How Filipino sounds Pagbigkas

The trick: Filipino is read the way it's written, with five clear vowels and the Latin letters you already know. Learn the rows below, and you can read any word aloud.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a, e, i, o, u	short and clean, as in Spanish or Italian	**araw** day, sun (a-raw)
ng	ng in singer, one sound, even at the start of a word	**ngayon** now, today (nga-yon)
r	a quick tap of the tongue, as in Spanish	**regalo** gift
g	always hard, as in go	**gabi** evening, night
h	always said, as in hat	**hapon** afternoon
ay	y in my	**bahay** house (ba-hay)
aw	ow in cow	**ikaw** you (i-kaw)
ts	ch in church, in words from Spanish	**tsinelas** flip-flops, slippers
dy	j in jam, in words from English and Spanish	**dyip** jeep, jeepney
ny, ñ	ny in canyon; ñ only in names like Santo Niño	**pinya** pineapple (pi-nya)
two vowels	each one said: two beats	**maaga** early (ma-a-ga)
a little catch	some words end in a small stop, like the middle of uh-oh	**bata** child (ba-ta, cut short)

ng = nang

the little word ng is said nang

bahay ng lola grandma's house

mga = ma-nga

mga makes more than one

mga bata children

Stress can change the word: BU-kas is open, bu-KAS is tomorrow. Dictionaries mark the stress with accents, everyday writing doesn't, so copy what you hear in shows.

Spanish and English words are everywhere, spelled the Filipino way: kotse, car (from coche); silya, chair (from silla); kompyuter, computer. Read them as written and they sound right.

How words work Balarila

No gender: Filipino has no masculine or feminine. siya is he and she, and a word like guro, teacher, is a man or a woman. ang often works like the: ang bata, the child.

Done, going on, or not yet

A verb doesn't say past or present the English way. It says if the action is done, still going on, or hasn't started.

kumain	kumakain	kakain
ate: done	is eating, eats: going on	will eat: not started

The pattern: the root is kain. Add -um- for done; repeat the first syllable for not yet; do both for going on. Verbs with nag- work the same way: nagluto, cooked; nagluluto, is cooking; magluluto, will cook.

ang, ng and sa

ang	ng	sa
the one the sentence is about	said nang: the other thing, or of	to, at, in, for
ang bata the child	ng mangga a mango	sa bahay at home

All together: Kumain ang bata ng mangga sa bahay. The child ate a mango at home. The verb usually comes first. For names, use si, ni and kay: si Ana, Ana. This is the trickiest part of Filipino, so for now just spot the markers. They make sense with time.

More than one

Put mga in front: bata, child; mga bata, children. After a number you don't need it: dalawang bata, two children.

Being polite

po and opo: add po to show respect to anyone older, a stranger or a customer: Salamat po. opo is a polite yes. You'll hear ho and oho too, a little less formal.

ikaw, ka and kayo: ikaw and ka both mean you, one person; ka comes after a word: Kumain ka na? kayo is you all, and also a polite you for one older person: Kumain na po kayo?

The first 222 words Mga unang salita

How: learn five a day, then hunt for them in Kitsumi subtitles. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Greetings and survival

Kumusta?
how are you? hi! *(also spelled kamusta)*

Mabuti
fine, good

Magandang umaga
good morning

Magandang tanghali
good day *(around noon)*

Magandang hapon
good afternoon

Magandang gabi
good evening, good night

Salamat
thanks

Salamat po
thank you *(polite)*

Maraming salamat
thank you very much

Walang anuman
you're welcome

Oo
yes

Opo
yes *(polite)*

Hindi
no, not

Pasensya na
sorry *(for the trouble)*

Makikiraan po
excuse me *(to get past)*

Paalam
goodbye *(formal, a bit final)*

Ingat!
take care! *(the usual goodbye)*

Hindi ko alam
I don't know

Hindi ko maintindihan
I don't understand

Kain tayo!
let's eat! *(a friendly invite)*

Tao po!
hello, anyone home? *(at a door)*

Question words

ano
what

sino
who

saan
where

kailan
when

bakit
why

paano
how

ilan
how many

magkano
how much *(money)*

alin
which

Me and you

ako
I, me

ikaw / ka
you, one person *(ka goes after a word)*

siya
he, she

tayo
we *(you included)*

kami
we *(you not included)*

kayo
you all; also polite you

sila
they

ko / mo
my / your *(after the word: bahay ko)*

ito
this

iyan / iyon
that *(near you)* / that *(over there)*

Little words

at
and

pero
but

o
or

may
there is; have *(May pera ako, I have money)*

wala
there isn't; don't have; nothing

din / rin
also, too *(rin after a vowel)*

na
already, now

pa
still, yet, more

dito
here

doon
over there

kasama
with; a companion

para sa
for

kung
if

dahil
because

sobra
too much; very *(casual)*

Add po: Salamat po, Opo, Hindi po. One little word makes you polite to anyone older. With friends your age, leave it out.

People, time, numbers Tao at oras

Family

nanay
mother *(also inay, mama)*

tatay
father *(also itay, papa)*

magulang
parent

kuya
older brother

ate
older sister *(said AH-teh)*

kapatid
brother or sister

bunso
the youngest child

anak
child, son, daughter

lola
grandma

lolo
grandpa

tita
aunt

tito
uncle

pinsan
cousin

asawa
husband, wife

pamilya
family

People

tao
person, people

lalaki
man, male

babae
woman, female

bata
child, kid; also young

kaibigan
friend

kasintahan
boyfriend, girlfriend *(casual: jowa)*

kapitbahay
neighbour

guro
teacher

estudyante
student

When

ngayon
now, today

bukas
tomorrow *(stress at the end: bu-KAS)*

kahapon
yesterday

mamaya
later today

kanina
earlier today

umaga
morning

tanghali
noon

hapon
afternoon

gabi
evening, night

araw
day; also sun

buwan
month; also moon

taon
year

oras
hour, time

Anong oras na?
what time is it?

Days of the week

Lunes
Monday

Martes
Tuesday

Miyerkules
Wednesday

Huwebes
Thursday

Biyernes
Friday

Sabado
Saturday

Linggo
Sunday; linggo is also a week

Numbers

isa
1

dalawa
2

tatlo
3

apat
4

lima
5

anim
6

pito
7

walo
8

siyam
9

sampu
10

labing-isa
11

labindalawa
12

dalawampu
20

dalawampu't isa
21

isandaan
100

isang libo
1,000

Days come from Spanish: Lunes, Martes, Sabado. And time and money often use Spanish numbers: alas tres, three o'clock; singkwenta pesos, 50 pesos. English numbers are common for prices too.

Filipino numbers: labing- makes the teens: labing-isa 11. -pu makes the tens: dalawampu 20, tatlumpu 30. Before a word, dalawa becomes dalawang: dalawang bata, two children.

Food, places, verbs Pagkain at lugar

Root and done: the root is what you look up in a dictionary. **-um-**, **nag-** or **na-** make the done form: kain, k**um**ain, ate. Meet kumain in a subtitle? Look up kain.

Food and drink

tubig
water

kape
coffee

kanin
cooked rice

tinapay
bread

manok
chicken

isda
fish

baboy
pork; pig

baka
beef; cow

itlog
egg

gulay
vegetables

adobo
meat stewed in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic

sinigang
sour soup, often with tamarind

pansit
noodles *(also pancit)*

lechon
roast pig

masarap
tasty, delicious

maanghang
spicy, hot

almusal
breakfast

tanghalian
lunch

hapunan
dinner

meryenda
snack, often in the afternoon

Gutom na ako
I'm hungry

Bill po
the bill, please

Places

bahay
house, home

sa bahay
at home *(sa: at, in, to)*

paaralan
school *(also eskwelahan)*

karinderya
small eatery

ospital
hospital

CR
toilet *(said see-ar: comfort room)*

palengke
market

tindahan
shop

simbahan
church

kalye
street

lungsod
city

dagat
sea

Things

selpon
mobile phone *(also CP, said see-pee)*

libro
book

pera
money

susi
key

kotse
car

Verbs: root / done

kain / k**um**ain
eat

inom / **um**inom
drink

punta / p**um**unta
go *(to a place)*

uwi / **um**uwi
go home

tulog / **na**tulog
sleep

nood / **na**nood
watch *(a show, a film)*

basa / **nag**basa
read

sulat / s**um**ulat
write

bili / b**um**ili
buy

hintay / **nag**hintay
wait

salita / **nag**salita
speak

trabaho / **nag**trabaho
work

aral / **nag**-aral
study

tulong / t**um**ulong
help

gusto
want, like *(Gusto ko, I like it)*

alam
know *(Alam ko, I know)*

puwede
can, may; OK?

Describing words

malaki / maliit
big / small

mainit / malamig
hot / cold

bago / luma
new / old *(for things)*

maganda / pangit
beautiful, nice / ugly

mabilis / mabagal
fast / slow

madali / mahirap
easy / hard *(mahirap is also poor)*

mura / mahal
cheap / expensive

masaya / malungkot
happy / sad

pagod
tired

Linking words: a describing word joins with -ng after a vowel and na after a consonant: magandang bahay, a beautiful house; mainit na kape, hot coffee. That's the -ng in Magandang umaga.

Show words Salita sa teleserye

6 · heard on screen

Reactions

Grabe!
wow! that's too much! *(good or bad)*

Talaga?
really?

Hala!
uh-oh! oh no! *(shock, or someone's in trouble)*

Ay naku!
oh dear! oh my! *(also Naku!)*

Sige
OK, go ahead; also bye

Ewan ko
I don't know, whatever *(a shrug)*

Sayang!
what a waste! too bad!

Bahala na
come what may *(see below)*

Kilig
the giddy flutter of romance *(see below)*

Charot! / Char!
just kidding! *(playful slang)*

Tara!
let's go! *(Tara na!)*

Teka lang!
wait a sec!

Ano ba!
come on! what is it?! *(annoyed)*

Okay lang
it's fine, I'm OK

Little words that add feeling

naman
softens, or turns it around: Ikaw naman! Oh, you! Ako naman. My turn.

nga
really, indeed; softens a request: Tulungan mo nga ako. Help me, please.

lang
only, just: Isa lang. Just one.

pala
oh, so it turns out: Ikaw pala! Oh, it's you!

kasi
because, that's why: Gutom kasi ako. I'm hungry, that's why.

The big scenes

Mahal kita
I love you

Mahal na mahal kita
I love you so much

Miss na kita
I miss you *(Taglish)*

Huwag!
don't! *(also Wag!)*

Tama na!
stop it! enough!

Umalis ka!
get out! leave!

Patawarin mo ako
forgive me

Walang hiya ka!
you shameless...! *(rude, a classic drama line)*

What to call people

Kuya! / Ate!
to any older stranger: drivers, waiters, shop staff

beh / bes
babe / bestie *(between friends)*

mahal
love, dear *(to a partner)*

pare
mate, buddy *(between men)*

tol
bro *(short for utol, sibling)*

Ma'am / Sir
for customers, teachers and bosses, all the time

Bahala na and kilig: Bahala na means let fate decide: you do what you can and leave the rest. It can sound brave or careless. Kilig is the giddy rush when a romance gets sweet. Kinikilig ako! I'm all fluttery!

Taglish: people mix English into Filipino all the time: Na-late ako kasi traffic. I was late because of the traffic. It's normal, shows are full of it, and you'll understand more than you expect.

Swear words are strong: Filipino has harsh swear words, and you'll hear them in fights on screen: recognise them, but don't say them. Hala!, Naku! and Grabe! are fine in front of anyone.

Practice Pagsasanay

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Filipino out loud, then slide it down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Questions: raise your voice at the end, or add ba after the first word: Gutom ka ba? Are you hungry?

Saying no: hindi goes before the word: Hindi ako gutom. I'm not hungry. wala means there isn't: Walang tubig. There's no water. huwag means don't: Huwag kang umalis. Don't leave.

Read these sentences

1. Magandang umaga po!
   Good morning! (polite)

2. Ano ang pangalan mo?
   What's your name?

3. Ako si Maria.
   I'm Maria.

4. Mabuti naman, salamat.
   I'm fine, thanks.

5. Nasaan ang CR?
   Where is the toilet? (nasaan: where is)

6. Magkano ito?
   How much is this?

7. Gusto ko ng kape.
   I'd like some coffee.

8. Masarap ang adobo!
   The adobo is delicious!

9. Kumain ka na?
   Have you eaten? (a friendly hello)

10. Pupunta ako sa palengke bukas.
    I'll go to the market tomorrow.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Filipino subtitles to see what it means.