

Language

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Due to colonial influences, English is an official language in every Southern African country except Mozambique (where it's Portuguese). English-speaking visitors should have few communication problems.

Afrikaans is also widely used throughout the region and, although it's often dismissed as the language of apartheid, it's the first language of millions of people of diverse ethnic back-grounds.

In Mozambique and parts of northern Namibia along the Angola border, Portuguese is the European language of choice.

In parts of Namibia, German is also widely spoken, but is the first language of only about 2% of Namibians.

AFRIKAANS

Afrikaans is often used for communication between members of different groups (eg Xhosa and Zulu, Herero and Namaa) who may not speak another common language. It's also used as a lingua franca in both South Africa and Namibia.

Pronunciation

a	as the 'u' in 'pup'
e	when word stress falls on e , it's as in 'net'; when unstressed, it's as the 'a' in 'ago'
i	when word stress falls on i , it's as in 'hit'; when unstressed, it's as the 'a' in 'ago'
o	as the 'o' in 'fort', but very short
u	as the 'e' in 'angel' with lips pouted
r	a rolled 'rr' sound
aai	as the 'y' sound in 'why'
ae	as 'ah'
ee	as in 'deer'
ei	as the 'ay' in 'play'
oe	as the 'u' in 'put'
oë	as the 'oe' in 'doer'
ooi/oei	as the 'ooey' in 'phooey'
tj	as the 'ch' in 'chunk'

Greetings & Conversation

Hello.	<i>Hallo.</i>
Good morning.	<i>Goeiemôre.</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Goeiemiddag.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Goeienaand.</i>
Good night.	<i>Goeienag.</i>
Please.	<i>Asseblief.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>(Baie) Dankie.</i>
How are you?	<i>Hoe gaan dit?</i>
Good, thank you.	<i>Goed dankie.</i>
Pardon.	<i>Ekskus.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ja.</i>
No.	<i>Nee.</i>
What?	<i>Wat?</i>
How?	<i>Hoe?</i>
How many/much?	<i>Hoeveel?</i>
Where?	<i>Waar?</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Praat U Engels?</i>
Do you speak Afrikaans?	<i>Praat U Afrikaans?</i>
I only understand a little Afrikaans.	<i>Ek verstaan net 'n bietjie Afrikaans.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Waarvandaan kom U?</i>
from ...	<i>van ...</i>

son/boy	<i>seun</i>
daughter/girl	<i>dogter</i>
wife	<i>vrou</i>

NAMING RITES

The actual title of several Southern African languages can cause confusion for visitors. For example, the language of the Basotho people (from Lesotho) is Sesotho. Usually, the prefixes ('Chi', 'Se', 'Isi', 'O'tji' etc) simply mean 'language', but they're only used when actually speaking that language. To say 'I can speak isiZulu' is like saying 'I can speak Français'. When speaking English the prefixes are usually omitted. However, some languages, such as Chichewa, retain the prefix regardless of the language you're speaking.

Following are the the current official English designations for the predominant languages of Southern Africa, with their indigenous titles in brackets: Chichewa, Herero/Himba (Otjiherero/Otjihimba), Ndebele (Sindebele), Northern Sotho (Sepedi), Owambo (Otiwambo), Southern Sotho (Sesotho), Swati (siSwati), Tsonga (Xitsonga), Tswana (Setswana), Venda (Tshivenda), Xhosa (isiXhosa), Zulu (isiZulu).

husband	<i>eggenoot</i>
mother	<i>ma</i>
father	<i>pa</i>
sister	<i>suster</i>
brother	<i>broer</i>
nice/good/pleasant	<i>lekker</i>
bad	<i>sleg</i>
cheap	<i>goedkoop</i>
expensive	<i>duur</i>

Shopping & Services

art gallery	<i>kunsgalery</i>
bank	<i>bank</i>
church	<i>kerk</i>
city	<i>stad</i>
city centre	<i>middestad</i>
emergency	<i>nood</i>
exit	<i>uitgang</i>
information	<i>inligting</i>
inquiries	<i>navrae</i>
office	<i>kantoor</i>
pharmacy/chemist	<i>apteek</i>
police	<i>polisie</i>
police station	<i>polisiestasie</i>
post office	<i>poskantoor</i>
rooms	<i>kamers</i>
tourist bureau	<i>toeristeburo</i>
town	<i>dorp</i>

EMERGENCIES – AFRIKAANS

Help!	<i>Help!</i>
Call a doctor!	<i>Roep 'n dokter!</i>
Call the police!	<i>Roep die polisie!</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ek is veeleorer.</i>

Transport

avenue	<i>laan</i>
car	<i>kar</i>
freeway	<i>vrymaak</i>
highway	<i>snelweg</i>
road	<i>pad, weg</i>
station	<i>stasie</i>
street	<i>straat</i>
track	<i>spoor</i>
traffic light	<i>verkeerslig</i>
utility/pick-up	<i>bakkie</i>

arrival	<i>aankoms</i>
departure	<i>vertrek</i>
one-way ticket	<i>enkel kaartjie</i>
return ticket	<i>retoer kaartjie</i>
to	<i>na</i>
from	<i>van</i>
left	<i>links</i>
right	<i>regs</i>
at the corner	<i>op die hoek</i>

In the Country

bay	<i>baai</i>
beach	<i>strand</i>
caravan park	<i>woonwapark</i>
field/plain	<i>veld</i>
ford	<i>drif</i>
game reserve	<i>wildtuin</i>
hiking trail	<i>wandelpad</i>
lake	<i>meer</i>
marsh	<i>vlei</i>
mountain	<i>berg</i>
river	<i>rivier</i>

Time & Days

When?	<i>Wanneer?</i>
am/pm	<i>vm/nm</i>
soon	<i>nou-nou</i>
today	<i>vandag</i>
tomorrow	<i>môre</i>
yesterday	<i>gister</i>
daily/weekly	<i>daaglik/weekblad</i>
public holiday	<i>openbare vakansiedag</i>
Monday	<i>Maandag (Ma)</i>
Tuesday	<i>Dinsdag (Di)</i>

cannot always be given for its English equivalent. The most common forms are given here, but do remember that although these words and phrases may not be 'proper' Chichewa, you'll be understood. Most Malawians and Zambians will be pleased to hear even a few words spoken by a foreigner.

Conversation & Essentials

Bambo literally means 'father' but is a polite way to address any Malawian man. The female equivalent is *amai* or *mai*. *Mazungu* means 'white person', but isn't a derogatory term.

Hello.	<i>Moni.</i>
Hello, anybody in?	<i>Odi.</i> (knocking on door or calling at gate)
Come in/Welcome.	<i>Lowani.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Tsala bwino.</i> (lit: 'stay well', when leaving)
Goodbye.	<i>Pitani bwino.</i> (lit: 'go well', when staying)
Good night.	<i>Gonani bwino.</i>
Please.	<i>Chonde.</i>
Thank you/Excuse me.	<i>Zikomo.</i>
Thank you very much.	<i>Zikomo kwambile/kwambiri.</i>
Yes.	<i>Inde.</i>
No.	<i>Iyayi.</i>
How are you?	<i>Muli bwanji?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Ndili bwino.</i>
And you?	<i>Kaya-iwe?</i> (to one person) <i>Kaya inu?</i> (to several people)
Good/Fine/OK.	<i>Chabwino.</i>

Numbers

Chichewa speakers talking together will normally use English for numbers and prices. Similarly, time is nearly always expressed in English.

1	<i>chimonzi</i>
2	<i>ziwili</i>
3	<i>zitatatu</i>
4	<i>zinayi</i>
5	<i>zitsano</i>

DAMARA/NAMA

The Damara and Nama peoples' traditional lands take in most of Namibia's wildest desert regions. Their languages belong to the Khoisan group and, as with the other

San dialects, they feature several of the tricky 'click' elements (see How to Click, p778).

Conversation & Essentials

Good Morning.	<i>Igai//oas</i>
How are you?	<i>matisa?</i>
Thank you.	<i>eio</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>engelsa Igoa idu ra?</i>
Pardon	<i>mati</i>
What's your name?	<i>mati du/onha</i>
My name is ...	<i>ti/ons ge a ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>tita ge a ...</i>
Yes.	<i>ii</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Igaise hare</i> (when leaving) or <i>Igure</i> (when staying)
How much is this?	<i>ne xu e matigo marie ni gan?</i>
Where is the ...?	<i>maha ... ha?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>/gui</i>
2	<i>/gam</i>
3	<i>!nona</i>
4	<i>haga</i>
5	<i>goro</i>
6	<i>!nani</i>
7	<i>hu</i>
8	<i>//khaisa</i>
9	<i>khoese</i>
10	<i>disi</i>

HERERO/HIMBA

The Herero and Himba languages are quite similar, and will be especially useful when travelling around Kaokoland and remote areas of north central Namibia, where Afrikaans remains a lingua franca and few people speak English. Most people, however, are delighted when foreign visitors attempt to communicate in Herero/Himba.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	<i>Tjike.</i>
Good morning, sir.	<i>Wa penduka, mutengua.</i>
Good afternoon, madam.	<i>Wa uhara, serekaze.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Wa tokera.</i>
Good night.	<i>Ongurova ombua.</i>
Please.	<i>Arikana.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Okuhepa.</i>
How are you?	<i>Kora?</i>
Fine.	<i>Naua.</i>
Well, thank you.	<i>Mbiri naua, okuhepa.</i>
Pardon.	<i>Makuvi.</i>

REMOTE HIMBA

The Himba living in remote areas speak a slightly different dialect. Again, people will greatly appreciate your efforts.

Hello/Good day.	<i>Moro.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Huenda.</i>
How are you?	<i>Muwepe nduka?/Kora?</i>
Fine, thanks.	<i>Nawa.</i> <i>Ami mbiri nawa.</i> (polite)
Yes.	<i>Eee.</i>
No.	<i>Kako.</i>
How much do you want for this?	<i>Imbi mokosisa vingapi?</i>
Do you know the road to ...?	<i>Motjua ondjira ndjijenda ...?</i>
Where is the ...?	<i>... iripi?</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Kara/Karee nawa.</i> (to one/many)

Yes.	<i>li.</i>
No.	<i>Kako.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Ove ua za pi?</i>

Do you speak ...?	<i>U hungjira ...?</i>
English	<i>Otjingirisa</i>
Herero/Himba	<i>Otjihimba</i>
Owambo	<i>Otjiwambo</i>

daughters	<i>ovanatje ovakazona</i>
sons	<i>ovanatje ovazandu</i>
wife	<i>omukazendu ngua kupua</i>
husband	<i>omurumendu ngua kupa</i>
mother	<i>mama</i>
father	<i>tate</i>
younger sister/ brother	<i>omuangu</i>
older sister/ brother	<i>erumbi</i>

caravan park	<i>omasuviro uo zo karavana</i>
game reserve	<i>orumbo ro vipuka</i>
hiking trail	<i>okaira ko makaendero uo pehi</i> (long/short)
river (channel)	<i>(okare/okasupi)</i>
road	<i>omuramba</i>
rooms	<i>ondjira</i> <i>omatuuo</i>

Numbers

1	<i>iimue</i>
2	<i>imbari</i>
3	<i>indatu</i>
4	<i>iine</i>

5	<i>indano</i>
6	<i>hamboumue</i>
7	<i>hambomabari</i>
8	<i>hambondatu</i>
9	<i>imuvuyu</i>
10	<i>omurongo</i>

!KUNG SAN

The click-ridden languages of the several San groups in Namibia and Botswana are surely among the world's most difficult for outsiders to learn (see How to Click, p778). Perhaps the most useful dialect is that of the !Kung people, who are concentrated in eastern Bushmanland in Namibia and around northwestern Botswana.

To simplify matters, in the rudimentary phrase list that follows, all clicks are represented by !k, as locals will usually forgive you for ignoring the clicks and using a 'k' sound instead.

Hello.	<i>!kao</i>
Good Morning.	<i>tuwa</i>
What's your name?	<i>!kang ya tsedia/tsidia?</i> (to a man/woman)
How are you?	<i>!ka tseyja/tsiya?</i> (to a man/woman)
My name is ...	<i>!kang ya tse/tsi ...</i> (man/woman speaking)
Thank you.	<i>!ka</i>
Thank you very much.	<i>!kin!ka</i>
Goodbye, go well.	<i>!king se !kua</i>

LOZI

Lozi is the most common Caprivi dialect, and is spoken throughout much of western Zambia.

Conversation & Essentials

When greeting a close friend, use *Lumela*, *mwana* or *Lumela, wena*.

Hello.	<i>Eeni, sha or Lumela.</i>
Good morning.	<i>U zuhile.</i>
Good afternoon/evening.	<i>Ki manzi buana</i>
Good night.	<i>Ki busihu</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Siala foo/Siala hande.</i>
Come in/Welcome.	<i>Kena.</i>
How are you?	<i>U cwang/W'a pila/W'a zuha?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>N'i teng/N'a pila/N'a zuha.</i>
And you?	<i>Wen'a bo?/Wena u cwang?</i>
Please.	<i>Sha</i> (only used with people of higher social standing)

HOW TO CLICK

Khoisan dialects (as well as several Bantu languages, including the Xhosa and Ndebele languages) are characterised by 'click' elements that make them difficult to learn.

The clicks are made by compressing the tongue against different parts of the mouth to produce different sounds. Names that include an exclamation point (!) are of Khoisan origin and should be rendered as a sideways click sound, similar to the sound made when encouraging a horse, but with a hollow tone like that when pulling a cork from a bottle. The other three clicks are made by quickly drawing the tongue away from the front teeth (represented by /); the tutting sound in English to indicate disapproval (represented by //); and a sharp pop formed by drawing the tongue down from the roof of the mouth (represented by ≠).

If the lingual gymnastics prove too much, just render all the clicks as a 'k' sound.

Thank you.	<i>N'itumezi.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Ni swalele.</i> (informal)
	<i>Mu ni swalele.</i> (polite)
Thank you very much.	<i>N'i tumezi hahulu.</i>

Good/Fine.	<i>Ki hande.</i>
OK.	<i>Ku lukile.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ee.</i>
No.	<i>Awa.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Wa bulela sikuwa?</i>
How much?	<i>Ki bukai?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>il'ingw'i</i>
2	<i>z'e peli or bubeli</i>
3	<i>z'e t'alu or bulalu</i>
4	<i>z'e ne or bune</i>
5	<i>z'e keta-lizoho</i>
6	<i>z'e keta-lizoho ka ka li kang'wi</i>
7	<i>supile</i>
10	<i>lishumi</i>
20	<i>mashumi a mabeli likiti</i>

NDEBELE (ISINDEBELE)

The language of Zimbabwe's Ndebele people is spoken primarily in Matabeleland in the western and southwestern parts of the country. It's derived from the Zulu group of languages and is not mutually intelligible with Shona.

The Ndebele of Zimbabwe and that of South Africa (also known as Southern Ndebele) are quite distinct languages. See the The 'Other' Ndebele, opposite, for some useful phrases in the South African variety.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello. (on meeting)	<i>Sawubona/Salibonani.</i>
Hello. (reply)	<i>Yebo.</i>
Welcome.	<i>Siyalemukela.</i>
Good morning.	<i>Livukenjani.</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Litshonile.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Litshone njani.</i>
How are you?	<i>Linjani/Kunjani?</i>
I'm well.	<i>Sikona.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Lisale kuhle.</i> (when staying)
Goodbye.	<i>Uhambe kuhle.</i> (when leaving)
Yes.	<i>Yebo.</i>
No.	<i>Hayi.</i>
Please.	<i>Uxolo.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Siyabonga kakulu.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ibizo lakho ngubani?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Elami igama ngingu ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ngivela e ...</i>
sir/madam	<i>umnimzana/inkosikazi</i>
How much?	<i>Yimalini?</i>
Where is the (station)?	<i>Singapi (isiteshi)?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>okukodwa</i>
2	<i>okubili</i>
3	<i>okutathu</i>
4	<i>okune</i>
5	<i>okuyisihlanu</i>
6	<i>okuyisithupha</i>
7	<i>okuyisikhombisa</i>
8	<i>okuyisitshiyangalo mbila</i>
9	<i>okuyisitshiyangalo lunye</i>
10	<i>okuli tshumi</i>

NORTHERN SOTHO (SEPEDI)

Northern Sotho is spoken in South Africa's northeastern provinces.

Hello.	<i>Thobela.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala gabotse.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ee.</i>
No.	<i>Aowa.</i>
Please.	<i>Ke kgapela.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ke ya leboga.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ke mang lebitso la gago?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Lebitso laka ke ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ke bowa kwa ...</i>

THE 'OTHER' NDEBELE

The Ndebele language of South Africa is spoken in the country's northeastern region. It shares many linguistic features with Northern Sotho but is not mutually intelligible with the Ndebele language spoken in Zimbabwe. Here are a few phrases that may prove useful:

Hello.	<i>Lotsha.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Khamaba kuhle/Sala kuhle.</i>
Yes.	<i>I-ye.</i>
No.	<i>Awa.</i>
Please.	<i>Ngibawa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ngiyathokaza.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ungubani ibizo lakho?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Ibizo lami ngu ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ngibuya e ...</i>

OWAMBO (OSHIWAMBO)

Owambo – and specifically the Kwanyama dialect – is the first tongue of more Namibians than any other language, and also the choice of the ruling Swapo party. As a result, it's spoken as a second or third language by many non-Owambo Namibians of both Bantu and Khoisan origin.

Conversation & Essentials

Good Morning.	<i>Wa lalapo.</i>
Good Evening.	<i>Wa tokelwapo.</i>
How are you?	<i>Owu li po ngiini?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Ondi li nawa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Tangi.</i>
Please.	<i>Ombili.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Oho popi Oshingilisa?</i>
How much is this?	<i>Ingapi tashi kotha?</i>
Yes.	<i>Eeno.</i>
No.	<i>Aawe.</i>
Maybe.	<i>andiya manga.</i>
Excuse me.	<i>Ombili manga.</i>
I'm sorry.	<i>Onde shi panda.</i>
I don't know.	<i>Ombili mwaa sho.</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ombili, onda puka.</i>
Can you please help me.	<i>Eto vuluwu pukulule ndje?</i>

Where is the ...?	<i>Openi pu na ...?</i>
bank	<i>ombaanga</i>
hospital	<i>oshipangelo</i>
pharmacy	<i>oaputeka</i>
police station	<i>opolisi</i>
post office	<i>opoosa</i>

telephone	<i>ngodhi</i>
toilet	<i>kandjugo</i>

soft drink, soda pop	<i>pumbwa okanar-nunate</i>
wine	<i>owaina</i>
beer	<i>ombiila</i>

Numbers

1	<i>yimwe</i>
2	<i>mbali</i>
3	<i>ndatu</i>
4	<i>ne</i>
5	<i>ntano</i>
6	<i>hamano</i>
7	<i>heyali</i>
8	<i>hetatu</i>
9	<i>omugoyi</i>
10	<i>omulongo</i>

SHONA

Shona is an amalgamation of several Bantu languages. It's spoken almost universally in the central and eastern parts of Zimbabwe. The 'high' dialect, used in broadcasts and other media, is Zezuru, which is indigenous to the Harare area.

Although most urban Zimbabweans have at least a little knowledge of English, many rural dwellers' English vocabulary is limited, so it helps to know a few words and phrases in Shona or Ndebele; see opposite). Even those Zimbabweans who speak English well will be pleasantly surprised to hear a foreigner attempt a few words in the indigenous languages.

Where two translations are given for the same word or expression in the following section, the first is used when speaking to one person, the second, to more than one.

Pronunciation

Shona, like Ndebele, was first written down by phonetic English transliteration, so most letters are pronounced as they would be in English. Differences of note:

dya	pronounced 'jga', as near to one syllable as possible
tya	as 'chka', said quickly
sv	say 's' with your tongue near the roof of the mouth
zv	like the 's-v' sound in 'is very'
m/n	before consonants at the start of a word, they're pronounced as a light 'm' or 'n' humming sound

TUMBUKA & YAO IN MALAWI

After Chewa, the two other principal indigenous languages of Malawi are Tumbuka (in the north) and Yao (in the south). Nearly all Tumbuka and Yao people also speak Chewa, and many speak English as well. Nevertheless, a few simple words in Tumbuka and Yao will be most welcome.

English	Tumbuka	Yao
Hello.	<i>Yewo.</i>	<i>Quamboni.</i>
How are you?	<i>Muliwuli?</i>	<i>Ilivuli?</i>
Fine.	<i>Nilimakola.</i>	<i>Ndiri chenene.</i>
And you?	<i>Manyi imwa?</i>	<i>Qualinimye?</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Pawemi.</i>	<i>Siagara gani ngwaula.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>Yewo (chomene).</i>	<i>Asante (sana).</i>
What's your name?	<i>Zinolinu ndimwenjani?</i>	<i>Mwe linachi?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Zinalane ndine ...</i>	<i>Une linaliangu ...</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Mukukhalankhu?</i>	<i>Ncutama qua?</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Nkhula khu ...</i>	<i>Gutama ku ...</i>

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	<i>Mhoro/Mhoroj.</i>
Hello. (reply)	<i>Ahoi.</i>
Welcome.	<i>Titambire.</i>
How are you?	<i>Makadii/Makadi-ni?</i>
I'm well.	<i>Ndiripo.</i>
Good morning.	<i>Mangwanani.</i>
Good afternoon.	<i>Masikati.</i>
Good evening.	<i>Manheru.</i>
Goodbye. (if staying)	<i>Chisarai zvakakanaka.</i>
Goodbye. (if leaving)	<i>Fambai zvakakanaka.</i>
Please.	<i>Ndapota.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ndatenda/Masvita.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ehe.</i>
No.	<i>Aiw.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Unonzi ani zita rako?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Ndini ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ndinobva ku ...</i>
How much?	<i>I marii?</i>

Numbers

1	<i>potsi</i>
2	<i>piri</i>
3	<i>tatu</i>
4	<i>ina</i>
5	<i>shanu</i>
6	<i>tanhatu</i>
7	<i>nomwe</i>
8	<i>tsere</i>
9	<i>pfumbamwe</i>
10	<i>gumi</i>

SOUTHERN SOTHO (SESOTHO)

Southern Sotho is one of two official languages in Lesotho (English being the other). It is also spoken by the Basotho people in

the Free State, North-West Province and Gauteng in South Africa. It's useful to know some words and phrases if you're planning to visit Lesotho, especially if you want to trek in remote areas.

Hello.	<i>Dumela.</i>
Greetings father.	<i>Lumela nlate.</i>
Peace father.	<i>Khotso nlate.</i>
Greetings mother.	<i>Lumela 'me.</i>
Peace mother.	<i>Khotso 'me.</i>
Greetings brother.	<i>Lumela abuti.</i>
Peace brother.	<i>Khotso abuti.</i>
Greetings sister.	<i>Lumela ausi.</i>
Peace sister.	<i>Khotso ausi.</i>

There are three commonly used ways of saying 'How are you?' (followed by suitable responses):

How are you?	<i>O kae? (sg)</i> <i>Le kae? (pl)</i>
How do you live?	<i>O phela joang? (sg)</i> <i>Le phela joang? (pl)</i>
How did you get up?	<i>O tsohele joang? (sg)</i> <i>Le tsohele joang? (pl)</i>
I'm here.	<i>Ke teng. (sg)</i> <i>Re teng. (pl)</i>
I live well.	<i>Ke phela hantle. (sg)</i> <i>Re phela hantle. (pl)</i>
I got up well.	<i>Ke tsohile hantle. (sg)</i> <i>Re tsohile hantle. (pl)</i>

These questions and answers are quite interchangeable. Someone could ask you *O phela joang?* and you could answer *Ke teng.*

When trekking, people always ask *Lea kae?* (Where are you going?) and *O tsoa kae?* or the plural *Le tsoa kae?* (Where have you come from?). When parting, use the following expressions:

Stay well.	<i>Sala hantle. (sg)</i> <i>Salang hantle. (pl)</i>
Go well.	<i>Tsamaea hantle. (sg)</i> <i>Tsamaeang hantle. (pl)</i>

'Thank you' is *kea leboha*, pronounced 'ke-ya le-bo-wa'. The herd boys often ask for *chelete* (money) or *lipompong* (sweets), pronounced 'dee-pom-pong'. If you want to say 'I don't have any', the answer is *ha dio*, pronounced 'ha dee-o'.

SWATI (SISWATI)

Swati is one of two official languages in Swaziland (the other is English). It's very similar to Zulu, and the two languages are mutually intelligible.

Yebo is often said as a casual greeting. It's the custom to greet everyone you meet. Often you will be asked *U ya phi?* (Where are you going?).

Hello. (to one person)	<i>Sawubona.</i> (lit: 'I see you')
Hello. (to more than one person)	<i>Sanibona.</i>
How are you?	<i>Kunjani?</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Kulungile.</i>
Goodbye. (if leaving)	<i>Sala kahle.</i> (lit: 'stay well')
Goodbye. (if staying)	<i>Hamba kahle.</i> (lit: 'go well')
Please.	<i>Ngicela.</i>
I thank you.	<i>Ngiyabonga.</i>
We thank you.	<i>Siyabonga.</i>
Yes.	<i>Yebo.</i> (also an all-purpose greeting)
No.	<i>Cha.</i>
Sorry.	<i>Lucolo.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Ngubani libito lakho?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Libitolami ngingu ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ngingewekubuya e ...</i>
How much?	<i>Malini?</i>

TSONGA (XITSONGA)

Tsonga is spoken in South Africa (north of Hluhluwe in KwaZulu-Natal) and in parts of Mozambique.

Hello.	<i>Avusheni.</i> (morning)
	<i>Inhelekani.</i> (afternoon)
	<i>Riperile.</i> (evening)

Goodbye.	<i>Salani kahle.</i>
Yes.	<i>Hi swona.</i>
No.	<i>A hi swona.</i>
Please.	<i>Nakombela.</i>
Thank you.	<i>I nkomu.</i>
What's your name?	<i>U mani vito ra wena?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Vito ra mina i ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ndzihuma e ...</i>

TSWANA (SETSWANA)

Tswana is widely spoken throughout Botswana and in some parts of South Africa (in the eastern areas of Northern Cape, in the North-West Province and in western Free State). There are clear similarities in vocabulary between Tswana and the two Sotho languages, and the speakers of each can generally understand one another.

The letter **g** is pronounced as a 'ch' in Scottish loch; th is pronounced as a slightly aspirated 't'.

The greetings *dumela mma* or *dumela rra* are considered compliments and Batswana people appreciate their liberal usage. When greeting a group, say *dumelang*. Another useful phrase, which is normally placed at the end of a sentence or conversation is *go siame*, meaning the equivalent of 'all right, no problem'.

Conversation & Essentials

Hello.	<i>Dumela mma/rra.</i> (to woman/man)
Hello.	<i>Dumelang.</i> (to group)
Hello!	<i>Ko ko!</i> (arrival outside a gate or house)
Goodbye.	<i>Tsamaya sentle.</i> (to one leaving)
Goodbye.	<i>Sala sentle.</i> (to one staying)
Yes.	<i>Ee.</i>
No.	<i>Nnyaa.</i>
Please.	<i>Tsweetswee.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Kea leboga.</i>
Excuse me/Sorry.	<i>Intshwarele.</i>
Pardon me.	<i>Ke kopa tsela.</i> (lit: 'I want road')
OK/No problem.	<i>Go siame</i>
How are you? (morning)	<i>A o tsogile?</i> (lit: 'how did you wake up?')
How are you? (afternoon/evening)	<i>O tlhotse jang?</i>
Come on!	<i>Tsenal</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>A o bua Sekgao?</i>
Does anyone here speak English?	<i>A go na le o o bua Sekgao?</i>
I understand.	<i>Ke a thaloganya.</i>
I don't understand.	<i>Ga ke thaloganya.</i>
How much is it?	<i>Ke bokae?</i>

Where is a/the ...?	<i>E ko kae ...?</i>
I'm looking for ...	<i>Ke batla ...</i>
a/the ...	
bank	<i>ntlo ya polokelo</i>
market	<i>mmaraka</i>
post office	<i>poso</i>
public toilet	<i>matlwana a boitiketso</i>
tourist office	<i>ntlo ya bajanala</i>
hotel	<i>hotele</i>
guesthouse	<i>matlo a baeng</i>
camping ground	<i>lefelu la go robala mo tenteng</i>

Numbers

0	<i>lefela</i>
1	<i>bongwe</i>
2	<i>bobedi</i>
3	<i>borara</i>
4	<i>bone</i>
5	<i>botlhano</i>
6	<i>borataro</i>
7	<i>bosupa</i>
8	<i>boroba bobedi</i>
9	<i>boroba bongwe</i>
10	<i>lesome</i>

VENDA (TSHIVENDA)

Venda is spoken in the northeastern region of South Africa's Northern Province.

Hello.	<i>Ndi matseloni.</i> (morning)
	<i>Ndi masiari.</i> (afternoon)
	<i>Ndi madekwana</i> (evening)
Goodbye.	<i>Kha vha sale zwavhudi.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ndi zwone.</i>
No.	<i>A si zwone.</i>
Please.	<i>Ndikho u humbela.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ndo livhuwa.</i>
What's your name?	<i>Zina lavho ndi nnyi?</i>
My name is ...	<i>Zina langa ndi ...</i>
I come from ...	<i>Ndi bva ...</i>

XHOSA (ISIXHOSA)

Xhosa is the language of the people of the same name. It's the dominant indigenous

language in Eastern Cape in South Africa, although you'll meet Xhosa speakers all through the region. *Bawo* is a term of respect used when addressing an older man.

Hello.	<i>Molo.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala kakuhle.</i>
Goodnight.	<i>Rhonanai.</i>
Please.	<i>Nceda.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Enkosi.</i>
Do you speak English?	<i>Uyakwazi ukuthetha siNgesi?</i>
Are you well?	<i>Uphilile na namhlanje?</i>
Yes, I'm well.	<i>Ewe, ndiphilile kanye.</i>
Yes.	<i>Ewe.</i>
No.	<i>Hayi.</i>
Where are you from?	<i>Uvela phi na okanye ngaphi na?</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Ndivela ...</i>
I'm lost.	<i>Ndilahlakile.</i>
Is this the road to ...?	<i>Yindlela eya ... yini le?</i>
How much is it?	<i>Idla ntoni na?</i>

ZULU (ISIZULU)

Zulu is spoken in South Africa by the people of the same name. As with several other Nguni languages, Zulu uses a variety of clicks (see How to Click, p778). To ask a question, add *na* to the end of a sentence.

Hello.	<i>Sawubona.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Sala kahle.</i>
Please.	<i>Jabulisa.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Ngiyabonga.</i>
Yes.	<i>Yebo.</i>
No.	<i>Cha.</i>
Where does this road go?	<i>Iqondaphi lendlela na?</i>
Which is the road to ...?	<i>Iphi indlela yokuya ku ...?</i>
Is it far?	<i>Kukude yini?</i>
left	<i>ekhohlo</i>
right	<i>ekumene</i>
food	<i>ukudla</i>
water	<i>amanzi</i>

Glossary

Although English is widely spoken in most Southern African countries, native speakers from Australasia, North America and the UK will notice that many words that have developed different meanings locally. There are also many unusual terms that have been borrowed from Afrikaans, Portuguese or indigenous languages. This glossary includes some of these particular 'Afro-English' words, as well as some other general terms and abbreviations that may not be understood.

In African English, repetition for emphasis is common: something that burnt you would be 'hot hot'; fields after the rains are 'green green'; a crowded minibus with no more room is 'full full', and so on.

For useful words and phrases in local languages, see p772.

4WD – four-wheel drive; locally called 4x4

apartheid – literally, the state of being apart; a political system in which peoples were officially segregated according to their race

asimilados – Mozambican term for Africans who assimilated to European ways

assegais – spears; used against the colonialists in Zimbabwe

baixa – commercial area in Mozambique

bakkie – pronounced 'bucky'; utility or pick-up truck

barchan dunes – migrating crescent-shaped sand dunes

Basarwa – Batswana name for the San people

Batswana – citizens of Botswana

bemanti – Swazi learned men

biltong – a chewy dried meat that can be anything from beef to kudu or ostrich

bobotie – traditional Malay dish; delicately flavoured curry with a topping of beaten egg baked to a crust, served with stewed fruits and chutney

Boer – farmer in Afrikaans; a historic name for the Afrikaner people

boerewors – Afrikaner farmer's sausage of varying quality

bogobe – sorghum porridge, a staple in Botswana

bojalwa – an inexpensive sorghum beer drunk in Botswana that is also brewed commercially

boma – in Zambia, Malawi and some other countries, this is a local word for 'town'; in East Africa the same word

means 'fortified stockade'; in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and much of South Africa, it's normally just a sunken campfire circle; it may be derived from the colonial term BOMA (British Overseas Military Administration), applied to any government building, such as offices or forts

boomslang – dangerous 2m-long tree snake

braai – a barbecue; a Southern African institution, particularly among whites

braawors – barbecue sausages

brötchen – little bread rolls available in Namibia

bushveld – flat grassy plain covered in thorn scrub

camarões – Mozambican term for prawns

camião – truck in Mozambique

campeamento principal – Mozambican term for main entrance

capulanas – colourful sarongs worn by Mozambican women around their waist

capuzinio – mission in Mozambique

casal – room with a double bed, for married couples, in Mozambique

cascata – Mozambican term for waterfall

chapa – word for converted passenger truck or minivan in Mozambique or Malawi

chibuku – local style mass-produced beer, stored in tanks served in buckets, or available in takeaway cartons (mostly in Zimbabwe and Malawi) and plastic bottles known as *scuds*; it's good for a quick euphoria and a debilitating *babalass* (hangover)

chili bites – spicy *biltong*, seasoned with *piri piri*

chipperone – damp misty weather that affects southern Malawi

Comrade – a Marxist title used mainly by the media, referring to black Zimbabweans, especially government officials; also Cde

Concession – a communal land area governmentally designated for use by a given commercial entity for a set amount of time – usually five years; a popular concept in both Namibia and Botswana

coupé – two-person compartment on a train

cuca shops – small shops in northern Namibia; named for the Angolan beer once sold in them

daga hut – a traditional African round house consisting of a wooden frame, mud and straw walls, and thatched roof (mainly in Zimbabwe)

dagga – pronounced da-kha; Southern African term for marijuana

dambo – area of grass, reeds or swamp alongside a river course

dassies – herbivorous gopherlike mammals of two species: *Procapra capensis*, also called the rock hyrax; and *Dendrohyrax arborea* or tree hyrax; they're in fact not rodents, but are thought to be the closest living relatives of the elephant

dhow – Arabic sailing vessel that dates from ancient times

difaqane – forced migration by several Southern African tribes in the face of Zulu aggression; also known as *mfeqane*

donga – steep-sided gully caused by soil erosion

dorp – a small country settlement in South Africa

drankwinkel – literally 'drink shop'; a Namibian or South African off-licence or bottle shop

drift – a river ford; most are normally dry

dumpi – a 375ml bottle of beer

duplo – term for a room with twin beds used in Mozambique

dwalas – bald knoblike domes of smooth rock

eh – (rhymes with 'hay') all purpose ending to sentences, even very short ones such as 'Thanks, eh?'

eumbo – immaculate Owambo *kraal*; much like a small village enclosed within a pale fence

euphoria – several species of cactuslike succulents; most are poisonous to humans

fynbos – fine bush, primarily proteas, heaths and ericas

gap it – make a quick exit; often refers to emigration from troubled African countries

garni – a hotel in Namibia that lacks a full dining room, but does offer a simple breakfast

gemütlichkeit – a distinctly German appreciation of comfort and hospitality

half-bus – Malawian term for a bus with about 30 seats – to distinguish it from big buses or minibuses

heks – entrance gates, farm gates

high season – in most of Southern Africa, this refers to the dry season, from late June to late September; in South Africa's Cape regions, it refers to the dry season from late November to early April

highveld – high-altitude grassland

Homelands – formerly self-governing black states (Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda etc), which were part of the apartheid regime's plan for a separate black and white South Africa

Incwala – most sacred Swazi ceremony in which king gives permission to his people to eat the first crops of the new year

inselberg – isolated ranges and hills; literally 'island mountains'

Izzit? – rhetorical question that most closely translates as 'Really?' and is used without regard to gender, person or

number of subjects; therefore, it could mean 'Is it?', 'Are you?', 'Is he?', 'Are they?', 'Is she?', 'Are we?' etc; also 'How izzit?' for 'How's it going?'

joala – sorghum beer in Lesotho

Jugendstil – German Art Nouveau architecture prevalent in Namibia, especially in Swakopmund and parts of Windhoek and Lüderitz

just now – refers to some time in the future but implies a certain degree of imminence; it could be half an hour from now or two days from now

kalindula – rumba-inspired music of Zambia

kampango – catfish in Malawi

kapenta – an anchovylike fish (*Limnothrissa mioda*) caught in Lake Kariba and favoured by Zimbabweans

karakul – variety of Central Asian sheep, which produce high-grade wool and pelts; raised in Namibia and parts of Botswana

kerk – church in Afrikaans

kgadi – alcoholic drink found in Botswana; a brew of brown sugar and berries or fungus

kgosi – chief in Botswana (Setswana language)

kgotla – village meeting place (Botswana)

Khoisan – language grouping taking in all Southern African indigenous languages, including San and Khoikhoi (Nama), as well as the language of the Damara (a Bantu people who speak a Khoikhoi dialect)

kizomba – musical style popular in Namibia

kloof – a ravine or small valley

kloofing – canyoning into and out of *kloofs*

kokerboom – quiver tree; grows mainly in southern Namibia and the Northern Cape province

konditorei – German pastry shops; found in larger Namibian towns

kopje – pronounced 'koppie'; a small hill or rocky outcrop on an otherwise flat plain

kotu – king's court in Zambia

kraal – Afrikaans version of the Portuguese word 'curral'; an enclosure for livestock, a fortified village of mud huts, or an Owambo homestead

kwacha – currency in Malawi and Zambia

kwasa kwasa – Congo-style rumba music

laager – wagon circle

lagosta – crayfish in Mozambique

lapa – large, thatched common area; used for socialising

lekolulo – a flutelike instrument played by herd boys in Lesotho

liqhaga – grassware 'bottles'

litunga – king in Zambia

location – alternative Namibian and South African word for township, usually affiliated with a rural town

lowveld – see *bushveld*

lupembe – wind instrument made from animal horn

mabele – sorghum, a traditional Batswana meal

machibombo – large bus in Mozambique

madila – thickened sour milk drunk in Botswana

mageu – a light and nonintoxicating drink made from *mielies* or sorghum mash, drunk in Botswana

mahango – millet; a staple of the Owambo diet and used for brewing a favourite alcoholic beverage

majika – traditional rhythmic sound

makalani – a type of palm tree that grows in the Kalahari region; also *mokolane*

makhosi – Zulu chiefs

makishi – a dance performed in Zambia featuring male dancers wearing masks of stylised human faces, grass skirts and anklets

makwela – a dance characterised by a cappella singing and sophisticated foot percussion performed in southern Mozambique

malva – apricot pudding of Dutch origin

mapiko – masked dance of the Makonde people

marimba – African xylophone, made from strips of resonant wood with various-sized gourds for sound boxes

marrabenta – typical Mozambican music, inspired by traditional *majika* rhythms

mataku – watermelon wine

matola – Malawian term for pick-up or van carrying passengers

mbanje – cannabis in Zimbabwe

mbira – thumb piano; it consists of five to 24 narrow iron keys mounted in rows on a wooden sound board

mbongi – holders and performers of a Xhosa group's oral history; a cross between a bard and a court jester

mealie pap – maize porridge, which is a dietary staple throughout the region; also called *mielie pap*

mfeqane – see *difaqane*

mielie pap – see *mealie pap*

mielies – cobs of maize

miombo – dry open woodland, also called *Brachystegia* woodland; it's composed mainly of mopane and acacia *bushveld*

mojito – Cuban cocktail made of mint, rum, lime juice, sugar and soda

mokolane – see *makalani*

mokoro – dugout canoe used in the Okavango Delta and other riverine areas; the *mokoro* is propelled by a well-balanced poler who stands in the stern

mopane – hardwood tree native to Southern Africa (also called ironwood), highly resistant to drought

mopane worms – the caterpillar of the moth *Gonimbrasiasibelina*, eaten as a local delicacy throughout the region

morama – underground tuber, source of water and pods have edible beans

mpasa – lake salmon in Malawi

msasa – small shrubby tree with compound leaves and small fragrant flowers

mujejeje – rocks that resonate when struck

multa – a fine in Mozambique

musika – a Zimbabwean market outside the town centre; also called *renkini* in Ndebele

muti – traditional medicine

nalikwanda – huge wooden canoe, painted with black and white stripes, that carries the *litunga*

Nama – popular name for Namibians of Khoikhoi, Topnaar or Baster heritage

não faz mal – 'no problem' in Portuguese; useful in both Mozambique and Angola

nara – type of melon that grows in desert areas; a dietary staple of the Topnaar people

nartjie – pronounced 'narkie'; South African tangerine

ncheni – lake tiger fish in Malawi

Ngwenyama – the Lion; term given to the King of Swaziland

nforesi – traditional San lands; literally, 'lands where one's heart is'

now now – definitely not now, but sometime sooner than 'just now'

nshima – filling maize porridge-like substance eaten in Zambia

nxum – the San people's 'life force'

nyama – meat or meat gravy

oke – term for bloke or guy, mainly heard in South Africa

ondjongo – dance performed by Himba cattle owners to demonstrate the care and ownership of their animals

oshana – normally dry river channel in northern Namibia and northwestern Botswana

oshikundu – tasty alcoholic beverage made from *mahango*; popular in traditional areas of northern Namibia

outjina (for women) and **otjipirangi** (for men) – Herero dance in which a plank is strapped to one foot in order to deliver a hollow, rhythmic percussion

pan – dry flat area of grassland or salt, often a seasonal lake-bed

pap en wors – maize porridge and sausage

participation safari – an inexpensive safari in which clients pitch their own tents, pack the vehicle and share cooking duties

pensão – inexpensive hotel in Mozambique

peri-peri – see *piri-piri*

pint – small bottle of beer or can of oil (or similar) usually around 300ml to 375ml (not necessarily equal to a British or US pint)

piri-piri – very hot pepper sauce of Portuguese-Angolan origin; the basis for the Nando's chain's chicken concotions; also known as *peri-peri*

plus-minus – meaning 'about'; this scientific/mathematical term has entered common parlance – eg 'the bus will come in plus-minus 10 minutes'

pondo – ‘pound’, occasionally used in Botswana to refer to two pula

potjie – pronounced *poi-kee*; a three-legged pot used to make stew over an open fire. The word also refers to the stew itself, as well as a gathering in which a *potjie* forms the main dish

potjiekos – meat and vegetable stew cooked in a *potjie*

praca – town square in Mozambique

praia – beach in Mozambique

pula – the Botswanan currency; means ‘rain’ in Setswana

pungwe – all-night drinking and music party in Zimbabwe

relish – sauce of meat, vegetables, beans etc eaten with boiled *mielie* meal (*nshima*, *sadza*, *mealie pap* etc)

renkini – Ndebele version of *musika*

rijsttafel – rice with side dishes; Dutch interpretation of Indonesian *makan besar*

Rikki – small, open van; cross between a taxi and a shared taxi

robot – no, not R2D2 – it’s just a traffic light

rondavel – round, African-style hut

rooibos – literally ‘red bush’ in Afrikaans; herbal tea that reputedly has therapeutic qualities

rusvingo – Shona word for walled-in enclosures

sadza – maize-meal porridge

San – language-based name for indigenous people formerly known as Bushmen

sandveld – dry, sandy belt

sangoma – witchdoctor; herbalist

scud – plastic drink bottle

seif dunes – prominent linear sand dunes, as found in the central Namib Desert

setolo-tolo – a Lesotho stringed instrument played with the mouth

shame! – half-hearted expression of commiseration

shebeen – an illegal township drinking establishment (which may also include a brothel)

sibhaca – type of Swazi dance

Sperrgebiet – forbidden area; alluvial diamond region of southwestern Namibia

Strandlopers – literally ‘beach walkers’; term used to describe the ancient inhabitants of the Namib region, who may have been ancestors of the San or Nama peoples; occasionally also refers to the brown desert hyena

sua – salt as in Sua Pan, Botswana

sungwa – a type of perch in Malawi

swaartgevaar – Afrikaans for the ‘black threat’

tambo – fermented millet and sugar drink, popular in rural areas of Namibia

thomo – a stringed instrument played by women in Lesotho

timbila – a form of xylophone played by Chope musicians

township – indigenous suburb, typically a high-density black residential area

Trekboers – nomadic pastoralists descended from the Dutch

trouk – jail (Afrikaans)

tsama – bitter desert melon historically eaten by the San people; it’s also eaten by livestock

tsotsi – hoodlum, thief

tufo – traditional dance style from Ilha de Moçambique

tuk-tuk – Asian-style motorised three-wheel vehicle found in Durban, South Africa

uitlanders – pronounced ‘ait-landers’; foreigners

Umhlanga – reed dance; sacred Swazi ceremony

umuzi – ‘beehive’ huts

upshwa – maize- or cassava-based staple in Mozambique

Uri – desert-adapted vehicle produced in Namibia

veld – pronounced ‘felt’; open grassland, normally in plateau regions

vlei – pronounced ‘flay’; any low open landscape, sometimes marshy

Voortrekkers – fore-trekkers, pioneers

volkstaal – people’s language

Volkstaat – people’s state

vundu – Malawian catfish

wag ‘n bietjie – pronounced ‘vak-n-bee-kee’; literally ‘wait a bit’; Afrikaans name for the buffalo thorn acacia

walende – a drink distilled from the *makalani* palm that tastes like vodka

wandelpad – short hiking trail

waterblommetjie bredie – water-flower stew; meat served with the flower of the Cape pondweed

welwitschia – bizarre cone-bearing shrub (*Welwitschia mirabilis*) native to the northern Namib plains

xima – maize- or cassava-based staple in Mozambique, usually served with a sauce of beans, vegetables or fish

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