

## Introduction To Basic Ghanaian Language (Twi)

A little Twi will get you a long way to leave in Ghana. Though Twi is neither the official language nor is it the lingua franca, it's one of the most widely spoken of the seventy (70) languages in Ghana. All Volunteers learn basic survival Twi regardless of whatever other Ghanaian language they learn for their site. English is the official language used in government, education and commerce.

These introductory lessons will give you a jump-start on learning Twi so you will not feel completely lost when you step off the airplane in Accra! The lessons contain key words, phrases and sentences along with their pronunciation.

### Cultural Introduction

**Akwaaba!** You will hear this word frequently in your first few weeks in Ghana. It means **welcome** in Twi. Spending time to greet people is essential. Greeting a person shows politeness and that you recognize her as a human being, and that you respect her.

Shaking hands is very common. When shaking hands with a group of people you need to begin with the person to your immediate right and shake hands moving through the group to your left. By doing it this way, you are always showing the palm of your hand to the person whose hand you are shaking. This practice applies to most cultures in the southern parts of Ghana, especially the Akans. People also greet by waving with a flat open hand. It is not polite to wave with the left hand because Ghanaians associate filth, uncleanness, and disrespect with the left hand.

Foreigners in Ghana are frequently be called, "**obroni**" which literally translates to the traveler from over the horizon. Adults and children will get a foreigner's attention by shouting "obroni, obroni, obroni". At times Trainees and Volunteers find this practice a strain on their patience. It can be a cause of frustration. As your comfort increases you will find your own personal way to mitigate these situations and create an environment that works for you.

## How to Learn a Language

Steps	
1	Decide what you want to learn.
2	Learn what you have decided to learn.
3	Use what you learned by systematic practice.
4	Evaluate what you learned so that you can decide what you want to learn, again.

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## Presentation of Twi Pronunciations

English	Twi Equivalent
Please	Mepa wo kyɛw ( <i>mepaakyɛw</i> )
Thank You	Meda wo ase ( <i>medaase</i> )

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### Twi alphabet

A a	B b	D d	E e	Ɛ ɛ	F f	G g	H h
[a]	[bɛ]	[dɛ]	[i]	[ɛ]	[fɛ]	[gɛ]	[hɛ]
I i	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	Ɔ ɔ	P p
[i]	[kɛ]	[l:]	[m:]	[n:]	[o]	[ɔ]	[pɛ]
R r	S s	T t	U u	W w	Y y		
[rɛ]	[s:]	[tɛ]	[u]	[wɛ]	[jɛ]		

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## Twi Alphabet Consonants

The Twi Alphabet consists of twenty-two (22) letters; there are fifteen (15) consonants as noted.

Printed Letter	Sounds	Pronunciation
B, b	/b/	as in book, boom
D, d	/d/	as in dance, drum
F, f	/f/	as in fish, food
G, g	/g/	as in go, good
H, h	/h/	as in hat, halt
K, k	/k/	as in car, come
L, l	/l/	as in loud, ball
M, m	/m/	as in moon, mute
N, n	/n/	as in name, anoint
P, p	/p/	as in purse, pour
R, r	/r/	as in round, road
S, s	/s/	as in sing, surprise
T, t	/t/	as in teach, talk
W, w	/w/	as in we, win
Y, y	/y//j/	as in yam, you

## Digraphs

*Digraphs are often used for phonemes that cannot be represented using a single character, like the English **sh** in ship and fish.*

Printed Letters	Pronunciation
gy	as in James, gym
hy	as in shirts, shorts
kw	as in quick, quit
ky	as in church, child
ny	as in canyon, onion
dw*	as in dwaso, dware
hw*	as in hwehwe
tw*	as in twa, twi
nw*	as in nwa, nwene

\* There is no English equivalent for this digraph.

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## Pronouns

English	Twɪ Equivalent
I, Me,	Me
You (singular)	Wo
He/She	ɔno
It	Eno
They	Wɔn
You (plural)	Mo
Us/We	Yɛn

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## Greetings

English	Twɪ Equivalent
Good morning	Mema wo akye (Maakye)
Good afternoon	Mema wo aha (maaha)
Good evening	Mema wo adwo (maadwo)
Good night	Da yie
General responses to all greetings	Yaa
Response to an elderly man	Yaa Agya
Response to an elderly woman	Yaa Ena
Response to an equal	Yaa Anua
We shall meet again	Yɛbɛhyia bio
We shall meet later	Akyire yi yɛbɛhyia

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## Introducing Yourself

English	Twɪ Equivalent
What is your name?	Yɛfrɛ wo sɛn?
What is your name?	Wo din de sɛn?
My name is John	Yɛfrɛ me John
My name is Ama	Me din de Ama
I am not called obroni	Yɛnfrɛ me obroni
I live at Pokuase	Mete Pokuase
I come from America	Me firi America
Where do you come from?	Wo fire he?
I am a Volunteer	Meyɛ Volunteer
I am a teacher	Meyɛ tikyani
I am a community health worker	Meyɛ apɔmuden ho adwuma
I am a business volunteer	Meyɛ business volunteer ni

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## Days of the week and its associated names

The **Akans** in Ghana frequently name their children after the day of the week they were born. The *red words* are in *Twi*.

DAY BORN	MALE	FEMALE
<b>Sunday</b> <i>(Kwasíada)</i>	Kwasi	Akosua
<b>Monday</b> <i>(Edwóada)</i>	Kwadwo	Adwoa
<b>Tuesday</b> <i>(Ebénada)</i>	Kwabena	Abena
<b>Wednesday</b> <i>(Wukúada)</i>	Kwaku	Akua
<b>Thursday</b> <i>(Yáwóada)</i>	Yaw	Yaa
<b>Friday</b> <i>(Efíada)</i>	Kofi	Afua
<b>Saturday</b> <i>(Méménada)</i>	Kwame	Ama

## Numbers

English	Twi Equivalent
One	Baako
Two	Mmienu
Three	Mmiensa
Four	Enan
Five	Enum
Six	Nsia
Seven	Nson
Eight	Nwɔtwe
Nine	Nkron
Ten	Edu
Eleven	Dubaako
Twelve	Dumienu

Thirteen	Dumiensa
Fourteen	Dunan
Fifteen	Dunum
Sixteen	Dunsia
Seventeen	Dunson
Eighteen	Dunwɔtwe
Nineteen	Dunkron
Twenty	Aduonu

## Food

English	Twi Equivalent
Food	Aduane
Breakfast	Anɔpa aduane
Lunch	Awia aduane
Dinner	Anwummerɛ aduane
Orange	Ankaa
Banana	Kwadu
Pineapple	Aborɔbɛ
Onion	Gyeene
Pepper	Mako
Tomato	Ntoosi
Bread	Paano
Sugar	Asikyire
Salt	Nkyene
Water	Nsuo
Meat	Enam
Fish	Nsuomnam
Rice Balls	Emo tuo
Jolof Rice	Jolof
Please do not add a lot of salt.	Mɛpa wo kyɛw (mɛpaakyɛw), mfa nkyene pii ngu mu
I am looking for . . .	Merehwehwɛ (meehwehwɛ) . . .

## Security Expressions

English	Twi Equivalent
Thief	Awi
Thief	Krɔmfɔɔ
Police	Polisini
Please help me	Mɛpa wo kyɛw (mɛpaakyɛw), boa me

## Shopping

English	Twi Equivalent
Shopping	Dwadie
How much is it?	Eyε sen?
How much is it?	Eyε ahe?
Are you having any . . . ?	Wowɔ . . . ?
It is expensive	Ne boɔ yε den.
Please reduce the price	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), te so
Please dash me	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), to so
Please give me my change	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), ma me nsesa
Money	Sika
What is this?	Edeen nie?

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## Telling Time in Duration And Times of Day

English	Twi Equivalent
1 hour	Dɔnhwere baako
2 hours	Nɔnhwere mmienu
Morning	Anɔpa
Afternoon	Awia
Evening	Anwummere
Night	Anadwo
I will return in . . .	Mεsan aba . . .

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## Directions

English	Twi Equivalent
Can you show me where the . . . is?	Wobetumi akyerε me baabi a . . . no wɔ?
Where are you going?	Worekɔ (wookɔ) he?
Turn right	Fa nifa
Turn left	Fa benkum
Go straight	Kɔ wanim tee

## Social Language

Part 1	
English	Twi Equivalent
Yes	Aane
No	Daabi
Excuse me	Mepa wo kyε
Is it true?	Ɛyε nokorε?
Thank you	Meda wo ase (Medaase)
I don't speak Twi well	Mente Twi papa
I speak a little Twi	Mete Twi kakra
Do you speak English?	Wote brɔfo?
Can you repeat, please?	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), Wobetumi aka no bio?
Can you please speak more slowly?	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), wobetumi aka no brεoo?
How do you say . . . in Twi?	Sεn na yεka . . . wɔ Twi mu?

Part 2	
English	Twi Equivalent
I don't have money to give you	Menni sika de ma wo
I don't have food to give you	Menni aduane de ma wo
I don't understand	Mente aseε
I don't know	Mennim
Can you please help me?	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), wobetumi aboa me?
I like . . .	Mepε . . .
I don't like . . .	Mempε . . .
I am going to . . .	Merekɔ . . .

Part 3	
English	Twi Equivalent
I need to wash dishes	Ese sε mehororo nnoɔma mu
I want to wash cloths	Mepε sε mesi nnoɔma
Please, help me wash my clothing	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), boa me ma mensi me nnoɔma
I want to bathe	Mepε sε medware
I am hungry	Ekɔm de me
I am tired	Mabrε
I am thirsty	Nsukɔm de me
I need to study	Ese sε mesua adeε

## Know Your Body Parts in Twi

English	Twi
Hair	Nwi
Hair (on head)	Etire nwi
Face	Anim
Forehead	Moma
Eye	Ani
Nose	ehwene
Cheek	Afono
Ear	Aso
Mouth	Ano
Tooth	ese
Tongue	Tɛkyerɛma
Chin	Abɔdweɛ
Neck	ɛkɔn
Heart	Akoma
Hand	Nsa
Belly	Yafuno
Finger	Nsateaa
Thigh	ɛsere
Knee	Kotodwe
Leg	ɛnan
Blood	Mogya
Bone	Dompe
Back	Akyi
Buttock	ɛtoɔ