

Thai



Thailand was known as Siam until 1939 and the language was known as Siamese. Thai has its own alphabet derived from the Devanagari script (in which Hindi is written). It is spoken by about 25 million people in Thailand and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, China and Laos.

Thai, like the languages of its neighbours is a tonal language, with the meaning of each syllable determined by the pitch at which it is spoken. Thai has five tones; mid, low, high, rising and falling. Most words are monosyllabic. When written, across the page from left to right, the words aren't separated as they are in English. Where spaces occur they're for punctuation.

There's no distinction between upper and lower case in the Thai written language. Vowels are shown by symbols being placed either above or below the letter, or to the left or right of it. Thai usually uses Arabic numerals nowadays so most literate people will be familiar with them, and many Thai speakers will be familiar with the English alphabet.

Thai grammar is structured differently to English. Adjectives and adverbs can also function as verbs and their pronoun system is a lot more complicated and makes different distinctions to that of English. Sentence structure is usually subject-verb-object but Thai speakers have a tendency to drop the subject if it is clearly understood. When this is done in English, sense can be lost, particularly when the subject is a pronoun. When asking questions Thai learners might put the *when* or *why* at the end, e.g. *She go when?*

There are no articles in Thai, so *the* and *a* are likely to be used incorrectly or omitted.

Thai speakers will try and fit every English word into the Thai phonological system, which gives rise to their distinctive staccato accent. This means they may tend to stress the final syllables of words, e.g. *matter*, *shopping*. Final consonants may be left off, so *rice*, *rise* and *right* may all sound like *ri*. Thai speakers may try giving equal weight and timing to each syllable, insert glottal stops before initial vowels, place a short vowel between consonant clusters (e.g. *samoke* for *smoke*) and reduce consonant clusters at the ends of words to single consonants, *pum* for *pump*, *lun* for *lunch*.

Thai speakers may have difficulty producing these common English sounds; *th* (*thin*), *th* (*there*), *v*, *z*, *sh*, and *zha* sound in *measure*. *V* will often be substituted by a *w* sound, *t*, *d* and *s* for the *th* sounds, *tsh* for *sh*, *l* for *n* and *s* for *z*.

There is an *r* in Thai but it is hard for Thai speakers to say even in their own language and they will often substitute it with an *l*.

Thais greet each other with a *wai* – hands held together in front of the chest and a bow from the waist. One *wai* is sufficient for a whole group. Men will say *Sawadhi krup* and women say *Sawadhi ka*. When entering a house, guests remove their shoes and avoid standing on the doorstep.



It is unacceptable to stand taller than someone of higher rank so people of lower rank will duck their head as a sign of respect when passing people of higher rank in the house. It is considered impolite to wave one's hands about when talking. Buddha images are sacred and should be treated with respect.



Thai

NOW YOU'RE TALKING
COMMUNITY LANGUAGE CARDS

GENERAL

ENGLISH	THAI	PRONUNCIATION
Hi/Hello.....	สวัสดี	Sahwasdee
Bye/Goodbye.....	ลาก่อนนะ	Lah gone nah
How are you?.....	คุณสบายดีหรือ	Koon sahbaidee ru?
Fine/Well, and you?.....	สบายดีแล้วคุณละ	Sabaidee, laew koon lah?
Not so good.....	ไม่ค่อยดี	Mai koy dee
What's your name?.....	คุณชื่ออะไร	Koon chu aria?
My name is.....	ผม/ดิฉันชื่อ	Phom/dichan chu
Pardon?.....	ขอโทษ	Kor toote?
Yes.....	ใช่	Chai
No.....	ไม่ใช่	Mai chai
I don't know.....	ผม/ดิฉันไม่ทราบ	Phom/dichan may sahp
Please.....	โปรด/ขอ	Proote/kor
Thank you.....	ขอบคุณ	Kop koon

DURING THE LESSON

Good!.....	ดี	Dee!
Do you understand?.....	คุณเข้าใจไหม	Koon kou jai mai?
Try again.....	ลองอีกที	Lorng eek thee
Do you want some help?.....	คุณต้องการความช่วยเหลือไหม	Koon tong karn karm chuay lu mai?
Don't worry, learning takes time.....	อย่ากังวลใจเลยการเรียนรู้ต้องใช้เวลา	Yaa kung wone jai loei, karn rian roo torng chai we-la
Shall we take a break now?.....	(เรา) พักก่อนดีไหม	(Row) Pak gorn dee mai?
Let's finish (the lesson) now.....	พอแล้วนะ	Por laew na
You're doing well.....	คุณทำ (เรียน) ได้ดี	Koon thum (rian) dai dee
Can you say it now?.....	คุณพูด (ตอนนี้) ได้ไหม	Koon poot (torn nee) dai mai?
Can you answer (the question)?.....	คุณตอบได้ไหม	Koon torp dai mai?
Now you ask me.....	ตอนนี้คุณถามผม/ดิฉัน	Torn nee koon tharm phom/dichan
See you next week.....	พบกันใหม่ อาทิตย์หน้า	Pope gun mai arthit nah