



Fante Handbook for Beginners

by Catherine Flaatten, ProGhana Volunteer 2009-2010

Akwaaba! (Welcome!) This handbook will provide you with the basics of Fante, part of the Akan language group that is most commonly spoken in the central and southern parts of Ghana. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge your teacher, Lawrence Arhin, for his dedication, patience and passion in teaching Fante to Ghana volunteers. The contents of this handbook are entirely based on his instruction.



Lesson 1: Alphabet and Pronunciation

Your first lesson will be on the alphabet and common letter combinations. I will include the pronunciations for the vowels, which tend to be long. The Fante alphabet is fairly similar to English with some omissions and additions:

Letter	Pronunciation
A	<i>ah as in mama</i>
B	
C	
D	



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Letter	Pronunciation
E	<i>ay as in day</i>
Ɛ	<i>eh as in fed</i>
F	
G	
H	
I	<i>ee as in bee</i>
K	
L	<i>*silent</i>
M	
N	
O	<i>oh as in no</i>
Ɔ	<i>aw as in law</i>
P	
R	
S	
T	
U	<i>oo as in food</i>
W	
Y	
Z	



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The alphabet should give you an idea of how to pronounce unfamiliar words in Fante, which are mostly spelled phonetically. When in doubt, sound it out!

Now we will address some unique two-letter combinations that can be difficult to pronounce and to distinguish from each other. Just do your best to approximate the sounds:

Combination	Pronunciation
dw	<i>j</i> as in <i>just</i>
dz	<i>z</i> as in <i>zip</i>
gy	<i>j</i> as in <i>just</i>
hw*	<i>shw</i> , pronounced by whistling through the <i>sh</i>
ky	<i>ch</i> as in <i>cheese</i>
ny	<i>ñ</i> as in <i>señor</i>
ts	<i>s</i> as in <i>snake</i>
tw*	<i>chw</i> , pronounced by whistling through the <i>ch</i>

**Ask Lawrence to help you with these.*

Try to pronounce the following words with what you have learned:

- Adwowa
- edziban
- gyina
- hwehwe
- aponkye
- Nyame
- nantwi



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Before we move on, I will make one last note about pronunciation. You will often see double vowels in Fante. The double vowel does not change the pronunciation; rather, the vowel sound is dragged out. For example:

- Ddzifuu = zee-foo-oo
- Fiifi = fee-ee-fee
- paanoo = pah-ah-noo-oo

Notes:

