Toki Pona

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

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

This version is by Jan Sa, CCO. Original by blinry.

This document is simply a cheat sheet and is not extensive. 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

You can base their sounds using the IPA.

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

plin pona – a good feeling

To negate a word, append ala.

mi lape ala. – I’m not sleeping.

jan ali 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 stament.

mi moku kepeken ila. – I eat with cutlery.

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

sina toki sama kalas! – 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 kwene. – I make the house using sticks and stones.

ana can be used to mean “or.”

ni li pona anu ike. – This is good or bad.

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

Loan 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 sulis. – The US is big.

Loaned adjectives must follow Toki Pona’s phonology. Toki Pona uses a (CV)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 kuile! – Listen!

o pali. – Work, please.

You can use a 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! – Truel! / Correct!

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

Questions

There are two ways to form yes or no questions. For polar 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 append “ana seme.”

sina moku anu seme? – Are you eating?

sana seme li toki? – Who’s talking?

sina pali e seme? – What are you making?

The question mark is a stylistic choice. Toki Pona relies purely on grammar to mark questions.

Preverbs

Preverbs go before verbs to modify their meaning.

mi kama sona. – I come to know.

waso lili wiile sulis. – 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 plin pona. – When you are by my side, I feel good.

Most prepositional terms can be moved behind a la.

mi lapo lon tempo pimeja. tempo 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 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)
akesi reptile, amphibian
ala no, not, zero
alasa to hunt, to forage
ale (ali) all; everything; 100
anpa downward, humble, lowly
ante different, other, changed
anu Or
awen enduring, kept, protected; to continue to
e (direct object marker)
en (multiple subject marker)
esun market, shop, fair
ijo thing, object, phenomenon
ike bad, negative; irrelevant
ilo tool, machine, device, instrument
insula centre, inside, content; organ, stomach
jaki disgusting, unclean, toxic
jan person, somebody
jelo yellow, yellowish
jo to have, carry, contain, hold
kala sea creature
kalama sound; to make a sound, utter
karma arriving, coming, future; to become
kasi plant, vegetation; grass, leaf
ken to be able to, can, may; possible
kepeken to use, with, by means of
kijete-santakalu Musteloids, such as raccoon
kili fruit, vegetable
*kin also, too
*kipisi to cut, to divide; part, division
kiwen hard object, metal, stone, rock
ko clay, semi-solid, paste, powder
kon air; spirit, essence; unseen agent
*ku to interact with Toki Pona Dictionary
kule color, colorful
kulupu community, group, company, nation
kute ear; to hear
la (context marker)
lape sleeping, resting
laso blue, green
lawa head, mind; ruler; to lead, to regulate
*leko square, block
len cloth, fabric; cover, layer of privacy
lete cool, cold; raw
li (predicate marker)
llili small, little; few, a bit; young
linja long and flexible thing; string, cord, hair, thread
lipu flat object; paper, card, document, website
loje red, reddish
lon located at, present at, true
luka arm, hand; five
lukin to see, examine
lupa door, hole, orifice
ma earth, land; outdoors; soil
mama parent; creator, caretaker
mani money, cash, currency item
*meli Female
mi first-person pronoun
*mije male
moku to eat, to drink; food
moli dead, dying
mons (verb marker)
*monsuta fear; monster; scary
mu (animal noise)
mun night sky object
musi entertaining, fun, recreational
mute many, a lot; very; quantity
*namako spice, additional
nanpa -th; number
nasa strange, unusual; foolish; silly
nasin way, road, doctrine, method
nena bump, hill, nose
ni this, that
nimi word, name
noka foot, leg; lower part
*o (vocative/ imperative particle)
olin to love, to respect
ona third-person pronoun
open to begin, to start; opening
pakala broken, damaged; to mess up
pali to do, to work on
palisa long hard object; rod, stick
pan grain, pasta, bread, rice
pana to give, to emit, to send
pi (regroups modifiers)
pilin heart, feeling
pimeja black, dark, unlit
pini finished, past, end
pipi bug, insect
poka hip, side; nearby
poki container, bag, box, bottle, cup
pona good, useful, simple, positive
pu interacting with Toki Pona: The Language of Good Things
sama similar, same; as
sela Fire; heat source
selo outer form, outmost layer; skin, peel
seme what? which?
sewi area above, highest part; divine, sacred
sijelo body, torso, physical state
sike circular object, cycle; of one year
sin new, fresh; another
sina second-person pronoun
sinpin face, front, wall
sitelen image, picture, writing, symbol
*soko mushroom
seda to know; wisdom, knowledge, info
soweli land animal
suli big, heavy, large
suno light source, sun; bright
supa horizontal surface, thing to put objects on
suwi sweet; cute
tan from, by, because
taso but, however; only
tawa going to; for; moving
telo liquid, water, beverage
tenpo time, duration, moment, period
toki to say; language
tomo indoor space; building, home
*tons non-binary, trans
*toni Two
unpa sex; to have sexual relations
uta mouth, lips; oral
utala to battle; challenge
walo white; light-colored, pale
wan one; unique
wasso flying creature
wawa strong, powerful; confident, energetic
weka absent, away
wile must, need, want

These definitions have been slightly shortened to better fit a single page. Also refer to other dictionaries and speakers!

*These words have been marked as widespread by lipu Linku, which means that while a majority of speakers do use this word, a significant portion do not.

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