

Tamil



Tamil is the official language of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and is also spoken by Tamils in Sri Lanka, in Malaysia, many parts of the Far East, in eastern and southern Africa and in the islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including Fiji.

Tamil has a formal language, used for Sanskrit texts, and an everyday version called Vatteluttu. There are 247 letters in the Tamil alphabet. Vowel sounds are shown by a system of vowel points that are placed around a letter. It's a very logical language, phonetic, without stress and there are no silent letters. Learning English then throws up many difficulties.

First learners must get used to the Latin alphabet and must try and get their tongues round unfamiliar sounds. *Sh* as in *fish* and *hush*, is a sound that proves especially difficult for Tamil speakers to pronounce. They are also likely to confuse *f* and *v*, and will pronounce *r* more strongly, with more of a roll, than English requires. When a word starts with *tr* such as *train* a Tamil speaker is likely to drop off the *t* and say *rain*. Tamil does not have consonant clusters like *br* or *spl*.

While English involves using the lips, the tip of the tongue and the front of the mouth when speaking, Tamil speakers use the back of the mouth and the glottal area a lot more to pronounce words so speaking English requires a major adjustment in the mouth! Sometimes it's difficult for Tamil speakers to hear the differences in English vowel sounds and to pronounce them. Eg. *said* and *sad*, *caught* and *cot*, *tie* and *toy*.

At the ends of words Tamils will often add an extra vowel. For example in words such as *develop-ed*, *play-ed*, *ask-ed*.

There are no articles (*a*, *the*) in Tamil, so getting used to using them and using them correctly takes time. Sentence structure in Tamil is subject-object-verb, while in English it is subject-verb-object.

The Tamil word *you* has a singular and plural form. Both forms can be used when talking to a younger person, but when talking to an older person the plural form is used as a mark of respect.

People do not use their given names all the time, but call each other sister, auntie, grandma, uncle, brother etc, even if they're not related, but as a mark of respect. Traditionally Tamils do not have middle names.

In Sri Lanka it is traditional to greet people by placing palms together in front of the chest, sometimes accompanied by a bow and the phrase *Vannakkam* – meaning *May you be blessed with the gift of long life*.

Tea is the common drink for Tamils, milk and two sugars. It is unlikely guests would be offered a choice of how they'd like it. If a guest refuses refreshments



the host is likely to keep insisting that they partake.

It's considered impolite to use the index finger to point, for women to sit with legs crossed, or to sit with legs raised in front of older people.



Tamil

**NOW YOU'RE
TALKING**
COMMUNITY LANGUAGE CARDS

GENERAL

ENGLISH	TAMIL	PRONUNCIATION
Hi/Hello	வணக்கம்	Vannakkam
Bye/Goodbye	போயிற்று வாறேன்	Poietu vaaren
How are you?	எப்படி இருக்கிறீர்கள்?	Aepadi irrukirengal?
Fine/Well, and you?	நலம்/ சுகம், நீங்கள் எப்படி?	Nalam/sugam, neenkal aepadi?
Not so good	அவ்வளவு நல்லாயில்லை.	Avvalavu nallaiyillai
What's your name?	உங்களுடைய பெயரென்ன?	Oongaludiya peyar aenna?
My name is	என்னுடைய பெயர்	Aennudiya peyar _____
Pardon?	கேட்கவில்லை/ விளங்கவில்லை	Kedkavillai/villangavillai
Yes	ஆம்/ ஓம்	Ahm/Ohm
No	இல்லை	Illai
I don't know	எனக்குத்தெரியாது.	Ennakuth theriyathu
Please	தயவுசெய்து	Thayavusayithu
Thank you	உங்களுக்கு நன்றி	Oongaluku nantree

DURING THE LESSON

Good!	நன்று!	Nantru!
Do you understand?	உங்களுக்கு விளங்குகிறதா?	Oongaluku villangukiratha?
Try again	திரும்ப முயற்சிக்கவும்.	Thirumba muyatchickavum
Do you want some help?	உங்களுக்கு ஏதும் உதவி வேண்டுமா?	Oongaluku aaethum uthavi wenduma?
Don't worry, learning takes time	கவலைப்பட வேண்டாம், படித்தறிய நேரம் எடுக்கும்	Kavalaippada wendaam, paddiththariya nayram aedukkum
Shall we take a break now?	இப்ப நாங்கள் ஒரு இடைவேளை எடுப்போமா?	Ippa naangal oru iddaiwellaiaeduppoma?
Let's finish (the lesson) now	இப்ப நாங்கள் பாடத்தை முடிப்போம்	Ippa naangal paadaththai muddippom
You're doing well	நீங்கள் நன்றாகச் செய்கிறீர்கள்.	Neengal nantraga chaikireergal
Can you say it now?	இப்ப இதை உங்களால் அப்படியே திரும்பச் சொல்ல முடியுமா?	Ippa ithai oongalal appadiae thirumba cholla muddiumma?
Can you answer (the question)?	உங்களால் மறுமொழி சொல்ல முடியுமா?	Oongala marumolee cholla muddiumma?
Now you ask me	இப்ப நீங்கள் என்னிடம் கேளுங்கள்	Ippa neengal ennidum kerlungal
See you next week	உங்களை அடுத்த கிழமை பார்க்கிறேன்	Ooungali aduththa killammai parkiraen