



## Reading Dutch Records

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### READING DUTCH RECORDS

This handout will outline some of the quirks of the Dutch language, give you some tools to help you read Dutch records, and briefly outline the content of various records you may encounter in researching your ancestors in the Netherlands and Belgium.

### DUTCH QUIRKS

#### Dutch names

There are four components to Dutch names:

- Given names: In English they are considered first and middle names. These are usually based off the name of a saint, though some areas may have unusual given names.
- Patronym: Much more common throughout the country until the early 1800s, they persisted in the north through the mid-1800s. A patronym is a name derived from the father that is not considered part of the given name, and usually ends in **-s**, **-se**, **-zoon**, or **-dochter** (sometimes abbreviated as **-dr**). Thus, person named Jan could have children with the patronym Jans, Janse, Janszoon, etc. Some surnames originally were patronyms.
- *Tussenvoegsel*: This descriptive element is usually glued onto the surname in English, but in Dutch it is a separate element. The most common *tussenvoegsels* are **van**, **van der**, and **de**, but there are others. In the Netherlands, they are not capitalized; in Belgium, they are. Thus, in the name Rembrandt van Rijn, **van** is the *tussenvoegsel*, and **Rijn** is the surname. This surname is alphabetized under **Rijn** in the Netherlands, but under **Van Rijn** in Belgium.
- Surname: The fixed name that is passed from father to children. In the Netherlands, surnames were required as of 1811; before this time period, there are large areas of the country (particularly in the north and west) where surnames did not exist, and patronyms were used. Note that patronyms are not surnames.

#### Pronunciation

For a helpful guide in pronouncing Dutch consonants and vowels, including voice clips of examples, see the following website: <https://www.heardutchhere.net/EasyDutch.html>

#### Dutch word order

Dutch sentence structure is different from English. The first verb is the second part (concept) of the sentence, while any subsequent verbs are “kicked” to the end. For example, the sentence “Today Jan de Jong **had appeared** at city hall before me the registrar.” would be written in Dutch word order, “Today **had** Jan de Jong at city hall before me the registrar **appeared**.”

A kicked verb usually (though not always) begins with **ge-**. For example: “He **has baptized** my son” in Dutch is written “Hij **heeft** mijn zoon **gedoopt**.” Notice the kicked verb begins with **ge-**.

## Spelling quirks

Tepee rule: the long vowel sound carries over one consonant (and one vowel can be dropped), making a tepee over the consonant, but it cannot be carried over two consonants. Examples:

- Adriaan / Adriaus
- Neeltje / Cornelia

If a name has a short vowel sound, it requires two consonants. Examples:

- Jan / Jannetje
- stop / stoppen

Dutch has some of the most creative spelling of any languages. Sometimes the tepee rule is ignored, and extra vowels are added (for example, Hogesteger vs. Hoogesteeger). An extensive list of interchangeable letters can be found here: <https://www.dutchgenealogy.nl/common-spelling-variations-in-dutch-names/>

## Diminutives and nicknames

Diminutives and nicknames are very common in the Netherlands, particularly in Protestant areas. They are not common in Belgium. A diminutive is a form of a name that indicates familiarity or endearment; think of the nicknames Bobby for Robert or Danny for Daniel. Diminutives and nicknames are very common as given names, and the name may appear differently in different records. Diminutives are most commonly found in records for females, adding a **-je** or a **-tje** (examples: Joanna = Jannetje; Petronella = Pietje). For both diminutives and nicknames, usually one (sometimes two) syllables of the name are used, and the tepee rule above is often invoked. Examples:

- Magdalena or Helena = Leentje
- Agatha = Aggje
- Hendrik = Henk

## RESEARCH TOOLS

**FamilySearch Wiki** (<https://www.familysearch.org/wiki>)

- Netherlands “How to” Guides
  - Reading Dutch Birth Records
  - Reading Dutch Marriage Records
  - Reading Dutch Death Records
- Dutch Genealogical Word List – see “key words” section for most commonly used words

**FamilySearch Help Center** (<https://www.familysearch.org/ask/landing>)

- Recorded classes and webinars; type in “Netherlands” and look in the section **Lessons**. These videos can be downloaded and usually come with downloadable handouts.

**FamilySearch Research Community** (<https://community.familysearch.org>)

Click on Groups, then type in the country of interest (Netherlands). Then **Join** the group. Here you can post questions and documents. Be sure to check out the very useful links on the left.

## FamilySearch Collections

(<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/location/1927059>)

The Dutch collections provide the easiest and most comprehensive way to access original images online. Click on Europe, then select Netherlands. Each province has two collections:

Civil Registration and Church Records. Be sure to check both **Indexed Historical Records** and **Image Only Historical Records**, and click view all, to find the collection for your province. Choose the province then collection of interest. Make sure to **Browse Images** – all “indexed” collections are very incomplete. Navigate to the municipality or parish, then choose your record type and time period. For church records, you may have to choose the religion of interest before the parish.

### **Online indexed collections**

Check out the following indexed collections for help in locating and viewing records:

- OpenArch.nl
- WieWasWie.nl
- FamilySearch.org
- Many province archives websites
- Some larger city archives

Handwritten indexes

- In the FamilySearch Catalog, try searching for the parish and looking at church records. If there is a handwritten index, you will see the word *Klapper* or *Index*. These are usually index cards, and can be organized by surname, patronym, or both.
- For church record indexes, try searching, in Dutch, for the word *Klapper* or *Index*, followed by the record type (*dopen, trouwen, or begraven*) and the name of the parish.

## **READING CIVIL REGISTRATION RECORDS**

Each civil registration record typically includes the name, age, occupation, and residence of the individuals who appear in the record.

When reading a foreign-language document, a good method of interpreting the document is to:

1. Identify names
2. Identify dates
3. Identify action verbs
4. Identify relationship words
5. Identify places
6. Identify ages

### **Geboorten – Births**

Dutch civil registration birth records typically include:

- Two dates: registration date (at the top of the record) and birth date (within the record)
- Informant (usually father or midwife)
- Mother
- Child
- Witnesses (usually two males)

### **Huwelijken – Marriages**

Dutch civil registration marriage records typically include:

- Multiple dates: marriage date (at the top of the record) and banns dates (within the record)
- Groom and bride
- Birthplaces of the groom and bride

- Parents of the groom and bride
- Any previous spouses
- Witnesses (usually four males) and relationship to the groom or bride, if any

### **Overlijdens – Deaths**

Dutch civil registration death records typically include:

- Two dates: registration date (at the top of the record) and death date (within the record)
- Informant (usually father or midwife)
- Deceased
- Parents and/or spouse of the deceased
- Witnesses (usually two males)

## **READING CHURCH RECORDS**

The most common church records include *dopen* (baptisms), *trouwen* (marriages), *begraven* (burials), and *lidmaten* (list of parish members).

### **Dopen – baptisms**

Dutch baptism records typically include:

- Name of the baptized
- Date of baptism, and sometimes date of birth
- Name of the parents, or at least the father
- Names of witnesses/godparents

### **Trouwen – marriages**

Dutch church marriage records typically include:

- Date of marriage
- Names of the bride and groom
- Legal status (single or widowed). If widowed, the previous spouse may be listed.
- Place of birth

### **Begraven – burials**

Dutch burial records typically include:

- Burial date
- Name of deceased
- Spouse of deceased
- Age of deceased, particularly if a child
- Parents of deceased child
- Tax paid (determined by if the deceased was an adult or child, and ability to pay)