

# Introduction to the Akan Twi Language



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## Introduction

Welcome to Peace Corps Ghana's "Twi For All" audio set.

Language is the key to effective Peace Corps service. A little Twi will get you a long way. Though Twi is neither the official language nor is it the lingua franca, it's one of the most widely spoken of the seventy (70) languages in Ghana. All Volunteers learn basic survival Twi regardless of whatever other Ghanaian language they learn for their site. English is the official language used in government, education and commerce.

These introductory lessons will give you a jump-start on learning Twi so you will not feel completely lost when you step off the airplane in Accra! The lessons contain key words, phrases and sentences along with their pronunciation.

Peace Corps Volunteers in Ghana you cannot get by with only English. If you do not speak the language of your community you will never know what you are missing.



## Index of Accompanying Audio Files

Audio File Name	Description	Duration	File Size
GH_Twi_Lessons_1.mp3	Twi Alphabet Consonants	2:16	3.1 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_2.mp3	Twi Alphabet Vowels	2:04	2.8 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_3.mp3	Diagraphs	2:45	3.8 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_4.mp3	Pronouns	1:36	2.2 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_5.mp3	Greetings	2:37	3.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_6.mp3	Introducing Yourself and Your Peace Corps Work	3:42	5.1 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_7.mp3	Numbers	4:03	5.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_8.mp3	Food	3:53	5.3 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_9.mp3	Security Expressions	1:08	1.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_10.mp3	Shopping	2:37	3.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_11.mp3	Telling Time In Duration and Times of Day	2:08	2.9 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_12.mp3	Directions	2:08	2.9 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_13.mp3	Social Language – Part 1	4:04	5.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_14.mp3	Social Language – Part 2	2:32	3.5 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_15.mp3	Social Language – Part 3	3:28	4.8 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_16.mp3	Sample Dialogue – No. 1	1:09	1.6 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_17.mp3	Sample Dialogue – No. 2	1:04	1.5 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_18.mp3	Sample Dialogue – No. 3	1:39	2.3 MB
GH_Twi_Lessons_19.mp3	Sample Dialogue – No. 4	1:01	1.4 MB

## Statement of Ghana's Linguistic Diversity

As you prepare to study Twi it is important to understand that Twi is just one of over seventy (70) languages spoken in Ghana. It is most likely that you will be required to learn another Ghanaian language in addition to Twi that will be appropriate for your specific site location in Ghana. Your ability to speak some small Twi will serve you well throughout your service in Ghana. Enjoy the lessons.



### Cultural Introduction

Akwaaba! You will hear this word frequently in your first few weeks in Ghana. It means welcome in Twi. Spending time to greet people is essential. Greeting a person shows politeness and that you recognize her as a human being, and that you respect her.

Shaking hands is very common. When shaking hands with a group of people you need to begin with the person to your immediate right and shake hands moving through the group to your left. By doing it this way, you are always showing the palm of your hand to the person whose hand you are shaking. This practice applies to most cultures in the southern parts of Ghana, especially the Akans. People also greet by waving with a flat open hand. It is not polite to wave with the left hand because Ghanaians associate filth, uncleanness, and disrespect with the left hand.

Foreigners in Ghana are frequently be called, "obroni" which literally translates to the traveler from over the horizon. Adults and children will get a foreigner's attention by shouting "obroni, obroni, obroni". At times Trainees and Volunteers find this practice a strain on their patience. It can be a cause of frustration. As your comfort increases you will find your own personal way to mitigate these situations and create an environment that works for you.

## Tonal Language Introduction

Like many languages spoken in Ghana, Twi is tonal. There are two basic tones: a high tone and a low tone. As you learn, it is important to be patient and diligent in your listening and practice. You will not be able to produce the sounds and tones until your ear is able to distinguish them. If you cannot hear the difference between two sounds, you will not be able to produce the sound. Once in Ghana, you are strongly advised to spend hundreds of hours listening (radio, church, meetings etc.) even if you do not understand the meaning.

The tone of a sound changes its meaning. One sound can have two different meanings depending on the tone. The lexical function of tone is to bring about different meanings of words that are written identically. The grammatical function is that tone indicates categories such as tense and aspect.

Like all languages, Twi was spoken long before it was ever written. As a result, some words have multiple written spellings. As a new Twi learner, you are going to make mistakes and mispronounce sounds. This will result in mixed meanings: it is okay! Most Ghanaians want to help you learn the language.

Your language learning, whether Twi or any of the seventy (70) languages in Ghana, will be a fun puzzle-like endeavor. At times it will be challenging. In the end it will expand your cross-cultural awareness and facilitate your community integration. If you don't know the language you have no idea what you are missing!



## How to Learn a Language

Steps	
1	Decide what you want to learn.
2	Learn what you have decided to learn.
3	Use what you learned by systematic practice.
4	Evaluate what you learned so that you can decide what you want to learn, again.

## Presentation of Twi Pronunciations

As noted in the Tonal Language Introduction Section of this document, it is not uncommon for written words or groups of words in Twi to be pronounced differently. To aid in the learning process both the written and spoken forms have been presented.

When there is a difference the written form is presented first, then the spoken form is enclosed within ( ) immediately following. As shown below:

English	Twi Equivalent
Please	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw)
Thank You	Meda wo ase (medaase)

As you listen to the recordings and come along a word that is pronounced differently than written, the first time it is presented it will be said as written, all subsequent times will be in the spoken form.



## Twi Alphabet Consonants

The Twi Alphabet consists of twenty-two (22) letters; there are fifteen (15) consonants as noted.

Printed Letter	Sounds	Pronunciation
B, b	/b/	as in book, boom
D, d	/d/	as in dance, drum
F, f	/f/	as in fish, food
G, g	/g/	as in go, good
H, h	/h/	as in hat, halt
K, k	/k/	as in car, come
L, l	/l/	as in loud, ball
M, m	/m/	as in moon, mute
N, n	/n/	as in name, anoint
P, p	/p/	as in purse, pour
R, r	/r/	as in round, road
S, s	/s/	as in sing, surprise
T, t	/t/	as in teach, talk
W, w	/w/	as in we, win
Y, y	/y//j/	as in yam, you

## Twi Alphabet Vowels

The Twi Alphabet consists of twenty-two (22) letters; there are seven (7) vowels, some of the vowels how two (s) sounds making a total of ten (10) vowel sounds as noted.

Printed Letter	Sounds	Pronunciation
A, a	a	as in bath, add
	æ	as in man, pan
E, e	e	as in hate, date
	I	as in dip, sip
Ɛ, ɛ	Ɛ	as in set, get
I, i	i	as in feet, heat
O, o	o	as in old, sold
	U	as in foot, good
ɔ, ɔ	ɔ	as in all, short
U, u	u	as in moon, food

## Diagrams

Printed Letters	Pronunciation
gy	as in James, gym
hy	as in shirts, shorts
kw	as in quick, quit
ky	as in church, child
ny	as in canyon, onion
dw*	as in dwaso, dware
hw*	as in hwehwƐ
tw*	as in twa, twi
nw*	as in nwa, nwene

\* There is no English equivalent for this diagram.

## Pronouns

English	Twi Equivalent
I, Me,	Me
You (singular)	Wo
He/She	Ɔno
It	Eno
They	Wɔn
You (plural)	Mo
Us/We	Yɛn

## Greetings

English	Twi Equivalent
Good morning	Mema wo akye (Maakye)
Good afternoon	Mema wo aha (maaha)
Good evening	Mema wo adwo (maadwo)
Good night	Da yie
General responses to all greetings	Yaa
Response to an elderly man	Yaa Agya
Response to an elderly woman	Yaa Ena
Response to an equal	Yaa Anua
We shall meet again	Yɛbɛhyia bio
We shall meet later	Akyire yi yɛbɛhyia

## Introducing Yourself And Your Peace Corps Work

English	Twi Equivalent
What is your name?	Yɛfrɛ wo sɛn?
What is your name?	Wo din de sɛn?
My name is . . .	Yɛfrɛ me . . .
My name is . . .	Me din de . . .
I am not called obroni	Yɛnfrɛ me obroni
I live at . . .	Mete . . .
I come from . . .	Me firi . . .
Where do you come from?	Wo fire he?
I am a Peace Corps Volunteer	Meyɛ Peace Corps Volunteer
I am a teacher	Meyɛ tikyani
I am a community health worker	Meyɛ apɔmuden ho adwuma
I am a business volunteer	Meyɛ business volunteer ni

## Numbers

English	Twi Equivalent
One	Baako
Two	Mmienu
Three	Mmiɛnsa
Four	Enan
Five	Enum
Six	Nsia
Seven	Nson
Eight	Nwɔtwe
Nine	Nkron
Ten	Edu
Eleven	Dubaako
Twelve	Dumienu
Thirteen	Dumiɛnsa
Fourteen	Dunan
Fifteen	Dunum
Sixteen	Dunsia
Seventeen	Dunson
Eighteen	Dunwɔtwe
Nineteen	Dunkron
Twenty	Aduonu

## Food

English	Twi Equivalent
Food	Aduane
Breakfast	Anɔpa aduane
Lunch	Awia aduane
Dinner	Anwummerɛ aduane
Orange	Ankaa
Banana	Kwadu
Pineapple	Aborɔbɛ
Onion	Gyeene
Pepper	Mako
Tomato	Ntoosi
Bread	Paano
Sugar	Asikyire
Salt	Nkyene
Water	Nsuo
Meat	Enam
Fish	Nsuomnam
Rice Balls	Emo tuo
Jolof Rice	Jolof
Please do not add a lot of salt.	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), mfa nkyene pii ngu mu
I am looking for . . .	Merehwehwɛ (meehwehwɛ) . . .



## Security Expressions

English	Twi Equivalent
Thief	Awi
Thief	Krɔmfoɔ
Police	Polisini
Please help me	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), boa me

## Shopping

English	Twi Equivalent
Shopping	Dwadie
How much is it?	Eyε sɛn?
How much is it?	Eyε ahe?
Are you having any . . . ?	Wowɔ . . . ?
It is expensive	Ne boɔ yε den.
Please reduce the price	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), te so
Please dash me	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), to so
Please give me my change	Mepa wo kyεw (mepaakyεw), ma me nsesa
Money	Sika
What is this?	Edeɛn nie?

## Telling Time In Duration And Times of Day

English	Twi Equivalent
1 hour	Dɔnhwere baako
2 hours	Nɔnhwere mmienɔ
Morning	Anɔpa
Afternoon	Awia
Evening	Anwummere
Night	Anadwo
I will return in . . .	Mɛsan aba . . .

## Directions

English	Twi Equivalent
Can you show me where the . . . is?	Wobɛtumi akyerε me baabi a . . . no wɔ?
Where are you going?	Worekɔ (wookɔ) he?
Turn right	Fa nifa
Turn left	Fa benkum
Go straight	Kɔ wanim tee

## Social Language

Part 1	
English	Twi Equivalent
Yes	Aane
No	Daabi
Excuse me	Mepa wo kyɛ
Is it true?	Ɛyɛ nokorɛ?
Thank you	Meda wo ase (Medaase)
I don't speak Twi well	Mente Twi papa
I speak a little Twi	Mete Twi kakra
Do you speak English?	Wote brɔfo?
Can you repeat, please?	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), Wobɛtumi aka no bio?
Can you please speak more slowly?	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), wobɛtumi aka no brɛoo?
How do you say . . . in Twi?	Sɛn na yɛka . . . wɔ Twi mu?

Part 2	
English	Twi Equivalent
I don't have money to give you	Menni sika de ma wo
I don't have food to give you	Menni aduane de ma wo
I don't understand	Mente aseɛ
I don't know	Mennim
Can you please help me?	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), wobɛtumi aboa me?
I like . . .	Mepɛ . . .
I don't like . . .	Mempɛ . . .
I am going to . . .	Merekɔ . . .

Part 3	
English	Twi Equivalent
I need to wash dishes	Esɛ sɛ mehororo nnoɔma mu
I want to wash cloths	Mepɛ sɛ mesi nnoɔma
Please, help me wash my clothing	Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), boa me ma mensi me nnoɔma
I want to bathe	Mepɛ sɛ medware
I am hungry	Ekɔm de me
I am tired	Mabrɛ
I am thirsty	Nsukɔm de me
I need to study	Esɛ sɛ mesua adeɛ

## Sample Dialogues

Index of Dialogues	
1	Two Peace Corps Trainers ~ At the market.
2	Two Peace Corps Trainers ~ Giving Directions.
3	A Peace Corps Trainer and a Peace Corps Volunteer ~ Introducing oneself.
4	A Peace Corps Volunteer ~ Counting to ten (10).