

General Information / Grammar & Pronunciation

Pronunciation and Grammar

- **Most Zulu words of two or more syllables are spoken with the second last syllable lengthened, emphasized, and raised to a higher pitch. The last syllable is then spoken softly.** (syllable = Silbe / pitch = Tonhöhe)
- **Consonants on their own are generally pronounced in a very sharp precise way. However if the consonant is followed by the letter “h”, then the consonant is spoken more softly, nearly like a “g”.**
- **To indicate that you are asking a question, the last word in the sentence has “na” added onto the end. (Not necessarily) The pitch of the “na” is raised in an inquiring manner just as in English.** (inquiring manner = (nach)fragende, erkundigende Art u. Weise)

Pronunciation of different letter combinations

c	-	Inward sucking “tska”. Loud and sharp.	Sounds like you would lure (=anlocken) or call a little puppy dog.
ch	-	Inward sucking “tska”. Soft and rounded.	
x	-	Inward dental “t” + sharp inward “cha” using cheeks rather than tongue.	
k	-	Sharp guttural sound intermediate between “k” and “g”.	
kh	-	Softer guttural “k”, but the “h” is not pronounced.	
q	-	Sharp inward “t” using the tongue on the roof of the mouth.	When professionals are doing this click sound, it's loud kakhulu. Like if you're opening a wine bottle... ☺
qh	-	Softer less emphasized inward “t” using the roof of the mouth.	
gq	-	Normal “g” followed immediately by the “q” as explained above.	
hl	-	Soft, blowing, very guttural “sh” followed by a normal “l”	Like a whispering/ lisping snake.
dl	-	“d” and a very guttural “sh” followed by a normal “l”.	
ng	-	Normal “ng” as in English but usually pronounced with a quiet “g”. However pronouncing the “g” as normal is also valid.	

The explanations above were taken out of a “Zulu Dictionary” which has been established for medical students, doctors and so on. The words and explanations below were written down by myself.

The easiest way in order to learn the click sounds and the whole language is speaking the language with native speakers. The click sounds are marked as bold and underlined in the phonetic transcription. I really hope that you can use this handbook in order to improve your speaking abilities a little bit. Surely you'll make a lot of people happy just through speaking their language - even if you're only greeting them with some scraps of Zulu.
Please enjoy!

Yours faithfully,

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singular (sg)	plural (pl)	[pronunciation]	translation	mnemonic / comments
<u>First Words</u>				
Sawubona	Sanbonani	[Saubu'ona] [Sanbo'nani]	Hello, Good morning, Are you still alive?	Like a Saubone!
Sawubona baba		[Saubu'ona baba]	Greet an older man	
sawubona ma/mama/auntie		[Saubu'ona ma/mama/auntie]	Greet an older woman	
sawubona bhuti/sisi		[Saubu'ona buti/sissi]	Greet a male/female friend	
Yebo!		[Jääbo]	Yeah, I'm still fine, I'm still alive.	Similar to our "Yeah!"
Cha!		[Tra]	No!	
Phephisa!		[Pepisa]	Sorry!	But even the most zulu speaking people use the english word "Sorry"
Unjani?	Ninjani?	[Untschaani]	How are you? How's it?	
Wena unjani?	Nina Ninjani?	[weena untshaaani] [nina nintschaani]	And you? How are you?	
Ngiyaphila	Siyaphila	[Ngi-/Sijapiiela]	I'm / We're still alive and feeling fine.	Like Jonas Piela, he's always fine. ☺
Ngikona	Sikona	[ngi-/sigona]	I'm fine / We're fine. I Right.	
Hamba Kahle	Hambani Kahle	[hamba/ni Gachle]	Go well!	
Sala Kahle	Salani Kahle	[sala/ni Gachle]	Stay well!	Sala = Stay!
Lala Kahle	Lalani Kahle	[lala/ni Gachle]	Sleep well!	You shouldn't say that to a wife, especially not when her husband is near to her.
Sobonana futhi / Sizobona		[sobonana futi] [sisobona]	We will see each other again.	
Ubenosuku oluhle!		[ubenosugu oluchle]	Have a nice day!	
Ngiyabonga kakhulu!	Siyabonga kakhulu!	[ngi-/siyabonga ga'kuulu]	Thank you very much.	
Ngubani igama lakho?		[ngubani igama lako]	What's your name?	
Ngingu Simon.		[ngingu hanjo]	I am Hanjo.	
Igama lami ngu Simon.		[Igama lam(i) ngu frank]	My name is frank.	
Uphumaphi?		[upuma'pi]	Where are you from?	

Ngiphuma e Jalimani.	Siphuma e Jalimani	[ngipuma e tschalmani] [sipuma e tschalmani]	I'm from Germany. / We're from Germany.	
Uhlalaphi?		[U ch lalapi]	Where are you living?	
Ngihlala eThekwini.	Sihlala eThekwini.	[Ng ich lala eThekwini] [S ich lala eThekwini]	I'm living in Durban / We're living in Durban.	
Ngisebenza eHarding Special School.	Sisebenza eHarding Special School.	[ngisebensa eharding special school]	I'm / We're working at Harding Special School.	
Sharp! / Shoar!		[shap] [schoor]	I Right, Everything is fine! (slang)	slang word, you can always use it! (no zulu word)
Moja!		[motscha]	Cool!	slang
Ai ngeke!		[Angege]	I don't believe you!	Too much of everything
Haybo!		[Haibo]	Wow, that's amazing.	You can hear it nearly every day.
Unamanga!		[unamanga]	You're telling lies!	The kids are always saying this, if you show them some "magic".
Angiqondi / Angizwa		[angi' q ondi] {ang'giswa}	I don't understand.	
Ngiyaxolisa		[ngija x olisa]	Sorry / Excuse me	
Umlungu	Abelungu	[umlungu]	White person(s)	Is a kind of swearword. The white Southafricans don't like it, because it's an relic of the apartheid system.
Unkulunkulu Akubusise!		[umgulungulu agubusise]	God bless you!	
Inkosi Ikubusise!		[ingosi igubusise]	God bless you!	Inkosi is normally a "chief" – but in this expression it's clear, that you're speaking about God.
Small Talk				
Kuyashisa kakhulu namhlanje!		[gujaschissa ga'kuulu nam ch lantsche]	It's very hot today!	
Lipholile namhlanje!		[lipolile]	It's medium today!	If it's not to cold or to hot...
Kuyabanda kakhulu namhlanje!		[gujabanda ga'kuulu nam ch lantsche]	It's very cold today!	

Ngisikuluma kancane IsiZulu.	[ngisiguluma ka <u>nc</u> ane isisulu]	I speak a little bit of Zulu.	
Ukudla Bekumnandi kakhulu namhlanje!	[ugudla begumnandi ga'kuulu namchlantsche]	The foody was very delicious/tasty today.	Just mention that always to the big mamas and they will love you. ☺
Ilanga libalele!	[ilanga libalele]	The Sun is shining.	
Ngihlinze inkukhu kakhulu izolo!	[ngichlinse inguku ga'kuulu isolu]	I've slaughtered a lot of chicken yesterday.	
Umlungu uyakwazi ukukhuluma IsiZulu? – Cha, akakwazi.	[umlungu ujakwasi ugukuluma isisulu] [Tra, agakwasi]	Can the white person speak Zulu? – No, he can't.	
Isinkwa siphelile	[isingwa sipelile]	The bread is finished.	
Kuyanetha	[gujaneta]	It is raining.	
Ubani Osuzile?	[ubani osusile]	Who was farting?	To fart = “pupsen”
Zikhona izilwane ekhaya lakho?	[zikona isibwane ekaja lako]	Have you got any animals at home?	
Ngizithanda zonke izilwane	[ngisitanda songe isilwane]	I like all animals.	
Inyama imnandi.	[injama imnandi]	The meat is tasty.	
Ingane Enomoya Omuhle	[ingane ennomoja omu <u>ch</u> le]	This is a very sweet/cute child.	
Injani Imfuyo Yakho?	[intshani imfujo jacko]	How is your cattle doing?	Just ask your opposite “unjani” and while you are shaking his hand and you also can ask the following stuff...
Unjani Umndeni wakho?	[untschani umndeni wacko]	How is your family doing?	That you shouldn't say that to orphans is hopefully clear...
Unjani Unkosikazi wakho?	[untschani ungosigasi wacko]	How is your wife doing?	
Zinjani Izingane zakho?	[sintshani isingane zacko]	How are your children?	
Unawo umdeni omkhulu?	[unawo umdeni omkulu]	Do you have a big family?	
Orders			
Lalela!	Lalelani !	[lalela/ni]	Listen !
Woza lapha !	Wozani lapha!	[wossa/ni lapa]	Come here!
Shesha!		[schescha]	Fast!

Akusheshe lapho!		[aguschesche lapho]	Make it fast!	
Woza!	Wozani!	[wossa/ni]	Come!	
Phuma!	Phumani!	[puma/ni]	Go Out!	
Sukuma!	Sukumani!	[suguma/ni]	Stand up!	
Suka!	Sukani!	[suga/ni]	Go away!	
Yeka lokho!	Yegani lokho!	[jega/ni loko]	Stop that!	
Hlala Phansi!	Hlalani Phansi!	[ch lala/ni pansi]	Sit down!	
Thula!	Thulani!	[thula/ni]	Be Quiet!	So often used...
Linda!!	Lindani!	[linda/ni]	Wait!	
Buya	Buyani!	[buja/ni]	Come back !	
Qaphela!	Qaphelani!	[q apela/ni]	Be careful / cautious !	
Musa ukuyenza leyonto!		[musa ugujensa lejonto]	Don't do that!	
Fakela!	Fakelani!	[fagela/ni]	Fill in !	
Geza izandla zakho!	Gezani izandla zakho!	[gesa/ni isandla sako]	Wash your hands!	
Khuluma kancane!	Khulumani kancane!	[kuluma/ni ga nc ane]	Speak slowly!	
Yidla!	Yidlani!	[jidla/ni]	Eat !	
Ngena!		[ngena]	Come in!	
Khipha ulimi!		[kipa ulimi]	Stick out your tongue!	
Vala amehlo!		[vala ame ch lo]	Close your eyes!	
Vula amehlo!		[vula ame ch lo]	Open your eyes!	
Yenza engikwenzayo!		[jensa engigwensajo]	Copy me! Do what I do!	You can have a lot of fun with this expression...
Ngikhombise kuphi!		[ngikombise gupi]	Show me where!	
Phendulwa Yebo noma Cha kuphela!		[pendulwa jebo noma tra gupela]	Please answer yes or no!	
Ngilandele / Landele mina!		[ngilandele] [landele mina]	Follow me!	

Usungahamba manje!	[usungahamba]	You can go now!	
Other useful Expressions			
Ngiyacabanga	[ngijatr a banga]	I am thinking	
Liqumile!	[li q umile]	It's broken.	
Sizobhaka ikhekhe.	[sisobaga ikeke]	We will bake a cake.	
Kulungile!	[gulungile]	It's okay.	
Kulula!	[gulula]	It's easy.	Please don't mix it up with "khulua", which means "strip off" ☺
Yebo, Ngiyasazi.	[jebo, ngijasasi]	Yes, I know.	
Kahle kakhulu.	[gach h le ga'kuulu]	Very Good.	
Ngiya esitolo.	[ngija esitolo]	I'm going to the shop.	
Ngifuna ukudlala lbhola.	[ngifuna ugudlala ibola]	I want to play soccer.	
Asinayo imoto.	[asinajo imoto]	We don't have a car.	
Usteffen uyakhala ngoba ulambile.	[usteffen ujakala ngoba ulambile]	Steffen is crying because he is hungry. ☺	
Angi bhemi	[angi bemi]	I don't smoke.	
Ingane elungile	Izingane ezilungile	[jinggane elungile] [isingane esilungile]	That's a nice child. That are nice children!
Ngiya e...	[ngija e]	I'm going to...	
Ngiyagoduka / Ngiya ekhaya.	[ngijagoduga] [ngijaekaja]	I'm going home.	
Ngizokubuya ngesonto.	Sizokubuya ngesonto.	[ngi-/sisogubuja ngesonto]	I'm / We're coming back on Sunday.
Ngifanele ngisebenza kakhulu.	[ngifanele ngisebensa ga'kuulu]	I have to work very hard.	
Ngiyaxolisa, kodwa angiqondi kahle usho ukuthini.	[ngijak o lisa, godwa ang i qondi ka ch le uscho ugutini]	I'm Sorry, but I don't understand what you're saying.	A tongue wister for us and "hamba geil" to impress.
Kubuhlungu!	[gubuch h lungu]	It is painful.	Like the question, but the voice must go down at the end of the word.

Ngiyagula!	Siyagula!	[ngi-/sijagula]	I am / We are sick.
Ngingudokotela!		[ngingudogotela]	I am a doctor!
<u>Prepositions and stuff like that</u>			
Kakhulu		[ga'kuulu]	Very, very much
Kancane		[kan' nc ane]	A little bit
Phezulu		[pesulu]	Up !
Phansi		[pansi]	Down !
Ngoba		[ngoba]	Because
Lutho		[luto]	Nothing
Laphaya		[lapaja]	Therefore
Kodwa		[godwa]	But
Lapha		[lapa]	here
Lapho		[lapo]	there
Masinyane		[masinjane]	soon
<u>Personal Pronouns and stuff like that</u>			
Ngi- / mina		[ngi] [mina]	I / emphasized Ngingu... I am...
U- / wena		[u] [wena]	You, He. She / emphasized Ungu... You are... Ngu / Uya... He/She is...
I- / yona		[I] [jona]	It / emphasized
Si- / tina		[si] [tina]	We / emphasized
Ni- / nina		[ni] [nina]	You / emphasized
Ba- / bona		[ba] [bona]	They / emphasized
Yami		[jami]	My
Yakho		[jako]	Your
Yabo		[jabo]	Their

Questions			
Yini?		[jini]	Why? / What?
Ubani?	Obani?	[ubani] [obani]	Who?
Nini?		[nini]	When?
Luphi / Kuphi / Uphi ?		[lupi] [kupi] [upi]	Where? Depends...
Kanjani?		[gantschani]	How?
Imalini?		[imalini]	How much?
Ngingakuzwa?		[ngingaguswa]	Can I taste it? Just ask this all teachers in the teachersroom and you never will be hungry again in your breaks! ☺
Ubani lona?		[ubani lona]	Who is this?
Uyagula?		[ujagula]	Are you sick?
Ubani umngani wakho?		[ubani umngani wako]	Who is your friend?
Wenzani?		[wensani]	What are you doing?
Ukhatele?		[ukatele]	Are you tired?
Uyangizwa?		[ujangiswa]	Can you understand me?
Ufunani?		[ufunani]	What do you want?
Uhlekani?		[uchlegani]	Why are you laughing?
Kubuhlungu?		[gubuchlungu]	Is it painful / sore?
Kubuhlungu kuphi?		[gubuchlungu gupi]	Where is the pain?
Uthini?		[utini]	What are you saying?
Ukhalelani?		[ukalelani]	Why are you crying?
Ngingakusiza?		[ngingagusisa]	Can I help you?
Uzobuya?		[usobuja]	Do you come back?
Uyahamba manje?		[ujahamba mantsche]	Are you going now?

Usaphila (na)?	[usapila (na)]	Are you still fine?	
Ulala kamnandi?	[ulala gamnandi]	Did you sleep well?	
Ngubani Ofuna amanzi?	[ngubani ofuna amansi]	Who wants water?	
Luphi Ubisi?	[lupi ubisi]	Where is the milk?	
Uphi u Steffen?	[upi u steffen]	Where is Steffen?	
Uyafuna Ukudlala Ibhola?	[ujafuna ugudlala ibola]	Do you want to play soccer?	
Ubulaphi izolo? / Ubuphi izolo?	[ubulapi izolo] [ubupi izolo]	Where were you yesterday?	
Uyafuna ukubhukuda? / Uyafuna Ukudada?	[ujafuna ugubuguda] [ujafuna ugudada]	Do you want to swim?	
Uyakwazi ukukhuluma IsiNgisi?	[ujakwazi ugukuluma isingisi]	Do you speak English?	
Uyasithanda?	[Ujasitanda]	Do you like it?	
Uyayithanda?	[Ujajitanda]	Do you like us?	
Yini uphatheke kabi?	[jini upatege gabi]	Why are you sad?	
Udaniel ukhoma na? – Cha, akekho.	[udaniel ukoma na]	Is Daniel there? – No, he isn't.	
Usaphila Ubaba wakho?	[usapila ubaba wako]	Is your father still alive?	
Wenzeni ngamaholidi?	[wenseni ngamaholidi]	What did you do in the holidays?	
Mingakhi iminyaka yakho?	[mingaki iminjaga jacko]	How old are you?	A lot of people will just mention their birth year...
Uvela kuphi? – Ngivela e Rhino.	[uwela gupi] [ngiwela eReino]	Where are you just coming from? – I'm just coming from Rhino.	Rhino = biggest and most popular supermarket in Harding!
Uyakuphi manje?	[ujagupi mantsche]	Where are you going to, now?	
Uphethwe yini?	[upetwe jini]	What's the problem?	
Unayo i...?	[unajo i...]	Do you have?	
Flirt-Corner			
Ubuheka umuhle kahulu namhlanje!	[ubugega umuchle ka'kuulu namchhlantsche]	You look very beautiful today!	Maybe you shouldn't say this, if her boyfriend is with

her ☺			
Ngiyakuthanda	[ngijagutanda]	I love/like you.	
Umile kahle	[umile kachle]	You have a nice shaped body.	
Khulula!	[kulula]	Strip off / Take your clothes off	But please don't forget to condomize ☺
Khamisa!	[kamisa]	Open your mouth!	I don't have a single idea how this expression could end up in the flirt corner...
Unezinwele ezinhle	[unesinwele esin <u>ch</u> le]	You have beautiful hair	
Ngiyaluthanda uncumolwakho!	[ngiyaluthanda un <u>c</u> umolwako]	I love your smile.	
Ushadile na?	[uschadile na]	Are you married?	If not, you should go on with the question below ☺
Uyafuna ukushadonami? / Ukushada nami?	[ujafuna uguschadonami] [uguschada nami]	Do you want to marry me?	You should be careful with this offer! A lot of girls would marry you!
Ngiyakukhumbula!	Siyakukhumbula!	[ngi-/sijagukumbula]	I / We missed you!
<u>Adjectives</u>			
Muhle	[mu <u>ch</u> le]	Beautiful!	
Imnandi	[imnandi]	Nice / Tasty!	
Kahle	[ka <u>ch</u> le]	Good!	
Kubi	[gubi]	Bad!	
Kabi	[gabi]	sad	
Kumnyama	[gumnjama]	Dark	
Komile	[gomile]	dry	
<u>Verbs</u>			
suza	[susa]	To fart	Ubani Osuzile?
Hamba	[hamba]	To go	
Woza	[wossa]	To come	

Hlala	[ch lala]	To live in	Ngihlala eHarding.
Hlala Phansi	[ch lala pansi]	To sit down	Hlala Phansi!
Thula	[tula]	To be quiet	Thulani!
Lala	[lala]	To sleep	Lala Kahle!
Phuma	[puma]	To go out / to come from	Puhmani!
dla	[ukudla]	To eat	Yidla, Yidla!
phuza	[pusa]	To drink	
Siza	[sisa]	To help	Ngingakusize?
Suka	[suga]	To go away	
Thi	[ti]	To say	
Khuluma	[kuluma]	To speak	
Sukuma	[suguma]	To stand up	
Cula	[n ula]	To sing	
Chama	[tschama]	To wee / to pee / to piss	
Funa	[funa]	To want	Ngifuna ...
Funda	[funda]	To learn / read	
Cela	[n ela]	To wish / desire	
Yima	[jima]	To wait	=linda
Linda	[linda]	To wait	
Qonda	[g onda]	To understand	Angiqondi
Enza	[ensa]	To do	
Sebenza	[sebensa]	To work	
Gula	[gula]	To be sick	
Godola	[godola]	To be cold	
Lambile	[lambile]	To be hungry	

Khatele	[katele]	To be hungry	
Shisa	[shissa]	To be hot	Is applied to the weather
Khumbula	[kumbula]	To miss	
Thanda	[tanda]	To like, to love	
Khala	[kala]	To cry	
Khatazeke	[katazege]	To be sad	
Jabula	[tschabula]	To be happy	
Bona	[bona]	To see	
Azi	[asi]	To know	
Zwa	[swa]	To hear	
Shaya	[schaja]	To hit / to beat	Shaya wena! Shaya Frank! ☺
Zama	[sama]	To try	
Letha	[leta]	To bring	
Beka	[bega]	To look	Ubukeya Umuhle!
Thenga	[tenga]	To buy	
Bonga	[bonga]	To thank	Nginyabonga!
Phonza	[possa]	To throw	
Bamba	[bamba]	To hold	
Yeka	[jega]	To let go	
Qala	[qala]	To start	
Thatha	[tata]	To take	Thatha iCrayon.
Fuqa / Ipusha	[fuga / lpuscha]	To push	
Donsa	[donsa]	To pull	
bamba	[bamba]	To grip	

Khululeka	[kululega]	To relax
Vula	[vula]	To open
Vala	[vala]	To close
Phenduka	[penduga]	To turn
Phakamisa	[pagamisa]	To lift
Geza	[gesa]	To wash
Nouns		
Unkulunkulu	[ungulungulu]	God
Ikati	[igati]	Cat
Ihashe	[ihasche]	Horse
Inja	[intscha]	Dog
Ipeni	[ipeni]	Pen
Indlu	[indlu]	House
Umuzi	[umusi]	Village
Imali	[imali]	Money
Isikhathi	[isikati]	Time
Umdlalo	[umdlalo]	Game
umshado	[umschado]	wedding
imoto	[imoto]	car
Ibhasi	[ibasi]	Bus
Isikolo / escholeni	[isigolo] [eskoleni]	School
Ibhanoyi	[ibanoji]	Airplane
Ibhola	[ibola]	Ball
Ilanga	[ilanga]	Sun
Unontlalongthe	[unontlalonte]	Social Worker

<u>Time</u>			
Izolo		[isolo]	yesterday
Namhlanje		[namchlantsche]	today
Manje		[mantsche]	now
Kusasa		[gusassa]	tomorrow
unyaka		[unjaga]	year
Inyanga		[injanga]	month
<u>Body</u>			
Umzima		[umsima]	Body
Zinyawo		[sinjawo]	Foot / feet
Madolo		[madolo]	knee
umlenze	imilenze	[umlense] [imilense]	Leg(s)
Ingqada		[ingqada]	bum, buttocks
isisu		[isisu]	stomach
Ingalo	Izingalo	[ingalo] [isingalo]	Arm(s)
Isandla	Izandla	[isandla]	Hand(s)
Umunwe		[umunwe]	finger
Mahlombe		[machlombe]	shoulder
Ikhanda		[ikhanda]	head
Ilinhle	Amehlo	[ilinchle] [amechlo]	Eye(s)
izindlebe		[isindlebe]	Ears
iKhala		[ikaka]	Nose
izinwele		[isinwele]	hair
Umthondo		[umthondo]	penis
Isibumbu		[isibumbu]	vagina

<u>Family</u>				
Ubhuti		[ubuti]	Brother	
Umtwana		[umtwana]	child	
Abantwana		[abantwana]	children	
Umntu		[umuntu]	Human being	
Abantu		[abantu]	People	
Umfethu / Bafethu		[umfetu] [bafetu]	Aldder, Digger, Brother, Friend	Slang
Usisi		[usisi]	Sister	
Umgani		[umugani]	Friend	
Indoda	Madoda	[in-/madoda]	Man / men	
Umfazi		[umfasi]	Woman	
Intombazana	Amatombazana	[intom-/abatombasana]	Girl / girls	
Umfana	Abafana	[um-/abafana]	Boy / boys	
<u>Food</u>				
Itiye		[itije]	Tea	
Ubisi		[ubisi]	Milk	
Ikhofi		[ikofi]	Coffee	
Phuza		[pusa]	Drink	
Usawoti		[usawoti]	Salt	
Ushukela		[uschugela]	Sugar	
Amahabhula		[amahabula]	Apples	
Utamatisi		[utamatisi]	Tomatoes	
Ikhekhe		[ikeke]	Cake	
Izinkwa		[isingwa]	Bread	
Inyama		[injama]	Meat	

Amanzi	[amansi]	Water
Inkukhu	[inguku]	Chicken
Izinkomo	[isingomo]	Cattle