

# VAGAHAU NIUE

## A brief guide to using the Niue language

### About vagahau Niue

Vagahau Niue (the Niue language) belongs to the Tongic languages of the Oceanic subgroup that includes most Pacific languages. It is closely related to Tongan. The official languages of Niue are vagahau Niue and English.

There are two regional varieties of vagahau Niue. The Motu variety (*motu* means ‘people of the island’) is the older variety spoken in the northern villages of Niue. The Tafiti variety (*tafiti* means ‘strangers’ or ‘people from a distance’) is spoken in the southern villages and has stronger influences from the Tongan language. There are minor differences in vocabulary and pronunciation between the two varieties, but the differences do not stop speakers of the two varieties from understanding one another.

### The Niue alphabet | Tau matatohi he vagahau Niue

The core Niue alphabet has 17 letters.

The vowels **A, E, I, O** and **U** have the same pronunciation as in most other Pacific languages, including te reo Māori. Short vowels are unmarked. Long vowels are marked with a macron: **Ā, Ē, Ī, Ō** and **Ū**.

The consonants are **F, G, H, K, L, M, N, P, R, S, T** and **V**.

The consonants are pronounced as in English with a few differences:

**G** – Pronounced like “ng” as in *sing*.

**T** – Pronounced as an “s” sound when followed by the vowels **E** or **I**. For example, *tote* (small) is pronounced “to-se” and *tele* (kick) is pronounced “se-le.”

## Everyday language

| ENGLISH                  | VAGAHAU NIUE                      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Hi (informal)            | Fakaalofa atu                     |
| Hello (formal)           | Fakaalofa lahi atu                |
| Good morning             | Fakaalofa atu he pogipogi         |
| Greetings everyone       | Fakaalofa atu ki a mutolu oti     |
| I'm pleased to meet you  | Fiafia lahi au he feleveia mo koe |
| Goodbye to those leaving | Fano a koe                        |
| Goodbye to those staying | Nofo a koe                        |
| How are you (singular)?  | Malolō nakai a koe?               |
| How are you (dual)?      | Malolō nakai a mua?               |
| How are you (plural)?    | Malolō nakai a mutolu?            |
| I am well, thank you     | Malolō au, fakaauue               |
| I am tired               | Lolelola au                       |
| I am sick                | Tatalu au / Gagao au              |
| I am so-so               | Malolō ni pihia                   |
| I am happy               | Fiafia au                         |
| And yourself?            | Ka e kua a koe?                   |
| See you later            | To liu ke feleveia                |
| See you tomorrow         | Feleveia a pogipogi               |
| See you next week        | Feleveia he faahi tapu kahau      |
| Blessings                | Kia monuina                       |
| Call me                  | Vilo mai au / Hea mai kia au      |
| Send me a message        | Fakafano mai e fekau kia au       |

| ENGLISH                                | VAGAHAU NIUE                              |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Please                                 | Fakamolemole                              |
| Thank you (very much)                  | Fakaauue (lahi mahaki)                    |
| You're welcome<br>(i.e. It's all good) | Mafola                                    |
| Excuse me                              | Fakamolemole                              |
| Apologies                              | Fakamolemole mai                          |
| Have you eaten?                        | Kua kai nakai a koe?                      |
| Come and eat with me                   | Hau ke kai a taua                         |
| Thank you for the food                 | Fakaauue ke he tau mena kai               |
| Yes                                    | Ē                                         |
| No                                     | Nakai                                     |
| Have a good day                        | Monuina e aho                             |
| Have a good week                       | Monuina e faahi tapu                      |
| Have a good weekend                    | Monuina e okioki vahā tapu                |
| Have a good holiday                    | Monuina e tau aho okioki                  |
| Merry Christmas                        | Monuina e Kilisimasi                      |
| Happy New Year                         | Monuina e Tau Foo                         |
| Happy birthday                         | Monuina e aho fanau                       |
| Happy Niue Language<br>Week            | Monuina e Faahi Tapu ma e<br>Vagahau Niue |
| Lots of love                           | Lahi e fakaalofa                          |

## Words of encouragement

| ENGLISH         | VAGAHAU NIUE         |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Great job       | Hau ti hau foki      |
| You can do it   | Maeke he taute e koe |
| Congratulations | Tau fakamonuina atu  |
| Don't give up   | Fakamalolō mai       |
| Stay strong     | Kia fakamalolō       |
| Give it a go    | Fakatai atu          |
| Excellent       | Homo ue atu          |
| Well done       | Mitaki lahi          |
| God is good     | Homo ue atu e Atua   |

## Relationship-building

| ENGLISH             | VAGAHAU NIUE              |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| What is your name?  | Ko hai e higoa haau?      |
| My name is _____    | Ko e higoa haaku ko _____ |
| Where are you from? | Hau a koe i fe?           |
| I am from _____     | Hau au i _____            |
| Where do you live?  | Nofo a koe i fe?          |
| I live in _____     | Nofo au i _____           |

## Email language

| ENGLISH                            | VAGAHAU NIUE                                              |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| I hope you're well                 | Amanaki kua malolō a koe                                  |
| Thank you for your email           | Fakaaue ke he imeli hila haau                             |
| Thank you for your response        | Fakaaue ke he tauī haau                                   |
| Thank you for your clarification   | Fakaaue ke he haau a fakamaamaaga                         |
| Thank you for your help            | Fakaaue ke he haau a lagomatai                            |
| That's a good question             | Mitaki e hūhū ia                                          |
| I will come back to you tomorrow   | To liu mai au kia koe a pogipogi                          |
| I will come back to you next week  | To liu mai au kia koe he faahi tapu kahau                 |
| I will come back to you soon       | To liu matūtaki atu he magaaho kū i mua                   |
| Apologies for the delayed response | Fakamolemole ha kua to tua e matūtaki atu                 |
| As per my previous email ...       | Muitua atu ke he imeli hila haaku he magaaho kua mole ... |
| Please see attached document       | Fakamolemole fakakia e tohi ne fakapiki ke he imeli nai   |
| As per our conversation ...        | Tuga ni ke he fakatutalaaga ha taua ...                   |
| Happy to discuss                   | Fiafia lahi ke fakatūtala                                 |
| I look forward to your response    | Amanaki ke moua mai haau a talahauaga                     |
| I look forward to seeing you       | Amanaki ke feleveia a taua                                |
| Kind regards                       | Haau a fakamooli                                          |
| Cheers                             | Kia monuina                                               |

## Talking about work

| ENGLISH                                                     | VAGAHAU NIUE                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Where do you work?                                          | Gahua a koe i fē?                                       |
| I work at _____                                             | Gahua au i _____                                        |
| I have worked here for _____ (months / years)               | Ko e _____ ia e (mahina / tau) he gahua au he gahua nai |
| What is your job?                                           | Ko e heigoa e gahua haau?                               |
| I am a _____                                                | Ko au ko e _____                                        |
| Teacher                                                     | Faiaoga                                                 |
| Student                                                     | Tama fano aoga                                          |
| Nurse                                                       | Nosi                                                    |
| Doctor                                                      | Ekekafo / Toketā                                        |
| Librarian                                                   | Tagata leveki he fale totou tohi                        |
| Manager                                                     | Menesā / Taha takitaki                                  |
| Musician (singer / instrument player)                       | Uhu lologo / Tagata tā kofe                             |
| Police officer                                              | Leoleo                                                  |
| Advisor                                                     | Tagata fakatonutonu mo e hataki                         |
| Where do you study?                                         | Fakaako a koe i fē?                                     |
| I study at high school / I study at the University of _____ | Fakaako au he aoga tokoluga / Fakaako au he aoga pulotu |

## Numbers

|                              |                               |                               |                               |                             |                               |                 |                  |                  |                  |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>0</b><br>Nakai            | <b>1</b><br>Taha              | <b>2</b><br>Ua                | <b>3</b><br>Tolu              | <b>4</b><br>Fā              | <b>5</b><br>Lima              | <b>6</b><br>Ono | <b>7</b><br>Fitu | <b>8</b><br>Valu | <b>9</b><br>Hiva |
| <b>10</b><br>Hogofulu        | <b>11</b><br>Hogofulu ma taha | <b>12</b><br>Hogofulu ma ua   | <b>13</b><br>Hogofulu ma tolu | <b>14</b><br>Hogofulu ma fā | <b>15</b><br>Hogofulu ma lima |                 |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>16</b><br>Hogofulu ma ono | <b>17</b><br>Hogofulu ma fitu | <b>18</b><br>Hogofulu ma valu | <b>19</b><br>Hogofulu ma hiva | <b>20</b><br>Uafulu         |                               |                 |                  |                  |                  |

## Proverbs

Ka uka ma mea, ti uku aki e ulu.

**Meaning** If it is difficult, go headfirst.

**Application** When something is challenging, make a start because making small steps forward is better than standing still.

Tagata ne ai kiva tau lima, nakai fai tonuhia ke fai talahauaga.

**Meaning** Those whose hands are not dirty should not have a say in important village matters.

**Application** To earn the right to have their voices heard, aspiring leaders should work in the community and serve their people.

Vagahau ti fakafelevehi e tau vagahau.

**Meaning** Put clothes on your words.

**Application** Speak with care and diplomacy. While speaking directly may clearly communicate your point, using polite language helps to preserve relationships.

## Cultural note

Tia (“see-ah”)

*Tia* is a traditional Niue weaving technique used to create both decorative and functional items, including wall hangings, *kato tia* (woven baskets), *ilili* (fans), placemats/coasters, hats, and jewellery. These woven works are valued not only for their practical use but also for their artistic beauty, often showcasing intricate patterns and the natural materials of the island.

*Lalaga* refers broadly to the practice of weaving, while *tia* is a specialised decorative weaving style that is uniquely associated with Niue. Developed and refined over generations, *tia* is a powerful expression of Niue identity, craftsmanship, and cultural continuity. Today, the art form remains an important way for tagata Niue (people of Niue heritage) to celebrate, preserve, and share their culture.

## Prayers

| VAGAHAU NIUE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ENGLISH                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Liogi</b><br>Kia hufeilo a tautolu mo e liogi<br>Ha mautolu a matua na ē hahā he lagi<br>Kua ole atu ke he haau a tau fakamonuinaaga ke lata mae faahi tapu nai<br>Kia mautolu taki tokotaha mo e aulua katoatoa<br>He higoa ha lesu Keriso kua liogi atu ai a mautolu<br>Amene                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Prayer</b><br>Let us pray<br>Our heavenly father<br>We ask for your blessings this week<br>To each and every one of us<br>In Jesus’ name we pray<br>Amen                                        |
| <b>Liogi e tau mena kai</b><br>Ko e Atua ha mautolu a Matua<br>Fakaaue atu ke he tau mena kai nai<br>Fakamolemole fakamonuina e tau lima ne tauteute ai e tau mena kai nai,<br>ke fakamalolōaki ha mautolu a tau tino mo e tau alaga<br>He higoa ha lesu Keriso kua liogi atu ai a mautolu<br>Amene                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Prayer to bless food</b><br>Father God<br>We thank you for this food<br>Please bless the hands that prepared it,<br>and let it give strength and health to our bodies<br>In Jesus’ name<br>Amen |
| <b>He Kaikōhau</b><br>Below is a traditional Te Reo Māori karakia or kaikōhau used in the Aotearoa context.<br><i>Nau mai ngā hua. Nau mai ngā pai. Nau mai kia nui. Kia hāwere ai. Tihei mauri ora.</i><br>A kaikōhau is an expression of hope welcoming all things positive – including bountiful harvests, good health and work or study achievements. It can be used during Matariki celebrations as you prepare for the new year ahead, before you share a meal, or to open or close a meeting. Here is an adaptation of this kaikōhau in vagahau Niue, with an English translation. |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <i>Fakafeleveia atu ke he tau mena kua tutupu mo e momoui</i><br><i>Fakafeleveia atu ke he tau mena kua homo atu e mitaki</i><br><i>Amanaki kua mahu mo e olatia ai</i><br><i>Mo e mahu</i><br><i>Kia tukumalagi e moui olaola mo e tupuola mitaki</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>Welcome all that has grown</i><br><i>Welcome all that is good</i><br><i>May it be plentiful</i><br><i>And in abundance</i><br><i>And forever, and ever</i>                                      |