

Learning a Little Swahili

It is helpful and much appreciated by our hosts if travelers know at least a few words of kiSwahili such as "Hello," "How are you?" and "Thank you." A brief Swahili tutorial may be found below (see also a free internet resource below).

A Basic Swahili Tutorial

Pronunciation:

a is almost always a short a-as in mama (a word pro. the same in both Eng. and kiSwahili)

e is almost always a long e-as in ate

i is almost always a long i-as in eat

o is almost always a long o-as in motor

u is almost always a long u-as in prune (sounds like moon)

y usually slides (e.g., vyote is veeyo-tay)

consonants are almost always hard-as the g in get.

Of course there are exceptions to everything, but not nearly as many as in English.

Emphasis (shown in bold below) is almost always on the penultimate syllable.

Some examples:

Tunamshakuru **sana Mungu** (We are grateful to God) =

Too-nam-sha-**koo-roo sah-na Mun-goo.**

Asante sana (Thank you very much) = Ah-**sahn-tay sah-nah.**

Karibu! (Welcome! or Come in! or Have a seat!) = kah-**ree-boo.**

Rafiki (Friend) = Rah-**fee-kee.**

Kifaru (Rhino) = Kee-**fah-roo.** (r's are rolled slightly as in German)

Salaam sana (Many greetings) = Sah-**lahm sah-na.**

Kweli kabisa! (That's the truth for sure!) = **Kway-lee kah-bee-sah!**

Tutuonana (Bye or See you later) = Too-too-oh-**nah-na.**

Ndiyo (Yes) = N-**dee-yo.**

Hapana (No) = Ha-**pahn-ah.**

If you want to say, "For sure!" or "You bet!" you just say **Kabisa!! Kah-bee-sah!!**

A lot of words begin with a consonant, like Ndugu (Brother) > N-**doo-goo,** or

Ndiyo (Yes) > N-**dee-oh.** The n sound is just barely there and very short.

Mzungu (a white person). M-**zune-goo.**

The word is pluralized by replacing the prefix, so for "white people" it would be Wazungu.

Some examples of words you should know:

Asante sana (Thank you very much) = Ah-**sahn-tay sah-nah.**

Tafadhali (Please) = Ta-fa-**dal-ee**

Karibu! (Welcome! or Come in! or Have a seat!) = kah-**ree-boo.**

Rafiki (Friend) = Rah-**fee-kee.**

Salaam sana (Warm greetings) = Sah-**lahm sah-na.**

Kweli kabisa! (That's the truth for sure!) = **Kway-lee kah-bee-sah!**

Tutuonana (Bye or See you later) = Too-too-oh-**nah-na.**

Ndiyo (Yes) = N-**dee-yo.**

Hapana (No) = Ha-**pahn**-ah.
Hapana asante (No, thank you) = Ha-**pahn**-ah ah-**sahn**-tay
Kabisa (For sure!) Kah-**bee**-sah!!
Habari yako (Hello/How are you? Lit. What's your news?) Ha-**bar**-ee **yah**-ko
Tembo (Elephant) Tem-bo
Twiga (Giraffe) Twee-gah

A typical greeting of respect (usually from a young person to an older person) is Shik**amoo**, to which the proper reply is, Mar-a-**ha**-ba.

Sisi tunafurahi sana kuwa hapa! = We are very happy to be here!
Tunawashukuru ninyi kwa ukarimu wenu wa upendo mkubwa! = We thank you for your wonderful (big) loving welcome!

For a free beginner's Swahili tutorial, go to: www.byki.com.

