

# Making your own Language



**The World of Languages**  
and Languages of the World

Over the next two weeks,  
can you make up your own  
language?

**Queen Mary  
Invented  
Languages  
Scheme (QuILS)**

# Acknowledgements

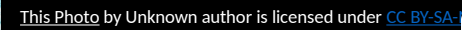
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- Thanks to Professor David Adger and Dr Coppe van Urksor at <https://creatinglanguages.org/>

# How do we go about making up our own language?

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WolLow the HIPPO



# Consonants.

In English, there are sounds made by stopping the air in the mouth and then releasing it.

Practice orally with apa, aba, ata, ada, aka, aga

Now write these down.

What "stops" does your language have?

There are also sounds made when you don't stop the air entirely, you just make it turbulent.

Practice orally with afa, ava, atha, adha, asa, aza, asha, azha, aha

Now write these down.

What "fricatives" does your language have?

# Vowels

The English alphabet has just 5 letters that are used for vowels:

a, e, i, o, u.

But English has a lot more vowel sounds than this:

bait, bet, bit, beat, bat, bot, boat, bite, boot, but, book, bath!

What vowels does your language have? How do you write them down? Do you use digraphs?

# Syllables

Languages put consonants and vowels together to make a syllable. A syllable is one vowel, with one or more consonants before it, and one or more consonants after it.

Common is consonant followed by vowel.

Can you think of examples of a syllable from English that is CVC, CCVC, VCC or CCVCC? The picture may help you.





# Giving meaning to words

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Practice orally: what are some syllables you can form with your consonants and your vowels?

Write these down.

Now put the syllables together in pairs or triples to make words.

Now give your words meanings. Some of the meanings we want: **sea, sky, land, mountain, tree, forest, island, city, bay, ice, fire, volcano, and other geographical terms.**

Draw pictures of what these words mean.

Now populate the map with names you have created in your language, using also the words for the geographical terms they have developed.



# Writing

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- How is the literature of your language written down? Carved into rocks, painted with brushes, drawn with pens, scratched into stone?
- What is the order of the symbols in your writing system? What is the order of writing(right to left, left to right, up to down, down to up, boustrophedon!).
- Write the items on your map in your writing system.

↓ Downwards in (Ancient) Chinese, Japanese:



← Leftwards in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian:

ويكيديا ، والبيض ، والحين

⇒ Boustrophedon in Ancient Greek (letters can also be reversed or mirrored):

THIS EXAMPLE OF BOUSTROPHEDON TEXT WAS  
WRITTEN SPECIFICALLY FOR THE WIKIPEDIA  
ARTICLE ON THE OX TURNING METHOD OF INSC  
RIBING TABLETS WITH RONGORONGO GLYPHS.

Decision: **What will be the direction of words?**

# Capitalisation

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English capitals are a special set of characters used for sentence-initial letters, names, and for the pronoun “I”.

There were two people who discovered Columbia, Tony and I.

In German, nouns are also capitalized:

Zwei Leute waren hier ‘Two people were here.’

In Fijian, only proper names are capitalized:

au a raici Soto. ‘I saw Soto.’

What will be capitalised?

Beginning/end/entirety of some words/ beginning/end of sentences/ names only/ nothing?



# Oh oh....Monsters have come to your island!

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Take three creatures of different types, in different numbers, and populate your island. Take a little time to come up with names for them.

For some of your creatures, you may have only put one on your island. For others, you might have multiple. In English, we indicate this difference with s at the end of the word: monster monster-s, dog dog-s

In other languages, you add different sounds. In Somali, you add o (usually): kab kab-o 'shoe' 'shoes', naag naag-o 'woman' 'women'

**Decide on a way to indicate monsters you have more than one of, with one or more sounds!**

# Can we make a sentence?

Sentence: A phrase that can

a) stand on its own, and

b) describes what someone or something (= the subject) is or is doing.

Word Order: SVO

English sentences have a particular word order, which is Subject Verb Object e.g. Fatima ate cookies

Other languages make different choices! In Bangla, for example, the word order is Subject Object Verb

Ami boiti porechi = I book have read

**What is the order of subject, verb and object in your language?**

# Spaces



In English, spaces separate words.



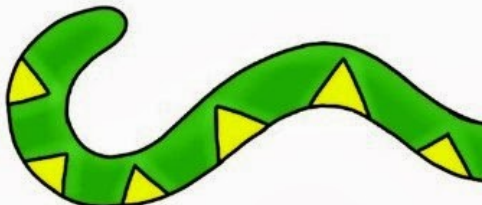
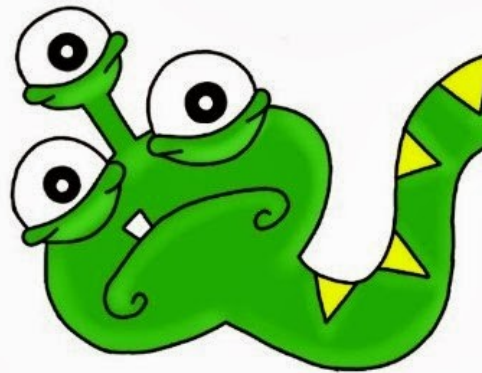
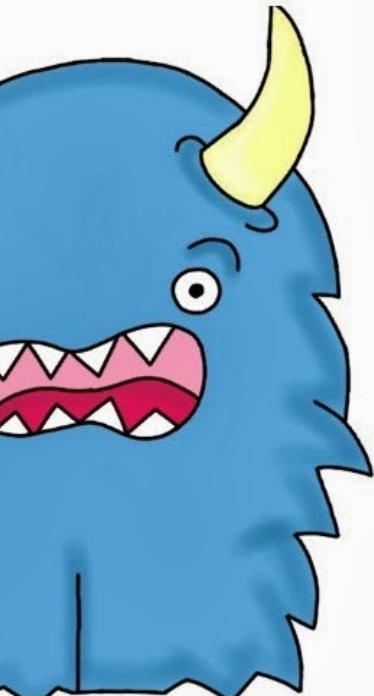
In Mandarin, nothing separates words:



我们是朋友。 wǒmén shì péngyǒu.  
'We are friends.'



Will you use spaces?



# A dialogue

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Create a short dialogue between some of the monsters on your island. Make sure you stick to the word order you chose. Use some of the words you came up with!



**Well  
done!**

Name your language.



You have a language with sounds, words, sentences, grammar, word order, a writing system and a name.

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