

Thai Language Basics for Expats: Essential Words and Phrases You'll Actually Use

At the Market or Grocery Store

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
How much is this?	Tao rai? (เท่าไร)	Pointing while asking helps
I want this one.	Ao an-nee. (เอาอันนี้)	Useful when you don't know the word for the item
Can you lower the price?	Lot dai mai? (ลดได้ไหม)	Common at street markets, said with a smile
Do you have [item]?	Mee [item] mai? (มี...ไหม)	Insert the item name if you know it
That's too expensive.	Paeng mak. (แพงมาก)	Good for playful bargaining

Ordering Food and Drinks

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
I would like...	Ao... krap/ka. (เอา...ครับ/ค่ะ)	Use "krap" if you're male, "ka" if you're female
No spicy.	Mai phet. (ไม่เผ็ด)	Essential if you can't handle heat
Little bit spicy.	Phet nit noi. (เผ็ดนิดหน่อย)	For a gentle kick without going overboard
Water, please.	Nam krap/ka. (น้ำครับ/ค่ะ)	Simple and always useful
Check, please.	Kep ngeun krap/ka. (เก็บเงินครับ/ค่ะ)	Said when you're ready to pay

Taking a Taxi or Grab

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Go to [place].	Pai [place] krap/ka. (ไป...)	Simple and effective
Turn left / Turn right.	Leow sai / Leow khwaa. (เลี้ยวซ้าย / เลี้ยวขวา)	Giving directions
Stop here.	Jord tee nee. (จอดที่นี่)	Handy for getting out anywhere
Use the meter, please.	Chai meter dai mai? (ใช้มิเตอร์ได้ไหม)	Important in regular taxis

Talking to Your Landlord or Building Manager

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
The air conditioner is broken.	Air mai tam ngaan. (แอร์ไม่ทำงาน)	Common complaint in hot weather
There is no water.	Mai mee nam. (ไม่มีน้ำ)	Happens occasionally, especially during maintenance
The electricity is out.	Fai dap. (ไฟดับ)	Useful during power cuts
The bathroom is leaking.	Hong nam ruut nam. (ห้องน้ำรั่วน้ำ)	"Ruut" = leak
I need it fixed.	Tong suuam. (ต้องซ่อม)	Simple way to say it needs repair

Quick Tips for Dealing with Home Issues

- **Speak slowly** and be ready to repeat yourself — housing staff might not be fluent in English.
- **Pictures help.** If you can't explain the problem well, a photo can make everything easier.
- **Stay polite and patient.** Things move at a different pace sometimes, but kindness often speeds things up.

Common Utility Words

English	Thai (Transliteration)
Water bill	Bai nam (บิลน้ำ)
Electricity bill	Bai fai (บิลไฟฟ้า)
Internet	Internet (อินเทอร์เน็ต)
Repair	Suuam (ซ่อม)
Maintenance staff	Phanakngaan burom (พนักงานบำรุงรักษา)

Setting up Services or Repairs

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
When can you come?	Ja maa muea rai? (จะมาเมื่อไหร่)	Helpful to schedule appointments
Can you fix it today?	Suuam wan nee dai mai? (ซ่อมวันนี้ได้ไหม)	Useful for urgent repairs
I will wait at home.	Phom/Chan ja raw tee baan. (ผม/ฉันจะรอที่บ้าน)	Let them know you'll be there

Joining Community Events

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
What time does it start?	Rerm gee mong? (เริ่มกี่โมง)	Useful for local events
Where is it?	Yoo tee nai? (อยู่ที่ไหน)	Asking for event location
Can I join?	Phom/Chan ja tham ruam dai mai? (ผม/ฉันจะเข้าร่วมได้ไหม)	Express interest in participating

Meeting New People

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Hello / Hi	Sawasdee krap/ka. (สวัสดีครับ/ค่ะ)	Always a safe, polite greeting
Nice to meet you.	Yin dee tee dai ruu jak. (ยินดีที่ได้รู้จัก)	Good for first meetings
What's your name?	Khun chuu arai? (คุณชื่ออะไร)	Useful for building casual friendships
My name is [name].	Phom/Chan chuu [name]. (ผม/ฉันชื่อ...)	Basic self-introduction
Where are you from?	Khun maa jaak tee nai? (คุณมาจากที่ไหน)	Great small talk opener

Polite Phrases to Keep Handy

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Thank you very much.	Khop khun maak krap/ka. (ขอบคุณมากครับ/ค่ะ)	Being extra polite goes a long way
Sorry.	Khor thot krap/ka. (ขอโทษครับ/ค่ะ)	Useful if you mispronounce or misunderstand
I don't speak Thai well.	Phood paasaa Thai mai keng. (พูดภาษาไทยไม่เก่ง)	Humble and appreciated honesty

Quick Tips for Building Connections

- **Use simple phrases first.** It's better to say a little Thai confidently than to get stuck trying to say too much.
- **Learn Thai nicknames.** Most Thai people go by short, easy-to-pronounce nicknames—and remembering them builds rapport fast.
- **Show curiosity.** Asking basic questions in Thai shows respect and makes locals feel more comfortable around you.

At the Bank

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
I want to open an account.	Phom/Chan tong gaan pert banchee. (ผม/ฉันต้องการเปิดบัญชี)	Essential for setting up banking
I want to withdraw money.	Phom/Chan tong gaan toed ngern. (ผม/ฉันต้องการถอนเงิน)	"Toed" = withdraw
I want to deposit money.	Phom/Chan tong gaan faak ngern. (ผม/ฉันต้องการฝากเงิน)	"Faak" = deposit
What documents do I need?	Tong mee ekkasaan arai bang? (ต้องมีเอกสารอะไรบ้าง)	Always good to ask

Helpful Banking Words

English	Thai (Transliteration)
Bank	Thanakhaan (ธนาคาร)
ATM	ATM (เอทีเอ็ม)
Passport	Nangseu dern taang (หนังสือเดินทาง)
Deposit	Faak ngern (ฝากเงิน)
Withdraw	Toed ngern (ถอนเงิน)

Paying Bills (Electricity, Internet, Water)

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Where can I pay this bill?	Jai bai nee tee nai? (จ่ายใบนี้ที่ไหน)	Very useful at 7-Eleven or banks
I want to pay the electricity bill.	Phom/Chan tong jai bai fai. (ผม/ฉันต้องจ่ายบิลไฟฟ้า)	"Fai" = electricity

At Immigration

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
I want to renew my visa.	Phom/Chan tong gaan dtae visa. (ผม/ฉันต้องการต่อวีซ่า)	"Dtae" = renew
I need a re-entry permit.	Phom/Chan tong gaan permit khao ork. (ผม/ฉันต้องการเพอร์มิตเข้าออก)	For traveling and returning
How long will it take?	Ja chai way-laa naan tao rai? (จะใช้เวลานานเท่าไร)	Helpful for managing expectations
Do I need an appointment?	Tong nai nook mai? (ต้องนัดหมายไหม)	Many immigration offices now require appointments

Medical Emergencies

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Help!	Chuay duay! (ช่วยด้วย)	Shout or call loudly if needed
I need a doctor.	Phom/Chan tong gaan mor. (ผม/ฉันต้องการหมอ)	"Mor" = doctor
I am sick.	Phom/Chan mai sabai. (ผม/ฉันไม่สบาย)	"Mai sabai" = not feeling well
I have an allergy.	Phom/Chan mee phaet. (ผม/ฉันมีแพ้)	Important for food allergies

Emergency Numbers in Thailand

Service	Number
Police	191
Ambulance and Rescue	1669
Tourist Police (English-speaking)	1155

Dealing with Police or Theft

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Call the police.	Riak tamruat. (เรียกดตำรวจ)	"Tamruat" = police
My wallet was stolen.	Phom/Chan toong khaap krao. (ผม/ฉันถูกขโมยกระเป๋า)	"Khaap krao" = wallet
I need to report a crime.	Phom/Chan tong gaan jairuang. (ผม/ฉันต้องการแจ้งความ)	For official reports at a police station

Fire or Natural Disasters

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
Fire!	Fai mai! (ไฟไหม้)	Shout loudly in case of fire
Where is the exit?	Phratoo ork yoo tee nai? (ประตูออกอยู่ที่ไหน)	"Phratoo ork" = exit door
Is it safe?	Plord phai mai? (ปลอดภัยไหม)	Helpful to ask during evacuations or floods

Common Phrases for Service and Repairs

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
I have a problem.	Mee panhaa. (มีปัญหา)	Good opener for any issue
The air conditioner is not working.	Air mai tam ngaan. (แอร์ไม่ทำงาน)	Very common during hot season
The internet is not working.	Internet mai tam ngaan. (อินเทอร์เน็ตไม่ทำงาน)	Simple, understandable
There is a leak.	Mee nam ruut. (มีน้ำรั่ว)	For plumbing issues
It's broken.	Tam ngaan mai dai. (ทำงานไม่ได้)	General way to say something doesn't work

Scheduling and Confirming Appointments

English	Thai (Transliteration)	Notes
When can you come?	Ja maa muea rai? (จะมาเมื่อไหร่)	Useful to agree on timing
Can you fix it today?	Suam wan nee dai mai? (ซ่อมวันนี้ได้ไหม)	Helpful if urgent
What time will you arrive?	Ja maa gee mong? (จะมากี่โมง)	"Gee mong" = what time

Useful Tip: Pictures and Examples Help

If explaining the problem gets tricky:

- Take a photo or video of the issue.
- Use simple hand gestures combined with short Thai phrases.
- Pointing and showing the broken item often says more than words.

Quick Tips for Smooth Service Interactions

- Be polite but clear—smile, say “krap” or “ka” often.
- Confirm appointments by time and day clearly.
- Always thank them afterward—even if the work isn’t perfect.
- Small gestures (offering water, saying “khop khun krap/ka”) go a long way in Thailand.

Curated by *Thrive in Thailand*
The Essential Thai for Daily Life Cheat Sheet
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