

Pronunciation guide

Vowels

a	lala	(sleep)	as in far
e	betha	(hit)	as in leg
i	lila	(cry)	as in is
o	bona	(see)	as in sore
u	funa	(want)	as in too

Consonants

As a guide, many consonants are pronounced as they are in English. However, when some consonants are followed by an h, the sound is aspirated i.e. air is forced out as you are saying the sound.

ph	pheka	(cook)	as in pat , but with aspiration
th	thanda	(like)	as in take , but with aspiration
kh	khulu	(big)	as in cat , but with aspiration
bh	bhala	(count)	as in bed
sh	shushu	(hot)	as in she

The following double consonants are pronounced roughly like this:

hl	hlala	(live/sit/stay)	Place the tip of your tongue behind your top teeth to one side and force the air out whilst saying the l . The air escapes over the side of the tongue and through the sides of the mouth – lots of practice helps with this one!
tsh	tshona	(set, go down)	as in cheque

Clicks

There are only 3 clicks and these are all suction sounds.

c	cela	(ask)	Here the tip of the tongue touches the back of the front teeth. It is released at this point with a sucking movement producing a sound sometimes used to express disapproval.
q	qonda	(understand)	Here the tip of the tongue is pressed against the front of the palate behind the front teeth, where it is released with a pop, producing a sound like the popping of a cork.
x	xela	(tell)	Here the tongue is raised so that its side comes into contact with the back teeth on one side. Release the tongue with a sucking movement to produce a clicking sound (like you would use when encouraging a horse).

Tips for helping your child

NB: The emphasis is on communicating and recognition of meaning, not to spell the words.

Suggestions for practicing the words:

- you say the Xhosa word and ask your child for the English meaning (let them help you with the pronunciation – use the guide to help you)
- you say the English meaning and ask your child for the Xhosa word
- make flashcards with the Xhosa on the one side, and the English on the other. These can be kept and used in later grades – a good investment for future learning.
- Make Xhosa visible in your home – stick flashcards on everyday items. Make simple posters with the Xhosa words.
- Find some Xhosa pictures relevant to the theme being learnt (e.g. parts of the body). You say the Xhosa word and your child has to give you the appropriate picture. (This is useful to keep as similar themes are also covered in Afrikaans.)

Ways to include Xhosa in your day-to-day lives:

- begin the day by greeting your children in Xhosa
- use the vocabulary being learnt even if it means using it in an English sentence e.g. Let's wash your iinwele (hair).
- make use of the question, "Yintoni le?" (What is this?) to elicit the Xhosa word for an object.
- encourage your children to speak to Xhosa speakers they come across at the garage, shop, at home or when socializing. This is a great opportunity for you to lead by example and try out what you know too!
- encourage them to sing you any songs they have learnt at school.

Useful resources:

- Oxford first Bilingual Dictionary published by Oxford University Press.
- Understanding everyday Xhosa by Pam Wilken Published by Maskew Miller Longman
- The Concise Trilingual Pocket Dictionary Published by AD Donker Publisher
- Learn Xhosa with Anne Munnik (with a CD) Published by Shuter and Shooter
- Speak Xhosa with us Beginner to Advanced (with CD) Published by African Voices
- English-Xhosa, Xhosa-English Dictionary Published by Pharos Dictionaries

- Google "isiXhosa pronunciation" and you will find many websites to help you.

- There are also Xhosa courses at Bergvliet High School's Continuing Adult Education Programme.

- We are exploring the possibility of offering a Xhosa course for parents through Xhosa Fundis. If you are interested in attending such a course please e-mail your child's Xhosa teacher asap.