

Linguists describe the Marshallese language as belonging to the Austronesian Language Family, the most geographically widespread language family in the world (spreading from Madagascar to Easter Island). Formosa (Taiwan) has been identified by linguists as the homeland of the original Austronesian language (this supports the theory on the human colonization of the Pacific islands, which postulates that the original settlers moved out of Southeast Asia).

The Austronesian language family tree is divided at the top into two branches: those languages still spoken on Formosa, and the Malayo Polynesian languages (880 in all), to which Marshallese belongs.

The full linguistic classification of Marshallese reads as follows:

**Austronesian;  
Malayo-Polynesian;  
Central-Eastern;  
Eastern Malayo-Polynesian;  
Oceanic;  
Central-Eastern Oceanic;  
Remote Oceanic;  
Micronesian;  
Micronesian Proper;  
Marshallese.**

There are two major dialects in the Marshalls, correlating to the two chains of atolls: RÄLIK and RATAK. However, the difference between the two dialects is minor and Marshallese is considered homogeneous.

Linguistic cognate studies have suggested that Marshallese is most closely related to the languages of Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Kiribati.

Below are some useful Marshallese terms and phrases. Don't be afraid to repeat the term or phrase more than once if at first you are not understood!

- Hello, goodbye, love- *Iokwe*
- Thank you very much- *Kommool tata*
- You're welcome- *Kin jouj*
- How are you? *Ejet am mour?*
- It's good- *Emman*
- It's bad, tastes bad- *Enana*
- Yes- *Aaet*
- No- *Jaab*
- Eat- *Mona*
- Tastes good- *Enno*
- Does it taste good? *Enno ke?*
- What? *Ta?*
- What's this? *Ta eo?*
- Who? *Won?*
- When? *Naat?*
- I or me- *Na*
- You, you are- *Kwe*
- Man, men- *Emmaan*
- Woman, women- *Kora*
- Children- *Ajri*
- Coconut tree/ripe coconut (green)- *Ni*

- Mature coconut (brown)- *Waini*
- Ocean- *Lojet/lometo*
- Lagoon- *Lomalo/malo*
- Beach- *Iar*
- Beer- *Pia*
- Boat, canoe, car- *Wa*
- Swim- *Tutu*
- Scuba dive, snorkel- *Tulok*
- Fish- *Iik*
- Reef, coral- *Wod*
- Sightsee- *Alwoj*
- North- *Ean*
- South- *Rak*
- East- *Reear*
- West- *Ralik*
- Purchase, buy- *Wia*
- Handicrafts- *Amimono*
- Dollar- *Tala*
- How much does it cost? *Jete onean?*
- It's cheap- *Edik onean*
- It's expensive- *Elap onean*
- What's your name? *Etam?*
- My name is John- *Eta in John*
- Where is the Bank? *Ewi Bank eo?*
- Come here- *Itok*
- Go away- *Etal*

- What time is it? *Jete awa kiio?*
- Excuse me, I'm sorry- *Jolok bod*
- Good looking woman- *Likatu*
- Good looking man- *Lakatu*
- You are a good looking woman/man- *Kwe likatu/lakatu*
- I'm a good looking woman/man- *Na likatu/lakatu*

#### NUMBERS

- *Juon*- one
- *Ruo*- two
- *Jilu*- three
- *Emen*- four
- *Lalem*- five
- *Jiljino*- six
- *Jiljilimjuon*- seven
- *Ruwalitok*- eight
- *Ruwatimjuon*- nine
- *Jonoul*- ten

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## Visitor Leaflets

# The Marshallese Language

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