

A Crash Course in Polish: Words You Can Use

William F. Hoffman, 737 Hartfield Dr., North Aurora IL 60542-8917

E-mail: WFHoffman@prodigy.net

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I don't think anyone here believes for a moment that I can teach you Polish in 90 minutes. I can't even teach you how to pronounce Polish in 90 minutes! So what are we doing here?

As many researchers have discovered for themselves, you don't have to be fluent in Polish in order to make sense of documents and records written in it. To actually speak any language well you need instant recall of thousands of words and forms; but to pick out the pertinent facts in a document you need only recognize a few hundred words, or know where to find them quickly. You can do quite well if you're familiar with the most basic terms that show up again and again, especially if you've developed some facility for recognizing and applying the basic patterns we call grammar. It's only tough if you have to look up *every single word* in a dictionary; every third word may be time-consuming, but it's tolerable. And the more you work with the language, the more words you recognize and don't have to look up.

The idea behind this talk is simple: to concentrate on certain terms, forms, and phrases that tend to show up a lot—especially ones you may have trouble finding in a dictionary. I have gone through the translation guide Jonathan Shea and I wrote, *In Their Words ... Volume I: Polish* (sorry, but I had to plug my book!), and I copied sections that discussed terms and forms you are especially likely to run into. I also added a few items that struck me as potentially useful. Of course, our book offers much more than this; but even if you have the book, this handout might be useful in that it gives you some basics to concentrate on. (And if you don't have the book, this will show you what you're missing. Insidious, ain't I?).

The “Chopping Block”

Let's start with an item we call the “Chopping Block,” designed to help you cope with grammar. (We will pause for a moment as everyone in the room screams in horror, “Grammar! Oh, God, no!”).

Now I admit, some folks have no talent for grammar at all. If you're one of them, perhaps you'll want to ignore this.

Still, the idea here isn't to teach you grammar; it's to help you recognize endings added to nouns and adjectives. Forms with those endings don't usually appear in dictionaries, and the inability to recognize those forms is one of the main causes of frustration for researchers. All the Chopping Block does is help you spot endings and point you toward the forms you will find in your dictionary. In other words, you won't find *księgach* in most dictionaries; the Chopping Block is meant to help you recognize the nominative form that you will find: *księga*.

There are seven so-called “cases” in Polish, one of which, the Vocative, seldom plays any significant role in texts a researcher is likely to deal with. The other cases, and the abbreviations used for them in the Chopping Block, are: N(ominative), G(enitive), D(ative), A(ccusative), I(nstrumental), and L(ocative). If you can, it's a good idea to learn how these cases are used. But the main thing to know is that they cause endings to be added to words according to how they're used in a sentence. Once you recognize a word's form, you can usually figure out what it means.

Other abbreviations used in the Chopping Block are: *sing.* singular, *pl.* plural, *masc.* masculine, *fem.* feminine, *neut.* neuter, and *adj.*, adjective.

The Chopping Block

Ending	Case(s)	Part of speech	Example	Replace with	Result
-a	G/A <i>masc. sing.</i> G <i>neut. sing.</i> N/A <i>neut. pl.</i>	noun	syn Jana do mieszkania nazwa miasta pola ciała	<i>nothing</i> -e -o -e -o	Jan mieszkanie miasto pole ciało
-ą	A/I <i>fem. sing.</i>	noun/adj.	Kwaśniewską	-a	Kwaśniewska
-ach	L <i>pl.</i>	noun	w dokumentach w księgach w Uhercach w Stawiskach w miastach w Borzymach	<i>nothing</i> -a -e -i -o -y	dokument księga Uherce Stawiski miasto Borzymy
-ami	I <i>pl.</i>	noun	materiałami cyframi zebraniem między Rudnikami słowami za Borzymami	<i>nothing</i> -a -e -i -o -y	materiał cyfra zebranie Rudniki słowo Borzymy
-ę	A <i>fem. sing.</i>	noun	Annę	-a	Anna
-(i)e	D/L <i>sing.</i> N/A <i>pl.</i> A <i>sing./pl.</i>	noun adj.	w Krakowie w Warszawie córce* w Wesołowie dobre	<i>nothing</i> -a -a* -o -y	Kraków Warszawa córka Wesółowo dobry
-ego	G/A <i>sing.</i> <i>masc./neut.</i>	adj. (also if used as noun)	syn Antoniego Dębskiego z Porytego woźnego	<i>nothing</i> -e -y	Antoni Dębski Poryte woźny
-(i)ej	G/D/L <i>fem. sing.</i>	adj. (also if used as noun)	Olszewskiej w Korczowej	-a -a	Olszewska Korczowa
-em	I <i>sing. masc./neut.</i> L <i>sing. masc./neut.</i>	noun adj.	między Janem w Zakopanem	<i>nothing</i> -e	Jan Zakopane
-emu	D <i>sing. masc./neut.</i>	adj. (also if used as noun)	Antoniemu Alojzemu	<i>nothing</i> -y	Antoni Alojzy
-i	G/D/L <i>fem. sing.</i> , G <i>sing./pl.</i> , N/A <i>pl.</i>	noun	w Łodzi syn Jadwigi z Pogorzeli	<i>nothing</i> -a -e	Łódź Jadwiga Pogorzele
-ich	G/A/L <i>pl.</i>	adj.	z Chrzanowskich	-i or -a	Chrzanowski
-im	I/L <i>sing.</i> , D <i>pl.</i>	adj. (also if used as noun)	z Antonim Dębskim Górskim	<i>delete -m</i> <i>delete -m</i>	Antoni Dębski Górski
-imi	I <i>pl.</i>	adj.	dalekimi	<i>delete -mi</i>	daleki
-om	D <i>pl.</i>	noun	Nowakom Wałęsom polom Stawiskom Moniuszkom Borzynom	<i>nothing</i> -a -e -i -o -y	Nowak Wałęsa pole Stawiski Moniuszko Borzymy

* see Consonant Alternations, page 4

-ów	G/A <i>masc. pl.</i>	noun	z Charłanów z Maciorów z Mikłaszów z Krysiaków z Mołodziejków z Młynów	<i>nothing</i> -a -e -i -o -y	Charłan Maciora Mikłasze Krysiaki Mołodziejko Młyny
-owi	D <i>masc. sing.</i>	noun	Janowi	<i>nothing</i>	Jan
-owie	N <i>masc. pl.</i>	noun	panowie, Zarebowie	<i>nothing, -a, -o</i>	pan, Zareba
-u	G/D/L <i>sing., masc./neut.</i>	noun	w Toruniu w Zaskrodziu w Ryszczewku	<i>nothing</i> -e -o	Toruń Zaskrodzie Ryszczewko
-y	G/D/L <i>fem. sing., N/G/A pl.</i>	noun	w Bydgoszczy syn Karoliny	<i>nothing</i> -a	Bydgoszcz Karolina
-ych	G/AL <i>pl.</i>	adj.	w Starych Gutach	-e	Stare Guty
-ym	I/L <i>sing., D pl.</i>	adj. (also if used as noun)	w Starym Mieście o Wincentym	-e -y	Stare Miasto Wincenty
-ymi	I <i>pl.</i>	adj.	między innymi	-y	inny

In the genitive plural of many nouns (mainly feminine and neuter), grammar calls for no endings. To get the nominative form, one must **add** an ending, rather than delete one:

ze Stawisk → Stawiski z Kielc → Kielce ze Żdziar → Żdziary

In similar environments one may need to delete a “fill” or “epenthetic” vowel. This is a vowel inserted in some forms—usually between two consonants at the end of a word, to make the word easier to pronounce—that drops out in other forms.

z Borek → Borki z Ejszyszek → Ejszyszki

Conversely, fill vowels may have to be restored when deleting endings from nouns containing certain suffixes, notably *-iec* or *-ec* and *-ek*.

z Myszyńca (genitive) → Myszynie**c** w Myszyńcu (locative) → Myszynie**c**
z Sielca (genitive) → Siele**c** z Ugorka (genitive) → Ugore**k**
z Rynku (genitive) → Ryne**k** z Mazurków (genitive) → Mazure**k**

Dropping the *Kreska*

No, this isn’t an obscure Polish folk custom. The *kreska* is the accent placed over the consonants *ć*, *ń*, *ś*, and *ź*. When a noun ends with a *kreska* consonant, and grammar calls for adding an ending, the *kreska* is dropped and an **-i-** is inserted before the ending:

Staroń + ending *-ów* → Staroni**o**ów Poznań + ending *-u* → Poznani**u**
Krzywoś + ending *-ów* → Krzywosi**o**ów Łoś + ending *-a* → Łosi**a**

When you encounter such a name with an ending in the text of a document, you must delete both the ending and the inserted **-i-**, and restore the *kreska*, to arrive at the nominative form, the one that appears in a dictionary or gazetteer, or on a map.

Vowel Shifts and Alternations

The only feature of this complicated phonetic phenomenon likely to affect the researcher is the shift of the vowel *ó* to simple *o* when endings are attached. This will most often be encoun-

tered when dealing with the common place name ending *-ów*: Kraków → w Krakowie, Chrzanów → w Chrzanowie

Other possibilities, less frequently encountered, are *a ~ e*, *ą ~ ę*, and *ó/o ~ e*:

<i>a ~ e</i> :	Wierzchlas → w Wierzchlesie
<i>ą ~ ę</i> :	mąż → o mężu
<i>ó/o ~ e</i> :	kościół → w kościele or jezioro → o jeziorze

Consonant Alternations

Besides dealing with removing endings and substituting others, researchers also need to be aware of consonant alternations in the **stems** of nouns when certain endings are attached, especially in the locative singular case. Thus after prepositions such as *w* and *na* (among others) that indicate a location or status in which something is taking place (as opposed to change of location or status), nouns have locative case endings. Researchers need to recognize this because the phonetic shape of place names in documents may need to be altered one more time, even after the endings are removed, to arrive at the form of a place name given on a map or in a gazetteer. The most common of these alternations are:

	<i>Map name</i>	→	<i>Name in Locative</i>
<i>ch</i> → <i>sz</i>	Birwicha	→	w Birwisze
<i>d</i> → <i>dzi</i>	Piwoda	→	w Piwodzie
<i>g</i> → <i>dz</i>	Praga	→	w Pradze
<i>k</i> → <i>c</i>	Adamówka	→	w Adamówce
<i>ł</i> → <i>l</i>	Piła	→	w Pile
<i>r</i> → <i>rz</i>	Wara	→	w Warze
<i>ś</i> → <i>śl</i>	Jasło	→	w Jaśle
<i>sn</i> → <i>śni</i>	Krosno	→	w Krośnie
<i>st</i> → <i>ście</i>	Nowe Miasto	→	w Nowym Mieście
<i>t</i> → <i>ci</i>	Huta	→	w Hucie
<i>zd</i> → <i>ździ</i>	Gniazdo	→	w Gnieździe (note the <i>a</i> → <i>e</i> vowel change)
<i>zn</i> → <i>źni</i>	Pilzno	→	w Pilźnie

EXPRESSIONS OF TIME AND DATES

The following expressions, denoting parts of the day and the like, immediately follow the hour:

<i>po północy</i> — after midnight	<i>wieczorem</i> — in the evening
<i>po południu</i> — after noon	<i>w nocy</i> — at night
<i>przed północą</i> — before midnight	<i>o północy</i> — at midnight
<i>przed południem</i> — before noon	<i>w południu</i> — at noon
<i>rano</i> — morning	

So *o godzinie trzeciej po południu* is literally “at the 3rd hour after midday,” in other words, “at 3 p.m.” Record keepers sometimes chose different styles to express the same thought, so that you may see *o piątej godzinie rano*, “at five o’clock in the morning,” or *o piątej godzinie po północy*, “at five o’clock after midnight,” to designate 5 a.m.

Other time expressions:

dziś or *dzisiaj* — today
onegdaj — two days ago

przedwczoraj — the day before yesterday
wczoraj — yesterday

A variant of the above was to use the preposition *w* or *na* plus the word for day (*dzień*) in the locative case form *dniu* plus an adjectival form of the time expressions noted in the list above. This produces such expressions as:

w dniu dzisiejszym — today, literally “in the day of today”
w dniu wczorajszym — yesterday
w dniu przedwczorajszym — the day before yesterday
w dniu onegdajszym — two days ago

Another way of expressing the same thing was to use the genitive singular of *dzień*, “day,” plus the genitive masculine forms of the adjectives just shown, with no preposition, e. g., *dzisiejszego dnia*, “today,” and *wczorajszego dnia*, “yesterday.”

DATES AND NUMERALS

In modern Polish dates are usually given in the following order: day/month/year. But in 19th-century records the year is in first position, almost always written out in words, followed by the day and then the month (or vice versa), all with the appropriate case endings. The year is almost always marked by use of *roku* or *w roku*, meaning “in the year of...”

Names of the Months

	Nominative/Genitive	English		Nominative/Genitive	English
I	<i>styczeń, stycznia</i>	January	VII	<i>lipiec, lipca</i>	July
II	<i>luty, lutego</i>	February	VIII	<i>sierpień, sierpnia</i>	August
III	<i>marzec, marca</i>	March	IX	<i>wrzesień, września</i>	September
IV	<i>kwiecień, kwietnia</i>	April	X	<i>październik, października</i>	October
V	<i>maj, maja</i>	May	XI	<i>listopad, listopada</i>	November
VI	<i>czerwiec, czerwca</i>	June	XII	<i>grudzień, grudnia</i>	December

Numerals

	Cardinal	Ordinal		Cardinal	Ordinal
1	<i>jeden</i> (masc.), <i>jedna</i> (fem.), <i>jedno</i> (neut.)	<i>pierwszy</i>	13	<i>trzynaście</i>	<i>trzynasty</i>
2	<i>dwa, dwie</i>	<i>drugi</i>	14	<i>czternaście</i>	<i>czternasty</i>
3	<i>trzy</i>	<i>trzeci</i>	15	<i>piętnaście</i>	<i>piętnasty</i>
4	<i>cztery</i>	<i>czwarty</i>	16	<i>szesnaście</i>	<i>szesnasty</i>
5	<i>pięć</i>	<i>piąty</i>	17	<i>siedemnaście</i>	<i>siedemnasty</i>
6	<i>sześć</i>	<i>szósty</i>	18	<i>osiemnaście</i>	<i>osiemnasty</i>
7	<i>siedem</i> or <i>siedm</i>	<i>siódmy</i>	19	<i>dziewięćnaście</i>	<i>dziewiętnasty</i>
8	<i>osiem</i> or <i>ośm</i>	<i>ósmy</i>	20	<i>dwadzieścia</i>	<i>dwudziesty</i>
9	<i>dziewięć</i>	<i>dziewiąty</i>	21	<i>dwadzieścia jeden</i>	<i>dwudziesty pierwszy</i>
10	<i>dziesięć</i>	<i>dziesiąty</i>	22	<i>dwadzieścia dwa</i>	<i>dwudziesty drugi</i>
11	<i>jedenaste</i>	<i>jedenasty</i>	23	<i>dwadzieścia trzy</i>	<i>dwudziesty trzeci</i>
12	<i>dwanaście</i>	<i>dwunasty</i>	24	<i>dwadzieścia cztery</i>	<i>dwudziesty czwarty</i>
			25	<i>dwadzieścia pięć</i>	<i>dwudziesty piąty</i>

26	<i>dwadzieścia sześć</i>	<i>dwudziesty szósty</i>	200	<i>dwieście</i>	<i>dwusetny</i>
27	<i>dwadzieścia siedem</i>	<i>dwudziesty siódmy</i>	300	<i>trzysta</i>	<i>trzechsetny</i>
28	<i>dwadzieścia osiem</i>	<i>dwudziesty ósmy</i>	400	<i>czteryście</i>	<i>czterechsetny</i>
29	<i>dwadzieścia dziewięć</i>	<i>dwudziesty dziewiąty</i>	500	<i>pięćset</i>	<i>pięćsetny</i>
30	<i>trzydzieści</i>	<i>trydziesty</i>	600	<i>sześćset</i>	<i>sześćsetny</i>
31	<i>trzydzieści jeden</i>	<i>trzydziesty pierwszy</i>	700	<i>siedemset</i>	<i>siedemsetny</i>
40	<i>czterdzieści</i>	<i>czterdziesty</i>	800	<i>osiemset</i>	<i>osiemsetny</i>
50	<i>pięćdziesiąt</i>	<i>pięćdziesiąty</i>	900	<i>dziewięćset</i>	<i>dziewięćsetny</i>
60	<i>sześćdziesiąt</i>	<i>sześćdziesiąty</i>	1000	<i>tysiąc</i>	<i>tysiączny</i>
70	<i>siedemdziesiąt</i>	<i>siedemdziesiąty</i>	1600	<i>tysiąc sześćset</i>	<i>tysiąc sześćsetny</i>
80	<i>osiemdziesiąt</i>	<i>osiemdziesiąty</i>	1700	<i>tysiąc siedemset</i>	<i>tysiąc siedemsetny</i>
90	<i>dziewięćdziesiąt</i>	<i>dziewięćdziesiąty</i>	1800	<i>tysiąc osiemset</i>	<i>tysiąc osiemsetny</i>
100	<i>sto</i>	<i>setny</i>	1900	<i>tysiąc dziewięćset</i>	<i>tysiąc dziewięćsetny</i>

Dates in the records are usually quoted in the genitive case and employ ordinal numbers for the last two digits of the year, as well as the day. The first two digits of the year are usually cardinal numbers with no case endings, although some record keepers converted these, too, into ordinal numbers with case endings. Thus the date November 28, 1869 would be written out as follows (genitive endings are emphasized in boldface type):

*...roku tysiąc ośmset sześćdziesiątego dziewiątego dnia dwudziestego ósmego
miesiąca listopada...*

Note the following terms:

rok, genitive *roku*, plural forms *lata*, *lat* — year
dzień, genitive singular *dnia*, locative singular *dniu* — day
miesiąc, genitive *miesiąca*, genitive plural *miesiący* — month

So a word-by-word, literal translation of the phrase above would be “of the year [one] thousand eight hundred sixty-ninth, of the day twenty-eighth, of the month of November.” Or as we’d say, “On November 28, 1869.”

Days of the Week

English	Dictionary form	“On __” [accusative case]
Sunday	<i>niedziela</i>	<i>w niedzielę</i>
Monday	<i>poniedziałek</i>	<i>w poniedziałek</i>
Tuesday	<i>wtorek</i>	<i>we wtorek</i>
Wednesday	<i>środa</i>	<i>w środę</i>
Thursday	<i>czwartek</i>	<i>w czwartek</i>
Friday	<i>piątek</i>	<i>w piątek</i>
Saturday	<i>sobota</i>	<i>w sobotę</i>

TERMS FOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

To make this list a little easier for you to use, these terms are alphabetized according to the order English-speakers would expect, which can differ substantially from the order in which one would find them in a Polish dictionary. All nouns are given with indication of gender (m. = masculine, f. = feminine, n. = neuter) and with the genitive singular form, to help you recognize the

stem from which cases other than the nominative are formed; in a few instances where there is a form one would not expect, it is also given. When expressions with an adjective and noun have a particular meaning not readily obvious from analysis of the components, the genitive form is given with the noun; thus for *cioteczny brat* see *brat*.

babcia, babci: (f.) grandmother (a more affectionate term than *babka*)
babka, babki (dat. sing. *babce*): (f.) grandmother; *stryjeczna babka*: paternal great aunt
bezdziety: (adj.) childless
bezmężna: (adj.) unmarried (female)
bliźniaczka, bliźniaczki: (f.) twin (female)
bliźniak, bliźniaka: (m.) twin (male)
bliźnięta, bliźniąt: twins (plural)
bracia → *brat*
brat, brata (dat. sing. *bratu*, loc. sing. *bracie*, nom pl. *bracia*, gen. pl. *braci*, instr. pl. *braćmi*): (m.) brother; *brat cioteczny*: cousin, son of your mother's sister; *brat przyrodni*: half brother, stepbrother; *brat rodzony*: full brother (not a stepbrother); *brat stryjeczny*: cousin, son of your father's brother; *brat wujeczny*: cousin, son of your mother's brother
bratanek, bratanka: (m.) nephew, brother's son
bratanica, bratanicy: (f.) niece, brother's daughter
bratowa, bratowej (declined as a fem. adj.): (f.) sister-in-law, brother's wife
busia, busi: (f.) colloquial term for "grandmother" (rare in Poland, more common in the U. S.)
chłopiec, chłopca (dat. sing. *chłopcu*, nom. pl. *chłopcy*): (m.) boy
chrześniaczka, chrześniaczki: (fem.) goddaughter
chrześniak, chrześniaka (nom. pl. *chrześniacy*): (m.) godson
chrzestna matka, chrzestnej matki: (f.) godmother (also often seen with the words inverted, *matka chrzestna*)
chrzestny: adj. from *chrzest*, "baptism"; (used as a noun) *chrzestny, chrzestnego*:

"godfather," *chrzestna, chrzestnej*
"godmother," *chrzestni*, "godparents";
rodzice chrzestni: godparents
chrzestny ojciec, chrzestnego ojca: (m.) godfather
ciocia, cioci: (f.) dim. of *ciotka*, "aunt"
cioteczny, adj. from *ciotka*, "aunt"; *cioteczna babka*: great aunt; *cioteczna siostra*: cousin, daughter of your mother's sister; *cioteczny brat*, cousin, son of your mother's sister; *cioteczny dziadek*: great-uncle
ciotka, ciotki (dat. sing. *ciotce*): (f.) aunt
córeczka, córeczki: (f.) dim. of *córka*, "little daughter"
córka, córki: (f.) daughter
członek, członka: (m.) member
członkini, członkini: (f.) member
druż, druż: (m.) best man
drużna, drużny (dat. sing. *drużnie*, gen. pl. *drużen*): (f.) bridesmaid
dziadek, dziadka: (m.) grandfather;
stryjeczny dziadek: paternal great uncle
dziadusi, dziadusia: (m.) affectionate dim. of *dziadek*, "grandfather"
dzieci, dziecięcia: (n.) child
dziecko, dzieć (nom pl. *dzieci*): (n.) child;
dziecko nieślubne: child born out of wedlock
dziewczyna, dziewczyny (dat. sing. *dziewczynie*): (f.) girl, maiden
dziewczynka, dziewczynki (dat. sing. *dziewczynce*): (f.) "girl, little girl" (dim. of *dziewczyna*)
dziewica, dziewicy: (f.) virgin, maiden (generally referring to a bride)
familia, familii: (f.) family
familijny: (adj.) family
kawaler, kawalera: (m.) bachelor
kmotr, kmotra: (m.) dialect = *kum*

kobieta, kobiety: (f.) woman
krewny: (adj.) related; (used as a noun)
krewna, krewniej (f.), female relative;
krewni, krewnych (pl.): relatives; *krewny, krewnego*: (m.) male relative
kum, kuma (nom. pl. *kumowie*): (m.) originally “godfather,” in modern usage “distant relative”
kumoter, kumotra: (m.) a dialect variant of *kum*, q. v.
kuzyn, kuzyna: (m.) cousin (male)
kuzynka, kuzynki (dat. sing. *kuzynce*): (f.) cousin (female)
macocha, macochy (dat. sing. *macosze*): (f.) stepmother
małoletni: (adj.) minor, under age; used as nouns, *małoletnia* (f.) and *małoletni* (m.) mean “minor child”
małżonek, małżonka: (m.) spouse (male)
małżonka, małżonki: (f.) spouse (female)
małżonkowie, małżonków: (m. pl.) married couple (plural of *małżonek*)
mamusia, mamusi: (f.) affectionate dim. of *matka*, “mommy”
matka, matki: (f.) mother
mąż, męża: (m.) husband; *z pierwszego męża*: by [her] first husband
mężatka, mężatki: (f.) married woman
młodzian, młodziana: (m.) young man (often referring to a bridegroom)
młodzieniec, młodzieńca: (m.) young man
narzeczeni, narzeczonych: (m. pl. adj. used as a noun) the engaged couple
narzeczona, narzeczonej: (f. adj. used as a noun) fiancée, bride, betrothed
narzeczony, narzeczonego: (m. adj. used as a noun) fiancé, groom
niekrewny: (adj.) non-relative; can be used as a noun (masc. *niekrewny*, fem. *niekrewna*, plur. *niekrewni*)
nieletni: (adj.) not of age; used as nouns, *nieletnia* (f.) and *nieletni* (m.) mean “minor child”
niemowlę, niemowlęcia (nom pl. *niemowlęta*, gen. pl. *niemowląt*): (n.) infant
nieślubny: (adj.) illegitimate, born out of wedlock; used as a noun, *nieślubny, nieślubnego* (m.) and *nieślubna, nieślubnej* (f.) mean “illegitimate child”
niewiadomy: (adj.) unknown
niezameżna, niezameżnej: (f. adj. used as a noun) unmarried female
nieżonaty: (adj., can be used as a noun) unmarried male
nowozaślubiony: (adj.) newly-married; (as nouns) *nowozaślubiona, nowozaślubionej* (f.) bride, *nowozaślubiony, nowozaślubionego* (m.) groom
nowożeńiec, nowożeńca: (m.) bridegroom; (pl.) *nowożeńcy* “newlyweds”
ojciec, ojca (dative *ojcu*, nom. pl. *ojcowie*): (m.) father
ojczym, ojczyma: (m.) stepfather
opiekun, opiekuna: (m.) guardian
opiekunka, opiekunki: (f.) guardian
panna, panny (dat. sing. *pannie*, gen. pl. *panien*): (f.) unmarried woman, bride
pasierb, pasierba: (m.) stepson
pasierbica, pasierbicy: (f.) stepdaughter
potomek, potomka: (m.) descendant
potomstwo, potomstwa: (n.) descendants (used collectively)
pra-: = “great” in English, see *prababka, prababka, prababki*: (f.) great-grandmother
pradziadek, pradiadka: (m.) great-grandfather
prawnuczka, prawnuczki: (f.) great-granddaughter
prawnuk, prawnuka: (m.) great-grandson
przyrodni: adj. used in expressions *przyrodni brat*, stepbrother, and *przyrodnia siostra*, stepsister
ród, rodu: (m.) clan, family, line
rodzeństwo, rodzeństwa: (n.) siblings, brothers and sisters collectively
rodzic, rodzica (m.) parent; seldom used in the singular, more often seen in the pl.
rodzice, rodziców, parents; *rodzice chrzestni*: godparents; *rodzice niewiadomi*: parents unknown

rodzina, rodziny: (f.) family
rodzony → *brat*
rozwidziony: (participle used as adj.)
 divorced; as a noun, *rozwidziona*,
rozwidzionej, (f.), divorcée;
rozwidziony, rozwidzonego (m.),
 divorcé
rozwódka, rozwódki (dat. sing. *rozwódce*):
 (f.) divorcée
rozwodnik, rozwodnika: (m.) divorcé
sierota, sieroty (dat. sing. *sierocie*): (f.)
 orphan
siostra, siostry (dat. sing. *siostrze*): (f.) sister;
siostra cioteczna: cousin, daughter of
 mother's sister; *siostra przyrodnia*:
 stepsister; *siostra rodzona*: full sister (not
 a half-sister); *siostra stryjeczna*: cousin,
 daughter of father's brother; *siostra*
wujeczna: cousin, daughter of your
 mother's brother
siostrunia, siostruni: (f.) dim. of *siostra*,
 "little sister"
siostrzenica, siostrzenicy: (f.) niece, sister's
 daughter
siostrzeniec, siostrzeńca: (m.) nephew,
 sister's son
siostrzyczka, siostrzyczki: (f.) dim. of *siostra*,
 "little sister"
stryj, stryja: (m.) paternal uncle
stryjeczny, adj. from *stryj*, q. v., see also
babka, brat, dziadek, siostra
stryjenka, stryjenki: (f.) dim. of *stryjna*
stryjna, stryjny: (f.) aunt on father's side,
 usually by marriage
syn, syna (loc. sing. *synu*, nom. plur.
synowie): (m.) son
synek, synka: (m.) "little son"

synowa, synowej: (f., declined as an adj.)
 daughter-in-law, son's wife
synuś, synusia: (m.) little son
szwagier, szwagra: (m.) brother-in-law
szwagierka, szwagierki (dat. sing.
szwagierce): (f.) sister-in-law
tata, taty: (m.) "dad"
tatuś, tatusia: (m.) "daddy"
teść, teścia: (m.) father-in-law
teściowa, teściowej: (f., declined as an adj.)
 mother-in-law
trojak, trojaka: (m.) triplet
wdowa, wdowy (dat. sing. *wdowie*): (f.)
 widow
wdowiec, wdowca: (m.) widower
wnuczek, wnuczka: (m.) dim. of *wnuk*,
 "grandson"
wnuczka, wnuczki (dat. sing. *wnuczce*): (f.)
 granddaughter
wnuk, wnuka: (m.) grandson
wuj, wuja: (m.) maternal uncle
wujeczny, adj. from *wuj*; *wujeczna babcia*:
 maternal great aunt; *wujeczna siostra*:
 maternal cousin (female); *wujeczny brat*:
 maternal cousin (male); *wujeczny*
dziadek: maternal great uncle
wujek, wujka: (m.) dim. of *wuj*, "uncle"
wujenka, wujenki: (f.) dim. of *wujna*, q. v.
wujna, wujny: (f.) aunt by marriage, wife of
 your mother's brother
zamężna, adj., unmarried (applied only to
 women); used as a noun, *zamężna*,
zamężnej, married woman, wife
zięć, zięcia: (m.) son-in-law
znajda, znajdy: (m., despite its feminine
 ending and declension) foundling
znajdek, znajdka: (m.) foundling
żona, żony: (f.) wife
żonaty: (adj.) married (said of men)

SOME SAINTS' NAMES AND RELIGIOUS EVENTS OFTEN USED IN CHURCH NAMES

Bł.	abbr. of <i>Blogosławiony</i> , “Blessed”
Boże Ciało	Corpus Christi, Body of Christ
Chrystus Król	Christ the King
MB Anielska	Our Lady of the Angels
MB Bolesna	Our Lady of Sorrows
MB Częstochowska	Our Lady of Częstochowa
MB Królowa Polski	Our Lady, Queen of Poland
MB Miłosierdzia	Our Lady of Mercy
MB Nieustającej Pomocy	Our Lady of Perpetual Help
MB Ostrobramska	Our Lady of Ostrobrama
MB Pocieszenia	Our Lady of Consolation
MB Różańcowa	Our Lady of the Rosary
MB Szkaplerzna	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
MB Wspomożenia Wiernych	Our Lady Help of Christians
MB Zwycięska	Our Lady of Victory
Najś.	abbr. of <i>Najświętszy</i> , “Most Holy, Most Sacred”
Najś. Ciała i Krwi Chrystusa	Holy Body and Blood of Christ
Najś. Imię	Holy Name
Najświętsze Serce Jezusa	Sacred Heart of Jesus
Narodzenie	Nativity
Nawiedzenie	Visitation
Niepokalane Poczęcie	Immaculate Conception
Niepokalane Serce NMP	Immaculate Heart of Mary
NMP	abbr., “Blessed Virgin Mary”
NMP Królowa Polski	Our Lady, Queen of Poland
Opatrzność Boża	Divine Providence
Przemienienie Pańskie	Transfiguration
św. Cyryl i Metody	Sts. Cyril and Methodius
św. Agnieszka	St. Agnes
św. Duch	Holy Spirit
św. Jan Nepomucen	St. John Nepomucene (a Bohemian saint)
św. Jan Chrzciciel	St. John the Baptist
św. Kazimierz	St. Casimir
św. Krzyż	Holy Cross
św. Mikołaj	St. Nicholas
św. Rodzina	Holy Family
św. Stanisław, B. i M.	St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr
św. Trójca	Holy Trinity
Trzej Królowie	Three Kings
Wniebowstąpienie	Ascension
Wniebowzięcie	Assumption
Wszyscy Święci	All Saints
Zmartwychwstanie	Resurrection

A FEW POINTS ABOUT OBITUARIES

- Often obituaries begin with **formulaic expressions**, such as *Wszystkim krewnym i znajomym donosimy tę smutną wiadomość, iż X zmarł ...*, “To all relatives and acquaintances we announce the sad news that X has died.” The name of the deceased, normally set off and in bold print, is the subject of *zmarł*, “died,” and thus appears in the nominative case, the form most familiar to us. Occasionally, however, the phrasing is such that it reports the death **of** someone, so the name appears in the genitive, e. g. *Jana Kowalskiego*, “of Jan Kowalski,” or *Agnieszki Kowalskiej*, “of Agnieszka Kowalska.”
- Married women are usually given with their married names, and their **maiden names** are often indicated with the expression *z domu*, “from the house of,” thus: *Agnieszka Kowalska, z domu Nowak*, “Agnieszka Kowalska, née Nowak.” Also common is an expression with the preposition *z*, “of, from,” plus the genitive plural of her maiden name: *Agnieszka Kowalska z Nowaków*, “Agnieszka Kowalska née Nowak,” or *Anna Piotrzak z Kwaśniewskich*, “Anna Piotrzak née Kwaśniewska.”
- Surviving spouses often remarried. For women, this was indicated by expressions such as *z pierwszego męża*, “by her first husband,” *z drugiego męża*, “by her second husband,” followed by that husband’s surname.
- Obituaries seldom give anything precise on the **cause of death**; it was considered unseemly and morbid to go into such details.
- Information for obituaries generally came from the family of the deceased, who were too grief-stricken to check facts carefully. Thus mistakes were common, and we often see an initial obituary, followed a day or two later by a second version with more reliable data. Sometimes, instead of reprinting the full obituary, a notice of **Sprostowanie**, “correction,” was printed. It is always wise to search a few days before and after the date of death—you never know what you may find.
- Besides actual obituaries, other notices connected with deaths appeared. A death might be announced with the heading **Zawiadomienie**, “Announcement”; from that point on the death notice generally follows a recognizable format. After the funeral the family might print a notice of **Podziękowanie**, “thanks,” expressing gratitude to all who offered condolences. Boxed-off notices **In memoriam** or **In memorium**, “In memory,” were sometimes published near the anniversary of the death. Such notices seldom add much to the information the original obituary provided, but they sometimes provided an opportunity to correct errors in the original obituary. Of course, sometimes they also produced new errors. Still, the meticulous researcher may find such notices worth looking for.
- Finally, in many obituaries the name of the deceased is followed by information on **organizations** he or she belonged to. This may lead you to organizational records with more data on the deceased, especially if he or she belonged to fraternal organizations such as the ZNP (*Związek Narodowy Polski*, Polish National Alliance) or ZPRK (*Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie w Ameryce*, the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, which necessarily kept records on death benefit claims. Other organizations included *Związek Polek w Ameryce*, “Polish Women’s Alliance of America” and *Sokolstwo*, “Falcons.”
- For more help with the kind of terms you see in obituary, you can visit the “*Dziennik Chicagoski* Obituary Translation” page on the PGSA Website at this address: <http://www.pgsa.org/dzieneng.htm>.

CEMETERY INSCRIPTIONS

The final memorials of our ancestors, their cemetery monuments, were often carved in their native language. This is especially true if they died a short while after coming to the U. S., for the ties to the old country and its language were stronger.

The limited vocabulary found on stones can be quickly mastered, but the researcher should be aware of certain factors which will help make sense of mystifying or inconsistent items on the stones. We should remember that in the very early days of many Polish settlements, a merchant and professional class was yet to emerge; thus there were few stone-cutters who spoke or understood Polish. The Yankee stone-carver in a small Massachusetts or Connecticut town was puzzled by the *ł* or *ę* of the Polish alphabet, and this could lead to mistakes, e. g., mistaking *ł* for *t*, etc. Thus we will find items such as *żyta* and *urodzita się* on stones instead of the correct *żyła* and *urodziła się*. At other times it seems that the data to be carved on the stones was conveyed orally, and the results reflect this fact — badly misspelled words in a quasi-Anglicized phonetic rendition.

The material that follows should enable you to make your next information-gathering trip to a cemetery more profitable linguistically.

Introductory Phrases

If they appear at all, the following phrases may begin an epitaph; but in many cases only the names are recorded, without any preliminaries.

Ku pamięci — “To the memory of.” Since “the memory of” expresses a relationship normally rendered in Polish with the genitive case, one should expect case endings on names that follow: *Ku pamięci Józefa Jaworskiego*, “To the memory of Józef Jaworski.” More common, actually, is the simple expression *świętej pamięci*, “of sacred memory,” commonly abbreviated *ś. p.* Names following *ś. p.* are generally in the nominative case.

Tu spoczywa/spoczywają — “Here lies/lie...,” from *spoczywać*, “to rest.” This phrase, often abbreviated *Tu sp.*, is followed by the name(s) of the deceased, or may contain additional expressions, e. g.: *Tu spoczywają zwłoki*, “here lies the body [of]”; *Tu spoczywają śmiertelne szczątki*, “Here lie the mortal remains [of]”; *Tu spoczywają prochy*, “Here lie the ashes [of].” The last three expressions naturally tend to end with “of,” so the names following them will be in the genitive case: *Tu spoczywają prochy Józefa Jaworskiego i jego żony Katarzyny*, “Here lie the ashes of Józef Jaworski and his wife Katarzyna.”

Za dusze: “for the souls of.” The word *dusze* is accusative plural of *dusza*, “spirit, soul” after the preposition *za*, which can mean, among other things, “for, on behalf of.”

Phrases Referring to Death

By far the most common word here is simply *zmarł* (referring to a male) or *zmarła* (referring to a female), abbreviated *zm.*, meaning “he/she died.” We also see *umarł/umarła*, abbreviated *um.* For some, however, those expressions may have seemed a bit too blunt, and thus euphemisms were used. They include:

Polecał/polecała ducha Bogu: “commended his/her soul to God.” The term *ducha* is from *duch*, “spirit” or “soul” (not the same word as *dusza*, which we saw above, but from the same linguistic root). *Bogu* is the dative singular of *Bóg*, “God.”

Przeniósł/przeniosła się do wieczności — “has passed on to eternity,” from the verb *przenieść się*, “to move on, pass,” literally “to carry oneself.”

Przeniósł/przeniosła się do wiecznego spoczynku — “has passed on to eternal rest.” Here *wiecznego* is the masculine genitive singular form of *wieczny*, “eternal,” and modifies *spoczynku*, the genitive singular form of *spoczynek*, “rest, repose.”

Spoczął/spoczęła w Panu — “has come to rest in the Lord.” *Panu* is the locative singular form (and also the dative singular) of *Pan*, “Lord.”

Zakończył/zakończyła życie — “ended his/her life” (but not in the sense of killing oneself!).

Zasnął/Zasnęła w Bogu or *w Panu* or *na wieki* — “fell asleep in God” or “in the Lord” or “for the ages.”

Zginął/Zginęła — “perished.” The manner of death may be given with *śmiercią*, the instrumental form of *śmierć*, “death,” plus an adjective, e. g., *Zginął śmiercią bohaterską*, “He died a heroic death,” *śmiercią morderką*, “a murderous death,” *śmiercią tragiczną*, “a tragic death” (or “tragically”).

Został zabity — “was killed.” In the case of accidents, some details may be provided on the tombstone, e. g., *został zabity w majnach*, “he was killed in the mines.” Note the Anglicized *w majnach*, “in the mines” — standard Polish would be *w kopalniach*. One might also see expressions such as *utonąła w rzece*, “She drowned in the river.”

Phrases Referring to Age

Most ways of expressing age involve a form of verbs such as *żyć*, “to live,” *przeżyć*, “to live [through, for a stated period],” or *liczyć*, “to count, number.” There are also a few prepositional phrases that can be applied. All these expressions are usually followed by the number of days, months, or years lived, e. g., *żył 5 dni*, “he lived five days,” *żyła 3 miesiące*, “she lived three months,” *żył 49 lat*, “he lived 49 years.” Here are other possibilities:

licząc _ lat — literally “numbering _ years.”

liczył/liczyła _ lat: literally “He/she numbered _ years.”

mający _ lat — literally “having _ years.” Forms of *mieć*, “to have,” are often used with numbers to give age.

miał/miała _ lat — literally “He/she had _ years.” The forms *miał* and *miała* are past-tense masculine and singular forms of that same verb *mieć*, “to have.”

po przeżyciu _ lat — “after having lived _ years” or, less literal but equally accurate, “at the age of _ years.” The preposition *po* takes the locative case when it means “after,” and *przeżyciu* is locative of *przeżycie*, “[the act of] having lived, survival, experience.”

przeżył/przeżyła _ lat — “he/she lived _ years.”

przeżywszy _ lat — “having lived _ years”; *przeżywszy* is a participle but does not change ending to indicate gender.

w wieku _ lat — “at the age of _ years.”

Exact ages are not always given—hard as it may be for us to imagine, many immigrants did not know how old they were. Sometimes, a general term appears, e. g., *młodzieniec*, “boy, young man,” or *zmarł w wiosnie życia* — “died in the spring of [his] life,” or *w podeszłym wieku*, “at an advanced age.”

Phrases Referring to Birthplace and Origins

The following are phrases often seen that tell of the deceased's birthplace:

u. ur., uro., urodz. — these are all abbreviations for *urodzony*, “born.”

urodził/urodziła się w — “was born in.” If the place of birth is given, it is usually followed by the preposition *w*, “in” (sometimes *na*), plus the name of some geographical entity, in the locative case.

urodzony w [starym] kraju — “born in the [old] country,” i. e., Poland

urodzony w Polsce — “born in Poland”; *Polsce* is locative of *Polska*, “Poland”

urodzony w Królestwie Polskim — “born in the Kingdom of Poland”

urodzony w Księstwie Poznańskim — “born in the Duchy of Poznań”

urodzony w gubernii grodzieńskiej — “born in Grodno province”

Occasionally you may see the name of a town or village, sometimes preceded by such expressions as *w mieście*, from *miasto*, “town, city”; or *w miasteczku*, “in the small town,” from *miasteczko*; or *we wsi*, “in the village,” from *wieś*, “village.”

pochodził z — “came from.” The place of origin could also be expressed with the past tense of *pochodzić*, “to come from, to have origins in,” plus the name of the geographical entity in the genitive case. Using the same examples given above, note how the endings change or fail to change:

pochodził [or przyjechał] ze [starego] kraju — “he came from the old country”

pochodził z Polski — “he came from Poland”

pochodził z Królestwa Polskiego — “he came from the Kingdom of Poland”

pochodził z Księstwa Poznańskiego — “he came from the Duchy of Poznań”

pochodził z gubernii grodzieńskiej — “he came from Grodno province”

And in some cases a place name may be specified, perhaps preceded by *z miasta*, “from the city,” or *z miasteczka*, “from the small town,” or *ze wsi*, “from the village.”

Other Phrases Often Seen

Boże okaż mu/jej miłosierdzie — “God, show him/her mercy.”

Cześć jego pamięci or *Cześć jej pamięci* — “Honor to his/her memory.”

Niech mu/jej ziemia będzie lekka — “May the earth be light for him/her.” Sometimes the expression is not just *ziemia* but *ta obca ziemia*, “this foreign soil,” expressing a wish that the immigrant may rest easy in this foreign land [America].

Pochowany — “buried,” typically with details on the funeral, such as the date.

Prosi o modlitwę — “Asking for a prayer” (i. e., “Please say a prayer for him/her.”)

Prosi o westchnienie do Boga — “Asking for a sigh to God.”

Prosi o Zdrowaś Maryjo — “Asking for a ‘Hail Mary’.”

Stroskani — “Sorrowful, woebegone,” referring to the surviving relatives, e. g., a child's gravestone may mention his *stroskani rodzice*, “grief-stricken parents.”

Wieczny odpoczynek racz mu/jej dać Panie — “Lord, grant him/her eternal rest,” presumably modeled after the first words of the Latin Requiem Mass, *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine*, “Lord, give them eternal rest.”

Wieczny pokój — “Eternal rest.”

ONLINE SOURCES OF HELP

If you have spent any time online looking for assistance with your research, you know that there is an enormous amount of material available. Indeed, tracking down the particular item you need among the ocean of information can be quite a challenge.

One general rule of thumb cannot be repeated too often: use a good Internet search engine to find stuff for yourself. To be honest with you, when I'm reading requests on the Polish mailing lists, I don't even consider replying to any question that could have been answered with a simple visit to a search engine; I figure if you can't be bothered to help yourself, why should I? The search engine generally regarded as best these days is at <http://www.google.com>. It not only does a good job of finding useful material; its home page also gives you options to search for photographs or pictures.

If you need to write a letter in Polish and have no clue how to go about it, a good letter-writing guide is available on the PGSA Website: http://www.pgsa.org/letter_eng.htm

I considered including a list of common terms for occupations in this handout, then remembered that I had such a list in a handout for a talk I gave last year. Then I remembered, that handout is available on the PGSA Website, too. You'll find it on page 12-15 at this site: <http://www.pgsa.org/TransTips.pdf>

If you've received correspondence in Polish from the State Archives and need a little help figuring out what it says, this site may help: <http://www.langline.com/StateArchGuide.htm>

Adventurous souls who'd like to try their hand at the basics of Polish pronunciation and grammar can do so here: <http://golem.umcs.lublin.pl/users/ppikuta/lessons/ex0.htm>

There are, of course, many more. But then you wouldn't want me to give you all the answers and spoil your fun, would you? Look for yourself. The sources you find may be much better than the ones I know about. Good luck!