

I Can Read Thai

(Book I)

Name of student

Sumaa Language and Culture Institute

by

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I Can Read Thai (Book I)

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Contents

Foreword

Basic Ideas of Reading and Writing Thai 1 – 8

The Tone Rules 9 – 14

Lesson 1 15 – 21

Letters ก and ข with Sarà ำ and ิ and the Final Consonant ฬ

Lesson 2 22 – 25

Letters ก and ข with Sarà ะ and ี and the Final Consonant ก

Lesson 3 26 – 31

Letters ฃ, ฅ, and ๓ with Sarà ำ, ิ, ะ, and ี

and Final Consonants ฬ, ก, and ฃ

Lesson 4 32 – 37

Letters ๓, ๕, ๗, and ๙ with Sarà ำ, ิ, ะ and ี

and Final Consonants ฬ, ก, ฃ, and ๓

Lesson 5 38 – 42

Middle Consonants with Sarà ำ, ะ, ๓, and ๕

Lesson 6 43 – 47

Middle Consonants with Clusters ๓, ๕, and ๗

Lesson 7 48 – 52

อ Preceding ย (อป่า, อปู่, อป่าง, and อป่าก)

Lesson 8 53 – 60

Letters ข and ฃ with Sarà โะ and ือ and the Final Consonant ฃ

Lesson 9 61 – 67

Letters ฃ and ค with Sarà โะ and ือ and the Final Consonant ฃ

Lesson 10 68 – 75

Letters ฃ, ค, and ฅ with Sarà ือ and ุ and the Final Consonant ฃ

Lesson 11 76 – 86

Letters ฃ, ค, and ฅ with Sarà ือ and ุ and the Final Consonant ฃ

Lesson 12 87 – 96

Low Consonants (unpaired) with Sarà ือ and ุ

and the Final Consonant ฃ

Lesson 13 97 – 101

ฃ Preceding Low Consonants (unpaired)

Lesson 14 102 – 106

Consonants with Sarà ะ, ุ, ือ, and ือ

Lesson 15 107 – 115

Letters ฃ, ค, and ฅ with Sarà ็, ็, and ัว

Lesson 16 116 – 122

Letters พ, ฟ, and ภ with Sara ะ ็ะ and ัะ

Lesson 17 123 – 130

Letters ช, ซ, ฌ, ฌ, ฌ, and ฌ

Lesson 18 131 – 136

Paired and Unpaired Low Consonants

Lesson 19 137 – 144

Irregular Final Consonants

Lesson 20 145 – 149

Special Leading Consonants (อักษรนำ)

Lesson 21 150 – 158

Clusters

Lesson 22 159 - 164

Sara ็, Double รร, and ฤ ฤ

Lesson 23 165 - 171

Special Markers

Lesson 24 172 - 175

Writing English Words in Thai

Lesson 25 176 - 179

ฝึกอ่านภาษาไทย

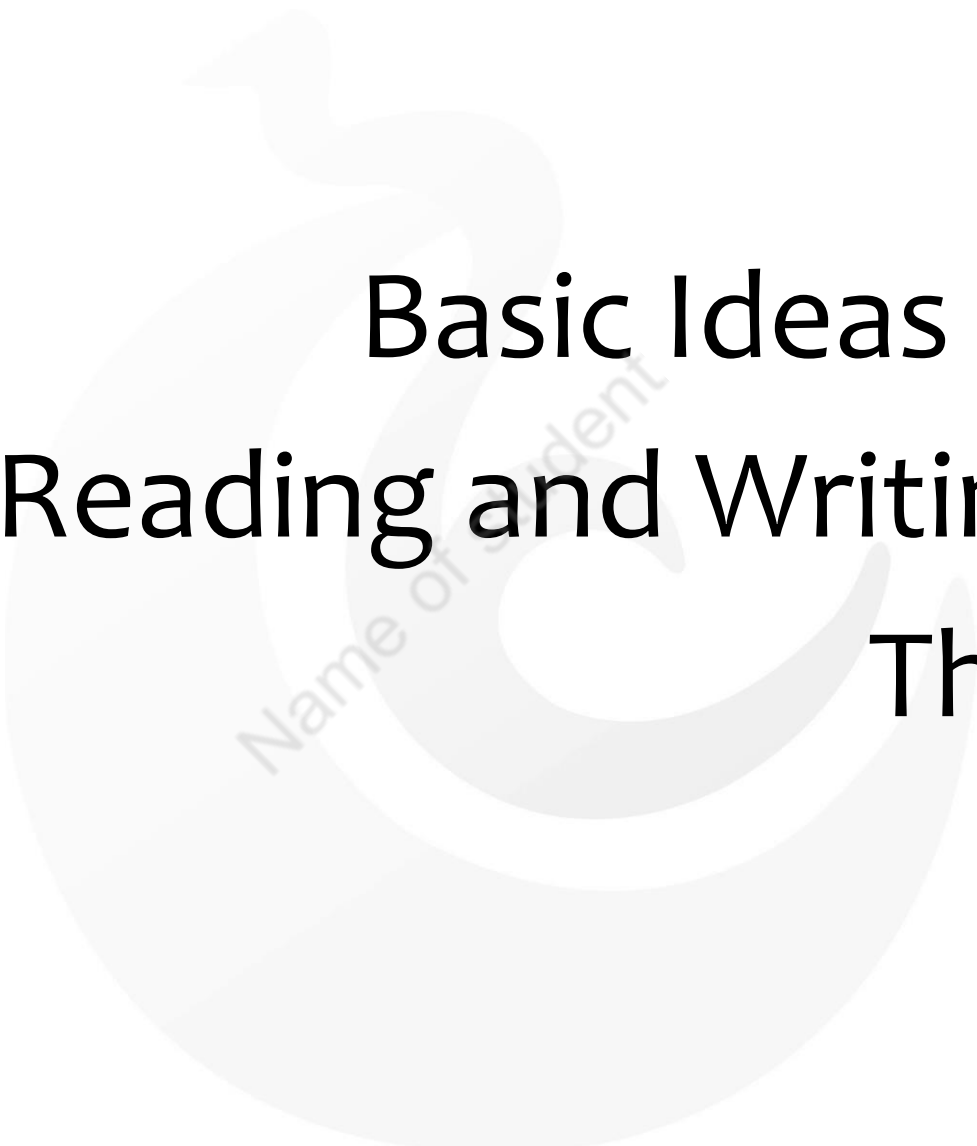
Foreword

I CAN READ THAI (Book 1) is prepared as a textbook for a Thai reading course. This book is suitable for use as a part of instruction. However, interested individuals can also use this textbook as a self-study material. In this case, assistance from a native speaker of Thai is recommended during reading aloud practice, to ensure that learners' pronunciation is accurate.

Recognizing the five tones is the key to learning Thai reading and writing. Therefore, this book concentrates on the tone rules along with three classes of consonants. Throughout the twenty-five chapters in this textbook, consonants and vowels are introduced in a systematic manner. Each chapter is accompanied by reading exercises to check learners' understanding of rules and ensure that reading objectives are met.

Certain explanations of rules are tailored for foreigners' ease of understanding. These adjustments do not distort the system of the language and therefore, the rules remain correct.

This book is also used by the Sumaa Language and Culture Institute. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact www.sumaa.net or sumaa48@gmail.com.



Basic Ideas of Reading and Writing Thai

Reading and writing Thai is about the **combination** of a consonant, a vowel, a final consonant (optional), and a tone in a syllable. For example,

ก + าก = กาก /kaa/ means a crow

ก + าก + ง = กากง /kaaŋ/ means to unfold

ก + าก + ง + ่ = ก้ากง /kâaŋ/ means a fish bone.

There are rules that tell us how to combine these elements.

Basic Ideas of Thai Consonants, Vowels, and Tone Markers.

Consonants (เสียงพยัญชนะ)

There are forty-four letters in the Thai alphabet. However, since some letters represent the same sound, Thai has only twenty-one distinct consonant sounds.

According to the rules of reading and writing Thai, we divide the forty-four letters into three classes which are High Consonants (อักษรสูง), Middle Consonants (อักษรกลาง), and Low Consonants (อักษรต่ำ). These three classes use different rules of tone. Moreover, we can also class the forty-four letters by the place of articulations.

Place of Articulation and Class of Consonants	Velum (เพดานอ่อน)	Palate (เพดานแข็ง)	Alveorus (ปุ่มเหงือก)	Lips (ริมฝีปาก)	Dental (ฟัน)	Glottal (เส้นเสียง)
High Consonants (อักษรสูง)	/kh/ ข /h/ ห	/ch/ ฉ	/th/ ถ, ฐ	/ph/ ฟ /f/ ฟ	/s/ ส, ษ, ศ	
Middle Consonants (อักษรกลาง)	/k/ ก	/c/ จ	/d/ ด, ฎ /dt/ ต, ฏ	/b/ บ /bp/ ป		/ʔ/ อ
Low Consonants (อักษรต่ำ)	/kh/ ค, ฆ /h/ ฮ /ŋ/ ง	/ch/ ช, ฌ /y/ ย, ญ	/th/ ท, ฑ /n/ น, ณ /l/ ล, ฬ /r/ ร	/ph/ พ, ภ /f/ ฟ /m/ ม /w/ ว	/s/ ซ	

Note:

1. There are forty-two letters shown in the table, because the letters ฦ and ฦ are obsolete.
2. Most of the letters that share the same sound are used to write borrowed words which come mostly from Pali and Sanskrit language.
3. The term for the place of articulation in this table has been simplified to make it is more friendly for learners who are not used to the technical language of linguistics.

Vowels (สระ)

There are twenty-eight vowel sounds in Thai excluding four syllabic consonants (ฤ, ฤๅ, ฦ, and ฦๅ) which inherit the vowel sounds in themselves.

Thai vowels can be placed in many positions.

Positions of Vowels in Thai

Position	Vowel Form	Example
Front Position	/ee/ เ-	เก, เค, เง
	/ææ/ แ-	แก, แค, แง
	/oo/ โ-	โก, โค, โง
	/ay/ ไ-	ไก, ไค, ไง
	/ay/ ใ- (ใ- and ใ- used to be pronounced differently in the old days.)	ไก, ไค, ไง (There are only 20 words written with ใ- .)

Back Position	/aa/	-า	กา, คา, งา
	/a/	-ะ	จา, ฉะ, ดะ
	/aw/	-อ	กอ, คอ, งอ
Top Position	/ii/	-ี	กี้, คี, งี้
	/i/	-ิ	จี้, ฉิ, ดิ
	/i/	-ึ	จี้, ฉี้, ดี้
Below Position	/uu/	-ู	กู, คุ, งู
	/u/	-ุ	จุ, คุ, ภู
Top + Back Position	/ii/	-ี-อ	กือ, คือ, งือ
	/ua/	-ัว	กัว, คัว, งัว
	/am/	-ำ	กำ, คำ, งำ
	/uaʔ/	-ัวะ	จัวะ, ฉัวะ, ดัวะ
Front + Back Position	/aw/	-อ	เกอ, เคอ, งอ
	/aw/	-า	เกา, คา, งา
	/e/	-ะ	เจะ, ฉะ, เดะ
	/æ/	แ-ะ	แจะ, ฉะ, เดะ
	/o/	โ-ะ	โจะ, โฉะ, โตะ
	/w/	-าะ	เงาะ, ฉะ, เตาะ
	/w/	-อะ	เจอะ, ฉะ, เตอะ
Front+Top+Back Position	/ia/	-ีย	เกีย, คีย, งีย
	/ia/	-ือ	เกือ, คือ, งือ
	/iaʔ/	-ียะ	เจียะ, ฉียะ, เตียะ
	/iaʔ/	-ือะ	เจือะ, ฉือะ, เตือะ

Each Thai vowel sound occurs in both long and short forms.

Long Vowels	Short Vowels
-ᨗ	-ᨗ
ᨑ-	ᨑ-ᨗ
ᨒ-	ᨒ-ᨗ
ᨓ-	ᨓ-ᨗ
-ᨔ	ᨑ-ᨗ
ᨕ	ᨕ
ᨕ-ᨔ	ᨕ
ᨖ	ᨖ
ᨖ-ᨔ	ᨖ-ᨗ
ᨗ-ᨔ	ᨗ-ᨗ
ᨗ-ᨔ	ᨗ-ᨗ

Note:

Vowels ᨗ, ᨑ-, ᨒ- and ᨑ-ᨗ are short. However, we can prolong the final sound since each of them contains a final consonant sound.

ᨗ is pronounced as /am/ or /-ᨗ/ + /m/

ᨑ-ᨗ is pronounced as /aw/ or /-ᨗ/ + /w/

ᨒ- and ᨓ- is pronounced as /ay/ or /-ᨗ/ + /y/

Nine vowels will change their forms when a final letter applied. The changed vowels are -ะ, -็, -๊, -๋, -อ, -ะ, -ะ, -าะ, -ะ, and -อ (only when ิ is the final letter.) For example, กิ + -ะ + ดิ does not combine into กิะดิ, but กิ๊ด, meaning “to bite.”

Tone Markers and Tone Sounds (วรรณยุกต์)

There are five tones in Thai, but only four tone markers, because no tone marker is applied for the middle tone. The tone markers are always put above an initial consonant, except when the initial letters are a cluster, in which case we put it above the last consonant of the cluster.

ไม้เอก / máay ɤ̀èek/	ก [่]	ก่า	กว่า
ไม้โท / máay thoɔ/	ก [้]	ก้า	กว้าง
ไม้ตรี / máay trii/	ก [๊]	ก๊า	กว้าง
ไม้จัตวา / máay càttawaa/	ก [๋]	ก๋า	กว้าง

As for the tone sounds, the tone actually applies only to the sound of the vowel, not the consonant.

Final Sounds (เสียงตัวสะกด)

There are eight final sounds in Thai which are /k/, /t/, /p/, /ŋ/, /n/, /m/, /y/, and /w/.

In Thai, most letters can be used as both initial and final letters. For example, the word กากิ, the first letter ก is an initial letter and the second ก is a final letter. Both of the ก letters are pronounced with the same sound which is /k/. This kind of final letter is called a regular final consonant.

However, some letters are not pronounced the same when they appear as an initial letter and a final letter. For example, in the word กากิ, ก as an initial letter is pronounced /c/ but as a final letter is pronounced /t/. This kind of final letter is called an irregular final consonant.

Irregular final consonants are usually used in words we borrow from the Pali, Sanskrit, Khmer, and English languages.

The letter ฉ, ฌ, ฝ, ฝ, ห, อ, and ฮ are not used as final consonants.

Open Syllable and Closed Syllable (พยางค์เปิดและพยางค์ปิด)

An open syllable is a syllable that can be prolonged without any obstruction when pronounced. A syllable with a long vowel makes an open syllable. A syllable with a final sound /n/, /m/, /y/, /ŋ/ and /w/ is also considered an open syllable. Moreover, a syllable spelled with vowels -า, -ไ, -เ- and -า is considered an open syllable as well.

A closed syllable is the opposite of the open syllable. A closed syllable cannot be prolonged when pronounced. It is combined with a short vowel or with a final sound /k/, /t/, or /p/.

The Tone Rules

Name of student

The Tone Rules

The key indicators of the tone in the Thai syllable are:

1. Classes of consonants (Middle, High or Low Consonant)
2. Tone marks (máay ʔèek ̀, máay thoo ́, máay trii ̂, and máay càttawaa ̃)
3. Kinds of syllable (open or closed syllable)

The Tone Rules of Middle Consonants

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle Tone	Low Tone	Falling Tone	High Tone	Rising Tone
Open Syllable	กา No tone mark for middle tone.	ก่า ̀ is used for low tone.	ก้า ́ is used for falling tone.	ก๊า ̂ is used for high tone.	ก๊า ̃ is used for rising tone.
Closed Syllable	No written form.	กะ No tone mark for low tone.	กัะ ̀ is used for falling tone.	กั๊ ̂ is used for high tone.	There is no closed syllable with rising tone that has meaning in Thai.

The Tone Rules of High Consonants

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle Tone	Low Tone	Falling Tone	High Tone	Rising Tone
Open Syllable	No written form.	ข้า ̀ is used for low tone.	ข้า ́ is used for falling tone.	No written form.	ชา No tone mark for rising tone.
Closed Syllable	No written form.	คะ No tone mark for low tone.	There is no closed syllable with falling tone that has meaning in Thai.	No written form.	There is no closed syllable with rising tone that has meaning in Thai.

The Tone Rules of Low Consonants

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle Tone	Low Tone	Falling Tone	High Tone	Rising Tone
Open Syllable	ค	No written form.	ค๋ ◌̣ is used for falling tone.	คั ◌̂ is used for high tone.	No written form.
Closed Syl. (long vowel)	No written form.	No written form.	ค บ No tone mark.	คั บ ◌̂ is used for high tone.	There is no closed syllable with rising tone that has meaning in Thai.
Closed Syl. (short vowel)	No written form.	No written form.	คั ะ ◌̣ is used for falling tone.	ค ะ No tone mark.	There is no closed syllable with rising tone that has meaning in Thai.

In other words, the Middle Consonants in an open syllable, can be written in five forms: without a tone marker, with máay ʔèek ◌̣, máay thoo ◌̂, máay trii ◌̆ and máay càttawaa ◌̈́. When a tone marker is not applied, a Middle Consonant is pronounced with the middle tone. With máay ʔèek ◌̣, a Middle Consonant is pronounced with the low tone. With máay thoo ◌̂, a Middle Consonant is pronounced with the falling tone. With máay trii ◌̆, a Middle Consonant is pronounced with the high tone. And With máay càttawaa ◌̈́, a Middle Consonant is pronounced with the rising tone. It is only Middle Consonants that can be written with máay trii ◌̆ and máay càttawaa ◌̈́ and pronounced with high and rising tones respectively.

As for an open syllable of High Consonants, they can be written in three forms: written without a tone marker, with máay ʔèek ̀ or with máay thoo ́. When a tone marker is not applied, a High Consonant is pronounced with the rising tone. With máay ʔèek ̀, a High Consonant is pronounced with the low tone. And with máay thoo ́, a High Consonant is pronounced with the falling tone.

Lastly, an open syllable of Low Consonants can be written in three forms: without a tone marker, with máay ʔèek ̀ and with máay thoo ́. When a tone marker is not applied, a Low Consonant is pronounced with the middle tone. With máay ʔèek ̀, a Low Consonant is pronounced with the falling tone. And with máay thoo ́, a Low Consonant is pronounced with the high tone.

In conclusion, for an open syllable, the middle tone is pronounced with Middle and Low Consonants. The low tone is pronounced with Middle and High Consonants. The falling tone is pronounced with all classes of consonants. The high tone is pronounced with Middle and Low Consonants. And the rising tone is pronounced with Middle and High Consonants.

Considering the occurrence of the tone sound in the open syllable, we can see that the falling tone occurs across all three classes of consonant. By contrast, the middle, low, high and rising tones are occurred in only two classes of consonant.

Middle Tone	Low Tone	Falling Tone	High Tone	Rising Tone
	High Con. ่่า	High Con. ้่า		High Con. ๊่า
Middle Con. ๊า	Middle Con. ่า	Middle Con. ้า	Middle Con. ๊า	Middle Con. ้า
Low Con. ๋า		Low Con ๋า	Low Con. ๋า	

As for the occurrence of the tone markers, máay ʔèek ̀ and máay thoo ́ occur with all classes of consonant, while máay trii ̂ and máay càttawaa ̃ occur with Middle Consonants only.

No Tone Marker	máay ʔèek ̀	máay thoo ́	máay trii ̂	máay càttawaa ̃
Middle Con. ก	High Con. ข่า	High Con. ข้า	Middle Con. ก้า	Middle con. ก้า
Low Con. ค	Middle Con. ก่า	Middle Con. ก๊า		
	Low Con. ค่า	Low Con. ค๊า		

For the closed syllable, máay ʔèek ̀ is applied only to Low Consonants to make the falling tone. Máay thoo ́ is applied to Middle Consonants to make the falling tone and to Low Consonants to make the high tone. Máay trii ̂ is applied only to the Middle Consonants to make the high tone.

There are closed syllables that do not have a tone marker. A closed syllable of Middle and High Consonants without a tone marker inherits the low tone, while the closed syllable of Low Consonants without a tone marker has two categories. Those with the long vowel have the falling tone and those with the short vowel have the high tone.

Tones That are Possible for Closed Syllables

Middle Tone	Low Tone	Falling Tone	High Tone	Rising Tone
-	High Con. ขะ	Middle Con. กั๋ะ	Middle Con. กั๊ะ	-
	Middle Con. กะ	Low Con. คั๋ะ	Low con. คะ	
		คาบ	ค๊าบ	

Table of Tones

Middle Consonant Class (อักษรกลาง)

ก จ บ ป อ ด ต ฎ ฏ (9 ตัว)

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle	Low	Falling	High	Rising
Open Syllable	กา	ก่า	ก้า	ก๊า	ก๋า
Closed Syllable		กะ	ก๊ะ	ก๊ะ	

High Consonant Class (อักษรสูง)

ข ฃ ฉ ถ ฐ ผ ฝ ศ ษ ส ห (11 ตัว)

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle	Low	Falling	High	Rising
Open Syllable		ข่า	ข้า		ขา
Closed Syllable		ชะ			

Low Consonants (Paired) (อักษรต่ำคู่)

ค ฅ ม ฌ ฎ ท ฒ ท ฑ ฒ ฬ ฎ ฏ ฐ ษ (14 ตัว)

Low Consonants (Unpaired) (อักษรต่ำเดี่ยว)

ง น ฌ ม ย ฎ ร ล ฬ ิว (10 ตัว)

Tone Kind of Syl.	Middle	Low	Falling	High	Rising
Open Syllable	คา		ค่า	ค้ำ	
Closed Syl. (long vowel)			คาบ	ค้ำบ	
Closed Syl. (short vowel)			ค๊ะ	คะ	

สระ	
อา	อะ
อี	อิ
อือ	อิ
อุ	อุ
เอ	เอะ
แอ	แอะ
โอ	โอะ
ออ	เอาะ
เออ	เออะ
เอียบ	เอียะ
เอือ	เอือะ
อัว	อัวะ
อำ	
เอา	
โอ	
ไอ	

Lesson 1

Letters ण and ञ

with Sarà ा and ै

and the Final Consonant ञ

In this lesson we will learn how to read the Middle Consonants ก and ข in an open syllable.

As mentioned in the Introduction of this book, there are two kinds of syllables in Thai, open and closed. Whether the syllable is open or closed is the key to identifying the tone of the syllable. An open syllable means a syllable prolonged without any obstruction when pronounced. An open syllable is one with any of these characteristics:

1. A syllable with a long vowel without a final consonant.
2. A syllable with a final sound /n/ /m/ /y/ /ง/ or /w/.
3. A syllable with one of the vowels ำ, ใ, ใ, or ำ.

The long vowels sarà ာ /aa/, and sarà ီး /ii/ with the final consonant ဲ will be used in this lesson.

Initial Letters in the Group of Middle Consonants

ก ก ไก่ /kwa kày/

ก This letter is the /k/ sound. Thai people pronounce it /kwa /with the name /kày/ which means a rooster, so we call this letter / kwa kày/. ก is a letter in the group of Middle Consonants.

ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก

ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก ก

ข ข ๒๓ /caw caan/

ข This letter is the /c/ sound. Thai people pronounce it /caw/ with the name /caan/ which means a plate, so we call this letter /caw caan/. ข is a letter in the group of Middle Consonants.

ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข

ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข ข

Long Vowels

Sara ๑ /aa/ is a long vowel placed after a consonant.

า า า า า า า า า า า า

Sara ็ /ii/ is a long vowel placed on top of a consonant.



Read and Write the Combination of an Initial Consonant and a Vowel.

ก	ก	ก	ก	ก	ก
จ	จ	จ	จ	จ	จ
ค	ค	ค	ค	ค	ค
ข	ข	ข	ข	ข	ข

Tone Markers

There are four tone markers in Thai. They are always placed above the initial consonant of the syllable or the last letter of an initial consonant cluster.

ไม้เอก / máay r̀eek/ ็



ไม้โท / máay thoo/ ้



ไม้ตรี / máay trii/ ็

๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓ ๓

ไม้จัตวา / máay càttawaa/ ็

+ + + + + + + + + + + +

Write the Combination of an Initial Consonant, a Vowel, and a Tone Marker

กา ก่า ก้า ก๊า ก๋า
 จา จ่า จ้า จ๊า จ๋า
 กิ กิ่ กิ๊ กิ๋ กิ๋
 จิ จิ่ จิ๊ จิ๋ จิ๋

The Tone Rules of Middle Consonants in an Open Syllable

| Open Syllable | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Middle Tone | Low Tone | Falling Tone | High Tone | Rising Tone |
| กา / จา
No tone mark
for middle tone. | ก่า / จ่า
็ is used for
low tone. | ก้า / จ้า
็ is used for
falling tone. | ก๊า / จ๊า
็ is used for
high tone. | ก๋า / จ๋า
็ is used for
rising tone. |

อ่านภาษาไทย (Read Phaasǎa Thai)

กา ก่า ก้า ก๊า ก๋า กิ กิ่ กิ๊ กิ๋ กิ๋
 จา จ่า จ้า จ๊า จ๋า จิ จิ่ จิ๊ จิ๋ จิ๋

The Final Consonant น

น น หนู /นอว น้หนู/

น This letter is the /n/ sound. Thai people pronounce it /นอว/ with the name /น้หนู/ which means a mouse or a rat, so we call this letter /นอว น้หนู/.

น can be used as either an initial consonant or a final consonant. As a final consonant, it has the /n/ sound as well. A syllable which ends with น is an open syllable.

น น น น น น น น น น น น น
น น น น น น น น น น น น น

Note : น as an initial letter is in the Low Consonant class.

อ่านภาษาไทย (Read Phaaśǎa Thai)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|
| กา | ก่า | ก้า | ก๊า | ก๋า | กาน | ก่าน | ก้าน | ก๊า | ก๋า |
| กิ | กั | กั้ | กั๊ | กั๋ | กิน | กั | กั้ | กั๊ | กั๋ |
| จา | จ่า | จ้า | จ๊า | จ๋า | จาน | จ่าน | จ้าน | จ๊า | จ๋า |
| จิ | จึ | จึ้ | จึ๊ | จึ๋ | จิน | จึ | จึ้ | จึ๊ | จึ๋ |

ฝึกอ่านคำที่มีความหมาย (Practice Reading Words with Meaning)

ก ไก่

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|------|--------|-----|------------------------|
| กา | a crow,
a kettle | ก้าน | a stem | ไก่ | How many?
How much? |
|----|---------------------|------|--------|-----|------------------------|

จ จาน

| | | | |
|-----|---------|-----|-------------------|
| จาน | a plate | จีน | China,
Chinese |
|-----|---------|-----|-------------------|

ฝึกอ่านคำหลายพยางค์ (Practice Reading Words with Many Syllables)

ก๊าก้าน ก๊ากาน กากี้