

Words ending in -i

There are many types of words ending in *-i* in Finnish. Uusi kielemme has an overview of [old versus new words](#) ending in *-i*. While this file is about the same topic, this language lesson doesn't cover everything that's in that article.

1. Types of words ending in -i

Why should you know about the different word types?

Finnish is a language where you add cases to the end of words. These endings can cause changes to happen to the word: letters can disappear or be replaced. Sometimes the whole word changes. Knowing the type a word belongs to can help you inflect it correctly. That's not to say that this knowledge is 100 % necessary, but many learners feel it helps them.

Main types of Finnish words ending in -i

- Old words
 - Old words ending in *-i*
 - Old words ending in *-si*
 - Old words ending in *-ni, -li, -ri*
- New words

	OLD			NEW
	kivi	pieni	käsi	tuoli
T-plural	kivet	pienet	kädet	tuolit
Missä	kivessä	pienessä	kädessä	tuolissa
Mihin	kiveen	pieneen	käteen	tuoliin
Partitive	kiveä	pientä	kättä	tuolia

For this lesson, we will ignore the added difficulty of the partitive plural. We will address what additional changes are involved there in a different lesson.

2. Old versus New

How to know whether a two-syllable word is old or new?

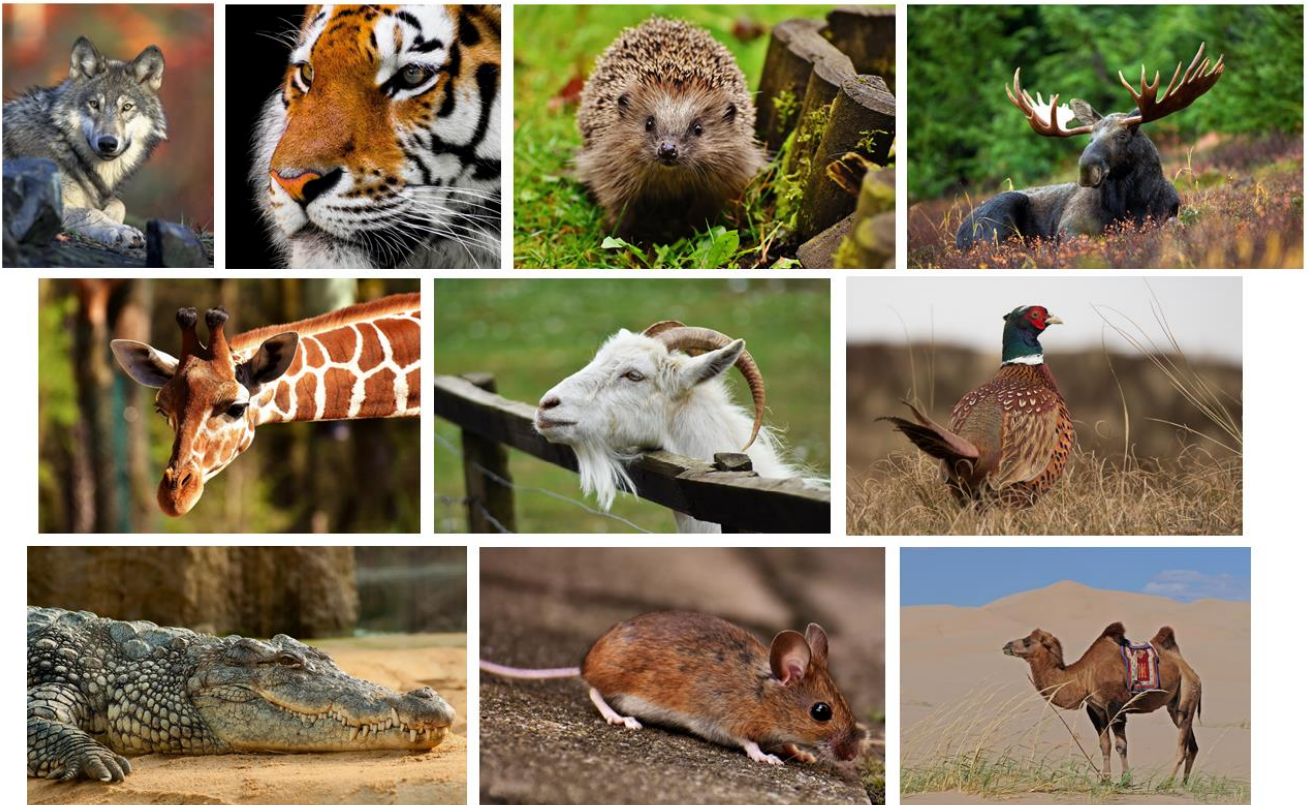
First, when we say a word is old or new, what we're referring to is basically whether the word is an old Finnish word or whether it's been adopted from another language into Finnish. Loanwords can be so old you can't recognise them as loanwords anymore, or so young that there's absolutely no doubt (eg. *banaani* or *printteri*).

Figuring out whether a word is old or new is something most learners of Finnish struggle with, because it influences the word's inflection. Luckily, there are some things that can help you.

2.1. Nature words

One thing that will help you is to look at nature: old Finnish words are often things that are found in **nature**, as Finns have been naming these things **before** they came into contact with other cultures.

This doesn't mean that **all** nature words are old. Can you guess which animals of the picture below are old words and which words were borrowed from other languages? You don't even need to know the Finnish word in order to divide these animals in old vs. new.



Answers:

English	Finnish	Age	Inflects like...
tiger	tiikeri	new	tuoli
giraffe	kirahvi	new	tuoli
crocodile	krokotiili	new	tuoli
camel	kameli	new	tuoli
phaesant	fasaani	new	tuoli
hedgehog	siili	new	tuoli
moose	hirvi	old	kivi
goat	vuohi	old	pieni
mouse	hiiri	old	pieni
wolf	susi	old	käsi

You likely got *tiikeri*, *kirahvi*, *krokotiili*, *kameli* and *fasaani* correct: they are **new** words because:

- they're not native animals to Finnish nature
- their Finnish name is clearly recognisable if you know some other languages, and
- they all have three or more syllables (which isn't typical for most old Finnish words)

Likewise, *susi*, *hiiri*, *vuohi* and *hirvi* are **old** words because:

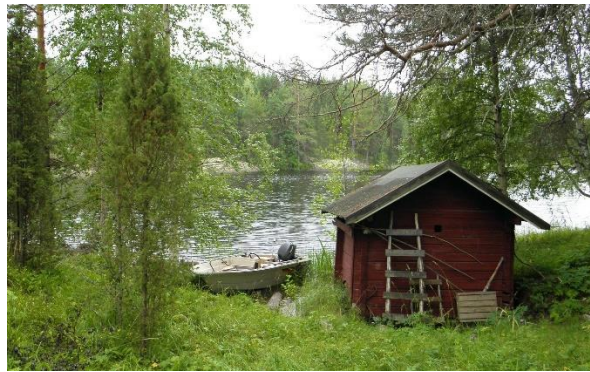
- they're native animals to Finnish nature
- their Finnish names don't immediately look like loanwords
- they are made up of two syllables (which is typical for old Finnish words)

The only one that's a bit iffy is **hedgehog** aka *siili*. This looks like it could be an old word, but it doesn't get inflected like one. These kinds of unclear words will be part of your journey towards fluency.

Indicators of a word's age

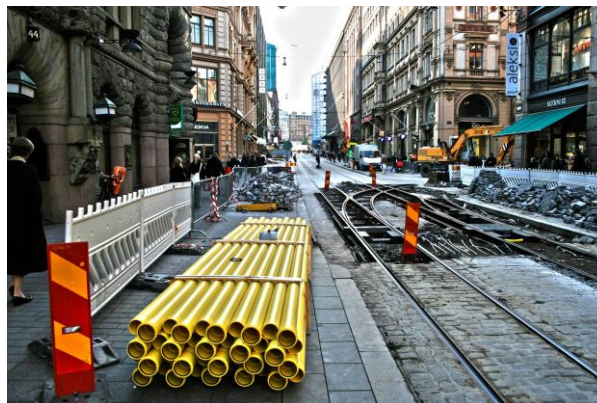
Old words

- ❖ **Nature words** are often old Finnish words, provided they are things that existed in Finnish nature 3000 years ago. This includes most body parts.
- ❖ **Short words** are more likely to be old words. A word is considered short when it has two syllables.



New words

- ❖ **Modern things** usually are new words. It can be hard to decide if something is “modern” because we’re looking as far back as 3000 years ago.
- ❖ **Loanwords** are new words. If a word looks similar to a word in English, you can be sure it’s a loanword. Older loanwords come from Russian and Swedish, so you won’t also be able to tell that they’re loanwords if you don’t know these languages.
- ❖ **Longer words** are nearly always new words. A word is considered long when it has three or more syllables.



... and sometimes you just can't tell!

Let's see whether you can figure out if the things in this picture are old or new!



Locate the following things in the picture above! Are they old or new words?

järvi	kanootti	vuori	pilvi
lumi	kuusi	turisti	lippalakki
kasvi	nurmi	vesi	melontaliivi
käsi	kärki	uinti	kylki

Answers:

English	Finnish	Age	Inflects like...
canoe	kanootti	new	tuoli
cap	lippalakki	new	tuoli
kayaking vest	melontaliivi	new	tuoli
tourist	turisti	new	tuoli
swimming	uinti	new	tuoli
plant	kasvi	new	tuoli
lake	järvi	old	kivi
tip, point	kärki	old	kivi
cloud	pilvi	old	kivi
grass	nurmi	old	kivi
side	kylki	old	kivi
mountain	vuori	old	pieni
snow	lumi	old	pieni
hand	käsi	old	käsi
water	vesi	old	käsi
spruce	kuusi	old	käsi

Did you get them right?

Words you probably put in the wrong category for understandable reasons:

❖ **Uinti**

I can see why you would think it's an old word: it's a short word, and it's something people have been doing forever. I'm assuming that the old way to express this has been *uiminen* and that *uinti* is a newer derivation type.

❖ **Kasvi**

This seems like an old word as well, doesn't it? It's short, and it's something in nature. However, it's derived from the verb *kasvaa*, and the internet tells me it's been invented by Samuel Roos in the 1850s. You can't know this.

These two words show us that if a word looks like it's a clear derivative from a verb (like *uinti* ~ *uida* and *kasvi* ~ *kasvaa*), it is possible that it is a newly derived word.

Let's try to sort through the following words one method at a time! Check how you did on the next page after completing each step!

1. **Step one:** find all the words of **three or more syllables**. Those words are all without a doubt **new** words.
2. **Step two:** find all the words that **look a little like English words** (or Swedish or Russian if you know these languages). Those words are all likely to be **new** words.
3. **Step three:** find all words that are obviously things that were around 3000 years ago. Those are most likely **old** words. This step (unlike the first two) requires you to understand what each word means.
4. **Step four:** find all the “new” inventions , things that weren't around 3000 years ago.

appelsiini	arkkitehti	banaani	bussi
hauki	helmi	pankki	hiiri
hirvi	hissi	huuli	insinööri
joki	jonglööri	jousi	järvi
kahvi	kassi	kasvi	kieli
kivi	kortti	koti	krokotiili
kuori	käsi	lahti	laki
tuoli	lasi	lehti	likööri
lohi	lääkäri	teksti	meri

Solutions:

- ❖ **Step one**, find the words with three or more syllables, which are **new** words:

appelsiini, arkkitehti, banaani, insinööri, jonglööri, krokotiili, likööri, lääkäri

- ❖ **Step two**, find the words that look like English, which are **new** words:

bussi (bus)

pankki (bank)

teksti (text)

lasi (glass – less clear, understandable if you missed this one)

tuoli (stool, chair – less clear, understandable if you missed this one)

kahvi (coffee – less clear, understandable if you missed this one)



- ❖ **Step three**, find things that were around 3000 years ago, which are likely **old** words.

hauki (pike, type of fish native to Finland)

hiiri (mouse, animal native to Finland)

hirvi (elk, animal native to Finland)

lohi (salmon, animal native to Finland)

käsi (hand, body part)

huuli (lip, body part)

kieli (tongue, body part – also means “language”)

joki (river, old nature word)

järvi (lake, old nature word)

kivi (stone, old nature word)

lahti (bay, cove, old nature word)

lehti (leaf, old nature word – also means “newspaper”)

meri (sea, old nature word)

kuori (shell, old nature word)

jousi (bow, old tool, existed 3000 years ago)

lapsi (child)



❖ **Step four**, find all the new inventions, which are likely new words.

hissi (elevator, clearly new, requires electricity etc)

kahvi (coffee, came to Europa in the 16th century)

kortti (card, paper was only made from the 13th century)

lasi (glass, was invented quite early but didn't make it to Finland until much later)

– maybe you also marked *kassi*, *laki* and *tuoli* here, which wouldn't be wrong but they're less clear as new inventions.

These four steps might have left you with the following words. These are the ones that you were likely to get wrong. Some of these are clearly ones that you just couldn't have known:

- ❖ *helmi*: pearl, **old** word, you might have guessed this based on *helmikuu* “February”
- ❖ *kassi*: bag, **new** word, if you know Swedish, you recognised it as a loanword “kasse”
- ❖ *kasvi*: plant, **new** word, derivate from the verb *kasvaa*
- ❖ *koti*: home, **new** word, the idea is old, but the word is new (*koto* and *kota* are older)
- ❖ *tuoli*: chair, **new** word, borrowed from the ancient Swedish word “stoll” – “stol”
- ❖ *laki*: law, **new** word, borrowed from the ancient Swedish word “lagh” – “lag”

End result: new vs old

appelsiini	arkkitehti	banaani	bussi
hauki	helmi	pankki	hiiri
hirvi	hissi	huuli	insinööri
joki	jonglööri	jousi	järvi
kahvi	kassi	kasvi	kieli
kivi	kortti	koti	krokotiili
kuori	käsi	lahti	laki
tuoli	lasi	lehti	likööri
lohi	lääkäri	teksti	meri



Old or new words?

penkki	lumi	bussi	lehti
laituri	koti	lasi	vuori
kuusi	kyltti	pilvi	veturi
konduktööri	nurmi	mökki	takki
ovi	maali	lenkkari	kaupunki

Solutions:

New: penkki (bench), bussi (bus), laiturii (platform), koti (home), lasi (glass), kyltti (sign), veturi (locomotive), konduktööri (conductor), mökki (cottage), takki (coat), maali (paint), lenkkari (sneaker), kaupunki (city)

Old: lumi (snow), lehti (leaf), vuori (mountain), kuusi (spruce), pilvi (cloud), nurmi (grass), ovi (door)

As you will see below, we're not out of the water just yet. While we now know which words are old and new, we are still dealing with [differences in the inflection](#).

Inflection of the old words

	OLD			
	hirvi (moose)	hiiri (mouse)	vuohi (goat)	susi (wolf)
T-plural	hirvet	hiiret	vuohet	sudet
Missä	hirvessä	hiiressä	vuohessa	sudessa
Mihin	hirveen	hiireen	vuohon	suteen
Partitive	hirveä	hiirtä	vuoh h ta	sut s ta

Inflection types of old words

1. Kivi-type words

Words like *hirvi*, *kivi*, *suomi*, *pilvi*

The final *-i* changes into *-e* in all cases.

2. Pieni-type words (-li/-ni/-ri words)

Words like *hiiri*, *vuohi*, *uni*, *veri*, *huuli*, *saari*

These words generally end in *-li*, *-ni* or *-ri*

- ❖ The final *-i* changes into *-e* in all cases except the partitive
- ❖ For the partitive you will replace the final *-i* with *-ta/tä*

3. Käsi-type words (-si : -de- : -te- words)

Words like *susi*, *vuosi*, *kansi*, *reisi*

These words end in *-si*

- ❖ The final *-si* changes into *-de-* in all cases except the partitive and the *mihin*-form
- ❖ For the partitive, you will replace the *-si* with *-tta/ttä*
- ❖ For the *mihin*-form, you will replace the *-si* with *-teen*

Inflection of the new words

	NEW					
	tiikeri	kameli	kirahvi	krokotiili	fasaani	siili
T-plural	tiikerit	kamelit	kirahvit	krokotiilit	fasaanit	siilit
Missä	tiikerissä	kamelissa	kirahvissa	krokotiilissa	fasaanissa	siilissä
Mihin	tiikeriin	kameliin	kirahviin	krokotiiliin	fasaaniin	siiliin
Partitive	tiikeriä	kamelia	kirahvia	krokotiilia	fasaania	siiliä

With **new words**, we're looking at just one inflection type: these words all inflect in the same way, as you can see above. If we added the [partitive plural](#) into the mix, we'd have more to worry about. *Tiikeri* would become *tiikereitä*, while *fasaani* would become *fasaaneja*. Those will be address in another lesson. You can read the theory [here](#).

That's it for this lesson! I hope you found this approach helpful! All images are from [pixabay.com](#), a great source for royalty free images.