

# languages of the world

There are more than 6,000 languages in the world; of these, only 250 are spoken by more than 1 million people.



## Afro-Asiatic languages

Family of some 120 living languages and several dead languages that are associated with major civilizations (Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician).

### Arabic

Language of the Koran as well as the Afro-Asiatic language spoken by the greatest number of individuals; it is concentrated mainly in North Africa and the Middle East.

### Hebrew

One of the official languages of the State of Israel; it is associated with the Jewish faith and people.

### Aramaic

Spoken throughout the Middle East since antiquity; it continues to be spoken in some regions of Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

### Amharic

Language spoken mainly in Ethiopia, where it has the status of official language.

### Berber

Language of the Berber people of North Africa and spoken mainly in Morocco and Algeria.



## Central African languages

Family grouping some 900 languages that are spoken mostly in central and western Africa.

### Fulani

Language spoken along the west coast of Africa, especially in Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria and Cameroon.

### Wolof

Language spoken in the western part of Africa, including in Senegal and Gambia.

### Bambara

Language spoken in Mali and in some neighboring countries, including in Senegal, Guinea and Ivory Coast.

### Hausa

One of the most widespread languages in western Africa; it is spoken mainly in Niger and Nigeria.

### Yoruba

Language spoken mainly in Nigeria, Benin and Togo.



### Bantu languages

Family of over 400 languages spoken in the southern half of the African continent.

#### Swahili

Bantu language spoken by the greatest number of individuals; it is concentrated mostly in southeast Africa, including in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

#### Kirundi

Official language of Burundi; it is very similar to Kinyarwanda.

#### Kinyarwanda

Language spoken mainly in Rwanda.

#### Lingala

Language spoken mainly in Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

#### Zulu

Language spoken by some people in South Africa and in several neighboring countries such as Swaziland and Mozambique.



### Sino-Tibetan languages

Family of languages of Southeast Asia; it is spoken by about one-quarter of the world's population.

#### Chinese

Family of languages belonging to the same writing system using ideograms; it includes Mandarin, the most widely spoken language in the world.

#### Thai

Official language of Thailand; it is also spoken in certain regions of Laos and Myanmar.

#### Vietnamese

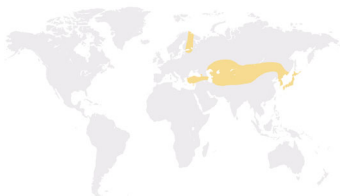
Language spoken mainly in Vietnam; it is usually written using a modified version of the Latin alphabet called "quoc ngu".

#### Burmese

Language spoken mainly in Myanmar (formerly Burma), where it enjoys the status of official language.

#### Tibetan

Language spoken in Tibet and certain regions of Nepal and Bhutan; the written alphabet originated in India.



### Ural-Altaic languages

Family made up of some 100 languages spoken in central and eastern Asia, the Middle East and northern and central Europe.

#### Japanese

Language spoken throughout the Japanese archipelago; it is written using ideograms or syllabic characters.

#### Korean

Language spoken mainly in Korea; its lexicon includes many words of Chinese origin.

#### Mongolian

Official language of Mongolia; it is also spoken by some communities in China and Russia.

#### Turkish

Official language of Turkey; it is written using the Latin alphabet.

#### Hungarian

Language spoken in Hungary.

#### Finnish

With Swedish, one of the official languages of Finland.



### Malayo-Polynesian languages

Family grouping some 850 languages that are spread over a vast area, including Madagascar, parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

#### Indonesian

National language of Indonesia; it is closely related to Malay.

#### Tagalog

Language spoken mainly in the Philippines, where it has the status of official language.

#### Malagasy

Language spoken mainly in Madagascar, but also in Comoros and Réunion.

#### Samoa

Language spoken in the Samoa archipelago of Polynesia in the central Pacific.

#### Tahitian

Language spoken in French Polynesia.

#### Hawaiian

Language spoken mainly in Hawaii (United States).

#### Maori

One of the official languages of New Zealand.



### Oceanian languages

All the languages spoken in Oceania; they usually have few ties among themselves or with other language families.

#### Melanesian

Language spoken in Melanesia, a group of archipelagos in the South Pacific that includes mainly New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Fiji Islands and New Caledonia.

#### Papuan languages

There are over 800 Papuan languages and dialects; they are spoken mainly on the island of New Guinea.

#### Australian aboriginal languages

There are a few hundred languages associated with the indigenous peoples of Australia; several are barely spoken today or have disappeared completely.



### Amerindian languages

Several hundred languages are associated with the indigenous peoples of the Americas; several are barely spoken today or have disappeared completely.

#### Inuktitut

Language of the Inuit who live in Alaska, the Canadian North and Greenland.

#### Cree

Algonquian language associated with the Cree, the largest Amerindian community in Canada, who live in the area between Alberta and Labrador.

#### Montagnais

Algonquian language associated with the Montagnais, who live in Eastern Canada, mostly in Quebec (North Shore of the St. Lawrence) and in Labrador.

#### Navajo

Native language spoken by the Navajo people of the Southwestern United States (Arizona, New Mexico).

#### Nahuatl

Language of the Aztec Empire that is still widely spoken today in certain regions of southern Mexico.

#### Maya

Language of the Maya Empire that is spoken in certain regions of southern Mexico, especially the Yucatan Peninsula.

#### Quechua

Language of the Inca Empire and the language spoken today by the largest number of Amerindians in countries such as Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.

#### Aymara

Language spoken mainly in Bolivia and Peru.

#### Guarani

Language accorded official status in Paraguay; it is also spoken in certain regions of Argentina and Bolivia.



## Indo-European languages

Group of languages (there are more than 200) sharing a common ancestral language as deduced by a historical comparison of the grammars of the present-day languages. Latin and ancient Greek are Indo-European.

### Romance languages

All the European languages derived from Latin; some have spread throughout the world.

#### French

Language of France and some neighboring countries that spread with the arrival of the French or Belgians to North America, Africa and Asia.

#### Spanish

Language of Spain that was introduced by the Spanish to most of the Americas (23 countries) and one African country (Equatorial Guinea).

#### Catalan

Official language of Catalonia, Valencia and Andorra; it is also spoken in the south of France.

#### Portuguese

Language of Portugal; it spread with the arrival of the Portuguese to Brazil, Africa and Asia.

#### Italian

National language of Italy and one canton of Switzerland (Tessin).

#### Romanian

National language of Romania.

### Germanic languages

All the languages derived from an early Indo-European dialect, which has since disappeared, as deduced from similarities observed among the languages.

#### English

Language of England that spread with the British Empire to North America, India, Asia, Oceania and eastern and southern Africa.

#### German

National language of Germany, Austria and the greatest part of Switzerland.

#### Dutch

Language spoken mainly in the Netherlands and by the Flemish community in Belgium.

#### Danish

Scandinavian language spoken mainly in Denmark.

#### Swedish

Scandinavian language spoken mainly in Sweden and Finland.

#### Norwegian

Scandinavian language spoken mainly in Norway.

### Icelandic

National language of Iceland; it is characterized by its great stability since the Middle Ages.

### Yiddish

Language of the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe; it is a product of the fusion of Hebrew with elements of Germanic and Slavic languages.

### Celtic languages

Widely spoken in western Europe throughout antiquity, these languages declined progressively and are found today in only a few regions.

#### Breton

Language spoken in the west of Brittany (France).

#### Welsh

One of the official languages of Wales (United Kingdom).

#### Scottish

Language closely related to Irish that is spoken mostly in Scotland (United Kingdom).

#### Irish

One of the official languages of the Republic of Ireland; it is also spoken in Northern Ireland (United Kingdom).

**Slavic languages**

Group of languages concentrated in Eastern Europe and Russia; they derive from a common extinct Slavic language.

**Czech**

National language of the Czech Republic that is closely related to Slovak.

**Slovak**

National language of Slovakia; both Slovak and Czech use the Latin alphabet.

**Polish**

National language of Poland; it is fairly close to Czech and Slovak.

**Russian**

National language of Russia that is also widely spoken in the former USSR; Russian is written with the Cyrillic alphabet.

**Ukrainian**

Language related to Russian that is spoken mainly in Ukraine and in several neighboring states.

**Bulgarian**

National language of Bulgaria that is written with the Cyrillic alphabet; it is related to Slovene and Serbo-Croatian.

**Slovene**

Language spoken mainly in Slovenia and written with the Latin alphabet.

**Serbian and Croatian**

Serbians and Montenegrins use the Cyrillic alphabet while Croats and Bosnians use the Latin alphabet.

**isolated languages**

Some modern Indo-European languages cannot be classified into any subgroup.

**Greek**

The national language of Greece is directly descended from ancient Greek; its origin can be traced back several centuries before the Common Era.

**Albanian**

Language spoken mainly in Albania and in some neighboring regions.

**Armenian**

Very old language that is spoken in the Caucasus region, mainly in Armenia.

**Indo-Iranian languages**

Spoken in Asia and the Middle East, they number the largest group of speakers among all Indo-European language groups.

**Persian**

Language spoken mainly in Iran and Afghanistan; it is written using the Arabic alphabet.

**Urdu**

Language spoken mainly in Pakistan and Northern India; it is very similar to Hindi but is written using the Arabic alphabet.

**Hindi**

Indian language spoken by the largest number of individuals; it is written using the Devanagari alphabet, which is common to several languages derived from Sanskrit.

## common symbols

Pictograms used in public areas or along thoroughfares to advertise services or warn of prohibitions.



camping prohibited



first aid



camping (trailer)



picnic area



camping (tent)



restaurant



wheelchair access



telephone



police



service station



camping (trailer and tent)



taxi transportation



coffee shop



hospital



picnics prohibited



pharmacy



women's rest room



fire extinguisher



men's rest room



information



currency exchange



lost and found articles



no wheelchair access



information