

Small Communication Book for Common Twi

Ghana-Korea-Germany
Church Partnership Youth Encounter

2014

Contents

1	Pronunciation Help	1
2	Greetings	3
3	Introducing yourself	5
4	Pronouns, Titles and Family	7
5	Tenses and Grammar	9
6	Useful Words and Phrases	13
7	On the market	17
8	Weekdays and how to find your way	19
9	Dictionary	21

Brothers and sisters, what should we say then? When you come together, every one of you brings something. You bring a hymn or a teaching or a word from God. You bring a message in another language or explain what was said. All of those things must be done to make the church strong.

— NIRV 1 Corinthians 14:26

1 Pronunciation Help

a	most times like bark
e	short like in let or longer
ε	head
i	short like in sit or long like sheet
o	most times like for
ɔ	open O like in pot
u	like look or choose
g	gate
h	hire
s	suit
r	rolling tongue R
w	wood
dw	like dj ango
gy	jungle
hw	sh wa or sh ip
hy	sh irt
kw	equ iped
ky	ch ief
nw	like nyw
ny	Español
tw	like tshu or the word chew
an	short like zebra a and silent N if word end

1 Pronunciation Help

Twi belongs to the Akan language family and consists of strong dialects like Asante, Akuapem, Fante and more. The book gives just small insights of a common Twi and you will find more local varieties of pronunciation and words. Depending on the way to count there are around 60 languages in Ghana, but the Twi group is the biggest, especially in the south. The language also spread to Suriname, Jamaica and other places around South America through the slave trade. The alphabet and some of the first publications in Twi come from German missionaries and thus most vowels and consonats are not too different from German pronunciation. But it's not easy like that and you'll need to practise not only the diphthongs but also tones.

2 Greetings

Akwaaba! Welcome!

Mema wo akye! (Maakye!) Good morning!
I-give you warmness

Mema wo aha! (Maaha!) Good afternoon!

Mema wo adwo! (Maadwo!) Good evening!

Possible answers for a greeting:

Yaa Eɛna! (mother, but used for all women)

Yaa Agya! (father, used for all men)

Yaa nua! [nwiya] (sibling, for same age or younger)

Wo ho te sɛn? How are you?
You body feel how?

Mo ho te sɛn? How are you (pl.)?
You (pl.) body feel how?

Ɛte sɛn? How is it?
It-feel how?

2 Greetings

Me ho ye. I'm fine.
I body good.

Onyame adom me ho ye. By God's grace I'm fine.
God grace I body good.

Eye. It's good.

Bokoo! Soft! (infrml.)

Na wo nso e? And how are you?
And you too same-question?

Menso me ho ye. I'm also fine.
I-too I body good.

Yoo. Yeda Onyame ase. Well, we thank God.
OK. We-lay God under.

Meda ase (paa/bebre). (Medaase.) Thank you (good/much).
I-lay under.

Meda wo ase. (Meda w'ase.) Thank you.
I-lay you under.

Menso meda mo ase. Thank you(pl.) too.
I-too I-lay you(pl.) under.

Nante yie! Save journey!

Mehu wo akyire! (Akyire!) (I) See you later!

Yebehyia! We will meet!

Okyena yebehyia bio. Tomorrow we'll meet again.

Afe hyia pa! - Afe nko mmeto yen! Happy New Year!
- May another year come and meet us!

3 Introducing yourself

Wo din de sɛn? What is your name?

Yɛfrɛ wo sɛn? How are you called?
We-call you how?

Me din de Ama. My name is Ama.

Yɛfrɛ me Adwoa. I'm called Adwoa.
We-call I Adwoa.

Wofri he? Where do you come from?
You-from where?

Mefri Korea. I'm from Korea.

Wote he? Where do you stay?
You-stay where?

Mete Combine. I stay at Combine.

Mebaa Ghana nnaawɔtwe baako nie. I came to Ghana
last week.
I-came Ghana week one ago.

Wobɛdi abosome sɛn wɔ Ghana? How many months
will you stay in Ghana?
You-will-eat months how-many in Ghana?

3 Introducing yourself

Medi nnaawɔtwe mienu. I will stay two weeks.
I-will-eat week two.

Woadi mfiɛ sɛn? How old are you?
You-have-eaten years how-many?

Medii mfiɛ dunkron. I am 19 years old.
I-ate years ten-nine.

Wopɛ deɛn? What do you want?
You-want what?

Mepɛ sɛ mesra Akosua. I want to visit Akosua.
I-want that I-visit Akosua.

Wɔwoo wo da bɛn? Which day are you born?
They-bear you day which?

Wɔwoo me Yawoada, enti yɛfrɛ me Yaw. I'm born at
Thursday and so am called Yaw.
They-born I Thursday, hence we-call I Yaw.

4 Pronouns, Titles and Family

me/mi I, me, my, mine

m'adamfo my friend

wo you, your

w'adamfo your friend

ɔɔ, ɔ- (when combined with verb) he/she, him/her

eno, ɛ- (when combined with verb) it

ne his/her

n'adamfo his/her friend

yɛ/yɛn we, us, our

y'adamfo our friend

mo you, yours

mo adamfo your friend

wɔ/wɔɔnom/wɔn/wɔm they, their, them

Often to speak to a person the title/role is prepended.

4 Pronouns, Titles and Family

family abusua

Maame/Ena, Enanom (pl.) Miss, Ladies/Women
Mother, Mothers

Papa/Agya, Agyanom (pl.) Mister, Gentlemen/Men
Father, Fathers

Obaa woman, girl

Abrantɛɛ, Ababawa young boy, young girl

Akwadaa/Akolaa child/baby

Ante auntie

wɔfa'se mothers brother i.e. uncle
→ special role in extended family

Sewaa aunt, "female father" i.e. fathers sister
→ special role in extended family

Bra, nnua beɛma brother

Sister (Sis'a), nnua baa sister

nua baa/barima panin big sister/brother
sibling female/male senior

nua baa/barima kumaa/ketewa small sister/brother
sibling female/male junior

(O)panyin adult

ntaa/ntaafɔɔ (pl.) twins

anuanom younger people

osugyani bachelor

mpena fiancée, boyfriend

5 Tenses and Grammar

Present tense is composed by putting subject and predicate together. While here the stem form of the verb is used many words in Twi are changed when used in different tense and nouns too change when used in plural form.

Enne medi Fufuo. Today I eat Fufu.

Mete ha. I stay here. *Note: te has several meanings.*

Menom nsuo. I drink water.

Abena (ɔ)te Twi. Abena speaks Twi.
Abena-feel Twi.

Present progressive is composed by adding a -re- between subject and predicate. When speaking this just becomes a vowel lengthening. Third person singular is an exception if it follows a name.

Mereba. (Meeba.) I'm coming/on my way.
I-now-come.

Meredi Fufuo. (Meedi Fufuo.) I'm eating Fufu.
I-now-eat Fufu.

5 Tenses and Grammar

Felix εεsua Twi. (*Not: Felix ɔɔsua.*) Felix is learning Twi.
Felix he-now-learn Twi.

Seesei worekɔ he? (Wookɔ he?) Where are you going now?
Now you-now-go where?

Merekɔ fie. (Meekɔ fie.) I am going home.
I-now-go house.

Merenom nsuo. (Meenom nsuo.) I am drinking water.
I-now-drink water.

Yerekɔ nom koko. (Yεekɔ nom koko.) We go to eat mais porrage.
We-now-go drink porrage.

ɔreyε deen? (ɔɔyε deen?) What is he doing?
He-now-do what?

Future tense is composed by adding a -bε- between subject and predicate. When speaking this can also just change e to ε.

Mebεda. (Mεda.) I will sleep.

ɔkyena ɔbεtɔ mpaboa. Tomorrow he'll buy shoes.

Wobεdi deen? You'll eat what?

ɔkyena akyi Kwame bεkɔ Togo. The day after tomorrow Kwame will go to Togo.

Past tense is formed by prolonging the vowel of the predicate (or just telling the time while using present tense).

Mesua Fanti. I have learned Fanti.

Ennora anwummerɛ medii Ampɛsi. Yesterday evening
I ate Ampesi.

Mete Germany mfiɛ miɛnsa nie. I lived in Germany
three years ago.
I-stay Germany year three ago.

Imperative forms of verbs do sometimes change (like **ka** to **kassa**). An example is ba which becomes bra, while others like ko remain unchanged.

Mepa wo kyɛw, bra, wei. Please come, ok? *I-Beg you
mercy, come, ok?*

Kɔ fa ntoosi ma me. Go bring the tomato for me.

Gye sika. Take the money/change.

Menka Twi paa. Enti kassa brofo ma me. I don't speak
Twi well. So speak English for me.

5 Tenses and Grammar

Negotiation of verbs are made by prepending **n** to them in most cases. But the consonant is changed if it starts with **d** like *da* which becomes *nnā* or **b** like *bɔ* which becomes *mmɔ*.

Wontɔ nsuo bio? You don't buy water again?
You-not-buy water again?

Mentɔn no. I don't sell this.
I-not-sell this?

Yenhyia seesei. We don't meet now.

Memmrɛ... I am not tired... (*from: abrɛ*)

Monnom bia? You don't drink beer?

Adɛn Kwaku nni gyeene? Why does Kwaku not eat onion?
Why Kwaku not-eat onion?

Yɛnfrɛ me ɔburoni, me din de Lisa. We don't call me
ɔburoni/european, my name is Lisa.
We-not-call I ɔburoni, I name given(?) Lisa.

Woboa! - Daabi, memmoa. You lie! - No, I don't lie.

Menni sika. I don't have money. (*from: wɔ*)

Menyɛ Amerikani. I'm not an American.

6 Useful Words and Phrases

Sometimes you get a question on the street as a greeting. E.g. **Woreko he?** (Where are you going?) It might be that no answer is expected, but it's always ok to give it short and quick: **Meko krum.** (I go to town.) - Then you might often hear: **Ko bra.** (Go come.) And you can also use **Me ko ba.** (I go come.) when you leave.

ne and

na and/but, joints phrases or introduces a question

Da yie! Sleep well!

Mepɛ sɛ meko gu nsuo. I want to go to toilet (peeing).
I-like that I-go pour-out water.

adepa nkye (said as "good bye" in the evening)

Wote Twi, anaa? You speak/understand Twi, right?

Aane, meka Twi. Yes, I speak Twi.

Kakra kakra Small small (a little)

Dabi, mente Twi. No, I don't speak/understand Twi.

6 Useful Words and Phrases

Wo nso wote Twi anaa? And you too, you speak Twi, right?

Mepa wo kyɛw kassa breau! Please speak slowly.

Wose sɛn? What do you say?

Men te ase. I do not understand.

Maatse. I got it.

Adɛn ...? Why ...?

Agoo!? (When entering a place) Hello, is there someone? Or knocking: **Kɔkɔkɔ** Answer: **Ameɛ!** Yes, someone is inside.

Hwan a? Who's outside?

Ɛyɛ me, Kofi. It's me, Kofi.

Yoo, bra mu! Ok, come in.

Agoo! (When approaching from the back) Attention, I'm coming!

Hwe yie! Watch out!

Ɔɔyɛ deɛn? What is he/she doing?

Ɛyɛ me ya. It hurts me.

Kafra! Sorry!

Yɛn kɔ? Shall we go?/Let's go.

Mesi wo ha. (In a Taxi/Trotro) I drop/alight here.

Mete ha. I stay here.

Mɛware wo. I'll marry you.

Yoo, kɔ hu me papa wɔ Germany. Well then, go see
my father in Germany.

M'aware dada. I've married already.

Me wɔ kunu/yere/mpena. I have a husband/wife/boyfriend.

Yɛfrɛ wo maame sɛn? We call your mother how?

Yɛfrɛ me mamme Yaa. We call my mother Yaa.

Asomdwe nka wo. - Enka wo nso Peace be with you.
- And with you.

Mepɛ w'asɛm. I like you.
I-like you'character.

Sister Akua kɔ sraa n'adamfo. Sister Akua goes to visit
her friend.

Mɛda dua ase. I'll sleep under the tree.
I'll-sleep tree under.

Medaa dan mu. I am sleeping in the room.
I-now-sleep room in.

Ennora/Ennɛ/ɔkyena yɛ da bɛn? What day was/is yes-
terday/today/tomorrow?
Yesterday/today/tomorrow is day which?

Ɛyɛ dɛ. It's sweet (food).

Mafe wo. I missed you.
Answer: Menso saa! Me too!

6 Useful Words and Phrases

Wo ho ye fe. You look beautiful.
You body is beautiful.

Tiafi wo ha? Is there a bathroom?
Bathroom have here?

Eye me ya. It hurts me.

7 On the market

Always start with a smalltalk (see other chapters) before negotiating. You might like to be cheeky and either ask for a lower price or to get some additional amount.

Mekɔ Kro-mu. (Mekɔ krom.) I go to town.

I-go town-into.

Dwaaso ahe? Where is the market?

Ɛye fɛfɛ. It's beautiful.

Me pɛ wei. I like this.

Mepɛ bio. I want more/again.

Wei ye sɛn?/Wei sɛn? How much is this?

Sɛn?/Ɛye sɛn? How much (is it)?

Apple sɛn?/Apple ɛye sɛn? How much is the apple?

Mepɛ sɛ, metɔ ntoma. Ntoma boɔ sɛn? I want to buy cloth. Cloth price is how much?

Yard baako 8 sidi (GHC). One yard is 5 Cedi (GHC).

Mepaakyɛ wo te so kakra. Please, reduce a little.
I-beg-your-mercy you put-down a-bit.

7 On the market

Yoo. Ma me 7 GHC. Ok, give me 7 Cedi.

Me ma wo 6 GHC. I give you 6 Cedi.

Mepɛ sɛ metɔ gyeene. Gyeene/ɛyɛ sɛn sɛn? I want
to buy onion. Onion/It is how much for how many?

Mmiɛnsa 60 GHp/pesewa. Three are 60 Pesewa.

(Wo) Ma me edu. Na gye sika. (You) Give me ten. And
take (your) money.

Or: Mepaa kyɛ wo to me so./Mepa wo kyɛw, to so kakra.
Please add some more for me (as gift).

8 Weekdays and how to find your way

People get names according to the weekday they are born. This list contains versions in one popular spelling.

day	day in Twi	male	female
Sunday	Kwasiada	Kwasi	Akosua
Monday	Ɛ-dwoada	Kwadwo	Adwoa
Tuesday	Ɛ-benada	Kwabena	Abenaa
Wednesday	Wukuada	Kwaku	Akua
Thursday	Yawoada	Yaw	Yaa
Friday	(E)fiada	Kofi	Afia
Saturday	Memeneda	Kwame	Ama

The following questions or phrases come in handy when you miss directions and get lost.

Ɛye me se m'ayera. I think I am lost.

Ɛhefa na ɔkwan wei kɔ? Where does this road go to?

8 Weekdays and how to find your way

Wowɔ kuro no asaase mfonini? Do you have a map of the city?

Meserɛ wo wobetumi akyerɛ me wɔ m'asaase mfonini yi so? Can you please show me on my map?

Ɛwa anaa? Is it far from here?

Ɛhefa na mɛhunu adrɛse yi? Where can I find this address?

Mɛtumi anante akɔ hɔ? Can I get there on foot?

Three basic Responses you might get

You also have to know some basic responses you will get when you ask these questions.

Ɛwɔ w'anɪm tee. It is straight ahead.

Fa wo nifa so. Turn right.

Fa wo benkum so. Turn left.

9 Dictionary

Verbs

adeka read

ba come (imp. bra)

bisa ask

boa help

dane turn

didi/di (+ object) eat

fa take (along)

fe ano kiss (lit. throw out
lips)

frɛ call

gye take

hata dry

hia need/want

home breathe

hu blow, see

huri jump

hwɛ look

hye burn

kae remember

ka talk (imp. kassa)

kɔ go

kɔ/tu mmrika run

kye fry

kyerɛ teach

kyia greet

nante walk

noa cook

nom drink

9 Dictionary

nunu tickle

nya earn

pam sew

pira hurt

pra sweep

shout tiemu

somu hold

spoil see

sre laugh

su cry

suro fear

susu measure

te n'ase sit down

tɔ buy

tɔn sell

to throw

tu fly

wia steal

yɛ ntɛm hurry

yera loose

Numbers

For non-whole number, simply add single number's name to its base value.

baako one

mienu two

miensa three

ɛ-nan four (stem: nan,
speak like nain)

e-num five ("-" marks fol-
lowing stem)

e-nsia six

ɛ-nson seven

(ɛ)nwɔtwe eight

(ɛ)nkron nine

e-du ten

du-baako 11

du-num 15

du-nsia 16

du-nkron 19

aduonu, aduenu 20

aduasa 30

aduasa nson 37

aduanan 40

aduonum 50

aduosia, aduesia 60

aduoc̣son 70

aduoẉtwe 80

aduoc̣kron 90

ɔha 100

Human Body

Eti/Etire/Ti head

Ti nwi hair

Enim face

Mo mma forehead

Eni eyes

Ese teeth

Hwene nose

Aso ear(s)

Ano mouth

(E)ḳn neck

Nsa arm(s)

Efu stomach

Eḳyi back

Sisi waist

(E)nan legs

Ani aḳyi nwi eyebrow(s)

Afono cheeks

Abogwe chin

Abogwe ṣe beard

Aḅeti/Mmḅeti Shoulder(s)

Bo chest

Sṛe thigh

Kotodwe knee

Fruits and Vegetables

Abrɔbɛ pineapple

Amako/Mako pepper

Amango mango

Ankaa, Akutu/Akutuo
orange

Bankye cassava

Bayerɛ, beye yam

Bɔfre, Bɔɔfre pawpaw,
papaya

Bɔɔdeɛ plantain

Gyeyney onion

Kwadu banana

Mankani cocoyam

Nkatiɛ (pea)nuts

Nkruma Okro

Ntoes, ntoosi tomato

Ntrowa/Ntɔrewa/Nyaadowa
egg plant, garden
egg, aubergine

Paya avocado

ɔkra/Agyinamoa cat

Colours

kɔkɔ red

tumtum black

fitaa, fufuo white

sika kɔkɔ gold (lit. gold
red)

bribri, bibri blue

bruu blue

ahaban mono green (lit.
new leaf)

akokɔ sraɔdeɛ yellow (lit.
chicken oil)

ahaban dada brown (lit.
old leaf)

akokɔbin brown (lit.
chicken shit)

tuum dark

Wordlist

abanoma adopted child	ennora yesterday
abofra child	he where
abosome months, bo- some = month	hyira bless
afie year, mfie = years	ma so lift up
anɔpa morning	mfie years, afie = year
anwummersɛ evening	na and/but/however, day (da)
asanka stone bowl for grinding	nana grandmother/father, king
awia noon, sun	nanankansoa great- grandchild
bɛn which	nnawɔtwe week ("days- eight")
bosome month, abosome = months	nya get, receive
dabi da never	ɔbabarima son
da day (noun), sleep (verb)	ɔbanana grandchild
da n'ase thank him (lay him'under)	okunu husband
deen what	ɔkyena akyi akyi two days after tomorrow (next-next)
ɛmo rice	
Ennora akye day before yesterday	ɔkyena akyi day after to- morrow

9 Dictionary

ɔkyena tomorrow

onua cousin

Onyame God

ɔyere wife

Saa! Is that so?!

sɛn how

tapoli mortar (kitchen
tool for grinding)

tikya teacher

wɔfaase nephew, niece

yi ayɛ give praise

Proverbs

Nka-kra, nka-kra akokɔ benom nsuo
bit by bit the chicken will drink water

Ɔkɔɔ nwo anoma a crab does not bear a bird

Kai Lüke, Richard Akyea

Released under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

