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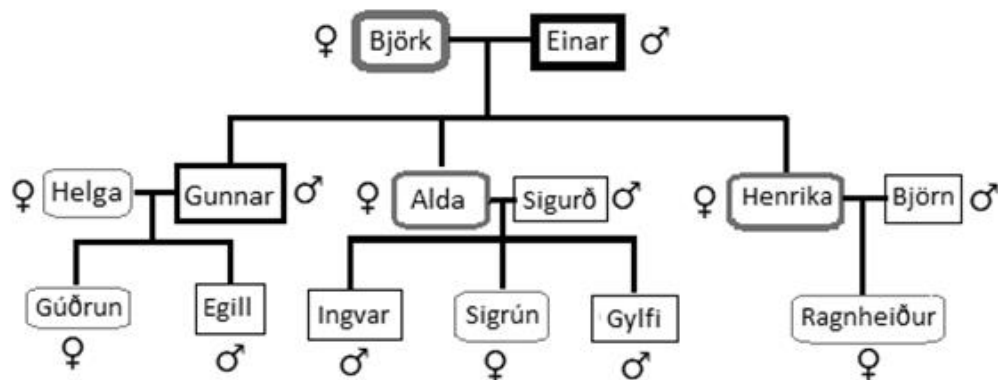


Problem 7. Icelandic Relations

According to Icelandic writer and translator Alda Sigmundsdóttir "Icelanders tend to be fanatically precise when it comes to describing family connections". Here's an example.



Grandparents Björk and Einar have three adult children, Gunnar, Alda and Henrika, who in turn are married with children. Their family tree is shown below. In this tree, Björk and Einar's children are in a bold textboxes with their spouses marked with lighter boxes; males are shown in square boxes accompanied by the ♂ symbol, while females are in rounded boxes accompanied by the ♀ symbol. The letter ð is pronounced like the 'th' in English "brother".

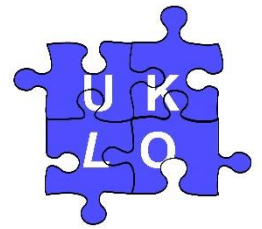


Here are some statements that apply to the family shown here.

- Alda er föðursystir Gúðrunur.
- Gúðrun er systir Egills.
- Egill er bróðir Gúðrunur.
- Gunnar er faðir Gúðrunur.
- Gúðrun er bróðurdóttir Aldar.
- Sigurð er eiginmaður Aldar.
- Egill er sonarsonur Björkur.
- Egill er bróðursonur Henrikar.
- Gúðrun er frænki Egills.
- Einar er frændi Gúðrunur.
- Egill er frændi Gúðrunur.
- Gúðrun og Helga eru mæðgur.
- Alda, Henrika og Björn eru mæðgur.
- Egill og Gunnar eru feðgar.
- Gúðrun og Gunnar eru feðgin.
- Helga og Egill eru mæðgin.
- Henrika er kona Björns.
- Helga er móðurbróður kona Ragnheiðurs.

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Q.7.1. Complete the following sentences with the most precise appropriate Icelandic relationship word.

1. Ingvar er Sigrúnur.
2. Ingvar er Einars.
3. Egill er Aldar.
4. Sigrún er Einars.
5. Henrika er Sigrúnur.
6. Gúðrun er Björkur.
7. Sigurð er Gúðrunur.
8. Ingvar, Gylfi og Alda eru

Q.7.2. As it happens, Helga has a sister, Jóhanna, and a brother, Magnus. Jóhanna is married to Jóhannes. In Icelandic, this means that:

- Magnus er mágur Gunnars.
- Jóhanna er mágkona Gunnars.
- Jóhannes er svilar Gunnars.

You meet Magda and she describes herself thus: “Ég er svilkona Gunnars.” Explain in English what Magda’s relationship to Gunnar is.

Q.7.3. If you know that “Björk er tengdamóðir Helgar”, complete these statements:

1. Einar er Helgar.
2. Björn er Helgar.
3. Björn er Gúðrunur.

Q.7.4. Give another simpler and more general Icelandic word to describe Björn’s relationship to Gúðrun.

Q.7.5. Gunnar’s surname is Einarsson, but Alda’s and Henrika’s is Einarsdóttir. What are Gúðrun’s, Egill’s and Gylfi’s full names?

1. Gúðrun:
2. Egill:
3. Gylfi:

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Solution and marking.

Intermediate answer sheet

Scoring (max 17)

- General
 - Earlier versions of this solution sheet contained an error in #7.1.2, now corrected.
 - No half marks; insist on correct forms for the underlined syllables
 - Ignore other spelling errors.
- 7.1: 1 point for each correct answer (max 8)
- 7.2: 2 points (max 2 points)
 - Accept: just X (from the answer sheet) or She/Magda is X.
- 7.3: 1 point for each correct answer (max 3)
- 7.4: 1 point (max 1)
- 7.5: 1 point for each correct answer (max 3)
 - Accept just the surname (Gunnarsdóttir etc) without the first name.

Q.7.1.

1. Ingvar er bróðir Sigrúnur.
2. Ingvar er dóttursonur Einars. [corrected from: systursonur]
3. Egill er bróðursonur Aldar.
4. Sigrún er dótturdóttir Einars.
5. Henrika er móðursystir Sigrúnur.
6. Gúðrun er sonardóttir Björkur.
7. Sigurð er föðursystur eiginmaður Gúðrunur.
8. Ingvar, Gylfi og Alda eru mæðgin.

Q.7.2. (She/Magda is) X = Gunnar's brother-in-law's wife; or: the wife of Gunnar's brother-in-law, or other paraphrases; or: the wife of the brother of the wife of Gunnar; or Gunnar's wife's brother's wife; or some equivalent combination.

Q.7.3.

1. Einar er tengdafaðir Helgar.
2. Björn er svilar Helgar.
3. Björn er föðursystur eiginmaður Gúðrunur.

Q.7.4. Give another simpler and more general Icelandic word to describe Björn's relationship to Gúðrun.

frændi

Q.7.5. Gunnar's surname is Einarsson, but Alda's and Henrika's is Einarsdóttir. What are Gúðrun's, Egill's and Gylfi's full names?

- Gúðrun: Gúðrun Gunnarsdóttir
- Egill: Egill Gunnarsson

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- Gylfi: Gylfi Sigurðsson

Advanced answer sheet

Scoring (max 17)

- General
 - Earlier versions of this solution sheet contained an error in #7.1.2, now corrected.
 - No half marks; insist on correct forms for the underlined syllables
 - Ignore other spelling errors.
- 7.1: 1 point for each correct answer (max 8)
- 7.2: 2 points (max 2 points)
 - Accept: just X (from the answer sheet) or She/Magda is X.
- 7.3: 1 point for each correct answer (max 3)
- 7.4: 1 point (max 1)
- 7.5: 1 point for each correct answer (max 3)
 - Accept just the surname (Gunnarsdóttir etc) without the first name.

<u>7.1.1.</u> bróðir	2. dóttursonur [not: systursonur]
3. bróðursonur	4. dótturdóttir
5. móðursystir	6. sonardóttir
7. föðursystur eiginmaður	8. mæðgin
<u>7.2.</u> (She/Magda is) X = Gunnar's brother-in-law's wife; or: the wife of Gunnar's brother-in-law, or other paraphrases; or: the wife of the brother of the wife of Gunnar; or Gunnar's wife's brother's wife; or some equivalent combination.	
<u>7.3.</u> 1. tengdafaðir	2. svilar
3. föðursystur eiginmaður	<u>7.4.</u> frændi
<u>7.5.1</u> Gúðrun Gunnarsdóttir	2. Egill Gunnarsson
3. Gylfi Sigurðsson	

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Commentary

Icelandic has the following family terms:

- frændi = any male relative (related through blood or marriage)
- frænki = any female relative (related through blood or marriage)

Aunts & Uncles

Icelandic kinship term:	English translation / description:
móðurbróðir	maternal uncle (lit. mother's brother)
föðurbróðir	paternal uncle (lit. father's brother)
móðursystir	maternal aunt (lit. mother's sister)
föðursystir	paternal aunt (lit. father's sister)
móðurbróður kona	maternal uncle's wife (lit. mother's brother's wife)
föðurbróður kona	paternal uncle's wife (lit. father's brother's wife)
móðursystur eiginmaður	maternal aunt's husband (lit. mother's sister's husband)
föðursystur eiginmaður	paternal aunt's husband (lit. father's sister's husband)

There is no single word for “aunt” or “uncle” and Icelandic focuses only on the blood relatives – the parent’s siblings in this case. As a result, nieces and nephews are described in a similar fashion, taking the sibling relationship as a starting point:

Nieces & Nephews

Icelandic kinship term:	English translation / description:
systursonur	nephew (lit. sister's son)
bróðursonur	nephew (lit. brother's son)
systurdóttir	niece (lit. sister's daughter)
bróurdóttir	niece (lit. brother's daughter)

Grandchildren:

Icelandic kinship term:	English translation / description:
dótturdóttir	grandchild (lit. daughter's daughter)
sonardóttir	grandchild (lit. son's daughter)
sonarsonur	grandchild (lit. son's son)
sonardóttir	grandchild (lit. son's daughter)

In-laws:

Icelandic kinship term:	English translation / description:
tengdamóðir	mother-in-law
tengdafaðir	father-in-law
mágur	brother-in-law (the blood relative, brother of spouse only; not used for the husband of a spouse's sister)
mágkona	sister-in-law (the blood relative, the sister of spouse only; not used for the wife of a spouse's brother)

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svilur	brother-in-law (the husband of your spouse's sister; related through marriage; also relationship you have with a person who is married to the sibling of the person you are married to)
svilkona	sister-in-law (the wife of your spouse's brother; related through marriage; also relationship with a person who is married to the sibling of the person you are married to)

Parents and Children:

Unlike English, Icelandic has also kinship terms to refer to a mother and daughter(s) or son(s), and to a father and daughter(s) and son(s). These terms are as follows:

Icelandic kinship terms:	English translation / description:
mæðgur	mother and her daughter or daughters
feðgar	father and his son or sons
mæðgin	mother and her son or sons
feðgin	father and his daughter or daughters

NOTE on case forms:

Icelandic nouns are declined for different case forms. In this puzzle, candidates must distinguish between the nominative (subject forms) and the genitive (possessive) case forms. When the terms for “aunt” and “uncle” for example are used, the first part of the compound noun, must be in the genitive case, just as in English “father’s sister” has a possessive marker on “father”. Many of the kinship nouns (as the table below demonstrates) are irregular in their declension, but the data given in the problem should give candidates sufficient information to ensure correct case endings are used.

Noun in nominative case:	Noun in genitive case:
faðir	föður
móðir	móður
bróðir	bróður
systir	systur
sonur ¹	sonar
dóttir	dóttur

References:

Meda Gunnarsdóttir. (2015) *Icelandic Language: The Icelandic Phrasebook*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

R. T. Merrill (1964) Notes on Icelandic Kinship Terminology in *American Anthropologist* 6, pp. 867-872.

¹ Yes – really! See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sonur> . Nominative –ur, genitive –ar, unlike all the other nouns.

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Alda Sigmundsdóttir (2016) *The Little book of Icelandic. On the Idiosyncrasies, Delights and Sheer Tyranny of the Icelandic Language*. Little Books Publishing.