

## The Ten Essentials of Thai Conversation

*Let's start at the very beginning. A very good place to start – Maria Von Trapp*

### Introduction

Long before I came to retire here in Thailand I lived in Seattle Washington. Surrounded by lakes, rivers, oceans, and mountains, Seattle is a beautiful city and the people there have the seemingly contradictory lifestyles of being the best read people in the country and the people who spend the most time outdoors, on the water and in the mountains.

I fit right in, and when I wasn't hunkered down reading on a rainy northwest day I was out in the mountains, rock climbing and glacier traversing (often on a rainy northwest day). I joined [The Mountaineers](#) to learn as much as I could about the back country. Since the 1930s they have given courses that prepare climbing and hiking enthusiasts to travel and survive in the North Cascades and neighboring mountains, especially when "stuff happens".

One of the most important things they stress is to always carry the Ten Essentials.

From [Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills](#)

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Sunglasses and sunscreen
4. Extra clothing
5. Headlamp/flashlight
6. First-aid supplies
7. Firestarter
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra food

Many a time when I was out in the back country, never lost of course , but often confused, I was happy to have each and every one of them.

So when I started thinking about what would be the most important vocabulary a new learner of Thai would need to *survive* here in Thailand, the Ten Essentials came to mind.

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I asked myself what are the 10 most essential sets of vocabulary items one would need as they begin their studies of Thai. These would be vocabulary you would need to get through your everyday existence here as you meet with people, buy stuff, pass the time

of day, talk about yourself, ask about those you are talking to, get the things you need, learn more Thai, and all the good things that make living and communicating with others so interesting and enjoyable.

Other authors and teachers may come up with a different set of priorities, and maybe add a vocabulary group or two, but there is no question that the following Ten Essentials of Thai Conversation will give you a solid base to develop your Thai language.

### The Ten Essentials of Thai Conversation

1. Thai greetings and Ending particles
2. Please and Thank You and Excuse Me
3. Personal pronouns and how to refer to yourself, family members, and to others
4. Essential verbs. Subject + verb (+ object) patterns. Speaking in the present, past, and future.
5. Adjectives and adjective word order.
6. Asking and answering
  - yes/no questions
  - when questions
  - where questions
  - who questions
  - how questions
  - how much questions

And how to give short answers to the above.

7. Vocabulary you'll need in order to ask if a person (shopkeeper, clerk, etc.) has a thing you are looking for.
8. Vocabulary that is important and interesting to you (Your own personal idiolect). Find the nouns that fit your needs. (we'll look at 10 common topics of interest)

Examples:

- Enjoy gardening? Learn the Thai words for the plants, insects, and birds you will encounter.
  - Enjoy eating Thai food? Learn to order all the Thai dishes you like.
  - Enjoy cooking Thai food? Learn all the names of the condiments and sauces that you will need.
9. Increase your vocabulary by asking
    - "What is this?"
    - "How do you say ... in Thai?"
    - "How can I translate ...?"
  10. Vocabulary and patterns you will need to talk to a doctor, or a pharmacist, and how to tell them and your Thai companion(s) how you feel.

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The following 10 chapters will cover each of the above Ten Essentials. We want to make this more than a simple phrase book so the vocabulary you'll need will be discussed in its linguistic and cultural context.

Each item will be written in Thai script, but phonetic transcriptions are also given for those just beginning with Thai.

At The end of each chapter will be a review of all the vocabulary and patterns that have been presented. If you want you can review the vocabulary before diving into the chapter.

Get a good teacher but until you find one use one of the "talking" dictionaries to help with pronunciation.

In these lessons, important Thai words will be linked to audio recordings by a Thai native speaker. This should help when a Thai teacher is not available to you.

Take your time and go through each chapter in any order that suits you. You won't learn Thai in a few days, but with a solid base you can add to your Thai language knowledge daily.

Learn these Ten Essentials and you'll more than survive in Thailand, you'll thrive.

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