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Mother Tongue

Setswana Language Course

Data Friendly Version



Intro to
learning
Setswana

Lesson One

History for the language

Origins of language – The Setswana language is not only an official language in South Africa but is also a national language spoken in Botswana. With around 9% of people in South Africa speaking the language and is closely related to the Sotho group.

The Twana people are most commonly known for their unique food, traditional dresses, and distinct fashion style.

Culture – Most Setswana names are given to children based on a meaning in life. Lesege means Luck and Kgololesego means Freedom.

Before the concept of a clock was introduced, the time of day was measured by the sun (Letsatsi) and the relevant events of the day.

Pronunciation

Kae

(Pronounced like “Sky”
but without the S)

Try with “Le Kae” –
Setswana for How are
you?

Tlh

(Tongue against top of
mouth – Push out air)

Try with “Matlho” –
Setswana for Eyes.

Ts

(Tongue against front
of teeth – Push air out)

Try with “Itumetse” –
Setswana for Happy.

Greetings

Hello (One person)

Ahee

How are you (One person)

Le kae?

Goodbye

Tsamaya sentle

Good night

Robalang sentle

Excuse me

Intshwarele

Hello (People)

Dumelang

I am well

Ke teng

See you soon

Ke tla go bona kgantele

Thank you

Ke a leboga

You are welcome

O a amogelwa

Lesson Two

Date

Monday –
Mosupologo

Tuesday –
Labobedi

Wednesday –
Laboraro

Thursday –
Labone

Friday –
Labotlhamo

Saturday –
Lamatlhatso

Sunday –
Latshipi

Today –
Gompiano

Tomorrow –
Ka moso

What is the day today? –
**Gompiano ke letsatsi la bokae la
kgwedi?**

Common things

One hundred Rand –
Legkolo la diranta

Robot –
Roboto

Corner –
Khona

Bus –
Bese

Match –
Motshameko

Building –
Moago

Street –
Seterata

Hair –
Moriri

Head –
Tlhogo

Chest –
Sefuba

Heart –
Pelo

Stomach –
Mpa

Fingers –
Menwana

Feet –
Maoto

Eyes –
Matlho

Mouth –
Molomo

Nose –
Nko

Hands –
Seatla

Value

One –
Nwge

Two –
Pedi

Three –
Tharo

Four –
Nne

Five –
Tlthano

Six –
Thataro

Seven –
Supa

Eight –
Robedi

Nine –
Robongwe

Ten –
Lesome

Last –
Gabofelo

First –
Ntlha

Short phrases

Yes –
Ee

No –
Nnyaa

Please –
Tswee-tswee

I am sorry –
Ke tlhomoga pelo

Excuse me, what did you say? –
Intshwarele, o rileng?

Please repeat –
Boeletsa gape

I don't understand –
Ga ke tlhaloganye

I understand a little –
Ke tlhaloganya gannyane

Do you speak English? –
A o bua Seesemane?

Come in –
Tsena

Who –
Mang?

What –
Eng?

Why –
Goreng?

When –
Leng?

Where –
Kae?

How –
Jang?

Too little –
Go nnye

Enough –
Go ntse

Lesson Three

Common questions

How much is it? –
Ke bokae?

What time is it? –
Ke nako mang?

When does it begin? –
Go simolola ka nako mang?

What is the weather like today? –
Bosa bo tla nna jang gompiano?

Are you free? –
O na le nako?

What is your name? –
Leina la gago ke mang?

Do you take credit cards? –
Le amogela karata ya krediti?

Where do I sign? –
Ke ngwala kae?

Could you please stop here? –
A o ka ema fa tswetswee?

How far is it? –
Go kgakala jang?

Where do you live? –
O nna kae?

Where are you going? –
O ya kae?

Where is the toilet? –
Ntlwana e kae?

What is the matter? –
Molato ke eng?

Ask for Help

Can you help me please? –
A o ka nthusa, tswetswee?

Will you please write it down? –
A o ka kwala?

Please hurry –
Ithlaganele, tswetswee

Thanks for your help –
Ke leboga thuso ya gago

I am lost –
Ke timetse

What is wrong? –
Go senyegile eng?

Where is the nearest garage? –
Karatshe e e gaufi e kae?

Where is the nearest shop? –
Lebenkele le le gaufi le fa kae?

Where do I pay? –
Ke duela kae?

Where can I buy a ticket? –
Nka reka thekete kae?

Instructions

Please take me to the airport –
**Nkise go kotamodifofane
tswetswee**

Taxi please –
Thekesi, tswetswee

I would like some coffee please –
Ke batla kofi, tswetswee

I want to withdraw money –
Ke batla go goga madi

Turn left –
Sokologela go molema

Turn right –
Sokologela go moja

Straight ahead –
Tthamalala fela

It is too expensive –
Go tura go feta

This is too big –
E, e kgolo

This is too small –
E, e nnyane

I want to see a doctor –
Ke batla go bona ngaka

I am sick –
Ke a lwala

I am tired –
Ke lapile

I am hungry –
Ke tshwerwe ke tlala

I am thirsty –
Ke tshwerwe ke lenyora

I am happy –
Ke itumetse



Continued learning

Online dictionary – <https://thevore.com/tswana/>

Use the above link for an online Setswana to English translations. If you are stuck with a word, then look it up and grow your ability to converse and communicate.

The best way to continue practicing any new language is to make relationships. Find someone at work, in your community or through online channels that speak Setswana. Form a relationship that allows you to practice and grow your confidence in speaking Setswana conversationally. You might just make some new friends along the way!

