult them regularly for such information as you may require on the areas they cover. The exercises in these sections should be attempted when you feel you have reached an appropriate level of expertise.

It is of course possible to work through 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 in the same methodical way as the earlier parts of the Grammar. This should not, however, be done before starting on your first text. The importance of reading a continuous piece of Old Norse at the earliest possible opportunity cannot be emphasised too strongly.

Finally, an important piece of practical information: where nothing other is stated, Old Norse words are given in their dictionary form, i.e. nominative singular for nouns, nominative for personal pronouns, nominative masculine singular for other pronouns, strong nominative masculine singular positive for adjectives, nominative masculine singular or plural (as appropriate) for numerals, positive for adverbs, and infinitive for verbs.
2 Pronunciation and Orthography

2.1 Old Norse

Stress was in principle always on the first syllable. About intonation nothing is known for sure, but it probably varied somewhat from area to area.

Regarding the speech sounds themselves, we have a good idea of the system as a whole, but are less certain about precise shades of sound. The equivalents in other languages suggested below should be understood as rough approximations.

2.1.1 Pure vowels

Old Norse had nine basic vowel sounds, which might be long or short, nasal or oral, giving 36 potential distinctions. Nasality seems to have been lost in most people’s speech by about 1200, and so is ignored here. Length is normally indicated by an acute accent. The relationship between spelling and sound is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Sound Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>á</td>
<td>as in English father</td>
<td>ár ‘year’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>the same sound, but short</td>
<td>dagr ‘day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>as in French été, but longer</td>
<td>él ‘storm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>as in French été</td>
<td>ben ‘wound’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>as in English eat</td>
<td>litr ‘looks [vb.]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>í</td>
<td>the same sound, but short</td>
<td>litr ‘colour’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð</td>
<td>as in French eau, but longer</td>
<td>sól ‘sun’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>as in French eau</td>
<td>hof ‘temple’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð</td>
<td>as in French bouche, but longer</td>
<td>hús ‘house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>as in French bouche</td>
<td>sumar ‘summer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>as in French rue, but longer</td>
<td>kýr ‘cow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>as in French rue</td>
<td>yfir ‘over’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð</td>
<td>as in English pat, but longer</td>
<td>sar ‘sea’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>as in French feu, but longer</td>
<td>ærr ‘mad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ø</td>
<td>as in French feu</td>
<td>dokkr ‘dark’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð</td>
<td>as in English hot</td>
<td>ðl ‘ale’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:

There is no short counterpart of æ or long counterpart of ø. Both sounds existed at one time, but in the kind of Old Norse on which the normalised spelling is based short æ had coalesced with e and ø with ð. The use of æ to denote the long equivalent of ø is an arbitrary convention, and in some works ø is found.

Most of these sixteen distinctive vowels occur exclusively in stressed syllables. In unstressed syllables there is no distinction of length and for the most part a basic three-way contrast is found between a, i and u. Some uncertainty exists about how these unstressed vowels were pronounced, but the student will be safe enough using the following.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
a & \text{as stressed } a \\
i & \text{as in English city} \\
u & \text{as in English wood} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{leysa } ['\text{to]} \text{ release'} \\
\text{máni } '\text{moon'} \\
\text{eyru } '\text{ears'} \\
\end{array}
\]

---

2.1.1 Pure vowels — Exercise

1. Pronounce á and a. What is the difference?
2. Which are the long vowels of Old Norse?
3. How many unstressed vowels did Old Norse have, and what did they sound like?
4. Pronounce ø and ø.
5. Pronounce the following words (use English equivalents for the consonants): tál 'deceit', tal 'talk', sénn 'seen [pp. nom. m. sg.]' (3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3), senn 'at the same time', lítr 'looks [vb.]', litr 'colour', hól 'praise', hol 'cavity', dúra ['to] doze', dur 'doorway [gen. pl.]', flytr 'floats [vb.]', flýtr 'conveys', aer 'ewe', bar 'farm', gora ['to] make', øl 'beer', gestir 'guests [nom. pl.]', gótur 'paths [nom./acc. pl.]'.

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2.1.2 Diphthongs

Diphthongs are vowel sounds that exhibit a change in quality within a single syllable, contrast English beer with a diphthong and be early with the same vowel qualities spread over two syllables.
Pronunciation and orthography

may be falling (where the first element is stressed and the second un-
stressed, the latter usually a semi-vowel like English w in low or y in
say), rising (where the unstressed (semi)-vowel precedes the vowel as
in English with or yes) or balanced (where both elements are given
equal stress — as often in Faroese). Old Norse had three falling and a
great many rising diphthongs. However, because rising diphthongs
tend to be spelt with initial ‘j’ or ‘v’ in most forms of Scandinavian,
they are often regarded simply as sequences of j (as in English yes) or
v + vowel. This is more a theoretical than a practical question. Here
only the three falling diphthongs are listed separately. They were all
long and were pronounced as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diphthong</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>as in English now</td>
<td>lauss ‘loose’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
<td>as in English bay</td>
<td>bein ‘bone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ey</td>
<td>ON e + y</td>
<td>hey ‘hay’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2 Diphthongs — Exercise

1. What is a diphthong?
2. What is the difference between a falling and a rising diphthong?
3. Which are the falling diphthongs of Old Norse?

2.1.3 Consonants

Just as the vowels, so Old Norse consonants too may be long or short.
Consonants with prolonged articulation are not a normal feature of
English, but are heard in compounds, e.g. lake-country, pen-knife,
where the k and n sounds are extended. Consonant length in Old Norse
is indicated by gemination (doubling). The relationship between spell-
ing and sound is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>as in English buy</td>
<td>bita ‘[to] bite’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bb</td>
<td>the same sound, but long</td>
<td>gabb ‘mockery’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>as in English day</td>
<td>dómr ‘judgement’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dd</td>
<td>the same sound, but long</td>
<td>oddr ‘point’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Old Norse

\[ f \]
(1) as in English *far*  
(2) as in English *very*  

\[ ff \]
as in English *far*, but long  

\[ g \]
(1) as in English *goal*  
(2) as in Scots *loch*  
(3) as in Scots *loch*, but voiced  

\[ gg \]
(1) as in English *goal*, but long  
(2) as in Scots *loch*, but voiced  

\[ h \]
as in English *have*  

\[ j \]
as in English *year*  

\[ k \]
as in English *call*  

\[ kk \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ l \]
as in English *leaf*  

\[ ll \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ m \]
as in English *home*  

\[ mm \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ n \]
(1) as in English *sin*  
(2) as in English *sing*  

\[ nn \]
as in English *sin*, but long  

\[ p \]
as in English *happy*  

\[ pp \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ r \]
rolled, as in Scottish English  

\[ rr \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ s \]
as in English *this*  

\[ ss \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ t \]
as in English *boat*  

\[ tt \]
the same sound, but long  

\[ v \]
as in English *win*  

\[ ð \]
as in English *thin*  

\[ ð \]
as in English *this*  

\[ x \]
two sounds, as in Scots *lochs*  

\[ z \]
two sounds, as in English *bits*  

Notes:

\[ f \]
Pronunciation (1) occurs in initial position (i.e. at the beginning of words), pronunciation (2) in medial and final position (i.e. in the middle or at the end of words).  

\[ g \]
Pronunciation (1) occurs in initial position and immediately
Pronunciation and orthography

after n, (2) immediately before s and t, (3) in all other positions
(‘voiced’ means using the vocal cords, as, for example, in English bill versus pill; b is voiced, p unvoiced). (2) may alternatively be sounded as in English act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Pronunciation and Orthography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gg</td>
<td>Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before s and t, (1) in all other positions. (2) may alternatively be sounded as in English act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>Immediately before s and t this may alternatively be sounded as in Scots loch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kk</td>
<td>Ditto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before g or k; note that in the combination ng the g is pronounced, as in some forms of northern English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>Immediately before s and t this may alternatively be sounded as in English far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp</td>
<td>Ditto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>Never sounded as in English rise, always as in goose.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be seen that h, þ, ð and the semi-vowels j and v are always short.

2.1.3 Consonants — Exercise

1. How are long consonants denoted in Old Norse orthography?
2. Can all Old Norse consonants be both long and short? Give details.
3. Does Old Norse use any consonant letters not found in English? Give details.
4. What sounds do ‘x’ and ‘z’ stand for in Old Norse?
2.1.4 Syllables

Because of the distribution of long and short vowels and consonants, stressed syllables in Old Norse were of four types (disregarding any consonants before the vowel):

1 — short: short vowel + short consonant, e.g. *bað* ‘bath’.
2 — long: short vowel + long consonant or consonant cluster (i.e. a group of consonants), e.g. *rann* ‘ran [1st/3rd sg. past]’, *qnd* ‘breath’, ‘spirit’.
3 — long: long vowel + short consonant or no consonant, e.g. *hús* ‘house’, *fé* ‘money’, *gnúa* ‘[to] rub’.
4 — overlong: long vowel + long consonant or consonant cluster, e.g. *nótt* ‘night’, *blástr* ‘blowing’.

In simplex (i.e. non-compound) words of more than one syllable, it is customary to assume that the syllable division occurs immediately before a vowel, e.g. *far-a* ‘[to] go’, *kall-a* ‘[to] call’, *górð-um* ‘walls [dat.]’, *gam-all-a* ‘old [gen. pl.]’, *kall-úð-ar* ‘called [pp. nom./acc. f. pl.]’, *hundr-úð-a* ‘hundreds [gen.]’. In compound words the division comes at the point where the elements of the compound meet, e.g. *spá-maðr* ‘prophet’, *vápn-lauss* ‘weaponless’, *vík-ing-a-hofð-ing-i* ‘viking chieftain’ (with the division after -a marking the meeting point of the words *vík-inga-* ‘of vikings [gen. pl.]’ and *hofðingi* ‘chieftain’).

In Old Norse metrics (in which one long syllable is the equivalent of two short ones), length is sometimes measured differently. There, for example, all monosyllables (such as *bað*) count as long. This is not a matter that need concern the beginner, and the system of length described in 2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 2.1.3 should be adhered to.

2.1.4 Syllables — Exercise

1. How many syllable lengths are there in Old Norse?
2. What constitutes a short stressed syllable?
3. What constitutes a long syllable?
4. In words of more than one syllable, where does the division come?
5. Exemplify each of the following with two Old Norse words: short stressed syllable; long syllable; overlong syllable; unstressed syllable.
2.2 Modern Icelandic

Radical changes affected the sound system of Icelandic during the late medieval period. This means that normalised Old Norse orthography is not the best of guides to modern Icelandic pronunciation. Even so, the correspondence between the two is far more regular than between current spoken and written English.

Stress in modern Icelandic falls without exception on the initial syllable of a word; in compounds the first syllable of the second element has a strong secondary stress, e.g. spákon ‘prophetess’, with primary stress on spá-, secondary on -kon-. Intonation can only sensibly be learnt from listening to native speakers, or recordings of connected speech, and will not be described here. The equivalents of Icelandic sounds in other languages suggested below should be understood as rough approximations.

2.2.1 Vowels

The modern Icelandic vowel system is fundamentally different from that of Old Norse. What was originally a difference of length (e.g. between á and a) has become one of quality, and vowel length is regulated by the number of immediately succeeding consonants. In stressed syllables, a vowel before a single consonant, or no consonant at all, is long; a vowel before two or more consonants (including long consonants, which count as two) is short. The relationship between spelling and sound is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Possible Spellings</th>
<th>Corresponding Sounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>á</td>
<td>as in English now</td>
<td>ár ‘year’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>(1) as in French mal</td>
<td>raf ‘amber’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) as in English now</td>
<td>langr ‘long’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) as in English my</td>
<td>hagi ‘pasture’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>as in English yes</td>
<td>létr ‘light [adj.]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>(1) as in English let</td>
<td>verri ‘worse’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) as in English bay</td>
<td>engi ‘no one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>í</td>
<td>as in English eat</td>
<td>hlið ‘hillside’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>(1) as in English pit</td>
<td>hlið ‘side’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) as in English eat</td>
<td>hringr ‘ring’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ó</td>
<td>as in American roam</td>
<td>sól ‘sun’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modern Icelandic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>(1) as in English law, (2) as in English boy, (3) as in French bouche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ú</td>
<td>as in French hof ‘temple’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>(1) a sound between the vowels in French pu and peu, (2) as in French bouche, (3) as in French húle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ý</td>
<td>as in English eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>as in English pit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>as in English my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æe</td>
<td>the same sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ø</td>
<td>as in French peur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>œ</td>
<td>(1) as in French peur, (2) as in French ail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>œu</td>
<td>as in French ail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
<td>as in English bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ey</td>
<td>the same sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before ng, (3) immediately before gi, (1) in all other positions.
- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before ng, gi and gj, (1) in all other positions.
- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before ng and gi, (1) in all other positions.
- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before gi, (1) in all other positions.
- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before ng, (3) immediately before gi, (1) in all other positions.
- Pronunciation (2) occurs immediately before ng and gi, (1) in all other positions.

Although some of the above examples show long and others short realisations of the different sounds, all vowels (except the diphthongal variants of o and u, which are always short) may have either length. Corresponding to long ã in ár, for example, we have short ã in árs ‘year [gen. sg.]’ (and also in langr, although written ‘a’); and corresponding to short é in léttr we have long é in lét ‘let’, ‘caused’ (1st/3rd sg. past of látta).
As in Old Norse, the vowels of unstressed syllables are essentially three. All are short and are pronounced as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
a & \quad \text{as stressed } a \quad \text{leysa} \ ['\text{to}'] \text{ release'} \\
i & \quad \text{as stressed } i \quad \text{máni} \ '\text{moon'} \\
u & \quad \text{as stressed } u \quad \text{eyru} \ '\text{ears'}
\end{align*}
\]

2.2.1 Vowels — Exercise

1. Where does stress fall in modern Icelandic?
2. In what positions do long vowels occur?
3. In what positions do short vowels occur?
4. Work through all the examples in 2.2.1, pronouncing each several times.

(Since modern Icelandic is a living language, access to native speech is available. Try to obtain an Icelandic pronunciation tape, or recordings of the spoken language. If you know an Icelander, get him or her to record the examples in 2.2 for you. Icelandic radio is now available on the internet, and a CD can be obtained from the Viking Society containing extracts I, II, IV, VIIB, VIII (b) and (e), IX and X from NION II read with Modern Icelandic pronunciation by Icelanders.)

2.2.2 Consonants

Consonants in modern Icelandic may be short or long, as in Old Norse (see 2.1.3). However, several of the long consonants of the medieval language have developed other pronunciations, although still spelt as geminates (double consonants). The relationship between spelling and sound is as follows. (On unvoiced sounds see the last paragraph of this sub-section.)

\[
\begin{align*}
b & \quad \text{as in English } \text{buy}, \text{ but unvoiced } \quad \text{bita} \ ['\text{to}'] \text{ bite'} \\
bb & \quad \text{the same sound, but long } \quad \text{gabb} \ '\text{mockery'} \\
d & \quad \text{as in English } \text{day}, \text{ but unvoiced } \quad \text{dómr} \ '\text{judgement'} \\
dd & \quad \text{the same sound, but long } \quad \text{oddr} \ '\text{point'}
\end{align*}
\]
Modern Icelandic

- **f**
  1. as in English *far* — fé ‘money’
  2. as in English *very* — haf ‘ocean’
  3. as in English *buy*, but unvoiced — hefna ‘[to] avenge’

- **ff**
  - as in English *heifer*, but long — offre ‘offering’

- **g**
  1. as in English *goal*, but unvoiced — gata ‘path’
  2. as in English *geese*, but unvoiced
     and with English *y*-sound following — gefa ‘[to] give’
  3. as in Scots *loch* — lágt ‘low [nom./acc. n. sg.]’
  4. as in Scots *loch*, but voiced — eiga ‘[to] own’
  5. as in English *year* — stigi ‘ladder’

- **gg**
  1. as *g* (1), but long — egg ‘edge’
  2. as *g* (2), but long — kleggi ‘haycock’
  3. as *g* (3) — gløggt ‘clear [nom./acc. n. sg.]’

- **h**
  1. as in English *have* — horn ‘horn’
  2. as in English *huge* — hjarta ‘heart’
  3. as in English *call* — hvass ‘sharp’

- **j**
  - as in English *year* — jafn ‘even [adj.]’

- **k**
  1. as in English *keep*, but
     with English *y*-sound following — kyr ‘quiet’
  2. as in English *keep* — likt ‘similar [nom./acc. n. sg.]’
  3. as in Scots *loch* — likt ‘similar [nom./acc. n. sg.]’

- **kk**
  1. as *k* (1), but preaspirated — brekka ‘slope’
  2. as *k* (2), but preaspirated — ekki ‘nothing’
  3. as *k* (3) — skakkt ‘skew [nom./acc. n. sg.]’

- **l**
  - as in English *leaf* — ndt ‘needle’

- **ll**
  1. as in English *leaf* — illt ‘bad [nom./acc. n. sg.]’
  2. as in English *badly* — helfr ‘cave’

- **m**
  - as in English *home* — frami ‘boldness’

- **mm**
  - the same sound, but long — frammi ‘in front’

- **n**
  1. as in English *sin* — hrinda ‘[to] push’
  2. as in English *sing* — hringer ‘ring’

- **nn**
  1. as in English *sin*, but long — renna ‘[to] run’
  2. as in English *kidney* — steinn ‘stone’

- **p**
  1. as in English *happy* — apa ‘[to] shout’
  2. as in English *far* — eptir ‘after’

- **pp**
  - as *p* (1), but preaspirated — heppinn ‘lucky’

- **r**
  1. rolled, as in Scottish English — gøra ‘[to] do’
  2. as *r* (1), but followed by *d* — barn ‘child’
Pronunciation and orthography


der as r (1), but long
s as in English this
ss the same sound, but long
t as in English tug
tt the same sound, but preaspirated
v as in English very
d as in English this
x two sounds, as in Scots lochs
z as in English this

Notes:

f Pronunciation (1) occurs in initial position (i.e. at the beginning of words), pronunciation (2) in medial and final position (i.e. in the middle or at the end of words); (3) occurs immediately before l and n (except where a consonant follows, in which case fl may be pronounced as in English flat before a voiceless and as in English naval before a voiced consonant, and fn as m (e.g. fiftli 'seduced [pp.], fifldi 'seduced [3rd sg. past]', hefndi 'avenged [3rd sg. past]').
g Pronunciation (1) occurs initially before á, a, ó, ů, u, ó, au and consonants, medially before l and n (e.g. sigla 'to sail') and also between consonants and a or u (e.g. saurga 'to dirty'), and finally after consonants (e.g. ping); pronunciation (2) occurs initially before e, i, i, y, ae, ae, ey and j, and medially between consonants and i or j (e.g. helgi 'holiness'); (3) occurs before s and t (e.g. hugsa 'to think'); (4) occurs between vowels and a, u, r or ð, and finally after vowels; (5) occurs between vowels and i or j.

gg Pronunciation (1) occurs between vowels and a, u, r or v, and in final position; (2) occurs between vowels and i or j; (3) occurs before t.

h Pronunciation (2) occurs before é and j, (3) before v, (1) in all other positions.

k Pronunciation (2) occurs before e, i, i, y, ae, ae, ei, ey and j, (3) before s and t, (1) in all other positions.

kk Pronunciation (2) occurs between a vowel and i or j, (3) before s and t, (1) in all other positions; preaspiration means that a
Modern Icelandic

puff of air similar to the one expelled after \( k, p \) or \( t \) in (southern) English \( k e g, p u t \) and \( t a k e \) precedes the \( k k \).

\( ll \) Pronunciation (1) occurs before consonants other than \( n \) and \( r \),
(2) between vowels and before \( n \) and \( r \).

\( nn \) Pronunciation (2) occurs before \( g \) and \( k \), (1) in all other positions.

\( pp \) Concerning preaspiration, see the note on \( kk \).

\( r \) Pronunciation (2) occurs in the clusters \( rl \) and \( rn \) where they appear between vowels or in final position, (1) elsewhere.

\( s \) Never sounded as in English \( r i s e \), always as in \( g o o s e \).

\( tt \) Concerning preaspiration, see the note on \( kk \).

The pronunciation of modern Icelandic consonants involves many subtleties which it would be out of place to describe in a brief account such as this. The following may, however, be noted. (1) The voicelessness of \( b(b) \), \( d(d) \) and \( g(g) \) signifies that these consonants are pronounced much like their English equivalents (fairly laxly and with no following puff of air as with \( p, t, k \)), but without the use of the vocal cords. (2) There is a tendency to unvoice voiced consonants in voiceless environment (in particular when they immediately precede \( k, p, s, t \): this is the norm in southern Icelandic pronunciation). (3) The clusters \( hl, hn \) and \( hr \) denote voiceless \( l, n, r \) (there is nothing like this in English: try pronouncing \( l, n \) and \( r \) without using the vocal cords). (4) Long consonants tend to be shortened when they occur immediately before another consonant (e.g. \( \text{þykka} \) "[to] thicken", \( \text{brendi} \) "burnt [3rd sg. past]"). (5) Preaspiration (see above) occurs where \( k, p \) or \( t \) precede \( l, m \) or \( n \) as well as before \( kk, pp \) and \( tt \) (e.g. \( \text{vakna} \) "[to] awake", \( \text{ætla} \) "[to] intend"). (6) In clusters of more than two consonants, one or more may be altered or lost (e.g. \( \text{rigndi} \) "rained [3rd sg. past]" is pronounced as though it were \( \text{ringdi} \) (the \( g \) not being sounded), \( \text{barns} \) "child [gen. n. sg.]" as though it were \( \text{bass} \).
2.2.2 Consonants — Exercise

1. Of the written geminates *bb*, *gg*, *ll*, *mm*, *nn*, *tt*, which always denote long consonants in modern Icelandic?
2. How many different sounds can *f* denote, and what are they?
3. How many different sounds can *g* denote, and what are they?
4. Work through all the examples in 2.2.2, pronouncing each several times.

(See the note following the exercise at the end of 2.2.1.)

2.2.3 Syllables

The fact that vowel length is regulated by the length of following consonants means that in modern Icelandic there are effectively only two types of stressed syllable, both long:

1. short vowel + long consonant or consonant cluster, e.g. *blástr* ‘blowing’, *nött* ‘night’, *rann* ‘ran [1st/3rd sg. past]’, *qnd* ‘spirit’.
2. long vowel + short consonant or no consonant, e.g. *báð* ‘bath’, *hús* ‘house’, *fê* ‘money’, *gnúða* ‘[to] rub’.

An exception to this pattern of distribution are clusters formed of *k*, *p*, *s*, or *t + j*, *r* or *v*, before which the vowel is always long. If both consonants are reckoned part of the syllable, it is clearly overlong, but conceivably only the first should be counted, so that in words like *vekja* ‘[to] wake’, *daprar* ‘sad [nom./acc. f. pl.]’, *fysja* ‘[to] rush’, *vøkva* ‘moisture’, etc., the syllable boundary would be placed immediately after *k*, *p* and *s*. Syllable boundaries are otherwise as outlined in 2.1.4.

2.2.4 The epenthetic vowel

Also called the svarabhakti vowel, this intrusive *u*-sound began to develop towards the end of the Old Norse period. Because it did not
originally form part of the words in which it is now found, and because of its relatively late arrival, the epenthetic vowel is not indicated in normalised Old Norse orthography. It develops between a consonant (other than \( r \)) and \( r \), especially an \( r \) in final position. Thus ON \( maðr \) ‘man [nom. m. sg.], dapur ‘sad [nom. m. sg.], eitr ‘poison [nom./acc. n. sg.], bindr ‘tie(s) [2nd/3rd sg. pres.],’ for example, are pronounced \( maður, dapur, eitur, bindur \) (the first three with long stressed vowels because only a single consonant immediately follows) — and so written in modern Icelandic orthography.

2.2.3/2.2.4 Syllables/The epenthetic vowel — Exercise

1. What feature of length characterises stressed syllables in modern Icelandic?
2. What is the epenthetic vowel?
3. How does the occurrence of the epenthetic vowel affect the use of modern Icelandic pronunciation for Old Norse?

It should be stressed that section 2.2 is offered simply as an initial guide to help those learners who wish to pronounce Old Norse as a living language. For a detailed, if slightly old-fashioned, description of the sounds of modern Icelandic, see Stefán Einarsson 1945, 1–31; for a briefer but more recent analysis, see Höskuldur Thráinsson 1994, 142–52. As urged above, such accounts should preferably be studied in conjunction with recordings of spoken Icelandic.
3. Morphology and Syntax

Morphology deals with the form and structure of words, and syntax with the ways in which words are combined to form sentences. In section 3 we shall be concentrating on inflexional morphology (changes in word-form that express grammatical categories and relationships, sometimes called accidence) and the ways in which it interrelates with syntax. In dealing with a language like Old Norse, where grammatical categories such as number, gender, case, person, tense (see below and 3.2, 3.6.1, 3.6.2) are expressed by variation in word-form, it is unhelpful to divide the inflexions from the syntax, as has been common practice in earlier grammars. The student needs to appreciate from the outset that form and function are interlinked: the form has no purpose other than to express the function, and often the function cannot be expressed without the form.

3.1 Noun inflexions and their function

Nouns in Old Norse are inflected for number and case.

3.1.1 Number

Number in nouns is restricted to a difference between singular and plural, as in English boy, foot compared with boys, feet. Thus ON hlið means ‘slope’, hliðir ‘slopes’, maðr ‘man’, menn ‘men’. (On the relationship between number in nouns and number in verbs, see 3.6.1.)

3.1.2 Case

Case is a much more complex matter than number. It is sometimes defined as a grammatical category that expresses the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence. While true as far as it goes, this definition is too abstract for our purposes. It gives no indication of how to recognise case. It does not explain what syntactic relations are,
how they are, or may be, expressed, or the nature of the link between the means of expression and the thing expressed.

In modern English a few words change form according to their function in a sentence. Thus we say (as a complete sentence):

I saw him

but

He saw me

not:

*Me saw he

or

*Him saw I

This change of form between I and me and he and him according to function provides a clear example of what is traditionally called case: a particular form expresses a particular syntactic relation — in these examples subject (I, he; see pp. 31–2) or object (me, him; see pp. 32–3). For the most part, however, modern English expresses syntactic relationship by other means than changes in the form of words. We may say both:

John saw the cat

in which John is subject and the cat object, and:

The cat saw John

in which the roles are reversed, but it is the word-order that signals the function (as it does additionally in I saw him and he saw me) not the particular forms of the words involved, which do not change. Another common means of expressing syntactic relationship in English is by the use of function words (words which have little or no meaning on their own) such as of, with, than. In:
The king of England
for example, of England modifies king, in much the same way as would
the addition of the adjective English. In:

He broke it with a stone

with a stone is an adverbial (3.5.4) expressing instrumentality (i.e.
defining the ‘tool’ or ‘instrument’ used to cause the breakage). In:

My brother is taller than me

than me supplies the part of the comparative phrase that denotes the
entity with which the comparison is made.

Where English uses word-order or function words to indicate syn-
tactic relationship, Old Norse regularly uses changes of word-form
instead or as well. This means that not only pronouns, but nouns and
adjectives (and also verbs and adverbs, as to some extent in English),
are likely to change form according to their relationship to other parts
of the sentence. It is their form that — wholly or partly — specifies
their grammatical role, as with I/me in English. English has traces of
such a system in the -’s (singular) or -’s’ (plural) that may be added to
nouns. Instead of saying (or writing) the king of England as above, for
example, we may alternatively use England’s king; instead of the
comfort of passengers, passengers’ comfort. However, the Old Norse
system is vastly more complex than anything in English. Its heavy
reliance on form to indicate a variety of functions means that a simple
two-way distinction like that between English I and me or England
and England’s offers a wholly inadequate parallel.

Old Norse nouns, adjectives and pronouns exhibit four distinctive
case-forms, known as nominative, accusative, genitive and dative.
This means that a noun (or adjective or pronoun) potentially has eight
different actual forms (four in the singular, four in the plural), but in
reality most have fewer because the same form occurs in more than
one case.

The number of functions expressed by these case-forms greatly ex-
ceeds four. This means that no case is uniquely associated with a par-
ticular function: each is used in a variety of ways. The accusative, for
example, commonly marks the object of a verb (as English *him* in *I saw him*; see pp. 32–3), but among other functions it also expresses duration of, or point in, time, as well as occurring after a number of prepositions (see 3.7). The following sentences (each accompanied by a literal and an idiomatic English translation) illustrate these three possibilities (the words in the accusative form are in **bold**):

Hann orti **visu þessa**
‘He made verse this’
‘He made this verse’ (object)

Hann dvalðisk þar **mestan hluta sumars**
‘He stayed-sk [see 3.6.5.3] there most part of-summer’
‘He stayed there for most of the summer’ (time)

Þeir gengu á **skóg**
‘They went into wood’
‘They went into the wood’ (after preposition á)

‘Case-form’ in relation to the nominative, accusative, genitive and dative has so far been used in an abstract sense. In reality, we are dealing not with one nominative, accusative, genitive or dative form, but with many (see the three examples just given). Thus to a question like: ‘What is the nominative singular form of nouns in Old Norse?’ there is no answer, only a return question: ‘Which kind of noun do you have in mind?’ Common nominative singular noun endings are -r, -i, -a, but there are others besides these, and a large group of nouns indicates this ‘form’ by exhibiting no ending at all.

It is time now to return to the starting point of the discussion: the definition of case. Three questions were thrown up by the definition initially suggested. (1) What are syntactic relations? (2) How are or may they be expressed? (3) What is the nature of the link between the means of expression and the thing expressed? In answer to the first question discussion and examples of common syntactic relations have been offered. In answer to the second it has been shown that change in word-form, word-order, and the use of function words are all important ways of expressing syntactic relations. The third question on the nature of the link between syntactic relations and the means by which
they are expressed bears more directly on the understanding of case. There are two main issues. First, what can be usefully recognised as case, and what not? Second, in so far as case is identified primarily as the expression of syntactic relations by changes in word-form, where is case to be found — in the syntactic relations or in the differing word-forms?

Some have identified case in English sentences like John saw the cat or phrases like the king of England. This is either because they were arbitrarily transferring the rules of another language (as often as not Latin) to English, where the rules do not necessarily apply, or because they related case primarily to the level of meaning. Neither approach seems likely to be helpful in the learning of Old Norse. The rules of Old Norse must be derived from Old Norse itself, not from Latin or any other language, and seeing case in terms of meaning ignores the fact that in Old Norse form is also a crucial factor. For present purposes, therefore, case would seem a term best restricted to the expression of syntactic relations by changes in word-form. There are difficulties here, though, that have already been alluded to. Case as thus defined refers both to form and function and denotes entities — nominative, accusative, etc. — that have a variety of forms and a variety of functions. It can therefore be hard to see what the essence of a case is — leading to uncertainty about what one means by the term. Is the Old Norse accusative, for example, the sum of the inflexions by which certain syntactic relations are expressed or the sum of those syntactic relations? There is no clear answer to this question. Nevertheless it seems that most writers conceive of case in a language like Old Norse primarily as a morphological category: they prefer to think of the different inflexions a case may exhibit as varying realisations of a single underlying form than to think of its differing functions as somehow derived from a single abstract meaning — and indeed the latter idea does require considerably greater intellectual elasticity. We will therefore adopt the concept of morphological case here. We will consider, for example, the -r, -i, -a etc. endings of nouns in the nominative singular to be realisations of an underlying form NOM in its singular incarnation. The morphological category thus established as primary can then be seen as having a range of different functions.

The upshot of this discussion is that there are four cases in Old Norse: nominative, accusative, genitive and dative. The cases are regarded as
Noun inflexions and their function

relating primarily to form, although there is no single nominative, accusative, genitive or dative form as such. Each case expresses a range of syntactic relations. **The student’s task is therefore twofold: to learn to recognise one case from another by mastering the essential inflexions, while simultaneously getting a grasp of the principal syntactic relations expressed by each case.**

### 3.1.3 Gender

As well as number and case, the role of gender in the inflexion of Old Norse nouns needs to be considered. Gender is an inherent category of the noun, that is, it is only when a noun is modified or referred to that its gender becomes manifest. There is, for example, nothing about the word *dalr* ‘valley’ to show that it is masculine rather than feminine or neuter, but if it is modified by an adjective, that adjective will appear in the appropriate masculine form, e.g. *djúpr dalr* ‘deep valley’ where *djúp-* is the root of the word and *-r* the nom. m. sg. ending (see 3.3.4). Similarly, if we wish to refer to a valley as ‘it’, it must be by the masculine form of the personal pronoun: *hann* ‘he’.

While there is thus nothing gender-specific about any individual Old Norse noun in its dictionary form, it is nevertheless true that gender plays a part in the inflexional system of nouns, if only a minor one. Most masculines, for example, end in *-r* or *-i* in the nominative singular, and many feminines in *-a*; neuters are characterised in both singular and plural by a lack of distinction between nominative and accusative, and many have no specific nom./acc. pl. inflexion either (so that *kvæði* ‘poem’, for example, may be nom. or acc. sg. or pl.). However, given that none of the above features (except the nom./acc. sg./pl. identity of neuters) is totally restricted to one particular gender, they cannot be classed as gender markers in the same way as the forms of modifying adjectives or of anaphoric pronouns (pronouns that refer back to some previously expressed meaning, as, for example, *it* referring to *valley* above). What the features do offer is guidance about the likely gender of a noun — a useful insight since it can help (a) to see which words in a sentence belong together and (b) to predict what forms a given noun will have other than the particular one encountered.
3.1.1/3.1.2/3.1.3 Number/Case/Gender — Exercise

1. What does the grammatical category number refer to? Give examples from Old Norse.
2. What does the grammatical category case refer to? Give examples from Old Norse.
3. What does the grammatical category gender refer to? Give examples from Old Norse.
4. To what extent does case occur in English?
5. In what ways other than change in word-form can syntactic relations be expressed?
6. Which cases are found in Old Norse, and how do we recognise them?

3.1.4 Basic noun inflexions

In learning the inflexions of Old Norse it is important not to lose sight of the wood for the trees. This is not least true of the noun inflexions. If account were taken of every minor variation, it would be possible to list pages of paradigms (patterns of inflexion), as some grammars do, but that is likely to put the learner off and thus be counter-productive. Initially it is the essential patterns that need to be grasped. The small details can be added bit by bit. (Students keen to see the complete range of inflexions are recommended to consult one of the more traditional Old Norse grammars. In English there is Gordon 1957, in Norwegian Iversen 1973 and in German Noreen 1923. Less traditional grammars in Norwegian are Spurkland 1989 and Haugen 2001, the latter particularly systematic and lucid. An exhaustive account of modern Icelandic inflexions is given in Thomson 1987.)

Fundamentally there are two types of noun inflexion in Old Norse, traditionally known as strong and weak. The student should not look for any deep significance in these names. They have none. The two types could as well be called ‘A’ and ‘B’ or ‘1’ and ‘2’. Strong nouns have a wider range of endings than the weak; weak nouns tend mostly to end in -a, -i or -u.

The strong and weak inflexional types can be sub-divided according to gender (cf. above). With three genders, masculine (m.), femi-
nine (f.) and neuter (n.), this gives us six basic sets of endings. They are as follows (~ = zero, i.e. there is no ending, the form consisting of the root of the noun alone — e.g. *dal* ‘valley’, acc. m. sg.; () = the ending does not always occur; actual paradigms are given in 3.1.8).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strong masculine</th>
<th>Weak masculine</th>
<th>Strong feminine</th>
<th>Weak feminine</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Pl.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sg.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pl.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sg.</strong></td>
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<td>nom.</td>
<td>-r</td>
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<td>acc.</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>-a</td>
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<td>gen.</td>
<td>-s/-ar</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-ar</td>
<td>-u</td>
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<td>dat.</td>
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<td>gen.</td>
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<td>-a</td>
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Certain regularities and patterns will be observed in these endings.

(1) The dat. pl. always ends in -\textit{um}.
(2) The gen. pl. always ends in -\textit{a}, in the case of the weak feminines and neuters preceded by -\textit{n}.
(3) There are no distinct case-forms in the weak sg. except in the nom. masculine and feminine.
(4) The strong nom. sg. ends in -\textit{r} or has no ending.
(5) The strong acc. sg. is characterised by the absence of an inflectional ending.
(6) The strong gen. sg. ends in -\textit{s} or -\textit{ar}.
(7) The strong dat. sg. ends in -\textit{i} or has no ending.
(8) The masculine and feminine nom. pl. end in -\textit{a}, -\textit{i} or -\textit{u} + \textit{r}.
(9) The masculine acc. pl. ends in -\textit{a}, -\textit{i} or -\textit{u}, and the feminine acc. pl. in -\textit{a}, -\textit{i} or -\textit{u} + \textit{r}.

These are the essentials of noun inflexion in Old Norse. It is by no means the whole story, but all other noun inflexions can be seen as variations on this basic pattern. It is vitally important that the student masters the above sets of endings before proceeding to the finer detail.
3.1.4 Basic noun inflexions — Exercise

1. Where is a difference between the nom. and acc. pl. to be found?
2. How many endings does the gen. pl. exhibit?
3. What characterises the singular inflexions of strong feminines?
4. What characterises the singular inflexions of weak masculines and feminines?
5. In what way do the plural inflexions of strong neuter nouns differ from those of strong masculines and feminines?
6. What are the different nom. sg. endings?
7. What are the different gen. sg. endings?
8. What are the different dat. sg. endings?

3.1.5 Examples of noun usage

To assist in the task of learning, examples will now be given of a selection of the different noun case-forms in function. The relevant inflexions are in bold (or the whole word where there is no difference from the root form). Two translations are normally provided, the first literal for a better understanding of the structure of the Old Norse sentence, the second idiomatic. Notes explain the relationship between form and function. Compare the case-forms used with those set out on pp. 29–30. Observe, too, the differences between Old Norse and English phraseology and sentence formation.

(1) Gerðisk Eiríkr þá konungsmaðr
‘Made-sk [see 3.6.5.3] Eiríkr then king’s-man’
‘Eiríkr then became a king’s man’

Eiríkr (strong nom. m. sg.) is the subject, konungsmaðr (strong nom. m. sg.) the subject complement; for both subject and subject complement the nominative is almost always the case used. Subject is an extremely hard concept to get to grips with; it is sometimes loosely defined as ‘what the sentence is about’; where the verb denotes an action, the subject is often the agent, or ‘doer’ of the action. However, such definitions relate chiefly to meaning. Syntactically subjects may be defined both in English and Old Norse as the first noun phrase of a sentence in unmarked word-order (where ‘noun phrase’ means a noun or pronoun with or without accompanying modifiers — e.g. John, she,
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the white-bearded old man — and ‘unmarked word-order’ word-order not deliberately altered for emphasis. The subject complement is Y in constructions like: X is Y, X becomes Y or X is called Y.

(2) Var bardagi milli þeira
   ‘Was battle between them’
   ‘There was a battle between them’

*Bardagi* (weak nom. m. sg.) is the subject, the first noun phrase in the sentence.

(3) Konur tvær vökðu yfir leiðinu
   ‘Women two watched over tomb-the’
   ‘Two women kept a vigil over the tomb’

*Konur* (weak nom. f. pl.), modified by *tvær*, is the subject; it is the first noun phrase in the sentence and the women perform the action denoted by the verb *vökðu*. *Leiðinu* (strong dat. n. sg. + def. art. — see 3.1.9) does not function here as a noun phrase, but is part of the preposition phrase *yfir leiðinu*, in which the noun is governed (i.e. has its case determined) by the preposition *yfir* (see 3.7, 3.7.4).

(4) Vápn bífta ekki á hann
    ‘Weapons bite not on him’
    ‘Weapons make no impression on him’

*Vápn* (strong nom. n. pl.) is the subject, the first noun phrase in the sentence; whether the weapons are seen as the agent, or ‘doer’, of the action, will depend partly on the wider context, partly on the analysis; normally a human agent wields weapons and the weapons are thus the instrument, but they can also be portrayed as agent.

(5) Hann tekr eigi mat né drykk
    ‘He takes not food nor drink’
    ‘He takes neither food nor drink’

*Mat* and *drykk* (both strong acc. m. sg.) are objects of the verb *tekr*. Like subject, object is a hard concept to define; traditionally a distinction is made between ‘direct object’, the goal of an action, and ‘indirect object’ the beneficiary, as in: *I sent Peter* (indirect object) *a letter* (direct object), but such definitions have to do with meaning rather than syntax. Syntactically objects may
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be defined both in English and Old Norse as the second and third noun phrases of a sentence in unmarked word-order, with the accusative commonly marking the direct and the dative regularly marking the indirect object in Old Norse, second position the indirect and third position the direct object (by and large) in English. Mat and drykk are both direct objects: they are the goal of the action, and whereas direct objects regularly appear unaccompanied by indirect objects, the reverse is very uncommon (cf. the impossibility of English *I gave him). The direct objects appear here in the accusative, the most common case for this function.

(6) Þeir báru þar reiða allan af skipinu
   ‘They bore there tackle all off ship-the’
   ‘There they carried all the tackle off the ship’

Reiða (weak acc. m. sg.), modified by allan, is the second noun phrase in the sentence and the direct object of the verb báru. Skipinu (strong dat. n. sg. + def. art.) does not function here as a noun phrase, but as part of the preposition phrase af skipinu, and its case is determined by the preposition af (see 3.7.3).

(7) Hann átti margar orrustur í Englandi
   ‘He had many battles in England’

Orrustur (weak acc. f. pl.), modified by margar, is the second noun phrase in the sentence and the direct object of the verb átti. Englandi (strong dat. n. sg.) is part of the preposition phrase í Englandi, and its case is determined by the preposition í (see 3.7.4).

(8) Þeir drukku þar of daga í skála miklum
   ‘They drank there during days in hall big’
   ‘They drank there by day in a big hall’

Daga (strong acc. m. pl.) is governed by the preposition of, skála (weak dat. m. sg.), + its modifier miklum, by the preposition í.

(9) Lát þér þat ekki í augu vaxa
   ‘Let to-you that not into eyes grow’
   ‘Don’t make a mountain of it’

This is an idiomatic phrase, of which Old Norse has its fair share. Augu (weak acc. n. pl.) is governed by the preposition í, which requires the accusative here because a sense of motion is involved (contrast examples 7 and 8).
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(10) Dvalðisk Brúsi litla hríð
‘Stayed-sk [see 3.6.5.3] Brúsi little while’
‘Brúsi stayed for a short time’

Brúsi (weak nom. m. sg.) is the subject; it is the first noun phrase in the sentence and the man bearing the name performs the action denoted by the verb dvalðisk. Hríð (strong acc. f. sg.), modified by litla, is an adverbial phrase expressing duration of time (it answers the question: ‘How long?’).

(11) Hann hefndi dráps Þorgríms
‘He avenged killing ofÞorgrímr’
‘He avenged the killing of Þorgrímr’

Dráps (strong gen. n. sg.), the second noun phrase of the sentence, is the direct object of the verb hefndi; hefna is one of the few verbs that take a direct object in the genitive. Þorgríms (strong gen. m. sg.) is an objective genitive, that is, it corresponds to English ‘of Þorgrímr’ and presents Þorgrímr as the object or goal of an action (cf. ‘NN killed Þorgrímr’).

(12) Hann sendi þá vestr at leita ðondvegissúlna sinna
‘He sent them west to seek high-seat-posts REFL. POSS.’
‘He sent them west to look for his high-seat posts’

Þondvegissúlna (weak gen. f. pl.), modified by sinna, is the direct object of the verb leita. It comes in an infinitive clause (i.e., we have the infinitive at leita ‘to seek’, but only an implied subject). A full sentence might run: þeir leituðu þondvegissúlna ‘they sought the high-seat posts’, in which the direct object would be the second noun phrase.

(13) Gunnarr var eina nótt at Sigríðar, frændkonu sinnar
‘Gunnarr was one night at Sigríðr’s, kinswoman’s REFL. POSS.’
‘Gunnarr stayed one night at Sigríðr’s, his kinswoman’s’

Gunnarr (strong nom. m. sg.), the first noun phrase in the sentence, is the subject; he does the staying. Nótt (strong acc. f. sg.), modified by eina, is an adverbial phrase expressing duration of time. Sigríðar (strong gen. f. sg.) and frændkonu (weak gen. f. sg.) + sinnar are subjective (possessive) genitives, that is, they correspond to English ‘-’s’ and present Sigríðr, the kinswoman, as the owner of the house where Gunnarr stayed (cf. ‘NN owns the house’); note that ‘house’ is not expressed in the Old Norse sentence, paralleling English usage as above or in, e.g., I am at Peter’s.
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(14) Ingólfr var frægastr allra landnámsmanna
    ‘Ingólfr was most-famous of-all settlers’
    ‘Ingólfr was most famous of all the settlers’

Ingólfr (strong nom. m. sg.) is the subject, the first noun phrase in the sentence and what it is about. Landnámsmanna (strong gen. m. pl.), modified by allra, is a genitive of type, that is, it corresponds to English ‘of the settlers’ and presents landnámsmenn as a type of which Ingólfr is a representative.

(15) Hann bar hann til vatns nokkurs
    ‘He bore him to lake some’
    ‘He carried him to a certain lake’

Vatns (strong gen. n. sg.), modified by nokkurs, is governed by the preposition til.

(16) Eigi leyna auðu ef ann kona Manni
    ‘Not hide eyes if loves woman man’
    ‘The eyes do not hide it if a woman loves a man’

This is an adage, consisting of two sentences. Auðu (weak nom. n. pl.), the first (and only) noun phrase in sentence 1, is the subject of the verb leyna; the eyes fail to perform the action denoted by the verb. Kona (weak nom. f. sg.) is the subject of the verb ann, the first noun phrase in sentence 2 and what it is about. Manni (strong dat. m. sg.) is the direct object of ann, the second noun phrase; a good many verbs take a direct object in the dative.

(17) Hon skylldi bera qi vikingum
    ‘She should bear beer to-vikings’
    ‘She was to serve beer to the vikings’

Qi (strong acc. n. sg.) is the direct object of the verb bera; it is the goal of the action and the second noun phrase in the sentence. Vikingum (strong dat. m. pl.) is the indirect object of bera; it denotes the beneficiary of the action and is the third noun phrase. In English the indirect object may be expressed by a preposition phrase (‘to the vikings’) or word-order (‘She was to serve the vikings beer’ — indirect object before direct); in Old Norse the indirect object appears in the dative.

(18) Peir hétu Rǫgnvaldri traustri fylgð
    ‘They promised Rǫgnvaldr firm support’
Rógvaldrí (strong dat. m. sg.) is the indirect, fylgð (strong dat. f. sg.), modified by traustri, the direct object of heitú. As noted in connection with (16), many verbs take a direct object in the dative, and heita ‘promise’ is among these.

(19) Peir ljá jarlí lífs
‘They grant earl life’
‘They spare the earl’s life’

Jarlí (strong dat. m. sg.) is the indirect, lífs (strong gen. n. sg.) the direct object of ljá. As noted in connection with (11), a few verbs take a direct object in the genitive, and ljá ‘grant’ is among these.

(20) Hann kastar beinum smám um þvert gólfit
‘He throws bones small over crossways floor-the’
‘He throws small bones across the floor’

Beinum (strong dat. n. pl.), modified by smám, has instrumental sense; in Old Norse people are conceived as throwing with something (cf. the close semantic relationship between English: He threw water onto the ground and He splashed the ground with water). Instrumentality in Old Norse is expressed either by the dative on its own or by the preposition með ‘with’ + dat. Gólfit (strong acc. n. sg. + def. art.), modified by þvert, is governed by the preposition um.

(21) Hon var hverri konu fríðari
‘She was than-every woman more-beautiful’
‘She was more beautiful than any other woman’

Konu (weak dat. f. sg.), modified by hverri, is the second proposition in a comparative construction — the proposition denoting the entity with which the comparison is made (i.e., taking every other woman as the basis — the standard by which ‘she’ is to be judged — ‘she’ is more beautiful); in Old Norse the basis of the comparison may be expressed either by the dative, as here, or by the conjunction en ‘than’ (3.8, 3.8.2.4) + the appropriate case.

(22) Váru dyrr á enda
‘Was doorway on end’
‘There was a doorway at the end’

Dyrr (nom. f. pl.) is the first noun phrase in the sentence and the subject. It has only plural forms, although it corresponds to the English singular ‘doorway’.
These forms are also in part irregular (see 3.1.7.2, 3.1.7.4), and the nom. f. pl. is indicated by other means than the adding of -a, -i or -u + r to the root. Enda (weak dat. m. sg.) is governed by the preposition á.

**3.1.5 Examples of noun usage — Exercise**

1. What are the principal functions of the nominative case in Old Norse?
2. What cases are used to denote the direct object?
3. What role do prepositions play in the assignment of case?
4. Account for the use of all the genitives in the above examples.
5. What case is used to denote the indirect object?
6. How is instrumentality expressed?
7. What is the role of the dative case in comparative constructions?
8. Where may the accusative be found other than as a marker of the direct object?

**3.1.6 Difficulties in recognising noun inflexions and ways of overcoming them**

Unfortunately it is not enough just to learn the endings listed in the tables in 3.1.4. For one thing, Old Norse nouns ring the changes on a relatively small number of endings. We find little other than the vowels -a, -i, -u or the consonants -r, -s on their own, or -a, -i, -u in conjunction with the consonants -m, -n, -r. This parsimony has the effect that the same ending may be found in a variety of different cases. While -s clearly signals the genitive singular, and -um the dative plural, for example, -ar may be genitive singular or nominative or accusative plural, and -a can denote any case in the singular as well as accusative and genitive plural.

Very often the context can determine which number and case a particular form represents. It will be clear from the overall sense of the sentence and the passage of which it forms a part — and usually, too, from the forms of words dependent on the noun: their number, and regularly their case and gender as well. Thus in the example sentence (4):

Vápn bíta ekki á hann
we know that vápn is plural because the verb-form bíta, dependent on the number of the subject (see 3.6.1), is also plural (cf. English dogs bite as opposed to John bites). Since vápn has no plural ending we may further deduce that it is neuter — though this deduction is in itself no help in gauging the role of the noun in the sentence, since we have already established that it is the subject and plural. In sentence (10):

Dvalðisk Brúsi litla hríð

we can tell from the agreement between the noun form hríð and the adjective form litla that we are dealing with the accusative feminine singular. ‘Agreement’ means that there is a formal relationship between the two words, expressed by their having the same case, gender and number (see further 3.3.1), and since litla can only be acc. f. sg. or acc. m. pl. (see 3.3.9, paradigm 9), and hríð cannot be acc. m. pl., the case, gender and number they have in common must be acc. f. sg. Having established that, we may further deduce that accusative case in conjunction with a verb meaning ‘stayed’ (dvalðisk) — and given the sense of hríð (‘while’ ‘short time’) — indicates duration of time. In (6):

Þeir báru þar reiða allan af skipinu

it is the form of the agreeing adjective, allan ‘all’, which shows that of the various cases reiða might be, singular or plural, it is in fact accusative singular, the adjective ending -an denoting acc. m. sg. alone (see 3.3.4). That it is accusative means it is likely to be the direct object of the verb báru ‘carried’ (examination of the other words in the sentence and their forms will in fact show that to be the only possible analysis). That it is singular is of little consequence, since reiði does not normally appear in the plural (any more than ‘tackle’ in English). That it is masculine is of importance to the extent that when used with a function that requires accusative case, the agreeing adjective will show the case, gender and number unambiguously.
3.1.6 Difficulties in recognising noun inflexions and ways of overcoming them — Exercise

1. Why may it sometimes be difficult to recognise the case and number of nouns in Old Norse?
2. What means can we use to help deduce their case and number?

3.1.7 Important variations in noun inflexion

A further problem for the learner of Old Norse is that the endings listed so far are by no means the whole story (cf., e.g., dyrr, nom. f. pl., in example sentence 22). To be reasonably sure of recognising a particular case-form for what it is, the student needs to be aware of additional features that play their part in noun inflexion. These will now be examined.

3.1.7.1 Labial mutation

Mutation, sometimes known by the German term Umlaut, occurs where the vowel of a stressed syllable adopts one or more of the features of the vowel or semi-vowel of the immediately following unstressed syllable. The vowel u and the semi-vowel w (the latter written ‘v’ in standardised Old Norse spelling) are labial sounds, that is, they are pronounced with rounded lips. Rounding is thus one of the features that characterise them. This feature is regularly adopted by a preceding stressed a, so instead of appearing as a it takes the form ø, i.e. it is pronounced like a with lip-rounding (see 2.1.1). In fact, it is a rule of Old Norse that a cannot appear before u or v in the next syllable. A noun with a in the root will therefore always change that a to ø when the ending consists of or contains a u. Thus, the dative plural of the nouns maðr ‘man’, bardagí ‘battle’, and vatn ‘lake’, which appear in the example sentences, is mønnun, bardogum, vøtnum (see paradigms 2, 9, 26 below). A weak feminine noun like saga ‘story’ has root a only in the nominative singular and genitive plural; the remaining forms are sogu (acc./gen./dat. sg.), sogur (nom./acc. pl.) and sogum (dat. pl., see paradigm 23). Likewise, the weak neuter hjarta ‘heart’ has the nom./acc. pl. forms hjørtu and dat. hjørtum.
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The rule that root $a$ changes to $ø$ before $u$ should not cause the learner problems, as long as s/he remembers that an unknown word with $ø$ in the root and $u$ in the ending must be looked up in a dictionary as though it had root $a$ if it cannot be found there with root $ø$. For example, $stjørnur$ (nom./acc. pl.), $fjør$ (acc./gen./dat. sg.), $dólum$, $grønnun$ (both dat. pl.) will be found not under $stjø-$, $fjø-$, $dø-$, $grø-$, but under $stjarna$ ‘star’, $fjara$ ‘shore’, $dalr$ ‘valley’, $granni$ ‘neighbour’.

Somewhat greater difficulties are caused for the learner by the fact that strong feminine and neuter nouns may exhibit root $ø$ in certain forms even though no $u$ or $v$ follows. The reason for the occurrence of $ø$ here is the presence of a following $u$ at an earlier stage of the language. This $u$ caused $a$ to develop to $ø$ and was subsequently lost (e.g. nom./acc. n. pl. *landu > land ‘countries’). The forms concerned are: nominative, accusative and dative feminine singular and nominative and accusative neuter plural. In addition, a small group of masculine nouns (several of them very common) has root $ø$ in the nominative and accusative singular. If the feminine or masculine nouns are met with in forms with root $ø$, no problem arises for the learner, since the nominative singular is also the entry form in dictionaries. For neuter plurals with root $ø$, however, root $a$ must be substituted before the word is sought in a dictionary, e.g. *fjoll ‘mountains’, land ‘countries’ will be found under fjall, land (see paradigm 26).

Difficulties with masculines and feminines of this type occur where a form other than one with root $ø$ is encountered. The bulk of the feminines are the least troublesome: in the genitive singular, nominative, accusative and genitive plural these have root $a$, so the process of looking such words up is simply the reverse of that which applies in the case of those like $stjørnur$, $fjør$, $dólum$, or $grønnun$. For example, $kvalar$ (gen. sg. or nom./acc. pl.), $hafnar$ (gen. sg.), $hafnir$ (nom./acc. pl.), $kvala$, $hafna$ (gen. pl.) will be found not under *kval or *hafn, but under *kvøl ‘torment’, and *høfn ‘harbour’ (see paradigm 12). The residual feminines and the masculines with original root $a$ present a more complex picture in that it is only in the genitive singular and plural that $a$ appears. In the remaining forms, where there is or has been no $u$ in the endings (automatically triggering $a > ø$, cf. above), i.e., dative singular and nominative (also analogically accusative) plural masculine, nominative and accusative plural feminine, we most often find root $ç$, though sometimes $i$ (see 3.1.7.2). Thus $vallar$ (gen. sg.),
Noun inflexions and their function

valla (gen. pl.), velli (dat. sg.), vellir (nom. pl.) should all be looked up under völfr ‘field’, m., fjardar (gen. sg.), fjarda (gen. pl.), firði (dat. sg.), firðir (nom. pl.) under fjörtl ‘fjord’, m., strandar (gen. sg.), stranda (gen. pl.), strendr (nom./acc. pl.) under strönd ‘beach’, f. (see paradigms 4, 5, 18).

U-mutation affects unstressed as well as stressed syllables. In unstressed syllables, however, it results in u, thus enabling the mutation to spread further. The strong masculine noun fagnuðr ‘joy’, for example, comes ultimately from *fagnaðuz via the intermediate forms, first *fagnuðuz and then *fagnuðuz. The u-mutated forms — nom. and acc. sg. and dat. pl.: fagnuðr, fognuð, fognuðum — thus contrast markedly with the other parts of the paradigm whose root is fagnad- (see paradigm 6). A strong neuter noun like sumar ‘summer’ has nom. and acc. pl. sumur (< *sumuru < *sumuðru < *sumaru) (paradigm 27).

3.1.7.1 Labial mutation — Exercise

1. What does the term ‘mutation’ (‘Umlaut’) refer to?
2. In what circumstances does root a change to ð in Old Norse?
3. Look up the following nouns in an Old Norse dictionary or in the Glossary in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: nufnum (n.), götur (f.), yoku (f.), ormum (m.).
4. In which cases, genders and numbers can we expect to find root ð where no u follows in the next syllable?
5. Look up the following nouns in an Old Norse dictionary or in the Glossary in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: gjöld (n.), lomb (n.), raddar (f.), sagnir (f.), hatta (m.), vaxtar (m.).

3.1.7.2 Front mutation

Front mutation, in common with its labial counterpart, mainly concerns the adoption by the vowel of a stressed syllable of a feature of the vowel or semi-vowel of the immediately following unstressed syllable. Here, however, the principal conditioning factors were the front vowel i and the front semi-vowel j. So-called ‘palatal r’ (or z, as in *kæz/kæ, which developed to kýr, see below), and the combined
influence of earlier -gê, -kê (as in *dagê, which became degi, see below) — as well as analogical levelling (the restructuring of forms by the force of analogy) — also played their part in this process. All the conditioning sounds are likely to have been pronounced with the front of the tongue raised close to its maximum height, and their presence had the effect of turning a preceding back vowel (one pronounced with the back of the tongue raised or lowered) into its front counterpart. Thus ð, for example, which is a mid-high back vowel (the back of the tongue is raised to above mid-height, but not to its full extent), became æ, a mid-high front vowel, when an i, j or other ‘conditioner’ followed. That is why the masculine noun fōtr ‘foot’ and the feminine bók ‘book’ have nominative plurals fœtr, bœkr respectively (see paradigms 7 and 19).

As these introductory remarks and examples suggest, front mutation, unlike the labial variety, is very much a historical process (it is also common to most Germanic languages, cf. English foot — feet, man — men, German Fuß — Füße, Mann — Männer). It occurred at a stage of Scandinavian language development that preceded Old Norse, and had ceased to be productive some time before the Old Norse period. This has two important consequences for the recognition of inflexions. First, we find an unstressed i that does not cause front mutation because it arose after the period when mutation was taking place, e.g. dat. m. sg. armi ‘arm’ (< *armê). This circumstance makes it impossible to formulate a hard-and-fast rule (like a > ø before a, v) stating which stressed vowels we can expect to find immediately preceding i. Second, the i, j or other conditioner triggering the fronting may no longer be present (very often it is not — cf. fœtr and bœkr above, earlier forms of which were *fōtriz, *bōkiz). This latter situation is parallel to the loss of u in forms such as fjœll ‘mountains’, hœfn ‘harbour’, noted in 3.1.7.1.

With such complications, what the learner of Old Norse needs to know are the front mutation products of the back vowels affected, so that s/he may recognise that fōtr — fœtr or bók — bœkr, for example, are different forms of the same lexical item. It is further useful to know where in different paradigms to expect front-mutated root vowels.

The back : front correspondences arising from front mutation, together with examples (contrasting nom. sg. with nom. pl. unless otherwise stated), are as follows:
Noun inflexions and their function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Inflection</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a —— e</td>
<td>(dagr —— degi ‘day’, nom. and dat. m. sg.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>á —— æ</td>
<td>(tá —— taer ‘toe’, f.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o —— ø</td>
<td>(hnut —— hnœtr ‘nut’, f.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ó —— æ</td>
<td>(bœndr —— hœndr ‘farmer’, m.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u —— y</td>
<td>(dura —— dyrr ‘doorway’, gen. and nom. f. pl.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ú —— ‡</td>
<td>(mœtr —— mœtr ‘mouse’, f.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occasionally o (from an earlier u) and ò (from an earlier lengthened a) can correspond to y and æ respectively (e.g. sonr —— synir ‘son’, m.; nöt —— nœt ‘night’, f.).

The places where front mutation forms are to be expected in noun paradigms are:

1. Nom., acc., gen. sg. of words (all masculine) ending in -ill (e.g. lykill ‘key’ — dat. sg. lukli, pl. forms all with root lukl-; see paradigm 3).
2. Dat. sg. of certain masculines (notably those with root vowel o in the nom. sg., e.g. hetti — nom. sg. hœtr ‘hood’; birni — nom. sg. bjœrn ‘bear’ (not strictly mutation, but often counted as such, see 3.1.7.3); fœti — nom. sg. fœtr ‘foot’; see paradigms 4, 5 and 7).
3. Nom. pl. of a good many masculines (again, notably those with root vowel o in the nom. sg.) and feminines (e.g. kettr — nom. m. sg. kœtr ‘cat’; þettir — nom. m. sg. þœtr ‘strand’, ‘short story’; feðr — nom. m. sg. feðr ‘father’; hendr — nom. f. sg. hœnd ‘hand’; hœtr — nom. f. sg. bœtr ‘compensation’; kyr — acc. f. sg. kœ ‘cow’ (see (5) below); paradigms 5, 8, 18, 19, 21).
4. Acc. pl. of a few masculines (and, in later texts, of most of those with root vowel o in the nom. sg.) and all feminines included under (3) (e.g. fœtr — nom. m. sg. fœtr ‘foot’; vœllr (as alternative to vœllu) — nom. m. sg. vœllr ‘field’ ‘ground’; feðr, hendr, hœtr, kyr — as under (3); paradigms 5, 7, 8, 18, 19, 21).

Additional cases of front mutation in nouns, affecting only a few words, but often very common ones, are:

5. Nom. and gen. sg. of the feminines kyr ‘cow’; sœr ‘sow’; ær ‘ewe’ (contrast acc. and dat. sg., gen. and dat. pl. of, e.g., kyr: kœ, kœ, kœa, kœm; paradigm 21).
6. Gen. sg. of certain feminines (e.g. bœkr — nom. sg. bœk ‘book’; nœtr — nom. sg. nœt ‘night’; the genitives of these feminines can also be found without mutation and with the more usual ending -ar; paradigm 19).
(7) dat. sg., gen. and dat. pl. of four nouns of relationship: fáðir ‘father’, m.; bróðir ‘brother’, m.; móðir ‘mother’, f.; dóttir ‘daughter’, f. (e.g. fëðr, dat. sg., fëðra, gen. pl., fëðrum, dat. pl.; mëðr, dat. sg., mëðra, gen. pl., mëðrum, dat. pl.; the dative singular of these nouns can also be found with the ending -ur, causing labial rather than front mutation in fáðir; paradigms 8, 22).

It is further worth noting a small group of weak masculines consisting of root + -and suffix. These have front mutation in the nom. and acc. pl., but it affects the suffix only (e.g. dómendr ‘judge’, nom. and acc. pl. dómendr; with contraction of the suffix: bóni (< bùandi) ‘farmer’, nom./acc. pl. bëndr; paradigm 10).

3.1.7.2 Front mutation — Exercise

1. Which front-mutated vowels correspond with which back vowels?
2. In which parts of noun paradigms are front-mutated vowels to be expected?
3. Does front mutation ever affect other syllables than the initial?
4. Look up the following nouns in an Old Norse dictionary or in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: strendr (f.), rexn (f.), mëtti (m.), brýr (f.), tugli (m.), erni (m.), eigendr (m.), katlar (m.).

3.1.7.3 Breaking

Like front mutation, breaking is a historical phenomenon. Its causes are disputed, but it results in a diphthong where earlier there was a single vowel sound, cf. ON jafn ‘even [adj.]’, hjfrô ‘herd’, f., with the English and German counterparts even, eben and herd, Herde. Though there are many nouns in ON with a broken (diphthongised) root vowel, there are only a few where this alternates with unbroken varieties within the paradigm, causing difficulties of recognition for the learner. In a small group of masculine nouns conditions have favoured breaking in all cases except the dat. sg. and nom. pl., where the root vowel i (from earlier e) is found. While the acc. and gen. sg. and acc., gen. and dat. pl. of skjôldr ‘shield’ are thus skjôld, skjôlar, skjôldu, skjôlda, skjôldum respectively, the dat. sg. and nom. pl. are skildi, skildir (see paradigm 4). All such nouns have root vowel y at the nom. sg.
3.1.7.4 Deviations from the basic endings

Certain endings occur that do not accord with those given on pp. 29–30. We have already seen in 3.1.7.1 and 3.1.7.2 above that the nom. and acc. pl. of a number of common masculine and feminine nouns end in -r rather than -a, -i or -u + r. Other deviations which may cause problems of recognition are:

(1) Nominative masculine singulars that lack the -r ending. These are due to the assimilation of r to an immediately preceding l, n, s (e.g. lykill ‘key’, m. (< *lykilr); hrafn ‘raven’, m. (< *hrafun < *hrafnr); áss ‘god’, m. (< *ásr); see paradigms 3, 5). Hrafn exemplifies a general rule that consonant + geminate (double) consonant is simplified to consonant + single consonant (thus also in nouns with consonant + root r; compare, e.g., nom. and acc. m. sg. vetr ‘winter’, the former from earlier *vetrr). Nominative and accusative plural -r can be assimilated in the same way as nom. sg. when the pl. ending does not contain a vowel (e.g. mús ‘mouse’, f. — nom. and acc. pl. myss).

(2) A small group of strong feminines that has -r in the nom. sg., just as most strong masculines, and -i in the acc. and dat. sg. (e.g. heiðr, heiði, heiði ‘moor’; see paradigm 17).

(3) Strong feminines with the suffix -ing or -ung, as well as a few others, that have -u in the dat. sg. (e.g. dróttning ‘queen’, dat. sg. dróttningu; sól ‘sun’, dat. sg. (usually) sólu; see paradigm 14).

(4) A small group of weak feminines that has -i throughout the singular (e.g. gleði ‘joy’; see paradigm 24). These nouns denote abstract concepts and have no plural form.

(5) A few nouns with root nn that have -dr in the nom. sg. (e.g. muðr ‘mouth’, m., acc. sg. munn; forkuðr ‘strong desire’, f., gen. sg. forkunnar).

3.1.7.5 Minor irregularities

The inflexions of ON nouns exhibit yet other deviations from the basic pattern, but these are less likely to cause the learner problems of recognition.

(1) The unstressed syllables of many disyllabic nouns lose their vowel when an inflectional ending is added which itself consists of a syllable (e.g. þistill ‘thistle’, m. — dat. sg. þistli, nom., acc., gen., dat. pl. þistlar,
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ψísla, ðísla, ðíslum; híðir ‘shepherd’, m. — dat. sg. híði (not *híði), nom., acc., gen., dat. pl. híðar, híða, híðum; sumar ‘summer’, n. — dat. sg. sumrí, gen., dat. pl. sumra, sumrum; kvæði ‘poem’, n. — dat. sg. kvæði (not *kvæði), gen., dat. pl. kvæða, kvæðum; see paradigms 3, 27; note also 28).

(2) The vowels of inflexional endings tend to be dropped when they immediately follow a long vowel of the same or similar quality (e.g. á ‘stream’, f. — gen. sg. ár, nom., acc., gen., dat. pl. ár, ár, ám; kné ‘knee’, n. — dat. sg. kné; see paradigms 16, 29).

(3) Where stressed é is followed by unstressed a or u, the stress tends to be shifted onto the latter (with resultant vowel lengthening and occasionally vowel change), the é becoming the semi-vowel j (e.g. kné ‘knee’, n. — gen. pl. knjá (< *knéa), dat. pl. knjám or knjóm (< *knéum); paradigm 29).

(4) In some nouns j is inserted before inflexional endings consisting of or beginning in a or u; in others v is inserted before endings consisting of or beginning in a or i (e.g. erfingi ‘heir’, m. — acc., gen., dat. sg. erfingja, nom., acc., gen., dat. pl. erfingjar, erfingja, erfingum; ey ‘island’, f. — gen., dat. sg. eyjar, eyja, nom., acc., gen., dat. pl. eyjar, eyja, eyjum; sker ‘skerry’, n. — gen., dat. pl. skerja, skerjum; sôngr ‘song’, m. — dat. sg. sôngvi, nom., acc., gen. pl. sôngvar, sôngva, sôngva; or ‘arrow’, f. — gen. sg. orvar, nom., acc., gen. pl. orvar, orvar, orva; see paradigm 15).

3.1.7.3/3.1.7.4/3.1.7.5 Breaking/Deviations from the basic endings/Minor irregularities — Exercise

1. Look up the following nouns in an Old Norse dictionary or in the Glossary in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: birni (m.), skildir (m.), djúfjul (m.), sveinar (m.), byróði (f.).
2. Which group of strong nouns have -u in the dative singular?
3. What is unusual about the inflexion of the noun gleði and of other feminines in -i?
4. Look up the following nouns in an Old Norse dictionary or in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: himnar (m.), hersar (m.), gamni (n.), erendum (n.), gjár (f.), benjar (f.), hóggvi (n.).
Having established the basic pattern of noun inflexions (pp. 29–30), and discussed the principal variations, we can now proceed to flesh out this skeleton with complete paradigms of individual nouns. These follow below.

It is customary when presenting nouns in Old Norse grammars to provide an example of every or virtually every inflexional type and to divide this wealth of data into classes and sub-classes, based often on features that had died out before the Old Norse period began. This does not help the learner much, and here instead an example is given of each of the basic patterns of noun inflexion, augmented by such others as will assist in the recognition of the majority of forms likely to be encountered in Old Norse texts. These examples should be studied in conjunction with the guidance given in 3.1.4, 3.1.6 and 3.1.7. Each pattern or paradigm is numbered for ease of reference.

**Strong masculine (basic pattern)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg.</th>
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<th>Pl.</th>
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<table>
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**Strong masculine (other patterns)**

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<td>katłum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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#### (4) skjöldr 'shield'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
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<th>Pl. nom.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skjöldr</td>
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<tr>
<td>skjöld</td>
<td>skjöldu</td>
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<td>skjáladar</td>
<td>skjálda</td>
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<tr>
<td>skjöldi</td>
<td>skjöldum</td>
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#### (5) ðrn 'eagle'

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<tbody>
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<td>ðrun/ðrni</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ern</td>
<td>ðrnum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### (6) fognuðr 'joy'

<table>
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<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>fognadóí</td>
<td>fognóhum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (7) fótr 'foot'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fótr</td>
<td>fetr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fót</td>
<td>fetr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fótar</td>
<td>fota</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fóti</td>
<td>fónum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (8) faðir 'father'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>faðir</td>
<td>feðr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foður</td>
<td>feðr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foður</td>
<td>feðra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feðri/foður</td>
<td>feðrum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Weak masculine (basic pattern)

#### (9) bardagi 'battle'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bardagi</td>
<td>bardagar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bardaga</td>
<td>bardaga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bardaga</td>
<td>bardaga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bardaga</td>
<td>bardogum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weak masculine (other pattern)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun inflexions and their function</th>
<th>49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(10) eigandi</strong> ‘owner’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>eigandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>eiganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>eiganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>eiganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong feminine (basic pattern)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun inflexions and their function</th>
<th>49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(11) laug</strong> ‘bath’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>laug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>laug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>laugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>laug</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun inflexions and their function</th>
<th>49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(12) mun</strong> ‘mane’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>mun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>mun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>manar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>mun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun inflexions and their function</th>
<th>49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(13) hlöð</strong> ‘slope’ ‘hillside’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>hlöð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>hlöð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>hlöðar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>hlöð</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong feminine (other patterns)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun inflexions and their function</th>
<th>49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(14) kerling</strong> ‘old woman’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>kerling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>kerling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>kerlingar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>kerlingu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Morphology and syntax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(15) ey ‘island’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. ey</td>
<td>Pl. nom. eyjar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. ey</td>
<td>acc. eyjar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. eyjar</td>
<td>gen. eyja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. eyju</td>
<td>dat. eyjum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(16) á ‘stream’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. á</td>
<td>Pl. nom. ár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. á</td>
<td>acc. ár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. ár</td>
<td>gen. á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. á</td>
<td>dat. ám</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(17) heiðr ‘heath’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. heiðr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. heiði</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. heiðar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. heiði</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom. heiðar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. heiðar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. heiða</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. heiðum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(18) strönd ‘shore’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. strönd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. strönd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. strandar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. strönd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom. strendr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. strendr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. stranda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. ströndum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(19) bók ‘book’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. bók</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. bók</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. bókr/bókar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. bók</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom. bókr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. bókr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. bóka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. bókum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(20) tá ‘toe’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom. tá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. tá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. tár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. tá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom. tár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc. tár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen. tá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat. tám</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noun inflexions and their function

(21) kyr ‘cow’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kyr</td>
<td>kyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>kú</td>
<td>acc. kyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>kyr</td>
<td>gen. kúa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>kú</td>
<td>dat. kúm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(22) dóttir ‘daughter’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dóttir</td>
<td>dóttir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>dóttur</td>
<td>acc. dótt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>dóttur</td>
<td>gen. dótra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>dótra/dóttur</td>
<td>dat. dótrum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weak feminine (basic pattern)

(23) saga ‘story’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>saga</td>
<td>sogur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>sogu</td>
<td>acc. sogur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>sogu</td>
<td>gen. sagna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>sogu</td>
<td>dat. sogum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weak feminine (other pattern)

(24) reiði ‘anger’

|          | Sg. nom., acc., gen., dat. | reiði |

Strong neuter (basic pattern)

(25) ord ‘word’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sg. nom.</th>
<th>Pl. nom.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ord</td>
<td>ord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>ord</td>
<td>acc. ord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>ord</td>
<td>gen. ord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>ordi</td>
<td>dat. ordum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Morphology and syntax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(26) vatn ‘water’, ‘lake’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>vatn</td>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>vatn</td>
<td>acc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>vatns</td>
<td>gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>vatni</td>
<td>dat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(27) sumar ‘summer’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>sumar</td>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>sumar</td>
<td>acc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>sumars</td>
<td>gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>sumri</td>
<td>dat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(28) erindi ‘message’, ‘speech’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>erindi</td>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>erindi</td>
<td>acc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>erindis</td>
<td>gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>erindi</td>
<td>dat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strong neuter (other pattern)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(29) kné ‘knee’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>kné</td>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>kné</td>
<td>acc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>knés</td>
<td>gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>kné</td>
<td>dat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weak neuter (basic pattern)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(30) auga ‘eye’</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>auga</td>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>auga</td>
<td>acc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>auga</td>
<td>gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>auga</td>
<td>dat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The learner who has conscientiously mastered the above should be in a position to recognise the forms of virtually all the Old Norse nouns with which s/he is confronted in a text. It should further be possible to deduce the nominative singular form of unfamiliar nouns, so that these can be looked up in a dictionary. (The amount of help offered by dictionaries varies, but in addition to the nominative singular, the genitive singular and nominative plural are usually noted, as well as (other) forms that cannot easily be predicted.)

3.1.8 Examples of noun inflexion — Exercise

Identify the case, gender, number, syntactic function and semantic role of the nouns printed in bold in the following passage (adapted from Hrafnkels saga Freysgoa ‘The Saga of Hrafnkell, Priest of Freyr’). Where a noun appears in a case other than the nominative singular, give the nominative singular — the dictionary entry — form. In the case of compound nouns, give the case, gender, number, function and role of the last element only (e.g., in Breiðdal, analyse -dal, in Hallfreðarstöðum, -stöðum and in fjárskiptis, -skiptis).

fiat var á dógum Haralds konungs ins hárfagra, Hálfdanar sonar ins svarta, at sá maðr kom skipi sínu til Islands í Breiðdalr, er Hallfreðr hét.

It was in days of Haraldr king the hairfair, Hálfdan’s son the black, that that man came with ship his. to Iceland into Breiðdalr, who Hallfreðr was-called.

It was in the days of King Haraldr fairhair, son of Hálfdan the black, that a man called Hallfreðr brought his ship to Iceland, to Breiðdalr.

Þar var á skipi kona hans ok sonr, er Hrafnkell hét. Hann var fimmtán veþra gamall. Hallfreðr setti bú saman.

There was on ship wife his and son, who Hrafnkell was-called. He was fifteen of winters old. Hallfreðr put dwelling together.

On board the ship was his wife and son, who was called Hrafnkell. He was fifteen years old. Hallfreðr established a farmstead.
En um várit førði Hallfreðr bú sitt norðr yfír heiði ok gerði bú þar, sem heitir í Geitdal.

But in spring-the moved Hallfreðr dwelling refl. poss. north over moor and made dwelling there that is-called in Geitdalr.

But in the spring Hallfreðr moved his dwelling northwards across the moor and made a dwelling in the place called Geitdalr.

Ok eina nótt dreymði hann, at maðr kom at honum ok mælti: ‘Par liggr þú, Hallfreðr, ok heldr óvarliga. Fær þú á brett þú þitt ok vestr yfír Lagarfljót. Þar er heil þín ðoll.’

And one night dreamt him that man came to him and said: ‘There lie you, Hallfreðr, and rather unwarily. Move you away dwelling your and west over Lagarfljót. There is fortune your all.’

And one night he dreamt that a man came to him and said: ‘There you lie, Hallfreðr, and rather unwarily. Move your dwelling away and westwards across Lagarfljót. There is where all your good fortune lies.’

Eptir flat vaknar hann ok førir bú sitt út yfír Rangá í Tungu, þar sem síðan heitir á Hallfreðarstaðum, ok bjó þar til ella.

After that wakes he and moves dwelling refl. poss. out over Rangá into Tunga, there that later is-called at Hallfreðarstaðir, and lived there till old-age.

After that he wakes up and moves his dwelling out across Rangá to Tunga, to the place which has since been called Hallfreðarstaðir, and lived there into his old age.

En honum varð þar eptir geit ok hafr. Ök inn sama dag, sem Hallfreðr var í brett, hljóp skriða á húsin, ok týndusk þar þessir gripir, ok því heitir þat síðan í Geitdal.

But to-him came-to-be there behind she-goat and billy-goat. And the same day that Hallfreðr was at(-)way, ran landslide onto houses-the, and lost-sk [see 3.6.5.3] there these animals, and therefore is-called it since in Geitdalr.

But it turned out he left a she-goat and a billy-goat there. And the same day as Hallfreðr moved away, a landslide fell onto the buildings and these animals perished there, and for that reason the place has since been called Geitdalr.
Hrafnkell laid that in custom REFL. POSS. to ride over onto moors in summer-the. Then was Jökulsdalr fully-settled up to bridges.

Hrafnkell made it his practice to ride up onto the moors in the summer. At this time Jökulsdalr was fully settled right up to the (rock) bridges.

Hrafnkell rode up along Fljótsdalsheiði and saw where empty-valley went from Jökulsdalr. That valley showed-sk to-Hrafnkell more-habitable than other valleys.

Hrafnkell rode up over Fljótsdalsheiðr and saw an uninhabited valley leading off from Jökulsdalr. The valley seemed more habitable to Hrafnkell than other valleys.

But when Hrafnkell came home, asked he father REFL. POSS. for-division-of-property, and said-sk he dwelling-place want raise for-self.

And so when Hrafnkell came home, he asked his father for a division of the property, and said he wanted to build a dwelling for himself.

This grants father his to-him, and he makes for-self farm in valley that and calls at Aðalbóli.

His father grants him this, and he makes himself a farm in that valley and calls it Aðalból.

Hrafnkell got Oddbjarg Skjöldólfsdóttur from Laxárdalr. They had two sons.

Hrafnkell married Oddbjarg Skjöldólfsdóttir from Laxárdalr. They had two sons.
3.1.9 The suffixed definite article

As in the Scandinavian languages in general, the definite article — the word for ‘the’ — may be suffixed to the noun. That is to say, it takes the form of an ending. Like the noun itself, the definite article is inflected for number and case. In addition, it is inflected for gender, i.e. it has different forms for masculine, feminine and neuter.

The forms of the suffixed article in Old Norse are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg.</td>
<td>nom. -(i)nn Pl. nom. -(i)nir</td>
<td>Sg. nom. -(i)n Pl. nom. -nar</td>
<td>Sg. nom. -(i)t Pl. nom. -(i)n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>-(i)nn acc. -(i)na</td>
<td>acc. -(i)na acc. -nar</td>
<td>acc. -(i)t acc. -(i)n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>-(i)ns gen. -nna</td>
<td>gen. -(i)nnar gen. -nna</td>
<td>gen. -(i)ms gen. -nna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>-(i)num dat. -num</td>
<td>dat. -(i)nni dat. -num</td>
<td>dat. -(i)nu dat. -num</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence or absence of the initial -i (in some texts -e) is unlikely to cause the learner serious problems of recognition. In the example sentences in 3.1.5 we had on the one hand (3), (6) leiðinu, skipinu, with dat. n. sg. -i noun ending + -nu, and on the other (20) gölfíti with acc. n. sg. zero noun ending + -it, all of them unambiguously combinations of noun and definite article (cf. also vár-it, sumar-it (both acc. n. sg.) and hús-in (acc. n. pl.) in the extract from Hrafnkels saga above). Contrastive examples with and without -i, based on the list of noun paradigms in 3.1.8, are:
The most general rule governing the occurrence of initial -i in the def. art. is that it is found in conjunction with words of one syllable and omitted elsewhere (contrast the left and right-hand lists above). However, there are several exceptions to this.

The -i is omitted after the following monosyllabic forms.

(1) Nom./acc. m./f. pl. (cf. fœtr-nir (nom. m. pl.), fœtr-na (acc. m. pl.) dœtr-nar (nom./acc. f. pl.)); an exception to the exception is represented by menn-inir, menn-ina (nom. and acc. m. pl. respectively), though this is a rare type.

(2) Those ending in a vowel, but only where the article is disyllabic (contrast kné-in with á-nni above).

(3) Dative masculine singulars that lack the usual -i ending (cf. stað-num).

The -i is retained after genitive singulars in -ar (cf. staðarins above, further eyjarinnar (gen. f. sg.)).

Note that in the dative plural, the noun ending -(u)m loses its m and the article is suffixed onto the u or stressed vowel (cf. kötlunum, sogunum, ordunum, knjánum).

As with the nouns, certain regularities will be observed in the definite article paradigms. It will also be noticed that there are various points of similarity between noun and article endings.

(1) The dat. pl. always ends in -um (as with nouns).
(2) The gen. pl. always ends in -a (as with nouns).
(3) It is only in the f. sg. and m. pl. there is a difference between nom. and acc. forms.
(4) The gen. m. and n. sg. ends in -s, the gen. f. sg. in -ar (as with most nouns, though some masculine genitives end in -ar).
(5) The nom. m. pl. ends in -ir, the acc. m. pl. in -a, and the nom./acc. f. pl. in -ar (cf. the pattern for nouns: nom. m. pl. and nom./acc. f. pl. = vowel + r, acc. m. pl. = vowel alone).

As well as the -(i)nn suffix dealt with here, Old Norse has a free-
standing definite article. However, since its use is closely bound up with that of the adjective, it is dealt with in 3.3.5, following the description of adjective inflexions.

It should be noted that the definite article is used more sparingly in Old Norse than in modern English. It is regularly omitted, for example, from nouns that denote something familiar to writer and reader. Thus konungr may mean ‘a king’ or ‘the king’ depending on the context. Contrast:

Fornjótr hefir konungr heitit
‘Fornjótr has king been-called’
‘There was a king called Fornjótr’

Konungr varð reiðr mjók
‘King became angry very’
‘The king became very angry’

3.1.9 The suffixed definite article — Exercise

Identify the case, gender, number, syntactic function and semantic role of the definite nouns printed in bold in the following sentences, and insert a hyphen between noun and article. Where the noun appears in a case other than nominative singular, give the nominative singular definite form.

(1) Brúðrin var heldr dýpr
‘The bride was rather sad’

(2) Illugi kippði inn aprtr vǫrusekkunum
‘Illugi snatched in again the sacks of wares’

(3) Æir kómu til boðsins
‘They came to the feast’

(4) Tekr Skrámir nestbaggann
‘Skrámir takes the provision-bag’

(5) Konan þakkaði honum vel gjoðina
‘Woman-the thanked to-him well gift-the’
‘The woman thanked him well for the gift’
Noun inflexions and their function

(6) Þæði sendi hann gestina út eptir þeim
   ‘Then he sent the retainers out after them’

(7) Þeir kómu þá til borgarinnar
   ‘They came then to the castle’

(8) Berserkinn leið aprtr yfir ánna
   ‘The berserk looked back across the river’

(9) Þá smugu þeir milli spalanna
   ‘Then they slipped between the bars’

(10) Lítill var gleði manna at boðinu
   ‘Little was joy of-men at feast-the’
   ‘Men were not very joyful at the feast’

(11) Jarl kom út í eyjarnar
   ‘The earl came out to the islands’

(12) Þorsteinn lagið fæð á Austmanninn, ok fór hann á brótt
    um sumarit, ok er hann nú ór sogunní
   ‘Thorstein laid coldness on easterner-the, and went he a(-)way
    in summer-the, and is he now out-of story-the’
   ‘Thorstein was cold towards the Norwegian, and in the sum-
    mer he left, and now he is out of the story’

(13) Þeir eru vanir at halda til móts við hofingjana
   ‘They are accustomed to hold at(-)gainst towards chieftains-the’
   ‘They are accustomed to offer resistance to the rulers’

(14) Í hellinum var féván mikil, ok kaupmenninir réðu til
    ok gengu hellinn
   ‘In cave-the was treasure-hope great, and merchants-the set
    about and walked cave-the’
   ‘There was great hope of finding treasure in the cave, and the
    merchants had a go and explored the cave’

(15) Þeir lögðu saman skipin
   ‘They laid together ships-the’
   ‘They laid the ships alongside each other’
3.2 Pronoun inflexions and their function

Pronouns are sometimes defined as words that stand in place of nouns. A more accurate definition is that they are words that occupy the same position in sentences as noun phrases. What this means is that in English, for example, noun phrases such as (1) the old man with the long white beard, (2) my colleague, who works at the university, (3) all the people, (4) not the tiniest little bit are reducible to single words like (1) he, (2) she, (3) everyone, (4) none. Of course, a noun phrase will often consist of just one word, e.g. John, moonlight, and these too may be replaced by pronouns (he, it), but a definition of pronoun that looks no further than this is clearly inadequate.

Many pronouns in addition to replacing noun phrases may be used adjectivally, i.e. as modifiers of noun phrases, like English this and some in this man, some particularly interesting ideas. Although arguably function should determine word class, it is impractical in a basic learners’ grammar such as this to operate with both pronominal and adjectival this, some etc. Section 3.2 therefore deals with words that regularly function as pronouns, irrespective of how else they may be used.

The personal pronouns I, you, he, she, it, we, they, together with the demonstratives this, that, the indefinites some, any, the negatives no one, nothing, none and the interrogatives who, what, are among the most commonly occurring words in English, and the same is true of their Old Norse equivalents. It is therefore clearly essential to learn the (often somewhat idiosyncratic) inflexions of these words as quickly as possible.

Since pronouns occupy the same position in sentences as noun phrases, it is no surprise to find that, like nouns, they are inflected for number and case in Old Norse, and that the function of the inflexions is in general the same as for nouns (cf. 3.1.1, 3.1.2). In addition, because pronouns ‘stand for’, i.e. take their reference from, noun phrases, many of them are also inflected for gender. Personal pronouns distinguish ‘person’, that is, the choice of pronoun depends on the perspective from which the participants in a situation are viewed. Old Norse, like English, has a three-way contrast: 1st person, in which a speaker or writer refers to him/herself (English I) or a group of which s/he is a part (Eng. we), 2nd person, in which a speaker/writer refers to a person
Pronoun inflexions and their function

or persons s/he is addressing (Eng. you, sg. or pl.), 3rd person, in which a person or persons other than the speaker/writer him/herself or the one/those s/he is addressing are referred to (Eng. he, she, it, they).

3.2.1 Personal pronouns: form

| 1st person: ‘I [sg.], ‘we two [dual]’, ‘we [pl.]’ |
|---|---|---|---|
| nom. | Sg. ek |Dual vit | Pl. vér |  |
| acc. | mik | ok(k)r | oss |  |
| gen. | mín | okkar | vár |  |
| dat. | mér | ok(k)r | oss |  |

| 2nd person: ‘you [sg.], ‘you two [dual]’, ‘you [pl.]’ |
|---|---|---|---|
| nom. | Sg. þú |Dual (þ)it | Pl. (þ)ér |  |
| acc. | þik | yk(k)r | yðr |  |
| gen. | þín | ykkar | yð(v)ar |  |
| dat. | þér | yk(k)r | yðr |  |

| 3rd person singular: ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’ |
|---|---|---|---|
| nom. | hann | hon | þat |  |
| acc. | hann | hana | þat |  |
| gen. | hans | hennar | þess |  |
| dat. | honum | henni | þ(v)í |  |

| 3rd person plural: ‘they’ |
|---|---|---|---|
| nom. | m. þeir | f. þær | n. þau |  |
| acc. | þá | þær | þau |  |
| gen. | þeir(r)a | þeir(r)a | þeir(r)a |  |
| dat. | þeim | þeim | þeim |  |
Various features of these paradigms are worthy of note.

(1) No distinction of gender is found in the first and second person, or in the third person reflexive. Observe, though, that, unlike English, Old Norse employs a masculine, feminine or neuter form of ‘they’ depending on the gender of the entity referred to. Where more than one gender is involved, the neuter plural is used.

(2) The three-way distinction: singular (used of one entity) — dual (used of two) — plural (used of more than two), occurs only in the first and second person.

(3) A separate reflexive pronoun is found only in the third person. The same forms are used whether the entity referred to by the pronoun is singular or plural, masculine, feminine or neuter. The only distinction made is of case, and then only between accusative, genitive and dative. No nominative form exists since reflexives are normally coreferential with (i.e. refer to the same entity as) the subject (cf. English: *John hurt himself*, but not *heself hurt John*). In the first and second person, the accusative, genitive and dative forms function both as non-reflexives and reflexives (thus *mik*, for example, means ‘me’ or ‘myself’, *ydr* ‘you [pl.]’ or ‘yourselves’).

Beyond this, the student will observe certain regularities in the paradigms, and similarities with other inflexions. The accusative, genitive and dative of the first and second person singular and of the reflexive vary only in the initial consonant. There is also minimal variation between the first and second person dual. First and second person dual and plural do not distinguish accusative and dative, and all have a genitive ending in -r (–ar except for vâr). The third person endings, especially in the singular, will be seen to correspond quite closely to those of the suffixed definite article, while the masculine and neuter genitive singular in -s and the feminine in -ar, the nominative masculine and nominative/accusative feminine plural in -r, the accusative masculine plural in a vowel, the genitive plural in -a and the dative plural in -m show a marked similarity to noun inflexions as well. Finally, it
should be noted that the nominative forms *ek* and *þú* can sometimes be found suffixed to the verb, in which case *ek* loses its vowel (e.g. *hafðak* < *hafða ek* ‘I had’, *kannk* < *kann ek* ‘I can’), while the *þ* of *þú* undergoes partial or complete assimilation with the immediately preceding consonant (e.g. *heyrðu* < *heyr þú* ‘hear you [i.e. listen!]’, *fórtu* < *fórt þú* ‘you went’, *seldu* < *sel þú* ‘hand you [i.e. hand over!]’). Occasionally other of the personal pronoun forms may be suffixed in this way, but the student is unlikely to come across them in straightforward prose texts.

3.2.2 Demonstrative pronouns: form

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg.</td>
<td>sóm.</td>
<td>sóm.</td>
<td>sóm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>sá</td>
<td>sú</td>
<td>þat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>þan</td>
<td>þá</td>
<td>þat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>þess</td>
<td>þeir(r)ar</td>
<td>þess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>þeim</td>
<td>þeir(r)i</td>
<td>þ(v)í</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>þeir</td>
<td>þær</td>
<td>þau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>þá</td>
<td>þær</td>
<td>þau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>þeir(r)a</td>
<td>þeir(r)a</td>
<td>þeir(r)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>þeim</td>
<td>þeim</td>
<td>þeim</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The neuter singular and all the plural forms of this pronoun will be seen to be identical with those of the personal pronoun, third person, given in 3.2.1. In fact we are dealing with one and the same word. The change in meaning from, for example, ‘those female beings’ or ‘those feminine objects’ to ‘they [f.]’ is very small. Indeed, the same development can be observed in many languages (French *il* ‘he’, *elle* ‘she’, for example, come from the Latin pronoun *ille* ‘that’), and on occasion Old Norse *sá*, *sú* are found in place of *hann*, *hon*.

Although there is considerable irregularity in the paradigm, compare the acc., gen., dat. m. sg. endings -n, -ss, -m and the acc., gen., dat. f. sg. -á, -ar, -i with those of the corresponding forms of the suffixed definite article (3.1.9) and of *hinn* immediately below.
The student will observe the close similarity between the forms of this pronoun and those of the suffixed definite article (though note the \(-t\) in the nom./acc. n. sg.). There is in fact a strong likelihood that the suffixed article is a reduced form of *hinn*. Not only does the similarity of form suggest this, the development: demonstrative pronoun > definite article is quite widely attested (cf., for example, French *le*, *la* — like *il*, *elle*, though by a different route — from Latin *ille* ‘that’). On the relationship between *hinn* and (*h*)inn, the free-standing definite article of Old Norse, see 3.3.5.

In this paradigm the number of alternative forms is noteworthy, but few are likely to cause problems of recognition. The nominative
Pronoun inflexions and their function

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Singulars sjá and þessi are both common, but dat. m. sg. þeima and dat. n. sg. þvísa are much less so. The genitive and dative feminine singular and the genitive plural can be thought of as þessar, þessi, þessa respectively, basic forms which are sometimes expanded by suffixes (þessar-ðar, þessa-ðra), or infixes (þess-ðar-ði). Although the forms of this pronoun may appear anomalous, similarities with other paradigms can still be found. The endings of the plural in particular are very close to those of hinn (above), and even in the singular we notice the characteristic -a and -ar endings in the feminine accusative and genitive, and -um, -i, -u in the masculine, feminine and neuter dative respectively. Some of the remaining forms also show characteristic features, though not in the endings — observe the n, t and s of acc. m. -nn-, nom./acc. n. -tt- and gen. m. and n. -ss-.

3.2.3 Indefinite pronouns: form

By far the most common indefinite pronoun in Old Norse is nokkur (in some texts with o for ð: nokkur, nokkut, etc.) ‘some(one/thing)’ ‘any(one/thing)’ ‘(a) certain’. Its endings are almost identical to those of a strong adjective (see 3.3.4), and very close to those of hinn (above). The difference between the inflexions of nokkur and hinn is largely determined by the final consonant of the root: the n of hin-assimilates a following r, and so we get forms like nom. m. sg. hinn, dat. f. sg. hinna, gen. pl. hinna (instead of *hinr, *hinri, *hinra).

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sg.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>nokkur</td>
<td>nokkur</td>
<td>nokkut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>nokkurr</td>
<td>nokkura</td>
<td>nokkut</td>
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<td>gen.</td>
<td>nokkurs</td>
<td>nokkurra</td>
<td>nokkurs</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>nokkurum</td>
<td>nokkurri</td>
<td>nokkuru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pl.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>nokkurir</td>
<td>nokkurar</td>
<td>nokkur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>nokkura</td>
<td>nokkurar</td>
<td>nokkur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>nokkurra</td>
<td>nokkura</td>
<td>nokkurra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>nokkurum</td>
<td>nokkurum</td>
<td>nokkurum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the oldest sources many of the forms of this pronoun appear with root nakkvar-.

Other indefinite pronouns are einnhrær ‘some(one/thing)’, and sumr ‘some’. The former consists of an invariable ein-, except in the nom./acc. m. and n. sg. (einn-, eitt- respectively), and occasionally the gen. m. and n. sg. (eins-), + hverr, the inflexions of which are described below. The latter inflects like a strong adjective (see 3.3.4).

3.2.4 Negative pronouns: form

Of the sundry negative pronouns of Old Norse the only one the learner will encounter regularly is engi ‘no one’ ‘nothing’ ‘none’ ‘no’. The various forms of the other negatives, manngi ‘no one’, veitki ‘nothing’, hváigr or hvárgi ‘neither’, will, when met with, be well enough understood from the glosses and examples given in Old Norse dictionaries.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>engi</td>
<td>engi</td>
<td>ekki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>engan/engi</td>
<td>enga</td>
<td>ekki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>enskis</td>
<td>engrar</td>
<td>enskis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>engum</td>
<td>engri</td>
<td>engu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
<td>engir</td>
<td>engar</td>
<td>engi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>enga</td>
<td>engar</td>
<td>engi</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>engra</td>
<td>engra</td>
<td>engra</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>engum</td>
<td>engum</td>
<td>engum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paradigm presented here gives the most common forms of engi. A complete list of attested forms will be found in Noreen 1923 (p. 323). Virtually all of these are easily deducible, however, as long as it is known (1) that the root of the word may be eing- or øng- as well as eng-, and (2) that -v- may be added before endings beginning with -a (e.g. nom./acc. f. pl. øngvar, engvar) and before the -ir of the nom. m. pl. (e.g. øngvir, engvir).

The inflexions of engi present a familiar enough pattern (observe, however, nom./acc. n. sg. ekki, from *eitt-ki < *eitt-gi). The student
should compare the endings given above with those of *hinn* and *nokkur*, especially the latter, and make a note of where they coincide. Only forms peculiar to *engi* need be learnt specially.

### 3.2.5 Interrogative and distributive pronouns: form

The two principal pronouns in this category are *hverr* ‘who’ ‘what’ ‘which’, ‘each’ ‘every’, and *hvárr* ‘which of two’, ‘each of two’ (sg.), ‘which of two groups’, ‘each of two groups’ (pl.). With the exception of the acc. m. sg. forms, *hvern* and *hvárn*, both decline like strong adjectives (see 3.3.4). In common with some adjectives *hverr* inserts a *-j-* between root and endings beginning with *-a* or *-u*; *hvárr* does not.

For ease of overview, the complete paradigm of *hverr* is now given.

<table>
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<th>m.</th>
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<th>n.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>hverr</td>
<td>hver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>hver</td>
<td>hverja</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>hvers</td>
<td>hverr</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>hverjum</td>
<td>hverri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>hverir</td>
<td>hverjar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>hverja</td>
<td>hverjar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>hverra</td>
<td>hverra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>hverjum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In addition to *hverr* and *hvárr* we have *hvat* ‘what’, ‘each (thing)’ ‘every(thing)’, *hvatki* ‘each thing’, and *hvatveðna* ‘everything’. None of these occurs with anything like a complete set of forms; indeed, apart from odd relics of a masculine equivalent of *hvat*, they are neuter singular only. Even then, except in the case of *hvatveðna* (gen. *hverveðna*, dat. *hvíveðna*), the paradigms are defective. For although *hves* and *hv* are often quoted as the genitive and dative form of *hvat*, they tend to function as separate words (*hv* for example, occurs mostly in the sense ‘why?’). And while a genitive *hves*(*skis* and dative *hvígi* of neuter singular *hvatki* are indeed found, the meaning, ‘whatsoever’, is somewhat removed from that of *hvatki*. 
3.2.1/3.2.2/3.2.3/3.2.4/3.2.5 Personal pronouns: form/Demonstrative pronouns: form/Indefinite pronouns: form/Negative pronouns: form/Interrogative and distributive pronouns: form — Exercise

1. Which of the personal pronouns are inflected for gender?
2. Which of the personal pronouns distinguish three numbers (singular, dual and plural)?
3. Give the forms of the 3rd person reflexive pronoun and explain why there is no nominative.
4. What regularities can be observed in the forms of the personal pronouns?
5. What similarities are there between the endings of *hinn* and *sjá/pessi*?
6. In what respects do the endings of *hinn, nokkur* and *engi* differ?
7. Give the full paradigm of *hvárr* and compare its endings with those of *hvær*.
8. In what sense is the paradigm of *hvát* defective?

3.2.6 Examples of pronoun usage

As was done for nouns, examples will now be given of pronouns in function. With the wide range of pronominal words and forms that exists, nothing like a comprehensive survey can be provided; the aim is rather to illustrate typical usage. The exemplification follows the same pattern as for nouns (see the preamble on p. 31). Note in particular that the ending or word-form being illustrated is printed in bold type. Compare the endings and word-forms used with those set out and discussed on pp. 61–67. Observe, too, the differences between Old Norse and English phraseology and sentence formation. Definitions of basic concepts that have already been given are not repeated; if in doubt, the student should consult the individual commentaries that accompany each of the examples of noun function.

(1) Eigi sagða ek þér þat
    ‘Not said I to-you that’
    ‘I did not tell you that’
Ek (1st person sg. nom.) is the subject; ‘I’ is the agent or ‘performer’ of the action and the first noun phrase in the sentence. Péir (2nd sg. dat.) is the indirect object; ‘you’ is the beneficiary of the action and the second noun phrase. Pat (3rd. sg. n. acc.) is the direct object, the goal of the action (i.e. what is said) and the third noun phrase.

(2) Pá skutu péir spjótum inn at þeim

‘Then they threw spears in at them’

The subject is péir (3rd pl. m. nom.), the agent and first noun phrase in the sentence. Þeim (3rd pl. dat.) does not function here as a noun phrase, but is part of the preposition phrase at þeim, in which the pronoun is governed (i.e. has its case determined) by the preposition at (see 3.7, 3.7.3).

(3) Víltu nokkut liðsínni okkr veita?

‘Will-you any help to-us-two give?’

‘Will you give us two any help?’

The subject is -tu (2nd sg. nom., suffixed to the verb); it is the agent and first noun phrase in the sentence. Nokkut is part of the direct object. The second noun phrase and the goal of the action consists of the noun liðsínni (acc. n. sg.) modified by the pronoun nokkut (which since it appears here in the role of modifier functions adjectivally; see 3.2). As a modifier nokkut appears in the same case (acc.), gender (n.) and number (sg.) as its head word (liðsínni). This formal relationship between the two (whereby the head word determines the form of its modifier) is known as grammatical agreement or concord and is a regular phenomenon in Old Norse (see 3.3.1). Okkr (1st dual dat.) is the indirect object; it denotes the beneficiary of the action and is the third noun phrase in the sentence.

(4) Þórhildr lagði yfir hann skikkjuna, ok gekk hann út á meðal þeira

‘Þórhildr put the cloak over him, and he went out between them’

This example consists of two sentences. Hann (3rd sg. m. acc.) in sentence 1 is part of the preposition phrase yfir hann, and its case is determined by the preposition yfir (see 3.7, 3.7.4). Hann (3rd sg. m. nom.) in sentence 2 is subject, the first noun phrase and the agent. Peira (3rd pl. gen.) is part of the preposition phrase meðal þeira, and its case is determined by the preposition meðal (see 3.7.2).
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(5) Hefn ðú vár, en vér skulum þín, ef vér lifum eptir
   ‘Avenge you us, but we shall you, if we live afterwards’
   ‘Avenge us, and we shall (avenge) you, if we survive’

This example consists of three sentences. ðú (2nd sg. nom.) in sentence 1 is the subject (of an imperative verb, cf. 3.6.3, 3.6.5.1), the first noun phrase and the agent; vár (1st pl. gen.) is the direct object of the verb (hefn) and the second noun phrase. Vér (1st pl. nom.) in sentence 2 is subject, the first noun phrase and agent (of the understood verb hefnah; þín (2nd sg. gen.) is the direct object of the (understood) verb and the second noun phrase. Vér (1st pl. nom.) in sentence 3 is subject, not so much agent here, rather the ‘experiencer’, denoting those who (may) experience survival.

(6) Pau væntu sér af honum nokkurtrausts
   ‘They expected for-self of him some support’
   ‘They expected (for themselves) some support from him’

Pau (3rd pl. n. nom., referring to persons of more than one gender) is subject, the first noun phrase and the experiencer. Sér (refl. dat.) is the indirect object, the second noun phrase and the intended beneficiary; it is coreferential with the subject (i.e. both subject and indirect object refer to the same entity; see 3.2.1). Honum (3rd sg. m. dat.) is part of the preposition phrase af honum, and its case is determined by the preposition af (see 3.7.3). Nokkurtrausts is part of the direct object: the third noun phrase, denoting what is experienced (the goal of the experiencing), consists of the noun trausts (gen. n. sg.) modified by the pronoun nokkur, which has the same case, gender and number as its head word (see example (3) above).

(7) ðví skaltu heita mér, at koma aptr til mín at ǫðru hausti
   ‘That shall-you promise to-me, to come back to me at second autumn’
   ‘You must promise me to come back to me next autumn’

ðví (3rd sg. n. dat.) is the anticipatory direct object: the thing promised is ‘to come back . . . ’, but the infinitive clause — the equivalent of a noun phrase — is postponed and its place filled by the pronoun því. The unmarked position for the direct object would be somewhere after the subject and the finite verb (skaltu), but here it has been moved to the front of the sentence for emphasis. The subject is -tu (2nd sg. nom., suffixed to the verb); it is the agent, and — the fronted því apart — the first noun phrase in the sentence. Mér (1st sg. dat.) is the indirect object, the beneficiary (the person to whom the promise is made), and the second or third noun phrase. Mín (1st sg. gen.) is part of the preposition phrase til mín, and its case is governed by the preposition til (see 3.7.2).
Pronoun inflexions and their function

(8) Takið hana ok haldið henni

‘Take her and hold her’

This example contains two sentences, each with its finite verb in the imperative (‘take!’; ‘hold!’; see (5) above, but also 3.6.3). The subject is left unexpressed, as generally happens with imperatives in English too. Hana and henni (3rd sg. f. acc. and dat. respectively) are both direct objects, the goals of the actions; their case is determined by the verb they are object of (taka ‘take’ normally has a direct object in the accusative, haldi in the sense ‘hold fast’ ‘restrain’ has its direct object in the dative).

(9) Meguð þér vel bíða þess, er eldrinn vinnr þá

‘Can you well await that, that fire-the overcomes them’

“You can easily wait for the fire to overcome them’

This example consists of two sentences. Þér (2nd pl. nom.) is the subject of sentence 1, the agent and the first noun phrase. Þess (3rd sg. n. gen.) is the anticipatory direct object (see (7) above): the thing being waited for is ‘that the fire overcomes them’, but this dependent sentence — the equivalent of a noun phrase — is postponed and its place filled by the pronoun þess. Þá is the direct object of (the dependent) sentence 2, the goal of the ‘action’ and the second noun phrase (the first — the subject — being eldrinn).

(10) Þær hvíla sík þar nokkurð nætr

‘They rest self there some nights’

“They rest themselves there for a few nights’

Þær (3rd pl. f. nom., referring to women) is subject, the first noun phrase in the sentence and the agent. Sík (refl. acc.) is the direct object, the goal of the action and the second noun phrase; it is coreferential with the subject (see (6) above). Nokkurð is part of the adverbial phrase nokkurð nætr (acc. f. pl.), which expresses duration of time; nokkurð modifies the head word nætr, and so appears in the same case, gender and number.

(11) Hvers þykkr yðr sá verðr, er þetta ráð gaf til?

‘Of-what seems to-you that-man worthy who this advice gave towards [a solution of the problem]?’

“What do you think the man who proffered this advice deserves?’

This example consists of an interrogative sentence, followed by an elliptical infinitive clause (3.9.5.2) and a dependent sentence. Hvers (gen. n. sg.) is an interrogative pronoun, and as such is moved out of an unmarked position after
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verðr (sá er verðr X ‘that person is worthy of X’) to the front of the sentence (cf. the identical movement in English); its case is determined by the adjective verðr (cf. English worthy/deserving of something), and its neuter gender by the fact that it does not refer to anything of specifically masculine or feminine gender. In traditional analysis yðr (2nd pl. dat., but used here as a singular honorific, like French vous — the person being addressed is the king) would be classed as the indirect object (the recipient or experiencer of the ‘seeming’, cf. ‘to-you’), but recently claims have been made for the existence of a class of ‘oblique’ (i.e. non-nominative) subjects into which yðr here would fall (note that with þykðþr ‘seems’ the person to whom something seems is normally always the first noun phrase in the sentence; see further 3.9.3). Sá (nom. m. sg.) is the subject of the elliptical infinitive clause (sá [vera] verðr ‘that man [to be] worthy’) — what the clause is about.

fietta rá› (acc. n. sg.); with fietta modifying rá›, is the direct object of the dependent sentence, the goal of the action (the words refer to the thing given or proffered); it is the only noun phrase in the sentence, the subject being subsumed into the relative particle or complementiser er, which is best regarded as being outside the sentence (see 3.8, 3.8.2.1).

(12)  
Hin vistin fœ›ir likamiinn, sjá fœ›ir sálina
   ‘That sustenance feeds the body, this feeds the soul’

This example consists of two sentences. In sentence 1, hin vistin (nom. f. sg.), with hin modifying vist-in (noun + def. art.), is the subject; it is the ‘performer’ of the action and the first noun phrase. In sentence 2, sjá (nom. f. sg.) is also the subject, fulfilling on its own the same function as hin vistin in sentence 1. Notice how hin contrasts with sjá: ‘that other one’ as opposed to ‘this one’.

(13)  
Hon virði þenna meira en hinn
   ‘She valued this more than that’
   ‘She held this one in higher esteem than the other’

Hon (3rd sg. f. nom.) is the subject, the agent and the first noun phrase in the sentence. Þenna (acc. m. sg., referring to an entity — person, animal or object — of masculine gender) is the direct object (what is valued) and the second noun phrase. Hinn (acc. m. sg., likewise referring to an entity of masculine gender) is part of a comparative phrase; this can be understood as ‘more than [she valued] the other’, and hinn taken as a direct object too.

(14)  
Nú verðr hann varr þessara tíðinda
   ‘Now becomes he aware of these tidings’
   ‘Now he becomes aware of these events’
Pronoun inflexions and their function

Hann (3rd sg. m. nom.) is the subject, not the agent here but the experiencer, and the first noun phrase in the sentence. The noun phrase *fressara tíðinda* (gen. pl.), with *fressara* modifying *tíðinda*, has its case determined by the adjective *varr* (cf. English *aware of something*).

15) Sumir váru drepnir ok sumir flýðu ór landi
   ‘Some were killed and some fled from (the) country’

This example consists of two sentences, in both of which *sumir* (nom. m. pl.) is subject, the first noun phrase and, in sentence 2, the agent. In sentence 1 with its passive verb phrase (*váru drepnir* ‘were killed’, see 3.6.4) the subject is the recipient or goal of the action (a typical feature of passive constructions).

16) *Engi* er svá líttill drykkjumaðr, at . . .
   ‘None is so little drinking-man that . . .’

*Engi* (nom. m. sg.) is the subject (the *X* in an *X is Y* construction, see 3.1.5, sentence 1) and the first noun phrase in the sentence.

17) *Hon* svarar engu
   ‘She answers nothing’

*Hon* (3rd sg. f. nom.) is subject, the agent and first noun phrase in the sentence. *Engu* (dat. n. sg.) can be construed as the direct object of *svarar* (what is answered), but in origin it probably had instrumental sense (the idea of answering with something, cf. 3.1.5, sentence 20).

18) *Engi* skip skulu sigla burt
   ‘No ships shall sail away’

*Engi* skip (nom. n. pl.), with *engi* modifying *skip*, is subject, the (potential) ‘performer’ of the action and the only noun phrase in the sentence.

19) *Hverju* skal launa kvæðit?
   ‘With-what shall reward poem-the?’

*Hverju* (dat. n. sg.) as an interrogative pronoun is moved out of an unmarked position after the verb *launa* (*X launar kvæðit Y*, where *Y* represents the dative...
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phrase) and fronted (cf. (11) above); the sense is instrumental, hence the use of the dative. It will be observed that (19) is without a subject (i.e. there is no element that corresponds to \( X \) in the abstraction above); although rare in English, subjectless sentences are a regular feature of Old Norse (see 3.9.3).

(20) Hvárr ykkar hefir drepit dýrit?
    ‘Which (of the two) of you two has killed the animal?’

\( \text{Hvárr} \) (nom. m. sg.) is an interrogative pronoun (‘which of two?’), but unlike hverju in the preceding example it is the subject of its sentence and thus stands in its unmarked position as the first noun phrase (cf. \( X \) hefir drepit dýrit where \( X \) is the agent). Ykkar (2nd dual gen.) has partitive sense: ‘you two’ is the whole of which one is the part (cf. English: five of the students (five = part, students = whole), the south of the country (the south = part, country = whole)).

(21) Hvát sýnisk þér ráð?
    ‘What shows-sk to-you plan?’
    ‘What seems to you a good plan/advisable?’

\( \text{Hvät} \) (nom. n. sg.) is an interrogative pronoun; traditionally it would be analysed as subject and þér as indirect object (the recipient or experiencer of the ‘seeming’), but more recent approaches (cf. (11) above) would class þér as (an oblique) subject and hvat as direct object (notwithstanding the latter is nominative, cf. 3.1.2 and 3.1.5, sentences 1 and 5), in which case the interrogative must be deemed to have moved from its unmarked position to the front of the sentence (cf. mér sýnisk þat ráð ‘to-me shows-sk that plan [i.e. that seems to me advisable/I think that advisable]’, where þat (nom.) is the putative object). Note that the pronoun hvat normally only occurs in the nominative and accusative neuter singular (cf. 3.2.5).

(22) Nú forvitnar mik at vita, hverja ek hefi hér fóstrat, eðr hverrar ættar þit eruð
    ‘Now interests me to know whom I have here fostered, or of-what family you-two are’
    ‘Now I am curious to know whom I have been fostering here, or what family you two belong to’

This example consists of three sentences and an infinitive clause (at vita). Sentence 1 is what is traditionally called ‘impersonal’, by which is meant that it has no nominative subject; such an analysis would class miki (1st sg. acc.) as direct object. More recent approaches would see miki as an oblique subject (cf.


(11) and (21) above), the experiencer and first (and only) noun phrase. Hverja (acc. m. pl.) in sentence 2 is the direct object — the goal of the action — but since it takes the form of an interrogative pronoun, it is fronted from its unmarked position after subject and finite or non-finite verb (cf. ek hefi fóstrat hann or ek hefi hann fóstrat). Ek (1st sg. nom.) is the subject of sentence 2, the agent and, apart from the fronted interrogative, the first noun phrase. In hverrar settar (gen. f. sg.) in sentence 3, with hverrar modifying settar and the whole phrase fronted because of the presence of the interrogative, the genitive has a defining or connective sense (note that once again the Old Norse genitive can correspond to English of). Pít (2nd dual nom.) is the subject: the X of an X is Y construction, and, the fronted interrogative apart, the first noun phrase.

(23) Hann er hverjum manni betr vígr
    ‘He is than-every man better able-to-fight’
    ‘He is a more able fighter than anyone else’

Hann (3rd sg. m. nom.) is subject: the X of an X is Y construction and the first noun phrase. Hverjam manni (dat. m. sg.), with hverjam modifying manni, is the second proposition in a comparative construction — the proposition denoting the entity with which the comparison is made (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 21); the dative phrase is the equivalent of the noun phrase X (in whatever case is appropriate) that follows en ‘than’ in a comparative adjective + en construction (e.g. fleiri en X ‘more than X’).

(24) Pá skyldu ein manngjöld koma fyrir hvern hinna
    ‘Then should single compensation come for each of the others’
    ‘Then there was to be single compensation for each of the others’

Hvern (acc. m. sg.) does not function here as a noun phrase, but is part of the preposition phrase fyrir hvern, and its case is determined by the preposition fyrir (see 3.7.4). Hinna (gen. pl.) has partitive sense: ‘the others’ is the whole of which each individual is a part (cf. (20) above).
3.2.6 Examples of pronoun usage — Exercise

1. What is the principal grammatical function of pronouns?
2. What does it mean that pronouns may be used ‘adjectivally’? Give two Old Norse examples of such usage.
3. Explain the difference between singular, dual and plural function. Give one example of each from Old Norse.
4. How are the reflexive forms sik, sín, sér used?
5. Pau can refer to a plural entity of neuter gender. What else may it refer to?
6. What is the difference in function between hann/hon on the one hand and sá/sú on the other?
7. In what sense is the pronoun hinn contrastive? Give two examples of the way in which it is used.
8. What is the difference in meaning between hverr and hvárr?
9. Give the case and, where appropriate, the gender and number of the pronouns (printed in bold) in the following sentences, and explain their syntactic function and semantic role:

(a) Váru þeir með honum þann vetr
   ‘They were with him that winter’
(b) Sel þér fé þøkkut at láni
   ‘Give me some money on loan’
(c) Þessu skulu engi undirmálfylgja
   ‘No deceit is to accompany this’
(d) Hverr þóat skal fá okkr eyri silfrs
   ‘Each of you is to give us two an ounce of silver’
(e) Hann vildi hefna sín
   ‘He wanted to avenge himself’
3.3 Adjective inflexions and their function

The principal function of adjectives is to modify nouns, and to a lesser extent pronouns. Adjectives may occur as part of a noun phrase — attributive function — or as the complement of a noun phrase — predicative function. English examples, using the adjective *yellow*, are: *a yellow car* or *the yellow car* (attributive), and *the car is yellow* or *he painted the car yellow* (predicative). In addition, adjectives are sometimes used in place of nouns, as in English *the old and the new* or *good and evil*. The fact that nouns, pronouns and adjectives all occur in noun phrases either alone or in conjunction with other words indicates that the three word classes have much in common.

Like nouns and pronouns, adjectives in Old Norse are inflected for number and case. In common with many but not all pronouns, they are also inflected for gender. In addition they are inflected for definiteness and degree. This variety of adjectival inflexion means it is particularly important for the student to be able to distinguish one form from another and understand what function any particular form has.

3.3.1 Number, case and gender

Definitions and exemplification of number, case and gender have been given in 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3. What the student needs to grasp about adjectival inflexion for these categories is that it is determined by the noun or pronoun being modified by the adjective. That is to say, there is a formal relationship between the two whereby the form of the noun/pronoun requires a corresponding form of the adjective. E.g. *gōdr* (nom. m. sg.) is the appropriate form of ‘good’ when modifying *maðr* (nom. m. sg.), *gōð* (nom. f. sg.) when modifying *kona* (nom. f. sg.), *gott* (nom./acc. n. sg.) when modifying *skip* (nom./acc. n. sg.), *gōðir* (nom. m. pl.) when modifying *menn* (nom. m. pl.), etc. This relationship is known as (grammatical) agreement or (grammatical) concord. It operates more widely than simply between noun/pronoun and adjective (see especially 3.6.1), but is particularly important in the noun/pronoun–adjective context because it governs much of adjectival inflexion in Old Norse. Furthermore, it is very often in the grammatical
agreement between an adjective and a noun that the gender of the noun is manifested (see 3.1.3).

3.3.2 Definiteness

In Old Norse, as in all Germanic languages originally, there were two types of adjective inflexion, known traditionally as strong and weak. We saw (3.1.4) that the terms themselves had no particular significance when applied to the noun, and the same is true of the adjective.

The weak adjective shares formal similarities with the weak noun. In the singular the two have identical endings, and overall, just as with the nouns, the weak paradigm exhibits much less variety than the strong (cf. that in the plural weak adjectives end either in -u (nom., acc., gen.) or -um (dat.)).

In terms of use the weak noun and weak adjective have little in common. The weak noun, as we have seen, is an inflexional type and nothing more: a noun is either strong or weak, and remains so, however it is used. Adjectives can inflect according to both the strong and the weak pattern. Choice of form depends on function: strong adjectives by and large have indefinite function, weak adjectives definite.

What this means in practice is that strong adjectives chiefly occur in noun phrases without determiners, e.g. **rikr konungr** ‘a powerful king’, **maðr gamall** ‘an old man’, **strendr langar** ‘long beaches’ (with attributive **rikr**, **gamall** and **langar**); **konungr varð reídr mjök** ‘the king became very angry’, **föggr er hlíðin** ‘beautiful is the hillside’ (with predicative **reídr** and **föggr**, which belong to different noun phrases from **konungr** and **hlíðin**, cf. English: the king [NP1] became a beggar [NP2]; because of their function, predicative adjectives are almost always strong — but cf. 3.3.6, sentence 24). Where strong adjectives do appear in conjunction with determiners, these are usually indefinite, e.g. **nókkurri mannigri mynd** (dat. f. sg.) ‘any human shape’.

Weak adjectives typically occur in noun phrases with determiners: the definite article (3.3.5 below), demonstratives (3.2.2) and possessives (3.3.4 below), the latter two commonly in conjunction with the definite article, e.g. **hinna ríku konunga** (gen. pl.) ‘the powerful kings’, **sjá hinna ungi maðr** ‘this the young man [i.e. this young man]’, **feim helga manni** (dat. m. sg.) ‘that holy man [i.e. that saint]’, **hinna yngsta**
son flinn (acc. m. sg.) ‘the youngest son your [i.e. your youngest son]’.
Sometimes where used as an epithet a weak adjective may occur without a determiner, e.g. Eiríkr rauði ‘Eiríkr the red’; here the adjective alone carries the definite sense ‘the red’.

3.3.3 Degree (comparison)

Adjectives in Old Norse, together with adverbs, are inflected for degree. There are three degrees: positive, comparative and superlative, corresponding in form to English: big — bigger — biggest. As in English, the positive degree has no special inflexion, and therefore the form of an adjective in the positive is simply its root plus the appropriate inflexion to indicate number, case, gender and definiteness. The comparative and superlative degrees are normally marked by the suffixes -(a)r, -(a)st respectively; to the superlative suffix is added the appropriate strong or weak ending just as in the positive, to the comparative suffix a limited range of endings that indicate number, case and gender (see 3.3.4 below). Comparative and superlative forms of the adjective are thus double-inflected, e.g. hvass-ar-i (comp. nom. m. sg., f. sg., nom./acc./gen. pl.) ‘sharper’, dýr-r-a (comp. acc./gen./dat. m. sg., n. sg.) ‘dearer’ ‘more precious’, hvass-ast-ar (sup. strong nom./acc. f. pl.) ‘sharpest’, dýr-st-a (sup. strong acc. f. sg., acc. m. pl., weak acc./gen./dat. m. sg., nom. f. sg., n. sg.) ‘dearest’ ‘most precious’.

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3.3.1/3.3.2/3.3.3 Number, case and gender/Definiteness/Degree — Exercise

1. For what grammatical categories are adjectives inflected in Old Norse?
2. What does the term grammatical agreement (or grammatical concord) mean, and how does it apply to the adjective in Old Norse?
3. What governs the choice between strong and weak adjectives in Old Norse?
4. What does it mean that adjectives are inflected for degree?
5. Analyse the following words into root, comparative or superlative suffix and grammatical ending: sterkastir, sæmri, sammara, reidasti.
### 3.3.4 Basic adjective inflexions

Just as in the case of noun inflexion (see 3.1.4), it is the basic patterns the student needs to grasp. Minor variations — to the extent they cause problems of understanding — can be noted and learnt when they are encountered.

From 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above it will be clear that — the comparative and superlative suffixes and comparative endings apart — there are two distinct types of adjective inflexion in Old Norse, strong and weak. Both types, as already observed, inflect for number, case and gender. With two numbers, four cases and three genders, there is thus a possible total of twice twenty-four different inflexions. In fact, because the same form may occur in different parts of the paradigm, the total is much smaller: fundamentally, there are thirteen different strong adjective forms and just four weak. They are as follows (~ = zero, i.e. there is no ending, the form consisting of root alone — e.g. rík ‘powerful’, strong nom. f. sg.; actual paradigms are given in 3.3.9).

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<tr>
<th>Strong masculine</th>
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<th>Pl.</th>
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Adjective inflexions and their function

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<th>Strong neuter</th>
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Certain regularities will be observed in these paradigms.

1. The dat. pl. always ends in -um.
2. Apart from the dat., the weak pl. ends in -u throughout.
3. There are no distinct case-forms in the weak sg. except in the nom. masculine and feminine.
4. The strong gen. pl. always ends in -ra.
5. There is no difference between the neuter nom. and acc., sg. or pl., weak or strong.
6. The strong feminine nom. and acc. pl. have the same ending.
7. The strong masculine and neuter gen. sg. have the same ending.

As well as observing these regularities, the student will notice that adjectival and noun inflexion have much in common. Attention has already been drawn to the complete identity between the singular forms of weak nouns and adjectives. Other instances where the forms are identical or closely similar (all in the strong declension bar (10), which applies to both strong and weak) are as follows.
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(1) Nom. m. sg. in -r.
(2) Gen. m. and n. sg. in -s.
(3) Nom. f. sg. with zero ending.
(4) Gen. f. sg. in -ar (noun), -rar (adj.).
(5) Nom. m. pl. in vowel + r.
(6) Acc. m. pl. in vowel.
(7) Nom./acc. f. pl. in vowel + r.
(8) Nom./acc. n. pl. with zero ending.
(9) Gen. pl. in -a (noun), -ra (adj.).
(10) Dat. pl. in -um.

The student should further observe the close similarity between the strong adjectival endings and those of pronouns such as hinn, ngkjarr, engi, hverr (cf. 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.2.5). The similarity becomes even clearer when the many adjectives with an -in suffix are added to the equation and the comparison is extended to certain of the possessive adjectives and the suffixed definite article (probably a reduced form of hinn, cf. 3.2.2).

Adjectives in -in inflect according to the tables above, but with three distinct deviations (see the example kominn, 3.3.9, paradigm 7).

1) Where the tables show an ending in or beginning with -r, adjectives in -in have -n instead, e.g. -inn (strong nom. m. sg.), -inni (strong dat. f. sg.). This is because an earlier r has assimilated to the n (-inn < *-inr, -inni < *-inri, cf. hinn < *hinr, 3.2.3). (2) The n of the suffix disappears in the strong nom./acc. n. sg. ending, giving -itt (the end result of the development *-int > *-itt > -it, cf. hitt, nom./acc. n. sg. of hinn (3.2.2)). (3) The strong acc. m. sg. has the same form as the nom., ending in -inn. It should also be noted that the -i- of the -in suffix is dropped when the inflexional ending consists of an additional syllable, except in the strong gen. and dat. f. sg. and the strong gen. pl., e.g. -nir (strong nom. m. pl.), -ni (weak nom. m. sg.), -inha (strong gen. pl.). This is not unlike what happens to the suffixed definite article (see 3.1.9), although the pattern is not wholly identical. Most two-syllable adjectives, in fact, drop the unstressed vowel of the second syllable according to the pattern of those in -in. A great many of these have an -al, -il, or -ul suffix (see the example gamall, 3.3.9, paradigm 8), and, just as with the n of -in, the immediately following r of the inflexional endings is assimilated to the l, giving -ll(-) instead of the expected *-lr(-), e.g. -all (strong nom. m. sg.), -allar (strong gen. f. sg.).
The possessive adjectives of the first and second person and the third person reflexive possessive (i.e., words corresponding to English ‘my’, ‘our’, etc. and, with pronominal function, ‘mine’, ‘ours’, etc.) inflect according to one or other of the strong adjective patterns just discussed. *Minn* ‘my’ (see 3.3.9, paradigm 21), *flinn* ‘your [sg.]’, *sinn* ‘his/her/its/their own’ go for the most part like adjectives in -in (but without loss of the *i* at any point since in the possessives it is part of the root syllable). It is worth noting, however, that in having the nom./acc. n. sg. forms *mitt*, *fitt*, *sitt*, they parallel even more closely the paradigm of the pronoun *hinn*, the only difference between the two being that the root vowel of the possessives is long before everything except a geminate consonant, e.g. *minn* (nom. m. sg.), *mín* (gen. m. or n. sg.). *Várr* ‘our [pl.]’ is inflected according to the strong pattern of the tables above, except that, as with certain pronouns, the acc. m. sg. ends in -n (várn). *Okkarr* ‘our [dual]’, *ykkarr* ‘your [dual]’ and *yð(∀)arr* ‘your [pl.]’ parallel *várr* (acc. m. sg. okkarn, ykkarn, yð(∀)arn), but as two-syllable words drop the unstressed vowel of the second syllable according to the pattern of the two-syllable adjectives discussed above (giving, for example, acc. f. sg. okkra, ykkra, yðra).

It remains to list the adjective endings that follow the comparative suffix.

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This minimal set of endings is also the one used with present participles, e.g. *sofandi* (nom. m. sg., f. sg., nom./acc./gen. pl.) ‘sleeping’ (see 3.3.9, paradigm 19).

These are the essentials of adjectival inflexion in Old Norse. It is not the whole story, but all other adjective inflexions can be seen as variations on this basic pattern. It is vitally important that the student masters the endings set out and discussed on pp. 80–84 before proceeding to the finer detail.

3.3.4 Basic adjective inflexions — Exercise

1. How many different endings do the strong masculine, the weak neuter, and the comparative adjective exhibit respectively?
2. Is there a difference between the strong and weak dat. pl. forms?
3. Where is a difference between the nom. and acc. pl. to be found?
4. Enumerate the gen. sg. endings.
5. Enumerate the acc. pl. endings.
6. What characterises the nom. and acc. of neuter adjectives?
7. Where is there (1) identity and (2) close similarity between noun and adjective endings?
8. Compare the principal adjective inflexions as given on pp. 80–81 with the paradigm of *hinn*. What similarities and differences between their inflexions can be observed?

3.3.5 The free-standing definite article

Before examples of adjective usage are given, it will be helpful to expand on what was said about definite function in 3.3.2, and show
how the definite article manifests itself in noun phrases that include adjectives.

As will have been apparent from certain of the examples in 3.3.2, Old Norse has a free-standing definite article in addition to the suffixed variety (just as in the modern Scandinavian languages). The free-standing article occurs where a definite noun is modified by an adjective (the adjective normally always being weak), e.g. (h)inn blindi ma›r ‘the blind man’. It is also used where an adjective with definite function (once again weak) is ‘substantivised’, i.e. used without a noun and thus, in a sense, in its place, e.g. (h)inir auðgu ‘the rich [pl.]’. (The inflexional forms of (h)inn are the same as those of the demonstrative pronoun hinn given in 3.2.2, except for the nom./acc. n. sg. which is (h)it with a single t. Note that in some texts instead of (h)inn, (h)it, (h)inir, etc. we get enn, et, enir, i.e., no initial h- and root vowel e.)

In Old Norse prose neither of the constructions just illustrated is in fact particularly common except where something or someone is being distinguished from another or others of the same type or name, e.g.: hín sí›asta orrostast ‘the last battle’, hínna gomlu skálda ‘the old poets [gen. pl.]’ (as opposed to the new ones), hendi inni hægr ‘the right hand [dat. f. sg.]’, Óláfr inn helgi ‘Óláfr the saint’, hit sí›ara ‘the latter’, hínna priði ‘the third’. (Observe that the free-standing article and its accompanying weak adjective may be found either before or after the noun).

To express the equivalent of English the + adj. ± noun Old Norse employs a variety of other constructions. In prose a much more common rendering of the definite article than (h)inn on its own is (h)inn together with the demonstrative pronoun sá (see 3.2.2), giving phrases of the type: sá (h)inn blindi ma›r ‘that the blind man’, ma›r sá (h)inn blindi ‘man that the blind’, or, less commonly, sá ma›r (h)inn blindi ‘that man the blind’, i.e. (in all three cases) ‘the blind man’. (Note the possible variations in word-order, and that sá and (h)inn agree with, i.e. always appear in the same case, gender and number as, adjective and noun — here nom. m. sg.; see 3.3.1.) Occasionally (h)inn may be omitted, and we then get the phrase-type: sá blindi ma›r or ma›r sá blindi, where sá alone renders ‘the’. In Norwegian sources in particular, the suffixed article may be used in addition to its free-standing counterpart, or the demonstrative sá, or both together, giving phrases like hinn hvít hjørninn ‘the white bear-the’ (literally), høndin sá hægr
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‘hand-the that right’, sá hinn þögli maðrinn ‘that the silent man-the’, vándin þau in gðu ‘weapons-the those the good’, all equivalents of English the + adj. + noun. (Note that the phrase-types without hinn, e.g. sá blindi maðr, hóndin sá hægrí, sometimes have greater deictic emphasis, i.e. the pronoun is closer in meaning to ‘that’ than ‘the’.)

Observe the fundamental identity of (h)inn and the suffixed definite article, the former of which certainly and the latter probably derive from demonstrative hinn (see above and 3.2.2). Additional notes on word-order in noun phrases will be found in 3.9.2.

3.3.5 The free-standing definite article — Exercise

Identify the case, gender, number, syntactic function and semantic role of the definite noun phrases printed in bold in the following sentences.

1. **Inn blindi maðr** kom í húsit
   ‘The blind man came into the house’

2. **Gekk hann þegar fram fyrir þá kristnu hófðingja**
   ‘Went he immediately forward before the Christian rulers’
   ‘He at once went forward in front of the Christian rulers’

3. **Hann skipaði logunum með ráði hínna vitrustu manna**
   ‘He organised the laws with the advice of the wisest men’

4. **Þrándr fór til Nóregs með kaupmönnum þeim hinum norrœnum**
   ‘Þrándr went to Norway with the Norwegian merchants’

5. **Engi maðr mátti nefna hann annan veg en jarl hínna illa**
   ‘No man might call him another way than earl the bad’
   ‘No man might call him anything other than “the bad earl”’

6. **En þau hin stóru skip, er áðr hófðu siglt, ok þeir hugðu at Ormrinn varð, þat var hit fyrra Tranan, en hit síðara Ormr hinn skammi**
   ‘But those the big ships which before had sailed, and they thought that Ormrinn were, that was the former Tranan but the latter Ormr hinn skammi’
‘But as for the big ships which had sailed previously and which they thought were “The Serpent”, the former was “The Crane” and the latter “The Short Serpent”’

(7) Þá minntisk hann þess er merin sú hin mikilláta hafði mælt til hans
   ‘Then he remembered that which the proud girl had said to him’

(8) Þeir snúa þegar at hinni miklu hǫllinni
   ‘They turn immediately to the big hall’

(9) Konunghét þar fyrir Óláfi hinum mestum afarkostum
   ‘King promised there for to-Óláfr the greatest hard-treatments’
   ‘The king promised Óláfr in return the harshest treatment’

3.3.6 Examples of adjective usage

As was done for nouns and pronouns, examples are now given of adjectives in function. With the wide range of adjectival functions and inflexions that exists, only a selection can be illustrated, with the emphasis on the most common types. As far as is practicable, the examples are ordered as follows: (a) strong adjectives; (b) weak adjectives; (c) substantivised adjectives (strong and weak); (d) superlatives (strong and weak); (e) comparatives — though some sentences contain examples of more than one type. In other respects, the exemplification follows the same pattern as for nouns (see the preamble on p. 31). Note that the adjectival inflexions being illustrated (or the whole word where there is no difference from the root form) are printed in bold type. To underline the grammatical relations involved, bold is also used for the noun or pronoun with which the adjective agrees. Compare the inflexions used below with those set out and discussed in 3.3.4. Observe, too, the differences between Old Norse and English phraseology and sentence formation. Definitions of basic concepts that have already been given are not repeated; if in doubt the student should consult the individual commentaries that accompany each of the examples of noun function in 3.1.5.
(1) Pvi var hann skakkr kallaðr
‘Therefore was he crooked called’
‘For that reason he was called crooked’

Skakkr and kallaðr are nom. m. sg., agreeing with hann, the subject. Skakkr is used predicatively (see 3.3), as the subject complement (i.e. as Y in: X is/ becomes Y); it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion. Kallaðr is the past participle of the verb kalla ‘[to] call’ which together with var forms a passive phrase (see 3.6.4); in such phrases the past participle (which itself functions not unlike a subject complement) inflects as a strong adjective.

(2) Par verðr orrosta bæði mikil ok hørð
‘There happens battle both great and hard’
‘There a great and hard battle ensues’

Mikil and hørð are nom. f. sg., agreeing with orrosta (f.), the subject. They are attributive adjectives (see 3.3), occurring in an indefinite noun phrase and therefore having strong inflexion. Although hørð as a nom. f. sg. strong adjective is without ending, the root vowel has u-mutation, just as the nom. sg. of strong feminine nouns (see 3.1.7.1 and 3.3.8.1).

(3) Eigi mun þat kauplaust
‘Not will that chargeless’
‘That will not be free of charge’

Kauplaust is nom. n. sg., agreeing with þat, the subject. It is the subject complement; it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion. Eigi mun þat kauplaust is elliptical for Eigi mun þat kauplaust vera (see 3.9.5.2).

(4) Peir lágú búnir at sigla til Suðreyja
‘They lay ready to sail to the Hebrides’

Búnir is nom. m. pl., agreeing with þeir, the subject. It is the subject complement; it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion.

(5) Pau váru skamma hrið ásamt
‘They were short while together’
‘They were together for only a short while’
Skamma is acc. f. sg., agreeing with hríð (f.), which is accusative because it functions as a time adverbial (see 3.1.2 and 3.1.5, sentence 10). The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun phrase, has strong inflexion.

(6) Peir fengu í Dynröst strauma váðvaena
   ‘They got in Dynröst currents dangerous’
   ‘They encountered dangerous currents in Sumburgh Roost’

Váðvaena is acc. m. pl., agreeing with strauma (m.), which is the direct object. The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun phrase, has strong inflexion.

(7) Konungsmenn gerðu jarl handtekin
   ‘King’s-men made earl captured’
   ‘The king’s men seized the earl’

Handtekin is acc. m. sg., agreeing with jarl (m.), which is the direct object. The adjective is used predicatively, as the object complement; it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion.

(8) Hann bað þá vinda segl sín
   ‘He bade them hoist sails REFL. POSS.’
   ‘He told them to hoist their sails’

Sín is acc. n. pl., agreeing with segl (n.), which is the direct object of the infinitive clause. Note that though the reflexive possessive agrees with þá (the subject of vinda, cf. 3.9.4) in person (both are 3rd), it agrees with segl in case, gender and number. Possessives have only strong forms: they are themselves determiners, not part of what is determined or defined.

(9) Því næst heyrðu þeir út til høggva stórra
   ‘To-that next heard they out to blows big’
   ‘Thereupon they heard the sound of great blows outside’

Stórra is gen. pl., agreeing with høggva (n.), the noun of the preposition phrase til høggva stórra. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition til (see 3.7, 3.7.2). The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun phrase, has strong inflexion.
(10) Oss er ván snarpligrar orrostu
    ‘To-us is expectation of-hard battle’
    ‘We can expect a hard battle’

Snarpligrar is gen. f. sg., agreeing with orrostu (f.), which is an objective genitive, that is, it corresponds to English ‘of . . . ’ and presents the battle as the object of the expectation (cf. the idiomatic translation above). The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun phrase, has strong inflexion.

(11) Nú skulu› flér taka ƒmbun verka yðvarra
    ‘Now shall you [pl.] take reward of-works your [pl.]’
    ‘Now you shall reap the reward of your deeds’

Yðvarra is gen. pl., agreeing with verka (n.), which is an objective genitive, that is, it corresponds to English ‘of . . . ’ and presents the deeds as being rewarded (cf. ‘X rewarded the deed’). Note that though the possessive adjective (here functioning as a reflexive, cf. 3.2.1) agrees with þér in person (they are both 2nd pl.), it agrees with verka in case and number (gender is not marked in the gen. pl.). (On the strong inflexion of yðvarra, see (8) above.)

(12) Þeir dvölðusk þar í allgódum fagnaði
    ‘They stayed-sk [see 3.6.5.3] there in very-good hospitality’
    ‘They stayed there with excellent hospitality’

Allgódum is dat. m. sg., agreeing with fagnaði (m.), the noun of the preposition phrase í allgódum fagnaði. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition í. The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun phrase, has strong inflexion.

(13) Aðils konungr var mjök kær at góðum hestum
    ‘King Aðils was very fond of good horses’

Kær is nom. m. sg., agreeing with Aðils (m.), the subject. It is the head word of the subject complement; it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion. Góðum is dat. pl., agreeing with hestum (m.), the noun of the preposition phrase at góðum hestum. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition at. The adjective is used attributively and has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion. The preposition phrase modifies the adjective kær.
Adjective inflexions and their function

(14) Hverr er þessi mæðr hinn drengiligi?
‘Who is this man the valiant?’
‘Who is this valiant man?’

_Drengiligi_ is nom. m. sg., agreeing with _mæðr_ (m.), the subject (cf. _who is X?
X is Y_, where X is the subject). The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in a definite noun phrase, has weak inflexion.

(15) Erlingr jarl lét drepa Eindriða unga
‘Earl Erlingr had Eindriði the young killed’

_Unga_ is acc. m. sg., agreeing with _Eindriða_ (m.), the direct object. It is used as a ‘defining’ epithet (Eindriði ‘the young’ as opposed to any other Eindriði); as such it is part of a definite noun phrase and therefore has weak inflexion. Observe that definite function in itself is enough to trigger weak inflexion, there being no determiners in the noun phrase in question.

(16) Hann var sonr Óláfs ins hvíta ok Auðar innar fjúpúðgu.
‘He was the son of Óláfr the white and Auðr the deep-minded’

_Hvíta_ is gen. m. sg., agreeing with _Óláfs_ (m.), and _fjúpúðgu_ gen. f. sg., agreeing with _Auðar_ (f.); both nouns are subjective (possessive) genitives (Óláfr and Auðr have ‘him’ as their son). As in (15), the adjectives are used as ‘defining’ epithets, but here in conjunction with the free-standing article (_h_inn_.
Both are part of definite noun phrases and therefore have weak inflexion.

(17) Hann bauð ambótt sinni þeirri þróenzku at hon skyldi . . .
‘He ordered bondwoman REFL. POSS. that Throindish that she should . . .’

_Sinni_ and _þróenzku_ are dat. f. sg., agreeing with _ambótt_ (f.), which is the indirect object of _bauð_ (cf. that he gave an order to the bondwoman). Note that though the reflexive possessive agrees with _hann_ in person (both are 3rd), it agrees with _ambótt_ in case, gender and number. _Þróenzku_ is used attributively, and, occurring in a definite noun phrase, has weak inflexion (on the strong inflexion of _sinni_, see (8) above).
(18) Pá sendi hann braut ena gauzkú menn
   ‘Then he sent away the Gautish (= from Gautland) men’

Gauzkú is acc. m. pl., agreeing with menn (m.), the direct object. It is used
attributively, and, occurring in a definite noun phrase, has weak inflexion.

(19) Því munu fáir trúa
   ‘That will few [pl.] believe’
   ‘Few will believe that’

Fáir is nom. m. pl. (masculine is the default gender where the reference is to
people in general). The adjective stands on its own without a noun and forms
the subject. It has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion.

(20) Hann lét jafna refsing hafa ríkan ok óríkan
   ‘He let equal punishment have mighty [sg.] and unmighty
   [sg.]’
   ‘He gave both mighty and unmighty equal punishment’

Jafna is acc. f. sg., agreeing with refsing (f.), which is the direct object of
hafa. The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in an indefinite noun
phrase, has strong inflexion. Ríkan and óríkan are acc. m. sg. They stand on
their own without a noun — but referring to individual males — and form the
direct object of lét. They have indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion.
The construction here is what is known as an accusative and infinitive: the
accusative objects of lét, ‘mighty and unmighty’, are in a sense also the subjects
of hafa (see 3.9.4).

(21) Snústu frá illu ok ger gott
   ‘Turn from evil and do good’

Illu is dat. n. sg. It stands on its own without a noun and is part of the prepo-
sition phrase frá illu, its case being determined by the preposition. Gott is acc.
n. sg., and it, too, stands on its own without a noun. It is the direct object of the
verb ger. Both adjectives have indefinite function and therefore strong
inflexion. They are neuter because they do not refer to an entity of masculine
or feminine gender. (Note that snústu is a contracted form of snúska þú: -sk
verb (see 3.6.5.3) + the personal pronoun þú (literally ‘turn you’). Gott is an
irregular nom./acc. n. sg. form (see 3.3.8.4), nom. m. sg. göðr.)
Adjective inflexions and their function

(22) Sýn þik þessum enum nýkonna
    ‘Show yourself to-this the newly-come’
    ‘Show yourself to this newly arrived one’

Nýkonna is dat. m. sg. It stands on its own without a noun — but referring to a male animal — and forms the head of the indirect object phrase þessum enum nýkonna. Determined by þessum enum, it has definite function and therefore weak inflexion.

(23) Sveinn var allra manna skygnastr
    ‘Sveinn was of-all men most-sharp-sighted’
    ‘Sveinn was the most sharp-sighted of men’

Skygnastr is nom. m. sg. sup., agreeing with Sveinn (m.), the subject. The adjective is the subject complement; it has indefinite function and therefore strong inflexion (which follows the superlative -ast suffix). (Note that the superlative here is what is known as absolute, i.e. it denotes not the highest but a very high degree.) Allra is gen. pl. of allr ‘all’, which has only strong forms; it agrees with manna, a genitive of type: menn are presented as a type of which Sveinn is a particularly sharp-sighted member (see 3.1.5, sentence 14).

(24) Varð þessi ferð in frægsta
    ‘Became this expedition the most-famous’
    ‘This expedition became most famous’

Frægsta is nom. f. sg. sup., agreeing with ferð (f.), the subject. It is the subject complement; it has definite function and therefore weak inflexion (which follows the superlative -st suffix). (Note that here too the superlative is absolute (see (23)) — notwithstanding the definiteness of the noun phrase.)

(25) Meðan hann var á léttasta aldri, hafði hann hvert sumar leiðangr úti
    ‘While he was at lightest age, had he each summer levy out’
    ‘While he was at the most active age, he made naval expeditions each summer’

Léttasta is dat. m. sg. sup., agreeing with aldri (m.), the noun of the preposition phrase á léttasta aldri. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition á. The adjective is used attributively and has definite function and therefore weak inflexion (which follows the superlative -ast suffix). On the occurrence of weak inflexion in the absence of determiners, cf. (15).
Sá mun þér hinn beztí
‘That will to-you the best’
‘That will be the best one (i.e. option) for you’

Beztí is nom. m. sg. sup. It stands on its own without a noun and forms the subject complement. It has definite function and therefore weak inflexion. Bezt- and the comparative betr- are suppletive forms (i.e. they have a different root from other parts of the word, cf. positive gód-; see further 3.3.8.3); ‘z’ denotes the sounds ts (cf. 2.1.3), so what we have is in effect *bet-st-. The phrase hinn beztí is elliptical for hinn beztí kostr ‘the best choice/option’.

Ok svá var, því at jarl var þess fúsari
‘And thus was, therefore that earl was of-that keener’
‘And thus it was, because the earl was more in favour of it’

Fúsari is nom. m. sg. comp., agreeing with jarl (m.), the subject of the second sentence. The adjective is the subject complement. Following the comparative suffix -ar, we get the appropriate comparative inflexion, which remains the same whether the function is indefinite or definite.

Par gekk Rognvaldr jarl af skipum ok allt it gøfgara lið þeira
‘There went Rognvaldr earl off ships and all the more-noble force their’
‘There Earl Rognvaldr and all the more noble of their force left the ships’

Allt is nom. n. sg. of allr ‘all’, which has only strong forms. Together with gøfgara (nom. n. sg.) it agrees with lið (n.), one of the two subjects. Both adjectives are used attributively. In gøfgara, following the comparative suffix -ar, we get the appropriate comparative inflexion (see (27)). The comparative and superlative forms gøfgar-, gøfgast- show loss of an unstressed vowel: the positive root is gøfug- (see 3.3.8.5 point (1)).

Hin yngri skálð hafa ort eptir deimum hinna gømlu skálða
‘The younger poets have composed following the examples of the old poets’

Yngri is nom. n. pl. comp., agreeing with skálð (n.), the subject. The adjective is used attributively. Following the comparative suffix -r, we get the appropriate comparative inflexion (see (27)). The comparative and superlative forms yngr- yngst- have a different root vowel from the positive ung- (because of
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front mutation, see 3.3.8.2). Gømlu is gen. pl., agreeing with skáld (n.), a possessive genitive (the examples, in a sense, ‘belong to’ the old poets). The adjective is used attributively, and, occurring in a definite noun phrase, has weak inflexion. The form gømlu has suffered loss of the second, unstressed, syllable, and its root vowel has undergone u-mutation (strong nom. m. sg. gamall; cf. 3.3.4, 3.3.8.5 point (1), 3.1.7.1, 3.3.8.1).

(30) Førir lögðu á þat hit mesta kapp, hverr betri hesta átti
‘They laid on that the most contest, who better horses owned’
‘They made it a matter of the greatest rivalry who owned the better horses’

Mesta is acc. n. sg. sup., agreeing with kapp (n.), the direct object of lögðu. The adjective is used attributively; it has definite function and therefore weak inflexion (which follows the superlative -st suffix). The comparative and superlative forms meir-, mest- are suppletive (positive mikil-; see (26)). Betri is acc. m. pl. comp., agreeing with hesta (m.), the direct object of átti. The adjective is used attributively. Following the comparative suffix -r, we get the appropriate comparative inflexion (see (27)). Like the superlative bezt-, betri is a suppletive form (cf. (26)).

3.3.6 Examples of adjective usage — Exercise

1. In which of the above examples do comparative forms occur? List all that you find.
2. In which of the above examples are adjectives used predicatively? List all that you find together with the nouns or pronouns with which they agree.
3. In which of the above examples are adjectives used with definite function? List all that you find.
4. In which of the above examples do possessive adjectives occur? List all that you find and explain which other words in their respective sentences they agree with and in what way.
5. Explain the following forms (i.e. state what inflexion or inflexions they have and, where possible, the reason for the inflexion(s)): kauplaust in example (3), handtekim (7), djúpúðgu (16), gauzku (18), ríkan (20), léttasta (25), gofgura (28).
3.3.7 Difficulties in recognising adjective inflexions and ways of overcoming them

As in the case of nouns (cf. 3.1.6), the learner may initially experience some difficulty in recognising which adjective inflexions are which.

The strong endings are by and large distinctive, and even where an ending recurs in different parts of the paradigm there are unlikely to be serious problems of understanding. Although the genitive masculine and neuter singular, for example, both end in -s, they clearly signal the genitive singular, just as -ra is an unambiguous sign of the genitive plural. The identity between nominative and accusative in the neuter singular and feminine and neuter plural may be problematic, but very often their function and therefore their case will be apparent from the context.

It is when confronted with the minimal distinctions of the weak and comparative systems of endings — and their overlap with certain strong endings — that the learner will regularly have to rely on the presence or absence of other words in the noun phrase, and, where appropriate, their forms, to determine the case, gender and number of the adjective. Fortunately, as we have seen, it is the way of adjectives, and weak adjectives in particular, to be accompanied by words with which they exhibit grammatical agreement. In sentence (17), for example:

Hann bauð ambótt sinni þeirri þraenzkú at hon skyldi . . .

it can be shown that þraenzkú is dat. f. sg., even though one strong and eleven other weak forms have the -u ending, because of the presence of sinni and þeirri. These words determine the noun that þraenzkú modifies, which means (a): the function of the adjective is definite and the form weak, and (b): þraenzkú will have the same case, gender and number as sinni and þeirri since all three agree with the noun ambótt. Given that sinni and þeirri are unambiguously dat. f. sg., we can thus deduce that þraenzkú represents the same combination of case, gender and number. Similarly, in sentence (22):

Sýn þik þessum enum nýkomna

it can be shown that nýkomna is dat. m. sg., even though two strong
and seven other weak forms have the -a ending. Here the noun phrase lacks a noun with which the adjective can agree, but there is agreement with the determiners pessum enum. Their presence indicates the phrase is definite and the adjective therefore weak, and although pessum enum can represent the dat. m. sg. or dat. pl., in combination with njoknna the pair can only be dat. m. sg. since the dat. pl. adjective ending (weak and strong) is -um. In sentence (27):

Ok svá var, því at jarl var þess fúsari

it is clear that fúsari is nom. m. sg. even though a total of fourteen comparative forms share the -i ending. Jarl, with which fúsari agrees, is masculine and singular, and the only masculine singular comparative form ending in -i is the nominative.

Sometimes direct pointers may be lacking. In sentence (15):

Erlingr jarl lét drepa Eindriða unga

unga might represent the strong acc. f. sg. or acc. m. pl., or the weak acc., gen. or dat. m. sg. or n. sg. (any case). The only word with which unga can agree, Eindriða, is masculine singular. That excludes the possibility of feminine or neuter gender, or masculine plural, but given that weak nouns have exactly the same forms in the singular as weak adjectives, it does not help determine whether unga is acc., gen. or dat. (m. sg.). Here one has to rely on function. The verb drepa takes a direct object in the accusative, and since its -r ending shows Erlingr to be nominative and thus subject, and there are no other noun phrases in the sentence, Eindriða unga must be the direct object and therefore accusative.

3.3.7 Difficulties in recognising adjective inflexions and ways of overcoming them — Exercise

1. Why may it sometimes be difficult to recognise the case, gender and number of adjectives in Old Norse?
2. What means can we use to help us deduce their case and number?
3.3.8 Important variations in adjective inflexion

Adjectives in Old Norse are not subject to as much inflexional variation as nouns (cf. 3.1.7). Nevertheless, they exhibit a wider range of forms than those described in 3.3.4 (cf., e.g., the comparative yngri and the weak pl. gomlu in (29)). The significant variations will now be examined.

3.3.8.1 Labial mutation

The basics of labial mutation were discussed in 3.1.7.1. Since, as pointed out there, it is a rule of Old Norse that a cannot appear before u or v, it is clear that adjectives with a in the root, just as nouns, will change that a to ð whenever an ending is applied that consists of or contains a u. Thus, the strong dat. m. sg. and dat. pl. of hardr ‘hard’ is hordum, and the strong dat. n. sg., weak acc., gen., dat. f. sg. and weak nom., acc., gen. pl. hordu (see paradigms 2 and 14 in 3.3.9).

This rule should not cause the learner problems, as long as s/he remembers that an unknown word with ð in the root and u in the ending must be looked up in the dictionary as though it had root a if it cannot be found there with root ð (for an example of the latter type, cf. folr ‘pale’ — paradigm 6 below). Just as hordum and hordu will be found under hordr, so grunnum or grunnu must be looked up under grannr ‘thin’, longum or longu under langr ‘long’, snorpu under snarpur ‘keen’, ‘hard’, etc.

Like certain noun forms, adjectives may have ð in the root even where no u or v follows in the next syllable. The cause is the same: the presence of a following u at an earlier stage of the language. We have seen (pp. 81–2) how closely adjective inflexions parallel those of nouns, and it is therefore no surprise (and of some help to the student) to learn that it is in part in the same forms that root ð is encountered in adjectives. The forms concerned are: strong nom. f. sg. and strong nom./acc. n. pl. The strong nom. f. sg. and nom./acc. n. pl. of hardr is thus hordr (< *hordo; cf. sentence (2)), of grannr gronn, of langr lóng, etc. (see paradigm 2 below). In these cases, too, an unknown word with root ð must be looked up in a dictionary as though it had root a if it cannot be found there with root ð.
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U-mutation in adjectives affects unstressed as well as stressed syllables, just as with nouns. In adjectives, too, it results in u in the unstressed syllable, and the mutation can then spread further (for the historical process, see p. 41). The superlative suffix -ast, for example, appears as -ust when a -u or -um ending follows. Thus skygnastr of sentence (23) and léttasta of (25) become skygnustu, léttustu, skygnustum, léttustum in the appropriate forms; adjectives with root a, e.g. harôr, exhibit u in the superlative suffix and q in the root: hǫrðustu, hǫrðustum (see paradigms 12, 17 below). Adjectives with two-syllable stems are also affected: spurul ‘inquisitive’, ykkarr ‘your [dual]’, for example, become spurul, ykkar in the (strong) nom. f. sg. and nom./acc. n. pl., and gamall ‘old’, with root a, has strong nom. f. sg. and nom./acc. n. pl. goðul (< *gamalu) (see paradigms 8, 22). Present participles are a partial exception in that the -and- suffix by which they are formed becomes -qnd- in the dat. pl., e.g., sofandum ‘sleeping’ (paradigm 19); this is because the suffix has secondary stress.

3.3.8.1 Labial mutation — Exercise

1. In which forms of the adjective does root a change to q?
2. Explain the differences in vowel quality (a) between the strong nom. m. sg. sup. spakastr and the dat. pl. sup. spókustum ‘wisest’, and (b) between the strong nom. m. sg. aitall and the strong nom. f. sg. qtul ‘fierce’.
3. Look up the following adjectives in an Old Norse dictionary or in the Glossary in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: sǫnnu, glað, spókarum, þogul, vitrustu.

3.3.8.2 Front mutation

The basics of front mutation were discussed in 3.1.7.2. The only parts of adjectival inflexion affected by this process are certain comparative and superlative forms. Those adjectives that form the comparative with the -r and the superlative with the -st suffix undergo front mutation of back root vowels. We find the following back : front correspondences (the examples contrast the strong nom. m. sg. pos. form with the nom. m. sg. comp.):
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Observe the loss of $j$ in $d‡pri$. The corresponding superlative forms (strong nom. m. sg.) are: lengstr, lægstr, stœrstr, yngstr, d‡pstr, þrœngstr.

If the learner is confronted by what appears to be a comparative or superlative form with one of the above front vowels, and s/he is unable to find the word in a dictionary, it should be looked up substituting the appropriate back vowel. No entry *fegr will be found, for example, so the learner puzzled by the word $fegrstu$ in the phrase enir fegrstu litir ‘the fairest colours’ should try under $fagr$.

### 3.3.8.3 Suppletive forms

As will have become clear from certain of the examples in 3.3.6, a few comparative and superlative forms (mostly very common) are suppletive, i.e. they have a completely different root from that of their positive counterpart. There are unfortunately no rules or guide-lines here and the student will simply have to learn the positive and the suppletive forms as separate items. Some help is to be had from the fact that many of the suppletives also occur in English, cf. the following list (featuring the (strong) nom. m. sg. positive, comparative and superlative forms):

- **gamall —— ellri —— elztr** ‘old’, ‘older’, ‘oldest’ (cf. elder, eldest)
- **gödr —— betri —— beztr** ‘good’, ‘better’, ‘best’
- **illr —— verri —— verstr** ‘bad’, ‘worse’, ‘worst’
- **litill —— minni —— minnstr** ‘little’, ‘smaller’, ‘smallest’
- **margr —— fleiri —— flestr** ‘many a’, ‘more’, ‘most’
- **mikill —— meiri —— mestr** ‘big’, ‘bigger’, ‘biggest’

Observe that in $minni$ (< *minri) the $r$ of the comparative suffix assimilates to the $n$ of the root (cf. 3.3.8.4 below). Fleiri, flestr are used of entities that can be counted, e.g. í flestum l‡ndum ‘in most
countries”; for non-count entities, meiri, mestr are employed in the sense ‘more’, ‘most’, e.g. meira fé ‘more wealth’.

3.3.8.4 Deviations from the basic endings

Certain endings occur that do not accord with those given in 3.3.4. We have already seen there that consonantal assimilations affect adjectives with the -in and -al, -il, -ul suffixes as well as the possessives minn, pinn, sinn, and that the -in-suffix adjectives and the possessives have an acc. m. sg. in -n rather than -an (see paradigms 7, 8, 21, 22).

Other deviations that may cause problems of recognition are:

(1) Consonantal assimilations in monosyllabic adjectives that follow the pattern of the disyllabic types and the possessives just mentioned. In some monosyllabic adjectives whose root ends in l, n, s, an immediately following r (in the strong nom. m. sg., gen. and dat. f. sg. and gen. pl. endings, and in comparatives with an -r suffix) assimilates to the l, n or s (e.g. hál ‘slippery’ (< *hár); dat. f. sg. heilli ‘whole’, ‘healthy’, (<*heilr); gen. f. sg. veinnar ‘hopeful’, ‘beautiful’ (<*vennar); dat. pl. comp. hreinnum ‘purer’ (<*hreinnum); jafn ‘equal’, ‘even’ (<*jafrn <*jafrn); frjáls ‘free’ (<*frjáls <*frjáls); see paradigms 3, 4, 20). Jafn and frjáls exemplify the general rule that consonant + geminate consonant is simplified to consonant + single consonant (thus also in adjectives with consonant + r in the root: contrast, for example, strong nom. f. sg. fagr ‘beautiful’ (<*fagru) with strong nom. m. sg. fagr (<*fagrr), strong gen. pl. fagra (<*fagra)).

(2) Consonantal assimilations that result in the loss or alteration of root -d or -b before the strong nom./acc. n. sg. -t ending (e.g. ödtr ‘furious’ — nom./acc. n. sg. ött (<*ödtr); vandr ‘difficult’ — nom./acc. n. sg. vant (<*vandt, with simplification of -nt to -nt, cf. above); kallaðr ‘called’ (pp.) — nom./acc. n. sg. kallat (<*kallatt <*kallaðt, with simplification of geminate tt in unstressed position); see paradigms 2, 11).

(3) A miscellaneous group of very common adjectives with irregular forms.

(a) Litl ‘little’ and its antonym mikill ‘big’, with roots litil- (contracted litl-), mikil-, have strong acc. m. sg. forms litinn and mikinn and strong nom./acc. n. sg. litit and mikit (i.e. they behave in these cases as though they were -in-suffix adjectives, cf., e.g., opinn ‘open’, tekinn ‘taken’ — strong acc. m. sg. opinna, tekinn, strong nom./acc. n. sg. opit, tekit; see paradigms 7 and 9). Mikill also sometimes has strong dat. n. sg. myklu.
(b) The strong nom./acc. n. sg. of góðr is gótt (cf. point (2) above) or, much more commonly, gott, of margr mart (also sometimes margt) and of santr ‘true’ satt.

(c) The two-syllable adjective heilagr ‘holy’, which drops the a of the unstressed syllable on the pattern of those in -al etc. (see 3.3.4 and 3.3.8.5 point (1)), regularly undergoes monophthongisation (i.e. the diphthong ei changes to a single vowel) in the shortened forms, cf., for example, strong nom./acc. f. pl. helgar, weak nom. m. sg. helgi.

3.3.8.5 Minor irregularities

The inflexions of Old Norse adjectives exhibit yet other deviations from the basic pattern, but these are less likely to cause the learner problems of recognition.

(1) As already outlined in 3.3.4 (and cf. also 3.1.7.5 point (1)), the unstressed syllables of many disyllabic adjectives lose their vowel when the inflexional ending itself consists of a syllable — except in the strong gen. and dat. f. sg. and strong gen. pl. It remains to be added that not only adjectives with an -in or -al, -il, -ul suffix are affected, but the many in -ig, -ug as well, and that the last, together with -al, -il, -ul types, but unlike those in -in, have strong acc. m. sg. forms in -an with resulting loss of the preceding syllable (contrast gamall ‘old’ — acc. m. sg. gamlan, auðigr ‘rich’ — acc. m. sg. auðgan with heidinn ‘heathen’, opin ‘open’ — acc. m. sg. heidinn, opin; see paradigms 8, 10). The comparative -ari and superlative -ast suffixes also commonly trigger loss of the unstressed vowel of disyllabic adjectives (e.g. nom. m. sg., f. sg., etc. comp. heidnari ‘more heathen’, strong nom. m. sg. sup. auðgastr ‘richest’; see paradigm 20).

(2) In accordance with the rule stated in 3.3.8.4 point (1), to the effect that consonant + geminate consonant is simplified to consonant + single consonant, adjectives that end in consonant + t do not add a further -t in the strong nom./acc. n. sg. (e.g. flutt ‘conveyed’ (pp.) — strong nom./acc. n. sg. flutt (< *flutt); hvassastr ‘sharpest’ (strong nom. m. sg. sup.) — nom./acc. n. sg. hvassast (< *hvassast; see paradigm 12).

(3) Consonants may sometimes be lengthened when immediately following long, stressed vowels. This is the rule with t in the strong nom./acc. n. sg., and more or less the rule with r in the strong gen. and dat. f. sg. and gen. pl. and in the comparative (e.g. grár ‘grey’ — strong nom./acc. n. sg. grátt, strong gen. f. sg. grár(r)ar; hár ‘high’ — nom. m.
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(4) As with nouns (cf. 3.1.7.5 point (2)), the vowels of inflexional endings tend to be dropped when they immediately follow a long vowel of the same or similar quality (e.g. grár — strong acc. m. sg. grán, strong dat. m. sg., dat. pl. grám, strong acc. f. sg., dat. n. sg. and acc. m. pl., all weak forms except nom. m. sg. and dat. pl. grú; trúr ‘faithful’ — strong dat. n. sg., weak acc., gen., dat. f. sg. and nom., acc., gen. pl. trú; see paradigms 5, 15, 20).

(5) As with nouns (cf. 3.1.7.5 point (4)), j is inserted in some adjectives before inflexional endings or suffixes consisting of or beginning in a or u; in others v is inserted before endings or suffixes consisting of or beginning in a or i (e.g. nýr ‘new’ — strong acc. m. sg. nýjan, strong dat. m. sg., dat. pl. nýjum, strong acc. f. sg. and acc. m. pl., weak acc., gen., dat. m. sg., nom. f. sg. and n. sg. nýja, strong nom. m. sg. sup. nýjastr; dökk ‘dark’ — strong acc. m. sg. dökkvan, weak nom. m. sg. dökkvi, nom. m. sg., f. sg., etc. comp. dökkvari; see paradigms 6, 20).

(6) As a final irregularity, it is worth noting that a few adjectives including the third person possessives are uninflected. These will cause the learner little trouble, since, like adjectives in English, their form remains unchanged whatever their function. Examples are: einskipa ‘with one ship’, fulltòa ‘full-grown’, andvaka ‘sleepless’. Some of these, e.g. andvaka, can also appear in the nom. m. sg. with an -i ending: andvaki. The possessives are: hans ‘his’, hennar ‘her’, þess ‘its’, þeir(þ)ar ‘their’, i.e. the genitive forms of the corresponding pronouns which have taken on an additional, adjectival function.

3.3.8.2/3.3.8.3/3.3.8.4/3.3.8.5 Front mutation/Suppletive forms/Deviations from the basic endings/Minor irregularities — Exercise

1. Where in Old Norse adjectival inflexion does front mutation play a role? Give examples.
2. What are the comparative and superlative forms of góðr, lítill, mikill? In what way does the inflexion for degree of these adjectives differ from that of the majority?
3. In what forms of the adjective may inflexional -r(-) be assimilated to an immediately preceding l, n or s?
4. Look up the following adjectives in an Old Norse dictionary or in NION III and write down the entry forms you find: breitt, helgustu, trúmn, fólvir, tekit, færri, mikiinn, fórjan, miðjum, vaknat.
3.3.9 Examples of adjective inflexion

Complete paradigms of individual adjectives are now given using the same selection criteria as for nouns (cf. 3.1.8, preamble). While Old Norse grammars in general tend to be over-lavish in their exemplification of nouns, they are sparing in the number of adjective paradigms they include. The current work breaks with this tradition and prints a selection big enough to enable the learner to recognise with the minimum of difficulty the majority of forms likely to be encountered in Old Norse texts. The examples should naturally be studied in conjunction with the guidance given in 3.3.4, 3.3.7 and 3.3.8. Each paradigm is numbered for ease of reference.

### Strong inflexion

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### Strong inflexion (2) With root a and final ḷ: harðr ‘hard’

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</table>
### Adjective inflexions and their function

#### (3) Monosyllable with final *n*: `hreinn` ‘pure’

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<td>hreinni</td>
<td>hreinu</td>
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| Pl. nom. | hreinir | hreinar | hrein |
| acc. | hreina | hreinar | hrein |
| gen. | hreinna | hreinna | hreinna |
| dat. | hreinum | hreinum | hreinum |

#### (4) Monosyllable with root *a* and final *ss*: `hvass` ‘sharp’

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<tbody>
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<td>hvössum</td>
<td>hvass(r)i</td>
<td>hvössu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Pl. nom. | hvassir | hvassar | hvöss |
| acc. | hvassa | hvassar | hvöss |
| gen. | hvass(r)ar | hvass(r)ar | hvass(r)ar |
| dat. | hvössum | hvössum | hvössum |

#### (5) With final long vowel: `grár` ‘grey’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>grár</td>
<td>grá</td>
<td>grátt</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>grán</td>
<td>grá</td>
<td>grátt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>grás</td>
<td>grár(r)ar</td>
<td>grás</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>grám</td>
<td>grár(r)i</td>
<td>grá</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Pl. nom. | grár | grár | grá |
| acc. | grá | grár | grá |
| gen. | grár(r)ar | grár(r)ar | grár(r)ar |
| dat. | grám | grám | grám |
(6) With *v* insertion: *fölhr* ‘pale’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>m.</th>
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<th>n.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg.</td>
<td>følr</td>
<td>føl</td>
<td>følt</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>følvan</td>
<td>følva</td>
<td>følt</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>føls</td>
<td>følra</td>
<td>føls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>følum</td>
<td>føtri</td>
<td>følu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>følvir</td>
<td>følvar</td>
<td>føl</td>
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<tr>
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<td>følva</td>
<td>følvar</td>
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<tr>
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<td>følra</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>følum</td>
<td>følum</td>
<td>følum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(7) With *-in* suffix: *kominn* ‘come’ (pp.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>komin</td>
<td>komit</td>
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<td>kominn</td>
<td>komna</td>
<td>komit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>komins</td>
<td>kominnar</td>
<td>komins</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>komnum</td>
<td>kominni</td>
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<tr>
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<td>komnir</td>
<td>komnar</td>
<td>komin</td>
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<td>komnar</td>
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<td>kominna</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
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<td>komnum</td>
<td>komnum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(8) With root *a* and *-al* suffix: *gamall* ‘old’

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Sg.</td>
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<td>gömul</td>
<td>gamalt</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>gamlan</td>
<td>gamla</td>
<td>gamalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>gamals</td>
<td>gamallar</td>
<td>gamals</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>gömlum</td>
<td>gamalli</td>
<td>gömlu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>gamlir</td>
<td>gamlar</td>
<td>gömul</td>
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<tr>
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<td>gamla</td>
<td>gamlar</td>
<td>gömul</td>
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<td>gamalla</td>
<td>gamalla</td>
<td>gamalla</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>gömlum</td>
<td>gömlum</td>
<td>gömlum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Adjective inflexions and their function

#### (9) With -il and -in suffix: mikill ‘big’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>mikinn</td>
<td>mikla</td>
<td>mikit</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>mikils</td>
<td>mikillar</td>
<td>mikils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>miklum</td>
<td>mikilli</td>
<td>miklu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
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<td>miklar</td>
<td>mikil</td>
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<td>miklar</td>
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<td>mikilla</td>
<td>mikilla</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>miklum</td>
<td>miklum</td>
<td>miklum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (10) With -ig suffix: auðigr ‘wealthy’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>auðigt</td>
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<td>acc.</td>
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<td>auðga</td>
<td>auðigt</td>
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<td>gen.</td>
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<td>auðigrar</td>
<td>auðigs</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>auðgum</td>
<td>auðigrí</td>
<td>auðgu</td>
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<td>auðig</td>
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<td>auðig</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>auðgum</td>
<td>auðgum</td>
<td>auðgum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (11) With -ad suffix: elskadr ‘loved’ (pp.)

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>elskadr</td>
<td>elskuð</td>
<td>elskat</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>elskadán</td>
<td>elskaða</td>
<td>elskat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>elskadás</td>
<td>elskaðrar</td>
<td>elskadás</td>
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<tr>
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<td>elskuðum</td>
<td>elskuðrí</td>
<td>elskuðu</td>
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<td>elskaða</td>
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<td>elskuð</td>
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<tr>
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<td>elskuðra</td>
<td>elskuðra</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>elskuðum</td>
<td>elskuðum</td>
<td>elskuðum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(12) With root *a* and superlative suffix: *hardastr* ‘hardest’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>m.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>ʰорðust</td>
<td>harðast</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>harðastan</td>
<td>harðasta</td>
<td>harðast</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>harðasts</td>
<td>harðastrar</td>
<td>harðasts</td>
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<td>dat.</td>
<td>ʰорðustum</td>
<td>harðastrí</td>
<td>ʰорðustu</td>
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<tr>
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<td>harðastar</td>
<td>ʰорðust</td>
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<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
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<td>ʰорðust</td>
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<td>harðastra</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>ʰорðustum</td>
<td>ʰорðustum</td>
<td>ʰорðustum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weak inflexion**

(13) Basic pattern: *sjúki* ‘ill’

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>n.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>sjúka</td>
<td>sjúka</td>
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<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúka</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
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<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúka</td>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>sjúka</td>
<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúka</td>
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<tr>
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<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúku</td>
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<tr>
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<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúku</td>
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<tr>
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<td>sjúku</td>
<td>sjúku</td>
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<td>sjúkum</td>
<td>sjúkum</td>
<td>sjúkum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(14) With root *a* and -*al* suffix: *gamli* ‘old’

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>ʰómoalu</td>
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<td>ʰómoalu</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>ʰómoalum</td>
<td>ʰómoalum</td>
<td>ʰómoalum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(15) With final long vowel: grái ‘grey’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>gen.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>grám</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(16) With -a› suffix: elska›i ‘loved’

<table>
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</table>

(17) With root a and superlative suffix: har›asti ‘hardest’

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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>hořďustu</td>
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<td>hořďustum</td>
<td>hořďustum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Comparative and present participle inflexion

(18) (With root a) harðari ‘harder’

<table>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>hǫrðurum</td>
<td>hǫrðurum</td>
<td>hǫrðurum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(19) sofandi ‘sleeping’

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</table>

Degree inflexion

(20) Main types, illustrated by strong and comp. nom. m. sg. forms

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<tr>
<th>pos.</th>
<th>comp.</th>
<th>sup.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sjúkr ‘ill’</td>
<td>sjúkari</td>
<td>sjúkastr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hreinn ‘pure’</td>
<td>hreinni</td>
<td>hreinstr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hvass ‘sharp’</td>
<td>hvassari</td>
<td>hvassastr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grár ‘grey’</td>
<td>grár(r)i</td>
<td>grástr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fjólr ‘pale’</td>
<td>fjólvari</td>
<td>fjólastr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heiðinn ‘heathen’</td>
<td>heiðnari</td>
<td>heiðnastr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auðigr ‘wealthy’</td>
<td>auðigri</td>
<td>auðgastr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Irregular comp. and sup. forms involving front mutation and suppletion are dealt with in 3.3.8.2 and 3.3.8.3 above.

### Possessive adjective inflexion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(21) minn ‘my’</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>f.</strong></td>
<td><strong>n.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>minn</td>
<td>mín</td>
<td>mitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>minn</td>
<td>mína</td>
<td>mitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>míns</td>
<td>minnar</td>
<td>míns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>mínun</td>
<td>minni</td>
<td>mínu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
<td>mínír</td>
<td>mínar</td>
<td>míñ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>míña</td>
<td>mínar</td>
<td>míñ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>minna</td>
<td>minna</td>
<td>minna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>mínun</td>
<td>mínun</td>
<td>mínun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(22) ykkarr ‘your [dual]’</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>m.</strong></td>
<td><strong>f.</strong></td>
<td><strong>n.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. nom.</td>
<td>ykkarr</td>
<td>ykkur</td>
<td>ykkart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>ykkarn</td>
<td>ykkra</td>
<td>ykkart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>ykkars</td>
<td>ykkarrar</td>
<td>ykkars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>ykkrum</td>
<td>ykkarri</td>
<td>ykkru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl. nom.</td>
<td>ykkrir</td>
<td>ykkrar</td>
<td>ykkur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>ykkra</td>
<td>ykkra</td>
<td>ykkur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>ykkarra</td>
<td>ykkarra</td>
<td>ykkarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>ykkrum</td>
<td>ykkrum</td>
<td>ykkrum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.9 Examples of adjective inflexion — Exercise

Identify the case, gender, number, type of inflexion (strong, weak, comparative/present participle) and, if comparative or superlative, the degree of the adjectives printed in **bold** in the following sentences. Comment, in addition, on the syntactic function and semantic role of the noun phrases they form part of. Where an adjective exhibits a form other than the strong nominative masculine singular positive — the one used in dictionary entries — give that form as well.
(1) Hann var inn vaskasti maðr
‘He was the most-valiant man’
‘He was the most valiant of men’

(2) Hann var íslenzkr at kyni, skyldr honum
‘He was Icelandic by kin, related to him’

(3) Er þar mikill maðr á baki í bláum klaðum
‘Is there big man on back in dark clothes’
‘There is a big man on horseback there in dark clothes’

(4) Þér hafið örnar betr eptir porkel, frænda yóvarn
‘You have sufficient payments after porkel, kinsman your’
‘You have sufficient compensation for porkel, your kinsman’

(5) Hann spurði, hvern fyrir skipi því réði enu vegliga
‘He asked who over ship that commanded the magnificent’
‘He asked who commanded the magnificent ship’

(6) Þeir áttu lengri leið
‘They had longer way’
‘They had a longer route’

(7) Nú má ok flat vera, at gömlum manni sé eigi ósárari sonardauði sinn
‘Now may also that be, that to-old man is not unsorer son’s-death refl. poss.’
‘Now it may also be that to an old man his son’s death is not less painful’

(8) Eru honum sögði tóðindin
‘Are to-him said tidings-the’
‘The news is told to him’

(9) Hann var faðir Eiríks ins spaka
‘He was the father of Eiríkr the wise’

(10) Þeir fundu þegar sveininn þar sofanda hjá húsi einu
‘They found immediately boy-the there sleeping by house one’
‘They at once found the boy sleeping there beside a certain building’
(11) Hér mun þinn þroski mestr
‘Here will your advancement greatest’
‘Here is where you will prosper most’

(12) Hann hélt ðoll heit sin drengiliga við sina menn
‘He kept all promises refl. poss. nobly with refl. poss. men’
‘He nobly kept all his promises to his men’

(13) Ek hefi til fás hlutazk, síðan ek kom til Íslands
‘I have to few allocated-sk since I came to Iceland’
‘I have been active in little since I came to Iceland’

(14) Par var brekka brøtt ofan í dalinn
‘There was slope steep down into valley-the’
‘There was a steep slope down into the valley’

(15) Erlendr vildi ekki, at synir hans hefði lægra hlut þar í Eyjum
‘Erlendr wanted not that sons his had lower lot there in Islands’
‘Erlendr did not want his sons to have a poorer position there in the Orkneys’

(16) Gangi sá inn gamli maðr fyrir
‘Go that the old man in-front’
‘Let the old man walk in front’

(17) Hlaut hann þar inn mesta heiðr
‘Received he there the greatest honour’
‘There he received the greatest honour’

(18) Pau váru allra skipa skjótust
‘They were of-all ships fastest’
‘They were fastest of all ships’

(19) Þeir ráku fyrir sér sextán klyfjaða hesta
‘They drove before them sixteen pack-saddled horses’

(20) Par er svarðlaus mýrr
‘There is grassless bog’
‘There is a grassless bog there’
(21) Hann lét þar gera steinkastala góðan; var þat þruggt vígí
‘He let there make stone-castle good; was that secure fortress’
‘He had a fine stone castle made there; it was a secure fortress’

(22) Maðrinn var nú miklu vinsælli en áðr
‘The man was now much more popular than before’

(23) Hann sótti málit til fullra laga
‘He pursued case-the to full laws’
‘He pursued the case to the full extent of the law’

(24) Kona sú in góða dýrkaði þann helga konung með mikilli ást
‘Woman that the good venerated that holy king with great love’
‘The good woman venerated the holy king with great love’

(25) Veita skulum vár þurföndum likamliga foeðlu
‘Give shall we to-needing bodily food’
‘We are to give bodily sustenance to the needy’

(26) Fóstur eru en hvössustu vápn í gégn dýfli
‘Fasts are the sharpest weapons against the devil’

(27) Þeir mæltu fund sín á milli í ákveðnum stað
‘They arranged meeting self be(-)tween in appointed place’
‘They arranged a meeting between themselves in an appointed place’

(28) Einarr kvað hann mann gofgarst ok hana fullvel gipta
‘Einarr said him man noblest and her full-well married’
‘Einarr said he was a most noble man and she was very well married’

(29) Bakkar hávir váru umhverfis
‘Hills high were around’
‘High hills were all around’

(30) Hann bað þann milda konung leysa in séigu syndabönd af sér
‘He bade that gracious king loose the stubborn sin-bonds off self’
‘He prayed to the gracious king to remove the stubborn bonds of sin from him’
3.4 Numerals

Numerals are sometimes regarded as adjectives, and indeed several of the inflexions exhibited by the Old Norse numerals either parallel or are strongly reminiscent of adjectival forms. Numerals may also be found classified as pronouns, and, in more recent grammatical literature, as quantifiers. They are treated here as a separate word class. One of several reasons for separating them from pronouns and adjectives is that three of the Old Norse numerals inflect and function as nouns.

3.4.1 The numerals and their inflexions

As in English, the basic counting system in Old Norse is divided into cardinal numbers (one, two, three, etc.) and ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.). The Old Norse numerals (nom. m. sg./pl. where they inflect) are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal</th>
<th>Ordinal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>einn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>tveir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>þrír</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>fjórir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>fim(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>sjau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>átta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>nú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>tíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ellifu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>tölf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>þrettán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>fjórtán, fjögurtán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>fim(m)tán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>sextán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>sjaut(j)án</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>át(t)ján</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beyond *nítugundi* the ordinals are not recorded. The cardinals are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Cardinal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>tíu tigir, hundrað</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>ellifu tigir, hundrað ok tíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>hundrað, hundrað ok tuttugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>þúsund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>þúsund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is apparent from this list, *hundrað* may denote either 100 (*hundrað tírætt* ‘a hundred of ten tens’ (see below)) or 120 (*hundrað tölfrætt* ‘a hundred of twelve tens’ ‘a “long” hundred’). Correspondingly, *þúsund* = either 1000 or 1200. With figures of this magnitude precision is often unimportant in Old Icelandic literature; where the intention is to express exact numbers or amounts, either the text itself or the edition may make clear what is meant by *hundrað* or *þúsund*.

Many of the above numerals have variant forms (the most common are specified), but none is likely to cause the learner problems of recognition. It is worth noting that the ordinal suffix *-undi* also appears as *-andi* (though *níundi* and *tíundi* are almost universal).

*Tigir* is nom. pl. of *tigr* (also *tegr*, *tugr*, *tøgr*), a masculine noun meaning ‘a group of ten’ ‘a decade’; *þrír tigir*, for example, thus literally means ‘three tens’. *Hundrað* is a neuter noun, and *þúsund* a feminine. All three inflect according to noun paradigms (*tigr* according to paradigm 5 but without the vowel changes associated with root *a*, *hundrað* according to 27 but without the loss of unstressed *a* in dat. sg. and gen./dat. pl., *þúsund* according to 13).
Of the other cardinals, only *einn*, *tveir*, *þrír* and *fjórir* inflect, *einn* for case, gender, number and definiteness (cf., e.g., *þat eina* ‘the one’), *tveir*, *þrír* and *fjórir* for case and gender alone. The paradigms are as follows (only the strong forms of *einn* are given).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sg.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>einn</td>
<td>ein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>einn</td>
<td>eina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>eins</td>
<td>einnar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>einum</td>
<td>einni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>einir</td>
<td>einar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>eina</td>
<td>einar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>einna</td>
<td>einna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>einum</td>
<td>einum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>tveir</td>
<td>tvær</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>tvá</td>
<td>tvær</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>tveggja</td>
<td>tveggja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>tveim(r)</td>
<td>tveim(r)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>þrír</td>
<td>þrjár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>þrjá</td>
<td>þrjár</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>þrígga</td>
<td>þrígga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>þrim(r)</td>
<td>þrim(r)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>fjórir</td>
<td>fjórar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>fjóra</td>
<td>fjórar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>fjogurra</td>
<td>fjogurra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>fjórum</td>
<td>fjórum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the plural, *einn* has the sense ‘only’ ‘just’ (e.g. *sagnir einar* ‘just tales’), ‘some’ (*einir heiðnir vikingar* ‘some heathen vikings’) and ‘roughly’ ‘about’ (*einar þrjár* ‘about three’).

As a numeral (in the sense ‘the two’) we can include *báðir* ‘both’. It has only plural (dual) forms and inflects as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>m.</th>
<th>f.</th>
<th>n.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nom.</td>
<td>báðir</td>
<td>báðar</td>
<td>bæði</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acc.</td>
<td>báða</td>
<td>báðar</td>
<td>bæði</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen.</td>
<td>beggja</td>
<td>beggja</td>
<td>beggja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dat.</td>
<td>báðum</td>
<td>báðum</td>
<td>báðum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be seen that *einn* (in its strong form) inflects exactly like the pronoun *hinn* (3.2.2); it is also very similar in its forms to the possessives *minn, þinn, sinn* and adjectives with the *-in* suffix (3.3.9, paradigms 21 and 7). Certain of the inflexions of *tveir, þrír, fjórir* and *báðir* are reminiscent of corresponding noun, pronoun and adjective forms. Compare (1) nom. m. *tveir* with nom. m. pl. *þeir* ‘they’ ‘those’, and *þrír, fjórir, báðir* with the common nom. m. pl. ending *-ir*; (2) acc. m. *tvá, þrjá* with acc. m. pl. *þá* ‘them’ ‘those’, and *fjóra, báða* with the common acc. m. pl. ending *-a*; (3) nom./acc. f. *tveir* with nom./acc. f. pl. *þær*, and *þrír, fjórar, báðar* with the common nom./acc. f. pl. ending *-ær*; (4) gen. *tveggja, þrígga, fjórgurra, beggja* with the ubiquitous gen. pl. ending *-a*; (5) dat. *tveim, þrím, fjórum, báðum* with the ubiquitous dat. pl. ending *-u(m).* Observe also that the nom./acc. n. of all four numerals, like the nom./acc. n. pl. of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, is without a final added *-r*.

The ordinals all inflect as adjectives (3.3.4), but subject to considerable restrictions: *fyrst* has both strong and weak inflexion (contrast *hann gekk fyrst* ‘he went first’ and *hit fyrsta sumar* ‘the first summer’), *annarr* only strong, and the remaining ordinals only weak; *þríð* has *þ* insertion before *-a* and *-u* (3.3.8.5 point (5)). The paradigm of *annarr* shows a number of irregularities and is therefore given here in full.
In addition to these basic numerals, the learner may encounter tvinnr/tvennr ‘double’ ‘twofold’ ‘consisting of two different things or kinds’, flrennr ‘triple’ etc. Both words inflect as strong adjectives. Also adjectival is the suffix -tøgr, -tugr, which has the sense ‘of a number of tens’; it is particularly used of age, e.g. tvítøgr (frítøgr, fertøgr, fim(m)tøgr, etc.) maðr ‘a man of twenty’ (‘thirty’, ‘forty’, ‘fifty’, etc.). For 70 and tens above, the suffix -raðr is more common, e.g. átraðr ‘of eight tens’, tíraðr ‘of ten tens’, tólfrødr ‘of twelve tens’ (cf. above on the ‘long’ hundred). Uninflected numerals are tysvar/tvisvar ‘twice’, pryssvar/prisvar ‘thrice’.

3.4.1 The numerals and their inflexions — Exercise

1. What types of numeral are found in the basic Old Norse counting system?
2. Which of the numerals are nouns?
3. In what way may hundrað and þúsund be ambiguous?
4. Which of the cardinal numbers inflect, and what points of similarity are there between their paradigms and those of other word classes in Old Norse?
5. Which of the ordinal numbers inflect, and according to which pattern or patterns?
3.4.2 Examples of numeral usage

Inflexions, where they occur, are printed in bold (or the whole word, where the inflected form is identical with the root). Notes explain the relationship between form and function, and usage in general. Compare the inflexions used with those set out or identified above. Observe, too, the differences between Old Norse and English phraseology and sentence formation. Definitions of basic concepts that have already been given are not repeated; if in doubt, the student should in the first instance consult the commentaries that accompany each of the examples of noun usage (3.1.5).

(1) Pat var tíunda dag jóla, er Rǫgnvaldr jarl stóð upp

‘It was tenth day of Christmas that Earl Rǫgnvald got up’

Tíunda is an ordinal number in the acc. m. sg., agreeing with dag, which is accusative because the phrase of which it is the head is a time adverbial (it answers the question: ‘When?’; see 3.1.2). Note that jól ‘Christmas’ is a plural noun.

(2) Sigurðr jarl átti þríja sonu aðra; hét einn Sumarliði, annarr Brúsi, þríði Einarr rangmunnr

‘Earl Sigurðr had three other sons; one was called Sumarliði, the second Brúsi, the third Einarr wry-mouth’

Þríja is a cardinal and aðra an ordinal number; both are acc. m. (pl.), agreeing with sonu, the direct object of the first sentence. Einn is a cardinal and annarr and þríði are ordinal numbers; all three are nom. m. sg., the subjects of their respective sentences (cf. ‘ . . . the second [was called] . . . the third [was called] . . . ’). Annarr, unlike almost all other ordinals, has strong inflexion.

(3) Af herfangi því, er vér fám þar, skulum vér fá fátækum mǫnnum inn fimmtuganda penning

‘Of booty that which we get there, shall we give to-poor men the fiftieth penny’

‘Of the booty which we win there, we will give the fiftieth part to the poor’
Finite and finite is an ordinal in the acc. m. sg., agreeing with *penning*, the direct object.

(4) Par var mikill skáli ok dyrr á báðum endum  
   ‘There was big hall and doorway on both ends’  
   ‘There was a big hall there and a doorway at both ends’

Báðum is a plural numerical adjective in the dat., agreeing with *endum*, the noun of the preposition phrase á báðum endum. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition á (see 3.7, 3.7.4).

(5) Sámr hafði ok fjóra tigu manna  
    ‘Sámr had also four tens of-men’  
    ‘Sámr also had forty men’

Fjóra is a cardinal in the acc. m., agreeing with the numerical noun *tigu*, the direct object. Together, fjóra and tigu make up the numeral ‘forty’. Numbers which include or consist of the nouns *tigr*, hundrað or þúsund are followed by a genitive of type, that is, one which expresses the nature of the entity to which the numeral refers (cf. English *hundreds of people*).

(6) Par var saman tölfrætt hundrað manna  
    ‘There were together duodecimal hundred of men’  
    ‘Altogether there were 120 men there’

Tölfrætt is an adjective in the strong nom. n. sg., agreeing with the numerical noun *hundrað*, the subject. On the genitive *manna*, see (5) above.

(7) Pá er hann var fimtán vetra gamall, reið hann til þings  
    ‘Then when he was fifteen of-winters old, rode he to assembly’  
    ‘When he was fifteen years old, he rode to the assembly’

Fimtán is an uninflected cardinal which together with *vetra* functions as an adverbial of measure. Where a cardinal is thus used in combination with (the appropriate form of) *gamall* ‘old’, the noun expressing the spans of time by which age is reckoned (here: ‘winters’) appears in the genitive.

(8) Hann reið á Háskuldsstaði við tölfta mann  
    ‘He rode to Háskuldsstaðir with twelfth man’  
    ‘He rode to Háskuldsstaðir with eleven men’
Morphology and syntax

Tólfta is an ordinal in the acc. m. sg., agreeing with mann, the noun of the preposition phrase vid tólfta mann. The case of the noun is governed by the preposition vid (see 3.7.4). ‘With ordinal man’ is a common way in Old Norse of specifying the total number in a group: the subject (here: ‘he’) is included in the group and the ordinal gives the total. In this particular example there were twelve altogether: ‘he’ and eleven others.

(9) Tveir menn ins fimta tigar váru með Eyjólfi
    ‘Two men of-the fifth ten were with Eyjólfr’
    ‘Forty-two men were with Eyjólfr’

Tveir is a cardinal in the nom. m., agreeing with menn, the subject. Fimta is an ordinal in the gen. m. sg., agreeing with tigar; ins fimta tigar is a partitive genitive, that is, one that expresses the whole of which the number or numbers singled out for mention (here: ‘two men’) are a part (see 3.2.6, sentence 20). Note how the number is expressed: the fourth ‘ten’ ends at 40 and the fifth at 50, thus two of the fifth ten, i.e. two on the way from 40 towards 50, is 42.

(10) En frá Snæfellsnesi er fjögurra dagra haf í vestr til Grønlands
    ‘But from Snæfellsnes is four days’ sea in west to Greenland’
    ‘But from Snæfellsnes it is four days’ sailing to the west to Greenland’

Fjögurra is a cardinal in the gen., agreeing with dagra; fjögurra dagra is a descriptive genitive, that is, one which modifies a noun (here: ‘sea’) by expressing a quality or characteristic associated with it.

(11) Rognvaldr jarl gaf Haraldi jarli annat skipit; þat hét Fífa, en annat hét Hjálp
    ‘Earl Rognvaldr gave Earl Haraldr the one ship-the; it was-called Fífa, and the other was-called Hjálp’
    ‘Earl Rognvaldr gave Earl Haraldr the one ship; it was called Arrow and the other was called Help’

Annat is an ordinal. In the first sentence it appears in the acc. n. sg., agreeing with skipit, the direct object. In the third sentence it is nom. n. sg. and is the subject. Note that annarr not only means ‘second’, ‘other’, but ‘the one’ and ‘the other’ of two entities. Observe further that skipit is definite (i.e. it is accompanied by the (suffixed) definite article); this gives the construction partitive sense (cf. (9) above), i.e. it means literally ‘the one of the [two] ships’.
(12) Kómu sendimenn til jarls primr nóttum síðarr
‘Came messengers to earl three nights later’
‘The messengers came to the earl three nights later’

*Primr* is a cardinal in the dat., agreeing with *nóttum*. *Primr nóttum* is an adverbial of degree, used together with comparatives to express by how much one entity is more than another; *primr nóttum síðarr* thus means literally ‘later by three nights’.

### 3.4.2 Examples of numeral usage — Exercise

1. In what different ways may *annarr* be used?
2. How might one say in Old Norse: ‘with six other men’?
3. What types of genitive construction are used in conjunction with numerals?
4. How might one say ‘fifty-six’ in Old Norse?
5. Give the case, gender and number (as appropriate) of the numerals (printed in bold) in the following sentences, and explain their syntactic function and semantic role:

   (a) Hann hafi fjögur skip ok tíu tígu manna
   ‘He had four ships and a hundred men’

   (b) Peir gengu þaðan inn þrettánda dag jóla
   ‘They went from there on the thirteenth day of Christmas’

   (c) Haraldr jarl var þá nær tvítøgum manni
   ‘Earl Haraldr was then a man of nearly twenty’

   (d) Peir sátu í skemmu einni skammt frá sænum
   ‘They sat in a certain building a short distance from the sea’

   (e) Eptir fall Rognvalds jarls var Haraldr jarl í Orkneyjum átta vetr ins fimmta tigar
   ‘After the fall of Earl Rognvaldr, Haraldr was earl in the Orkneys for forty-eight years’

   (f) Hét annarr Sqrli ok annarr Porkell
   ‘The one was called Sqrli and the other Porkell’
3.5 Adverbs

Adverbs are sometimes defined as words that modify the verb or specify its action (e.g. English quickly in he ran quickly, which denotes the manner of the running). In fact, the function of many words that are traditionally classed as adverbs does not fit this definition. Indeed the adverb word class serves as a kind of dustbin into which items that do not obviously belong to any other category can be put. In the English sentence: unfortunately, they could not come, for example, unfortunately is classed as an adverb, yet it says nothing about the ‘coming’, but means rather: ‘I/we think it is unfortunate they could not come’.

As in English, adverbs in Old Norse are a heterogeneous group. One feature they all share, however, is that they do not inflect for number, person, case or gender. Most, like adjectives, inflect for degree (see below), but that is all. The learner therefore needs to master nothing more than the meanings of adverbs and to be able to recognise their comparative and superlative forms.

3.5.1 Adverb formation

Although a number of Old Norse adverbs appear to be primary (not transparently derived from other words, e.g. mjök ‘very’, svá ‘thus’ ‘so’, þá ‘then’, vel ‘well’), the majority are derivatives. Many are based on adjectives. A particularly common way of forming adverbs from adjectives is by adding an -a suffix (e.g. illa ‘badly’ from illr ‘bad’); equally common is the use of the strong nom./acc. n. sg. form of the adjective with adverbial function (e.g. skjótt ‘quickly’ from skjótr ‘quick’). Adverbs derived from adjectives with the commonly occurring -ligr suffix are formed in the same way as illa (e.g. makligr ‘fitting’, makliga ‘fittingly’); sometimes -liga is added to the root of other adjectives (e.g. gløgg ‘clearly’, gløggliga ‘clearly’), and thus itself becomes an adverb suffix. A number of adverbs are fossilised case-forms of adjectives or nouns (e.g. jafnan ‘always’ ‘constantly’ from jafn ‘equal’ ‘even’, alls ‘altogether’ ‘at all’ from allr ‘all’, miklu ‘much’ (emphasising comparatives as in miklu meiri ‘much greater’) from mikill ‘big’, loks ‘finally’ from lok n. ‘end’, stundum ‘sometimes’ from stund f. ‘while’ ‘time’).

Many adverbs indicating movement towards a place have counter-
Adverbs

parts formed with an -i suffix that denote rest in a place and others with an -an suffix meaning movement from a place (e.g. inn ‘in’, inni ‘inside’, innan ‘from within’). Some have only two of the forms (e.g. norðr ‘northwards’ ‘in the north’, norðan ‘from the north’ (with root norð-); thus also the other compass-point adverbs — on suðr ‘southwards’, sunnan ‘from the south’, see p. 126). Certain of these locational adverbs can have special meanings (e.g. útan ‘from without’ and thus ‘from Iceland’, seen from the perspective of Norway). The threefold distinction: ‘to a place’, ‘in a place’ and ‘from a place’ is also found in the commonly occurring hingat — hér — heðan ‘hither — here — hence’, þangat — þar — þaðan ‘thither — there — thence’, hvert — hvaðan ‘where (to) — where — whence’ (it should be noted that none of these words has the slightly archaic ring of some of the English equivalents). Adverbs with the -an suffix combine with a preceding fyrir (cf. 3.7.1, 3.7.4) to form prepositional phrases indicating position relative to another (fixed) position (e.g. fyrir norðan heiðina ‘north of the heath’, fyrir ofan húsin ‘above the buildings’; note the idiomatic fyrir norðan/sunnan land ‘in the north/south of Iceland’).

3.5.2 Inflexion for degree

The suffixes used to form the comparative and superlative of adverbs are the same as those found in adjectival comparison, namely -(a)r, -(a)st. As examples we may cite opt ‘often’ and lengi ‘long’ ‘for a long time’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>comparative</th>
<th>superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opt</td>
<td>opt</td>
<td>optar</td>
<td>optast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lengi</td>
<td>leng</td>
<td>lengr</td>
<td>lengst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adverbs like skjótt that consist of the strong nom./acc. n. sg. adjective mostly have the corresponding adjective form in the comparative as well (e.g. skjóttara ‘more quickly’, with an -ara suffix, lengra ‘farther’, from langi). In the superlative of such adverbs the strong nom./acc. n. sg. form is always used (e.g. skjótast ‘most quickly’, lengst ‘farthest’ with the -(a)st suffix (cf. 3.3.8.5 point (2)), added to the roots skjót-, leng- rather than to the positive adverb forms skjótt, langi). Occasionally the -(a)ra comparative ending can be found in adverbs other than those of the skjótt type.
Other minor deviations from the above pattern include the addition of an extra *r* to many comparatives in -ar (e.g. *optar*('more often'), *framar*('farther forward' 'farther on' from *fram* 'forward') and the spread of comparative *r* into many superlatives (e.g. *frama(r)st* 'farthest forward' 'farthest on', *innar(r)st* 'farthest in'). As the brackets in the examples indicate, regular forms may also be found.

Like adjectives, adverbs that form the comparative with the -ar and the superlative with the -st suffix undergo front mutation of back root vowels (see 3.1.7.2 and 3.3.8.2). Few adverbs are in fact affected. Common ones are *lengra* 'farther', *lengst* 'farthest' (see above), *fremr* 'farther forward', *fremst* 'farthest forward' (alternative comparative and superlative forms to *framar(r), frama(r)st*, see above), and the irregular *fjarri* 'far off' — *frr* 'farther off' — *first* 'farthest off' and *gørr* 'more thoroughly', 'precisely' — *gørr* 'more thoroughly' — *gørst* 'most thoroughly'.

Also in common with adjectives, a small group of adverbs have suppletive forms in the comparative and superlative (see 3.3.8.3). The ones likely to be encountered regularly by the learner are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>gjarna</em></td>
<td>'willingly', 'rather', 'most of all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>illa</em></td>
<td>'badly', 'worse', 'worst'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>litt</em></td>
<td>'little', 'less', 'least'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mjok</em></td>
<td>'much', 'more', 'most'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vel</em></td>
<td>'well', 'better', 'best'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One or two of the deviations and minor irregularities affecting adjectives (3.3.8.4, 3.3.8.5) can be found in the comparative and/or superlative forms of adverbs also. Attention has already been drawn to the loss of neuter -ar in superlatives of the *skjótast* type (3.3.8.5 point (2)). Further to be noted are consonantal assimilations (3.3.8.4 point (1), cf., e.g., *seinnar* 'more slowly' 'later' < *seinra*) and loss of unstressed syllables in disyllabic adverbs when a further syllable is added (3.3.8.5 point (1), cf., e.g., *sjalldar* 'seldom' — *sjalldnar* 'more seldom' — *sjalldnast* 'most seldom').

Occasionally the alternation *dr* — *nn* seen in nouns like *muðr* 'mouth', acc. *mun* gen. *munns* etc. (cf. 3.1.7.4 point (5)) also distinguishes different forms of adverbs. We have already noted that the -an form of *sudr* is *sunnan*; its comparative and superlative manifestations are *sunnar(r), sunna(r)st* respectively.
3.5.3 Examples of adverb usage

On the pattern of exemplification, see the preambles to 3.1.5, 3.2.6, 3.3.6 and 3.4.2. Adverbs are given in bold type.

1. Peir kurrūdu illa um brottvist sīna
   ‘They grumbled badly about absence refl. poss.’
   ‘They grumbled a lot about their having to be away’

ILLA is an adverb of manner; it describes the way in which ‘they’ grumbled.

2. Par eru jafnan dregin skip yfir
   ‘There are regularly dragged ships across’
   ‘Ships are regularly dragged across there’

PAR is an adverb of place; it is the ‘rest’ counterpart to flangat ‘thither’ and þaðan ‘thence’ (cf. (5) below), denoting neither movement to nor from a place. Jafnan may loosely be described as an adverb of time; it denotes the regularity with which the event described takes place. YfIR is a preposition used here as an adverb of place; it denotes movement within a specified area.

3. Tóku menn þá rôdr mikinn ok fóru ákafliga
   ‘Began men then rowing big and went furiously’
   ‘Then men began to row hard and they travelled at a furious pace’

þÁ is an adverb of time; it denotes the point in time at which men started to row. Ákafliga is an adverb of manner; it describes the way in which the vessels moved.

4. Þessu var skjótt neitat
   ‘This was quickly refused’

SKJÓTT is an adverb of manner derived from the nom./acc. n. sg. of the adjective skjótr ‘quick’; it describes the speed with which the refusal was made.

5. Magnús konungr helt þaðan í Suðreyjar
   ‘Magnús king continued thence to Hebrides’
   ‘King Magnús went on from there to the Hebrides’

THAÐAN is an adverb of place; the -an suffix imparts to it the sense of movement from a place.
Magnús konungr helt sunnan með Skotlandi
‘Magnús king continued from-south along Scotland’
‘King Magnús continued northwards along the coast of Scotland’

_Sunnan_ is an adverb of place; the -an suffix imparts to it the sense of movement from a place. Note, however, that here it seems more natural in English to render the movement as motion towards, i.e. ‘northwards’ (cf. further: ofan ‘from above’ ‘down’, nedan ‘from underneath’ ‘up’).

Hann eignar sér svá allar eyjar fyrir vestan Skotland
‘He assigns to-self thus all islands west of Scotland’
‘He thus takes possession of all the islands west of Scotland’

_Svá_ is an adverb of manner; it refers to the way in which ‘he’ takes possession of the islands. Note the compound preposition _fyrir vestan_ incorporating the adverb of place _vestan_ (see 3.5.1).

Hann fór þegar austr til Nóregs
‘He went immediately east to Norway’

_Þegar_ is an adverb of time; it denotes the lack of any interval before ‘he’ left for Norway. _Austr_ is an adverb of place, here denoting movement towards the place.

Eysteinn konungr tók við honum forkunnar vel
‘King Eysteinn received him exceedingly well’

_Forkunnar_ is an adverb of degree; it describes how well ‘he’ was received (as the -ar ending suggests, this is in origin the gen. sg. form of a noun, _forkuðr_ f. ‘strong desire’, see 3.1.7.4 point (5)). _Vel_ is an adverb of manner; it describes the way in which Eysteinn received ‘him’.

Pá reðdi Kali um, at þeir myndi eigi fara lengra
‘Then spoke Kali about that they would not go farther’
‘Then Kali said that they would not go any farther’

_For pá_, see (3) above. _Lengra_ is an adverb of place in the comparative; it denotes movement additional to that already made towards a place.

Litlu síðarr gekk maðrinn út
‘A little later the man went out’

_Síðarr_ is an adverb of time in the comparative; it compares the time the man
Adverbs

went out with an earlier event. Út is an adverb of place; it denotes movement towards the outside. Although litlu is in form the strong dat. n. sg. of the adjective litill (cf. 3.3.8.4 point (3)), it functions here as an adverb of degree, expressing how much later the event described took place.

(12) Þóðr vann þá allra sýsligast
    ‘Þóðr worked then of-all most-briskly’
    ‘Then Þóðr worked more briskly than ever’

For þá, see (3) above. Sýsligast is an adverb of manner in the superlative; it describes the way in which Þóðr worked and defines it as the highest degree of that manner of working. Although allra is in form the gen. pl. of the adjective allr, it functions here as an intensifying adverb: Þóðr did not just work most briskly, but most briskly of all (things).

3.5.1/3.5.2/3.5.3 Adverb formation/Inflexion for degree/Examples of adverb usage — Exercise

1. In what ways do adverbs inflect in Old Norse?
2. Give examples of three common ways of deriving adverbs in Old Norse.
3. What is the basic meaning of (a) the -i and (b) the -an adverb suffix?
4. How are the comparatives and superlatives of adverbs formed?
5. Give the positive and superlative forms of the following adverbs: minnr, lengra, betr, fljótara, síðarr.
6. Explain the form (where appropriate) and the function of the adverbs (printed in bold) in the following sentences.

   (a) Heldu þeir þá þeigar suðr í Eyjar
       ‘They then at once went south to the Orkneys’

   (b) Þeir vǫrðusk drengiliga
       ‘They defended themselves manfully’

   (c) Hundrinn hljóp ofan til skipa
       ‘The dog ran down to the ships’

   (d) Þeir kómu heldr síð
       ‘They came rather late’

   (e) Skip Sveins gekk meira
       ‘Sveinn’s ship went faster’

   (f) Sveinn varð seinst búinn
       ‘Sveinn was ready last’
Adverbs and adverbials

In the above we have dealt almost exclusively with adverbs, that is, single words whose basic function is adverbial and which are therefore assigned to the adverb word class. However, as litlu and allra in example sentences (11) and (12) above indicate, non-adverbs can sometimes be used in such a way that they assume adverbial function. This applies not only to single words, but to whole phrases. Many preposition phrases, for example, are reducible to adverbs. Thus í + a placename is in a sense the equivalent of þar ‘there’ or hér ‘here’ in that it answers the question ‘where’ (e.g. í Nóregi ‘in Norway’), and í + a noun denoting a point in time or a period of time is the equivalent of þá, answering the question ‘when’ (e.g. í þeim tíma ‘at that time’). Noun phrases, too, may have adverbial function (e.g. þat var einn dag ‘that happened one day’ where einn dag is accusative and expresses a point in time; cf. 3.1.2 and 3.1.5, sentence 10). Even complete dependent sentences may be reducible to a single adverb and thus be shown to have adverbial function (e.g., meðan hann lifði ‘while he lived’ refers to a period of time and can be replaced by þá ‘then’).

Phrases or clauses that have adverbial function are known as adverbials. But since adverbs by definition also have adverbial function, they are clearly adverbials too. The difference between the two is a matter of perspective. Adverbs are a word class on a par with nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc., while adverbials are functional elements in the sentence, comparable to subjects, objects, etc. Although this Grammar attempts as far as practicable to integrate morphology and syntax, its different sections are rooted firmly in the word class. Adverbials will therefore not be further discussed. In fact, Old Norse and English do not differ greatly with respect to adverbial formation and use, so it is unlikely the student will encounter much difficulty in recognising Old Norse adverbials for what they are.
3.6 Verb inflexions and their function

Traditionally the verb has been defined as a ‘doing’ or ‘action’ word. This definition, based on meaning, is not wholly satisfactory, since it can be shown that many words classed as verbs do not denote actions (e.g. English *seem, need, must*). Verbs can also be defined by their morphology, i.e. as words which (may) have different forms to distinguish, *inter alia*, person, number, tense, mood, and voice. In terms of function, verbs are the non-reducible part of the predicate. On the one hand we have the subject — ‘what the sentence is about’ (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1), on the other the predicate — what is said of the subject. Every predicate must contain a verb; it will usually contain more than this, but some predicates consist of a verb alone (e.g. English *John* (noun/subject) *arrived* (verb/predicate)).

The verb in Old Norse is most easily recognised by its morphological features. It inflects for person, number, tense, mood, and, to a limited extent, voice (see further below). Analysis will also show it to be the non-reducible part of the predicate, but such analysis may often be difficult for the learner. In any case, what s/he needs first and foremost to acquire is knowledge of the different verbal forms and an understanding of their meaning. We begin, therefore, with a brief introduction to person, number, tense, mood and voice and a schematic account of how these categories are expressed in Old Norse.

3.6.1 Person and number

As explained in the case of the pronouns (cf. 3.2, 3.2.1), person in linguistic description refers to the perspective from which the participants in a situation are viewed. We saw that in Old Norse, as in English, there were three persons, represented by the pronouns *ek* ‘I’, *vit* ‘we two’, *vé* ‘we [pl.]’ (1st person), *þú* ‘you’, *(þ)út* ‘you two’, *(þ)ér* ‘you [pl.]’ (2nd person), *hann* ‘he’, *hon* ‘she’, *(þ)at* ‘it’, *heir* ‘they [m.]’, *(þ)ær* ‘they [f.]’, *(þ)au* ‘they [n.]’, *sik* ‘self’ ‘selves’ (3rd person).

In English, the form of the verb may occasionally change depending on which person (in the grammatical sense) is used as subject (e.g. *I/we/they sing, but he sings*). In older English, and still today with the verb to *be*, there are further changes (e.g. *I/we/ye/they sing, thou*
singest, he singeth; I am, you/we/they are, he is). In Old Norse each person, singular and dual/plural, by and large has its own distinctive verbal inflexion. Thus if we wish to render ‘I judged’ in Old Norse, we must say ek dœm›, ‘you [sg.] judged’ is þú dœm›r, ‘he judged’ hann dœm›, ‘we [pl.] judged’ vêr dœm›um, ‘you [pl.] judged’ (þ)vêr dœm›ud, ‘they [m.] judged’ þeir dœm›u. Note that it is the person and number of the subject that determines the form of the verb. Further that it is only person in conjunction with the singular : plural distinction that triggers this verbal agreement (on the concept of agreement, see 3.3.1); the gender of 3rd person subjects never affects the form of the verb, nor does the dual : plural distinction (‘she judged’ is thus hon dœm›i, ‘we two judged’ vit dœm›um, ‘you two judged’ (þ)vit dœm›uð, ‘they [f.] judged’ þer dœm›u, etc.)

3.6.2 Tense

Tense is a difficult concept to define. In the broadest sense it refers to the way in which a verb marks the time at which whatever it denotes takes place. The relationship between tense and time is, however, anything but clear-cut. Thus, what is generally agreed to be the past tense in English (alternatively known as the preterite or imperfect) may express a counter-factual rather than a temporal sense (e.g. if I knew — but I don’t), and what is accepted as the present may refer to the future (e.g. Helen performs there tomorrow), the past (e.g. I hear that you plan to move) or a regular occurrence (e.g. the sun rises in the east). Nor do the problems end there. While we may express past time in English with the past tense (e.g. David came yesterday), and present time with the present (e.g. I am bored), there is no corresponding verb-form with which to express the future. Indeed, English has no other morphological tenses than the present and the past. Some argue that verb phrases like shall come and will come represent the English future tense, and further that have come represents the ‘perfect’ and had come the ‘pluperfect’. Others go further and claim that would come and should come are ‘conditional’, but this is all rather far removed from English morphology. To be sure, have come and had come express something different from came and from each other (chiefly differences of time orientation), and would come does not mean the same as
Verb inflexions and their function

will come, but if tense is to be related solely or chiefly to meaning, the need for clarity requires the creation of a separate term to denote tense-forms, that is, variations in the morphology of the verb whose primary function is to signal temporal meanings.

The difficulty is, no such term obviously suggests itself. ‘Tense’ in the sense ‘tense-forms’, is well established, traditional usage. Since the lack of clarity arises from the application of the term to a variety of periphrastic (i.e. separate-word) constructions that express meanings similar or identical to those expressed by tense-forms, it seems better to choose different terms for the periphrastic constructions. Verb phrases with temporal and related meanings that are not simple tense-forms will accordingly be described as ‘phrases’ or ‘constructions’, and, where necessary, terms like ‘perfect construction’, ‘future construction’, etc. will be used.

All Germanic languages share with English the minimal tense system outlined above — using ‘tense’ in the sense just defined. Old Norse thus exhibits a contrast between present and past tense inflexions, but has no set of endings whose primary purpose is to mark the future, in contrast to French or Latin, for example. Nor does it have individual inflexions for the perfect, the pluperfect or any other of the wide range of tenses that may be found in some other languages. In place of such tenses, much as English, it employs periphrastic constructions involving what are called auxiliary verbs (i.e. ones subordinate to the main verb, which express mood, voice, time orientation etc.). English I have (aux.) killed (main) the vikings thus has its Old Norse counterpart in ek hefi drepit vikingana, and I will (aux.) kill (main) the vikings in ek mun drepa vikingana (see further 3.6.7, 3.9.7.1).

The past is distinguished from the present in Old Norse in much the same way as in English: either by root vowel change (e.g. Old Norse ek tek — ek tók, English I take — I took) or the suffixation of -d, -d or -t (e.g. Old Norse ek fylgi — ek fylgda, English I follow — I followed; note, regarding the varying form of the suffix in Old Norse, that what is written ‘ed’ in English is not always pronounced as a simple d, cf. voted, walked). Traditionally these two types of past tense formation are known as strong and weak. As in the case of noun and adjective inflexion, the terms themselves have no special significance, and one could as easily speak of ‘type A’ and ‘type B’.

A further difference between present and past, as fylgi versus fylgda
indicates, lies in some of the personal inflexions, but this is of second-
ary importance compared with the root vowel alternation or the pres-
ence or absence of the -d/-d/-t suffix. The vowel alternation and the
occurrence or otherwise of the suffix affect all forms of the tense con-
cerned and are more immediately obvious. Some of the personal in-
flexions, on the other hand, are identical in both tenses (e.g. þú fylgir
‘you follow’ — þú fylogir ‘you followed’, and cf. tek — tók above
with zero ending).

3.6.3 Mood

Mood is sometimes known as ‘modality’, and refers in its broadest
sense to the attitude of a speaker or writer to what s/he is saying. Mood
is thus concerned with matters like certainty, vagueness, possibility,
will, obligation, etc. and the ways in which they may be expressed. In
English, modal auxiliaries (subordinate verbs expressing mood, cf.
3.6.2) like ought, shall, may, etc. are widely used to convey such atti-
tudes, and that is also the case in Old Norse. To a limited extent, Eng-
lish may also employ inflexion, i.e. in addition to indicating person,
number and present or past tense, forms of the verb may suggest some-
thing about the speaker’s or writer’s attitude to what is being said. In
the sentence:

He goes every day

the ‘going’ is presented as factual — as taking place — whereas in:

I suggest that he go

the ‘going’ is merely something that is envisaged. Similarly, in:

I was single then

the speaker or writer presents his/her unmarried status at a time in the
past as fact. In:

If I were single . . .
on the other hand, the presupposition is that the speaker/writer is mar-
ried, and the counter-factual sense of the hypothesis is (in part) con-
veyed by the form of the verb. Both was and were are 1st person singular
past tense forms of to be in English, but they indicate different atti-
tudes to the truth value of what is said on the part of speaker or writer. *Was*, as also *goes* in the previous pair of examples, represents what is known as the **indicative** mood, *were*, together with *go* in the previous pair, the **subjunctive**.

Beyond these cases (3rd person singular present of most verbs and 1st (and 3rd) singular past of *to be*), there is little of mood inflexion in English. In Old Norse, in contrast, each verb has two full sets of endings. As in English, indicative endings are used by and large in sentences where the predicate denotes something regarded by the speaker/writer as factual or certain. Subjunctive endings are found chiefly in sentences where the predicate denotes something regarded by the speaker/writer as hypothetical: a wish, request, instruction, supposition, possibility, etc. In addition, Old Norse has an **imperative** mood (used for commands — see below), but this only manifests itself in the 2nd person singular (some have reckoned with 1st and 2nd pl. imperatives, but these are distinctive usages, not forms). Contrastive examples, illustrating differences between indicative, subjunctive and imperative forms in the present tense and indicative and subjunctive forms in the past (there is no past imperative) are: *þú kastar* ‘you throw’ (indic.) — *nema þú kastir* ‘unless you throw’ (subj.) — *kasta* (þú) (or: *kastaðu*, cf. 3.2.1) ‘throw!’ (imp.); *þeir dœmðu* ‘they judged’ (indic.) — *þó þeir dœmði* ‘though they judged’ (subj.).

### 3.6.4 Voice

Voice is a term used to denote the way in which the relationship between the subject and the object of a verb is expressed. The main distinction in many languages, and the only one it is useful to make in Old Norse, is between **active** and **passive**. If in English we say *John hit him*, the subject is also the agent (i.e. John is the one who does the hitting, cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1). But we may turn the sentence round, as it were, and say *he was hit (by John)*, where the subject, ‘he’, is the goal of the action, or the ‘patient’, and the agent appears (optionally) in a preposition phrase (cf. 3.7). The first type of construction is known as active and the second as passive.

Old Norse forms passive verb phrases in much the same way as English (e.g. *þeir halda hátð mikla* ‘they hold a great festival’ (act.) — *hátð mikil er haldin* ‘a great festival is held’ (pass.); *þeir nefnda*
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hann Óláf ‘they named him Óláfr’ (act.) — hann var nefndr Óláfr ‘he was named Óláfr’ (pass.). Morphologically, such passives are periphrastic: the main verb does not itself inflect for voice, rather we have the appropriate form of the present or past tense of the verb vera ‘[to] be’ used as an auxiliary in combination with the past participle of the main verb, which inflects as an adjective (haldin, nom. f. sg., agrees with hátíð, nefndr, nom. m. sg., agrees with hann, cf. 3.3.1). (See further 3.9.7.2.)

Old Norse does, however, possess an inflexion that sometimes has passive function. This is the -sk form of the verb (so-called because in most manifestations it consists of an -sk added to the appropriate verbal ending). It would be misleading, however, to consider the -sk a passive form since it more commonly appears with other functions (see 3.6.5.3). Examples of passive usage are: hann fyrirdœmi af illum mánnum ‘he is condemned by wicked men’, á hans dögum byggðisk Ísland ‘in his days Iceland was settled’, hann fannsk eigi ‘he was not found’ ‘he could not be found’. Fyrirdœmi ‘is condemned’ contrasts with fyrirdœmir ‘condemns’, byggðisk ‘was settled’ with byggði ‘settled’ and fannsk ‘was found’ with fann ‘found’.

3.6.1/3.6.2/3.6.3/3.6.4 Person and number/Tense/Mood/Voice — Exercise

1. In what ways do person and number affect the form of the verb in Old Norse?
2. How many tenses may the Old Norse verb be said to have, and why?
3. How is the past tense distinguished from the present in Old Norse?
4. How is the subjunctive mood marked in Old Norse, and what are its chief functions?
5. To what extent can the passive voice be expressed by inflexions in Old Norse?
3.6.5 Basic verb inflexions

Having introduced the main categories of the Old Norse verb, we will now present the basic inflexions by which these categories are expressed. The emphasis is on ‘basic’. As in the case of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, it is important for the learner not to lose sight of the wood for the trees. Deviations from the basic patterns are not infrequent, but there is little point in trying to learn those until the essentials have been mastered. In any case, it will often be possible to recognise an irregular form for what it is once one has become familiar with the underlying system. (For students keen to see the full range of inflexions, the grammars cited in the preamble to 3.1.4 are recommended.)

3.6.5.1 Endings

This section sets out the inflexions that are attached to the verbal root, i.e. the personal endings and the past tense suffix of weak verbs (see 3.6.2). Because strong verbs lack a past tense suffix and some of their personal forms are different from those of the weak verbs, it is clearest to provide separate tables for the two types. The student should observe, however, that the majority of personal endings are common to both strong and weak verbs. With either type, each tense potentially has six different endings for the indicative and six for the subjunctive (three persons, 1st, 2nd and 3rd, times two numbers, singular and plural), and also the 2nd sg. present imperative. In reality the number is smaller because the same form can occur in more than one position. The endings are as follows (~ = zero, i.e. there is no ending, the form consisting of root alone (e.g. ek tek ‘I take’, hon tók ‘she took’); actual paradigms are given in 3.6.10).
### Strong verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. pres.</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. pres.</td>
<td>-r</td>
<td>-ir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. pres.</td>
<td>-r</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. pres.</td>
<td>-um</td>
<td>-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-ið</td>
<td>-ið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. past</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. past</td>
<td>-t</td>
<td>-ir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. past</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. past</td>
<td>-um</td>
<td>-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl. past</td>
<td>-uð</td>
<td>-ið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. past</td>
<td>-u</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imperative (2nd sg. pres.)** ~

### Weak verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. pres.</td>
<td>~/a/i</td>
<td>-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. pres.</td>
<td>~/ar/-ir</td>
<td>-ir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. pres.</td>
<td>~/ar/-ir</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. pres.</td>
<td>-um</td>
<td>-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-ið</td>
<td>-ið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. past</td>
<td>~/da/-ta</td>
<td>-da/-ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. past</td>
<td>~/dir/-tir</td>
<td>-dir/-tir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. past</td>
<td>~/di/-ti</td>
<td>-di/-ti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. past</td>
<td>~/dim/-tim</td>
<td>-dim/-tim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl. past</td>
<td>~/duð/-tuð</td>
<td>-duð/-tuð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. past</td>
<td>~/du/-tu</td>
<td>-di/-ti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imperative (2nd sg. pres.)** ~/a
Certain regularities and patterns will be observed in these paradigms.

1. The 2nd and 3rd person sg. present indic. always end in -\textit{r}; this is what distinguishes them from the 1st person, which either has no ending or a vowel (the same vowel, minus the following \textit{r}, as is found in the 2nd and 3rd person).

2. The 1st person pl. always ends in -\textit{m}: -\textit{um} in the indicative, -\textit{im} in the subjunctive.

3. The 2nd person pl. always ends in -\textit{ð}: -\textit{ð} in the present indicative and the subjunctive, -\textit{uð} in the past indicative.

4. The 3rd person pl. always ends in a vowel: -\textit{a} in the present indicative, -\textit{u} in the past indicative, -\textit{i} in the subjunctive.

5. The 1st person sg. ends in -\textit{a} in most cases, the exceptions being the present indicative of many verbs, and the past indicative of strong verbs.

6. The 2nd person sg. ends in -\textit{ir} in most cases, the exceptions being the same as those noted in (5).

7. The 3rd person sg. ends in -\textit{i} in the past indicative of weak verbs and in the present and past subjunctive.

8. The 1st person sg. present and past indicative of strong verbs has no ending.

9. The subjunctive endings of the present and past tense are the same, except that in weak verbs they are preceded by an -\textit{ð}, -\textit{d} or -\textit{i} suffix.

These are the essential verb endings of Old Norse. Certain variations on this pattern can be found, but if the student has mastered the above table s/he should be able to recognise the overwhelming majority of endings encountered.

\textit{3.6.5.1 Endings — Exercise}

1. In what way does the ending of the 2nd and 3rd person sg. present indic. differ from that of the 1st?
2. Which verb-form ends in -\textit{t}?
3. What endings does the 3rd person pl. exhibit, and in what forms are the different endings to be found?
4. What characterises all 1st person pl. endings?
5. Which verb-forms have zero ending?
6. In what ways do the indicative endings of strong and weak verbs differ?
7. What endings does the 2nd person pl. exhibit, and in what forms are the different endings to be found?
8. What characterises the subjunctive endings?
3.6.5.2 Vowel alternations

In order to grasp the grammatical function of individual verb-forms, and thus their sense, it is not sufficient simply to be familiar with the various endings. It is also necessary to know the fundamentals of the vowel alternations that occur in the root syllables of the majority of verbs. These are of different kinds. Some are readily predictable, others less so, and some are not predictable at all.

Wholly predictable is the change $a > \varphi$ caused by labial mutation. It will have been seen that a number of verb endings contain or consist of $u$. As explained in relation to nouns and adjectives (3.1.7.1, 3.3.8.1), it is a rule of Old Norse that $a$ cannot appear before $u$ or $v$, but alters instead to $\varphi$ in stressed syllables and to $u$ in unstressed. Thus it is no surprise to find that although kasta ‘[to] throw’, for example, has root $a$, the 1st pl. present indic. is (vit/vér) kóstum, the 1st pl. past indic. (vit/vér) kóstudum, 2nd pl. past indic. (þit/þér) kóstuduð, 3rd pl. past indic. (þéir) kóstudu.

Front mutation (cf. 3.1.7.2, 3.3.8.2) also causes root vowel alternations in verbs. This too is predictable, but not directly from the verb-forms themselves since the conditioning factor has in many cases disappeared. All the student needs to know, however, is in which forms of which verbs to expect front mutation, and to be aware of the back : front correspondences arising from it.

The three parts of the verbal paradigm affected by front mutation are the entire present indicative and subjunctive of one class of weak verb, the singular present indicative of strong verbs, and the past subjunctive of all verbs with the exception of one weak class.

Weak verbs with a short root syllable (cf. 2.1.4) and a -ja infinitive (infinitive = the dictionary entry form, corresponding to the English ‘to’ form as in to go, to hear; see 3.6.6) have front mutation throughout the present tense (and also in the infinitive), but mostly revert to the original root vowel in the past indicative. Virtually all verbs of this type have either $a$ or $u$ in the past indicative, which mutates to $e$, $y$ respectively in all other tensed forms (e.g. hann velr ‘he chooses’—hann valði ‘he chose’, ek spyr ‘I ask’ — ek spurða ‘I asked’).

All strong verbs that are susceptible (i.e. those with original back root vowels) exhibit front mutation in the singular present indicative. The back : front correspondences that arise (contrasting 3rd pl. with 3rd sg.) are as follows:
 Verb inflexions and their function  

| a —— e | (fara —— ferr) |
| á —— æ | (gráta —— grætr) |
| o —— ø | (sofa —— sœfr (› sœfr)) |
| ó —— œ | (blóta —— blœtr) |
| ú —— ù | (lúka —— l‡kr) |
| ŋ —— ø | (høggva —— hœgr) |
| au —— ey | (hlaupa —— hleypr) |
| jó —— ý | (skjóta —— skýtr) |
| jú —— ý | (fljúga —— fl‡gr) |

The last two examples illustrate a more complex process than straightforward front mutation: ?*jó > *jœ > *j‡ > ý and *jú > *j‡ > ý.

All disyllabic past subjunctive forms with original back root vowels exhibit front mutation. The back : front correspondences that arise (contrasting 3rd pl. indic. with 3rd pl. subj. unless otherwise stated) are as follows:

| a —— e | (valði (3rd sg.) —— velði ‘chose’) |
| á —— æ | (báru —— beri ‘carried’) |
| ó —— œ | (fóru —— fœri ‘went’) |
| u —— y | (brunnu —— brynni ‘burnt’) |
| jo —— y | (bjoggu —— byggi ‘lived’) |
| jó —— ý | (hljópu —— hl‡pi ‘leapt’) |

On the correspondences jo —— y and jó —— ý, see above.

Breaking (cf. 3.1.7.3) may also cause root vowel alternation in verbs. The plural present indicative and the present subjunctive of a small number of common strong verbs have the diphthong ja, while the singular present indicative has the original e (e.g. fleir gjalda ‘they pay’ — hann geldr ‘he pays’). As with the workings of front mutation, the dichotomy is thus between the singular present indicative on the one hand and the rest of the present on the other, though here it is the latter that has undergone the change.

Strong verbs, as already noted, form their past tense by root vowel change. The alternations concerned, known as ‘vowel gradation’ or by the German term Ablaut, have nothing to do with mutation or breaking, but are a feature inherited from a pre-Germanic stage of language development. With its origin rooted so far back in linguistic history, the factors that shaped vowel gradation have long since disappeared,
and there is therefore nothing like the $u$ of labial mutation or even the historical $i$ of front mutation to warn us what vowels to expect and when to expect them. The alternations concerned are not arbitrary, however, but conform to regular patterns, so as soon as one particular form of a strong verb is encountered, it is often possible to predict what the root vowels of all the other forms will be.

Here we are concerned with the present and past tenses. In these a maximum of three different gradation vowels are found, one throughout the present (subject to front mutation in the singular indicative and to breaking in the plural indicative and subjunctive), another in the singular past indicative, a third in the plural past indicative and the past subjunctive (the latter also subject to front mutation). In all, there are six regular gradation series, that is, ways in which root vowels may alternate, and a few minor patterns found only in a small number of verbs, albeit some quite common ones. One series, for example, has $i$ in the present tense, $e.i$ in the sg. past indic., and $i$ in the remaining past tense forms. If therefore we come across the sentence hann greip sverð sitt 'he grasped his sword', we may deduce (a) that greip is a singular past tense form (in the absence of the -$r$ 3rd sg. present ending or the -$i$ of the subjunctive, and noting that there is in any case no verb *greipa), and (b) that the root of the present tense will be gríp- and of the past plural and past subjunctive grip-. Another series has $a$ in the present, ó throughout the past. An unfamiliar verb-form fór (there being no *fóra) may therefore be taken as singular past and its present root confidently assumed to be far-., but with front mutation in the singular present indicative (cf. hon fert 'she goes', þér farið 'you [pl.] go', hon fór 'she went'). The six basic vowel gradation series have the following alternations in the present, past sg. indic., and past pl. indic./past subj. (front mutation forms are given in brackets):

1. $i$ --- $e.i$ --- $i$
2. $jó/jú (j) --- au --- u (y)$
3. $e$ --- $a$ --- $u (y)$
4. $e$ --- $a$ --- á ($æ$)
5. $e$ --- $a$ --- á ($æ$)
6. $a (e)$ --- ó --- ó ($æ$)

It will be observed that (4) and (5) are identical. This is because a complete series also takes in the past participle (see 3.6.6), and there
the root vowel of (4) and (5) does vary. As noted above, certain verbs which form their past tense by vowel change follow patterns other than the six just described. We find $a \rightarrow e \rightarrow æ \rightarrow è \rightarrow æu \rightarrow jò \rightarrow ei \rightarrow è \rightarrow è$ and variations on each. Most of the few verbs involved are very common, and it is probably sensible for the student to learn them individually as they are encountered.

In order to flesh out this rather abstract account, a verb illustrating each of the six series and the minor patterns is now provided; the forms are cited in the following order (the pl. past subj. has the same root vowel as the sg., and indeed the 3rd pl. has exactly the same form as the 3rd sg.; only the basic meaning(s) of the verb are given):

3rd sg., pl. present indic., 3rd sg., pl. past indic., 3rd sg./pl. past subj.

- **ríðr** —— **ríða** —— **reið** —— **ríðu** —— **ríði** ‘ride’
- **brýtr** —— **brjóta** —— **braut** —— **brutu** —— **bryti** ‘break’
- **dettr** —— **dettta** —— **dätt** —— **duttu** —— **dytti** ‘fall’
- **stelr** —— **stela** —— **stal** —— **stálu** —— **stéli** ‘steal’
- **drepr** —— **drepá** —— **dráp** —— **drápu** —— **dreyti** ‘kill’
- **grefr** —— **gráfa** —— **grójf** —— **grófu** —— **grefti** ‘dig’
- **fellr** —— **fálta** —— **fell** —— **fellu** —— **felli** ‘fall’
- **ræðr** —— **ræða** —— **ræð** —— **ræðu** —— **ræði** ‘advise’ ‘rule’
- **hleypr** —— **hlaupa** —— **hljóp** —— **hljópu** —— **hlýpi** ‘leap’ ‘run’
- **leikr** —— **leika** —— **lêk** —— **lêku** —— **léki** ‘play’

### 3.6.5.2 Vowel alternations — Exercise

1. Enumerate the different factors that cause root vowel alternation in the Old Norse verb.
2. Why does *kastar* have root vowel *a* and *kástum* root vowel *o*?
3. Which three parts of the verbal paradigm are affected by front mutation?
4. Account for the difference in root vowel between *ráða* and *ræðr*, *brjóta* and *brýtr*, *taka* and *tekr* and *gjalda* and *geldr*.
5. Account for the difference in root vowel between *tóku* and *teki*, *brutu* and *bryti* and *kroðu* and *kreði*.
6. What is meant by vowel gradation? What part does it play in the inflexion of strong verbs?
3.6.5.3 The -sk form

As indicated above (3.6.4), the -sk form of the verb consists for the most part of an -sk suffix added to existing endings. Where the final sound in an ending is -r, this is assimilated to the s and the resulting ss is then simplified (e.g. finnsk ’is found’, 3rd sg. present indic., < *finnsk < *finnsk). Where the final sound of an ending is -ð or -t, the juxtaposition with s is rendered z (e.g. fæðzk ’are brought up’, 2nd pl. present indic., < *fæððsk; cf. 2.1.3). This applies even where ð or t is juxtaposed to s after the assimilation of r as just outlined (e.g. gezk ’is begotten’, 3rd sg. present indic., < getsk < *getssk < *getrsk).

In older texts the 1st person singular forms deviate from this pattern: they appear with an -umk ending attached to the plural root of the relevant tense and mood (e.g. ek kollumk ’I am called’, with labially mutated root kall-, ek rådeumk frá ’I refrain from’, with root råde-, contrast ek ræð ’I advise’). 1st person -sk verbs are not very common at all, however, especially 1st person singular (and very rarely do they have passive sense either in the singular or plural, cf. rådeumk above).

In younger texts not only is the 1st person sg. -umk replaced by the 2nd/3rd person sg. form, but a bewildering variety of suffixes is found as well as or in place of -sk, -umk. The more common are -zk (which spreads from its original domain, cf. above), -s, -z, -st and -zt; hybrids such as 1st sg. -umsk, -ums also occur. Ultimately, the -st form replaces all the others, and is the one used in modern Icelandic, Faroese and Norwegian nynorsk.

Most normalised texts will use the forms set out in the table below, but even where that is not the case, or the student is confronted with an unnormalised text, there should be few problems of recognition. What needs to be remembered is, first: that -umk, -sk, -zk, -s, -z, -st, -zt, etc. are variant realisations of a single underlying form and choice of any particular one does not change the meaning; second: that in most cases the suffix — whichever is employed — will simply be attached to the verbal ending (e.g. nefndisk ’named him/herself’ ’was named’ consists of nefn-di-sk; root + 3rd sg. past ending + -sk); the exceptions to this rule have been described above.

With these reservations, the -sk form of the verb may be set out as follows. (Both personal and -sk endings are given; actual paradigms will be found in 3.6.10.)
### Strong verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. pres.</td>
<td>-umk</td>
<td>-umk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. pres.</td>
<td>-sk</td>
<td>-isk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. pres.</td>
<td>-sk</td>
<td>-isk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. pres.</td>
<td>-umsk</td>
<td>-imsk</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-izk</td>
<td>-izk</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-ask</td>
<td>-isk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. past</td>
<td>-umk</td>
<td>-umk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. past</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. past</td>
<td>-usk</td>
<td>-isk</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Imperative (2nd sg. pres.)** - sk

### Weak verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Indicative</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. pres.</td>
<td>-umk</td>
<td>-umk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. pres.</td>
<td>-sk/-ask/-isk</td>
<td>-isk</td>
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<td>3rd sg. pres.</td>
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<td>-izk</td>
<td>-izk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. pres.</td>
<td>-ask</td>
<td>-isk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st sg. past</td>
<td>-đumk/-đumk/-tumk</td>
<td>-đumk/-đumk/-tumk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg. past</td>
<td>-đisk/-đisk/-tisk</td>
<td>-đisk/-đisk/-tisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. past</td>
<td>-đisk/-đisk/-tisk</td>
<td>-đisk/-đisk/-tisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl. past</td>
<td>-đumsk/-đumsk/-tumsk</td>
<td>-đimsk/-đimsk/-timsk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl. past</td>
<td>-đuzk/-đuzk/-tuzk</td>
<td>-đizk/-đizk/-tizk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. past</td>
<td>-đusk/-đusk/-tusk</td>
<td>-đisk/-đisk/-tisk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Imperative (2nd sg. pres.)** - sk/-ask
Although we are concerned in this section with form rather than function, a few lines on the use of the -sk form will not be amiss.

The Old Norse -sk verb is often termed the ‘middle voice’. This is unhelpful because we are dealing here not with a voice in the sense of the active or passive (cf. 3.6.4), but with a verbal inflexion that has a variety of functions. One such is reflexive: the -sk suffix can often be the equivalent of the reflexive pronoun sik (e.g. hann nefndi sik/nefndisk ‘he named himself’). It will be seen, however, that ‘he named himself’ or ‘he called himself’ overlaps semantically with ‘he was named’ ‘he was called’, and it is probably in constructions of this kind that -sk first came to take on a passive function. The -sk suffix can also have reciprocal function (e.g. bitask ‘bite each other’, gefask ‘give each other’). In the case of many verbs, the addition of -sk simply imparts, or may impart, a different meaning from that of the simple form (e.g. gera ‘[to] do’ — gerask ‘[to] become’, minna ‘[to] remind’ — minnask ‘[to] remember’). Some verbs only exist in an -sk guise (e.g. òttask ‘[to] fear’). For the learner the best procedure is probably to treat -sk verbs as separate words from their non-sk counterparts, until s/he has developed some feel for Old Norse. (See further 3.9.8.3.)

### 3.6.5.3 The -sk form — Exercise

1. Of what elements are the majority of -sk verb-forms composed?
2. What happens when the -sk suffix is added to a verbal ending in -ð or -r?
3. Why do we find the 3rd sg. present indic. -sk forms kallask, teksk, nefndisk and not *kallarsk, *teknorsk, *nefnirsk?
4. Where is the suffix -umk found, and what form of the verbal root is it attached to?
5. In what guises other than -sk and -umk does the -sk form of the verb appear?

### 3.6.6 Finite and non-finite forms; principal parts

So far we have discussed only present and past tense forms of the verb. The reason for treating these separately, and first, is that they are
central to every sentence. It was pointed out in 3.6 that the verb is the ‘non-reducible part of the predicate’, but it would be more precise to say that it is the **tensed** verb that is the essential element — and in Germanic languages that means a verb in the present or past tense. Thus we may attest in English: *he sings* and *he sang*, but not: *he sing*, *he sung* or *he singing*. Nevertheless, *sing*, *sung* and *singing* are considered to belong to the same lexical item (dictionary word) as *sings* and *sang*, and to that extent to represent the same word class. In terms of function, however, *sing*, as in *to sing*, behaves more like a noun (compare *I want to sing* and *I want beer*, in which *to sing* and the noun *beer* occupy the same slot in the sentence), and *sung* and *singing* more like adjectives (compare *a sung chorus*, *the singing detective* and *a noisy chorus*, *the smart detective*, in which *sung*, *singing* occupy the same slots as the adjectives *noisy*, *smart*; note that *singing* may also be a pure noun as in *I like singing*, but then it is not considered part of the verb at all).

There is thus every reason to make a distinction between *to sing*, *sung* and *singing* on the one hand and *sings* and *sang* on the other. In grammatical description the former are commonly said to represent the non-finite parts of the verb, the latter the finite. This terminology is based on the observation that *sings* and *sang* make a contrast of tense; they are in one way or another bound by time. The same is not true of *to sing*, *sung* and *singing*, which are independent of time. That is perhaps not immediately obvious in the case of *sung* or *singing*. *Sung* appears to refer to the past (*I have sung mass*), and is even called a ‘past participle’. Consider, however, *the hymn was/is/will be sung in unison*, where the time distinctions are not applicable to *sung*, but are in the finite verbs, *was/is/will*. *Singing* is even harder to connect with past, present or future. It is known as a ‘present participle’, but is in fact timeless (cf. *the singing detective*); in verb phrases of the type *was/is/will be singing*, it is again the finite verbs that provide the time reference.

Old Norse has the same non-finite forms as English, to wit: the infinitive — *at syngja* ‘to sing’, the past participle — *sunginn* ‘sung’, and the present participle — *sýnjandi* ‘singing’. Mention is occasionally made of a ‘past infinitive’, but the form concerned is in origin the 3rd pl. past indic. and its use as an ‘infinitive’ seems to have arisen through the recasting of certain finite clauses on analogy with common constructions that employ the standard infinitive. Very few ‘past
infinitive’ forms are attested, in Old Norse prose only three regularly. The usage is illustrated in 3.9.4.

Being non-finite forms, the infinitive and the participles do not have verbal inflexion. The Old Norse infinitive is not inflected at all. It regularly ends in -a, to which the -sk form may be suffixed as appropriate (e.g., berja ‘beat’, berjask ‘fight [literally: beat each other]’). The participles, as we have seen (3.3.9, paradigms 7, 11, 16, 19; also 3.3.6, sentences 1, 4, 7, 22), inflect as adjectives. The past participle of strong verbs has the adjectival -in suffix, that of weak the same -ð, -d, -t suffix as the past tense (e.g. farinn, farit ‘gone’, from fara, krafðr, kraftr ‘demanded’, from krefja, strong nom. m. and nom./acc. n. sg. in both cases). The -sk inflexion is added to the nom./acc. n. sg. form in various periphrastic constructions (e.g. hafa farizk ‘have perished’ (farit + sk, with ts written z), var sætzk ‘was come to terms [i.e. terms were agreed]’ (sett + sk)). The present participle is formed with an -and suffix, as shown in 3.3.9, paradigm 19. It does not normally take the -sk inflexion.

Although the non-finite verb-forms in terms both of inflexion and function are largely non-verbal, they are nevertheless, as noted above, considered to belong to the same word class as the finite. This is because it is counter-intuitive to view the present and past tense of any given verb as a separate word from the infinitive and the participles. The non-finite forms thus have their place in the verbal paradigm. Indeed, the infinitive is usually taken as the basic form — as the word itself, of which all the other manifestations are inflected parts. That is why the infinitive regularly appears as the dictionary entry form.

As we have seen, the endings of verbs in Old Norse and the root vowel alternations caused by labial and front mutation and breaking are predictable. This means that it is only necessary to cite a minimal number of basic forms for the student to be able to identify a particular verb-form s/he has encountered, i.e. to determine what verb it is part of and its person, number, tense and mood. These basic forms, known as ‘principal parts’, include the infinitive and the past participle. From the infinitive it is possible to deduce all the present tense forms (provided the person and number endings and the workings of labial and front mutation and breaking are known). From the 3rd sg. past indicative (or alternatively the 1st or 2nd person) all the past tense forms of weak verbs can be readily predicted. This is less true of strong verbs: many
undergo vowel change between the singular and plural past indicative, so they need to be cited in both a singular and plural form; the past subjunctive of strong verbs, on the other hand, can be deduced from the plural indicative (once again, provided the inflexional basics are known). Finally, the past participle needs to be given since those of strong verbs usually exhibit further root vowel change; a few weak verbs, too, show irregular forms, but for the most part their participles are deducible from the past tense. We thus have a minimum of three principal parts for weak verbs and four for strong. Front-mutated present singular indicatives and past subjunctives may be included as optional extras, but these are non-essential. The decision whether or not to cite them will depend on how much help one thinks the learner needs.

This is how the system works. A strong verb like rþjþfa ‘break’ ‘violate’ will be listed in a grammar or dictionary with its infinitive, rþjþfa, the 3rd (or 1st) sg. past indic. rauf, 3rd (or 1st) pl. past indic. rþfu (rþfum), and pp. rþfinn or rþfit (the choice in the case of the pp. being between the strong nom. m. or nom./acc. n. sg. forms). From the infinitive, the present sg. indic. forms rþf, rþfr can be deduced by applying the appropriate endings and the rule: ‘in the present sg. indic. strong verbs with back root vowels undergo front mutation’. All the other present tense forms will have root rþjþf-. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd sg. past indic. have root rauf- with the -t ending added in the 2nd person. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd pl. past indic. have root rþuf- plus the appropriate endings, and from this the subjunctive root rþyf- can be deduced, to which the appropriate subjunctive endings are added. The participial root is rþof-, which remains unchanged whatever the adjective ending.

A weak verb like kþreffja ‘demand’ will be listed with infinitive kþreffja, 3rd (or 1st) sg. past indic. kþraþfi (kþraþfa), and pp. kþraþfþr or kþraþfþr. From the infinitive all the present tense forms can be deduced simply by adding the appropriate endings. (One will need to recognise the type of weak verb involved (see below) to know whether the indicative sg. endings are ~-, -a or -i (1st), -r, -ar or -ir (2nd/3rd), but this variation is unlikely to cause problems of understanding to the reader of Old Norse.) From the 3rd or 1st sg. past indic. all the past tense forms can be deduced by applying the appropriate endings, the labial mutation rule, and the rule: ‘all disyllabic past subjunctive forms with original back root vowels exhibit front mutation’. Thus, the pl. indic. root + -ð suffix of kþreffja will be kþraþð-, because all three plural endings begin with n;
the subjunctive root + -ð suffix will be krefð-, because a is a back vowel and thus susceptible to front mutation. The pp. root + suffix, krafð-, will undergo labial mutation like any other adjective (cf. 3.3.8.1), so we find that the strong dat. m. and nom. f. sg. forms, for example, are kroðum and kroð respectively.

In the case of the majority of weak verbs, which, unlike krefja, have the same root vowel in the past indic. as in the present, often only the past suffix (with ‘connecting vowel’ where appropriate; see below) is given in addition to the infinitive (e.g. kalla (at) ‘call’, hefna (d) ‘avenge’, eipa (t) ‘shout’). From this minimal information all forms of the verb concerned are deducible. Kalla undergoes only labial mutation of the root vowel since it is trisyllabic (a three-syllable word) in the past tense; hefna and eipa already have a front-mutated root vowel and this cannot undergo further mutation.

Having now established what the principal parts of strong and weak verbs are, and how any form of a given verb may be deduced from these, we conclude this section by listing the principal parts of a strong and weak verb of each major type, and then explaining more fully what is meant by ‘type’ of weak verb. The principal parts of each verb are listed in the following order (those in brackets are optional, see above; the pp. is given in the strong nom. m. sg. form):


**Strong verb type 1:** bita ‘bite’

bita —— bitr —— beit —— bitu —— biti —— bitinn

**Strong verb type 2:** skjóta ‘shoot’

skjóta —— sk‡tr —— skaut —— skutu —— skyti —— skotinn

**Strong verb type 3:** bresta ‘burst’

bresta —— brestr —— brast —— brustu —— brysti —— brostinn

**Strong verb type 4:** bera ‘bear’

bera —— berr —— bar —— báru —— bæri —— borinn

**Strong verb type 5:** reka ‘drive’

reka —— rekr —— rak —— ráku —— rekí —— rekinn
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**Strong verb type 6: fara ‘go’**

fara —— ferr —— för —— föru —— fœri —— farinn

**Minor strong verb types:**

falla ‘fall’, gráta ‘cry’, hlaupa ‘leap’ ‘run’, leika ‘play’

falla —— fellr —— fell —— fellu —— felli —— fallinn
gráta —— grætr —— grét —— grétu —— gréti —— grátinn
hlaupa —— hleypr —— hljóp —— hljópu —— hl‡pi —— hlaupinn
leika —— leikr —— lék —— léku —— léki —— leikinn

**Weak verb type 1: krefja ‘demand’**

krefja —— krefr —— krafov —— krefo —— krafðr

**Weak verb type 2: kalla ‘call’**

kalla —— kallar —— kallö —— kollöu —— kallaö —— kallör

**Weak verb type 3: heyra ‘hear’**

heyra —— heyrir —— heyrö —— heyro —— heyro —— heyrodr

The three types of weak verb differ in a number of ways. For the learner what will be most noticeable is: type 1 has root vowel change between the present and past indic. (krefja — krafoil) and no vowel in the sg. present indic. endings (hann krefr); type 2 has a ‘connecting vowel’ a in the past tense (kallaö) and a in the sg. present indic. endings (hann kallar); type 3 has the same root vowel throughout, no connecting vowel in the past tense and i in the sg. present indic. endings (hann heyrir). The three distinct past tense suffixes, -ð, -d and -t, are distributed not according to type of verb, but phonetic environment, so that ð occurs after vowels and most voiced consonants (kallaö, fáði ‘coloured’, krafoil, heyrö), d chiefly after n (hefndi ‘avenged’), and t after unvoiced consonants (vakti ‘wakened’, epti ‘shouted’). In the earliest texts ð is found after unvoiced consonants, and from the late thirteenth century onwards d replaces ð after certain voiced consonants, particularly l and m (valði/valdi ‘chose’, diemði/dæmdi ‘judged’).
3.6.6 Finite and non-finite forms; principal parts — Exercise

1. What essential differences are there between finite and non-finite verb-forms?
2. What non-finite verb-forms are found in Old Norse?
3. What is meant by the ‘principal parts’ of an Old Norse verb, and why are these important?
4. Look up the verb *hljóta* in an Old Norse dictionary or in the Glossary in *NION* III. Give the four basic principal parts and thereafter the 1st person sg. present indic., the 3rd pl. present indic. and subj., the 2nd pl. past indic., and 3rd pl. past subj.
5. Look up the verb *verja* ‘[to] defend’. Perform the same operation as for *hljóta* in question 4.
6. How many types of strong and weak verb are there in Old Norse?
7. What distinguishes the different types of weak verb?
8. What determines the form of the past tense suffix of weak verbs?

3.6.7 Preterite presents and other irregular verbs

The preterite present verbs of Old Norse form a small but important class — important because virtually all its members are extremely common. The majority are modal auxiliaries (verbs subordinate to the main verb, which express mood, e.g. English *I would come, she might go*; cf. 3.6.3). The term ‘preterite present’ reflects the fact that verbs of this type have strong past tense forms in the present; in the past they inflect for the most part like weak verbs, though not all of them have the dental suffix associated with weak inflexion. The reason for the preterite present aberration lies in linguistic pre-history. Put at its most simple, the Germanic past tense is a development of an earlier perfect, which expressed completed action or the state obtaining after the action. While the perfects of most verbs happily made the transition to past, those of what became the preterite presents seem so firmly to have expressed present state that they were ultimately absorbed into the present tense by the creation of new (weak) past tense forms. Thus, ON *vita* ‘know’ is related to Latin *vidēre* ‘see’ ‘perceive’, and *hon veit* ‘she knows’ (cf. past tense *beit* ‘bit’, *leit* ‘looked’, etc.) must derive from a form that originally meant something like ‘she has perceived’.
The principal parts of the preterite presents are listed in the following order (the pp. is given in the strong nom./acc. n. sg. form, for some verbs the only one used; note the infinitives munu and skulu, modelled on the 3rd pl. present indic., which in virtually all verbs has the same form as the infinitive):


eiga ‘own’
eiga — á — eigu — eigi — ætti — ætti — átt

kunna ‘know’ ‘understand’
kunna — kann — kunnu — kunni — kunni — kynni — kunnat

mega ‘be able to’
mega — má — megu — megi — mátti — mátti/megat

munu ‘remember’
muna — man — munu — muni — mundi — myndi — munat

munu ‘will’ ‘shall’ (denoting future time or uncertainty)
munu — mun — munu — muni — muni — mundi — myndi — myndi — (lacking)

skulu ‘shall’ (denoting obligation or intention)
skulu — skal — skulu — skulí/skyli — skyldi — skyldi — (lacking)

unna ‘love’
unna — ann — unnu — unní — unni — ynni — unnt/unnat

vita ‘know’
vita — veit — vitu — viti — vissi — vissi — vitat

þurfa ‘need’
þurfa — þarf — þurfa — þurfi — þurfi — þyrfrí — þurfrí/þurfat

Two verbs not historically preterite presents have something in common with the above. They are vilja ‘wish’ ‘want’, a weak modal auxiliary with (in later texts) 2nd sg. present indic. in -t like the other
preterite presents, and vera 'be', a highly irregular strong verb basically of type 5 but with preterite-type forms in the present indic. (2nd sg. ert, 2nd, 3rd pl. eru, eru; note also 1st sg. en). Of vilja the same principal parts are given as for the preterite presents above; of vera the same plus the 3rd pl. past indic. (cf. the principal parts of strong verbs in 3.6.6 above):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vilja} & \quad \text{villé} & \quad \text{vill} & \quad \text{vildi} & \quad \text{vildi} & \quad \text{viljat} \\
\text{vera} & \quad \text{er} & \quad \text{eru} & \quad \text{sé} & \quad \text{var} & \quad \text{váru} & \quad \text{væri} & \quad \text{verit}
\end{align*}
\]

In addition to the above, there is a small group of common verbs that have regular strong present tense forms, but a past whose root undergoes radical change, metamorphosing to initial consonant(s) + er or ør, to which weak endings are attached. The pp. has the same root as the infinitive and the -in participial suffix of a strong verb. The verbs concerned are gnúa 'rub', gróa 'grow', róa 'row', sá 'sow', snúa 'turn'. Two examples will suffice (citing the same principal parts as for the preterite presents above).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{róa} & \quad \text{rœr} & \quad \text{róa} & \quad \text{rói} & \quad \text{reri/røri} & \quad \text{reri/røri} & \quad \text{róit} \\
\text{snúa} & \quad \text{sn‡r} & \quad \text{snúa} & \quad \text{snúi} & \quad \text{sneri/snøri} & \quad \text{sneri/snøri} & \quad \text{snúit}
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, the principal parts of valda 'cause', göralgera 'do' 'make', hafa 'have' and verða 'become' are given, the first because it is highly irregular (with strong forms in the present, a radically altered root and weak endings in the past), the latter three because they are extensively used in a variety of constructions (hafa and verða often as auxiliaries) and exhibit certain forms that may not be wholly transparent. For valda, göralgera and hafa, with weak pasts, it is enough to cite inf., 3rd sg. pres. indic., 3rd sg. past indic. and subj., and pp. (for göralgera with root vowel change only in the pp. fewer forms would in fact do); for verða, the full complement of strong verb principal parts is given (cf. 3.6.6). The pp. is in each case in the strong nom./acc. n. sg. form.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{valda} & \quad \text{veldr} & \quad \text{oll} & \quad \text{ylli} & \quad \text{valdit} \\
\text{gera} & \quad \text{gerir} & \quad \text{gerði} & \quad \text{gerði} & \quad \text{gørt} \\
\text{hafa} & \quad \text{hefr/hefir} & \quad \text{hafði} & \quad \text{hefði} & \quad \text{haft} \\
\text{verða} & \quad \text{verðr} & \quad \text{varð} & \quad \text{urðu} & \quad \text{yrði} & \quad \text{ordit}
\end{align*}
\]
3.6.7 Preterite presents and other irregular verbs — Exercise

1. What is the meaning of the term ‘preterite present’?
2. What inflexional features characterise preterite present verbs?
3. What function do many preterite present verbs have?
4. Study the principal parts of *kunna* (above), and then give the following forms: 2nd person sg. and pl. present indic., 1st pl. present subj., 3rd pl. past indic. and subj.
5. What forms do *vilja* and *vera* have in common with preterite present verbs?
6. What is unusual about the inflexion of (a) *gróa*, (b) *valda*, (c) *hafa*?

3.6.8 Examples of verb usage

Following the same procedure as for other word classes, examples are now given of verbs in function. With the vast range of verbal forms and functions that exists, only a selection can be illustrated, with the emphasis on the most common types. Equally, because so many different features are involved — person and number, tense, mood, voice, -st forms, periphrastic constructions — and several features combine in the one verb phrase, it has proved difficult to order the examples in any meaningful way. Note that the verbal inflexions being illustrated (or the whole word where there is no difference from the root of the infinitive or an inflexion cannot easily be discerned) are printed in bold type. To underline the grammatical relations involved, bold is also used for the subject, which triggers the person and number form in the verb. Compare the inflexions used below with those set out and discussed in 3.6.5, 3.6.6 and 3.6.7.

(1) **Hann býr** ferð sína ok fór til Nóregs
   ‘He prepares journey refl. poss. and went to Norway’
   ‘He gets ready to depart and went to Norway’

*býr* is 3rd sg. present indic. of the strong verb *búa* (minor type). *Fór* is 3rd sg. past indic. of the strong verb *fara* (type 6). Indicative is used because factual statements are being made about what happened. The abrupt change from present to past tense is characteristic of Old Norse prose style.
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(2) Jarl svarar ok bað konung gefa sér frest at hugsa þetta mál
    ‘Earl answers and bade king give self respite to consider this matter’
    ‘The earl answers and asked the king to give him time to consider this matter’

Svarar is 3rd sg. present indic. of the weak verb svara (type 2). Bað is 3rd sg. past indic. of the strong verb biðja (type 5, but with root i in the inf. and present tense, see 3.6.9.1 point (5)). Indicative is used in both cases because factual statements are being made about what happened. Gefa is an infinitive, a complement of bað; it has no overt subject, but konung, the object of bað, functions as covert (understood) subject (i.e. it is the king who is to do the giving; see further (24) below and 3.9.4). Hugsa is likewise an infinitive, a complement of frest; again there is only a covert subject: the earl (i.e. it is he who is to do the considering).

(3) Porfinnr vissi eigi, at Brúsi hafði upp gefið riði sitt
    ‘Porfinnr knew not that Brúsi had up given realm REFL. POSS.’
    ‘Porfinnr did not know that Brúsi had surrendered his realm’

Vissi is 3rd sg. past indic. of preterite present vita. Hafði is 3rd sg. past indic. of weak hafa (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7); together with the pp. gefið, from gefa (strong type 5), it forms a so-called ‘past perfect’ construction, the equivalent of English ‘had given’ (the strong nom./acc. n. sg. form of the pp., when used in perfect and past perfect constructions, is known as the supine, see 3.9.7.1). On the use of the indicative mood, see (1) and (2) above.

(4) Skilðuisk þeir með kærleikum
    ‘They parted with friendship’

Skilðuisk is 3rd pl. past indic. of weak skilja (type 1) with the -sk suffix (skilðu + sk). On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2) above. Skilja means ‘separate’ ‘divide’; the -sk form imparts a reciprocal sense: ‘they separated (from) each other’.

(5) Eptir þat sefask Rögnvaldr
    ‘After that Rögnvaldr calms down’

Sefask is 3rd sg. present indic. of weak sefa (type 2) with the -sk suffix (sefar + sk with assimilation rs > ss and simplification ss > s in unstressed position (see 3.6.5.3)). On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2). Sefa means ‘soothe’
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‘calm’; the -sk form is probably in origin a reflexive (‘calms himself’), but it can also be conceived as passive (‘is soothed’), and thus illustrates how the function of the -sk form could develop from reflexive to passive.

6) **Sumir menn segja, at hann hafí fallit**

‘Some men say that he has fallen’

Segja is 3rd pl. present indic. of weak segja (type 3, but with vowel change in the past tense, see 3.6.9.2 point (5)). Hafí is 3rd sg. present subj. of weak hafa (see (3)); together with supine fallit, from falla (strong minor type), it forms a perfect construction (see (3)). Observe the difference between the use of the indicative and subjunctive: that ‘men say’ is what the writer reports as fact; that ‘he has fallen’ is not what the writer says, but what he claims other people say, and thus from the writer’s point of view no longer a statement of fact.

7) **Ef þú vill eigi gerask minn maðr, þá er sá annarr kostr, at ek setja þann mann yfir Orkneyjar, er ek vil.**

‘If you will not make-sk my man, then is that other choice, that I put that man over Orkneys whom I want’

‘If you are not willing to become my man, then the alternative is that I put whatever man I want in charge of the Orkneys’

Vill is 2nd sg. present indic. of weak vilja (type 1, but irregular, see 3.6.7 and 3.6.9.1 point (11)); together with inf. gerask, -sk form of weak gera ‘do’ ‘make’ (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7), it forms a modal construction (see 3.6.3).

Gerask has a different meaning from gera, though the origin of the sense ‘become’ can probably be sought in the reflexive ‘make oneself’. Er is 3rd sg. present indic. of irregular vera (3.6.7). Setja is 1st sg. present subj. of weak setja (type 1, but with no vowel alternation between present and past, see 3.6.9.3). Vil is 1st sg. present indic. of vilja (see above); here, too, it functions as a modal, although not accompanied by an overt infinitive (the sense, however, is ‘whom I want to put’). Observe the difference between the use of the indicative and subjunctive. In present tense conditional sentences beginning with ef ‘if’ (see 3.8.2.4) the indicative is normally used even though no statement of fact is being made, hence vill. In the independent sentence which follows there is hardly a recording of fact either, rather a statement of the situation that will obtain if the condition is not fulfilled, but such sentences, too, have the indicative. Setja, however, denotes a wholly hypothetical action, and is accordingly subjunctive. With vil we are once again back with the indicative: the speaker’s will is presented as real and immediate.
Hann tók til orða ok gneri nefit
‘He took to words and rubbed nose-the’
‘He started to speak and rubbed his nose’

Tók is 3rd sg. past indic. of strong taka (type 6, but with root e in the pp., see 3.6.9.1 point (4)). Gneri is 3rd sg. past indic. of irregular gnúa (3.6.7). Both statements are factual and the indicative is therefore used.

Váru sumir drepnir, sumir á braut reknir
‘Some were killed, some driven away’

Váru is 3rd pl. past indic. of irregular vera (3.6.7); together with the pp.s drepnir and reknir, from drepa and reka (both strong type 5), it forms passive constructions, the equivalent of English ‘were killed’, ‘(were) driven’ (in such constructions the pp. inflects as a strong adj. (see 3.6.4), here nom. m. pl., agreeing with the subjects sumir . . . sumir). For the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2).

Hefir þú eigi heyrt þat, at ek em ekki vanr at ðæta þá menn fé, er ek læt drepa
‘Have you not heard that, that I am not accustomed to compensate those men with-money whom I let kill’
‘Have you not heard that I am not accustomed to paying compensation for the men I cause to be put to death’

Hefir is 2nd sg. present indic. of weak hafa (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7); together with the supine heyrt, from heyra (weak type 3), it forms a perfect construction (see (3)). Em is 1st sg. present indic. of irregular vera (3.6.7). Beta is an infinitive, a complement of vera vanr ‘be accustomed’; its covert subject is the ek of the finite sentence: ek em ekki vanr (see (2)). Læt is 1st sg. present indic. of strong láta (minor type); it acts here as an auxiliary, and together with the infinitive (drepa, strong type 5) forms a construction with the sense ‘cause to be killed’ ‘have killed’. Indicative is used throughout because nothing is presented as unreal or hypothetical; after verbs meaning ‘hear’, ‘learn’, ‘discover’, etc., the indicative is almost always found, the truth value of what is ‘heard’ being taken for granted; the unwillingness of the speaker to pay compensation and his propensity to have people killed are in no doubt.

Norðmenn ok Danir herjuðu mjökk í vestviking ok kómu optíga við eyjarnar, er þeir fóru vestr eða vestan, ok nánu þar nesnám
‘Norwegians and Danes harried much in west-viking and came often to islands—the when they went west or from-west, and took there headland-plunder’

‘Norwegians and Danes made many raiding expeditions to the West and often called by the Orkneys when they were going west or (returning) east and plundered the headlands’

Herjuð is 3rd pl. past indic. of weak herja (type 2). Kómu, fóru and námu are likewise 3rd pl. past indic., of strong koma (historically type 4, but highly irregular, see 3.6.9.3), fara (type 6) and nema (type 4). On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2).

(12) Fyrir ofdrambs sakar hafði hann villzk ok snúizk ífrá guði
‘For arrogance sake had he bewildered-sk and turned-sk from God’

‘Because of arrogance he had gone astray and turned from God’

Hafði is 3rd sg. past indic. of weak hafa (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7); together with the -sk supines villžk and snúžk (< villt + sk, from weak type 3 villa, snút + sk, from irregular snúa (3.6.7), both with ts written ‘z’) it forms past perfect constructions (see (3)). Both the -sk forms are in origin probably reflexives (‘led himself astray’, ‘turned himself’). On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2).

(13) Muntu ok eigi vilja þat á þik, at þú liggir hér sem kottr í hreysi, þar er ek berjumk til frelsis hvárumveggjum
‘Will-you also not want know that onto you, that you lie here like cat in cranny, there where I fight-sk for freedom for-both’

‘You will also not want to be accused of lying here like a cat in a cranny while I fight for the freedom of both of us’

Muntu (either munt + þú with assimilation þb > nt and simplification nt > t after another consonant or mun + þú with loss of -t ending before þú and partial assimilation np > nt, see 3.2.1) is 2nd sg. present indic. of preterite present mun; together with infinitives vilja (weak type 1, but irregular, see 3.6.7, 3.6.9.1 point (11)) and vita (preterite present) it forms a double modal construction (i.e. two modal verbs ‘will [future]’ and ‘want to’ are involved).

Liggir is 2nd sg. present subj. of strong liggja (type 5, but irregular, see 3.6.9.3).

Berjumk is 1st sg. present of weak berja (type 1) with the -umk suffix (which
replaces -sk in the 1st sg.). The -sk form of berja is in origin reciprocal (‘beat each other’), but it comes to have the more general meaning ‘fight’ — in which ‘each other’ may or may not be understood. Of the three finite verbs in this example one is indic., one subj. and one indeterminate on the basis of form: mun(t) records what the speaker presents as fact, whereas liggir refers to a hypothetical event; berjunk is almost certainly indic. since the speaker is in no doubt about the fighting in which he will be involved.

(14)  **Hverr veit, nema ek verða viða frægr**

‘Who knows, but-that I become widely famous’

‘Who knows whether I may not become famous far and wide’

Veit is 3rd sg. present indic. of preterite present vita. Verða is 1st sg. present subj. of strong verða (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7). The first sentence contains a direct present-tense question introduced by an interrogative pronoun (hverr) and, like all sentences of this type, has a verb in the indicative. The second sentence is introduced by the conjunction nema which automatically triggers a subjunctive verb-form since it presupposes a hypothetical situation.

(15)  **Beiðir þá Einarr, at Rǫgnvaldr skyli ráðask til ferðar með þeim**

‘Requests then Einarr that Rǫgnvaldr shall set-out-sk on journey with them’

‘Einarr then requests that Rǫgnvaldr should set out on the journey with them’

Beiðir is 3rd sg. present indic. of weak beiða (type 3). Skyli is 3rd sg. present subj. of preterite present skulu; together with inf. ráðask, -sk form of strong ráða ‘advise’, ‘rule’ (minor type), it forms a modal construction (see 3.6.3). Ráðask has various meanings, mostly different from those of ráða; the semantic development can often be hard to trace. Beiðir is indic. because it denotes what the writer regards as fact; skyli, in contrast, refers to what Einarr wants to happen, but which may or may not take place.

(16)  **Pá hruðask skip þeira Sigurðar ok Magnúss**

‘Then cleared-sk ships their Sigurð’s and Magnús’s’

‘Then Sigurðr’s and Magnús’s ships were cleared of men’

Hruðask is 3rd pl. past indic. of hróða (strong type 2) with the -sk suffix. The sense of -sk here is clearly passive: some agency cleared the ships (i.e. killed those on board) but the goal of the action, ‘ships’, has been made subject and the agent is left unexpressed. On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2).
Verb inflexions and their function

(17)  

Varð engi uppreist ímótí konungi gor

‘No rebellion was made against the king’

Varð is 3rd sg. past indic. of strong verða (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7); together with gor, pp. of geraðega (weak type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7), it forms a passive construction (see (9)). Verða, as well as vera, may be used as the equivalent of English ‘be’ in passive verb phrases (see further 3.9.7.2). On the use of the indicative, see (1) and (2).

(18)  

Þó at þú verðir reiðr, þá mældu fátt

‘Though that you become angry, yet say little’

Verðir is 2nd sg. present subj. of strong verða (type 3, see 3.6.7). The conjunction þó at or þótt (3.8.2.2), which introduces the first sentence, automatically triggers a subjunctive verb-form since it mostly presupposes a hypothetical situation. Mældu (mael + þá, with partial assimilation lþ > lþ, see 3.2.1) is the imperative of mæla (weak type 3) with the subject pronoun attached; it expresses an instruction.

(19)  

Eigi vil ek, at þit hittizk optarr

‘Not want I that you [dual] meet-sk more-often’

‘I do not want you two to meet again’

Vil is 1st sg. present indic. of weak vilja (type 1, but irregular, see 3.6.7, 3.6.9.1 point (11)). As a modal auxiliary, it is regularly followed by an inf., but here that is replaced by the dependent sentence at þit hittizk. Hittizk is 2nd pl. present of hitta (weak type 3) with the -sk suffix (ðþ being written ‘z’). The sense of -sk here is reciprocal: ‘meet each other’. The mood of the verb cannot be deduced from the form, but it is almost certainly subj., determined by the sense of the preceding independent sentence: that which is wanted or wished for is hypothetical.

(20)  

Ætlaða ek þá, at ek mynda hvergi þess koma, at ek mynda þess gjalda, at ek vara of friðsann við óvini mína, en nú geld ek þess, er ek hefi þær gríð gefit

‘Thought I then, that I would nowhere of-that come that I would for-that pay, that I was too peaceful towards enemies my, but now pay I for-that, that I have to-you quarter given’

‘I never thought then I would get into a situation where I would pay for being too easy on my enemies, but now I am paying for having given you quarter’
Ætla is 1st sg. past indic. of weak ætla (type 2). Mynda is 1st sg. past subj. of preterite present munu; together with infinitives koma (strong type 4 historically, but highly irregular, see 3.6.9.3) and gjalda (strong type 3, see 3.6.5.2) it forms modal constructions (3.6.3). Væra is 1st sg. past subj. of irregular vera (3.6.7). Geld is 1st sg. present indic. of strong gjalda (see above). Hefi is 1st sg. present indic. of weak hafa (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7); together with supine gefit, from gefa (strong type 5), it forms a perfect construction (see (3)). The three subjunctives, mynda (twice) and væra, all depend on ætla in the independent sentence: this is what the speaker thought would happen, but events have proved him wrong. With geld, we are back to statements the speaker presents as factual.

(21)  **Hann veitti allri hirð sinni baði mat ok mungát, svá at menn þyrfti eigi í skytning at ganga**
     ‘He gave all his retainers both food and ale, so that men would not need to go to an inn’

Veitti is 3rd sg. past indic. of weak veita (type 3). Þyrfti is 3rd pl. past subj. of preterite present þurfa; together with inf. ganga (strong minor type) it forms a modal construction (see 3.6.3). Indic. veitti is used in what the writer presents as a statement of fact. The subjunctive þyrfti suggests a purpose rather than a result sentence: svá at ‘so that’ can mean either ‘in order that’ or ‘with the result that’ (see 3.8.2.2); the former is putative, normally requiring the subj., the latter factual, normally requiring the indic.

(22)  **Ef hann væri heill at sumri, sagði hann, at þeir skyldi finnask**
     ‘If he were hale at summer, said he, that they should find-sk’
     ‘If he were alive when summer came, said he, they should meet’

Væri is 3rd sg. past subj. of irregular vera (3.6.7). Sagði is 3rd sg. past indic. of weak segja (type 3, but with vowel change in the past tense, see 3.6.9.2 point (5)). Skyldi is 3rd pl. past of preterite present skulu; together with inf. finnask, -sk form of strong finna ‘find’ (type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.9.2 point (2), 3.6.9.3), it forms a modal construction (see 3.6.3). The -sk form has reciprocal sense: ‘find each other’, and thus ‘meet’. Indicative sagði presents what the writer regards as fact, namely that ‘he’ said the accompanying sentences. Væri conforms to the usage whereby past tense verbs in conditional sentences are almost always subjunctive (even when, as here, the condition is ‘open’, i.e. may or may not be fulfilled, and the past tense form is simply the reported speech equivalent of direct: ‘if I am alive when summer comes’). The mood of skyldi cannot be deduced from the form, but it is certainly subj., referring to hypothetical circumstances dependent on the indirect-speech condition of ef hann væri heill at sumri.
Verb inflexions and their function

(23) **Mun samþykkí okkart** mest, at vit **innimsk** lítt til um þann þríðjung landa

‘Will concord our [dual] greatest, that we allude-sk little to about that third of-lands’

‘Our concord will be greatest if we make little mention of that third of the country’

*Mun* is 3rd sg. present indic. of preterite present *munu, vera* ‘be’, with which it forms a modal construction, is omitted but understood (see 3.9.5.2). *Innimsk* is 1st pl. present subj. of weak *inna* (type 3) with the -sk suffix (*innim + sk*). The -sk form is in origin reciprocal: ‘speak to each other’. Indicative *mun* expresses what the speaker regards as certain, subjunctive *innimsk* the hypothetical situation he envisages.

(24) **Kalladí hann** sér gefit hafa verit þat ríki

‘Called he to-self given have been that realm’

‘He said that that realm had been given to him’

*Kalladí* is 3rd sg. past indic. of weak *kalla* (type 2). *Gefit* is the pp. of strong *gefa* (type 5), acc. n. sg., agreeing with *þat ríki*; together with *verit*, supine of irregular *vera* (3.6.7), it forms a passive construction (see (9)). *Verit* for its part joins with inf. *hafa* (weak type 3, but irregular, see 3.6.7) to form a perfect. We thus have a non-finite perfect passive construction. The lack of a finite verb arises because the complement of *kalladí* is what is known as an ‘accusative and infinitive’ clause — one that takes the object of the matrix verb as its subject. This is all somewhat complex, so a detailed analysis is now offered: *kalladí* (finite verb), *hann* (subject), *þat ríki* (direct object of *kalladí* and subject of *gefit*), *gefit hafa verit* (non-finite perfect passive construction), *sér* (indirect object of the infinitive clause, but coreferential with the subject of the independent sentence); a semi-literal translation is: ‘he said that realm to have been given to himself’. (Some would argue that *sér* is subject of the infinitive clause and *þat ríki* object. These theoretical considerations need not concern the learner, but see 3.9.3. On acc. + inf. clauses, see further 3.9.4.)

(25) **þer skuluð nú frá mér þess mest njóta, er þer gáfuð mér líf ok leituðuð mér slidrar semðar sem þer mättuð**

‘You [pl.] shall now from me that most enjoy, that you [pl.] gave me life and sought for-me such honour as you [pl.] could’

‘What chiefly benefits you now as far as I am concerned is that you gave me my life and tried to show me as much honour as you could’
**3.6.8 Examples of verb usage — Exercise**

1. In what different ways may the passive voice be expressed in Old Norse?
2. What are the principal factors that govern the choice between indicative and subjunctive?
3. What are the principal functions of the -sk form as revealed in the above examples?
4. What is meant by a ‘covert subject’? Give an example.
5. In which of the above examples do modal constructions (modal auxiliary + inf.) occur? List all that you find.
6. In which of the above examples do passive constructions occur? List all that you find.
7. In which of the above examples do perfect and past perfect constructions occur? List all that you find.
8. Explain the following forms (i.e. state what inflexion or inflexions they have and the reasons for the inflexion(s)): sefask in example (5), haft fallit (6), vár drëpni (9), let drepa (10), hafól snáizk (12), hruðusk (16), verðir (18), mëldu (18), veri (22), mátuð (25).

**3.6.9 Important variations in verb inflexion**

Difficulties in recognising verb-forms for what they are arise more from the irregularity of the principal parts than from the endings. Certainly, verb endings show the same degree of overlap and ambiguity as those of nouns and adjectives (3.1.6, 3.3.7), but they carry less meaning. Since in Old Norse the subject is virtually always expressed (unlike, say, in Latin or Italian), the endings are largely redundant for the purposes of denoting person and number. Thus in hann drap tvá menn ‘he killed two men’, we know that drap is 3rd sg. because that is the person and number of hann, the subject.
Other parts of the verbal system are equally transparent. Those who have studied the preceding sections will not fail to recognise hann haði drepit tvá menn ‘he had killed two men’ as a past perfect construction and tveir menn váru dreppir ‘two men were killed’ as passive. The -sk suffix is also hard to confuse with any other ending (though occasional uncertainty may arise when it appears in its -st, -zt manifestations).

Less easy to spot is the difference between indicative and subjunctive mood. To get this right consistently the student will have to be familiar with the relevant endings, but quite often it is enough to recognise the form of the root (contrast hann drap ‘he killed [indic.]’ with þótt hann dreppt ‘though he killed [subj.]’). How far it is essential to know whether a verb-form is indicative or subjunctive will depend on the context. As the examples in 3.6.8 show, the choice between the moods is sometimes automatic, sometimes dependent on meaning, though the differences of meaning can often be subtle and difficult to render in English.

In the light of these considerations, the deviations from the established patterns of verbal inflexion to be concentrated on here are chiefly those affecting principal parts. The presentation will be divided into three major sections. First, deviations that follow phonological rules the student can apply; second, unpredictable deviations that affect a group of verbs; third, idiosyncratic deviations.

3.6.9.1 Phonological variation

(1) In general, v is lost before rounded vowels. Strong type 3 þverra ‘decrease’, verpa ‘throw’, for example, have 3rd pl. past indic. þurru, urpu (past subj. root þyrr-, yrp-) and pp.s þorriinn, orpinn (cf. also verða, 3.6.7). Strong type 4 veffa ‘weave’ has pp. ofinn. Strong type 6 vadda ‘wade’, vaxa ‘grow’ have 3rd sg. and pl. past indic. ód — ódu, óx — óxu (past subj. root æð-, irregular eyx- or yx-).

(2) Strong verbs with vowel + g as the basic root have, or may have, a long monophthong and no g in the past sg. indic. Type 1 stíga ‘step’, for example, has 3rd sg. past indic. sté or steig, type 2 fljúga ‘fly’ has fló or flaug, type 5 vega ‘kill’ vá, type 6 draga ‘drag’ dró.

(3) Strong verb roots that end in -d, -nd and -ng undergo change to -t, -tt and -kk respectively in the imperative and the past sg. indic.
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Type 3 binda ‘bind’ (on root vowel ɨ, see 3.6.9.2 point (2)), gjalda ‘pay’, for example, have imp. bitt, gjalt, 3rd sg. past indic. batt, galt; minor types ganga ‘walk’, halda ‘hold’ have imp. gakk, halt, 3rd sg. past indic. gekk, helt (sometimes regular imp. forms are encountered — in the above cases: bind, gjald, gang, hald).

(4) Pp.s of type 6 and minor type strong verbs normally undergo front mutation of the root vowel when the root ends in -g or -k, e.g. dreginn from draga, genginn from ganga, tekinn from taka ‘take’.

(5) Present roots of type 6 strong verbs undergo front mutation of the root vowel when j occurs before endings consisting of or beginning with a or u, e.g. heffa ‘lift’, sverja ‘swear’, 3rd sg. past indic. höf, sór (see (1) above). Note also that the same conditions give root vowel ɨ instead of e in type 5 strong verbs, e.g. bidja ‘ask’, sitja ‘sit’.

(6) Pp.s of type 3 and 4 strong verbs have root vowel u rather than o when the immediately following consonant is m or n, e.g. bundinn from binda ‘bind’, sprunginn from springa ‘spring’ ‘burst’, unninn (see (1) above) from vinna ‘work’ (on root vowel ɨ, see 3.6.9.2 point (2)), numinn from nema ‘take’.

(7) Weak verbs undergo a number of consonantal assimilations and simplifications when the past tense and participial suffixes -ð, -d, -t are added. Such phonological adjustments are not restricted to verbs, but are found elsewhere in the language (see 3.1.7.4 point (1), 3.3.8.4 point (2), 3.3.8.5 point (2)). Verbs whose root ends in consonant + ɵ, d or t do not add a further ɵ, d or t to mark the past-tense or participial/supine suffix, e.g. viðða — viðði — viððr ‘value’, senda — sendi — sendr ‘send’, sviptä — svipti — sviptr ‘deprive’. This applies equally when the root ends in tt, e.g. réttta — réttti — rétttr ‘straighten’ ‘stretch out’. Verbs whose root vowel is immediately followed by ɵ show assimilation ɵd > ɵd in the past tense and past participle, e.g. eyða — eyðdi — eyðdr ‘destroy’, gleðja — gleðdi — gleðdr ‘gladden’. The -t ending of the nom./acc. n. sg. of the pp. regularly amalgamates with the participial suffix (by processes of simplification or assimilation and simplification; see further 3.3.8.4 point (2) and 3.3.8.5 point (2)), e.g. flutt (< flutt + t) from flyjja ‘convey’, kastat (< kastað + t) from kasta ‘throw’, sent (< send + t) from senda, leyst (< leyst + t) from leysa ‘loosen’, ‘resolve’, hitt (< hitt + t) from hitta ‘meet’.

(8) As with nouns and adjectives (3.1.7.5 point (2), 3.3.8.5 point (4)), the vowels of endings tend to be dropped when they immediately
follow a long vowel of the same or similar quality. Thus weak type 3 
trúa ‘believe’, for example, has a 1st pl. present indic. form trúm (< *trúum), 
deyja ‘die’ 3rd pl. past indic. dô (< *dóu), fá ‘get’ 1st pl. 
present indic. fám (< *fám), sjá ‘see’ pp. sénn (< *séinn) (these last three 
verbs are highly irregular and their principal parts are listed in 3.6.9.3).

(9) As with adjectives, i is lengthened when immediately following 
long, stressed vowels. Thus the 2nd sg. past indic. of strong type 1 
stíga ‘step’ (see (2) above) is stétt, of búa ‘prepare’, ‘dwell’ (3.6.9.3) 
bjótt.

(10) Strong verbs whose root ends in -d or -t suffer changes to these 
consonants in the 2nd sg. past indic. The -t assimilates to the -t ending 
(cf. (7) above), e.g. reitt, from strong type 1 ríða ‘ride’. Where the root 
ends in -t, the usual ending is -zt, e.g. bæzt, from strong type 3 binda 
‘bind’ (3rd sg. past indic. bætt, see (3) above; on root vowel i see 
3.6.9.2 point (2)), lêzt, from strong minor type láta ‘let’. This latter 
change affects preterite present vita ‘know’ too (2nd sg. present indic. 
veit). Some verbs with root final -d may have the -zt ending as an 
alternative to -tt, e.g. bæzt or bætt from strong type 5 biðja (on root 
vowel i, see 3.6.9.1 point (5)). Some with root final -t may as an 
alternative add i in the normal way, e.g. lêtt from láta (see above), or 
have the same form as the 1st and 3rd sg. past indic., e.g. helt from 
strong minor type halda ‘hold’ (see (3) above). Strong verbs with root 
final -st have zero ending in the 2nd sg. past indic., e.g. laust from 
strong type 2 ljósta ‘strike’.

(11) As in the case of nouns and adjectives (3.1.7.4 point (1), 3.3.8.4 
point (1)), an -r ending may sometimes be assimilated to an immedi-
ately preceding l, n or s, e.g. 3rd sg. present indic. vil (<&vilr), from 
irregular weak type 1 (3.6.7) vilja ‘want’, skinn (<&skinn) from strong 
type 1 skína ‘shine’, les(s) (<&lesr) from strong type 5 lesa ‘gather’, ‘read’.

(12) The 2nd sg. past indic. -t ending of strong verbs is often dropped 
when the 2nd person pronoun immediately follows, e.g. gekkt þá or 
gekk þá ‘you went’, tók þá or tók þá ‘you took’.

(13) The 1st pl. -m ending is often dropped when the 1st person dual 
or pl. pronoun immediately follows, e.g. tókum vit or tóku vit ‘we two 
take’, tókum vér or tóku vér ‘we took’.

(14) The 2nd pl. -d ending is often dropped when the 2nd person 
dual or pl. pronoun in the form þit, þér immediately follows, e.g. takið 
þit or taki þit ‘you two take’, tókuð þér or tóku þér ‘you took’.
(15) The 3rd sg. present indic. -r ending of the verb *flyk(k)ja* ‘seem’ is often dropped when the dat. of the 1st or 2nd person sg. pronoun immediately follows, e.g. *flyk(k)ir mér* or *flyk(k)i mér* ‘it seems to me’.

### 3.6.9.2 Morphological variation

1. A few strong verbs of type 2 have present tense root vowel ú rather than jó or jú, e.g. *líua* ‘bend down’, *sípa* ‘sip’.

2. Several strong verbs of type 3 have present tense root vowel i rather than e or ja, and a few have y or φ, e.g. *binda* ‘bind’, *finna* ‘find’, *syngva/synga* (see (6) below) ‘sing’, *sókkva* ‘sink’. The verbs with present tense i and y have root vowel u in the pp. (see 3.6.9.1 point (6)); those with present y and φ have root vowel φ in the past sg. indic., e.g. *sóng* ‘sang’, *sókk* ‘sank’.

3. Some weak verbs of type 1 and type 3 have pp.s like those of type 2, e.g. *huga›r* (or *hug›r*) from *hyggja* ‘think’ ‘intend’, *viljat* from *vilja* ‘want’, *porat* from *hora* ‘dare’. Many type 1 verbs have alternative pp. forms with connecting vowel -i-, e.g. *bardr* or *bardr* ‘beaten’. Because the nom./acc. n. sg. of the i-forms is identical with the nom./acc. n. sg. of the pp. of strong verbs (*barit* ~ *farit*), we also get analogical ‘strong’ pp.s of type 1 weak verbs, e.g. *barinn* nom. m. sg.

4. A few weak verbs of type 3 have an -i ending in the imperative as well as zero, e.g. *vak* or *vaki* from *vaka* ‘keep awake’. The imp. of *flegja* ‘stay silent’ is always *fegi*.

5. The type 3 weak verbs *segja* ‘say’ and *flegja* (3rd sg. pres. indic. *segir*, *flegir*) have root vowel a in the past indic., e in the past subj., like type 1 verbs (3rd sg. *sagí*, *flagí*, *segí*, *flegí* respectively). *(segir)*

6. As with nouns and adjectives (3.1.7.5 point (4), 3.3.8.5 point (5)), j may be found in some verbs before endings consisting of or beginning in a or u; in others v may be found before endings consisting of or beginning in a or i. With most verbs such insertions are found only in connection with the present root, but type 2 weak verbs have them throughout the paradigm. Examples are: *svíkja* ‘betray’ (strong type 1) — 1st pl. present indic. *svíkjun* — 3rd pl. past indic. *svíku, syngva* ‘sing’ (strong type 3, on root vowel y, see 3.6.9.2 point (2)) — 3rd pl. present subj. *syngvi* — 3rd pl. past subj. *sygni, berja* ‘strike’ (weak type 1) — 1st sg. past indic. *barda, eggja* ‘incite’ (weak type 2) — 3rd pl. past indic. *eggjuðu*
Verb inflexions and their function

— supine eggjat, bolva ‘curse’ (weak type 2) — 3rd pl. past indic. bolvad — supine bolvat. Note that strong verbs with \( v \) insertion and \( y \) in the present tense root may alternatively have \( j \) insertion (e.g. syngja).

### 3.6.9.3 Idiosyncratic variation

A number of common verbs are irregular in varying degrees. While it would be possible to offer historical explanations for their irregularity and, where this has not already been done, assign them to one or other of the weak and strong types, it is easier for the learner simply to list their principal parts. For strong verbs inf., 3rd sg. and pl. past indic. and supine are given, for weak verbs inf., 3rd sg. past indic. and supine. Forms that cannot easily be deduced from these are described in the notes that follow, as are other peculiarities.

**Strong verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal root</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>3rd sg. past indic.</th>
<th>Supine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blóta</td>
<td>blét</td>
<td>blétu</td>
<td>blótit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bregóa</td>
<td>brá</td>
<td>brugóu</td>
<td>brugóit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>búa</td>
<td>hjó</td>
<td>hjoggu</td>
<td>húit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deyjá</td>
<td>dó</td>
<td>dó</td>
<td>dáit</td>
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<tr>
<td>drýga</td>
<td>dró</td>
<td>drógu</td>
<td>drégit</td>
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<tr>
<td>drekka</td>
<td>drakk</td>
<td>drukku</td>
<td>drukkit</td>
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<tr>
<td>etu</td>
<td>át</td>
<td>átu</td>
<td>etít</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fá</td>
<td>fêkk</td>
<td>fengu</td>
<td>fengit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fela</td>
<td>fal</td>
<td>fál</td>
<td>folgit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finna</td>
<td>fann</td>
<td>fundu</td>
<td>fundit</td>
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<td>flá</td>
<td>fló</td>
<td>flógu</td>
<td>flegit</td>
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<tr>
<td>fregna</td>
<td>frá</td>
<td>frágu</td>
<td>fregit</td>
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<tr>
<td>frjósa</td>
<td>fôri</td>
<td>fôru</td>
<td>frôrit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ganga</td>
<td>gêkk</td>
<td>gengu</td>
<td>gengit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>hêkk</td>
<td>hêngu</td>
<td>hangit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heita</td>
<td>hét</td>
<td>hêtu</td>
<td>heítit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hleja</td>
<td>hló</td>
<td>hlógu</td>
<td>hlegit</td>
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<td>höggva</td>
<td>hjó</td>
<td>hjoggu</td>
<td>höggyit</td>
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<tr>
<td>kjósa</td>
<td>kôri</td>
<td>kôru</td>
<td>kôrit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koma</td>
<td>kom</td>
<td>kómu</td>
<td>komit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'sacrifice' 'move' 'prepare', 'dwell' 'die' 'drag' 'drink' 'eat' 'get' 'hide' 'find' 'flay' 'ask', 'learn' 'freeze' 'walk' 'hang' 'be called', 'promise' 'laugh' 'strike', 'kill' 'choose' 'come'
Morphology and syntax

liggja —— lá —— lágu —— legit
'slie'
sjá —— sá —— sá —— sét
'see'
slá —— sló —— slógu —— slegit
'hit'
søfa —— svaf —— sváf —— sofít
'sleep'
standa —— stóð —— stóðu —— staðit
'stand'
sveípa —— sveip —— sveipu —— sveipít
'wrap'
svíma —— svam —— svámu —— sumít
'swim'
troða —— trað —— traðu —— troðit
'tread'
tyggva —— tøgg —— tøggu —— tøggit
'chew'
þíggja —— þá —— þágu —— þégít
'accept'
þvá —— þó —— þógu —— þvegit
'wash'

Weak verbs

heyja —— háði —— háðit
'perform', 'conduct'
kaupa —— keypiti —— keyp
'buy'
leggja —— lagði —— lagt
'lay' 'put'
ljá —— léði —— lét
'lend' 'grant'
selja —— seldi —— selt
'hand over', 'sell'
setja —— setti —— sett
'set' 'place'
sækja —— sótti —— sótt
'seek', 'attack'
yrkja —— orti —— ort
'work', 'make poetry'
þreyja —— þráði —— þráðt
'long for'
þykkja —— þótti —— þótt
' seem'

Búa has past subj. root bjøgg-, bjøgg- or bygg-.
Frjósa and kjósa have weak endings in the past sg. indic. Both alternatively have strong type 2 forms (fraus — frusu — frosit, kaus — kusit).

Hangi has a connecting vowel i in the present sg. indic. (e.g. vápnit hangír 'the weapon hangs'), as does heita in the sense 'be called'.
Hangi lacks front mutation in the relevant forms.

Koma, sofa, and troða have certain alternative forms. Present sg. indic. root: kem- or kóm-, sef- or sef-, troð- or troð-; past pl. indic. root kvám-; sáf- (past subj. root is either kem- or kvæm-, sef- or sef-).

Svíma has an alternative inf. symja, and an alternative strong type 3 paradigm (with root final mn): svíma — svam — summu — summit.

For the present tense of sjá, which has highly irregular inflexions, see p. 175.
Verb inflexions and their function

3.6.9.1/3.6.9.2/3.6.9.3 Phonological variation/Morphological variation/Idiosyncratic variation — Exercise

1. Explain the following forms: 3rd pl. past indic. urðu, from verða; 1st sg. past indic. hnþ, from hnþga; imp. statt, from standa; pp. ekit, from aka.
2. Why can sverja (past indic. root sör-) be said to belong to the same strong verb type as fara (past indic. root för-)?
3. Which pp.s of type 3 and 4 strong verbs have root vowel a rather than o?
4. What is the past tense root of weak verbs benda, hitta, myrða and skipta, and why?
5. What is the past tense root of weak verbs freða and ryðja, and why?
6. Give the 1st pl. present indic. of búa.
7. Give the 2nd sg. past indic. of strong verbs látþ and slá, and the 2nd sg. present indic. of preterite present vitþ.
8. Give the 3rd sg. present indic. of fregna, skilþa, vaxa.
9. Enumerate the different present tense roots of type 2 and type 3 strong verbs.
10. What variations does the imperative form exhibit?
11. In what way are the paradigms of frjósa and kjósa unusual?
12. Give the principal parts of koma and sofa, including all alternative forms.

3.6.10 Examples of verb inflexion

Complete paradigms of selected verbs are now given. As with adjectives, Old Norse grammars tend to be somewhat parsimonious in their exemplification of verbs. To be sure, most forms likely to be encountered can be identified using the guidance provided in the preceding sections, but this can often be a long and arduous process for the novice. The present grammar therefore gives more paradigms than strictly necessary, but not so many, one hopes, that the student is overwhelmed and unable to see the wood for the trees. To illustrate the main patterns, two strong verbs are displayed, one with root-final t (skjóta) and one with root a (fara), and three weak, one of each type (berja, þakka, brenna). In addition, a preterite present verb, mega, is
presented, and vera and sjá, since not only are these two irregular and extremely common, but certain of their forms are easily confused. Finally, the paradigms of one strong (fara) and one weak verb (berja) are repeated with the -sk suffix added. Finite forms precede non-finite. The past participle is given in the nom./acc. n. sg. form. Rather than the abstract '1st sg.' etc., pronouns are used to indicate person and number; hann 'he' is used for the 3rd sg., vér for the 1st pl., þér for the 2nd pl., þeir for the 3rd pl. The imperative is always 2nd sg. (cf. 3.6.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong verb (type 2): skjóta ‘shoot’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past indicative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imperative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infinitive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present participle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past participle</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Strong verb (type 6): *fara* ‘go’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek fer</td>
<td>ek fara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú ferr</td>
<td>þú farir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann ferr</td>
<td>hann fari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér forum</td>
<td>vér farim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér farñð</td>
<td>þér farñð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir fara</td>
<td>þeir fari</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek för</td>
<td>ek föra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú fört</td>
<td>þú förir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann för</td>
<td>hann föri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér förum</td>
<td>vér förim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér föruð</td>
<td>þér förið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir föru</td>
<td>þeir föri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Imperative: far
- Infinitive: fara
- Present participle: farandi
- Past participle: farit

### Weak verb (type 1): *berja* ‘beat’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek ber</td>
<td>ek berja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú berr</td>
<td>þú berir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann berr</td>
<td>hann beri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér berjum</td>
<td>vér berim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér berñð</td>
<td>þér berñð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir berja</td>
<td>þeir beri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek barða</td>
<td>ek berða</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú barðir</td>
<td>þú berðir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann barði</td>
<td>hann berði</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér børðum</td>
<td>vér børðim</td>
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<tr>
<td>þér børðuð</td>
<td>þér børðið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir børðu</td>
<td>þeir berði</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Imperative: ber
- Infinitive: berja
- Present participle: berjandi
- Past participle: bart/barit
### Weak verb (type 2): *pakka* ‘thank’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek ūkka</td>
<td>ek ūkka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú ūkkar</td>
<td>þú ūkkir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann ūkkar</td>
<td>hann ūkki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr þökkiúm</td>
<td>vēr þökkið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þēr þākkið</td>
<td>þēr þākkið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þēir þākka</td>
<td>þēir þākki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek þākkant</td>
<td>ek þākkat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú þākkanir</td>
<td>þú þākkāir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann þākkandi</td>
<td>hann þākkāi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr þākkuddum</td>
<td>vēr þākkāðum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þēr þākkuddō</td>
<td>þēr þākkāðō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þēir þākkuddu</td>
<td>þēir þākkāði</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
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<th>Past participle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>þākka</td>
<td>þākka</td>
<td>þākkandi</td>
<td>þākkat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Weak verb (type 3): *brenna* ‘burn’ (transitive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek brenni</td>
<td>ek brenna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú brennir</td>
<td>þú brenni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann brennir</td>
<td>hann brenni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr brennum</td>
<td>vēr brenni</td>
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<tr>
<td>þēr brennið</td>
<td>þēr brennið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þēir brenna</td>
<td>þēir brenni</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>ek brennda</td>
<td>ek brennda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú brenndir</td>
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</tr>
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<td>hann brenndi</td>
<td>hann brenndi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr brenndum</td>
<td>vēr brenndim</td>
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<td>þēir brenndu</td>
<td>þēir brenndi</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>brenn</td>
<td>brenna</td>
<td>brennandi</td>
<td>brennt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Irregular verb: *vera* ‘be’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek em</td>
<td>ek sjá/sé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú ert</td>
<td>þú sér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann er</td>
<td>hann sé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér erum</td>
<td>vér séð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér eruð</td>
<td>þér sém</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir eru</td>
<td>þeir sé</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek var</td>
<td>ek vara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú vart</td>
<td>þú værir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann var</td>
<td>hann væri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér várum</td>
<td>vér værið</td>
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<td>þér værið</td>
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<td>þeir váru</td>
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<table>
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<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ver</td>
<td>vera</td>
<td>verandi</td>
<td>verit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Irregular verb: *sjá* ‘see’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek sé</td>
<td>ek sjá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú sér</td>
<td>þú sér</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann sér</td>
<td>hann sé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér sjáð/sjóm</td>
<td>vér séð</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér séð</td>
<td>þér sém</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir sjá</td>
<td>þeir sé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek sá</td>
<td>ek saa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú sátt</td>
<td>þú sair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann sá</td>
<td>hann sai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vér sám</td>
<td>vér saim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þér sáð</td>
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<tr>
<th>Imperative</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sé</td>
<td>sjá</td>
<td>sjándi</td>
<td>sét</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Preterite present verb: mega ‘be able to’ ‘be allowed to’ ‘can’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek má</td>
<td>ek mega</td>
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<tr>
<td>þú mátt</td>
<td>þú megi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hann má</td>
<td>hann megi</td>
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<tr>
<td>vér megum</td>
<td>vér megið</td>
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<td>þer meguð</td>
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<table>
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<th>Past subjunctive</th>
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<td>ek maetta</td>
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<tr>
<td>þú máttir</td>
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<td>hann mátti</td>
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<td>þer máttuð</td>
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<tr>
<td>þeir máttu</td>
<td>þeir maetti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Imperative**: lacking
- **Infinitive**: mega
- **Present participle**: megandi
- **Past participle**: mätt/megat

### Strong verb (type 6): farask ‘perish’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek förumk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þú fersk</td>
<td>þú farisk</td>
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<tr>
<td>hann fersk</td>
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<tr>
<td>vér förumsk</td>
<td>vér farimsk</td>
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<td>þer farizk</td>
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<th>Past subjunctive</th>
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<td>ek förumk</td>
<td>ek førumk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þú försk</td>
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<td>hann försk</td>
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<td>þer førizk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þeir förusk</td>
<td>þeir førisk</td>
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</table>

- **Infinitive**: farask
- **Past participle**: farizk
Verb inflexions and their function

Weak verb (type 1): berjask 'fight'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present indicative</th>
<th>Present subjunctive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek berjumk</td>
<td>ek berjumk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þú bersk</td>
<td>þú berisk</td>
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<tr>
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<td>hann berisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr berjumsk</td>
<td>vēr berimsk</td>
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<tr>
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<td>þēr berizk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þeir berjask</td>
<td>þeir berisk</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past indicative</th>
<th>Past subjunctive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ek bœrðumk</td>
<td>ek bœrðumk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þú barðisk</td>
<td>þú berðisk</td>
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<tr>
<td>hann barðisk</td>
<td>hann berðisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vēr bœrðumsk</td>
<td>vēr berðimsk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þēr bœrðuzk</td>
<td>þēr berðizk</td>
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<tr>
<td>þeir bœrðusk</td>
<td>þeir berðisk</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>berjask</td>
<td>barzk/barizk</td>
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</table>

Imperatives and present participles with the -sk suffix are uncommon and in many verbs unattested. To the extent they occur, they will be found to consist of the basic form + sk, e.g. dvelsk 'stay!', dveljandisk 'staying', from dvelja (weak type 1).

3.6.10 Examples of verb inflexion — Exercise

Identify the verb-forms printed in bold in the following sentences. If the form is non-finite, state whether it is an infinitive, present or past participle, and, if either of the latter, give the case, gender and number. If the form is finite, give its person (1st, 2nd or 3rd), number (sg. or pl.), tense (pres. or past), mood (indic., subj. or imp.) and voice (act. or pass.). In all cases, say what type of verb is involved (strong type X, weak type X, preterite present, etc.), and list its principal parts. Finally, comment, as appropriate, on the syntactic function and semantic role of the verb-forms, paying due attention to any with the -sk suffix.

(1) **Fóru** vinir á milli ok leituðu um sættir
    ‘Went friends be(-)ween and sought for settlement’
    ‘Friends intervened and tried to get a settlement’
Morphology and syntax

(2) Hann hljóp fyrr borð ok svam til lands ok bjó svá um í hvílu sinni, at þar sýndisk, sem maðr legi
‘He jumped over side and swam to land and arranged thus around in bed refl. poss., that there showed-sk as man lay’
‘He jumped overboard and swam to shore and arranged his bed in such a way that it looked as though a man lay there’

(3) ‘Eigi veit ek þat’, segir Skarpheðinn
‘“Not know I that”, says Skarpheðinn’
‘“I don’t know about that”, says Skarpheðinn’

(4) Heyrt hefi ek, at þér hafið kvisat í milli yðvar, at ek væra ekki léttill maðr vexti
‘I have heard you whispering among yourselves that I was not little man in-stature’

(5) Þetta þótt allum ráðligt, ok var þetta heit fest
‘This seemed to-all advisable, and was this vow made’
‘This seemed a good idea to everyone, and this vow was made’

(6) Eigi vil ek, at þit sêð missáttir
‘‘Not want I that you-two are discordant’
I don’t want you two to be on bad terms’

(7) Þeir þorðusk vel um hríð
‘They defended themselves well for a while’

(8) Þeir sjá, hvar tveir menn gengu frá skálanum
‘They see where two men went from hall-the’
‘They see two men going from the hall’

(9) Hann hafði tvau skip ok jafnmarga menn, sem mælt var
‘He had two ships and equally-many men as stipulated was’
‘He had two ships and as many men as was stipulated’

(10) En því næst laust þú mik með hamrinum þrjú hógg
‘But to-that next hit you me with hammer-the three blows’
‘But then you hit me three blows with the hammer’
Verb inflexions and their function 179

(11)  **Væntir** hann þess, at þú **mynir** honum grið **gefa**, ef kastalinn **verðr uninn**
    ‘Hopes he that, that you will to-him quarter give if castle-the is won’
    ‘He hopes that you will spare his life if the castle is taken’

(12)  **Ver** kátr bóndi, ok **grát** eigi
    ‘Be cheerful, farmer, and cry not’
    ‘Cheer up, master, and don’t cry’

(13)  Átján **váru drepnir**, en tólf **þágu** grið
    ‘Eighteen were slain, and twelve received pardon’

(14)  Ósœmt **er**, at líkamr **fæðisk** ok **klaðisk** ítarliga, en hinn íðri maðr sé óprúðr ok **missi** sinnar fæðlu
    ‘Unseemly is that body feeds-sk and clothes-sk finely, but the inner man is unadorned and lacks refl. poss. food’
    ‘It is unseemly that the body is finely fed and clothed, but the inner man is unadorned and goes without his food’

(15)  En ek á nú norðr leði til fjalla þessa, er nú **munu** þér **sjá mega**
    ‘But I have now northwards path to mountains these which now will you see be-able’
    ‘But my path now lies northwards to these mountains which you will now be able to see’

(16)  **Ek vil**, at vit **takim** menn til gotðar með okkr
    ‘I want that we-two take men for arbitration between us-two’
    ‘I want us to choose men to arbitrate between us’

(17)  **Eigi er** þat kynligt, at þér **undrízk** þetta
    ‘Not is that strange that you wonder-at-sk this’
    ‘It is not strange that you are amazed at this’

(18)  **Hann** hafði **loganda** brand í hendi
    ‘He had a flaming brand in his hand’

(19)  **Heyr** þú dróttinn þen þá, er þráell þinn **biðr** þik í dag,
    at augu þín sé upp **lokin** ok eyru þín **heyrandi** yfir hús þetta dag ok nótt
‘Hear you, Lord, prayer that which servant your asks you to-day, that eyes your be opened and ears your hearing over building this day and night’

‘Hear, O Lord, the prayer which your servant asks of you to-day, that your eyes be opened and your ears listening over this building day and night’

(20) Fyrir hví reiztu þessu hrossi, er þér var bannat?

‘For why rode-you this horse which to-you was forbidden?’

‘Why did you ride this horse which was forbidden to you?’

(21) Maðrinn heilsar þeim ok spyrr, hverir þeir væri

‘The man greets them and asks who they were’

(22) Vel má ek gorat þat til skaps fōður míns at brenna inni með honum, því at ek hreðumk ekki dauða minn

‘Well can I do that for pleasure of-father my to burn inside with him, therefore that I fear-sk not death my’

‘I can happily please my father by burning alive in the house with him, because I do not fear death’

(23) Lézk þar Adam byskup, ok var líkit lítt brunnit, er fannsk

‘Lost-sk there Adam bishop, and was body-the little burnt when found-sk’

‘Bishop Adam died there, and his body was scarcely burnt when it was found’

(24) Sér Pórr þá, at þat hafði hann haft of nóttina fyrir skála

‘Sees Pórr then that that he had during night-the for house’

‘Then Pórr sees that that was what he had been using during the night as a house’

(25) Hann skyldi halda sætt ok frið við þá menn alla, er í þessi ráðagarði hofðu vafízt

‘He should keep truce and peace with those men all who in this plot had entangled-sk’

‘He was to keep the peace agreement with all the men who had become embroiled in this plot’
3.7 Prepositions

Prepositions are non-inflecting words that appear in conjunction with noun phrases and together with them form sentence elements known as preposition phrases. English examples, with the preposition given in bold, are: *with John, in town, for two weeks, about them.*

Usually a preposition will immediately precede its noun phrase, although in Old Norse other words may occasionally intervene (e.g. — with the preposition phrase given in bold — núa ræðr þú, hversu þú skalt við una þitt orrendi ‘now decide you how you shall with be-content your mission [i.e. now it is up to you what satisfaction you derive from your mission’]). Where the noun phrase comes first, as can also happen in Old Norse, the term ‘preposition’ is often replaced by the more precise ‘postposition’ (e.g. mælti nú engi maðr því í móti ‘no man now spoke against it’, with því ‘it’ preceding í móti ‘against’).

Although prepositions do not themselves inflect, in many languages they determine the case of the noun phrase they are used in conjunction with, and are thus said to ‘govern’ it (cf. *about them* above, not *about they*).

Typically prepositions convey concepts like time, place, possession, instrumentality. This means that many preposition phrases are adverbials (cf. 3.5.4). In the English sentence *John did it during the interval,* for example, *during the interval* answers the question ‘when?’ and is reducible to the adverb *then.* Similarly, *outside the shop in we met outside the shop* answers the question ‘where?’ and can be reduced to the adverb *there.* Some prepositions, however, simply act as connectors between verb and noun phrase: contrast English *he visited them* with American *he visited with them.*

Old Norse has about thirty common prepositions, several of which occasionally function as postpositions. They trigger accusative, genitive and dative case in the noun phrases they govern, but never nominative. Some always trigger the same case, some trigger two, and one even three; among the second group, difference of case usually implies a difference of meaning.

In the following, the chief Old Norse prepositions are presented, ordered according to the case or cases they trigger. A selective range of their principal meanings is given, together with examples of usage. It should be noted, however, that prepositional usage is often very
idiomatic, and one-to-one equivalence between the prepositions of Old Norse and English is not to be expected. ON at, for example, shares with English at a common form, origin and spatial sense, but appropriate English equivalents — as well as ‘at’ — can be ‘against’, ‘to’, ‘along’, ‘around’, ‘near’, ‘by’, ‘in’ and ‘on’, to name but some.

Observe that prepositions with initial á, í, um may also be found written as single words, e.g. ámedal, ímótir, umfram.

### 3.7.1 Prepositions triggering the accusative

(i) gegnum ‘through’

Hallbjörn lagði í gegnum skjoldinn
‘Hallbjörn thrust through shield-the’
‘Hallbjörn thrust his spear through the shield’

**of**

(a) [motion] ‘over’ ‘across’

Hann fór suðr of fjall
‘He went south across the mountain’

(b) ‘during’ ‘in’

Of aptan, er myrkt var, þá . . .
‘In evening when dark was, then . . .’

‘In the evening when it was dark, then . . .’

Occasionally of is construed with the dative case, either in sense (b) or with the locational meaning ‘over’ ‘above’ (e.g. konungr sat of bordi ‘the king sat over [i.e. at] table’). The latter usage is one of shares with the prepositions um and yfir (see below). In most functions of and um are interchangeable, and of was more or less ousted by um, and to a lesser extent yfir, in the course of the thirteenth century.

**um**

(a) [motion] ‘around’ ‘over’ ‘across’

Slógu þeir þá hring um þá
‘Threw they then ring around them’

‘Then they encircled them’
(b) ‘during’ ‘in’

Þeir váru þar um nóttina
‘They were there during the night’

(c) ‘about’ ‘concerning’

Þeir töludu þá um málit
‘They spoke then about the matter’

Like of, um may occasionally be construed with the dative, either in sense (b) or, rarely, with the locational meaning ‘over’ ‘above’.

um fram ‘beyond’ ‘above’ ‘more than’

Þat er þakt með ísum, umfram óll ónnur hóf
‘It is covered with ice, more than all other seas’

umhverfis ‘around’

Gengr hann umhverfis skemmuna
‘He walks around the hut’

Apart from the above, there is a series of complex prepositions that trigger the accusative, made up of fyrrir and a following adverb with the -an suffix (cf. 3.5.1). These indicate position relative to another (fixed) position, e.g. fyrrir vestan hafit ‘west of the sea’, fyrrir neðan kné ‘below the knee’ (further examples under 3.5.1). Sometimes the order fyrrir + -an adverb may be reversed, but it should be noted that while, e.g., fyrrir ofan always means ‘above’, ofan fyrrir has two meanings: ‘above’ and ‘down past’ ‘down along’; in the latter sense it is not a complex preposition but a sequence of adverb + preposition (see 3.7.4, fyrrir).
3.7.2 Prepositions triggering the genitive

**innan** ‘within’

Innan kastalans var eitt munklífi
‘Within the castle was a monastery’

Occasionally *innan* may be construed with the accusative or dative.

**(á/í) meðal** ‘among’ ‘between’

Hann settisk niðr á meðal þeirra
‘He sat (himself) down between them’

**(á/í) milli/millum** ‘among’ ‘between’

Ríki guða er yðar í milli
‘The kingdom of God is among you’

Each of the three above prepositions can denote time as well as location (e.g. *innan lítills tímas* ‘within a short time’, *milli jólaks ok fæstu* ‘between Christmas and Lent’).

**til**

(a) ‘to’ ‘towards’

Hann fór vestr um haf til Porfinns jarls
‘He went west over the sea to Earl Porfinnr’

(b) ‘regarding’ ‘concerning’

Þeim varð gott til manna
‘To-them became good regarding men’

‘They managed to gather together a good many men’

(c) ‘to’ ‘until’

Helt hertoginn öllu sínu ríki til dauðadags
‘Kept duke-the all REFL. POSS. dominion till death-day’

‘The duke kept all his lands until the day he died’
Somewhere between a preposition phrase and a preposition stands *fyrir* . . . *sakar/sakir/sakum, fyrir sakar/sakir/sakum* ‘because of’ ‘regarding’, which triggers the genitive (e.g. *fyrir sára sakir* ‘because of wounds’, *fyrir vits sakir* ‘as regards intelligence’, *fyrir sakar þess* ‘for that reason’).

### 3.7.3 Prepositions triggering the dative

**af**

(a) ‘off’ ‘from’

Rǫgnvaldr jarl kom af hafi við Hjaltland
‘Rǫgnvaldr earl came off sea at Shetland’
‘Earl Rǫgnvaldr landed in Shetland’

While *af* in this sense can simply denote [source] — where someone/something comes from — it often correlates with prepositions meaning ‘on’, first and foremost *á*: that which is ‘on’ something can come ‘off’ it (cf. the above example where Rǫgnvaldr has been on the sea sailing to Shetland).

(b) [time] ‘(gone) from’

Þrjár vikur váru af sumri
‘Three weeks were from summer’
‘Three weeks of summer were gone’

(c) [partitive, cf. 3.2.6, sentence 20] ‘of’

Porfínr háði mikinn hluta af Skotlandi
‘Porfinnr had a big part of Scotland’

(d) [in passive constructions] ‘by’

Ek em sendr hingat af Starkaði
‘I am sent hither by Starkaðr’

(e) [cause] ‘of’ ‘from’ ‘because of’

Ínn nórðri hlutr liggur óbyggðr af frosti ok kulða
‘The northern part lies uninhabited because of frost and cold’
Morphology and syntax

at  (a) ‘at’ ‘to’ ‘towards’

Hleypr Kolr þá at honum
‘Kolr then runs at him’

(b) ‘at’ ‘in’

Eigi má ek hér vera at hýbýlum mínun
‘Not can I here be at home my’
‘I cannot stay here at my home’

The above uses of at can be temporal as well as locational (e.g. leið at kveldi
‘it passed on to evening’, at jóhum gaf jarl honum gullhring ‘at Christmas the
earl gave him a gold ring’). In addition at can signify future time (e.g. at vári
‘next spring’ ‘when spring comes’).

(c) ‘from’

Ari nam marga frœði at Þuriði
‘Ari gained much knowledge from Þuriðr’

(d) ‘according to’

Óláfr var gefit konungs nafn at upplenzkum lögum
‘To-Óláfr was given king’s name according-to Upplandic
laws’
‘Óláfr was declared king in accordance with the laws of
Uppland’

At + acc. in the sense ‘after’ (particularly ‘after someone’s death’) may also
be encountered (e.g. sonr á æf at taka at þóður sín ‘a son is to take inheritance
after his father’). Historically this appears to be a different preposition from at
+ dat., probably an assimilated form of apt, related to eptir (see below).

frá  (a) ‘from’

Þau róa frá skipinu
‘They row from the ship’
Prepositions 187

(b) ‘concerning’ ‘about’

Er mér svá frá sagt konungi
‘Is to-me thus about said king’
‘I am told so about the king’

As distinct from af, fró does not correlate with particular locational prepositions, but denotes source or origin of any kind. It can have temporal as well as locational function (e.g. fró þessum degi ‘from this day’).

gagnvart/gegnvart ‘opposite’

Skipaði Hrútr honum gagnvart sér
‘Hrútr placed him opposite himself’

(i) gegen (a) ‘against’

Mestr hluti manna mælti honum í gegen
‘Most part of-men spoke him against’
‘Most of the men spoke against him’

(b) ‘towards’

Hann ríðr út í gegen þeim
‘He rides out towards them’

hjá (a) ‘at someone’s (house)’

Var hann á gistingu hjá Þóri
‘Was he on night-stay at Þórir’s’
‘He was staying the night at Þórir’s’

(b) ‘close to’ ‘next to’ ‘by’

Konungr bað hann sitja hjá sér
‘The king bade him sit by him’
Morphology and syntax

(c) 'past'

Gengr kona hjá Þormóði
“A woman walks past Þormóðr”

(d) 'compared with'

Þórr er lágr ok líttill hjá stórmenni því, er hér er með oss
“Þórr is short and small compared with the big men who are here with us”

In sense (a) and, to a certain extent, (b), ON hjá corresponds to French chez.

(á/i) móti (i) (a) ‘against’

Mælti þá ok engi maðr í móti honum
‘Spoke then also no man at-against him’
‘And indeed no man then spoke against him’

(b) ‘towards’

Gengu tveir menn í móti þeim
‘Two men walked towards them’

nær ‘near’

Austmaðrinn kvezk vilja fyrir hafa land ok þó nær sér
‘Easterner-the says-sk want for-it have land and yet near self’
‘The Norwegian says he wants to have land in exchagene for it, but near him’

Nær can have temporal as well as locational sense (e.g. nær aptni ‘near evening’). Since nær is in origin an adverb, it has comparative and superlative forms (cf. 3.5.2), and occasionally these are also used with prepositional function (e.g. nær(r) honum ‘nearer him’, næst hinum fremstum ‘closest to the foremost (people)’).
**Prepositions**

Ór/úr ‘out of’ ‘from’

Hann hafði í brot komizk ór brennunni
‘He had a(-)way come-sk out-of burning-the’
‘He had escaped from the burning’

Ór often correlates with prepositions meaning ‘inside’ ‘within’; in the above example the escape was made from within a burning building.

**undan** ‘away from’

Ek get þess, at þú vilir eigi renna undan þeim
‘I guess that, that you want not run away-from them’
‘I do not imagine you want to run away from them’

Where one entity is moving and another following or due to follow in orderly fashion, **undan** corresponds to English ‘ahead of’ ‘before’ (e.g. *fara undan þeim* ‘go ahead of them’).

Also used with the dative is a series of constructions — with a wide range of meanings — consisting of preposition + various forms of the noun *hona*. Like *fyrr* . . . *sakar* etc. (cf. 3.7.2), preposition + *hona* constructions stand somewhere between a preposition phrase and a preposition. Among the most common are: *á honđ/hendr* ‘against’, *til handa* ‘for’ ‘on behalf of’ (e.g. *fara á hendr Rǫgnvaldi jarli* ‘go against [i.e. attack] Earl Rǫgnvaldr’, *bida konu til handa honum* ‘ask woman for him [i.e. ask for a woman in marriage on his behalf]’).

3.7.4 **Prepositions triggering the accusative and dative**

Prepositions in this category are construed with the accusative or dative largely according to sense. The principal distinction is between motion (usually towards some goal) and location (rest), the former triggering the accusative, the latter the dative. Only *eptir*, *með* and *við* are unaffected by this dichotomy. *Eptir*, together with *fyrr*, tends to trigger the accusative when denoting time. *Með* may historically have been followed only or chiefly by the dative and *við* by the accusative, but in
classical Old Norse the two prepositions have become somewhat mixed up and the one can rather often be found with the sense and/or case of the other. In connection with the motion : location dichotomy it is worth noting first that the movement or rest involved is often denoted or suggested by a word other than the preposition (usually a verb or adverb, cf., e.g., á + acc. (a) and á + dat. (a) below), and second that an English speaker’s conception of movement and rest may not always tally with that of speakers of other languages (cf., e.g., þeir sá bôða mikinn inn á fjörðinn “they saw a great breaker [i.e. breaking wave] in the inlet [literally: (looking) into the inlet]”).

**á + acc.** (a) ‘onto’ ‘on’ ‘to’

- Hann gekk á land
  - ‘He went on land’
  - ‘He went ashore’

(b) ‘during’ ‘at’ ‘in’

- Standa þar yfir vótn á vetrinn, en á várin . . .
  - ‘Stand there over waters in winter-the, but in springs-the . . .’
  - ‘It is covered with water in the winter, but in the spring . . .’

When used in a temporal sense á tends to trigger the accusative where the noun is accompanied by the definite article (contrast dat. (b) below). Á + acc. may indicate a point in time as well as a recurring period (e.g., á laugardaginn næstu ‘on the next Saturday’).

**á + dat.** (a) ‘on’ ‘in’

- Reri hann yfir á Nes einn á báti
  - ‘Rowed he over to Nes one in boat’
  - ‘He rowed over to Caithness in a boat on his own’

Note the contrast between the accusative yfir á Nes, where the adverb yfir indicates motion towards a place, and the dative á báti, which implies location. The verb reri combines with both senses.
Prepositions

(b) ‘during’ ‘at’ ‘in’

Hann gaf Hrómundi gelding hvert haust, en lamb á várum
‘He gave to-Hrómundr wether each autumn, but lamb in
springs’
‘He gave Hrómundr a wether each autumn, but a lamb in the
spring’

Á + dat. may indicate a point in time as well as a recurring period (e.g. á því
sumri ‘in that summer’).

(c) [inalienable possession] ‘X’s Y’

Lagði hann í fótinn á honum
‘Thrust he into leg-the on him’
‘He thrust (his weapon) into his leg’

Á in this sense is typically used of body parts, but can also be found in other
contexts (e.g. allar dyrr á hásum ‘all the doorways of the buildings’).

eptir + acc. [time] ‘after’

Eptir orrostuna fór hann norðr til Prándheims
‘After the battle he went north to Prándheimr’

Eptir + acc. can also be used in the sense of ‘after someone’s death’ (e.g. þá
tök hann arf eptir fóðar sinn ‘then he took inheritance after his father’).

eptir + dat. [motion] ‘after’ ‘following’

Hann reið eptir þeim
‘He rode after them’

The sense ‘following’ can extend to ‘along’ (e.g. gekk hann apr eptir skipinu
‘he walked back along the ship’), and to ‘according to’ (e.g. gekk allt eptir
því, sem Hallr hafði sagt ‘everything went according to what [literally: that
which] Hallr had said’).
Morphology and syntax

fyrir + acc. (a) [motion] ‘before’ ‘in front of’

Hann kom skildinum fyrir sik
‘He came shield-the before self’
‘He put the shield in front of him’

(b) [directional] ‘over’ ‘past’

Péir drógu hann ofan fyrir brekkuna
‘They dragged him down over the slope’

(c) [time] ‘before’

En litlu fyrir jól fór hann í Papey ina litlu
‘But shortly before Christmas he went to Papa Stronsay’

(d) ‘in return for’ ‘in place of’

Pú skalt gjalda fyrir hana þríðrar merkr silfrs
‘You shall pay three marks of silver for her (a slave)’

fyrir + dat. (a) [location] ‘before’ ‘in front of’

Varð fundr þeira fyrir Rauðabjörnun
‘Took-place meeting their before Rauðabjörn’
‘They met off Roberry’

Locational fyrir has a number of extended meanings. Particularly common are: (1) ‘in charge of’, developed from the sense ‘in front of’ via the idea of ‘leading’ (e.g. vera fyrir líði ‘be in charge of a body of men’), and (2) ‘in the presence of’, widely used with verbs of speaking (e.g. mæla fyrir honum ‘say to [literally: before] him’, kæra fyrir þeim ‘complain to them’).

(b) ‘ago’

Ek skildumk við Óláfr konung fyrir fjórum nóttum
‘I parted from King Óláfr four nights ago’
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í + acc. (a) ‘into’ ‘in’ ‘to’

Eigi miklu síðarr sendir hann menn í Suðreyjar
‘Not much later he sends men to the Hebrides’

Í in the above sense may be used with abstract as well as concrete nouns (e.g. kominn í allmikla kærleika við ‘come into very great friendship with [i.e. become very great friends with]’).

(b) ‘during’ ‘in’ ‘at’

Í þenna tíma kom út Geirríðr
‘At this time came out Geirríðr’
‘At this time Geirríðr came to Iceland’

Í in this temporal sense is commonly used with the words dagr ‘day’ and nótt ‘night’ as well as the names of parts of the day and the seasons to indicate ‘time now’ or ‘time closest to the present’ (e.g. í nótt ‘tonight’, í kveld ‘this evening’, í sumar ‘this summer’).

í + dat. ‘in’

Dvalþisk Rǫgnvaldr skamma stund í Nóregi
‘Rǫgnvaldr stayed a short while in Norway’

Í in this sense may be used with abstract as well as concrete nouns (e.g. í miklum kærleikum við ‘in great friendship with’).

með + acc. ‘with’

Hann fór til Íslands með konu sína ok børn
‘He went to Iceland with his wife and children’

Með here implies that ‘he’ took his wife and children to Iceland rather than simply going together with them (see með + dat. (a) below). Because it carries the notion of ‘control’ over whatever entity one is ‘with’, með + acc. is commonly found with nouns denoting inanimate objects (e.g. kom Bárðr eptir þeim með horn fullt ‘Bárðr came after them with a full horn’, i.e. carrying a horn full of drink).
með + dat. (a) ‘together with’

Dóttir hans fór með honum
‘His daughter went with him’

(b) [instrumental] ‘with’

Þeir urðu at verja sik með sverðum
‘They had to defend themselves with swords’

(c) [manner] ‘with’ ‘in’ ‘by’

Priðju nótt varð gnýt með sama hætti
‘Third night happened clamour with same manner’
‘The third night there was a clamour in the same way’

(d) ‘among’

Pát er síðr með kaupmönnum, at . . .
‘It is a custom among merchants to . . .’

Case usage after með is more fluid than the above examples suggest. In particular it is not uncommon to find með + dat. in what appears to be the ‘control’ sense (cf. með + acc. above). As indicated in the preamble to this sub-section, með can sometimes take the place of við; thus we may attest, for example, berjask með + acc. for earlier berjask við + acc. ‘fight with’ ‘fight against’, where the noun phrase following the preposition denotes the goal of the action.

undir + acc. [motion] ‘under’

Lagði Þorfinnr jarl þá undir sik allar Eyjar
‘Laid Þorfinnr earl then under self all Islands’
‘Then Earl Þorfinnr placed all the Northern Isles under his rule’

undir + dat. [location] ‘under’

Pá brast í sundr þjóðin undir hestí hans
‘Then burst a(-)sunder earth-the under horse his’
‘Then the earth burst open under his horse’
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In either of the above senses *undir* may be used metaphorically (e.g. *gefa undir kirkjuna* ‘give to the church’, i.e. with the result that what is given comes under the church’s control, *undir þeim biskupi eru ellifu hundruð kirkna* ‘under that bishop are eleven hundred churches’).

**við + acc.** (a) ‘near’ ‘by’

*Þeir sátu lengi við bakelda*
‘They sat long by baking-flames’
‘They sat by the fire warming themselves for a long time’

This use of *við* may be temporal as well as locational (e.g. *við sólarsetr* ‘at sunset’, *við þetta* ‘at this (point)’).

(b) [directional] ‘to’ ‘towards’ ‘vis-à-vis’

*Engu skiptir mik, hversu þú hefir við aðra menn gort*
‘By-nothing concerns me how you have to other men done’
‘It does not concern me at all how you have acted towards other men’

The noun following *við* in sense (b) denotes the entity at which an action is directed. The usage is commonly found *inter alia* with verbs of saying (e.g. *tala við konung* ‘speak to the king’). Because of the directional sense, the noun following *við* can sometimes have the force of a direct object (the ‘goal of the action’, cf. 3.1.5, sentence 5). That is particularly the case with phrasal verbs (those consisting of two or more words), although many of these denote mental processes rather than actions (e.g. *fara til fundar við* ‘go to meeting with’, where the sense is more or less equivalent to the English transitive phrase *go to meet*, *verða varr við* ‘become aware of’, equivalent to *notice*, *vera háðr við* ‘be afraid of’, equivalent to *fear*).

**við + dat.** ‘against’

*Hann kastaði sér níðr við vellinum*
‘He threw himself down against the ground’

Sometimes *við + dat.* may have the related sense ‘towards’ (e.g. *horfa við* ‘look towards’). As noted above, *við* and *með* have become confused, and we may thus find *við + dat.* in all the senses of *með + dat.* Potential ambiguities can usually be resolved by examining the sentence in which the preposition
phrase stands or the wider context (e.g. slá honum níðr vîð steininum must mean ‘throw him down against the rock’ rather than ‘strike him down with the rock’ because of the dative honum — cf. (3.1.5, sentence 20) that verbs of throwing take the dative of the entity thrown).

\textbf{yfír + acc.} [motion] ‘over’ ‘above’

\begin{quote}
Þá tók Skaði eitorm ok festi upp yfír hann
‘Then took Skaði poisonous-snake and fixed up above him’
‘Then Skaði took a poisonous snake and tied it up above him’
\end{quote}

\textbf{yfír + dat.} [location]

\begin{quote}
Hvers manns álæpni hekk yfír rúmi hans
‘Each man’s weapons hung above his seat’
\end{quote}

In either of the above senses yfír may be used metaphorically (e.g. hafa vîxt yfír aðra menn ‘have growth beyond [i.e. be taller than] other men’, konungr yfír Englandi ‘king over England’).

3.7.5 \textit{Prepositions triggering the accusative and genitive}

The only preposition regularly to trigger both accusative and genitive is \textit{útan}. It has two senses, and either case may have either sense.

\textbf{útan + acc./gen.} (a) ‘outside’

\begin{quote}
Hann nemr stað í garðinum útan hurð klaustursins
‘He takes stand in yard-the outside door of-convent’
‘He stops in the yard outside the door of the convent’
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Þeir fóru heldr útan herðs til kaupa
‘They went rather outside district to tradings’
‘They preferred to go outside the district to trade’
\end{quote}
(b) ‘without’

Eigi er enn við honum tekit útan þitt ráð
‘Not is yet with him taken without your consent’
‘He has not yet been received without your consent’

. . . ef þeir eru útan sætta
‘. . . if they are without a settlement’

3.7.6 Preposition triggering the accusative, genitive and dative

The only preposition to trigger all three cases is án. The meaning is the same, irrespective of case.

án + acc./gen./dat. ‘without’

Kristnin mátti eigi vera lengi án stjórnarmanninn
‘The Church could not be long without its leader’

Pess máttu Gautar illa án vera
‘That could Gautar ill without be’
‘The people of Gautland could not afford to be without it’

Giptisk hon Valgarði án ráði allra frænda sinna
‘Married-she to-Valgarðr without consent of-all kinsmen
REFL. POSS.’
‘She married Valgarðr without the consent of any of her kinsmen’

3.7.7 Residual remarks

Two further matters concerning Old Norse prepositions should be noted.

First, they often combine with adverbs, particularly those that indicate direction. Thus a journey to Caithness from Orkney may be
described as yfir á Nes, one in the opposite direction as út í Eyjar, and one into the hinterland of Scotland as upp í Skotland. Sometimes such combinations develop idiomatic senses considerably removed from the meanings of the two elements of which they are made up, e.g. framán at ‘to the front side of [literally: from the front to]’ (cf. also 3.7.1 on the many combinations of fyrir + -an adverb). When confronted by an adverb + preposition (or preposition + adverb) sequence that does not appear to make immediate sense, the student is advised to look up the adverb first since often it will mainly be this that gives the sequence its meaning.

Second, prepositions in Old Norse are often converted into adverbs by the omission of the noun phrase they govern. Sometimes the noun phrase can be clearly understood from the context (e.g. hann kom svá á óvart, at eigi varð fyrr varð við en . . . ‘he came so on unawares that not became before aware of than . . . [i.e. he arrived so unexpectedly that no one became aware of (him) before . . .]’. In other cases the reference is less specific (e.g. niðanyrkr var á ‘pitch-darkness was on [i.e. it was pitch-dark]’. Students should be particularly on their guard against prepositions used adverbially that yet appear to be prepositions because they are immediately followed by a noun phrase (e.g. hann finnr, at þar var stungit í sverði Sigmundar ‘he notices that there was thrust into with-sword of-Sigmundr [i.e. that Sigmundr’s sword was thrust into it]’, where sverði is an instrumental dative (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 20) and í belongs with the adverb þar, giving the adverb phrase þar í ‘therein’, or, more idiomatically, ‘into it’). As can be seen from the translation, þar is here the equivalent of a pronoun, and þar í therefore effectively a preposition phrase. This type of construction is very common in Old Norse; mostly it involves þar, but hér ‘here’ also occurs (cf. nú verðr þar frá at hverfa ‘now becomes there from to turn [i.e. now we must turn from that]’; . . . svá björt, at þar af lýsti ‘. . . so bright [n. pl.] that there from shone [i.e. so bright that they shone]’; œll sannindi hér um ‘all truth here about [i.e. all the truth about this]’). (See further 3.9.8.3.)
3.7 Prepositions — Exercise

1. Define and exemplify ‘preposition’, taking your examples from Old Norse.
2. Do Old Norse prepositions always immediately precede the noun phrase they govern?
3. List the prepositions that trigger the accusative, the genitive or the dative only.
4. How far can case usage after Old Norse prepositions be related to meaning?
5. What differences, if any, are there between the meanings of *af*, *frá* and *ór*?
6. In what senses and with what cases may *fyrir* be used?
7. In what senses and with what cases may *me›* be used?
8. What is the difference in meaning between *ofan* and *fyrir ofan*?
9. Which Old Norse prepositions may have temporal sense?
10. Identify the basic meaning of each of the following prepositions (printed in bold); state, where appropriate, the case of the noun phrase governed and the reason for the choice of case (where a preposition is found to be used adverbially, discuss its relationship with other words in the sentence):

(a) Var Kálfr þá í miklum kaerleikum við Porfinn jarl
   ‘Kálfr was then on very friendly terms with Earl Porfinnr’
(b) Eptir þat sendi Porfinnr menn út í Eyjar
   ‘After that Porfinnr sent men out to the Orkneys’
(c) Hann kaerir fyrir þeim, at þeir ætla at fara með her á hendr honum
   ‘He complains to them that they intend to advance against him with an army’
(d) Hann sigldi þegar á haf um nóttina ok svá austr til Nóregs
   ‘He sailed straight to sea during the night and then east to Norway’
(e) Konungr sat yfir mat
   ‘The king sat over food’
(f) Var kominn á byrr
   ‘A fair wind had sprung up’
(g) Hann er jarðaðr at Kristskirkju
   ‘He is buried at Christ’s Church’
(h) Móg lónd hafði hann lagt undir sik með hernaði
   ‘Many countries he had placed under his rule by warfare’
(i) Goðin skópðu þar ór mann
   ‘The gods created a man out of it’
3.8 Conjunctions

Conjunctions differ from most other words in that they do not form part of a sentence, but stand outside it. Their function, as the term conjunction suggests, is to join constituents together, and the constituents may be anything from sentences to single sentence elements (though even the latter can mostly be analysed as reduced sentences).

A distinction is made between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. The former join together constituents of the same level, the latter constituents of different levels. Commonly, coordinating conjunctions connect independent sentences (also known as matrix sentences or main clauses), i.e. sentences that can stand on their own as a complete utterance. The two most frequently occurring coordinating conjunctions in English are *and* and *but*. In:

Peter sat down **and** poured himself a drink

*and* connects the sentences *Peter sat down* and *Peter poured himself a drink* (in the second sentence *Peter* is omitted because unless specified, the subject of *poured* will be understood to be the same as the subject of *sat down*). Both these sentences are independent in the sense that they require nothing further to complete them. The conjunction *but*, while introducing an element of contrast not present in *and*, functions in a similar way. In:

Anne opened the door **but** did not go in

the sentences joined together are again both independent: (1) *Anne opened the door*; (2) *[Annelshe]* did not go in.

Subordinating conjunctions typically function as connectors between independent and dependent sentences, introducing the latter (also known as embedded sentences or subordinate clauses). Dependent sentences are those that cannot stand on their own as complete utterances. Examples of subordinating conjunctions in English are *because*, *when*, *if*. In:

I like the summer **because** it is light

*because* joins the dependent *because it is light* to the independent
I like the summer. The former, unlike the other sentences so far ad-
duced, is not a complete utterance. To say because it is light, which
details a reason, requires that we specify the action, event or state to
which the reason applies. Equally, the dependent when he arrives,
introduced by when, needs to be completed by an independent sentence
which details an action, event or state that stands in a time relation to
'his' arrival, e.g.:

We will eat when he arrives

The conjunction if introduces the notion of condition: one action, event
or state is conditional upon another. The action/event/state that will/
would take place/ensue if the condition is/were met is expressed as an
independent, the condition as a dependent sentence, e.g.:

Joan will write the letter if you help her

Subordinating conjunctions are often grouped according to their
meaning, and the groups given designations such as ‘causal’ (e.g.
because, since), ‘temporal’ (e.g. when, while), ‘conditional’ (e.g. if,
unless), ‘final’ (e.g. in order that), ‘consecutive’ (so that [i.e. ‘with
the result that’]). As will be seen from these examples, some conjunc-
tions consist of more than one word.

Not all words that introduce dependent sentences have traditionally
been reckoned conjunctions. English who(m), which and whose are
often termed ‘relatives’ or even ‘relative pronouns’, the latter desig-
nation based on the observation that such words can have the same
function as noun phrases (appearing as subjects and objects of sen-
tences, for example), cf.:

Bill helped the girl who was drunk (subject)

This is a prize which you can win (object)

Whatever other functions they may have, however, it is undeniable
that who, which in examples like the above (and in similar fashion
whom, whose) join together sentences, and to that extent can be classed
as conjunctions in the same way as because, when, etc.
For who(m), which we may often substitute that in English (… that was drunk, … that you can win). A different function of that — likewise conjunctional, though, again, not always recognised as such — is to introduce what are often called that-clauses. These have a number of functions, but are often the complements of verbs such as say, know, think, suppose, hope, or, in a different type of construction, of be, e.g.:

He said that it was interesting

The upshot was that they all left

In such cases that is, of course, not interchangeable with who(m), which.

We are dealing here with three fundamentally different types of dependent sentence: (1) those reducible to an adverb (e.g. … when he arrives = then); (2) those reducible to an adjective (e.g. … which you can win = winnable); (3) those reducible to a noun phrase (e.g. … that it was interesting = it, the (following) thing, etc.). All dependent sentences are reducible in this way, which accounts for their dependent status. They represent expanded versions of adverbial, adjectival or nominal elements in independent sentences. Different though the three main types of dependent sentence may be, it is unhelpful to divide the words that introduce them into three separate categories since their common function as dependent sentence introducers is thereby obscured. In keeping with this view, all Old Norse words that join sentences together will in the following be treated as conjunctions.

3.8.1 Coordinating conjunctions

The principal coordinating conjunctions in Old Norse are ok ‘and’ and en ‘but’ ‘and moreover’ ‘and’. Others are eda ‘or’ ‘but’, né ‘nor’. Note further the expanded constructions heði . . . ok ‘both . . . and’, annattveggja . . . eda ‘either . . . or’ and hvárki . . . né ‘neither . . . nor’. As can be seen from the translations offered, the meanings of Old Norse coordinating conjunctions are sometimes less clear-cut than those of their modern English equivalents, and the student may need to examine carefully the contexts in which they appear in order to determine the precise meaning.

The following examples illustrate typical usage.
Conjunctions

Eptir þat fór Porfinnr jarl til Orkneyja ok sat þar um vetrinn
‘After that went Porfinnr earl to Orkneys and sat there during
winter-the’
‘After that Earl Porfinnr went to the Orkneys and stayed there
over the winter’

Pessu þáta þeir broðr, en Óláfr ferr heim
‘To-this agree those brothers, but Óláfr goes home’
‘The brothers agree to this, but Óláfr goes home’

Lét ek ok þar fé nokkut, en ek var leiðinn sjálfr háðuliga
‘Lost I also there property some, but I was treated myself
shamefully’
‘I also lost some property there, and moreover I was myself
treated shamefully’

Here ok appears not as a conjunction, but as an adverb with the sense ‘also’.
For further uses of ok, see 3.8.2.4 and 3.9.9.

Hvárt sem hann bað fyrir óvinum eða hann ávitaði þá . . .
‘Whether that he prayed for enemies or he rebuked them . . .’
‘Whether he prayed for his enemies or rebuked them . . .’

Note that the sentences joined by eða in this example are both dependent.

Ver vel kominn! Eða hvat mey er þat, er þér fylgir
‘Be well come! Or what maid is that who you follows?’
‘Welcome! But what maid is that who is with you?’

This use of eða to bridge two different themes is very common, especially
where the sentence it introduces is a question.

Nú mun faðir minn dauðr vera, ok hefir hvárki heyrtil hans
styn né hóstta
‘Now will father my dead be, and has neither heard to him
groan nor cough’
‘Now my father must be dead, and neither a groan nor a cough
has been heard from him’

Although né joins together the two nouns styn and hóstta, the second of these can
be seen as a reduced sentence: hefir hvárki heyrtil hans styn né [hefir heyrtil
til hans] hóstta.
3.8.2 Subordinating conjunctions

As is the case with many languages, Old Norse boasts far more subordinating than coordinating conjunctions. The field is so broad, not least because of the tendency for adverbs to metamorphose into subordinating conjunctions, that no attempt can be made here to provide a complete list. For the student the most important thing is in any case not the meaning of each individual conjunction. That can be looked up in a dictionary. It is rather to grasp those features of the system that constantly recur, in particular any which may not be immediately transparent to the learner.

3.8.2.1 The particle er

Old Norse *er* is an all-purpose subordinating conjunction. Having lost any meaning of its own, it is used to introduce a wide variety of dependent sentences, either alone or together with one or more other words. In order to interpret *er* correctly, the student will usually need to understand clearly the context in which it appears. Consider the following sentences (where the semantic emptiness of *er* is signalled by the literal rendering *COMP* (= complementiser), indicating a general complementising — sentence introducing — function):

(a)  Ok þá *er* þessi orðsending kom aprt til jarls, bjó hann ferð sín
   ‘And then *COMP* this message came back to earl, prepared he journey REFL. POSS.’
   ‘And when this message got back to the earl, he made ready to leave’

(b)  En *er* hann kom á Péttrlandsfjörð, þá hafði hann þrjá tigi stórskipa
   ‘But *COMP* he came into Pentland-Firth, then had he three tens of-large-ships’
   ‘And when he got into the Pentland Firth, he had thirty large ships’
(c) En um morguninn, er menn váru vaknaðir, var kominn á byrr
‘And in morning-the, comp men were woken-up, was come on favourable-wind’
‘And in the morning, when men were awake, a favourable wind had sprung up’

(d) Ok er þeir váru búnir, sigldu þeir í haf
‘And comp they were prepared, sailed they to sea’
‘And when they were ready, they sailed out to sea’

(e) Porfinnr jarl var þá fimm vetra gamall, er Melkólmr Skota-konungr gaf honum jarlsnafn
‘Porfinnr earl was then five of-winters old comp Melkólmr king-of-Scots gave him earl’s-name’
‘Earl Porfinnr was five years old when Melkólmr, king of the Scots, gave him the title of earl’

In (a) er is immediately preceded by þá, an adverb of time meaning ‘then’. The latter (in conjunction with the tense of the verbs) supplies past-time sense, while er introduces the dependent sentence; together they form a temporal subordinating conjunction with the meaning ‘when [past time]’. (b) has er as a sentence introducer without preceding þá. The sense of the dependent sentence it introduces can, however, be deduced from the occurrence of the adverb þá at the beginning of the following independent sentence: the earl commanded thirty ships ‘then’, i.e. at the point when he entered the Pentland Firth. In (c) the time adverbial um morguninn performs much the same function as þá in (a), even though um morguninn is more obviously than þá part of the independent sentence that, as it were, ‘frames’ its dependent partner (en um morguninn [. . .] var kominn á byrr). Past-time sense is given by the tense of the verbs (váru, var). (d) lacks any adverbial that could indicate the sense of er. Here we must be guided by context, and the context is a sequence of events occurring at a particular time in the past. Immediately following (d) is the sentence: þat var á þundverðum vetri ‘that was at the beginning of winter’. This makes a temporal interpretation of er þeir váru búnir the obvious one. (e) is similar to (b) in that the er introducing the dependent sentence is
rendered unambiguous by the occurrence of þá ‘then’ in the accompanying independent sentence. The difference lies in the order of the two sentences and in the placing of þá: in (b) it is the first element in the independent sentence, in (e) it follows the verb.

The particle er appears in many temporal contexts. It commonly combines with the adverbs meðan ‘meanwhile’, síðan ‘since’, þegar ‘at once’ (yielding the conjunctions meðan er ‘while’, síðan er ‘since’, þegar er ‘as soon as’), with the adverb phrase þar til ‘thereto’ ‘up to that point’ (conjunction: þar til er ‘until’), and with preposition phrase adverbials (see 3.5.4) such as eptir þat ‘after that’ (conjunction: eptir þat er ‘after’), frá því ‘from that’ (conjunction: frá því er ‘since’), í því ‘in that’ (conjunction: í því er ‘at the moment when’), til þess ‘to that’ (conjunction: til þess er ‘until’). In most of these cases (and also with þá) er can be omitted, and there is then formal identity between conjunction and temporal adverbial (3.5.4) — as with English since (cf. since (conj.) he came . . . , it has since (adv.) been lost). The following can serve as a general example illustrating the use of temporal conjunctions with and without er.

Vér sökjum þangat miskunn guðs, þegar er vér komum í heim, ok þangat meðan vér erum í heimi, ok þangat þá er vér fyrum ór heimi

‘We seek thither mercy of-God at-once comp we come into world, and thither while we are in world, and thither then comp we go from world’

‘We seek God’s mercy there (in church) as soon as we enter the world, and (we seek it) there while we are in the world, and (we seek it) there when we leave the world’

Observe that the temporal contexts in which er operates are not restricted to past-time reference.

Location is another type of context in which er is commonly to be found, usually in combination with a locational adverbial. We find þar er ‘where’ (adverb þar ‘there’), þangat er (sometimes þangat til er) ‘to where’ (adverb þangat ‘thither’, adverb til ‘to’ (cf. 3.7.7)), þáðan er ‘from where’ (adverb þáðan ‘thence’), and the further series hvar(gi) er ‘wherever’ (adverb hvur ‘where’), hvert(ki) er ‘to wherever’ (adverb hvert ‘whither’), hváðan er ‘from wherever’ (adverb hváðan ‘whence’).
Conjunctions

Typical examples are:

Helt hann *hangat, er* hann spurði til Porfinns
‘Proceeded he thither *comp* he heard of Porfinnr’
‘He proceeded to where he heard Porfinnr was’

Guð heyrir bœnir várar, *hvar er* vér bíðjum fyrir oss af ǫllu hjarta
‘God hears prayers our where *comp* we pray for ourselves of all heart’
‘God hears our prayers wherever we pray from our whole heart’

*Er* can introduce several other types of adverbial sentence. Some of these are easy enough to interpret since the words with which *er* combines are common and impart their characteristic meanings — e.g. *hversu, hvé* ‘how’, *hverr* ‘who’, which give the conditional-concessives *hversu er, hvégi er* ‘however’ (as in *hversu hvégi lengi er* . . . ‘however long . . .’), *hverr er* ‘whoever’. The circumstantial *at því er* ‘insofar as’ is not immediately deducible from its component parts, but its sense is clear and unambiguous. Circumstantial or causal *par er*, on the other hand, can only be distinguished from the formally identical locational conjunction (see above) by the context. In, for example:

Tölöu þeir þat óráð at leggja til bardaga við Þorgeir, *þar er* hann hafði íð meira
‘Said they that bad-counsel to go to battle with Þorgeirr, there *comp* he had force bigger’
‘They said it was a bad idea to go to battle with Þorgeirr since he had the bigger force’

there can be no question of a locational interpretation since no locations are mentioned. On the other hand, in:

Muntu ok eigi vilja vita þat á þik, at þú liggir hér sem koðtr í hreysi, *þar er* ek berjumk til frelsis hvárumtveggjum

cited as 3.6.8, sentence 13, it can be hard to determine the precise meaning of *par er*. There is the implied contrast of *par* with *hér* ‘here’,
suggesting a locational interpretation, but the greater contrast seems to be circumstantial: hiding away as opposed to participating in desperate action. The translation offered in 3.6.8 is ‘while’; ‘given that’ ‘seeing that’ are possible renderings too.

Another very common use of er is to introduce relative (adjectival) sentences. This arises because Old Norse has no relative pronoun proper (though in Latinate style interrogative hvarr ‘who?’ is sometimes used as a relative in the same way as who(m), which, whose in English). Since er is semantically empty, it is usual for the antecedent noun phrase modified by the relative sentence to be accompanied by the appropriate form of the demonstrative sá or sjálfossi (3.2.2). E.g.:

Erlendr átti þá konu, er þóra hét
‘Erlendr had that woman COMP þóra was-called’
‘Erlendr was married to the woman who was called þóra’

where konu is the antecedent noun phrase, þá the accompanying demonstrative and er þóra hét the relative sentence. Note however that þá is in the same (independent) sentence as konu and agrees with it in case, gender and number (acc. f. sg.). It is thus of no help in indicating the function of whatever correlates with (i.e. refers to the same entity as) konu in the relative sentence. Whether we take this to be er or a relative pronoun that is absent but understood, it has subject function (‘the woman/she was called þóra’), and nominative would therefore be the appropriate case. This is not, however, shown, the only marker, er, being uninflected, and the student thus has to deduce the function of the correlate from the context.

Further examples will make the problem clearer, and indicate strategies for solving it. In:

Hann beiddisk þess þröðjungs, er átt hafði Einarr jarl
‘He demanded that third COMP owned had Einarr earl’

the antecedent and its accompanying pronoun are in the genitive (governed by beiddisk), but what of the correlate? The student may ponder two possibilities: ‘which had owned Earl Einarr’ (‘which’ = subject) or ‘which Earl Einarr had owned’ (‘which’ = object). The latter will be preferred as by far the more likely statement, and any residual doubt
can be resolved by the form *Einarr*. *Einarr* is nom. (acc. *Einar*). Since *eiga* ‘[to own]’ is construed with nom. subject and acc. direct object, the subject of the relative sentence must be *Einarr*, leaving the correlate of *fless friðjungs* as the object (accusative, though unmarked as such). The idiomatic translation is thus:

‘He demanded the third which Earl Einarr had owned’

In:

Váru þeir menn þá út dregnir, er grið váru gefin
‘Were those men then out dragged [from the burning building] COMP truces were given’

the antecedent and its accompanying pronoun are in the nominative (the subject of váru . . . dregnir). The main verb of the relative sentence is to be found in the pp. form *gefin*, from *gefa* ‘[to give]’. Verbs of giving are normally construed with nominative subject, accusative direct object and dative indirect object in Old Norse, but in passive constructions, which is what we have here, nominative subject (what was given) and dative indirect object (to whom it was given) normally suffice (see 3.6.8, sentence 24). The only noun phrase in the relative sentence is *grið*, and this will be found to be n. pl. The auxiliary verb-form *váru* is pl. and its subject could thus be either the correlate of *þeir menn* or *grið*; however, pp. *gefin* is either nom. f. sg. or nom./acc. n. pl. (3.3.9, paradigm 7) and cannot therefore agree with a m. pl. subject. The correlate must be indirect object (‘to whom truces were given’), and an idiomatic rendering would be:

‘The men who were given quarter were then pulled out’

Note finally that antecedent and relative sentence are discontinuous (i.e. *þá út dregnir* intervenes), a common enough phenomenon in Old Norse. In:

Rǫgnvaldr segir, at þann hlut Eyja, er þeir kalla til, hefði hann tekit í lén af Magnús konungi
‘Rǫgnvaldr says that that part of-Islands COMP they call to, had he taken in fief from Magnús king’
the antecedent and its accompanying pronoun are in the accusative (the object of hefði tekit). The verb phrase of the relative sentence consists of verb (kalla) + preposition (til). Since the verb is 3rd pl., its subject cannot be the correlate of pann hlut and must therefore be nom. pl. þeið. This means the correlate of pann hlut is governed by til. An idiomatic rendering is then:

‘Rǫgnvaldr says that he had taken in fief from King Magnús the part of the Orkneys to which they are laying claim’

(Observe that in Old Norse constructions of this type the preposition regularly comes at the end of the sentence; word-order equivalent to English to which, from whom, etc., is seldom found, and never where the particle er is used.)

This last example indicates that the correlate can have functions (in addition to reference to the antecedent) other than those of subject, direct and indirect object. The instrumental dative and the various relationships expressed by the genitive — to mention the most common — can also be ‘built in’ to the correlate. Consider the following two examples:

Sá þvengr. er muðrinn Loka var saman rifaðr, heitir Vartari
‘That thong COMP mouth-the of-Loki was together sewn is-called Vartari’
‘The thong with which Loki’s mouth was sewn up is called Vartari’

(er (or an understood correlate, cf. above) = instrumental dat. ‘with which’)

Sjá maðr. er vér segjum nú frá jartegnum, átti marga lærsveina
‘This man, COMP we say now from miracles, had many disciples’
‘This man, of whose miracles we are now telling, had many disciples’

(er (or understood correlate) = subjective gen. ‘whose’
Although pronoun + noun or noun + pronoun is the most common antecedent of a relative sentence, a noun or pronoun may also occur on its own. E.g.:

Øzurr átti son, er Leifr hét
‘Øzurr had a son who was called Leifr’

Svínbeygt hefi ek nú þann, er ríkastr er með Svíum
‘Made-root-like-a-pig have I now that-one [m.] comp most-powerful is among Swedes’
‘I have thoroughly humbled him who is most powerful among the Swedes’

Occasionally — mostly in early writings — a personal or demonstrative pronoun or possessive adjective may be included in the relative sentence to make the function of the correlate clearer. E.g.:

Ekkja heitir sú, er búandi hennar var sóttdauðr
‘Widow is-called that-one [f.] comp husband her was dead-from-illness’
‘She whose husband died from illness is called a widow’

Sometimes the particle er is replaced by sem. This is particularly common with relative, conditional-concessive (hvver er/sem ‘whoever’ etc.) or locational ‘-ever’ sentences (hvar er/sem ‘wherever’ etc.). E.g.:

Gengu út þeim, sem glöggssýnastir váru at sjá
‘Went out those comp most-clear-sighted were to look’
‘Those who were most clear-sighted went out to look’

Hann var kenndr at illu hvar sem hann fór
‘He was known for bad where comp he went’
‘He had a bad reputation wherever he went’

More problematically, er is interchangeable with at, another extremely common Old Norse particle which participates in a wide range of constructions (3.8.2.2).
Morphology and syntax

For example:

\[ \text{En þeir allir, at þau tíðindi heyrðu, lotuðu sannan guð} \]
\[ \text{‘But those all, COMP those tidings heard, praised true God’} \]
\[ \text{‘And all who heard that news praised the true God’} \]

English-speaking learners may be helped by the quirk that \textit{that} can introduce both \textit{that}-(noun) and relative (adjective) sentences (cf. 3.8), making ‘and all that heard that news . . . ’ a possible English rendering of the above. This superficial similarity will not help in all cases where \textit{at} is substituted for \textit{er}, however, nor where \textit{er} is used for expected \textit{at}, so it is important to understand the sentence structure. In, for example:

\[ \text{Þegar at haustaði, tóku at vaxa reimleikar} \]
\[ \text{‘At-once COMP became-autumn, began to grow hauntings’} \]
\[ \text{‘As soon as autumn arrived the hauntings began to increase’} \]

\textit{Þegar} combines with \textit{at} rather than \textit{er} to form a temporal subordinating conjunction. Here it is quite impossible to think of \textit{at} as the equivalent of English ‘that’. For the beginner the best advice is to try substituting \textit{er} for \textit{at} and vice versa when either is met in a context where it does not make obvious sense.

3.8.2.2 The particle \textit{at}

Used on its own, \textit{at} introduces noun sentences and adverbial sentences of purpose. The former are far commoner. Typical examples of \textit{at} noun sentences are provided by:

\[ \text{Þeir segja, at hann væri þar á höfðanum hjá þeim} \]
\[ \text{‘They say that he was there on the headland with them’} \]

\[ \text{En ek vil, Sveinn, at þú farir í Orkneyjar} \]
\[ \text{‘But I want, Sveinn, that you go to Orkneys’} \]
\[ \text{‘But I want you, Sveinn, to go to the Orkneys’} \]
Conjunctions

An adverbial sentence of purpose introduced by *at* is contained in:

\[
\text{Mun ek veita þér slikt lið, sem þú vill, at þetta fari fram}
\]
‘Will I give you such aid as you want that this goes forward’

\[\text{‘I will give you as much aid as you want so that this may be accomplished’}\]

Noun sentences are sometimes anticipated by a demonstrative pronoun standing in the associated independent sentence, e.g.:

\[
\text{Ræð ek þat, at vér vindim segl várt}
\]
‘Advise I that that we hoist sail our’

\[\text{‘I advise that we hoist our sail’}\]

\[
\text{Er sú bæn Kveldúlfs, at þú takir við Þórólfr}
\]
‘Is that [f.] request of-Kveldúlfr that you take with Þórólfr’

\[\text{‘It is Kveldúlfr’s request that you receive Þórólfr’}\]

where *at vér vindim segl várt*, the object of *ræð*, is represented by *þat* in the independent sentence, and *at þú takir við Þórólfr*, the subject of *er*, by *sú* (agreeing with *bæn*, f.).

*At* regularly combines with other words to form subordinating conjunctions; these introduce various kinds of adverbial sentence. More often than plain *at* the purpose conjunction is *til þess at* ‘in order that’ ‘so that’ (*til þess at* can alternatively, but less commonly, have the temporal sense ‘until’). Sentences of reason or cause may be introduced by *fvi at*, *af fvi at*, *fyrir fvi at*, *með fvi at* ‘because’ ‘since’; of concession by *þó at* or *þóði* (the latter a compound of the former) ‘although’ ‘even though’; of result by *svá at* ‘so that’ ‘with the result that’; and of comparison by *svá . . . at* ‘so . . . that’. Examples are:

\[
\text{Skulu [3.6.9.1 point (13)] vér frændr þínir veita þer styrk, til þess at þú komir aldriði síðan í slikt óngþveiti}
\]
‘Shall we kinsmen your give you support to that that you come never subsequently into such straits’

‘We your kinsmen will give you support so that you never again get into such straits’
Hrað hann skipin skjótt, því at þar var þóðamunr mikill
‘Cleared he ships-the quickly therefore that there was difference-in-height great’
‘He cleared the ships (of men) quickly because there was a great difference in height (between his ships and the others)’

Kallar hann þat meirr verit hafa fyrir því játtat, at þeir váru þá konnir í greipr Óláfi konungi
‘Calls he that more been have for that agreed that they were then come into clutches [belonging] to-Óláfr king’
‘He says it was agreed more readily because they had then fallen into the clutches of King Óláfr’

Þó at hann deyi í mörgum syndum, þá lifir hann í trú sinni
‘Though that he dies in many sins, then lives he in faith REFL. POSS.’
‘Even though he may die full of sin, he lives in his faith’

Lögðu þeir á flóttta, svá at fá ein skip váru eptir með jarls skipi
‘Set-off they to flight, so that few only ships were behind with earl’s ship’
‘They took to flight, so that only a few ships were left with the earl’s ship’

Ekki eru þeir enn svá nær oss, at eigi væri betr, at ek hefða sofí
‘Not are they yet so near us that not were better that I had slept’
‘They are not yet so near us that it would not have been better if I had slept’

Note that conjunctions that consist of more than one word can be discontinuous (fyrir því . . . at; comparative svá . . . at is always so).
Sometimes whole sentences may intervene between the different elements, e.g.:

\[\text{Af því eigum vér, góðir vinir, at leggja mikla rœkt á kirkjur várar, at vér søkjum þangat miskunn guðs}\]

‘From that ought we, good friends, to place great care on churches our that we seek thither grace of-God’

‘We ought, dear friends, to take great care of our churches because we seek there the grace of God’

This in no way exhausts the list of subordinating conjunctions incorporating \textit{at}, but students will find that once the basics are understood the sense of most can be deduced from the context. In addition to result and comparison, for example, \textit{svá at} can introduce sentences of purpose, e.g.:

\[\text{Af því er oss nauðsyn, góðir brœðr . . . at vér hreinsim brjóst-kirkjur várar, svá at ekki finni guð í mysteri sínu . . . þat er hann styggvisk við}\]

‘From that is to-us necessity, good brothers . . . that we cleanse breast-churches our, so that not finds God in temple REFL., POSS. . . . that COMP he offends-sk with’

‘Therefore it is necessary for us, dear brethren . . . to purify the churches of our hearts, so that God does not find in his temple . . . anything by which he is offended’

Note that \textit{af því} here is the adverbial ‘therefore’, and does not belong with the following \textit{at}, which introduces the noun sentence subject of \textit{er oss nauðsyn} (‘that we purify the churches of our hearts is to us a necessity’). Observe also a further example of a correlate in a relative sentence governed by a preposition: \textit{er hann styggvisk við} (3.8.2.1).

### 3.8.2.3 Interrogative pronouns and adverbs

Hvé, hversu, hvernig ‘how’, nær, hvenær ‘when’, hví ‘why’, introduce noun sentences. Typically such sentences occur after verbs of ‘asking’ or ‘knowing’, denoting the thing asked or known, but they may be found in many other contexts. Since these interrogatives are among the most common words in Old Norse and their meaning is usually clear, the dependent sentences they introduce are unlikely to cause the learner many difficulties. It is worth noting, however, that the pronouns always appear in a case, gender and number appropriate to their function in the dependent sentence. A selection of examples follows to illustrate the range of Old Norse ‘indirect questions’ — as dependent sentences introduced by interrogatives are often called.

Hann lét frétta eptir, hverr fyrir eldinum réði
‘He let ask after who of fire-the had-command’
‘He had people ask who was responsible for the fire’

Hverr is the subject of the verb réði and thus nominative (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1). The noun sentence hverr fyrir eldinum réði is governed by the preposition eptir (3.7.4) in the independent sentence: if hverr fyrir eldinum réði were reduced to a noun or pronoun, its case would be dative (e.g. hann lét frétta eptir hví ‘he had people ask about that’).

Ek vil vita, hverju þú vill þöltu mér þróður minn
‘I want know with-what you will compensate to-me brother my’
‘I want to know what compensation you will give me for my brother’s death’

Hverju is an instrumental dative denoting the means of compensation — with or by what someone or something is compensated (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 20). The noun sentence introduced by hverju is the object of the verb vita in the independent sentence: it describes what the speaker wants to know (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 5, 3.2.6, sentence 6).

Leitaði hann þá eptir, hvern styrk þeir vilja veita honum
‘Sought he then after what support they will give him’
‘He then enquired what support they are willing to give him’

Styrk, with which hvern agrees, is accusative — the object of veita (what ‘they’ (may) give). As in the first example, the noun sentence is governed by the preposition eptir.
Conjunctions

Pat vil ek vita, **hvat** þú vill veita oss
‘That want I know what you will give us’
‘I want to know what you are willing to give us’

**Hvat**, like **hvær styrk** in the preceding example, is the object of **veita**. Observe that the noun sentence is anticipated by (and reduced to) **pat** in the independent sentence: ‘I want to know that — namely, what you will give us’. Such anticipation by a demonstrative pronoun is not uncommon. **Pat** is acc., because it and the noun sentence it stands for are the object of **vita**.

Eigi þykkj mér skipta, í **hvárún** flokki ek em
‘Not seems to-me matter in which-of-the-two party I am’
‘It does not seem to me to matter in which of the two parties I am’

**Hvárún** agrees with **flokki**, which is dat., governed by the preposition **í** (3.7.4). The noun sentence introduced by **í hvárún flokki** is the subject of the independent sentence — in which of the two parties the speaker finds himself is what does not seem to him to matter.

Veit ek eigi, **hváðan** þjófsaugu eru komin í ættar várar
‘Know I not whence thief’s-eyes are come into families our’
‘I do not know from where thief’s eyes have come into our kin’

Engi veit, **nar** sú stund kómur
‘No one knows when that time will come’

Nú vil ek vita, **hvárt** þú vill þessu ferðafara með mér
‘Now want I know whether you will this journey go with me’
‘Now I want to know whether you will make this journey with me’

**Hváðan**, **nar** and **hvárt** are interrogative adverbs and thus not inflected. The noun sentences they introduce are the objects of **veit/vita** — what the speaker does not know, what no one knows, and what the speaker wants to know.

Engu skiptir mik, **hversu** þú hefir við aðra menn gort
‘By-nothing concerns me how you have to other men done’
‘It does not concern me at all how you have treated other men’
Hversu is an interrogative adverb. The noun sentence it introduces is the subject of skiptr — what does not concern the speaker.

Hann spur›i, hví at eigi skyldi drepa flugumenn
‘He asked why that not should kill assassins’
‘He asked why assassins should not be killed’

Hví is an interrogative adverb. The noun sentence it introduces is the object of spur›i — what is asked. Observe that not only hví but also the particle at is used to introduce the dependent sentence. Such ‘doubling’ is not uncommon and can also involve er, e.g.:

En nú haf þú njósn af, nær er þeir koma til bœjarins
‘But now have you watch of when COMP they come to town-the’
‘But now keep watch and see when they come to town’

The addition of at or er makes no difference to the meaning. It strengthens the impression of these particles as general complementisers, and suggests that interrogatives were sometimes felt to be unequal to the task of introducing dependent sentences on their own.

3.8.2.4 Other adverbial sentence introducers

We have already seen that the particles er and at can introduce adverbal sentences (3.8.2.1, 3.8.2.2). There are in addition several conjunctions with more specific meaning that perform this task. Commonest among these are the conditionals ef ‘if’, nema, útan ‘unless’, the temporals áðr ‘before’, unz ‘until’, the temporal and circumstantial síðan ‘since’ ‘seeing that’ (see 3.8.2.1), and the comparatives en ‘than’, sem ‘as’ ‘as though’. The following examples illustrate typical usage.

(a) En ef vart ver›r vi› vára fer›, flá látum vér enn hafit gæta vár
‘But if aware becomes of our movement, then let we again sea-the guard us’
‘But if people notice our movements then we will once again let the open sea hide us’

(a) provides a good illustration of the way in which dependent sentences are reducible to a single word. The adverb þá “then” ‘in that case’, which heads
the independent sentence, encapsulates and repeats the adverbial sense of the preceding conditional *en ef vart verðr víð vára ferð*. Observe further that the conditional sentence has no subject (cf. 3.9.3).

(b) *Nú þykkí mér Rǫgnvaldr eigi vel launa mér, ef ek skal nú eigi ná bróðurarfí mínunum, nema ek berjumk til*  
‘Now it seems to me Rǫgnvaldr is not repaying me well if I am not now to get my brother’s inheritance unless I fight for it’

(c) *Nú sé ek, at ek mun deyja, útan þú hjálpir mér*  
‘Now I see that I shall die unless you help me’

Conditional sentences introduced by *nema* or *útan* are most often dependent on a negative, as in (b).

(d) *Þeir kómu þar árdegis, áðr menn váru uppstaðnir*  
‘They came there early-of-day before men had got up’

(e) *Ferr hann í Geirþjófsfjörð ok er þar unz haustar*  
‘He goes to Geirþjófsfjörð and stays there until autumn arrives’

As in (a), the dependent sentence of (e) is subjectless.

(f) *Einarr hafði verit með Óláfr Svía konungi síðan Sveinn jarl andaðisk*  
‘Einarr had been with Óláfr of-Swedes king since Earl Sveinn died’

(g) *Villtu, at ek gæta vitans, síðan ek geri ekki annat?*  
‘Do you want me to look after the beacon seeing that I am not doing anything else?’
Observe that síðan may have circumstantial as well as temporal meaning, testifying to the close relationship between a temporal sequence and the closed condition or premise (síðan ek geri ekkir annat) that ties a circumstantial sentence to an independent fellow expressing the conclusion (villtu . . . ?). (In English since and as function as temporal, circumstantial and also as causal conjunctions.)

(h) Peir létu ok eigi fleiri menn sjá á skipinu en jarli høﬂdu fylgt
   ‘They let also not more men see on ship-the than earl had followed’
   ‘Nor did they let more men be seen on the ship than had accompanied the earl’

(i) Hann létti eigi fyrr en hann kom á fund Magnúss konungs
   ‘He stopped not earlier than he came to finding of-Magnús king’
   ‘He did not stop before he found King Magnús’

Just as English than, ON en requires a comparative adjective (here fleiri) or adverb (fyrr) in the independent sentence. It is possible to analyse fyrr en as a complex temporal conjunction (cf. the idiomatic English rendering ‘before’), although, like most other compound conjunctions in Old Norse, it may be discontinuous (i.e. the parts may be separated) as in: eigi varð fyrr varð við en þeir høﬂdu tekit allar dyr ã húsunum ‘not became earlier aware of than they had taken all doorways on buildings-the [i.e. people did not become aware of anything before they had seized all the exits from the buildings].’

(j) Konungr bað honum með sér at vera, svá lengi sem honum líkaði
   ‘King invited him with self to be as long as him pleased’
   ‘The king invited him to stay with him as long as he pleased’

(k) Muntu gørr sekr, slikir menn sem hér eigu eptirmæli
   ‘Will-you made outlawed, such men as here have prosecution’
   ‘You will be condemned to outlawry, seeing what kind of men have to follow up the case’

(l) Magnús konungr bað hann fara sem honum líkaði
   ‘Magnús king bade him go as him pleased’
   ‘King Magnús said he could go as he pleased’
Conjunctions

(m) Sveinn lét, sem hann heyði eigi
‘Sveinn acted as-though he heard not’
‘Sveinn pretended he did not hear’

Comparative *sem* is often dependent on a preceding *svá* (j) or *slíkr* (k) — with *slíkr* in the appropriate case, gender and number — though it may appear without either (l), and commonly does when the sense is ‘as though’ (m). The precise syntactic function of *svá* and *slíkr* — with or without accompanying adverb or noun phrase — can be difficult to analyse (true also of comparative *svá . . . at* constructions, 3.8.2.2). In (j) and (k) above *svá lengi* and *slíkr menn* stand outside the independent sentence but before the *sem* which introduces the dependent, comparative sentence. Since, however, similar constructions — equally difficult to analyse — are found in English, understanding is unlikely to prove a problem for the learner. (On the lack of an Old Norse equivalent of ‘be’ in (k)’s *munu gær sekr*, see 3.9.5.2.) Note that comparative *sem* is sometimes replaced by *ok*. This normally only occurs where the comparative is dependent on an antecedent meaning ‘same’ or ‘similar’. E.g.:

> Pat segja sumir menn, at hann yrði aldri sami maðr ok áðr
> ‘That say some men that he became never same man and before’
> ‘Some men say that he was never the same man as (he was) before’

3.8 Conjunctions — Exercise

1. What is the principal function of conjunctions? In what way do they differ from most other words?
2. What is implied by the term ‘coordinating conjunction’? What are the main coordinating conjunctions in Old Norse?
3. How can the meaning of *er* be deduced?
4. Outline the main sentence types introduced by *er*.
5. What types of sentence are introduced by *at* on its own?
6. With what words does *at* combine to form complex subordinating conjunctions? Give the Old Norse forms and their meaning(s).
7. List the interrogative pronouns that introduce dependent sentences in Old Norse and give their meaning(s).
8. Apart from *er* and *at*, which simplex (single-word) conjunctions introduce adverbial sentences in Old Norse? Give the words and their meaning(s).
9. Find three examples of discontinuous conjunctions (either from sentences in this section or elsewhere) and quote them.
10. Analyse the conjunctions (printed in bold) in the following sentences. State whether they are coordinating or subordinating and, if subordinating, the type of sentence they introduce (noun, adjectival, adverbial, conditional, temporal, causal, etc.).

(a) Þa spúrði hann, at Haraldr var farinn yfir til Kataness
   ‘Then he learnt that Haraldr had gone across to Caithness’
(b) Er þér eigi forvitni á, hversu mér líkar sagan?
   ‘Aren’t you curious to know how I like the story?’
(c) Fór þá Erleindr austr í Nóreg, en Anakol var eptir í Orkneyjum
   ‘Then Erleindr went east to Norway, but Anakol remained in the Orkneys’
(d) Íþrótt er flá, ef þú efnið
   ‘That is a feat if you can perform it’
(e) Hann var þá barn at aldri, er hann tók ríkit
   ‘He was only a child when he came to the throne’
(f) Þó at þú verðir reiður, þá mældu fát
   ‘Though you become angry, yet say little’
(g) Konungr kallaðisk þá vilja fá honum skip ok lið, svá sem hann þurfti
   ‘The king said he would give him ships and men then as (many as) he needed’
(h) Tóku þeir þá byrðinginn ok allt þat, er á var
   ‘They then seized the cargo-boat and everything that was on it’
(i) Þeir váru í Orkahaugi, meðan él dró á
   ‘They were in Orkahaugr, while a storm passed over’
(j) Gaf hann meir en fjördung biskupsdóms sínns, til þess at heldr
   væri tvær biskupsstólur á Íslandi en einn
   ‘He gave more than a quarter of his bishopric so that there should be two episcopal seats in Iceland rather than one’
(k) Sveinn skyldi fyrir sjá, hvert ræð er skyldi taka
   ‘Sveinn was to decide what plan should be adopted’
(l) Konungr varð svá reiður Agli, at hann vill eigi fara at finna hann
   ‘The king became so angry with Egill that he will not go to see him’
(m) Hann sendi þá orð þórum höfðingjum þeim, er honum var liðs
   at ván
   ‘He then sent word to the other leaders from whom he expected help’
(n) Við var hann kallaðr blöððox, at maðrinn var ofstopamáðr
   ‘He was called “bloodaxe” because he was an overbearing man’
3.9 Residual points of syntax

The aim of this section is to introduce the learner to various aspects of Old Norse syntax that may cause difficulty (some will have been briefly alluded to in earlier parts of this Grammar). Only the essentials are dealt with. For more thorough accounts, see Faarlund 2004, Haugen 2001, Heusler 1932, Iversen 1973, Nygaard 1905.

3.9.1 Sentence word-order

Word-order in Old Norse is freer than in modern English. That does not mean, however, that words may appear in any sequence. One clear rule is that the finite verb must be the first or second element in a sentence, in dependent sentences most often the second. Awareness of this pattern can help to determine whether a sentence is to be analysed as independent and beginning with an adverb or dependent and introduced by a conjunction. For example:

(a) Síðan gekk hann til messu

and:

(b) Síðan hann gekk til messu . . .

are to be interpreted differently. (a) is an independent sentence in which the adverb síðan ‘then’ occupies first position, the finite verb gekk ‘went’ second, and the subject hann ‘he’ third. (b) is a dependent sentence introduced by the subordinating conjunction síðan ‘since’, in which the subject hann occupies first position and the finite verb gekk second. The full meaning of (a) is thus ‘then he went to mass’ and of (b) ‘since he went to mass . . .’. Being dependent, (b) requires the addition of an independent sentence to complete the utterance (cf. 3.8).

In English a finite verb in first position normally signals either a question (can you come?) or a command (come here!). In Old Norse declarative sentences too may have verb-first order. Thus:

Hefir þú mikít lið
Morphology and syntax

may either be the question ‘have you a big force?’ or the declarative ‘you have a big force’. Normally the context will make clear how such a sentence is to be understood. Ambiguity can also be avoided by the use of the question introducer hvárt (in origin nom./acc. n. sg. of the interrogative pronoun hvárr ‘which of two’, cf. 3.2.5). Thus, while

Lifir hann enn
‘Lives he still’

may either be the question ‘is he still alive?’ or the statement ‘he is still alive’,

Hvárt lifir hann enn?
can only be the question.

As noted in 3.1.5 and elsewhere, the unmarked order of noun phrases in Old Norse (order not deliberately altered for emphasis) is subject — object. Often the subject will precede the finite verb giving subject — verb — object:

Þeir fundu konung
‘They met the king’

However, where some other word is in first position (a) or the verb is first (b), the order will be verb — subject — object (cf. above):

(a) Par fundu þeir konung
(b) Fundu þeir konung

The position of the direct and indirect object in relation to one another is not fixed, morphological case (mostly) indicating the function (see 3.1.5, sentences 5, 16–19). A tendency for the indirect to precede the direct object is however noticeable.

The subject complement (3.1.5, sentence 1) also follows the subject in unmarked word-order, and the object complement (3.3.6, sentence 7) the object, as in:
Points of syntax

Var hann inn mesti hofdingi
‘Was he the greatest ruler’
‘He was a very great ruler’

Þeir gerðu hann þegar líflátinn
‘They made him at-once life-lost’
‘They killed him at once’

Many sentences will of course contain more than subject, finite verb, object(s) and/or complement. However, the learner is unlikely to be much confused by the order in which such additional elements appear, even though this can vary considerably. Three features are worth noting.

First, non-finite verb-forms may follow as well as precede objects and complements. E.g.:

Hann hafði heit strengt
‘He had oath sworn’
‘He had sworn an oath’

Eigi var hann jafnaðarmaðr kallaðr
‘Not was he fair-man called’
‘He was not called a fair man’

Second, although a finite verb may immediately follow a subordinating conjunction, it is common to insert a sentence element between them. This element may be of almost any type. E.g. (with intervening pronoun vér, supine byggt and adverb þar in bold):

Af þeira ætt er sú kynslóð komin, er vér köllum Ása ættir, er
byggt hafa Ásgardr ok þau ríki, er þar liggja til
‘From their union is that family-line come COMP [3.8.2.1] we call of-Æsir kinsfolk, COMP inhabited have Ásgarðr and those realms COMP there lie to’
‘From them has come the family line we call the Æsir kinsfolk, who have inhabited Ásgarðr and the realms which belong to it’
Third, provided the subject is the only noun phrase in the sentence, it may be postponed to the end. E.g.:

Tók þá brátt at brenna berinn
‘Took then soon to burn farmhouse-the’
‘Then the farmhouse soon began to burn’

Not uncommonly, an object or complement is fronted (moved into first position), either because it is an established discourse topic or to give it emphasis. These are cases of marked word-order (see 3.1.5, sentence 1). A fronted object will usually be detectable from the fact that it has a case other than the nominative and one different from that of any other noun phrase in the sentence, but a complement will have the same case as one of the other noun phrases (cf. above and 3.1.5, sentence 1, 3.3.6, sentence 7), often the nominative. Thus, in:

Ásu dóttur sína gipti hann Guðröði konungi
‘Ása, daughter refl. poss., married he to-Guðröðr king’
He gave his daughter, Ása, in marriage to King Guðröðr

the accusative case of Ásu dóttur sína should warn the student against trying to interpret it as subject, notwithstanding it is the first noun phrase in the sentence. The student will either know, or can ascertain from a dictionary, that gipta is construed with a nominative subject, accusative direct object and dative indirect object. Since Guðröði konungi is clearly dat., and Ásu dóttur sína clearly acc., hann must be nom. (rather than acc., cf. 3.2.1) and is thus the only candidate for subject. On the other hand, in:

Vitr maðr ertu
‘Wise man are-you’
‘You are a wise man’

both vitr maðr and þá (ertu = ert þá, cf. 3.2.1) are nominative. There is nevertheless no doubt that þá is subject and vitr maðr subject complement. In sentences of the X is Y type X is the topic and Y the comment. Thus, you are a wise man is acceptable English since you can be interpreted as an established discourse topic about which something
is being said, whereas *a wise man is you is impossible because of the difficulty of interpreting a wise man as topic and you as something said about it. Not all examples are as clear-cut as this. Consider:

Dóttir Njarðar var Freyja
‘Daughter of-Njörðr was Freyja’
‘Freyja was Njörðr’s daughter’

Here we may legitimately wonder what is subject and what subject complement. The reason for identifying Freyja as subject is that dóttir Njarðar is more likely as a description of a named individual than a named individual is as a description of dóttir Njarðar (cf. English ?John’s daughter was Sally).

It is not only objects and complements that are fronted in Old Norse. Adverbials (cf. þar fundu þeir konung, eigi var hann jafnadarmaðr kallaðr above) and non-finite verbs (þakka viljum vér yðr ‘we want to thank you’) may also be topicalised or emphasised in this way.

Observe that in all these cases of fronting the finite verb remains the second sentence element (though not necessarily the second word). This is even the case where a dependent precedes an independent sentence — the former being reducible to a single element (cf. 3.8), e.g.:

Er jarl heyrði þetta, varð hann reiðr miðok
‘COMP earl heard this, became he angry much’
‘When the earl heard this, he became very angry’

Dependent er jarl heyrði þetta can be reduced to þá ‘then’, and where þá heads an independent sentence the finite verb, here varð, must be the next element.
3.9.1 Sentence word-order — Exercise

1. What sentence positions may the finite verb occupy in Old Norse? Give three examples.
2. In what order do the different noun phrases appear in an unmarked Old Norse sentence? Give three examples.
3. What is meant by fronting? Give three examples.
4. Analyse the word-order of the following sentences:
   (a) Fé þat all gaf hann liðsmonnum sínum
       ‘He gave all that wealth to his followers’
   (b) Fornjótr hefri konungr heitit
       ‘There was a king called Fornjótr’
   (c) Hugðu þeirr, er fyrir váru, at Rǫgnvaldr jarl myndi þar fara
       ‘Those who were present thought that Earl Rǫgnvaldr would be on the move there’

3.9.2 Word-order in noun phrases

Noun phrase word-order, like word-order in general, is freer in Old Norse than English. Words modifying a noun may, with certain restrictions, appear either before or after it. Thus we find both gamall maðr (adj. + noun) and maðr gamall (noun + adj.) ‘old man’, þann guð (pron. + noun) and guð þann (noun + pronoun) ‘that god’. Phrases containing a pronoun, definite article and adjective may have three different orders (cf. 3.3.5): sá (h)inn blindi maðr (pron. + def. art. + adj. + noun), maðr sá (h)inn blindi (noun + pron. + def. art. + adj.), and sá maðr (h)inn blindi (pron. + noun + def. art. + adj.) ‘the blind man’.

Possessive adjectives tend to come after the noun they modify unless they are stressed: lið várt ‘our army’, móðir mín ‘my mother’, tungs hennar ‘her language’, but þat er ekkvi mít skap ‘that is not my inclination’ — with stress on ‘my’. This applies also to genitive modifiers: þrátt konungs ‘the king’s slave’, haugr Hálfdanar ‘Hálfdan’s mound’, but marga manna vitord ‘many men’s knowledge [i.e. known to many men]’ with stress on ‘many’. Regularly placed after the noun are epithets and appositional modifiers: Eiríkr rauði ‘Eiríkr the red’, Porfinnr jarl ‘Earl Porfinnr’.
Comparative and superlative adjectives normally precede the nouns they modify: (*h*í*nr* stærri skipin ‘the larger ships’, (*h*í*nr* spókstu menn ‘the wisest men’. This is also true of adverbs modifying adjectives, though a few, such as the common mjók, vel, betr, bæzt, tend to follow their head word: ákafliga reiðr ‘furiously angry’, but gott mjók ‘very good’, hærðr vel ‘well haired [i.e. with fine hair]’.

A further feature of noun phrases in Old Norse of which students should be aware is their proneness to discontinuity. Elements which belong together may be found at some distance from each other, separated by other elements. Consider the following examples (with the separated elements in bold):

- **Er menn váru út dregnir flestir**, gekk maðr út í dyrnar
  ‘COMP men were out dragged most, went man out into doorway’
  ‘When most men had been dragged out, a man went out into the doorway’

- **Maðr gekk í lyptingina í rauðum kyrli miðiok vaskligr**
  ‘Man went onto poop-deck-the in red tunic large and manly’
  ‘A large and valiant-looking man in a red tunic came up onto the poop-deck’

- **Þófinnr háði miði skip ok vél búit**
  ‘Þófinnr had a large and well-equipped ship’

- **Þórr fór fram á leið ok þeir félagar**
  ‘Þórr went forward on way and those companions’
  ‘Þórr and his companions went on their way’

Such discontinuity should not on the whole cause students too much difficulty provided they pay proper attention to case, gender and number. The inflexions of nouns, pronouns and adjectives will normally suffice to make clear what belongs with what.
3.9.2 Word-order in noun phrases — Exercise

1. Where is the place of the adjective (including the possessive) in relation to the noun in Old Norse noun phrases? Give four examples, two indefinite, two definite, of Old Norse noun phrases containing adjectives.

2. Where is the place of genitive modifiers in relation to the noun in Old Norse?

3. Where is the place of adverbs in Old Norse in relation to the adjectives they modify?

4. What is meant by discontinuity? Give two examples of its occurrence in Old Norse noun phrases.

3.9.3 Impersonal constructions

Certain verbs in Old Norse are construed without a subject. Many of these have to do with the weather, with the coming of the seasons or of parts of the day or night. Common to all of them is that they denote an event which has no obvious instigator; it is the event itself that the sentence ‘is about’ (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1). Examples are (with the subjectless verb in bold):

Frost var veðrs, en áðr hafði snjófat nökku
‘Frost was of-weather, but earlier had snowed somewhat’

Þegar at haustatri, tóku at vaxa reimleikar
‘As soon as autumn arrived the hauntings began to increase’

En at morni þegar dagúi, stendr ðórr upp ok þeir félagar
‘But in morning as-soon-as dawned gets ðórr up and those companions’

‘But in the morning as soon as dawn broke ðórr and his companions get up’
Because of their lack of a subject, constructions such as these are often known as ‘impersonal’ — a reference to the absence both of an instigator and of person agreement in the verb (cf 3.3.1, 3.6.1), 3rd person sg. being used as the default form. ‘Impersonal’ is not only applied to cases where the verb cannot have a subject, however, but also to those where a potential subject is left unexpressed. This often happens in Old Norse when the focus is on the object and the subject is of no interest in the context, e.g. (once again with the relevant verb(s) in bold):

(a) **Hér hefr kristni sögu**
   ‘Here begins of-Christianity saga’
   ‘Here begins the history of the Church (in Iceland)’

(b) **Standi menn upp ok taki hann, ok skal hann drepa**
   ‘Stand men up and seize him, and shall him kill’
   ‘Let men stand up and seize him; he is to be killed’

(c) **Sjá má nú, at ekki nýtir pu hérf af**
   ‘See can now that nothing benefit you here from’
   ‘One can see now that you get no benefit at all from this’

It is not uncommon for learners to take *sögu* in (a) or the second *hann* in (b) as the subject. However, the form *sögu*, which differs from nom. *saga*, and the meaning of *hann*, which can hardly be agent, warn against such hasty conclusions. *Sögu* is acc., the object of *hefr*, and the sense is something like ‘here one begins the history of the Church’. The Old Norse sentence has no word corresponding to ‘one’, however, and given that the subject and agent — the person or thing beginning the history — is unspecified, there are several ways of rendering the sense into English, e.g. ‘here we begin . . . ’, rather than ‘here one begins’ or the passive ‘here is begun’ (cf. 3.6.4 and further below). Similarly in (b) both occurrences of *hann* are acc., the objects of *taki* and *drepa*, but whereas *taki* (3rd pl. pres. subj.) has *menn* as its subject (understood because coreferential with the expressed subject of *standi*), *drepa* is subjectless; *menn* cannot be subject here since the finite verb, the auxiliary *skal*, is sg. In English we must once again introduce an unspecified ‘one’, ‘we’, ‘you’, etc. as subject and agent — the person
or persons who are to do the killing — or we can make the rendering passive, whereby the Old Norse object hann will correspond to the English subject and the agent can be omitted: ‘he shall be killed’, ‘he is to be killed’ — by whom in particular is neither here nor there in the context. In (c) the impersonal construction is slightly easier to spot because there is no noun phrase at all in the independent sentence sjá má nú, the object of sjá being the dependent at ekki nýtur þá hér af. Otherwise (c) is not different in type from (a) or (b): the focus is on the object of sjá — the thing seen — not the subject — the person or persons who see. The seer or seers are unspecified and can thus be rendered ‘one’, ‘people’, etc. in English, or omitted altogether by substituting a passive for the Old Norse active phrase: ‘that you get no benefit at all from this can now be seen’.

Insofar as the direct object in active verb phrases becomes the subject when the verb is made passive, active phrases lacking a direct object will, if turned directly into passives (i.e. without further change), tend to be without a subject. In English such passivisation does not occur: we may say the bed was slept in, but not *was slept in the bed. In Old Norse, on the other hand, subjectless passives are a regular feature. Thus, active:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Pá logðu þeir at jarlskipinu} \\
&\text{‘Then laid they at earl’s-ship-the’} \\
&\text{‘Then they attacked the earl’s ship’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Gekk hann inn nökkut fyrir lýsing} \\
&\text{‘Went he in somewhat before dawn’} \\
&\text{‘He went in shortly before dawn’}
\end{align*}
\]

correspond to passive:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Pá var lagt at jarlskipinu} \\
&\text{‘Then was laid at earl’s-ship-the’} \\
&\text{‘Then the earl’s ship was attacked’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Var gengit inn nökkut fyrir lýsing} \\
&\text{‘Was gone in somewhat before dawn’} \\
&\text{‘Someone went in shortly before dawn’}
\end{align*}
\]
Students should take careful note of these and the other types of ‘impersonal’ construction mentioned above. By one means or another they will have to supply a subject when translating them into English.

The designation ‘impersonal’ has further been applied to Old Norse verbs construed without a nominative, or where the nominative noun phrase is not the first in unmarked word-order (see 3.9.1, 3.1.5, sentence 1). This is a moot point. Where there is no nominative, there is no person agreement in the verb — the default 3rd sg. being used (see above); to that extent ‘impersonal’ might be deemed an appropriate term. On the other hand, it has been shown that oblique (non-nominative) noun phrases that appear first in unmarked word-order behave like subjects in virtually every respect except the triggering of person agreement. And such phrases may certainly denote ‘persons’. While the question how constructions of this type are best described is not of primary concern to the learner, it is important for him/her to realise that where a noun phrase in a case other than the nominative is the first in a sentence, it is not automatically to be taken as a fronted object (see 3.9.1). Thus, in:

Pá skal hana engan hlut skorta
‘Then shall her no thing lack’
‘Then she shall lack nothing’

Ávalt er ek sé fagrar konur, þá minnir mik þessarrar konu
‘Always COMP I see beautiful women, then reminds me of this woman’
‘Whenever I see beautiful women, then I remember this woman’

Tók konungi at orna undir feldinum
‘Began to-king to warm undir cloak-the’
‘The king began to get warm under the cloak’

Líkaði yðr vel Finnskattrinn, er Þórólf fr sendi yðr?
‘Liked to-you well Lapp-tribute-the COMP Þórólf fr sent to-you?’
‘Were you pleased with the Lapp-tribute that Þórólf fr sent you?’
the accusatives hana and mik and the datives konungi and yôr are the first noun phrases in sentences whose word-order is not obviously marked. Even in líkaði yôr vel Finnskattrinn, where the second noun phrase is nominative, the difficulty of showing that dat. yôr has been fronted makes it hard to cast it in the role of object, and that in turn raises doubts about whether Finnskattrinn can be subject. In semantic terms, hana, mik, konungi and yôr represent ‘experiencers’ (the people experiencing the events denoted by the verbs), a sense regularly conveyed by the nominative in modern English and certain other European languages (cf. I lack, I remember, I get warm, I am pleased) — seemingly reflecting a common tendency to make the experiencer subject rather than the thing experienced. Certainly, natural English translations of Old Norse sentences like the above will tend to bring out the subjecthood of the first noun phrase.

Also regularly construed without nominatives are the passives of verbs whose direct object is in the genitive or dative, e.g.:

Pess var leitat við jarl
‘Of that was sought of earl’
‘That was asked of the earl’

Mönnum var borgit flestum
‘To-men was saved most’
‘Most people were saved’

In the active, leita ‘seek’ ‘ask’ has a nominative subject and genitive object, bjarga ‘save’ a nominative subject and dative object. When passivised such verbs lose their nominative subject in the normal way (3.6.4), but the object does not become the new nominative subject. It remains in its original case. However, since in unmarked word-order (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1) it precedes the verb phrase in the passive sentence, there is some justification for treating it as subject. It certainly becomes the theme of the sentence — ‘what it is about’ (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 1).

Only partially analogous are passives of verbs construed in the active with a nominative subject, a dative indirect object and a further argument in the genitive or dative. To active:
Points of syntax

Peir ljá jarli lífs
‘They grant [to-]earl [of-]life’
‘They spare the earl’s life’

Peir hétu honum bana
‘They promised [to-]him [with-]death’
‘They threatened him with death’

correspond passive:

Engum er alls lét
‘To-none is [of-]all granted’
‘No one is granted everything’

Honum var heitit bana
‘To-him was promised [with-]death’
‘He was threatened with death’

In the passive versions the nominative subject is lost as before, but it is the indirect object (engum, honum) which moves into subject position rather than gen. alls or dat. bana. Although genitive and dative arguments of this type have been termed ‘direct objects’ (e.g. 3.1.5, sentences 11, 12, 16, 18, 19 and above in this section), their failure here to move into subject position suggests they retain something of the original syntactic and semantic role that caused them to be expressed by the genitive or dative in the first place. Just as, for example, the dative with which kasta is construed can be viewed either as direct object or instrumental phrase — ‘[to] throw something’ or ‘[to] throw with something’ (cf. 3.1.5, sentence 20) — so ljá + dat. + gen. may be taken as ‘[to] grant someone something’ or ‘[to] give to someone possession of something’, and heita + dat. + dat. as ‘[to] promise someone something’ or ‘[to] threaten someone with something’.

Nominativeless passive constructions are relatively easy to spot, and — where relevant — the student will normally be able to render the, or the first, genitive or dative noun phrase as the subject when translating, as above. More difficult is to recognise the accusative, genitive or dative that precedes other noun phrases in an active sentence not because it is fronted, but because the verb is thus construed. The student
should try to be alert to verbs that do not have a nominative subject (relatively few) and make an effort to learn them as a special category. It is important this be done. Subject and object can otherwise easily be confused. (See further the ‘postscript’ pp. 262–3.)

3.9.3 Impersonal constructions — Exercise

1. What do you understand by the term ‘impersonal’?
2. Give Old Norse examples (a) of a verb always construed without a subject, and (b) of a construction in which a potential subject is left unexpressed.
3. How would you translate examples (a) and (b) in your answers to the previous question into English?
4. In what circumstances do Old Norse passive constructions lack a subject?
5. The first noun phrase in an Old Norse sentence is often in the accusative, genitive or dative case. What are the different possibilities of interpretation in such examples?
6. How are the main verbs in the following sentences construed?

(a) Liðr fram haustinu ok tekr at vetra
   ‘The autumn passes and winter comes on’
(b) Þess er enn ekki hefnt
   ‘That is not yet avenged’
(c) Ekki sá skipit fyrir laufinu
   ‘The ship could not be seen for the foliage’
(d) Draum dreymði mik í fyrri nátt
   ‘I dreamt a dream the night before last’
(e) Engum mun bóta synjat
   ‘No one will be refused compensation’

3.9.4 Accusative and infinitive

In English we may say: I saw her open it, he asked the boys to sing. What follows saw and asked is sometimes described as a non-finite clause object: we have a clause or sentence which is the equivalent of an object (cf. I saw the letter, he asked a favour), and it contains an
infinitive (open, sing) but no finite verb. This analysis, however, leaves out of account the fact that in a sense her is both the object of saw and the subject of open, and the boys both the object of asked and subject of sing (cf. (I saw that) she opened it, (he asked the boys that) they should sing). The term mostly used to describe the Old Norse counterparts of such English constructions is ‘accusative and infinitive’. While hardly achieving descriptive adequacy, this designation has the merit of emphasising accusative case, which marks direct object status, and suggesting a connection between the accusative and the following infinitive. Above all, it is a more precise term than non-finite clause object, which can cover a variety of constructions.

Old Norse accusatives and infinitives occur regularly after verbs of saying, thinking, and experiencing. E.g.:

Magnús bað hann fara sem honum líkaði
‘Magnus bade him go as to-him pleased’
‘Magnús said he could go as he pleased’

Vérr ætla hana litla hríð svá hafa verit kallaða
‘We think her little while thus have been called’
‘We think she has been called that only a short while’

Opt hefi ek heyt yr þat meðla
‘Often have I heard you that say’
‘I have often heard you say that’

In cases where the accusative object/subject of the infinitive is identical with the subject of the finite verb, the former is not expressed as a separate word; instead it is denoted by the -sk suffix (3.6.5.3), which can be considered to have reflexive function. Thus in:

Hon sagðisk vera döttir Pórkells
‘She said-sk be daughter of-Pórkell’
‘She said she was Pórkell’s daughter’

the -sk can be interpreted literally as ‘herself’. Observe that the subject complement döttir is nominative. This is the rule where the accusative of an acc. + inf. construction is to be found in the -sk suffix.
Where the accusative appears as a separate word denoting an entity different from the subject of the finite verb, a subject complement will agree with it by also appearing in the accusative — cf. acc. f. sg. *kallaða* in the second example above agreeing with *hana*, and:

> Hann sagði Sigmund vera óbættan
> ‘He said Sigmundr be unatoned’
> ‘He said Sigmundr was unatoned [i.e. his death was uncompensated]’

where acc. m. sg. *óbættan* agrees with *Sigmund*.

In the case of the verb *fyk(k)ja* ‘seem’ ‘think’ we normally find a ‘nominative and infinitive’ construction. There are two variants of this. Occasionally the subject of the infinitive is ‘raised’ (i.e. moved into the higher sentence) and becomes the subject of *fyk(k)ja* (a), but more commonly *fyk(k)ja* appears in the default 3rd sg. form, with dative experiencer — denoting the person to whom the matter of the infinitive sentence ‘seems’ — as its most likely subject (see 3.9.3) and a nominative as the subject of the infinitive (b).

(a)  Eiríki konungi . . . þóttu þeir mjök hafa spottat sik
    ‘To-Eiríkr king seemed they much have mocked self’
    ‘King Eiríkr thought they had mocked him greatly’

(b)  Pá þótti mér þeir sækja at ǫllum megin
    ‘Then seemed to-me they come against on-all sides’
    ‘Then it seemed to me they attacked on all sides’

In (a) nom. *þeir* is the subject of *þóttu* as can be seen from the 3rd pl. verb-form. In (b), on the other hand, where *þóttu* is 3rd sg., *þeir* can only be the subject of inf. *sækja*. When the subject of the infinitive is 3rd sg., as it often is, the two constructions are difficult to distinguish. In:

> Þótti honum hon vel hafa gert
> ‘Seemed to-him she well have done’
> ‘He thought she had acted well’

*hon* can according to traditional analysis be the overt subject either
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of flótti or of gert. In some modern approaches dat. honum, the first noun phrase, would be deemed the subject of flótti, as also mér in (b) above.

Subject raising is the norm with fyk(k)ja where the subject of the following infinitive denotes the same person as the experiencer (the person to whom the matter of the infinitive sentence ‘seems’). In, for example:

Þú fykkisk of fá drepit hafa mína hírmenn óhætta
‘You seem-sk too few killed have my retainers unatoned’
‘You think you have killed too few of my retainers without paying compensation’

a putative *fykkr þér þú of fá drepit hafa . . . is restructured in such a way that þú, the subject of drepit, becomes the subject of the finite sentence and the dative experiencer is converted into an -sk suffix. This is not unlike what happens with the hon sagðisk vera . . . type of construction above, though there there is no subject raising and the -sk suffix takes the place of an accusative rather than a dative. If we render -sk in the above example as ‘to yourself’, and translate fairly literally ‘you seem to yourself to have killed too few . . .’ we get something of the flavour of the original.

Concerning fyk(k)ja, it should finally be noted that the 3rd singular present indicative is often fyk(k)i rather than fyk(k)ir (see 3.6.9.1 point (15)).

Sometimes in accusative and infinitive constructions a past infinitive is encountered (see 3.6.6). In prose this is only likely to involve the forms mundu, skyldu, vildu, and occurs chiefly when the finite verb is past tense. E.g.:

Hann lézk heldr mundu at sinni gefa upp ríkit
‘He said-sk rather would for time give up earldom-the’
‘He said he would rather give up the earldom for the time being’

Þórðr kvað beggja þeira ráð þetta vera skyldu
‘Þórðr said of-both their decision this be should’
‘Þórðr said this should be their joint decision’
It is difficult to get the literal sense of *mundu* and *skyldu* across since English ‘would’ and ‘should’ are finite forms. Semi-literal renderings may be helpful here, using the infinitive marker *to* to direct attention to the past infinitive.

‘He said himself rather to would give up the earldom...’

‘Dórór said this their joint decision to should be’

### 3.9.4 Accusative and infinitive — Exercise

1. Why are Old Norse accusative and infinitive constructions so called?
2. What happens to the accusative in an accusative and infinitive construction when it denotes the same entity as the subject of the finite verb?
3. Describe the different kinds of nominative and infinitive construction in which the verb *flyk*(*k*)ja is found.
4. In what type of construction do past infinitives occur in Old Norse?

### 3.9.5 Omissions

Certain elements are regularly omitted from Old Norse sentences. Some can be readily understood from the context and will cause the learner no difficulty. A subject that is already established, for example, is usually omitted in Old Norse just as in English. Thus, in:

Karl hljóp á annat skip ok bað þá taka til ára
‘Karl jumped onto another ship and bade them take to oars’

the subject of *bað* is not expressed — any more than in the English renderings — because it refers to the same person as the subject of the previous sentence, *Karl*. 
3.9.5.1 Objects

Slightly more problematic for the learner, because characteristic of Old Norse but not of English, is the omission of the object where already established. E.g.:

(a) Njáll tók fészóðinn ok seldi Gunnari
    ‘Njáll took money-bag-the and gave to-Gunnarr’
    ‘Njáll took the bag of money and gave it to Gunnarr’

(b) Konungr greip til sverðs ok brá
    ‘King grasped at sword and drew’
    ‘The king grabbed hold of the sword and drew it’

Here ‘it’, referring in (a) to the bag of money, in (b) to the sword, is lacking in Old Norse. This is because there is identity of reference with a preceding noun, fészóðinn in (a), sverðs in (b). Observe that object omission is not dependent on case equivalence. In (a) the missing noun phrase would have had accusative case, just as fészóðinn, but in (b) it would have been dative, while sverðs, the noun establishing the reference in (b), is genitive, governed by the preposition til (3.7.2). Indirect objects, too, may be omitted, as in:

Konungr lét skíra Hákon ok kenna réttu trú
    ‘King let baptise Hákon and teach true faith’
    ‘The king had Hákon baptised and taught the true faith’

Note that the idiomatic English rendering obscures the omission; insertion of ‘him’ between ‘taught’ and ‘the’ would give a different sense — that it was the king himself who taught Hákon the true faith.

3.9.5.2 vera

The verb vera is often omitted, especially the infinitive (a) in connection with auxiliary verbs and (b) in accusative and infinitive constructions. The student should pay particular attention to this phenomenon since it can often cause misunderstanding.
Consider the following examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fiú munt þá ekki hér vel kominn} & \quad \text{\textquote{You will then not here well come}} \\
& \quad \text{\textquote{You will not then be welcome here}} \\
\text{Þat mæltu sumir, at leitat skyldi um sættir} & \quad \text{\textquote{Some said that an attempt should be made to reach a settlement}} \\
\text{fiorfinnr kva› flat ósannligt, at . . .} & \quad \text{\textquote{fiorfinnr said it was unjust that . . .}} \\
\text{Tölðu sumir várkunn, at hann vildi eigi miðla ríkit} & \quad \text{\textquote{Some said there was understandable cause for his unwillingness to divide the earldom}}
\end{align*}
\]

In the first example the copula (\textit{vera}, the verb \textquote{be}) is the missing link needed to connect subject \textit{þá} and the subject complement \textit{vel kominn} (cf. \textit{þá ert vel kominn} \textquote{you are welcome}). In the second \textit{vera} is required to complete the passive construction \textit{leitat skyldi vera} \textquote{should be sought}. The third and fourth examples illustrate accusative and infinitive constructions from which the infinitive is omitted. In the third the copula is what is wanted to connect \textit{þá} and its complement \textit{ósanligt} (cf. \textit{þá er ósannligt} — subject + copula + subject complement), so the construction is to be understood as \textit{Þorfinnr kvað þat ósanligt vera}, \textit{at . . .} The fourth example too requires \textit{vera} to be understood since \textit{várkunn} can only be the object of \textit{tölðu} in an accusative and infinitive construction (i.e. \textit{tölðu sumir várkunn vera at . . .} is perfectly acceptable, but \textit{*tölðu sumir várkunn} without the ellipsis of \textit{vera} is not).

Because all four contexts so clearly demand \textit{vera}, it is readily understood or supplied by the reader familiar with Old Norse. The beginner will have to proceed more slowly and analytically: faced by a sentence that seems to lack an infinitive, and in doubt about the meaning, s/he should always try supplying \textit{vera}. In most cases this will provide the solution.
Finite forms of *vera* are also sometimes omitted. As with the above, the prerequisite seems to be that the verb should be recoverable from the context. Consider:

Fimm menn hǫfðu bana af lĩði Helga, en sárir allir aðrir
‘Five men had death from force of Helgi, but wounded all others’
‘Five of Helgi’s men were killed, and all the others were wounded’

The finite verb of the first sentence is *hǫfðu*, but that will not fit the context of the second. What we have in *sárir allir aðrir* is a fronted subject complement (*sárir*) followed by the subject (*allir aðrir*), and the copula is needed to connect them. The second sentence is thus to be understood: *en sárir váru allir aðrir*.

### 3.9.5.3 Verbs of motion

The infinitives of verbs of motion are often omitted when modified by an adverb or preposition phrase indicating destination. E.g.:

Sámr sagðisk vilja heim aprtr
‘Sámr said-sk want home again’
‘Sámr said he wanted to go back home’

Ætlaði hann yfir á Nes
‘Intended he over to Nes’
‘He intended to go across to Caithness’

Because of the clear directional sense indicated by adverb or preposition phrase, such constructions are unlikely to cause the learner great problems.

### 3.9.5 Omissions — Exercise

1. In what circumstances may the object be omitted in Old Norse? Give examples.
2. In what kinds of construction is *vera* commonly omitted? Give examples.
3. What is understood in the sentence: *nú býsk hann út til Ílands* ‘now he gets ready to go to Iceland’?
3.9.6 Points of nominal syntax

Important aspects of nominal syntax not dealt with elsewhere are (1) certain idiomatic uses of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives; (2) what are often loosely termed ‘the genitive and dative of respect’.

3.9.6.1 Idiomatic uses of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives

Sometimes in Old Norse personal names are accompanied appositionally by a 3rd person pronoun of the same gender and number. Instead of ‘far sitr Selsbani’ ‘there sits Selsbani’, we find ‘far sitr hann Selsbani’ ‘there sits he [i.e. that fellow] Selsbani’, instead of ‘hann var fa›ir Eiríks hins sigrsela ok Óláfs’ ‘he was the father of Eiríkr the victorious and Óláfr’, ‘hann var fa›ir þeira Eiríks hins sigrsela ok Óláfs’ ‘he was the father of-them [i.e. of the pair] Eiríkr the victorious and Óláfr’.

More commonly a 3rd plural or 1st or 2nd dual or plural pronoun is found together with a single name. E.g.:

Báru þeir Rǫgnvaldr eld at bœnum
‘Carried they Rǫgnvaldr fire to house-the’
‘Rǫgnvaldr and the others set fire to the house’

Vit Arnvi›r munum fara
‘We-two Arnvi›r will go’
‘Arnvi›r and I will go’

Here, as will be seen from the idiomatic translations, the pronouns are only partly in apposition to the personal names since they also contain a reference to one or more other people known from the context. The dual pronouns denote one additional person, the 1st and 2nd plural more than one. Thus ‘vér Arnviðr would mean ‘Arnviðr and we (others)’; ‘þit Arnviðr’ ‘Arnviðr and you [sg.]’, ‘þér Arnviðr’ ‘Arnviðr and you (others)’. Since there is no dual 3rd person pronoun, ‘þeir Rǫgnvaldr’ can mean ‘Rǫgnvaldr and he’ as well as ‘Rǫgnvaldr and the others’, depending on the context. Where men and women or a man and a woman are involved, the 3rd person neuter plural is used (cf. 3.2.1):

Þau dróttning tala jafnan
‘They queen talk constantly’
‘The queen and he talk constantly’
From the context of this particular example we know that only the queen and a single male are involved; in another context *þau dróttning* could mean ‘the queen and the others (including at least one male)’.

This usage is not confined to personal pronouns, but can also be found with possessive adjectives. E.g.:

Hverja ætlan hefir þú á um deilu ykkra Óláfs digra?
‘What view have you on about quarrel your-two Óláfr’s stout?’

‘What is your view of Óláfr the stout’s and your quarrel?’

Here the dual 2nd person possessive *ykkra* carries the same ‘inclusive’ sense as the personal pronouns in the previous examples. There is however a significant syntactic difference between *ykkra Óláfs digra* and, say, *vit Arnviðr*. The pronoun *vit* stands in the same case as *Arnviðr* (nom.), whereas *ykkra* takes its case (and gender and number) from *deilu* (acc. f. sg.) while *Óláfs digra* is in the genitive. The difference is occasioned by the fact that *vit* and *Arnviðr* form a joint subject, a pairing of two noun phrases, whereas *ykkra* and *Óláfs*, though both modify *deilu*, represent different word classes: adjective and noun. The possessive signals its modifier role by case, gender and number agreement, but the noun cannot — instead it goes into the genitive (the ‘possessive’ case, see 3.1.5, sentence 13). The close relationship between possessive adjectives and genitives is shown by the 3rd person pronouns (non-reflexive), whose genitive forms, *hans, hennar, þess, fleira*, double up as possessives (3.3.8.5 point (6)).

It should be observed that the juxtaposition of possessive adjectives and genitive noun phrases is also common in more unambiguous cases of apposition. E.g.:

Er þat vili várr búandanna
‘Is that will our of-farmers-the’

‘That is the will of us farmers’

Two further points of nominal syntax involving possessives and pronouns require discussion.

In partitive constructions (3.2.6, sentence 20, 3.4.2, sentence 9) where a pronoun is the head word denoting the part, and the modifier denoting the whole would be expected to be a personal pronoun, the latter is usually replaced by the corresponding possessive adjective, which agrees in case, gender and number with the head word. E.g.:
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Skal hverr yðvarr fara í friði fyrir mér
‘Shall each your go in peace before me’
‘Each of you shall go in peace as far as I am concerned’

Pá skal sá okkarr kjósa bœn af þørum, er sannara hefir
‘Then shall that-one our-two choose favour of other COMP
truer has’
‘Then the one of us (two) who is right shall choose a favour
of the other’

Instead of nom. m. sg. hverr ‘each’ + gen. yðvar ‘of you’ and nom. m. sg. sá ‘that one’ + gen. okkar ‘of us two’, we find nom. m. sg. hverr yðvarr ‘each your’ and nom. m. sg. sá okkarr ‘that one our-two’.

Students should take careful note of this construction since experience has shown it can cause much confusion.

Contemptuous reference is a further case in which a possessive adjective is used where on the basis of English one might expect a personal pronoun. This can occur in both direct and indirect speech. Thus we find not only fóli þinn ‘fool your [i.e. you fool!]’, but also:

Hann bað þegja bikkjuna hans
‘He bade be-silent bitch-the his’
‘He told the dog to shut up’

where ‘the dog’ is used insultingly of a man.

3.9.6.2 The genitive and dative of respect

The genitive and dative can be used in Old Norse to specify the applicability of the verb phrase. The basic sense of such constructions is ‘with respect to’ ‘in respect of’ ‘as regards’, but idiomatic English will usually require a different translation. E.g. (with the genitive or dative phrases in bold):

Þegi þú þeira orða
‘Be-silent you of-those words’
‘Keep quiet with those words’
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Vesall ertu þinnar skjaldborgar
‘Wretched are-you of-your shield-fortification’
‘You and your wretched wall of shields!’

Er Haraldr konungr varð þessa tíðinda víss, þá dró hann her saman
‘When Haraldr king became of-these tidings aware, then drew he army together’
‘When King Haraldr got news of these events, he gathered together an army’

Öll váru bœrn Svíakonungs vel viti borin
‘All were children of-Swedes-king well with-wit endowed’
‘All the children of the Swedish king were endowed with a good understanding’

Varð þeim mart talat
‘Became to-them much talked’
‘There was much talk between them’

Vín er honum hæði drykkr ok matr
‘Wine is to him both drink and food’

Dative phrases of respect often have the force of possessives. This applies notably where they complement preposition phrases denoting body parts. E.g. (with dative and preposition phrase in bold):

Skarði fell fyrir feetr Þorkeli
‘Skarði fell before feet to-Þorkell’
‘Skarði fell in front of Þorkell’s feet’

Loki greip upp mikla stong ok rekr á kroppinn erninum
‘Loki grasped up big pole and drives onto body-the to-eagle-the’
‘Loki seized a big pole and drove it against the eagle’s body’

Þá laust hann sverði ór hóndum honum
‘Then struck he sword-the out-of hands to-him’
‘Then he struck the sword out of his hands’
3.9.6 Points of nominal syntax — Exercise

Analyse the phrases printed in bold in the following sentences:

(a) Þorfinnr and the others stayed on the island for the night
   ‘Þorfinnr and the others stayed on the island for the night’

(b) With her lies the good fortune of you both now
   ‘With her lies the good fortune of you both now’

(c) But I have witnesses here who saw the earl’s and my agreement
   ‘But I have witnesses here who saw the earl’s and my agreement’

(d) Which of you thought it most advisable?
   ‘Which of you thought it most advisable?’

(e) Hrani told her for what purpose Haraldr had gone to see Queen Sigríðar dróttningar
   ‘Hrani told her for what purpose Haraldr had gone to see Queen Sigríðar’

(f) Then Loki let himself drop onto Skaði’s knees
   ‘Then Loki let himself drop onto Skaði’s knees’

3.9.7 Points of verbal syntax

A few remarks on verbal syntax need to be added to the basics set out at various points in section 3.6. These concern four areas: (1) the perfect and past perfect (3.6.2, 3.6.8, sentence 3); (2) the passive (3.6.4); (3) the ‘dative absolute’; (4) present participles expressing potentiality or obligation.

3.9.7.1 The perfect and past perfect

The perfect and past perfect of intransitive verbs of movement and change are construed with vera as well as hafa. E.g.:

Hann hafði kominn út með Þorkatli
   ‘He had come out with Þorkatli’
   ‘He had come to Iceland with Þorkatli’

Maðr er hér kominn úti fyrir durum
   ‘A man has arrived here outside the door’
Svá mun Hallgerði sýnask, sem hann hafi eigi sjálfdauðr orðit
‘So will to-Hallgerðr seem, as he has not self-dead become’
‘It will seem to Hallgerðr as though he has not died a natural death’

Pá er myrkt var orðit, leituðu þeir sér til náttstadar
‘Then COMP dark was become, searched they for-self for night-place’
‘When it had become dark, they looked for a place to spend the night’

The choice of auxiliary depends on the sense. Where the focus is on the action itself, 
*hafa* is used, where the state following the action is emphasised, we find *vera* (contrast English *he has gone there a lot recently and he is gone (= he is no longer present)). Thus the first example above focuses on the travelling to Iceland rather than the being there, the third on the dying rather than the being dead. In the second and fourth examples, in contrast, the emphasis is on the man’s being outside the door and the state of darkness in which the searching took place.

It will be observed that where *vera* is the auxiliary, the past participle inflects as an adjective, agreeing with the subject in case, gender and number (cf. 3.6.6). Thus *maðr* and *kominn* are both nom. m. sg. (*þá er myrkt var orðit* has no subject, so the nom. n. sg. (*orðit*) is used as the default form). With *hafa* as the auxiliary, on the other hand, the past participle tends to adopt the neuter nom./acc. sg. form, and is then often known as the supine (3.6.8, sentence 3). The reason for this difference lies in the auxiliaries themselves. Elements linked by *vera*, whatever its function, stand in the same case, the one element modifying the other, whereas non-auxiliary *hafa* is construed with a nominative subject and accusative object (cf., e.g., *hann hafði tvá knórru* ‘he had two merchant ships’). In perfect constructions with *hafa* the past participle does not normally modify anything; it combines with the auxiliary to form a single verb phrase. Thus in *hann hafði keypt tvá knórru* ‘he had bought two merchant ships’ *hafði keypt* is the verb phrase of which *tvá knórru* is the object. In origin, however, the perfect seems to have been a subject — verb — object — object complement construction (‘I have them bought’), which was gradually re-analysed as subject — verb phrase — object (‘I have bought them’).
One of the chief reasons for assuming this development is that in early Old Norse texts the past participle quite often agrees with an accusative object (never a genitive or dative, since *hafa* governed the accusative only). It seems, however, that at this relatively late stage in the history of the Old Norse perfect, participle-object agreement had ceased to carry the original ‘I have them bought’ meaning. Agreement and non-agreement give the appearance of being interchangeable — indeed, sometimes we find an inflected and an uninflected participle dependent on the same auxiliary, e.g. (with the participles in bold):

> En jarlsmenn *höfðu* **barða** marga eyjarskeggja, en **tekit** Kúga bónda ok **settan** í fjótra
> ‘But earl’s-men had beaten many islanders, but taken Kúgi farmer and placed in shackles’

> ‘But the earl’s men had beaten many islanders and taken the farmer, Kúgi, and put him in shackles’

There is agreement here between **barða** and **marga eyjarskeggja** (acc. m. pl.), and **settan** and **Kúga bónda** (acc. m. sg.), but not between **Kúga bónda** (acc. m. sg.) and **tekit** (nom./acc. n. sg.). The function of the participle is however the same in all three cases: each combines with *höfðu* to form a verb phrase of which **marga eyjarskeggja** or **Kúga bónda** are the objects. The student may thus consider inflected participles in perfect constructions as ordinary supines and treat them in exactly the same way they would their uninflected counterparts (as in modern French).

Several other verbs combine with past participles to form periphrastic constructions, but of these only *fá* and *gota* are at all common. Both have the basic sense ‘get’, and their use with past participles is paralleled in English (cf. *he got it done*). As in the *hafa* constructions, the participle may either agree with an accusative object or not; where the object is genitive or dative, or there is no object, the nom./acc. n. sg. form is always used. E.g. (with the periphrastic verb phrases in bold):

> Abraham **gat frelsta** frændr sína
> ‘Abraham got saved kinsmen his’

> ‘Abraham was able to save his kinsmen’
Ambáttirnar fengu dregit steininn
‘Bondwomen-the got dragged stone-the’
‘The bondwomen managed to drag the stone’

Sá fekk þó borgit sér nauðuliga
‘He got though saved self narrowly’
‘He just about managed to save himself, though’

In the first example frelsta agrees with frendr sína (acc. m. pl.), in the second and third examples the nom./acc. n. sg. form of the participle is used, once where the object is acc. m. sg. (steininn), once where it is dat. reflexive.

3.9.7.2 The passive

The Old Norse periphrastic passive formed with vera may be dynamic or static, just as its English counterpart with be. Dynamic passives denote an action or event, static passives the state after an action or event. Two typical examples illustrating the difference are:

Var sá høggvinn fyrr, er sínar gekk
‘Was he cut-down earlier comp later walked’
‘He (of two) who walked behind was slain first’

Hann nefndi mennina þá, er vegnir váru
‘He named men-the those comp slain were’
‘He named the men who were slain’

The passive var sá høggvinn, er . . . is the equivalent of the past tense active; þeir hjooggu þann, er . . . ‘they slew the one who . . . ’, whereas er vegnir váru corresponds to the past perfect active er þeir hofðu vegið ‘whom they had slain’, and could itself be expressed as a past perfect: er vegnir hofðu verit ‘who had been slain’. Of itself, vera + pp. is ambiguous; it is the context that determines whether the construction is to be understood as dynamic or static, just as in English (cf., e.g., ambiguous the house was sold, which may be expanded into the dynamic the house was sold by the new agent or the static the
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house was already sold). A further contrastive pair of Old Norse examples illustrating present tense usage is:

Fjórir hleifar brauðs eru honum førðir hvern dag
‘Four loaves of-bread are to-him brought each day’

Frá flessu segir í flokki fleim, er ortr er um Þormóð
‘From this says in poem that COMP composed is about Þormóðr’

The passive eru honum førðir is dynamic, the equivalent of active þeir færa honum ‘they bring to him’, while ortr er is static, corresponding to active einnhverr hefir ort ‘someone has composed’.

Sometimes passives are formed with auxiliary verða rather than vera. Such passives are always dynamic, and usually have one or more additional senses — commonly the notion of futurity and/or possibility.

E.g.:

Hversu megu synir hans, þeir er getnir verða í útleð, njóta þeira gjafa?
‘How may sons his, those COMP born are in exile, enjoy those gifts?’

Varð engi uppreist í móti konungi gor í þat sinn í Prándheimr
‘Was no uprising a(-)gainst king made on that occasion in Prándheimr’

In the first example the talk is of sons who may be born in the future. The interpretation of the second example is less certain: it need be no more than a dynamic passive, but it could carry the additional sense that an uprising against the king was not possible on that occasion.
(because of his superior force). More firmly endowed with the notion of (im)possibility is:

Hallbjörn hleyp til búa, en sveinarnir til skógar, er þar var nær, ok verða eigi fundnir
‘Hallbjörn runs to booth, but boys—the to scrub, comp there was near, and are not found’

Occasionally in verða-passives the agent may be expressed by the dative, e.g.:

Honum varð litit upp til hlídaðarinnar
‘By-him was looked up to hillside-the’

Such constructions usually carry the implication that the action was a chance one, a sense of verða being ‘[to] happen’ (cf. slíkt verðr opt ungum mónnum ‘such things often happen to young men’). A more precise idiomatic rendering of the above would therefore be: ‘He chanced to look up at the hillside’.

3.9.7.3 The ‘dative absolute’

The Old Norse ‘dative absolute’ construction consists of a noun phrase in the dative accompanied by a present or past participle in agreement, the two conveying what would otherwise be expressed by a dependent temporal sentence. Commonly the construction takes the form of a prepositional phrase introduced by at, but in more formal style the preposition may be dispensed with. E.g. (with the dative absolute in bold):

Ok at líounum þrír nóttum för hann at finna vísendamann
‘And with passed three nights went he to find soothsayer’

‘And when three nights had passed he went to find the soothsayer’
Vér skulum hér koma svá margir þingmenn, sem nú eru til nefndir, at uppverandi sólu
‘We shall here come as many assembly-members as now are to appointed, with up-being sun’
‘We are to come here, as many assembly members as are now appointed for the purpose, when the sun is up’

Þessum þrettán útgengnum váru aðrir þrettán inn leiddir
‘These thirteen out-gone were other thirteen in led’
‘When these thirteen had gone out, another thirteen were led in’

Höfum vér þar um talat þerra Erlingi ok þörum göðum munnum hjáverðum
‘Have we there about spoken lord Erlingr and other good men present-being’
‘We have spoken about it in the presence of Lord Erlingr and other good men’

The idiomatic English renderings make clear the equivalence between dative absolutes and dependent temporal sentences. An alternative to ‘in the presence of Lord Erlingr and other good men’ is ‘when Lord Erlingr and other good men were present’. The construction with the past participle corresponds to a finite perfect or past perfect, that with the present to a finite present or past, depending on the context.

3.9.7.4 Present participles expressing potentiality or obligation

Present participles can appear in Old Norse as subject complements with the sense of what is suitable, possible or necessary, and with a passive interpretation. In this function, geranda, for example, means ‘do-able’ — ‘fit to be done’, ‘able to be done’ or ‘necessary to be done’, according to the context. A few examples will suffice to make the usage clear:
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Hann fór suðr með landinu at leita, ef þar væri byggjanda
‘He went south along land-the to search if there might-be settleable’
‘He went south along the coast to see if it might be suitable for settlement there’

Jarl kvað þetta vera óþolanda
‘Earl said this be intolerable’
‘The earl said this was intolerable’

At kveldi er dagr lofandi
‘At evening is day to-be-praised’
‘The day should be praised when evening comes (and not before)’

The clarity of the context will determine the degree of precision with which the participle can be translated into English.

Outside this construction, the Old Norse present participle tends to correspond to the English -ing form of the verb and will give the learner little trouble: e.g. hlæjandi ‘laughing’, skínandi ‘shining’, sofandi ‘sleeping’.

3.9.7 Points of verbal syntax — Exercise

1. When is hafa and when vera used to form perfect and past perfect constructions?
2. To what in Old Norse does the term ‘supine’ refer?
3. What is the difference between an inflected past participle and an inflected supine in Old Norse?
4. Give an example of a dynamic and a static passive in Old Norse and explain the difference.
5. What characterises verða-passives?
6. What is the Old Norse ‘dative absolute’? Give examples of the construction.
7. Explain the meaning of the present participle in: þat þótti þó ógeranda, at konungr vissi eigi þetta.
3.9.8 Points of syntax affecting more than one type of phrase

Three matters require brief treatment: (1) adjectival and adverbial complements; (2) agreement between subject, verb and subject complement; (3) -sk verb forms and ‘preposition adverbs’.

3.9.8.1 Adjectival and adverbial complements

Complements of vera ‘[to] be’ and verða ‘[to] become’ are sometimes adverbs in Old Norse. In the case of the pair vel ‘well’ and illa ‘badly’, English tends to use adjectives in corresponding phrases. E.g.:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pá er vel} & \quad \text{‘It is good’} \\
\text{Konungr segir, at þat var illa at Arnljótr hafði eigi farit á hans fund} & \quad \text{‘The king says that it was bad that Arnljótr had not gone to see him’} \\
\text{Pú skal heita þraell, ok svá vera} & \quad \text{‘You shall be called a slave and be so’} \\
\text{Varð Eyrjólf þá framarlega} & \quad \text{‘Became Eyrjólf then forward’}
\end{align*}
\]

In contradistinction to usage in the first two of the above sentences, adjectives may stand in apposition to subjects, objects or prepositional complements in Old Norse where English would employ an adverb or adverbial (cf. 3.5.4). This applies to comparatives and superlatives where a sequence or order is denoted, to quantifiers such as einn ‘one’, allr ‘all’, hálfr ‘half’, and to the locational terms miðr ‘middle’, þverr ‘transverse’. E.g.:
Points of syntax

Skuluð þit brœðr fyrstir fara
‘Shall you-two brothers [as the] first go’
‘You two brothers shall go first’

Prym drap hann fyrstan
‘Prymr killed he [as the] first’
‘He killed Prymr first’

Hann var einn konungr yfir landi
‘He was one king over country’
‘He alone was king over the country’

Hví ertu í blóði einu allr?
‘Why are-you in blood one all?’
‘Why are you completely covered in blood?’

Kom sú á hann miðjan
‘Came she onto him middle’
‘It hit him in the middle (of his body)’

(Cf. also 3.1.5, sentence 20.)

3.9.8.2 Agreement between subject, verb and subject complement

Although the verb in Old Norse normally agrees in number with the (nominative) subject of the sentence (3.1.1, 3.2, 3.6.1), there are exceptions to the rule. Where the verb precedes one or more of a sequence of conjoined subjects, it will often appear in the same number as the subject which is closest. E.g. (with the relevant agreement in bold):

Var þá Úlfr ok allir stafnbúarnir komnir at lyptingunni
‘Was then Ulfr and all forecastle-men-the come to poop-deck-the’
‘Then Ulfr and all the forecastle men had got to the poop-deck’
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Týndisk fé allt ok meiri hlutr manna
‘Lost-sk property all and greater part of-men’
‘All the property was lost and most of the men’

Konungr var allmjök drukkinn ok þeði þau
‘King was all-much drunk and both they’
‘The king was very drunk and she as well’

Observe that in the first sentence the past participle komnir agrees with the plural subject allir stafnbúarnir (or, equally possible, both subjects together) rather than the singular subject Ulfr and the singular verb. (On the use of þau in the last sentence, see 3.9.6.1.)

Even where it precedes a lone plural subject, a verb may appear in the singular if several words intervene. E.g. (with the singular verb in bold):

Eptir þat dreif at þeim fóstbroðrum vinir þeira ór Firðafylki
‘After that drifted to those foster-brothers friends their from Firðafylki’
‘After that their friends from Firðafylki thronged to (join) the foster-brothers’

In sentences of the type X is Y, the verb often agrees in number with Y, the subject complement, especially when the subject is þat ‘that’ ‘it’ or þetta ‘this’. E.g. (with the relevant agreement in bold):

Váru þat lítil sár ok mǫrg
‘Were that small wounds and many’
‘The wounds were small and many’

Ekki munu þetta friðarmenn vera
‘Not will this peace-men be’
‘These will not be men of peace’

Slíkt eru konungsmenn, sem þú ert
‘Such are king’s men as you are’
‘You are the sort of person to be a king’s man’
Notice further the propensity of past participles in such constructions to agree with the subject complement rather than the subject:

\[ \text{Var þat mikill fjölði orðinn} \]

‘Was it great multitude become’

‘It had become a great number’

Sometimes, however, agreement is with the subject:

\[ \text{Þat var þorkell nefja, Karlshófuð, ok Þorsteinn ok Einarr þambarskelfir} \]

‘That was þorkell nefja, Karlshófuð, and Þorsteinn and Einarr þambarskelfir’

\[ \text{Þat var síðan kallat Kvernbítr} \]

‘It was thereafter called Kvernbítr [m.]’

### 3.9.8.3 -sk verb forms and ‘preposition adverbs’

As pointed out in 3.6.5.3, the -sk form may have reflexive and reciprocal function. Often this is combined with use of a preposition, which, in an abstract sense, governs the reflexive or reciprocal to which the -sk form gives expression. Since, however, there is no overt prepositional complement in such constructions, the preposition has the appearance of an adverb (cf. 3.7.7). E.g. (with the -sk form and preposition given in bold):

\[ \text{Kormakr litask um} \]

‘Kormakr looks-sk around’

‘Kormakr looks around him’

\[ \text{Þeir lögðusk allir niðr fyrr fyrir kirkjunni ok báðusk fyrr} \]

‘They laid-sk all down before church-the and prayed-sk for’

‘They all laid themselves down before the church and prayed for themselves’
Ek hefi nú vel um búiðk
‘I have now well around prepared-sk’
‘I have now protected myself all around’

Áttuðsk þeir við drykkju ok orðaskipti
‘Had-sk they with drinking and conversation’
‘They had drinks and conversation with each other’

Horðúsuk þeir Gizurr at hofðunum
‘Faced-sk they Gizurr towards with-heads-the’
‘Gizurr and he faced towards each other with their heads’

Where the preposition is immediately followed by a noun phrase (or noun phrases) as in the last two sentences, the student should be particularly careful not to jump to the conclusion that the two belong together. Neither *við drykkju ok orðaskipti nor *at hofðunum is a preposition phrase, drykkju ok orðaskipti being the accusative direct object of áttu, hofðunum a manner adverbial in the dative case.

3.9.8 Points of syntax affecting more than one type of phrase —
Exercise

1. Old Norse sometimes employs adverbs as complements of vara ‘[to] be’ and verða ‘[to] become’. Give examples and compare and contrast Old Norse usage with English in this respect.
2. In Old Norse an adjective standing in apposition to subject, object or prepositional complement often corresponds to an adverb or adverbia in English. Give examples and compare and contrast Old Norse usage with English in this respect.
3. In what circumstances may an Old Norse verb not agree in number with a nominative subject?
4. Give a grammatical analysis of the sentence þau raðdusk opt við ‘they often talked together'.

3.9.9 Adverbial ok

Sometimes *ok* appears at the beginning of an independent sentence with a sense equivalent to *þá* ‘then’. In such cases a dependent temporal or conditional sentence almost always precedes (indeed, the *ok* or *þá* represents a recapitulation, in the form of an adverb, of the dependent sentence, cf. 3.8, 3.9.1). E.g.:

Ok í annat sinn er þeir raufa seyðinn, þá er stund var líðin, ok var ekki soðit
‘And for second time COMP they open cooking-pit-the, then COMP short-while was passed, and was not cooked’

Ef maðr andask í úteyjum, ok eru þeir menn skyldir at fóra lík til kirkju, er . . .
‘If man dies-sk in out-islands, and are those men bound to take body to church, COMP . . .’

If a man dies on some outlying island, then those men are responsible for taking the body to a church, who . . .

The second example is from a law text, where this use of *ok* for *þá* is very common.
A postscript on ‘impersonal’ constructions

The student may legitimately wonder why some verbs in Old Norse are construed without a nominative, and thus, apparently (cf. 3.9.3), without a subject. It was explained in 3.9.3 that sometimes this is because the focus is on the object and the subject is of no interest in the context. In, e.g.,

\[
\text{Hér hefr kristni sögu} \\
\text{‘Here begins of-Christianity saga’} \\
\text{‘Here begins the history of the Church (in Iceland)’}
\]

the writer draws attention solely to the work and its commencement. Who caused it to commence is of no relevance, and indeed the individual(s) concerned would probably be hard to identify. There is a similarity here with some passive constructions in English. In, e.g.,

\[
\text{The church was built in the fourteenth century}
\]

the point of interest is the time at which the building work took place, not who carried it out, which, as in the ON example, may not be (generally) known.

What is missing in both the ON and the English sentence is of course the agent — which is nevertheless there in the background, understood although unspecified. But it has been argued by some that an agent has also been omitted from those types of ON ‘impersonal’ (i.e. non-nominative) construction in which an animate instigator cannot be conceived (e.g. daga ‘dawn’, skorta ‘lack’, dreyma ‘dream’; cf. further 3.9.3, pp. 230, 233–4). The verbs concerned tend to denote natural events, the passing of time, (chance) occurrences, want, feelings, impressions, etc. What is suggested is that at the time such constructions arose there was a belief in a mythological agency or agencies which controlled the events by which people were affected. Thus in, e.g.,

\[
\text{Gaf þeim vel byri} \\
\text{‘Gave to-them well winds’} \\
\text{‘They got favourable winds’}
\]
a recognised but (for whatever reason) unspecified power may have been conceived as directing the wind, driving boats across the sea, causing people to dream, and so on (cf. the further examples pp. 230, 233).

It is not claimed that speakers of Old Norse thought in these terms; rather that they were using linguistic constructions inherited from an earlier age (many Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages exhibit similar types of phrase). The interconnection between nominative case and agent role suggested by this line of reasoning can also be viewed as having a historical basis. In 3.1.2 it was stressed that no morphological case is uniquely associated with a particular syntactic function in Old Norse, and that is equally true of semantic roles. It is conceivable, however, that to begin with each case did have a unique semantic role and syntactic function, and that in this pristine system nominative denoted the agent. Then, over the thousands of years that followed, much restructuring took place, including perhaps loss and amalgamation of several cases — leading to the Old Norse system in which morphological case, syntactic function and semantic role are far less obviously interconnected.

Regardless of the correctness or otherwise of these ideas, the student may find them helpful in getting to grips with ‘impersonal’ constructions — a type alien to modern English. The closest equivalents are constructions such as it is raining, where it simply fills what would otherwise be an empty subject slot, or it seems to me, where the experiencer does not become subject but is presented as the recipient of external stimuli. We may also note the archaic construction methinks, comparable to ON pyk(k)ir mér.
References to linguistic terms explained in the *Grammar*

References (by page number) are to the place or places where the term is most clearly explained and/or exemplified, usually the first occurrence. Items which form the subject matter of a (sub-)section or (sub-)sections of the *Grammar* are not normally included; these can be located using the list of contents (pp. vii–xi). Terms that are used only once or twice and are explained where they occur are also mostly omitted.

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apposition The relationship between two or more sentence elements with the same syntactic function and identity or similarity of reference. E.g. hann átti Ragnhildi, dóttur Hrólfs ‘he was married to Ragnhild, the daughter of Hrólfr’, where Ragnhildi and dóttur Hrólfs are in apposition.

assimilation The influence of one sound on another, so that they become more alike or identical. E.g. *lykil ‘key’ < lykilr, with assimilation lr > ll.

beneficiary The entity to which something is given, said, etc. for which something is done, made, etc. E.g. þeir veittu honum lið ‘they gave him support’, where honum is the beneficiary.

complement A syntactic element that ‘completes’ another element. E.g. var hann inn mesti hǫfðingi ‘he was a very great ruler’, where hann is the subject and inn mesti hǫfðingi the subject complement; í þenna tíma ‘at this time’, where í is a preposition and noun phrase þenna tíma the prepositional complement.

complex Consisting of two or more separate elements. E.g. the preposition fyrr norðan ‘north of’.

compound Consisting of two or more elements which are combined. E.g. fjárskipti ‘division of property’ a compound noun made up of gen. fjár, from fé ‘property’ ‘money’, and skipti ‘division’.

covert Not expressed, understood. In, e.g., þeim var engi kostr í brott at fara ‘there was no possibility for them to go away’, the subject of fara is not expressed, but is understood as identical with the þeim of þeim var engi kostr.

declarative A sentence type used for statements, contrasting with interrogative, imperative, etc. E.g. Páll jarl fór til Orkneyja ‘Earl Páll went to the Orkneys’ is a declarative sentence, whereas hvárt fór Páll jarl til Orkneyja? ‘did Earl Páll go to the Orkneys?’ is interrogative and farðu til Orkneyja! ‘go to the Orkneys!’ imperative.

goal The entity affected by the action expressed by a verb. In, e.g., þeir brenndu hann inni ‘they burnt him in his house’, hann ‘him’ is the goal of the action, the person burnt.

govern(ment) A syntactic linkage whereby one word requires a particular morphological form of another word. E.g. the ON verb hefna ‘avenge’ governs the genitive of the person or thing avenged (hann hefndi bróður sins ‘he avenged his brother’); the preposition frá governs the dative (frá skipinu ‘from the ship’).
head word The central word in a phrase. E.g. in maðr gamall ‘an old man’, the noun maðr is the head word, on which the adjective gamall is dependent; we find maðr gekk út ‘a man went out’, but not *gamall gekk út ‘old went out’.

infinitive clause A clause (sentence) with one or more infinitives but no finite verb — one of several types of non-finite clause. E.g. in dvel þú eigi at snúað til dróttins ‘do not wait to turn to the Lord’, at snúað til dróttins is an infinitive clause whose covert (understood) subject is the þú of the finite dvel þú eigi (see covert).

infix An affix (a word element that can only be used when joined to another form) added within a word (see p. 65).

inflexion A change to any part of a word (root, affix, ending) signalling grammatical relations (case, gender, number, tense, mood, etc.), e.g. hestar ‘horse’ (nom. sg.), hests (gen. sg.); hvarð ‘hard’ (nom. f. sg., nom./acc. n. pl.), hvarður (nom. m. pl.); bút ‘bite’ (1st sg. pres. indic.), beít (1st/3rd sg. past indic.).

intransitive A verb which cannot take a direct object, e.g. liggja ‘lie’ ‘be situated’.

modifier (modify) A word that is dependent on another word or phrase and qualifies its meaning. In, e.g., sá inn gamli maðr ‘the old man’, the words sá inn gamli are all dependent on the head word maðr: they qualify the meaning of maðr, introducing the attribute of age and making the phrase definite. In draumr Hálfdanar, the genitive Hálfdanar is dependent on draumr and qualifies its meaning, indicating whose the dream was (see head word).

overt Expressed, observable in the structure (see covert).

past perfect A verb construction found in Germanic (and some other) languages consisting of the past tense of have (hafa etc.) and a supine, usually expressing a time prior to some past point of time. In, e.g., er þeir hafu upp borít fongin, fór þeir á land ‘after they had carried up the baggage, they went ashore’, the carrying precedes the going ashore, which is itself in the past.

perfect As past perfect, but consisting of the present tense of have (hafa etc.) and a supine, and commonly expressing time viewed in relation to the present. In, e.g., vør hafum fengit mikinn skada á munnum várum ‘we have suffered great losses to our men’, the losses are presented as relevant to the situation in which the words are spoken.

phrase A sentence element consisting of one or more words, but usually reducible to a single word. E.g. skrín ins helga Magnúss jarls ‘the shrine of St Magnús the earl’ is a noun phrase, reducible to þat ‘it’; í fann
tíma ‘at that time’ is a preposition phrase functioning as an adverbial, reducible to þá ‘then’.

**root** The basic form of a word, to which nothing has been added. E.g. tak-, root of the verb taka ‘take’, heið-, root of the feminine noun heiðr ‘moor’, ‘heath’, lang-, root of the adjective langr ‘long’.

**semantics** The study of meaning in language; sometimes simply used as a synonym for meaning.

**sentence** The largest unit of grammar or syntax, i.e. the largest unit over which a grammatical or syntactic rule can operate. A sentence will always include one finite verb, and one only. Thus (finite verbs given in bold) Go! or John kicked the ball into the net are each sentences, whereas Gosh! or Looking to the future are not. The utterance She smiled because she was given a toy, but she often scowls contains three sentences: the independent (3.8) she smiled and [but] she often scowls and the dependent [because] she was given a toy. In traditional grammatical parlance what is here termed ‘sentence’ is known as a ‘clause’, ‘sentence’ being employed for broader and less clearly defined concepts such as ‘a statement that can stand on its own’.

**sentence element** Used in the Grammar synonymously with phrase.

**simplex** Consisting of a single element — non-complex or non-compound.

E.g. á ‘on [etc.]’ is a simplex preposition as opposed to the complex fyrir nordan ‘north of’; konungr ‘king’ is a simplex noun as opposed to the compound konungsmaðr ‘king’s man’.

**stress** Prominence given to a particular syllable because of the degree of articulatory force used in producing it. In, e.g., Skotlandi ‘Scotland’ (dat. n. sg.) there is primary stress on the first syllable, secondary stress on -land-, and little or no stress on the dative -i ending.

**substantive** An alternative term for ‘noun’ — the part of speech denoting persons, places, concrete objects, concepts (e.g. Hrólfr, Island ‘Iceland’, hús ‘house’, gleði ‘joy’). Formally substantives/nouns display certain types of inflexion, in Old Norse number: konungr ‘king’, konungar ‘kings’, case: konungr (nom.), konungi (dat.), and to a certain extent gender: dropi (m. with -i ending) ‘drop’, gata (f. with -a ending) ‘path’. Substantives/nouns also perform specific syntactic functions, appearing, e.g., as subject or object of a sentence or the complement of a preposition in a preposition phrase (examples under 3.1.5).

**substantivised** Used as a substantive/noun. The term is applied to adjectives that stand in place of a substantive/noun, e.g. gott ‘good [nom./acc. n. sg.]; fáir ‘few [nom. m. pl.]; hit eldra ‘the older [nom./acc. n. sg.]’ (see 3.3, 3.3.6, sentences 19–22, 26).
suffix An affix (see infix) coming after the form to which it is joined. Examples of ON suffixes are the weak past tense markers -ð, -ð, -i (cf. kasta-ð-i ‘threw’, with root kasta-, past tense suffix -ð and 3rd sg. ending -i), and the definite article -inn (cf. hest-r-inn ‘the horse’, with root hest-, nom. sg. ending -r and suffixed nom. m. sg. def. art. -inn).

transitive Verb which can take a direct object, e.g. drepa ‘kill’, hefna ‘avenge’.
Bibliography


