

Reading and speaking

Te Taetae ni Kiribati

The Kiribati alphabet consists of 13 letters.

The vowels have similar pronunciation to other Pacific languages including Te Reo Māori (Māori language).

There are five vowels

	SHORT SOUND	LONG SOUND
Aa	As in 'ask' and 'dark'	March
Ee	As in 'elephant' and 'enter'	Egg
Ii	As in 'pit' and 'in'	Meat
Oo	As in 'ocean' and 'oat'	Door
Uu	As in 'blue and 'you'	Moon

The consonants consist of eight letters

Mm	As in 'number'
Nn	As in 'in'
Ng	As in 'sing'
Bb	As in 'be'
Kk	As in 'gift'
Rr	As in 'tree'
Tt	As in 'sea'
Ww	As in 'we'

Special Consonants

Nasals - M N Ng

Like the vowels, the nasal sounds may also occur lengthened, which may pose some difficulty for English speakers.

This is another area in which spelling systems do not agree, often failing to indicate the additional length. For the most part these sounds are similar to those occurring in English.

In the 'NG' consonant, we can start, end, and use it in the middle of a word. E.g. Ngare (laugh), 'kangkang' (delicious) and 'eng' (yes). In the English language, NG is used in and at the end of a word. E.g. 'singing' and 'sing' but never start a word with NG except for nouns.

R – In te taetae ni Kiribati we roll the letter 'r'. For example 'Kiribati' is pronounced as 'g-i-dd-y-b-a-s'.

K – The letter 'k' is softened to a hard 'g' sound, as in 'gift'. Again, this is demonstrated well in the word 'Kiribati'.

T – The letter 't' makes a 'd' sound like when we say the word please - 'taiaoka' the english phoneme equivalent would be 'd-ay-o-g-a'.

I – When an 'i' follows a 't', it changes the 't' to an 's' sound.

Additional Consonants

mw mwa mwe mwi

bw bwa bwe bwi

These consonants are used to differentiate the sounds in:

'maku' (scared)
'umwa' (kitchen)
'bangke' (bank)
'bwatere' (dance).

As in English:

'ma' in 'madam'
'mwa' in 'mother'
'ba' in 'badminton'
'bwa' in 'bar'.

Please note that in some parts of the Kiribati islands, these consonants cannot be used with the 'o' and 'u' vowels.

A na man ni koroboki Kiribati

Kiribati alphabet

Aa Ee Ii Oo Uu

Mm Nn Ng Bb Kk Rr Tt Ww

Nasals: **Mm Nn Ng**

Mw Bw



Taeka aika a bongana *Useful words*

Common Phrases

Mauri	<i>Greetings / Hello</i>
Kam na bane ni mauri	<i>Greetings everyone</i>
Ti a bo	<i>Goodbye</i>
Ti a bo, tekeraoi te mwananga	<i>Goodbye, have a safe trip / nice trip</i>
Taiaoka	<i>Please</i>
Ko rabwa (singular) Kam rabwa (plural)	<i>Thank you</i>
Kabwara te bure	<i>Sorry</i>
Ko matauninga	<i>Excuse me</i>
Antai aram?	<i>What is your name?</i>
Arau _____	<i>My name is _____</i>
Kaain ia ngkoe?	<i>Where are you from?</i>
Ngai kaain _____	<i>I am from _____</i>
Ko mwakuri ia?	<i>Where do you work?</i>
I mwakuri i (I makuri n te) _____	<i>I work at _____</i>
Ko uara? Kam uara?	<i>How are you (singular vs dual / plural)?</i>
Ko rabwa, I marurung (I marurung ko rabwa)	<i>I am fine, thank you</i>
Ko a tia n amwarake? Ti a nako n amwarake	<i>Have you eaten? Let's go eat</i>

Office Talk

Kabwara te bure ni iremwen te reitaki rikaaki...	<i>Apologies for the delayed response...</i>
Ni kaineti ma au meeri are ma i mwaina...	<i>As per my previous email...</i>
I kukurei ni maroroakinna	<i>I am happy to discuss</i>
Te tai ni kamarurung!	<i>It's gym time!</i>
Ko a reitaki nakoio n te tarebon / Ko a tareboniai	<i>Call me</i>
Tekeraoi n am tokanikai!	<i>Congratulations!</i>

Taeka aika a bongana *Useful words*

People

Te Atua n tangira	<i>God of love</i>
Te karo / te Tama	<i>Father</i>
Mitinare / Minita	<i>Church Minister</i>
Te Tama	<i>Father / Priest (Catholic)</i>
Te nati / te ataei	<i>Child</i>
Naati / ataei	<i>Children</i>

Family Words

Tamau / Tamara / Tamaia / Tamami	<i>My father / our father / their father / their fathers</i>
Kaaro nakon te nati te mwane / aine	<i>Parents to children; boy / girl</i>
Naati / Natiu / Natimi / Natim	<i>Children / my children / your children / your child</i>
Natiu te mwane / Natiu te aine	<i>My son / my daughter</i>
Te Tina / Tinau / Tinara / Tinami	<i>Mother / my mother / our mother / your mother</i>
Tiina / Tinaia	<i>Mothers / their mothers</i>

From a boy to a girl / girl to a boy

Mwaneu / Mwanera	<i>My brother or sister / our brother or sister</i>
Mwanem / Mwanena	<i>Your brother or sister / his sister or her brother</i>
Mwaneia	<i>Their brother or their sister</i>

From a boy to a boy / girl to a girl

Taari / Tariu	<i>Sisters or brothers / my sister or brother</i>
Tarim / Tarimi	<i>Your brother or sister / your brothers or sisters</i>
Tarina / Tariia	<i>Her sister or his brother / their brother or sister</i>

