1. **ALPHABET**

1A. **Vowels:** a, e, i, o, u

1B. **Consonants:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LENIS</th>
<th>FORTIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>ll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>nn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>r (rr is not used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>ch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gw</td>
<td>kw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sw</td>
<td>chw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas in English and Spanish the distinguishing factor is voiced (b) versus voiceless (p,) in Kuna the distinguishing factor is between lenis (weak, gentle, soft) consonants versus fortis (strong) consonants. These may or may not be voiced depending on the environment.

For practical purposes, the lenis is almost a soft, voiced fricative, and the fortis is a strong, voiceless stop/nasal/etc.

Other letters are used in borrowed Spanish words. (e.g. “c, f, h, j, ñ, q, v, x, z”)

LENIS consonants are used word initial. (Even though in reality they are fortis.)

For socio-linguistic reasons, some words are “fudged” on.

Example: **agla** “to fall”

The “g” is actually fortis “k”, but because of social pressures it is written as a “g”. Most velar stops are written as lenis whether they are lenis or fortis when they precede an “l” within a morpheme. Suffixes starting with “l” do not impact the way the preceding consonant is written.

Example: **yeer-dakle** “beautiful”

The “le” is actually a semi-passive suffix.

The consonants which cannot occur word-initial are “k, p, t, l, ll, mm, nn, r, ch, kw”. All initial consonants in Kuna are written as lenis. “l” does not occur word final.
1C. **LONG VOWELS**

If a word is a single syllable, the vowel is usually lengthened. Normally when a suffix is added, the vowel is again shortened. (e.g. *dii* “water”; but *digi* “in water”) There are a few exceptions. (e.g. *niisgwa* “star”)

The last vowel of a word is often lengthened to show intensity, and the previous consonant becomes fortis. (e.g. *nuegwa* “well/good” but *nuekwaa* “very well/precise”)

There are other vowels that are technically long, but are written as single vowels and should not upset the teaching.

1D. **LONG CONSONANTS**

Long consonants are usually only fortis letters, but are written as cc because we do not have any single letter we can use in this case. (e.g. *ammor* “aunt”)

Double consonants across morpheme boundaries go from lenis to fortis. (e.g. *neg* “house” but *neggi* “in the house”) This is pronounced “neki”.

1E. **“k” CHANGING TO “i”**

As in many languages, “k” goes to “i” which in turn goes to “i”. This “i” functions as a consonant. I have toyed with changing this “i” to “y” but have hesitated because of the huge amount of work involved, and the fact that traditionally these letters have been written as “i”.

The frequency of use of a word accelerates the change in the language so that a common word like “chief” is *saila*, not “sakla.” People do not even recognize that the word *saila* actually comes from the earlier form.

Where the change is not complete, we have opted to write the word with “k” or “g” rather than the “i”. (e.g. *daksa* “saw” not “daisa.”)

1F. **“zh”**

As far as I know, “zh” does not occur in the San Blas dialect of Kuna. “zh” only occurs in the Border Kuna dialect.

2. **SYLLABLES**

The syllables are v, vv, cv, vc, cvc. The only double consonants within a syllable are the labialized letters (i.e. gw, kw, sw, chw.)

The cc is common across syllabic borders.

The ccc rarely occurs. (e.g. *niisgwa* “star”; *nisgwa* “liquid”) and only occurs across syllable boundaries.
3. PUNCTUATION

3A. Period

When the intonation drops marking the end of a sentence, a period is used. Even if the idea continues but the intonation drops, the period is still used. If there is a change of person, place, time or theme, a new paragraph is used.

Andi ibmar baknao, An-urbadi saburba ibmar-maknaoe.
“I went to buy something. My younger brother went to do something in the jungle.”
Pedro sae nonikid, Pedrode, Juan-e-urba.
“Peter arrives yesterday. Peter is John’s younger brother.”

3B. Comma

When the intonation is maintained or rises, a comma is used.

Geb degine an nade.
“And then I left”
Be negse naele an beba namogo.
“When you go home, I will go with you.”
Pedro mas guchagu sapurba nade.
“After eating, Peter went to the jungle.”
Bukib-binsa an be-imaksamar-inigwele gwen akar an itosulid. (2 Corintios 7:8)
“Even though I make you sad, it does not make me feel badly.”
Degisoggu dule-wargwengi isgued we-napnegse dognonikid. (Romanos 5:12)
“Saying this, sin entered the world through one person.”

3C. Colon

The colon, which is used to introduce a direct quote, is always followed by a capital letter. The colon is also used when giving a list of items of names.

Ejemplo 1:
Dad ibmar senonikid manigi ukegar: Ogob, oba, aswe, moe.
“Grandpa brought something to sell: coconut, corm, avocado, squash.”

Ejemplo 2:
Jesús e-sapinganga sogded:
--Mata-dummad-abin-obakar namargwelo. (Marcos 4:35)
“Jesus said to his disciples:
--Let us cross over the lake.”

3D. Semi-colon

A semi-colon is very rarely used.
3E. Questions

An inverted question mark is used to introduce a question, and the sentence is closed with a conventional question mark.

The question mark often occurs partway through a sentence, at the beginning of the interrogative part of the sentence. In that case the question mark is preceded by a comma, and starts with a lower case letter.

Example:

The people who arrived yesterday, ¿where did they come from?

A series of back-to-back questions calls for each question to be marked by a set of question marks. Each new question is treated as a new sentence.

3F. Exclamations

The inverted exclamation mark is used to introduce an exclamation, and the sentence is closed with a conventional exclamation mark.

The same rules apply to the exclamation marks as apply to the question marks.

NOTE: Only a single punctuation mark is used to complete a sentence in both quote and non-quote situations. Either a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark is used. The following forms are NOT USED (?.) (?.) (!.) (!,) even though they are often used in Spanish.

3G. TILDE

The tilde is only used now in foreign words. It is no longer used to mark intensification.

4. FOCUS

Focus is achieved by changing the normal word order and fronting what is in focus.

\[
\begin{align*}
Be \ aku \ an-bab-dake. & \quad “You do not know my father.” \\
An-bab \ aku \ be \ dake. & \quad “You do not know \underline{my} \ father.” \quad (John \ 8:19)
\end{align*}
\]
5. QUOTES

5A. Speech Margins for quotes

Speech margins occur ONLY initially, not part way through or at the end of the quote. In other words:

Example 1: You never have: “Hhhhhhhhh,” he said.
Example 2: You never have: “Hhhhhhh,” he said, “hhhh.”

The quote margin is always punctuated by a colon.
Example: He said: “I will go to the shop.”

5B. The position of other punctuation marks

The punctuation marks (periods, commas, questions marks, exclamation marks) always occur inside of the quote marks. This varies from some of the Spanish versions.

Example 1: “Hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.”
Example 2: “¡Hhhhhhh?”
Example 3. “¡Hhhhhhhhh!”

5C. Dialogue

In a dialogue between two people, the dialogue will be opened with a new paragraph and a long dash (double hyphen.) At the end of the quote, there are no quotation marks, and a new paragraph is started.

Example 1:
¶ --Hhhhhhhhh.
¶ Hhshhshhh. Jjj. Ddd. (Narrative continues)

5D. Long Quote (A dialogue quote that crosses paragraph boundaries)

A long dialogue quote which involves several paragraphs, is opened with a long dash. Each succeeding paragraph is opened with a reverse double (”) quote. At the end of the entire long quote, the last paragraph is closed with a closing quote mark (”), and a new paragraph continues the narrative.

Example:
¶ (Continuing non-quote narrative)
5E. Monologue, Thoughts, Conversations with God
In the case of a monologue, such things as personal thoughts and conversations with God do not necessarily require a new paragraph, but they are opened with an opening double quote (“) and closed with a closing (”) double quote. The end of this type of quote does not necessarily require a new paragraph.

Example:

He said: “I went to the store.”
NOTE: The term monologue is also used to describe a situation in which a person makes one statement, and that statement is acted on even though no oral response is given.

Example:
The king yelled: “Bring me my sword!”
(The servant does not reply orally, but simply obeys the king’s command.)

5F. Long Quote (A quote such as monologue, thoughts, conversations with God that crosses paragraph boundaries)

A long quote which involves several paragraphs, is opened with an opening double quote mark. Each succeeding paragraph is opened with a reverse double (“) quote. At the end of the entire long quote is closed with a closing double quote mark (“). It is not always necessary to start a new paragraph.

Example:
Ddd. Jjjjj. Kkkkk.” (Continue with non-quote narrative)
5G. Second Level Quotes

Second level quote (a quote within a quote) requires a single quote marker to open and close the quote.

In the case of the quote within a quote that starts with a double dash, the quote is opened and closed with a single quote marker.

Example 1:

He said: ¶ --But Mary did say: ‘I can’t go today,’ but she said nothing about tomorrow.

In the case of an ongoing quote within a quote, a single reverse quote marker is used.

Example:

Ddd. Jijiji. Kkkkk.”
¶ (Continuing non-quote narrative)

Example 2:

¶ "Hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. Jijiji. Ddddd. DddD
Ddd. Jijiji. Kkkkk.”
¶ (Continuing non-quote narrative)

If the quote within a quote begins at the beginning of a main, ongoing quote-paragraph, the ongoing reverse double quote marker is used, there is a space, and the forward-facing single quote is used. The quote within the quote is closed with a single quote marker.

Example:

He said: “Hhhhhhhhhhh.
¶ ” ‘Hhh. Jijiji. Uuuuuuu.’ ”

NOTE 1: If both quotes close at the same time, there is a single quote separated from the double quote by a space.
5H. Third Level Quotes

Third level quotes in Kuna have no quotation marks.

Example:

God said: “Jeremiah say to them: ‘I will destroy Jerusalem. Do not say: You will not destroy the temple. Do not think that I will not carry out what I say.’ ”

6. COMMON CONNECTOR WORDS IN NARRATIVES

6A. Degi, degine (“and”) deginbali (“and in addition”) a-uki, a-ukine (“in addition”, “further to”)

6B. Agi, agine (“at that time/place”) aginbali (“at that time/place again”)

6C. Geb (“then”), a-sorba (“after that”)

6D. Deunni (“at that time”), degidgine (“then with that”)

6E. Dakargu (“it appears that”)

NOTE: Degi (“and”) VERSUS Degii (“thus, like that”)

7. LOAN WORDS

Loan words plus Kuna suffixes proved to provide a reading difficulty. Kuna people had a difficult time to distinguish the division between the loan word and the suffix. To overcome this difficulty, we introduced the use of the apostrophe to separate the Kuna suffix from the foreign word or name.

Example:

Nabucodonosor’ga “to Nebuchadnezzar”
Rey-Bela’gi “from King Bela”
Gar-arpa’mar “harps”

In the case of biblical names, although we could have changed the spelling of biblical names to fit Kuna phonological patterns, we decided not to do that. The common names such as Pedro, David, Belén, etc. are already being used in Kuna. We used the names as written in the Reina Valera so that both pastors and laymen could look up the name of a person or place in a Bible dictionary or concordance.
8. HYPHENIZATION

In Kuna, if there is a change of intonation, there is also a change of meaning for the phrase or sentence. For this reason hyphens MUST be used. If they are not used, sometimes the meaning is carried by the context. Especially in the case of unknown or new material, it is often impossible to understand the meaning of the phrase.

EXAMPLES:

1. An saila machi daksa.
   
   An-saila machi-daksa.  Mi cacique vió el muchacho.
   An saila-machi-daksa.  Vi el hijo del cacique.
   An-saila-machi-daksa.  (Alguien) vio el hijo de mi cacique.
   An-saila machi daksa.  El hijo de mi cacique vio (alguien/algo.)
   An-saila machi daksa.  Era mi cacique que el muchacho vió.

2. An ome sogsiid.
   
   An-ome sogsiid.  Dice mi esposa.
   An ome sogsiid.  Yo soy mujer.

3. Pedro urba mai noni.
   
   Pedro urba mai noni.  Pedro vino en el bote.
   Pedro-urba mai noni.  El hermano de Pedro vino acostado.
   Pedro-urba mai noni.  Vino de bajo de Pedro.
   Pedro urba-mai noni.  Pedro vino de bajo de …..

4. Ua an gucha.
   
   Ua an gucha.  Yo comi pescado.
   Ua an-gucha.  El pescado me comió.

5. An Bab aku be dake. (San Juan 8:19)
   
   An-Bab aku be dake.  Tú no conoces a mi papá.
   An-Bab aku be-dake.  Mi papá no te conoce.

WHERE ARE HYPHENS NECESSARY?

A. Reduplication
   bela-bela, muchub-muchub, sunnu-sunnu, emis-emis, bane-bane

B. Possessives
   An-machi nade.
   Pedro-machi noni.
   Juan e-nanga sogsa.
C. Adjectives

_Machi-dummad mas gucha._
_An mor-arad baksa._
_Dad es-sered anga uksa._

D. Nominalization of the phrase

_Sailaba-nonimalad an neggi gabisa._
_Judio-igar-nue-wisimalad bukwa-gusmogad._ (Lucas 5:17)

E. Subordinate Clause is often hyphenated

_Bemar-noar-nanidiidbali ibmar-bukidar an bemargi soged-nikad._

F. Numbers (If the number has only a single prefix, it is written as one word. If the number has two prefixes, a hyphen is used between the two prefixes.)

_Birgambe_ “ten years”
_birga-dulagwen_ “twenty years”
 ua-ukambe “ten fish”
 ua-dulagugle-gakambe-gakapaa (Juan 21:11) “one hundred and fifty-three fish” (John 21:11)
(7 X 20 + 10 + 3)

In the past the entire number was hyphenated. In response to socio-linguistic pressure, numbers are now hyphenated within the unit of millions, within the unit of thousands, within the units above two hundred, and everything below two hundred is grouped together with hyphens.

The rationale for this hyphenization convention stems from the counting system. Numbering is to the base twenty. This means: one twenty = 20; two twenties = 40; three twenties = 60, etc. Five twenties = 100.
When it comes to one hundred and twenty, instead of saying 100 + 20, the system says six twenties = 120. Seven twenties = 140, eight twenties = 160, nine twenties = 180. Five twenties times 2 = 200. Five twenties times 3 = 300.

EXAMPLES:
653, 736 = mili-dulatar-ilanergwa-gakabo-gakambe-gakapaa gaka dulatar-ilagugle gaka dulagwen-gakambe-gakanergwa
200,005 = mili-dulatar-ilabo gaka atar
205,000 = mili-dulatar-ilabo-gaka-atar
8,405 = milibaabak gaka dulatar-ilabake gakatkar
2,545 = milibo gaka dulatar-ilatar gaka dulabo-gakatar
2,277 = milibo gaka dulatar-ilabo gaka dulapaa-gakambe-gakagugle
246 = dulatar-ilabo gaka dulabo-gakanergwa
135 = dulanergwa-gakambe-gakatar
NOTE: The number “three” is written “baa” when following a consonant, and “paa” when following a vowel.

EXAMPLE:

Dule warbaa  “Three people”
Ilapaa.     “Three times”

NOTE: The number “eight” is always spelled with a “b”

EXAMPLE:

Dule walabaabak  “Eight people.”
Ilabaabak      “Eight times”

NOTE: When the prefix ends in an “a” and the number begins with an “a,” the vowels are collapsed into a single vowel. The exception is the prefix ‘gwa-’ which maintains a double vowel when it precedes a number which begins with a vowel.

EXAMPLE:

ila + atar → ilatar  “Five times”
gwa + ambe → gwaambe  “Five (round items)”

NOTE: Number prefixes plus the numerals one to ten are written as a single word without a hyphen.

EXAMPLE:

Walagugle  “seven (long/tall objects)”
Gwanergwa “six (round objects)”

NOTE: “gaka” plus a number one to ten is written together, so that fourteen becomes

EXAMPLE:

gakambe-gakabake  “fourteen”

NOTE: Other number markers plus a numeral are usually hyphenated.

EXAMPLE:

Nii-gugled  “seventh month”
G. Ordinal Numbers: Ordinal numbers are written by adding *gwad*.

*Warbake gwad*  
“fourth”

H. Inanimate and Animate Objects

Inanimate objects are not hyphenated to the verb. The reason the hyphen is not necessary is that, outside of fairy tales, it is impossible for an inanimate object to be the subject of an action.

**EXAMPLES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inanimate Object</th>
<th>Verbalbjation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Dule ob digsa.</em></td>
<td>The man plated the corn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ome oros dunai.</em></td>
<td>The woman cooks rice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Muu mor maksa.</em></td>
<td>The old lady is sewing clothes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the structure of the animated object is not very complex, then the object is hyphenated to the verb. If the object has a complex structure of four or more pieces, the object is hyphenated together but is not hyphenated to the verb. This use of the hyphen is very problematic but I have not found another way to mark the difference between the following two sentences.

**EXAMPLE:** Note the meaning change due to hyphenization.

*An Bab aku be dake.* (San Juan 8:19)
- *An-Bab aku be dake.*  
  You do not know my Father./Tú no conoces a mi papá.
- *An-Bab aku be-dake.*  
  My Father does not know you/Mi papá no te conoce.

I. Post Positions

Post positions are sometimes used instead of suffices. These are hyphenated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Position</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>dulemar-abargi</em></td>
<td>“among the people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>neg-urba</em></td>
<td>“below the house”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a-ular</em></td>
<td>“for that reason”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>An nao-dibe.</em></td>
<td>“I might go”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Be bennuke-gebed.</em></td>
<td>“You have to pay”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J. Double Adverbs

Double adverbs are hyphenated.

**EXAMPLE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Double Adverb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ise-nued</em></td>
<td>“VERY good”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bur-dummad</em></td>
<td>“biggest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bur-bule</em></td>
<td>“worse/worst”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
K. Compound Names

Both parts of a complex name are joined by a hyphen. Unlike Spanish, both parts of the name are written with capital letters. This allows the reader to know that they are still dealing with a foreign word. Unlike Spanish, the names of people groups (Israelites) are written with capital letters to alert the reader that the word is a foreign one.

EXAMPLE:

*Ben-Hadad*
*Filistea-dulemar*  “Philistines”

In the case of a place name, both the actual name of the geographical feature and the type of feature are written. The actual name is capitalized. The type of the geographical feature (e.g. city, river, sea) is hyphenated to the feature’s name, but is not capitalized.

EXAMPLE:

*Jerusalén-neggwebur*  “city of Jerusalem”
*Jordán-diwar*  “Jordan River”