



HAWAII COURT REPORTERS & CAPTIONERS ASSOCIATION

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REPORTING IN HAWAII – THE LANGUAGE

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THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Hawaiian language uses five vowels and seven consonants: a, e, i, o, u, and h, k, l, m, n, p, and w, respectively. Consonants never occur together in Hawaiian words.

- A is always a soft “a,” as in ala.
- E is pronounced as a long “a,” as in May.
- I is always a long “i,” pronounced ee.
- O is always a long o,” as in note.
- U is always a long “u,” as in hula.
- W is pronounced as a “v” or a “w.”

I've always been baffled by the way we pronounce Wahiawa. We say, wa-hee-wa, or wa-hee-a-wa, but I've never heard anyone say Va-hee-a-va. In my research for this article, I discovered a rule for pronunciation akin to our “i before e except after c or when sounded like a as in neighbor and weigh.” So here's the rule: “The letter W is pronounced [w] or [v] after a, [v] after i or e and [w] after o or u.” Now if we could only come up with a snappy little ditty like the “neighbor and weigh” thing.

<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/hawaiian.htm>

Each word is pronounced syllabically and phonetically, which makes reporting a breeze once you've developed an ear for it, and *if* people pronounce their words correctly (a *big if*).

The `okina is treated as another letter and is used to indicate a glottal stop. It is found on the upper left-hand corner of your computer keyboard on the same key as the tilde, ~. It is not an apostrophe. Consult a Hawaiian language dictionary for proper placement of the `okina as omitting it will change the meaning of the word. To aid in Internet searches for this website, we have foregone the use of the `okina as a technical matter and mean no offense to native language speakers. Some attorneys have also mentioned this preference to aid in word searches in transcripts. For more information on the proper usage of the `okina, visit

<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language/og/archives/001713.html>

WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

These words are commonly used in giving directions, as in the following dialogue.

Q: When the accident occurred, which way were you heading?

A: Ewa.

Q: When you first saw the person in the crosswalk, which corner was he on?

A: The Diamond Head makai corner, getting ready to go Zippy's.

mauka	toward the mountains
makai	towards the sea
Ewa	towards the town of Ewa pronounced ev-a
Diamond Head	towards the landmark Diamond Head

FYI:

Leahi the Hawaiian name for Diamond Head

Puuloa the Hawaiian name for Pearl Harbor

We don't customarily italicize Hawaiian words in transcripts. We are, after all, actually in the land of Hawaii, so it would seem kind of rude to treat Hawaiian words as "foreign."

MORE WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

`aina	land
akamai	smart
ali`i	royalty
alo ha	a greeting meaning hello or goodbye, also meaning love
`aumakua	family guardian spirits
halau	hula troupe
hale	house
hana	work
hapai	pregnant
hanai	adopted, either formally or informally
haole	foreigner, Caucasian
hau`oli	happy
honu	turtle
honi	kiss
hapa	mix
holoholo	vacation
huli	turn - huli huli chicken is rotisserie chicken
imu	underground pit oven use in luau
kapu	forbidden, sacred
kalo	taro
kamaaina	local, of the land
kane	man

kaukau	food
kapakahi	crooked
keiki	child
kokua	help
kuleana	jurisdiction/responsibility
kupuna	grandparent/elder
kuulei	my beloved
lanai	porch, veranda, patio
lani	heavenly
lei	garland of flowers
limu	seaweed
lolo	crazy, although in Filipino <i>lolo</i> is grandfather, <i>lola</i> is grandmother.
lua	bathroom, toilet
luau	feast
mahalo	thank you
mana	spiritual power
malihini	newcomer
mele	song
menehune	diminutive people of legend said to have inhabited the islands prior to the first Polynesians.
nene	endangered Hawaiian native goose
`ohana	family
`ono	delicious
`opala	trash
pali	cliff
paniolo	cowboy
pilikia	trouble
poi	pounded taro root
puka	hole
pupu	appetizer
wahine	woman
wikiwiki	fast

PHRASES YOU NEED TO KNOW

Ahui hou kakou	until we meet again
Aloha kakahiaka	good morning
Hana hou	one more time
Mahalo nui loa	thank you very much
No ka oi	the best

OTHER WORDS YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW

There are other words in regular use in Hawaii as a result of our rich culture that stem from other languages such as Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese.

bolo head bald

pakalolo marijuana

make pronounced ma-kay, is a Japanese word meaning death. The Make Man is the equivalent to the Boogie Man.

`okole I recently learned from a friend who teaches at Kamehameha Schools that the word `okole, which we use to refer to our bottoms – derriere, fanny, what have you – is actually the word for the anal sphincter, though I’ve never heard anyone use the word to refer to someone as an a—hole.

DON'T BE A TOURIST

Mahalo means thank you. It is often printed on the fronts of trashcans at places like McDonald’s, meaning, “Thank you for doing business with us.” Some tourists have mistakenly assumed it means trash. The word for trash is `opala.

Kane on a bathroom door is for men. Wahine is for women.

The Likelike Highway is pronounced lee-kay lee-kay, not like like.

When giving directions off the freeways, we never use exit numbers. If you tell us you live off exit number 21, we have absolutely no idea what you’re talking about.

We rarely use north/south/east/west. Our islands being more or less circular, some of us don’t even know which way is west unless we actually see the sun setting. We use mauka and makai, mauka being inland, makai being seaward, which works no matter where you are on the island.