

TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI

A brief guide to using the Cook Islands Māori language

About Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani

Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani (Cook Islands Māori) belongs to the Tahitic languages of the Oceanic subgroup that includes most Pacific languages. It is closely related to te reo Māori (Aotearoa) and te reo Tahiti. The language is composed of a number of similar varieties spoken across the islands of Rarotonga, Aitutaki, 'Atiu, Mangaia, Manihiki / Rakahanga, Mā'uke, Miti'aro, and Penrhyn / Tongareva.

The official languages of the Cook Islands are Cook Islands Māori and English.

There are other languages spoken in the Cook Islands. Palmerston is an English variety with Cook Islands Māori influences spoken on Palmerston Island. Pukapuka, which is closely related to Samoan, is spoken on Pukapuka Island.

The Cook Islands Māori alphabet | Te Ara Reta Māori Kūki 'Airani

The core Cook Islands Māori alphabet has 13 letters.

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

The consonants are **NG, K, M, N, P, R, T** and **V**.

The Penrhyn / Tongareva alphabet has two additional consonants: **S** and **H**. The Manihiki / Rakahanga variety also has an **F, H** and **L**. Pukapuka also has the letters **L, W**, and **Y** in its alphabet.

In Cook Islands Māori, vowels can be long or short. The inverted comma (āmata) in Cook Islands Māori represents the glottal stop [ʔ] and it creates a short vowel sound, such as in 'aere.

The macron (mākarōna) creates a long vowel sound. Macrons distinguish between different words, such as *marama* (moon) and *mārama* (daylight / understand).



Everyday language

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
Hello	Kia orāna
Good morning	Pōpongi meitaki
Greetings everyone	Kia orāna kōtou katoatoa
I'm pleased to meet you	Tē mataora nei au 'i te 'ārāvei 'iā koe
Goodbye to those leaving	'Aere atu rā kōtou
Goodbye to those staying	E no'o ake rā kōtou
How are you (singular)?	Pē'ea koe?
How are you (dual)?	Pē'ea kōrua?
How are you (plural)?	Pē'ea kōtou?
I am well, thank you	Meitaki 'ua au
I am tired	'E ro'iro'i au
I am sick	'E maki au
I am so-so	Mei tēra 'ua ra
I am happy	Kua mataora au
And yourself?	E koe oki?
See you later	Kā kite iā koe ā kōnei
See you tomorrow	Kā kite iā koe āpōpō
See you next week	Kā kite iā koe 'ā teia 'epetoma ki mua
Blessings	Kia 'akameitaki ia te Atua
Good luck	Kia manuia
Call me	Tāniuniu mai iāku
Send me a message	Tuku mai 'i tēta'i karere ki āku
Please (always used before request)	'Inē / Me ka tika

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
Thank you very much (Rarotonga)	Meitaki ma'ata
Thank you very much (Aitutaki)	Meitaki 'atupaka
Thank you very much (Mitiaro, Mauke and Atiu)	Meitaki rānuinui
Excuse me	'Inā ake ana, inē
Sorry	'Akakoromaki mai
Have you eaten?	Kua kaikai koe?
Come and eat with me	'Aere mai ka kaikai tāua
Thank you for the food	Meitaki nō te kai
Yes	'Āe
No	Kāre
Have a good day	Kia manuia tō'ou rā
Have a good week	Kia manuia tō'ou 'epetoma
Have a good weekend	Kia manuia koe, i teia openga 'epetoma
Have a good holiday	Kia manuia tā'au 'orote
Merry Christmas	Kia manuia 'i te Kiritimiti / Mēri Kiritimiti
Happy New Year	Kia mataora i te mata'iti 'ōu
Happy Birthday	Kia mataora tō'ou rā 'ānau'anga
Happy Cook Islands Māori Language Week	Kia mataora 'i te 'Epetoma 'ō te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani
Lots of love	Kia ma'ata te aro'a

Words of encouragement

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
Great work	Meitaki ma'ata no tā'au 'anga'anga
You can do it	Ka rauka iā koe 'i te rave
Congratulations	Kia 'akameitaki'ia koe
All the best	Kia manuia
Stay strong	Kia mātūtū 'ua atu rāi
Give it a go	Timata'ia
Excellent	Meitaki ma'ata tikāi
Well done	Mako
God is good	Meitaki te Atua

Relationship-building

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
What is your name?	Ko 'ai tō'ou ingoa?
My name is _____	Ko _____ tōku ingoa
Where are you from?	Nō 'ea mai koe?
I am from _____	Nō _____ mai au
Where do you live?	'Ē no'o ana koe ki 'ea?
I live in _____	'Ē no'o ana au ki _____



Email language

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
I hope you're well	Te irinaki nei au e, tē meitaki 'ua mai na koe
Thank you for your email	Meitaki nō tā'au 'imēre
Thank you for your response	Meitaki nō tā'au pa'u'anga
Thank you for your clarification	Meitaki nō tā'au 'akamārama'anga
Thank you for your help	Meitaki nō tā'au tauturu
That's a good question	'E ui'anga meitaki tēnā
I will come back to you tomorrow	Ka pa'u atu au ki ā koe āpōpō
I will come back to you next week	Ka pa'u atu au ki ā koe 'ā teia 'epetoma ki mua
I will come back to you soon	Akonei atu ka pa'u atu au ki ā koe
Apologies for the delayed response	Tē tātara'ara atu nei, au nō tei tāroaroa tāku pa'u'anga atu
As per my previous email ...	Mei tāku 'imēre i tuku atu na mua ake ...
Please see attached document	Me kā tika ia koe e ākara i te au pēpa tāku tāpiri atu'
As per our conversation ...	Mei tā tāua rai 'i komakoma ana ...
Happy to discuss	Ka mataora au 'i te 'uri'uri manako kia koe
I look forward to your response	Tē 'ākara atu nei ki mua ki tā'au au manako
I look forward to seeing you	Tē 'ākara atu nei au nō tō tāua 'ar'avei'akaōu-anga
Kind regards	Kia manuia
Cheers	Kia mataora

Talking about work

ENGLISH	TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI
Where do you work?	'E 'anga'anga ana koe ki 'ea?
I work at _____	'E 'anga'anga ana au ki _____
I have worked here for _____ (months / years)	Kua 'anga'anga ana au ki kōnei nō tēta'i _____ (marama / mata'iti)
What is your job?	'E a'a tā'au 'anga'anga?
I am a _____	'E _____ au
Teacher	Pū'āpi'i
Student (primary / secondary / tertiary)	Tamariki 'āpi'i tuatai / tamariki 'āpi'i tuarua / āpi'i tuatoru
Nurse	Nēti
Doctor	Taote
Librarian	Tangata 'anga'anga i roto i are vairanga nō te Rūnanga puka
Manager	Mānitia
Musician	Tangata 'akatangi
Lawyer	Rōia
Police officer	'Akavā
Advisor	Tangata kama'atu
Where do you study?	'E tāmou 'āpi'i ana koe ki 'ea?
I study at high school / I study at the University of _____	'E tāmou 'āpi'i ana au 'i te 'āpi'i tuarua / 'E tāmou 'āpi'i ana au 'i te 'āpi'i tuatoru _____

Numbers

0 Kāre	1 Ta'i	2 Rua	3 Toru	4 'Ā	5 Rima	6 Ono	7 'Itu	8 Varu	9 Iva
10 Ta'i nga'uru	11 Ta'i nga'uru mā ta'i	12 Ta'i nga'uru mā rua	13 Ta'i nga'uru mā toru	14 Ta'i nga'uru mā 'ā	15 Ta'i nga'uru mā rima				
16 Ta'i nga'uru mā ono	17 Ta'i nga'uru mā 'itu	18 Ta'i nga'uru mā varu	19 Ta'i nga'uru mā iva	20 Rua nga'uru					



Proverbs

Me kakati koe i te akari, kakati meitaki 'ia te puru

Meaning When you husk the coconut with your teeth, make sure that you have a good hold on the husk.

Application Even during tough times, make sure you have a secure position and good attitude before you begin your task.

Ko te rō 'anga'anga kāre 'aia e 'akamā me ka kitea mai 'aia

Meaning A busy ant is never ashamed of being seen.

Application Work hard and with humility. Like the busy ant that is unashamed of being seen working, this proverb encourages people to take pride in honest labour.

Ka tomo te vaka i te 'atu 'anga ngaru. Kāre ra te rangatira tiratiratu e maremo

Meaning The canoe might sink in the breaking wave, but the wise navigator will not drown.

Application A good leader stays focused and makes wise decisions, even during challenging times. In Cook Islands culture, leadership is not measured by status alone but by the ability to guide, protect, and serve others, especially in times of uncertainty.

Prayers

TE REO MĀORI KŪKI 'AIRANI	ENGLISH
Pure Ka pure tātou 'Ē to mātou Metua 'i runga 'i te rangi teitei Tē pati atu nei mātou 'i tā'au 'akameitaki'anga 'i teia 'epetoma Kia mātou tātakita'i Nā roto 'i te ingoa 'ō lesu 'i pure atu ei mātou 'Āmene	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
Pure nō te 'akameitaki 'i te kai 'Ē te Atua ē Tē 'akameitaki nei mātou iā koe nō teia kai 'Akameitaki mai 'i te au rima tei raverave 'i tēia, kia riro tē reira 'ei 'ōronga mai 'i te māro'iro'i 'ē te ora'anga meitaki ki tō mātou au kōpapa Nā roto 'i te ingoa 'ō lesu 'Āmene	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. <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 Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Airani, with an English translation.	
<i>'Āriki'ia te au mea katoatoa tei tupu 'Āriki'ia te au mea meitaki katoatoa Kia ma'ata 'ua atu rāi 'Ē kiā mānganui 'ua atu rāi E tuātatau 'ē mutukore 'ua atu</i>	<i>Welcome all that has grown Welcome all that is good May it be plentiful And in abundance And forever, and ever</i>

Cultural note

Tivaivai

A tivaivai is a handmade quilt, but also a gift of love, care, and commitment. The word tivaivai literally means 'patches'. Each stitch demonstrates the time, patience, and cooperation of the vainerini (group of women) in creating the treasure. The patterns carry family stories, memories, and cultural identity. A tivaivai is made to mark major life milestones (birthdays, weddings, graduations, unveilings, etc.).

Tivaivai-making is a traditional activity where Cook Islands Māori is spoken, maintained, and passed on. Creators keep the spirit of their people alive by sharing their knowledge and traditions with the next generation and helping them to connect to their genealogy and Cook Islands heritage.