

Peace Corps Swaziland



Pre-Departure siSwati
Language
Materials

Pre-departure siSwati language materials for Swaziland contain nine (9) lessons, cultural notes, safety and general tips and useful etiquette tips.

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WELCOME!

This manual is a brief presentation of the spoken siSwati language and some cultural behaviors in Swaziland. With the help of the enclosed interactive language digital audio files, you will be able to hear and pronounce the sounds of siSwati and become familiar with them.

In this manual, several topics are introduced where you will find some siSwati words and expressions along with their transliteration and English meaning. Some cultural notes are also included in order to help you familiarize yourself with the language as well as the culture.

Please note that siSwati is a tonal language. Word meaning can be influenced or even change through the utterance of wrong intonation. The same word can convey different meaning depending on the tone with which it is pronounced. We admonish you to pay particular attention to this regard and practice as often as you can.

History of the siSwati Language

SiSwati belongs to the Bantu Language Family of Africa which includes the four major language groups found in South Africa, viz Nguni, Sotho, Tsonga and Venda. Languages in this family are spoken in an area, which extends from the Cape in the south to just north of the equator. These languages are grouped into geographical zones, which in their turn are divided into groups, sub-groups, dialect clusters (languages) and dialects. These four major language groups are divided into nine written languages: Swati, Zulu, Xhosa, South-Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Southern-Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga and Venda.

The Nguni group is divided into two sub-groups, viz being the Zunda and Tekela. Zunda languages comprise Zulu, Xhosa, South Ndebele, and Zimbabwean Ndebele.

Tekela languages comprise **siSwati of Swaziland** and siSwati of kaNgwane stretching from the Mpumalanga Province in South Africa to the South Eastern Transvaal.

Of note here is that out of these dialects, siSwati is the only one that has attained recognition as a language in its own right. It has acquired written status and is used as the medium of instruction in schools in Swaziland and kaNgwane. Which is one of the reasons we expect you to learn the spoken siSwati Language. To be able to **TALK** with the people of the host country, more especially those you will be directly working with

These lessons will help you learn normal conversation in siSwati, rather than focusing on formalities.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Swaziland, you will have to adjust to some pronunciation difficulties and deal with some social attitudes and cultural norms. So, get ready for a new experience and challenge and welcome to Swaziland...

Lessons 1 SiSwati Speech Sounds

<i>SiSwati Speech Sounds</i>			
Sound	Equivalent	SiSwati Example	Comments
Vowels			
a	ah	h <u>a</u> m <u>b</u> a (<i>go</i>)	
e	egg	y <u>e</u> bo (<i>yes</i>)	
-i-	in	<u>i</u> nja (<i>dog</i>)	
-i	see	umgijim <u>i</u> (<i>a runner</i>)	"i" at end of word
o	post	ngikh <u>o</u> na (<i>I am here/fine</i>)	
u	tool	<u>U</u> njani (<i>how are you?</i>)	

Consonants			
B	<u>b</u> aby	<u>b</u> ala (count)	Voiced bilabial implosive similar to truncated English b
bh		<u>bh</u> ala (write)	Breathy, voiced, bilabial explosive
c		<u>c</u> ela (ask)	Dental click
ch		<u>ch</u> a (no)	Aspirated dental click
d	<u>d</u> ay	Li <u>d</u> a <u>d</u> a (duck)	
dl	<u>d</u> le	<u>D</u> lala (play)	Lateral-alveolar, voiced Fricative similar to "idle"
dv		Si <u>d</u> v <u>u</u> d <u>v</u> u (pumpkin mash)	
dvw		Ku <u>d</u> v <u>w</u> e <u>b</u> a (to draw/design)	Cannot be followed by o or u
dz		Li <u>ch</u> u <u>d</u> z <u>e</u> (rooster)	
f	<u>f</u> un	ku <u>f</u> undza (to learn/read)	
g		li <u>g</u> ama (name /word)	Partially-voiced velar explosive between the two "k's"
gc		Um <u>g</u> c <u>u</u> g <u>c</u> u <u>t</u> e <u>l</u> i (RHM)	Voiced dental click
gw		Lo <u>g</u> w <u>a</u> ja (rabbit)	
h	<u>h</u> ouse	<u>H</u> amba (walk/go)	
hh		<u>Hh</u> ula (cut hair)	Breathier "h"
hl	man <u>tl</u> e/kettle	<u>Hl</u> ola (check/peep/test)	Lateral-alveolar voiceless Fricative can be heard in "mantle/kettle"
hlw		Um <u>h</u> l <u>w</u> a (termites)	
<i>SiSwati Speech Sounds Continued</i>			
Sound	Equivalent	SiSwati Example	Comments
Consonants			
j	<u>j</u> ump	<u>J</u> ayiva (dance)	
jw		Li <u>j</u> w <u>a</u> bu (loose skin)	
k	<u>g</u> irl	<u>K</u> udla (food)	Voiced velar explosive
k	<u>sch</u> ool	Si <u>k</u> eti (skirt)	Voiceless velar explosive
kh	<u>k</u> ill	<u>Kh</u> uluma (talk)	Aspirated version of latter "k"
l	<u>l</u> ay	Li <u>k</u> ati (cat)	
kw	<u>q</u> uiet	Li <u>k</u> w <u>i</u> ndla (autumn)	
m	<u>m</u> om	Ma <u>k</u> e (mother)	
mb	<u>a</u> mber	Im <u>b</u> ali (rose/flower)	

mg		U <u>mg</u> idvo (<i>ceremony</i>)	
mgc		U <u>mgc</u> ibelo (<i>Saturday</i>)	Similar to “gc”
mgcw		U <u>mgcw</u> embe (<i>traditional plate</i>)	
mh		U <u>mh</u> ambo (<i>culture</i>)	
mhl		U <u>mhl</u> angano (<i>meeting</i>)	
mj		U <u>mj</u> ovo (<i>injection</i>)	
mkh		U <u>mkh</u> ono (<i>arm</i>)	
mkhw		U <u>mkhw</u> enyana (<i>son in-law</i>)	
ml		U <u>ml</u> ungu (<i>white person</i>)	
mmb		U <u>mmb</u> ila (<i>maize</i>)	
mn		U <u>mn</u> umzane (<i>home owner</i>)	
mnc		U <u>mnc</u> ele (<i>boundary</i>)	<i>Bilabial-nasal to alveolar-nasal dental-click</i>
mncw		U <u>mncw</u> e (<i>biltong/jerky</i>)	
mp	<u>imp</u>	<u>imp</u> ompi (<i>water tap</i>)	
mph	<u>im</u> possible	U <u>mph</u> akatsi (<i>Chief's home</i>)	
ms		U <u>ms</u> ila (<i>tail</i>)	
msh		U <u>msh</u> eko (<i>diarrhea</i>)	
mshw		U <u>mshw</u> edla (<i>someone who gave birth before marriage</i>)	

SiSwati Speech Sounds Continued

Sound	Equivalent	SiSwati Example	Comments
Consonants			
n	<u>n</u> o	<u>N</u> oma (<i>or [else], although</i>)	
nc		K <u>anc</u> ane (<i>a little</i>)	<i>Alveolar-nasal dental-click</i>
nch		<u>Inch</u> ubo (<i>procedure</i>)	
ncw		<u>Incwancw</u> a (<i>sour porridge</i>)	

nd	Ind ianapolis	Ind engano (<i>soft porridge</i>)	
ndl		Lib and la (<i>a council</i>)	
ndlw		Indlw ana (<i>small house</i>)	
ndv		Indv odza (<i>man</i>)	
ndvw		Ligund v wane (<i>rat</i>)	
ndz		Indz aba (<i>a story</i>)	
ngc		Ing ccondvo (<i>brain</i>)	
ngcw		Ing cwele (<i>an Expert</i>)	
ngw		Ing wenya (<i>crocodile</i>)	
ng	fing er	Ng ena (<i>come in</i>)	<i>Voiced velar-nasal</i>
ng	thin g	Ng ikhona (<i>I am fine/here</i>)	<i>Voiceless velar-nasal</i>
nhl		Inh langano (<i>an organization</i>)	
nhh		Kun hhin hhitela (<i>to mumble</i>)	<i>Breathier than "in-house"</i>
nj	syri ng	In ja (<i>dog</i>)	
njw		Inj wayelo (<i>habit/tendency</i>)	
nk	lin k	In kinga (<i>a problem</i>)	
nkh	in come	Ink hukhu (<i>chicken</i>)	
nkw		Ink wela (<i>a whistle</i>)	
nkhw	en quire	Sink hwa (<i>bread</i>)	
no	no te	In ombolo (<i>number</i>)	
ns	sins	Ins ika (<i>pillar</i>)	
nsh	Anc ient	In sha (<i>youth</i>)	
nsw		ins welaboya (<i>thieves</i>)	

SiSwati Speech Sounds Continued

Sound	Equivalent	SiSwati Example	Comments
Consonants			
nt		Em ant i (<i>water</i>)	
nts	ants	nt setse (<i>grasshopper</i>)	
ntj	munch	Ish int ji (<i>change</i>)	
ntjw		Em antj wele (<i>chicks</i>)	
nw		Lun w abu (<i>chameleon</i>)	
ny		In yoka (<i>snake</i>)	

nz	means	Tinkunzi (<i>bulls/males of large animals</i>)	
p	space	Lipalishi (<i>porridge</i>)	
ph	paper	Liphapha (<i>paper</i>)	
s	similar	Sifo (<i>sickness</i>)	
sh	shy	Shaya (<i>beat/call</i>)	
shw		Shwila (<i>twist</i>)	
t	stake	Situlo (<i>chair</i>)	
tf		Litfuba (<i>chance</i>)	Voiceless
tfw		Tfwala (<i>carry</i>)	
tj		Tjani (<i>grass</i>)	Voiceless
tjw		Tjwala (<i>beer</i>)	
ts	it's	Natsa (<i>drink</i>)	
th	tell	Thula! (<i>be quiet!</i>)	Aspirated "t"
tw		Lutwane (<i>toe</i>)	
v	van	Kuyala (<i>to close</i>)	
w	walk	Wela (<i>cross over [a river]</i>)	Semi-vowel
y	yes	Yebo (<i>yes</i>)	Semi-vowel
z	zoo	Zuba (<i>jump</i>)	
zw		Zweli	

Lesson 2 Greetings and Personal Identification

I will read each word / phrase twice. When I finish reading the second time I will give you some time to practice saying it after me.

English	Transliteration
Hello	Sawubona
Hello (reply)	Yebo
How are you? (singular)	Unjani?
How are you? (plural)	Ninjani?
Good morning.	Kusile.
I am fine	Ngikhona,
We are fine.	Sikhona
And you? (singular)	Wena ke?
And you? (plural)	Nine ke?
I also / me too	Nami futsi.
Thank you.	Ngiyabonga
I am happy to know you.	Ngiyajabula kukwati.
We are happy to know you.	Siyajabula kukwati.
What is your name?	(U)ngubani ligama lakho?
My name is...	Ligama lami ngu...
You are welcome. (singular)	Wemukelekile.
You are welcome (plural)	Nemukelekile.
What is his/her name?	Ngubani ligama lakhe?
His/her name is.....	Ligama lakhe ngu
I come from America.	Ngibuya eMelika

Goodbye / stay well	Sala kahle
Go well	Hamba kahle.

English**Transliteration****(1) Listen to how two people greet each other.****A: Hello Themba.****A: Sawubona Themba.****B: Hello Sipho. (reply)****B: Yebo Sipho.****A: How are you?****A: Unjani?****B: I am fine, and you?****B: Ngikhona, wena unjan?****A: I am fine also.****A: Nami ngikhona.**

Now practice the greetings. You greet first.

The following greeting is very common in Swaziland and can be used any time during the day.

(2) Listen to the following people greeting each other.**A : Hello.****A: Sawubona****B : Hello.****B : Yebo**

I will initiate the conversation and you reply.

Now you initiate and I will reply.

(3) Listen to the following morning greeting.**A: Good morning Themba.****A : Kusile Themba.****B: Good morning Sipho.****B : Kusile Sipho.**

I will initiate the conversation and you reply.

Now you initiate and I will reply.

(4) Listen to how people greet, and ask and answer about their names.

A : Hello.

B : Hello.

A: What is your name?

B: My name is Themba.

A: Sawubona.

B: Yebo.

A: Ngubani ligama lakho?

B: Ligama lami ngu Themba.

Let us practice. I will initiate the conversation and you reply.

Now you start.

(5) Listen to how people greet, ask about others' names, and state that they are pleased to meet them.

A: Good morning

B: 'Morning.

A: What is your name?

B: My name is Sam. And you.

A: I am Siphso.

B: I am pleased to meet you.

A: And me too.

A: Kusile.

B: Kusile

A: Ngubani ligama lakho?

B: Ligama lamin ngu Sam. Wena ke?

A: Mine ngingu Siphso.

B: Ngiyjabula kukwati.

A: Nami futsi.

I will initiate the conversation and you reply.

Now you initiate and I will reply.

Lesson 3 How are you today?

I will read each phrase twice. When I finish reading the second time I will give you some time to practice saying it after me.

English	Transliteration
How are you? (singular)	Unjani?
How are you (plural)	Ninjani?
Good	Kahle / kuhle.
I am fine	Ngikhona.
I am well	Ngiyaphila.
I am tired	Ngidziniwe.
I am happy	Ngijabulile.
I am not well	Angiphili.
I have a flu / cold	Nginemkhuhlane.
I am sick	Ngiyagula.
Today.	Namuhla.

(1) Listen to how these two people greet each other, and inquire about the health questions.

A: Good morning Sam.

B: 'Morning Themba.

A: How are you today?

B: I am well, and you?

A: Kusile Sam.

B: Kusile Themba.

A: Unjani namuhla?

B: Ngiyaphila wena ke?

A: I am also well.

B: That is good.

A: Nami ngiyaphila

B: Kuhle.

Now let us take turns and do the dialog. I will go first and you respond.

Let us swap the roles and you go first and I will respond.

(2) Listen to the following dialogue where two people greet each other and inquire about their well being.

A: Hello Themba.

B: Hello Sam.

A: How are you today?

B: I am not well, I have a cold.

A: You are sick?

B: Yes, very sick!

A: Sorry about that.

A: Sawubona Themba.

B: Yebo Sam.

A: Unjani namuhla?

B: Angiphili, nginemkhuhlane.

A: Uyagula?

B: Yebo, kakhulu!

A: Ncesi.

Now let us take turns and do the dialog. I will go first and you respond.

Let us swap the roles and you go first and I will respond.

Lesson 4 Identifying Family Members

I will read each word/phrase twice. When I finish reading the second time I will give you some time to practice saying it after me.

English	Transliteration
Family	Umndeni.
Father	Babe.
Mother	Make.
Brother	Bhuti.
Sister	Sisi.
Son	Indvodzana.
Child	Umntfwana.
Daughter	Indvodzakati.
Husband	Indvodza.
Boyfriend/girlfriend	Singani.
Wife	Umfati.
I have...(personal nouns)	Ngina...
I have...(impersonal nouns)	Ngine...

I will read each sentence twice and I will stop for a while after the second reading to let you say it after me.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. I have a family | 1. Nginemndeni. |
| 2. I have a father. | 2. Nginababe. |
| 3. I have a mother. | 3. Nginamake. |
| 4. I have a sister. | 4. Nginasisi. |
| 5. I have a boyfriend/girlfriend. | 5. Nginesingani. |

I will read each sentence twice and I will stop for a while after the second reading to let you say it after me.

- 1. I do not have a brother.**
- 2. I do not have a husband.**
- 3. I do not have a wife.**

- 1. Ngite bhuti.**
- 2. Ngite indvodza.**
- 3. Ngite umfati.**

Now complete the following sentences.

- 1. I have a brother.**
- 2. I have a girlfriend.**
- 3. I do not have a brother.**
- 4. I do not have a girlfriend.**

- 1. Ngina _____**
- 2. Ngine _____**
- 3. Ngite _____**
- 4. _____**

Lesson 5: Useful Expressions

I will read each word twice and I will stop for a while after the second reading to let you say after me.

English	Transliteration
Sorry	Ncesi
Excuse me	Ncesi
It's okay	Kulungile
No problem	Kute inkinga
Would you please	Ngiyacela
Thank you	Ngiyabonga
You are welcome	Wemukelekile
Yes	Yebo
No	Cha
Here	Lapha
There	Lapha`
Later on!	Leytha.
Never	Ngeke
Now	Nyalo / manje
It is possible.	Kungenteka
Is it really possible?	Kungenteka vele?
Come on!	Hhayi bo!
I apologise	Ngiyacolisa.
Oh! I see!	Wo! Ngiyabona.
Repeat please.	Ngicela uphindze
Say it slowly please.	Shano kancane, ngiyacela.

Lesson 6 Naming Different Types of Food

I will read each word twice, and then pause so that you can repeat after me.

English	Transliteration
Bread	Sinkhwa
Rice	Lilayisi
Salt	Luswayi
Sugar	Shukela
Water	Emanti
Tea	Litiya
Coffee	Likhofi
Milk	Lubisi
Juice	Ijusi
Vegetables	Emaveji
Fruits	Titsele
Breakfast	Libhulakufesi
Lunch	Lidina
Dinner	Lidina
It is delicious/nice/tasty.	Kumnandzi
I am hungry	Ngilambile
I am thirsty	Ngomile
I am full	Ngesutsi

Lesson 7 Finding Your Way Around.

I will read each word/phrase twice, and then pause so that you can repeat after me.

English	Transliteration
Where is it going?(the bus/taxi)	Iyaphi?
How much?	Malini?
When is it leaving?	Isuka nini?
Change please.	Ngicela ishintji.
On the left	Ngesancele
On the right	Ngesekudla
Next to..	Eceleni
Upwards	Etulu / enhla
Down wards	Entasi
At the bus station	Esiteshini
Station	Siteshi
At the post office	Eposini
Post Office	Liposi
At the shop	Esitolo
Shop	Sitolo
In town	Edolobheni
Town	Lidolobha

Lesson 8 Time.

I will read each word/phrase twice, and then pause so that you can repeat after me.

English	Transliteration
Today	Namuhla.
Yesterday	Itolo.
Tomorrow	Kusasa.
In the morning	Ekuseni.
At noon	Emini.
Afternoon	Entsambama.
In the evening	Kusihlwa.
At night	Ebusuku
Week	Liviki
Month	Inyanga
Year	Umnyaka
Time	Sikhatsi

CULTURAL NOTES

Greetings

- Greetings are a key to almost everything among Swazi people, for example;
 - a) It is a form of knowing how a person is feeling on that day.
 - b) It is a way of showing politeness and humility / way of showing respect.
 - c) It is used before addressing people.
 - d) Greetings are a way/means leading to a discussion
- The Swazi people consider a person rude if s/he starts a conversation without greeting. We consider that individual as someone who did not have a good upbringing.
- When we greet, we always greet with titles to show respect to the elders, e.g **'Sawubona make.'** If you know the surname, you can always add it thus saying **'Sawubona make Shongwe.'** To young people we can say **'Sawubona Mbali.'** addressing them by their first names or you can say **'Sawubona mntfwanami.'**
- The titles **"make"** and **"babe"** (*mother and father respectively*) in Swaziland are used to address old people in the community, it does not have to be your maternal mother or paternal father. **"Gogo"** and **"mkhulu"** (*grandmother and father respectively*) are used to address very old people.

Visits.

Hospitality and generosity are highly valued in Swaziland. Swazis like to socialize a lot, especially in the villages, they visit each other quite frequently and any time without an appointment and the host has a big responsibility of showing generosity to guests. Do not be surprised if your host family is inundated with visitors while you are there.

Respect for elders

Traditionally the eldest male is undisputed head of the family and no undertaking can be taken without his approval. Elders are considered integral family members and sources of wisdom and spirituality. In everyday life respect towards elders is easily noticed. Their word is most of the time final and not publicly questioned.

SAFETY TIPS IN SWAZILAND

Swaziland, like many other developing countries in the world in general has its fair share of challenges, one of which is crime. Visiting Peace Corps Volunteers are advised to maintain vigilance as they enjoy their visit in the country. Below are tips that may be useful in ensuring a safe and memorable stay in the kingdom.

- By all possible means, try to spend the least possible time in Swaziland's cities' bus ranks as these are crime hotspots. Pick pocketing is rife in these areas.
- Beware of people who suspiciously bump against you when in busy areas. Avoid putting wallets and cell phones in back pockets, use your front pockets.
- Be advised that local authorities are sensitive about what you might be seen photographing e.g. government buildings and the airport.
- Kindly decline offers of food and drinks from strangers. Eat only what is served at reputable food outlets. Also, do not be liberal with your trust, trust your instincts.
- Do not put all your eggs in one basket. Carry your money in different places. Rather leave important documents like passports, credit cards and travelers cheques are best left at your hotel.
- Last but not least, be wary of strangers. Swazis are generally very friendly people and in Swaziland, your business is everybody's business but you can never be too careful. Do not be deceived by fake friendly smiles and favors. Do not be naïve. **ALWAYS BE CAUTIOUS!**

USEFUL SOCIAL ETIQUETTE TIPS

- It is always polite to greet people even if you do not know them.
- One is expected to sit down when they eat. Eating while standing is considered disrespectful. This is especially observed at family settings.
- Dress Codes
 - casual – shopping, in town, games and dances
 - formal – work, church, community meeting
 - informal – sports, games, your house
 - traditional – appropriate in all the above.
- Bathing and cleanliness is an important facet of personal hygiene. A dirty volunteer will never be taken seriously. As a volunteer, you represent a professional, and part of the image you portray is judged by your cleanliness.
- If you make the mistake of giving alms indiscriminately, be prepared to be expected to always give. Read situations that will require you to give carefully and ask about the most appropriate gift from local friends
- Touching is relatively not as sensitive in Swaziland as in western cultures.
- Ladies are expected to sit with their legs together and not revealing their underwear.
- Gender roles are defined by the culture and are than in the USA. Swazi churches also have a great influence and are very conservative and vocal in defining sexual morals.
- Be sensitive to relationships because they are of the utmost importance.
- When doing your laundry, designate a corner of your room in which to dry underclothes. They should not dry out in the open, especially women's.
- When offered something, please use the right hand to take it. The same applies when you give out something.