

Beginning Khmer (Khmer 1A) is one-half of a year-long sequence designed to bring students up to “survival level” in standard spoken and written Khmer. We will spend about 60% of our time on speaking and listening, and 40% on the writing system. Class will mostly consist of activities in which Khmer must be used to accomplish specific tasks relevant to the topical matter of the Unit, thus giving practical experience in using and hearing Khmer. There will also be lectures (in English) on various cultural and grammatical issues in Khmer, with a focus on how these issues relate to English and American culture). There will be lectures on the writing system and on common pronunciation problems as well. There will also be lots of “focused listening” practice, games, and songs. A playful and creative approach will be encouraged in the learning and practice of all four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in Khmer.

While many of the teaching techniques used in this course have their origin in the West, a strict Khmer classroom culture will be maintained. Students must show appropriate respect for their instructor and for their fellow students. Failure to do this will hurt one’s grade just as much as not doing homework or not showing up to class. Khmer, like all languages, is inextricably bound with the culture of the people who speak it as a native language. If you don’t learn how to properly behave in the culture, no matter how well you speak, you don’t really know the language.

NOTE: This course is be open to and includes students from UCLA and UC-Irvine, which are Quarter-system schools. This means that UC-Berkeley students will need to wait until the other schools in session before we begin the main content of the class. For the first month of class, you'll learn some basic Khmer introductions, and an overview of the basic consonants. We'll also watch some videos made by my students, and a documentary on Khmer pop music of the 1960s/70s. UC-Berkeley students will meet 6 times from late August until late September, on Mondays and Wednesdays. The main content of the course will begin on Thursday, Sept. 23, at which point we'll start meeting five days a week.

Here are the days that UC-Berkeley students will be meeting with the instructor prior to the other schools joining us:

Wednesday August 25
Monday August 30
Thursday September 2
Thursday September 9
Monday September 13
Thursday September 16

Course requirements:

Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Class Participation: 45%
- Quizzes on Alphabet Basics: 10% (4 quizzes with total scores averaged, and the lowest score among the 4 discarded)
- Homework, including a “dialog journal” (one written page in Khmer on any topic) handed in every two weeks (beginning in Unit Two): 20%
- Final Exam: 15%
- Mid-term Exam: 10%

In general, students are expected to spend at least one hour outside of class for each class hour. That hour should be spent preparing/studying, and in particular memorizing and practicing vocabulary and sentence structures covered the previous day in class. If you do not spend this *minimum* amount of time studying/practicing outside of class, you will not be able to reach the goals (described as “At the end of this Unit, students will be able to...” listed in this syllabus.

Students will not be graded on attendance per se, but note that if you don’t attend, you can’t participate, and active participation in class activities makes up 45% of your grade. If you do miss class, it is *your responsibility*--by checking with the instructor or fellow students--to find out what you missed and cover the necessary material in time for the next class. You may utilize office hours to make up for material missed because you didn't attend a class, but only within reason...in other words, you can't use office hours to make up for class time you choose to miss on a regular basis or to an excessive amount.

Also note that if you're having trouble with any of the material in the class, you are expected to come to office hours for help. If you consistently show low grades on quizzes and exams, inability to keep up with the rest of the class in activities, incomplete memorization of vocabulary, alphabet, etc., and I don't see you seeking help in office hours, then I can only assume that you don't care about doing well in the class, and I will grade you accordingly.

The instructor must always be addressed by the title you will learn to use with him on the first day of class. Please respect both your instructor and fellow students by coming to class on-time. No cellphone activity will be permitted in class, including texting. **Cellphone use--or computer use not directly related to work currently being done as part of the class--will be severely penalized.** Laptops are only permitted to be open in class when I tell you to turn to a page in your textbook, and this will be rare. **The penalties for cellphone use or non-class-related laptop use in class are significant. The first offense will result in a 5% reduction of your total grade for the entire course. The second offense will result in a 10% reduction of your grade. Every subsequent offense will result in a 20% reduction of your grade. I'm serious about this one, and I keep records for every single day...so when you come to class, don't let yourself be tempted.** That call or text can wait until class is over. Put your phone on “silent,” and put it away.

Office hours: 3-4 Monday and Wednesday, or by appointment. Office hours will be held on Zoom, meeting ID 417 780 5140. Password will be given to registered students before class begins.

Textbook:

“*Muk Khmae*” by Frank Smith. Includes videos, audio tracks of vocabulary and structures and clickable alphabet chart. Available as a \$42 download from <https://studykhmer.com/textbooks/beginning.html> .

No physical dictionary is required for the course, but students may wish to purchase the *Hippocrene Cambodian-English/English-Cambodian Dictionary*. It’s not perfect (and note that the Khmer words in it are handwritten, which confuses some students) but it’s small, cheap, and goes in both directions. Usually available on amazon.com. Students are encouraged to use the free online dictionary at <http://www.sealang.net/khmer>. Note that this dictionary requires that Khmer Unicode fonts are installed on one’s computer. See the instructor for more info on this.

Course Content:

Unit One: Introductions and Pleasantries (September 23 - October 5)

Topics covered in this unit include polite and colloquial greetings and farewells, talking about basic everyday actions and activities and commonly used kinship terms. Students will also learn to count to 10 in Khmer. Students will begin to learn the basics of the Khmer writing system from day one in class. No phonetic transcription will be used. At the end of this unit, students will be familiar with most of the Khmer consonants.

At the end of Unit One, students will be able to:

- greet social peers and elders/teachers appropriately in Khmer
- say farewell appropriately in a variety of social contexts
- count to 10 in Khmer
- ask and respond to very basic questions regarding family, work and everyday activities
- use common verbs (walk, go, come, stay, eat, etc.) in combination with common pronouns and names of locations to ask/answer questions concerning simple actions and activities
- be able to use appropriately (as pronouns) the most common kinship terms in Khmer

Unit Two: The Language of the Classroom (October 6 - October 18)

Topics covered in this unit include the names of objects in the classroom, recognizing and responding to common teacher commands and questions, and asking basic questions about language (“How do you say _____ in Khmer?” “How are these two words different?” etc.). Students will also learn the names of several body parts, a few selected classifiers in Khmer, and how to describe common physical actions (put, take, give, lift, stand, sit). Students will

learn more kinship terms used as pronouns, the rudiments of telling time in Khmer, how to manipulate concepts of time in conversation in a very basic way, and the names of additional important locations and verbs to describe everyday activities. Special attention will be paid to common vowel and consonant pronunciation problems in Khmer by non-native speakers. In their study of the writing system, students will become familiar with the about 1/3 of the rest of the Khmer consonants and the rest of the Khmer vowels. Students will have memorized at least six important Khmer “sight words”. Students will be able to write simple sentences in Khmer mirroring to some extent their current command of the spoken language.

At the end of Unit Two, students will be able to:

- respond appropriately to the most common classroom commands from the teacher
- begin to use several Khmer classifiers appropriately
- ask and give the time in limited ways
- increase the complexity of their ability to describe everyday activities and actions begun in Unit One
- respond to commands involving common physical actions, and give a few of these commands themselves
- converse using a wider range of kinship terms as pronouns
- begin to incorporate the notions of time and aspect into their Khmer sentences
- count to 1,000 in Khmer
- recite from memory two Khmer proverbs
- be able to ask basic questions about language and talk in a limited way about language learning

The mid-term exam will consist of two sections: written and oral. The written section will be a short test comprising dictation, fill-in and matching exercises. The oral section will involve memorizing and performing a simple dialog reflecting everyday conversation.

Unit Three: The Family (October 26 – November 23)

Topics in this Unit include additional Khmer kinship terms used as pronouns, talking about family, friends and one’s personal history (the latter in a very limited way), and the culture and language used in visiting a home in Cambodia. Students will also learn more complex ways of discussing time and aspect, and learn a great many modifiers (adjectives) in Khmer and how to properly use them. More colors will also be learned, as well as the names of important animals. In their study of the written language, students will become familiar with the rest of the Khmer consonants, and all of the “second series” vowel sounds. An additional 6-10 sight words will be learned as well.

At the end of this Unit, students will be able to:

- conduct themselves appropriately during a visit to a Khmer home
- ask and answer common questions concerning family, friendship and marriage in Khmer
- talk in more subtle ways about time and aspect in Khmer

- talk about common animals in Khmer
- use additional words for eating in Khmer appropriately
- use additional kinship terms and other pronouns appropriately in conversation

Midterm Exam: October 22

Final Exam: November 29 (oral), December 2 (written)