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Summary Article: **Norwegian language**

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member of the North Germanic, or Scandinavian, group of the Germanic subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages. It is spoken by about 4 million people in Norway and another million in the other Scandinavian countries and North America. Norwegian is a daughter language of Old Norse (see Germanic languages; Norse language). Today there are two official forms of Norwegian: *bokmål* [book language] and *nynorsk* [new Norwegian]. *Bokmål*, also called *riksmål* [national language] and Dano-Norwegian, was greatly influenced by Danish, which was the dominant language of officialdom when Norway was under Danish rule (1397–1814). The language of the cities, the official and professional classes, and literature, *bokmål* came to differ greatly from the Norwegian spoken by the common people. Since 1905, however, orthographical and grammatical reforms by the government have brought *bokmål* closer to the popular form of Norwegian. *Nynorsk*, also known as *landsmål* [country language], stems from the native Norwegian dialects that evolved from Old Norse (uninfluenced by Danish), and it is therefore very different from *bokmål*. Developed by Ivar Aasen, *nynorsk* was introduced by him in 1853 as part of a nationalistic desire to have a purely Norwegian language for the country. It is based on rural dialects and spoken principally in rural areas. Both *bokmål* and *nynorsk* are employed by the government, the schools, and the mass media, but *bokmål* is by far the more widely used of the two, especially in education and literature. Some efforts have been made to fuse the two forms of Norwegian into one common Norwegian tongue called *samnorsk* [common Norwegian], and there is hope that this can be accomplished. Norwegian grammar is fairly simple. The form of the noun is changed only to indicate possession and the plural, and personal inflection of the verb has been discarded. Like Swedish, Norwegian uses pitch accents, but to a lesser degree. The pitch accents give the language a musical quality and are sometimes employed to distinguish the meanings of homonyms. Norwegian employs the Roman alphabet, which was introduced in Norway in the 11th cent. and to which three characters, *æ*, *ø*, and *Å*, have been added.

See Chapman, K. G. , *Icelandic-Norwegian Linguistic Relationships* (1962);

E. I. Haugen; K. G. Chapman, *Spoken Norwegian* (1964);

Haugen, E. I. , *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* (1966);

Strandskogen, R. , *Norwegian Grammar* (1987).

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