
Discovering Swedish



EPISODE 4

**“What is that?”
and
“I don’t know...”**



Dialogue

Swedish

Anna: Johanna! Äntligen... Var tåget försenat?

Johanna: Ja, tåget var försenat.

José: Hej! José.

Johanna: Johanna. Trevligt att träffas.

José: Detsamma.* Hur var resan?

Johanna: Tack, den var bra.

José: Trevligt att höra. Jag--- eh?!?! Vad är det?

Anna: Vad är vad?

José: Det. Det där borta!

Anna: Menar du cykeln? Den röda cykeln?

Johanna: Eller menar du den gröna bilen?

José: Nej, nej. Jag menar den stora saken på räls?

Anna: Åh! Jag vet inte vad det heter på svenska.

Johanna: Jag vet! Det är en spårvagn.**

José: Åh! Är det en spårvagn?

Johanna: Ja, det är en spårvagn.

José: Jaså... eh? uhm? Varför?

Anna &

Johanna: Huh?

English

Anna: Johanna! Finally... Was the train delayed?

Johanna: Yes, the train was delayed.

José: Hello. [I'm] José.

Johanna: [I'm] Johanna. Pleased to meet you.

José: You too. How was the trip?

Johanna: Thank you, it was good.

José: Good to hear. I--- eh?!?! What is that?

Anna: What is what?

José: That. That over there!

Anna: Do you mean the bicycle? The red bicycle?

Johanna: Or do you mean the green car?

José: No, no. I mean the big thing on rails.

Anna: Oh! I don't know what it is called in Swedish.

Johanna: I know! It is a tram.

José: Oh! Is it a tram?

Johanna: Yes, it is a tram.

José: I see... eh? uhm? Why?

Anna &

Johanna: Huh?

Notes: * Many people say 'tack detsamma', which is a slightly more polite way of putting it. However, in some situations 'tack detsamma' is recommended. If someone, for instance, were to wish you a good weekend, you would normally respond by saying 'tack detsamma' instead of just 'detsamma'.

** Due to Gothenburg being built largely on clay, it is supposedly very difficult to construct an underground tunnel system for a tube service. Instead, Gothenburg relies on an extensive tram system, as well as bus services. Gothenburg has by far the most tram services of any city in Sweden.

Key vocabulary

Swedish	English
äntligen	finally
(en) spårvagn	tram
(en) resa	trip, journey
bra	good
hur	how
trevlig -t trevligt att höra	nice, pleasant good to hear
höra	hear
vad	what
(en) cykel	bicycle
(en) räls	rails (that a train or tram travels on)
(en) sak	thing
detsamma	you too

Key sentences

Swedish	English
Hur var resan?	How was the trip/journey?
Vad är det?	What is that?
Menar du den stora cykeln?	Do you mean the large bicycle?
Vad heter det här/där på svenska?	What is this/that called in Swedish?

Grammar Explanations

Jag vet (inte) + interrogative ProN.

Saying that you know something usually follows the same basic structure as English.

Example:

I know what it is.

Jag vet vad det är.

I know how to drive a car // literary: I know how one drives a car

Jag vet hur man kör bil.

I know who you are.

Jag vet vem du är.

When negating this sentence pattern, something happens that is not reflected in English. In English, you place the negation marker before 'know', like so: *I do not know...* In Swedish, however, the negation is placed after 'vet', like this: *Jag vet inte...*

I don't know what it is.

Jag vet **inte** vad det är.

I don't know how to drive a car.

Jag vet **inte** hur man kör bil.

I don't know who you are.

Jag vet **inte** vem du är.

When you describe abilities, i.e. things you can/can't do, you usually use another construction in Swedish. We will cover this second construction in greater detail in a later episode, so this is just a pre-taste of what is to come.

I can sing.

Jag kan sjunga.

I cannot sing.

Jag kan **inte** sjunga.

Det här/det där

'Det här' and 'det där' often function as the equivalents of the English 'this (thing here)' and 'that (thing over there)'. Literally, 'det här/det där' would be translated as 'this here/that there'. As we mentioned in episode 2, Swedish nouns can have one of two genders: common gender (nouns that take 'en') and neuter (nouns that take 'ett'). We will now see how the two genders affect 'det här/det där':

	<u>Common gender</u>	<u>Neuter</u>
This	Den här	Det här
That	Den där	Det där

Vad heter det här/det där på + language?

This phrase is extremely helpful when learning Swedish. You simply point at something you want to know the Swedish name for, and use this sentence pattern:

What is this called in Swedish?
Vad heter det här på svenska?

What is that over there called in Swedish?
Vad heter det där på svenska?

When you are asking what something is called in Swedish, chances are you do not know if the thing you ask about is a common noun (en-noun) or a neuter (ett-noun). But you do not have to worry about it, for we commonly use 'det här/det där' when asking what something is called in Swedish. I say 'commonly' because, of course, there are some exceptions. For instance, if you ask about the name of a book, you could say 'vad heter den här boken?' In this case, 'den' must be used because the object, common noun 'boken', is part of the sentence.

If you want to ask what something is called in another language, simply exchange 'svenska' for the language of your choice. See episode 1 for a list of many different languages in Swedish.

Example:

What is this called in English?
Vad heter det här på engelska?

What is that called in Japanese?
Vad heter det där på japanska?

Vocabulary List

Colours Vocabulary List			
Adjective (en)	Adjective (ett)	Adjective (plural)	English
gul	gult	gula	yellow
röd	rött	röda	red
blå	blått	blåa	blue
grön	grönt	gröna	green
svart	svart	svarta	black
vit	vitt	vita	white
brun	brunt	bruna	brown