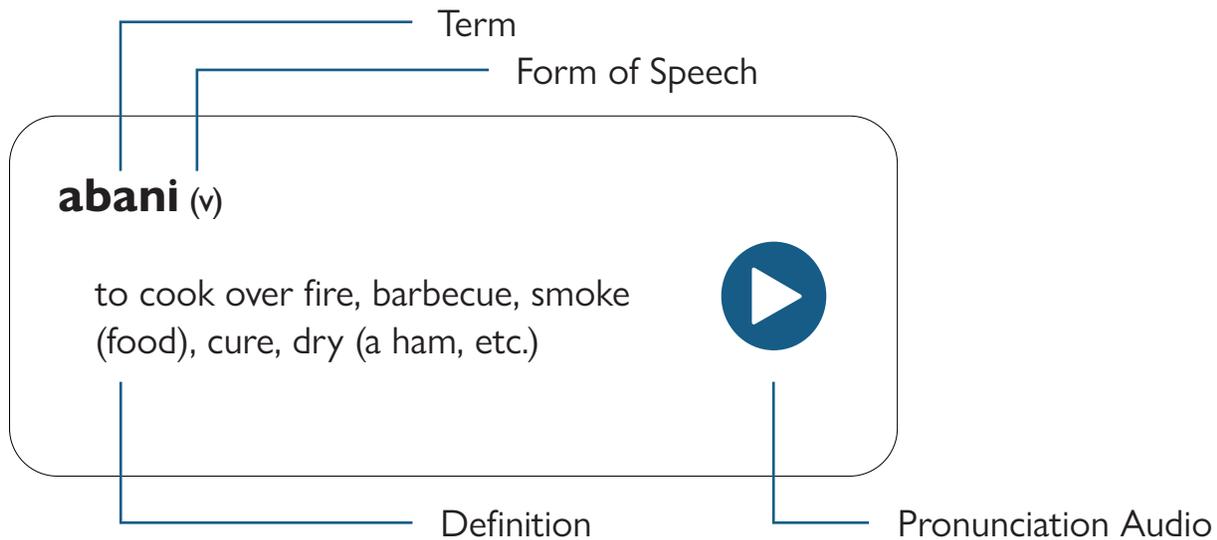




# Choctaw Dictionary

## Key to dictionary entries



## Parts of speech

Most words in Choctaw belong to three parts of speech:

noun (n.): a person, place or thing: *ofi* 'dog'.

verb (v.): an action or a state of being: *hliohli* 'to chase'.

adjective (adj.): a word that describes or modifies a noun: *ofi lusa* 'a black dog'. Adjectives are closely related to verbs in Choctaw.

In addition, Choctaw has several smaller classes of words.

pronoun (pro.): a type of noun that replaces a noun phrase: *chishno* 'you'.

conjunction (conj.): a word used to join words or phrases: *hikhia* 'even so'.

demonstrative (dem.): a word modifying a noun or appearing independently and used in pointing: *iluppa* 'this'.

interrogative (interr.): a word that asks a question: *kuta* 'who'.

indefinite (indef.): a word that does not refer to anything in particular: *kuna* 'someone, anyone'. Indefinites are closely related to interrogatives in Choctaw.

interjection (interj.): a word that functions as a complete sentence: *Yakoke!* 'Thank you!'.

numeral (num.): a number: *achuffa* 'one'.

postposition (p.): a word following a noun phrase and indicating a relationship between that noun phrase and the sentence: *oka anuka* 'in the water'. It is like a preposition in English, but it comes after a noun phrase instead of before it.

marker: an element needed for grammar: *ofi lusa yut* 'the black dog (as a subject)'.

## Phonetic spelling

Choctaw spelling does not always reflect pronunciation perfectly. We have added a phonetic spelling for those who are learning a word for the first time.

In phonetic spellings, the following consonants are pronounced as in English: [b], [ch], [f], [h], [k], [l], [m], [n], [p], [s], [sh], [t], [w], [y]. [th] is used to represent the *hl* sound (technically, a voiceless lateral fricative). The letters [a], [i], and [o] are used for short vowels, while [a:], [i:], and [o:] are used for long vowels. The nasal vowels are spelled [a<sup>n</sup>], [i<sup>n</sup>], and [o<sup>n</sup>]. Hyphens are used to divide words into syllables.

Choctaw has a system of pitch accent. If you listen to a fluent speaker pronounce a word like *shukha* 'hog', the voice will go up at the end. If the same speaker says the word *shukcha* 'bag', the voice starts out high, and then goes down:

*shuk-ha* [shok-ha] 'hog'                      *shuk-cha* [shók-cha] 'bag'

We indicate these distinctions in the phonetic spelling. The noun *shukha* is spelled phonetically as [shok-ha], while the noun *shukcha* is spelled phonetically as [shók-cha], with an accent indicating the high syllable. The accent appearing on the second to last syllable of a word can be important in signalling that the noun is derived from a verb:

*hoponi* [ho-po:-nih] *v.* to cook  
*hoponi* [ho-pó:-ni] *n.* a cook

## Entries vs. subentries

Forms that are closely related may be listed as subentries instead of main entries.

**afabi** [a-fá:-bi] *adj.* left (the direction)  
→ **ibbak afabi** [ib-bak a-fá:-bi] *n.* the left hand

When a form includes a marker and the form is a noun, we list the form as a main entry:

**isht abeka** [ish-ta-bí:-ka] *n.* a disease, sickness

When a form includes a marker and the form is a verb, we list the form as a subentry under the root verb:

**abeka** [a-bi:-kah] *v.* to be sick  
→ **isht abeka** [ish-ta-bi:-kah] *v.* to be sick with (an illness)

Verbal forms including the prefixes *a-*, *ai-*, or *itti-* are listed as main entries and as subentries.

## Using the Dictionary

Like any language, Choctaw has rules for combining words in sentences. Students of the language should consult a textbook or a fluent speaker for explanations of how to use words in this dictionary. We provide a very brief sketch here to those without other sources.

**Commands.** A simple verb in its dictionary form can be used as a command:

Taloo! Sing!

Ishko! Drink!

Negative commands use *na* after the verb and *ish* 'you' or *hush* 'you (plural)' before the verb:

Ish taloo **na!**            **Don't** sing! (said to one)

Hush potoli **na!**        **Don't** touch! (said to two or more)

'Let's' commands use *kil* before a verb beginning with a vowel or *ke* before a consonant:

**Kil** impa!        **Let's** eat!

**Ke** taloo!        **Let's** sing!

**Objects.** An object is a noun phrase that is affected by an action. Objects come before a verb in Choctaw:

**Pishukchi** ishko!    Drink **milk!**

**Pishukchi** *kil* ishko!    *Let's* drink **milk!**

For clarity, objects can be followed by the object marker *a*.

**Subjects.** A subject can be added before the verb. The subject is followed by the subject marker *ut*:

**Hattak** *ut* toksuli.    **The man** is working.

**Hushi** *yut* taloo.      **The bird** is singing.

The subject marker is *ut* after a consonant. After a vowel, it's usually *yut*. After a few nouns, it's *hut*.

There is no Choctaw pronoun for 'he', 'she', 'it', or 'they':

Toksuli.            (He/she/it) is working.

Taloo.            (He/she/it) is singing.

Once the subject is established, subjects are understood from context.

When a verb has a subject and an object, the subject comes first:

**Ofi** *yut* pishukchi ishko.      **The dog** is drinking *milk*.

**Adjectives.** Adjectives in Choctaw come after the noun that is modified:

Hushi **lusa** *yut* taloo.    The **black** *bird* is singing.

In the above sentence the adjective *lusa* 'black' modifies the noun *hushi* 'bird'. Adjectives in Choctaw can also be used as predicates, without a form of 'be':

Hushi *yut* **lusa**.            The bird **is black**.

**'Be' sentences.** A noun can also be used as a predicate:

Hattak *ut* **Chahta**.            The man **is Choctaw**.

Ohoyo *yut* **ikhunanchi**.      The woman **is a teacher**.

'I am', 'you are', etc. are expressed as follows with nouns:

Chahta **sia**.      **I am** Choctaw.

Chahta <b>chia</b> .	<b>You are</b> Choctaw.
Chahta <b>hupia</b> .	<b>We are</b> Choctaw.
Chahta <b>huchia</b> .	<b>You (all) are</b> Choctaw.

**Question markers.** A question asking for a yes or no answer is marked by adding *ho\_* after the verb:

Taloo <b>ho_</b> ?	<b>Is</b> he/she/it singing?
Chahta chia <b>ho_</b> ?	<b>Are</b> you Choctaw?

The question marker has the form *o\_* after a consonant and *yo\_* after an adjective.

**Li/ish person markers.** The Li/ish person markers identify who is performing an action:

impa <b>li</b>	<b>I</b> am eating
<b>ish</b> impa	<b>you</b> are eating
impa	he/she/it is eating
<b>il</b> impa	<b>we</b> are eating
<b>hush</b> impa	<b>you (all)</b> are eating

Notice that *li* is the only person marker following the verb, and that 'he/she/it' has no marker. *li* takes the form *e* before a consonant.

**SU/chi person markers.** The SU/chi person markers are used for the objects of actions:

<b>su</b> pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees <b>me</b>
<b>chi</b> pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees <b>you</b>
pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees him/her/it
<b>pi</b> pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees <b>us</b>
<b>hupi</b> pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees <b>all of us</b>
<b>huchi</b> pi <sub>sa</sub>	he/she/it sees <b>you (all)</b>

SU/chi person markers are also used for the subjects of adjectives (words describing emotions, etc.) and less active verbs:

<b>su</b> nukoa	<b>I</b> am angry
<b>chi</b> nukoa	<b>you</b> are angry
nukoa	he/she/it is angry
<b>pi</b> nukoa	<b>we</b> are angry
<b>hupi</b> nukoa	<b>all of us</b> are angry
<b>huchi</b> nukoa	<b>you (all)</b> are angry

When a verb has a subject and an object, a Li/ish person marker and a SU/chi person marker can be combined:

<i>chi</i>	pi <sub>sa</sub>	<b>li</b>	<b>I</b> see <i>you</i>
<b>ish</b>	<i>su</i>	pi <sub>sa</sub>	<b>you</b> see <i>me</i>
<b>e</b>	<i>chi</i>	pi <sub>sa</sub>	<b>we</b> see <i>you</i>

Notice that the subject (Li/ish) person marker comes before the object (SU/chi) person marker when these are both before the verb.

**Um/chim person markers.** Choctaw also has *Um/chim* person markers. These often mean 'to' or 'for' someone:

<i>um</i>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to me</b>
<b>chim</b>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to you</b>
<b>im</b>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to him/her</b>
<b>pim</b>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to us</b>
<b>hupim</b>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to all of us</b>
<b>huchim</b>	anoli	he/she/it is telling it <b>to you (all)</b>

Before consonants, the *Um/chim* person markers take the form *a\_ chi\_ i\_ pi\_ hupi\_* and *huchi\_*. The *Um/chim* person markers can be used with the *Li/ish* person markers:

*ish pim* anoli ho? are you telling it **to us**?

**Possession.** Person markers are also used for possession. For most nouns, the *Um/chim* person markers are used:

<i>um</i>	ofi	<b>my</b> dog
<b>chim</b>	ofi	<b>your</b> dog
<b>im</b>	ofi	<b>his/her/its</b> dog
<b>pim</b>	ofi	<b>our</b> dog
<b>hupim</b>	ofi	<b>our</b> dog (all of us)
<b>huchim</b>	ofi	<b>your (all)</b> dog

Before consonants, these are *a\_ chi\_ i\_ pi\_ hupi\_ huchi\_*.

For some nouns, the *SU/chi* person markers are used:

<b>su</b>	haksobish	<b>my</b> ears
<b>chi</b>	haksobish	<b>your</b> ears
	haksobish	ears, his/her/its ears (no mark)
<b>pi</b> <sup>1</sup>	haksobish	<b>our</b> ears
<b>hupi</b>	haksobish	<b>our</b> ears (all of us)
<b>huchi</b>	haksobish	<b>your (all)</b> ears

The nouns that take the *SU/chi* person markers are usually parts of the body or family terms, though some parts of the body and family terms take the *Um/chim* person markers.

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1 Many people say *pi\_haksobish*, *huchi\_haksobish*, and *hupi\_haksobish* in certain contexts.

**Tense and possibility.** Choctaw has several tenses. There is no marker for the present tense. To form a past tense, *tuk* is used:

toksʉli he/she/it is working

toksʉli **tuk** he/she/it worked, he/she/it **did** work

To describe something in the remote past, *tok* is used instead:

toksʉli **tok** he/she/it worked **a long time ago**

To express the future tense, *achi* is used:

toksʉli **achi** → toksʉla **chi** he/she/it **will** work

ishko **achi** → ishka **chi** he/she/it **will** drink

impa **achi** → impa **chi** he/she/it **will** eat

As the example above shows, you delete the last vowel of the verb and move the *a* of the future tense over to replace it. The marker *ahinla* 'can, may' follows the same rule:

toksʉli **ahinla** → toksʉla **hinla** he/she/it **can** work

**Negation.** One way to express 'not' is with *kiyo*:

toksʉli **kiyo** he/she/it is **not** working

Another way is to add a suffix *-o* to the verb and to use a special set of negative person markers. The following pattern is used for actions done on purpose:

**ak** impo **I** have **not** eaten

**chik** impo **you** have **not** eaten

**ik** impo **he/she/it** has **not** eaten

**kil** impo **we** have **not** eaten

**huchik** impo **you (all)** have **not** eaten

For adjectives (emotions, etc.) and less active verbs, the following pattern is used:

**ik su** nukshopo **I** am **not** afraid

**ik chi** nukshopo **you** are **not** afraid

**ik** nukshopo **he/she/it** is **not** afraid

**ik pi** nukshopo **we** are **not** afraid

ik **hupi** nukshopo **all of us** are **not** afraid

**ik huchi** nukshopo **you (all)** are **not** afraid

**Pronouns.** Choctaw has a set of personal pronouns:

ʉno I

chishno you

pishno we

hʉpishno we (all)

hʉchishno you (all)

The personal pronouns may be used together with the person markers. The person marker agrees with the personal pronoun:

ʉno ak kia anumpuli **li**. **I** also am speaking.

Possessive pronouns indicate a possessor of something understood in context:

ummi	mine
chimmi	yours
immi	his/hers/its/theirs
pimmi	ours
hupimmi	all of ours
huchimmi	all of yours

Example:

Isht ishko mut ummi. That glass is **mine**.

Demonstrative pronouns are used for pointing or referring:

iluppa	this, these
yummthat	those

The same words are used after nouns, where they have the form *ilupput* and *yummut* for a subject, and *iluppa* and *yumma* for an object:

Chukka <b>ilupput</b> tohbi.	<b>This</b> house is white./These houses are white.
Chukka <b>yummut</b> lusa.	<b>That</b> house is black./Those houses are black.
Chukka <b>iluppa</b> ish piṣa ho?	Do you see <b>this</b> house/these houses?
Chukka <b>yumma</b> ish piṣa ho?	Do you see <b>that</b> house/those houses?

The demonstratives may also be shortened:

Chukka <b>put</b> tohbi.	<b>This</b> house is white./ <b>These</b> houses are white.
Chukka <b>mut</b> lusa.	<b>That</b> house is black./ <b>Those</b> houses are black.
Chukka <b>pa</b> ish piṣa ho?	Do you see <b>this</b> house/ <b>these</b> houses?

Interrogatives are used for asking questions:

nanta	what
kuta	who

Indefinites are used for notions like 'something' or 'someone':

nana	something
kuna	someone

**Postpositions.** English has *prepositions* that come *before* their objects. Choctaw has *postpositions* that come *after* their objects:

chukka <b>nutaka</b>	<b>underneath</b> the house
chukka <b>paknaka</b>	<b>over</b> the house
chukka <b>bilika</b>	<b>near</b> the house
chukka <b>anuka</b>	<b>inside</b> the house
chukka <b>tikba</b>	<b>in front of</b> the house
chukka <b>apata</b>	<b>beside</b> the house
chukka <b>aṣhaka</b>	<b>behind</b> the house

**Common affixes and markers in dictionary entries.** The prefix *a-* (or *ai-*) is used to specify a location:

binili (one) to sit

**abinili** **place where** one sits: chair

The prefix *itti-* is used to mean 'each other' or 'together':

hokli to grasp

**ittihokli** to grasp **each other**

The suffix *-chi* is often used to mean 'cause' or 'make':

binili (one) to sit

binil**ichi** to **cause** (one) to sit, to seat

Several markers are used to indicate direction:

**pit** pisa to look **that way**

**et** pisa to look **this way**

**ont** pisa to **go** look

**ant** pisa to **come** look

**akka** ia (one) to go **down**

*u*ba ia (one) to go **up**

**falamut** ia (one) to **return** going

**falamut** minti (one) to **return** coming

Markers of direction come before the person markers:

**Et** *s*u pisa! Look at *me* (**this way**)!

**Et** *u*m anoli! Tell it *to me* (**this way**)!

Other markers indicate notions like location, use of an instrument, or accompaniment:

**o** hikia (one) to stand **on** (something)

**isht** ikbi (one) to make **with** (a tool)

**awant** ia (one) to go **along with** (someone)

**iba** taloa to sing **with** (someone)

**Plural forms of verbs.** Verbs in Choctaw that describe motion or position often have special forms based on how many are involved in the action:

ia / ittiachi / ilhkoli (one) / (two) / (three or more) to go

bininli / chiya / binohmaya (one) / (two) / (three or more) to be sitting

hikia / hinli / hiyohmaya (one) / (two) / (three or more) to be standing

ittonla / ka<sub>h</sub>a / kahmaya (one) / (two) / (three or more) to be lying

takanli / takohli / takohmaya (one) / (two) / (three or more) to be hanging

**Changes in verb shape.** The pronunciation and spelling of a verb will sometimes change depending on how the verb is used.

takchi	to tie
tahakchi	to tie quickly
tahakchi	to tie repeatedly
taiyakchi	to have finally tied
takchi	to be tying (and then doing something else)

The dictionary does not include all of these derived forms. When they are included, they are listed as subentries.

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## Symbols and abbreviations

adj. adjective

adv. adverb

conj. conjunction

dem. demonstrative

gr. var. grammatical variant

indef. indefinite

interj. interjection

interr. interrogative

n. noun

num. numeral

pro. pronoun

sp. var. spelling variant

v. verb

|| example

◆ cultural note