Penang Hokkien Basics

Lessons: www.penang-traveltips.com/penang-hokkien.htm
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/groups/learnpenanghokkien/
Email: writetome@timothytye.com

Introduction
"Penang Hokkien Basics" provides you the foundation to speak and write Penang Hokkien, all within one.
In this condensed lesson, you learn the romanization system, grammar, sentence construction, various parts of speech, basic words to make your own sentences, and basic phrases. This is sufficient for short-term visitors to Penang. If you want to progress to a more advanced level, follow the more detailed lessons at Learn Penang Hokkien on the web, where you also get to learn the history of Penang Hokkien. If you want to practise using Penang Hokkien with other learners, join the Learn Penang Hokkien Facebook Group.

You can download the latest free copies of "Penang Hokkien Basics" from the Penang Travel Tips website at:

Objective
The objective of Learn Penang Hokkien is to make Penang Hokkien easy for everybody to learn. Through Learn Penang Hokkien, you learn to speak, read and write the language using a simple romanized system.

TJ Romanization System
The TJ Romanization System is the system created for you to write Penang Hokkien using a standard keyboard, without any additional characters.

Spelling
Detailed lesson at: http://www.penang-traveltips.com/hokkien/spelling.htm
The spelling system is based on English and Malay. The system tries to capture as close as possible the way Penang Hokkien speakers spell words, while establishing a rule over how words are expected to be spelled.

Pronunciation Guide
(a- initial letter, -a final letter, -a- initial/final letter)
- a- is pronounced /a/, as in (Eng) father: ka1 (to cut), la3 (to stir), mak3 (mother)
- ae, e- is pronounced /e/ as in (Eng) esso, care: kae1 (family), em3pit3 (pencil), en1 (smoke)
- ai, ye is pronounced /ai/, as in hai4 (sea), lai2 (to come), mai3 (don't want), chye3 (vegetable)
- b- is pronounced /b/ as in (Eng) best: bong1 (to touch), bin3 (face), bang3 (net)
- c- is pronounced /ts/ as in (Malay) cari: ca4 (early), near to (Eng) choose: cu4 (to cook)
- ch- is pronounced /tsʰ/ as in char4 (to stir fry), cho3 (error), chor1 (rough)
- d- only appears in loan words such as du3rian2 (durian)
- e- (initial), -eh and - ay are pronounced /e/ as in (Malay) enak: e2 (shoe) se1 (to comb), kay1 (chicken)
- f- only appears in loan words such as (Cantonese) chee cheong fun
- g- is pronounced /g/ as in (Eng) go: gong3 (stupid), gau2 (clever)
- h- is pronounced /h/ as in (Eng) hot: ham1 (cockle), huat3 (to rise)
- i- is pronounced /i/ as in (Malay) itu, (Eng) sit: hin2 (dizzy), gin2 (silver)
- ie- is pronounced /iɛ/ as in tien3 (electricity), phien3 (to lie)
- j- is pronounced /dz/ as in (Eng) jump: jip1 (go in), jit1 (sun)
- k- is pronounced /k/ as in (Eng) king: kau1 (to hang), kuan4 (to control), kut (bone/to dig)
- kh- is pronounced /kʰ/ as in khau1 (to scrape), khan4 (behaviour), khut (cavity)

© Timothy Tye - Penang Travel Tips (www.penang-traveltips.com)
-k is pronounced /ʔ/ as in (Eng) uh-oh: bak3 (meat), pak3 (hundred), sak1 (to boil)
-rk is pronounced /k/ as in (Eng) bark: bark1 (ink), park1 (to tie), sark3 (to push)
-l- is pronounced /l/ as in (Eng) lamp: lu4 (you), lim1 (to drink), lian3 (to make noise)
-m- is pronounced /m/ as in (Eng) mother: ma1cai3 (tomorrow), mm33thang1 (don't)
-n- is pronounced /n/ as it (Eng) net: nui3 (egg), nau4 (brain)
-na- is pronounced /na/ (nasal sound) as in tna4 (guts), kna4 (dare), pna2 (plate)
-ni- is pronounced /ni/ (nasal sound) as in pni4 (flat), sni3 (to sting), pni3 (rice)
-nae- is pronounced /næ/ (nasal sound) as in snaeh1 (to give birth), pnae1 (to pry open)
-nua- is pronounced /uə/ as is pnu42 (plate), knua2 (to feel cold)
-nui- is pronounced /ui/ as in pniu3 (rice), snu3 (to count)
-ng is pronounced /ng/ as in (Eng) king: kong1 (grandfather), ny- is pronounced /ŋ/ as in nya32 (to win), Nyonya
-o-, -oh is pronounced /o/ as in (Eng) so: go2 (goose), boh2 (don't have)
-or- is pronounced /ɔr/ as in (Eng) orange: or1 (black), kor1 (mushroom)
-ong is pronounced /ɔŋ/ only in loan words: a3pontg1 (pancake), ba3li1tong3 (shellfish)
-ph- is pronounced /pʰ/ as in phau3 (to stir drinks), phong3 (bloated)
-r- appears mostly in loan words, as in roti1 (bread)
-s- is added to -o to form /ɔ/ and to -k to form /k/ sounds
-s- is pronounced /s/ as in (Eng) sun: su1 (sand), su1 (defeated)
-t- is pronounced /t/ as in (Eng) tall: tim (to throw), bät (to know)
-th- is pronounced /θ/ as in tha1na1 (now), thark1 (to read)
-u-, -oo- is pronounced /u/ as in (Malay) sabun: ku4 (long time), bu4 (dance), hoon4 (powder)
-ua is pronounced /ua/ as in kuan (bottle), suan4 (to vote)
-w- is pronounced /w/ as in wah4 (l), wna4 (bowl), wan1 (to turn)
-y- is pronounced /j/ as in yau1 (hungry), ya2 (coconut)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voiced, Unaspirated &amp; Aspirated Sounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>voiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nasalized Sounds

/ä/ tna4 = guts, kna4 = dare, pna2 = plate, suan1 = hill, knua2, wna4 = bowl, wna3 = to change
/æ/ pnae1 = to pry, snaeh1 = to give birth, snaeh3 = surname; chnae1 = green, cnae4 = well
/i/ pni1 = side, kni2 = edge, tnee1 = sweet, enee2 = round, cni4 = young, chni1 = fresh

Pseudo-Fricative, Glottal Stops and Velar Stops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None/Pseudo-Fricative</th>
<th>Glottal Stop /ʔ/</th>
<th>Velar Stop /k/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bah2 = numb</td>
<td>bak3 = meat</td>
<td>bark1 = ink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pa2 = to slap</td>
<td>pak3 = hundred</td>
<td>park1 = to tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa1 = to seize</td>
<td>sak3 = to push</td>
<td>sark1 = to boil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Morphemes**
A syllable that carries a meaning is called a *morpheme*. For example, ang2 (red) is both a morpheme and a word; ang3mor2 (Westerner) are two morphemes (ang2, red, and mor2, hair) but one word.

*Free morpheme* can stand on its own as a word, for example ang2 (red).
*Bound morpheme* has to attach to other morpheme(s) to form a word, for example tan1 in ang3mor3tan1.

All morphemes are syllables, but not all syllables are morpheme. A word may comprise one morpheme (ang2) or several morphemes (ang3mor2, ang3mor3 tau3iu2).

**Intonation**
Every morpheme in Penang Hokkien can be uttered in four tones which are numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4. There four tones correspond to the four tones in Mandarin.

pa1, pa2, pa3, pa4
pan1, pan2, pan3, pan4
pang1, pang2, pang3, pang4

Wah1 beh1 chye3 = I buy vegetables.
Wah1 beh3 chye3 = I sell vegetables.

Cim2 lok3 chooi4 chim3-chim1. = The crab goes deep into the water.
Cim3 lok3 chooi4 chim3-chim1. = Dip it deeply into the water.

Ee1 ti1 thau3 thnia1. = She is (in the midst of) eavesdropping.
Ee1 ti1 thau2 thnia3. = She's having a headache.

**Tone Sandhi**
When two or more morphemes are placed together, all morphemes except the last change their tone, from the basic to the modified form.

```
Basic Form       Modified Form
1               1
2               2
3               4
```

Morphemes change tone in compound nouns:

ang2 = red
ang3mor2 = red hair
ang3mor3tan1 = rambutan
ang3mor3tan3 cang2 = rambutan tree
ang3mor3tan3 cang3 kha1 = foot of the rambutan tree
Morphemes also change tones in sentences:

Wah4 = I
Wah1 boek3 = I want
Wah1 boek1 khee3 = I want to go
Wah1 boek1 khee1 co3 = I want to go to do
Wah1 boek1 khee1 co1 kang1 = I want to go to do work
Wah1 boek1 khee1 co1 kange1 liau4 = I want to go to work already

**Unsandiable morpheme**
In this romanization system, there is a small group of morphemes that do not change their tone, even when they are attached to other morphemes in compound nouns or placed in sentences. They are usually tone 3 morphemes. To help you identify them, they are listed in the dictionary with tone 33 rather than tone 3. For example, gor33 (five), tang33 (dark), ji33 (word), lau33 (old).

gor3 = five
gor3-cap1 = fifty

lau3 = old
lau3 lang2 = old man

When writing, it is optional to write the unsandiable morpheme as gor33; you are free to write as gor3.

**Dictionary**
Look up words in the free Penang Hokkien Online Dictionary:
http://www.penang-traveltips.com/dictionary
You can search in Penang Hokkien, English and Malay. Every search result includes audio, so you can hear how the words are pronounced in the citation form.

**Citation Form & Sandhi Forms of Words**
Words are listed in the dictionary in the citation form. (For example, "fly" is the citation form of flies, flown, flew, etc.; "selidik" is the citation form of menyelidik, penyelidik, etc.) That's the basic form, for example ang2, ang3mor2, ang3mor3tan1. This is the form before the word sandhis. All words sandhi their final syllable unless the final syllable is an unsandiable morpheme. Note the underlined tones in the examples below:

ang2 (red) becomes ang3 sna1 (red shirt)
ang3mor2 (Westerner) becomes Ang3mor3 Tang3 Cek3 (Christmas)
ang3mor3tan1 (rambutan) becomes ang3mor3tan3 hnu2 (rambutan plantation)

However:
lauseum3 (old) remains lau3 peng3iu4 (old friend)

**Regular Forms & Emphatic Forms of Sentences**
Regular: Wah1 ciak3 bak3, lu1 ciak3 chye3: I eat meat, you eat vegetables.
Emphatic: Wah4 ciak3 bak3, lu4 ciak3 chye3! I eat meat, you eat vegetables!

**Heterographs**
This system uses heterographs (words of different meaning that sound the same, but are spelled differently) to ensure the written sentences are clear.
say4 = to wash
se3 = small
le1 boek1 say1 thau3keong1. = He wants to wash spoons.
le1 boek1 se1 thau3keong1. = He wants a small spoon.

tu2 = cupboard
too1 = pig
Wah1-eh3 tu3 knia3 uh3 see1-ki3 kha1. = My little cupboard has four legs.
Wah1-eh3 too3 knia4 uh3 see1-ki3 kha1. = My piglet has four legs.

thnia1 = to listen
thniah1 = living room, hall
Ee1 ti1 thau3 thnia1. = She is (in the midst of) eavesdropping.
Ee1 ti1 thau3 thniah1. = She's in the main hall.

Pronouns
I = wah4 (sandhis to wah1)
you = lu4 (lu1)
he = ie1
she = ee1
it = i1
we = kita: wah1 lang2, wang1 (slurred version), kami: lan4, lan4 lang2
you = lu1 lang2, luang1 (slurred version)
they = ie1 lang2, iyang1 (male, general), ee1 lang2, eyang1 (female), i1 lang2 (animals, things)

Question Words
what (apa) = ha1 mik1
who (siapa) = cui33 - cui33
where (mana) = ta1 lok1
why (mengapa) = ha1 mik1 su3, co1 mik1 su3
when (bila) = ti3 si2
which (yang mana) = ta1 lok1 cit3 leh2, tok1 cit3 leh2

Lu1 mia3 ha1 mik1? What is your name?
Cui33 - cui33 choay3 wah4? Who is looking for me?
Wah4-eh3 lu1 ti1 ta1 lok1? Where is my money?
Ha1 mik1 su3 lu4 boh3 lai2? Why didn't you come?
Ti3 si2 lu4 kho1 chaek3? When are you sitting for your exams?
Ta1 lok1 cit3 leh2 si3 lu4-eh3 chia1? Which one is your car?

Cardinal Numbers
1 = cit1 6 = lark1 11 = cap3-it1 20 = jee33-cap1 57 = gor33-cap3-chit3 139 = cit3-pak1-snar3-cap3-kau4
2 = nor33 7 = cit3 12 = cap3-jee33 21 = jee33-cap3-it3 61 = lark3-cap3-it3 251 = nor33-pak1-gor33-cap3-it3
3 = snar1 8 = pek3 13 = cap3-snar1 22 = jee33-cap3-jee33 75 = cit1-cap3-gor33 1000 = cit3-cheng1
4 = see3 9 = kau4 14 = cap3-see3 25 = jee33-cap3-gor3 100 = cit3-pak3 1200 = cit3-cheng1, nor33-pak3
5 = gor33 10 = cap1 15 = cap3-gor33 30 = snar3-cap1 101 = pak1-it3 1200 = cheng3-see3

Ordinal Numbers
1st: it3 6th: lark1 the first: te3-it3 the sixth: te3-lark1
2nd: jee33 7th: cit3 the second: te3-jee33 the seventh: te3-cit3

© Timothy Tye - Penang Travel Tips (www.penang-traveltips.com)
| 3rd: snar1 | 8th: pek3 | the third: te3-snar1 | the eighth: te3-pek3 |
| 4th: see3 | 9th: kau4 | the fourth: te3-see3 | the ninth: te3-kau4 |
| 5th: gor33 | 10th: cap1 | the fifth: te3-gor33 | the tenth: te3-cap1 |

### Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one o'clock: it1 tiam4</td>
<td>1:00 = it1 tiam4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two o'clock: jee33 tiam4</td>
<td>1:05 = it1 tiam1 cit3 leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three o'clock: snar3 tiam4</td>
<td>1:10 = it1 tiam4 nor33-leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four o'clock: see3 tiam4</td>
<td>1:15 = it1 tiam4 snar3-leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five o'clock: gor33 tiam4</td>
<td>1:30 = it1 tiam1 pnua3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sixth o'clock: paku3 tiam4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seventh o'clock: ti3 tiam4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eighth o'clock: te3 pek3</td>
<td>1:35 = it1 tiam4 chit1 leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ninth o'clock: te3 kau4</td>
<td>2:00 = jee3 tiam4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tenth o'clock: te3 cap1</td>
<td>2:10 = jee3 tiam4 nor33-leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eleventh o'clock: te3 gor33</td>
<td>2:30 = jee3 tiam4 pnua3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twelve o'clock: te3 gor33</td>
<td>4:50 = see1 tiam4 cap3-leh3 ji33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:05 = it1 tiam4 cit3 leh3 ji33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10 = it1 tiam4 nor33-leh3 ji33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 = it1 tiam4 snar3-leh3 ji33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 = it1 tiam1 pnua3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35 = it1 tiam4 chit1-leh3 ji33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Money

| 5 sen | RM1.00: cit3 khor1 |
| 10 sen | RM1.20: khor3 jee33 |
| 20 sen | RM1.25: khor1 jee33 gor33 |
| 25 sen | RM1.50: khor3 pnua3 |
| 50 sen | RM1.90: khor3 kau4 |
| RM1.00: jee3 tiam4 | |
| RM1.20: khor3 jee33 | |
| RM1.25: khor1 jee33 gor33 | |
| RM1.50: khor3 pnua3 | |
| RM1.90: khor3 kau4 | |
| RM3.00: snar3 khor3 pnua3 | |
| RM8.00: cap3-it1 khor1 | |
| RM11.00: cap3-it1 khor1 cap3-gor33 | |
| RM11.15: cap3-it1 khor1 cap3-gor33 | |
| RM12.50: cap3-jee33 khor3 pnua1 | |
| RM25.60: jee3-cap3-gor33 khor3 lark1 | |

### Auxiliary Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary Verbs</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can (boleh, dapat): e3, e33sai4</td>
<td>Ciau4 e33 poay1. Bird(s) can fly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>want (mahu): ai3, boek3</td>
<td>Wah3 e33sai1 lai2 boh2? Can (are allowed to) I come?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have (ada): uh3</td>
<td>Wah1 ai1 ciak3 pnui3 liau4. I want to have my meal already.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot (tak boleh): be3, be33sai4, mm33thang1</td>
<td>Wah1 boe1 tnui4 liau4. I want to go home already.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't want (tak mahu): mm33mai3, mai3</td>
<td>Le1 uh3 cit1-ciak1 niau1. He has a cat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't have (tak ada): boh2</td>
<td>Wah1 be33 khoon3. I cannot sleep.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Classifiers (Penjodoh Bilangan)

- **-leh2**: general classifier (buah)
- **-khien4, kheok3**: classifier for people (orang)
- **-ki1, -tiau2**: classifier for stick-like items (batang)
- **-liap1**: classifier for lumped items (gugus, ketul, biji)
- **-keng1**: classifier for houses and buildings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le1 beh4 cit1-leh3 tok1 teng4 kah1 nor33-leh3 kau3ie4</td>
<td>He bought a table and two chairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uh3 nor33-khien1 lang2 boek1 choa3y lu4</td>
<td>There are two men who want to see you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kui1-kheok1 lang2 tua1 cit1-keng3 chu3?</td>
<td>How many people stay in this house?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le1 park1 heh1-leh1 gor33-ki3 cha2 yong3 cit3-tiau3 snua3</td>
<td>He tied the five sticks with a rope.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© Timothy Tye - Penang Travel Tips (www.penang-traveltips.com)
Prepositions (Postpositions)

at (di): ti1
le1 tua3 ti1 ta1lok1?  (At) where does he stay?  (Di manakah did tinggal?)
le1-eh3 mi3kni3a3 ti1 cit1-peng2.  His thing is (at) here.  (Bendanya di sini.)

front (depan): thau3ceng2
back (belakang): au3bin33
middle (tengah): teong3ng1
inside (di dalam): ti1 lai3bin33
outside (di luar): ti1 gua3bin33

Uh3 cit3-cia1 gu2 ti1 heh1-leh1 chu3-eh3 thau3ceng2.  There's a cow in front of the house.
Cui3cui3 knia3 ti1 lu4-eh3 au3bin33?  Who is standing behind you?
Lu1 hien3tiok3 ha1mik1 ti1 teong3ng1?  What do you see in the middle?
Wah1-eh3 Pa3 Pa1 ti1 lai3bin33 chu3.  My father is inside the house.
Lu1 co1 ha1mik1 ti1 gua3bin33?  What are you doing outside?

Conjunctions

and: kah1 (dan)
with: ka1 (dengan)
because: eng3goay3 (kerana, sebab)
that: kong4 (bahawa)

Jack kah1 Jill khee1 paek1 snua1.  Jack and Jill went to climb a hill.
Jack khee1 paek1 snua1 ka1 Jill.  Jack went to climb a hill with Jill.
le1 boh3 ti3 eng3goay3 ie1 khee1 paek1 snua1.  He's not in because he went to climb a hill.
le1 kong4 kong4 ie1 khee1 paek1 snua1.  He says that he is going to climb a hill.

Particles

For full list of particles, go to http://www.penang-traveltips.com/hokkien/particles.htm

eh2: possessive particle; that (punya, yang)
liau4: already (sudah)

le1-eh3 chia1 cin3 tua3 teng4.  His car is very big.
Heh1-leh1 lau33lang2-eh3 tong3kat3 phang1kni3: The old man's walking stick is lost.
Heh1-leh1 chia1-eh3 sek3 chien4 khee3 liau4.  The colour of the car has faded.

Heh1-leh1 lang2 kong1 wa3 ka1 wah4 eh2 si3 cit3-khien1 sin3snaeh1.
The man who talked to me is a teacher.  (Orang yang bercakap dengan saya seorang guru.)
le1 chio3 wah4 eh2.  He laughed at me.  (He's the one who laughed at me.)
Boh3 lui1 eh3 lang2 be33sai1 gau3 keng4.  People who are poor cannot be choosy.

Wah1 ciak3 pa4 liau4: I have eaten already.  (Saya sudah makan.)
le1lang2 lai2 liau4.  They have come (already).  (Mereka sudah datang.)
Conversational Phrases for Tourists

1. Welcome to Penang: Huan3ging2 lai3 Penang (or Pin3 Sniah2, or Pi3nang3 Su3)
2. Thank you: Kam1siah3
3. Where do you come from? Lu4 ta1lok1 lai2 eh2?
4. I come from Singapore: Wah4 Sing3ka1po1 lai2 eh2.
5. How long do you come here? Lu4 lai2 cor3 ku4?
6. I come for 4 days. Wah1 lai2 see1 jit1.
7. When do you go home? Ti3 si2 lu1 tnui4?
8. I go home tomorrow. Wah1 ma1cai3 tnui4.
9. What time did you arrive? Lu1 kui1 tiam4 kau3?
10. I arrived at 10:00 pm. Wah4 cap3 tiam4 kau3.
11. How did you come? Lu1 ceh3 ha1mik1 lai2?
11. I come by plane/bus/train/ship. Wah1 ceh3 poay3ki1/bas1/hoay1chia1/cun2 lai2
12. Where do you stay in Penang? Ti1 Penang lu1 tua3 ta1lok1?
13. I stay at E & O Hotel. Wah1 tua1 ti1 E & O Hotel.
16. What is this called? Cit1-leh1 kio3 co1 ha1mik1?
17. This is called durian, rambutan, … Cit1-leh1 kio3 co1 du3rian2, ang3mor3tan1, …
18. How much is it? Kui1 lui1?
19. RM10 per kilo. Cap3 khor1 cit3-kilo.
20. Oh, it's too expensive. Wah3, thai1 kui3!
21. Give me one kilo. Hor3 wah4 cit3-kilo.
22. Thank you very much. Kam1siah3 ce3-ce3.