

Kuloonay Orthography

**Practical guide for learning
and discovering the written
Kuloonay language**



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Introduction

This short booklet is intended to give people an idea of the most important principles of writing in the Kuloonay language. It is not intended to answer every possible question. A more thorough treatment is available in 'Karon Orthography' (SIL, 2011). The aim is that people who can speak the language fluently, and have a good level of experience in reading and writing in English, may be able to make a start at writing text in Kuloonay, according to the rules that have been agreed by the language committee.

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A. Fundamental principles of the alphabet

- 1) In Kuloonay, unlike in English, all the letters are pronounced. There are no silent letters (like the letters **gh**, in the English word ‘eight’, or like the **e** on the end of words like ‘like’).
- 2) The pronunciation of a letter never changes. So for example the letter **c** is always pronounced like the English ‘ch’, and never like the English ‘k’ or ‘s’. The only exception to this rule is the **n** in combinations like **nf**, **nk** and **nc** (see section **B.2.1**).
- 3) Words are written as if they were said slowly. For example ‘I know how to climb’ should be written **yíniyini pisilo** and not **yíniini pisilo**

B. The letters of the Kuloonay alphabet

The Kuloonay alphabet has 24 letters, of which 14 are consonants and 10 are vowels. They are given below in alphabetical order:

Capital	Lowercase	Example	Meaning in English
A	a	<u>a</u> cifa	tailor
Á	á	<u>á</u> wi	friend
C	c	<u>c</u> aanak	sun
E	e	<u>e</u> kumpaan	house
É	é	<u>é</u> saapun	well
F	f	<u>f</u> álin	donkey
H	h	<u>h</u> isenkec	lizard
I	i	<u>i</u> haay	piece of meat
Í	í	<u>í</u> m	sing!
K	k	<u>k</u> asel	spoon
L	l	<u>l</u> úutoo	mango
M	m	<u>m</u> an	water
N	n	<u>n</u> ikopu	rope
Ñ	ñ	<u>ñ</u> ow	wash!
ŋ	ŋ	<u>ŋ</u> aam	grab hold!
O	o	<u>o</u> kop	ring
Ó	ó	<u>ó</u> ikon	stool
P	p	<u>p</u> ikin	village

S	s	<u>s</u> eemak	fire
T	t	tíya	peanut
U	u	<u>u</u> li	rice
Ú	ú	útiŋ	sky
W	w	<u>w</u> un	give!
Y	y	yaac	bee

B.1 Kuloonay vowels

B.1.1 Light and heavy vowels

The ten vowels can be divided into two groups: **a, e, i, o, u** (called the *light* vowels) and **á, é, í, ó, ú** (called the *heavy* vowels). The heavy vowels are marked with an accent.

Apart from a few exceptions, vowels from the two groups are not found in the same word. A word is either light or heavy. For this reason it is not necessary to write an accent over each heavy vowel in a word. So, following the Senegalese Government decree for Jola languages, only the first vowel in a heavy word is marked with an accent.

Here are some examples of contrasts between light and heavy words.

	Light		Heavy
kawufan	- to give	káwufan	- to recover
ihawu	- to chop	íhawu	- to bark
hicutu	- to harvest	hícutu	- thread a piece of string through something
hipuku	- to give birth	hípuku	- to be soaked
hikoosu	- to gather	híkoos	- navel
hiluulu	- threat	éluulu	- fly
kankalaŋ	- roof	ínkalaŋ	- drum
hiwoomu	- to pound	híwoomu	- to curse

Note too that if a heavy word begins with a vowel that is capitalised, the accent is placed over the first lowercase vowel in the word. Thus, if the word **íhawu** needs to be capitalised (see section D.1 for when to use capital letters), it becomes **Iháwu**. Similarly, **éluulu** becomes **Elúulu** and **ínkalaŋ** becomes **Inkálaŋ**.

B.1.2 The short vowels: a, á, e, é, i, í, o, ó, u, ú

The following table gives examples of words containing all the different short vowels.

Vowel	Examples	Meaning in English
a	<u>a</u> n pi <u>s</u> ama <u>t</u> a <u>a</u> wi <u>c</u> a	human being shoe sculptor
á	<u>á</u> yiin púnt <u>a</u> lo <u>á</u> yif <u>a</u>	man scorpion drummer
e	<u>e</u> cont <u>e</u> ye <u>n</u> <u>e</u> laame <u>e</u>	heel dog machete
é	<u>é</u> kink káahent <u>i</u> noolu pásuume <u>e</u>	to enclose feather for scratching the ear softness/calm
i	<u>i</u> haay hili <u>y</u> a maali <u>i</u>	piece of meat shark snack
í	<u>í</u> h <u>i</u> nu p <u>í</u> c <u>i</u> po <u>é</u> soli <u>i</u>	to do to go down arrow
o	ih <u>o</u> ku et <u>o</u> p <u>o</u> k <u>o</u> lo <u>o</u>	to put out marsh
ó	<u>é</u> s <u>o</u> si púwuulo <u>o</u>	arrow wear a hat
u	<u>u</u> li al <u>u</u> ta el <u>u</u> mu <u>u</u>	rice builder kidney
ú	<u>ú</u> ti <u>u</u> pú <u>u</u> ku <u>u</u> t kénu <u>u</u>	sky thick liquid to pound palm nuts

B.1.3 The long vowels: aa, áa, ee, ée, ii, íi, oo, óo, uu, úu

Each short vowel has a corresponding long vowel; which is identical in quality but is roughly twice the length in duration. This can be seen, for example, in contrasts between: **can**, ‘drop of water’ and **caan** ‘estuary, canal’; between **ekon** ‘piece of wood’ and **ekoon** ‘seed’ and between **fúl** and **fúul**.

The following table gives examples of words with all the different long vowels.

Vowel	Examples	Meaning in English
aa	<u>a</u> al soka <u>aa</u> sok	woman I said
áa	<u>á</u> asi ká <u>á</u> ha <u>á</u> afeen	maternal uncle to sift
ee	pi <u>ee</u> n a <u>ee</u>	boat someone
éé	<u>é</u> siitene <u>é</u> <u>é</u> lukule <u>é</u> n	he was listened to animal; snake
ii	hi <u>ii</u> nu k <u>ii</u>	family name dance!
íi	s <u>í</u> ten w <u>á</u> nt <u>i</u>	listen! throw here!
oo	etopok <u>oo</u> lo sok <u>oo</u>	marsh tell him!
óo	c <u>ó</u> op <u>i</u> lú <u>u</u> to <u>o</u>	bring! mango
uu	ep <u>uu</u> k esu <u>u</u> m	children wrestler
úu	p <u>ú</u> tu <u>u</u> n sú <u>u</u> maasu <u>u</u> m	god it is sweet, delicious

B.1.4 Two consecutive vowels

Two different vowels should not be written consecutively in a word in Kuloonay. Wherever it sounds like you have two different vowels without a consonant in between, they should be written with either a 'w' or a 'y' in between (depending on which sounds more appropriate). This often arises when a suffix or prefix is added to a word.

Examples:

liyaali	- I ate (not liaali)
áwiyam	- my friend (not áwiam)
atuwi	- your younger brother (not atui)
puhooniyoo	- his face (not puhoonjoo)
hifiiniyam	- my family name (not hifiniam)

One important exception to this rule, decided on by the language committee, is the word **anooan** (everyone). This is not written **anoowan** to avoid any confusion with **wan** (hair).

B.2 *Kuloonay consonants*

Most Kuloonay consonants are used in a similar way to in English. However, there are the letters ñ and ŋ, that are not used in English, and the letter c, which is used differently to English. Examples of these three letters in Kuloonay words are shown in the table below.

Consonant	Examples	English meaning	Pronunciation of the consonant
c	<u>ca</u> pa e <u>cu</u> la miya <u>ac</u>	onion mouse wood	Like the ch in the English words ' <u>ch</u> amp' and ' <u>ch</u> eat'.
ñ	<u>ñ</u> ow a <u>ñ</u> ii hítuka <u>añ</u>	wash! baby honey comb	Like the ny in the English word 'c <u>ny</u> on' or the ni in the word 'op <u>ni</u> on'.
ŋ	<u>ŋ</u> aasuwan e <u>ŋ</u> enu elo <u>ŋ</u>	ten wrist life	Like the ng in the English word 'si <u>ng</u> '

B.2.1 Consonant combinations

The consonant combinations **ŋk**, **ñc** and **mf** are common in Kuloonay. Following other Jola languages, these are written as **nk**, **nc** and **nf** respectively. Note however that **mp** is written as **mp**.

Examples:

- ekmpul** - palm nut
- háncant** - night
- hincu** - hammer a nail
- cancut** - a piece of cloth for carrying a baby on the back (not **caŋkut**)
- pins** - grain
- asonfaaf** - aunt (not **asomfaaf**)

C. Word breaks

Deciding where to put in word breaks is a difficult part of writing in Kuloonay. All that will be done here is to give some rules of thumb and some common mistakes to avoid. For a more thorough treatment see 'Karon Orthography' (SIL, 2011).

C.1 Some rules of thumb

1) If a word can be moved around to a different place in the sentence, then it must be a separate word.

Thus, in the examples below, the underlined word is separate.

Examples:

fíyoy afaanjot

- today he will sleep

afaanjot fíyoy

- he will sleep today

ekee ekii ~ ekii ekee

- another dance

Puume naalaane hipuun ha
how he drank medicine the

- how did he drink
the medicine?

Hipuun puume naalaane
medicine what he drank

- what medicine did
he drink?

2) If another word can come in between, then there are probably two separate words. Thus, in each of the examples below, the underlined word is a separate word, since something else is allowed to come before it.

3)

Examples :

- sícalukun sa** - the pigs
sícalukun súsupak sa - the two pigs
punuun empe - these trees
punuun penfakat empe - these big trees

3) Since a word must be all light or all heavy, a word that seems to start light and end heavy is probably two separate words.

(Note that this rule is sometimes a bad indicator, since there is a lot of variation from speaker to speaker as to exactly what is light and what is heavy).

Examples:

- níkin na** - the eye The vowel in the definite article is light, but the vowels in the word **níkin** are heavy. The two words are therefore written separately.
- níkinam** - my eye The whole word is heavy, so it is written as one word. The **-ám** is not written separately.

C.2 Some common mistakes

1) The definite article (the) should always be written as a separate word:

Examples:

- piteen pa** - the boat (not **piteempa**)
eyen ya - the dog (not **eyeniya**)
pakan paka - the people (not **pakampaka**)

2) Wherever a verb is 'redoubled', it should be written as one single word, even though this gives rise to some quite long words sometimes!

Examples:

- hín** - work! **hínaahin** - I worked (not **hínaa hín**)
tantak - witness! **atantakaatantak** - he witnessed (not **atantakaa tantak**)

3) Verbal prefixes should not be separated from the verb that they're attached to:

Examples

- naasok** - he said (not **naa sok**)
n'kacuk - they saw (not **n'ka cuk** - see below for an explanation of the use of the apostrophe here)

kapikaay - and they went (not **kapi kaay**)

efikawac - they will swim (not **efika wac** or **efi kawac**)

4) Be careful with word breaks when one word ends with the same vowel that the next word starts with.

Examples

an̄a afaasok ya - that he will say (not **an̄aa faasok ya** or even **an̄aa faa sokiya**)

akina asok - he said (not **akinaa sok**)

akina awune - he is the reason (not **akinaa wune**)

D. Punctuation

D.1 Capitals and lowercase

Capital letters will be used at the beginning of each sentence, after a full stop, question mark and exclamation mark as well as at the beginning of a quote after a colon.

Examples:

Naasokoo: “Unii pitejenool núufulii.”

She said to him: “We’re coming from a meeting”

David asok: “Inci taakaataak pakaal pákasupak.”

David said: “I have two wives”

The first letter of names of people, families, countries, towns, etc. is always a capital

Examples:

Inci hicoopu Akoli te enuuf
Pool ati Máhamuta

I’m taking Akoli to the house
Paul comes from Mahamouda

D.2 Contraction of ninj

Very often the word **ninj** ‘and’, ‘with’ is shortened and joined to the word that follows it. Sometimes we use an apostrophe when adjoining this word and sometimes not. The system that has been adopted can be summarised with 2 rules:

1) When **ninj** is joined to a noun, an apostrophe is always used.

Examples:

Pútuun pa (niṅ aluu) - May God be with you.
piyeno na'aluu.

Naayito nu'ulap. (niṅ ulap) - He/she wakes up in the morning. (lit. he/she wakes up with the dawn)

Inci hili (niṅ áwiyam) - I eat with my friend.
ná'awiyam.

2) When **niṅ** attaches to a verb, an apostrophe is only used if the verb begins with a consonant other than **h**, **l**, **w** or **y**:

Examples:

n'kasok (niṅ kasok) - and they said (not **nkasok** or even **nka sok**)

n'kayeno (niṅ kayeno) - and they sat down

n'súumii (niṅ súumii) - and they felt happy

m'píhin (niṅ píhin) - and it did/worked

But note these examples with no apostrophe:

naasok (niṅ asok) - and he said
(not **na'asok**)

núusiiteno (niṅ úsiiteno) - and we listened to him
(not **nu'úsiiteno**)

nihilafalooloo	(niŋ hilafalooloo)	- and they (the bees) stung him all over (not ni'hilafalooloo)
nihiliye	(niŋ hiliye)	- and it (my liver) ate (not ni'hiliye)

E. Exercises

Try to correct these Kuloonay sentences and phrases. Pay particular attention to accents, to lengths of vowels, to the nasal consonants **m**, **n**, **ñ** and **ŋ** and to word breaks. The answers are given below. Note that since there is some variation between speakers as to how some words are pronounced, probably not all speakers of Kuloonay will agree with the exact spelling of these answers. Even so, these exercises should give some practice in familiarity with the basic principles of writing. The number in brackets gives the number of mistakes to correct.

Example:

David a sokaa sok lafi lafi pusamatapa pítoom peewallapa (7)
- David said, "I like my nice shoes"

Answer:

David asokaasok: "láfilafi pusamata_pa pitoom peewalla_pa"

(mistakes: **asokaasok** should be all one word; punctuation should be added for speech; **láf**ilafi is heavy and should have an accent; **láf**ilafi is one word not two; **pusumata pa** is two words not one; **pitoom** is light and should not have an accent; **peewalla pa** is two words not one)

1. Añiiya naa fulii ŋkatey (4)

- the child came out
and ran

2. Akinaa tatahanii tatahan (2)

- she waited a while
for them

3. Chímmák chemfakat nasuwan suuwan atiyoo (6)

- great boasting
brings great
shame

4. Añiyya naa taak híyaani (2)

- the child had a
tail

5. Naasoko inci yem áhampaatiina (3)

- He said to him, "I
am the chief"

6. Kákup áciiti cíiti (2)

- talking is difficult

7. Pulukuleempa piti saateeya (4) - the animals of the village

8. Akinaa yina kaloon púlooj (2) - he was more powerful than all of the Kaloon

9. Cahom akin áamiit nii eyeniya an ati motoo alooje yo (2)

- however, he did not know that the dog, a person with a motor car hit it.

10. Caacata naa sokii inci siyaa, afaniñofo fo kacom n'níñofoonii (3)

- Lion said to them: “I have heard, go back until tomorrow, then come back.”

Answers:

1. Añii ya náafulii n'katey
2. Akina atatahaniitatahan
3. Címmak cenfakat nasuuwansuuwan atiyoo
4. Añii ya naataak híyaani
5. Naasokoo: “Inci yem áhampaatiin a”
6. Káakup áciiticiiti
7. Púlukuleen pa piti saatee ya
8. Akina ayina Kaloon púloon
9. Cahom akina ámiit nii eyen ya an ati motoo aloonje yo
10. Caacata naasokii: “Inci síyaa, afaniñofo fo kacom n'níñofoonii”