A Pima Word Book

O'Odham Ñiokĭ O'ohana

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2014

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Salt River O'odham Piipaash Language Program Writing System

An orthography is simply a method of writing a language. There are many different types of writing systems, but most of us are probably most familiar with alphabetic writing systems such as the English alphabet. An efficient alphabet uses a symbol to represent each sound within a language. The sounds of the O'odham language are very different from the sounds of English language and, therefore, require a different alphabet. Writing the O'odham language is something that is relatively new to most O'odham speakers, but it can be a powerful tool for language preservation.

Alvarez / Hale Orthography

The Alvarez / Hale writing system was developed by Dr. Albert Alvarez, a Tohono O'odham linguist and Mr. Kenneth Hale, a milga:n professor from MIT, and has been the official writing system of the Tohono O'odham Nation since 1974. This system uses many of the same letters or symbols that are used in the English alphabet, but the sounds they represent can be very different.

The Alvarez/Hale system has been the basis for all materials developed by the SRPMIC O'odham Piipaash Language Program and schools for the past twenty years. Some slight modifications to the original system were necessary to reflect the distinct differences that exist between Tohono O'odham and Onk Akimel O'odham.

Pronunciation & Helpful Hints

1. With this writing system, an apostrophe is used to symbolize a glottal stop /'/. A glottal stop represents a closing of the glottis that stops the flow of air. An example of this is found in the middle of an expression commonly used by English speakers: "oh-oh", as in "Oh-oh, I think we're in trouble."
2. The stress on most O'odham words is on the first syllable.
3. Vowel sounds in O'odham can be drawn out to a long sound or cut off as a short sound. The sound of a long or a short vowel does not change. It is simply held for a longer or shorter duration.
    - A colon : following a vowel makes it a long vowel.
    - A breve ˘ above a vowel makes it a short vowel (almost silent).
4. The most common way of pluralizing nouns is reduplication of the first consonant and vowel, or just the initial vowel.
    - EXAMPLE: gogs » gogogs or mi:tol » mimi:tol

Some words have unique plural forms, however, that do not follow this pattern.

In the following orthography description, we introduce each O'odham letter, followed by an English word that contains a somewhat similar sound. Some of these English sounds are not exactly the same but are used as a general pronunciation guide for new learners. Next, we introduce an O'odham word that contains the sound represented by the letter, followed by the English translation.

Alvarez/Hale Orthography

Letter	Sound	O'odham	Milga:n
a	father	ali	baby
b	big	ban	coyote
c	chip	cehia	little girl
d	this	do'ag	mountain
ḍ	but	taḍ	foot
d	dam	judum	bear
e	earth	eṣ	chin
g	go	gogs	dog
h	hot	huñ	corn
i	machine	ipud	dress
j	job	ju:k	raining
k	kiss	ka:lit	car
l	rolling "l"	lial	money
m	miss	mi:tol	cat
n	no	nalaṣ	orange
ñ	canyon	ñulaṣ	peach
o	all	o'o	bone
p	pot	pi:las	pear
s	see	siṣpakuḍ	safety pin
ṣ	ship	ṣuṣk	shoes
t	thin	taṣ	sun
u	brute	uhig	bird
v	vine	violi:n	violin
w	what	wuai	deer
y	yes	yavĭ	key

Alvarez/Hale Orthography

Vowels

Letter	Sound	O'odham	Milga:n
a	father	ba'ag	eagle
e	earth	eldagĭ	skin
i	machine	ispul	spur
o	all	oks	old woman
u	brute	uvĭ	female

Long Vowels

Letter	O'odham	Milga:n
a:	ma:gina	machine
e:	e:eḍ	blood
i:	i:bhai	prickly pear
o:	o:b	apaches
u:	u:s	wood

A few words use vowels that have a symbol above them called a breve. A vowel with a breve above it is only found at the end of words and can be difficult to hear. It may simply sound like an aspiration.

Letter	Sound	O'odham	Milga:n
ĭ	an aspiration	svegĭ	red

Alvarez/Hale Orthography

Diphthongs

When two vowels occur together in an O'odham word, the resulting diphthongs (the second vowel is always "i") can produce new sounds.

Letter	Sound	O'odham	Milga:n
ai	aisle	vaiñom	knife
ei	gooey	i:gei	fell down
oi	poi	ṣoiga	pet
ui	oui	kui	mesquite tree

Engwa

Letter	Sound	O'odham	Milga:n
ŋ	thing	*ca:ŋgo	monkey

* In Salt River we use the word "Gogs O'odham" to describe monkey. (Tohono O'Odham word for monkey is ca:ŋgo)

The Salt River O'odham Piipaash Language Program recognizes no right, wrong or "one way" of speaking and recognizes that spelling variations are commonplace. We all have, within our families, our individual dialects depending on the location of our homes and our relationships. If there is a "correct way" it is one of using the language in your everyday life. The greatest resources available to you are the elders in your families, communities, and those O'odham speaking tribal members.

FAMILY & KINSHIP

Paternal

Relationship to Me:	I call them:	They call me:
Father	Heñ Og	Heñ Alidag
Grandfather	Heñ Vosk	Heñ Vosmaḍ
Grandmother	Heñ Ka:k	Heñ Ka'amaḍ
Father's older brother	Heñ Og Keli	Heñ Cucuḍ
Father's older sister	Heñ Oksi	Heñ Cucuḍ
Father's younger brother	Heñ Hakit	Heñ Hakimaḍ
Father's younger sister	Heñ Vovoit	Heñ Hakimaḍ

Maternal

Relationship to Me:	I call them:	They call me:
Mother	Heñ Je'e	Heñ Maḍ
Grandfather	Heñ Ba:b	Heñ Ba'amaḍ
Grandmother	Heñ Hu'ul	Heñ Mo:s
Mother's older brother	Heñ Je'es	Heñ Maḍ
Mother's older sister	Heñ Da:d	Heñ Maḍ
Mother's younger brother	Heñ Tatal	Heñ Ma'i
Mother's younger sister	Heñ Jisk	Heñ Ma'i

Siblings

Relationship to Me:	I call them:	They call me:
My older brother	Heñ Si:s	Heñ Sikul
My older sister	Heñ Si:s	Heñ Sikul
My younger brother	Heñ Sikul	Heñ Si:s
My younger sister	Heñ Sikul	Heñ Si:s

FAMILY & KINSHIP

Great Grandparents

Relationship to Me:	I call them:	They call me:
Great Grandfather	Heñ Vi:kol	Heñ Viṣaḍ
Great Grandmother	Heñ Vivi'i	Heñ Viṣaḍ
Great, Great Grandparents	Heñ Sikul	Heñ Si:s

Other Relations

Relationship to Me:	I call them:	They call me:
First cousin/cousins	Heñ Vena:k	Heñ Vena:k
Stepfather	Heñ Hakit	Heñ Hakimaḍ
Stepmother	Heñ Jisk	Heñ Ma'i

GREETINGS

English	O'odhamac
My friend	Heñ navoc
What did you say?	Ṣap kaic?
What is your name?	Ṣap cegig?
My name is	Añi añ ap ce:gig?
How are you?	Ṣapai cui'ig?
What are you doing?	Ṣap e wa?
What about you?	Api hik?
It's good / It is okay / It's alright	Sape

NUMBERS

English	O'odhamac
Zero	Pi Haicu
One	Hemako
Two	Go:k
Three	Vaik
Four	Gi'ik
Five	Hetasp
Six	Cudp
Seven	Vevkam
Eight	Gigi'ik
Nine	Hemuckam
Ten	Vestma:m
One hundred	Siant
Thousand	Mil
Million	Miyon

DAYS OF THE WEEK

English	O'odhamac
One Week	Hemako Domik
Monday	Lunas
Tuesday	Go:k taṣ
Wednesday	Vaik taṣ
Thursday	Gi'ik taṣ
Friday	Vialas
Saturday	Ṣavai
Sunday	Domik

COLORS

English	O'odhamac
Red	Svegĭ
Pink	Svegium
Brown	Soam
Yellow	Soam
Orange	Soam
Green	Scedagĭ
Blue	Scedagĭ
Purple	Sibhaimagĭ
Black	Scuk
White	Stoa
Gray	Skomagĭ

MONTHS

English	O'odhamac	
June	Haṣañ Baidag Maṣad	Saguaro fruit month: Harvest of the saguaro fruit
July	Jukiabig Maṣad	Rainy month: Month when most planting occurs
August	Ṣopol E'esbig Maṣad	Short planting month: Late summer rains and short planting crops are sown
September	Vaṣai Gakidag Maṣad	Dry grass month: Harvesting begins
October	Sepijig Maṣad	Cold month: Gather left over fruits, tubers, roots etc for winter food supply
November	Soam Maṣad	Also known: U'velig Maṣad – deer rutting or also as deer mating season
December	Skomagĭ Maṣad	Gray month: Trees are bare, vegetation is scant
January	Aupa l'ivagidag Maṣad	Leafing of the cottonwood month
February	Aupa Hyosik Maṣad	Blooming of the cottonwood month
March	Kui l'ivagidag Maṣad	Leafing of the mesquite month
April	Kui Hyosik Maṣad	Blooming of the mesquite month
May	Kai Cuklig Maṣad	Black seed month

FOOD

English	O'odhamac
Pinto Beans	Muñ
Lima Beans	Havul
Tepary Beans (Brown)	Oa'am Bavĭ
White Tepary Beans	Tota Bavĭ
Mesquite Bean	Viohog
Pinole	Ha:kĭ cu'i
Meat	Cu:kug
Pork Meat	Cu:kug
Bacon / Ham	Hamon
Beef	Cu:kug
Fish	Vatopĭ
Chicken	Cucul
Fruit	Haicu Baidag
Apple	A:bal
Apricot	Vilgodi
Banana	Hovic
Pomegranate	Kalnayu
Cantaloupe	Wua'amakam
Watermelon	Miliñ
Casaba	Keli Baṣo

FOOD

English	O'odhamac
Grapes	Hu:dvis
Orange	Nalaṣ
Peach	Ñulaṣ
Pear	Pilas
Prickly Pear	Ibhai
Wheat	Pilkañ
Onion	Sivol
Corn	Huñ
Squash	Ha:l
Potato	Ba:bas
Spinach	I:vagĭ
Wild Spinach	Opoñ
Chili (any kind but a few have names)	Ko'okol
Tomato	Domadi
Carrot	Tobĭ haicu hukĭ
Lettuce	I:vagĭ
Milk	Vi:p
Butter	Mandagia
Eggs (Chicken)	Cucul Nonha
Cheese	Gi:ṣo

FOOD

English	O'odhamac
Sugar	Asuga
Pepper	Cuk on (This is a given name)
Lard	Mañjik
Baking Powder	Koṣoḍkdakuḍ
Water	Ṣudagĭ
Coffee	Ko:vi
Rice	A:loṣ (Nickname "Totoni Mamaḍ")
Oatmeal	Vulo Ki'ivi (Nickname)
Bread	Pan
Tortilla	Cemait
Frybread	Wuamajda
Lazy Bread	Skovk Cemait
Cake	Si'ovĭ Pan
Pie	Pastil
Cookies	Si'ovĭ Cecmait
Gravy	Ho'oṣna
Pudding	A'tol
Syrup	Sitol
Candy	Lulsi
Gum	Ki'ivi

BODY

English	O'odhamac
Body	Honṣpadag
Skull	Koṣva
Head / Hair	Mo'o
Face	Wiyoṣa
Back of Head	Kuṣo
Skin	Eldagĭ
Forehead	Kua
Eyebrows	Hehevo
Eye	Wi'
Eyelashes	Wi'po
Nose	Da:k
Cheek	Ka:m
Mouth	Ciñ
Lips	Ciñ Ku:g
Ear	Na:k
Chin	Eṣ
Neck	Kusva
Throat	Bai'dk
Shoulder	Kodva
Chest	Baṣo
Heart	Ibdak

BODY

English	O'odhamac
Breasts	Vip'pi
Arm	No:vĭ
Elbows	Si:ṣ
Wrist	Maṣva
Fingers	Mamṣ
Stomach	Vo:k
Belly Button	Hik
Waist	Huda
Back	O:
Small of Back	Komĭ
Hip	Cu:l
Buttock	Atapuḍ
Leg	Kaiyo
Thigh	Um
Knee	To:n
Calf	U:kṣ
Ankle	Cekva
Foot	Ta:t
Toe	Macpoḍ
Heel	Ce:m
Nail	Huc

BODY

Short Sentences

Say It In English	O'odhamac Bo Cei
This is my head or hair This is your head or hair Where is my head or hair? Where is your head or hair?	Ida oḍ eñ mo'o Ida oḍ em mo'o Hebai hasko geñ mo'o? Hebai hasko gem mo'o?
This is my face This is your face Where is my face? Where is your face?	Ida oḍ eñ wiyoṣa Ida oḍ em wiyoṣa Hebai hasko geñ wiyoṣa? Hebai hasko gem wiyoṣa?
This is my forehead This is your forehead Where is my forehead? Where is your forehead?	Ida oḍ eñ kua Ida oḍ em kua Hebai hasko geñ kua? Hebai hasko gem kua?
This is my nose This is your nose Where is my nose? Where is your nose?	Ida oḍ eñ da:k Ida oḍ em da:k Hebai hasko geñ da:k? Hebai hasko gem da:k?
This is my eye This is your eye Where is my eye? Where is your eye? These are my eyes These are your eyes Where are my eyes? Where are your eyes?	Ida oḍ eñ wi' Ida oḍ em wi' Hebai hasko geñ wi'? Hebai hasko gem wi'? Idam oḍ eñ vupoi Idam oḍ em vupoi Hebai hasko geñ vupoi? Hebai hasko gem vupoi?

BODY

Short Sentences

Say It In English	O'odhamac Bo Cei
This is my ear	Ida oḍ eñ na:k
This is your ear	Ida oḍ em na:k
Where is my ear?	Hebai hasko geñ na:k?
Where is your ear?	Hebai hasko gem na:k?
These are my ears	Idam oḍ eñ na:nk
These are your ears	Ida oḍ em na:nk
Where are my ears?	Hebai hasko geñ na:nk?
Where are your ears?	Hebai hasko gem na:nk?
This is my mouth	Ida oḍ eñ ciñ
This is your mouth	Ida oḍ em ciñ
Where is my mouth?	Hebai hasko geñ ciñ?
Where is your mouth?	Hebai hasko gem ciñ?
This is my cheek	Ida oḍ eñ ka:m
This is your cheek	Ida oḍ em ka:m
Where is my cheek?	Hebai hasko geñ ka:m?
Where is your cheek?	Hebai hasko gem ka:m?
These are my cheeks	Idam oḍ eñ ka:kam
These are your cheeks	Idam oḍ em ka:kam
Where are my cheeks?	Hebai hasko geñ ka:kam?
Where are your cheeks?	Hebai hasko gem ka:kam?
This is my chin	Ida oḍ eñ eṣ
This is your chin	Ida oḍ em eṣ
Where is my chin?	Hebai hasko geñ eṣ?
Where is your chin?	Hebai hasko gem eṣ?
This is my neck	Ida oḍ eñ kusva
This is your neck	Ida oḍ em kusva
Where is my neck?	Hebai hasko geñ kusva?
Where is your neck?	Hebai hasko gem kusva?

BODY

Short Sentences

Say It In English	O'odhamac Bo Cei
This is my throat	Ida oḍ eñ bai'dk
This is your throat	Ida oḍ em bai'dk
Where is my throat?	Hebai hasko geñ bai'dk?
Where is your throat?	Hebai hasko gem bai'dk?
This is my hand	Ida oḍ eñ no:vĭ
This is your hand	Ida oḍ em no:vĭ
Where is my hand?	Hebai hasko geñ no:vĭ?
Where is your hand?	Hebai hasko gem no:vĭ?
These are my hands	Idam oḍ eñ nonovĭ
These are your hands	Ida oḍ em nonovĭ
Where are my hands?	Hebai hasko geñ nonovĭ?
Where are your hands?	Hebai hasko gem nonovĭ?
This is my leg	Ida oḍ eñ kaiyo
This is your leg	Ida oḍ em kaiyo
Where is my leg?	Hebai hasko geñ kaiyo?
Where is your leg?	Hebai hasko gem kaiyo?
These are my legs	Idam oḍ eñ kakiyo
These are your legs	Idam oḍ em kakiyo
Where are my legs?	Hebai hasko geñ kakiyo?
Where are your legs?	Hebai hasko gem kakiyo?

CLOTHES

English	O'odhamac
Clothes	Eñiga
Socks	Kakalsido
Slip	Vecoḏak
Skirt	Ṣa:kum Ipuḍ
Shoes	Ṣuṣk
Shirt	Kamiṣ
Scarf	Moñjelik
Blouse	Uvĭ Kamiṣ
Coat	Vagdalik
Dress	Ipuḍ
Glove	No:vĭ Koṣodak
Handkerchief	Tovaṣ
Loincloth	Atovṣa
Pant	Ṣaliv
Belt	Givoḍ
Hat	Vonam
Sandals	Gigidkam Ṣuṣk

EMOTIONS & ACTIONS

English	O’odhamac
Happy	Sekik
Sad	Ṣoikcud
Crying	Ṣoak
Laughing	He’hem
Mad	Bagat
Singing	Ne’e
Running	Meḍ
Dancing	Vaila
Coughing	I’ihok
Sick	Mumko
Want	Tac'cu
Not here / absent	Piac

ANIMALS

English	O'odhamac
Ant	Totoñ'ĭ
Butterfly	Ho'hokimel
Cricket	Cukugṣvaḍ
Grasshopper	Ṣo:o
Grey Spider	Komagĭ Tokdoḍ
Lady Bug	Ju:kĭ maḍ
Locust	Ko:ktpol
Mosquito	Vamok
Scorpion	Nakṣel
Tarantula	Hiañ
Termite	Hiopc
Velvet Ant	Wuimal
Wasp	Vi:pṣ
Worm	Vatopĭ
Tick	Mamṣ
Bird	Uhig
Buzzard	Ñui
Cactus Wren	Hokaḍ
Cardinal	Sipuk
Mourning Dove	Ho:hi

ANIMALS

English	O'odhamac
White Wing Dove	Okokoi
Duck	Vapkakĭ
Eagle	Ba'ag
Chicken Hawk	Viṣak
Night Hawk	Ñe:poḍ
Red-tailed Hawk	Haupal
Hummingbird	Vipismal
Oriole	Vajiko
Burrowing Owl	Kokoho
Horned Owl	Cukuḍ
Pigeon	Paploñ
Quail	Kakaicu
Roadrunner	Taḏai
Swallow	Gitvol
Antelope	Kuvid
Bat	Nanakmel
Bear	Juḏumĭ
Bobcat	Gevo
Cat	Mi:tol
Cougar / Mountain Lion	Mavit

ANIMALS

English	O'odhamac
Cow	Haivañ
Coyote	Ban
Deer (Mule)	Wuai
Deer (Whitetail)	Si:kĭ
Dog	Gogs
Field Rat	Koson
Fox	Gaso
Gopher	Cevo
Horse	Kaviyo
Jaguar	Oṣaḍ
Javalina	Misciñ Koji
Mouse	Nahagio
Pig	Koji
Prairie Dog	Ṣelik
Cottontail Rabbit	To:bĭ
Jackrabbit	Cu:vĭ
Raccoon	Vavuk
Sheep	Ka:vul
Bighorn Sheep	Ceṣonĭ
Skunk	U:pio

ANIMALS

English	O'odhamac
Goat	Sivato
Squirrel	Ce:kol
Wolf	Ṣe'eh
Fish	Vatopĭ
Frog	Babad
Horned Toad	Cemamaigĭ
Gila Monster	Ciaḏagĭ
Lizard (Black)	Hujuḍ
Gecko Lizard	Pitoicu
Tree Lizard	Jusukal
Whiptail Lizard	Vajelho
Snake (Any kind unless named)	Vamaḍ
Gopher Snake	Ṣo'ova
Rattlesnake	Ko'oi
Sidewinder	A'agam ko'oi
Red Racer Snake	Vegĭ Vamaḍ
Whale	Ne:big

NATURE

English	O'odhamac
Sun	Taṣ
Moon	Maṣad
Star	Hu'u
Sky	Da:m ka:cim
Morning	Sialik
Noon	Da:m ju:k
Afternoon / Mid-Afternoon	Imui'i ju:k
Sunset	Taṣ Hudoñig
Evening	Hudonk
Night	Cu'hug
Cloud	Cevagĭ
Wind	Hevel
Whirlwind	Sivlikĭ
Dust Storm	Jegos
Rain	Ju:kĭ
Rainbow	Kiohoḍ
Thunder	Tatañik
Thunder Bolt	Wihom
Land / Earth / Dirt	Jeveḍ
Rock	Hodai

NATURE

English	O’odhamac
Mountain	Do'ag
Sand	O’oḍ
River	Akimel

DIRECTIONS

North	Da:m
West	Kuiva
South	Veco
East	Tai'i

PLANTS

Cholla Buds	Hanam
Century Plant	A’uḍ
Ocotillo	Melhog
Prickly Pear Pad	Nav
Prickly Pear Fruit	Ibhai
Saguaro	Ha:ṣañ
Saguaro Fruit	Haṣañ Baidag

PLANTS

English	O'odhamac
Cottonwood	Aupa
Mesquite	Kui
Willow	Ce'ul
Apricot	Vilgodi
Apple	A:bal
Fig	Suna
Grapefruit	Soam eldakam
Orange	Nalaṣ
Peach	Ñulaṣ
Pear	Pilas
Creosote	Ṣegoi
Wolfberry / Squawberry	Kuavul
Arrowweed	U'us kokmagĭ
Cattails	Uḍvak
Devils Claw	Ihug
Flower (Any Kind)	Hyosik
Gourd	Vakoa
Sunflower	Hivai

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