

LEA FAKA-TONGA

A brief guide to using the Tongan language

About Lea Faka-Tonga

Lea-Faka Tonga (Tongan) belongs to the Tongic languages of the Oceanic subgroup that includes most Pacific languages.

It is closely related to Niuean. The official languages of the Kingdom of Tonga are Tongan and English.

The Tongan alphabet | 'Alafapeti Faka-Tonga

The Tongan alphabet has 17 letters.

The five basic vowels **A, E, I, O** and **U** have the same pronunciation as most other Pacific languages, including te reo Māori.

Long vowels are marked with a macron: **Ā, Ē, Ī, Ō, Ū**.

Short and long vowel sounds must be used, as they distinguish between different words, such as *kaka* (to climb) and *kākā* (to cheat).

The consonants are **F, H, K, L, M, N, NG, P, S, T, V**, [ʔ]. The glottal stop is considered a consonant as it helps to distinguish between words.

The Tongan language uses stress marks, also known as definitive accents (*fakamamafa pau*).

These written accents at the end of a word (**á, é, í, ó, ú**) tell us to emphasise the sound.

For example, the word *Tongá*, should be pronounced with a strong 'á' sound at the end

The inverted comma (*fakau'a*) in Tongan represents the glottal stop [ʔ]. This changes the pronunciation of the vowel to a shorter, sharper sound. Using the glottal stop distinguishes different words such as *anga* (behaviour) and 'anga (shark).



Everyday language

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
Hello	Mālō e lelei
Good morning	Mālō 'etau ma'u ki he pongipongi' ni
Greetings everyone	'Oku ou talitali lelei kimoutolu
I'm pleased to meet you	'Oku ' ou fiefia ke fe'iloaki' mo koe
Goodbye to those leaving	'Alu ā
Goodbye to those staying	Nofo ā
How are you (singular)?	'Oku ke fēfē hake?
How are you (dual)?	'Oku mo fēfē hake?
How are you (plural)?	'Oku mou fēfē hake?
I am well, thank you	'Oku ou saipē, mālō
I am tired	'Oku ou hela'ia
I am sick	'Oku ou puke
I am so-so	'Oku ou sai sai pē
I am happy	'Oku ou fiefia
And yourself?	Fēfē 'a koe?
See you later	Tau toki sio
See you tomorrow	Tau toki sio 'apongipongi
See you next week	Tau toki sio he uike kaha'u'
Blessings/Good luck	Talamonū atu
Call me	Tā mai
Send me a message	Tohi mai
Please	Fakamolemole

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
Thank you very much	Mālō 'aupito
You're welcome	'Oku talitali lelei koe
Excuse me	Kataki fakamolemole / Tulou
Sorry	Fakamolemole
Have you eaten?	Kuo ke 'osi kai?
Come and eat with me	Ha'u ketau kai
Thank you for the food	Mālō e ma'u me'a tokoni
Yes	'lo
No	'Ikai
Have a good day	'Ofa ke ke ma'u ha 'aho lelei
Have a good week	'Ofa ke ke ma'u ha uike lelei
Have a good weekend	'Ofa ke ke ma'u ha faka'osinga uike lelei
Have a good holiday	'Ofa ke ke ma'u ha taimi mālōlō lelei
Merry Christmas	'Ofa ke mou ma'u ha Kilisimasi fiefia
Happy New Year	'Ofa ke mou ma'u ha ta'u fo'ou monū'ia
Happy Birthday	Talamonu atu ki he hokosia ho 'aho fa'ēle'i'
Happy Tongan Language Week	Ke mou ma'u ha uike lea faka-Tonga fiefia
Lots of love	'Ofa lahi atu

Words of encouragement

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
Great work	Faka'ofa'ofa 'a e ngāue'
You can do it	'Ikai ke 'i ai ha me'a 'oku faingata'a
Congratulations	Mālō e ngāue lahi
All the best	Talamonu atu
Stay strong	'Oua e fo'i
Give it a go	Fai ha feinga
Excellent	Faka'ofa'ofa 'aupito
Well done	Faka'ofa'ofa
God is good	'Oku lelei 'a e 'Eiki'

Relationship-building

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
What is your name?	Ko hai ho hingoa?
My name is _____	Ko hoku hingoa' ko _____
Where are you from?	Ko ho'o ha'u mei fē?
I am from _____	'Oku ou ha'u mei _____
Where do you live?	'Oku ke nofo 'i fē?
I live in _____	'Oku ou nofo 'i _____



Email language

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
I hope you're well	'Ofa 'oku saipē 'a e me'a kotoa
Thank you for your email	Fakamālō atu ho'o 'imeili mai
Thank you for your response	Fakamālō atu ho'o tali 'a e 'imeili
Thank you for your clarification	Fakamālō atu ki hono to e fakama'ala'ala mai
Thank you for your help	Mālō e ma 'u tokoni
That's a good question	Ko e fahu'i lelei ena
I will come back to you tomorrow	Teu toki fetu'utaki atu 'apongipongi
I will come back to you next week	Teu toki fetu'utaki atu he uike kaha'u
I will come back to you soon	'E vave ' ni pē ha'aku toe fetu'utaki atu
Apologies for the delayed response	Kataki he tuai 'a e tali atu ho 'imeili
As per my previous email...	Hangē ko e me'a na'a ' ku lave kiai he 'imeili kimu'a ' ...
Please see attached document	Kātaki 'o vakai ki he ngaahi pepa 'oku fakapipiki atu
As per our conversation...	Hānge ko e me'a na'a ' ta Talanoa ki ai
Happy to discuss	'Oku ou fiefia ke ta talanoa
I look forward to your response	Teu fakaongoongo atu pē ki ha'o lau
I look forward to seeing you	'Ofa vave ' ni pē ha 'a tau fe'iloaki
Kind regards / Cheers	Faka'apa'apa atu

Talking about work

ENGLISH	LEA FAKA-TONGA
Where do you work?	'Oku ' ke ngāue 'i fe?
I work at _____	'Oku ou ngāue 'i _____
I have worked here for _____ (months / years)	Ko e (mahina / ta'u) eni 'e _____ 'eku ngāue heni
What is your job?	Ko e hā ho'o ngāue 'oku fai ' ?
I am a _____	Ko 'eku ngāue 'oku fai ko e _____
Teacher	Faiako
Student	Tokotaha 'oku lolotonga ako
Nurse	Neesi
Doctor	Toketā
Librarian	Ngāue he laipeli
Manager	Pule ngāue
Musician	Fai hiva
Police officer	'Ofisa Melino
Advisor	Tokotaha fale'i
Where do you study?	'Oku ' ke ako 'i fe?
I study at high school / I study at the University of _____	'Oku ou lolotonga ako he kolisi / 'Oku ou lolotonga ako he 'Univesiti 'o _____

Numbers

0 Noa	1 Taha	2 Ua	3 Tolu	4 Fā	5 Nima	6 Ono	7 Fitu	8 Valu	9 Hiva
10 Hongofulu	11 Tahataha	12 Tahaua	13 Tahatolu	14 Tahafā	15 Tahanima				
16 Tahaono	17 Tahafitu	18 Tahavalu	19 Tahahiva	20 Uanoa					



Proverbs

‘Oua lau e kafo kae lau e lava

Meaning Don't count the difficulties, count the blessings.

Application A reminder to stay positive and focus on achievements rather than obstacles.

Folola e fala, kae alea e kāinga

Meaning Spread the *fala* (woven mat) so the family can discuss and deliberate.

Application This proverb reflects the traditional Tongan practice of talanoa and consultation. It reminds people that important matters should not be decided alone, but through respectful conversation and collective wisdom.

Ko e koloa ‘a e Tonga ko e fakamālō

Meaning Gratitude is the treasure of Tonga.

Application This reflects the cultural importance of thankfulness in Tongan society.

Cultural note

Māfana

Māfana is a Tongan cultural concept that describes a feeling of emotional warmth, inspiration, and heartfelt uplift experienced during gatherings, performances, or meaningful exchanges. It is the inner heat that rises when people are connected in harmony – through song, dance, ceremony, or acts of generosity – and it signals that the event has touched the heart and spirit of the community. Māfana often emerges during moments of collective pride, joyful celebration, or shared vulnerability, energising both participants and observers.

In Tongan culture, a performance or occasion that generates māfana is considered successful, because it shows that people have been moved emotionally and spiritually, strengthening the *vā*, the relational space between individuals.

Prayers

LEA FAKA-TONGA	ENGLISH
Lotu Ke tau lotu Ko ‘emau Tamai ‘oku ‘i hēvani ‘Oku mau kole ke ke tāpuaki‘i ‘a e uike’ ni Mo kimautilu hono kotoa Ko ‘emau lotu ia, ‘ia Sisu Kalaisi ko homau ‘Eiki ‘Emeni	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
Lotu kai Tamai Mafimafi ‘Oku mau fakamālō atu ki he me‘atokoni ko ‘eni’ Fakamolemole ‘o fai tapuekina ‘a kinautolu na’a nau teuteu‘i ‘a e me’a tokoni’, tapuekina ‘a e me’a tokoni ke fakamalohi ki homau ngaahi sino ‘I he huafa ‘o Sisū Kalaisi’ ‘Emeni	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 we pray Amen
He Kaikōhau Below is a traditional Te Reo Māori karakia or kaikōhau used in the Aotearoa context. <i>Nau mai ngā hua. Nau mai ngā pai. Nau mai kia nui. Kia hāwere ai. Tihei mauri ora.</i> 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 Lea Faka-Tonga, with an English translation.	
<i>Talitali lelei ‘a e me’a kotoa kuo tupu</i> <i>Talitali lelei ‘a e me’a kotoa ‘oku lelei</i> <i>Ke tupulaki</i> <i>Mo lahi ‘aupito</i> <i>Tapuaki ‘o e fakatupu</i>	<i>Welcome all that has grown</i> <i>Welcome all that is good</i> <i>May it be plentiful</i> <i>And in abundance</i> <i>And forever, and ever</i>

