Tibetan language
for beginners

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with the collaboration of
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# Contents

Introduction .................................................. 5

**Part I – Grammar** ......................................... 6

Sentence structure ........................................... 7

Nouns ............................................................ 8

Articles ......................................................... 9

Personal pronouns ........................................... 10

Genitive and dative cases ................................ 11

Possessive adjectives and pronouns ................ 12

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns .......... 13

Qualifying adjectives ..................................... 14

Interrogative pronouns ................................... 16

Postpositions ................................................ 17

Verbs - To be ................................................ 18

Verbs - To have ............................................. 23

Verbs conjugation ......................................... 24

Verbs - Infinitive .......................................... 25

Verbs – Present tense .................................... 26

Verbs – Future tense ..................................... 27

Verbs – Past tense ......................................... 28

Verbs – Negative form ................................... 29

Verbs – Interrogative form ......................... 30
Questions and answers 31
Imperative 32
Verbs – Termination table 33
Want – need – can – like 35
Special structures 37
Numbers 39
Indefinite adjective and pronouns 40
Conjunctions 40

Part II – Little phrasebook
Greetings – Making friends 41
In town and outskirts 46
Visiting a monastery 50
At the Barkor market 53
At the restaurant 55
At the hotel 58
Trekking 59
Weather 60
Time 61
Health 63
Common adjectives 65
Common verbs 67
Tibetan alphabet 70
Bibliography 72
Introduction

These pages are intended to provide the basic rules to build simple sentences in Tibetan, suitable to have small conversations or ask information.

The first part contains simple grammar rules and many examples on how to use them.

The second part is a collection of words and phrases useful on different occasions (visiting towns and monasteries, trekking on mountains, eating at the restaurant, etc), where you can find some applications of the rules presented in the first part.

Hurried and lazy people can skip directly to the second part, using sentences without knowing nothing about their structure, but it will be much less amusing...!

Pronunciation rules

Tibetan words have been transcribed using the Latin alphabet, trying to reproduce the original pronunciation. However the readers must take in mind that some Tibetan sounds have not a precise correspondence in western languages. For instance you can hear a sound that is not really k nor g but stays somewhere in the middle between them; the same happens for p and b, or for d and t.

At the end of this grammar you can see the Tibetan alphabet, consisting of 29 consonants and 5 vowels. For our western ears it can be difficult to perceive the difference between k and k’, between ts and ts’, or between ch and ch’. Sounds that for us are quite similar, for Tibetans are very different. In any case, don’t get discouraged...Tibetan people can understand you even if you don’t use the exact pronunciation and often, with a smile or a warm laugh, they will repeat what you have awkwardly tried to say, giving you the possibility to listen the correct way to pronounce it...
The Tibetan language is spoken in a very wide region, extending for thousands of kilometers. The written language doesn’t change, but the pronunciation can vary a lot going from the western part of Tibet to the extreme eastern regions or to the Himalayan lands. In this grammar we will refer to the pronunciation used in Lhasa.

In general you can read the Tibetan sentences of this book as in English, but remember that:

- **a** is like in *father*
- **e** is like in *let*
- **i** is like in *sing*
- **o** is like in *low*
- **ö** is like the French *eu* in *jeu*
- **u** is like in *moon*
- **ü** is like the French *u*
- **ny** is like the Spanish *ñ* in *niño*
- **g** is like in *goat*
- **j** is like in *jam*
- **r** is rolled, don’t read it like the Italian nor the French *r’s*.
- **ng** is like in *sing*, but the *g* is almost silent (the very common word *nga*, that means *I*, is pronounced as something between *nga* and *na*).
- **k,g** at the end of a word are almost silent (*yag*, the popular animal yak, and *chig*, the number one, are pronounced almost *ya* and *chi*).
- **h** after a consonant (except after *c*) means a breathy consonant. Don’t read *ph* as in *photo* and don’t read *th* as in *three* or as in *this*. Pronounce *thr* and *dhr* like in *tree* and *drum*.

In this book all the words are divided in syllables to make easier the learning. In a word the accent generally falls on the last syllable...but not always: at the restaurant remember to ask for momò (typical dumplings) and not for mòmo (grandmother)...

Good luck ! ... or better, Tashi deleg !
Sentence structure

In Tibetan language the structure of the sentence is:

subject + object + verb

The verb is always at the end.

Example:

I am Pema = nga Pe-ma yin

I - Pema - am

this is a book = di teb re

this - book - is

Tenzin is in Tibet = Ten-zin Pö la du

Tenzin - Tibet - in - is
Nouns

In Tibetan language nouns can be monosyllabic or polysyllabic. Most of them are disyllabic.

Example:

\[\begin{array}{ll}
\text{monosyllabic} & \text{disyllabic} \\
\text{earth} = \text{sa} & \text{mother} = \text{a-ma} \\
\text{mountain} = \text{ri} & \text{monastery} = \text{gom-pa} \\
\text{people} = \text{mi} & \text{lama} = \text{la-ma} \\
\text{water} = \text{chu} & \text{house} = \text{khang-pa} \\
\text{tea} = \text{cha} & \text{good} = \text{yag-po} \\
\end{array}\]

Most of polysyllabic nouns end with the particles: \text{-pa, -po, -ba, -bo, -ma, -mo}.

In some cases, by adding the particle \text{-pa} to a word, a new term is created, denoting a man who is in some way connected to the item.

Example:

\[\begin{array}{ll}
\text{horse} = \text{ta} & \text{horseman} = \text{ta-pa} \\
\text{Tibet} = \text{Pö} & \text{man of Tibet} = \text{Pö-pa} \\
\end{array}\]
**Number and gender**

To make a noun **plural** you can add the particle **-tso.**

**Example:**

- book = *teb*  
  books = *teb-tso*
- person = *mi*  
  persons = *mi-tso*

In many cases the terminations **-po** and **-mo** define the gender.

**Example:**  
- king = *gyel-po*  
  queen = *gyel-mo*

Some nouns have a single form for masculine and feminine.

**Example:**  
- children (male and female) = *pu-gu*

In some case different words specifies different gender.

**Example:**  
- male yak = *yag*  
  female yak = *dhri*
Articles

In Tibetan the definite and indefinite articles do not exist. Instead of the indefinite articles a and an you can use the word for the number one, chig, following the noun.

Example:

- a boy = bu chig (pronounce chig almost as chi),
- a girl = bu-mo chig

Instead of the definite article the you can use, if necessary, the demonstrative adjectives this/that and these/those, always following the noun.

- this = di
- that = de
- these = din-tso
- those = den-tso

Example:

- the book (if it is near) = teb di
- the books (if it is far) = teb den-tso

Note: demonstrative adjectives will be more extensively discussed at pag.13.
# Personal pronouns

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>nga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>khye-rang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/ she</td>
<td>khong  (honorific)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>kho / kho-rang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>mo / mo-rang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>ngan-tso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>khe-rang-tso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>khong-tso</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In practice for **he** and **she** you can always use **khong**, even if it is an honorific term, to be used talking of important people (for example lamas or professors).
Genitive and dative cases

To form the genitive case (ex.: the book of Tenzin) one must insert the particle gi between the owner and the owned:

owner + gi + owned

Example:
the house of the lama = la-ma gi khang-pa

lama - of - house

the price of the tea = cha gi kong

tea - of - price

To form the dative case (ex.: I gave it to you) one has to put the particle la after the noun or the personal pronoun that receives the action.

to = la

Example:
to the lama = la-ma la
to me = nga la

Pronounce these sentences with the accent on the particle la.
Possessive adjectives and pronouns

To form possessive adjectives and pronouns simply add the genitive particle –gi to the personal pronouns (in practice “your” is translated as “of you”, etc.) except “nga-gi” that becomes “nge” (pronounce nge like ſe with a long e).

For plural persons you can also change the termination tso in tsö.

| my - mine | nge |
| your - yours | khye-rang-gi |
| his/her-hers/its | khong-gi |
| our - ours | ngan-tso-gi / ngan-tsö |
| your - yours | khe-rang-tso-gi / khe-rang-tsö |
| their - theirs | khong-tso-gi / khong-tsö |

Possessive adjectives must be placed **before** the noun.

**Example:**

- *my friend* = nge dhrog-po
- *this is yours* = di khye-rang-gi re
Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>this</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>de / pha-gi</td>
<td>that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>these</td>
<td>din-tso</td>
<td>these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>those</td>
<td>den-tso / phan-tso / pha-gi-tso</td>
<td>those</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demonstrative adjectives must be placed **after** the noun.

**Example:**

- **this** house = khang-pa **di**
  
  *house - this*

- **this** is my house = **di** nge khang-pa re
  
  *this - my - house - is*

- **that** is your friend = **de** khye-rang-gi dhrog-pa re
  
  *that - your - friend - is*
Qualifying adjectives

In Tibetan qualifying adjectives are always placed **after** the nouns and do not change with the gender.

The particle **-tso** to make plural or demonstratives used as articles are placed **after** the adjectives.

**Example:**

- **good person** = mi **yag-po**
- **good persons** = mi **yag-po-tso**
- **these good persons** = mi **yag-po din-tso**

Some common adjectives

- **big** = **chen-po**
- **hot** = **tsa-po**
- **good** = **yag-po**
- **long** = **ring-po**
- **old** = **nyim-pa**
- **small** = **chun chun**
- **cold** = **dhrang-mo**
- **bad** = **dug-cha**
- **short** = **tung tung**
- **new** = **sar-pa**

To say **very** + adjective you can use:

- **adjective + shi-tha** or **pe + adjective**

**Es.:** **very hot** = **tsa-po shi-tha** or **pe tsa-po**
To say **extremely + adjective** add the particle -shö to the adjective root.

**Example:** extremely hot = tsa-shö

To say **too + adjective** add the particle -tak to the adjective root.

**Example:** too hot = tsa-tak

To ask **how + adjective ?** add the particle –lö to the adjective root.

**Example:** how long is it ? = ring-lö re ?

**Comparatives**

To say **more + adjective** one adds the particles -ua to the adjective root. If the root ends with g or r instead of –ua you must use -ga or -ra. Sometimes the root is slightly modified.

**Example:**

big = chen-po  bigger = che-ua

good = yag-po  better = yag-ga

To make a comparison the particle le (pronounced with a long e) is used in the following way:

**Ex:** my horse is bigger than yours =

nge ta, khye-rang-gi ta le, che-ua du

my - horse - your - horse - than - bigger - is
**Interrogative pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what ?</td>
<td>ka-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which ?</td>
<td>ka-gi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where ?</td>
<td>ka-bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from where ?</td>
<td>ka-ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how ?</td>
<td>kan-dhre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in which way ?</td>
<td>kan-dhre-si</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how much ?</td>
<td>ka-tsö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when ?</td>
<td>ka-dü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who ?</td>
<td>sü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>why ?</td>
<td>ka-re se-na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**

**what** is it ?  =  ka-re  re ?

**what** is there  ? = ka-re  du ?

**which** is your house ? = ke-rang-gi  khang-pa  ka-gi  re?

**what** time is it ? = chu-tsö  ka-tsö  re ?

*hour - how much - is ?*

**how much** is the price ?  = kong  ka-tsö  re ?

*price - how much - is ?*
Post-positions

Post-positions correspond to English prepositions, but always follow the noun they address (often between the noun and the postposition the particle gi is inserted):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Preposition</th>
<th>Tibetan Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in, at, to, for, towards</td>
<td>la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td>gang-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in, inside</td>
<td>la / nang-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>near</td>
<td>thri-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in front of</td>
<td>dün-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>ngon-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in middle</td>
<td>kyil-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about</td>
<td>kor-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from</td>
<td>ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under</td>
<td>uog-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside</td>
<td>chi-log-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far from</td>
<td>gyang-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behind</td>
<td>gyab-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
<td>je-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with</td>
<td>nyam-du</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:

in Tibet = Pö la with me = nga nyam-du

on the table = chog-tse gi gang-la

near you = khye-rang gi thri-la

I come from Italy = nga Ithaly ne yin

I talk about this = nga di kor-la lap-gi-yö
**Verbs - To be**

In Tibetan language the verb **to be** has two different forms:

a) to express **identity** (*ex: I am Tashi*)

b) to express **location** (*ex.: I am in Tibet*).

The verb **to be** doesn’t change with the number. This means that the conjugation of plural persons (we, you, they) is equal to the conjugation of singular ones (I, you, he/she/it).

**To be** also doesn’t change tense. Tenses must be deduced by the general context of the sentence.

**a) Identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>nga yin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are</td>
<td>khye-rang re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is</td>
<td>khong re</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**

I **am** Tashi = nga Ta-shi **yin**

*I - Tashi - am*

this **is** mine = di nge **re**

*this - mine - is*
How to choose between *du* and *yo-re*?

**Du** (pronounced almost like *dug*) is used when the speaker has personally experienced what he is talking about, while **yo-re** (pronounced with the accent on *re*) is used if he only knows the subject from other sources.

**Example:**

I am in Tibet = nga  Pö  la  yö

> *I - Tibet - in - am*

If I have seen yaks in Tibet I can say:

in Tibet there are yaks = Pö la yag **du**

If I have only read on books that yaks live in Tibet I say:

in Tibet there are yaks = Pö la yag **yo-re**
To be – negative form

The negative form of to be is obtained modifying the conjugation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yin</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yō</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ma-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>min-du</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:

he is not Tenzin = khong Ten-zin ma-re

he - Tenzin - is not

I am not in Lhasa = nga Lha-sa la me

I - Lhasa - in - am not

here there are no yaks = de yag min-du

here - yaks - there are not

Note that ma-re and min-du have to be pronounced with the accent on the last syllable.
To be – interrogative form

The interrogative form of to be is obtained adding the terminations pe or ge, as shown in the panel.

\[
\begin{align*}
yin & \rightarrow yin-pe & yö & \rightarrow yö-pe \\
re & \rightarrow re-pe & du & \rightarrow du-ge
\end{align*}
\]

Ex: is there a monastery ? = gom-pa chig yo-re-pe ?

monastery – a – is there

Furthermore the 1\textsuperscript{st} and the 2\textsuperscript{nd} persons are swapped, that is to say that in a question the verb is conjugated as expected in the answer (ex.: are you ? becomes am you ?).

Ex.: are you Tashi ? = khye-rang Ta-shi yin-pe ?

you - Tashi - are (am)

If in the sentence there is an interrogative pronoun (what, who, where, when...) the verb doesn’t change.

Ex.: where is the market ? = throm ka-ba yo-re ?

market – where – is

Note that the accent of verbs in interrogative form falls always on pe and ge, that must be pronounced with a long and open e.
To be - Summary

To be (identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirm.</th>
<th>Neg.</th>
<th>Inter.</th>
<th>Inter.-neg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td>yin</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>re-pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khye-rang</td>
<td>re</td>
<td>ma-re</td>
<td>yin-pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khong</td>
<td>re</td>
<td>ma-re</td>
<td>re-pe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be (location)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirm.</th>
<th>Neg.</th>
<th>Inter.</th>
<th>Inter.-neg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td>yö</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>yo-re-pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khye-rang</td>
<td>du</td>
<td>min-du</td>
<td>yö-pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yo-re</td>
<td>yo-ma-re</td>
<td>yma-re-pe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khong</td>
<td>du</td>
<td>min-du</td>
<td>du-ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yo-re</td>
<td>yo-ma-re</td>
<td>yo-re-pe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verbs - To have

In Tibetan the verb **to have** doesn’t exist.

To express the idea of possession you can use the verb **to be** in its *location form*, putting the particle **la** after the subject.

In practice “he has...” is translated as “by him there is....”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have</td>
<td>nga la yö</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you are</td>
<td>khye-rang la du / yo-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he has</td>
<td>khong la du / yo-re</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The choice between **du** or **yo-re** follows the same rules seen for **to be**.

**Example:**

I have a house = nga la khang-pa yö

\[ I - house - have \]

he has no yaks = khong la yag min-du

\[ he - yaks - has not \]

have you a car? = khye-rang la mo-tha yö-pé?

\[ you - car - have \]
Verbs conjugation

The verb conjugation is one of the most delicate parts of the Tibetan grammar.

To conjugate verbs one must add a suitable termination to the verb root, that depends on the person and the tense.

The terminations are formed by particle as gi or pa, followed by auxiliary verbs (the two forms of to be).

The terminations do not change with the number (for example the 3rd singular person he and the 3rd plural person them have the same termination).

The termination also changes if the verbs is active or passive.

Active verbs define an action “actively” performed (as to go, eat, read...). Passive verbs refers to actions or sensations that the subject doesn’t have control over (as to be hungry, to feel, to fall asleep...).

With some active verbs, the particle gi has to be insert after the subject.
**Verbs - Infinitive**

Verbs are formed by a **root** (fixed) and a **termination** (that changes according to the person and the tense).

The termination of the infinitive is **-ua** or **–pa** depending on the verb.

**Example:**

*Active verbs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to go</td>
<td>dhro-ua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make</td>
<td>je-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>sa-ua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to read</td>
<td>log-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to see</td>
<td>ta-ua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give</td>
<td>te-ua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Passive verbs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to be hungry</td>
<td>dro-go to-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to remember</td>
<td>dhen-pa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to be thirsty</td>
<td>kha-kom-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fall ill</td>
<td>na-ua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Verbs - Present tense**

To conjugate the present tense add the following terminations to the verb root:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active verbs</th>
<th>Passive verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} person</td>
<td>+gi-yō</td>
<td>+gi-du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} person</td>
<td>+gi-du</td>
<td>+gi-du</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exemple:**

*active verbs:*

I *go* home  =  nga nang la **dhro-gi-yō**

\[ I - \text{home} - \text{go} \]

he *eats* yak meat=  khong yak-sha **sa-gi-du**

\[ he - \text{yak meat} - \text{eats} \]

*passive verbs:*

I *am hungry*  =  nga **dhro-go-to-gi-du**

they *are thirsty* = khong-tso **kha-kom-gi-du**
**Verbs - Future tense**

Terminations to add to the verb root:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>Active verbs</th>
<th>Passive verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+gi-yin</td>
<td>+gi-re</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2nd and 3rd persons</th>
<th>Active verbs</th>
<th>Passive verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+gi-re</td>
<td>+gi-re</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**

I **will go** to Lhasa  =  nga Lha-sa la **dhro-gi-yin**

* I - Lhasa - to - will go

you **will drink** tea  =  khye-rang cha **thung-gi-re**

* you - tea - will drink

we **will stay** at home  =  nga-tso nang la **de-gi-yin**

* we - home - at - will stay

we **will meet** at the market  =

= ngan-tso throm la **thuk-gi-yin**

* we - market- at -will meet
**Verbs - Past tense**

Terminations to add to the verb root:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active verbs</th>
<th>Passive verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>+pa-yin</td>
<td>+song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd and 3rd persons</td>
<td>+pa-re</td>
<td>+song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:**

you **drank** water = khye-rang chu **thung-pa-re**

you - water - drank

I **understood** = nga **ha-ko-song**

I forgot = je-song  I heard = ko-song

**Note:** some irregular verbs change the root in the past, ex:

to go dhro → chin

to come yong → lep

to eat sa → se

Ex.: I **went** to the restaurant = nga sa-khang la **chin-pa-yin**

I - restaurant - to - went
Verbs - Negative form

The negative form is obtained by modifying the terminations in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yin</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>min</th>
<th>yö</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>re</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ma-re</td>
<td>du</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>min-du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>song</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>ma-song</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:

I don’t go to the restaurant = nga sa-khang la dhro-gi-me

I - restaurant - to - don’t go

he doesn’t go to Lhasa = khong Lha-sa la dhro-gi-min-du

he - Lhasa - to - doesn’t go

he will not eat meat = khong sha sa-gi-ma-re

he – meat – will not eat

I have not understood = ha-ko-ma-song
### Verb - Interrogative form

In order to obtain the interrogative form you must modify the terminations as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Interrogative Form</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yin</td>
<td>yin-pe</td>
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<td>yö</td>
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<tr>
<td>re</td>
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<tr>
<td>du</td>
<td>du-ge</td>
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<tr>
<td>song</td>
<td>song-nge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, as for the verb **to be**, the 1\(^{st}\) and the 2\(^{nd}\) persons are swapped, that is to say that in a question the verb is conjugated as expected in the answer.

Note that the termination **gi-yin-pe** can be shortened as **ge**, while **pa-yin-pe** is shortened as **pe**.

**Example:**

- **do you go** to Lhasa? = khye-rang Lha-sa la **dhro-gi-yö-pe**?
  
  
  \(\text{you} \ - \ Lhasa \ - \ \text{to} \ - \ \text{go}\)

- **did you understand**? = **ha-ko-song-ge**?

- **will you go**? = khye-rang **dhro-gi-yin-pe** (*short. dhro-ge*)?

- **did you go**? = khye-rang **chin-pa-yin-pe** (*short. chin-pe*)?

Remember, the accent of the verb falls always on **pe** and **ge**.
Questions and answers

We have seen that in a question the 1\textsuperscript{st} and the 2\textsuperscript{nd} persons are swapped, that is to say that the verb is conjugated as expected in the answer.

To answer, if the answer is simply yes or no, you have to use the courtesy particle la, followed by the auxiliary verb used in the question, in its affirmative or negative form.

Example:

\textit{question:} are you Tibetan ? = khye-rang pö-pa yin-pe ?
\textit{answer:} yes = la-yin \hspace{1cm} no = la-min

\textit{question:} do you eat meat ? = khye-rang sha sa-gi-yö-pe ?
\textit{answer:} yes = la-yö \hspace{1cm} no = la-me

\textit{question:} is this a monastery ? = di gom-pa re-pe ?
\textit{answer:} yes = la-re \hspace{1cm} no = la-ma-re

\textit{question:} is there a market ? = throm chig yo-re-pe ?
\textit{answer:} yes = la-yo-re \hspace{1cm} no = la yo-ma-re

If you don’t know the answer: maybe = chig che-na

\hspace{1cm} probably yes = yin-pa-dhra

\hspace{1cm} probably not = me-pa-dhra
**Imperative**

The ordinary form uses the termination **-ah** added to the verb root. For a more polite form add the termination **-nang** or **rog-nang** to the verb root (the **g** of **rog** is almost silent). For an exhortation use the termination **–scig**.

For a strong command or in an informal situation you can simply drop the termination from the verb root.

For the negative form put the particle **ma** before the verb root.

**Example:**

come ! = sho-**ah**

please, read = log-**rog-nang**  (the accent is on **rog**)

come on, read ! = log-**scig**

give me ! = te

look ! = ta

come here ! = de sho

go away ! = gyu

don’t do that ! = **ma**-che
### Verbs – Terminations table

**Active verbs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Affirm.</th>
<th>Neg.</th>
<th>Inter.</th>
<th>Inter.-neg.</th>
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</thead>
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<td>song-nge</td>
<td>ma-song-nge</td>
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</table>
To want, need, must, can, etc

To translate **to want**, **to need** something, you must use the verb **go** in the following way:

**Ex.**:
- I **want** some tea = nga la cha **go**
- I **don’t want** Tibetan tea = nga la Pö cha **ma-go**
- **do you want** some tea? = khye-rang la cha **go-pe**?

**answer**: yes = **go**  no = **ma-go**

What **do you want**? = ka-re **go**?

To translate **to need, must** + verb, you have to use the present tense form of the verb and substitute the particle **gi** of the termination with the particle **go**.

**Ex.**:
- I **have to go** to the market = nga throm la **dhro-go-yö**
- you **must go** = khye-rang **dhro-go-re**

To translate **to want** + verb you must use the present tense of the verb and substitute **dö** to **ghi**. Furthermore you must add a **-n** to the verb root.

**Ex.**:
- I **want to go** to Lhasa = nga Lha-sa la **dhron-dö-yö**
- I **don’t want to eat** = nga **san-dö-me**
To translate **can, to be able**, use the form **verb + tub + termination:**

Ex.: I can go to Lhasa  =

= nga Lha-sa la **dhro-tub-gi-yö**

To translate **to have intention of**...you must use **tsi** in the following way:

Ex.: I intend to buy this = nga di **nyo-tsi-yö**

To translate **to be allowed** you must use the verb **cho**:

Ex.: Am I allowed to go there ?  =

= nga pa-ghi dhro **cho-gi-re-pe** ?

*answer:* yes = **cho-ghi-re**  no = **cho-ghi-ma-re**

**To like**

To translate **to like**...use the expression **ga-bo** in this way:

Es.: I like tea  = nga cha la **ga-bo yö**

I don’t like tea= nga cha la **ga-bo me**

do you like tea ? = khye-rang cha la **ga-bo yö-pe** ?

I like tea very much = nga cha la **ga-bo** shi-tha yö
**Special structures**

A sentence made of two parts connected by the conjunction *if*, like:

if [subordinate sentence], [main sentence]

is translated in the following way:

[subordinate sentence] na, [main sentence]

Ex: if he comes, I will go =

khong yong-gi-du na, nga dhro-gi-yin

he - comes - if, I - will go

Expressions as before + verb, are translated with the form ma-verb-kong-la.

Ex.: before he arrives… = khong ma-lep-kong-la...

In expressions with when + verb..., the form verb-dü is used.

Ex.: when we arrive to Lhasa… =

nga-tso Lha-sa la lep-dü...
Expressions with to, in order to + verb are translated with the form verb-ga.

Ex.: let’s go to eat = ngan-tso sa-ga dhro

**Who is doing the action**

The termination ken added to the verb root indicates who or what is doing the action.

Ex.: the car that is going to Lhasa =

= Lha-sa la dro-ken mo-ta
**Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
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<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>gu chu go chig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>gya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>nyi-gya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>chig tong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>nyi-tong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers larger than 20 are formed in a similar way, but one has to insert a particle between the tens and the units. This particle (tsa, so, sha ...) changes for every decade, as shown in the following panel.

After “round” numbers as 20, 30, 100... is common to say the word tam-ba (Ex.: 50 = nga-chu tam-ba)
Indefinite adjective and pronouns

much / many = mang-po
more = mang-ua
too much = mang-tak / mang drag-pa
a little = de-tsi / nyung nuyng / nyung-she
less = nyung-ua
how much / how many? = mang-lö?
all = tsang-ma / kang-ga / ka-yang
nothing = ke-e min-du / ga-yang me
few, some = ka-she
both = nyi-ka
enough = dhrig-pa, dang-pa
too much = mang-tak / mang drag-pa
less = nyung-ua
how much / how many? = mang-lö?
all = tsang-ma / kang-ga / ka-yang
nothing = ke-e min-du / ga-yang me
few, some = ka-she
both = nyi-ka
enough = dhrig-pa, dang-pa
other = shen-da

27. Conjunctions...and more

and = tang
but = yin-na / yin-na yang
because = kang yin se-na (accent on na)
also = ye / yang
then = ten-ne / ten-du
in this case = di yin-na
about = tsam la / tsa
like, as = nang-shin
or = yang-na
otherwise = ya-me-na
since = tsang
almost = pe-che
maybe = chik-che-na
Part II
Little phrasebook

Greetings - Making friends

People and related words
people = mi
man/ boy / son = bu
father = pha-pa / pha-la
grandfather = po-po / po-la
child = pu-gu
brother = pin-gya bu / cho-la
husband = khyo-ga / cho-la
friend (male) = dhrog-po
age = lo
country = lung-pa
language = ke
Tibet = Pö
China = Gya-nak
India = Gya-gar
English = in-ji

family = mi-tsang
woman/ girl / daughter = bu-mo
mother = a-ma / a-ma-la
grandmother = mo-mo / mo-la
parents = pha-ma
sister = pin-gya bu-mo
wife = kye-men
friend (female) = dhrog-mo
work = le-ka
name = ming / tsen (hon.)
dialect = ke-lug
Tibetan = pö-pa
Chinese = gya-mi / ge-ri
Nepal = Pe-yul
foreigner = chi-gye
Greetings and politeness

When you meet someone:

**ta-shi de-leg** *(good luck)* (the g of *leg* is almost silent)

**khye-rang ka-bar phe-ge** *(where are you going ?)*

How are you ? = **khye-rang ku-su de-po yin-pe ?**

*(is your body well ?)*

I am well = **la yin, nga sug-po de-po yin**

*(yes, my body is well)*

Note then the term body *(sug-po)* is expressed in the honorific form **ku-su** when it refers to the body of your interlocutor.

To say good bye, when you separate :

**ka-le-shu** *(if you are going away, stay peacefully)*

**ka-le-phe** *(if you stay, go peacefully)*

Note that in these sentences the honorific forms of go *(phe)* and stay *(shu)* are used.

See you later = **je yong**

See you tomorrow = **san-nyi je yong**

Goodnight = **sim-ja nan-go**

Thank you = **thu-je-che**

Excuse me = **gong-da**
It doesn’t matter = ke je-gi-ma-re
Ok, it’s all right = dhri-gi-re / las-so

Making friends

What’s your name ? = khye-rang-gi ming-la ka-re re ?
My name is Pema = nge ming-la Pe-ma re nga Pema yin

How old are you ? = khye-rang lo ka-tsö yin ?
I am 30 = nga lo 30 yin

Where are you from ? = khye-rang lung-pa ka-ne yin ?
I am from Italy = nga Italy ne yin

What is your job ? = khye-rang-gi le-ka ka-re re ?
I am a farmer = nga shing-pa yin
    professor = nga ge-gen yin
    scientist = nga tsen-rig-pa yin
    artist = nga ri-mo-ken yin

What is your religion ? = khye-rang-gi chö-lug ka-re re ?
I am Buddhist = nga nang-pa yin
    Christian = nga ye-shu yin
Where do you live? = khye-rang ka-bar de-gi-yö?
I live in Lhasa = nga Lha-sa la de-gi-yö
When did you arrive in Tibet? =
  khye-rang Pö la ka-dü yong-pa-yin?
Two days ago = nyi-ma nyi chin-song
How long will you stay in Tibet? =
  khye-rang Pö la gyün-ring-lö de-ge?
I will stay 3 months = nga Pö la da-wa sum de-gi-yin
Please, come in = phe rog-nang / ya phe
Please, sit down = shu-rog-nang
Please, have a tea = cha she-ro-nang or cha thung (informal)
What do you want? = ka-re go?

Language problems
Do you speak English? = in-ji-ke shing-gi-yö-pe?
I speak a little Tibetan = nga Pö-ke de-tsi shing-gi-yö
Do you understand? = ha-ko song-nge?
I understand = ha-ko song
I don’t understand = **ha-ko-ma-song**

Please, speak slowly = **ka-le la sung-rog-nang**

Please, repeat = **yang-kyer  sung-rog-nang**

How do you call this ? = **di la ka-re sa ?**

What is the name of this ? = **di ming-la ka-re re ?**

Please, say it in Tibetan = **pö-ke la sung-rog-nang**

To attract the attention of someone, you must call the person using a different term depending on his/her age and gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>boy</strong></td>
<td>bu</td>
<td>bu-mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your age</td>
<td>cho-la</td>
<td>a-gia-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>older than you</td>
<td>pa-la</td>
<td>a-ma-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>very old</strong></td>
<td>po-la</td>
<td>mo-la</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In town and outskirts

Buildings, roads etc

town = dhrong-kye
road = lam-ka
restaurant = sa-khang
shop = tsong-khang
bank = ngü-khang
palace = pho-dhrang
office = le-kung
hospital = men-khang
house = khang-pa
door = go
stairs = ken-za
at home = nang la
village = dhrong-sep
market = throm
hotel = dhru-khang / dhrön-khang
bar = chang-khang
post office = dhra-khang
museum = dhrem-tön khang
school = lap-dhra
prison = tsön-khang
roof = tho-kha
window = gi-kung
wall = tsik-pa / kyan

Transportations

car = mo-tha
bus = lam-kor
taxi = te-ksi
motorcycle = pa-pa
plane = nam-dhru
boat = dhru
by car = mo-tha la
bicycle = kang-ga-ri
bus station = lam-kor kak-sa
driver = mo-tha tong-kyen
tractor = to-la-chi
airport = nam-dru thang
train = ri-li
by walking = kom-pa-gyab-ne
Directions
place = sa-cha
distance = tha
direction = chok
straight = shar-gye / kha-thu
right = ye
on the right = ye pa / ye cho-la
left = yön
on the left = yön pa / yön cho-la
up = ya
down = ma
here = de
there = pha-ge
from here = di ne
from...to... = ... ne ...par-tu
inside = nang-la
outside = chi-log-la
behind = gyab-la
in front of = tsa la / dön-la
close to= (gi) thri-la
far = tha ring-po
between = par-la
among = nang-ne
around = gi ta-kor la
upstairs = tho-ka
north = chang
south = lho
east = shar
west = nub
map = sap-thra
toward south = lho chok la

Photos, phone, postcards...
photograph = par
camera = par-che
ticket = pa-si
passport = lang-kyer
letter = yi-gi
postcard = dhrag-shog
address = kha-jang
envelope = yi-go
pen = nyu-gu
pencil = sha-nyu
paper = shu-gu
telephone = ka-bar
Walking in the town

Where is the monastery? = gom-pa ka-bar yo-re?
Is it far? = tha ring-po yo-re-pe?
How far is the market? =

di-ne throm la tha ring-lö yo-re?
It is not too far = tha ring-po shi-trha yo-ma-re
Go north = chang-chok la gyu
Walking it takes two hours =

kom-ba gyab-na chu-tsö nyi go-gi-re
Where can I hire a bicycle? =

kang-ga-ri yar-sa ka-bar yo-re?
Do you hire bicycles? = kang-ga-ri yar-ye yö-pe?
How much does it cost for one day? =

nyi-ma chik la, kong ka-tsö re?
How much does it cost per hour? =

chu-tsö re-re la, ka-tsö re?
Travelling

Is this the bus to Lhasa? =

Lha-sa la dro-ken lam-kor di re-pe? 

What time will we leave? =

ngan-tso chu-tsö ka-tsö la dhro-ya re? 

How long does the trip takes? = gyün ring-lö dhro-ya yo-re? 

How far is Lhasa? = Lha-sa tha ring-lö yo-re? 

From Lhasa to Sera how long does it take? =

Lha-sa ne Se-ra par-tu, chu-tsö ka-tsö go-gi-re? 

The car is going too fast = mo-tha gyo-tak gi-du 

I am afraid = nga shi-gi-du 

Pease, go slowly = ka-le ka-le dhro-rog-nang 

Stop please = ka-rog-nang 

Wait a moment = gu-nang
Visiting a monastery

In the monastery and around

monastery = gom-pa

neighbouring monastery = a-ni gom-pa

temple = lha-khang

assembly hall = tsog-khang

altar = chö-shun

statue = ku

stupa = chö-ten

lama’s throne = la-ma shug-ti

circumambulation = ko-ra

prayer mast = dar-chen

cave = dhra-pu

rock painting = do la ri-mo

Religious objects

painting = thang-ka

mandala = kil-khor

white scarf = kha-ta

prayer flag = dar-chog

incense = pö

butter lamp = cho-me

vajra = dor-je

bell = dhri-bu

drum = nga

trumpet = gya-ling / dung-chen

cymbal = bug-che

religious book = pe-cha

rosary = thran-ga

prayer wheel = ma-ni kor-lo

mani-stone = do-ko ma-ni

sacred food = tsog

Rites and prayers

ceremony = se-ra-kom-ba

festival = dü-chen

prayer = mu-lam

to pray = mu-lam gyap

to prostrate = cha-tse

to circumambulate = ko-ra gyab

mantra = ma-ni / ngak

to say mantra = ma-ni dang

to meditate = gom gyab

divination = mo gyap

religious dance = cham

debate = tsö-pa
People and deities

monk = ku-sho/ dhra-pa
abbot = khen-po
hermit = gom-chen
god = lha
Buddha = Sang-gye
Maitreya = Cham-pa
Yamantaka = Dor-ge Jig-je
protective deity = yi-dam

nun = a-ni
teacher = rim-po-che
pilgrim = ne-kor-ken
goddess = lha-mo
Avalokiteshvara = Chen-re-zi
Tara = Dhrol-ma
Dalai Lama = Ye-shin Nor-bu
bodhisattva = jang-chu sem-pa

Religion

religion = chö
buddhism = nang-pe chö
christian = ye-shu
jewish = ju-is
muslim = kha-che
life = tse
karma = le
sect = chö-lug
buddhist = nang-pa
catholic = ye-shu ke-to-ly
atheist = chö khe-mi-len-ken
mosque = kha-che lha-kang
death= chi-ua
reincarnation = kye-wa nga-chi

Useful sentences

When does Jokang open / close ? =

Jo-kang go ka-dü che-gi-re /gyap-gi-re ?

At what time do you open / close ? =

chü-tso ka-tsö la go che-gi-re / gyap-gi-re ?
May I come in? = nga nang-la yong-na dhri-gi-re-pe?
May I go there? = nga pa-ge dhro cho-gi-re-pe?
May I go upstairs? = nga tho-ka la dhro cho-gi-re-pe?
May I look at those statues? = nga ku pan-tso la ta-na dhri-gi-re-pe?
May I take a picture? = par gyap cho-gi-re-pe?
You can = cho-gi-re  You cannot = cho-gi-ma-re
You have to pay = ngü te-go-re
You have not to pay = ngü te-go-ma-re
Of whom is that statue? = ku pa-gi su re?
What is the meaning of this painting? = ri-mo di gi tön-ta ka-re re?
Where are the rock paintings? = do la ri-mo ka-bar yo re?
How many monks are here? = ku-sho ka-tsö yo-re?
When there will be a ceremony? = se-ra kom-ba go ka-dü che-gi-re-pe?
Many buildings have been destroyed = khang-pa mang-po me-ba sö yo-re
At the Barkor market

price = kong                                    money = ngü
coin/yuan = gor-mo                            thing = cha-lag
bracelet = dro-tung                           necklace = kye-gyen
pearl = trang-dok                            precious stone = tha
gold = ser                                    silver = ngü
coral = che-ru                                turquoise = yu
amber = po-shi                                “eye stone” = zii
ivory = pe-so                                 mother-pearl = mo-ti
skin = pak-pa                                 bone = ru-ko
wool = pee                                    silk = tu-zi
clothes = tung-lo                            Tibetan coat = chu-ba
apron = pan-ge                                foulard = gor-re
knife = thri                                  shell = tung
painting = ri-mo                              book = teb
true = ngo-ma/ ngo-ne                        false = zü-ma

(for religious objects see pag. 50)

Useful sentences

I want to buy a necklace = nga ke-gyen chik nyon-dö-yö

Please show me those necklaces =

    nga-la ke-gyen pan-tso te-rog-nang
Which stones are they? = tha ka-re re?
These stones are authentic? = tha di ngo-ma re-pe?
Which material is it? = di gi gyup-cha ka-re re?
Where can I find some tangka? =

   tang-ka ka-bar ra-gi-re?

This tangka is true or false? =

   tang-ka di ngo-ma re, zü-ma re?

It seems false = zü-ma nang-shin du (it is like false)
How much for this? = di kong ka-tsö re?
How much for all this? = di tsang-ma ka-tsö re?
It’s expensive = kong chen-po re (the price is large)
It’s too expensive = kong che-tak du
Have you something cheaper? = kong chun-nga yö-pe?
Have you something better? = yag-ga yö-pe?
I give you 100 yuan for all this =

   nga cha-lag tsang-ma la gor-mo 100 te-gi-yin

OK = dhri-ghi-re

Like this = di nang-shin
At the restaurant

food/meal = ka-la
breakfast = sho-ghe/sho-cha ka-la
lunch = nyng-ku ka-la
dinner = gong-ta ka-la
table = chog-tse
chair = kup-kya
plate = ta-ba
glass = glas-si
bowl = po-ba / ka-yül
bottle = she-tam
chopsticks = kö-tse
fork = kang-dra
knife = dri
spoon = tu-ma
bill = ngü-tsi

Drinks
water = chu
beer = chang
tea = cha
butter tea = pö-cha
sweet tea = cha ngar-mo
boiled hot water = chu kö-ma
fruit juice = shin-tog ku-ua

Milk and dairy products
milk = o-ma
butter = mahr
cheese = chu-ra
yogurt = sho

Cereals and first courses
bread = pa-le
spaghetti = ghya-du
rice = dre
barley = ne
soup = tang (chinese)
cream cake = ten-shi
Second courses
veal/beef = lang-sha          lamb = lug-sha
yak = yag-sha              pork = phak-sha
chicken = cha-sha          fish = nya-sha
dried meat = sha-kam       egg = gon-nga

Tibetan dishes
Tibetan food = Pö-be ka-la
dumplings = mo-mo
vegetarian dumplings = mo-mo sha me-ba
soup with noodles = tuk-pa
soya noodles = ping
toasted barley flour = tsam-pa

Vegetables and fruit
potatoes = sho-go              onions = tsong
beans = tre-ma                 tomatoes = tomato
fruit = shing-do                apple = ku-shu
pear = li                     orange = tsa-lû-ma

Condiments
salt = tsa            sugar = che-ma ka-ra
oil = num            vinegar = tshu

Cooking styles
boiled = chu-tsö       fried = ngö–pa
roast = me-tag ghyab-pa grilled = chag-top nang-la trag-pa
Useful sentences

Where is a Tibetan (western) restaurant? =

Phö-be (In-ji) sa-kang·ka-ba yo ré?

I am hungry = nga tro-go tö-ghi-du

I am thirsty = nga ka-kom ghi-du

I have to take breakfast = nga sho-ghe ka-la sa-go-yö

I want Tibetan tea = nga la Pö cha go

Please bring me a soup = nga la tang chik te-ro-nang

Have you some mo-mo? = mo-mo yö-pé?

This is good = di shim-po du

cold = di trang-mo du

rotten = di ru-ba du

Please bring me one more = shen-da chik te-ro-nang

Without meat = sha me-ba

This food is too much for me = ka-la di nga la mang-tak du

It’s enough, I am full = dhrik song

How much is it? = ngü ka-tsö ré?

This restaurant is expensive = sa-kang-di kong chen-po du
**Accommodation**

room = nyi-khang / khang-mi
bed = nyi-tri

sheet = nyi-je
pillow = nye-go

bathroom = trü-kang
shower = sug-po tru-sa

toilette = sang-chö
kitchen = tap-tsang

lice = bu
key = di-mi

electricity = lok
lamp = shu-ma

**Useful sentences**

Have you a room ? = **khang-mi yö-pe ?**

Where can I find an empty room ? =

**khang-mi tong-pa ka-bar ra-gi-re ?**

Can I see the room ? = **khang-mi ta cho-gi-re-pe ?**

This room is all right = **khang-mi di dhri-gi-re**

How much for one night ? = **tsen chig la ka-tsö re ?**

It costs 10 yuan per night =

**tsen re re la gor-mo chu te-go-re**

I need hot water = **nga la chu tsa-po go**

When there will be hot water ? =

**chu tsa-po chu-tsö ka-tsö la yong-gi-re ?**
**Trekking**

- earth = sa
- mountain = ri
- rock = drag
- valley = rong
- mountain pass = la
- river = tsang-po
- stream = chu
- water fall = pap-chu
- grassland = tsa-tang
- mud = tak-pa
- forest = shing-nak
- tree = shin-dong
- field = shin-ka
- village = throm-seb
- farmer = shin-pa
- yak dung = cho-ua
- flash light = log-shu

**Animals**

- animal = sem-chen
- dog = kyi
- cow = ba-mo / pa-chu
- yak male = yak
- cat = shi-mi
- sheep = lug
- yak female = dhri
donkey = pung-gu  horse = ta
pig = pak-pa  goat = ra
chicken = cha-ti  cock / hen = ja-po/ja-mo
hare = ri-pong  bird = cha
mountain rodent = a-bra  mouse = tsi-tsi
insect = bu-sin  fish = nya
snake = dhrü

Weather

weather = nam-shi
sun = nyi-ma  air =lung
moon = da-ua  star = kar-ma
rain = char-pa  snow = kang pap
hail = se-ra tang  lightning = lok
wind = lung / lag-pa  fog = mug-pa
cloud = thin-pa  storm = lung-char
rainbow = ja  thunder = dru-ke
cold = thrang-mo  hot = tsa-po

Useful sentences

What’s the weather like ? = nam-shi kan-dre du ?
The weather is good = nam-shi yag-po du
The weather is bad = nam-shi duk-cha du
It’s cold = thrang-mo du  It’s hot = tsa-po du
## Time

time = dü-tsö  
date = tse-ba  
day = nyi-ma  
week = dün-tha  
month = da-ua  
year = lo  
hour / clock = chü-tsö  
minute = kar-ma  
morning = sho-ge  
noon = nying ku  
afternoon = chi-tho  
night, evening = gong-ta / tsen

### Time adverbs

today = te-ring  
now = tan-da  
tomorrow = san-nyi  
day after tomorrow = nang-nyi  
yesterday = ke-sa  
day before yesterday = ke-nyi-ma  
tonight = to-gong  
this morning = ta-rang sho-ge  
often = yang yang  
always = ka-dü yin na / tak-ba  
once = teng-chik  
twice = teng-nyi  
sometimes = kap kap-la / tsam tsam la  
ever = ka-dü-ye (+ verb neg.) / nam-yang  
every time = teng ré ré  
everyday = nyin-tar  
late = chi-po  
early = nga-po  
before = kong-la  
after = je-la / shug-la  
while = ring-la / kab-la  
soon = gyok-po  
during = tü-la / kap la  
immediately = lam-sang  
again = yang-kyer
The days of the week
Monday = sa da-ua                    Friday = sa pa-sang
Tuesday = sa mi-ma                   Saturday = sa pem-ba
Wednesday = sa lak-pa                Sunday = sa nyi-ma
Thursday = sa pu-bu

Seasons
spring = chi-ka                       summer = yar-ka
autumn = tön-ka                       winter = gun-ka

Useful sentences

What time is it? = chü-tso ka-tsö re ?

It’ five o’ clock = chü-tso nga-ba re (add ba to the hour)

5:30 = chü-tso nga tang che-ka re
5:10 = chü-tso nga tang kar-ma chu re
20 to 5 = chü-tso nga sim-ba-la kar-ma nyi-shu du

At what time ......? = ..... chü-tso ka-tsö la re ?

At 9 o’ clock= chü-tso gu-ba la

About at 9 o’ clock= chü-tso gu-ba tsa la

From 4 to 6 o’ clock = chü-tso shi-ba ne truk-ba par-tu

Every hour = chü-tso re-re la
**Health**

doctor = am-ji  
disease = na-tsa  
medicine = men  
pill = ri-pu  
fever = tsa-ua  
cough = lo  
altitude sickness = la-du na  
nausea = kyu-me lang-ua  
headache = go na  
toothache = so na  
cold = cham-ba na  
stomachache = tro-go na  
cut = ma  
pulse = tsa  
hospital = men-khang  
pharmacy = men-tson-khang  
oxygen = sog-zin lung

**Parts of the body**

head = go  
eye = mi  
mouth = ka  
teeth = so  
nose = na-kug  
ear = am-jo  
throat= mik-ba  
tongue = che  
stomach = tro-go  
chest = pang-ko  
heart = nying  
back = gyap  
hand/arm = lak-ba  
finger = zur-gu  
foot/leg = kang-ba  
body = sug-po  
blood = trak  
urine = chin-ba
Useful sentences

Is there a doctor who speaks English? =

in-ji shin-ken am-ji yo-re-pe?

Please, call a doctor = am-ji ke ta-rog-nang

I don’t feel well = nga de-bo min-du

I feel sick = nga na-ghi-du

It hurts here = de na-tsa gya-gi-du

I have a fever = nga la tsa-ua yö

I have a cough = nga lo gyap-gi-du

I have diarrhoea = nga tro-ko she-gi-du

I feel nauseous = nga kyu-me lang-gi-du

I am dizzy = nga go-yu kor-gi-du

Is serious = nyen-ka-chen-po re

Take these pills = ri-pu din-tso sa-nang

Take them twice a day =

nyi-ma chik la teng nyi sa-nang

Take them on a empty stomach = tro-go tong-pa la sa-nang

Take them with food = ka-la nyem-do sa-nang
**Common adjectives**

alone = chik-po  
bad = duk-cha  
beautiful (people) = tse-po (m) / tse-ma (f)  
beautiful (thing) = nyin ge-po  
big = chen-po  
cheap = ke-po  
    / kong chun chun  
clean = tsang-ma  
close, near = thri-la / gyap  
cold = trang-mo  
delicious = shim-po  
different = ka-gak  
difficult = kag-po  
dirty = tsog-pa  
dry = kam-po  
easy = le-la-po  
empty = tong-pa  
expensive = kong chen-po  
false = zü-ma  
far = ta ring-po  

fast = gyok-po  
first = tang-po  
full = keng-po  
good = yak-po  
happy = ki-po  
hot = tsa-po  
hungry = tro-go to  
ill = na  
important = ke-chen-po  
last = ta-ma / chug-la  
long = ring-po  
low = ma-po  
narrow = tok-po  
neart = nye-po  
new = sar-pa  
noisy = ke chen-po  
old (thing) = nyim-pa  
old (people) = gen-go  
open = che / ka-che-ne  
other = shen-ta  
pleasant = ki-bo
quiet = ka ka-de
rich = chuk-po
right = ma-nor-ua / dhrig-pa
ripe = mim-pa
sacred = ke-chen-po
sad = kyo-po
short = tung tung
similar = chik-pa
small = chun chun
slow = ka-lé / te-po
strong = shuk chen-po
sure = ten-den
sweet = ngar-mo
tall = tho-po
tired = thang che
tire = ngu-ne / ngo-ma
ugly = do nyi-bo
wet = löm-pa
wide = sheng-ga chen-po
young = shön shön/shön-pa

Colours

colour = tsö-shi

black = nak-po
blue = ngom-po
green = gyang-gu
orange = ma-se / li-uang
red = mar-po
white = ka-po
yellow = se-po
Common verbs

Roots of verbs

arrive = yong
ask = tri / lap
ask a question = ke-cha tri
barter = je
be afraid = je
be born = kyi
be hungry =thro-go-tö
better = yag
be thirsty = ka-kom
boil = kho / chu-tsö
bring = kye
broke = chak
build = so / sö (p)
buy = nyo / nyö (p)
call = ke tang
change = je
change money = ngü sil-ma
choose = dem
circumambulate = ko-ra gyap
climb = za
close = gyap / go gyap
come = yong / lep (p) / sho
cook = ka-la so-ua
count = tsi gyag
drink = tung
do, make = che / sö
drive = mo-ta tang
die = drong / chu / shi
eat = sa/se(p)/she(h)
enter = zuh
fall (thing) = sa
fall (people) = ri
fall ill = na
feel cold = kyag
find = nye
finish = tsar
forget = je
give = te / trö / pül (h)
go= dhro/chin (p)

/phe(h)
go down = pap / mah pap
go out = thön
go up = za
grow = kye
hear = ko / tö
help = rog-pa che
hire = yar / la
kiss = ka-kyel
know = she / shing
know (people) = ngo shing
learn= jang
like = ga
listen = nyen
live = te / sön
look = ta
loose = lah
meditate = gom gyap
meet = tuk
move = tang
need = go
obtain = ra
offer = chö / pül(h)
open = go che
paint = tsön-tang / la-dri
pay = ngü te
phone = ka-bar tang
photograph = par gyap
pour = lu
pray = mu-lam ghap / ghap su-chi
prostrate = cha-tse
put = sha
rain = char-pa tang
read = log
remember = dren
ride = ta shön
say = lap / sung (h)
see = tong
sell = tsong
send = tang / kur
show = te
sleep = nyi-ku
stay / sit = de / shu (h)
steal = ku
stop = kah
study= lop-jung che
take = len
take (food etc) = she (h)
talk = she / ke-cha she

think = sem

travel = ta-kor che

understand = ha-ko

wait = gu

walk = kom-ba gyap

wash = tru

work = le-ga che

write = dri

(p) = past

(h) = honorific
# Tibetan alphabet

## Tibetan Consonants

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## Tibetan Vowel Modifiers

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*by Sonam Tenzing*
Acknowledgments

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