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# THE CHEAT'S GUIDE TO TAGALOG

*A refreshingly easy method*

*Philip Smithson, Angela Imana*

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## Preface

### *Learning Tagalog changed my life.*

It opened up a whole new way of living for me in the Philippines and unlocked richer experiences and personal connections that I could never have imagined before moving here.

As you go through this humble book, and as you apply what you learn in your everyday life, I hope you will also uncover the beauty, excitement and charm of this delightful archipelago.

Learning Tagalog has brought me three main things:

#### **1. A deeper understanding of cultural differences.**

Having lived in one country my whole life I had a feeling of how things were supposed to be, what people were supposed to think and what was supposed to be important.

Coming to the Philippines, this was turned on its head and I encountered people who did things differently, thought differently, and valued different things.

As a young man, it made me realize that there wasn't one "correct" culture or one way of thinking that was "right" and it helped me understand how culturally diverse the world is.

Applying this knowledge made it easier for me to accept the differences between home and the Philippines and to adjust to life on the other side of the planet.

#### **2. More meaningful connections with the people you engage with.**

Tagalog has enabled me to interact with more people, to learn about their families, what they do, how they work, what they think about a particular topic and many other things. It's nice being able to go the extra mile and have that interaction with strangers, on a level deeper than just "*where are you from?*".

Whether I'm at work or in the province, speaking Tagalog helps people I talk to relax and be comfortable enough to get past the common language barriers.

#### **3. An "ease of use" quality that non-Tagalog speakers aren't privy to.**

Whether I'm riding a taxi, renting a boat or looking for a guide in the mountains, I've become incredibly comfortable engaging with local service providers and making sure I

can clearly have conversations about what I want, where I'm going, what I need, how long it will take to get there, how much it will cost, asking for a better price, stating whether or not something is acceptable and so on.

This makes it easy for me to go anywhere and do anything knowing that I'm unlikely to run into any serious language barriers.

*I hope that you too will be able to experience all this and more as you apply the lessons contained within this book.*

*Good luck!*

- Phil Smithson, Manila, December 2017

## What you can expect from this book.

***“The expert at anything was once a beginner.”***

***- Helen Hayes***

***Many people struggle with Tagalog; this book is designed to make it easy.***

What will hold you back from starting to learn any language is linked to three main problem areas: 1. the fear of making mistakes, 2. the fear of being misunderstood and 3. the fear of being laughed at.

In order to be good at something, however, we must first be bad at that thing. The more comfortable we are being bad at it, the quicker we can progress towards mastery.

The first step in learning something is to try it, to stumble, to make mistakes and to put yourself in situations in which you don't feel comfortable.

It's like learning to walk again.

Do babies get frustrated at being unable to walk? At the constant struggle to stand up and learn? No, the baby just carries on, picks herself up and tries again. As we should.

As life-long learners, we need to rediscover that childlike way of not even thinking about failure and instead immersing ourselves in ambiguity and to, as soon as possible, start to make mistakes.

***This book is designed to help you take your first steps in interacting with local Filipinos in a language they understand.***

You will not be fluent after reading and learning the material in this book. You will not speak perfect Tagalog. You will not be able to read a book in Tagalog or understand the TV news perfectly.

***So, what will you learn?***

Our goal is to get you interacting with locals. You should use this book as a reference and dip in and out and skip chapters as you need.

You'll learn some Tagalog, you'll learn some Taglish (Tagalog + English is a very common way of communicating, especially in Manila), you'll learn some slang and you'll learn how to make people feel at ease in Tagalog through basic conversations.

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In this book, we focus on teaching what you need to know and removing the things you (a beginner) don't need to know right now.

It's a streamlined way of learning, a streamlined way of getting you to a point where you feel comfortable interacting with local speakers.

This and this alone is the humble goal of this book.

Here's to embracing ambiguity and failing fast!

*Phil, Leo & Kim.*  
*December 2017*

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## Beginner Lessons

## Lesson 1 Introducing Yourself

Learning a new language is one thing but learning how to talk to people in their native language is a whole different story. This means second-guessing every word and wishing people came with subtitles or pause buttons. But don't fret! You'll discover how friendly it is to learn Tagalog, especially when talking to its speakers.

**P**hilippines is generally a bilingual country with English as the second language. English is so prevalent in the Philippines that Tagalog speakers developed **Taglish**. As the name suggests, it is Tagalog and English combined. This is mainly done using English words or phrases in Tagalog grammar. So, when you find yourself struggling to find the right Tagalog word, just throw in the towel and use the English word and try again next time. :)

Like when you are getting to know a new person, learning a new language is easier to start when you talk about yourself first. In this lesson, we are tackling how to answer basic personal questions and how to properly introduce yourself.

### Greeting

First, we start with a greeting. In Tagalog, we say **Kamusta?** (/kah + moose + TAH/) or "How are you?" as a greeting. It's a candid and friendly way to break any ice while also prompting the other person to talk. How to answer this? You can say the following:

**Okay naman ako. / Okay naman.** = *I'm okay.*

/Oh + kay + nah + MAN +ah + koh/

**Mabuti naman ako. / Mabuti naman.** = *I'm great.*

/mah + BOO + tea + nah + MAN +ah + KOH/

**Okay lang.** = *I'm okay.*

/ Oh + kay + lang/

You can even add **Ikaw/ Kaw?** (/ee + kaw/) as in "You?" or "How about you?" to ask how they are. For example:

**Kamusta?** = *How are you?*

**Okay naman. Ikaw?** = *I'm okay. You?*

Oh, and feel free to use English greetings like "Hi!" and "Hello!". More often than not, Filipinos will understand you and great back.

### Name

Next is introducing yourself. There are usually two ways to introduce yourself and these answer the question:

**Anong pangalan mo?** = *What's your name?*

/ah + NONG + pah + NGAH + lan + moh/

**Hi, Ako si [your name]. Ikaw?** = *Hi, I am [your name]. You?*

**Hi, Ang pangalan ko ay [your name].** = *Hi, my name is [your name].*

So far, so good? Great! Here are more introductory questions that you may encounter when talking about yourself:

## Place of Origin

Let's be real, in a foreign country like the Philippines, you are the foreigner, so people are naturally curious about your country of origin. There are generally two ways to ask and subsequently answer country of origin:

**Taga-saan ka?** = *Where are you from?*

/tah + gah + sah + AN + kah/ OR /tah + gah + san + kah/

**Taga-\_\_\_\_\_ ako.** = *I'm from \_\_\_\_\_.*  
(country of origin)

**Saan ka galing?** = *Where are you from?*

/sah + AN + kah + GAH + ling/ OR / san + kah + gah + ling/

**Galing ako sa \_\_\_\_\_.** (country of origin)

## Place of Current Residency

No matter how sketchy it is at first, asking and knowing a person's current address is one sure way of being relatable or creating rapport, especially when you discover that you are from the same area. After all, knowing that you know the same places means that you have shared experiences and rapport is all about shared experiences!

Just remember that you are not required to give out your full address. Just the city or the province will do.

**Saan ka nakatira?** = *Where are you staying/living?*

/sah + AN + ka + nah + kah + tea + RAH/ OR  
/san + ka + nah + kah + tea + RAH/

**Nakatira ako sa \_\_\_\_\_.** (current address)

**Taga-saan ka?** = *Where are you from?*

**Taga-\_\_\_\_\_ ako.** = *I'm from \_\_\_\_\_.* (current address)

## Nationality/ Citizenship

Again, peg this to your foreign-ness and the natural curiosity of the locals but when Tagalog speakers ask you your nationality/ citizenship, they don't mean anything malicious or bad about it. It is just one of those glaring conversation starters waiting to be used!

**Anong citizenship mo?** = *What's your citizenship?*

\_\_\_\_\_ **ako.** (citizenship; in English or Tagalog)

In this case, feel free to use the English word for your nationality/ citizenship. Tagalog speakers rarely translate nationality/ citizenship anyway. But if you do want to use the Tagalog translation, here are some of the more common nationality/ citizenship in Tagalog:

<b>Americano/a</b>	<i>American</i>
<b>Espanyol/la</b>	<i>Spanish</i>
<b>Koreano/a</b>	<i>Korean</i>
<b>Hapon/nesa</b>	<i>Japanese</i>
<b>Intsik</b>	<i>Chinese</i>
<b>Italiano/a</b>	<i>Italian</i>

**Mexicano/a**                      *Mexican*

As you can see, you have the option to include your gender, i.e. ending in **-a** for women and ending with **-o** for men. But this is not required.

## Age

As you continue your stay in the Philippines, you'll discover that age is often a topic of discussion. Feel free to say your age in English if you want. Tagalog speakers rarely count let alone say their age in Tagalog.

**Ilang taon ka na?** = *How old are you?*

/ee + LANG + tah + ON + kah + nah/

**21 years old ako.** = *I am 21 years old.*

**21 taong gulang ako.** = *I am 21 years old.*

/GOO + lang/

\_\_\_\_\_ **ako.** (age)

## Work or Hobby

Depending on the location or speaker, Tagalog speakers would ask about what you do for a living... or just in general. Some would prefer the latter to reduce the pressure for the other person regarding their work or how much they make for a living. In these cases, you can talk about a hobby or other interests.

**Anong work mo?** = *What do you do for work?*

\_\_\_\_\_ **ako.** (work/ position)

You can answer this by saying your general work or position. For example, are you a

manager or a vlogger or even an app developer? Then you can say:

**Manager ako.** = *I am a manager.*

**Vlogger ako.** = *I am a vlogger.*

**App Developer ako.** = *I am an App Developer.*

**Anong ginagawa mo ngayon?** = *What do you do right now?* /gee + NAH + gah + WAH/ /ngah + YON/

**Nagta-trabaho/ Nagwo-work ako sa \_\_\_\_\_.**  
(place of work) = *I'm working at/ in \_\_\_\_\_.*  
(place of work) /trah + bah + ho/

**Nag-ta-trabaho ako sa Makati.** = *I'm working in Makati.*

**Nag-wo-work ako sa Makati.** = *I'm working in Makati.*

**Trabaho** is "work in Tagalog. Notice how the first syllable of the word "work" and **trabaho** were repeated? You can also do this for your hobbies and interests, but you don't say **nag-ho-hobby** or **nag-in-interest**. Instead you can say:

**Nag + [first syllable of hobby] + [hobby] ako.**

For example, your hobby is going on road trips or playing basketball. You can say:

**Nag-ro-road-trip ako.** = *I'm going on a road-trip.*

**Nag-ba-basketball ako.** = *I'm playing basketball.*

For more details about this repetition of syllables, you may go to [Lesson 34: "Present Tense"](#). :)

### Reason for going/ staying in the Philippines

And no, this is not an Immigration/ Foreign Affairs interview. This is just a curious question since you did decide to leave your own country and go to the Philippines. So, relax and feel free to share your plans in this country.

**Bakit ka pala pumunta/ nag-visit dito sa Philippines?** = *What brings you here in the Philippines?* (Lit. Why you went/ visited here in the Philippines?)

### Practice

Imagine that you are in a classroom in your first day of school as a transfer student in the Philippines. Introduce yourself by saying your...

1. Name
2. Age
3. Place of Origin
4. Place of Current Residency
5. Nationality/ Citizenship
6. Work or Hobby
7. Reason for going/ staying in the Philippines

## Lesson 2 Taglish Rules!

In the first lesson, you were introduced to the concept of **Taglish** or the combination of Tagalog and English. In this age of globalization, English is so ubiquitous that it is not surprising that some languages borrow or adapt to it. One of those languages is Tagalog, and thus, Taglish was developed.

If you've been in the Philippines or heard Tagalog speakers talk, you'll notice some English words in their conversations. Of course, these English words will not give you the whole context of the conversation, but it's a start. You would've thought that you can learn Tagalog by speaking English. Now that's irony!

Now, Taglish is not just two languages mashed together willy-nilly. It is true that most Taglish speakers use the **English words in Tagalog grammar** approach, but you just can't say **I kumain the mango!** or "I ate the mango!". There are rules to follow.

Just like how you can make your own version of a chocolate cake. Maybe you want sprinkles in your cake or maybe a layer of milk chocolate ganache instead of dark chocolate between the cake layers. But before you reinvent, you must follow the essential steps on baking a chocolate cake, right? It's the same concept in Taglish.

### English in Tagalog Grammar

How do you know when to use English words? Well, the easiest way is to accept that most Tagalog speakers would prefer to use the English translations for several cases. Some of those are:

### Greetings

Feel free to say, "Good Morning!", "Hello!", or "Bye!", because Tagalog speakers themselves use these. You might even say that these are more common than the actual Tagalog greetings like **Magandang umaga!**, **Kamusta!**, or **Paalam!**.

### Numbers

Like Greetings, Tagalog speakers prefer to use the English numerical system over the Tagalog one, mainly because it is shorter and faster to use. More often than not, you'll hear Tagalog speakers say **Twenty-one na mansanas** for "twenty-one apples" instead of **Dalawampu't isa na mansanas** which means exactly the same thing but longer.

Note that Tagalog speakers also use the Spanish numerical system for smaller number and years. For example:

<u>Tagalog</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	
<b>isa</b>	<b>uno</b>	1
<b>dalawas</b>	<b>dos</b>	2
<b>tatlo</b>	<b>tres</b>	3
<b>apat</b>	<b>kwatro</b>	4
<b>lima</b>	<b>singko</b>	5

<b>dalawampu</b>	<b>beinte</b>	20
<b>limampu</b>	<b>singkwenta</b>	50
————	<b>dekada nobenta</b>	<i>the 19's</i>

If you do want to learn about the Tagalog Numerical System, go to Appendix. :)

### Days, Months, Years, Time

Numbers are not the only mouthful words in Tagalog. When time is of the essence— or topic, you wouldn't want to allot too much *time* (pun fully intended) pronouncing them, right?

So, feel free to use “Monday”, “December”, “Twenty-eighteen”, or “one P.M.”! If Tagalog speaker use the, you can use them. If you do want to learn the Days, Months, Years, and Time in Tagalog, go to Appendix. :)

### Trademarked Brand Names

“Bubble wrap”, “chapstick”, “frisbee”, “jacuzzi”— sounds familiar, right? In fact, too familiar. These words are actually trademarked brand names that are used as generic terms in American English.

In the Philippines, brand names, both local and international, are also so mainstream that Filipinos often use them as generic terms of their products. A classic example of this is the quintessential Filipino childhood experience: **Bili ka ng Colgate, yung Close-up** (“Go buy Colgate, the Close-Up brand”).

Here are some of the trademarked brand names used as generic terms in Tagalog:

<b>Albatros</b>	<i>bathroom deodorizer</i>
<b>Band-aid</b>	<i>adhesive bandages</i>
<b>Coffeemate</b>	<i>coffee creamer</i>
<b>Coleman</b>	<i>cooler</i>
<b>Colgate</b>	<i>toothpaste</i>
<b>Crayola</b>	<i>crayons</i>
<b>Downy</b>	<i>fabric conditioner</i>
<b>Frigidaire</b>	<i>refrigerator</i>
<b>Gasul</b>	<i>liquefied petroleum gas</i>
<b>Kiwi</b>	<i>shoe shine</i>
<b>Mongol</b>	<i>pencil</i>
<b>Nescafe</b>	<i>coffee</i>
<b>Pampers</b>	<i>diapers</i>
<b>Payless</b>	<i>noodle soup</i>
<b>Pentel</b>	<i>permanent marker</i>
<b>Rugby</b>	<i>heavy adhesive</i>
<b>Scotch tape</b>	<i>adhesive tape</i>
<b>Stabilo</b>	<i>highlighting pen</i>
<b>Tasty</b>	<i>sliced loaf bread</i>
<b>Tupperware</b>	<i>plastic container</i>
<b>Xerox</b>	<i>photocopy</i>
<b>Zonrox</b>	<i>bleach</i>

### Technical Terms and Jargon

Growing up at least bilinguals, Filipinos had been exposed to English as early as their elementary years, in which the major subjects like the Sciences and Math are taught in English. More often than not, you'll

hear Tagalog speakers discuss technological or scholarly subjects without translating the term and jargon (words and/or expression used in particular context, often by a particular profession or group of people) into Tagalog.

There have been attempts by the [Commission on the Filipino Language](#), to translate and standardize scholarly terms without getting influenced by English (and/or Spanish). But most of these never caught up to the speaker themselves.

For example: why use **agsikapin**, for “engineer” if **inhenyero** (pronounced, /in + hen + YEH + ro/ from the word “engineer”) and “engineer” itself is understandable? Some may use **agsikapin** in formal writing or speech, but you won’t be hearing it in casual setting.

You may ask, **Ano ang “engineer” sa Tagalog?** (“What is “engineer” in Tagalog?”). Most often than not, Tagalog speakers will reply, **Inhenyero pero okay na yung “engineer”** (““Inhenyero” but “engineer” is also okay”).

So next time you find yourself discussing technical terms and jargons, don’t sweat too much on translating. What matters is that you are understandable. :)

### English words as root words

In the previous cases, Tagalog speakers directly borrowed from English without changing the word and then inserted these English words in a Tagalog sentence. In this

case, the English words borrowed are further changed to fit the grammar of Tagalog.

These changes are more common in borrowed nouns and verbs. For example:

**May dumaan na mga doctor tapos nag-jogging sila sa park.** = *There were doctors that passed by and then they jogged in the park.*

In this Taglish sentence, the “doctor” is singular and yet the translation says there were more than one doctors. At the same time, the verb used was “jogging” and yet the translation says it was in Past Tense. This what happens when Taglish uses English word as root words.

### Tagalog in English Grammar

Another version of Taglish is when the majority of the sentence is in English. The Tagalog additions may not mean much at first glance but when used properly, Tagalog in English Grammar will show your Tagalog friends you deep understanding for their language.

### Conjunctions

Conjunctions are the parts of speech used to connect words, phrases, clauses or sentences. These are the “and”, “but”, “then”, “yet”, etc. of languages.

In Taglish, you can use Tagalog conjunctions to connect English words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, to give them that Tagalog flavor. For example:

**I was about to go kaso my alarm didn't go off.** = *I was about to go but my alarm didn't go off.*

**I will go to the office tapos pupunta ako sa Greenbelt.** = *I will go to the office then I'll go to Greenbelt.*

For more details on Tagalog Conjunctions, you can go to [Lesson 27: Making Small Talk Lasts.](#) :)

### Interjections

On the other hand, Interjections are sounds or expressions that conveys spontaneous feelings or reactions. Unlike conjunctions, they don't really connect words, phrase, clauses, or sentences. However, they do add nuance to the general "feel" of the sentence. For example:

**Aray! He bit me!** = *Ouch! He bit me!*

**Please let me go to the party naman o.** = *Please let me go to the party, please?*

For more details on Tagalog Conjunctions, you can go to [Lesson 32: Take Your Time.](#) :)

### Tagalog words as root words

The same way Tagalog speakers use English words as root words, Tagalog speakers also do the opposite of this. For example:

**Kuya guard made bantay my gamit while I was away.** = *Kuya guard guarded my stuff while I was away.*

**It's a good thing I ligo-ed this morning.** = *It's a good thing I showered this morning.*

**He's like so gwapo and bait!** = *He is so handsome and nice.*

Note that this version of Taglish is also called **Coño** or **Conyo**. This is the version of Taglish often used by younger members of rich people in major cities. This may have negative connotations from other Tagalog speakers, especially when the **Coño/ Conyo** speakers themselves are Filipino. However, a foreigner learning Tagalog are given a pass since they are still learning the language.

### Practice

What is the meaning of the following sentences?

1. Please, buy the baby pampers, yung Huggies.
2. Anong date ngayon? Ah, May 14, 2018.
3. Anong oras yung meeting? 1 p.m.
4. I'm like so stressed kanina, buti nalang the guard made tulong me to lift the groceries.
5. I ligo-ed kanina before you came!

## Lesson 3 Pronunciation Guide

Before anything else, the trick to *sounding* like a native Tagalog speaker is not in the vocabulary or sentences that you know. It is in the sounds that you can produce.

It is true that Tagalog and English has similar alphabet but it is important to remember that not all English sounds in

Tagalog, and vice versa. To start, here are the sounds that occurs in Tagalog:

Consonants			Vowels			Diphthongs					
b	as in	robe	ng	as in	king	a	as in	aisle	ai/ ay	as in	pie
d	as in	feed	ñ/ ny	as in	onion	e	as in	let; seem;	aw	as in	owl
f	as in	food	p	as in	cap			sit; say	iw	as in	ew
g	as in	flag	r	as in	rose; burrito; butter				oy	as in	oil
h	as in	hand	s	as in	sand	i	as in	seem	uy	as in	—
j	as in	hand	t	as in	late	o	as in	low			
k	as in	sock	w	as in	wow	u	as in	soon			
l	as in	lemon	y	as in	yawn						
m	as in	man									
n	as in	not									

### BONUS TIP

Before the Latin alphabet, a.k.a. the alphabet we are using right now, Tagalog and other Philippine languages actually have different ancient scripts that precede all of the colonizing cultures that stayed in the Philippines. The indigenous script of Tagalog is called **Baybayin**. Unlike the Latin alphabet used today, it is an abugida or a writing system in which the smallest unit is a consonant-vowel syllable, instead of letter.

### Notable sounds

As you can see, there are corresponding English words you can use to determine the actual sound of a Tagalog letter (marked by the **bold**). Most of these are similar to the English sounds but there are some notable

Tagalog consonants and vowels that are different from their English counterparts.

### D d and T t

Compared to their English counterparts, Tagalog T's and D's are harder and sharper. There are produced by hitting the tip of the tongue behind the front teeth instead of hitting it to the fleshy bit just about them.

Most foreigners learning Tagalog won't be able to tell the difference, but if your goal is to sound as Tagalog as possible, this is also a good place to start.

## J j

Borrowed from Spanish, the Tagalog J is also pronounced like an /h/ as in “hand”. This is usually used in borrowed Spanish names like **Juan, Jacinta, Jacobo**, etc., which are all pronounced with an /h/. Sometimes, you may see these names spelled with an H too, especially if the person naming a child was feeling experimental. It can be confusing at first but just remember that the Tagalog of “Jesus” is also **Hesus**.

## Ñ ñ/ Ny ny

This also originated from Spanish and people read the letter as **enye**. True to its name, it is pronounced as the combination of /n/ and /y/. Since the dawn of typewriters and computers, people find it hard to type without putting an extra effort, e.g. keyboard shortcuts. Hence, the NY ny alternative was practiced. People are usually lax when it comes to choosing between the two, but it is important to remember to stick to Ñ ñ if it is a proper name.

## R r

There are actually several kinds of R’s in Tagalog. This is due to the fact that a lot of languages contributed to Tagalog.

One of the more obvious one is **Trill R** or the kind of R you hear in the word “burrito”. In this word the R is long, as if growling. This came from Spanish. This R is usually used when the Tagalog word starts with an R or there are double R’s in the word

Next is the **retroflex R** or what is commonly used in American Accent English. It is the

sound you make when you pronounced the t’s in the words “butter” or “cutter” in American Accent. It is so soft it is almost non-existent. This R started to become common when more Filipinos started learning and using English.

The last one is the **tap R**. It is called tap because you just need one tap with your tongue to produce this. It is harder than an American English R but softer than the Spanish R. This is the “default” R of Tagalog.

Of all the three the **Trill R** is the rarest while **retroflex** and **tap** are almost interchangeable. However, if you really want to bull’s eye that neutral Tagalog accent, try to avoid **retroflex** as much as possible.

## Glottal Stop

Believe it or not, there is a consonant sound that doesn’t have an equivalent letter. This is the glottal stop. It is the sudden pause between two vowels or sometimes at the end of some words. The same pause or stop you do when saying, “Uh oh”. For example, **paaralan** is pronounced /pa + a + ra + LAN/ and not /pa + ra + lan/. It literally separates the two vowels without the use of a hyphen.

## Vowels

You might not notice it, but each English vowel has different pronunciation. The good thing is that, Tagalog vowels are more simple and easier to understand.

First things first, understand that sometimes /i/ is interchangeable with /e/, and

sometimes /o/ is interchangeable with /u/. In these cases, the meaning of the word doesn't change. For example:

<b>babai</b>	<b>babae</b>	<i>woman</i>
<b>lalaki</b>	<b>lalake</b>	<i>man</i>
<b>konti</b>	<b>konte</b>	<i>few</i>

Of course, this is not always the case. A good rule of thumb is "if the word ends this vowel, it can interchange with that vowel". The rest are by familiarizing yourself with the words.

Next, don't add extra vowels when pronouncing the sound. For example: The A in Tagalog is the A in the word "aisle". Just the A, not including the /i/ sound. It is not /ai/ as in "eye". Another example is the O's. The O's in Tagalog is also independent. Don't add an additional /u/ or /w/ sound in the end.

### Diphthongs

These are sounds made up of vowels combined with either /y/ or /w/. These are pronounced as a single, combined sound. For example:

<b>kaibigan</b>	/kai + BEE + gan/	<i>friend</i>
<b>Maynila</b>	/mai + KNEE + lah/	<i>Manila</i>
<b>sabaw</b>	/sah + BAU/	<i>soup</i>
<b>sisiw</b>	/SEE + seew/	<i>chick</i>
<b>baboy</b>	/BAH + boy/	<i>pig</i>
<b>baduy</b>	/bah + <u>dui</u> /	<i>off-fashion</i>

### Stress

In English, a "PREsent" is a gift while "preSENT" is the act of presenting something. Like in English, Stress also affects the pronunciation and meaning of the words in Tagalog. For example:

#### puno

- /POO + no/ *tree*
- /poo + NO/ *full*

There are four kinds of stress in Tagalog: (1) **Malumay**, (2) **Malumì**, (3) **Mabilís**, (4) **Maragsâ**. And as their names look like, there are stress marks involved.

### Malumay

This is the default stress of most Tagalog words; therefore, it is the most common. The stress is on the second to the last syllable and it is traditionally left unmarked. For example:

<b>Tagalog</b>	/ta + GA + log/	<i>Tagalog</i>
<b>bubuyog</b>	/boo + BOO + yog/	<i>bee</i>
<b>kabayo</b>	/ka + BA + yo/	<i>horse</i>

### Malumì

Similar to malumay, the stress is on its second to the last syllable. However, there is a glottal stop at the end (marked by underline). Malumì words always ends with a vowel and it is traditionally marked by a grave symbol ( ` ) over the vowel. For example:

<b>batà</b>	/BA + <u>ta</u> /	<i>child</i>
<b>binatà</b>	/bee + NA + <u>ta</u> /	<i>young man</i>

**dalagà** /da + LA + ga/ *young woman*

**dugô** /doo + GO/ *blood*

**butikî** /boo + tea + KEY/ *lizard*

**salitâ** /sa + lee + TA/ *word*

### Mabilís

Meaning “fast” or “quick”, Mabilís puts the stress on the last syllable. In this case, it is traditionally marked by an acute symbol ( ´ ) over the vowel. A Mabilís word can either end with a vowel or a consonant. For example:

**galáw** /ga + LAU/ *move*

**diláw** /dee + LAU/ *yellow*

**bulaklák** /boo + lak + LAK/ *flower*

You might ask, “Do Tagalog speakers really use these accent marks?”. The honest answer is No. We don’t. For some Tagalog speakers, the only time they can see written Tagalog with accents marks is when it is on formal documents like diploma or certificates. We don’t actually need the accent marks because we know how to pronounce the words.

### Maragsâ

Like Mabilís, the stress is also on the last syllable. However, like malumî, it also has a glottal stop in the end (marked by underline). Maragsâ words always ends with a vowel and it is traditionally marked with a circumflex ( ^ ). For example:

However, for a learner like you, you might want to learn how to read with accent marks or pronunciation guide, e.g. /sa + lee + TA/, first before memorizing a bunch of Tagalog words. As a review, here are the different Tagalog stresses compared with each other:

## Stress in Tagalog

Stress Type	Characteristics	Sample word with accent marks	Sample words as pronunciation guide
Malumay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stress on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the last syllable</li> <li>no added stress mark</li> </ul>	<b>Tagalog</b>	/tah + GAH + log/
Malumî	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stress on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the last syllable</li> <li>glottal stop at the end</li> <li>➤ added grave symbol ( ` ) over the last vowel</li> </ul>	<b>batà</b> <i>child</i>	/BA + <u>ta</u> /
Mabilís	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stress on the last syllable</li> <li>➤ added acute symbol ( ´ ) over the last vowel</li> </ul>	<b>galáw</b> <i>move</i>	/ga + LAU/
Maragsâ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stress on the last syllable</li> <li>glottal stop at the end</li> <li>➤ added circumflex ( ^ ) over the last vowel</li> </ul>	<b>dugô</b> <i>blood</i>	/doo + <u>GO</u> /

**Hack:** Only Tagalog words ending with a vowel can have a glottal stop (marked by underline) at the end of the word. For this e-book, we will follow the latter or the pronunciation guide, so you may learn the proper pronunciation and stress at the same time. :)

### Practice

Convert the following pronunciation guides to accented Tagalog words:

1. /ee + SA/ *one*
2. /sa + REE + lee/ *self*
3. /hin + DEE/ *no*
4. /mah + lah + MIG/ *cold*
5. /poo + LO/ *island*
6. /COO + yah/ *big brother*
7. /too + LAH/ *poem*
8. /mah + doo + MEE/ *dirty*
9. /poo + NO/ *full*
10. /POO + no/ *tree*

## Lesson 4 Everyday Questions

So, you are in a new country, meeting new sets of people, and hearing a new language. You will need all the help that you can get! Like they always say, “Ask and you shall receive,” so don’t be shy to ask friendly Tagalog speakers around you.

**B**y now you know that “**Kamusta?**” means “How are you?” in English, right? Now, we’re going to re-use this same word in the example below:

### Kamusta...? / Kumusta...?

/kah + MOOSE + tah/ OR /coo + MOOSE + tah/

**Kamusta ang meeting?** = *How was/ is the meeting?* (/ang/ as in the Avatar: Legend of Aang)

The tense is not indicated in the question so the “was/ is” is only provided in this example in the context of the conversation. The word **ang** acts as the word “the” here to identify a specific “meeting”, and not just any meeting. You wouldn’t care about a meeting irrelevant to you and to the one you’re talking to, right?

So **Kamusta ang...** is a phrase that can be easily repeated and all you have to do is switch out the noun that follows with a Tagalog or English word:

**Kamusta ang pagkain?** = *How was/ is the food?* (Say: /pag + KAH + in/)

**Kamusta ang beer?** = *How was/ is the beer?*

**Kamusta ang traffic?** = *How was/ is the traffic?*

**Kamusta ang beach?** = *How was/ is the beach?*

Simple, right? What if you want to sound more candid and more Tagalog? You can also interchange **ang** with **yung**. For more details about **ang** and **yung**, you may go to [Lesson 12: Describing People and Things Part 2.](#) :)

For example:

**Kamusta yung pagkain?** = *How was/ is the food?*

**Kamusta yung meeting?** = *How was/ is the meeting?*

### BONUS TIP

When answering Non-Yes/ No questions in Tagalog, you can treat the question words like a blank that you can fill with your answer. For example:

**Kamusta yung pagkain?** = *How was/ is the food?*

[ \_\_\_\_\_ ] yung pagkain?

Masarap yung pagkain. = *The food was/ is delicious.* /mah + sah + RAP/

## Ano...?

/ah + NOH/

**Ano** means “what” in Tagalog. This is a useful word, especially when you’re trying to learn new Tagalog words.

Using the same structure as above, we can ask questions like:

**Ano yung “vacation” sa Tagalog?** = *What is “vacation” in Tagalog?*

**Ano ang pangalan mo?** = *What is your name?*

**Ano ang ibig sabihin ng “paro-paro”?** = *What does “butterfly” mean?*

**Ano sa palagay/ tingin mo?** = *What do you think? /*

### BONUS TIP

More frequent than not, restaurants here in the Philippines have these “Best-Sellers” in their menu. This is usually their best dish and a crowd-favorite of the customers. So, the next time you are having a hard time choosing which meal to order, try the “best-seller” by asking:

**Ano yung best-seller niyo?** = *What is your best-seller (here)?*

Easy so far, right? What if I tell you that you can still make it easier? Tagalog speakers like blending words together to make them shorter and easier to pronounce, similar to English speakers with their “can’t”, “won’t”, “don’t”:

## Ano ang pangalan mo? / Ano yung pangalan mo?

> **Anong pangalan mo?** = *What is your name?*

As you can see, **anong** came from the combination of **ano** and **ang/ yung**. This is generally done by the Tagalog speakers for ease of articulation and speed.

### BONUS TIP

You know when you want to say something, but you can’t remember the right words for it and the next thing you know you’re saying “... um... you know... hm...” or “You know the... whatchamacallit?”

Well, **ano** has got you covered! Don’t worry, this is pretty common for Tagalog speakers. Just say **ano** whenever you’re lost for words or just want to say something to fill up the dead air or until you find the perfect word that you are looking for.

**Ano ulit ang pangalan ni ano?** = *What’s his/her name again? (Lit. What again the name of the what?)*

**Na-ano si ano?** = *Something happened to what(who)?*

And if you really need the time to think, you can even extend it like:

**Anoooooooo...** = *ummmm...*

## Kailan...? / Kelan...?

/KAY + lan/ or /KEH + lan/

**Kailan** means “when” in Tagalog. It can also follow the same structure as the first question words.

**Kailan ang meeting?** = *When is the meeting?*

**Kailan yung dinner?** = *When is the dinner?*

**Kailan ang bakasyon?** = *When is the vacation?* (say: /bah + kash + SHYON/)

**Kailan yung game?** = *When is the game?*

Now, say you are talking to an older person, or maybe the parents of your Filipino girlfriend/ boyfriend, or even a complete stranger, and you just want to present yourself as the best and most polite you, you can add this word:

**Po**, pronounced /poh/, is the magical word you can add to any sentence, whether questions or statement, to make them more polite.

**Kailan po ang meeting?** = *When is the meeting?* (polite)

**Kailan po ang dinner?** = *When is the dinner?* (polite)

### Alin...?

/ah + LIN/

This simply means “Which?”. This implies that the one asking has options.

**Alin dito?** = *Which from these?* (say: /dee + toh/)

**Alin** can also be immediately followed by a noun. In these cases, it is implied that there are a lot of this noun and you can choose from them:

**Alin book yung discounted?** = *Which from these books is the discounted one?*

**Alin coupon ang sulit?** = *Which from these coupons is worth it?* (say: /SOO + lit/)

**Alin flavor yung masarap?** = *Which from these flavors is the delicious one?* (say: /mah + sah + RAP/)

### Saan...? / San...?

/sah + an/ or simply /san/

The last word **saan** means “where”. It’s used the same way as the three question words above but let’s take it a step further and make it even more useful for you:

**Saan yung beer ko?** = *Where’s my beer?*

**Saan ang kape nila?** = *Where’s their coffee?* (say: /kah-PEH/)

**Saan yung beach?** = *Where’s the beach?*

**Saan po ang beach?** = *Where’s the beach?* (polite)

**Saan ako?** = *Where am I?*

**Saan ka?** = *Where are you?*

**Saan tayo?** = *Where are we?*

### Practice

Let’s see how we can apply this to some imaginary real-world situations. How would you answer the following scenarios?

1. You are drinking with friends and you think someone picked up your beer by mistake. Ask your friends, "where's your beer?".
2. A friend that you are expecting calls you and said that they are running late because of the traffic. Ask them where they are and how is the traffic.
3. You forgot the time of your meeting, so you call your boss and politely ask him, "When is the meeting?"
4. You're in the beach and you see a girl selling seashells by the seashore, so you stop and ask, "What is "seashell" in Tagalog?".
5. You notice that there's a soft opening café near you and they offer 20% off for select bread. Ask "Which of these breads are discounted?"