

Chapter One: Introductions and Pleasantries

In this chapter we'll show you what to say first to Khmers when you meet them, and get you acquainted with the things they'll tend to say to you. On the up side, the range of probably questions and responses in this category is fairly limited. On the downside, the kinds of questions that people ask each other in Khmer upon meeting can differ quite a bit from what you're used to in the West, so keep an open mind!



Kids in rural Kampong Thom

You'll also get an introduction to the Khmer alphabet, and learn to start writing some useful words right off the bat.

Audio Track One: Greetings and Farewells (see Culture Note C.1)

សុខសប្បាយ Hello (informal, friendly)

សួស្តី Hi

ជំរាបសួរ Hello (formal, respectful)

លាហើយ Bye (informal, friendly)

ជំរាបលា Goodbye (formal, respectful)

អរគុណ Thank you.

អត់អីទេ You're welcome (literally "it's nothing")



Audio Track Two: Greetings: Application

(see footnote 1, next page, and Grammar Note G.1)

ក. បងសុខសប្បាយជាទេ? Are you doing okay?

a1. បាទ សុខសប្បាយ Yes, I'm fine (males only)

a2. ចាស សុខសប្បាយ Yes, I'm fine (females only)



Audio Track Three: Common Questions, Part I

(see footnote 2 below)



ក. លោកអ្នកធ្វើញទៅណា?

Where are you going?

(see Grammar Note G.2)

ក1. ខ្ញុំទៅផ្សារ I'm going to the store.

ក2. ខ្ញុំដើរលេង I'm taking a walk.

ក. មកពីណា? Where are you coming from?

ក. មកពីស្ពៀន From school.

ក. ផ្ទះមីងនៅឯខាងណា? Where's your house?

ក. ផ្ទះខ្ញុំនៅឯនោះ It's over there.

Footnotes for Tracks Two and Three

1. Three important things are going on in this question. First of all, it's an example of how there's no neutral word for "you" in Khmer. By using alternating kinship terms (and other terms of address) from phrase to phrase, we're trying to slowly get you used to this fact. We also want to help you recognize the wealth of kinship terms used as pronouns in Khmer (see Culture Note C.2 for more). The first word in the question is an example of this universe of shifting pronouns, depending on whom you're talking to. This one means "older sibling". Secondly, in the answer to the question, no pronoun at all is used. This is also very common in Khmer: to omit pronouns when it's clear from context whom you're talking to (or about). Thirdly, note that the word for "yes" in Khmer is different depending on whether you're male or female.

2. Here we have more examples of shifting pronouns, as well as omitted pronouns. Can you find where this occurs? Also, note that the first and second questions asked in Track Three are very common greetings in Khmer. The person asking the question doesn't necessarily care that much about what the answer is, any more than you want to hear a detailed story of what's going on your friends' lives every time you ask "how are you doing?" or "what's up?" in English