

Somali-Swahili-English Pronunciation Guide

Practical pronunciation notes for beginners

Tip: Do not judge your accent harshly. Aim for clear, understandable speech.

Free download for learners of Somali, Swahili and English.

Pronunciation principles

Somali, Swahili and English use Latin-based spelling, but the same letter can represent different sounds. Focus on listening, then repeat short words rather than trying to master every sound at once.

Useful learner reminders

Point	Reminder	Example
Somali x	Often represents a strong throat/fricative sound, not the English “x” in “box”.	xali
Somali c	Represents a distinct sound in Somali. Learn it by hearing native examples rather than replacing it automatically with an English consonant.	caano
Swahili j	Usually similar to the sound in English “jam”.	jina
Swahili ng’	The apostrophe marks the nasal sound in words such as “ng’ombe”.	ng’ombe
English th	Can have two common sounds, as in “think” and “this”.	think / this

Practice routine

1. Hear the word. 2. Repeat slowly. 3. Repeat at normal speed. 4. Record yourself. 5. Compare and repeat.

Self-check

Circle the sounds you find difficult: Somali x / c; Swahili r / ng’; English th / r / v. Work on one group at a time.