How Māori sounds Te reo Māori

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Māori is read as it's written, and every letter is said. The alphabet has 15 letters: a e h i k m n o p r t u w ng wh. Five vowels, eight consonants, and ng and wh, which are one letter each.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
a, ā	short a like u in cup; long ā like a in father	**aroha / āporo** love / apple
e, ē	e in bed; ē is the same sound, held longer	**kete / tēnā** basket / that
i, ī	ee in see, but short; ī is held longer	**ika / pīrangi** fish / want
o, ō	o in or, with no r; ō is held longer	**ono / kōrero** six / talk
u, ū	u in put; ū like oo in food	**puku / kūmara** belly / sweet potato
ai, ao, au	two vowels glide: ai close to eye, ao to ow in cow, au to o in go	**kai / hau** food / wind
h, m, n, w	much as in English	**hoa / moana / nui** friend / sea / big
k, p, t	softer than in English, with less puff of air	**kai / pai / tama** food / good / son
r	a light tap of the tongue, never rolled, close to a quick d	**rā / roa** sun, day / long
ng	ng in singer, even at the start of a word; never the g in finger	**ngā / ngeru** the / cat
wh	usually f in fun; in some areas it is said closer to w or h	**whare / whā** house / four

ā ē ī ō ū

the macron, tohutō, makes a vowel long

wahine woman · **wāhine** women

marama moon · **mārama** understand

ng · wh

two letters, one sound each

ngeru cat · **ngā** the, more than one

whare house · **whā** four

Long or short: a macron keeps the same sound and holds it a little longer. It can change the word: tangata is a person, tāngata people. Some texts leave the macron out; this sheet prints every one, so you learn each word with its long vowels.

Every syllable ends in a vowel: wha-re, house; ta-ma-ri-ki, children; kō-re-ro, talk. Two consonants never meet, so words borrowed from English gain vowels: āporo, apple; tēpu, table.

Stress, simply: say every syllable clearly and evenly, and lean a little on the first one, or on a long vowel: TA-ma-ri-ki, WHĀ-nau. Don't swallow the endings: every vowel is said.

Five vowels, five sounds: each vowel always sounds the same, wherever it is. If you know the vowels of Spanish or Italian, you already know the Māori ones.

How words work Te wetereo

No gender: Māori has no masculine or feminine, and ia is he and she. te is the, for one; ngā is the, for more than one; he is a or some.

Words in colour

noun
a thing, a person or a place
whare house · **wai** water

describing word
comes after the noun
nui big · **pai** good

verb
it never changes
haere go · **kite** see

other
little words and phrases
me and · **ki** to

Around the noun

te whare the house	**ngā** whare the houses	**he** whare a house, some houses	**tēnei** whare this house	**ēnei** whare these houses	te whare **nui** the big house

More than one: often only the little word changes: te whare, ngā whare. A few words for people hold a vowel longer: wahine, wāhine; tangata, tāngata; matua, mātua. tamaiti, child, becomes tamariki.

Who: one, two, three or more

	one	two	three or more
I, we	au, ahau	tāua you and me māua me and one other	tātou all of us, you too mātou us, not you
you	koe	kōrua	koutou
he, she, they	ia	rāua	rātou

When: haere, to go

	I'm going	I went	I'll go	I'm not going
au I	**Kei te** haere au	**I** haere au	**Ka** haere au	**Kāore** au **i te** haere
koe you	**Kei te** haere koe	**I** haere koe	**Ka** haere koe	**Kāore** koe **i te** haere
ia he, she	**Kei te** haere ia	**I** haere ia	**Ka** haere ia	**Kāore** ia **i te** haere
tātou we, all of us	**Kei te** haere tātou	**I** haere tātou	**Ka** haere tātou	**Kāore** tātou **i te** haere

Verb first: the little word for when comes first, then the verb, then who: Kei te haere au, I'm going. kei te is now, i is past, ka is will, and kua is done: Kua haere ia, he has gone.

Saying no: Kāore goes first and the person moves up: Kāore au i te mōhio, I don't know. On its own, no is Kāo. **Questions:** raise your voice at the end: Kei te pai koe? Are you OK? Or start with a question word: He aha tēnā? What's that?

Whose: taku or tōku

tōku ingoa my name	**taku** pukapuka my book	**aku** pukapuka my books	**tō** ingoa your name	**tōna** ingoa his or her name	**tō** mātou whare our house, not yours

Two words for my: taku and tōku both mean my, and the word decides which: tōku ingoa, my name; taku pukapuka, my book. Learn each with its word. For more than one, drop the t: aku pukapuka, my books.

The first 254 words Ngā kupu tuatahi

How: learn five a day, then listen for them in Māori films and series. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Me and you

au / ahau
I, me: two forms of one word

koe
you, one person

ia
he, she: there is no gender

tātou / mātou
we, all of us, you too / we, but not you

koutou
you, three or more

rātou
they, three or more

tēnei / tēnā / tērā
this / that, near you / that, over there

Question words

ko wai
who *(Ko wai ia? Who is he? Who is she?)*

aha
what *(He aha tēnā? What's that?)*

hea
where *(Kei hea? Where is it?)*

pēhea
how

āhea
when, for the future *(inahea, for the past)*

hia
how many *(E hia? How many?)*

tokohia
how many people

nā te aha
why *(it means because of what)*

Little words

me
and, with, between two nouns

engari
but

rānei
or

hoki
also, too

anō
again; also

tino
very *(tino pai, very good)*

ki
to *(ki te kura, to school)*

kei
at, in, now *(kei te kāinga, at home)*

nō
from *(Nō hea koe? Where are you from?)*

kāore
not, no: it goes first *(page 2)*

katoa
all, everyone

pea
maybe, after the word

ko
before a name *(Ko Mere tōku ingoa, my name is Mere)*

konei / konā / korā
here / there, near you / over there

Family

whānau
family, the wider kind *(page 6)*

māmā / pāpā
mum / dad

whaea / matua
mother / father; also an older woman / man

mātua
parents *(matua, one parent)*

tamaiti / tamariki
child / children

tama / tamāhine
son, boy / daughter

tuakana / teina
older / younger brother or sister, of your own gender

tungāne
a woman's brother

tuahine
a man's sister

kuia / koroua
grandmother, older woman / grandfather, older man

mokopuna
grandchild

whanaunga
relative

pēpi
baby

People

tangata
person *(tāngata, people)*

tāne
man; also husband

wahine
woman; also wife *(wāhine, women)*

hoa
friend

kōtiro
girl

kaiako
teacher

ākonga
student, learner

tākuta
doctor

manuhiri
guest, visitor

kaumātua
elder, a respected older person

We, two ways: tātou is all of us, you too; mātou is us, but not you. Brothers and sisters work by age and gender: a girl's older sister is her tuakana, a boy's sister is his tuahine.

Time and things Te wā me ngā mea

When

ināianei
now

ākuanei
soon, in a moment

tēnei rā
today *(it means this day)*

āpōpō
tomorrow

inanahi
yesterday

ata
morning *(i te ata, in the morning)*

ahiahi
afternoon, evening

pō
night

rā
day; also sun

wā
time, a while

marama
month; also moon

tau
year

haora
hour

ia rā
every day

Things

pukapuka
book

moni
money

tatau
door

matapihi
window

kākahu
clothes

hū
shoe, shoes

waka
car, boat, canoe: anything that carries you

waea
phone

pouaka whakaata
TV *(pouaka is box)*

kiriata
film, movie

tēpu / tūru
table / chair

Weather and nature

whetū
star

ua
rain *(Kei te ua, it's raining)*

hau
wind

moana
sea

awa
river

maunga
mountain

ngahere
forest, bush

rākau
tree; also wood

kurī / ngeru
dog / cat

manu
bird

Describing words

pai / kino
good / bad

nui / iti
big / small

wera / makariri
hot / cold

hou / tawhito
new / old

roa / poto
long, tall / short

ngāwari / uaua
easy / hard

tika / hē
right / wrong

ātaahua
beautiful

reka
tasty, sweet

harikoa
happy

pōuri
sad; also dark

ngenge
tired

hiakai
hungry *(hiainu, thirsty)*

whero / kōwhai / kākāriki
red / yellow / green

pango / mā
black / white

kikorangi
blue

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
kore	tahi	rua	toru	whā	rima	ono	whitu	waru	iwa	tekau

11	12	20	30	100	1,000
tekau mā tahi	tekau mā rua	rua tekau	toru tekau	kotahi rau	kotahi mano

Counting things: put e before 2 to 9: E toru ngā āporo, there are three apples. For one thing, say kotahi: kotahi te whare, there's one house. 11 is tekau mā tahi, ten and one; 20 is rua tekau, two tens.

Describing words come after the noun: te whare nui, the big house; he kai reka, tasty food. With kei te they say how things are: Kei te makariri, it's cold; Kei te ngenge au, I'm tired.

Food, places, verbs Kai, wāhi, mahi

Food and drink

kai
food; also to eat *(page 6)*

wai
water

miraka
milk

parāoa
bread

tīhi
cheese

hēki
egg

huka / tote
sugar / salt

mīti
meat

heihei
chicken

ika
fish

kaimoana
seafood *(it means sea food)*

rīwai
potato

kūmara
sweet potato

āporo / ārani / panana
apple / orange / banana

huarākau
fruit

tī / kawhe
tea / coffee

hāngī
food cooked in an earth oven, for a big gathering

parakuihi
breakfast

Places

kāinga
home

whare
house; also any building

kura
school

toa
shop

hōhipera
hospital

wharepaku
toilet *(it means small house)*

wharekai
restaurant, dining hall *(it means food house)*

whare pukapuka
library *(it means book house)*

tari
office

huarahi
road, way

matau / mauī
right / left

te reo Māori
Māori, the language *(reo, language; also voice)*

Verbs

haere
go, come *(Haere mai! Come here!)*

inu
drink

kite
see

mātakitaki
watch

whakarongo
listen

kōrero
talk, speak; also a story, a chat

mōhio
know

mārama
understand; also clear, light

pīrangi
want

aroha
love; also care *(page 6)*

moe
sleep

mahi
work, do; also a job

noho
sit; also live, stay

tū
stand

hīkoi
walk

pānui
read

tuhi
write

ako
learn; also teach

hoko
buy; also sell

utu
pay; also a price

hoatu / homai
give, away from me / give, to me

tīmata / mutu
start / finish

wareware / mahara
forget / remember

waiata
sing; also a song

tākaro
play

āwhina
help

Verbs never change: haere is go, went and will go. The little word in front says when: Kei te haere au, I'm going; I haere au, I went; Ka haere au, I'll go (page 2).

Names for places: many are built from whare, house: wharekai, food house, is a restaurant; whare pukapuka, book house, is a library.

Phrases and show words Kia ora!

Hello and goodbye

Kia ora
hello; also thanks, cheers *(it means be well)*

Tēnā koe
hello, polite, to one person *(Tēnā kōrua to two, Tēnā koutou to three or more)*

Mōrena
good morning

Pō mārie
good night

Nau mai, haere mai
welcome

Kei te pēhea koe?
how are you?

Kei te pai
I'm good, fine; also it's OK

Ko wai tō ingoa?
what's your name?

Ko ... tōku ingoa
my name is ...

Nō hea koe?
where are you from?

Ka kite anō
see you again

Mā te wā
see you later *(it means in time)*

Haere rā / E noho rā
goodbye, to someone leaving / staying

Mauri ora
a warm hello or goodbye *(it means life and good health)*

Please, thanks and help

Āe / Kāo
yes / no

Tēnā koa
please

Ngā mihi
thanks; also best wishes, to end a message

Aroha mai
sorry, excuse me

Kāore au i te mōhio
I don't know

Kāore au i te mārama
I don't understand

He pātai tāku
I have a question

Anei
here it is, here you go

Kia pai tō rā
have a nice day

Reactions

Ka pai!
good! nice one! well done!

Ka rawe!
great! awesome!

Ka mau te wehi!
amazing! wow!

Pai rawa atu!
excellent! the best!

Auē!
oh no! oh dear! wow!

Hōhā!
fed up! what a bore!

Kia kaha!
go for it! stay strong!

Taihoa!
wait! hang on! not yet!

The big scenes

Kei te aroha au ki a koe
I love you

Āwhina mai!
help!

Kia tūpato!
be careful!

Kia tere!
hurry up!

Haere atu!
go away!

He aha te mate?
what's wrong? what's the matter?

Kei te aha koe?
what are you doing?

Me haere tātou
let's go

Kua mutu
it's over, it's finished

What to call people

e hoa
mate, my friend

e koro
to an older man, grandad

e kui
to an older woman, gran

Aroha nui
lots of love, to end a message

Kia ora and Tēnā koe: Kia ora works for anyone, any time, and also means thanks. Tēnā koe is more polite, and changes with how many you greet: koe for one, kōrua for two, koutou for three or more.

Three words you'll hear everywhere: whānau is family, the wider kind: parents, children, aunties, uncles, cousins and grandparents. kai is food, and to eat: Kei te kai au, I'm eating. aroha is love, and also care and kindness for others: Aroha mai, sorry, asks for it.

Calling someone: e goes before the word when you call someone: e hoa, mate; e koro, to an older man; e kui, to an older woman. Whaea and matua are also used for an older woman or man, a bit like auntie and uncle.

Practice Kia kaha!

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

How you feel: put the word between Kei te and au: Kei te ngenge au, I'm tired; Kei te hiakai au, I'm hungry.

Read every vowel: nothing is silent, and a macron means hold it: ā-po-ro, three beats.

Read these sentences

1. Kia ora, ko Mere tōku ingoa.
   Hi, my name is Mere.

2. Kei te pai ahau, kia ora.
   I'm good, thanks.

3. Kei hea te wharepaku?
   Where's the toilet?

4. Homai he wai, tēnā koa.
   Some water, please.

5. Kei te ako au i te reo Māori.
   I'm learning Māori.

6. Kei te ua i tēnei rā.
   It's raining today.

7. Ka haere mātou ki te toa āpōpō.
   We're going to the shop tomorrow.

8. He tino reka tēnei kai!
   This food is really tasty!

9. Kei te mātakitaki au i te pouaka whakaata.
   I'm watching TV.

10. Ka kite anō, e hoa!
    See you again, mate!

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