

# Samoa



Samoa in the South Pacific is made up of nine islands, the largest being Sava'i and Upolu. Its name changed from Western Samoa in 1997. To its east lies American Samoa – an unincorporated territory of the United States – made up of six islands. Samoans are predominantly Christian, with about half belonging to the Christian Congregationalist Church.

Samoa is the primary language, spoken by more than 360,000 people in Samoa, New Zealand, Hawaii and Fiji. English is widely spoken, mainly in commerce and administration.

There are 17 letters in the Samoan alphabet. A E I O U (vowels) and F G L M N P S T V (consonants) and H R K are additional consonants for new words from English. The vowel sounds are very clear; *a* as in *apply*, *e* as in *etiquette*, *i* as in *if*, *o* as in *often* and *u* as in *put*. Words can have as many as five vowel sounds together. Vowel sounds are lengthened with macrons and glottal stops, and this also changes the meanings of words with similar spellings. For example *Taua* means *war*, but *tāua* means *important*, *tā'ua* means *both of us* and *ta'ua* means *mention*. Samoan words always end with a vowel.

While there are many similarities between Samoan and other Polynesian languages, Samoan differs in that two consonants are never written together.

Often Samoan speakers will say yes to a negative question, e.g. *You didn't attend school yesterday, did you?* Answer: *Yes, I did not attend school yesterday.*

There are three different levels of language in Samoan. Formal idiomatic spoken by chiefs and orators, polite partly formal, and informal everyday

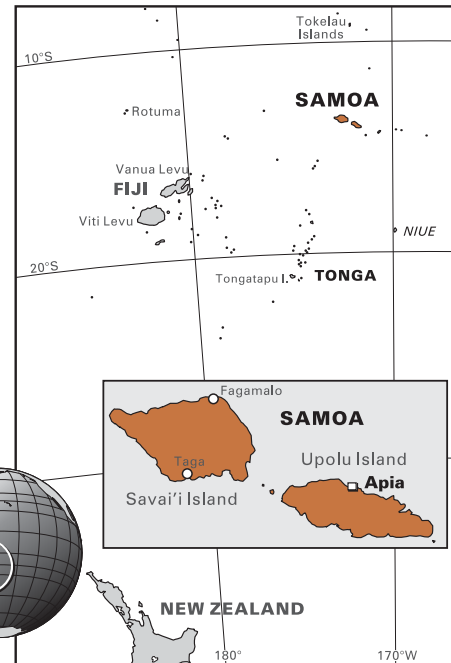
language. In everyday language speakers will often replace *t* with a *k*. For example, the word *tatou* might be said *kakou*. In written form the *t* is usually used.

Traditionally in Samoan villages people do not say *good morning* or *good day* when they first see each other informally. Rather a person might say *Ua e usu mai?* Meaning, *Have you come this morning?* The reply would be *Ioe* meaning *yes*. In the afternoon a person would say *Ua e sau?* meaning *Have you arrived?* Again the reply is *Ioe*. The formal greetings are *Talofa* or *Mālō le soifua* to which one replies *si o'u alofa* or *Mālō fo'i*.

It is not a Samoan concept to say *How are you?* Rather Samoans ask after the people they do not see – the family members. Therefore they will say *O manuia le aiga?* which means *Is your family well?*

A brother refers to his sister as *tuafafine* and a sister refers to her brother as *tuagane*, but *uso* refers to a sister's sister or brother's brother. Uncles and aunts are called mothers and fathers by younger children. Female cousins address one another as sisters and male cousins address one another as brothers.

Samoa may use an upward movement of the head and eyebrows to indicate *yes*, and an unresponsive stare, straight ahead or down at the feet for *no*. In conversation they may pause often to collect their thoughts. It is considered impolite to look people in the eye while speaking. It's almost confrontational and they say focusing on one person cuts out others in a group. Respect and politeness is



important to Samoans. Sometimes though, they may not immediately thank someone for something, but rather will repay in kind at a later date. When invited to a family home food will not be offered – it's provided. It is customary to always sit down first, before speaking. If seated on the floor legs are folded.



# Samoaan



GENERAL

ENGLISH	SAMOAN	PRONUNCIATION
Hi/Hello.....	Talofa.....	Tahlofah
Bye/Goodbye.....	Tofā soifua.....	Tofah soyfua
How are you?.....	O fa'apefea mai 'oe?.....	O fah'ahpefair my 'oe?
Fine/Well, and you?.....	Manuia/Mālōlōina, ae ā 'oe?.....	Mahnooeah/Mahlōlōina, ahe ah oe?
Not so good.....	Fa'alēlelei.....	Fah'ahlēlelei
What's your name?.....	O ai lou suafa?.....	O ai loh suafah?
My name is.....	O lo'u igoa o.....	O loh'uh ingor o
Pardon?.....	Se i toe fai mai lava.....	Si i toe fai mai lava
Yes.....	Ioe.....	Eeoe
No.....	Leai.....	Leahi
I don't know.....	'Ou te lē iloa.....	Oh te lē ilor
Please.....	Fa'amolemole.....	Fah'ahmolemole
Thank you.....	Fa'afetai.....	Fah'ahfetai

DURING THE LESSON

Good!.....	Lelei!.....	Lelei!
Do you understand?.....	Ua e mālmalama?.....	Ua e mahlahmahlahmah?
Try again.....	Toe taumafai.....	Toe towmahfai
Do you want some help?.....	E te mana'omia se fesoasoani?.....	E te mahnah'omiah se fesorsorni?
Don't worry, learning takes time.....	'Aua le popole, o le a'oa'oina e alu ai lava le taimi.....	'Aua le popole, o le ah'oa'oinah e ahluk ai lava le taimi
Shall we take a break now?.....	A fai se tatou mālōlōga nei?.....	A fai se tahtoh mahlōlōngah nei?
Let's finish (the lesson) now.....	Se, tatou fa'auma (le lesona) nei.....	Se, tahtoh fah'ahuhmah (le lesonah) nei
You're doing well.....	Lelei tele.....	Lelei tele
Can you say it now?.....	E mafai ona e toe faalau mai nei?.....	E mahfai onah e toe fah'ahlahuh mai nei?
Can you answer (the question)?.....	E mafai ona e tali mai (i le fesili)?.....	E mahfai onah e tahlī mai (i le fesili)?
Now you ask me.....	la, fesili mai la 'oe iā te a'u.....	la, feseeli mahi lah 'oe iah te ah'uh
See you next week.....	Feiloa'i iā te 'oe i lea vaiaso.....	Feilorah'e iah te 'oe i lair vaheeahso