Khmer script អក្សរខ្មែរ

The trick: Khmer is written left to right, with no capitals. Its 33 consonants each carry a built-in vowel, and they come in two teams, the **a-series** and the **o-series**, and the team decides how the vowel after it sounds.

33 consonants, row by row

	a-series	a-series, puff	o-series	o-series, puff	nose
k row	ក ka	ខ kha	គ ko	ឃ kho	ង ngo
ch row	ច cha	ឆ chha	ជ cho	ឈ chho	ញ nho
d row	ដ da	ឋ tha	ឌ do	ឍ tho	ណ na
t row	ត ta	ថ tha	ទ to	ធ tho	ន no
b, p row	ប ba	ផ pha	ព po	ភ pho	ម mo
y r l v	យ yo	រ ro	ល lo	វ vo	
s h l a	ស sa	ហ ha	ឡ la	អ a	

The names tell you the series: a name that ends in a, like ក ka, is **a-series**; a name that ends in o, like គ ko, is **o-series**. A puff of air: kh, chh, th and ph are said with a breath, as if blowing out a candle. **Pale letters** are rare.

One vowel sign, two sounds

It sits	on an a-series letter	on an o-series letter	a-series word	o-series word
after	កា kaa	គា kea	បាយ baay rice	ទា tea duck
above	កី kei	គី ki	ស្រី srei woman	ពីរ pir two
below	កូ kou	គូ ku	កូន koun child	ទូក tuk boat
before and above	កើ kae	គើ keu	ច្រើន chraen many	មើល meul watch
before and after	កៅ kau	គៅ kov	ចៅ chau grandchild	ទៅ tov go

Before, but said after: some signs are written before the letter, or on both sides, but said after it: ទៅ tov, go.

Letters under letters

ខ្ញុំ
ខ + ញ
khnhom I, me
ញ changes shape underneath

ខ្មែរ
ខ + ម
khmaer Khmer
kh, then m

ស្រី
ស + រ
srei woman
រ underneath sits on the left

ប្រាំ
ប + រ
pram five
ប with a letter under it is p

No spaces between words

ខ្ញុំញ៉ាំបាយ khnhom nham baay, I eat rice, is one block. A space ends a phrase, like a comma, and ។ is the full stop.

Two little teeth

On ប they make a p: ប៉ា paa, dad. On ម, យ or ញ they move it to the a-series: ម៉ោង maong, hour.

A short hook

A small hook on top makes the vowel short: ចាស chaah, yes (a woman says it), but ចាស់ chah, old.

Khmer digits

០ 0	១ 1	២ 2	៣ 3	៤ 4	៥ 5	៦ 6	៧ 7	៨ 8	៩ 9

How words work វេយ្យាករណ៍

Romanization on this sheet: plain letters, written the way it's said, because Khmer spelling and sound don't always match.

a, o	built in: a in father, o in law	ភ្នំ phnom mountain
aa, ea	a in father *(កា)*, or ea in near *(គា)*	ទា tea duck
ei, i	ay in day *(កី)*, or ee in see *(គី)*	ស្រី srei woman
ou, u	o in go *(កូ)*, or oo in food *(គូ)*	កូន koun child
ae, eu	ah-uh, fast *(កើ)*, or u in fur *(គើ)*	ច្រើន chraen many

kh, ph	h means a puff of air	ខ្មែរ khmaer Khmer
nh, ng	ny in canyon; ng in sing	ងាយ ngeay easy
'	a catch: អ under a letter	ស្អាត s'aat clean
end r, h	final r is quiet, final ស is h	ទោស toh fault
-	joins the parts of a word	អរគុណ a-kun thanks

Word order is like English

ខ្ញុំ
khnhom
I

ញ៉ាំ
nham
eat

បាយ
baay
rice

No a, the or plurals: ឆ្មា chhmaa is a cat, the cat or cats. To say more than one, add a number or ច្រើន chraen: ឆ្មាច្រើន chhmaa chraen, lots of cats. **Describing words go after:** ផ្ទះធំ phteah thom, a big house. You don't need is: មួយឆ្ងាញ់ mhoub chhnganh is tasty food, or the food is tasty.

The verb never changes: a little word says when

ខ្ញុំបានញ៉ាំ
khnhom baan nham
I ate *(បាន: it happened)*

ខ្ញុំកំពុងញ៉ាំ
khnhom kom-pung nham
I'm eating *(កំពុង: right now)*

ខ្ញុំនឹងញ៉ាំ
khnhom neung nham
I'll eat *(នឹង: later)*

ខ្ញុំញ៉ាំហើយ
khnhom nham haey
I've eaten *(ហើយ: already)*

Or just a time word: ម្សិលមិញ msel-minh yesterday, ថ្ងៃនេះ thngai nih today, ថ្ងៃស្អែក thngai s'aek tomorrow, at the start.

Polite words: it's about who speaks

a man says

បាទ baat

for yes, and to answer politely when someone calls you.

a woman says

ចាស chaah

the same word, for a woman: yes, and a polite answer.

No: put មិន min before the verb and ទេ te at the end: ខ្ញុំមិនដឹងទេ khnhom min deung te, I don't know. In everyday speech you'll often hear អត់ ot instead: ខ្ញុំអត់ដឹងទេ khnhom ot deung te. **Questions:** put ទេ te at the end: អ្នកចូលចិត្តទេ? neak choul-chet te?, do you like it? Question words go at the end too: នេះជាអ្វី? nih chea avei?, what's this?

I and you

Word	It means	Use it for
ខ្ញុំ khnhom	I, me	polite and safe with anyone
អ្នក neak	you	polite, to anyone; family words are warmer *(page 6)*
គាត់ koat	he, she	polite, for someone older or respected
គេ ke	he, she, they	everyday; also people in general
យើង yeung	we, us	you and me, or my group

The first 278 words ពាក្យដំបូង

How: learn five a day, then hunt for them in Kitsumi subtitles. *(Notes in brackets)* say how a word is used.

Hello with your hands: ជំរាបសួរ chom-reap-suor goes with palms pressed together at your chest, a little higher for someone older. With friends, a quick សួស្តី suos-dei is fine.

Greetings and survival

ជំរាបសួរ chom-reap-suor
hello *(polite, with palms together)*

សួស្តី suos-dei
hi *(casual)*

ជំរាបលា chom-reap-lea
goodbye *(polite)*

លាហើយ lea haey
bye, I'm off

ជួបគ្នាពេលក្រោយ
chuob knea pel kraoy
see you later

អរគុណ a-kun
thank you

អរគុណច្រើន a-kun chraen
thank you very much

បាទ baat
yes *(a man says it)*

ចាស chaah
yes *(a woman says it)*

ទេ te
no; at the end, it makes a question

សុំទោស som-toh
sorry; excuse me

មិនអីទេ min ei te
never mind, it's OK; you're welcome

សុខសប្បាយទេ? sok-sa-baay te?
how are you? *(are you well?)*

ខ្ញុំសុខសប្បាយ khnhom sok-sa-baay
I'm fine

សូម soum
please *(before the verb: សូមអង្គុយ, please sit)*

អ្នកឈ្មោះអ្វី? neak chhmuoh avei?
what's your name?

ខ្ញុំមិនយល់ទេ khnhom min yol te
I don't understand

ខ្ញុំមិនដឹងទេ khnhom min deung te
I don't know

ចាំបន្តិច cham bon-tech
wait a moment

Question words

អ្វី avei
what

អ្នកណា neak naa
who

ឯណា ae naa
where *(នៅឯណា? where is it?)*

ពេលណា pel naa
when

យ៉ាងម៉េច yaang mech
how

ប៉ុន្មាន pon-maan
how much, how many

មួយណា muoy naa
which one

Me, you, this

ខ្ញុំ khnhom
I, me

អ្នក neak
you *(polite)*

គាត់ koat
he, she *(polite)*

គេ ke
he, she, they; people

យើង yeung
we, us

ពួកគេ puok-ke
they

របស់ខ្ញុំ ro-bah khnhom
my, mine *(it means thing of me)*

នេះ nih
this

នោះ nuoh
that

ទីនេះ ti nih
here

ទីនោះ ti nuoh
there

Numbers

0 ០	1 ១	2 ២	3 ៣	4 ៤	5 ៥	6 ៦	7 ៧	8 ៨
សូន្យ	មួយ	ពីរ	បី	បួន	ប្រាំ	ប្រាំមួយ	ប្រាំពីរ	ប្រាំបី
soun	muoy	pir	bei	buon	pram	pram-muoy	pram-pir	pram-bei

9 ៩	10 ១០	11 ១១	20 ២០	30 ៣០	100 ១០០	1,000 ១០០០	10,000 ១០០០០
ប្រាំបួន	ដប់	ដប់មួយ	ម្ភៃ	សាមសិប	មួយរយ	មួយពាន់	មួយម៉ឺន
pram-buon	dop	dop-muoy	mphei	saam-sep	muoy-roy	muoy-poan	muoy-meun

Numbers are Lego: from six to nine, it's five and one more: ប្រាំ pram 5, ប្រាំមួយ pram-muoy 6, ប្រាំបី pram-bei 8. Prices come in រៀល riel, and dollars are used too.

Time, people, food គ្រួសារ និង ម្ហូប

Time

ឥឡូវ ei-lov
now

ថ្ងៃនេះ thngai nih
today

ថ្ងៃស្អែក thngai s'aek
tomorrow

ម្សិលមិញ msel-minh
yesterday

ព្រឹក preuk
morning

រសៀល ro-siel
afternoon

ល្ងាច lngeach
evening

យប់ yup
night

ថ្ងៃ thngai
day

សប្តាហ៍ sap-daa
week

ខែ khae
month

ឆ្នាំ chhnam
year

ម៉ោង maong
hour; o'clock

ពេល pel
time, when

Family

ម្តាយ mdaay
mother

ឪពុក ov-puk
father

ម៉ាក់ mak
mum

ប៉ា paa
dad

បងប្រុស bong-proh
older brother

បងស្រី bong-srei
older sister

ប្អូនប្រុស p'oun-proh
younger brother

ប្អូនស្រី p'oun-srei
younger sister

កូន koun
child *(a son or a daughter)*

កូនប្រុស koun-proh
son

កូនស្រី koun-srei
daughter

ប្ដី pdei
husband

ប្រពន្ធ pra-pon
wife

គ្រួសារ kruo-saar
family

People

មនុស្ស mo-nuh
person, people

ប្រុស proh
man, male

ស្រី srei
woman, female

ក្មេង kmeng
child, kid

មិត្តភក្តិ mit-pheak
friend

គ្រូ kru
teacher

សិស្ស seh
student, pupil

គ្រូពេទ្យ kru-pet
doctor

ភ្ញៀវ phnhiev
guest

អ្នកជិតខាង neak chit-khaang
neighbour

Food and drink

បាយ baay
rice, cooked; also a meal

អង្ករ ong-kar
rice, uncooked

ទឹក teuk
water

កាហ្វេ kaa-fe
coffee

តែ tae
tea

ទឹកដោះគោ teuk-doh-ko
milk

ស្រាបៀរ sraa-bier
beer

សាច់ sach
meat

សាច់មាន់ sach-moan
chicken

សាច់ជ្រូក sach-chruk
pork

សាច់គោ sach-ko
beef

ត្រី trei
fish

បង្គា bong-kea
prawns

ពង pong
egg

បន្លែ bon-lae
vegetables

ផ្លែឈើ phlae-chheu
fruit

ចេក chek
banana

ស្វាយ svaay
mango

ម្នាស់ mnoah
pineapple

គុយទាវ kuy-teav
noodle soup

អំបិល am-bel
salt

ស្ករ skar
sugar

ម្ទេស mteh
chilli

ម្ហូប mhoub
food; a dish

ឆ្ងាញ់ chhnganh
delicious, tasty

ហឺរ heur
spicy, hot

ផ្អែម ph'aem
sweet

ជូរ chur
sour

ឃ្លាន khlean
hungry

ស្រេកទឹក srek teuk
thirsty

ឆ្អែត chh'aet
full *(I've eaten enough)*

គិតលុយ kit luy
the bill, please *(it means count the money)*

Rice means a meal: ញ៉ាំបាយ nham baay, eat rice, just means eat. Ask with សុំ som, ask for: សុំទឹក som teuk, water, please.

Hungry or full: ឃ្លានបាយ khlean baay, hungry for rice, means you'd like a meal. When you've had enough, say ឆ្អែតហើយ chh'aet haey, I'm full.

Places and verbs ទីកន្លែង

Places

ផ្ទះ phteah
house, home

បន្ទប់ bon-tup
room

សាលារៀន saa-laa rien
school

ផ្សារ phsaar
market

ហាង haang
shop

មន្ទីរពេទ្យ mon-tir pet
hospital

បង្គន់ bong-kun
toilet

សណ្ឋាគារ son-thaa-kear
hotel

ធនាគារ tho-nea-kear
bank

ព្រលានយន្តហោះ pro-lean yon-hoh
airport

ផ្លូវ phlov
road, street; also the way

ក្រុង krong
city, town

ភូមិ phum
village

ប្រទេស pra-teh
country

កម្ពុជា kam-pu-chea
Cambodia

ភ្នំពេញ phnom-penh
Phnom Penh

ទន្លេ ton-le
river; also a big lake

សមុទ្រ sa-mut
sea

ភ្នំ phnom
mountain, hill

Getting around, things

ស្តាំ / ឆ្វេង sdam / chhveng
right / left

ត្រង់ trong
straight on

ឡាន laan
car

ឡានក្រុង laan krong
bus *(it means city car)*

ម៉ូតូ mo-to
motorbike

រ៉ឺម៉ក reu-mok
tuk-tuk

កង់ kong
bicycle

យន្តហោះ yon-hoh
plane

សំបុត្រ som-bot
ticket; also a letter

លុយ luy
money

រៀល riel
riel, Cambodian money

ដុល្លារ dol-laar
dollar *(you can pay in both)*

ទូរស័ព្ទ tu-ra-sap
phone

សៀវភៅ siev-phov
book

សោ sao
key

ទ្វារ tvear
door

ឆ័ត្រ chhat
umbrella

កាបូប kaa-boub
bag, purse

សម្លៀកបំពាក់ som-liek-bom-peak
clothes

រូបថត rup-thot
photo

ចម្រៀង chom-rieng
song

Verbs

ញុំ nham
eat

ផឹក pheuk
drink

ទៅ tov
go

មក mok
come

គេង keng
sleep

មើល meul
look, watch

ឃើញ kheunh
see

ស្តាប់ sdap
listen

អាន aan
read

សរសេរ sa-ser
write

និយាយ ni-yeay
speak, say

ធ្វើ thveu
do, make

ធ្វើការ thveu-kaar
work

ទិញ tinh
buy

លក់ lok
sell

រង់ចាំ rong-cham
wait

ដឹង deung
know

យល់ yol
understand

ចូលចិត្ត choul-chet
like

ស្រឡាញ់ sra-lanh
love

ចង់ chong
want to *(ចង់ទៅ, want to go)*

រៀន rien
study, learn

ចេះ cheh
know how to, can

ជួយ chuoy
help

អង្គុយ ong-kuy
sit

ដើរ daer
walk

ឲ្យ aoy
give

យក yok
take

រក rok
look for

លេង leng
play

សើច saech
laugh

យំ yom
cry

គិត kit
think

ជួប chuob
meet

បើក baek
open

បិទ bet
close, shut

ងូតទឹក ngut teuk
have a shower, bathe

Verbs never change: ទៅ tov is go, goes, went and gone. Two verbs can sit side by side: ចង់ទៅ chong tov, want to go. For can, put បាន baan after the verb: ទៅបាន tov baan, I can go.

Feelings and show words ពាក្យក្នុងរឿង

Describing words

ធំ / តូច thom / touch
big / small

ក្តៅ / ត្រជាក់ kdau / tra-cheak
hot / cold

ល្អ / អាក្រក់ l'a / aa-krok
good / bad

ថ្មី / ចាស់ thmei / chah
new / old

ថោក / ថ្លៃ thaok / thlai
cheap / expensive

ងាយ / ពិបាក ngeay / pi-baak
easy / hard

ជិត / ឆ្ងាយ chit / chhngaay
near / far

លឿន / យឺត luen / yeut
fast / slow

ស្អាត s'aat
clean; also pretty

សប្បាយ sa-baay
happy, fun

ពិបាកចិត្ត pi-baak chet
upset, sad *(it means a hard heart)*

អស់កម្លាំង oh kam-lang
tired *(it means out of strength)*

ឈឺ chheu
ill; also it hurts

ខ្លាច khlaach
scared

Little words

និង neung
and

ហើយ haey
and then; already

ប៉ុន្តែ pon-tae
but

ឬ rue
or

ណាស់ nah
very, so *(after the word)*

បន្តិច bon-tech
a little

ច្រើន chraen
a lot, many

មាន mean
have; there is

នៅ nov
be at, live; still; not yet

ជា chea
be *(who or what)*

ព្រោះ pruoh
because

បើ bae
if

ជាមួយ chea-muoy
with

សម្រាប់ som-rap
for

ទៀត tiet
more, again *(after the word)*

អញ្ចឹង anh-cheung
so, like that

Reactions

ឆ្ងាញ់ណាស់! chhnganh nah!
so tasty!

ពិតមែន? pit maen?
really? is it true?

ល្អណាស់! l'a nah!
great! very good!

ស្អាតណាស់! s'aat nah!
so pretty!

អស្ចារ្យ! ah-chaa!
amazing!

ប្រយ័ត្ន! pra-yat!
careful! watch out!

ជួយផង! chuoy phong!
help!

ឈប់! chhup!
stop!

តោះទៅ! taoh tov!
let's go!

អត់ទេ! ot te!
no! *(casual)*

ឆ្កួត! chhkuot!
crazy! you're mad!

ខ្មាសគេ! khmaah ke!
how embarrassing!

គួរឲ្យស្រឡាញ់ kuor aoy sra-lanh
cute, lovely *(it means worth loving)*

សង្ហា song-haa
handsome

What to call people

បង bong
big brother or sister; you, to anyone a bit older

អូន oun
little brother or sister; you, to someone younger; darling

ពូ pu
uncle; any man about your parents' age

មីង ming
auntie; any woman about your parents' age

យាយ / តា yeay / taa
grandma / grandpa; any old woman / man

លោក lok
Mr, sir

លោកស្រី lok srei
Mrs, madam

អ្នកគ្រូ neak kru
teacher *(to a woman; to a man,* លោកគ្រូ*)*

The big scenes

បងស្រឡាញ់អូន bong sra-lanh oun
I love you *(he says it; it means big brother loves little one)*

អូនស្រឡាញ់បង oun sra-lanh bong
I love you *(she says it)*

នឹកអូន neuk oun
I miss you *(to her)*

កុំទៅ! kom tov!
don't go!

កុំបារម្ភ kom baa-rom
don't worry

Useful phrases

នេះជាអ្វី? nih chea avei?
what's this?

នេះថ្លៃប៉ុន្មាន? nih thlai pon-maan?
how much is this?

ថ្លៃពេក thlai pek
too expensive

ចុះថ្លៃបានទេ? choh thlai baan te?
can you bring the price down?

បង្គន់នៅឯណា? bong-kun nov ae naa?
where's the toilet?

ម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន? maong pon-maan?
what time is it?

សូមនិយាយយឺតៗ
soum ni-yeay yeut-yeut
please speak slowly *(ៗ says it twice)*

ខ្ញុំនិយាយខ្មែរបន្តិច
khnhom ni-yeay khmaer bon-tech
I speak a little Khmer

ញ៉ាំបាយហើយឬនៅ?
nham baay haey rue nov?
have you eaten yet? *(a friendly hello)*

ចុះអ្នកវិញ? choh neak vinh?
and you?

Bong and oun are everywhere: Cambodians call each other by age. Someone a bit older is បង bong, someone younger is អូន oun, even a stranger in a shop. In love scenes, he is bong and she is oun.

Practice លំហាត់

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

Find the words you know first: there are no spaces, so look for ខ្ញុំ khnhom, ទេ te and ណាស់ nah, and the rest of the line falls into place around them. ។ is the full stop.

Read these sentences

1. ជំរាបសួរ! ខ្ញុំឈ្មោះសុភា។

   chom-reap-suor! khnhom chhmuoh so-phea.

   Hello! My name is Sophea.

2. អ្នកសុខសប្បាយទេ? ខ្ញុំសុខសប្បាយ អរគុណ។

   neak sok-sa-baay te? khnhom sok-sa-baay, a-kun.

   How are you? I'm fine, thank you.

3. ផ្សារនៅឯណា?

   phsaar nov ae naa?

   Where's the market?

4. សុំកាហ្វេមួយកែវ។

   som kaa-fe muoy kaev.

   A cup of coffee, please.

5. ថ្ងៃនេះក្តៅណាស់។

   thngai nih kdau nah.

   It's very hot today.

6. ខ្ញុំមិនញ៉ាំសាច់ទេ។

   khnhom min nham sach te.

   I don't eat meat.

7. ថ្ងៃស្អែក ខ្ញុំនឹងទៅភ្នំពេញ។

   thngai s'aek khnhom neung tov phnom-penh.

   Tomorrow I'll go to Phnom Penh.

8. គាត់ជាបងប្រុសរបស់ខ្ញុំ។

   koat chea bong-proh ro-bah khnhom.

   He's my older brother.

9. ម្ហូបខ្មែរឆ្ងាញ់ណាស់!

   mhoub khmaer chhnganh nah!

   Khmer food is so tasty!

10. ខ្ញុំកំពុងរៀនភាសាខ្មែរ។

    khnhom kom-pung rien phea-saa khmaer.

    I'm learning Khmer.

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