

Katabbu Kadooli ka Kuhabura Bantu Kuhandiika Lugungu



A Brief Lugungu Spelling Guide

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The Lugungu Alphabet

The Lugungu alphabet consists of 27 letters and 10 letter groups:

Consonants: **b** **ɓ** **bb** **c** **d** **f** **g** **h** **j** **k** **l** **m**
 n **ng** **ny** **p** **r** **s** **t** **v** **w** **y** **z**

Vowels: **a** **e** **i** **ɪ** **o** **u** **u** **aa** **ee** **ii** **ii** **oo** **uu** **uu**

Lugungu uses 24 out of the 26 letters of the English alphabet and makes up six extra sounds by using the special symbols: **ɪ** and **u**, for the two ‘hard’ vowels, and **ɓ** for the very soft consonant b, and by using the letter groups **bb**, **ny**, and **ng** for the remaining three consonants.

Consonants

b	bɪcoolɪ maize	n	nanaasi pineapple
ɓ	ɓumaalu mushroom	ng	nghinghinira louse egg
bb	bbegeri leopard	ny	nyumba house
c	cupa bottle	p	pikipiki motorcycle
d	dirisa window	r	rangi colour
f	firimbi whistle	s	sente money
g	gule baboon	t	taara lantern
h	haaha grandfather	v	vakedo avocado
j	joojolo afternoon	w	wempe razor blade
k	kabindi roof	y	yogwo that one
l	lusonko shell	z	ziiza grandmother
m	meeza table		

Vowels

a	ntali lion	aa	ntaama sheep
e	mpeta buffalo	ee	meeza table
i	mpiri snake	ii	mupiira ball
<u>i</u>	<u>nsimo</u> hoe	<u>ii</u>	<u>kijiiko</u> spoon
o	nsone knife	o	kikoora leaf
u	mpunu pig	u	kihuulu mortar
<u>u</u>	<u>ngugu</u> hippopotamus	<u>uu</u>	<u>suruuru</u> pickaxe

Hard and Soft Vowels

In Lugungu, underlined vowels i and u are called *hard* vowels, while the rest of the vowels are called *soft* vowels. Hard and soft vowels have meaning differences:

kubinya to break something	<u>k</u> <u>u</u> <u>b</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>y</u> <u>a</u> to dance
kuluma to bite	<u>k</u> <u>u</u> <u>l</u> <u>u</u> <u>m</u> <u>a</u> to abuse
kiniga something that strangles	<u>k</u> <u>i</u> <u>n</u> <u>i</u> <u>g</u> <u>a</u> anger
kusunga to watch	<u>k</u> <u>u</u> <u>s</u> <u>u</u> <u>n</u> <u>g</u> <u>a</u> to sew

Rules for writing hard vowels

1. Hard vowels shall be written everywhere they occur.
2. If one vowel in a word is hard, then all the other letter i's and all the other letter u's in that same word will also be hard.

Two Exceptions to the above rules:

- a) The words **ku**, **mu**, or **bu** should be written with soft u's, even though they may at times sound hard:

ku zigati at the courtyard

mu nyumba in the house

bu Simooni at Simon's

- b) When **mu** is attached to the end of words, it should be written with a soft **u**, even if the rest of the word contains hard vowels:

kweziramu to repent

yaabeiririmu he answered them

Long and short vowels

Vowels in Lugungu may be written short with one letter or long with two letters:

haaha grandfather

haha here

museeri sick person

museri night dancer

kuhoora to revenge

kuhora to lend

kuhuuha to blow

kuhuha to become lighter

Combinations of different vowels

These are the only combinations of different vowels that are allowable in Lugungu: **ai ai ei ei oi oi au au**:

malaika angel

bbaiibbuli Bible

yankei himself

nkeito shoe

oicale you stay

hoi very

lusau hill

Daudi personal name

However, the consonants **n** or **ny** can be followed by a hard **i** and then a letter **a** or **o** giving the sequences: **n_ia**, **ny_ia**, **n_ie**, or **n_io**. These combinations also are allowable:

kuhonia to heal

muniongooro earthworm

kutoonya to drop

kukwenyia to make pale

nkunio pestle

kubagania to divide

munsinyie chicken

yaaguuniengi he would grumble

Long vowels and the time of events

In Lugungu, a long vowel is present at the beginning of verbs to indicate that the time an event takes place is in the recent past, the remote past, or the near future. A long vowel is also used when narrating events that happened in the past. A single vowel is used for events that take place at other times:

baagyendiri

they went (remote past)

baagyendiri

they have gone

+baagyendiri

they went (recent past)

naagyenda

and he goes

baagyenda

they will go (near future)

baagyenda

they usually go

baagyenda

then they went
(narrative past)

baaligyenda

they will go
(remote future)

Long vowels are also present at the end of verbs when the action is for or on behalf of someone:

yaatumiri he sent for somebody

yaatumiri he sent

Tone

Lugungu is a tonal language. Tone is the pitch melody that overlies all words in the language. This pitch melody gives the hearer part of the meaning of words. Words that

are written the same can have different meanings if they are spoken with different tone melodies:

kwala to swim

kwala to make a bed

baaleetiṛi they brought
(within the last 24 hours)

baaleetiṛi they brought
(a long time ago)

Lugungu words, (e.g., like **kwala**) that are identical except for tone will not be distinguished with a tone symbol. However, verbs which mark events of the recent past which are identical to verbs which mark events of the remote past (e.g., like **baaleetiṛi**) will be marked with a tone symbol. Recent past verbs shall be preceded by a + symbol. Verbs of the remote past shall be unmarked:

+ **Baaleetiṛi** **deeru**.
They brought today.

Baaleetiṛi **auki**.
They brought the day
before yesterday.

Sylvia + **yaagyendiṛi**
mwakya.
Sylvia went in the morning.

Sylvia **yaagyendiṛi**
sabiiti gimalikiri.
Sylvia went last week.

Fiina **ḅuyaali nacakadwa**
Eriḅabeeti **yaamuweera**,
“+ **Bḅunyeegwiri** **iraka**
lyamu nokundamuḅkya,
mwana yaacuuka-cuuka
mu nda gyange.”

When Phina had just arrived Elizabeth told her, “When I heard your voice greeting me, the child jumped within me.”

Fiina **ḅuyaaweeni**
Eriḅabeeti **mweri gudi**
mwana yaacuuka-
cuukiri **mu nda gya**
Eriḅabeeti.

When Phina saw Elizabeth last month the child jumped within the womb of Elizabeth.

Spelling rules

Lugungu is written as it is spoken. Spelling rules are necessary however, to give a standard writing system in order to make reading easier.

Rule 1: Long vowels are written with a single vowel letter before consonant combinations that begin with a letter m or n or after consonant combinations that end with a letter y or w

Vowels before consonant combinations beginning with a letter **m** or **n** are always pronounced long, but are written with a single vowel:

bantu people

bunfooka wizardry

nnindo nose

wange my

Vowels following consonant combinations that end in a letter **y** or **w** are always pronounced long, but are written with a single vowel:

pyoko rhinoceros

kuhyolya to whistle

kubbwoma to pour

waamwe his/her

Note: **ny** is a single consonant and not a consonant combination, therefore when a long vowel follows **ny** it is written double, unless a consonant combination beginning with **m** or **n** follows:

kunyeega to wrestle

nyunyuzi star

nyumba house

nyaanya tomatos

Rule 2: Final vowels are written short

In Lugungu, nearly all words end with a short vowel (or occasionally with a vowel combination):

kumwa to shave

we you

do! exclamation

di? when

ki? what

musa he only

kiku bedbug

hoi very

nkwi firewood

But, there are a few exceptions to the above rule:

itaa elder sibling

mpaa aunt

kikuu dead thing

ii no

ee yes

Rule 3: The hard **b** sound is written **bb**, but when it follows a letter **m**, it is written with a single **b**

kubbumba to cover

mbumbambe I cover

Rule 4: Reduplication

For words that have repetition within the word, a hyphen is placed between the halves of the word whenever the reduplicated part consists of more than one syllable.

Hyphens shall only be used to split up verbs or adverbs:

mulyega-ḥwegi you will just know

mutafuruka-furukanga don't keep on migrating

ḥwangu-ḥwangu quickly

Rule 5: How to join small words that end with vowels

Small words like **wa, ba, kya, za, ha, ku, mu, na, ḥu,** etc., shall be written separately if the following word begins with a consonant. They will be joined only if the following word begins with a letter **i** or **i**. An apostrophe will be used if the following word begins with a vowel *and* a capital letter:

mwana wa bbaawe his father's child	mwana w'Isaka Isaac's child
ha nsi on the ground	heitehe on the ground
mu bwati in the canoe	mwiguru in heaven
Ibburahimu na Musa Abraham and Moses	Musa n'Ibburahimu Moses and Abraham
bijanga byeitaka waves of the lake	bijanga by'Itaka ly'Albert waves of Lake Albert

Rule 6: Words always written separately

The following categories of words shall be written separately:

- ❖ Verbs where the subject is present as a prefix on the main verb and also on the auxiliary verb before the main verb:

tunakubba tujuniri we must have helped

twiceeri tujuniri we had helped

tulibba nitukujuna we will be helping

- ❖ Where the auxiliary verb before the verb is kusobora, or kwiza, even if the subject is not repeated on the verb:

tukwiza kujuna we will help

tusobora kujuna we can help

- ❖ Where the auxiliary verb begins with bu:

ḅuyaali nakujuna when he was helping

ḅunyaali nincaali nanywe while I was still with you

- ❖ All nouns and pronouns and their adjectives, demonstratives and possessives:

nyumba gyetu our house

nyumba gigi this house

nyumba gikooto
the big house

nibali na yoodi
they were with that one

ali na sente
he has money

Maliya yaali na nda
Mary was pregnant

hali yo on him/to him

kuli yo to him

- ❖ Kinship terms that imply ‘our’, ‘your(pl)’, or ‘their’:

ziiza weetu our grandmother

ziiza weenyu your(pl) grandmother

ziiza waabu their grandmother

- ❖ Verbs with the negative kwahi:

twajuniri kwahi we were not helping

- ❖ Location words: ha, ku, and mu:

mu nsi on the earth

mu meiso ahead/in front

ha kiro on the day

mu bwire bubwo at that time

mu nywe among you

mu nda in the stomach

- ❖ Question words: ki?, hai?, di?:

kukola ki?
to do what?

okugyenda hai?
where are you going?

Rule 7: Words always written together

The following categories of words shall be joined.

- ❖ The small words: mu, mwo, mwona, bba, ha, ho, and yo that can be added onto the end of verbs:

yaabutembirimu bwati he climbed into the canoe

ohandiikemwo you re-write

banyakubbamwona those who were in

nkukuroopabba I will really cane you

yaadiriho kadooli he ate a little

yaakiteereeriho he put it on it

yaagyendiriyo he went there

- ❖ Verbs with the negative ti or ta:

titulimukujuna
we are not helping

twiceeri tutakujuna
we have not been helping

- ❖ The word na, when it is before a verb or a pronoun:

olinakumuganyira
you must forgive him

ali nayo
he is with him

- ❖ Shortened kinship terms that imply ‘my’, ‘your’ or ‘his/her’:

ziiza my grandmother

ziizaabu your grandmother

ziizaawe his/her grandmother

❖ Verbs where the subject appears only once:

tulimukujuna we are helping

twiceerikujuna we have been helping

twakalikujunanga we were helping

❖ Other examples written as one word:

hansi below/under

nahabwakikyo because of that

Kyakabiri Tuesday

Mweri Gwakanei April

hanzei outside

habwakubba because

munda inside

heinyuma behind

yoodede he also

kwamwetu at our home

yatyo like that

nahahwo at that moment

hakyendi above

hamwenya together

habwaki? why?

waakabiri second

Dialect Differences

Lugungu does not have major dialects. However, there are differences in the words people use and in the way certain words are pronounced. To accommodate these differences the Lugungu Bible Translation and Literacy Association has approved spelling standards as follows:

Words with a soft b

Some people speak the soft b much softer than others. However Lugungu shall be written in a standardised way.

Rule 8: Words with a very soft b

The b shall be written as a **ɸ** before **u**, **u** or **w**, and as a **b** before any other letters.

Note, that people can pronounce these words however they like. For some people the **ɸ** and **b** will be pronounced the same. For others the **ɸ** before **u**, **u** or **w** will be pronounced very softly.

ɸwomi ɸwabu their life

ɸunaku poverty

kɸuɸulya to ask

ɸwati ɸwe his boat

ɸubu ɸwomi ɸuli ɸurungi
this life is good

ɸuseeri ɸwabu
their sickness

However, a very soft b with an **m** before it is always written **mb** and not **mɸ**, even though it may be followed by **u**, **u** or **w**.

mbundu gun

mbuulya ask me

mbwene dog

mbuli goat

Also, specific names for people and places which begin with a capital letter, are written *without* a very soft b.

Buliisa name of a town

Businge personal name

Words with ei, ei or ee

Words with an **ei**, **ei** or **ee** sound should be written as follows:

omwei one	inei, munaanei four, eight
beitu but	meiso, meino eyes, teeth
bensei they all	teetei? kyonkei how? but
beetu our brothers	waamwe, hanzei his/her, out
hamwei together	yankei himself/alone

