



Basic Ewe For Travellers

This is a brief introduction to Ewe (pronounced E3e, a voiced 'f') which is a language spoken in the Volta Region of Ghana, Togo, Benin and part of Nigeria. The speakers can be found at every corner of the remaining 9 regions of Ghana and consists of about 5 million people, which represents 23% of the Ghanaian population. This introduction contains basic instruction about pronunciation and important words and phrases. When volunteering and travelling in Ghana, the ability to communicate in Ewe will greatly enhance your experience. Even if you do not plan on studying the language in-depth, we strongly suggest learning and using basic greetings and phrases. The locals will greatly appreciate your efforts and will be all the more welcoming to you during your stay. If you would like to complete a beginning course in Ewe, there is a self-study book; Language Guide, Ewe version by Bureau of Ghana languages or contact a language scholar who may be of assistance.

PRONUNCIATION

Ewe is generally written in the Latin script, which is also used to write many other languages including English. There are 30 characters in Ewe, 23 of which are also found in the English language. The letters c, j, and q are not found in Ewe. They are replaced by k, dz and kw respectively. There are seven letters in the Ewe language that are not found in English. These include 2, 5, 6, ` , 1, 4, and 3.

VOWELS

There are 7 vowels in Ewe. They are a, e, 1, i, o, 4 and u.

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|------|--|-----------------------|
| i) | 'a' sounds like 'a' in mall. | e.g. ta – to crawl |
| ii) | 'e' sounds like 'a' in get. | e.g. ge – to drop |
| iii) | '1' sounds like 'e' in men, but dragged. | e.g. n1 – to him |
| iv) | 'i' sounds like 'ee' in feet. | e.g. si – to run away |
| v) | 'o' sounds like 'o' in goal. | e.g. to – to pound |
| vi) | '4' sounds like 'o' in cost. | e.g. l4 – to collect |
| vii) | 'u' sounds like 'oo' in cool. | e.g. tu – to close |

The vowels can also be pronounced nasally, by breathing the letter through the nose and it is indicated by a tilde (~) over the letter.

Vowels can also be short or long. A single letter will indicate short vowels, while long vowels will be indicated by a double letter, e.g. 'a' vs. 'aa'.

CONSONANTS

Generally, Ewe consonants are pronounced the same as in English, however, there are several unique sounds.

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|------|------------------|-------|---------------------|
| i) | b, 'b' as in bat | v) | h, 'h' as in how |
| ii) | d, 'd' as in dog | vi) | k, 'k' as in kennel |
| iii) | f, 'f' as in fun | vii) | l, 'l' as in last |
| iv) | g, 'g' as in get | viii) | m, 'm' as in mill |

- ix) n, 'n' as in neat
- x) p, 'p' as in pin
- xi) r, 'r' as in rabbit
- xii) s, 's' as in sit
- xiii) t, 't' as in top

- xiv) v, 'v' as in valley
- xv) w, 'w' as in walk
- xvi) y, 'y' as in yolk
- xvii) z, 'z' as in zoo

- i) 2, '2' is softer and is pronounced slightly farther back than the English 'd'.
- ii) 5, '5' is a bilabial f. It is pronounced with both lips. Pronounced as if blowing out a candle.
- iii) 6, '6' sounds like a very soft h.
- iv) x, 'x' is a voiceless velar fricative, pronounced like a voiceless h.
- v) ` , '' is pronounced like 'ng' in sing.
- vi) 3, '3' is a voiced f. It sounds like an English 'v' pronounced with both lips.

DIGRAPHS

The digraphs that foreigners find difficult to pronounce are few. They are 'ts', 'tsy', 'dz', 'kp', 'gb', and 'ny'.

- ts – Sounds almost like 'ts' in hits e.g. tsi – water
- tsy – Sounds almost like 'ch' in chair e.g. tsy4tsy4 – dark
- dz – Sounds almost like "ts' but it is noticeably softer and voiced. It is pronounced almost like a 'j' in the English language e.g. dze – salt
- kp – To sound this, position the tongue as for 'k', the lips as for 'p' and then release the two closing simultaneously e.g. kpe – stone
- gb – Sounds like 'kp' but is softer voiced and heavier e.g. gbe – voice
- ny – Sounds like 'ni' in onion e.g. nya – word.

Ewe is a tonal language and changes in meaning can be brought about by tonal differences. However, tone will not be marked but rather be learned by listening to the spoken language. Additionally, you do not need to use tones to be understood.

In some instances, a word's pronunciation will be truncated. In this guide, these truncated pronunciations will follow the word/phrase and be italicised.

GREETINGS

ENGLISH	EW E
Welcome	Woez4
Come in	Ge 2e ime
Knocking	Agoo (or) k4k4k4
Good Morning	~di
Good Afternoon	~d4
Good Evening	Fi8
Response; ~di, a5emet4wo d4a ~d4, a5emet4wo d4a Fi8, a5emet4wo d4a	
Goodbye	Hede nyuie
Response; Yoo	
See you later	Mia ga do go
Response; Yoo	

How are you?	Ef4a
Response; ! mef4	
And you?	Wo h7 ef4a
Response; ! nye h7 mef4	
Good night	D4 agbe

INTRODUCTIONS

My name is...	~k4 nyee nye...
What is your name?	~k4 wo 2ee?
I am from America.	Metso Amerika.
Where are you from?	Afika netso
What are you doing in Ghana?	Nu ka w4m nele le Ghana?
I am a student.	Sukuvie menyee.

ETIQUETTE

Thank you.	Akpe nawo (Ew4 d4)
Thanks	Akpe
Please	Me2e kuku (Ta5latse)
Please sit down	Me2e kuku, n4 anyi
Yes	! or yoo
No	ao
What is this?	Nukae nye esia
Sorry	Taflatse
Excuse me (to get attention or to pass)	agoo or taflatse

RELATIONSHIPS / TITLES

I / me	Nye / m
You (informal)	Wò / mi
He / she / it	Eya / E
We	Mi
They	Wo
Friend	Velia
Family	%ome
Daughter	vi ny4nu
Son	vi `utsu
Brother	n4vi `utsu
Sister	n4vi ny4nu
Father	Fofu
Mother	Dada
Husband	sr4 `utsu
Wife	sr4 ny4nu
Man	`utsu

Woman	ny4nu
Doctor	atikew4la (@4kita)
Teacher	Nufiala
Sir / Mr.	A5et4
Lady / Madame	A5en4
Slightly older male	Fo
Slightly older female	Davi
Male – fathers age	Papa
Female – mothers age	Dada / afen4
Chief	Fia / T4gbi

FOOD AND DRINK

I am hungry	D4 le wuyem
I am thirsty	Tsi k4 le wuyem
I want...	Medzi...
Food	Nu2u2u
Bread	yevubolo
Meat	Adel7
Fish	L7 (nudonui)
Fruit	Atikutsetse
Chicken	Koklovi
Banana	Ak42u
Pineapple	At4t4
Plantain	Abladzo
Pawpaw	Adiba
Orange	A`uti (at4t4`uti)
Watermelon	Dzamatre
Yam	Te
Eggs	Azi (koklozi)
Rice	M4lu
Stew	Atadi (atadiw4w4)
Cassava	Agbeli
Coffee	K451
Tea	Tii
Water	Tsi
Alcohol	Aha
Delicious	Vivi

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Where is it?	Afika ne le? Afika wo le?
Market	Asi
Church	S4leme
Shop	Fiase
School	Suku
Hospital	D4y45e (k-dzi)
House/home	A5e
Bathroom	Tsile5e
Toilet	Agboti (A54dzide5e)
Kitchen	Dzodo5e (Nu2a5e)

Garden	Ab4
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COST

How much?	Ho nenie?
How much is this?	Ho nenie nye esia?
Money	Ga
Price	Ho / asi
Too much	Esu gb4

TIME OF DAY

Morning	~di
Afternoon	~d4
Evening	Fi8
Night	Z7
Midnight	Z7titina
Dawn	F4`li

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes) / Yoo
No	Ao
Maybe	@ewoli
Okay	Enyo
Now	Fifi laa
Later	Emegbe
What is this?	Nu ka nye esi?
I want to go...	Medzi be mayi...
I am tired	@e2i te `unye.
To be lost	Bu
I don't feel good	Nyemew4 nyuie o. Nye I7me mew4 nynuie o.
I am happy	Dzi le dz4yem.
I don't understand	Nyemese eg4me o.
Do you speak English?	@enedoa Yevugbea
Help!	Kpe2e`u (kpekpe2e`u)
Who?	Ame kae?
Where?	Afi kae?
Why?	Ale kee?
What?	Nu kae?
How?	Ale kee?

MISCELLANEOUS

Peace	Duti5a5a
Love	L4l-
Work	D4 (D4w4na)
Enough	Enyo (Esugb4)
Beautiful	Dzetugbe
Slowly	Blewuu
Strength	~use
Bad	Menyo o (Gbegble / gble)
Good	Nyo, Enyo

Overseas	%u-godo
White person	Yevu
Congratulation	Dze agbagba
Wait a little	Lala vie, T4gb4
Sometimes	@ewo6i
One day	Gbe 2eka
Stranger	Amedzro

NUMBERS

One – @eka	Eleven – Wui2ek1	Thirty – Blaet-
Two - Eve	Twelve – Wuieve	Forty – Blaene
Three – Et-	Thirteen – Wuiet-	Fifty – Blaet-
Four – Ene	Fourteen – Wuiene	Sixty – Blaade
Five – At-	Fifteen – Wuiat-	Seventy – Blaadre
Six – Ade	Sixteen – Wuiade	Eighty – Blaenyi
Seven – Adre	Seventeen – Wuiadre	Ninety – Blaasieke
Eight – Enyi	Eighteen – Wuienyi	Hundred – Ala5a 2eka
Nine – Asieke	Nineteen – Wuiasieke	Thousand – Akpe 2eka
Ten – Ewo	Twenty – Blaeve	