

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn the Kurdish alphabet – small letters, capital letters, vowels and consonants – country names and some cities in Kurdistan.

















By the end of this lesson;

- you will produce Kurdish sounds correctly.
- you will learn new words.
- you will gain certain skills so that you can pronounce new words correctly.
- you will learn basic greeting phrases.
- you will be able to introduce yourself and ask about personal information.

Elfabe / Alphabet

The Kurdish language uses three different alphabets: The Kurdish latin alphabet based on the Roman script; the alphabet based on the Arabic script and the alphabet on the basis of the Cyrillic alphabet. The Kurdish Latin alphabet is the most frequently used alphabet for Kurmanji. It is used in the parts of Kurdistan that are situated within the borders of Turkey and Syria, and by the large Kurdish diaspora community in Europe and North America from these two countries. The alphabet based on Arabic script is used in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, while Cyrillic is used only in ex-Soviet countries. In this course we will be using the Roman-based alphabet.

There are 8 vowels and 23 consonants in the standard Kurdish Roman-based alphabet. In the chart below the Kurdish letters are listed and you can listen to their pronunciation by clicking on the sound file image next to each letter.

Roman Script	Example	English example	IPA
A,a 	agir (fire), xanî (house)	f ather	[a]
B,b 	baş (good), bira (brother)	b ell	[b]
C,c 	cil (clothes), civak (society)	j ungle	[dʒ]
Ç,ç 	çar (four), keçik (girl)	b utcher	[tʃ]
D,d 	dîwar (wall), beden (body)	d oor	[d]
E,e 	enî (forehead), dest (hand)	bat (British English pronunciation)	[æ]
Ê,ê 	êş (grief), stêr (star)	b ait	[e:]
F,f 	ferheng (dictionary), berf (snow)	f armer	[f]
G,g 	genim (wheat), seg (dog)	g et	[g]
H,h 	heyv (moon), duhî (yesterday)	h ead	[h]
I,i 	ciwan (young), zivistan (winter)	b it	[i], [w]
Î,î 	îro (today), havîn (summer)	m eat	[i:]
J,j 	jan (grief), bajar (city)	b eige	[ʒ]
K,k 	kur (boy), dayik (mother)	b ook	[k]
L,l 	leymûn (lemon), mil (arm)	l ight	[l]
M,m 	mamoste (teacher), dem (time)	m other	[m]
















N,n		nav (name), nan (bread, food)	name	[n]
O,o		ode (room), roj (sun, day)	odour	[o]
P,p		pîşt (back), dapîr (grandmother)	party	[p]
Q,q		qelem (pen), aqil (reason)	(Arabic Qaf)	[q]
R,r		rûbar (river), bihar (spring)	Two pronunciations, like in Spanish (pero-perro) One with a single tap, one rolled front r.	[r] [r]
S,s		ser (head), mast (yoghurt)	sun	[s]
Ş,ş		şekir (sugar), aştî (peace)	share	[ʃ]
T,t		tirs (fear), kitêb (book)	table	[t]
U,u		kurd (Kurd), du (two)	bull	[ʊ]
Û,û		ûd (laud), birû (eyebrow)	foot	[u:]
V,v		vala (empty), çav (eye)	violet	[v]
W,w		welat (country), bawerî (belief)	wine	[w]
X,x		xewn (dream), baxçe (garden)	cf. Scottish: loch	[x]
Y,y		yek (one), giya (grass)	yellow	[j]
Z,z		zengil (bell), azadî (freedom)	breeze	[z]

Table 1. The Vowels in Kurmanji (approximate phonetic values)

	Front	Central	Back
Closed	î i		û u
Half-closed	ê		o
Open		a	

The vowels represented in the writing by <i> and <u> are quite close and may be difficult to distinguish in some varieties of Kurmanji.

Table 2. The Consonants in Kurmanji

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental/Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	q	
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ j		x		h
Affricate				ç c				
Nasal	m		n					
Approximant	w				y			
Tap / Trill			r					
Lateral			l					

Note: In addition to the consonants shown in chart, some Kurmanji words contain sounds that are not usually noted in the standard orthography, though often noted in dictionaries. They are some special forms of the plosives and affricates. Native speakers are aware of these sounds, and can hear and produce them readily. For learners, however, they are difficult to perceive and at this stage need not be introduced. You will still be understood even if you do not produce them correctly; we will discuss them in a later lesson with some examples.

Text: Rojbaş!

Two students sit next to each other in the first lesson at their university. They introduce themselves to each other, saying their names and where they are from.

- Zeyneb : Rojbaş. Navê min Zeyneb e. Navê te çi ye?
Good day, my name is Zeyneb. What is your name?
- Ehmed : Rojbaş. Navê min Ehmed e.
Good day, my name is Ehmed.
- Zeyneb : Tu ji kû derê yî Ehmed?
Where are you from, Ehmed?
- Ehmed : Ez ji Diyarbekirê me. Tu?
I am from Diyarbekir. (And) you?
- Zeyneb : Bi rastî! Ez jî ji Diyarbekirê me.
Really! I am from Diyarbekir too.
- Ehmed : Ser çavan, gelek kêfxweş bûm.
How nice. I am (lit. was) very happy.
- Zeyneb : Ez jî pir kêfxweş bûm. Tu kurd î?
I, too, am very happy. Are you a Kurd?
- Ehmed : Erê, ez kurd im, tu?
Yes, I am a Kurd, (and) you?
- Zeyneb : Ez jî kurd im. Ha, mamoste tê.
I am a Kurd too. Oh, the teacher is coming.
- Ehmed : Baş e. Em paşî dê biaxivin.
OK (lit. it is good). We will talk later.
- Zeyneb : Baş e.
OK.

Greetings (Silav)

Merheba/Silav/Silamun eleykum	Hello
Beyanîbaş/ spêde bi xêr/Sibehe te bi xêr	Good morning (to one person)
Beyanîbaş/ spêde bi xêr/Sibehe we bi xêr	Good morning (to more than one person)
Rojbaş	Good day
Êvarbaş/Êvara te bi xêr	Good evening (to one person)
Êvarbaş/Êvara we bi xêr	Good evening (to more than one person)
Şevbaş /Şeva te bi xêr	Good night (to one person)
Şevbaş /Şeva we bi xêr	Good night (to more than one person)
Çawa yî?	How are you sg.?
Çawa nen?	How are you pl.?

Good bye (Xatirxwestin)

Bi xatirê te
Bi xatirê we

Good bye (to one person)
Good bye (to more than one person)

Response to *bi xatirê te/we*

Oxir be/Oxira te ya xêrê be/Bi xêr û silametî

Good bye

Grammar / Rêziman 1

A The personal pronouns

The pronouns of Kurmanji corresponding to English *I, you* etc. have two forms, which we will call **Direct** and **Oblique**. Their uses will be explained below. The forms are the following:

Person	Direct	Oblique
I	<i>ez</i>	<i>min</i>
you	<i>tu</i>	<i>te</i>
he/she	<i>ew</i>	<i>wî</i> (him), <i>wê</i> (her)
we	<i>em</i>	<i>me</i>
you	<i>hûn</i>	<i>we</i>
they	<i>ew</i>	<i>(e)wan</i>

Usage

The **Direct** forms are used for **all** subjects in the present tenses, for example:

Ez kurd im 'I am a Kurd'

and for the subjects of **intransitive** verbs in the past tenses.

(Intransitive verbs are verbs which cannot take a direct object, e.g. go, climb, die, laugh.)

The **Oblique** forms are used everywhere else, for example, to express the possessor of something:

Navê min Ehmed e. 'My name is Ehmed'

We will discuss the use of the Direct and Oblique forms in more detail later.

B Expressing 'to be' in the present tense

In the simple present tense, there is no independent word for *is, are, am* in Kurdish. Instead, endings are added to the last word of the sentence that indicate the person involved. For example, to say 'I am a Kurd' in Kurdish we say literally 'I Kurd-am'. These endings are actually **written** separately as though they were independent words, but they are really unstressed short forms **pronounced** as though they were part of the preceding word. They have slightly different forms depending on whether the preceding word ends in a vowel or consonant. The forms of these endings are as follows:

After consonant:		After vowel:	
<i>Ez kurd im</i>	'I am a Kurd'	<i>Ez ji Diyarbekirê me</i>	'I am from D.'
<i>Tu kurd î</i>	'You are a Kurd'	... <i>yî</i>	'You are ...'
<i>Ew kurd e</i>	'He / She is a Kurd'	... <i>ye</i>	'He / she ...'
<i>Em kurd in</i>	'We are Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'We are ...'
<i>Hûn kurd in</i>	'You are Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'You are ...'
<i>Ew kurd in</i>	'They are Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'They are ...'
<i>Ez ne kurd im</i>	'I am not a Kurd'	<i>Ez ne ji Diyarbekirê me</i>	'I am not from D.'
<i>Tu ne kurd î</i>	'You are not a Kurd'	... <i>yî</i>	'You are ...'
<i>Ew ne kurd e</i>	'He / She is not a Kurd'	... <i>ye</i>	'He / she ...'
<i>Em ne kurd in</i>	'We are not Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'We are ...'
<i>Hûn ne kurd in</i>	'You are not Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'You are ...'
<i>Ew ne kurd in</i>	'They are Kurds'	... <i>ne</i>	'They are ...'

Wordlist

baş	good
be	may it be (a form of the verb <i>bûn</i> 'be, become')
biaxivin	'let's talk' (a form of the verb <i>axaftin</i> 'talk, speak', see future lessons)
bimîne	may it remain (a form of the verb <i>man</i> 'stay, remain')
bi rastî	really!
bi xêr	good
bûm	(I) have become / was (1st pers. sg. past tense form of the verb <i>bûn</i> 'be, become')
çi	what
dê	indicates future tense of the verb
ders	lesson
diçim	I go, I am going (a form of the verb <i>çûn</i> 'to go')
em	we, 2nd pers. pl. pronoun
erê	yes
êvar	evening
ez	I, 1st pers. sg. pronoun
gelek	very, many
ha	oh
ji	from
jî	too, also, as well (used after the word it refers to: <i>ez jî</i> 'I too ...')
kêfxweş	happy
kek	an address form for males
kû der	where
mamoste	teacher
merheba	hello
min	1st pers. sg. object pronoun (see Grammar 1)
na/ne	no
nav	name
ne	not (negation)
niha	now
paşî	later on
pir	very, many
piştî	after
rojbaş	good-day; have a good day

ser çavan	you are welcome (literally: on eyes)
şev	night
sibeh, beyanî	morning
silav	greeting
te	2nd pers. sg. oblique pronoun (see Grammar 1)
tê	(he/she) comes, is coming (present tense of the verb hatin 'come')
tu	you, 2nd pers. sg. pronoun
xatirxwestin	to take farewell, to say goodbye
xwendekar	student
xweş	good, enjoyable

Exercise 1.

Two students are meeting in the school canteen. Fill in the blanks from their conversation with the forms presented above.

Dara : Beyanîbaş! Navê Dara ye. Navê çi ye?

Daner :! Navê min Daner e.

Dara : ji kû derê yî Dara?

Daner : Ez ji Qamişloyê me. Tu?

Dara : jî ji Duhokê me.

Daner : Kêfxweş bûm kekê Dara.

Dara : Ez jî kêfxweş bûm.

Daner : Ez niha diçime dersê. Bi te.

Dara : Oxir be!

Exercise 2.

Fill in the blanks according to the information given in the dialogue above.

Daner

Navê Daner e. Ez ji Diyarbekirê

.... xwendekar im. Ez kurd

Exercise 3.

Below, there are questions for you! Please write true answers for the questions.

a. Navê te çi ye?

b. Tu ji kû derê yî?

.....

.....

c. Tu kurd î?

d. Tu xwendekar î?

.....

.....

Country names

Franse

France

Çîn

China

Almanya

Germany

Rusya

Russia

Îngilistan

England

Hindistan

India

Îtalya

Italy

Iraq

Iraq

Espanya

Spain

Amerîka

USA

Swêd

Sweden

Îran

Iran

Siwîs

Switzerland

Sûriye

Syria

Tirkiye

Turkey

Norwêc

Norway

Çend bajarên Kurdistanê / Some cities of Kurdistan

Bajar/city	Navên din /other names	Dewlet/state
Afrîn		Sûriye
Agirî	Ağrı	Tirkiye
Amed	Diyarbakır	Tirkiye
Amûdê		Sûriye
Bedlîs	Bitlis	Tirkiye
Bokan		Îran
Cizîr	Cizre	Tirkiye
Culemêrg	Hakkari	Tirkiye
Dêrsim	Tunceli	Tirkiye
Dihok	Dohuk	Iraq
Dîlok	Antep	Tirkiye
Efrîn		Sûriye
Erzingan	Erzincan	Tirkiye
Erzirom	Erzurum	Tirkiye
Gurgum	Maraş	Tirkiye
Helepçe		Iraq
Hewlêr	Erbil	Iraq
Ixdir	Iğdır	Tirkiye
Îlam		Îran
Kerkuk	Kerkük	Iraq
Kirmaşan	Keremansah	Îran
Mehebad	Mahabad	Îran
Meletî	Malatya	Tirkiye
Mexmûr		Iraq
Mezra	Elazığ	Tirkiye
Mêrdîn	Mardin	Tirkiye
Midyad	Midyat	Tirkiye
Mûsil		Iraq
Mûş	Muş	Tirkiye
Ormiye	Urmiye, Wirmiyê	Îran
Qamişlo	Kamişli	Sûriye
Qers	Kars	Tirkiye
Riha	Urfa	Tirkiye
Semsûr	Adiyaman	Tirkiye
Segez		Îran

Sêrt	Siirt	Tirkiye
Silêmanî	Süleymaniye	Iraq
Sîne	Sanandaj	Îran
Urmiye		Îran
Wan	Van	Tirkiye
Zaxo		Iraq
Çewlik	Bingöl	Tirkiye
Êlih	Batman	Tirkiye
Şirnex	Şırnak	Tirkiye
Xarpêt	Elezîz, Elazığ	Tirkiye
Zaxo		Iraq