

Learn Mini in 20 minutes



S.C. Gruget

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Mini is a man-made language designed to be as simple as possible.

With a total of 1,000 words and a core vocabulary of only 120 words, it's also one of the easiest to learn. This guide will teach you the basics in 20 minutes.

Why learn Mini? Because learning Mini will surprise you by how much you can express when you break things down into their simplest form.

Say it like you mean it

Mini has 19 letters (a b d e f g i j k l m n o p r s t u v). All of the consonants (b d f g j k l m n p r s t v) are pronounced exactly the same as they are in English. Phew!

The vowels are pronounced like they are in Spanish, Italian, German, and many other languages:

A — ah — **f**a**th**er
E — eh — m**e**t
I — ee — **e**a**t**
O — oh — m**o**m**e**n**t**
U — oo — m**oo**

Easy, right?

The only other pronunciation rule you need to know is that words are always stressed or emphasized on their second-to-last syllable:

animale = ah-nee-MAH-leh, not ah-nee-mah-LEH
veji = VEH-jee, not veh-JEE

Some vocab

Good news: You already know a lot of Mini words because they come from English. What does the word *mini* mean? That's right, it means mini or small.

A small selection of words you already know:

Mini	English	have	have
go	go		
kan	can		
make	make		
man	human / person		
mi	me		
rason	reason		

If you've studied other languages (especially Romance languages or German but also Malay), you may recognize even more words!

The big idea

Now it's time to get started. There's basically only one big idea in Mini, and that's that every word can be any part of speech. A word like *fogo* can mean fire, burn, or fiery depending upon how it's used in a sentence. To make this work in practice, Mini uses a few one-letter words to indicate which part of speech a word is in a sentence.

In a normal sentence, you have a subject (the person or thing doing an action), a verb (the action), and an object (the thing which the subject is acting on). Mini uses one word to mark the verb (*i*) and another to mark the object (*a*). Let's see a few examples.

Note that Mini doesn't use articles like *the* or *a*. It also doesn't have tenses or plurals or cases. So you end up sounding a little like a caveman: "Me eat. Bob make food."

[subject] *i* [verb] *a* [object]
I eat. *Bob i manja a veji.*
Bob eats veggies. *Man i bibe a vasa.*

A person drinks water. Bob i make a manja.
Bob makes food. Mi i vasa a veji.
I water the plants.

Notice that *manja* is used to mean both *eat* and *food*. This is how most words in Mini work: they describe a broad category of things and their precise meaning is only pinned down when you use it in a sentence.

That depends on what the meaning of “is” is

Mini doesn’t really have a word for “is.” If you want to say that something is something else, you just use the word *a* to link the two items:

[subject] a [noun] Bob a man.
Bob is a person. Veji a manja.
Vegetables are food.

This is the same word we used above to introduce the direct object. In Mini, when a subject is followed by *a [noun]* that means the subject *is* that noun. No extra “is” is necessary.

You might wonder how you would say something is good. The word “good” after all is not a noun so the above pattern wouldn’t work. What we need is...another special grammatical word.

The word *e* introduces adjectives and descriptive words, and works analogously to *a*. To say something is good, you say that thing *e bon*. Let’s see a few examples:

[subject] *e* [adjective]
Kosa e bon.
The thing is good.
Bob e vasa.
Bob is wet.
Manja e Bob.
The food is Bob's.

Notice that the word *vasa*, which in the above examples meant *water*, here means *wet*, because the word is now being used as an adjective. And similarly the name *Bob* is now possessive because it’s being used as an adjective.

You might be wondering if there are any more of these weird part-of-speech words. But, rest assured, this is the last one. We’ve now seen all three part-of-speech words in Mini:

Word	Function	introduces the verb
a		introduces direct object & noun complement
e		introduces adjective complement

These words are the glue that keeps the language together and allows Mini to recycle its vocabulary into as many different concepts as possible.

This grammar can take a little bit to get used to, as it's pretty different from English. But it's powerful and intuitive to use once you get the hang of it.

All your ducks in a row

In Mini, adjectives come before the noun like they do in English:

mega loke	<i>big placeno mui kolo</i>
<i>not much colordika feo bebe</i>	<i>fat ugly baby</i>

Adverbs (other than *not*) come after the verb:

Bob i manja rapi.	<i>Bob eats fast.</i>	Bob i no manja mui rapi. <i>Bob does not eat very fast.</i>
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Hi, my pronouns are si/si

Mini uses the following personal pronouns:

mi	first person	<i>I, me</i>
tu	second person	<i>you</i>
si	third person	<i>he, she, it, him, her</i>

The pronouns do not change for gender or number. To get explicit plural pronouns (like *we*), you have to use a compound word:

mi-ale	<i>we (me-all)</i>
si-ale	<i>they</i>

When personal pronouns are used as adjectives, they become possessives.

tu kaja	<i>your box</i>
si note	<i>his/her/its note</i>
mi-ale name	<i>our name</i>

Prep school

Prepositional phrases come after the words they describe in basically the same way as in English. If the phrase is describing the verb, it can go after the direct object.

de	<i>from, of, about, by, out of, made of</i>
en	<i>in, at, on</i>
go	<i>to, for, towards</i>
kon	<i>with</i>
sama	<i>like, as, than, same</i>

Bob e kon Alisa.	<i>Bob is with Alice.</i>
Bob e de Amerika.	<i>Bob is from America.</i>
Alisa i viva en London.	<i>Alice lives in London.</i>
Da e go tu.	<i>That's for you.</i>
Mi i toma go tu a kosa.	<i>I take the thing to you.</i>
Mi e sama tu.	<i>I am like you.</i>

Remember that in Mini words can be used as any part of speech?

Well, Mini prepositions can often be verbs. (This is why *go* is *go*.)

Alisa i go a retorante.	<i>Alice goes to the</i>
<i>restaurant.</i>	<i>Alice includes</i>
Alisa i kon a Bobi.	<i>Bob.</i>

They can also be used as adverbs:

Mi i kipa en.
I stay in.

Conjunction junction, what's your function?

Mini uses three conjunctions, which work basically the same as English:

an	<i>and</i>
pero	<i>but</i>

u or, either Alisa an Bobi i pale mui.
Alice and Bob talk a lot. Tu i vole a kafe u tea?
Do you want coffee or tea? Mi i kamina en foreta, pero si i
kipa en.
I walk in the forest, but he stays inside.

Mini conjunctions can also be used as other parts of speech:

Mi i vole go an.	I want to go too.
Si a pero kinde.	He is but a child.
Tu i no kan go a u jalan.	You can't go either way.

Yes or no

Yes-or-no questions can be formed by using a question mark and rising intonation (when spoken) or by adding a tag question like *no?*, *ja?*, or *u ke?* to the end of a sentence.

Si i vole resi?	Does he want to sleep?
Si i vole go, u ke?	Does he want to go or what?
No, si i no vole go.	No, he does not want to go.

You what?

In English, words like who, what, where, when, and why are used to ask questions. Since Mini is *mini*, there's only one question

word: the pronoun *ke* (what). This word can be used to form all the other question words.

In Mini, unlike English, the word ordering of questions does not change.

Tu i ke?	<i>You what?</i>
Tu a ke (man) ?	<i>Who are you?</i>
Tu e ke?	<i>How are you?</i>
Tu i go en ke tempo? go?	<i>When (at what time) do you go?</i>
Tu i kipa go ke rason? <i>you stay?</i>	<i>Why (for what reason) do you stay?</i>
Tu i manja a ke mui?	<i>How much do you eat?</i>
Tu i vole uti a ke kosa? <i>use?</i>	<i>Which thing do you want to use?</i>

I'll have what she's having

The question word *ke* (what) which we introduced above can also be used to introduce dependent clauses.

In English, dependent clauses are the little side-comments that people attach to the main part of a sentence. In a sentence like “I feel that it works”, *that it works* is the dependent clause. Mini works basically the same way, with *ke* meaning *that*.

Mi i senti ke si i make.

I feel that it works. Mi i ave a ke si i ave.

I have what she has. Tu i vole manja afa ke tu i aroma a pan.

You want to eat after (that) you smell the bread.

Just do it!

To form a command, simply omit the subject.

I go!

Go!

I manja a tu veji!

Eat your veggies!

I no pale!

Don't talk!

Count von Count

Let's count some numbers!

1 uno

2 duo

3 san

4 fo

5 penta

6 sita

7 seven

8 ba

9 nin

10 tenMan i ave a uno nase, duo oko, an penta diji en kada mano.

A person has one nose, two eyes, and five fingers on each hand.

Greetings, Earthling

Now let's practice some common phrases in Mini.

Tu name a ke?

What's your name? Salu, mi name a Bob.

Hello, my name is Bob. Tu e ke?

How are you? Ke i pasa?

What's up? Bon maten!

Good morning! Sori, toilette e en ke?

Sorry, where is the toilet? I favo pale lenta.

Please talk slowly. Danke.

Thanks. De nulo. / Sama-sama.

You're welcome. Adio!

Goodbye!

Fini

If you've read up to here, congrats! You now know a lot of what you need to understand and speak Mini. There's still a few advanced topics left to cover, but you can read about them in the [next lesson](#).

Nun, tu kan begin pale a Mini! (Now you can start speaking Mini!)

Next lesson: Learn Mini II: Advanced Mini

More resources at minilanguage.com

Mini
Conlanging