

Improving Your

# Thai

Pronunciation

A GUIDE TO MASTERING THAI SOUNDS

Benjawan Poomsan Becker

เบญจวรรณ ปูมิแสน เบคเกอร์

# Improving Your Thai Pronunciation

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Paiboon Poomsan Publishing  
582 Amarinniwate Village 2  
Sukhapiban Road 1, Bungkum  
Bangkok 10230  
THAILAND

☎ 662-509-8632

Fax 662-519-5437

Paiboon Publishing  
PMB 192, 1442A Walnut Street  
Berkeley, California USA 94709  
☎ 1-510-848-7086  
Fax 1-510-848-4521

Email: [info@paiboonpublishing.com](mailto:info@paiboonpublishing.com)  
[www.paiboonpublishing.com](http://www.paiboonpublishing.com)

สำนักพิมพ์ไพบูลย์ภูมิแสวน  
582 หมู่บ้านอัมรินทร์นิเวศน์ 2  
ถ. สุขุมวิท 1 เขตปทุมธานี  
ก.ท.ม. 10230  
☎ 662-509-8632  
โทรสาร 662-519-5437

Email: [info@paiboonpublishing.com](mailto:info@paiboonpublishing.com)  
[www.paiboonpublishing.com](http://www.paiboonpublishing.com)

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Voice Talent: Craig Becker, Benjawan Becker, Adissapong  
Praphantanathorn and Gamontip Prayoonthong

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# Introduction

Mastering pronunciation of the Thai language can be a real challenge for foreigners, in spite of the fact that grammar, sentence structure and general usage are fairly straight forward. Non-Thai speakers whose languages are not tonal often find themselves struggling with sounds that are unfamiliar to the ear, many of which seem to sound the same. Distinguishing between words that are identical except for tone or vowel length is especially difficult and takes some practice. Having a good ear is important but it's not necessary to be a musician! Remember—all Thais learn to hear and speak tones and vowel length whether they are musically talented or not.

This is a program that has been specifically designed to help non-Thai speakers enhance their Thai listening and speaking skills. It particularly targets problems with Thai tones and vowel length. You will learn the basic five tones by heart, how to distinguish between similar sounds and much more.

"Improving Your Thai Pronunciation" is not meant to be a complete language course—it doesn't address grammar or writing. To review sentence structure, writing, vocabulary building and grammar use a basic text such as "Thai for Beginners". Whether you have been learning Thai for a long time or are just starting off, you will find this pronunciation course useful, fun and user-friendly. We hope that you will feel more confident speaking Thai—you may be surprised with the improvement in your pronunciation after finishing this program!

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# Guide to Pronunciation

## Tones

Because Thai is a tonal language, its pronunciation presents new challenges for English speakers. If the tone is wrong, you will not be easily understood even if everything else is correct. Thai uses five tones. For example, to pronounce a rising tone, your voice starts at a low pitch and goes up (much like asking a question in English). The phonetic transliteration in this text book uses tone marks over the vowels to show the tone for each word. Note that the tone marks used for transliteration are different from those used in Thai script.

## Tone Marks ( Transliteration)

<u>Tone</u>	<u>Tone symbol</u>	<u>Example</u>
<i>mid</i>	<i>None</i>	maa
<i>low</i>	`	màa
<i>falling</i>	^	mâa
<i>high</i>	´	máa
<i>rising</i>	ˇ	mǎa

## Vowels

Most Thai vowels have two versions, short and long. Short vowels are clipped and cut off at the end. Long ones are drawn out. This book shows short vowels with a single letter and long vowels with double letters ('a' for short; 'aa' for long).

The 'ๅ' has no comparable sound in English. Try saying 'u' while spreading your lips in as wide a smile as possible. If the sound you are making is similar to one you might have uttered after stepping on something disgusting, you are probably close!

### Short & Long Vowels

a	like <u>a</u> in <u>Alaska</u>	fan - teeth
aa	like <u>a</u> in <u>father</u>	maa - come
i	like <u>i</u> in <u>tip</u>	sìp - ten
ii	like <u>ee</u> in <u>see</u>	sìi - four
u	like <u>oo</u> in <u>boot</u>	kun - you
uu	like <u>u</u> in <u>ruler</u>	sũun - zero
ๅ	like <u>u</u> in <u>ruler</u> , but with a smile	nàng - one
ๅๅ	like ๅ but longer	mๅๅ - hand
e	like <u>e</u> in <u>pet</u>	sèt - finish
ee	like <u>a</u> in <u>pale</u>	pleeng-song
ε	like <u>a</u> in <u>cat</u>	lé - and
εε	like <u>a</u> in <u>sad</u>	dεeng - red

ə	like <u>er</u> in <u>teacher</u>	lɔ̃ - dirty
	without the r sound	
æ	like <u>ə</u> but longer	jæ - meet
o	like <u>o</u> in <u>note</u>	jon - poor
oo	like <u>o</u> in <u>go</u>	joon - robber
ɔ̃	like <u>au</u> in <u>caught</u>	gɔ̃ - island
ɔ̃ɔ̃	like <u>aw</u> in <u>law</u>	nɔ̃ɔ̃ - sleep

### Complex Vowels

The following diphthongs are combinations of the above vowels.

ai	mâi - not	aai	saai - sand
ao	mao - drunk	aaɔ̃	kâɔ̃ - rice
ia	bia - beer	iao	ñiao - sticky
ua	dtua - body	uai	ruai - rich
ɰa	rɰa - boat	ɰai	ñɰai - tired
ɔ̃i	ñɔ̃i - little	ɔ̃ɔ̃i	kɔ̃ɔ̃i - wait
ooi	dooi - by	æi	næi - butter
ui	kui - chat	iu	h̃iu - hungry
eo	reo - fast	eeɔ̃	eeɔ̃ - waist
eo	t̃eo - row	éeo	léeo - already

## Consonants

b	as in <u>b</u> aby	bin - fly
ch	as in <u>ch</u> in	ch <sup>h</sup> u - name
d	as in <u>d</u> oll	duu - look
f	as in <u>f</u> un	fai - fire
g	as in <u>g</u> old	gin - eat
h	as in <u>h</u> oney	h <sup>h</sup> aa - five
j	as in <u>j</u> et	j <sup>h</sup> et - seven
k	as in <u>k</u> iss	kon - person
l	as in <u>l</u> ove	ling - monkey
m	as in <u>m</u> oney	mii - have
n	as in <u>n</u> eed	naa - rice field
p	as in <u>p</u> retty	pan - thousand
r	rolled like the Spanish <u>r</u>	rian - study
s	as in <u>s</u> ex	s <sup>h</sup> ii - four
t	as in <u>t</u> ender	tam - do
w	as in <u>w</u> oman	wan - day
y	as in <u>y</u> ou	yaa - medicine
ng	as in <u>ng</u> ringing	ngaan - work
dt	as in <u>dt</u> op	dtaa - eye
bp	as in <u>bp</u> ot	bpai - go
gw	as in <u>gw</u> am	gw <sup>h</sup> aa - more than
kw	as in <u>kw</u> eer	kwaam - matter



Practice saying the words below while your teacher listens. Then have your teacher say the words and see if you can hear the tones correctly.

Mid	Low	Falling	High	Rising
maa <i>to come</i>	-	-	máa <i>horse</i>	mǎa <i>dog</i>
mai <i>mile</i>	mài <i>new</i>	mâi <i>no, not</i>	mái <i>....., right?</i>	mǎi <i>silk</i>
glai <i>far</i>	-	glâi <i>near</i>	-	-
sai <i>fish trap</i>	sài <i>to wear</i>	sâi <i>intestine</i>	sái <i>to preen</i>	sǎi <i>clear</i>
paa <i>to take</i>	pàa <i>to split</i>	pâa <i>cloth</i>	-	pǎa <i>cliff</i>
kaao <i>fishy</i>	kàao <i>news</i>	kâao <i>rice</i>	-	kǎao <i>white</i>
-	wàt <i>a cold</i>	-	wát <i>temple</i>	-
-	sùa <i>mat</i>	sûa <i>shirt</i>	-	sǔa <i>tiger</i>
yaa <i>medicine</i>	yàa <i>"don't"</i>	yâa <i>grandmother, grass</i>	-	-

**Practice the Following Words****A. Words with mid tones:**

1.	dii	ดี	<i>good</i>
2.	kon	คน	<i>person</i>
3.	jai	ใจ	<i>heart</i>
4.	aai	อาย	<i>to be shy</i>
5.	kruu	ครู	<i>teacher</i>

**B. Words with low tones:**

1.	nùng	หนึ่ง	<i>one</i>
2.	sii	สี่	<i>four</i>
3.	jèt	เจ็ด	<i>seven</i>
4.	jà	จะ	<i>will</i>
5.	sèt	เสร็จ	<i>to finish</i>

**C. Words with falling tones:**

1.	hâa	ห้า	<i>five</i>
2.	gâao	เก้า	<i>nine</i>
3.	nii	นี้	<i>this</i>
4.	châi	ใช่	<i>correct</i>
5.	mâi	ไม่	<i>not, no</i>

**D. Words with high tones:**

1.	fáa	ฟ้า	<i>blue, sky</i>
2.	náam	น้ำ	<i>water</i>
3.	chái	ใช้	<i>to use</i>
4.	rúu	รู้	<i>to know</i>
5.	rák	รัก	<i>to love</i>

**E. Words with rising tones:**

1.	mǎa	หมา	<i>dog</i>
2.	sǔung	สูง	<i>tall</i>
3.	nǎngsǔn	หนังสือ	<i>book</i>
4.	mǔu	หมู	<i>pig</i>
5.	kǎao	ขาว	<i>white</i>

## More About Tones, Short-Long Vowels, Similar Consonants and Vowel Sounds

When you are not understood, often you are saying the tone wrong. However, the length of the vowel is also very important. Try to get the vowel length correct. This will help you to be understood better while you are still learning to master the tones.

Practice saying the following words.

### Different Tone, Different Meaning

1.	maa	มา	<i>to come</i>
	máa	ม้า	<i>horse</i>
	mǎa	หมา	<i>dog</i>
2.	mai	ไม้	<i>mile</i>
	mài	ใหม่	<i>new</i>
	mâi	ไหม, ไหม้	<i>no, to burn</i>
	mái	มี๊	<i>....., right?</i>
	mǎi	ไหม	<i>silk</i>
3.	kào	เข้า	<i>knee</i>
	kâo	เข้า	<i>to enter</i>
	káo	เค้า	<i>he/she</i>
	kǎo	เขา	<i>animal horn, he/she</i>
4.	kaao	คาว	<i>fishy</i>
	kàao	ข่าว	<i>news</i>
	kâao	ข้าว	<i>rice</i>
	kǎao	ขาว	<i>white</i>
5.	sii	สี	<i>"a particle"</i>
	sìi	สี่	<i>four</i>
	sîi	ซี่	<i>the classifier for "tooth"</i>
	sǐi	สี	<i>color</i>

6.	glai	ไกล	<i>far</i>
	glâi	ใกล้	<i>near</i>
7.	sûa	เสื้อ	<i>mat</i>
	sûa	เสื้อ	<i>shirt</i>
	sũa	เสื้อ	<i>tiger</i>
8.	baa	บาร์	<i>bar</i>
	bàa	บ่า	<i>shoulder</i>
	bâa	บ้า	<i>mad, crazy</i>
9.	paa	พา	<i>to take along</i>
	pàa	ผ่า	<i>to cut, to split</i>
	pâa	ผ้า	<i>cloth</i>
	pǎa	ผา	<i>cliff</i>
10.	bpa a	ป่า	<i>to throw</i>
	bpàa	ป่า	<i>forest</i>
	bpâa	ป้า	<i>aunt</i>
	bpǎa	ป้า	<i>father (of a Chinese Thai)</i>
11.	yàak	อยาก	<i>to want to</i>
	yâak	ยาก	<i>difficult</i>
12.	yaa	ยา	<i>medicine</i>
	yàa	อย่า	<i>don't</i>
	yâa	ย่า	<i>grandmother</i>
13.	bpuu	ปู	<i>crab</i>
	bpùu	ปู่	<i>grandfather</i>
14.	naa	นา	<i>rice field</i>
	nâa	หน้า	<i>face, season</i>
	nǎa	หนา	<i>thick</i>
15.	mii	มี	<i>to have</i>
	mìi	หมี่	<i>dry noodle</i>
	mǐi	หมี	<i>bear</i>

16.	pèt	เผ็ด	<i>spicy</i>
	pét	เพชร	<i>diamond</i>
17.	nai	ใน	<i>in</i>
	nǎi	ไหน	<i>where</i>
18.	wàt	หวัด	<i>a cold</i>
	wát	วัด	<i>temple</i>
19.	sai	ไซ	<i>a kind of fish trap</i>
	sài	ใส่	<i>to put on, to wear</i>
	sâi	ไส้	<i>intestine</i>
	sái	ไซ้	<i>to preen (the feathers)</i>
	sǎi	ใส	<i>clear</i>
20.	saai	ทราย	<i>sand</i>
	sàai	ส่าย	<i>to shake</i>
	sáai	ซ้าย	<i>left</i>
	sǎai	สาย	<i>late</i>

### Short and Long Vowels

1.	kǎo	เขา	<i>horn</i>	kǎao	ขาว	<i>white</i>
2.	kâo	เข้า	<i>to enter</i>	kâao	ข้าว	<i>rice</i>
3.	jan	จันทร์	<i>moon</i>	jaan	งาน	<i>plate</i>
4.	yang	ยาง	<i>yet</i>	yaang	ยาง	<i>rubber</i>
5.	kun	คุณ	<i>you</i>	kuun	คูณ	<i>to multiply</i>
6.	sǎi	ใส	<i>clear</i>	sǎai	สาย	<i>late</i>
7.	mâi	ไม่	<i>no</i>	mâai	ม้าย	<i>widower</i>
8.	jàk	จักร	<i>sewing machine</i>	jàak	จาก	<i>from</i>
9.	nai	ใน	<i>in</i>	naai	นาย	<i>Mr.</i>
10.	rao	เรา	<i>we</i>	raao	ราว	<i>about</i>

## Similar Sounds

1.	dii	ดี	<i>good</i>	dtii	ตี	<i>to hit</i>
2.	bai	ใบ	<i>leaf</i>	bpai	ไป	<i>to go</i>
3.	nũu	หนู	<i>mouse</i>	nguu	งู	<i>snake</i>
4.	pèt	เผ็ด	<i>spicy</i>	bpèt	เป็ด	<i>duck</i>
5.	tũng	ถุง	<i>bag</i>	tũng	ถึง	<i>to</i>
6.	krũang	เครื่อง	<i>machine</i>	krũang	ครึ่ง	<i>half</i>
7.	dao	เดา	<i>to guess</i>	dtao	เตา	<i>stove</i>
8.	nœn	เนิน	<i>mound, hill</i>	ngœn	เงิน	<i>money</i>
9.	ũut	อูฐ	<i>camel</i>	ũut	อืด	<i>swollen</i>
10.	glua	กลัว	<i>to be afraid</i>	glua	เกลือ	<i>salt</i>

## Irregular Tones

The tone pronunciation of some common words has evolved and they are now usually pronounced differently from the way they are written in Thai script. For example:

ดิฉัน (dì-chǎn) is usually pronounced ดิฉัน (dì-chán).

เขา (kǎo) is usually pronounced เค้า (káo).

ไหม (mǎi) (the particle) is usually pronounced มัย (mái).

In our transliteration system, we give the pronunciation most commonly used by modern Thai speakers. For example:

ดิฉัน is transcribed as dì-chán. เขา is transcribed as káo.

ไหม is transcribed as mái.

For poly-syllabic words, in normal speech, the tone of the initial syllable tends to become a mid tone. For example:

à-rai sounds like a-rai in normal speech.

sà-wàtdii sounds like sa-wàtdii in normal speech.

# The Five Tones

<u>Tone</u>	<u>Tone symbol</u>	<u>Example</u>
<i>mid</i>	<i>None</i>	maa
<i>low</i>	`	màa
<i>falling</i>	^	mâa
<i>high</i>	´	máa
<i>rising</i>	ˇ	mǎa

Practice saying the following exercise many times.

gaa	gàa	gâa	gáa	gǎa
กา	ก่า	ก้า	ก๊า	ก๋า
dii	dìi	dîi	díi	dǐi
ดี	ดี๋	ดี๊	ดี็	ดี้
buu	bùu	bûu	búu	bǔu
บู	บู๋	บู๊	บู็	บู้
ee	èe	êe	ée	ěe
เอ	เอ๋	เอ๊	เอ็	เอ้
joo	jòo	jôo	jóo	jǒo
โจ	โจ๋	โจ๊	โจ็	โจ้

## The Vowels

The following vowel sounds are not familiar to English speakers.

### ๗/๗๗ ๗ / ๗

๗	อึ	dung
๗๗๗	มือ	hand
sək	สึก	to disrobe (monks)
k๗๗	คืน	night
f๗๗๗	ฟืน	wood fuel
๗๗๗-๗๗๗	มือถือ	hand phone

### ๗๗ ๗๗๗

๗๗๗	เรือ	ship
s๗๗๗	เสื่อ	mat
g๗๗๗	เกลือ	salt
n๗๗๗	เหนือ	north
m๗๗๗	เมื่อ	at the time, when
๗๗๗-ch๗๗๗	เหลือเชื่อ	unbelievable



## จ/เจ - -อะ / -อ

jə̀	เจออะ	to find
jaə	เจอ	to find, to meet
taə	เธอ	you
raə	เรอ	to belch
páə-jáə	เพ้อเจ้อ	to talk foolishly
lá-tá	เลอะเทอะ	dirty and messy

## ว/ว - -าะ / -อ

gə̀	เกาะ	island
jə̀	เจาะ	to make a hole
ká	เคาะ	to knock
raə	รอ	to wait
kaə	คอ	neck
lòə	หล่อ	handsome

## The Consonants

The following consonant sounds are not familiar to English speakers.

### ng ง

nguu	งู	snake
ngən	เงิน	money
ngôo	โง่	stupid
ngong	งง	confused
ngǎo	เหงา	lonely
ngii-ngǎo	งี่เง่า	dumb

### dt ต

dtaa	ตา	eye
dtòk	ตก	to fall
dtua	ตัว	body
dtèe	แต่	but
dtaai	ตาย	to die
dtoong-dteeng	โตงเตง	swayingly

**bp ป**

bpuu	ปู	crab
bpàa	ป่า	forest
bpîng	ปิ้ง	to grill
bpun	ปืน	gun
bpâo	เป้า	target
bpà-bpaa	ปะปา	water supply

**r ร**

rao	เรา	we
รอ	รอ	to wait
rêe	แร่	mineral
rúu	รู้	to know
rũu-rãa	หรูหรา	luxurious
rúk-raan	รุกราน	to invade

## Clusters

There are three letters that form common cluster sounds in Thai: “r”, “l” and “w”. The combinations are gr-, gl-, gw-, kr-, kl-, kw-, dtr-, bpr-, bpl-, pr- and pl-. Announcers, official speakers, newscasters etc. may pronounce all them. However, in normal speech many Thai people drop the “r” and “l” sounds in the cluster form, although they do pronounce the “w”.

For example:

grung-têep (Bangkok) will be pronounced as gung-têep.

gġn (smell, odor) will be pronounced as ġn.

kruu (teacher) will be pronounced as kuu.

klɔɔng (canal) will be pronounced as kɔɔng.

dtrɔng (straight) will be pronounced as dtɔng.

bpràp (to fine, to adjust) will be pronounced as bpàp.

bplùk (to wake someone up) will be pronounced as bplùk.

praan (hunter) will be pronounced as paan.

pleeng (song) will be pronounced as peeng.

This can cause mix-ups at times. The word “kuu” means “ditch” and the word “paan” means “tray”. In order to avoid confusing them with the words for “teacher” and “hunter”, you will have to consider the context, since they are often pronounced the same.

The “w” clusters are normally pronounced fully:

gwaang (deer) will be pronounced gwaang.

kwaai (buffalo) will be pronounced kwaai.

## Confusing Words

Can you distinguish the following words? They are similar sounding to non-Thai speakers.

The differences are in the tones and the vowel lengths.

kào	เข่า	knee
kâo	เข้า	to enter
káo	เค้า	he, she
kǎo	เขา	horn, he, she
kaao	คาว	fishy
kào	ข่าว	news
kâao	ข้าว	rice
kaao	ขาว	white
gao	เกา	to scratch
gào	เก่า	old
gâao	เก้า	nine, step
mài	ใหม่	new
mâi	ไม	no
mái	ม้าย	...right?

mǎi	ไหม	silk
maai	ไมล์	mile
māai	ม่าย	widow
sai	ไซ	a kind of fish trap
sài	ใส่	to put on
sâi	ไส้	intestine
sái	ไช้	to dig for food
sǎi	ใส	clear
saai	ทราย	sand
sàai	ส่าย	to shake
sáai	ซ้าย	left
sǎai	สาย	late

Can you distinguish the following words? They are similar sounding to non-Thai speakers.

The differences are in the initial consonants.

bàa	บ่า	shoulder
bpàa	ป่า	forest
pàa	ผ่า	to chop (wood)

pèt	เผ็ด	spicy
bpèt	เป็ด	duck
bèt	เบ็ด	fishhook
bai	ใบ	leaf
bpai	ไป	to go
pai	ไพ	old Thai coin
dii	ดี	good
dtii	ตี	to hit
tii	ที	times (occurrence)
dao	เดา	to guess
dtao	เตา	stove
tao	เทา	grey
dung	ดึง	to pull
dtung	ตึง	tight
gaang	กาง	to spread (e.g. wings)
glaang	กลาง	center
kaang	คาง	chin
kraang	คราง	to groan

## Poly-Syllabic Words

Poly-syllabic words with the same tone — mid, low, falling, high and rising respectively.

raang-wan	รางวัล	prize
glaang-kan	กลางคัน	halfway
sà-àat	สะอาด	clean
bprà-gùat	ประกวด	to contest
kâao-jâao	ข้าวเจ้า	non-glutinous rice
lêek-kii	เลขคี่	odd number
tú-rá	ธุระ	errand
pá-yák	พยัก	to nod
nǎng-sǎn	หนังสือ	book
gǔai-dtǎo	ก๋วยเตี๋ยว	rice noodles



With poly-syllabic words there is almost always a light stress on the final syllable. The non-stressed syllables, especially the first syllable in long words, usually change to mid tone. This does not always happen. Some people pronounce all the tones the same way that they are written, although this sounds a bit stiff and unnatural to most people. It depends on the individual speaker.

sà-wàt-dii สวัสดี “good day!” sounds like sa-wàt-dii.

à-rai อะไร “what” sounds like a-rai.

ká-ná คณะ “faculty” sounds like ka-ná.

ben-jà-wan เบญจวรรณ “Benjawan” sounds like ben-ja-wan.

บอว-rí-sàt บริษัท “company” sounds like บอv-ri-sàt.

gà-sì-gam กลสิกรรม “farming” sounds like gà-si-gam.

pá-yan-chá-ná พยัญชนะ “consonant” sounds like  
pa-yan-cha-ná.

má-hǎa-wít-tá-yaa-lai มหาวิทยาลัย “university” sounds like  
ma-hǎa-wít-ta-yaa-lai.

paa-hù-rát พาหุรัด “Pahurad Road in Bangkok” sounds like  
paa-hu-rát.

## Thai Intonation

When you speak Thai, you can't use intonation the same way that you would in English. For example, in the English statement "John went to the store"; if you change the intonation of the word "store" to a rising tone, you turn the statement into a question "John went to the store?". When speaking Thai, however, this ingrained intonation habit no longer works. Changing the tone of the last word in a statement doesn't make it a question, it changes the last word to another word entirely or to a nonsense sound. Nevertheless, Thai people are able to use their voices to express a full range of emotions-- affection, anger, doubt, joy, fear, hesitation, etc. The pitch, stress and inflection may vary depending on the mood of the speaker, however the words retain their basic tone characteristics.

Please listen to the CD and pay attention to your intonation. Repeat the following sentences and practice them until you can say them like a native Thai. The first item for each number is for male speakers and the second is for female speakers.

### 1. Hello!

sa-wàt-dii-kráp. สวัสดีครับ

sa-wàt-dii-kâ. สวัสดีค่ะ

### 2. I like Thailand very much.

pǒm chǎw p mhang tai mâak kráp. ผมชอบเมืองไทยมากครับ

chán chǎw p mhang tai mâak kâ. ฉันชอบเมืองไทยมากค่ะ

3. Could you speak slowly?  
 pūut cháa-cháa dāai mái kráp. พูดช้าๆได้มั้ยครับ  
 pūut cháa-cháa dāai mái ká. พูดช้าๆได้มั้ยค่ะ
4. This one is really spicy.  
 annii pèt māk ləoi kráp. อันนี้เผ็ดมากเลยครับ  
 annii pèt māk ləoi ká. อันนี้เผ็ดมากเลยค่ะ
5. Where is the toilet?  
 hōng náam yùu nǎi kráp. ห้องน้ำอยู่ไหนครับ  
 hōng náam yùu nǎi ká. ห้องน้ำอยู่ไหนค่ะ
6. What kind of work do you do?  
 kun tam ngaan a-rai kráp. คุณทำงานอะไรครับ  
 kun tam ngaan a-rai ká. คุณทำงานอะไรค่ะ
7. Where have you been?  
 bpai nǎi maa kráp. ไปไหนมาครับ  
 bpai nǎi maa ká. ไปไหนมาค่ะ
8. I have been in Thailand for two weeks.  
 pǎm maa muang tai dāai sǎwng aa-tít léeo.  
 ผมมาเมืองไทยได้สองอาทิตย์แล้ว  
 chán maa muang tai dāai sǎwng aa-tít léeo.  
 ฉันมาเมืองไทยได้สองอาทิตย์แล้ว

## Tongue Twisters

The following phrases, sentences and tongue twisters contain difficult tone or sound combinations. They may not make much sense but are good for pronunciation practice. If you can say them all correctly, you'll sound almost like a native speaker! If Thai people understand 18 out of 20, you are doing excellent, 14 out of 20 is good, 10 out of 20, you can get by in Thailand O.K. and fewer than 10, well, Thai people may have to ask you a few times to figure out what you are trying to say.

### Practice the Following Sentences

1. Who's selling chicken eggs?  
krai kǎai kài-gài. ใครขายไข่ไก่
2. Which season does auntie farm rice?  
nǎa tam-naa nǎa nǎi. น้าทำนาหน้าไหน
3. Gai pretends that she lives just near by, not far away.  
gài tam-gǎi wǎa yùu glâi-glâi mǎi glai.  
ไก่ทำไก่ว่าอยู่ใกล้ๆ ไม่ไกล
4. The dog and the horse are eating Ma-ma noodles.  
mǎa gǎp mǎa maa gin maa-mǎa. หมากับม้ามากินมาม่า

5. New wood doesn't burn, does it?  
máai mài mâi mâi mái. ไม้ไหมไม้ไหมมั๊ย
6. The snake ate the mouse until the snake was confused.  
nguu gin núu jon nguu ngong-nguai. งูกินหนูจนงูงงวย
7. Auntie took daddy to throw crabs in the woods.  
bpâa paa bpâa bpai bpaa bpuu nai bpâa.  
ป้าพาป้าไปป้าในป่า
8. He came in to tell that there was some white rice.  
káo kâo maa bòok kâao wâa mii kâao kâao.  
เขาเข้ามาบอกข่าวว่ามีข้าวขาว
9. Phet likes to eat very very hot duck *laap*.  
nóong-pét chívop gin lâap-bpèt tii pèt-pèt.  
น้องเพชรชอบกินลาบเปิดที่เผ็ดๆ
10. Nam is going to the river with thorns.  
nam bpai mêe-nâam mii nâam. นำไปแม่น้ำมีหนาม
11. The small boat moves very fast.  
rua lam-lék looi-lóng rúat-reo. เรือลำเล็กลอยต่อจรวดเร็ว

12. There are 88 doctors.  
mii p̄eet bp̄eet-sìp-bp̄eet kon. มีแพทย์แปดสิบแปดคน
13. What is a hand phone?  
มมม-ทัมม กกมม arai. มือถือคืออะไร
14. Chai used the flashlight on Chaai's face, didn't he?  
chai cháai fai-cháai sài n̄aa chaai cháai-mái.  
ชัยใช้ไฟฉายใส่หน้าชายไช้มัย
15. The tiger is on the mat. The shirt is on the tiger.  
The mat is on the shirt. The shirt is on the mat.  
The tiger is on the shirt. The mat is on the tiger.  
s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.      s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.  
s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.      s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.  
s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.      s̄h̄a yùu bon s̄h̄a.  
เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ                      เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ  
เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ                      เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ  
เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ                      เสื้ออยู่บนเสื้อ
16. The green bowl is turned over in the morning.  
The white bowl is turned over in the evening.  
chaam-k̄iao kw̄âm cháao. chaam-k̄áo kw̄âm k̄âm.  
ชามเขียวคว่ำเช้า ชามขาวคว่ำค่ำ

17. The big giant chased the small giant and then the small giant chased the big giant.  
 yák-yài lâi yák-lék léεo yák-lék gôw lâi yák-yài.  
 ยักษ์ใหญ่ไล่ยักษ์เล็ก แล้วยักษ์เล็กก็ไล่ยักษ์ใหญ่
18. Grandpa Ti fell off the palm tree. The palm trunk hit his bottom and he died.  
 dtaa-dtîi dtòk dtôn-dtaan dtəw-dtaan dtam dtuut  
 dtaai.  
 ตาตีตกต้นไม้ตาลตอตาลตำคุดตาย
19. Morning, I gulp stir-fried squash.  
 Evening, I gulp squash stir-fried.  
 cháao fáat fák-pàt. yen fáat păt-fák.  
 เช้าฟาดผักผัด เย็นฟาดผัดผัก
20. The soldier carried a gun, received some cement and went to plaster the building.  
 tá-hǎan bèek bpəun bə̀ək bpuun bpai bə̀ək dtək.  
 ทหารแบกปืน เป็กปูน ไปโบกตึก

## Thaiglish

*Thaiglish* is a made-up word that describes the language that comes out when Thai people try to speak English (or it could equally describe what happens when English speakers try to speak Thai). There are more and more Thai people speaking English, especially those in big cities and in the business world. Quite a few become very proficient. However, there are many others who speak with a heavy Thai accent and tend to use Thai grammar with English words. This is "*Thaiglish*"! There are many sounds in English that are difficult for Thai speakers to pronounce. When you are in Thailand speaking English with a Thai, there may be times when you wonder what the Thai person is trying to say. Often you will laugh when you find out that they meant something entirely different from what you thought you understood. Other times you may never understand at all. Sometimes you will run across written Thaiglish. It's not uncommon to see a bewildered foreigner at a museum or historical park standing in front of a sign that was supposedly written in English by some well meaning government employee. The tourist will typically say something like "I understand every word individually but have no idea what the overall meaning of this explanation is". Such is the grammatical structure of Thaiglish. The following are a few typical examples of the ways that Thai people tend to change the pronunciation of English words. Hopefully, the list will help you to better understand what Thai people are trying to say to you in English.



## Consonant Sounds at the Beginning of a Syllable

sh, z, r, v, th at the beginning of a syllable.

'sh' is pronounced as 'ch'.

e.g.: 'she' is pronounced as 'chee'.

'z' is pronounced as 's'.

e.g.: 'zero' is pronounced as 'sero'.

'r' is pronounced as 'l' or Thai 'r'.

e.g.: 'rat' is pronounced as 'lat' or 'rat' (with a rolling 'r'), but more likely 'lat'.

'v' is pronounced as 'w'.

e.g.: 'seven' is pronounced as 'sewen'.

'th' is pronounced as 'd' or 't'.

e.g.: 'three' is pronounced as 'tee' or 'tree'.

'that' is pronounced as 'dat'.

## Consonant Sounds at the End of a Syllable

The Thai language uses considerably fewer consonant sounds (eight, to be exact) in final position compared to the initial position of a syllable. Many English sounds at the end of a word or syllable are difficult for Thai speakers, including the following:

f, g, l, ch, r, s, sh, th, z, r or v at the end of a syllable.

‘v’ or ‘f’ is pronounced as ‘b’ or ‘p’.

e.g.: ‘love’ is pronounced as ‘lub’.

‘l’ is pronounced as ‘n’ or ‘w’ or is completely omitted.

e.g.: ‘kill’ is pronounced as ‘kiw’ (‘kiu’).

‘general’ is pronounced as ‘genneran’.

‘th’, ‘s’ and ‘z’ are pronounced as ‘t’ or dropped completely.

e.g.: ‘house’ is pronounced as ‘how’.

‘ch’ and ‘sh’ are pronounced as a soft ‘t’.

e.g.: ‘touch’ is pronounced as ‘tut’.

## Consonant Clusters

The Thai language has some consonant clusters but people tend not to pronounce them, even when they speak Thai. When speaking informally, they often drop the ‘l’ and ‘r’ clusters completely.

e.g.: ‘kráp’ (particle for male speakers) is pronounced as ‘káp’.

‘glàp’ (to return) is pronounced as ‘gàp’.

It is very hard for Thai people to say the word “three”. They either pronounce it as “tree” or simply “tee”. When they say that their phone number is “one-nine-four-tee”, please make sure that it is 1943 and not 1940. (They will pronounce it as “won-ny-foe-tee.”)

Many Thai speakers change the ‘r’ sound at the beginning of a syllable to ‘l’. They also do this when they speak English.

e.g.: ‘rian’ (to study) is pronounced as ‘lian’  
‘roof’ is pronounced as ‘loop’.

## Stress and Tones

Thai schools often emphasize reading and writing of English more than speaking and pronunciation. Besides having difficult sounds, English stress and intonation are a challenge. Thai language generally stresses the last syllable of a word. You will notice, for example, that the English name JOHN-ny becomes john-NEE and MA-ry becomes ma-REE. Also, Thai is a tonal language with every syllable having one of five tones, so when Thai people speak English they automatically tend to assign a tone to each syllable. For many proper nouns and common English words the tones are already set by common usage. Since Thai students of English are taught that English is not a tonal language, they may give most unfamiliar words a flat middle tone (“no tone” to them). This gives their speech a dreamy monotone quality.

Here are some phrases in English that you can ask your Thai friends to practice saying. You will probably notice some "Thaiglish" pronunciation. Maybe they will give you some Thai tongue twisters to attempt in exchange!

**Alice Woods has a house in Laos.**

(It is rare indeed that a Thai student of English will get every final 's' sound in the above sentence.)

**She sells seashells by the seashore.**

**There are three zebras under the tree.**

**I fell in love.**

## **How Do They Say It?**

When you talk to a Thai person, you will probably hear phrases like "I lib in Pattaya, but my how in Ubon" for "I live in Pattaya, but my house is in Ubon". You will get used to their pronunciation after a while. Often they have memorized a few English sentences learned from their Thai friends or just translate Thai into English literally without changing the Thai word order. Here are some English phrases that you often here from Thai people.

- ◆ Up to you!
- ◆ Same same.
- ◆ Same you. (The same as you. It's the same.)
- ◆ Where you from?
- ◆ Where you go? (Where are you going?)
- ◆ What your name?
- ◆ My name Yut.
- ◆ You like? (Do you like it?)
- ◆ Who do? (Who did it?)
- ◆ Tank you.
- ◆ Coming soon. (It will happen soon.)
- ◆ Hey you! or You, you!

(For "excuse me" Don't get offended! The litteral translation of 'you' is *kun* which is a term of respect in Thai like 'sir' or 'ma'am'.)

- ◆ I'm boring. (I'm bored.)
- ◆ No have. (There isn't/aren't any.)
- ◆ Over. (To finish or to exaggerate)
- ◆ Snake snake fish fish.

(This one is from a funny Thai idiom which means "so-so" or "comme ci comme ça". It is a direct translation which doesn't make sense in English. For example, if you ask a Thai person whether he can speak English, you might get the answer "Snake snake fish fish".)

Well known foreign words, names and places usually have an established Thai pronunciation, including tones, based on common usage, e.g. New York (niu-yòók), Randy (reen-dii) or computer (kóm-píu-dtâe). Less common words may be pronounced more than one way since no exact rules have been developed for them yet. Sometimes English and other foreign languages will be spoken in a rather dreamy sounding flat monotone. After all, as Thai students know, English is a non-tonal language— so they try to speak it without any tones. In general, if you pronounce foreign words in the Thai way you will be more easily understood. This means using final consonants that are familiar to Thai and duplicating Thai stress and tone patterns.

## Names

- |    |                                  |                                     |
|----|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Craig<br>แคร็ก                   | kréek or kéek                       |
| 2. | Helen<br>เฮเลน                   | hee-len or hee-leen                 |
| 3. | Jinny<br>จิ้นนี่                 | jin-nii                             |
| 4. | Brad<br>แบรด                     | béet or bréet                       |
| 5. | Paul<br>พอล, ปอล                 | poon or bpoon                       |
| 6. | Christina<br>คริสติน่า, คริสตินา | kít-sa-dti(i)-nâa or<br>kít-dti-nâa |

- |     |                                    |                              |
|-----|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 7.  | Randy<br>แรนดี้                    | lɛen-dii or reen-dii         |
| 8.  | Laura<br>ลอร่า                     | lɔw-lâa or lɔw-râa           |
| 9.  | Eric<br>เอริก                      | ee-rìk or ee-lìk             |
| 10. | Bruce<br>บรูซ                      | brúus, brúut, búut or búus   |
| 11. | Kennedy<br>เคนเนดี้                | ken-nee-dii                  |
| 12. | Becker<br>เบคเกอร์                 | bék-gôo                      |
| 13. | Ronaldo<br>โรนานโด, โรนานโด        | roo-naan-dôo or loo-naan-dôo |
| 14. | Thompson<br>ทอมสัน                 | tɔm-sǎn                      |
| 15. | Powell<br>พาวเวล                   | paaow-weo                    |
| 16. | Bush<br>บุช                        | búsh, búut or bút            |
| 17. | William<br>วิลเลียม                | win-líam                     |
| 18. | Clinton<br>คลินตัน                 | klin-dtân or kin-dtân        |
| 19. | McDonald<br>แมคโดนัลด์, แมคโคแนลด์ | mék-doo-nêo                  |
| 20. | David<br>เดวิด                     | dee-wít                      |

## Sample Sentences

- A. Craig and Helen went to visit David Clinton  
 เครีกรักกับเฮเลนไปเยี่ยมเดวิด คลินตัน  
 kreek gàp hee-len bpai yiam dee-wít klin-dtân.
- B. Laura is waiting for Randy at McDonald's.  
 ลอรวารอแรนดี้ที่แมคโดนัลด์  
 loo-râa roo reen-dii tii mék-doo-nêo.
- C. Bill doesn't like Eric or Bruce.  
 บิลไม่ชอบเอริคกับบรูซ  
 biu mâi chôp ee-rìk gàp brúut.

## Places

- |     |           |  |
|-----|-----------|--|
| 1.  | Las Vegas | láat-wee-gát or láas-wee-gát<br>ลาสเวกัส |
| 2.  | Tokyo     | dtooo-gioa โตเกียว                       |
| 3.  | Colorado  | koo-loo-raa-dôo โคลราโด                  |
| 4.  | Belgium   | ben-yiam เบลเยียม                        |
| 5.  | Egypt     | ii-yìp อียิปต์                           |
| 6.  | Scotland  | sà-gót-leen สกอตแลนด์                    |
| 7.  | Brazil    | braa-sin or baa-sin บราซิล               |
| 8.  | Italy     | ìt-dtaa-lìi อิตาลี                       |
| 9.  | Sydney    | sít-nii ซิดนีย์                          |
| 10. | Paris     | bpaa-riit ปารีส                          |



The following places are words that are not exactly according to the adoption of transliterating words from English.

- |     |               |                |                |
|-----|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 11. | Burma/Myanmar | pá-mâa         | พม่า/เมียนมาร์ |
| 12. | China         | jiin           | จีน            |
| 13. | England       | ang-grít       | อังกฤษ         |
| 14. | France        | fa-ràng-sèet   | ฝรั่งเศส       |
| 15. | Germany       | yəə-ra-man     | เยอรมัน        |
| 16. | Protugal      | bproo-dtù-gèet | โปรตุเกส       |
| 17. | Japan         | yii-bpùn       | ญี่ปุ่น        |
| 18. | Korea         | gao-líi        | เกาหลี         |
| 19. | Cambodia      | kà-měen        | เขมร           |
| 20. | Turkey        | dtù-ra-gii     | ตุรกี          |

### Sample Sentences

- A. President George Bush took a trip to France.  
 ประธานาธิบดีจอร์จ บุชเดินทางไปฝรั่งเศส  
 bprà-taa-naa-tí-bəə-dii jǔət-búut dəən-taang bpai  
 fa-ràng-sèet.
- B. Japan and Germany are allies.  
 ญี่ปุ่นเป็นพันธมิตรกับเยอรมัน  
 yii-bpùn bpen pan-tá-mít gəp yəə-ra-man.
- C. The Brazilian and Belgian teams made it to the finals.  
 ทีมบราซิลและทีมเบลเยียมเข้ารอบสุดท้าย  
 tiim braa-sin lé tiim ben-yiam kâo-rǔəp sùt-táai.

## Foreign Words

- |     |                |                         |              |
|-----|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1.  | Pyramid        | bpì-raa-mít             | ปิรามิด      |
| 2.  | Computer       | kóm-pít-dtǎo            | คอมพิวเตอร์  |
| 3.  | Serious        | sii-ríat                | ซีเรียส      |
| 4.  | AIDS           | èet or èets (not often) | เอ็ดส์       |
| 5.  | Bonus          | boo-nát                 | โบนัส        |
| 6.  | Album          | aa-la-bâm               | อัลบั้ม      |
| 7.  | Copy           | kóp-bpîi                | ก๊อปปี       |
| 8.  | Disco          | dít-sa-gôo              | ดิสโก้       |
| 9.  | Shopping       | chóp-bpîng              | ช้อปปิ้ง     |
| 10. | Bowling        | boo-ling                | โบว์ลิ่ง     |
| 11. | Fashion        | fee-chân                | แฟชั่น       |
| 12. | Technology     | ték-noo-loo-yii         | เทคโนโลยี    |
| 13. | Taxi           | ték-sii                 | แท็กซี่      |
| 14. | Spaghetti      | sa-bpaa-gét-dtii        | สปาเก็ตตี้   |
| 15. | Soda           | soo-daa                 | โซดา         |
| 16. | Video          | wii-dii-oo              | วีดีโอ       |
| 17. | Internet       | in-dtǎo-nèt             | อินเทอร์เน็ต |
| 18. | Romatic        | roo-meen-dtìk           | โรแมนติก     |
| 19. | Catalog        | két-dtaa-lók            | แคตตาล็อก    |
| 20. | Volleyball     | won-lée-bwǎn            | วอลเลย์บอล   |
| 21. | Contact lens   | kǎn-tèk-leen            | คอนแทคเลนส์  |
| 22. | Apartment      | aa-páat-mén             | อพาร์ทเมนต์  |
| 23. | Elevator, lift | líp                     | ลิฟท์        |
| 24. | Jelly          | yen-líi                 | เยลลี่       |
| 25. | Lecture        | lék-chǎo                | เล็คเชอร์    |
| 26. | Guitar         | gii-dtǎa                | กีตาร์       |

27.	Motorcycle	moo-dtəə-sai มอเตอร์ไซค์
28.	Agent	ee-yên เอเยนต์
29.	Bible	bai-bôn ไบเบิล
30.	Cashier	két-chia แคชเชียร์
31.	Film	fiim ฟิล์ม
32.	Golf	gówp กอล์ฟ
33.	Stapler	sa-dtép-bpôn สแต็ปเปิล
34.	Technique	ték-nìk เทคนิค
35.	Clutch	káat or klát คลัทช, คลัตช์
36.	Card	gáat การ์ด
37.	Guide (tour guide)	gái ไกด์
38.	Sex	sék เซ็กซ์
39.	Wine	waai ไวน์
40.	Soup	súp ซุป

### Sample Sentences

- A. We went shopping and then to a disco.  
 เราไปช้อปปิ้งแล้วก็ไปดิสโก้  
 rao bpai chōp-bpīng léəo-gōw bpai dít-sa-gōo.
- B. New technology has been adapted to this technique.  
 เทคโนโลยีใหม่ได้ถูกนำมาใช้กับเทคนิคนี้  
 ték-noo-loo-yii mài dāai tùuk nam maa cháí gáp  
 ték-nìk níi.

C. There are many pyramids in Egypt.

มีปิรามิดมากที่อียิปต์

mii bpì-raa-mít mâak tii ii-yìp.

D. Give me soda, spaghetti and red wine, please.

ขอโซดา สปาเก็ตตี้ กับไวน์แดงด้วยค่ะ

kǎw soo-daa sà-bpaa-gét-dtîi gàp waai deeng  
dûai kâ.

E. This computer has no internet.

คอมพิวเตอร์นี้ไม่มีอินเทอร์เน็ต

kǎm-píu-dtǎo nîi mâi mii in-dtǎo-nèt.

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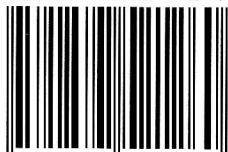
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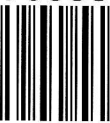


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