

TE 'GANA TUVALU

A brief guide to using the Tuvalu language

About te 'gana Tuvalu

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

Tuvalu was previously known as the Ellice Islands and the Tuvaluan language is also called Ellice or Ellicean.

Tuvalu has nine islands in total: Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Nui, Vaitupu, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Nukulaelae and Niulakita. Te 'gana Tuvalu is spoken on all islands, but on the island of Nui,

most people speak both te 'gana Tuvalu and the Kiribati language, reflecting historical migration. For such a small country, Tuvalu maintains notable linguistic variation between islands. There are differences between the northern and southern varieties. The Funafuti and Vaitupu varieties, both in the southern group, are the basis of the standard modern language, sometimes called te 'gana māسانی ("the common language"). This is the variety used for official purposes such as for government and business.

The Tuvalu alphabet | Mataimanu i te 'gana Tuvalu

The core Tuvalu alphabet has 16 letters.

The vowels **A, E, I, O** and **U** have the same pronunciation as in most other Pacific languages, including te reo Māori. Vowels can be long or short.

Long vowels are marked with a macron, and the sound is slightly dragged out. Short and long vowel sounds must be used, as they distinguish between different words.

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



Everyday language

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
Hello	Tālofa
Greetings everyone	Tālofa katoa koutou
I'm pleased to meet you	Ko gali ko fetai tātua
Goodbye	Tofā
How are you (singular)?	Ea mai koe?
How are you (dual)?	Ea mai koulua?
How are you (plural)?	Ea mai koutou?
I am well, thank you	Au e lei, fakafetai
I am tired	Au e fi'tā
I am sick	Au e masaki
I am so-so	Au e feolōlo
I am happy	Au e fiafia
And yourself?	Kae ko koe?
See you	Toe fetai
See you tomorrow	Fetai mā taeao
See you next week	Fetai i te sua vaiaso
Blessings	Ke manuia
Good luck	Fakamanuiāga
Call me	Telefoni mai
Send me a message	Tusi mai

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
Please	Fakamolemole
Thank you (very much)	Fakafetai (lasi)
You're welcome	E 'lei loa
Excuse me	Tulōu
Apologies	Fakatoese atu
Have you eaten?	Ko oti koe ne kai?
Come and eat with me	Vau ke 'kai tātua
Thank you for the food	Fakafetai mo mea'kai
Yes	Ao
No	I'kai
Have a good day	Ke manuia te aso
Have a good week	Ke manuia te vaiaso
Have a good weekend	Ke manuia te fakaotiga o te vaiaso
Have a good holiday	Ke manuia te malolōga
Merry Christmas	Ke manuia te Kilisimasi
Happy New Year	Ke manuia te Tausaga Fōu
Happy birthday	Ke manuia tou asofanau
Happy Tuvalu Language Week	Ke manuia te Vaiaso o te 'Gana Tuvalu
Lots of love	Omotou alofāga e uke

Words of encouragement

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
Great work	Malō mo te gālua
You can do it	E mafai ne koe o fai
Congratulations	Fakamalō
All the best	Ke manuia
Stay strong / Keep going	Fakamalosi / Taumafai
Give it a go	Taumafai o fai
Excellent	Tafasili i te 'lei
Well done	Malō mo te taumafai
God is good	Te Atua e lelei

Relationship-building

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
What is your name?	Ko oi tou igoa?
My name is _____	Toku igoa ko _____
Where are you from?	Koe se tino mai fea?
I am from _____	Au se tino mai _____
Where do you live?	Koe e nofo i fea?
I live in _____	Au e nofo i _____



Email language

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
I hope you're well	Taku faka'tau ia koe e malosi
Thank you for your email	Fakafetai mo tau meli
Thank you for your response	Fakafetai mo tau tali
Thank you for your clarification	Fakafetai mo tau fakamaināga
Thank you for your help	Fakafetai mo tou fesoasoani
That's a good question	E 'lei ki te fesili tenā
I will come back to you tomorrow	E 'lei ko toe tali atu ki a koe mā taeao
I will come back to you next week	E 'lei ko toe tali atu ki a koe i te suā vaiaso
I will come back to you soon	E 'lei ko toe tali atu ki a koe mā taimi pili mai mua nei
Apologies for the delayed response	Fakatoese atu mo te tuai o tali atu
As per my previous email ...	E pēlā mo taku meli taluai ...
Please see attached document	Fakamolemole onōno ki te 'tusi tēnā e fakapiki atu
As per our conversation ...	E pēlā mo tā sautalāga ...
Happy to discuss	E fiafia o sautala
I look forward to your response	Ko fakatali atu au kise tali mai ia koe
I look forward to seeing you	Ko fakatali atu au ki te taimi e fetau ei tāua
Kind regards	Alofāga mō koe
Cheers	Ke manuia

Talking about work

ENGLISH	TE 'GANA TUVALU
Where do you work?	Koe e gālua i fea?
I work at _____	Au e gālua i te _____
I have worked here for _____ (months / years)	Au ne gālua i konei mō se _____ (māsina / tausaga)
What is your job?	Seā tau gālua?
I am a _____	Au se _____
Teacher	Faiākoga
Student	Tamaliki ākoga
Nurse	Nēsi
Doctor	Tōkitā
Librarian	Tino gālua i te fale tusi
Manager	Menetia
Musician	Tino fai-pese
Police officer	Pulisimani
Advisor	Tino fautua
Where do you study?	Koe e akoga i fea?
I study at high school / I study at the University of _____	Au e akoga i te akoga lasaga lua / Au e akoga i te akoga maluga ko _____

Numbers

0 Leai	1 Tasi	2 Lua	3 Tolu	4 Fā	5 Lima	6 Ono	7 Fitu	8 Valu	9 Iva
10 Sefulu	11 Sefulu-tasi	12 Sefulu-lua	13 Sefulu-tolu	14 Sefulu-fā	15 Sefulu-lima				
16 Sefulu-ono	17 Sefulu-fitu	18 Sefulu-valu	19 Sefulu-iva	20 Lua sefulu					



Proverbs

Aloalo tou vaka, alo tonu ki mua.
Sa kilo ki peau io u tafa.

Meaning Guide your canoe carefully and keep moving forward.
Pay no attention to the waves around you.

Application Focus on your goals without being distracted by the many things that life throws at you.

Ulu ki te fatu e malu ei koe.

Meaning Shelter in the rock for your safety.

Application It is important to protect one's culture as the foundation of identity.

Tou malosī, ko tou maumea.

Meaning Your strength, your wealth.

Application Good health, knowledge, resilience, and character are more valuable than material possessions.

Prayers

TE 'GANA TUVALU	ENGLISH
Lotu Fai tou 'talo Te motou Tamana tela i te lagi A matou ko akai atu ki tau fakamanuiaga i te vaiaso tenei Mo matou katoa I te igoa o Iesu e 'talo atu ei matou 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
Talo fakafetai mō mea'kai Te Atua te Tamana E fakafetai atu mātou mō mea'kai konei Fakamolemole fakamanuia a lima ne fakatoka a meakai konei, kae ke maua omotou foitino ne te ola mō te malosī I te igoa o Iesu 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 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 te 'gana Tuvalu, with an English translation. <i>Fakatālofa atu ki mea ola katoa Fakatālofa atu ki mea 'lei katoa Ke malaku valevale kae ke uke foki latou</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

Climate change and the Digital Nation project

Tuvalu's islands have an average elevation of 1.83 metres above sea level, making it one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It is projected that at the current rate of global sea level rise, the entire country could be submerged in a matter of decades.

The proposed Digital Nation project was first announced by Minister Simon Kofe at the United National Climate Change Conference (COP27) in 2022. The initiative proposes creating a digital 'twin' of Tuvalu by mapping its physical landscapes. It would also support digital migration and preservation of cultural sites, oral histories, traditional knowledge, language resources and official records.

The Tuvalu Digital Nation initiative demonstrates that language preservation is not only about recording words, but also about protecting the cultural knowledge, stories, places, and identities that give those words meaning. By creating a digital record of its land and culture, Tuvalu is helping to ensure that future generations remain connected to their language and cultural heritage, wherever they may live.