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📅: 2025-12-05



toki pona

Developed by linguist Sonja Lang, toki pona is a language with ~130 words.

It uses only 14 IPA phonemes: *a e i o u j k l m n p s t u w*

Basic Sentences

The particle > separates the subject from the predicate.

🐱>🍖 - *The cat is eating.*

👤>🛌 - *People sleep.*

There is no verb “to be.” The part after > (predicate) can be a noun or an adjective.

🍎>🍌 - *Fruits are food.*

≈>🌊 - *Water is good.*

If the subject is P or b alone, the > is always omitted.

P🍌 - *I eat.*

b🌊 - *You are good.*

Ambiguity

Toki Pona words are less specific than English words, so one-to-one translation is not as easy.

P🍌 - *I am eating, I was eating, or I will be eating.*

Many words have multiple or general meanings.

🐱 - *A cat, dog, or any land mammal.*

🍌 - *Any fruit or vegetable.*

Most words can act as nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs.

≈ - *Water, wet, or to wash.*

🌊 - *Good, simple, to improve, or wellness.*

Nouns have no number and there is no “a” or “the”.

🐟 - *A fish, the fish, some fish.*

P - *I, me, we, or us.*

Direct objects

The particle >> signifies the direct object. This also makes the previous word into a verb.

🐱>>🍷 - *The animal drinks the water.*

P≈>>🍷 - *I wash my hands.*

bV>>🍷 - *You enlarge it.*

Modifying words

Words can be modified by appending other words.

👤 - *Child (small human).*

🏠 - *My house.*

👤 - *A good feeling.*

To negate a word, append ×

P×🍷 - *I'm not sleeping.*

👤×>🍷 - *No one is talking.*

With multiple modifiers, they all modify the first word.

🌿🌿 - *Two plant lists.*

🌿🖤 - *A blue and black box.*

You can change the way the modifiers interact using pi .

🌿.🌿 - *A two-plant list.*

🌿.🖤 - *A dark-blue box.*

Prepositions

🍌, 🍌, 🍌, and 🍌 can act as prepositions. They go at the end of a statement.

P🍌🍌 - *I eat with cutlery.*

🐱>🏠 - *The animal is in the house.*

b🍌=🍌 - *You sing like a bird!*

P🍌🍌 - *I return from work.*

🍌>🍌>🍌 - *They said that to you.*

Questions

There are three ways to form a question. If you want a yes-or-no answer, use verb × verb.

🍌>🍌×🍌 - *Is she playing?*

This will usually result in one of three types of replies:

🍌 - *Yes: [she is] playing.*

🍌× - *No: [she is] not playing.*

× - *No: [she is] not [playing].*

If you want to check something, end the sentence with Y?

b🍌Y? - *Are you making fire?*

🐱^>🏠Y? - *Is the cute cat in a box?*

Replace unknown info with ? to form an open-ended question.

🍌?>🍌>🍌 - *Who's bringing the drinks?*

b🍌? - *What are you making?*

Interjections

Interjections are common. Add ! for emphasis.

🌊 - *Good! / Great! / Thanks!*

🍌 - *So powerful!*

🍌 - *Hello! / Hi! / Greetings!*

÷ - *True! / Correct!*

🍌 - *Bon appetit!*

Conjunctions

There are many ways to say “and”. Use + for 2+ subjects.

P+🍌>🍌 - *You and I are playing a lot.*

For 2+ predicates, repeat >.

🐱>🍌>^ - *This animal is small and cute.*

For direct objects, repeat >>.

🍌>🍌>🍌 - *She sees a bird and a fish.*

For prepositions, repeat the preposition.

P🍌>🍌🍌 - *I build the house using sticks and stones.*

Y can be used to mean “or.”

🍌>Y - *Is this good or bad?*

PY🍌>🍌 - *You or I are going to the store.*

Loanwords

Toki Pona uses **proper adjectives**, not nouns.

These are marked by a box. Only the first sound of each word is read.

🍌[🍌🍌🍌] - *A person named Sonja, a.k.a. jan Sonja.*

🍌[🍌🍌🍌] - *The language “Tosi” (Deutsch), a.k.a. German.*

🍌[🍌🍌🍌🍌]>V - *The land Mewika (USA) is big.*

Loanwords should try to follow Toki Pona's rules for syllables:

- They have exactly one vowel.
- They may have n at the end.
- The first syllable in a word may start with a vowel.
- The others must all start with a consonant.
- The combinations wu, wo, ji, ti, nm and nn are avoided.

The word !

You can use ! before a verb to turn it into a command.

!🍌 - *Listen!*

!🍌 - *Please drink.*

You can use ! after a subject to address them.

🍌[🍌🍌] - *Eten! (Aden)*

You can place ! between subject and predicate to express a wish, desire, request, etc.

🍌>🍌 - *Joy to you.*

P🍌 - *I should be working.*

Or it can also be a contraction of the first two uses.

🍌[🍌🍌] - *Eat, Sasa. (Sasza)*

Preverbs

Preverbs go before verbs to modify their meaning.

P🍌 - *I can write.*

🍌>🍌V - *The small bird wants to become big.*

The words 🍌, 🍌, 🍌, 🍌, 🍌, and 🍌 can be preverbs.

Context

The word > can be used to mark the context of a sentence:

a) b means: In the context of a, b. This can mean time, cause, topic, etc.

b🍌.P🍌 - *When you are by my side, I feel good.*

The word > is often used to move a prepositional phrase to the front of the sentence.

=P🍌 - *Just like me, you know a lot.*

🍌? - *Why are you hot?*

The preposition ÷ can be omitted in this case.

🍌P - *I sleep [at] night.*

Numbers

Combine number words to add them up.

For example, 1 is 1, 11 is 2, 11 is 5, 111 is 20, ∞ is 100, 111 is 4, and 1111 is 8.

The word # can be used to mark ordinals.

🍌1> - *The first book is good.*

🍌1111 - *26th Street.*

people

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | jan person, somebody | |
| | kulupu group, community, company, collection, team | |
| | mama parent, caretaker; creator | |
| | meli female, feminine | |
| | mi (1st-person) I, me, we, us | |
| | mije male, masculine | |
| | ona (3rd-person) he, she, it, they, ... | |
| | sina (2nd-person) you, y'all | |
| | tonsi nonbinary; transgender | |

body

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | insa inside, center, between, middle; organ, stomach | |
| | kute ear; hear, listen | |
| | lawa head, mind; lead; leader; rule | |
| | luka hand, arm; 5 | |
| | lukin look, see, examine; eye; try | |
| | monsi behind, back, rear | |
| | nena nose, bump, hill, button | |
| | noka foot, leg; roots, lower part | |
| | pilin heart, feeling (emotion, sense) | |
| | selo outer layer, skin, peel, shell, bark; boundary | |
| | sijelo body, physical state, torso | |
| | sinpin vertical surface, wall; front, face | |
| | uta mouth, lips | |

things

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | ijo thing, object, matter | |
| | ilo tool, machine, device, instrument | |
| | leko square, cube, block, brick | |
| | linja long and flexible thing, rope, hair, line, string | |
| | lipu flat object, paper, document, card, website | |
| | lupa door, window, hole, pit, portal | |
| | namako spice, ornament; extra, additional | |
| | nena nose, bump, hill, button | |
| | palisa long hard object, rod, stick | |
| | poki container, bag, bowl, box, cup, category | |
| | sike circle, sphere; cycle, orbit, year | |
| | supa horizontal surface, bed, floor, table, platform, stage | |

necessities

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | esun market, shop; trade, buy, sell | |
| | len cloth, fabric; hidden, private | |
| | mani money, currency; valuables | |
| | misikeke medication, medical practice | |
| | moku eat, drink; food | |
| | pan bread, grain, potato, pasta, rice | |
| | tomo building, room, tent, shelter | |
| | wile want, must, need | |

sight

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | jelo yellow, yellowish color | |
| | kule color; aspect of sense, timbre, pitch, flavor, texture; queer | |
| | laso blue, green, turquoise, indigo | |
| | loje red, reddish color | |
| | lukin look, see, examine; eye; try | |
| | pimeja black; dark, unlit; dark color | |
| | sitelen image, picture, symbol, writing | |
| | walo white; light-colored, bright color | |

activity

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | alasa hunt, forage, seek, attempt, try | |
| | esun market, shop; trade, buy, sell | |
| | jo have, hold, carry, contain | |
| | kalama to make noise; sound | |
| | kepeken using, with, by means of | |
| | kipisi cut, split, slice; piece, part | |
| | ku to interact with Toki Pona Dictionary by Sonja Lang | |
| | lape sleep, rest | |
| | pali work, create, take action on | |
| | pana give, send, emit, provide | |
| | pu to interact with Toki Pona: The Language of Good by Sonja Lang | |
| | sitelen image, picture, symbol, writing | |
| | su to interact with the illustrated story book series produced by Sonja Lang | |
| | toki talk, communicate; tale; language | |
| | unpa sex, to have sexual relations | |
| | utala fight, compete, battle; challenge | |

state

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | ante different, change, changed, other | |
| | awen stay, remain, wait; protect, save; to continue | |
| | kama arrive, summon; future; become | |
| | ken can, may, ability; possible; allow, enable; to be able to | |
| | open begin, start; turn on; opening | |
| | pini finish, stop; turn off; close, end, final | |
| | tawa motion, walking, flight, travel; going to, for; from the perspective of | |
| | tempo time, moment, period, duration | |
| | weka away, absent, distant; remove, rid | |

connection

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | anu (possibility marker), or | |
| | e (direct object marker) | |
| | en (multiple subject marker) | |
| | kin too, also | |
| | la (context marker) | |
| | li (predicate marker) | |
| | lon located at; real, true, exist | |
| | pi (regroups modifiers) | |
| | seme (question marker); what, which | |
| | tan by, from, because; origin, cause | |
| | taso only, exclusively; but, however | |

critters

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | akesi reptile, amphibian, scaly animal | |
| | kala fish, marine animal | |
| | kijetesantakalu raccoon, procyonid, musteloid | |
| | pipi insect, bug, spider, tiny crawling creature | |
| | soweli land animal, beast | |
| | waso bird, flying animal, winged animal | |

evoke

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | a (emphasis/emotion interjection); ah, oh, haha, eh, um | |
| | mu (animal noise/onomatopoeia) | |
| | n (thinking interjection); hm, uh | |
| | o (vocalive/imperative marker), must, ought, should, could, would | |

descriptions

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | ante different, change, changed, other | |
| | ike bad, negative, unpleasant, cringe, complex, harmful, unneeded | |
| | jaki disgusting, unclear, toxic | |
| | kiwen hard object, stone, rock, metal | |
| | ko clay, dough, something pliable, powder, sand | |
| | lawa head, mind; lead; leader; rule | |
| | lili little, small, short; few; young | |
| | namako spice, ornament; extra, additional | |
| | nasa strange, unusual, silly, unexpected; drunk | |
| | pona good, positive, pleasant, simple, friendly, useful, peaceful, based | |
| | sama same, similar; sibling, peer; as, like | |
| | sin new, fresh; another, extra | |
| | suli big, heavy, large; important; adult | |
| | suwi sweet; cute, innocent, adorable | |

elements

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | kasi plant, vegetation; herb, leaf | |
| | kili fruit, vegetable | |
| | kiwen hard object, stone, rock, metal | |
| | kon air, breath, wind; spirit, soul | |
| | lete cold, cool, frozen; raw | |
| | ma earth, land, soil; country, territory | |
| | mun moon, night sky object, star | |
| | seli hot, warm; heat, fire; burn | |
| | soko mushroom, fungus, lichen | |
| | suno sun, light source; light, glow | |
| | telo water, liquids, drinks; to wash, to clean | |

counting

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | ala not, nothing, no; 0; (negation); (yes-no question) | |
| | ale all, everything, entirety; any; 100 | |
| | luka hand, arm; 5 | |
| | mute many, several; very; 20 | |
| | nanpa number, -th | |
| | tu 2; separate, divide, split | |
| | wan 1; combine, join, mix | |

locating

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | anpa bottom, underside; below; defeat, humble, lowly | |
| | insa inside, center, between, middle; organ, stomach | |
| | lon located at; real, true, exist | |
| | monsi behind, back, rear | |
| | ni this, that, these, those | |
| | poka side, hip; next to, near | |
| | poki container, bag, bowl, box, cup, category | |
| | selo outer layer, skin, peel, shell, bark; boundary | |
| | sewi up, top, above; divine, sacred, supernatural; awesome, inspiring | |
| | sinpin vertical surface, wall; front, face | |
| | weka away, absent, distant; remove, rid | |

ideas

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | jasima mirror, reflection, opposite | |
| | moli death, dead, dying; kill, murder | |
| | monsuta monster, fear, scary, threat, danger | |
| | musi entertainment, fun, game, art, amusing, interesting | |
| | nasin method, doctrine; road, way | |
| | nimi word, name | |
| | olin love, bond, compassion, respect | |
| | pakala damage, break, harm; mistake | |
| | pilin heart, feeling (emotion, sense) | |
| | sewi up, top, above; divine, sacred, supernatural; awesome, inspiring | |
| | sona knowledge, information; know; wisdom, skill | |
| | tempo time, moment, period, duration | |
| | utala fight, compete, battle; challenge | |
| | wawa amazing; power, energy; intense | |
| | wile want, must, need | |

