

lonely planet

≡ *Fast Talk*

Thai

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Before You Go

Cradled between Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand is something of a Tower of Babel, with numerous dialects spoken. What's known as Standard Thai is actually a dialect spoken in Bangkok and the surrounding provinces. It's the official language of administration, education and the media, and most Thais understand it even if they speak another dialect. All the words and phrases in this book are translated into Standard Thai.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

Just about all of the sounds in Thai exist in English. While some people may find it difficult to pronounce Thai words, persistence is the key. Locals will appreciate your efforts and often help you along.

★ Most consonants in our phonetic system are pronounced the same as in English but Thai does have a few tricky consonants. Watch out for the **ɓ** sound which is halfway between a 'b' and a 'p', and the **ɗ** sound which is halfway between a 'd' and a 't'.

★ In this book we have used hyphens to separate syllables

from each another. So the word **ang-grít** (English) is made up of two distinct syllables **ang** and **grít**. In some words we have divided the syllables further with a dot · in order to help you separate vowel sounds and avoid mispronunciation. So the word **kĕe-an** is actually pronounced as one syllable with two separate vowel sounds.

MUST-KNOW GRAMMAR

★ The pronoun 'I' will change depending on the gender of the speaker – so a man will refer to himself as **pŏm** ผม (I, me) while a

woman will refer to herself as **dì-chǎn** ดิฉัน (I, me). When being polite to others, it's customary to add the word **kráp** ครับ (if you're a man) or **kâ** ค่ะ (if you're a woman) as a kind of a 'softener' to the end of questions and statements.

★ Often you'll see the symbol **m/f** in this book which stands for male/female. Whenever a sentence is marked with m/f you have to make a choice between **pǒm** and **dì-chǎn** or **kráp** and **kâ** depending on your gender.

PLUNGE IN!

Don't be discouraged if Thai seems difficult at first – this is only because we aren't used to pronouncing certain Thai sounds the way we do in English. Speak slowly and follow the coloured phonetic guides next to each phrase. If you absolutely can't make yourself understood, simply point to the Thai phrase and show it to the person you're speaking to. The most important thing is to laugh at your mistakes and keep trying.

Fast Talk Thai

Don't worry if you've never learnt Thai (ภาษาไทย **pah-sǎh tai**) before – it's all about confidence. You don't need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you'll be amazed how many prompts you'll get to help you build on those first words. You'll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.

5.

Phrases to Learn Before You Go

1. Have you eaten?

กินข้าวหรือยัง

gin kôw rêu yang

In Thailand instead of asking ‘What are you up to?’, it’s customary to ask ‘Have you eaten?’.

2. Please take off your shoes.

กรุณาถอดรองเท้า

gà-rú-nah tòrt rorng tów

Shoes are always removed when entering a house and this also applies to religious buildings.

3. Can you recommend a local speciality?

แนะนำอาหารรสเด็ดของแถวนี้ได้ไหม

náa-nam ah-hăhn rót dèt dèt kôrng tăa-ou née dâi mǎi

Thailand’s seemingly endless variety of local dishes is a major draw for visitors

4. Can you lower the price?

ลดราคาได้ไหม

lót rah-kah dâi mǎi

Bargaining is common in street markets and some small shops.

5. How do you say ...?

... ว่าอย่างไร

... wâh yàhng rai

If in doubt about a word or phrase, just ask.

10. Phrases to Sound Like a Local

Hey! เฮ้ย hêi·i

Great! ยอด yôht

Sure. แน่นอน nâa norn

Maybe. บางที bahng tee

No way! ไม่มีทาง mâi mee tahng

Just a minute. เดี่ยวก่อน dĕe·o gòrn

It's OK. ไม่เป็นไร mâi ben rai

No problem. ไม่มีปัญหา mâi mee ban-hăh

Oh, no! คายแล้ว dai láa·ou

Oh my god! คุณพระช่วย kun prá chō·ay

10.

Phrases
to Start a Sentence**When's (the next bus)?**(รถเมล์คันต่อไป) มาเมื่อไร
(rót mair kan dòr bai) mah mêu-a rai**Where's (the market)?**(ตลาด) อยู่ที่ไหน
(dà-làht) yòo têe nãi**How much is it (per night)?**(คืนละ) เท่าไร
(keun lá) têu-rai**Could I have (the key), please?**ขอ (กุญแจห้อง) หน่อย
kôr (gun-jaa hôrng) nòy**I'd like to buy (an adaptor plug).**อยากจะซื้อ (ปลั๊กต่อ)
yàhk jà séu (blák dòr)**I'd like (the menu), please.**ขอ (รายการอาหาร) หน่อย
kôr (rai gahn ah-hăhn) nòy**Can I take a photo (of you)?**ถ่ายรูป (คุณ) ได้ไหม
tài rôop (kun) dâi mãi**I need a (bottle opener).**ต้องการ (เครื่องเปิดขวด)
dông gahn (krêu-ang bèut kòo-at)**I'm going to (Ayuthaya).**ผม/ดิฉันกำลังไป (อยุธยา)
pôm/dì-chăn gam-lang bai (à-yút-tá-yah)**I like dancing.**ผม/ดิฉันชอบ(เต้นรำ)
pôm/dì-chăn chôp (dên ram) m/f

Chatting & Basics

≡ Fast Phrases

Hello.	สวัสดี sà-wàt-dee
Goodbye.	ลาก่อน lah gòrn
Do you speak English?	คุณพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้ไหม kun pôot pah-săh ang-grít dâi mǎi

Essentials

Yes.	ใช่ châi
No.	ไม่ mâi
Please.	ขอ kôr
Thank you (very much).	ขอบคุณ(มาก ๆ) kòrp kun (mâhk mâhk)
You're welcome.	ยินดี yin dee
Excuse me. (to get attention)	ขอโทษ kôr tôht