

## Regular noun paradigms of Old English (early West Saxon dialect).

“Strong” nouns.

		masculine		neuter		feminine		
sg.	nom.	stān	ende	scip	word	ġiefu	lār	cwēn
	acc.	stān	ende	scip	word	ġiefe	lāre	cwēn(e)
	gen.	stānes	endes	scipes	wordes	ġiefe	lāre	cwēne
	dat.	stāne	ende	scipe	worde	ġiefe	lāre	cwēne
pl.	n.-a.	stānas	endas	scipu	word	ġiefa,	-e lāra,	-e cwēne, -a
	gen.	stāna	enda	scipa	worda	ġiefa	lāra	cwēna
	dat.	stānum	endum	scipum	wordum	ġiefum	lārum	cwēnum

“Weak” nouns.

		masculine		feminine		neuter		U-stem nouns.	
								masc.      fem.	
sg.	nom.	hunta	tunge	ēage	sunu	hand			
	acc.	huntan	tungan	ēage	sunu	hand			
	gen.	huntan	tungan	ēagan	sunu	handu			
	dat.	huntan	tungan	ēagan	sunu	handu			
pl.	n.-a.	huntan	tungan	ēagan	sunu	handu			
	gen.	huntena	tungena	ēagena	sunu	handu			
	dat.	huntum	tungum	ēagum	sunum	handum			

## Irregular nouns.

### Masculine.

- 1) Four nouns have internal *æ* in the singular but *a* in the plural: *dæg*, *dagas* ‘day’; *hwæl*, *hwalas* ‘whale’; *pæþ*, *paþas* ‘path’; *stæf*, *stafas* ‘staff’.
- 2) One noun has internal *æ* in the singular but *a* in the plural: *mæg*, *māgas* ‘kinsman’.
- 3) Nouns in *-rh* and *-lh* drop the *h* and lengthen the preceding vowel before all endings; they are *ealh*, *ēal-* ‘temple’ [poetic]; *eolh*, *ēol-* ‘elk’; *fearh*, *fēar-* ‘piglet’; *healh*, *hēal-* ‘corner’; *mearh*, *mēar-* ‘horse’ [poetic]; *sealh*, *sēal-* ‘willow’; *seolh*, *sēol-* ‘seal’ [the animal]; *wealh*, *wēal-* ‘foreigner’. Exception: *horh*, *horw-* ‘phlegm’.
- 4) Nouns in *-h* preceded by a vowel drop the *h* and lengthen the preceding vowel before all endings; but they also often drop the vowel of the ending, so that all forms are monosyllabic. Because gen. pl. *-a* would thereby disappear, it is usually replaced by weak *-na*. These nouns are: *eoh*, *ēo-* ‘horse’ [poetic]; *flēah*, *flēa-* ‘flea’; *hōh*, *hō-* ‘heel’; *lēah*, *lēa-* ‘meadow’; *scōh*, *scō-* ‘shoe’; *slōh*, *slō-* ‘mud’.
- 5) The noun here ‘army’ drops *-e* and inserts *-ġ-* before all endings (*herġes*, *herġe*, etc.).

- 6) The noun *bearu* ‘grove’ drops *-u* and inserts *-w-* before all endings (*bearwes*, etc.).
- 7) The noun *þēo* ‘slave, servant’ has a stem *þeow-* before all endings; but there is a strong tendency for the long diphthong to spread into the forms with endings and for the *-w-* to spread into the endingless forms, giving an invariable stem *þēow(-)*. So also its compound *lārēo*, *lāttēo* ‘tutor, teacher’.
- 8) Some names of peoples have nom.-acc. pl. *-e*, e.g. *Engle* ‘Angles’, *Seaxe* ‘Saxons’, *Dene* ‘Danes’; so also *ielde* ‘human beings’, *liode* ‘people’, *ielfe* ‘elves’. A few other nouns, such as *wine* ‘friend’, have nom.-acc. pl. *-as* or *-e*. Gen. pl. *Denigea* and *winiġea* occur in early poetry (notably *Beowulf*).
- 9) The noun *fæder* ‘father’ can have endingless forms throughout the sg. The noun *brōþor* ‘brother’ is endingless throughout the sg., and the dat. sg. is *brēþer*, with *i*-umlaut; in addition, the nom.-acc. pl. is either endingless or ends in *-u*.
- 10) The nouns *mōnaþ* ‘month’ and *hæleþ* ‘warrior’ can have endingless nom.-acc. pls.
- 10) The nouns *mann* ‘person’, *fōt* ‘foot’, *tōþ* ‘tooth’, *frēond* ‘friend’, and *fēond* ‘enemy’ have endingless dat. sg. and nom.-acc. forms with *i*-umlaut (*menn*, *fēt*, *tēþ*, *frīend*, *fiend*). The noun *gōddōnd* ‘benefactor’ has a nom.-acc. pl. *gōddēnd*.
- 11) Agent nouns in unstressed *-end* have gen. pl. in *-ra* (like strong adjectives).

### Neuter.

- 1) Almost twenty nouns have *æ* in the sg. and *a* in the pl.: *bæc* ‘back’, *bæþ* ‘bath’, *blæd* ‘blade’, *cræt* ‘cart’, *dæl* ‘valley’, *fæc* ‘period of time’, *fæt* ‘container’, *fnæd*, *fnæs* ‘fringe’, *hæf* ‘sea’, *sæl* ‘hall’, *scræf* ‘cave’, *stæþ* ‘shore’, *swæþ* ‘track’, *træf* ‘tent’, *wæd* ‘ford’, *wæl* ‘carnage’; further *ġeat*, *gatu* ‘gate’ (with diphthongization of *æ*) and *gærs* / *græs*, *grasu* ‘grass’ (with metathesis).
- 2) The nouns *feorh* ‘life’ and *holh* ‘hollow’ drop *h* and lengthen the preceding vowel before all endings.
- 3) Other nouns in *-h* drop that consonant before all endings, and the vowels contract; they are *feoh* ‘money’, *flāh* ‘treachery’, *flēah* ‘albugo’, *pleoh* ‘danger’, *þēoh* ‘thigh’, *þrōh* ‘rancor’, *wōh* ‘perversity’.
- 4) The nouns *bealu* ‘harm’, *cwudu* ‘cud’, *meolu* ‘meal’, *searu* ‘device’, *smeoru* ‘grease’, *teoru* ‘tar’ drop *-u* and add *-w-* before all endings.
- 5) The nouns *cnēo*, *cneow-* ‘knee’, *hlēo*, *hleow-* ‘protection’, and *trēo*, *treow-* ‘tree’ tend to level the long diphthong and *-w-* throughout the paradigm to give invariant stems in *-ēow(-)* (like the corresponding masc. class).
- 6) The nouns *æġ* ‘egg’, *ċealf* ‘calf’, and *lamb* ‘lamb’ insert *-r-* before the pl. endings; sometimes so does *ċild* ‘child’.
- 7) The noun *ealu* ‘ale’ has gen., dat. sg. *ealoþ*; there is no pl.

**Feminine.**

- 1) Strong feminines can have weak gen. pls. in *-ena*.
- 2) Some strong fem. abstract nouns tend to simplify their inflection radically, as follows.
  - a) There is a class of abstracts with heavy root syllables that nevertheless have nom. sg. *-u* (e.g. *brædu* ‘breadth’); the *-u* tends to spread to all forms except the gen. pl. and dat. pl.
  - b) Abstracts in *-þ* occur both with and without nom. sg. *-u* (e.g. *strengþ* / *strengþu*); the *-u* tends to spread, as in (a) above.
  - c) Abstracts in *-ing*, *-ung* tend to spread *-a* to all forms except the nom. sg. and dat. pl.
- 3) The nouns *beadu* ‘battle’, *nearu* ‘distress’, *sceadu* ‘shadow’, and *sionu* ‘sinew’ drop *-u* and add *-w-* before all other endings; the nouns *mæd* ‘meadow’, *læs* ‘pasture’, *blōdlæs* ‘bloodletting’, and *ræs* ‘council’ likewise add *-w-* before all endings.
- 4) Fem. *u*-stems with light root syllables have nom.-acc. sg. *-u* (like masc. *sunu*); they are *duru* ‘door’ and *nosu* ‘nose’. Like *hand* ‘hand’ are *cweorn* ‘handmill’ and *flōr* ‘floor’.
- 5) The nouns *sweostor* ‘sister’ and *mægþ* ‘girl’ are endingless except in the gen. pl. and dat. pl.; so is *niht* ‘night’, except that the gen. sg. ends in *-e* (and the dat. sg. can).
- 6) The noun *mōdor* ‘mother’ has an endingless gen. sg.; the dat. sg. is *mēder*, the nom.-acc. pl. *mōdru*; *dohtor* ‘daughter’ follows the same pattern, except that the nom.-acc. pl. can be endingless.
- 7) Almost a dozen nouns have *i*-umlaut in the dat. sg. and nom.-acc. pl. (which are endingless) and optionally in the gen. sg. (which is endingless if it has *i*-umlaut). They are *āc*, *æc* ‘oak’; *bōc*, *bēc* ‘book’; *brōc*, *brēc* ‘legging’; *burg*, *byrg* ‘walled town’; *dung*, *dyng* ‘prison’; *gāt*, *gæt* ‘goat’; *gōs*, *gēs* ‘goose’; *grūt*, *grýt* ‘coarse meal’; *lūs*, *lýs* ‘louse’; *mūs*, *mýs* ‘mouse’; *turf*, *tyrf* ‘turf’.
- 8) Like the preceding, but with loss of *-h* and compensatory lengthening before endings, are *furh*, *fyrh*, *fūr-* ‘furrow’ and ‘fir-tree’ (homonyms) and *sulh*, *sylh*, *sūl-* ‘plow’.
- 9) Like the preceding, but with loss of *-h* and contraction before endings, is *þrūh*, *þrȳh*, dat. pl. *þrūm* ‘trough’. So also *cū* ‘cow’, except gen. sg. *cū(e)*, gen. pl. *cū(n)a*.
- 10) The noun *ēa* ‘river’ is indeclinable except for dat. pl. *ēam* and optional gen., dat. sg. *īe*.
- 11) The nouns *hnitu* ‘mit’, *hnutu* ‘nut’, and *studu*, *stuðu* ‘column’ have *-u* also in the acc. sg. (!), as well as *-e* with *i*-umlaut in the dat. sg. and nom.-acc. pl.