

Tongan



Tonga, the 'friendly islands' in the South Pacific, is made up of 150 small volcanic or coral islands. 103,000 people speak the language in Tonga with at least another 20,000 speaking it in Samoa, American Samoa, Tokelau, Niue, Fiji, Hawaii, Guan, Australia, USA, UK and New Zealand.

The Tongan alphabet has 17 letters. They are *a, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, ng, o, p, s, t, u, v* and ' *a glottal stop*. The vowels, A E I O U, are all short vowel sounds and when a bar or macron (represented here with a double vowel, ie. māma = maama) is placed above the vowel it doubles the sound. *Mama* means *I*, but *maama* means *light*. Glottal stops also change the meaning of words, e.g. *tau-war*; *ta'u-year*; *taau-suit*. Words always end in a vowel.

Two or more consonants cannot be joined together, except *ng*, which is counted as one sound. The letter *t* is pronounced *d* and the letter *p* is pronounced *b*.

Whereas English sentences have a subject-verb-object construction Tongan is verb-subject-object. *The man married the woman* in Tongan becomes *Married the man the woman*.

Sometimes yes and no answers can be misunderstood between speakers of English and Tongan. *You did not attend school yesterday, did you?* might be answered with a *yes*. Meaning *Yes, I did not attend*.

The extended family is an important aspect of Tongan life and female cousins address one another as sisters and male cousins address one another as brothers. Uncles and aunts are called mothers and fathers by younger children. A brother refers to his

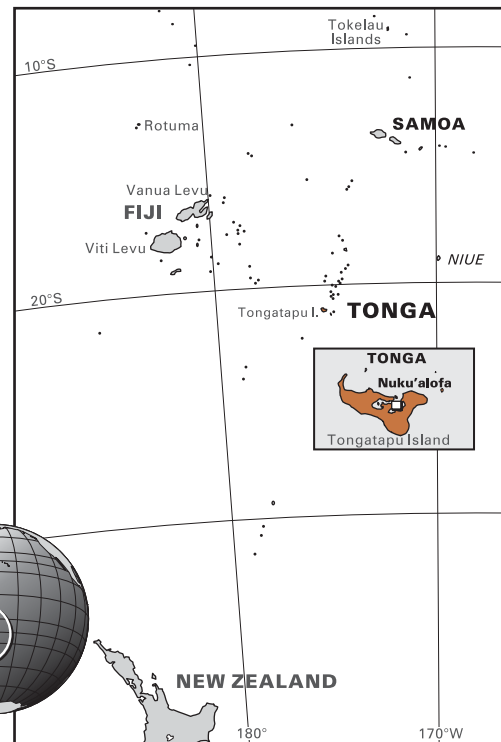
sister as *tuofine* and a sister refers to her brother as *tuongaane*.

As well, there are three different registers of Tongan; King, nobles and children, and commoner. For example the word *go*; King – *ha'ele*, nobles/children – *me'a*, to commoners – *alu*.

Tongans greet each other by shaking hands or just a nod of the head, or shake hands and hug if they know each other or are related. Raising the eyebrows can mean *yes* or *I agree*.

Tongans usually call each other by given names but when meeting for the first time will use titles and the family name. *Mr* is *Tangata'eiki*, *Mrs* is *Fine'eiki* and *Miss* is *Ta'ahine*.

Keeping long, continuous eye contact when talking to someone may be regarded as a challenge. Respect and politeness is very important in Tongan culture. When invited to see a family, people should sit down first before speaking. If seated on the floor, the legs are always folded. Men usually sit cross-legged, women with their legs together at the side. It is considered rude to stretch legs out in front of other people and a person should not touch another person's head. It is also considered impolite to poke out the tongue, spit, make faces or open the eyes wide.



Tongan



GENERAL

| ENGLISH | TONGAN | PRONUNCIATION |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hi/Hello..... | Malo e lelei..... | Maloo ee lelei |
| Bye/Goodbye..... | 'Alu aa or nofo aa..... | 'Alu aa or nofo aa |
| How are you?..... | 'Oku ke feefee hake?..... | 'Oku ke feefee hake? |
| Fine/Well, and you?..... | Sai pe malo, feefee koe?..... | Sai be maalo, feefee koe? |
| Not so good..... | 'Ikai ke fu'u sai..... | 'ekai ke fu'u saai |
| What's your name?..... | Ko hai ho hingoa?..... | Ko hai ho higoaa? |
| My name is..... | Ko hoku hingoa ko..... | Ko hooku higoaa koo |
| Pardon?..... | Kataki 'o toe 'ai mai..... | Kaataki 'o toe 'ai mai |
| Yes..... | 'Ilo..... | 'Eeo |
| No..... | 'Ikai..... | 'Ekai |
| I don't know..... | 'Ikai te u 'ilo..... | 'Ekai deu 'elo |
| Please..... | Fakamolemole..... | Fakamolemole |
| Thank you..... | Malo 'aupito..... | Maaloo 'aubito |

DURING THE LESSON

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Good!..... | Sai!..... | Saai! |
| Do you understand?..... | 'Oku mahino kia koe?..... | 'Oku maahino kia koe? |
| Try again..... | Toe feinga pe..... | Doe feiiga pee |
| Do you want some help?..... | 'Oku ke fiema'u ha tokoni?..... | 'Oku kee fiema'uha dokoni? |
| Don't worry, learning takes time..... | 'Oua te ke tokanga ki ai, ko e ako 'oku fiema'u 'a e taimi lahi ki ai..... | 'Ouaa deke dokangaa kiiai, koe akoo 'oku fiema'u'ae daimilahi kiai |
| Shall we take a break now?..... | Te tau malolo he taimi ni?..... | Dedau maalolohe daimini? |
| Let's finish (the lesson) now..... | Tau faka'osi ('a e lesoni) he taimi ni..... | Dau faka'osihe daimini |
| You're doing well..... | 'Oku ke fu'u sai 'aupito..... | 'Oku keefu'u sai'aubido |
| Can you say it now?..... | Te ke lava 'o lea mai 'aki he taimi ni?..... | Deke lava'olea mai'aki he daimini? |
| Can you answer (the question)?..... | Te ke lava 'o tali ('a e fehu'i)?..... | Deke lava 'o dali ('aefehu'ii)? |
| Now you ask me..... | Sai, fehu'i mai 'e koe kiate au..... | Sai, fehu'ii mai 'ekoe kiadeau |
| See you next week..... | Io, tau toki fe'iloaki he uike kaha'u..... | 'Eo, daudoki fe'iiloaaki he uiike kaha'uu |