

Discover Discomfort – Swahili Grammar Reference Cheat Sheet

Class	Types of words typically in the class	Examples	Adj. prefix	Object prefix	Poss. prefix	Referential concord	This, these	That, those
M/Wa (1/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular/plural starts with m/wa Used for people All animals, animate objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mtu/watu (people) mtoto/watoto (children) simba (lion) rafiki (friend) 	m-	a-/yu-	w-	ye	huyu	yule
			wa-	wa-	w-	o	hawa	wale
M/Mi (3/4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words that start with <i>m</i> or <i>mi</i> for singular or plural (e.g. "tree/s", <i>mti/miti</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mguu/miguu (leg/s) mti/miti (tree/s) mkate/mikate (bread) 	m-	u-	w-	o	huu	ule
			mi-	i-	y-	yo	hii	ile
Ji/Ma (5/6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words whose singular/plural starts with <i>ji/ma</i> Words where the plural starts with <i>ma</i>, even if singular doesn't start with <i>ji</i> Some words that are plural only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jina/majina (name/s) jibu/majibu (answer) gari/magari (car/s) tunda/matunda (fruit) mafuta (oil) (pl. only) maji (water) (pl. only) 	-	li-	l-	lo	hili	lile
			ma-	ya-	y-	yo	haya	yale
Ki/Vi (7/8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words start with Ki or Vi Words starting Ch/Vy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kitu/vitu (thing/s) kitabu/vitabu (book/s) chakula/vyakula (food/s) chumba/vyumba (room/s) 	ki-	ki-	ch-	cho	hiki	kile
			vi-	vi-	vy-	vyo	hivi	vile
N (9/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many start with <i>n</i> (not always) A lot of imported loanwords Words that have the same word form in singular and plural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ndege (bird/s), ndizi (banana/s) simu (phone), meza (table) chumvi (salt/s), taa (light/s) asubuhi (morning), simu (phone) 	n-	i-	y-	yo	hii	ile
			n-	zi-	z-	zo	hizi	zile
U (11) (plurals treated like n-class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular nouns that begin with a <i>u</i>, sometimes uncountable Conceptual adjective nouns Country names Some nouns beginning with <i>w</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> umeme (electricity), umri (age) uma/nyuma (forks), ukuta/kuta (wall/s) urefu (length), uwezo (ability) uzuri (beauty), upendo (love) Ufaransa (France), UChina (China) wakati/nyakati (time), wimbo/nyimbo (song) 	m-	u-	w-	o	huu	ule
Pa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locations, places. Location words that get a "ni" on the end (for "at this place") Ku: Infinitive form of verbs, when used as nouns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mahali or pahali (place) marikiti (market) nyumba (house/home) duka (shop) ku class: kuishi (to live), kula (to eat) 	pa-	pa-	p-	po	hapa	pale
Ku			ku-	ku-	kwa	ko	huku	kule
Mu			m-	m(u)-	mwa	mo	humu	mule