

Hmong Tones

What is a tone? A tone is a **pitch** stressed *with* a particular word or a syllable of word. For example, the English word “**bottom**” has two syllables. The first syllable “**bot-**” has a higher pitch than the second syllable “-tom”, *i.e.*, “**BOT**-tom”, *high to low* pitches respectively. A tone is then similar to the English musical notes “**Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti.**” With that said, we are going to use the first note “**Do**”, spelled “**Doe**” from here on, and we are going to assign the letter “**S**” to this “**Doe**” pitch. So the Hmong word “**haus**” has the “**s**” at the end of the word. The Hmong word **haus** (phonically as “**how**”) means *to drink*. Below are some Hmong words with the Hmong **S** tone as well as the equivalent English phonics to help you. Again, make sure you say both the Hmong and English words using the **Doe** pitch.

1	Hmong word	das	dais	daus	daws	des	dees	dis	dias	dos	doos	duş	duas
2	English phonics	dah	dai	dao	der	day	deng	dee	dia	daw	dong	doo	doua
3	Hmong word	mas	mais	maus	maws	mes	mees	mis	mias	mos	moos	mus	muas
4	English phonics	mah	mai	mao	mer	may	meng	mee	mia	maw	mong	moo	moua
5	Hmong word	nas	nais	naus	naws	nes	nees	nis	niaş	nos	noos	nus	nuas
6	English phonics	nah	nai	nao	ner	nay	neng	nee	nia	naw	nong	noo	nuoa

Below are some Hmong words you have learned above and their equivalent English meanings:

Hmong English Hmong English Hmong English Hmong English Hmong English
daws to untie **dos** onion **mis** milk **mos** young **mus** to go

Now let’s learn **two more** tones – the **highest** and **lowest** tones in the Hmong language. The tones and/or pitches are already exist in the English language. The English word “**bottom**” has two syllables with two different pitches – from **high** to **low**. Meaning you would utter the first syllable “**BOT-**” with a higher pitch and then ending with a lower pitch for the second syllable “-tom.” We are going to assign the letter **B** to represent the **high** pitch or tone marker, and then the letter **M** as the **low** pitch. Now we can write this English word with the Hmong tone markers as follows: **bot^b-tom^m**. Let’s see if you can read these English words with these two tones.

mom^bmy^m, dad^bdy^m, sun^bny^m, and yo^byo^m
mommy daddy sunny yoyo → English words without tone markers.

As you can see, the above words have two syllables with two distinct pitches or tones even though they don’t have the tone markers placed on them in English. For Hmong, **each word** will always have a tone marker placed **at the end**. When there is no tone marker, it is considered to have the equivalent pitch of the 2nd musical note “**Re**” → Do **Re** Mi Fa So La Ti.

The **B** tone marker is called “Cim **Siab**”, and the **M** tone is called the “Cim **Niam**.”

Now read the table below starting from the **left** column, **Bot-**, -tom, then **niab**, **niam** to **lab** and **lam**. Then read by row starting from syllable **BOT-**, **niab**, **nab** to **lab – b tone**, and then “-tom” row from **-tom**, **nia_m** to **la_m**.

Hmong

Tone Pitch

Hmong words with **B** and **M** tones

English phonics		<i>nia</i>	<i>nah</i>	<i>nay</i>	<i>noo</i>	<i>nee</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>dah</i>	<i>day</i>	<i>doua</i>	<i>daw</i>	<i>deng</i>	<i>lah</i>
1	B BOT (<i>highest</i>)	nia^b	na^b	ne^b	nu^b	ni^b	dia^b	da^b	de^b	dua^b	do^b	dee^b	la^b
2	M -tom (<i>lowest</i>)	nia_m	na_m	ne_m	nu_m	ni_m	dia_m	da_m	de_m	dua_m	do_m	dee_m	la_m

Hmong words with **B** and **M** tones

English phonics		<i>ah</i>	<i>yah</i>	<i>ay</i>	<i>yay</i>	<i>yee</i>	<i>yia</i>	<i>yer</i>	<i>yong</i>	<i>yao</i>	<i>yaw</i>	<i>yeng</i>	<i>yai</i>
3	BOT- <i>b</i>	a^b	ya^b	e^b	ye^b	yi^b	ya^b	yaw^b	yoo^b	yau^b	yo^b	yee^b	yai^b
4	-tom <i>m</i>	a_m	ya_m	e_m	ye_m	yi_m	ya_m	yaw_m	yoo_m	yau_m	yo_m	yee_m	yai_m

Now let's add the mid tone **S** in between the **B** and **M** tones. Now read each column *from top to bottom*, i.e., “**BOT-**, **Doe**, and **-tom**” and then “**nia^b**, **nias**, **niam**” etc...

Tone Pitch

Hmong words with **B**, **S**, and **M** tones

5	Highest -b	BOT-	nia^b	nab	neb	nub	nib	diab	dab	deb	duab	dob	deeb	lab
6	Mid -s	Doe	nias	nas	nes	nus	nis	dias	das	des	duas	dos	dees	las
7	Lowest -m	-tom	nia_m	nam	nem	num	nim	diam	dam	dem	duam	dom	deem	lam

The word **dab** means *a ghost* and **dam** means *to break or is broken*. We now can put Hmong tone markers on the English words “**a bottom**” like this: **a^sbot^b-tom^m**

Please fill in the correct tone markers for each of the Hmong words based on the **Doe** and Bottom.

Hmong		Hmong		Hmong		Hmong		Hmong		
Pitch	Tone	tone	Pitch	tone	Pitch	tone	Pitch	tone	Pitch	tone
Doe	<i>s</i>	mus	BOT-	<i>ne</i> __	-tom	<i>Tee</i> __	Doe	<i>na</i> __	-tom	<i>No</i> __
BOT-	<i>b</i>	saib	Doe	<i>mu</i> __	BOT-	<i>pa</i> __	BOT-	<i>ta</i> __	Doe	<i>lo</i> __
-tom	<i>m</i>	niam	-tom	<i>nia</i> __	Doe	<i>nu</i> __	-tom	<i>to</i> __	BOT-	<i>pa</i> __

English phonics *moo mee nah day dee law nay ha dah*

Doe	<i>s</i>	mus	mis	nas	des	dis	los	<i>nes</i>	has	das
BOT-	<i>b</i>	mub	mib	nab	deb	dib	lob	<i>neb</i>	hab	dab
-tom	<i>m</i>	mum	mim	nam	dem	dim	lom	<i>nem</i>	ham	dam

Mus means *to go*. **Nas** means *a squirrel*. **deb** = *far*, **dib** = *cucumber*, **los** = *come*, **dab** = *ghost*, **mis** = *milk*, **niam** = *mother* and **nab** = *snake*.

Now let's use the three tones you have learned and see if you are still able to read the following words.

1	Doe	as	<i>mus</i>	los	nas	nws	los	b	muab	lab	peb	neb	wb
2	Bot-	yau^b	<i>sai^b</i>	pab	liab	paub	peb	s	nws	los	mus	los	hais
3	-tom	yau_m	<i>niam_m</i>	yom	dim	law _m	niam	m	yuam	pom	kaw _m	koom	haum

Now let's learn some simple Hmong words that have learned these three tones. Some of these words do have multiple meanings, however.

Hmong

(English phonics)

	English		Hmong	English
4	<i>mus (moo)</i>	<i>to go</i>	19	<i>tob (-taw)</i> <i>deep</i>
5	<i>hais (hai)</i>	<i>to say or speak</i>	20	<i>mem (may)</i> <i>pen or pencil</i>
6	<i>paub (-pao)</i>	<i>to know</i>	21	<i>nom (naw)</i> <i>an official</i>
7	<i>pom (-paw)</i>	<i>to see</i>	22	<i>pib (-pee)</i> <i>begin, start</i>
8	<i>los (law)</i>	<i>to come, to return</i>	23	<i>kim (-kee)</i> <i>expensive</i>
9	<i>deb (day)</i>	<i>far</i>	24	<i>kib (-kee)</i> <i>to fry</i>
10	<i>dib (dee)</i>	<i>cucumber</i>	25	<i>kis (-kee)</i> <i>gap, to spread into</i>
11	<i>dam (dah)</i>	<i>to break</i>	26	<i>tiam (-tia)</i> <i>generation</i>
12	<i>lem (lay)</i>	<i>to turn</i>	27	<i>lim (lee)</i> <i>to filter</i>
13	<i>teb (-tay)</i>	<i>to answer, respond</i>	28	<i>nab (nah)</i> <i>snake, here</i>
14	<i>cem</i>	<i>to yell, scold</i>	29	<i>niam (nia)</i> <i>mother</i>
15	<i>ces</i>	<i>then</i>	30	<i>tas (-tah)</i> <i>done, finished, complete</i>
16	<i>peb (-pay)</i>	<i>we, three</i>	31	<i>lom (law)</i> <i>to poison</i>
17	<i>tos (-taw)</i>	<i>to wait for</i>	32	<i>lob (law)</i> <i>to grab or take</i>
18	<i>tom (-taw)</i>	<i>to bite, allege, accuse</i>	33	<i>zes (zhay)</i> <i>to bother, a nest</i>

Peb mus (-pay moo) = We go. **Peb tos** (-pay -taw) = We wait. **Peb los** (-pay law) = We come. **Peb paub** (-pay -pao) = We know. **Peb paub nws niam** = We know his/her mother.

Well, with just three tones, we can't really create any meaningful Hmong songs so let's add **two** more tones, and their pitches are similar to the English word "**section**." Now, let's say this word "**SEC-tion**" like this: "**SEC-**" with a **rising** pitch, and then "**-tion!**" with a **falling** pitch. The Hmong designated the **V** to the **rising** tone and **G** to the **falling** tone. The **V** is called the "Cim **Kuv**", and **G** is called the "Cim **Neeg**." With that said, if you say the English word **SEC-tion** and the Hmong words **Kuv Neeg** you should notice that they both have similar pitches.

English: **Sec-tion**

Hmong: **Kuv-Neeg**

Now we can use the Hmong tones to mark the English word:
Section like this: **Sec^v-tion_g**

Now read the following table, from left column “SEC-” to “-tion”, “nav nag” and “nev neg” to the last column. Then read by row, starting “SEC-, nav, nev” to “lov”, and then “-tion”, nag to log.

No	Pitch	Tone	Hmong words with V and G tones												
			<i>English phonics</i>	<i>nah</i>	<i>nay</i>	<i>naw</i>	<i>doo</i>	<i>may</i>	<i>dee</i>	<i>noo</i>	<i>lee</i>	<i>-tee</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>law</i>
1	SEC-	<i>v</i>	na^v	ne ^v	nov	duv	mev	div	nuv	liv	tiv	daiv	diav	lov	
2	-tion	<i>g</i>	na_g	ne _g	nog	dug	meg	dig	nug	lig	tig	daig	diag	log	

Now please fill in the appropriate Hmong tone markers.

Pitch	Word	pitch	tone	pitch	tone	pitch	tone	pitch	tone
SEC-	mu ^v	-tion	na__	SEC-	de__	SEC-	me__	-tion	no__
-tion	mu _g	SEC-	na__	-tion	de__	-tion	me__	SEC-	no__

Below, read by **row**, dab, daib to *dwb*. Then read by **columns**, dab, dam, da, das, dav, dag.

English phonics		<i>dah</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>dao</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>day</i>	<i>deng</i>	<i>dee</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>daw</i>	<i>doo</i>	<i>dew</i>	
3	Bot-	<i>b</i>	da^b	daib	daub	dawb	deb	deeb	dib	diab	dob	dub	dwb
4	-tom	<i>m</i>	da_m	daim	daum	dawm	dem	deem	dim	diam	dom	dum	dwm
5	Re	–	<i>da</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>dau</i>	<i>daw</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>dee</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>dw</i>
6	Doe	<i>s</i>	das	dais	daus	daws	des	dees	dis	dias	dos	dus	dws
7	SEC-	<i>v</i>	dav	daiv	dauv	dawv	dev	deev	div	diav	dov	duv	dwv
8	-tion	<i>g</i>	dag	daig	daug	dawg	deg	deeg	dig	diag	dog	dug	dwg

No	Pitch	Tone	Hmong words with B, V, S, G and M tones										
9	Bot-	<i>b</i>	da^b	daib	daub	dawb	deb	deeb	dib	diab	dob	dub	dwb
10	SEC-	<i>v</i>	dav	daiv	dauv	dawv	dev	deev	div	diav	dov	duv	dwv
11	Re	–	<i>da</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>dau</i>	<i>daw</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>dee</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>dw</i>
12	Doe	<i>s</i>	das	dais	daus	daws	des	dees	dis	dias	dos	dus	dws
13	-tion	<i>g</i>	dag	daig	daug	dawg	deg	deeg	dig	diag	dog	dug	dwg
14	-tom	<i>m</i>	da_m	daim	daum	dawm	dem	deem	dim	diam	dom	dum	dwm

dav (*dah*) = wide. **dag** (*dah*) = lie, tease, joke. **dawb** (*der*) = white, free. **dib** (*dee*) = cucumber.
peb dag (*-pay dah*) = we lie or we are joking. **dev dub** (*day doo*) = dog black or black dog.
peb yuav los (*-pay youa law*) = we will come. **dev dag peb** (*day dah -pay*) = dog lie us.

Please practice the words above until you have mastered the tones because these are very important part of the Hmong language. Saying a phrase with wrong tones is worse than singing a song with wrong notes. For example: The Hmong word “**muas**” – phonically sounds like *moua* means *to buy*, and the Hmong word “**muaj**” – phonically sounds like *moua!* *Muaj* means *to have*.

Okay, now you have learned six tones out of eight so let's learn some Hmong words that have these tones. Read by row from **left to right**, and then by column from **top to bottom**.

No	Hmong	English	Hmong	English	Hmong	English	Hmong	English	Hmong	English
1	dab	<i>ghost</i>	deb	<i>far</i>	zes	<i>nest</i>	Peb	<i>We</i>	teeb	<i>light</i>
2	dav	<i>wide</i>	dev	<i>dog</i>	pav	<i>to tie</i>	yuav	<i>will</i>	ceev	<i>fast</i>
3	pas	<i>a stick</i>	nas	<i>squirrel</i>	los	<i>to come</i>	pab	<i>help</i>	lees	<i>to admit</i>
4	dag	<i>to lie</i>	nag	<i>rain</i>	tuaj	<i>to come</i>	muam	<i>sister</i>	tuag	<i>to die</i>
5	dam	<i>to break</i>	hem	<i>scare</i>	pam	<i>blanket</i>	muag	<i>sell</i>	tuab	<i>thick</i>

The next tone we are going to learn is very simple, and it already exists in English. The English word “**hey!**” or any interjection words *has this pitch*. The letter assigned to this tone marker is the **J**. So the English word “**hey!**” would be written in Hmong as “**hej**” instead.

No	Pitch	Tone	Hmong words with J and blank (Re) tones										
	<i>English phonics</i>		<i>doo!</i>	<i>dai!</i>	<i>dao!</i>	<i>der!</i>	<i>day!</i>	<i>deng!</i>	<i>dee!</i>	<i>dia!</i>	<i>daw!</i>	<i>dong!</i>	<i>doua!</i>
6	hey!	j	duj	daij	dauj	dawj	dej	deej	dij	diaj	doj	dooj	duaj

Haus dej (*hao day!*) means **drink water**. Below is a table which has the **seven** tones. First, read by column starting from **left to right**, and then by row from **top to bottom**.

No	Pitch	Tone	Hmong words with the seven tones										
	<i>English phonics</i>		<i>dah</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>dao</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>day</i>	<i>deng</i>	<i>dee</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>daw</i>	<i>doo</i>	<i>dew</i>
7	BOT-	b	da ^b	dai ^b	dau ^b	daw ^b	de ^b	dee ^b	di ^b	dia ^b	do ^b	du ^b	dw ^b
8	hey!	j	daj	daij	dauj	dawj	dej	deej	dij	diaj	doj	duj	dwj
9	SEC-	v	dav	daiv	dauv	dawv	dev	deev	div	diav	dov	duv	dwv
10	Re	blank	da	dai	dau	daw	de	dee	di	dia	do	du	dw
11	Doe	s	das	dais	daus	daws	des	dees	dis	dias	dos	dus	dws
12	-tion	g	dag	daig	daug	dawg	deg	deeg	dig	diag	dog	dug	dwg
13	-tom	m	da _m	dai _m	dau _m	daw _m	de _m	dee _m	di _m	dia _m	do _m	du _m	dw _m

Now you have learned the seven tones that cover most of the Hmong words. The only tone left is the **D** tone which you will learn later. To learn the Hmong tones, try to memorize this Hmong line:

English Pitch:	Hey!	Doe	SEC-	-tom	-tion	BOT-	Re	n/a
Hmong Tone:	Koj	Mus	Kuv	Niam	Neeg	Siab	Zoo	Tod
English phonics:	<i>-kaw</i>	<i>moo</i>	<i>-koo</i>	<i>nia</i>	<i>neng</i>	<i>shia</i>	<i>zhong</i>	<i>-taw</i>
Meaning:	you	go	my	mom	person	heart	good	there

In other words: **You go to my good mother over there.**

Phrase to remember: **Koj Mus Kuv Niam Neeg Siab Zoo Tod**
 Equivalent English phonics: -kaw! moo -koo nia neng shia zhong -taw



The musical notes above kind a show you how low the “My” note is. This is the *lowest* you can possibly make, and that is the equivalent to the Hmong **M** tone. The *highest* tone in Hmong is equivalent to the “Be” note on the far right. This is the Hmong *highest B* tone. Again, the “Do” note is similar to the Hmong **S** tone, and the “Re” note is similar to the Hmong “*blank*” tone – no tone marker that is. The Hmong **J** tone is equivalent to any *interjection* English tone. And the last two tones are the *rising* pitch of the “SEC-” syllable and the *falling* pitch “-tion” syllable of the word “SEC-tion” where we assigned the **V** and **G** to respectively.

English Pitch:	<u>Hey!</u>	<u>Doe</u>	<u>SEC-</u>	<u>-tom</u>	<u>-tion</u>	<u>BOT-</u>	<u>Re</u>
Hmong Tone:	Koj	Mus	Kuv	Niam	Neeg	Siab	Zoo
Hmong na (<i>nah</i>):	naj	nas	nav	nam	nag	nab	na
Hmong ne (<i>day</i>):	dej	des	dev	dem	deg	deb	de

Just think of the Hmong tone markers like the *ending* letters in the English words. For example: Let, led, mad and map etc... The Hmong tone markers, for example: Leb, lem, maj, mam etc... The **D** tone is nothing more than starting with the **M** tone and then rise with the **V** tone, i.e., tod = tom + ov (*tom-ov*). Let see if we can write the Hmong phonics for some of the English words. **I see you** (*ais xis yus* – Hmong spelling and phonics). **You see me** (*yus xis mis*). **I see many** (*ais xis meb-nis*). **Hey! How many** (*hej haus meb-nis*). **You are happy** (*yus os hav-pim*).

Again, the Hmong language is an *open* syllable and *tonal* language. Therefore, it is very important that you say each word with your mouth *open* with the correct **tones**. For example:

dej means **water**, **deb** means **far**, **dev** means a **dog**, and **de** = to **pinch**.

Don't worry too much about these tones because if you can master these English words:

English phonics *hee*

English words: hid, hit, him, his, hip, hips and hi (*with different ending sounds*)

Hmong words: hij, his, hiv, him, hig, hib and hi (*with different tones*)

At first its seems hard but I an assure you that it is not that hard once you have mastered the Hmong Tonal Line: **Koj Mus Kuv Niam Neeg Siab Zoo Tod**.

This is the Hmong **eight** musical notes to help you speak the Hmong language correctly.

Hmong vowel(English sound), a(ah) ai(ai) au(ao) aw(er) e(ay) ee(eng) i(ee) ia(ia) o(aw) oo(ong) u(oo) ua(oua) w(ew)

© 2012-2022 Jay Xiong Hmong tonal line: koJ muS kuV niaM neeG siaB Zoo toD

Let us learn the Hmong tones until you can sing the Hmong **tonal line** really well before we move on. Speaking with the correct tones is *very important*. For example, if you want to give something to someone and you say it like this: “Kuv **muag** rau koj” instead of “Kuv **muab** rau koj.” The word “**muag**” means **to sell**, and “**muab**” means “**to give**.”

The **B** tone marker – say it **as high as** you possibly can.

	phonics		ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua
1	pitch	tone	dab	daib	dawb	deb	deeb	dib	diab	daub	dob	dub	duab
2	Bot-	b	lab	laib	lawb	leb	leeb	lib	liab	laub	lob	lub	luab
3			nab	naib	nawb	neb	neeb	nib	niab	naub	nob	nub	nuab

The **M** tone marker – say it **as low as** you possibly can.

	phonics		ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua
4	pitch	tone	dam	daim	dawm	dem	deem	dim	diam	daum	dom	dum	duam
5	-tom	m	lam	laim	lawm	lem	leem	lim	liam	laum	lom	lum	luam
6			nam	naim	nawm	nem	neem	nim	niam	naum	nom	num	nuam

Combing the **B** and **M** tones together – **Bot-tom** pitches

	phonics		nah	nai	ner	nay	neng	nee	nia	nao	naw	noo	noua
7	Bot-	b	nab	naib	nawb	neb	neeb	nib	niab	naub	nob	nub	nuab
8	-tom	m	nam	naim	nawm	nem	neem	nim	niam	naum	nom	num	nuam

The **J** tone marker – say this tone exactly as with any interjection words – **Hey! You!**

	phonics		ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua
9	Hey!	j	haj	haij	hawj	hej	heej	hij	hiaj	hauj	hoj	huj	huaj
10	Ya!	j	yaj	yaij	yawj	nej	yeej	yij	yiaj	yauj	yoj	yuj	yuj

Combing the **J**, **B** and **M** tones together – **Hey! Bot-tom** pitches

	phonics		ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua
11	Hey!	j	naj	naij	nawj	nej	neej	nij	niaj	nauj	noj	nuj	nuaj
12	Bot-	b	nab	naib	nawb	neb	neeb	nib	niab	naub	nob	nub	nuab
13	-tom	m	nam	naim	nawm	nem	neem	nim	niam	naum	nom	num	nuam

Let's see if you can read these Hmong words

Hmong: **Koj noj loj. Neb pab peb. Koj muaj muam. Tuam pom lawm.**
 English: *You eat big. You help us. You have sisters. Toua saw already.*

The **V** tone – “**Sec-**” pitch of the word **Sec-tion** – the **rising** pitch.

	phonics	ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua	
1	Sec-	v	dav	daiv	dawv	dev	deev	div	diav	dawv	dov	duv	duav
2		v	lav	laiv	lawv	lev	leev	liv	liav	lawv	lov	luv	luav
3		v	nav	naiv	nawv	nev	neev	niv	niav	nawv	nov	nuv	nuav

The **G** tone. The “**-tion**” pitch of the word **Sec-tion** – the **falling** pitch.

	phonics	ah	ai	er	ay	eng	ee	ia	ao	aw	oo	oua	
4	-tion	g	dag	daig	dawg	deg	deeg	dig	diag	daug	dog	dug	duag
5		g	lag	laig	lawg	leg	leeg	lig	liag	laug	log	lug	luag
6		g	nag	naig	nawg	neg	neeg	nig	niag	naug	nog	nug	nuag

Combining the **V** and **G** tones – **Sec-tion**

	phonics	nah	nai	ner	nay	neng	nee	nia	nao	naw	noo	noua	
7	Sec-	v	nav	naiv	nawv	nev	neev	niv	niav	nawv	nov	nuv	nuav
8	-tion	g	nag	naig	nawg	neg	neeg	nig	niag	naug	nog	nug	nuag

Combining the **S** and **blank** tones – **Doe** and **Re** pitches.

	phonics	nah	nai	ner	nay	neng	nee	nia	nao	naw	noo	noua	
9	Doe	s	nas	nais	naws	nes	nees	nis	nia	naus	nos	nus	nuas
10	Re	blank	na	nai	naw	ne	nee	ni	nia	nau	no	nu	nua

Okay, you have learned the 7 tones in great detail now. With that said, let’s see if you can read the below Hmong words. *The English translation is **verbatim** to help you learn the Hmong words.*

Hmong: **Los peb mus noj mov. Koj tuaj kawm lus Hmoob.**
 English: *Come we go eat food. You come learn language Hmong.*

Hmong: **Lis los haus dej. Dib kam tuaj pab peb.**
 English: *Lee comes drink water. Dee agrees come help us.*

Hmong: **Koj puas paub hais lus Askiv? Kuv paub me me.**
 English: *Do you know how to speak English? I know very little.*

Hmong: **Nej puas muag mov? Nej puas muaj fawm?**
 English: *Do you sell food? Do you have pho?*

Hmong: **Peb mus kawm lus Hmoob. Peb hais lus Hmoob xwb.**
 English: *We go learn language Hmong. We speak Hmong only.*

Txawm ua tau zoo npaum li cas los yeej tseem yuav muaj neeg thuam.

Hmong vowel(English sound), a(ah) ai(ai) au(ao) aw(er) e(ay) ee(eng) i(ee) ia(ia) o(aw) oo(ong) u(oo) ua(oua) w(ew)

© 2012-2022 Jay Xiong Hmong tonal line: koJ muS kuV niaM neeG siaB Zoo toD

Hmong Tone Markers on English Words

To help you understand the Hmong tones, we are going to refer to some English words that have similar pitches. In other words, the English word **yo-yo** will be written with Hmong tone markers as **yo^b-yo^m** which is – **YO-yo** – high to low pitches.

English	Hmong phonics	English word with Hmong tone marker
offer	ov-fawm	of ^v fer ^m
don't	dooj ^{rwg}	dont ^j
do	dus	do ^s
purple	phawb-poem	pur ^b ple ^m
sick	xiv ^{kwg}	sick ^v
for sure	fos suaj	for ^s sure ^j
I like you.	ais laiv ^{kwg} yus	I ^s like ^v you ^s
hey!	hej	hey ^j
hello	heb-loes	hel ^b lo ^s
poor me	phuaj mis	poor ^j me ^s
you too	yus thuj	you ^s too ^j
paper	pheb-pawm	pa ^b per ^m
after	av ^{fwg} -tawm	af ^v ter ^m
lucky	lav-kim	luc ^v ky ^m
many	meb-nis	ma ^b ny ^s
how	haus	how ^s
stopping	xas-tov-pees	s ^s -top ^v ping ^s

As you can see English is somewhat a tonal language, too. The thing you don't realize is that the pitch can be slightly off and people still can understand because of its content. For example, if you say “**you too**” like “**you^m too^b**” – lowest to highest pitches, most people will have a hard time understanding. But if you say **you^s too^j** people will know.

Hmong words: **haus dej**
 English phonics: *how day!*
 Meaning: **drink water**

Hmong tones:	Koj	Mus	Kuv	Niam	Neeg	Siab	Zoo	Tod	
Pitch →	Re	hey!	Doe	SEC-	-tom	-tion	BOT-	Re	m+v
d + ai =	dai	daij	dais	daiv	daim	daig	daib	dai	daid
f + ai =	fai	faij	fais	faiv	faim	faig	faib	fai	faid
h + ai =	hai	haij	hais	haiv	haim	haig	haib	hai	haid
k + ai =	kai	kaij	kais	kaiv	kaim	kaig	kaib	kai	kaid
l + ai =	lai	laij	lais	laiv	laim	laig	laib	lai	laid
m + ai =	mai	maij	mais	maiv	maim	maig	maib	mai	maid
n + ai =	nai	naij	nais	naiv	naim	naig	naib	nai	naid
p + ai =	pai	paij	pais	paiv	paim	paig	paib	pai	paid
s + ai =	sai	saij	sais	saiiv	saim	saig	saib	sai	said
t + ai =	tai	taij	tais	taiv	taim	taig	taib	tai	taid
v + ai =	vai	vaij	vais	vaiiv	vaim	vaig	vaiib	vai	vaid
x + ai =	xai	xaij	xais	xaiiv	xaim	xaig	xaib	xai	xaid
y + ai =	yai	yaij	yais	yaiiv	yaim	yaig	yaiib	yai	yaid
z + ai =	zai	zaij	zais	zaiiv	zaim	zaig	zaib	zai	zaid

The English word **die** would be written in Hmong phonically as **dais**, and the English word **do** would be written as **dus**, and **never** would be written as **neb-vawm**.

I saw you before (ais xos yus bis-foj). **I hear you now** (ais hiaj yus naus).