

PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE FOR THE MAYAN LANGUAGE

The following pronunciation practice is provided as an aid to understand the various particulars of how the Mayan vowels and certain Mayan consonants are pronounced.

The vowels are presented first. The user should focus attention on the distinction between the different lengths and tonal inflections which are given to the vowel sounds. In general, the order of presentation for each vowel sound is: clipped vowel, regular vowel, elongated vowel, glottal stopped / glided glottal stopped vowel. In order to aid the user an apostrophe is used with the clipped vowels in order to distinguish them from regular and elongated vowels. However, as is pointed out in Section 3 in the chapter "The Alphabet", the apostrophe is not normally used and will not be found in the examples given in the grammar nor in the reading selections given in the Anthology.

Following the presentation of the vowel sounds is a section presenting the special Mayan consonants. A description of how these consonant sounds are produced in speaking is given Section 4 in the chapter "The Alphabet". In order to help the user tune his ear to differences between standard consonant sounds and these special consonants the section on the special consonants is followed by a section comparing standard consonants with the special consonants.

The guide concludes with a selection of short, often one word, phrases followed by some every-day conversations. We have tried to give enough here so that the user will have something to work with on his initial contact with Mayan speakers.

The mp3 of the pronunciation guide is available on line at:

<http://alejandrasbooks.org/www/Maya/pronunciation.mp3>

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VOWEL SOUNDS

“A”:

we, our	c' (pronounced ca')
Where are we going now?	Tuux c' bin beya?
striped squash	ca'
round squash	uoliz ca'
mother	na'
your mother	a na'
two, again, then, if, you	ca
two houses	cappel na
Then he said...	Ca tu yalah...
Where are you going?	Tuux ca bin?
house	na
thatched house	xanil na
town	cah
city	nohoch cah
verb root of “to earn”	nah
How much do you earn?	Bahux ca nahaltic?
future tense, to be good for	caah
I am going.	Nin caah.
What are you good for?	Baax a caah?
to be full of food	naah
Are you filled?	Naahech ua?
snake, four, to learn	can
boa constrictor (skunk snake)	pay och can
four men	cantul macoob
I have to learn Mayan.	Yan in canic Maya.
bad, ugly	kaz
It became broken.	Kazchahi.
to tire	canal
He has gotten tired.	Dzoc u canal.
sky	caan
high, above, up	caanal
up there	te caanalo

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“E”:

wood, tree	che’
one tree	huncul che’
egg, testicle	he’
fried eggs	tzahbil he’
here	he’
Here they come.	He’ cu taloob.
road	be
front door	hol be
to laugh	cheeh
He/she is laughing.	Tan u cheeh.
change	hel
change of clothes	u hel a nok
to open	heb
They open their house.	Tu heboob u uotochoob.
cold	ceel
Are you cold?	Ceelech ua?

“T”:

delicious	ci’
very delicious	hach ci’
edible root	ui’
sweet potato root	u ui’ cup
henequen	ci
an area of henequen	u pach ci
to hunger	uiih
I am hungry.	Uiihen.
cat	miz
a cat	huntul miz
broom, to sweep	miz
I am sweeping my house.	Tan in miztic in uotoch.
thorn, spine	kiix
porcupine	kiix pach och

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“O”:

crazy, rabid	co’
rabid dog	co’ pek
tooth, grain	co
a grain of salt	hun co taab
large jungle cat, puma	coh
large puma	nohoch coh
expensive	cooh
very expensive	hach cooh
male, penis	ton
male cat	ton miz
untangle	chol
Untangle the rope.	Chol le zumo.
we, our	toon
Not us.	Ma toone.

“U”:

nest	ku’
bird’s nest	u ku’ chiich
smell, stink, rotten	tu’
rotten egg	tu’ he’
center, middle	dzu’
in the middle of the world	tu dzu’ luum
he/she/it	tu
by itself	tu hunal
one	hun
a rock	hunppel tunich
squash	kum
squash seeds	zicil kum
boiled corn ready to grind	kuum
half cooked corn	kaz takan kuum
earth, world	luum
the land of the turkey,	u luumil cutz, u luumil ceh
the land of the deer	

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“AY”:

fish	cay
little fish	chan cay
hoof	may
deer’s foot	u may ceh
skunk	pay och

“EY”:

like	bey
That’s the way it is.	Bey le baalo.
Like that.	Beyo.

“OY”:

corner	moy
corner of the room	u moy na
shadow	booy
shadow of the tree	u booy che’

“UY”:

turtle dove	mucuy
little turtledove	chan mucuy
pinch	thuy
a pinch of salt	hun thuy taab

“AU”:

boat-tailed grackle	kau
the tail of the grackle	u ne x-kau
bag	pau
My bag is new.	Tumben in pauo.

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SPECIAL CONSONANT SOUNDS

“CH”:

to take	cha'
Take it.	Cha'e.
well	cheen
mouth of the well	u chi' cheen
to grasp hold of	chiic
He didn't take it.	Ma tu chiic.
rat, mouse	cho'
little mouse	chan cho'
sweet	chuhuc
pastry	chuhuc uah
bucket	choy
a bucket of water	humppel choy ha'
to hang	chuy
bananas hanging in bunches	chuyenchuy u yich haaz

“K”:

fire	kak
the flames of the fire	u ledz kak
pig	keken
beautiful pig	hadzutz keken
blood	kik
dysentery	kik nak
day, sun	kin
hot sun	chocol kin
to carry on one's head	koch
She is carrying a water jar.	Tu kochic hunppel ppul ha'.
squash	kum
sweet squash	chuhuc kum
boiled corn ready for grinding	kuum
She is washing the corn.	Tan u ppo'ic le kuumo.
boat tailed grackle	kau
big grackle	nohoch kau

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song, to sing She is singing.	kay Tan u kay.
to dig out of a hole Dig out its eyes.	koy Koy u yich.
crooked, not straight His neck is not straight.	kuy Kuy u cal.

“PP”:

to leave something Leave it!	ppat Ppate!
just right, even Just right.	ppelech Hach ppelech.
pop-eyed pop-eyed mouse	ppich ppichil ichil cho
to wash Wash your face!	ppo' Ppo' a uich.
hunched back the hunch backed people	ppuuz le ppuzobo

“TH”:

speech, to speak Don't speak.	than Ma a than.
rooster little rooster	thel chan thel
to stretch Stretch it!	thin Thine!
to hand out She is handing out the food.	thox Tan u thoxlantic le hanalo.
rabbit Br'er Rabbit	thuul Juan Thuul

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“TZ”:

rattles	tzab
rattle snake	tzab can
one side	tzel
Move over!	Tzelaba!
penetrating smell	tzieh
The smell of slake lime is penetrating.	Hach tzieh le taano.
hair	tzootz
the hair of his head	u tzootzil u pol
mound, pile of soft things	tzuc
a pile of mud	huntzuc luk
to hit the mark	tzay
My gun doesn't hit the mark.	Ma tu tzayal in dzon.

“DZ”:

to give	dza
Give it!	Dzae!
little	dze'
aunt (little mother)	dze' na'
cloven hoof	dzidz
pig's foot	u dzidz keken
finish	dzoc
Have you finished?	Dzoc ua?
owner	dzul
owner of the garden	u dzulil col
thin	dzoyaan
a thin person	dzoyaan uinic

Have you given the last medicine to the man?
Dzoc ua dzic u dzoc u dzac te dzulo?

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COMPARATIVE PRONUNCIATIONS

“C” / “K”:

snake, four, to learn	can
sky	caan
yellow, to be ripe	kan
hammock, net, web, 20 meters	kaan
clay jar	cat
to ask	kat
poorly ground	cel
cold	ceel
toasted	kel
penis	cep
unequal	kep
I (used with transitive verbs)	cin
day, sun	kin
wide, to kick	coch
to carry on the head	koch
he/she/it	cu
nest	ku'
to carry	cuch
to arrive	kuch

“CH” / “CH”:

to let loose	cha'
to take	cha'
anteater	chab
to create, to procreate	chab
red, to cook in water	chac
rain, the rain god	chac
arrow root	chaac
to cut	chac
little	chan
to look	chaan
pot shards	chan
only	chen
well	cheen

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grandmother, hard	chich
bird	chiich
to lie down	chil
granary	chil
to clean, to dry	cho
mouse, rat	cho'
intestine	choch
to untie	chooch
salty	choch
pubic hair	chom
vulture, pinuela	chom

“P” / “PP”:

to break	pa'
to open the mouth	ppa'
to weed	pac
wall	pak
tomato	ppac
to wait	pat
to leave something	ppat
to play an instrument	pax
to borrow	ppax
to move	pec
dog	pek
to dislike, to hate	ppec
to cook in ashes	poc
to hit making a sound	pok
hat	ppoc

“T” / “TH”:

in front of, to be able	tan
slake lime, ashes	taan
speech, tongue	than
I (also, to my ...)	tin
to stretch	thin
full (of liquid)	tul
rabbit	thuul

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“Z” / “TZ” / “DZ”:

corn gruel drink	za’
fight	tza’
to give	dza
white	zac
itch	zak
locust	zak
to strike a bell	tzak
medicine, surface of 20 m.	dzac
very	zen
sneeze	zeen
to feed	tzen
to calm	dzem
seeds or intestines of squash	zic
glean	zik
to obey	tzic
to pull out fibers, to shave	tzic
to give	dzic
angry, furious, left handed	dzic

He is angry because he can’t shave with his left hand.

Tu dzicil tumen ma tu patal u tzicil yetel u dzic.

bat	zodz
hair	tzootz
to whip	dzodz
to accustom	zuc
grass	zuuc
mound	tzuc
to rot	dzuc

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USEFUL PHRASES

Greetings:

Good Morning.	Dias.
Good Afternoon.	Tardes.
Good Evening.	Noches.

Standard Questions:

How are you? (How is your road?)	Bix a bel?
What do you say? (an informal greeting)	Baax ca ualic?
Where are you going?	Tuux ca bin?
What are you doing?	Baax ca betic?

Other phrases:

No.	Ma'.
Certainly not.	Ma'tech.
Definitely not.	Ma'taan.
O.K. (lit. "not bad")	Ma'lob.
Certainly.	Hele.
Let's go.	Coox.
Let's eat breakfast.	Coox ukul.
Let's eat.	Coox hanal.
Let's go to the plaza.	Coox kiuc.
Let's go cut firewood.	Coox zi'.
Let's go to work.	Coox meyah.
Let's go for a walk.	Coox ximbal.
Let's go to sleep.	Coox uenel.
Come.	Coten.
Come here.	Coten uaye.
Enter.	Ocen.
Come out.	Hoken.
Be seated.	Culen.
Seat yourself.	Xectaba.
Eat.	Hanen.
Stand.	Ualen.
Go.	Xen.
Take it.	Cha'e.
Leave it.	Cha'e.
Get yourself out of the way.	Tzelaba.
Hold on.	Machcaba.
I am going.	Nin caah.
Wait I am going.	Patic in bin. / Pat in bin.
I have to go.	Yan in bin.

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SHORT CONVERSATIONS IN THE MAYAN LANGUAGE

Standard Small Talk:

Conversation 1: Informal greeting:

What do you say?	Baax ca ualic?
Nothing. And you?	Mixbaal. Cux tech?
Just the same.	Chen beya.
O.K. I'm going.	Malob. Nin caah.

Conversation 2: Formal greeting:

Morning, big father. How are you? (How is your road?)	Dias, nohoch tat. Bix a bel?
Very well, thank you. And you? (Very straight my spirit, god pays you. And thus you?)	Hach toh in uol, dios botic tech. Cux tun tech?
Very well also, thanks. Where are you going?	Hach toh in uol xan, dios botic. Tuux ca bin?
I am going to my house now. Do you want to go with me?	Nin caah tin uotoch beyora. Tac ua bin tin uetel?
No. I have to go to work.	Matech. Tene yan in bin meyah.
O.K. then. See you later probably.	Malob tun. Cacate uale.

Shopping:

Conversation 3: Buying eggs:

Morning.	Dias.
Morning.	Dias.
Are there any eggs?	Yan ua he'?
There are. Come on in.	Yan. Ocen.
How much are the eggs?	Bahux le he'o?
One hundred pesos each one.	Cien pesos cada humppel.
Give me three eggs.	Dza ten oxppel he'.
O.K. Wait. Here I will bring them to you.	Malob. Patici. He in tazic teche.
Here is your money. Thank you very much. I am going.	He yan a takin. Hach yaabach dios botic tech. Pat in bin.

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Conversation 4: Buying Mid-day Lunch:

Morning.	Dias.
Morning. Are there any tortillas now?	Dias. Yan ua uah beyora?
There are.	Yan.
Give me one kilo of tortillas.	Dza ten humppel kilo uah.
Here. What else?	Hela. Baax ulak?
I think I need a quarter kilo cheese and one bag of salt and two sections (teeth) of garlic.	Mi kabet ten cuarto kilo queso yetel humppel bolsa taab yetel ca co ajo.
O.K. Here. What else?	Malob. Hela. Baax ulak?
For tomorrow I need a half kilo beans. There is going to be pig meat here tomorrow?	Utial zamal kabet ten medio kilo buul. Yan ua u yantal u bakil keken zamal uaye?
There is.	Yan.
O.K. That will do then.	Malob. Yetel lelo.
O.K. then. Wait. Now I will figure out your bill. Here. Two thousand five hundred seventy pesos.	Malob tun. Patici. He in han hozic a cuenta. Hela. Dos mil quinientos setenta pesos.
O.K. Here.	Malob. Hela.
Thank you. Here is your change.	Dios botic tech. Hela yan a vuelto.

Conversation 5: Getting directions:

Afternoon.	Tardes.
Afternoon.	Tardes.
Do you know Don Julio Dzul?	A kahol ua don Julio Dzul?
I know him.	In kahol.
Is he home?	Culaan ua?
I think he is home now. When I passed by his house he was just returning from work.	Mi culaan beyora. Ca manen tu yotoche tan tu yul tu meyahe.

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Where is his house?

Tuux yan u yotoch?

You just keep on this road.

Chen ca bin ti le bea.

Then when you pass the plaza

Le can manech te kiucio

you have to go another two blocks.

ca bin ulak cappel cuadras.

His house is on the
east side of the road.

Te lakin le beo
ti yan u yotocho.

O.K. Thank you.

Malob. Dios botic tech.

I am going.

Pat in bin.