



INTRODUCTION TO THE TONGAN LANGUAGE

GREETINGS FROM TONGA!!

Mālō e lelei and welcome to Peace Corps Tonga. Even though your stay will begin with about four to six weeks of Intensive Language Training, this CD may be useful since it provides an introduction that will give you the basics of the Tongan Language in order to help you get acquainted with your host country, Tonga. This CD includes the audio lessons, 2 through 9 as well as the Tongan National Anthem and other Tongan songs.

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**Please refer to this packet when listening to the CD. It will give you a visual guide to the language lessons as you listen to the pronunciation and sounds in Tongan.

** Please note that Lesson 1, 10 and 11 are not recorded in the audio CD.

Lesson 1

Introduction

Welcome to the Peace Corps Tonga language basic-lessons!

Tongan is the first language of Tongans and, along with English, is one of the two national languages of Tonga. The following “Basic Tongan” lessons will help you get a head start in learning the language and using colloquial phrases that will help you survive during your home stay experience and in your first weeks in Tonga. It is suggested that you take the time to listen to the lessons at least once every day in preparation for your time in Tonga.

The Tongan language is exclusively phonetic, that is to say, Tongan words are spelled the way they are pronounced and pronounced the way they are spelled. In the first lesson, there is a pronunciation of each letter in the Tongan alphabet, including the mysterious **fakau’a**, or the glottal stop. There are only two Tongan consonants which are likely to be found difficult at first by a person who speaks only English, and they are “**ng**” (for the sound of *ng* as in *sing*) and the “**glottal stop**”.

It is important to master the glottal stop, or the **fakau’a**, because it is not only changes the sound of the vowels; it also changes the meaning of the words. For example “**a**” and “**‘a**” thus produce different sounds and in words (**anga** - *behavior/attitude*) and (**‘anga** - *shark*).

The glottal stop, or the **fakau’a**, can either be placed in front of a vowel or between two vowels. When this is done at the beginning of a word, it has the effect of lightening the pronunciation. **e.g.** **‘alu**. When it places between two vowels inside a word, it produces an abrupt sound, as if you have suddenly put on the brakes. **e.g.** **fa’a**.

There are only 5 Tongan vowels, but there are 4 different ways of pronouncing and writing each of them; the first way is the stand-alone vowel, the second is the vowel with the **fakau’a**, the third is the vowel with the **toloi** and the last one is the vowel with the **fakau’a** and **toloi**. (Refer to Lesson 3 for the pronunciation of the 20 vowel sounds).

The “**toloi**”, a bar across the top of the vowel *e.g.* **ā**, indicates that the vowel is a “long vowel”. The long vowel is pronounced as though the speaker is holding the sound for twice the time or length as the normal length. **Toloi** is similar to “**fakau’a**” in changing the meaning of words. **For examples:** **kākā** - *to cheat*, **kaka** - *to climb*

In some words, a vowel may have both a “**fakau’a**” and “**toloi**” **e.g.** **la’ā** - (*sun or sunny*) if the **toloi** was not there then the word would be pronounced as “**la’a**” and does not mean anything. Therefore, it is very important to take notice of these two signs; “**fakau’a**” and “**toloi**”.

In Tongan, two consonants cannot come together without a vowel between them. The sound represented by **ng** is not two consonants, but one; it is a simple sound, not a compound one. However, two, three, four or even more than four vowels may come together without the intervention of a consonant, **e.g.** **‘oiāuē**. Lastly, no word in Tongan can end with a consonant.

A quick note about word stress: normally, stress falls on the penultimate syllable. Some examples would be:

kai - <i>to eat</i>	lautohi - <i>reading</i>
fimoheā - <i>to be sleepy</i>	kaukautāhi - <i>swimming</i>

However there are two cases in which stress changes. The first of these exceptions occurs when the vowel is “long”, which is denoted by the presence of a **toloi**, *e.g.* **kumā** - *rat*; the stress falls on the “**ā**”. The second exception occurs when the word is preceded by the definite article “**e**” or “**he**”, the stress then falls on the last vowel; *e.g.* **‘i he fale** - *in the house*, or **ko e fefine** - *the woman*.

Listen carefully to the Tongan Speaker the first time, then try to repeat the sounds with the speaker the second time. Once you learn each letter sound, and remember the basics about **fakau'a**, **toloi**, and word stress, you will be able to decode and pronounce any Tongan word!

The lessons do not have to be studied in any particular order, but the beginning lessons do build upon one another. Grammar is NOT addressed in these lessons; you will learn Tongan grammar during language classes in Pre-Service Training once you are in Tonga.

We hope that you will enjoy these Tongan language mini-lessons and wish you luck in your language learning!

Lesson 2

Tongan Alphabet: 'Alafapeta faka-Tonga

Listen carefully to the Tongan speaker the first time, then try to repeat the sounds with the speaker the second time.

Tongan Alphabet	Approximate English sound equivalent	How to say the letter name.
Aa	as in f ather	a
Ee	as in h en	e
Ff	as in f at	f(a)
Hh	as in h at	h(a)
Ii	as in mach i ne	i
Kk	nearly as in k ettle, but somewhat suggestive, at times, of g as in <i>get</i> .	k(a)
Ll	similar to l in live ; the inter-medial l is usually pronounced with a flip (flap) of the tongue.	l(a)
Mm	as in m en	m(a)
Nn	as in n ote	n(a)
NGng	as in si nger (not finger)	ng(a)
Oo	as in bo rn (pronounced a little further back in the throat)	o
Pp	as in p ad (only aspirated; somewhere between p in pad and b in bad)	p(a)
Ss	as in s it	s(a)
Tt	as in t end (only aspirated; there is a faint suggestion of the d in initial positions)	t(a)
Uu	as in ro ot (only shorter and without offglide)	u
Vv	as in v ery	v(a)
'	fakau'a	fakau'a

Lesson 3

Pronunciation: Pu'aki lea

Vowels: The Tongan vowels are written and pronounced as follows. Listen carefully to the Tongan speaker the first time, then try to repeat the sounds of the speaker the second time.

Stand alone vowels	Approximate English Sound equivalent
a	as in f ather - (only shorter)
e	as in b et (or somewhere between bet and bait)
i	as in m ach i ne
o	as in b orn - (pronounced a little further back in the throat)
u	as in r oot - (only shorter and without offglide)

Vowels with fakau'a	Approximate English Sound equivalent
'a	as in a h ha
'e	as in e lephant
'i	as in i nn
'o	as in o range
'u	as in oo h la la

Vowels with toloi	Approximate English Sound equivalent
ā	is equal to a in ca lm
ē	nearly equal to a in va ry or ai in fa iry
ī	very nearly to i in ma chine or ee in se e
ō	nearly to o in sto ry or aw in sa w
ū	very nearly to u in flu te or oo in soo n

Vowels with toloi and fakau'a	Approximate English Sound equivalent
'ā	as in " A men" (Ah-men)
'ē	as in " e gg"
'ī	as in " e asy"
'ō	as in " o h no"
'ū	as in " sou p"

Consonants: The Tongan Consonants with short and long vowels are written and pronounced as follows. Listen carefully to the Tongan speaker the first time, then try to repeat the sounds with the speakers the second time.

Consonants	Short vowels (a, e, i, o, u)	Long vowels (ā, ē, ī, ō, ū)
f	fa, fe, fi, fo, fu	fā, fē, fī, fō, fū
h	ha, he, hi, ho, hu	hā, hē, hī, hō, hū
k	ka, ke, ki, ko, ku	kā, kē, kī, kō, kū
l	la, le, li, lo, lu	lā, lē, lī, lō, lū
m	ma, me, mi, mo, mu	mā, mē, mī, mō, mū
n	na, ne, ni, no, nu	nā, nē, nī, nō, nū
ng	nga, nge, ngi, ngo, ngu	ngā, ngē, ngī, ngō, ngū
p	pa, pe, pi, po, pu	pā, pē, pī, pō, pū
s	sa, se, si, so, su	sā, sē, sī, sō, sū
t	ta, te, ti, to, tu	tā, tē, tī, tō, tū
v	va, ve, vi, vo, vu	vā, vē, vī, vō, vū

The following list of words is solely for practice in spelling and pronunciation. The speaker will spell and pronounce each word twice. Listen carefully to the speakers the first time, then try to repeat the spelling and pronunciation the second time.

How to Spell the words	How to Write and Pronounce the words
<u>l</u> a-e-l <u>a</u> -e-i	lelei
f <u>a</u> -i-e-l <u>a</u> -e-l <u>a</u> -e-i	fielelei
h <u>a</u> -i-ng <u>a</u> -o-a	hingoa
fakau'a-a-l <u>a</u> -u	'alu
m <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i a-l <u>a</u> -o-h <u>a</u> -i	mālohi
m <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i a-l <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i o-l <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i o	mālōlō
o-ng <u>a</u> -o-o-ng <u>a</u> -o	ongoongo
ng <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i a-u-e	ngāue
f <u>a</u> -a-i-ng <u>a</u> -a-t <u>a</u> -a-fakau'a a-fakau'a i-a	faingata'a'ia
k <u>a</u> -a-k <u>a</u> -a	kaka
k <u>a</u> -a-k <u>a</u> -tol <u>o</u> i a	kakā

Lesson 4

Greetings = Ngaahi Lea fakafe'iloaki

In the following audio file you will hear a word or phrase in English one time, then twice in Tongan.

Listen carefully to the Tongan the first time, then try to repeat the word or phrase with the speaker the second time.

English	Tongan
<i>Hi. (Informal)</i>	Mālō e lelei.
<i>Hello (Formal)</i>	Mālō 'etau lava.
<i>How are you?</i>	Fēfē hake? (<i>Idiomatic</i>)
<i>Fine, thank you.</i>	Sai pē, mālō.
<i>How about you?</i>	Fēfē koe?
<i>Very Good.</i>	Sai 'aupito.
<i>Are you ok?</i>	Sai pē?

Farewells: Ngaahi lea fakamāvae

English	Tongan
Good-bye - (<i>said to someone who is going, when you are staying, informal</i>)	'Alu ā.
Good-bye - (<i>said to someone who is staying, when you are going, informal</i>)	Nofo ā.
See you later. (<i>informal</i>)	Toki sio.
Bye Rose - (<i>good bye to a person using his/her name</i>).	Lose ē.
Good bye - (<i>said to someone who is going, when you are staying, very formal</i>)	Faka'au ā
<i>Yes, is the common response to all the farewells above.</i>	'Io! but pronounced it like this "loooooo"

Lesson 5

Useful phrases: Ngaahi kupu'i lea mahu'inga

In the following audio file you will hear a word or phrase in English one time, then twice in Tongan.

Listen carefully to the Tongan the first time, then try to repeat the word or phrase with the speaker the second time.

English	Tongan
Yes	'lo
No	'ikai
Thank you	mālō
Thank you very much	mālō 'aupito
No, thank you	'ikai, mālō pē
Excuse me (said when passing in front of someone)	tulou
Please	kātaki
Sorry	fakamolemole
Please, help me	kātaki, tokoni mai
What is the Tongan word for _____?	Ko e hā e lea faka-Tonga ki he _____?
I am here. (An appropriate response when someone calls your name)	Ko au.
What's that?	Ko e hā ē?
Sorry, what is it? (say it again)	Fakamolemole, ko e hā koā?
Where is the toilet?	Ko fē e falemālōlō?
I have a question.	'Oku 'i ai ki'i fehu'i.
I am tired.	'Oku ou hela'ia.
I am Taua. (name).	Ko Taua au.
Sorry, I don't understand.	Fakamolemole, 'ikai mahino.
Let's begin.	Tau kamata.
Time to rest.	Taimi mālōlō
Let's pray.	Tau lotu.
Do you know how to speak English?	Ke poto he lea faka-pālangi?
I speak a little Tongan.	'Oku ou lea faka-Tonga si'isi'i pē.

Useful Expressions:

English	Tongan
<i>An expression of grief, excitement or concern</i>	'Oiauē!
<i>Stop it!</i>	Tuku ia!
<i>Don't.</i>	'Oua
<i>It's ok/ Never minds.</i>	Sai pē ia.
<i>Just joking</i>	Fakakata pē
<i>Just wondering around</i>	'Eva pē.
<i>Of course.</i>	Ka ko toe hā.
<i>Oh, how sad!/pitiful</i>	Faka'ofa.
<i>Man!!</i>	Masi'i!
<i>Really?</i>	Mo'oni?

Lesson 6

Numbers: Ngaahi mata'i fika

In this lesson file you will hear a number in English one time, then twice in Tongan. Listen carefully to the Tongan the first time, then try to repeat the word with the speaker the second time

Numbers	English	Tongan
0	zero	noa
1	one	taha
2	two	ua
3	three	tolu
4	four	fā
5	five	nima
6	six	ono
7	seven	fitu
8	eight	valu
9	nine	hiva
10	ten	hongofulu
20	twenty	uanoa
30	thirty	tolunoa
40	forty	fānoa
50	fifty	nimanoa
60	sixty	ononoa
70	seventy	fitunoa
80	eighty	valunoa
90	ninety	hivanoa
100	hundred	teau

*Note:

- ❖ Eleven is “**taha taha**” which is the same as saying “one one”, twelve is “**taha ua**” which is the same as “one two”. Numbers larger than 10 are formed in this fashion, using numbers 0 through 9.
- ❖ **With few exceptions:** 22 - uoua, 55 - nimenima, 99 - hivehiva

The following lists of words are associated with Money. (**Pa'anga**)

English	Tongan
dollar	pa'anga
cent	sēniti
How much is it?	'Oku fiha?
Eight dollars	Pa'anga 'e valu
Ten cents	Sēniti 'e hongofulu
Two dollars and ten cents	Pa'anga 'e ua sēniti 'e hongofulu

Lesson 7

Days of the week: Ngaahi 'aho 'o e uike

In this lesson you will hear a word or phrase in English one time, then twice in Tongan.

Listen carefully to the Tongan the first time, then try to repeat the word or phrase with the speaker the second time

English	Tongan
Monday	Mōnite
Tuesday	Tūsite
Wednesday	Pulelulu
Thursday	Tu'apulelulu
Friday	Falaite
Saturday	Tokonaki
Sunday	Sāpate

Asking for the day = 'Eke e 'aho

English	Tongan
What day is it?	Ko e 'aho hā eni?
It is _____ (name of the day)	'Aho _____ (name of the day)

Months of the year: Ngaahi māhina 'o e ta'u

English	Tongan
January	Sanuali
February	Fepueli
March	Ma'asi
April	'Epeleli
May	Mē
June	Sune
July	Siulai
August	'Aokosi
September	Sepitema
October	'Okatopa
November	Nōvema
December	Tisema

Asking for the date = 'Eke e 'aho.

Question: What is the date? Ko e 'aho fiha eni?

Response:

American: July 4th, 2008 Siulai 'aho 4, 2008. (uaafe mā valu)

Tongan: 4th July, 2008 'Aho 4 'o Siulai, 2008 (uaafe mā valu)

Lesson 8

WORDSEARCH = Kumi Lea

In the following lesson you will hear a word twice in Tongan. Listen carefully to the first time, then try to repeat the word with the speaker the second time then write it down. After, search for the word in the puzzle below. Check your answers in lesson 11.

Spelling

i s a r ō f h i n g o a t v k
g e h p u a n g ā u e p ē s ā
l o l v p k u h i u n p p v k
k t t e e a e a i l l a i y ā
h i f f l ` k i t ō k g l j a
r p o a e a l p l k e j e s p
i u f k p u s ō e q t r z y x
z a a a i ā l v s o t e q ` y
q ` i ` n ā w a i a d o t e t
k d x o m z k f t e a r n p p
x w x f b a y k k g j q s e q
t u p a k a m o r c w v u l i
a q i f e v o b k a k ā v e k
` j z a a o g n o o g n o l p
u s l s y b i t c u p r i i j

Lesson 9

Dialogues: Ngaahi fepōtalanoa'aki

In this lesson you will hear each dialogue in English twice in Tongan. Listen carefully to the Tongan the first time (Then try to repeat the phrase with the speaker the second time). The speakers will first say the dialogue slowly, then said the dialogue the second time as it would be normally be said in Tonga.

Dialogue 1: To ask for direction

Trainee:	Mālō e lelei.	<i>Hello.</i>
Trainer:	'Io, sai pē?	<i>Yes, are you ok?</i>
Trainee:	'Io, kātaki ko fē falemālōlō?	<i>Yes, please where is the toilet?</i>
Trainer:	Ko ē. (pointing to the toilet)	<i>Over there.</i>
Trainee:	Mālō 'aupito.	<i>Thank you very much.</i>
Trainer:	'Io.	<i>You welcome.</i>

Dialogue 2: To ask for help.

Trainee:	Mālō e lelei.	<i>Hello.</i>
Trainer:	Mālō e lelei.	<i>Hello.</i>
Trainee:	'Oku 'i ai ki'i fehu'i.	<i>I have a question.</i>
Trainer:	'Io?	<i>Yes?</i>
Trainee:	Ko e hā e lea faka-Tonga ki he "pig"?	<i>What is the Tongan word for pig?</i>
Trainer:	Puaka.	<i>Pig..</i>
Trainee:	Mālō 'aupito	<i>Thank you very much.</i>
Trainer:	Toki sio.	<i>See you later.</i>

Dialogue 3: To joke with someone

Taua:	Lose! Lose!	<i>Lose! Lose!</i>
Lose:	Ko au.	<i>Here I am.</i>
Taua:	Kātaki, tokoni mai.	<i>Please, help me.</i>
Lose:	Fakamolemole, 'oku ou hela'ia.	<i>Sorry, I am tired.</i>
Taua:	Mo'oni? Sai pē ia.	<i>Really? Never mind.</i>
Lose:	Masi'i, fakakata pē.	<i>Man! Just joking.</i>
Taua:	'Oiauē!	<i>'Oiauē!</i>

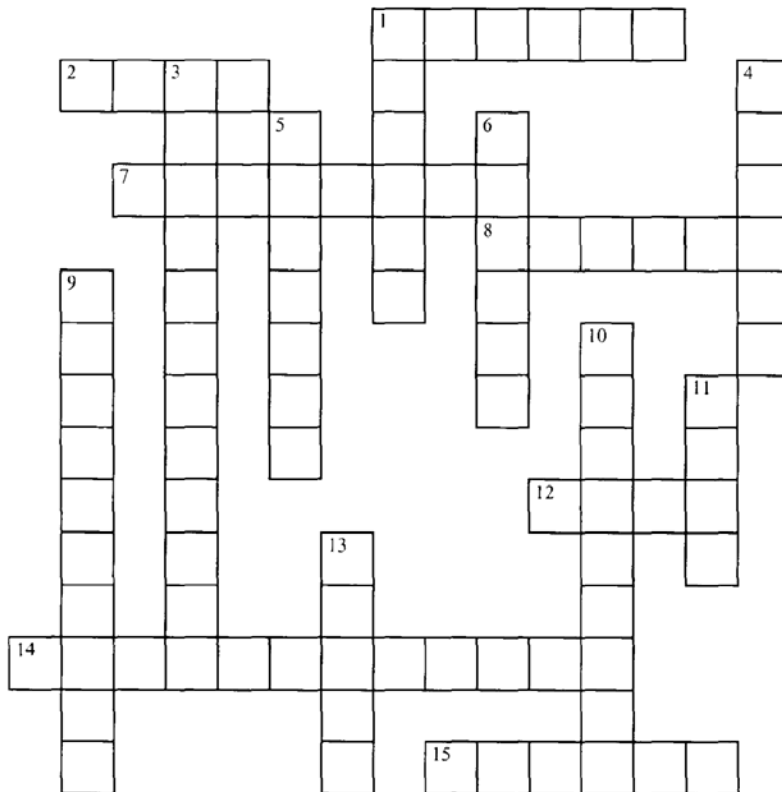
Dialogue 4: To begin a Session/Meeting

Trainer:	Mālō e lelei.	<i>Hello.</i>
Trainee:	Mālō 'etau lava.	<i>Hello.</i>
Trainer:	Fēfē hake?	<i>How are you?</i>
Trainee:	Sai 'aupito. Fēfē koe?	<i>Very good, and you?</i>
Trainer:	Sai pē. Tau kamata.	<i>Ok. Let's start.</i>
Trainee:	'Io.	<i>Yes.</i>
Trainer:	Sai, tau lotu. 'Eiki.....'emeni.	<i>Ok, let's pray Lord.....Amen.</i>
Trainee:	'Emeni.	<i>Amen.</i>

Lesson 10

Crossword Puzzle

Useful Tongan Phrases and Expressions



Across (Tafa'aki)

1. Man
2. Thank you.
7. Oh, how sad/pitiful
8. Stop it
12. I am here/Here I am
14. Sorry
15. Oh my

Down (Lalo)

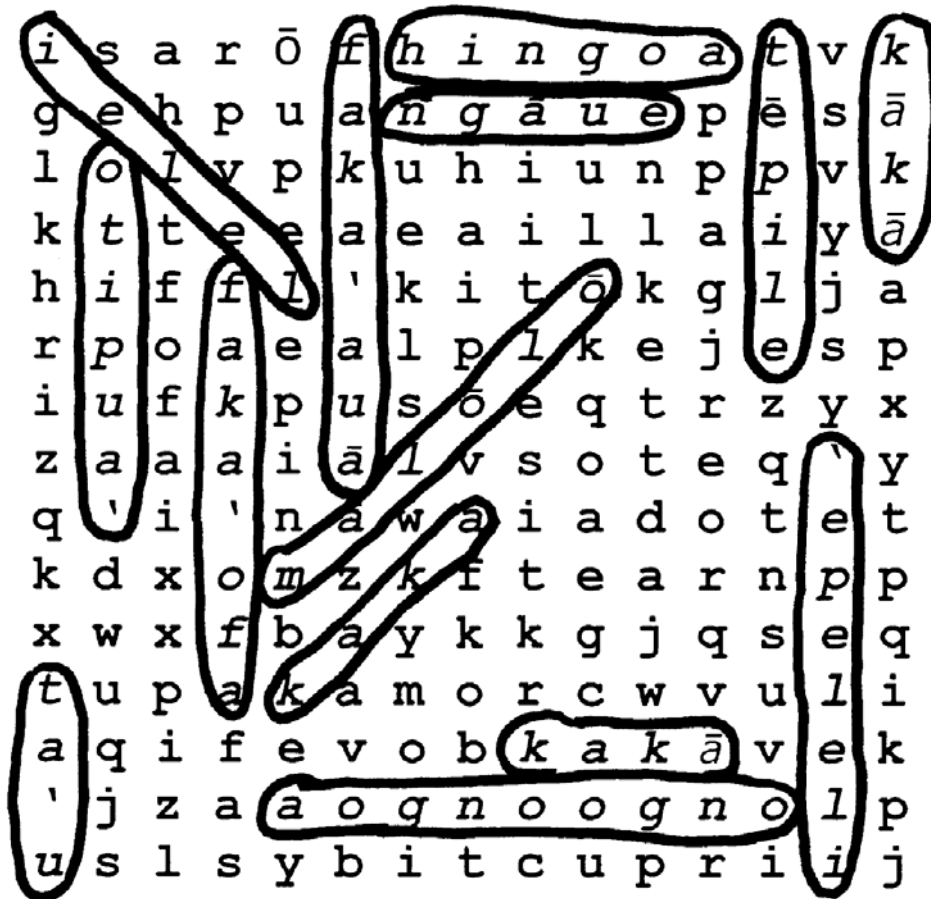
1. No thank you
3. Tongan Language
4. Just wondering around
5. It's ok
6. Please
9. Just joking
10. Of course!
11. Don't
13. Excuse me.

Note: *Fakau'a* (') or the glottal stop counts as a letter in the Tongan alphabet.

Lesson 11

The answers to the Wordsearch.

Spelling



Words: [Ngaahi fo'i lea](#)

1. 'aupito
2. 'epeleli
3. kaka
4. lelei
5. kakā
6. kākā
7. ta'u
8. ngāue
9. faka'ofa
10. mālōlō
11. tēpile
12. hingoa
13. faka'au ā
14. ongoingoa

Tonga National Anthem = Fasi Fakafonua 'o Tonga

This Anthem beseeches God, whom we (Tongans) acknowledge as our Lord and whom we trust and know that he loves us. We ask him to look on Tonga with love and to grant our wishes and protect Tupou the King.

<i>Oh almighty God above</i>	'E 'Otua mafimafi
<i>Thou art our Lord and sure defense</i>	Ko homau 'Eiki koe
<i>In our goodness we do trust Thee</i>	Ko koe ko e falala'anga
<i>And our Tonga thou dost love.</i>	Mo e 'ofa ki Tonga
<i>Hear our prayer for though unseen</i>	'Afio hifo 'emau lotu
<i>We know that thou hast blessed our land</i>	'A ia 'oku mau fai' ni
<i>Grant our earnest supplication</i>	Mo ke tali homau loto
<i>Guard and save Tupou our King.</i>	'O malu'i 'a Tupou

That is the end of our Introduction to the Tongan Language, we hope that the CD will be beneficial to you. We also hope that you will enjoy the following music and the little entertainment! Before closing down, we would like to wish you all the best in your preparation for Tonga and we are ALL looking forward to seeing you all. 'Ofa atu.

Mālō 'aupito

Lose Lavakei'aho

Language and Cross Culture Coordinator, US Peace Corps Tonga
P.O. Box 147, Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, South Pacific
E-mail: llavakeiaho@to.peacecorps.gov
Office Tel: (676)-25-466 ext. 122, mobile: (676) 874-1592
Fax: (676) 25-467