

Toki Pona

Toki Pona is a language developed by linguist Sonja Lang, with only around 130 words.

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

This version is by jan Sa, CC0. [Original](#) by blinry.

This document is simply a cheat sheet and is not exhaustive. For more, visit <https://tokipona.org/>

Alphabet

Toki Pona uses these letters:
a e i j k l m n o p s t u w

All consonants are the same as English, except j is like English “y.”
Vowels are all similar to Spanish.

Basic sentences

The particle *li* separates the subject from the predicate.

soweli li moku. – The cat is eating.

jan li lape. – Someone is sleeping.

There is no verb “to be.”

The part after *li* (predicate) can be a noun or an adjective.

kili li moku. – Fruits are food.

telo li pona. – Water is good.

If the subject is *mi* or *sina* alone, the *li* is always omitted.

mi moku. – I eat.

sina pona. – You are good.

Ambiguity

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

mi moku. – I am eating. / I was eating. / I will be eating.

Many words have multiple or general meanings.

soweli – cat / dog / (any land mammal)

kili = (any fruit or vegetable)

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

telo – water / wet / to wash

pona = good, simple / to improve, to make better / well, greatly

Nouns have no default countability. They also do not have any default identifiability.

kili – a fruit / the fruit / some fruits / the fruits

mi – I / me / we / us

Direct objects

The particle *e* separates a verb from its direct object. This also makes the word before into a verb.

soweli li moku e telo. – The animal drinks the water.

mi telo e soweli. – I wash the cat. / I apply water to the cat.

sina suli e ona – You embiggen it. / You make it big.

Modifying words

Words can be modified by appending other words.

jan lili – small human, child

tomo mi – my house

pilin pona – a good feeling

To negate a word, append *ala*:

mi lape ala. – I’m not sleeping.

jan ala li toki. – No one is talking.

With multiple modifiers, they all modify the first word.

lipu kasi tu – two plant documents

poki laso pimeja – a blue and black box

You can change the way the modifiers interact using *pi*.

lipu pi kasi tu – a document of two plants

poki pi laso pimeja – a dark-blue box

Prepositions

kepeken, *lon*, *sama*, *tan*, and *tawa* can act as prepositions. They go at the end of a statement.

mi moku kepeken ilo. – I eat with cutlery.

soweli li lon tomo. – The animal is in the house.

sina toki sama kala! – You talk like a fish!

mi kama tan esun. – I arrive from the store.

ona li toki e ni tawa sina. – They said this to you.

Conjunctions

There are many ways to say “and.” For *multiple* subjects, use *en*.

mi en sina li musi mute. – You and I are playing a lot.

For predicates, repeat *li*.

soweli ni li lili li suwi. – This animal is small and cute.

For direct objects, repeat *e*.

ona li jo e waso e kala. – She has a bird and a fish.

For prepositions, repeat the preposition.

mi pali e tomo kepeken palisa kepeken kiwen. – I make the house using sticks and stones.

anu can be used to mean “or.”

ni li pona anu ike? – Is this good or bad?

mi anu sina li tawa esun. – You or I are going to the store.

Loaned Adjectives

Toki Pona does not use proper nouns, but rather proper adjectives:

jan Sonja – a Sonja person, a person named Sonja

toki Tosi – a Tosi (Deutsch) language, German

ma Mewika li sulii. – The US is big.

Loaned adjectives should follow Toki Pona’s phonology. Toki Pona uses a (C)V(n) syllable structure. Vowel clusters, consonant clusters, and the sequences *wu*, *wo*, *ji*, *ti*, *nm*, and *nn* are disallowed.

O

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

o kute! – Listen!

o pali. – Work, please.

You can use *o* after a subject to address that subject.

jan Pape o! – O Pape!

You can have *o* between a subject and predicate to express a wish, desire, request, etc.

pona o tawa sina. – I wish for goodness to go to you.

mi o pali. – I should be working.

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

soweli Ton o moku. – Eat, Ton.

Interjections

Interjections are used often, sometimes paired with *a* for emphasis.

pona! – Good! / Great! / Thanks!

wawa a! – So powerful!

toki! – Hello! / Hi! / Greetings!

lon! – True! / Correct!

moku pona! – Bon appetit! / What a fantastic meal!

Questions

There are two ways to form yes or no questions. For yes/no questions, use “verb *ala* verb.”

sina moku ala moku? – Are you eating?

To say yes, repeat the verb. To say no, say “verb *ala*” or “*ala*.”

moku – yes

moku ala / ala – no

For open-ended questions, you can also use “*anu seme*.”

sina moku anu seme? – Are you eating?

kala anu seme li lon poki? – Are fish in the box?

seme can also be used to create nonpolar questions. Replace the word in question with *seme*.

jan seme li toki? – Who’s talking?

sina pali e seme? – What are you making?

The question mark is a stylistic choice. Toki Pona uses grammar to mark questions, not tone or punctuation.

In general, all you need for punctuation is to separate sentences.

Preverbs

Preverbs go before verbs to modify their meaning.

mi kama sona. – I come to know.

waso lili li wile sulii. – The small bird wants to be big.

The words that can act as preverbs are *wile*, *kama*, *sona*, *lukin*, *ken*, *awen*, and sometimes *alasa*.

Context

la can be used to mark the context of a sentence. *X la Y* means “In the context of X, Y.” This can mean time, cause, topic, or any other relationship to the main sentence.

sina lon poka mi la mi pilin pona. – When you are by my side, I feel good.

Most prepositional terms can be moved behind a *la*.

mi lape lon tenpo pimeja. tenpo pimeja la mi lape. – I sleep at night.

sina seli tan seme? tan seme la sina seli? – Why are you hot?

Numbers

Combine number words to add them up.

wan – 1 *tu* – 2 *luka* – 5

mute – 20 *ale* – 100

tu tu – 4 *luka tu wan* – 8

nanpa can be used to mark ordinals.

jan nanpa wan li pona. – The first person is good.

ni li nasin nanpa mute tu wan. – That is 23rd Street.

And... that’s it!

a	(emphasis, emotion, or confirmation)	kala	sea creature	len	cloth, fabric; cover, layer of privacy
akesi	reptile, amphibian	kalama	sound; to make a sound, utter	lete	cool, cold; raw
ala	no, not, zero	kama	arriving, coming, future; to become	li	(predicate marker)
alasa	to hunt, to forage	kasi	plant, vegetation; grass, leaf	lili	small, little; few, a bit; young
ale (ali)	all; everything; 100	ken	to be able to, can, may; possible	linja	long and flexible thing; string, cord, hair, thread
anpa	downward, humble, lowly	kepeken	to use, with, by means of	lipu	flat object; paper, card, document, website
ante	different, other, changed	**kijete-santakalu	Musteloids, such as racoon	loje	red, reddish
anu	(connects phrases with “or” rather than “and”)	kili	fruit, vegetable	lon	located at, present at, true
awen	enduring, kept, protected; to continue to	*kin	also, too	luka	arm, hand; five
e	(direct object marker)	*kipisi	to cut, to divide; part, division	lukin	to see, examine
en	(multiple subject marker)	kiwen	hard object, metal, stone, rock	lupa	door, hole, orifice
esun	market, shop, fair	ko	clay, semi-solid, paste, powder	ma	earth, land; outdoors; soil
ijo	thing, object, phenomenon	kon	air; spirit, essence; unseen agent	mama	parent; creator; caretaker
ike	bad, negative; irrelevant	*ku	to interact with <i>Toki Pona Dictionary</i>	mani	money, cash, currency item
ilo	tool, machine, device, instrument	kule	color, colorful	*meli	Female
insa	centre, inside, content; organ, stomach	kulupu	community, group, company, nation	mi	first-person pronoun
jaki	disgusting, unclean, toxic	kute	ear; to hear	*mije	male
jan	person, somebody	la	(context marker)	moku	to eat, to drink; food
jelo	yellow, yellowish	lape	sleeping, resting	moli	dead, dying
jo	to have, carry, contain, hold	laso	blue, green	monsi	back, behind, rear
		lawa	head, mind; ruler; to lead, to regulate	*monsuta	fear; monster; scary
		*leko	square, block	mu	(animal noise)
				mun	night sky object

musi	entertaining, fun, recreational	poki	container, bag, box, bowl, cup	tawa	going to; for; moving
mute	many, a lot; very; quantity	pona	good, useful, simple, positive	telo	liquid, water, beverage
*namako	spice, additional	pu	interacting with <i>Toki Pona: The Language of Good</i>	tenpo	time, duration, moment, period
nanpa	-th; number	sama	similar, same; as	toki	to say; language
nasa	strange, unusual; foolish; silly	seli	Fire; heat source	tomo	indoor space; building, home
nasin	way, road, doctrine, method	selo	outer form, outmost layer; skin, peel	*tonsi	non-binary, trans
nenā	bump, hill, nose	seme	what? which?	tu	Two
ni	this, that	sewi	area above, highest part; divine, sacred	unpa	sex; to have sexual relations
nimi	word, name	sijelo	body, torso. physical state	uta	mouth, lips; oral
noka	foot, leg; lower part	sike	circular object, cycle; of one year	utala	to battle; challenge
o	(vocative / imperative particle)	sin	new, fresh; another	walo	white; light-colored, pale
olin	to love, to respect	sina	second-person pronoun	wan	one; unique
ona	third-person pronoun	sinpin	face, front, wall	waso	flying creature
open	to begin, to start; opening	sitelen	image, picture, writing, symbol	wawa	strong, powerful; confident, energetic
pakala	broken, damaged; to mess up	*soko	mushroom	weka	absent, away
pali	to do, to work on	sona	to know; wisdom knowledge, info	wile	must, need, want
palisa	long hard object; rod, stick	soweli	land animal		
pan	grain, pasta, bread, rice	suli	big, heavy, large		
pana	to give, to emit, to send	suno	light source, sun; bright		
pi	(regroups modifiers)	supa	horizontal surface, thing to put objects on		
pilin	heart, feeling	suwi	sweet; cute		
pimeja	black, dark, unlit	tan	from, by, because		
pini	finished, past, end	taso	but, however; only		
pipi	bug, insect				
poka	hip, side; nearby				

These definitions have been slightly shortened to better fit two pages. Also refer to other dictionaries and speakers!

*These words have been marked as widespread by [lipu Linku](#), which means that less than 90% of speakers use this word.

**This word is a common joke word, not intended for serious use.