

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S1 #1

Learning to Say Hello in Swahili

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DIALOGUE - SWAHILI

MAIN

1. Juma : Habari yako?
2. Musa : Mzuri sana.
3. Juma : Uko mzima?
4. Musa : Niko mzima kabisa, Asante.

ENGLISH

1. Juma : Hello?
2. Musa : Hello.
3. Juma : How are you doing?
4. Musa : I am really well thanks.

VOCABULARY

Swahili	English	Class
uko	auxiliary verb meaning 'are you'	phrase
mzima	I'm good, I'm fine, fine	phrase, adverb
niko	I am	verb, pronoun
kabisa	totally, very	adjective, adverb
asante	thanks	adverb
sana	so much, very much	adjective
Habari	Hello	Interjection

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Uko na njaa? "Are you hungry?"	Nilipona, sasa niko mzima. "I am recovered and I am now fine."
Niko na njaa "I am hungry."	Nimeshiba kabisa. "I am totally full."
Asante kwa chakula. "Thanks for the food."	Samahani sana. "I am very sorry."

Asante sana kwa kukuja.

Habari yako

"Thank you so much for coming."

Hello

Habari. Waambaje?

"Hello. How are you doing?"

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

Habari is a word that can be used with people you meet for the first time or with people you know. It is used to inquire about the wellbeing of something or someone. For greeting purposes, you can say *habari yako?* and you can also add the name of the subject at the end. For example, *habari yako Juma?* If you are addressing more than one person you can say *habari yenu?* *Yako* is singular while *yenu* is plural. If you want to know about something like a city you may say *habari ya Nairobi?* meaning "how is Nairobi?"

Mzuri sana is a phrase that is used to reply to greetings. It means "I am fine." The *sana* word is used to add emphasis so you may choose to just say *mzuri*. The phrase can also be used to inform about something or somewhere. For example, it can be a reply to the concern *habari ya Nairobi?* The reply could be: *mzuri sana* meaning that Nairobi is doing well.

Uko Mzima is a phrase that is used as a continuation of greetings. The phrase is made up of *Uko* + *mzima*. *Uko* is used in place of "are you" and *Mzima* is Swahili for "fine." It is mostly used with people who know each other formally. It follows *habari yako* just like in the dialogue. To reply to this, you can use the phrase *niko mzima kabisa*. This means "I am totally fine."

GRAMMAR

The Focus of this Lesson is Passing Greetings

Habari yako?

"Hello"

Habari yako is a general phrase for passing greetings. The verb is in the second person singular since it's referring to one person. The greeting is popular between two people who might or might not have met before. Most often the answer is *mzuri sana* which is Swahili for "I am fine." *Uko mzima* is a courteous way of asking someone if they feel okay. The phrase can also be appropriately used to get to know the condition of a sick person. The answer is constructed using the verb *mzima* and the adverb *kabisa*. The resulting reply is *niko mzima kabisa*. This is a typical answer but there might be other answers such as *mimi simbaya sana* meaning "I am not too bad."

The Verb *Habari*

The phrase used to greet people is *habari yako*. The second word *yako* is a singular pronoun. To greet more than one person, the second word would be *yenu*. *Habari* is also the Swahili word for "news."

For example:

1. *Habari yako dada?*
"How are you sister?" (singular)
2. *Mzuri sana.*
"I am very fine."
3. *Habari yenu nyote?*
"How are you all?" (plural)
4. *Mzuri sana.*
"We are very fine."
5. *Umeona habari za runinga leo?* (here the word *habari* means news)
"Have you watched the news on TV today?"
6. *Ndio.*
"Yes I have."

Examples from this lesson:

1. *Habari yako dada?*
"How are you sister?" (singular)
2. *Mzuri sana.*
"I am very fine."
3. *Habari yenu nyote?*
"How are you all" (plural)
4. *Mzuri sana.*
"We are very fine."

Examples from this dialogue:

1. *Habari yako*
"How are you" - (one person)

2. *Habari yenu*

"How are you all" (many people)

Sample Sentences

Habari yako Juma.

Habari yenu Musa na Rehema.

Language Tip

The word *habari* in Swahili is used as a greeting and to inquire about the condition of something or somewhere. To form a phrase, the word comes first and then the subject follows. For instance, *Habari ya gari lako?* meaning "how is your car?"

CULTURAL INSIGHT

When to Greet People in Kenya

Passing greetings are common in Kenya whether the two people know each other or not. People exchange greetings in the street, in lifts and churches, among other public places. Greetings are also a part of introductions before you explain why you are in a place. You are considered to have good manners if for example you use general greetings before buying something from a shopkeeper. If you are not too sure about how to address the subject, you can simply say one word *habari* and you will be safe.

It is a polite and friendly gesture to shake hands, though it is not a must. Close relatives, friends and colleagues may hug but that depends on the level of friendship.