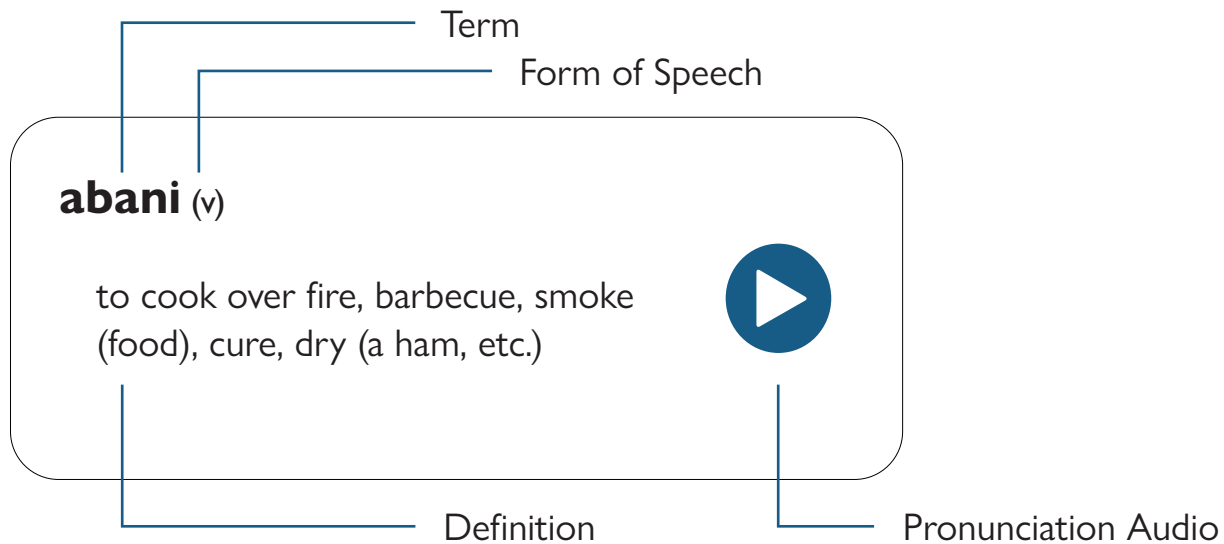




Choctaw Dictionary

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 [aⁿ], [iⁿ], and [oⁿ]. 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 **nna!** **Don't** sing! (said to one)

Hush potoli **nna!** **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 chia .	You are Choctaw.
Chahta hupia .	We are Choctaw.
Chahta huchia .	You (all) are Choctaw.

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

Taloha ho_ ?	Is he/she/it singing?
Chahta chia ho_ ?	Are 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 li	I am eating
ish impa	you are eating
impa	he/she/it is eating
il impa	we are eating
hush impa	you (all) 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:

su pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees me
chi pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees you
pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees him/her/it
pi pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees us
hupi pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees all of us
huchi pi _{sa}	he/she/it sees you (all)

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

su nukoa	I am angry
chi nukoa	you are angry
nukoa	he/she/it is angry
pi nukoa	we are angry
hupi nukoa	all of us are angry
huchi nukoa	you (all) 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 _{sa}	li	I see <i>you</i>
ish	<i>su</i>	pi _{sa}	you see <i>me</i>
e	<i>chi</i>	pi _{sa}	we 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 to me
chim	anoli	he/she/it is telling it to you
im	anoli	he/she/it is telling it to him/her
pim	anoli	he/she/it is telling it to us
hupim	anoli	he/she/it is telling it to all of us
huchim	anoli	he/she/it is telling it to you (all)

Before consonants, the *Um/chim* person markers take the form *a₁ chi₁ i₁ pi₁ hupi₁* and *huchi₁*. 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	my dog
chim	ofi	your dog
im	ofi	his/her/its dog
pim	ofi	our dog
hupim	ofi	our dog (all of us)
huchim	ofi	your (all) dog

Before consonants, these are *a₁ chi₁ i₁ pi₁ hupi₁ huchi₁*.

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

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

1 Many people say *pi₁haksobish*, *huchi₁haksobish*, and *hupi₁haksobish* 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:

toksʊli he/she/it is working

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

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

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

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

toksʊli **achi** → toksʊla **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:

toksʊli **ahinla** → toksʊla **hinla** he/she/it **can** work

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

toksʊli **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:

ʊno I

chishno you

pishno we

hʊpishno we (all)

hʊchishno you (all)

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

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

The demonstratives may also be shortened:

Chukka put tohbi.	This house is white./ These houses are white.
Chukka mut lusa.	That house is black./ Those houses are black.
Chukka pa ish piṣa ho?	Do you see this house/ these 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 nutaka	underneath the house
chukka paknaka	over the house
chukka bilika	near the house
chukka anuḱa	inside the house
chukka tikba	in front of the house
chukka apata	beside the house
chukka aṣhaka	behind 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_ha / 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