TE GAGANA TOKELAU

Ministry for Pacific Peoples

PACIFIC LANGUAGE WEEKS

A brief guide to using the Tokelau language

About te gagana Tokelau

Te gagana Tokelau (the Tokelau language) belongs to the Samoic languages of the Oceanic subgroup that includes most Pacific languages. It is closely related to Samoan and the Tuvalu language.
The official languages of Tokelau are the Tokelau language and English.

Tokelau has three atolls: Atafu, Nukunonu, and Fakaofo. The language associated with each atoll is te gagana Tokelau, although there are very minor differences in pronunciation and spelling between each language variety.

The Tokelau alphabet | Tokelau alafapeta

The core Tokelau alphabet has 15 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**, **K**, **L**, **M**, **N**, **P**, **H**, **T** and **V**. The order of these letters reflects the 1986 Tokelau Dictionary.

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

F – pronounced like 'hw'.
Fakalogo (to listen) is pronounced "h-wa-ka-longo".

G – pronounced like 'ng' as in te reo Māori.
Tagi (to cry) is pronounced "ta-ngi".

H – pronounced like 'hy'.
Hau (to come) is pronounced "hy-au".

Everyday language

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
Hello	Mālō ni
Good morning	Taeao fōu manuia
Greetings everyone	E fakatālofa atu
I'm pleased to meet you	Kua fiafia au ki tātou kua feiloaki
Goodbye	Tōfā ni
How are you (singular)?	E ā mai koe?
How are you (dual)?	E ā mai koulua?
How are you (plural)?	E ā mai koutou?
I am well, thank you	Ko au e manuia, fakafetai
I am tired	Ko au e vāivai
I am sick	Ko au e hē mālohi
I am so-so	Ko au e feoloolo
I am happy	Ko au e fiafia
And yourself?	Kae ko koe?
See you later	Toe feiloaki ni
See you tomorrow	Fetaui taeao
See you next week	Fetaui i te vaiaho fōu
Blessings	Ke manuia
Call me	Telefoni mai
Send me a message	Lafo mai hau meli
Please	Fakamolemole

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
Thank you (very much)	Fakafetai (lahi lele)
You're welcome	Koe e hē popole
Excuse me	Tulou ni
Sorry	E fakamalie atu
Have you eaten?	Kua kai koe?
Come and eat with me	Hau ke kakai kitāua
Thank you for the food	Fakafetai mo te meakai
Yes	Io
No	Hēai
Have a good day	Ke manuia te aho
Have a good week	Ke manuia te vaiaho
Have a good weekend	Ke manuia te fakaikuga o te vaiaho
Have a good holiday	Ke manuia te tukuaga
Merry Christmas	Ke manuia te Kilihimahi
Happy New Year	Ke manuia te Tauhaga Fōu
Happy birthday	Ke manuia te aho fānau
Happy Tokelau Language Week	Ke manuia te Vaiaho o te Gagana Tokelau
Lots of love	Alofa lahi atu

Words of encouragement

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
Great work	Mālō te galue
You can do it	E kē mafaia fai
Congratulations	Mālō te taumafai
All the best	Ke manuia au taumafaiga
Stay strong	Fakamākeke ni
Give it a go	Kite ake
Awesome	Kai te mānaia
Well done	Te lelei ō koe
God is good	Ko te Aliki e lelei

Relationship–building

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
What is your name?	Ko ai tō igoa?
My name is _____	Ko toku igoa ko _____
Where are you from?	Ko koe e hau i fea?
I am from _____	Ko au e hau mai _____
Where do you live?	Koe e nofo i fea?
I live in _____	Ko au e nofo i _____

Email language

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
I hope you're well	Talohia ko koe e mālohi
Thank you for your email	Fakafetai mo tau imeli
Thank you for your response	Fakafetai mo tau tali mai
Thank you for your clarification	Fakafetai mo tau fakamāina ātili
Thank you for your help	Fakafetai mo tō fehoahoani
That's a good question	Ko he fehili manaia tēnā
I will come back to you tomorrow	Ka toe logo atu koe e au taeao
I will come back to you next week	Ka toe logo atu koe e au i te vaiaho fōu
I will come back to you soon	Ka toe logo atu koe e au i he taimi lata mai
Apologies for the delayed response	E fakamalūlū ki te tuai tali atu
As per my previous email...	E ve ona tākua i tau imeli muamua...
Please see attached document	Fakamolemole kikila ifo ki te pepa kua fakapipiki atu
As per our conversation...	E vē oi talanoa ai kitāua...
Happy to discuss	E fiafia ke fakatalatalanoa
I look forward to your response	E amanaki ki hau tali mai
I look forward to seeing you	E amanaki ke feiloaki kitāua
Kind regards/Cheers	Mālō te onohai

Talking about work

ENGLISH	TE GAGANA TOKELAU
Where do you work?	Koe e galue i fea?
I work at _____	Ko au e galue i _____
I have worked here for _____ (months / years)	Ko au na galue i kinei mo he _____ (māhina / tauhaga)
What is your job?	Heā tau gāluega?
I am a _____	Ko au ko he _____
Teacher	Faiākoga
Student	Tamaiti ākoga
Nurse	Teine fōmai
Doctor	Fōmai
Librarian	Pule Faletuhi
Manager	Pule fakahoa
Musician	Tino fatu muhika
Police officer	Leoleo
Advisor	Faufautua
Where do you study?	Koe e ākoga i fea?
I study at high school / I study at the University of _____	Ko au e ākoga i te ākoga tulaga lua / Ko au e ākoga i te lunivehite o _____

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Helo	Tahi	Lua	Tolu	Fā	Lima	Ono	Fitu	Valu	Iva

10	11	12	13	14	15
Hefulu	Hefulutahi	Hefululua	Hefulutolu	Hefulufā	Hefululima

16	17	18	19	20
Hefuluono	Hefulufitu	Hefuluvalu	Hefuluiva	Luahefulu

Proverbs

Fulifuli te lākau ki te tanega.

Meaning When carving a canoe, keep turning the log until you find the correct side to start.
Application Careful preparation leads to better results. Before beginning any task, consider your options and choose the best course of action. A strong start lays the foundation for success and helps avoid problems in the future.

E timokia te manu ka he manu moana.

Meaning A seabird may be battered by strong winds and rain at sea, yet it survives through its experience and courage.
Application Resilience and preparedness help people endure challenges and overcome adversity.

Pokotau ki au kapuga.

Meaning Challenge the size of the swirls in the water as you paddle.

Application The quality of one's effort is reflected in the results achieved. Strive to give your best in all that you do.

Cultural note

Inati

Inati is Tokelau's traditional system of sharing resources, especially fish. When fishers return with their catch, it is brought together and shared among households according to community customs and family needs. This helps ensure that everyone is provided for, including those who may not be able to fish themselves.

Inati reflects important Tokelau values such as fairness, cooperation, and caring for others. It is based on the idea that what benefits one person should also benefit the wider community. Through *inati*, people are reminded that everyone has a role to play in supporting the wellbeing of others.

While life has changed significantly over time, the principles of *inati* remain an important part of Tokelau identity. In both Tokelau and New Zealand, its spirit can still be seen in the way families and communities share food, support one another through life's challenges, and contribute to collective events and celebrations.

Prayers

TE GAGANA TOKELAU	ENGLISH
Tatalo Tātou tatalo To mātou tamana i te lagi Liligi mai ko tō manuia i te vaiaho fōu tenei Fakamanuia mai ki mātou uma I te igoa o Iehu e tatalo atu ai ki mātou Amene	**Prayer** Let us pray Our heavenly father We ask for your blessings this week To each and every one of us In Jesus' name we pray Amen
Tatalo mo nā meakai Te Atua te tamana E fakafetai atu ki mātou mo nā meakai iēnei Ke fakamanuia fakamolemole nā lima na ki lātou haunia, ma ke fakamālohi ma fakamālōlō ai o mātou tino I te igoa o Iehu Amene	**Prayer to bless food** Father God We thank you for this food Please bless the hands that prepared it, and let it give strength and health to our bodies In Jesus' name Amen

He Kaikōhau

Below is a traditional Te Reo Māori karakia or kaikōhau used in the Aotearoa context.

Nau mai ngā hua. Nau mai ngā pai. Nau mai kia nui. Kia hāwere ai. Tīhei mauri ora.

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 te gagana Tokelau, with an English translation.

Fakafeiloaki na mea uma kua ōla	*Welcome all that has grown*
Fakafeiloaki na mea lelei uma	*Welcome all that is good*
Ke tupu olaola ke lava ai te fakahoa	*May it be plentiful*
Ke haga liliigi pea mai	*And in abundance*
Na fakamanuiaga fakatetino	*And forever, and ever*