

Toki Pona

Toki Pona is a constructed language created by Canadian linguist and translator Sonja Lang in 2001. It's an experiment to see how minimalist a language can get.

This side describes the entire grammar, the other side contains the entire vocabulary.

Cheat sheet by blinry, CC0.

morr.cc/toki-pona-workshop/

Alphabet

Toki Pona uses nine consonants (*j k l m n p s t w*) and five vowels (*a e i o u*). Pronunciation doesn't really matter.

Basic sentences

The particle *li* separates the subject and the verb:

soweli li moku. = *The cat is eating.*

jan li lape. = *The person is sleeping.*

There is no verb "to be"; the part after *li* can also be a noun or an adjective.

kili li moku. = *Fruits are food.*

telo li pona. = *Water is good.*

telo li moku. = *Water is a drink.*

If the subject is *mi* or *sina*, the *li* is omitted:

mi moku. = *I eat.*

sina pona. = *You are good.*

Ambiguity

Toki Pona has a lot of ambiguity. You'll often need to know the context to decide what things mean. For example, verbs have no tense:

mi moku. = *I am eating. / I was eating. / I will be eating.*

Many words have multiple or general meaning:

soweli = *cat / dog / any land mammal*

kili = *(any fruit or vegetable)*

Many words can play the role of a noun, adjective, or verb:

telo = *water / wet / to wash*

pona = *good, simple / to fix, to repair*

Nouns have no singular/plural, and no definite/indefinite article:

kili = *a fruit / the fruit / some fruits / the fruits*

Direct objects

The particle *e* separates a direct object from the rest of the sentence:

soweli li moku e telo. = *The cat drinks the water.*

mi telo e soweli. = *I'm washing the cat.*

Modifying words

Words can be modified by appending other words:

jan lili = *small human* = *child*

tomo mi = *my house*

pilin pona = *to feel good* = *to be happy*

Negation

To negate a word, append *ala*:

mi lape ala. = *I'm not sleeping.*

jan ala li toki. = *Nobody is talking.*

Questions

To ask yes-or-no questions, replace the verb with "(verb) *ala* (verb)":

sina ken ala ken lape? = *Are you able to sleep?*

soweli li wile ala wile moku? = *Is the cat hungry?*

Alternatively, append *anu seme* to the sentence:

sina wile uta e mi anu seme? = *Do you want to kiss me?*

To answer these questions, reply with either "(verb)" or "(verb) *ala*".

To ask questions that can't be answered with yes or no, write a normal sentence and replace the word in question with *seme*:

sina moku e seme? = *What are you eating?*

seme li moku e kili mi? = *Who/what ate my fruit?*

Modifying words using pi

To modify an expression with a group of words, separate them with the particle *pi*. It can often be thought of as "of":

tomo telo nasa = *crazy water house*

tomo pi telo nasa = *house of the crazy water* = *pub*

jan wawa ala = *no strong people*

jan pi wawa ala = *people of not-strong* = *weak people*

Providing context using la

To add a context to a sentence, prepend another sentence or expression and *la*. This often results in a structure like "If (part 1), then (part 2)" or "In the context of (part 1), (part2)."

mi lape la ali li pona. = *When I'm asleep, everything is okay.*

Time

You can use a *la*-clause to add a temporal context to a sentence:

tenpo ni la mi lape. = *I am sleeping right now.*

tenpo kama la mi lape. = *I will be sleeping in the future.*

tenpo pini la mi lape. = *I slept in the past.*

Compound sentences

If there are multiple subjects in a sentence, use *en*:

lape en moku li suli. = *Sleep and food are important.*

To say that the subject does more than one thing, you can use multiple *li*-clauses:

pipi li moku li pakala. = *The bug eats and destroys.*

If there are several direct objects of the same verb, you can use multiple *e*-clauses:

mi moku e kili e telo. = *I consume fruit and water.*

Unofficial words

Unofficial words (like names of countries, languages, or people) are capitalized and treated like adjectives. They are attached to a noun, and often simplified to Toki Pona's limited alphabet:

mi jan Pita. = *I'm Peter.*

ma Kanata li pona lukin. = *Canada is pretty.*

mi toki ala e toki Inli. = *I don't speak English.*

ma tomo Nujoka li suli. = *New York is big.*

Prepositions

lon, *kepeken*, *tawa*, and *tan* can be used as prepositions at the end of a sentence:

mi moku lon tomo. = *I eat in the house.*

mi moku kepeken ilo moku. = *I eat using a fork.*

sina pona tawa mi. = *You are good for me.* = *I like you.*

sina tawa weka tan seme? = *Why are you leaving?*

Commands

To state a command, use *o* and then what you want the person to do:

o lukin e ni! = *Look at this!*

To address someone, start a sentence with "(person) *o*,":

jan Ken o, sina pona lukin. = *Ken, you are pretty.*

You can also use this together with a command, merging the two *o*'s:

jan San o tawa toma sina. = *Sam, go home.*

Numbers

Combine number words to add them up:

wan = 1 *tu* = 2 *luka* = 5

luka luka tu wan = 13

And... that's it!

a	(emphasis, emotion or confirmation)	kulupu	community, company, group, nation, society, tribe	namako	spice, something extra	sewi	area above, highest part, something elevated; awe-inspiring, divine, sacred, supernatural
akesi	non-cute animal; reptile, amphibian	kute	ear; to hear, listen; pay attention to, obey	nanpa	-th (ordinal number); number	sijelo	body (of person or animal), physical state, torso
ala	no, not, zero	la	(between the context phrase and the main sentence)	nasa	unusual, strange; foolish, crazy; drunk, intoxicated	sike	round or circular thing; ball, circle, cycle, sphere, wheel; of one year
alasa	to hunt, forage	lape	sleeping, resting	nasin	way, custom, doctrine, method, path, road	sin	new, another, more
ali	all; abundant, countless, bountiful, every, plentiful; abundance, everything, life, universe; 100	laso	blue, green	nena	bump, button, hill, mountain, nose, protuberance	sina	you
anpa	bowing down, downward, humble, lowly, dependent	lawa	head, mind; to control, direct, guide, lead, own, plan, regulate, rule	ni	that, this	sinpin	face, foremost, front, wall
ante	different, altered, changed, other	len	cloth, clothing, fabric, textile; cover, layer of privacy	noka	foot, leg, organ of locomotion; bottom, lower part	sitelen	image, picture, representation, symbol, mark, writing
anu	or	lete	cold, cool; uncooked, raw	o	hey! O! (vocative or imperative)	sona	to know, be skilled in, be wise about, have information on; to know how to
awen	enduring, kept, protected, safe, waiting, staying; to continue to	li	(between any subject except mi alone or sina alone and its verb; also to introduce a new verb for the same subject)	oko	eye	soweli	animal, beast, land mammal
e	(before the direct object)	lili	little, small, short; few; a bit; young	olin	to love, have compassion for, respect, show affection to	suli	big, heavy, large, long, tall; important; adult
en	(between multiple subjects)	linja	long and flexible thing; cord, hair, rope, thread, yarn	ona	he, she, it, they	suno	sun; light, brightness, glow, radiance, shine; light source
esun	market, shop, fair, bazaar, business transaction	lipu	flat object; book, document, card, paper, record, website	open	to begin, start; open; turn on	supa	horizontal surface, thing to put or rest something on
ijo	thing, phenomenon, object, matter	loje	red, reddish	pakala	botched, broken, damaged, harmed, messed up	suwi	sweet, fragrant; cute, innocent, adorable
ike	bad, negative; non-essential, irrelevant	lon	located at, present at, real, true, existing	pali	to do, take action on, work on; build, make, prepare	tan	by, from, because of
ilo	tool, implement, machine, device	luka	arm, hand, tactile organ; five	palisa	long hard thing; branch, rod, stick	taso	but, however; only
insa	center, content, inside, between; internal organ, stomach	lukin	to look at, see, examine, observe, read, watch; to seek, look for, try to	pan	cereal, grain; barley, corn, oat, rice, wheat; bread, pasta	tawa	going to, toward; for; from the perspective of; moving
jaki	disgusting, obscene, sickly, toxic, unclean, unsanitary	lupa	door, hole, orifice, window	pana	to give, send, emit, provide, put, release	telo	water, liquid, fluid, wet substance; beverage
jan	human being, person, somebody	ma	earth, land; outdoors, world; country, territory; soil	pi	of	tenpo	time, duration, moment, occasion, period, situation
jelo	yellow, yellowish	mama	parent, ancestor; creator, originator; caretaker, sustainer	pilin	heart (physical or emotional); feeling (an emotion, a direct experience)	toki	to communicate, say, speak, say, talk, use language, think
jo	to have, carry, contain, hold	mani	money, cash, savings, wealth; large domesticated animal	pimeja	black, dark, unlit	tomo	indoor space; building, home, house, room
kala	fish, marine animal, sea creature	meli	woman, female, feminine person; wife	pini	ago, completed, ended, finished, past	tu	two
kalama	to produce a sound; recite, utter aloud	mi	I, me, we, us	pipi	bug, insect, ant, spider	unpa	to have sexual or marital relations with
kama	arriving, coming, future, summoned; to become, manage to, succeed in	mije	man, male, masculine person; husband	poka	hip, side; next to, nearby, vicinity	uta	mouth, lips, oral cavity, jaw
kasi	plant, vegetation; herb, leaf	moku	to eat, drink, consume, swallow, ingest	poki	container, bag, bowl, box, cup, cupboard, drawer, vessel	utala	to battle, challenge, compete against, struggle against
ken	to be able to, be allowed to, can, may; possible	moli	dead, dying	pona	good, positive, useful; friendly, peaceful; simple	walo	white, whitish; light-colored, pale
kepeken	to use, with, by means of	mons	back, behind, rear	pu	interacting with the official Toki Pona book	wan	unique, united; one
kili	fruit, vegetable, mushroom	mu	(animal noise or communication)	sama	same, similar; each other; sibling, peer, fellow; as, like	waso	bird, flying creature, winged animal
kin	indeed, still, too	mun	moon, night sky object, star	seli	fire; cooking element, chemical reaction, heat source	wawa	strong, powerful; confident, sure; energetic, intense
kiwen	hard object, metal, rock, stone	musi	artistic, entertaining, frivolous, playful, recreational	selo	outer form, outer layer; bark, peel, shell, skin; boundary	weka	absent, away, ignored
ko	clay, clinging form, dough, semi-solid, paste, powder	mute	many, a lot, more, much, several, very; quantity	seme	what? which?	wile	must, need, require, should, want, wish