



Disc 1, Part 2: “A”, “An”, “Some”, and “The”

Congratulations! Now that you have learned the essentials of Hawaiian pronunciation, let's turn our attention to some basic words that you'll need as you progress through this language series by Topics Entertainment.

First are the words “he” and “he mau”. In English, these are equivalent to saying “a” or “an”, and “some”. “He” means “a” or “an”; and “he mau” means “some”.

Let's say “a car” and “some cars”. The word for car is “ka'a”. It almost sounds like English, doesn't it? To say “a car” I say “He ka'a”. And so say “some cars”, I say “He mau ka'a”. Let's try together. Repeat after me:

He ka'a - a car
He mau ka'a - some cars

Did you notice that the word “ka'a” didn't change, no matter whether it was singular “he” or plural “he mau”? We would have to change it in English, saying “a car” for one, but “some cars” for many. In Hawaiian, the words “he” and “he mau” tell us if the ka'a is one or many, singular or plural.

Let's do that last exercise once more for good measure:

He ka'a - a car
He mau ka'a - some cars

Great! Now let's learn the word for “book”. It is “puke”, from the English. Puke. Say it after me: Puke. So now how would we say “a book”? - He puke. Right!

Repeat after me:

He puke - a book
He mau puke - some books

Do you think you can say “a telephone”? The word for telephone is “kelepona”. Say it after me: kelepona.

He kelepona - a telephone
He mau kelepona - some telephones

And now the word for “elephant”. “Elepani” - similar to the English. This should help you remember it better. Say it after me: ‘Elepani. The word “elepani” starts with an ‘okina, or glottal-stop, before the “e”, so to be sure to listen for it in the two examples, and pronounce it correctly.

He ‘elepani - an elephant
He mau ‘elepani - some elephants

So far, we have learned the words ka‘a, puke, kelepona, and ‘elepani. Now it’s your turn to help me to speak Hawaiian! Tell me how to say the following English phrases in Hawaiian. You’ll hear the correct answer after a short delay. Ho‘omākaukau - get ready!

A telephone - he kelepona
Some telephones - he mau kelepona
A book - he puke
Some books - he mau puke
A car - he ka‘a
Some cars - he mau ka‘a
An elephant - he ‘elepani
Some elephants - he mau ‘elepani

How did you do? If you had a hard time, try going through the lesson once again. It won’t be long before you understand. If you are ready to move on, we are going to learn how to say “the car” and “the cars”, using the definite articles “ka”, “ke”, and “nā”.

When we want to talk about a particular car, or a group of cars, we use the articles “ka” or “ke” for “the” singular, and “nā” for “the” plural.

“Ka” and “ke” both mean “the”. In very ancient times, the only article was “ke” (te). But over time, as languages change, new things are introduced. So for whatever reason, there are now two articles for the singular definite article “the” in Hawaiian.

Here is a good general rule to help you remember when to use “ka” and “ke”. “Ke” comes only before words starting with K, ‘Ē, Ā, or Ō. This spells “ke ao” meaning “the cloud”. Any other letter starting a word (including the glottal stop!), and you use “ka”.

Let’s try some examples:

ke ka‘a - the car - “ka‘a” starts with a “k”, so you say “ke ka‘a”. Say it again-
ka puke - the book - “puke” does not start with “k-e-a or o” so we use “ka”. Say it-
ke kelepona - the telephone - “kelepona” starts with a “k”. Say it again-
ka ‘elepani - the elephant - what does “elepani” start with? Yes, it starts with an ‘okina before the “e”, so you have to use “ka” to say “the”, because only words starting with “k, a, e, and o” use “ke”.

For our audio lessons, it will probably be best for you just to remember which word to use by saying the combinations of words that you hear enough times to yourself that it would sound strange to use the incorrect article. That's the way that we all learned our native language in the first place, and it is for that reason that if I say “Do you see those car over there?” that you think “those car” sounds very strange. After listening to this complete program for some time, you will start to get a feeling for what sounds “right” and “not so right.”

Now for the way to say “the” plural. “Nā” is the word to use. So to say “the cars”, we say “Nā ka‘a”. Let's try some examples. Repeat after me:

nā ka‘a - the cars

nā puke - the books

nā kelepona - the telephones

nā ‘elepani - the elephants

Now we have come to the end of this section of the program. You have covered a lot of material, and you are encouraged to review it as many times as you can, until you have practically memorised every word.

So far, you have learned how to pronounce the Hawaiian vocabulary ‘Ā, ‘Ē, ‘Ī, ‘Ō, ‘Ū, H, K, L, M, N, P, W, and ‘okina. You learned about the ‘okina and about lengthened vowels. You also learned how to say “a car”, “some books”, “the telephone” and “the elephants”.

In the next section, we are going to travel to the island of Hawai‘i and continue our lessons there. E hele kākou. Let's go!