

COMMON CREOLE WORDS AND PHRASES

CREOLE – ENGLISH

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Bonjou! - Good morning!
Bonswa! - Good afternoon!/Evening! (used after 11 AM)
Komon ou ye? - How are you?
N'ap boule! (most common greeting and response) - Good!
Wi - Yes
yo - they, them
Non - No
Mesi - Thanks
Anmwe! - Help!
Non, mesi - No, thanks
Souple - Please
Merite - You're welcome
Pa gen pwoblem - No problem
Oke - OK
Eskize mwen - Excuse me
Mwen regret sa - I'm sorry
Gen... - There is/are...
Pa genyen! - There is/are not any!
Mwen pa genyen! - I don't have any!
Sekonsa! - That's right!
Piti piti - A little bit
Anpil - A lot
Gen anpil... - There are a lot of...
Isit - Here
La - There
Tout bagay anfon? - Is everything OK?
Pa kounye-a - Not now
Toupatou - Everywhere
Anyen - Nothing
Preske - Almost
Atansyon! - Attention!/Watch out!
Prese prese! - Hurry!
Dife! - Fire!
Rete! - Stop!
Kounye-a - Now
Nou ap chache... - We are looking for...
Souple, ban mwen... - Please give me...
Separe sa ant nou - Divide this among you
Ye - Yesterday
Jodia - Today
Demen - Tomorrow
Maten an - This morning
Apremidi a - This afternoon
Aswe a - This evening
lendi - Monday
madi - Tuesday
mekredi - Wednesday
jedi - Thursday

vandredi - Friday
samdi - Saturday
dimanch - Sunday
Ou byen? - You OK?
Mwen pa two byen - I'm not too well
Mwen malad - I'm sick
Te gen yon aksidan - There was an accident
Nou bezwen yon dokte/yon mis touswit - We need a doctor/a nurse right now
Kote Iopital Ia? - Where is the hospital?
Kote Ii ou fe mal? - Where does it hurt you?
Li ansent - She's pregnant
Mwen pa ka manje/domi - I cannot eat/sleep
Mwengendjare - I have diarrhea
Mwen anvi vonmi - I feel nauseated
Tout ko mwen cho - My whole body is hot
Mwen toudi - I'm dizzy
Nou bezwen pansman/koton - We need bandages/cotton
Mwen bezwen yon bagay pi blese sa a - I need something for this cut
Ou gen SIDA - You have AIDS
Mwen grangou - I'm hungry
Mwen swaf anpil - I'm very thirsty
Nou ta vle manje - We would like to eat
Konben - How much?/How many?
Poukisa? - Why?
Kote? - Where?
Kisa? - What?
Kile? - When?
Ki moun? - Who?
Kijan? - How?
Kiles? - Which?
Eske gen...? - Is/Are there...?
Eske ou gen...? - Do you have...?
Eske ou ka ede nou, souple? - Can you help us please?
Kote nou ka achte...? - Where can we buy...?
Eske ou ka di mwen...? - Can you tell me...?
montre - show
ban - give
Ki moun ki Ia? - Who is there?
Kisa ou vle? - What do you want?
Kisa ou ta vle? - What would you like?
Kisa ou ap fe Ia? - What are you doing there?
Kisa sa a ye? - What is that?

Sa k'genyen? - What's the matter?
Kisa pi nou fe? - What must we do?
Eske ou te we...? - Have you seen...?
Eske ou pale angle/franse? - Do you speak English/French?
Ki moun isit ki pale angle? - Who speaks English here?
Ou konprann? - You understand?
Kij an yo rele sa an kreyol? - What do they call that in Creole?
Kij an yo di...an kreyol? - How do they say... in Creole?
Kisa ou bezouen? - What do you need?

Kisa ki rive ou? - What happened to you?
Ki kote li ale? - Where did he go?
Kilaj ou? - How old are you?
Kote ou rete? - Where do you live?
Eske ou gen petit? - Do you have any children?
Kote nou ye? - Where are we?
genyen - to have
chita - to sit
manje - to eat
rete - to stop
kouri - to run
kouche - to lie down
vini - to come
ale/prale - to go
ban - to give
rete trankil - to be quiet
pran - to get, receive
leve - to get up
sede - to give up
touye - to kill
frape - to hit
kache - to hide
konnen - to know
manti - to lie (not truth)
gade - to look
koupe - to cut
kwit-manje, fe-manje - to cook
fimen - to smoke
atake - to attack
ban pemi - to authorize
kri - to shout, yell, scream
achte - to buy
fe-apel - to call, name
netwaye - to clean
femen - to close
fose - to coerce, force
fini - to finish
obeyi - to obey
fe - konfyans - to trust
console - to comfort
pati - to leave, depart
mouri - to die
fe-desen - to draw, sketch
bwe - to drink
tonbe - to drop, fall
mete abo - embark, load, board
atoure - to surround
ranfose - to enforce
ou - you, your
mwen - I, me, my, mine
nou - us, our, you (plural)
Ii - him, her, his, hers

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Creole is written phonetically. Each letter is pronounced, and each word is spelled as it is pronounced. Creole has only been recognized as the official language of Haiti in the last few years. Therefore, there are many different ways in which the Haitians write and spell Creole words. There is an official standard that has been set, and this standard will be maintained in this publication. The following is a pronunciation guide using this standard; most of the sounds are French.

ch-share chache-to look for
o-claw fo-strong
e-aim ede-to aid, help
ou-you ou-you
e-leg mesi-thank you
r-(not rolled) respire-to breathe
g-go gen-to have
I-see isit-here
s-(always s) prese-in a hurry
j-(avoid the d sound) jou-day
y=yes pye-foot
o-toe zo-bone

There are nasal sounds in Creole just as there are nasal sounds in French, which are pronounced partially through the nose, but without the "n" itself pronounced (a rare exception to the general pronunciation rule of pronouncing every letter). Some English equivalents which come close to the nasal sounds are as follows:

an-alms dan-tooth
en-chopin pen-bread
on-don't bon-good

A. When a nasal sound is followed by another "n", or "m," the nasal sound is pronounced, then the "n" or "m" is pronounced separately.

B. If an accent is placed over the vowel, there is no nasal sound.

C. In never indicates a nasal sound.

The letter c is only used in the ch combination.

The letter k is used for the hard sound.

The letter s is used for the soft sound.

The word *nèg* and the word *blan*

The term *nèg* strictly means a dark-skinned man and the word *blan* a white person, as in *Gen yon nèg e gen yon blan*. ("there is a black man and there is a white man"). However, *nèg* is generally used for any man, regardless of skin color (i.e. like "guy" or "dude" in American English). *Blan* is generally used for *foreigner*. It is not used to refer just to white foreigners, but foreigners of color as well.

Etymologically, the word *nèg* is derived from the French "nègre" and is cognate with the Spanish *negro* ("black", both the color and the people), and cognate with the English "negro". In Haitian Creole, however, *nèg* does not have pejorative connotations.

There are many other Haitian Creole terms for specific tones of skin, such as *grimo*, *bren*, *wòz*, *mawon*, etc. However, such labels are considered offensive by some Haitians, because of their association with color discrimination and the Haitian class system.

Grammar

Haitian Creole grammar differs greatly from French and inflects much more simply: for example, verbs are not inflected for tense or person, and there is no grammatical gender — meaning that adjectives and articles are not inflected according to the noun. The same primary word order (SVO) is the same as French, but the variations on the verbs and adjectives are minuscule compared to the complex rules employed by French.

Many grammatical features, particularly pluralization of nouns and indication of possession, are indicated by appending certain suffixes (postpositions) like *yo* to the main word. There has been a debate going on for some years as what should be used to connect the suffixes to the word: the most popular alternatives are a dash, an apostrophe or a space. It makes matters more complicated when the "suffix" itself is shortened, perhaps making only one letter (such as *m* or *w*).

Pronouns

There are six pronouns, one pronoun for each person/number combination. There is no difference between direct and indirect. Some are obviously of French origin, others are not.

person/number	Creole	Short form	French	English
1/singular	<i>mwen</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>je, moi</i>	"I", "me"
2/singular	<i>ou</i> (*)	<i>w</i>	<i>tu, te, vous</i>	"you" (sing.)
3/singular	<i>li</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>il, elle, on</i>	"he", "she", "it"
1/plural	<i>nou</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>nous</i>	"we", "us"
2/plural	<i>nou</i> or <i>vou</i> (@)		<i>vous</i>	"you" (pl.)
3/plural	<i>yo</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>ils, elles, eux</i>	"they", "them"

(*)sometimes *ou* is written as *w*- in the sample phrases, *w* indicates *ou*.

(@) depending on the situation.

Plural of nouns

Nouns are pluralized by adding *yo* at the end.

liv yo - "books"
machin yo - "cars"

Possession

Possession is indicated by placing the possessor after the item possessed. This is similar to the French construction of *chez moi* or *chez lui* which are "my place" and "his place", respectively.

lajan li - "his/her money"
fanmi mwen or *fanmi m* - "my family"
kay yo - "their house" or "their houses"
papa ou or *papa w* - "your father"
chat Pyè - "Pierre's cat"
chèz Mari - "Marie's chair"
zanmi papa Jan - "Jean's father's friend"
papa vwazen zanmi nou - "our friend's neighbor's father"

Indefinite article

The language has an indefinite article *yon*, roughly corresponding to English "a/an" and French *un/une*. It is placed before the noun:

yon kouto - "a knife"
yon kravat - "a necktie"

Definite article

There is also a definite article, roughly corresponding to English "the" and French *le/la*. It is placed **after** the noun, and the sound varies by the last sound of the noun itself. If the last sound is an oral consonant and is preceded by an oral vowel, it becomes *la*:

kravat la - "the tie"
liv la - "the book"
kay la - "the house"

If the last sound is an oral consonant and is preceded by a nasal vowel, it becomes *lan*:

lanp lan - "the lamp"
ban lan - "the bench"

If the last sound is an oral vowel and is preceded by an oral consonant, it becomes *a*:

kouto a - "the knife"
peyi a - "the country"

If the last sound is an oral vowel and is preceded by a nasal consonant, it becomes *an*:

fanmi an - "the family"
mi an - "the wall"

If the last sound is a nasal vowel, it becomes *an*:

chen an - "the dog"
pon an - "the bridge"

If the last sound is a nasal consonant, it becomes *nan*:

machin nan - "the car"
telefòn nan - "the telephone"
madanm nan - "the woman"

"This" and "that"

There is a single word *sa* that corresponds to French *celceci* or *ça*, and English "this" and "that". As in English, it may be used as a demonstrative, except that it is placed **after** the noun it qualifies. It is often followed by *a* or *yo* (in order to mark number):

jardin sa (a) bèl - "This garden is beautiful."

As in English, it may also be used as a pronoun, replacing a noun:

sa se zanmi mwen - "this is my friend"
sa se chen frè mwen - "this is my brother's dog"

Verbs

Many verbs in Haitian Creole are the same spoken words as the French infinitive, but they are spelled phonetically. As indicated above, there is no conjugation in the language; the verbs have one form only, and changes in tense are indicated by the use of tense markers.

Li ale travay le maten - "He goes to work in the morning."
Li dòmi le swa - "He sleeps in the evening."
Li li Bib la - "She reads the Bible."
Mwen fè manje - "I make food."
Nou toujou etidye - "We study all the time."

Copulas

The concept expressed in English by the verb "to be" is expressed in Haitian Creole by two words, *se* and *ye*.

The verb *se* (pronounced as the English word "say") is used to link a subject with a predicate nominative:

Li se frè mwen - "he is my brother"
Mwen se doktè - "I am a doctor"
Sa se yon pyebwa mango - "That is a mango tree"
Nou se zanmi - "we are friends"

The subject *sa* or *li* can sometimes be omitted with *se*:

Se yon bon lide - "That is a good idea"
Se nouvo chemiz mwen - "This is my new shirt"

For the future tense, such as "I want to be", usually *vin* "to become" is used instead of *se*.

L ap vin bel frè mwen - "He will be my brother-in-law"
Mwen vle vin yon doktè - "I want to become a doctor"
Sa ap vin yon pyebwa mango - "That will become a mango tree"
N ap vin zanmi - "We will be friends"

"Ye" also means "to be", but is placed exclusively at the **end** of the sentence, after the predicate and the subject (in that order):

Ayisyen mwen ye = Mwen se Ayisyen - "I am Haitian"
Ki moun sa ye? - "Who is that?"
Kouman ou ye? - "How are you?"

The verb "to be" is not overt when followed by an adjective, that is, Haitian Creole has stative verbs. So, *malad* means "sick" and "to be sick":

M gen yon zanmi malad - "I have sick friend."
Zanmi mwen malad. - "My friend is sick."

To have

The verb "to have" is *genyen*, often shortened to *gen*.

Mwen genyen lajan nan bank lan - "I have money in the bank".

There Is

The verb *genyen* (or *gen*) also means "there is/are"

Gen anpil Ayisyen nan Florid - "There are many Haitians in Florida".
Gen yon moun la - "There is someone here".
Pa gen moun la - "There is nobody here".

To know

There are three verbs which are often translated as "to know", but they mean different things. *Konn* or *konnen* means "to know" + a noun (cf. French *connaître*).

Èske ou konnen non li? - "Do you know his name?"

Konn or *konnen* also means "to know" + a fact (cf. French *savoir*).

M pa konnen kote li ye - "I don't know where he is." (note *pa* = negative)

The third word is always spelled *konn*. It means "to know how to" or "to have experience". This is similar to the "know" is used in the English phrase "know how to

ride a bike": it denotes not only a knowledge of the actions, but also some experience with it.

Mwen konn fè manje - "I know how to cook" (lit. "I know how to make food")
Èske ou konn ale Ayiti? - "Have you been to Haiti?" (lit. "Do you know to go to Haiti?")
Li pa konn li fransè - "He can't read French" (lit. "He doesn't know how to read French.")

Another verb worth mentioning is *fè*. It comes from the French *faire* and is often translated as "do" or "make". It has a broad range of meanings, as it is one of the most common verbs used in idiomatic phrases.

Kouman ou fè pale kreyòl? - "How did you learn to speak Haitian Creole?"
Mari konn fè mayi moulèn. - "Marie knows how to make cornmeal."

To be able to

The verb *kapab* (or shortened to *ka*, *kap'* or *'kab*) means "to be able to (do something)". It refers to both "capability" and "availability", very similar to the English "can".

Mwen ka ale demen - "I can go tomorrow."
Petèt m ka fè sa demen - "Maybe I can do that tomorrow."

Tense markers

There is no conjugation in Haitian Creole. In the present non-progressive tense, one just uses the basic verb form for stative verbs:

Mwen pale kreyòl - "I speak Haitian Creole"

Note that when the basic form of action verbs is used without any verb markers, it is generally understood as referring to the past:

mwen manje - "I ate"
ou manje - "you ate"
li manje - "he/she ate"
nou manje - "we ate"
yo manje - "they ate"

(Note that *manje* means both "food" and "to eat" -- *m ap manje bon manje* means "I am eating good food").

For other tenses, special "tense marker" words are placed before the verb. The basic ones are:

te - simple past
tap (or *t ap*) - past progressive (a combination of *te* and *ap*, "was doing")
ap - present progressive (With *ap* and *a*, the pronouns nearly always take the short form (*m ap*, *l ap*, *n ap*, *y ap*, etc.))
a - future (some limitations on use)
pral - near or definite future (translates to "going to")

Simple past or past perfect:

mwen te manje - "I ate" or "I had eaten"
ou te manje - "you ate" or "you had eaten"
li te manje - "he/she ate" or "he/she had eaten"
nou te manje - "we ate" or "we had eaten"
yo te manje - "they ate" or "they had eaten"

Past progressive:

mwen t ap manje - "I was eating"
ou t ap manje - "you were eating"
li t ap manje - "he/she was eating"
nou t ap manje - "we were eating"
yo t ap manje - "they were eating"

Present progressive:

m ap manje - "I am eating"
w ap manje - "you are eating"
l ap manje - "he/she is eating"
n ap manje - "we are eating"
y ap manje - "they are eating"

Note: For the present progressive ("I am eating now") it is customary, though not necessary, to add "right now":

M ap manje kounye a - "I am eating right now"

Near or definite future:

mwen pral manje - "I am going to eat"
ou pral manje - "you am going to eat"
li pral manje - "he/she am going to eat"
nou pral manje - "we am going to eat"
yo pral manje - "they am going to eat"

Future:

N a wè pita - "See you later" (lit. "We will see (each other) later")

Other examples:

Mwen te wè zanmi ou yè - "I saw your friend yesterday"
Nou te pale lontan - "We spoke for a long time"
Lè li te gen uit an... - "When he was eight years old..."
M a travay - "I will work"
M pral travay - "I'm going to work"
N a li l demen - "We'll read it tomorrow"
Nou pral li l demen - "We are going to read it tomorrow"
Mwen t ap mache e m wè yon chyen - "I was walking and I saw a dog"

Additional time-related markers:

fèk - recent past ("just")
sòt - similar to *fèk*

They are often used together:

Mwen fèk sòt antre kay la - "I just entered the house"

A verb mood marker is *ta*, corresponding to English "would":

Yo ta renmen jwe - "They would like to play"

Mwen ta vini si mwen te gen yon machin - "I would come if I had a car"

Li ta bliye w si ou pa t la - "He/she would forget you if you weren't here"

Negating the verb

The word *pa* comes before a verb (and all tense markers) to negate it:

Woz pa vle ale - "Rose doesn't want to go"

Woz pa t vle ale - "Rose didn't want to go"