

Toki Pona

Toki Pona is a constructed language created by Canadian linguist and translator Sonja Lang in 2001. It's an experiment to see how minimalist a language can get.

This side describes the entire grammar, the other side contains the entire vocabulary.

Cheat sheet by blinry, CC0.

blinry.org/toki-pona-cheat-sheet/

Alphabet

Toki Pona uses nine consonants (*j k l m n p s t w*) and five vowels (*a e i o u*). Pronunciation doesn't really matter.

Basic sentences

The particle *li* separates the subject and the verb:

soweli li moku. = *The cat is eating.*

jan li lape. = *The person is sleeping.*

There is no verb "to be"; the part after *li* can also be a noun or an adjective.

kili li moku. = *Fruits are food.*

telo li pona. = *Water is good.*

telo li moku. = *Water is a drink.*

If the subject is *mi* or *sina*, the *li* is always omitted:

mi moku. = *I eat.*

sina pona. = *You are good.*

Ambiguity

Toki Pona has a lot of ambiguity. You'll often need to know the context to decide what things mean. For example, verbs have no tense:

mi moku. = *I am eating. / I was eating. / I will be eating.*

Many words have multiple or general meanings:

soweli = *cat / dog / (any land mammal)*

kili = *(any fruit or vegetable)*

Many words can play the role of a noun, adjective, or verb:

telo = *water / wet / to wash*

pona = *good, simple / to fix, to repair*

Nouns have no singular/plural, and no definite/indefinite article:

kili = *a fruit / the fruit / some fruits / the fruits*

Direct objects

The particle *e* separates a direct object from the rest of the sentence:

soweli li moku e telo. = *The cat drinks the water.*

mi telo e soweli. = *I'm washing the cat.*

Modifying words

Words can be modified by appending other words:

jan lili = *small human* = *child*

tomo mi = *my house*

pilin pona = *to feel good* = *to be happy*

Negation

To negate a word, append *ala*:

mi lape ala. = *I'm not sleeping.*

jan ala li toki. = *Nobody is talking.*

Questions

To ask yes-or-no questions, replace the verb with "(verb) *ala* (verb)":

sina ken ala ken lape? = *Are you able to sleep?*

soweli li wile ala wile moku? = *Is the cat hungry?*

Alternatively, append *anu seme* ("or what") to the sentence:

sina wile uta e mi anu seme? = *Do you want to kiss me?*

To answer these questions, reply with either "(verb)" or "(verb) *ala*".

To ask questions that can't be answered with yes or no, write a normal sentence and replace the word in question with *seme*:

sina moku e seme? = *What are you eating?*

seme li moku e kili mi? = *Who/what ate my fruit?*

Modifying words using pi

To modify an expression with a group of words, separate them with the particle *pi*. It can often be thought of as "of". Note the difference:

tomo telo nasa = *crazy water house* = *strange bathroom*

tomo pi telo nasa = *house of the crazy water* = *pub*

jan wawa ala = *no strong people*

jan pi wawa ala = *people of not-strong* = *weak people*

Providing context using la

To add a context to a sentence, prepend another sentence or expression, followed by *la*. This often results in a structure like "If (part 1), then (part 2)" or "In the context of (part 1), (part2)."

mi lape la ale li pona. = *When I'm asleep, everything is okay.*

Time

You can use a *la*-clause to add a temporal context to a sentence:

tenpo ni la mi lape. = *I am sleeping right now.*

tenpo kama la mi lape. = *I will be sleeping in the future.*

tenpo pini la mi lape. = *I slept in the past.*

Compound sentences

Separate multiple subjects in a sentence using *en*:

lapen moku li suli. = *Sleep and food are important.*

To say that the subject does more than one thing, you can use multiple *li*-clauses:

pipi li moku li pakala. = *The bug eats and destroys.*

If there are several direct objects of the same verb, you can use multiple *e*-clauses:

mi moku e kili e telo. = *I consume fruit and water.*

Unofficial words

Unofficial words (like names of countries, languages, or people) are capitalized and treated like adjectives. They are attached to a noun, and often simplified to Toki Pona's limited alphabet:

mi jan Kapile. = *I'm Gabriele.*

ma Kanata li pona lukin. = *Canada is pretty.*

mi toki ala e toki Inli. = *I don't speak English.*

ma tomo Nujoka li suli. = *New York is big.*

Prepositions

lon, *kepeken*, *tawa*, and *tan* can be used as prepositions at the end of a sentence:

mi moku lon tomo. = *I eat in the house.*

mi moku kepeken ilo moku. = *I eat using a fork.*

sina pona tawa mi. = *You are good for me.* = *I like you.*

sina tawa weka tan seme? = *Why are you leaving?*

Commands

To state a command, use *o* and then what you want the person to do:

o lukin e ni! = *Look at this!*

To address someone, start a sentence with "(person) *o*,":

jan Malin o, sina pona lukin. = *Malin, you are pretty.*

You can also use this together with a command, merging the two *o*'s:

jan San o tawa tomo sina. = *Sam, go home.*

Numbers

Combine number words to add them up:

wan = 1 *tu* = 2 *luka* = 5

luka luka tu wan = 13

And... that's it!

a (emphasis, emotion or confirmation)	kulupu community, company, group, nation, society, tribe	namako spice, something extra	sewi area above, highest part, something elevated; awe-inspiring, divine, sacred, supernatural
akesi non-cute animal; reptile, amphibian	kute ear; to hear, listen; pay attention to, obey	nanpa -th (ordinal number); number	sijelo body (of person or animal), physical state, torso
ala no, not, zero	la (between the context phrase and the main sentence)	nasa unusual, strange; foolish, crazy; drunk, intoxicated	sike round or circular thing; ball, circle, cycle, sphere, wheel; of one year
alasa to hunt, forage	lape sleeping, resting	nasin way, custom, doctrine, method, path, road	sin new, another, more
ali all; abundant, countless, bountiful, every, plentiful; abundance, everything, life, universe; 100	laso blue, green	nen bump, button, hill, mountain, nose, protuberance	sina you
anpa bowing down, downward, humble, lowly, dependent	law head, mind; to control, direct, guide, lead, own, plan, regulate, rule	ni that, this	sinpin face, foremost, front, wall
ante different, altered, changed, other	len cloth, clothing, fabric, textile; cover, layer of privacy	nimi name, word	sitelen image, picture, representation, symbol, mark, writing
anu or	lete cold, cool; uncooked, raw	noka foot, leg, organ of locomotion; bottom, lower part	sona to know, be skilled in, be wise about, have information on; to know how to
awen enduring, kept, protected, safe, waiting, staying; to continue to	li (between any subject except mi alone or sina alone and its verb; also to introduce a new verb for the same subject)	o hey! O! (vocative or imperative)	soweli animal, beast, land mammal
e (before the direct object)	lili little, small, short; few; a bit; young	oko eye	suli big, heavy, large, long, tall; important; adult
en (between multiple subjects)	linja long and flexible thing; cord, hair, rope, thread, yarn	olin to love, have compassion for, respect, show affection to	suno sun; light, brightness, glow, radiance, shine; light source
esun market, shop, fair, bazaar, business transaction	lipu flat object; book, document, card, paper, record, website	ona he, she, it, they	supa horizontal surface, thing to put or rest something on
ijo thing, phenomenon, object, matter	loje red, reddish	open to begin, start; open; turn on	suwi sweet, fragrant; cute, innocent, adorable
ike bad, negative; non-essential, irrelevant	lon located at, present at, real, true, existing	pakala botched, broken, damaged, harmed, messed up	tan by, from, because of
ilo tool, implement, machine, device	luka arm, hand, tactile organ; five	pali to do, take action on, work on; build, make, prepare	taso but, however; only
insa center, content, inside, between; internal organ, stomach	lukin to look at, see, examine, observe, read, watch; to seek, look for, try to	palisa long hard thing; branch, rod, stick	tawa going to, toward; for; from the perspective of; moving
jaki disgusting, obscene, sickly, toxic, unclean, unsanitary	lupa door, hole, orifice, window	pan cereal, grain; barley, corn, oat, rice, wheat; bread, pasta	telo water, liquid, fluid, wet substance; beverage
jan human being, person, somebody	ma earth, land; outdoors, world; country, territory; soil	pana to give, send, emit, provide, put, release	tenpo time, duration, moment, occasion, period, situation
jelo yellow, yellowish	mama parent, ancestor; creator, originator; caretaker, sustainer	pi of	toki to communicate, say, speak, say, talk, use language, think; hello
jo to have, carry, contain, hold	mani money, cash, savings, wealth; large domesticated animal	pilin heart (physical or emotional); feeling (an emotion, a direct experience)	tomo indoor space; building, home, house, room
kala fish, marine animal, sea creature	meli woman, female, feminine person; wife	pimeja black, dark, unlit	tu two
kalama to produce a sound; recite, utter aloud	mi I, me, we, us	pini ago, completed, ended, finished, past	unpa to have sexual or marital relations with
kama arriving, coming, future, summoned; to become, manage to, succeed in	mije man, male, masculine person; husband	pipi bug, insect, ant, spider	uta mouth, lips, oral cavity, jaw
kasi plant, vegetation; herb, leaf	moku to eat, drink, consume, swallow, ingest	poka hip, side; next to, nearby, vicinity	utala to battle, challenge, compete against, struggle against
ken to be able to, be allowed to, can, may; possible	moli dead, dying	poki container, bag, bowl, box, cup, cupboard, drawer, vessel	walo white, whitish; light-colored, pale
kepeken to use, with, by means of	monsi back, behind, rear	pona good, positive, useful; friendly, peaceful; simple; thanks	wan unique, united; one
kili fruit, vegetable, mushroom	mu (animal noise or communication)	pu interacting with the official Toki Pona book	waso bird, flying creature, winged animal
kin indeed, still, too	mun moon, night sky object, star	sama same, similar; each other; sibling, peer, fellow; as, like	wawa strong, powerful; confident, sure; energetic, intense
kiwen hard object, metal, rock, stone	musi artistic, entertaining, frivolous, playful, recreational	seli fire; cooking element, chemical reaction, heat source	weka absent, away, ignored
ko clay, clinging form, dough, semi-solid, paste, powder	mute many, a lot, more, much, several, very; quantity; 20	selo outer form, outer layer; bark, peel, shell, skin; boundary	wile must, need, require, should, want, wish
kon air, breath; essence, spirit; hidden reality, unseen agent		seme what? which?	
kule colorful, pigmented, painted			