

Language

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WHO SPEAKS WHAT WHERE?

In polyglot East Africa you'll find people speaking languages belonging to all four major African ethno-linguistic families. The largest of these is the Niger-Congo family, which encompasses Swahili and other Bantu languages. Others are the Nilo-Saharan family (which includes Nilotic and Nilo-Hamitic languages such as Maasai), and the Afro-Asiatic (or Hamito-Semitic) family, whose Cushitic branch includes Iraqw and Somali. The smallest family is Khoisan, which consists of only a few dozen languages, characterised by their distinctive 'clicks' (where clicking sounds are made by the tongue). The main click languages found in East Africa are Sandawe and, more distantly, Hadza (Hadzabe), both spoken by small, somewhat scattered populations in north-central Tanzania who still follow traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyles.

Throughout the region, attempting to speak even just a few words of Swahili – or whatever the local African language is – will enrich your travels and be greatly appreciated by the people you meet, no matter how rudimentary your attempts. Good luck and *Safari njema!* (happy travels).

Burundi

The official languages are Kirundi and French, although Swahili is also useful. Hardly anyone speaks English, except in Bujumbura.

Kenya

English and Swahili are the official languages and are taught in schools throughout Kenya, but Hindi and Urdu are still spoken by south Asian residents.

Most urban Kenyans and even tribal people involved in the tourist industry speak English, and many speak some German or Italian, especially around the coast.

There are many other major tribal languages, including Kikuyu, Luo, Kikamba, Maasai and Samburu, as well as a plethora of minor tribal languages. You may also come across Sheng, a mixture of Swahili and English along with a fair sprinkling of other languages – Sheng is favoured by younger Kenyans.

Rwanda

The national language is Kinyarwanda. The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French and English. Kinyarwanda is the medium of school instruction at primary level, and French is used at secondary level (only 10% of the population reach secondary level). Little English is spoken beyond Kigali, but Swahili can be useful in some areas.

Tanzania

Swahili and English are the official languages. English is widely spoken in major towns, but in rural areas it helps to know at least a few Swahili phrases. Outside cities and towns, far fewer people speak English than in comparable areas of Kenya.

The predominant Swahili dialect on the Tanzanian mainland is Kiunguja (the Swahili of Zanzibar Island), from which 'standard' Swahili has developed. Over 100 other African languages are spoken, including Sukuma, Makonde, Haya, Ha, Gogo and Yao, all of which belong to the Bantu group, and Maasai, which belongs to the Nilotic ethno-linguistic group.

Uganda

The official language is English, which most people can speak well – at least in urban areas. The other major languages are Luganda and Swahili, though the latter isn't spoken much east of Kampala or in the capital, as most Ugandans associate it with the bad old days when Idi Amin sought to make it the national language.

SWAHILI

Standard Swahili is based on the variety of the language spoken in Zanzibar Town, although several other dialects can be found throughout East Africa. Written Swahili – the language of newspapers, textbooks and literature – usually conforms to the coastal standards. This language guide uses the standard variety, as it should be more universally understood.

Although Swahili may initially seem a bit daunting, its structure is fairly regular and pronunciation uncomplicated. You'll soon discover that just a handful of basic words will rapidly break down barriers between you and the many people you meet on your travels in East Africa.

If your time is limited, concentrate first on the greetings and then on numbers (very useful when negotiating with market vendors, taxi drivers etc). The words and phrases included in this chapter will help get you started. For a more comprehensive guide to the language, get hold of Lonely Planet's *Swahili Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Perhaps the easiest part of learning Swahili is the pronunciation. Every letter is pronounced, unless it's part of the consonant combinations discussed in the 'Consonants' section below. If a letter is written twice, it is pronounced twice – *mzee* (respected elder) has three syllables: *m-ZE-e*. Note that the 'm' is a separate syllable, and that the double 'e' indicates a lengthened vowel sound.

Word stress in Swahili almost always falls on the second-to-last syllable.

Vowels

Correct pronunciation of vowels is the key to making yourself understood in Swahili. If the following guidelines don't work for

you, listen closely to Swahili speakers and spend some time practising. There's also a useful audio pronunciation guide available on the website: www.yale.edu/swahili/.

Remember that if two vowels appear next to each other, each must be pronounced in turn. For example, *kawaida* (usual) is pronounced *ka-wa-EE-da*.

a	as in 'calm'
e	as the 'ey' in 'they'
i	as the 'ee' in 'keep'
o	as in 'go'
u	as the 'oo' in 'moon'

Consonants

Most consonants in Swahili have equivalents in English. The only one that might be a bit unusual for an English speaker is the sound **ng**, but with a little practice it should come easily – say 'sing along' a few times and then drop the 'si', and that's how it sounds at the beginning of a word. The sounds **th** and **dh** occur only in words borrowed from Arabic.

r Swahili speakers make only a slight distinction between **r** and **l**; use a light 'd' for 'r' and you'll be pretty close.

dh	as 'th' in 'this'
th	as 'th' in 'thing'
ny	as the 'ni' in 'onion'
ng	as in 'singer'
gh	like the 'ch' in Scottish <i>loch</i>
g	as in 'get'
ch	as in 'church'

ACCOMMODATION

Where's a ...?	<i>... iko wapi?</i>
camping ground	<i>Uwanja wa kambi</i>
guesthouse	<i>Gesti</i>
hotel	<i>Hoteli</i>
youth hostel	<i>Hosteli ya vijana</i>

Can you recommend cheap lodging?

Unaweza kunipendekezea malazi rahisi?

What's the address?

Anwani ni nini?

Do you have a ... room?	<i>Kuna chumba kwa ...?</i>
single	<i>mtu mmoja</i>
double	<i>watu wawili, kitanda kimoja</i>
twin	<i>watu wawili, vitanda viwili</i>
triple	<i>watu watatu</i>

How much is it per day/person?

Ni bei gani kwa siku/mtu?

Can I see the room?

Naomba nione chumba?

Where's the bathroom?

Choo iko wapi?

Where are the toilets?

Vyoo viko wapi?

I'll take it.

Nataka.

I'm leaving now.

Naondoka sasa.

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Greetings are probably the most important vocabulary for a traveller to East Africa. It's worth taking the time to familiarise yourself with the few we include here.

Jambo is a pidgin Swahili word, used to greet tourists who are presumed not to understand the language. There are two possible responses: *Jambo* (meaning 'Hello, now please speak to me in English'), and *Sijambo* (or 'Things aren't bad with me, and I'm willing to try a little Swahili').

If people assume you can speak a little Swahili, greetings may involve one or a number of the following exchanges:

How are you?	<i>Hujambo?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Sijambo.</i>
How are you all?	<i>Hamjambo?</i>
We're fine.	<i>Hatujambo.</i>

The word *habari* (meaning 'news') can also be used for general greetings. You may hear the word *salama* substituted for *habari*, or the *habari* may be dropped altogether.

How are you?	<i>Habari?</i>
How are you all?	<i>Habari zenu?</i>
What's the news?	<i>Habari gani?</i>
What's happening?	<i>Habari yako?</i>
Good morning.	<i>Habari za asubuhi?</i>
Good day.	<i>Habari za leo?</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Habari za mchana?</i>
Good evening/night.	<i>Habari za jioni?</i>

By memorising these three simple words, you can reply to almost anything:

Good.	<i>Nzuri.</i>
Fine.	<i>Salama.</i>
Clean.	<i>Safi.</i>

There is also a respectful greeting for elders:

Greetings.	<i>Shikamoo.</i>
Greetings. (response)	<i>Marhaba.</i>

Once you've dealt with all the appropriate greetings, you can move onto other topics:

What's your name?	<i>Jina lako nani?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Jina langu ni ...</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Unataka wapi?</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Nataka ...</i>
I like ...	<i>Ninapenda ...</i>
I don't like ...	<i>Sipendi ...</i>

Farewells are generally short and sweet:

Goodbye.	<i>Kwa heri.</i>
Until tomorrow.	<i>Kesho.</i>
Later on.	<i>Baadaye.</i>
Good night.	<i>Usiku mwema.</i>

And a few basics never hurt ...

Yes.	<i>Ndiyo.</i>
No.	<i>Hapana.</i>
Please.	<i>Tafadhali.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>Asante (sana).</i>
You're welcome.	<i>Karibu.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Samahani.</i>
Sorry.	<i>Pole.</i>

SIGNS

Mahali Pa Kuingia	Entrance
Mahali Pa Kutoka	Exit
Maelezo	Information
Imfunguliwa	Open
Imfungwa	Closed
Ni Marufuku	Prohibited
Polisi	Police
Choo/Msalani	Toilets/WC
Wanaume	Men
Wanawake	Women

DIRECTIONS

Where's ...?	<i>... iko wapi?</i>
It's straight ahead.	<i>Iko moja kwa moja.</i>

Turn ...	<i>Geuza ...</i>
at the corner	<i>kwenye kona</i>
at the traffic lights	<i>kwenye taa za barabarani</i>
left/right	<i>kushoto/kulia</i>

behind	nyuma ya
in front of	mbele ya
near	karibu na
next to	jirani ya
opposite	ng'ambo ya

EMERGENCIES

Help!	Saidia!
There's been an accident!	Ajali imetokea!
Call the police!	Waite polisi!
Call a doctor!	Mwite daktari!
I'm lost.	Nimejipotea.
Leave me alone!	Niache!

HEALTH

I'm sick.	Mimi ni mgonjwa.
It hurts here.	Inauma hapa.

I'm allergic to ...	Nina mzio wa ...
antibiotics	viuavijasumu
aspirin	aspirini
bees	nyuki
nuts	kokwa
peanuts	karanga

antiseptic	dawa ya kusafisha jeraha
condoms	kondom
contraceptives	kingamimba
insect repellent	dawa la kufukuza wadudu
iodine	iodini
painkillers	viondoa maumivu
thermometer	pimajoto
water purification tablets	vidonge vya kusafisha maji

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak (English)?	Unasema (Kiingereza)?
Does anyone speak (English)?	Kuna mtu yeyote kusema (Kiingereza)?
What does (asante) mean?	Neno (asante) lina maana gani?
Do you understand?	Unaelewa?
Yes, I understand.	Ndiyo, naelewa.
No, I don't understand.	Hapana, sielewi.
Could you please write ... down?	Tafadhali ... andika?
Can you show me (on the map)?	Unaweza kunionyesha (katika ramani)?

NUMBERS

0	sifuri
1	moja
2	mbili
3	tatu
4	nne
5	tano
6	sita
7	saba
8	nane
9	tisa
10	kumi
11	kumi na moja
12	kumi na mbili
13	kumi na tatu
14	kumi na nne
15	kumi na tano
16	kumi na sita
17	kumi na saba
18	kumi na nane
19	kumi na tisa
20	ishirini
21	ishirini na moja
22	ishirini na mbili
30	thelathini
40	arobaini
50	hamsini
60	sitini
70	sabini
80	themanini
90	tisini
100	mia moja
1000	elfu
100,000	laki

PAPERWORK

name	jina
nationality	raia
date of birth	tarehe ya kuzaliwa
place of birth	mahali pa kuzaliwa
sex/gender	jinsia
passport	pasiporti
visa	viza

QUESTION WORDS

Who?	Nani?
What?	Nini?
When?	Lini?
Where?	Wapi?
Which?	Gani?
Why?	Kwa nini?
How?	Namna?

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Where's a ...?	... iko wapi?
department store	Duka lenye vitu vingi
general store	Duka lenye vitu mbalimbali

I'd like to buy ...	Nataka kununua ...
I'm just looking.	Naangalia tu.
How much is it?	Ni bei gani?
Can you write down the price?	Andika bei.
Can I look at it?	Naomba nione.
I don't like it.	Sipendi.
Do you have others?	Kuna nyingine?
That's too expensive.	Ni ghali mno.
Please lower the price.	Punguza bei, tafadhali.
I'll take it.	Nataka.

Do you accept ...?	Mnakubali ...?
credit cards	kadi ya benki
travellers cheques	hundi ya msafiri

Enough.	Bas.
A bit more.	Ongeza kidogo.
Less.	Punguza.

Where's (a/the) ...?	... iko wapi?
bank	Benki
market	Soko
tourist office	Maarifa kwa watalii
... embassy	Ubalozi ...
hospital	Hospitali
post office	Posta
public phone	Simu ya mtaani
public toilet	Choo cha hadhara
telecom centre	Telekom

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	Ni saa ngapi?
It's (ten) o'clock.	Ni saa (nne).
morning	asubuhi
afternoon	mchana
evening	jioni
today	leo
tomorrow	kesho
yesterday	jana

Monday	Jumatatu
Tuesday	Jumanne
Wednesday	Jumatano
Thursday	Alhamisi
Friday	Ijumaa
Saturday	Jumamosi
Sunday	Jumapili

January	mwezi wa kwanza
February	mwezi wa pili
March	mwezi wa tatu
April	mwezi wa nne
May	mwezi wa tano
June	mwezi wa sita
July	mwezi wa saba
August	mwezi wa nane
September	mwezi wa tisa
October	mwezi wa kumi
November	mwezi wa kumi na moja
December	mwezi wa kumi na mbili

TRANSPORT**Public Transport****What time is the ... leaving?**

... inaondoka saa ngapi?

Which ... goes to (Mbeya)?

... ipi huenda (Mbeya)?

bus	Basi
minibus	Daladala
plane	Ndege
train	Treni

When's the ... (bus)?

(Basi) ... itaondoka lini?

first	ya kwanza
last	ya mwisho
next	ijayo

A ... ticket to (Iringa).

Tiketi moja ya ... kwenda (Iringa).

1st-class	daraja la kwanza
2nd-class	daraja la pili
one-way	kwenda tu
return	kwenda na kurudi

cancelled	imefutwa
delayed	imeche leweshwa
platform	stendi
ticket window	dirisha la tiketi
timetable	ratiba

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an ...	Nataka kukodi ...
bicycle	baisikeli
car	gar i
4WD	forbaifor
motorbike	pikipiki

Are you willing to hire out your car/motorbike?

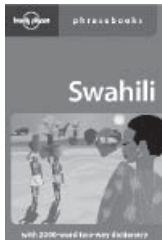
Unaweza kunikodisha gari/pikipiki yako?

(How long) Can I park here?

Naweza kugesha hapa (kwa muda gani)?

Is this the road to (Embu)?*Hii ni barabara kwenda (Embu)?***Where's a petrol station?***Kituo cha mafuta kiko wapi?***Please fill it up.***Jaza tangi/tanki.***I'd like ... litres.***Nataka lita ...*

diesel	<i>dizeli</i>
leaded	<i>risasi</i>
unleaded	<i>isiyo na risasi</i>

I need a mechanic. *Nahitaji fundi.***I've had an accident.** *Nimepata ajali.***I have a flat tyre.** *Nina pancha.***I've run out of petrol.** *Mafuta yamekwisha.***The car/motorbike has broken down (at Chalinze).***Gari/Pikipiki ime haribika (Chalinze).***The car/motorbike won't start.***Gari/Pikipiki haiwaki.***Could I pay for a ride in your truck?***Naweza kulipa kwa lifti katika lori lako?***Could I contribute to the petrol cost?***Naweza kuchangia sehemu ya bei ya mafuta?***Thanks for the ride.***Asante kwa lifti.***TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN****I need a/an ...** *Nahitaji ...***Is there a/an ...?** *Kuna ...?***baby change room** *chumba cha kuvalia mtoto***baby seat** *kiti cha kitoto***child-minding** *anayeweza kumlea mtoto***service** *menyu kwa watoto***children's menu** *menyu kwa watoto***disposable nappies/** *nepi***diapers****(English-speaking)** *yaya (anayesema Kiingereza)***babysitter****highchair** *kiti juu cha mtoto***potty** *choo cha mtoto***stroller** *kigari cha mtoto*

Also available from Lonely Planet:
Swahili Phrasebook

Glossary

The following is a list of words and acronyms from Burundi (B), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (C), Kenya (K), Rwanda (R), Tanzania (T) and Uganda (U) you are likely to come across in this book. For a glossary of food and drink terms, see p43.

AMKO – Association of Mount Kenya Operators (tour guide association) (K)
askari – security guard, watchman
ASP – Afro-Shirazi Party on Zanzibar Archipelago (T)

banda – thatched-roof hut with wooden or earthen walls; simple wooden and stone-built accommodation
bangi – marijuana; also *ganja*
benga – musical style originating among the Luo in western Kenya, and characterised by its electric guitar licks and bounding bass rhythms (K)
Big Five, the – the five archetypal large African mammals: lion, buffalo, elephant, leopard and rhino
boda-boda – bicycle taxi
boma – living compound or camp; in colonial times, government administrative office or fort
bui-bui – black cover-all garment worn by some Islamic women outside the home

CCM – Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution); Tanzania's governing political party (T)
chai – tea; bribe
chakula – food
chang'a – dangerous homemade alcoholic brew containing methyl alcohol
choo – toilet; pronounced cho
Cites – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CUF – Civic United Front; Tanzania's main opposition party (T)

daladala – minibus or pick-up truck (T)
dhow – traditional Arabic sailing vessel, still common along the coast
dudu – small insect or bug; creepy-crawly
duka – small shop or kiosk (K)

forex – foreign exchange bureau
fundi – repairer of clothing, buildings, cars etc; expert

gacaca – traditional tribunal headed by village elders (R)
ganja – see *bangi*
gof – volcanic crater

hakuna matata – no problem
hatari – danger
hoteli – small informal restaurant

injera – unleavened bread
Interahamwe – Hutu militia (R)

jamaa – clan, community
jua kali – literally 'hot sun'; usually an outdoor vehicle-repair shop or market

kabaka – king (U)
kanga – printed cotton wraparound, incorporating a Swahili proverb, worn by women
karibu – Swahili for welcome
kikoi – printed cotton wraparound traditionally worn by men in coastal areas
kitenge – similar to a *kanga*, but usually a larger, heavier piece of cloth with no Swahili proverb
kitu kidogo – literally 'a little something'; bribe
KWS – Kenya Wildlife Service (K)

lingala – Congolese dance music; also *soukous* (C)
lugga – dry river bed, mainly in northern Kenya (K)

makuti – thatched roof made of palm leaves, mainly on the coast
malaya – prostitute
manamba – *matatu* tout, often a veritable style guru and all-round dude (K)
manyatta – Maasai or Samburu livestock camp often surrounded by a circle of thorn bushes (K)
marimba – musical instrument played with the thumb
matatu – minibus (K)
Maulid – birth of the prophet Mohammed and Muslim feast day, celebrated in many areas of East Africa
mihrab – prayer niche in a mosque showing the direction of Mecca
miraa – bundles of leafy twigs and shoots that are chewed as a stimulant and appetite-suppressant
moran – Maasai or Samburu warrior (K)
mpingo – African blackwood
msenge – homosexual
murram – dirt or partly gravelled road
mwaliimu – Swahili for teacher; used to refer to Julius Nyerere (T)
mwami – king (B, R)
mwizi – thief
mzee – elderly person; respected elder
mzungu – white person (plural *wazungu*)

NCA – Ngorongoro Conservation Area (T)
Ngai – Kikuyu god
NRA – National Resistance Army (U)
NRM – National Resistance Movement (U)
nyatiti – traditional folk lyre

panga – machete, carried by many people in the east African countryside and often by thieves in the cities
papasi – literally ‘tick’; used on the Zanzibar Archipelago to refer to street touts (T)
parking boys – unemployed youths who will help park a vehicle and guard it while the owner is absent
pesa – money

RMS – Rwenzori Mountaineering Services (U)
RPF – Rwandan Patriotic Front (R)

safari – Swahili for journey
shamba – small farm or plot of land
shetani – style of figurative art embodying images from the spirit world
shifita – bandit
shilingi – shilling; money

shuka – tie-dyed sarong
soukous – see *lingala*

taarab – Zanzibari music combining African, Arabic and Indian influences (T)
taka – rubbish
Tanapa – Tanzania National Parks Authority (T)
TANU – Tanganyika African National Union (T)
taxi – minibus (U)
taxi-motor – motorcycle taxi
tilapia – Nile perch
TTB – Tanzania Tourist Board (T)

uhuru – freedom or independence
ujamaa – Swahili for familyhood or togetherness (T)
Unguja – Swahili name for Zanzibar Island (T)
UWA – Uganda Wildlife Authority (U)

vibuyu – carved gourds

wazungu – see *mzungu*

ZIFF – Zanzibar International Film Festival (T)

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