

- Morphological categories

OE nouns had grammatical GENDER, i.e. each noun was either masculine, feminine or neuter.

OE nouns were inflected for: NUMBER: singular and plural, CASE: nominative, genitive, dative (=celownik), accusative (=biernik); they were declined according to the DECLENSIONAL CLASS they belonged to.

That gives us 3 genders x 2 numbers x 4 cases = **24 categories**

- Major OE declensional classes

	a-stem <i>stān</i>	a-stem <i>word/scipu</i>	ō-stem <i>wund/lufu</i>	u-stem <i>sunu/duru</i> <i>feld/hand</i>	n-stem <i>nama</i>	C-stem (athematic consonant stems) <i>fōt, mann</i>
	(masc)	(neut)	(fem)	(masc/fem)	(masc)	(masc)
Sg.						
N	-∅	-∅	-∅/u	-∅/u	-a	-∅
G	-es	-es	-e	-a	-an	-es
D	-e	-e	-e	-a	-an	!-∅ (=vowel mutation + no ending)
A	-∅	-∅	-e	-u	-an	-∅
Pl.						
N	-as	-∅/u	-a/e	-a	-an	!-∅
G	-a	-a	-a/ena	-a	-ena	-a
D	-um	-um	-um	-um	-um	-um
A	-as	-∅/u	-a/e	-a	-an	!-∅
	strong			weak		athematic

The 24 morphological categories were marked by a relatively small number of endings → OE morphology was relatively inexpressive. Most of the endings were multiply ambiguous: (*-an, -u, -e*). No OE noun had more than **6** distinct endings for the eight Case/number categories. There were only 9 devices altogether to mark the available morphological categories: *-∅, -u, -a, -e, -an, -um, -as, -es, ! (=vowel mutation)*

- Themes in Germanic were of three types:

(i) a vowel – vocalic nouns = STRONG declension

e.g. **Strong Masculine**: *a*-stems (cf. PrGmc nom.sg. *stainaz* = *stain* + *a* + *z*, i.e. root + **theme** + inflection)

(ii) a consonant – consonantal nouns; *n*-stems = WEAK declensions; minor declensions

(iii) zero – athematic nouns

masculine vocalic 35%, masculine *n*-stems 10%, feminine vocalic 25%, feminine *n*-stem 5%, neuter vocalic

25%

- At the time of the invasions English had four major types of vocalic nouns inherited from Germanic: a-stems, *ō*-stems, i-stems and u-stems. (the first two most common by far). The paradigms show that root+theme+infl doesn't make sense in OE.

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N-∅	<b>-as</b> !	N. stān 'stone'	stānas
A-∅	-as	A. stān	stānas
G- <b>es</b> !	-a	G. stānes	stāna
D-e	-um	D. stāne	stānum

- OE morphology underwent radical changes: tripartite (root + theme + inflection) → bipartite (stem + inflection)

**MASCULINE *α*-STEMS** (phonological variation)

- hwæl – hwalas; dæg – dagas; pæð - paðas (æ-*α*, voicing of fricatives)
- loss of /x/ as in eolh – ēolas
- disyllabic stems; (vowel-zero alternation)

N. A.	fugol 'bird' (< *fugl-az)	fuglas
G.	fugles	fugla
D.	fugle	fuglum

- α*-neuters**

**heavy stems**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N. word	word
A. word	word
G. wordes	worda
D. worde	wordum

**light stems**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
scip	scipu
scip	scipu
scipes	scipa
scipe	scipum

phonological variation

- bæð 'bath' - baðu
- feoh 'money' – fēo
- disyllables: wæter (gen. wæt(e)res) - wæter/wætru  
hēafod - hēafod/hēafdu

▪ **-ja stems**

	masculine		neuter		
N. A.	hyll 'hill' (<*hul-j-az)	hyllas	cyn(n) 'kin'	cyn(n)	in nom.acc. the final consonant is sometimes deleted (degemination)
G.	hylles	hylla	cynnes	cynna	
D.	hylle	hyllum	cynne	cynnum	

▪ **-wa stems**

	masculine		neuter		
N. A.	snāw	snāwas	bealu	bealu	u-w alternation
G.	snāwes	snāwa	bealwes	bealwa	
D.	snāwe	snāwum	bealwe	bealwum	

**STRONG FEMININE: *ō*-stems****heavy stems**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N. wund 'wound'	wunda/-e
A. wunde	wunda/-e
G. wunde	wunda
D. wunde	wundum

**light stems**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
lufu 'love'	lufa/-e
lufe	lufa/-e
lufe	lufa
lufe	lufum

▪ ***j-ō* feminines**

N. hen(n) 'hen'	henna/-e
A. henne	henna/-e
G. henne	henna
D. henne	hennum

***w-ō* feminines**

sceadu	sceadwa/-e	sceadu vs. mǣd in nom.sg. depending on the structure of stems
sceadwe	sceadwa/-e	u-w alternation
sceadwe	sceadwa	
sceadwe	sceadwum	

**u-STEMS (incl. Masc. and Fem.)**

The original masc., fem. and n. exhibiting the structure (root + u + ending) belonged to this declension, but only masc. and fem. survived into OE. Because of a weakly marked contrast between cases, this inflectional pattern showed signs of decay from the earliest times.

<i>feminine</i>				<i>masculine</i>			
<i>heavy</i>		<i>light</i>		<i>heavy</i>		<i>light</i>	
<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N. A.	hand 'hand'	handa	duru dura	feld	felda	sunu	sunā
G.	handa	handa	dura dura	felda	felda	sunā	sunā
D.	handa	handum	dura durum	felda	feldum	sunā	sunum

**WEAK MASCULINE**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N. oxa	oxan
A. oxan	oxan
G. oxan	oxena
D. oxan	oxum

**WEAK FEMININE**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
folde 'earth'	foldan
foldan	foldan
foldan	foldena
foldan	foldum

**WEAK NEUTER**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
ēage	ēagan
ēage	ēagan
ēagan	ēagena
ēagan	ēagum

**ATHEMATIC NOUNS**

Masc.				Fem.				
sg.								
N.	mann	fōt	tōp	hnutu (nut)	bōc (book)	gōs	mūs	burg
G.	mannes	fōtes	tōpes	hnute	bōce	gōse	mūse	burge
D.	menn	fēt	tēp	hnyte	bēc	gēs	mys	byrig
A.	mann	fōt	tōp	hnutu	bōc	gōs	mūs	burg

pl.								
N.	menn	fēt	tēþ	hnyte	bēc	gēs	mys	byrig
G.	manna	fōta	tōþa	hnuta	bōca	gōsa	mūsa	burga
D.	mannum	fōtum	tōþum	hnutum	bōcum	gōsum	mūsum	burgum
A.	menn	fēt	tēþ	hnyte	bēc	gēs	mys	byrig

**r-stems**

<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>	<i>Sg.</i>	<i>Pl.</i>
N. fæder	fæderas	cild	cildru
A. fæder	fæderas	cild	cildru
G. fæder	fædera	cildes	cildra
D. fæder	fæderum	cilde	cildrum