

A MINI MAORI COURSE



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Here is the first of a three-part course for all of you wishing to learn to speak Maori. It does not claim to provide all the answers or any short cuts, and it's not a dictionary. But it does outline the basic structures which you will need to be familiar with, and it offers examples and models from which you can form your own sentences.

The course is designed as a reference or "ready-reckoner" to help you to learn the vital sentence patterns of conversational Maori, and should prove useful to those who have perhaps lost what they learned and wish to brush up their ability. It is designed also to complement the best teaching programme of all—regular practice.

We can learn the Maori language for a long time and still not be able to converse in it. Only regular and concentrated practice in actually speaking it counts towards learning to speak Maori. These notes set out the most vital and useful patterns. Everything here is essential; you cannot speak Maori without a knowledge of *all* these points. On the other hand, if you can become really quick at using these sentence patterns you will already be past the most difficult stage and be in a much better position to try conversation with Maori speakers.

If you already know some Maori *your first duty is to help your friends* to get to your level. If you have other words and ways of expressing things please bear in mind that the ones in these notes are also correct and it will be a lot easier for a beginner to learn your words once they have mastered the basic patterns. The main requirement is imagination to make up additional examples. You must hear and say enough repetitions of the same pattern to fix it in your mind. Make up fresh sentences by introducing new words but without changing the form. Each step is only a little different from the one before, but it must be properly mastered before going on to the next.

Maori is a beautifully regular language and with determined and regular practice, at home or in the lunch hour, you should make good progress, and so help to preserve our fine New Zealand language.

A very important point in Maori is that you must always be prepared to meet the same "word" with *more than one meaning*.

1.1 Word order

Maori order

E waiata ana te wahine

English order

The woman is singing

"Te wahine" is obviously the *subject* of the sentence and what is said about her *comes first* in the Maori sentence. This will apply in nearly all sentences.

1.2 Verbs and verb signs A verb indicates a particular *action*, and verb signs are used to show the *state* of the action, whether it happens in the past or future, is completed or is still going on, for example:

E kai ana te tamaiti = the child is eating

Gives a continuous tense ('ing), usually present time.

I oma nga tamariki = the children ran

Gives past time.

Kua hoki te kuri = the dog has returned (come back)

Gives a completed tense.

Ka rere nga manu = the birds will fly, the birds fly off

Gives a future tense, or indicates what happens next irrespective of time.

Me haere nga kotiro = the girls had better go

Gives a strong suggestion, or mild order.

Now re-combine the same words to make the Maori for "the child had better run", "the bird has flown", "the girls ate", "the dog is eating", etc. When these have been practised until you use the correct verb sign every time the sentences can be modified:

(a) By adding describing words (adjectives)—pai, nui, whero, wera, momona, tere, ataahua, koi, etc.—directly