

## **FAQ: Amharic Words and Phrases**

Compiled by adoptive parents and staff. Revised May 2005

The following words and phrases may help with basic communication in Amharic.

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#### **I. Basic words and phrases**

##### **A. Simple Commands and Statements**

No	Idellem OR ai de lum OR aye (most common)
All gone	yellum (one way to say no) also gesture: wagging the index finger in front back and forth
Yes	ow OR awo also gesture: intake of breath and a quick nod upwards
Calm down	kes bey
Careful	ta tahn ka key
Carry baby on back	chee che
Come (boy)	nah
Come (girl)	neaye
Done, enough	bekka (often used for “stop that”)
Dont' be afraid (girl)	ayzosh (used for comfort)
(boy)	ayzoh
Hey you (female)	anchee
Hey you (male)	ante
How much is it?	sent no?
Hurry	toh low
I don't want it	eh fall ah go

Let's go	en heed
Look	ey
Look out/be careful	Keh-ah-see-fah-two-leh-yeu-weh-che (girl)
I love you (girl)	e weud e shall o
no problem	chigger yellum
yes problem	chigger alle
Okay?	Isshy OR e she
Ready	ze geh jew
School	tim ur te bet
Share	mekafel OR tay kah fah lu
Show me	asa yeen
Sit down (two)	kuchu-belu
Sit down (one)	kuchu-bay
Stop	kai or thai
Understanding	
Do you understand?	guh bash?
I understand	guh bañ
I don't understand	algo banyem
I know	ow kah lo
I don't know	ala wahkem
Wait	koy-yah OR ko-yee
Be patient (girl)	ta ggesh
Be patient (boy)	ta gges
Patience	ti-gist
Not yet	gena new
What?	mindin-new
Why?	lemon
Welcome/you're welcome here	In Kwan dehna metah (en-kwahn' dun-nah' mah-tahk')

### **B. Courtesy**

Excuse me	yikuhrta
Goodbye (casual)	ciao
Greeting	tay nah yist tahl leen
(literally, may health be with you)	
Hello	sa lahm or salem
How are you? (girl)	Donna neush
Please (girl)	ibahkish
Sorry	az-na-YOH or aznalo
Thank you	amma-say-ga-nala OR ah mah se ga nah lo
What's your name? (girl)	Suesh man no? OR Sem me man esh?

### **C. Food**

The words for mango and papaya are the same as in English  
The barley snack eaten and loved by Ethiopian children is kolo  
Apple pom

Banana	moose
Bread (soft, like a dinner roll)	dabo
Chicken	doro
Coffee	bunna
Drink	metet
Eggs	en ku lal
Fish	asa
Full	tegebihugn
Honey	mar
Hungry	rabeh
Ice cream	gelati
Juice	chimmakee
Meat, red (beef)	siga
Milk	weutet
Oranges	bertukan
Peanut butter	ocholene
Rice	ros
Tea (black, strong, lots of sugar)	chai
Water	Woo ha

I'm hungry	a robin
Breakfast	kurs
Lunch	mesa
Dinner	e raht
Fork	shu kah
Spoon	man ka
Baby bottle	tee toh

#### **D. Clothing**

Clothes	lebs
Pants	su ri
Shoes	chamma
Socks	Kal see
Shirt	shah mees

#### **E. Bathroom, body, health**

Bathroom (more formal)	banyobet
Go to the Bathroom (action)	shintabet
Defecate, poop	awrrr or AARR OR kahkah
Doctor	hakeem
Penis	washela
Potty chair	popo
Soap	samuna
Toilet paper, tissue (Kleenex)	"soft"
Urinate, pee	shint
I feel sick	ah-moe-nya-luh

### **F. Useful nouns**

Backpack/purse	borsa
Ball	kwass
Balloon	feena
Bed	alga
Butterfly	birabiro
Car	mack ee na (or pee pee)
Dog	wushaw
Flower	ababa
Horse	ferres
Love	fikir
Pen	escribito
Rain	zaneb
Room	bet
Swimming pool	wanna
Telephone	silk

### **G. People**

Brother	wendim
Dad, papa	abbabba OR ebahye
Family	beta seb
Friend	gwadegna OR gwah dwain ya
Mama	em-aye-yay OR enat
Old man	shimagele
Old woman	arogeet
Sister	ihit

### **H. Useful Adjectives**

Bad	metfo
Beautiful	konjo
Dirty	ko-sha-sha
Forever	zeh lah lum
Good / nice	tiro or teru
Very Good	ta ru no
Great	bu tam te ru
Hot	muk
More, a lot	boozhu
New	addis
Responsible	halafee
Small, a little	tin nish
Smart (also used for good job)	gobez
Strong	enkaraa

### **I. Time**

Now	a hun
Later	Bu hall a
Just a minute	ahnd gize
Not yet	gena new
Today	za re
Tomorrow	nuh guh
Yesterday	tenant

### **J. Numbers**

One	ahnt
Two	heulet
Three	sost
Four	arat
Five	amist

### **K. Compliments**

Good	kahn-joe-no
Pretty	kahn-joe
Very clever (high compliment)	go-bez

**L. Insults** -- When adopting siblings, the knowledge of these words is helpful to monitor their treatment of each other.

Idiot	deh-bheb, deh dheb
Someone incapable of listening	don-corra
fat-head	chin-ke-low
other	layla

## **II. Dictionaries, phrasebooks**

Phrase books and bilingual dictionary (for older children) that have been recommended:

Amharic for Foreigners, 6th ed. Woldegabir, Semere. 1996.

Concise Amharic Dictionary: Amharic--English English--Amharic.

Leslau, Wolf.

University of California Press, 1996.

Lonely Planet Ethiopian Amharic Phrasebook. Kebede, Tilahun and Catherine Snow.

Lonely Planet Publications, 2002.

## **III. Selected online resources.** Current as of March 2005.

**A. Online translations.** *An online search for “Amharic AND online AND translation” may find additional resources.*

Ethiopian Amharic phrases

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/language/ethiopian-amharic-phrases.html>

Ethiopian Names (see also NAMES file in the aaiethiopia FILES)

[http://www.ethiotrans.com/ethiopian\\_names.htm](http://www.ethiotrans.com/ethiopian_names.htm)

“Explaining the Ethiopic Numbering System and a tiny lesson on Amharic”

<http://www.hanselman.com/blog/ExplainingTheEthiopicNumberingSystemAndATinyLessonOnAmharic.aspx>

Glossary of English words and phonetic Amharic pronunciation

<http://www.ethiopic.com/glossary/>

Holy Bible in Amharic -- International Bible Society

<http://www.ibs.org/bibles/amharic/>

Online Amharic-English Dictionary

[www.ethiopiandictionary.com](http://www.ethiopiandictionary.com)

Short Amharic “glossary” and descriptions of units of measure

<http://www.angelfire.com/ak/sellassie/page30.html>

**B. Self-teaching materials.** *For your information – products have not been reviewed or recommended by other parents.*

Amharic and Tigrinya language courses

<http://www.africanlanguage.com/>

Amharic Language course

[http://www.maps2anywhere.com/Languages/Amharic\\_language\\_course.htm](http://www.maps2anywhere.com/Languages/Amharic_language_course.htm)

Language exchange via Email, Text Chat and Voice chat

<http://www.mylanguageexchange.com/Learn/Amharic.asp>

Products in Amharic, also language courses – BROWSE by Country

<http://www.worldlanguage.com/>

