



You represent the driving force of a nomadic civilization that lives in an arid, rocky region. Nearby streams (feeding into a large river) serve as your primary source of fresh water. There are mountainous regions to the north and east, and a great ocean beyond the vast stretches of forest to the south, but your people have never been there.



Epoch 1

To begin with, you will need some sounds. Enclosed you will find an IPA chart. Use it to create a list of sounds (not phonemes) that (minimally) meet these requirements:

Stops: At least six (one set aspirated, the other unaspirated).

Fricatives: No more than two; no fewer than one.

Places of Articulation: At least four (including labial, coronal, velar).

Nasals: No more than two; no fewer than one.

Vowels: No more than three, no fewer than two (balanced).

Approximants/Taps/Trills: Exactly four.

Special: Include a series of long vowels.

Once you have your sound system, use it to create some words. Create roots for the words below, and for seven or eight other basic words (flora, fauna, actions, etc.) that relate to your region. When creating words, use the following max syllable:

{C / #}V(C₁)(C₂) where C₁ = approximant and C₂ = stop (oral or nasal)

(a) speaking, speech

(f) land

(k) eye

(b) tongue

(g) sky

(l) sleeping, sleep

(c) person

(h) water

(m) ear

(d) man

(i) sun

(n) nose

(e) woman

(j) moon

(o) making, make

Note to Group Leader: Please ignore morphology of any kind right now, and don't worry about verbal stems vs. nominal stems. For this set, two vowels can't be next to one another (i.e. an onset is required for every syllable except the first).

Epoch 2

Your people have been in existence for some time, and have recently come across a foolhardy traveler who died of thirst asking something of your band of outriders in an unknown language. You are now aware of the presence of others in the world. Your people and language will need names to distinguish themselves, but first, you may need some pronouns. Adhere to the following:

Number: Two numbers (singular and plural, nouns included).

Person: Two persons (first and second).

Gender/Class: At least two in all persons.

Clusivity: No distinction.

Using what you have, come up with a name for your language and your people (though if you need to coin another noun or two, feel free). You may need to decide on strategies for modification and possession. To do so, answer the following questions:

1. Do modifiers precede or follow the nouns they modify?
2. Are modifiers marked (to indicate they modify something), or are nouns marked to indicate that they're being modified—or both?
3. Do possessors precede or follow the nouns they possess?
4. Are possessors marked (to indicate they possess something), or are nouns marked to indicate that they're possessed—or both?
5. How are possessors (or possessed nouns) and modifiers (or modified nouns) marked: suffix? prefix? preposition? postposition? What about nominal number?

Note to Group Leader: The answers to 1 and 3 need not be identical, but for the sake of this exercise, the answer to 5 should serve for both modification and possession. You may create some demonstratives if you feel ill at ease without a set of third person pronouns.

Epoch 3

Time has passed, and your latest generation of speakers speaks in a way that differs in certain respects from generations past. The following changes have occurred (in order):

1. Intervocalic Voicing: C[+cont] > [+voice] / V_V
2. Spirantization: C^h > [+cont]
3. Fronting: V > [+front] / _C[(+palatal / +alveo-palatal)]
4. Rounding: V > [+round] / _C[(+velar / +uvular)]
5. Create Your Own:

Apply the changes to your words and see what happens. Also create forms for the following words, applying the above changes after you've coined the forms in the old way:

(p) flower

(t) bird

(x) pouch

(q) tree

(u) fish

(y) hat

(r) animal

(v) food

(z) mat, towel

(s) rock

(w) stick

(æ) cloth

Note to Group Leader: The parentheses indicate "either/or"; the comma in between _ and C in rules 3 and 4 indicate that the change occurs no matter the order (i.e. where the consonant in question comes before *or* after the vowel). For the fronting rule, let's say you have a central vowel [ə]. If it comes next to [j] (so [jə] or [əj]) or so me other palatal or alveo-palatal consonant ([ç], [ʃ], etc.), it will front. *How* it will front is up to you. This same applies to the rounding rule next to, e.g. [k], [q], [w], etc.

Epoch 4

Your people have developed specialized knowledge of the surrounding area. They've begun to cultivate several plants and create tools and clothing unique to their region. Enclosed you'll find pictures of several plants, animals and tools. Create words for them using some of the strategies discussed, including:

- Novel Root Creation
- Reduplication
- Affixation
- Compounding
- Metaphorical Extension

In addition, your people have acquired a new ability: the ability to use verbs! Your verbs will encode the same number categories as your nouns (not your pronouns), and then will make distinctions based on chance. You can use the space below to note the distinctions being made:

- Number Encoding: Singular and plural.
- Tense / Aspect Distinction:
- Person Encoding:
- Exponence:
- Wild Card:

Note to Group Leader: The realization/exponence need not be compositional. Just as long as it encodes what it's supposed to encode, that's fine. Don't worry about infinitives, commands, sub / conjunctives or participles (unless there's time and you feel like it).

Epoch 5

Your people have come into regular and steady contact with a nearby civilization. Furthermore, you've discovered that they're in possession of certain items which your people would put to good use if they had a steady supply. Perhaps they would be interested in trading with you for something that you have in abundance...?

Items of Interest

- You've learned of a strange domed plant that seems to grow straight out of tree bark. If boiled down, the resultant broth from these plants is said to cure fevers, rheumatism and the shivers.
- You've learned of an industrious (and, more important, delicious) animal that can be raised for slaughter. They're plump enough to feed an entire family!
- The mountain folk are, additionally, quite adept at crafting fine jewelry—and the mountains are rich in precious metals. These two facts seem to work in your favor.

In order to communicate with others, you'll need some greetings. Consider what's been discussed about greetings and coin some useful phrases to facilitate your exchange. You might consider coming up with strategies to cover the following:

Hello!	Yes!	Do you have...?
Goodbye!	No!	Will you give me...?
Thank you!	I need...	Repeat, please...?

Note to Group Leader: Your sound changes are no longer synchronic (i.e. current). They may have changed your phonological inventory, but they no longer apply to novel (i.e. borrowed) forms. Older forms, yes.

Epoch 6

Due to advancements in modern travel, you are now able to trade with all the peoples of the world. See what they have to offer! Trade around to get at least three manmade implements, three animals and three plants (and get a few that may have been borrowed before). But note that, yet again, your people have begun to speak their language in a slightly different way. The following changes have taken place (in order):

1. Intervocalic Voicing: C[+stop] > [+voice] / V_V
2. Final Vowel Loss: V > Ø / _#

Epoch 7

As a final challenge: Attempt to translate the Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Namely:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Good luck, and thanks for participating!



