Getting Started in Ladakhi
A Phrasebook for Learning Ladakhi
Revised and Expanded Edition
By Rebecca Norman

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Leh
2005
Getting Started in Ladakhi: a phrasebook for learning Ladakhi
Revised and expanded edition
2nd printing
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The Ladakhi in this book is Pierre Robilliard’s LTibetan font for the Macintosh with the fantastically easy shareware program WylieEdit.
Contents

Guide to pronunciation inside front cover
Abbreviations iv
Foreword v
Introduction vii

I  Conversation and Grammar
1 Greetings and visiting 1
2 Forming sentences 9
3 Numbers 19
4 Present tense 24
5 All five words for To Be 29
6 Past tense and verb types 35
7 Commands 41
8 Additional grammar 44
9 Songs 57

II  Writing and Pronunciation
The alphabet 61
Vowels and whole syllables 65
Combined letters 69
Further spelling notes 74
Regional variations 76
Why write in modern Ladakhi? 78

III  Vocabulary and Phrases 80
See inside back cover for page numbers
**Abbreviations**

- act: active verb
- aux: auxiliary verb
- COMMAND: basic command stem of a verb
- e.g.: for example
- esp: especially
- hon: honorific (*i.e.* vocabulary showing respect to the person or thing who does the verb or has the noun)
- hon obj: honorific object (*i.e.* vocabulary, usually a verb, showing respect to the object of the verb)
- i.e.: that is
- inac: inactive verb
- int: intransitive verb
- lit: literally
- non-hon: non-honorific (*i.e.* normal vocabulary)
- PAST STEM: past stem of a verb
- STEM or: present/future stem of a verb
- PRES STEM:
- tr: transitive verb
**Foreword**

*If the valley is reached by a high pass, only the best of friends and worst of enemies are its visitors. — Tibetan Proverb*

Ladags, our land of high passes, has so far been very fortunate to have had mostly the best of friends visiting. Ever since Ladakh was opened to tourism in 1974 it has had an unprecedented number of foreign visitors. However due to the inaccessibility and ‘inhospitable climate’ only those with a special interest in our land and people have visited us. This is why, unlike many other tourist destinations which have been culturally devastated by tourism, in Ladakh it has, in many ways, strengthened the Ladakhi people. This is easier to believe for those who remember the time when development agencies and officials from the big cities had almost overwhelmed us with the idea that we were primitive, backward people and should ‘civilise and develop’ to be like the ‘proper humans’ in the cities.

It is thanks to the many friends and supporters brought by sensitive (or at least less insensitive) tourism and the recognition it gave to the richness of our culture, traditions, values, and our beneficial nature-friendly lifestyle that the speed at which we Ladakhis were trying to break every link with our ‘inferior’ roots in the nineteen sixties and seventies has not only slowed down, but now there is even a definite trend of pride in these roots.

However, this positive impact of tourism would not have been possible without interaction between visitors and locals. In the absence of communication, even best friends could play the role of worst enemies, no matter how much they respect Ladakh. Our young people would see you as another rich Westerner and be more impressed by your dark glasses and blue jeans. With all the understanding you may have of the unsustainability of the Western lifestyle and its social and emotional problems, you would only be propagating the notion that ‘West is best.’

It is amazing how your presence changes into a most powerful educational tool for both sides when there is an interaction between you and the locals. While you learn more about Ladakh and life here in a way that would not have been otherwise possible, your Ladakhi friends get a first-hand account of the realities of the West, that it is different from the all-beautiful images seen on cinema and television.
screens. This also makes us more aware of the values in our own culture and lifestyle which we would not have otherwise appreciated.

Yet for communication to take place, a common language, or at least a starter, is essential and this is where the present book aims to bridge the gap. This book might not promise to make you fluent in Ladakhi in weeks, but it will definitely provide you an opportunity to get started in friendly conversations with Ladakhis, who always appreciate and help people learning their language.

Yet it would be wrong to assume this book is only for those intending a cultural exchange experience or serious long-term cultural study. In fact, apart from giving common vocabulary and phrases for different situations in the market, in the villages and on treks, etc., it also guides the visitor in the do’s, don’ts and nuances of Ladakhi culture and manners. For the more serious, it also presents the Ladakhi alphabet so you can read and write. The added advantage of having Ladakhi script alongside is that people can read what you want to say when you are not otherwise understood. Again, this brings you closer to the locals as you have something they can participate in.

In short this book is invaluable for every visitor who wants to be more than just another tourist. It might even make the difference between being a ‘best friend’ or a ‘worst enemy’ for this land of high passes.

Sonam Wangchuk
1994
**Introduction**

I hope this book helps other visitors to Ladakh learn the language more quickly than I did. Arriving in Ladakh after a brief course in Tibetan, my rudimentary Tibetan was useless with most Ladakhis. There are similarities in the grammar structure—and knowing the Tibetan writing system did help—but virtually all the greetings, requests, basic sentences and verb endings are totally different.

Getting started in Ladakhi was a great hurdle as there was nothing in print to help the beginner make simple sentences. Feeling the need for a book like this, I wrote the first edition after only two years in Ladakh, when I still really didn’t know much. With six years more experience, the second edition was much improved, especially in explaining grammar and in having a more comprehensive vocabulary section.

This book tries to reflect the speech of Leh: I was careful to avoid classical language and include only what I hear, as ancient or excessively polite forms are not much use to the beginner. In monasteries, however, you may find people who like to use classical or Tibetan forms, and of course there are regional differences, even from one village to the next. However, most Ladakhis can understand the Leh variety, and can tell you what the local alternative is.

The written Ladakhi is included so that Ladakhis can read it if the pronunciation doesn’t work, and learners may learn the writing system. It is not difficult and will help you understand pronunciation.

With sentences, a word-by-word translation is included. Owing to basic differences between the two languages it was not always possible to make the word-by-word line precise, but I hope it gives a sense of sentence structure and encourages readers to create new sentences by substitution. Without this, they cannot break phrases down and actually learn rather than pointing to the printed page.

The written Ladakhi or Bodik found in most books published in Ladakh is a mix of ancient Classical Tibetan and modern Ladakhi. Modern Ladakhi, modern Tibetan and Classical Tibetan are not mutually intelligible and thus can be considered three distinct languages. Revering the Classical language, many Ladakhis believe that spoken Ladakhi is somehow not correct, and that grammar and
proper language must be difficult and obscure. I have been told more than once that ‘spoken Ladakhi has no grammar.’

Actually, spoken Ladakhi has a rich grammar, full of subtlety and nuances of meaning. Indeed, it has a highly developed and fascinating system of verb forms (called evidentiality in linguistics) lacking in the Classical language.

Anyone who endeavours to publish in Ladakhi walks a fine line between traditional Tibetan spelling and the modern spoken language. Taking Sanyukta Koshal’s Conversational Ladakhi, and Helena Norberg-Hodge and Geylong Paldan’s Ladakhi-English Dictionary as models, I spelled in a very colloquial way. Whenever the traditional Tibetan spelling of a word is close enough to any regional version in Ladakhi, I used that spelling in this book, even if it is not the Leh pronunciation. For this reason you may notice places in the book where the Bodik and the given pronunciation don’t seem to match: the pronunciation is for Leh/Central Ladakh, while the Bodik may reflect pronunciation somewhere outside of Leh.

I hope the scholars of Ladakh will forgive the colloquial grammar and spelling, and remember that the language they themselves speak is not wrong or bad, but is a real and living language with a rich grammar and vocabulary of its own.

The spoken Ladakhi language desperately deserves written expression, and it is Melong Publications’ aim to publish secular, readable materials in it.

My thanks to Henk Thoma for his substantial help and support, and to Simone Costa, Bettina Zeisler, and the many others who took time to offer careful corrections and suggestions; and to Sonam Wangchuk and everyone at SECMOL for their patience with my constant questions.

This book is dedicated to my mother, who wanted it to be titled Yakkity-Yak.
1 Greetings & visiting

Vocabulary

The all-purpose word: hello, goodbye, good morning, good night; please, thank you, etc.

(Are you) well?

(I’m) well.

I don’t understand.

I understand.

Do you understand?

yes, okay; I see. (Kasa is more respectful.)

no

a little bit; just a little

A polite particle added to the end of sentences to show respect to the listener; also added to names and terms of address for respect to the person named.

Verbs

These are verb stems, which can be used as commands. When telling or asking someone to do something, it is polite to use honorific verbs rather than the non-honorific words.

sit, stay (honorific)

‘Please sit down.’

eat, drink (hon)

‘Come in!’

zh is pronounced as in pleasure, Brezhnev, or French Je.

Remember that ḏ sounds like English d, while d is like Spanish d, with the tip of the tongue against the teeth.
Greetings & visiting

Greetings

sal give (hon)

It’s okay; that’s enough; it’s all right

Family members

Remember to add -le for respect.

ama mother

aba father

me-me grandfather

abi grandmother

a-cho or ka(g)a elder brother

a-che elder sister

no or no-no younger brother

no-mo younger sister

azhang uncle

a-ne aunt

Nouns: food and drink

cha tea (common: your own tea)

solja tea (hon: anyone else’s tea)

cha khan-†e butter tea, salt tea

cha ngarmo sweet tea, milk tea

ch’ang fresh fermented barley wine, ‘beer’

ch’u water

ch’u-skol boiling water (served hot)

sha meat
Greetings & visiting

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Greetings & visitors
Greetings & visiting

Ladakhi Manners

Terms of address
It is good to call people ama-le, nono-le or acho-le, etc., according to the difference between your age and theirs. For instance, you can call a shopkeeper’s attention by calling him azhang-le if he seems old enough to be your father or uncle. Monks are called azhang-le and nuns ane-le. Also, be alert: people will call you by these terms, too.

Honorifics
Like many languages, Ladakhi has separate vocabulary for honorific and non-honorific uses. You don’t need to know many honorifics, but there are some you will hear often. Honorifics are used to speak to or about monks, elders, strangers, guests, etc.—and since you are probably a stranger or guest, people will use them with you.

Honorific nouns are used especially for food and parts of the body, and show respect to the person whose food or body it is. Use the non-honorific term when referring to your own food or body. However, you can use either term when referring to someone else’s food or body. In other words, to say my tea, say cha (non-honorific); but to say your tea, use the honorific solja, especially if you is a monk, elder or guest. Luckily, apart from solja, which you will certainly hear, it is possible to get by without knowing many honorific nouns.

The use of honorific verbs is common and indicates respect to the person doing the verb: skyot, meaning come, shows respect towards the person who should come. Saying don, eat or drink, shows respect towards the person who should eat or drink.

You will probably hear honorifics in the very common phrases above. Adding -le to the end of sentences shows respect to the person you’re speaking to, and is used frequently.

Insincere refusal (dzangs)
Ladakhis consider it rude to accept any offer too quickly: it is polite to do dzangs, that is, to refuse once or twice before accepting. If you feel you are being urged to eat or drink more than you want, remember that it’s perfectly fine to say no. In fact, it’s good manners to leave your butter tea or ch’ang
untouched until someone comes to refill it. Sweet tea and hot milk are not usually refilled, so just drink it up.

**Polluted food**
When taking food from a serving dish, never, NEVER put a spoon—or anything else—from your mouth or your used plate back into the serving dish. The entire serving dish would then be polluted or k`atet.

**Feet**
As in many Asian cultures, the feet are considered physically and spiritually unclean, so you should be careful about where you put them. Don’t step over books (especially books with Bodik or religious images); never step over any kind of food or utensils (even dirty dishes); nor over any part of someone’s body.

You will see Ladakhis reach down and move the objects or tap the person to make a path rather than stepping over. Also try not to stretch out your legs with the soles of your feet towards a person, the kitchen stove, or anything religious.

**But don’t worry...**
Ladakhis are unlikely to take mortal offence if you make a mistake, and you may even see them breaking these rules themselves. For example, some Ladakhis know that foreigners don’t do dzangs so you run the risk of being believed if you refuse an offer. Only stepping over food-related items and putting used spoons into the serving dish might nauseate your companions, and so can be considered really strict rules.

*Note: While learning these phrases it would be a good time to start on the alphabet, which will help you understand pronunciation.*
2 Forming sentences

Vocabulary

Question words

who

what

when

where, to where

where, from where

how many, how much

why, for what

Personal pronouns

I

you (singular, honorific)

he or she

we (not including the person you’re speaking to)

we (including the person you’re speaking to)

you (plural, hon)

1 he or she (hon). 2 they

Adjectives

very (attached before adjectives, pronounced with a little stress)

good

* This sound is common in English but not at the beginning of words. Refer to the pronunciation guide at the front of the book for advice on how to pronounce nga without any hard g sound.
Adjectives usually go after the noun they modify. The sounds in brackets above may seem difficult at the beginning of words, but they are clearer with má: mártsokpo very bad; máldemo, márgyalla very good.

Case endings

Here are three basic case endings: the possessive, the dative, and a third ending which can be translated as from.

Possessive (of, ’s)

This ending can be translated into English as of or -’s: Its pronunciation varies depending on the sound it follows.

Words ending in a consonant add -i (pronounced -e in some areas):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Endings</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k'ong</td>
<td>k'ong-i</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigzin</td>
<td>Rigzin-i</td>
<td>Rigzin’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bazar</td>
<td>bazar-i</td>
<td>of the market, store-bought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words ending in a vowel add -i but change as follows:

- a+i is pronounced e
- o+i is pronounced -oi or -e
- u+i is pronounced -ui or -i
- e and i are left unchanged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Endings</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td>nge</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ìolma</td>
<td>Ìol-me</td>
<td>Dolma’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dative (to, at, in, for)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ㄧhe, she</td>
<td>ㄧhis, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ㄧ(a name)</td>
<td>ㄧAngmo's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ㄧ who</td>
<td>ㄧsui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ㄧ apple</td>
<td>ㄧku-shi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ending can usually be translated as *to, at, or in*. After `r`, `s`, `n`, and `l` it is pronounced `-la`; after `m`, `ng`, `g/k`, `b/p`, `d/t` or a vowel it is pronounced `-a` where it may be spelled by repeating the preceding consonant. However, in songs or formal writing it may be `-la any time.

- ㄧto Hemis
- ㄧto the market, in the market
- ㄧto my country/village, in my...
- ㄧto him/her
- ㄧto you

### From

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ㄧ (...)-a</td>
<td>ㄧ (...)-ne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ending meaning *from* is pronounced `-ne` in Leh and east through Tibet, while to the west it is pronounced `-nas`, reflecting its Tibetan spelling.

- ㄧfrom the market
- ㄧmarket-
- ㄧfrom the USA
- ㄧUSA-
- ㄧfrom Leh
- ㄧLe-
Forming sentences

Noun phrases with case endings

If a noun has adjectives with it, put the ending only once, at the end of the whole noun phrase. This is easier to remember if you think of the case endings as separate words like of, at and from rather than as endings; however they can’t stand alone as words.

- **yul mangpe**  
  *country many-of*  
  of many countries/villages

- **yul mangpo-a**  
  *country many -in*  
  in many countries

- **yul mangpo-ne**  
  *country many -from*  
  from many countries

- **acho nyis-i**  
  *brother two-of*  
  two elder brothers’

- **acho nyis-la**  
  *brother two-to*  
  to two elder brothers

Possessives go before the noun they modify, while other adjectives go after the noun they modify:

- **bazar-i chuli**  
  *market-of apricot*  
  apricots of the market (i.e. not home-grown)

- **bazar-i chuli (r)gyalla**  
  *market-of apricot good*  
  good apricots of the market

- **acho nyis-i tagi**  
  *brother two-of bread*  
  two brothers’ bread

- **acho nyis-i tagi zhimpo**  
  *brother two-of bread delicious*  
  two brothers’ delicious bread
Three words for ‘to be’

Ladakhi doesn’t choose verb forms and endings on the basis of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person as Indo-European languages do, but instead on the basis of how you know what you’re saying. For example: Are you seeing it? Do you feel it? Is it general knowledge? In linguistics, this is called evidentiality.

Here are three of the five words for to be. Don’t try to make too many parallels to English, but instead try to develop a sense for which verb fits which situation.

**Duk, in, rak**

- **Duk** is, are, etc. Duk has many uses, including when English would use there is (…), there are (…), (…) is here, (…) are here.

- **In** is, am, are, etc. In is used for describing things.

- **Rak** is, am, are, etc. Rak is used for describing things you can feel, taste, smell or hear. Rak can also be translated I feel it is (…)

**Forming sentences**

- The verb always goes at the end of the sentence, and doesn’t change for singular or plural.

- It’s very common to leave the subject out.

- Remember to add -le at the end of sentences: it shows respect to the person you’re speaking to. Also, it is polite and quite normal to refer to people by honorifics: nyerang you and k’ong he or she, etc.

  - tagi duk
    - bread is there
    - There’s bread.

  - tagi mangpo duk
    - bread much is there
    - There’s a lot of bread.

  - Padma duk
    - Padma is there
    - Padma is here.
Forming sentences

Who is there?

I am Dolma.

What’s your name?

My name is Dolma.

Where are you from?

I’m from the USA.

It is cold; I feel cold.

The bread is delicious.

The tea is very hot.

(I feel) it’s good.
Negatives of duk, in and rak

mi-duk (also pronounced mi-ruk or mi-nuk)
Is not, is not there, are not, are not there, is not here, are not here, etc.

man (also pronounced men)
Am not, is not, are not, etc.

mi-rak (also pronounced mi-nak)
Am not, is not, are not, etc. I don’t feel (…)

tagi mi-duk
bread not-is
Padma mi-duk
Padma not-is

nga Padma man, Norbu in
I Padma am-not Norbu am

i(b)onge man
this my isn’t

dangmo mi-rak
cold not-am
cha ts’ante mi-rak
tea hot not-is
(r)gyalla mi-rak
good not-is

There’s no bread. / The bread isn’t here.

I’m not Padma, I’m Norbu.

This isn’t mine.

I’m not cold. / I don’t feel cold.
The tea is not hot.
(I feel) It’s not good.
Questions with duk, in and rak

Forming sentences

Questions with duk, in and rak

- **du(g)-a?** (usually sounds like *du-a*)
  
  *Is it (...)?  Is there (...)? Is (...) here? etc.*

- **in-a?**
  
  *Is it (...)? Are you (...)? etc.*

- **rag-a?**
  
  *Is it (...)? Are you (...)? etc. Does it feel (...)?*

- You can recognise ‘yes-or-no’ questions because they usually have -a at the end.

- Questions using question words like su, karu, kane, tsam, etc, do not need the question form of the verb, ending in -a. The question word already makes the sentence a question.

- It is not necessary to say the subject of the answer. If you want to answer yes to a question, say the affirmative (*i.e. normal*) form of the verb, and if you want to answer no, say the negative form of the verb.

You

**tagi du(g)-a?**

*bread is?*

**mi-duk**

*nott-is*

Padma du(g)-a?

*Padma is?*

**duk**

*is*

nyerang k’amzang in-a-le?

*you well are?*

in -le or k’amzang in -le

*am well am*

Is there any bread?

No.

Is Padma here?

Yes.

Are you well?

Yes. or Yes, I am well.
Forming sentences

nyerang padma in-a -le? Are you Padma?  
you Padma are?  
in -le  
am

†angmo rag-a? Are you cold? (Do you feel cold?)  
cold are?  
mi -rak  
not-am

tagi zhimpo rag-a? Is the bread good?  
bread delicious is?  
rak  
is

Conversational sentences

Remember to add -le at the end of sentences now and then for respect.

k’amzang in-a? Are you well? (= How are you?)  
well are?  
k’amzang in  
well am

nyerang ka-ne in? Where are you from?  
you where-from are  
nga (...) -ne in  
I (...) -from am

nyerang-i minga chi in? What is your name?  
your name what is  
ge minga (...) in  
my name (...) is
ch’u du(g)-a?  Is there water?
water is?
ch’u duk Yes, there is water.
water is
mi-duk No.
not-is
Sonam du(g)-a ? Is Sonam there?
Sonam is there?
duk / mi-duk Yes. / No.
is / not-is
t’ukpa zhimpo rak The thukpa is delicious.
thukpa delicious is
t’angmo mi-rak I’m not cold. (I feel it isn’t cold)
cold not-is
má-t’angmo rak It’s very cold. (I feel it’s cold.)
very -cold is
su duk? Who is there?
who is
k’ong su in? Who is s/he?
(s)he who is
chi in? What is it?
what is
tsam in? How much is it?
how-much is
Ladags má-lde-mo duk Ladakh is very nice/beautiful.
Ladakh very-beautiful is

Note: After this chapter it would be a good time to learn the chapter Vowels and Whole Syllables
3 Numbers

Learning the Ladakhi numbers is not as useful as you’d expect: everyone seems to count in Hindi in the market! Of course, most shopkeepers in Leh are Tibetan or Indian, but many Ladakhis use the Hindi/Urdu numbers even while speaking Ladakhi. In fact, I often hear trilingual sentences (e.g. saat metre duk). Out in villages and monasteries this foreign influence is not as common.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LADAKHI</th>
<th>HINDI/URDU</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 དི</td>
<td>chik</td>
<td>ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ཨི</td>
<td>nyis</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ཕི</td>
<td>sum</td>
<td>tiin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ངི</td>
<td>zhi</td>
<td>chaar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 སྱ</td>
<td>(B)nga</td>
<td>paanch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ཛྷི</td>
<td>†uk</td>
<td>chhe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 དུ</td>
<td>dun</td>
<td>saat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 ལོ</td>
<td>(r)gyat</td>
<td>aath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 ཞི</td>
<td>(r)gu</td>
<td>nau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 ཁི</td>
<td>(B)chu</td>
<td>das</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The numbers above 10 follow a simple pattern: *ten-one* for eleven, *two-ten* for twenty, etc. There are just two things to learn about the pattern.

❖ For the twenties, thirties, forties, etc., each has its own special syllable between the parts: in the 20s it’s *tsa*, in the 30s *so*, 40s *zha*, 50s *nga*, 60s *ra*, 70s *don*, 80s *gya*, and 90s *go*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+(k)shik</th>
<th>+(k)nyis</th>
<th>+(k)sum</th>
<th>+(p)zhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chu/cho+</td>
<td>chukshik 11</td>
<td>chuknyis 12</td>
<td>chuksum 13</td>
<td>chupzhi 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyi-shu-tsa+</td>
<td>nyishu-tsakshik 21</td>
<td>nyishu-tsaknyis 22</td>
<td>nyishu-tsaksum 23</td>
<td>nyishu-tsapzhi 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sum-chu-so+</td>
<td>sumchu-sokshik 31</td>
<td>sumchu-soknyis 32</td>
<td>sumchu-soksum 33</td>
<td>sumchu-sopzhi 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhipchu-zha+</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhakshik 41</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhaknyis 42</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhaksum 43</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhapzhi 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngapchu-nga+</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngakshik 51</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngaknyis 52</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngaksum 53</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngapzhi 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†uk-chu-ra+</td>
<td>†uk-chu-rakshik 61</td>
<td>†ukchu-raknyis 62</td>
<td>†ukchu-raksum 63</td>
<td>†ukchu-rapzhi 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dun-chu-don+</td>
<td>dun-chu-don-chik 71</td>
<td>dun-chu-don-nyis 72</td>
<td>dun-chu-don-sum 73</td>
<td>dunchu-don-zhi 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gyat-chu-gya+</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyakshik 81</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyaknyis 82</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyaksum 83</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyapzhi 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gupchu-go+</td>
<td>gupchu-gokshik 91</td>
<td>gupchu-goknyis 92</td>
<td>gupchu-goksum 93</td>
<td>gupchu-gopzhi 94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sum-chu-so-nga} & \quad 3 \quad 10 \quad (\&) \quad 5 \quad = \quad 35 \\
\text{†uk-chu-ra-nga} & \quad 6 \quad 10 \quad (\&) \quad 5 \quad = \quad 65
\end{align*}
\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+nga</th>
<th>+ruk</th>
<th>+(p)dun</th>
<th>+(p)gyat</th>
<th>+(r)gu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chonga 15</td>
<td>churuk 16</td>
<td>chupdun 17</td>
<td>chopgyat 18</td>
<td>churgu 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyishu-tsanga 25</td>
<td>nyishu-tsaruk 26</td>
<td>nyishu-tsapdun 27</td>
<td>nyishu-tsapgyat 28</td>
<td>nyishu-tsargu 29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sumchu-songa 35</td>
<td>sumchu-soruk 36</td>
<td>sumchu-sopdun 37</td>
<td>sumchu-sopgyat 38</td>
<td>sumchu-sorgu 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhipchu-zhanga 45</td>
<td>zhipchu-zharuk 46</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhapdun 47</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhapgyat 48</td>
<td>zhipchu-zhargu 49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngapchu-nganga 55</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngaruk 56</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngapdun 57</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngapgyat 58</td>
<td>ngapchu-ngargu 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡ukchu-ranga 65</td>
<td>‡ukchu-raruk 66</td>
<td>‡ukchu-rapdun 67</td>
<td>‡ukchu-rapgyat 68</td>
<td>‡ukchu-rargu 69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dunchu-don-nga 75</td>
<td>dunchu-don-ruk 76</td>
<td>dunchu-don-dun 77</td>
<td>dunchu-don-gyat 78</td>
<td>dunchu-don-gu 79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gyatchu-gyanga 85</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyaruk 86</td>
<td>gyatchu-gypadun 87</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyapgyat 88</td>
<td>gyatchu-gyargu 89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gupchu-gonga 95</td>
<td>gupchu-goruk 96</td>
<td>gupchu-gopdun 97</td>
<td>gupchu-gopgyat 98</td>
<td>gupchu-gorgu 99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these combined numbers you will hear little sounds which are normally silent letters. For example, chik, nyis and sum are all spelled with a prefix letter which is only pronounced when they are combined into longer words. However, note that the don of the 70s outweighs the prefix letter.

There are a couple of places where the pronunciation has relaxed over the centuries: chik one is pronounced shig in combinations; ‡uk six is pronounced ruk in combinations; and twenty is nyishu instead of the nyis-chu you’d expect.
There is a silent letter before chu (10) and gya (100) which comes out as p after a vowel, so 40=zhipchu, 50=ngapchu, and 90=gupchu. Similarly, 200=nyipgya, 400=zhipgya, 500=ngapgya, and 900=gupgya.

Use nang and in higher numbers:

123 gya nang nyishu-tsaksum
347 sum-gya nang zhipchu-zhapdun
1998 stong chik nang gupgya gupchu-gopgyat
8,442 stong rgyat nang zhipgya zhipchu-zhaknyis
Number-related words

chik-chik  only one; one and the same
chikpo    alone
p’et       half

There’s no Ladakhi word for zero: just use a negative verb. Use the following patterns for any number:

tangpo  or  chikpa  first
nyis-pa       second
sum-pa         third
zhi-pa        fourth

nyis-ka   both; two together
sum-ka     all three together
zhi-ka     all four
4 Present tense

Vocabulary

Verbs

STEM+ches* is considered the basic form of the verb and dictionaries give this form. Ladakhis don’t use honorifics all the time, but you will frequently hear these most common verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HONORIFIC</th>
<th>NON-HONORIFIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skyot-chés</td>
<td>ch’a-chés to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lêw’-chés</td>
<td>yong-chés to come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don-chés</td>
<td>za-chés to eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhuks-shes</td>
<td>duk-chés to sit or stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dza’d-chés</td>
<td>cho-chés to do, to make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sal-chés</td>
<td>tang-chés to give</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present tense of verbs using -at ending

Verb endings are attached to the verb stem, which you find by taking away the ending -ches or -shes. For present tense, add -at to the stem. (In the Bodik spelling, this is done by repeating the final consonant, or connecting with the letter a.)

The negative ending is -a-met, and the question ending is -ad-a. Note that as usual, the negative has m in it and the question is just the normal form plus -a.

This tense can be used for either I am drinking tea or I drink tea. It can also be used for the future, just like English We’re leaving tomorrow.

* When attached to a stem ending in -s (such as zhuks to sit or stay), the -ches is pronounced -shes. The s is not heard before the sh sound, but I kept it in to make the verb stem (i.e. zhuks-) clear.
Ladakhi verbs do not change for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person like Hindi or European languages. Thus the literal translation of a word like t’ung-at can be used for any person, though it is most often used for 1st person and questions to be answered in the 1st person.

I drink.  
I eat.  
I go.  
I stay.  
I don’t drink.  
I don’t eat.  
I’m not going.  
I’m not staying.  
Do you drink?  
Do you eat?  
Do you go?  
Do you stay?

Making sentences
Verbs go at the end of the sentence. The subject is usually first if you say it at all, but almost everything else seems to be in the opposite order from English. (Subject) + Object + Verb. The best way to learn how sentences are structured is by learning examples:

I’m going to Leh.  
I’m not going to Leh.  
(I) stay in Leh.  
My father doesn’t stay in Leh.
26  Present tense

sha  za-amet  (I) don’t eat meat.
meat  eat-not

Questions
You’ll find that in conversation, questions often use honorifics because you is doing the action: nyerang karu skyod-at? *Where are you going?* However, the answer uses the non-honorific because I is doing the action: nga Le-a ch’a-at *I’m going to Leh.*

If you use a question word like su, karu, kane, chi, etc, then don’t add -a to the verb, because it’s already a question. Add -a to the verb only for yes-or-no questions.

nyerang ka(ru) skyod-at?  Where are you going?
    you   where   go (hon)

nga Le-a  ch’a-at  I’m going to Leh.
    I  Leh-to  go (non-hon)

Le-a  skyod-ada?  Are you going to Leh?
    where   go?

ch’a-at  (Yes, I) am going.
    go

ch’a-amet  (No, I) am not going.
    go-not

karu  zhuks-at?  Where are you staying?
    where   stay (hon)

nga Hemis-la  dug-at  I’m staying at Hemis.
    I  Hemis-at  stay (non-hon)

chi  dzad-at?  What are (you) doing?
    what   do (hon)
**Conversation in a bus**

nyerang karu skyod-at-le?
**you** **where** **go**

nga Alchi-a ch’a-at-le
**I** **Alchi-to** **go**

Alchi-a zhuks-ad-a?
**Alchi-in** **stay?**

Alchi-a dug-amet
**Alchi-in** **stay-not**

Saspol-a dug-at
**Saspol-in** **stay**

Alchi-a chi-a skyod-at?
**Alchi-to** **why** **go**

gonpa jal-at
**gonpa** **visit (hon)**

nyerang ka-ne in?
**you** **where-from are**

Germany-ne in
**Germany-from are**

nyerang Alchi-ne in-a?
**you** **Alchi-from are?**

Alchi-ne man
**Alchi-from am-not**

Choglamsar-ne in
**Choglamsar-from am**

Pot-pa in-a?
**Tibetan** **are?**

man, Ladaks-pa in
**no, Ladakhi am**

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?

Where are you going?
### Present tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alchi-a chi dzad-at?</td>
<td>འལྦྱི-སྐོ-དྲི་ད་ཏ? What do (you) do in Alchi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alchi-in what do</td>
<td>འལྦྱི-སྐོ-དང་གི་ད་ཏ (I) am a teacher in Alchi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alchi-a gergan in</td>
<td>འལྦྱི-སྐོ-གི་ར་གན (I) am a teacher in Alchi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ya ta Alchi-a lep</td>
<td>འལྦྱི-སྐོ-ལེ (we’ve) arrived at Alchi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oh now Alchi-in arrive</td>
<td>འལྦྱི-སྐོ-དང་གི་བོད་ནི (we’ve) arrived at Alchi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyerang ka-lam-ne skyodat?</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་ཐ་མ་སྐྲོད་ཅི་? Which way are (you) going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nga i-ne ch’aa-at</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་ཐ་མ་སྐྲོད་ཅི་? Which way are (you) going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I from-here go</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་ཐ་མ་སྐྲོད་ཅི་? Which way are (you) going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ya ju-le!</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་! Okay, ju-le!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>okay ju-le</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་! Okay, ju-le!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ju-le!</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་! Ju-le!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ju-le</td>
<td>རྒྱལ་ལྷ་! Ju-le!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** While learning this chapter it would be a good time to learn Combined Letters.
5  All five words for ‘TO BE’

In Chapter 2 you learned three words for to be. There are two more, yot and inok, for a total of five.

**Yot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>འིག</th>
<th>yot</th>
<th><em>Is, am are; there is, there are; has, have</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>འིག</td>
<td>met</td>
<td><em>It isn’t; there isn’t, there aren’t; I don’t have ...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འིག</td>
<td>yod-a?</td>
<td><em>Is it? Are there? Is there? Do you have ... ?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yot as TO BE (Yot vs duk)**

Much of the time, yot means *there is*, like duk. Both are used to indicate the presence or location of something or someone, but yot is used for things that are more permanent or general, and for things the speaker already knows well or intimately; while duk is used for things that are more temporarily there or not there, or that the speaker has just seen to be there or not there.

**EXAMPLES:**

*my country-in people many are*  (I know it well and it’s my own country.)

*There are many people in my country.*
All five words for TO BE

There are many people in the market.
(I just looked.)

There’s water. (I just looked.)

There’s water. (I know there is.)

Yot as to have

Yot is used in sentences where English would use has or have. Such sentences work like this: nga-a mingbo nyis yot To me there are two brothers.

I have three elder sisters.

S/he has two elder sisters.

Do you have any elder brothers?

I don’t have any elder brothers.

Is there butter? / Do you have butter?

No.

Then, do you have sugar?

Yes.

Inok

Is, are, etc.

isn’t, aren’t, etc.
Inok overlaps with in. Both are used for describing, but in is more often for first person and things the speaker knows intimately. In can be used to talk about your own things or family, etc., not just yourself, while you should use inok if you’re talking about something not yours, general statements, common knowledge, etc.

i(b)ο chi inok? What is this?
this what is
chuli inok It’s an apricot.
apricot is
k’ong su inok? Who is that?
s/he who is
Angmo inok That’s Angmo.
Angmo is
nge a-che in She’s my sister. (in because she’s mine)
my sister is
Stobdan-i a-che inok She’s Stobdan’s sister.
Stobdan’s sister is (inok because she’s not mine)
i-k’angpa su-i inok? Whose house is this?
this-house whose is
i-bas-bo karu-a inok? Where does this bus go?
this-bus-the where-to is
Chang-t’ang ma-t’angmo inok Changthang is very cold.
Changthang very-cold is

Overview of the five words for TO BE
These really aren’t more complicated than English, just different: in place of each of these words, English chooses between am, are, is, has, have, and feels, tastes, looks, etc.

Generally, yot and in are often first person or intimately or already known, while duk and inok are more external and often third person. Using
duk means you’ve recently or just now seen the thing, while yot means you already knew about it before.

Rak is limited to describing things felt, sensed, tasted, smelled, touched or heard. However, duk is also used to describe things by sight, the way rak is used for perceptions of the other senses and emotions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIBING</th>
<th>EXISTENCE, PRESENCE &amp; LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>yot saying something exists or where it is, if you already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inok</td>
<td>duk saying something exists or where it is, if you just found out or saw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rak</td>
<td>describing things on the basis of feeling, smell, taste, touch or hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duk</td>
<td>describing things on the basis of sight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Angmo duk. *There’s Angmo.* (I just saw her.)

Angmo yot. *Angmo is here.* (I already know she’s here.)

Angmo in. *I’m Angmo.*

Angmo inok. *That’s Angmo.*

Angmo rak. *I can hear Angmo.*

Note that in Ladakhi, questions are asked in the verb form you expect the answerer to use.

What do you see? or What is there? (I expect you to have just seen.)

What do you have? or What is there? (I expect you to know already.)
What are you? (Might be a strange question, but it could also mean: What is it, this thing of yours?)

What is that?

What do you feel? (Common phrase for What’s wrong?)

Conversation: Buying Things

So few of the shops in Leh are Ladakhi-owned that you may have difficulty practising Ladakhi there. The vegetable sellers along the main bazaar are Ladakhi, and so are the people who sell dried apricots and ch’ur-pe as you move down towards the bus-stand. However, they may keep speaking Hindi to you, even if you tell them Hindi mi-shes I don’t know Hindi!

Where are the apricots from?

They’re from Sham.

What is this?

It’s apricot nuts. It’s good. Eat!

Do you have phating?

Yes.

How much is phating?

30 rupees for 250 grams.
rin mangpo manog-a?
price much isn’t?
mangpo manok!
much isn’t
pao c hig sal-le
250g one give

shugu meda?
paper don’t-you-have?
met
no
ðiık, i-ne yot
okay, here there-is

ya ðiık, ju-le
yes okay ju-le

ju-le!
ju-le

Isn’t that a high price?
No it’s not much!
Please give me 250 grams.
Don’t you have a bag?
No.
It’s okay; I’ve got one.
Yes, okay. Ju-le!
Ju-le!
6 Past tense and verb types

Ladakhi verbs fall into different categories that behave differently in their grammar. First, there are the five to be verbs. Then there are all the other verbs, which have a stem plus an ending. There are two ways of dividing these verbs, resulting in four categories, which have different endings on their subjects, and on the verb itself (mainly in the past tense, which is why it comes up at this point).

**Active/Inactive**

The first way of dividing Ladakhi verbs is between active verbs—where the subject actively or intentionally does the action—and inactive verbs, which just happen without the subject making any effort.

For example, borches to put or keep is active, while storches to lose is inactive. Skol-ches to boil is active (a person does it), while k’ol-ches to boil is inactive (the water does it). Lta-ches to watch is active (you actively look at something), while t’ong-ches to see is inactive (something is visible to you).

Occasionally it’s not easy to see why one verb is active and another is inactive: lep-ches to arrive follows the grammar of inactive verbs, while yong-ches to come follows the pattern of active verbs.

**Transitive/Intransitive**

The second way of dividing verbs is between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive means the verb can have a direct object, *i.e.* somebody does the action to somebody or something else: *I’m eating rice.* (Rice is the object of the verb eating, so eat is transitive.) *They watched a movie.* (Movie is the object of watched, so watch is transitive.) *They saw the accident.* (Accident is the object of saw, so see is transitive.) *He knocked over the lamp.* (Lamp is the object of knocked over, so knock over is transitive.)

Verbs without an object are called intransitive: *He arrived yesterday.* (The verb arrive can’t have an object since nobody can arrive something else, so arrive is intransitive.) *The lamp fell over.* (The verb fell over can’t have an object since nobody can fall something over, so fall over is intransitive.)
Some examples of the four types of verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE + ACTIVE</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE + ACTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t’ungches to drink</td>
<td>yongches to come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donches to eat or drink (hon)</td>
<td>ch’aches to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chocches to do</td>
<td>skyotches to come or go (hon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tangches to give</td>
<td>dukches to sit or stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’uches to wash</td>
<td>zhukshes to sit or stay (hon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skolches to boil, to cook</td>
<td>langshes to stand up, get up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’yongches to bring</td>
<td>dulches to walk or move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l)taches to watch</td>
<td>nguches to cry, weep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zaches to eat</td>
<td>(r)gotches to laugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyoches to buy</td>
<td>babshes to go down, descend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapches to teach or study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE + INACTIVE</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE + INACTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>goshes to want</td>
<td>lepches to arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>storches to lose</td>
<td>ngalches to get tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’ongches to see; to be visible</td>
<td>(l)tokshes to be hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’opches to find, obtain, get</td>
<td>díkches to be okay, enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’ukches to meet</td>
<td>shiches to die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheshes to know</td>
<td>k’olches to boil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha goches to understand</td>
<td>ts’arches to be finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lopshes to learn</td>
<td>sunches to be bored, lonely, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ßho yongches to get angry</td>
<td>díangshes to feel full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gorches to be late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>díupches to be finished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subjects and objects of verbs
In Ladakhi, the object of a transitive verb has no special ending, while the subject usually has a special ending.

With transitive active verbs (like choches to do) the ending on the subject sounds like the possessive: -i or -e.

Nge cho-at I do it.
Ngatangi cho-at We do it.
Nyerangi las cho-ad-a? Do you work?
Nyerangi chang za-a-med-a? Aren’t you eating anything?
Nge chang za-a-med. I’m not eating anything.

With transitive inactive verbs (like goshes to want), the subject has the dative ending, like to him: -a or -la,

Nga-tang-a Ladaksi spera shes-at We know Ladakhi.
Nyerang-a ch’u gos-ad-a? Do you want water?
Nga-a chang gos-a-met. I don’t want anything.

With intransitive verbs (both active and inactive), the subject has no special ending, and by definition intransitive verbs have no object.

Nga yong-at I’m coming.
Nyerang karu skyodat? Where are you going?
Nyerang (r)god-ad-a? Are you laughing?
Nga (r)god-a-met. I’m not laughing.
Ngazha sun-amet. We don’t get bored.
### Transitive Verbs

No ending on the object; the subject has special endings.

**ACTIVE + TRANSITIVE**

Past tense can have -s and -pin. Subject ending sounds like the possessive.

- Nge stanmo-a (l)tas-pin. *I watched the show.*
- A-me k’arji chos. *Mother made food.*
- Su-i tangs? *Who gave (it)?*
- K’ong-i nga-a tagi sals. *They gave me bread.*
- K’arji k’yongs-pin-a? *Did (you) bring food?*
- Ma-k’yongs-pin. *No, (I) didn’t bring (it).*
- Nge ch’u k’yong-at. *I’m bringing water.*
- K’oi las cho-at. *S/he works.*

**INACTIVE + TRANSITIVE**

Past tense is just the verb stem itself. The subject has -a ending.

- Nga-a stanmo t’ong. *I saw the show.*
- Nga-a kulik stor. *I lost the key.*
- K’ong-a t’op. *He found (it).*
- Angmo-a k’o t’ong. *Angmo saw (him/her/it).*
- Nga-a gos-at. *I want (it).*
- Nyerang-a ha go-a? *Did you understand?*
- Ha go. *I understood.*
- Ha ma-go. *I didn’t understand.*
- K’o-a ladagsi spera shes-amet. *He doesn’t know Ladakhi.*
- Nga-a shes-at. *I know (it).*
### Intransitive Verbs

No ending on the subject. By definition there is no object.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVE + INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>Past tense can have -s and -pin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ka ru skyotpin?</td>
<td><em>Where did (you) go?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le-a song-pin.</td>
<td><em>(I) went to Leh.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhugs-pin-a?</td>
<td><em>Did (you) stay?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dugs-pin.</td>
<td><em>(Yes, I) stayed.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K’o dering yongs.</td>
<td><em>He came today.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dang yongs-pin.</td>
<td><em>(I) came yesterday.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga t’ore yong-at.</td>
<td><em>I’m coming tomorrow.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyerang karu zhuks-at?</td>
<td><em>Where are you staying?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INACTIVE + INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>Past tense is just the verb stem itself.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dang leb-a?</td>
<td><em>Did (you) arrive yesterday?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyerang nam lep?</td>
<td><em>When did you arrive?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dang lep.</td>
<td><em>(I) arrived yesterday.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K’ong nam lep?</td>
<td><em>When did s/he/they arrive?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngal-a?</td>
<td><em>Did (you) get tired?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma-ngal.</td>
<td><em>(No, I) didn’t get tired.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Íha its (l)toks.</td>
<td><em>(I) got very hungry.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Íig-a? literature</td>
<td><em>Was it okay? but used as Is it okay?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Íik.</td>
<td><em>It was okay; it is okay.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Past tense

In order to form the past tense, the first step is to find the past stem. The simplest past tense is the past stem alone, but endings can also be added to it.

For inactive verbs, the past stem is the same as the present stem (i.e. just remove -ches or -shes), and it can be used as the past tense. For example, K’o-a t’ong s/he saw. Angmo lep Angmo arrived.

Active verbs form the past stem by adding -s to the present stem. The pronunciation of the s is variable after l, t, n, and r, where s is not allowed by classical spelling rules. The past stem by itself is used as the past tense only for 2nd and 3rd persons. For example, t’ung s you/he/she/it/they drank; yongs you/he/she/it/they came. For 1st person (and questions to be answered in 1st person), use past stem+pin. For example, T’ungspin I drank. T’ungspin-a Did you drink? Yongspin I came. Yongspin-a? Did you come?

There are only two irregular past stems, and both are active:
- ch’a-ches to go becomes song he/she/they went or song-pin I/we went
- za-ches to eat becomes zos he/she/they ate or zos-pin I/we ate

Generally in Ladakhi the subject and/or object should be left unsaid if they are obvious from context.

Questions are simply past+a, and negatives are ma+past. The actual verb stem is only one syllable, so two-part verbs like spera tangches and ha goches (ha being a ‘word’ used only with goches) form the negative past like this: spera ma-tangs and ha ma-go.

Tear your hair...

Tragically for us learners, each region has slight differences in these rules. For example, Shammas pronounce the -s on the active transitive subject (reflecting the proper Tibetan spelling) so it doesn’t sound like the possessive: k’os, ngas, sus, etc., instead of k’oe, nge, sui, etc. In Changthang and Zangskar, on the other hand, they don’t even pronounce the s in the past stems, but may change the vowel instead. In Nubra there is not such a big difference between active and inactive verbs.

Classical Tibetan had this pattern of transitive and intransitive subjects a thousand years ago, and so do most modern varieties of Tibetan and Ladakhi. In linguistics, languages with this pattern are called ‘ergative’.
7 Commands

As seen in the first conversation chapter, many verbs can be made into commands by saying the verb stem alone: skyot! zhuks! yong! solja don! t’ukpa sal!

- Verb stems ending in a vowel add -s. For example, cho-ches to do becomes chos! do!
- Non-honorific verb stems with the vowel -a- in them change the vowel to -o-. For example: langs-shes to get up becomes longs! get up! and tang-ches to give becomes tong! give! But sal-ches to give remains sal! please give! because it’s honorific.
- Inactive verbs are not usually made into commands.
- There are two irregular commands: za-ches to eat becomes zo! eat! and ch’-a-ches to go becomes song! go!
- For the negative simply say ma+PRESENT STEM: ma-skyot don’t go! ma-zhuks don’t sit! ma-yong don’t come! ma-sal don’t give! Use the original unchanged present stem: ma-cho don’t do! ma-tang don’t give! ma-za don’t eat! ma-ch’a don’t go!
- The plural command has -shik: Skyot-shik Please come in (spoken to more than one person). Ma-skyot-shik Please don’t go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb (en)</th>
<th>command (th)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yong</td>
<td>ma-yong don’t come!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyot</td>
<td>ma-skyot don’t come/go! (hon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zo</td>
<td>ma-za don’t eat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>song</td>
<td>ma-ch’a don’t go!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chos</td>
<td>ma-cho don’t do!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tong</td>
<td>ma-tang don’t give!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sal</td>
<td>ma-sal don’t give! (hon)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Variations on the basic command**

- **COMMAND+ang** is firmer than the simple command.

  - **Skyod-ang!**  
    "Come in! (Firmer than skyot alone.)"
    嘿佳, 佳佮
  
  - **Don-ang!**  
    "Please eat. (Insisting: Don’t argue, just eat.)"
    ཆ་ཐྲག་ཁ
  
  - **So(ng)-ang!**  
    "Go! (Rude, like Get lost!)"
    ཉ་ང་
  
  - **(L)tos-ang!**  
    "Look! or Watch out!"
    གྲེག་ཁ

- Adding -hey to a command (or any other sentence) emphasises it in a friendly or cajoling way. Also, ju-hey is a more informal good-bye than ju-le.

  - **Don-hey!**  
    "Please eat. (Go on, have some!)"
    ཆ་ཐྲག་
  
  - **Yi-ge ōis-hey!**  
    "Write a letter, okay?"
    སྒྲོན་ཁ

- Adding ju-ju to a command sounds insistent but in a friendly way, often translatable as *Please!*

  - **Chos-ang, ju-ju**  
    "Do it! (Please don’t forget/refuse again.)"
    ཀྲོང་ཁ
  
  - **Ladagsi nanga mol, ju-ju**  
    "Please say it in Ladakhi (insisting, pleading)"
    དཔལ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཐེག་ཆེན་ལྕན་པ་གཞན་
❖ **PRESENT-STEM+a-dzat**  
Dzat is the honorific for *to do* and can be added to any verb stem for extra respect. It is rather formal and is especially used between strangers or in public notices or speeches.

İhing-a-dzat  
Please wait.  
\[\text{Please wait.}\]

Sal-a-dzat  
Give. (This is even more respectful than sal.)  
\[\text{Give. (This is even more respectful than sal.)}\]

❖ When you are out walking, people may say skyod-de to you, which is not telling you to get lost, but rather to go well. It’s a pleasant good-bye to someone who is leaving, and similarly zhuk-se can be said when leaving someone who is staying put.

❖ If you’re asking for something, instead of sal or sal-ang, you might want to use t’ob-in-a, which means roughly *Would I find?* or *Can I get?*  
\[\text{Can I get hot water?}\]

\[\text{Can I get hot water?}\]

\[\text{Can I get hot water?}\]
8 Additional grammar

I hope this book has helped you grasp the basics of Ladakhi. After getting started, you can progress with the help of the people around you. Here are some other common and useful grammar structures to assist you as you move forward on your own, but beware of regional variations.

**Verb forms**

All the TO BE words can be used as verb endings. (The ending -at is actually a form of yot.) As with the TO BE words, the distinctions between the various verb endings are based on evidentiality, which means the choice of verb endings doesn’t follow Indo-European divisions of 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, but instead reflects how the speaker knows the verb happened or is happening. In many cases, more than one option is correct.

Note that any verb form can be made into a yes-or-no question by adding -a, even to the negative. And keep in mind that the subject and/or object are left unsaid if they are obvious from the context.

The five TO BE words are different from normal verbs, and don’t take many endings. Rak and inok don’t usually take endings, so if you need to add an ending to these (such as -do for probably or -na for if), rak becomes yot and inok becomes in.

**STEM+duk (Present tense for seen information)**

This is a present tense ending, usually 3rd person. The difference between -at and -duk as verb endings is similar to that between the words yot and duk themselves: STEM+at is vaguely first person or for things already known; STEM+duk is for things seen, or things just found out. After a vowel, the pronunciation of -duk changes to -ruk.

\[\text{i(b)o } \partial \text{ul-a-miruk} \]
This doesn’t work.

\[\text{this work-doesn’t} \]
(If you just saw that it doesn’t work.)
[็นี่ปุถา่ añ∂]|}

\[\text{i(b)o } \partial \text{ul-a-met} \]
This doesn’t work.

\[\text{this work-doesn’t} \]
(If you knew it already)
[็นี่ปุถา่ añ∂]|}
k'o ch’a-ruk  S/he is going.  
s/he goes  (When you can see him or her going)

Ladaksi spera she’s  S/he knows Ladakhi!  (What people will whisper to each other all around you)

This is also the present ending for t’ongches, which is easier to remember if you think of it as to be visible or to look good or bad, instead of to see.
a- mi-bo t’ong-dug-a?  Do you see that person over there?

me-to visible isn’t  Looks good.

STEM+a-rak  (Present tense for things sensed)
This ending can be used for the present tense for things you feel, sense, smell, or hear happening.

(l)toks-a-rak  I’m hungry.  (I feel hungry)
hungry-feel-am  
skat-zhig yong-a-rak  There’s a noise.  (I hear it)

sound-a come-feel  
lu tang-a-rak  Someone is singing.  (I hear them)
song give-hear  
ch’arpa tang-a-rak  It’s raining.  (I feel it)

Ts’or-a-rak  (Likes and dislikes)
Here’s a useful pattern for stating your likes and dislikes. Literally, ts’or-a-rak means I feel that it is...

(chuli) zhimpo ts’or-a-rak  I like (apricots).
apricots delicious I-feel-that-it-is  

(please translate this sentence into the appropriate language and format for your final submission)
Additional grammar

(---) (r)gyalla ts‘or-a-rak  I like (---).
(---) good  I-feel-that-it-is  "...ŋjuː`maː́ ʧεᵄˈrəː ʰəŋ ʈʃən"

(---) (r)gyalla ts‘or-a-mirak  I don’t like (---).
(---) good  I-feel-that-it-isn’t  "...ŋjuː`maː́ ʧεᵄˈrəː ʰəŋ ʈʃən"

(---) kakspo ts‘or-a-rak  I find (---) difficult.
(---) difficult  I-feel-that-it-is  "...n̥aŋzjawwsi`́ ʧεᵄˈrəː ʰəŋ ʈʃən"

STEM+anok  (General statements in present/future)
This ending can be used for 3rd person present or future, and indicates that the action happens regularly, generally or reliably. It sounds authoritative.
k‘o yong-anok  S/he will come.
s/he come-will  ñ̥i‘ʃɛː `ʧən

bas yong-a-manok  The bus won’t come.
bus  come-won’t  ñ̥aʃɛː `ʧən

book  kazuga  zer-anok  How do you say book?
book  how  say-will  book`ɑːn ʧɛn ʧεᵄˈrəː ʰəŋ ʈʃən

Losar  rgun-la  yong-anok  Losar comes in winter.
Losar  winter-in  come-will  ñ̥i`ʃɛː ʃəŋz ʃəŋ ʈʃən  `ʧən

ngazhe  yul-la-ang  k‘a  tang-anok  It also snows in my country.
our  country-in-also  snow  give-will  ʃəŋz ʃəŋ ʈʃən  `ʧən

Dilli-a  tang-a-manok  It doesn’t (snow) in Delhi
Delhi-in  give-will  ñ̥i`ʃɛː ʃəŋz ʃəŋ ʈʃən  `ʧən

STEM+in (Present & future)
The negative is mi+STEM. This is often used for 1st person future with active verbs, though the ending -at is also common for the future. With inactive verbs this form isn’t necessarily future or 1st person.
t‘o-re  jal-in!  I’ll see you tomorrow! (hon)
tomorrow  see-will  ñ̥i`ʃɛː ʃəŋz ʃəŋ ʈʃən

ngé † u-in!  I’ll wash! (to insist on washing the dishes)
I  wash-will  ʧən`ʃɛː
skyodina? Shall we go? (respectful)
go-will? ḗ꣕ꦐ꣕ꦐ
ch’ena? (=ch’a-ina) Shall we go? (familiar)
go-will? ḗ꣕ꦐ꣕ꦐ
mi-yong I won’t come.
won’t-come ḗ꣕ꦐ꣕ꦎ

Hindi mi-shes I don’t know Hindi.
Hindi don’t know ḗ꣕ꦐ꣕ꦎ
ch’u mi-(r)gos Water isn’t/won’t be needed.
water don’t want ḗ꣕ꦐ꣕ꦎ

**STEM+chen (Indefinite tense)**

This could be called the indefinite tense, used for things that happen generally, not at a specific time, and also for likely future or ‘supposed to’, any person. The negative is STEM+che-man.

nyerangi ming-a chi zer-chen What is your name?
your name-to what say-generally ḗ꣕ꦐ꣚ꦎꦐꦎꦐꦎꦎꦐꦐꦐꦎ
k’o yong-chen S/he is supposed to come.
s/he come-likely ḗ꣕ꦐꦐꦎ
k’o yong-che-man S/he isn’t supposed to come.
s/he come-likely-not ḗ꣕ꦐꦐꦎ

**STEM alone in questions (‘Should I?’)**

A verb stem without an ending is like Shall I? or Should I? It’s used in questions only: either with a question word, or with the ending -a to make a yes-or-no question.

chi cho? What shall I do?
what shall-I-do ḗ꣕ꦎ
nam yong? When should I come?
when shall-I-come ḗ꣕ꦐꦎ
chalak k’yer-a? Shall I carry the luggage?
luggage shall-I-carry? ḗ꣕ꦐꦎꦐꦎꦎꦐꦐꦐꦎ
48 Additional grammar

daksa  cho-a? Should I do it now?
now  shall-I-do?

+∂o (Maybe, probably)
Uncertainty can be expressed by adding -∂o to yot, met, in, man, and verbs ending in -at or -met. When speaking of yourself it’s better to use chig-ch’ana maybe at the beginning of the sentence, rather than -∂o forms.

yot-∂o There probably is.

met-∂o There probably isn’t.

in-∂o It probably is.

man-∂o It probably isn’t.

tagi yot-∂o Maybe there is some bread.

bread is-maybe

k’o yongat-∂o Maybe s/he will come.

s/he come-maybe

chig-ch’ana nga yong-chen Maybe I will come.

maybe I come-will

+k(y)ak (Must be)
The ending -kyak or -kak is added to yot, met, in, man, PAST STEMS, and verbs ending in -at or -amet. This expresses more certainty than -∂o forms but less than inok or -anok forms. It is also used for telling stories and talking about history.

yot-k(y)ak There must be.

man-k(y)ak I’m pretty sure it’s not.

k’ong ts’angma yongat-k(y)ak They must all be coming.

they all coming-must-be
It was built in the time of the kings.

**PAST STEM+tok (Past tense, not seen)**

This past tense ending is used when one hasn’t seen the thing happening, but is sure of it. The radio news readers always use this form.

- **yongs-tok**
  - They’ve come (I didn’t see them but I’m sure).
  - (I feel) I should go.

- **ch´ak-tok**
  - It broke (though I didn’t see it break).

- **ma-chos-tok**
  - It hasn’t been done.

- **Zoji-la-a k’a tangs-tok**
  - It snowed on Zoji-la.

- **dang Sonam lep-tok**
  - Sonam arrived yesterday.

- **yesterday Sonam arrived**
  - (I feel) I must go. I have to go.

**Auxiliary verbs**

These verbs are added to the stem of another verb, and can take any ending themselves.

- **PRESENT STEM+(r)gos-shes:** *should, must, to have to, to be necessary* (tr, inac)
- **PRESENT STEM+nyan-ches:** *can, to be able to, to be possible* (tr, inac)
- **PRESENT STEM+chug-ches:** *to allow, let, permit; to make (somebody do something)* (tr, act)
- **PAST STEM+tang-ches or +sal-ches** adds a sense of spontaneity to any other verb, and is very common (tr, act)

- **nga-a ch´a goshe(s)-rak**
  - (I feel) I should go.

- **nga-a ch´a goshe(s)-yot**
  - I must go. I have to go.
cho mi-(r)gos       It won’t be necessary to do.  ฐี่ ฉันจะไม่ทำ
cho ma-nyan        (I/she/he/etc.) couldn’t do it.  ฉัน ทำไม่ได้
cho ma-chuks        It wasn’t permitted.  ฉันไม่ได้
k’o-a nge cho chug-in I will make him/her do it.  ฉันจะให้เขาทำ
chos tong!          Just do it!  ฉันจะทำ
yongs tangs        S/he just turned up.  เขามาแล้ว
nyos tangspin       I bought it on the spur of the moment.  ฉันซื้อ

**PAST STEM+te  (Perfect participle & verbal adverb)**
The PAST STEM+te is a very common form, making a participle or adverb. The negative is ma+PRESENT STEM+a. Usually it means that the action is finished and in that case, choste can be translated as having done, i.e. a perfect participle. Sometimes, though, choste can be translated as doing or by doing i.e. a verbal adverb.

loks-te      skyot!  Come back!  กลับบ้าง
by-returning come!  ไปแล้ว
ðuł-te yongspin    I came on foot.  ฉันมาเท้า
by-walking (I) came ถือทางเท้า
Q: chi cho-at?  A: duks-te yot  What are you doing? I’m hanging around.  คุณอยู่ what are-you-doing Sitting am
k’arji zos-te yongspin I ate before I came.  ฉันกินก่อน
food having-eaten came alică ฉันกินก่อน
Additional grammar

ma-za-a in-a? Have you eaten?
not-having-eaten are?
las ma-dub-a inok The work is not finished.
work not-finished is

The form zhukste is used to make the TO BE verbs honorific:
nyerang ka-ne zhugste in? Where are you from? (hon)
you where-from (hon) is
rinpoche zhugste duk The Rinpoche is there.
Rinpoche (hon) is-there

**STEM +ches (Gerund & future participle)**

The PRESENT STEM +ches or +shes is considered the basic form of the verb, but it can’t be used alone as the main verb of a sentence. It is pronounced as -che or -she in some combinations.

It functions in at least two ways: as the gerund, that is as the noun representing the activity, and as a sort of future participle, meaning going to or supposed to.

As the gerund:
Bodik sikhes kakspo ts’or-a-rak I find reading Bodik difficult.
Bodik reading difficult I-feel-it-is
(β) tses-lu tang-ches skyitpo inok Singing and dancing is fun.
dance-song giving happy is
one pen zer-ches (r)gyalla manok It’s bad to say ‘one pen.’
one pen saying good isn’t

As the future participle (supposed to or going to):
t’o-re skyot-ches in-a? Are you supposed to go tomorrow?
tomorrow supposed-to-go are-(you)?
dang ch’a-ches in-pin I was supposed to leave yesterday.
yesterday supposed-to-go was
ch’ak-ches duk It looks like it’s going to break.
going-to-break is (on basis of sight)
Verbal nouns
Certain endings can be added to any verb stem to make a noun from the verb. Here are a few useful and common ones.

- kan  the person or thing that does
- (s)nyin(g)  the desire to do, want
- long  enough time to do

I-to  Ladakhi speech learn-desire feel

I want to learn Ladakhi.

cha t'un-g-nin mi-rak  I don’t want to drink tea.

I don’t want to drink tea.

si-l-long ma-yongs  I didn’t have time to read it.

I didn’t have time to read it.

cho-long yong-in-a?  Will you have time to do it?

do-time come-will?

Will you have time to do it?

las cho-kan  Worker

work doer

k’ara met-kan  Without sugar

sugar not-haver

Overview of present and future tenses

STEM+at  is present or future implying the speaker already knows, so is mainly used for the 1st person.

cho-at  I do --, I’m doing --. I’m going to do --.

STEM+duk is present tense, when the speaker sees or has just found out.

cho-ruk  She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.

She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.

STEM+rak is used when the speaker hears, senses, feels the verb happening.

cho-a-rak  She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.

She/he/they are doing --. It is being done.

I can hear, sense or feel it.

STEM+anok  is for authoritative statements in present and future.

cho-anok  They do --. They’ll do --. (It’s generally known)

STEM+at-∂o  gives a sense of uncertainty or probability.

cho-at-∂o  They might do it. They’ll probably do it.
STEM+at-kyak is more certain than -∂o.
  cho-at-kyak  They must be doing it.
STEM+chen can be called the indefinite tense.
  cho-chen  They’ll do that (likely, or they’re supposed to).
  cho-chen  or  It’s generally done.
STEM+ches +TO BE makes many going to or supposed to sentences:
  cho-ches inok  It’s supposed to be done or It’s going to be done.
  cho-che(s) yot  I’m supposed to do it.
  cho-che(s) rak  I feel like doing it.

**Overview of past tenses**

PAST STEM+pin is for 1st person, active verbs.
  song-pin  I went
PAST STEM alone with active verbs is 2nd or 3rd person, especially if seen by
  the speaker.
  song  She/he/they went (and I saw them go.)
PAST STEM alone with inactive verbs is any person if seen by the speaker.
  lep  I arrived. or
  She/he/they arrived (and I saw them come.)
PAST STEM+tok means the speaker is sure but didn’t personally see it.
  song-tok  She/he/they went. (I’m sure but I didn’t see them go.)
  lep-tok  She/he/they arrived. (I’m sure but didn’t see them come.)
PAST STEM+kyak means the speaker is fairly sure on the basis of evidence.
  song-kyak  She/he/they must have gone.
  lep-kyak  She/he/they must have arrived.
PAST STEM+te+TO BE makes many other past and perfect constructions.
  song-te inok  She/he/they are gone.
  lepte yot  She/he/they have arrived (and are here.)

PAST STEM+pin can also be used for things that happened uncertainly or at an
uncertain time in the past, and in this sense it can be used with inactive verbs. It is not really common or useful enough to be included in this book, but if I don’t mention it, your Ladakhi friend or teacher might tell you it’s not true that -pin can’t be used for 3rd person or with inactive verbs like lep-
ches or t’ongches.
Other grammatical forms

Conditional (if)
If is expressed by adding -na to a present verb stem. -Nang is a bit stronger, more like even if.

naksha (r)gyap-na, ơig-ga-le  Is it okay if I take a picture?
picture  take-if,  is-it-okay?  ་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

ch’arpa tang-na, ch’a-met  If it rains, I won’t go.
    rain  give -if  go  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

ch’arpa tang-nang, ch’a-at  Even if it rains, I’ll go.
    rain  give-even-if  go  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

Kaltes can be added to the beginning of the sentence, but is not necessary:
kaltes k’ärji ma-za-na (l)toks-anok  If one doesn’t eat, one will be hungry.
    if  food  not-eat-if  hungry-is  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

Comparison of adjectives
Comparative adjectives are usually made by dropping the second syllable of an adjective and adding -a. The comparative form is not compulsory; the regular form of the adjective can also be used. The list of adjectives on page 95 gives the comparative form of each adjective if there is one.

The word sang means than, but it goes after its object, and the object is usually in the possessive case.

Jammu-i sang Le  †ang-a-inok  Leh is colder than Jammu.
    Jammu-of  than  Leh  colder  is  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

Padma Dolkar-i sang ringa duk  Padma is taller than Dolkar.
    Padma Dolkar-of  than  taller  is  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

The usual way of expressing superlatives (best, biggest, etc.) is to say better than all, bigger than all, etc.

ts’ang-me sang (r)gyalla inok  (It) is the best.
    all-of  than  good  is  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

i(b)o ts’ang-me sang ch’enmo duk  This is the biggest one.
    this  all-of  than  big  is  བོ་་ོ་་ོ་་ོ་

dang-dering -i sang skitpo met
*These are the happiest days!*

(Line from Ali Yato song)

**Too hot, too cold, too much, etc.**

To express the idea of *too* or *too much*, use mángste.

*The tea is too hot for me.*

*There’s too much chilli (for me).*

**Articles (the, a, some)**

Articles are attached to words, but are not compulsory as in English.

- singular indefinite article like *a, an* or *some*
  -zhik, -ik

- singular definite article, like *the*
  -po, -bo, -o

-plural definite article, like *the*
  -gun

The pronunciation of -zhig depends on the sound before it: after a vowel it can be pronounced -ik, *e.g.* *ch’u-zhik* and *ch’u-ik* *some water* are equally correct.

*Please give (me) an apple.*

*Please give (me) some boiled water.*

*Please give (me) the apple.*

*Please give (me) the red one.*

*Please give (me) the red ones.*
mi-gun song

people-the went

mi-zhig-i tangs

person-a-(act subj) gave

The people went.  

Somebody gave (it) to (me).

The plural article is not used if some other indicator of amount is given, such as a number, ts`angma all, mangpo much or many, etc.

mi mangpo song

people many went

†`ugu sum lep

children three arrived

Many people went.

Three children arrived.

-zhik/ -shik/ -ik also means approximately or about when used with a number or amount:

(β)chu-zhik sal / (β)chu-ik sal

ten-about give

tsapik-zhik sal

little-about give

Give (me) about ten.

Give me a little bit.
Almost every Ladakhi I know enjoys singing, except perhaps some younger people who grew up in Leh with TV. Modern Ladakhi music is thriving, with many new songs being written every year. The radio, cassettes, and young people spread them from village to village along with their accompanying dance movements. I’m told that fifteen or twenty years ago many songs exhorted people to modernize and get rid of their dusty old traditions, but for the past ten years the trend has been quite the opposite, and many songs popularly sung by young people are about preserving Ladakhi culture.

Here are two songs that almost anyone you ask should know the tunes to. I didn’t include a zhung-lu, more serious folk song, because they tend to use semi-classical language and have confusing la-la-la syllables in the middle of words.

Ali Yato is a cheerful and well-known song and the verses are easy, but the literal meaning of some lines is vague. Adapted from Zangskari songs by Tsewang Dorje, it has evolved further by word of mouth.

Roughly translated:

Intro:
Summertime on the high pass; there’s a beautiful summer pasture
Grass and palu flowers; it’s full of wonderful smells
Yaks, goats and sheep; we’ve got big flocks and small
Butter, milk, buttermilk and cheese; dairy products flowing freely

Chorus:
Hey-Hey! Aha, my friends, hey; twenty-five, hey!

1. Up-up-up this way; aha, my friends!
   Down-down-down that way; aha, my friends!

2. There’s no happier time than this; aha my friends!

3. If you don’t make yourself happy, people will make you suffer
**Ali Yato**

Yar-k’a la-k’a t’onpo te la  
*summer pass high that at*  
Íoksa demo yot  
*pasture nice there-is*

Spang tang mentog palu suli  
grass and flowers (type of flower)  
‘i-zhim t’ul-t’ul yot  
*smell nice full there-is*

Yak tang öi tang rama luggi  
yak and female-yak and goats sheep  
K´yu-ch´en k´yu-ch´ung yot  
flock-big  flock-small  there-is

Mar tang oma tara  ch´urpe  
butter and milk buttermilk cheese  
Zhon-ch´u di-ri-ri  
dairy products (flowing sound)

Chorus: Hai hai! A-li yato-le  

Nyishu-tsa-nga-le

1. Gyen-gyen-gyen-la  
up-up-up-to  crowding take  
A-li yato-le  

T´ur-t´ur-t´ur-la  
down-down-down-to  crowding take  
A-li yato-le

2. Dang-diring sang skyitpo met  
yesterday-today than happy there-isn’t  
A-li yato-le  

Dang-diring sang gamo met  
yesterday-today than happy there-isn’t  
A-li yato-le

3. Skyitpo rangi ma-cho-na  
happy self  not-make-if  
Dukpo mi-i stan (repeat)  
misery people show
The Jullay Song

Chorus:
Ju-le, ju-le, ju-le mol ju-lan zhig sa-a-al
Jullay, Jullay, Jullay say ju-answer-a give
Ladakhi rgan-zhon-kun
Ladakhi old-young-all
1. Bye-bye tang hello, ta-ta-kun
   Bye-bye and hello, ta-ta all
   Rang-skat-na p’ing-gos-duk
   Own-language-from take-out-should
   Shes-rig-la not-pe lobs-ngan-kun
   Culture-to harming habit-bad-all
   Ta-ni p’ang-t’o-ran song
   Now throw-time went
   2. Be’ta tang be’i lobs-ngan-kun
      (Hindi for nono) and (Hindi nomo) habits-bad
      Rang-skat-na p’ing-gos-duk
      Own-language-from take-out-should
      Rang-skat-ti nono nomo kun
      Own-language nono nomo all
      Ta-ni mol-t’o-ran song
      Now say-time went
      3. Zhal-dzom tang peste skyot-zana
         (Hon)-meet and parting go-while
         Ju-le ts’igs zangpo mol
         Jullay word good say
         Mi-ga-we mi tang-nyampo
         Not-liking person with
         Rang-sems chig-tu t’un-chuk
         Own-mind one-to agree-make
      4. Dzawo-kun nyemo gyur-chuk-kan
         Friends-all close change-maker
         Ju-le ts’igs zangpo yin
         Jullay word good is
         Mi-shes-pe mi-kun sheshuk-kan
         Not-knowing people know-maker
         Ju-le ts’igs zangpo yin
         Jullay word good is
The Jullay Song translated generally:

Chorus: Say jullay and answer jullay
All Ladakhis, young and old

1. We should rid our language of words like \textit{bye-bye, hello and ta-ta}
Now is the time to get rid of culture-destroying habits

2. We should rid our language of words like \textit{beta and beti}
Now is the time to use our own words like \textit{nono and nomo}

3. Whether meeting or parting, say the good word, jullay.
With anyone you don’t like, make up with them.

4. The good word that brings friends closer is jullay,
The good word that make strangers friends is jullay.

—Ngawang Rinchen, Wachar
The alphabet

ka
k’a
ga
nga
cha
ch’a
ja
nya
ta
t’a
da
na
pa
p’a
ba
ma
tsa
ts’a
dza
wa
zha
za
a
ya
ra
la
sha
sa
ha
a
Try learning the alphabet while growing familiar with the material in the first conversation chapter, ‘Greetings and Visiting.’ It’s a phonetic alphabet with only thirty letters, and you can learn it easily in a day or two by copying it several times in the traditional order, four letters per line, and saying each letter as you write it. Knowing how to read will help you immensely in understanding Ladakhi pronunciation, and is also useful if you ever want to learn Tibetan.

For the best appearance, write the strokes in the correct order: always moving your pen from left to right, and top to bottom. First write the top line from left to right, and then add the lower lines, starting from the left. The order and direction of strokes was more important (and more complex) with the old bamboo pens, but now with modern pens people use a slightly simplified version.

As each letter is actually a syllable rhyming with ah, ka is both the name of the first letter and also the sound of what it spells if nothing else is added. Marking the end of each syllable is a dot called tsek or p‘et‘ik. Marking a larger break such as the end of a sentence is a line called shat, except after the letter ga, which is traditionally considered to contain a shat in its own downstroke if a shat is needed.

You’ll notice that although 𒈺 and .AppendLine(‘ are usually pronounced ga, ja, da, and ba, in some words they sound like ka, cha, ta, and pa or wa instead. Also, since there are two letters pronounced a, 𒈺 can be referred to as a-chung or small a.

Here are some words you can now read:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>sugar; candy, sweets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth; snow</td>
<td>meat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soil, place</td>
<td>salt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes; or</td>
<td>yes (polite)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mountain-pass</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The order of strokes for writing the Tibetan/Ladakhi alphabet:
Get a Ladakhi friend to help you practice recognising and pronouncing the sounds in these words. For native speakers of English, German, and some other European languages, the unaspirated sounds (ṭ, t, k, p, ts, ch) are more difficult because English tends to use aspirated sounds (ṭʾ, kʾ, pʾ, tsʾ, chʾ) at the beginning of words. Try holding your breath while making the unaspirated sounds, and hold the back of your hand to your lips to feel the puff of air in the aspirated sounds.

Tongue twister:  The Buddhist's goose ate barley flour.

Disclaimer: The author and publisher can not be held responsible for any injuries sustained during incorrect attempts at pronouncing the above.
Vowels and whole syllables

Each letter of the alphabet can be read as a syllable rhyming with *ah* unless a different vowel sign is added. A vowel sign is a symbol above or below the main letter, changing the inherent -a sound to -i,-u,-e or -o, similar to English *beat, boot, bet,* and *boat*. Be careful never to say the flat *a* of English *flat* or *cat*.

With vowel signs,  fName becomes  fName,  fName,  fName,  or  fName.

### Names of the vowels with sample words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Sample Word</th>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Sample Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>mi person</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>bu bug, worm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>chʻu water</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>yu turquoise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>me-me grandfather</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>re-re each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>dzo cross of yak + cow</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>nomo little sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>zho yoghurt</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>no little brother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spelling is simplified in these examples for learning.
Spelling out loud

If you ask a Ladakhi or Tibetan for the spelling of a word, they’ll give you a long chant which you won’t understand unless you learn how to spell out loud. When telling how a word is spelled, don’t simply say the letters as if spelling in English. First say the letter name, then the vowel name, and finally the resulting syllable:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cha gigu: chi} & \quad \text{ch`a zhapskyu: ch`u} \\
\text{ma gigu: mi} & \quad \text{sa zhapskyu: su} \\
\text{ma d`engbo: me} & \quad \text{la d`engbo: le} \\
\text{k`a naro: k`o} & \quad \text{dza naro: dzo}
\end{align*}
\]

Suffix letters

Words like rak, in, ch`ang and k`am-zang have a sound at the end of the syllable which is written with a suffix letter after the main letter. (In contrast to Tibetan, suffixes are pronounced in Central and Western Ladakhi, and they don’t change the vowel.)

You will notice that \(\text{f}\) and \(\text{f}\) tend to sound like k, t and p at the end of words but like g, d and b in the middle of words. In this book I chose to write them as I hear them said: for example, rak is spelled with the letters ra and ga, but what people pronounce is rak, not rag.

Only ten of the letters may be suffixes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ch`ang} & \quad \text{alcohol, beer} \\
\text{gur-gur} & \quad \text{tea churn} \\
\text{rak} & \quad \text{to be, to feel} \\
\text{rag-a} & \quad \text{Is it? Do you feel?} \\
\text{Pot / Bot} & \quad \text{Tibet} \\
\text{yi-ge} & \quad \text{letter}
\end{align*}
\]

bod-yik Ladakhi writing (“Tibetan letters”)

The only possible second suffix is \(\text{f}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ladags, Ladaks} & \quad \text{Ladakh} \\
\text{zhuks} & \quad \text{sit (hon)} \\
\text{kangs} & \quad \text{ice}
\end{align*}
\]
Prefix letters

The only really confusing part of Ladakhi spelling is the prefix letters before the main letter of some syllables. There are only five possible prefixes, but their main function seems to be to protect the status of people who know how to spell!

The prefix can be silent, pronounced, or changed to a different sound. With verbs, the prefixes are usually silent, and the scholars can never agree on which prefix goes with which tense, so you can ignore prefixes on verbs. However, prefixes on nouns seem to represent some archaic pronunciation which resurfaces in the middle of some compound words.

Knowing about prefixes will help you understand why the pronunciation of a word sometimes changes when it is combined with another word. The numbers make a good example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONE SYLLABLE (silent prefix)</th>
<th>COMPOUND WORD (prefix pronounced in second syllable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ཤིོ ཨྫྭ nyis two</td>
<td>དྷོ ཨྫྭ chugnyis twelve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཤིོ ཨྤྫྭ sum three</td>
<td>དྷོ ཨྫྭ chugsum thirteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཤིོ ཨྫྭ zhi four</td>
<td>དྷོ ཨྫྭ chubzhi fourteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཤིོ ཨྫྭ (B)chu ten</td>
<td>དྷོ ཨྫྭ zhibchu forty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is one irregular prefix combination: ཤིོ ཨྫྭ is not pronounced ba but instead softens to wa or takes on the sound of whatever vowel is attached to it:

**Wangmo or Angmo**

There is another irregular combination: ཤིོ ཨྫྭ is usually pronounced sp, and generally the prefixes ཤིོ and ཤིོ tend to be pronounced (r) (B) or (s).

**Spera speech, language**

**Spalzes (a name)**
Prefixes (or the lack of one) affect the pronunciation of the voiced letters, ga, ja, da and ba (all in the third column of the alphabet). These are usually pronounced ka, cha, ta and pa (like the first column) if they are not ‘protected’ by a prefix or combination:

ka-ru where cha tea te-bo that puts a boy

However, if these letters have a prefix when they begin a word, then they are ‘protected’ by it, and are voiced (like their own names):

go head ju-le dang yesterday bu-tsik bug

Note that the above rule holds true in Leh and East, but in Sham the pronunciation tends to stay closer to the spelling.

When reading a syllable, you must find the main letter to pronounce. Usually, the one with the vowel sign is the main letter, unless there is no vowel sign (in other words, the unwritten inherent a sound). If there are only two letters in the syllable and no vowel sign, assume the first letter is the main letter. Remember there can be only one prefix, and only one suffix, or one suffix plus ˚f.

Spelling out loud
To spell whole syllables with prefix, vowel, and suffix, name the parts in the order you write them:

1. If there is a prefix, name it and add -ok to show it’s just a prefix.
2. Name the main letter and then the vowel.
3. Say the result so far.
4. If there is a suffix, name it.
5. Finally say the result of the whole syllable.

ra, ga: rak.

ga-ok, cha gigu: chi, ga: chik.

ga-ok, nya gigu: nyi, sa: nyis.

ga-ok, sa zhapskyu: su, ma: sum.

ba-ok, cha zhapskyu: chu.

da-ok, ba, nga: wang. ma naro: mo. Wangmo.
# Combined letters

Two or three consonants can be combined to make the central part of a syllable. Most of the combinations are easy to recognise:  ýšś ṭ̥a, ýšṛ ṭ̥a, ṭ̥a, ýšś ṭ̥a, etc.

However, the two most common subscribed (written under) letters, ya and ra, change their looks and the sound of the consonant they are attached to.

## Subscribed ya (yataks)

Ya can be subscribed below seven different letters, changing their sounds. The standard way to learn the pronunciation changes is by repeating the spelling like a chant until you can remember it: say yasta for *with ya below*.

When subscribed, ya  ý’ appears as  ý’.

### Spelling out loud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ýšš</td>
<td>kya</td>
<td>ka yasta: kya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ýšṛ</td>
<td>k’ya</td>
<td>k’a yasta: k’ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ýš</td>
<td>gya</td>
<td>ga yasta: gya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ý’</td>
<td>cha</td>
<td>pa yasta: cha (sometimes pya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ý’</td>
<td>ch’a</td>
<td>p’a yasta: ch’a (sometimes p’ya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ý’</td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>ba yasta: ja (sometimes bya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ý’</td>
<td>nya</td>
<td>ma yasta: nya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Following the rule of ‘protection’ of letters, ýš and ýš are pronounced kya and cha/pya in Leh if without a prefix, but gya and ja/bya if they have a prefix.

- Since the combination ýš softens and changes to whichever vowel is added to it, with ya subscribed it simply becomes ya:

  ýšš yar *summer*  ýšṛ ṭ̥a ṭ̥a  ýšṛ ṭ̥a  Yangchan (*a name*)

When Tibetans invented this writing system a thousand years ago, presumably they were intelligent and transcribed current pronunciation. Over time the pronunciation of certain combinations has changed, as the above list shows, but the process of change is still visible here in Ladakh. Kargil and lower Sham still pronounce most of the above as they are spelled.
However, in Leh py, p'y and by are pronounced as spelled in most words with the vowels i or e, and change to ch, ch' and j in words with the vowels a, u and o:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEH PRONUNCIATION</th>
<th>LOWER SHAM PRONUNCIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p'e flour</td>
<td>p'e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p'iloga outside</td>
<td>p'iloga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch'ogs direction</td>
<td>p'yogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch'ukpo rich</td>
<td>p'yukpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cha bird</td>
<td>bya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subscribed ra (rataks)**

Ra also changes the pronunciation of the main letter, creating those ‘retroflex’ sounds with a hint of r in them. Only 11 letters can have ra subscribed, and some of them are rarely found. Again, the best way to learn the pronunciation changes is by repeating the spelling several times. (For with ra below, different regions may also say rasta, ran’ta or raßha.)

When subscribed, acles appears as

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>†a</td>
<td>ka rata: †a (Kargil kra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†'a</td>
<td>k’a rata: †’a (Kargil k’ra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṏa</td>
<td>ga rata: ṏa or †a (Kargil gra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†a</td>
<td>ta rata: †a (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†’a</td>
<td>t’a rata: †’a (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṏa</td>
<td>da rata: ṏa or †a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†a</td>
<td>pa rata: †a (rare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†’a</td>
<td>p’a rata: †’a (Kargil and lower Sham p’ra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṏa</td>
<td>ba rata: ṏa or †a (Kargil and lower Sham bra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḃha</td>
<td>sa rata: ḃha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḃha</td>
<td>ha rata: ḃha (rare)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once again, the rule of protection by prefixes applies. Without a prefix, ञृ ञृ are pronounced ũ in Leh and east, but if they are ‘protected’ by a prefix they are pronounced ḏ. And also once again, Sham pronunciation is often closer to the spelling.

द्ञृ द्ञृ †angmo cold  द्ञृ द्ञृ †onmo warm
dik okay das rice (Lower Sham bras)

All the ratags sounds are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled up into the palate as if to say r. At first ũha may sound like sha to you, and ḏa like ta, etc., but practice with a Ladakhi friend until you can differentiate them. ḑa, ḏa and ḏa are more like the English letters t and d than are t, t and d, which are pronounced with the tip of the tongue against the teeth.

Hindi and Tibetan make this same distinction between dental and retroflex consonants. The Tibetans who invented Bodik on the basis of Indian writing systems didn’t include letters for retroflex sounds because they didn’t have these sounds in Tibetan at that time. Only later did Tibetan and Ladakhi change the pronunciation of combinations involving ra and borrow retroflex sounds from Indian languages.

Ask a Ladakhi friend to help you differentiate and pronounce these words:

шей शा meat  टै टै 10,000
dā धा hair  टै टै knife
dā धिङ wood  धिङ धिङ write
dā धिङ wait!  धिङ धिङ dragon
dā धिङ dang yesterday  धिङ धिङ there is
dā धिङ dangs I’m full!  धिङ धिङ poison
dā धिङ t’ong see  टै टै six
dū दूंg tong give!  दूंg दूंg t’ukpa soup
dū दूंg †ongs die (hon)  टै टै †ukpa quarrel (Upper Lad)
Superscribed sa, ra, la (rago, sago, lago)

Other combinations are easier to read. Sa, ra and la can be superscribed (written above) several letters, and la can be subscribed below several letters. The main sound pronounced is usually the lower one.

Here are the main combinations with superscribed sa, ra, and la, and how they are usually pronounced. They are pronounced as spelled except the exceptions marked with *.

- sa*: (rare) rdza or za*

Note that s and r naturally come out unvoiced, *i.e.* s and bh, before certain letters like k, t, p, ts, ng, n, ny, and m. They naturally come out voiced, *i.e.* z and r, before other letters like g, j, d, b, or dz.

In Leh, the top letter is often pronounced s; in Sham it tends to be pronounced as spelled, and east of Leh it tends to be silent:

- Sham bhta, Leh sta, Changthang ta *horse*
- Sham la-chas, Leh sta-ches, Changthang ta-che *to see*
- Sham and Leh stari, Changthang tari *axe*
Subscribed la (lataks)

When la is subscribed below another letter the result is pronounced simply la or lha, so ལ་ི་ི་ི་ are all pronounced la, or, especially in Sham, lha.

opération school

Le Leh

lama

lu song

lu underground spirit

lha spirit, local god

There is only one irregular combination: ལ་ is pronounced lda or ldza (Memorize za la-ta: lda). Luckily, ལ་ནོིིིMoon or month is the only common word with this combination.

Combinations of three letters

Most combinations of three letters are easy to recognise if you already know the combinations of two letters.

(r)gyalla good

skyot come, go (hon)

(s)nyonba insane, mad, crazy

However, combinations of three letters with ra at the bottom may be pronounced ཟོར, ར, གྷ or ཀ depending on whether the central letter is a voiced consonant, and vary from region to region:

VOICED CONSONANTS: r OR ḍ | UNVOICED CONSONANTS: ḃh

rungs story

rangu fly

(Lower Sham zbangbu)

rul snake

(Lower Sham zbul)

İolma (a name)

Ch’orol (a name)

Bha hair

Bhin cloud

(Lower Sham bhpin)

Bhi cream, colostrum

Maṣho Matho village
Further spelling notes

Syllables with two vowels
When adding an ending to a word that ends in a vowel sound (i.e. doesn’t have a consonant suffix), one syllable can have two vowels:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{˚zf} & \quad \text{su-a to whom} & \quad \text{˚zf} & \quad \text{su-i of whom, whose} \\
\text{˚Zf} & \quad \text{nga-a to me} & \quad \text{Zf} & \quad \text{nga-i (pron. nge) of me, my} \\
\text{˚Zf} & \quad \text{ch’a-at I am going} & \quad \text{‘Zf} & \quad \text{ch’a-in (pron ch’en) will go}
\end{align*}
\]

At first this may seem confusing if the vowel mark is not with the main letter, but only \( \ddot{z} \) can be used for the second vowel, and \( \ddot{z} \) as a main letter never has a prefix. You’ll soon learn to recognise which letters cannot be prefixes and so must be the main letter.

- Only five letters may be prefixes: \( \ddot{z} \) 
- Ten letters may be suffixes: \( \ddot{z} \) 
- The only second suffix is \( \ddot{z} \)

Wazur
Wa subscribed below other letters is just a little triangle, and is generally silent. Its main functions seem to be to differentiate between otherwise identical words, or to mark the main letter of a syllable.

\[
\begin{align*}
\ddot{z} & \quad \text{ts’a salt} & \quad \ddot{z} & \quad \text{ts’a (word root for heat)} \\
\text{˚zf} & \quad \text{(r)tsa plants, grass} & \quad \text{˚zf} & \quad \text{(r)tsa nerve, vein, artery} \\
\ddot{z} & \quad \text{Ladags Ladakh (without wazur it should be pronounced La-gas)}
\end{align*}
\]

S+ch pronounced sh
The sound ch changes to sh if it follows s. These words are sometimes even spelled with \( \ddot{z} \) instead of \( \ddot{z} \) or \( \ddot{z}’ \).

\[
\begin{align*}
\ddot{z} & \quad \text{semshan animal, sentient being} & \quad \ddot{z} & \quad \text{nyishu twenty}
\end{align*}
\]

Nas pronounced ne; silent sa
In Tibetan, Upper Ladakhi and Zangskari, the suffix sa is not pronounced, but instead changes the preceding vowel. In Leh accent this happens only in two situations. 1) The ending or word meaning from is spelled -nas but pronounced -ne in Leh and east through Tibet. In Sham, people say -nas. 2) The ending for the subject of an active transitive verb is spelled with a sa
which goes silent and changes the vowel before it in Leh and east through Tibet. In Sham they pronounce the sa and don’t change the vowel.

**A-chung ꟮**

For foreign words, especially Sanskrit and Hindi, a-chung can be subscribed below another letter to indicate a long vowel since there is no distinction between long and short vowels in Ladakhi and Tibetan.

In the second syllable of Ladakhi words, the prefix ꟮ often comes out as a nasal sound (n or ng). This is also true in Tibetan where ལོགས་ is pronounced mindu.

**Special letters for foreign words**

In mantras and foreign words you may notice backwards letters, unusual combinations, and a little circle above some letters, all of which are traditionally used for transcribing Sanskrit words into Tibetan script. The backwards letters ꟮⁄­ indicate retroflex sounds in foreign words, and the pronunciation is identical to ꡳ⁄­. Other backwards letters represent various Sanskrit letters but are pronounced as if they weren’t backwards.

The little circle above a letter is borrowed directly from Sanskrit/Hindi writing, and indicates a nasal sound (n, ng or m) after the vowel.

A whole Sanskrit word is often squeezed between two ꡳ⁄­s when written in Tibetan, even if it has more than one syllable.

**Vowel Harmony**

Often, the second syllable of a word overwhelms and changes the vowel of the first syllable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ꡳ⁄­</th>
<th>Ts‘iring</th>
<th>ꡳ⁄­</th>
<th>shugu paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ꡳ⁄­</td>
<td>Nurbu</td>
<td>ꡳ⁄­</td>
<td>bungbu donkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ꡳ⁄­</td>
<td>Tunþup</td>
<td>ꡳ⁄­</td>
<td>pomo girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aspirated second syllable**

If the second syllable of a word has an aspirated consonant, most regions pronounce it unaspirated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ꡳ⁄­</th>
<th>(W)angchuk</th>
<th>ꡳ⁄­</th>
<th>P’untsok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Regional variations

There are slight variations of vocabulary, pronunciation and verb endings across Ladakh. The variations blend from one area to the next, so each village has a unique combination. Most people will understand the Central Ladakhi version given in this book, though they may use something different. Variations usually follow a regular pattern that you can figure out.

Variations in the TO BE verbs

Regional variations in the basic TO BE verbs can be confusing at first. After a vowel, -duk may be pronounced -ruk or -nuk, and -rak may be pronounced -nak. In some areas, rak itself is pronounced ðak. Sham and Nubra say intsuk instead of inok, and Balti-skat doesn’t have rak, so they say duk where other Ladakhis would say rak.

Sham

Shammas are proud of their pronunciation for being close to spelling: Clusters of letters are often pronounced completely, and ga, ja, da, ða, ba and dza do not need any ‘protection’ but are pronounced as they are spelled. Instead of inok and related endings, Shammas use intsuk and -tsuk or -sok, and the basic verb ending ches is chas. The second syllable of many words pronounced -a or -u in Leh is pronounced -ba or -bu in Sham.

Nubra

The most famous specialty of Nubra-skat is that for miduk they say miyang (but Nubrapas are NOT amused by jokes about the cat’s meow). Also, a consonant between two vowels is often softened or swallowed, so that mother is a(ng)a not ama, and camel is ð nga-ong not ð ngabong. The basic verb ending ches is cha.

Upper Ladakh

These eastern accents merge towards Tibetan in simplifying most consonant clusters to a single sound, and leaving s silent after vowels and changing the vowel. We were disappointed when we visited someone’s house in Changthang and were told that he’d gone to Leh: Le-a song. But then he turned up minutes later in work clothes, not city finery, and we realised that las, work, is pronounced le in Changthang. Watch out when people from far east of Leh try to speak Leh-skat with you: they tend to put s randomly before every word in an effort to sound like Leh-skat.
Zangskar

Zangskari has some significant differences from Ladakhi, but the one everybody notices most is that sk and rk are pronounced h. The sound s after a vowel often goes silent and may change the preceding vowel sound, much like Tibetan does.

Balti

The Balti accents of Kargil and Baltistan pronounce even closer to the classical Tibetan spelling than Lower Sham does, even though these Muslim areas haven’t used Bodik writing for centuries. They are the far west edge of the Tibetan language realm, and perhaps represent the most conservative pronunciation, similar to that of the scholars who invented Bodik more than a thousand years ago. However, they use a lot of Urdu vocabulary and may not know some of the Tibetan/Ladakhi words used in Central Ladakh. There is currently a Bodik revival movement in Pakistan-held Baltistan.

Consonant Cluster Changes

These patterns pop up here and there. Any given place may use a few of these, and the resulting sounds may not even be acknowledged or recognised by people of other regions.

- št => st (Leh)
- šg, rg => gh, gutteral g as in Urdu, or French r (e.g. Leh, Iqoo)
- šj => zh (Leh, Changthang)
- šdz => z (Leh, Changthang)
- šts => s (Changthang)
- šsk, rk, (β)k => h (Zangskar)
- šsb, rb => v (e.g. Iqoo, parts of Zangskar)
- šsp, rp, (β)p => f (e.g. Iqoo, parts of Zangskar)
- šga prefix with ya => hy (e.g. in lower Sham)
- šL below almost any other letter => Lh (e.g. lower Sham)
Why write modern Ladakhi?

Many scholars in Ladakh claim that modern Ladakhi, modern Tibetan, and Classical Tibetan are all one language, and use this claim as an excuse for writing in a semi-classical style that is equally incomprehensible to all. Certainly all three are closely related and use the same alphabet, but does the same situation make Spanish, French and Latin all one language, or Hindi, Nepali and Sanskrit? Ladakhis today are growing up without the basic right of mother tongue literacy. They are faced with a daunting number of languages to learn to read and write: English the one currently giving the greatest access to rights and opportunities; Urdu, the official language of J&K; Hindi, the national language and lingua franca of North India; and Sanskrit, Classical Tibetan or Arabic for religious studies. Among all these, the option of literacy in their mother-tongue, Ladakhi, is lost.

Most children do study ‘Bodhi’ (an unfortunately communal-sounding misspelling of Bodik) in school, but it is radically different from the Ladakhi they speak, using words and grammar unknown to them. It is something like Shakespearean English with its archaic forms and irregular spellings. With some study, Ladakhis can learn to understand it, but only a few monks and scholars dare write it, and the rest are intimidated, afraid of the ‘sin’ of misspelling the sacred script. Thus, very few Ladakhis ever gain functional literacy in their mother tongue. I find people writing letters—even love letters!—in English, Hindi or Urdu, even when neither the sender nor the recipient knows these languages very well.

Neither Ladakhis nor Tibetans speak Classical Tibetan, and the modern languages are different enough that they often use Hindi to communicate. As with every living language, Ladakhi grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary have changed naturally over time, while modern Tibetan has changed in its own direction.

Ladakhi verb tenses, for example, are unique. Classical Tibetan has no verb endings, and every verb is what we call irregular in English, with four different stems for the four tenses. Modern Ladakhi (and modern Tibetan) have changed to what we call regular verbs in English, with one stem for each verb and a pattern of changes and endings for the different tenses. Moreover, what is called ‘evidentiality’ in linguistics is essential in Ladakhi verb forms, meaning it is impossible to make a sentence without stating how one knows the verb happened. This system is entirely absent from Classical Tibetan.
Similarly, Ladakhi vocabulary has changed. But even with vocabulary that remains the same in Ladakhi and Tibetan, the pronunciation is markedly different. For example, the Ladakhi name Diskit is pronounced Diki by Tibetans, though the Bodik spelling is the same. Likewise, Ladakhi Stanzin is Tibetan Tenzin. These changes in pronunciation surely happened after the spelling was set down, and Ladakhi pronunciation is undoubtedly closer to that of the time when Tibetan was first written, more than a thousand years ago.

Even the scholars who claim that Ladakhi and Tibetan are one language know that they have to translate their so-called Ladakhi writing into actual Ladakhi when reading it in public, if they wish to be understood.

Literacy is a fundamental tool and right. The Tibetan community realises this and produces its newspapers and books in modern Tibetan (which Ladakhis don’t understand). Tibetans who wish to study Classical Tibetan still do so, with the added strength of foundation in their mother tongue. Ladakhi students deserve the same opportunity. If Ladakhi students started out reading modern Ladakhi that they could fully understand, perhaps the Classical language would not seem so difficult later on. The strongest foundation for literacy, even in other languages, is to have strong reading and writing skills in one’s mother tongue first. For this reason, we at Melong Publications are dedicated to writing and publishing a variety of materials for all ages in the Ladakhi language.
**Vocabulary & Phrases**

**Place names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltistan</td>
<td>the people of Baltistan, which is down the Shayok river and now mostly controlled by Pakistan, and of the Kargil area are called Balti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang-t’ang</td>
<td>the high plateau between Ladakh and Tibet. (Tibet’s Changthang plateau is different)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch’i-gyalpa</td>
<td>Ch’i-gyalpa is the proper term for foreigner, but not as common as angrespa (English) or †uris, which are how all (whitish) foreigners tend to be referred to—regardless of nationality or purpose in Ladakh. Indian-looking people are often referred to as gyagarpa regardless of their origins, and other foreigners are still rare enough not to have a blanket term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da-Hanu</td>
<td>İokyul, brokyul, da-hanu: region further down the Indus from Sham, with a unique non-Ladakhi language and culture; dokpa, brokpa, hanupa: Dard, the people of Da-Hanu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>İuk-yul: Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Gya-gar: India; gya-gar-pa: an Indian person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Gya-nak: China; gya-mi: a Chinese person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahaul</td>
<td>Karzha: Lahaul, north of Manali, with a mixed Tibeto-Hindu culture; karzha-pa: person of Karzha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashmir</td>
<td>K’a-chul: Kashmir; k’a-chulpa: Kashmiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladakh</td>
<td>Ladags: Ladakh; Ladagspa: person of Ladakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leh</td>
<td>Nubra: region north of Leh, on the Shyok river; Nubra-pa: person from Nubra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Palyul: Nepal, but colloquially Nepalis are called Gorka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibet</td>
<td>Pot: Tibet; Potpa: Tibetan person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>western Ladakh</td>
<td>Sham: western Ladakh, on the lower Indus; Shamma: person from Sham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourist</td>
<td>Skor-yangs-pa: tourist (lit. one who goes around for fun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>region southeast of Ladakh</td>
<td>Spiti: region southeast of Ladakh, with related culture and language; Spitapa: person from Spiti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Srinagar: Srinagar

Stot: Upper Ladakh, the eastern section; Upper Zangskar is also Stot; Stotpa: person from Stot.

yul: village or country; yulpa: villager, citizen

Zangskar: valley south of Ladakh, with related culture & language; Zangskarpa: person from Zangskar

For any other place not listed here, try the English name.

-pa and feminine -ma make a person out of another word:
Chang-pa = person from Changthang, Sabu-ma = woman from Sabu.
Personal names

Listed here are only some of the most common names of Buddhist Ladakhis, because Muslim names are more varied and may already be familiar to you.

Ladakhi Buddhists have two names of equal importance. Neither is a family name, and either may be what the person is called in one circle of people or another. You’ll probably meet several people with the same name, and brothers with totally different names. Most names can be for either girls or boys, though there are certain feminine names.

Tibetans names are the same but pronounced differently—thus Ladakhi Stanzin is Tibetan Tenzin, Ladakhi Padma is Tibetan Pema, and Ladakhi Diskit is Tibetan Diki.

If you insist on asking for a family name, people will tell you their house name—but in reality most people don’t treat the house name as part of their own name. However, the house name is essential for addressing letters, since there may be two—or ten—people with the same name as your friend in his or her village!

Feminine names

-Mo and -ma are feminine endings; Dolma and names with ḍol in them refer to the goddess Tara; and -skit joy, and -zes/dzes elegance, are also only in girls’ names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladakhi</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ch’orol</td>
<td>Chökor</td>
<td>Ch’orgyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dechan</td>
<td>Dechen</td>
<td>Dolma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diskit</td>
<td>Diski</td>
<td>Dolma’Angyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Íolkar</td>
<td>Íolkar</td>
<td>Dolma’Angyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Íolma</td>
<td>Íalma</td>
<td>Dolma’Angyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunzes</td>
<td>Kunzhes</td>
<td>Dolma’Angyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhaďol</td>
<td>Lhaďol</td>
<td>Dolma’Angyal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(W)Angmo
Names for both men & women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| དབ་ | Dawa | 男性:
| ཉོ་ | Dorje | 男性:
| གོན་པོ | Gonbo | 男性:
| དགྲ་པོ | Gyalpo | 男性:
| དབ་མཚན | Gyatso |   
| བཞག་ཅིག་དཔེར་ | Jigmet |   
| འཁོར་ཆོས་ | Konchok |   
| གནས་བཟང་ | Lobzang |   
| སྐུ་ོ་ིེ | Lunöup |   
| མོ་ཏུ་ཐུབ་ | Ngoöup, Murup |   
| སྤོང་གཡལ་ | Namgyal |   
| གནས་དབང་ | Ngawang |   
| འཁྲོ་སྲིད་ | Norgyas |   
| སི་མ་ | Nyima |   
| བདེ་མ་ | Padma |   
| བད་པལད་ | Paldan |   
| བྲང་དར་ | P’andey |   
| གུན་གླེ་ཚ་ | P’untsok |   

Many more names are made by combining the above syllables in other ways. Everyone named by the Dalai Lama is Stanzin and in recent years he has been giving more unusual names for the other name, so children’s names may be different from those above.
Family members

- **me-me** grandfather
- **abi** grandmother
- **aba** father (also uncle, father’s acho)
- **ama** mother (also aunt, mother’s a-che)
- **azhang** uncle (mother’s brother or ane’s husband)
- **agu** uncle (father’s no or machung’s husband)
- **a-ne** aunt (father’s sister or azhang’s wife)
- **ma-ch’ung** aunt (mother’s nomo or agu’s wife)
- **ka(g)a, kaka** elder brother (hon, elite or Muslim)
- **a-cho** older brother (or cousin)
- **a-che** older sister (or cousin)
- **no, no-no** younger brother (or cousin)
- **no-mo** younger sister (or cousin)
- **ming-bhing** brothers & sisters
- **puts’a** boy, man; son
- **pumo** girl, woman; daughter
- **†’u-gu** child, baby
- **makpa** 1 husband. 2 husband who moves into his wife’s household instead of the usual opposite.
- **nama** wife

To clarify between siblings and cousins, people seem to use the Urdu word k‘as specific for real siblings, e.g. Stanzin-i acho inok. That’s Stanzin’s elder brother. K‘as acho inog-a? His real brother? K‘as manok... No, cousin...
Pronouns

Personal pronouns have a maddening number of regional variations. Listed below are those used in Leh, which should be understood throughout Ladakh.

**Singular Personal Pronouns & Possessives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>nga I</th>
<th>nge my</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནང་</td>
<td>nyerang you</td>
<td>nyerangi/ nye-ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནང་ (sing, hon)</td>
<td>your (sing, hon)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནང་</td>
<td>k`yerang you</td>
<td>k<code>yerangi/ k</code>yeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནང་ (sing, familiar)</td>
<td>your (sing, familiar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་</td>
<td>k`ong he/she (hon)</td>
<td>k`ongi his/ her (hon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་</td>
<td>k`o he/she/it (non-hon)</td>
<td>k`oi his/ her/ its</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plural Personal Pronouns & Possessives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>nga-tang we (including the person you’re speaking to)</th>
<th>nga-ti our (inclusive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ཆེ་གྲེར་</td>
<td>nga-tang we (not incl.)</td>
<td>nga-ti our (not incl.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>nye-zha you (pl. hon)</th>
<th>nye-zhe your (pl. hon)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནམ་</td>
<td>k`ye-zha you (pl. familiar)</td>
<td>k`ye-zhe your (pl. familiar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་ནམ་</td>
<td>k`ong they</td>
<td>k`ongi their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rang is an ending roughly like English -self: Nga-rang I myself, k`o-rang he himself, it itself, etc.

Rang also means you and can be added to names and terms of address: nomo-rang you, nomo; no-rang you, no-no, Angmo-rang you, Angmo. This form of you is good to use with people who are younger or equal to you, since k`yerang can sound rude. It can also be used instead of nyerang, as in ama-le-rang.

Gun is a plural ending emphasizing all or most of the group in question.

Combinations of these components lead to an almost unlimited number of possible pronouns, such as nyerang-gun yourselves or each of you; k`ong-rangi their own; nyezha-rang-i each of your own.
Pronouns

Nobody, nothing, and never
To say nobody, use sú-ang with a negative verb.
To say nothing, use cháng with a negative verb.
For never or not at all, use má-ne with a negative verb.

Nobody is here.
I have nothing.
I ate nothing.
I never went.
It doesn’t matter.

Question words

how, in what way
how many, how much
what
when
at what time
where, to where
where, from where
where, on what
which one
which (question word prefix that can be attached before other words)
who
why, for what
**Demonstrative pronouns**  
* (This, that & which; Here there & where)  

The prefix syllables i-, a-, te-, and ka- are used to build many words.  

- **i-** this, here, etc.  
- **a-** that, there  
- **te-** that, there *(the place or thing we’ve been talking about)*  
- **ka-** which, where *(makes a question)*  

These prefixes can be attached before any noun, or they can build such words as in the table below. They change a little from region to region. For example, in Sham (as in Tibetan), *this* is di- instead of i-.  

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-(b)o</td>
<td>a-(b)o</td>
<td>te-(b)o</td>
<td>ka-(b)o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this thing</td>
<td>that thing</td>
<td>(that we mentioned)</td>
<td>which thing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-ru</td>
<td>a-ru</td>
<td>te-ru</td>
<td>ka-ru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here, to here</td>
<td>there, to there, over there</td>
<td>there, to there (where we mentioned)</td>
<td>where? to where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-ne</td>
<td>a-ne</td>
<td>te-ne</td>
<td>ka-ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here, from here</td>
<td>there, from there</td>
<td>from there; and then</td>
<td>where? from where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-ka</td>
<td>a-ka</td>
<td>te-ka</td>
<td>ka-ka?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here, on this</td>
<td>there, on that</td>
<td>there, on that</td>
<td>where? on what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-zuk</td>
<td>a-zuk</td>
<td>te-zuk</td>
<td>ka-zuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like this, this way</td>
<td>like that, that way</td>
<td>the way we mentioned</td>
<td>how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-ko-re</td>
<td>á-ko-re</td>
<td>té-ko-re</td>
<td>ká-ko-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this cup</td>
<td>that cup</td>
<td>the cup (that we mentioned)</td>
<td>which cup?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples above use a few suffixes:  
- **-bo** is often added to nouns to mean something like *the*  
- **-ka** means *on* or *at*.  
- **-ru** is a classical version of *-la, to* or *at*.  
- **-ne** means *from*.  

### Verbs

- **hon** Using honorific verbs shows respect towards the subject of the verb: the *Lama gives to me* uses the honorific *sal*; *I give* uses the non-honorific *tang*. Honorifics are used when the subject (i.e. the one doing the verb) is respected: a guest, stranger, elder, lama, etc.

- Verbs not marked *hon* are non-honorific or for both situations.

- **tr** Transitive  •  **act** Active  •  **aux** Auxiliary verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>ཿིེིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིིིི-ིིིི</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིིི-ིིི</code></td>
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<tr>
<td><code>ིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ིིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིིི-ིིིི</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<tr>
<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
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<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>ིིིི་</code></td>
<td><code>ིི-ིི</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>chuk-ches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yongches</td>
<td>to come (int, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyot-ches</td>
<td>to come or go (hon, int, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngu-ches</td>
<td>to cry, weep (int, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ß)tses tang-ches</td>
<td>to dance (tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi-ches</td>
<td>to die (int, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋongs-shes</td>
<td>to die (hon, int, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cho-ches</td>
<td>to do, make (tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dzat-ches</td>
<td>to do, make (hon, tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyilam t`ong-ches</td>
<td>to dream (tr, inact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t`ung-ches</td>
<td>to drink (tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhul-ches</td>
<td>to drive; to run (a machine, programme, etc.) (tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don-ches</td>
<td>to eat or drink (hon, tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-ches</td>
<td>to eat. Irregular past zos, and command zo. (tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but-ches</td>
<td>to fall, to drop (int, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t`op-ches</td>
<td>to find, receive, get (a thing) (tr, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts`ar-ches</td>
<td>1 to be finished, be used up, end (int, inac). 2 aux already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñup-ches</td>
<td>to be finished, ready, complete (int, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhet-ches</td>
<td>to forget (tr, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>langs-shes</td>
<td>to get up, stand up (int, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tang-ches</td>
<td>1 to give (tr, act). 2 aux (expresses spontaneity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sal-ches</td>
<td>to give (hon, tr, act. Change any tang-ches phrase to sal for hon)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verbs

ch’a-chës  to go. Irregular past and command song (int, act)
k’or-chës  1 to go around. 2 to be overcast (int, inact)
baps-shës  to go down, descend (int, act)
ts’or-chës  1 to hear. 2 to feel something to be a certain way (tr, inac)
yato cho-chës to help, to assist (tr, act)
bor-chës  to keep, to put (tr, act)
shës-shës  to know (a person, language, etc.) (tr, inac)
(r)gyus yot-chës to know (about something) (tr, inac)
(r)got-chës  to laugh (int, act)
lops-shës  to learn (tr, inac)
zun tang-chës  to lie (tr, act)
nyan-chës  1 to listen; to obey (tr, act). 2 aux to be able (tr, inact)
sta-chës, lta-chës to look at, to watch (tr, act)
psal-chës  to look for, search for, seek (tr, act)
stor-chës  to lose, to be lost (tr, inac)
nama cho-chës to marry, get married (tr, act)
sto-chës  to matter (mostly in neg: it doesn’t matter) (int, inac)
t’uk-chës  to meet, find, see (a person), to talk on the phone with (tr, inac)
nor-chës  to mix things up, make a mistake, err
ïul-chës  to move, to walk (int, act)
pe-chës  to open (tr, act)
pene tang-chës to pay (tr, act)
sil-ches to read, to study (tr, act)

lus-shes to remain, be left behind (int, inac)

itu yong-ches to remember (tr, inac)

shal-ches 1 to rinse (tr, act). 2 to have diarrhoea (int, inac)
zer-ches to say (tr, act)
mol-ches to say (hon, tr, act)

lo said (irregular, no endings) (tr, act)
t’ong-ches to see (tr, inac)
tsong-ches to sell (tr, act)
kucho tang-ches to shout, to make noise (tr, act)

stan-ches to show (tr, act)
lu tang-ches to sing (tr, act)
duk-ches to sit; to stay (int, act)
zhuks-shes to sit; to stay (hon, int, act)
nyit tang-ches to sleep (tr, act)

spera tang-ches to speak (tr, act)
(b)ku-ches to steal (tr, act)
sgag-ches to stop (e.g. a vehicle) (tr, act)
nen-ches to take, accept, receive (tr, act)
(n)ams-shes to take, accept, receive (hon, tr, act)
k’yer-ches to take, take away (tr, act)
naksha gyap-ches to take a photo (tr, act)
p’ut-ches to take off (clothes, shoes, etc.) (tr, act)
### Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Part(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lap-ches</td>
<td>to teach; to learn</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sam-ches</td>
<td>to think</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skor-ches</td>
<td>to turn something around</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha go-ches</td>
<td>to understand</td>
<td>(tr, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyuk-ches</td>
<td>to vomit</td>
<td>(int, inac or act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ßhing-ches</td>
<td>to wait</td>
<td>(int, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)gos-shes</td>
<td>1 to want, to need. 2 with verb stem should, must</td>
<td>(tr, inac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†’u-ches</td>
<td>to wash</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gon-ches</td>
<td>to wear, to put on</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>òi-ches</td>
<td>to write</td>
<td>(tr, act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Verbs with honorific objects

There are a few verbs that show respect to the object rather than to the subject of the verb. You may encounter them especially in relation to religion: If I say *I saw the Dalai Lama*, I should say jal rather than t’ong, or if I offer him something, I should say p’ul-at rather than tang-at. If I tell about speaking to him, I would use zhu-at rather than zer-at. These may also be used in reference to guests, elders, strangers and in public speaking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p’ul-ches</td>
<td>to give (to someone respected), to make offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhu-ches</td>
<td>to say, request (to someone respected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jal-ches</td>
<td>to see, visit (something or someone respected or sacred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhangches</td>
<td>to make (sacred things or buildings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLES**

-t’o-re    jal-in!                  See you tomorrow!

*tomorrow see-will*
nyerangi ts’an-la chi zhu-chen?    What is your name?
your name-for what is-said

Hemis gonpa jal-a song-pin    I went to see Hemis gonpa.
Hemis gonpa see-to went

donkyir p’ul-duk    S/he is serving bread (e.g. to guests)
bread (hon) offers

ch’orten zhangs    A chorten was built.
shorten built
Feeling verbs (adjectives in English)

Many ideas that are adjectives in English are used as verbs in Ladakhi:

- òik-ches to be okay, enough (int, inac)
- ngal-ches to be tired (int, inac)
- (l)toks-shes to be hungry (int, inac)
- skoms -shes to be thirsty (int, inac)
- sun-ches to be bored; lonely; homesick (int,inac)
- gor-ches to be late (int, inac)
- k’yaks-shes to feel cold, to freeze (int, inac)
- †’el-ches to be shy, embarassed, ashamed (int,inac)
- jigs-shes to be afraid, to fear (tr, inac)
- ðangs-shes to be full (after eating) (int, inac)
- ßho yong-ches to get angry (tr, inac)

Be careful: with adjectives, má- means very, but with verbs ma- means not. To say very with any of these verbs that have an undesirable connotation, use ßhan-te severely.

These are often used with the verb stem alone, which is actually the past tense, e.g. ngal I got tired or I am tired. The STEM+te form, which makes a past participle used as an adverb adjective, is also common. The form STEM+a-rak is the present tense for things being felt.

EXAMPLES

- ngal-te rak I’m tired.
- ßhante ngal I’m very tired. (lit. I got very tired)
- ma-ngal I’m not tired, (lit. I didn’t get tired.)
- ßhante k’yaks-a-rak I’m very cold. I’m freezing.
- ngazha ßhante gor We were very late.
- gor-te lep Arrived late.
Adjectives

Many ideas that are adjectives in English are expressed as verbs in Ladakhi, especially those having to do with feelings, like tired, hungry, thirsty, shy, etc. See ‘Feeling Verbs’ in the previous section for these.

Adjectives

ADVERBS USED WITH ADJECTIVES

- **má-** (very (attached before adjectives, usually pronounced a little higher and with stress))
- **mang-ste** too, too much
- **manga** more (can be used to make any adjective comparative)
- **mangche-a** mostly, usually

ADJECTIVES

If there is a special comparative form of the adjective, it is given in brackets.

- **ts’angma** all, every
- **chik-po** alone
- **(β)tsok-po** bad, dirty, no good ((β)tsog-a)
- **ch’enmo** big (ch’e-a)
- **k’an†e** bitter; also used to specify salt tea
- **k’yemo** cheap (k’ye-a)
- **lak(s)mo** clean (laks-a)
- **†ang-mo** cold (†ang-a)
- **silmo** cool (sil-a)
- **jigshes** dangerous, scary, risky
- **zhimpo** delicious (zhim-a)
- **soso** different, separate
- **kakspo** difficult (kaks-a)
- **skampo** dry (skam-a)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lamo</td>
<td>easy (la-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stongpa</td>
<td>empty (stong-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuspo</td>
<td>expensive (kus-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gyokspa</td>
<td>fast, quickly; early (gyoks-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyungun</td>
<td>few, little, a little (nyung-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’ak-ring</td>
<td>far (t’ak-ring-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rompo</td>
<td>fat, thick (rom-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)gyalla</td>
<td>good ((r)gyalla)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l)demo, (r)demo</td>
<td>good, nice, beautiful ((l)de-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‼’ik</td>
<td>good, okay, fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skitpo</td>
<td>happy, fun; pleasant (skid-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lchin-te</td>
<td>heavy (lchi-a ...Don’t say lchin-a; it sounds like urine!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts’an-te</td>
<td>hot (also of spicy food) (ts’a-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts’atpa</td>
<td>hot (i.e. uncomfortably warm), sweaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’ak-chan</td>
<td>important (k’ak-ch’e-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)nyonba/-mo</td>
<td>insane, mad, crazy, mentally ill (m/f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ting-ting</td>
<td>level, flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>las-mi-lam</td>
<td>lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yangmo</td>
<td>light in weight (yang-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ringmo</td>
<td>long, tall, far (ring-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangpo</td>
<td>many, much (mang-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyemo</td>
<td>near, close (nye-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soma</td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(r)gatpo/-mo</td>
<td>old (of people), elderly (m/f) ((r)gad-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(β)nyingpa</td>
<td>old (of things, buildings, etc.) ((β)nying-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch’atpo</td>
<td>ragged, torn, dressed like a hippy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch’ukpo</td>
<td>rich, wealthy (ch’ug-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsoks</td>
<td>same, similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kule-a</td>
<td>slow, slowly, carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch’ungun</td>
<td>small (ch’ung-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shet-chan</td>
<td>strong, powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngarmo</td>
<td>sweet (ngar-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βhan-te</td>
<td>tough, severe, firm. (With verbs like to be hungry, etc., βhan-te means very) (βha-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ldenba</td>
<td>true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rinchan</td>
<td>valuable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†onmo</td>
<td>warm (†o-a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shet-met</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’am-zang</td>
<td>well, feeling well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lonpa</td>
<td>wet (lon-a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Colours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nakpo</td>
<td>black, dark, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngonpo</td>
<td>blue (and the green of plants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ljangku</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(s)mukpo</td>
<td>brown (and some shades of violet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marpo</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karpo</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serpo</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-positions (English prepositions)

In Ladakhi, the words that function like English prepositions go *after* their object, so they can be called post-positions. English has one post-position: *ago*, as in *three years ago*. Otherwise, English has only prepositions: *after* a while, *between* two stones, *before* breakfast.

For most post-positions, the object is in the possessive case—that is, the noun before the post-position has the -i ending. A few post-positions follow nouns with -ne from, nang and/with or no ending. Given in brackets is the most common ending for the object of the post-position. See the examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chad p.</th>
<th>意义</th>
<th>例</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(-i) skorla</td>
<td>about, concerning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) (β)tingne</td>
<td>after</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) (β)nganla</td>
<td>before, ago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) (r)gyaba</td>
<td>behind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) yo(g)a</td>
<td>below, under</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) zhaste</td>
<td>due to, because of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma-ne</td>
<td>except</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ne</td>
<td>from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) dunla</td>
<td>in front of, next to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) p’ia</td>
<td>for, in order to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) nanga</td>
<td>in, inside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-i</td>
<td>of (possessive ending)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) ka</td>
<td>on, at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) k’at’o(g)a</td>
<td>on top of, on the roof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) p’ilo(g)a</td>
<td>outside</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-ne) p’arla</td>
<td>since</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-i) sang</td>
<td>than (in comparisons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a/ -la</td>
<td>to, at, on (dative ending)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-positions

ts`ukpa, ts`akpa until; by (a future time); as long as
(-nang) nyampo with, together with

EXAMPLES

lo sum-i (β)nganla Three years ago
year three-of before

naning-ne p`arla Since last year
last-year-from since

lo chig-i βt`ingne After one year
year one-of after

gonp-e nanga Inside the gonpa
gonpa-of inside

k`angpe dunla In front of the house.
house-of in-front

ch`uts`ot sum-i (β)nganla lep I arrived three hours ago.
hour three-of before arrived

ch`arpe zhaste, dukspin I stayed because of the rain.
rain-of because stayed

sonam-i p`ia k`yongspin I brought it for Sonam.
Sonam-of for brought

sum ma-ne met I have only three (lit I don’t have but three)
three except don’t-have

te skorla spera tangat I’m speaking about that.
that about talk am-giving
Conjunctions

नंगः nang and. Can link nouns or clauses. It is pronounced tang formally and in songs.

यांगः yang and; again. Links clauses.

यांगः -yang, -ang also, too, connected to the previous word

चियांतः -ya, -ang because

इननंगः, लेकिन innang, lekin but, however. Urdu lekin is very common.

या, यांगना ya, yang-na or. Not used in either-or questions. Used in statements like Everyone drank tea or coffee, but not in questions like Would you like tea or coffee?

Either/or questions

For either/or questions, the first option is formed as a yes-or-no question and the second option directly after it, without any conjunction:

योदा, मेट? yod-a, met? Is there any or not?

दुग-द, चाँटा? dug-ada, ch’à-at? Are you staying or going?

हाँ-गो-अ, मां-गो? ha-go-a, ma-go? Did you understand or not?

कोफ़ी don-ad-a, cha? coffee are-you-drinking, tea Would you like tea or coffee?
Exclamations & wishes

†ashi deleks Congratulations (for weddings, etc.);
Good luck (e.g. for New Year)
bumbarik Congratulations (for weddings, etc.)
ts‘ering-shik May you have a long life. (Used like
Bless you when someone sneezes, or
as a form of thanks)
t‘uk-je-ch’e Thank you. (Formal; not for Thanks
for the tea situations, where you can
just say ju-le)
a-ch’u-ch’u Brrr! (from cold)
a-ts’a-ts’a Ow! (from heat or pain)
ju-le 1 Hello. 2 Good-bye. 3 Thank you.
ju-he 1 Thanks. 2 ’Bye. (informal)
kaza Yes; I see (respectful)
ot-ju Yes, please
ju-ju Please (insisting)

Konchok-sum The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and
Sangha. (Used like By God! or I swear it’s true! though
pious people consider it swearing.)

Kyi-kyi-so-lhargyalo May the gods be victorious!
(Victory cry, on reaching the top of a pass or to express
group excitement, etc.)
# Days and time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>དུས་</td>
<td>tus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རུ་ཙོད་</td>
<td>ch’a-t’sot, Urdu gan’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འོད་</td>
<td>zhab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུན-ཞེས་</td>
<td>dun-zhab, Urdu hafta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གྲུ་</td>
<td>lda, ldza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཤོ་</td>
<td>lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>ngatok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྡོ་</td>
<td>nyima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དོ་ཀོ</td>
<td>p’itok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མིག་</td>
<td>ts’an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Days and time (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>དི་ཐོད་</td>
<td>diring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གུ་རོ་</td>
<td>t’o-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ལྣད་</td>
<td>dang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུན-ཞེས་</td>
<td>day after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུན-ཞེས་</td>
<td>day before yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྡོ་</td>
<td>naning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རོ་ཐོད་</td>
<td>ta-lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྣ་ཞེས་</td>
<td>nangmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྗེའ་</td>
<td>lo-zhung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Today, yesterday, next year, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>དི་ཐོད་</td>
<td>diring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གུ་རོ་</td>
<td>t’o-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ལྣད་</td>
<td>dang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུན-ཞེས་</td>
<td>day after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུན-ཞེས་</td>
<td>day before yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྡོ་</td>
<td>naning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རོ་ཐོད་</td>
<td>ta-lo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྣ་ཞེས་</td>
<td>nangmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྗེའ་</td>
<td>lo-zhung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Now, never, sometimes, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>རུས་པོ་ཇོ་</td>
<td>resga-re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རུ་མགོ</td>
<td>chag-lan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table includes a variety of terms used to express days, time, and periods in Tibetan, along with their English translations and meanings.*
Days and time

Days and time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ནོར་སྟེ།</td>
<td>zhak-tang</td>
<td>every day, always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན</td>
<td>máne</td>
<td>never (with negative verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན་ཆེར</td>
<td>daksa</td>
<td>now, right now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན་རིང</td>
<td>darung</td>
<td>still, yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན་དེ།</td>
<td>zote</td>
<td>at last, finally, after a delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན་ལྕ།</td>
<td>alta</td>
<td>in a little while, later today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྒྲིན་རིང</td>
<td>da-re</td>
<td>a little while ago, earlier today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Telling time**

You’ll hear English *time* or Hindi gaōi as often as ch’uṣ’t’ot *hour* or tus *time.*

ch’uṣ’t’ot tsam song? What time is it?

hours how-many went

sum song

**three went**

nyis nang p’et two-thirty

two and half

sum ch’a-la chonga duk It’s quarter to three (2:45).

three go-to fifteen is

sum nang mina† chonga duk It’s 3:15.

three and minute 15 is

k’ong chig-i-ka lep They arrived at one.

they one-at arrived

ngatang tsam-i-ka ch’en? At what time will we go?

we how-many-at will-go

dun nang p’et-i-ka ch’en We’ll go at seven thirty.

seven and half-at will go

**Days of the week**

These are the Tibetan/Ladakhi days of the week, but many people only use the English weekday names.
Days and time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>za nyima</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-ldawa</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-migmar</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-lhakpa</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-p’urbu</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-pasang</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>za-spenba</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the months, Ladakhis use Hindi/Urdu versions of the English names, or number the Tibetan lunar months starting from the Tibetan New Year.

Seasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spit</td>
<td></td>
<td>spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yar</td>
<td></td>
<td>summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ston</td>
<td></td>
<td>autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)gun</td>
<td></td>
<td>winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Religion

1 religion. 2 Dharma.

to pray, esp. reading prayers

Buddhism

The vocabulary of Buddhism in Ladakh is basically Tibetan. Most lay-people won’t know the Sanskrit terms that you may know, such as Dharma.

Buddhist

high lama, esp. reincarnated

His Holiness the Dalai Lama or other very high lamas

nun

monk (lama means high teacher, but many people use it for monk.)

mani walls, stones, wheels, and chortens may be called ma-ne

monastery

shorten, stupa

house temple, shrine room

religious masked dances by monks at annual festivals

prayer flags

to chant mantras

to meditate (tr, act)
to do prostrations

Om mani padme hum In this Sanskrit mantra for Chenrezig, each syllable has a deep meaning. There are many interpretations*, but the literal translation is not as significant as its power as a mantra.

* But Hail the Jewel in the Lotus is not even close!
### Islam

The vocabulary of Islam in Ladakh is basically Arabic and Urdu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic/Urdu</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musulman, k’-ache</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K’oda</td>
<td>Allah, God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masjid, mazhit</td>
<td>mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nama z, nemaz</td>
<td>prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramzan</td>
<td>Ramadan, the month of fasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>id</td>
<td>Id, special festivals in the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haji</td>
<td>a person who has made the great Haj pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muharram</td>
<td>event of mourning in the Muslim month of Muharram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Christianity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mashikapa</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tus-chen</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local spirits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lha</td>
<td>spirit, local god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lhato</td>
<td>shrine for local lha, usually erected on high places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu</td>
<td>underground spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lanđe</td>
<td>monster, ghost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Health and emergencies

All doctors in Ladakh and some Amchis (traditional doctors) know English, so this section is mainly for village or trekking emergencies.

The most likely problem is diarrhoea, as many foreign visitors get stomach problems. The altitude may make you feel weaker than you expected with a minor illness, and you may have to rest for a few days. Some people swear that if you eat nothing but rice-soup (dæs-t’uk), you will get well faster.

Use rak for telling about yourself; duk for telling about others: ch’ampa rak means I have a cold; ch’ampa duk means you see that someone else has a cold. See the next section for body parts.

I/we should go to the (...)

 (...)-a ch’a-go-she-rak

 (...)-to go-should-feel

(hospital)

(dæk’ar-ika)

(amchi-ka)

zumo bhante rak

I have very bad pain/ I am very ill.

pain severe feel

ch’ampa rak

I have a cold.

a-cold feel

†odpa-a zumo rag-ga?

Do you have a stomach problem?

stomach-to sick do-you-feel?
Health and emergencies

†odpa-a zumo rak

I have stomach problem (or pain, etc.)

stomach-to sick feel

skyuks

I/he/she vomited.
vomited

chang za-che mi-rak

I don’t feel like eating.

anything to-eat don’t-feel

ruspa ch’ak

The bone broke.

bone broke

(β)kangpa mologa song

(My/her/his) ankle twisted.

foot rolled-over went

ðul nyan-che(s) mirak

I can’t walk.

walk to-be-able don’t-feel

zumo i-ne yong-a-rak

The pain comes from here.

pain here-from is-coming

†´ak mangpo bing-duk

It’s bleeding a lot.

blood much comes-out

nge †´opa á-ne yot

My friend is over there.

my friend there is

yato dzad-nyan-in-a -le

Could you please help?

help do-can-will

zumo gyal-a?

Are you better now?

illness got-better?

gyal

Got better, recovered.

recovered
### Body parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>གུས་པ།</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གོ་</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གེང་</td>
<td>face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གཉེན་</td>
<td>eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཉམ་ཅོས་ཀྱི་སྒྲིག་པ།</td>
<td>ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཉབ་</td>
<td>hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གྲ་</td>
<td>mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གོ་</td>
<td>tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མུ་</td>
<td>throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་སྟངས་ལོངས་པ།</td>
<td>foot, leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་ལྕགས་པ།</td>
<td>hand, arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>གཉེན་ཚིགས་</td>
<td>joint; ankle; wrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མོ་ཡྱ།</td>
<td>lungs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་ཅེར་པ།</td>
<td>waist; back (in reference to back pain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཕེས་ཀྱི་རུས་པ།</td>
<td>bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་སེམས་</td>
<td>mind, heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་ནི་ཡེ་</td>
<td>heart (the organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་ཐོད་པ།</td>
<td>stomach, belly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་ཡུམ་</td>
<td>intestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་ཀྱི་ཕྱིན་པ།</td>
<td>liver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བོད་པ་</td>
<td>farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྟབས་</td>
<td>garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དོན་</td>
<td>pond, reservoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་</td>
<td>irrigation canal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་</td>
<td>manure, fertiliser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་ཆུས་མ་</td>
<td>chemical fertiliser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་</td>
<td>pesticide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བ་ཏུ་</td>
<td>grain mill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་</td>
<td>shovel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དཔལ་</td>
<td>sickle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>rake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>tools for flattening earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བོད་</td>
<td>basket (esp. the Ladakhi backpack-basket)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Plants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བས བལ།</td>
<td>barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས སྐོ།</td>
<td>wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཀྲ་ལ།</td>
<td>alfalfa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲ།</td>
<td>plants, fodder plants, hay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲན།</td>
<td>weed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བལ།</td>
<td>flower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱ་དྲ།</td>
<td>1 tree. 2 willow tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱ་དྲན།</td>
<td>Lombardy poplar (tall straight type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱ་དྲན།</td>
<td>poplar (wider type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱ་དྲན།</td>
<td>juniper, pencil cedar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྱ་དྲན།</td>
<td>sapling, newly planted tree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Agricultural verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>zhis (β)moches to plough while planting in spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>zhis lok-ches to plough after harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>son tapches to sow seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>ch’u tangches to irrigate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>(β)ngaches to harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བས བྲིེན།</td>
<td>k’u-yus skorches to thresh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ya-li tong lamo le**  
**Sing: make it easy!**

**Yang sol tong lamo le**  
**Once again, easy does it!**

(not literal, varies from place to place)
### Animals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>བལང གོད།</td>
<td>balang / lang'o cow / bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>འབབ་དོན།</td>
<td>yak / ñimo yak (m / f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དྲོ / དབྲོམ།</td>
<td>dzo / dzomo cross of yak &amp; cattle (m/f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བདེ་དབོང་</td>
<td>(b)nga(b)ong camel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དུང་།</td>
<td>bung(b)u donkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ལ་</td>
<td>(b)ta horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རམ་</td>
<td>rama goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ལུག</td>
<td>luk sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མདོད་</td>
<td>k'yi dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བིལ་</td>
<td>bila cat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| དཀར་             | nya fish                                       |
| སབ་ིག་          | sabilik mouse, rat                             |
| བལྟེ་རྒྱལ་ཐང་ཞིང་ལྷུང། | galchig, ltsangspa lizard                      |
| བུ་ཚིག་         | bu-tsik bug (any kind, including insects, spiders, worms, etc.) |
Wildlife

Animals

ridaks catch-all term for any wild goat or sheep-like animal, often mis-translated deer

skyin ibex (mountain goat)

nyan Tibetan Argali sheep

shapo Tibetan Urial sheep

napo blue sheep, bharal

tsos Tibetan antelope (endangered because its hair is used for valuable shah-toosh)
go-a Tibetan gazelle (very rare and endangered)

kyang wild ass

sha-wa deer (not found in Ladakh)

(chan, shan) snow leopard

i lynx

shangku wolf

wa-tse fox

p’ara dhole, a wild dog-like species

tenmo bear (As bears are found in Zangskar but not central Ladakh, many Ladakhis know only the Hindi word bhalu)

p’i-a marmot

ri(b)ong rabbit, hare

zabra, rdzabra pika, mouse-hare

lhakimo weasel
### Birds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chipa, cha</td>
<td>bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cha ṭʼung-_dropdown-SingleOrDefault ṭʼung</td>
<td>crane (as in <em>Black-necked-crane</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chʼu-bhak, chʼunbiya</td>
<td>wild duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lak</td>
<td>eagle, vulture (specific names vary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngang-pa</td>
<td>goose (as in <em>Bar-headed-goose</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭʼa</td>
<td>hawk, falcon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chamo/ chapʼo</td>
<td>hen, chicken/ rooster, cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utututse</td>
<td>hoopoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lchunka</td>
<td>red-billed chough, jackdaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaʼang puʼit, kʼata ṭʼa-o</td>
<td>magpie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhakpa</td>
<td>partridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʼurgon</td>
<td>pigeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʼorok</td>
<td>raven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names for wild birds are different in every village, but given here are what seem to be the most standard or common names.
i-yul-i minga chi zer-anok?  
this-village-of name what is-said

yul Øtingma tsam-zhig’ akling inok?  
village next how-much long-way is?

teru ha†i yod-kyaga?  
there shop is-probably?

ch’ uts’ ot tsam-zhik?  
hour about-how-many

(---)i lam ka-ne inok?  
(---) of path where is

i-lam-bo karu ch’anok?  
this-path-the where goes

lam nor  
road erred

lam-bo stan-in-a?  
road-the show-is?

lam (β)tsokpo inog-a?  
road bad is-it?

lam  †ik inok  
road fine is

ka(ru) skyod-at?  
where go (hon)

(----)-a skyod-ad-a?  
(----)-to go?

nyampo Øul-na Øig-ga?  
together go-if ok?

nam loks-te skyod-at?  
when returning come

What is the name of this village?  

How far to the next village?  

Is there a shop there?  

How many hours?  

Which is the way to (---)?  

Where does this road go?  

(I/We)’ve lost the path.  

Could you show the way?  

Is the road/path bad?  

The road/path is fine.  

Where are you going?  

Are you going to (---)?  

May I go with you?  

When will you come back?
(β)ta ka-ne t’obat-∂o? Where might I get a horse?
horse where-from get-maybe ฉันจะไปที่ไหน?
t’ung-ch’u ka-ne yot? Where is there drinking water?
drinking-water where-from is ฉันจะไปที่ไหน?

When asking directions it’s safer to ask open-ended questions, because the answer to ‘yes-or-no’ questions is more often yes than correct, especially if the person doesn’t really understand you.

To call outside a house, try calling azhang-le uncle until someone appears. Remember to add -le to sentences, for respect.

One Pen!
‘one pen’ ma-zer Don’t say ‘one pen.’
one pen don’t-say ฉันไม่ใช่คนหนึ่ง
‘one pen’ zer-ches (β)tsokpo inok It’s bad to say ‘one pen.’
one pen to-say bad is ฉันไม่ใช่คนหนึ่ง
ju-le zer-ches (r)gyalla inok It’s better to say jullay.
ju-le to-say good is ฉันไม่ใช่คนหนึ่ง

Some notes about visiting villages
Although it’s easy to trek without ponies and guides, there aren’t many tea-stalls, guest-houses or shops out in the villages. In fact, for the remote villages it’s probably best if trekkers carry all their own stuff from Leh so they don’t eat up all the food, or their animals eat all the fodder. Many villages just manage to be self-sufficient, but the recent increase in trekkers has caused shortages for local people.

If you stay with a friend (or an acquaintance’s cousin) or if you become friends with your hosts, they may refuse money. You’ll feel like less of a freeloader if you’ve brought some gifts. Useful things like tea and sugar are always welcome. Fruit, vegetables and eggs are great where unavailable, such as high villages off the road, or in winter, but chocolate, coffee and cheese are unfamiliar and not always appreciated. Torches, kitchen tools or other utensils make excellent gifts if you can carry them.

Remember that Ladakhis expect most people to do dzangs, which means refusing offers once or twice before accepting. The normal way of presenting gifts is to put them on a table and not make any fuss about presenting them, thus avoiding the whole drama of dzangs.
Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lho</td>
<td>ch’oks (-la)</td>
<td>south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shar</td>
<td>ch’oks (-la)</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chang</td>
<td>ch’oks (-la)</td>
<td>north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nup</td>
<td>ch’oks (-la)</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gyen</td>
<td>(-la)</td>
<td>uphill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’ur</td>
<td>(-la)</td>
<td>downhill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’a†ang</td>
<td>(-a)</td>
<td>straight; across from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoma</td>
<td>(yon-ch’oks-la)</td>
<td>left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yaspa</td>
<td>(yas-ch’oks-la)</td>
<td>right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lokste</td>
<td></td>
<td>back, returning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t’ak-ring</td>
<td></td>
<td>far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyemo</td>
<td></td>
<td>near</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with any location, add -a or -la after the word to mean to that direction, or -ne to mean from that direction.

Examples

yon-ch’oks-la skyot  Go to the left.
left-side-to go       ཤོག་ལོག་ཡོད་པར་ོར་བ།

k’a†ang-a skyot       Go straight.
straight-to go         གོང་འ་ོས་པ་མོ་བ།

t’ur-la cha-at         (I/ we) are going downhill.
down-to am-going       རི་བུ་འི་མ་བའི།

t’ur-ne yong-duk       (s/he/they) are coming from downhill.
down-from is-coming    རི་བུ་སོགས་ལ་བའི།

hemis-ne loks-te yong-at (I/ we) are coming back from Hemis.
Hemis-from returning am-coming རི་ལུང་ལོག་བུ་ཤིང་ལུང་དབུ།
### Landmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>མི་ཞི་</td>
<td>ri</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མི་བཟོ་</td>
<td>ri-go</td>
<td>mountain top, peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐོ་</td>
<td>kang-ri</td>
<td>glacier, snow-covered peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>lartsa</td>
<td>base camp of a pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>p’u</td>
<td>high mountain pasture, top of a valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>t’ang</td>
<td>flat area, plain, plateau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>spang</td>
<td>grass, grassy area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཞི་</td>
<td>lam</td>
<td>path, road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐོ་</td>
<td>(r)gya-lam</td>
<td>big road (also jib-lam i.e. jeep-road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>ma-ne</td>
<td>Mani wall, prayer wheel or chorten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>zampa</td>
<td>bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>․okpo</td>
<td>stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>ltsangs-po</td>
<td>river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>ts’o</td>
<td>lake, pond (natural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་</td>
<td>zing, rdzing</td>
<td>reservoir, pond (man-made)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>ch’ u-mik</td>
<td>spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>pulu</td>
<td>shepherds’ hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>nyelam</td>
<td>shortcut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>ba-o</td>
<td>cave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤ་ཐེ་</td>
<td>lungpa</td>
<td>valley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Weather & sky

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>སྤྲོ་མ་སྤེལ།</td>
<td>nam(ka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྒྱ་མཚོ་</td>
<td>ch’arpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>བྲ་</td>
<td>k’a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྭ་ཚོགས་</td>
<td>lungspo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲི་</td>
<td>kangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>དྲིག་བོ།</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>དྲིག་བོ།</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྒྱ་མཚོ་</td>
<td>ch’u-lok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>lung-rak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>nam k’orches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>nam t’ang-ches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རྒྱ་མཚོ་</td>
<td>ch’arpa tang-duk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཆ’ai</td>
<td>k’a tangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྲོ་མ་སྤེལ།</td>
<td>དྲིག་བོ།</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྤྲོ་མ་སྤེལ།</td>
<td>དྲིག་བོ།</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲི་</td>
<td>ts’atpa rak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་</td>
<td>nyima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>lda-gyirmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་གྲོས་</td>
<td>skarma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་</td>
<td>ཁིམ།</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྦྲི་</td>
<td>ཁིམ།</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- sky; weather
- rain
- snow
- wind
- ice
- shade, shadow
- flood
- wind storm
- to be overcast
- to be clear
- It’s raining.
- It snowed.
- It’s cold.
- It’s hot.
- sun
- moon
- star
- cloud
**Bus & taxi travel**

i-bas-bo karu k‘yer-anok?  
*this-bus-the where take-will*

Where does this bus go?

i-bas-bo (---)-la k‘yer-nog-ga?  
*this-bus-the (---)-to take-will?*

Does this bus go to (---)?

ka-bas-po (---)-la k‘yer-anok?  
*which-bus (---)-to take-will*

Which is the bus to (---)?

bas-po nam leb-anok?  
*bus-the when arrive-will*

When will the bus come?

bas ka-ne k‘yer-anok?  
*bus where-from take-will*

Where does the bus leave from?

(---)-la rin tsam inok?  
(---)-to price how-much is

How much is it to (---)?

(---)-la ch’a-at  
(---)-to go

I’m going to (---).

ika sgag-sal  
*here stop-give*

Please stop here.

lok-ste ch’a-goshes-rak  
*returning go-should-feel*

I have to go back.

(naksha)-i p‘ia gaöi sgag-a-dzat  
*(picture)-of for vehicle stop-(hon)*

Please stop for (a picture)

(dechot)  
*(toilet)*

(k‘arji)  
*(food)*

(cha)  
*(tea)*

tsapik ku-le-a Bhul-a-dzat, ju-ju  
*a-little slowly drive-(hon) please-please*

Please drive a little slower.

i-yul-i minga chi zer-chen?  
*this-village-of name what is-said*

What is the name of this village?
Air travel

daksa kampyu†ar dul-a-miduk
now computer work-doesn’t

The computer is down now.

nyeri ming kampyu†ari nanga miduk
your name computer-of in isn’t

Your name is not in the computer.

we†ing lisika rgya-nang-dunchu
waiting list-on hundred-and-seventy

Number 170 on the waiting list.

jás-bo kensel song
plane-the cancelled went

The flight was cancelled.

maðén
not-admitted

(I) didn’t get on (the flight).

Market

bazar  market, area with shops
rin  price, value
kirmo  rupee
pene  1 money. 2 paise
pao  250 g
p’et  half
rinchen  valuable, expensive
kuspo  expensive
k’yemo  cheap
shugu  1 paper. 2 paper or plastic bag

For the numbers, see Chapter 3.
Ladakhis are like my old school-teachers: they are never seen entering the toilet. Especially in mixed company, it is not done to announce *I’m going to the toilet*. If asked, just vaguely say you’re going outside, or if out walking say, *You go ahead, I’ll catch up later* nga kule-a yongat. If the toilet door doesn’t lock (or indeed, exist) the system is to give a little cough rather than shouting *Yo! I’m in here!* People don’t usually wait outside the door but wander discreetly off. And men do not generally urinate in public unless they are very Indianized or drunk.

### Renting a room

- nang-zhil t’obches yot-ño-a? (Can I get a room?)
  - room-a to-find is-maybe?
- k’arji t’obches yot-ño-a? (Can I get some food?)
  - food to-find is-maybe?
- chi yot-na ḍık (Whatever you’ve got is fine)
  - what have-if is-okay
- zhag-a rin tsam inok? (What is the price per day?)
  - day-for price how-much is
- zhag tsam-i phia (For how many days?)
  - day how-many-of for
- zhag (nyis)-i phia (For (two) days.)
  - day (two)-of for
(Tuesday) zhag-a loktse yongat        I/we are coming back on (Tuesday).
(Tuesday) day-on returning am-coming

chalak bor-na ðíg-a-le?    Can I/we keep baggage here?
luggage keep-if is-it-okay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedroom</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>जाना किर्</td>
<td>malsa</td>
<td>bed, bedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>छाटा</td>
<td>stan</td>
<td>carpet, mattress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झैहनिर्जीर्ग-जिते</td>
<td>shapos/ raza</td>
<td>heavy quilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झनिर्जीर्ग</td>
<td>sliping</td>
<td>sleeping bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-मक</td>
<td>kambal</td>
<td>blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-जा</td>
<td>chadar</td>
<td>bed-sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-झिर्जीर्ग</td>
<td>(s)nyas-bol</td>
<td>pillow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-विंक</td>
<td>kulik</td>
<td>lock; key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-अद्दी्रीर्ग</td>
<td>mombati</td>
<td>candle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-बिजल</td>
<td>bijil</td>
<td>torch, flashlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-चारी</td>
<td>chari</td>
<td>bed-bug</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kitchen</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>झाके-झाका</td>
<td>chansa</td>
<td>kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-त्पा</td>
<td>t’ap</td>
<td>stove (traditional or gas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-सि-ओ</td>
<td>si-†o</td>
<td>stove (kerosene stove)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-सामार</td>
<td>sa-mar</td>
<td>kerosene; diesel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-झाका</td>
<td>zang-bu</td>
<td>pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-त्यली</td>
<td>t’ali</td>
<td>plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>झाके-को-रे</td>
<td>ko-re</td>
<td>cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
124  House & village

House & village

There is no word for fork,

knife,

table, esp. the low Ladakhi type (and don’t sit on it!)

Water

Many houses, especially guesthouses with piped bathrooms, use two different sources of water: one for drinking, from a clean water supply, and one for washing, from the nearest stream or canal. If you are filtering or boiling your own water, make sure you start with drinking water, not with possibly soapy canal water.

Is this the drinking water?

Where can I get drinking water?

Where can I have a bath?

Where should I wash my clothes?

water tap, pipe

drinking water

bucket

warm water

soap
Food & drink

Barley

nas  barley

p’e, (B)ngam-p’e  roasted barley flour.

k’olak  ngamp’e mixed into a dough with tea

p’emar  sweet dough made of ngamp’e, tea, sugar, butter and sometimes cheese

cha-Bhul  ngamp’e mixed into a porridge with tea

paba  several kinds of flour cooked together into a dough

yos  roasted barley or wheat grains

Wheat

to  wheat

pak-p’e  wheat flour; dough of wheat flour

ta(g)i  any bread made of wheat

don-kyir  bread, biscuit (hon)

bre’d  store-bought white bread

k’ambir  round leavened bread

tagi Bhamo  flat bread, chapati, wheat tortilla

t’uk-pa  soup, often with wheat noodles
### Food & drink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mok-mok</td>
<td>momos, stuffed dumplings (usu. meat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skyu</td>
<td>thumb-pressed noodle stew with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>potatoes or turnips</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other basic foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>†’ul</td>
<td>egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dal</td>
<td>lentils, any dried peas or beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sha</td>
<td>meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḍas</td>
<td>rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḍas-t’uk</td>
<td>rice soup, good for bad stomachs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spaks</td>
<td>vegetable or meat dish (eaten with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>k’olak, tagi, rice or paba)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mar-nak</td>
<td>cooking oil, specifically mustard oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dairy products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oma</td>
<td>milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zho</td>
<td>yoghurt (<em>curd</em> in Indian English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mar</td>
<td>1 butter. 2 any oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tara</td>
<td>buttermilk: the sour non-fat liquid left from making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labo</td>
<td>butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch’urpe</td>
<td>cottage cheese made from tara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dried labo cheese (makes vegetarian soups hearty)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Vegetables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ts’odma</td>
<td>vegetable, esp. leafy veg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ban-gobi</td>
<td>cabbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sarak turman</td>
<td>carrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p’ul-gobi</td>
<td>cauliflower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mong-gol</td>
<td>chard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Food & drink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(z)gogpa</td>
<td>garlic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsong</td>
<td>onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhanma</td>
<td>peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alu</td>
<td>potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labuk</td>
<td>radish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salat</td>
<td>1 Chinese cabbage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Indian salad of sliced tomatoes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palak</td>
<td>spinach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†ama†ar</td>
<td>tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyungma</td>
<td>turnip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fruits & nuts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit Item</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kushu</td>
<td>apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chuli</td>
<td>apricot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p`ating</td>
<td>sweet variety of apricot, dried with its edible nut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(β)tsigu</td>
<td>apricot nut. Sweet (ngarmo) are like almonds; bitter (k`an†e) are toxic but pressed for fragrant oil ((β)tsigu mar).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kela</td>
<td>banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)gun</td>
<td>grape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aam</td>
<td>mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyuti</td>
<td>pear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basho</td>
<td>raisin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starga</td>
<td>walnut</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spices

Many Ladakhis are vague about spices, call them all masala, and don’t know the Ladakhi names. If the Hindi/Urdu word is given in *italics* below, it may be more widely known than the Ladakhi/Tibetan name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladakhi</th>
<th>Hindi/Urdu</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masala</td>
<td>sugmel</td>
<td>spice; mixed spices, curry powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elaichi</td>
<td></td>
<td>green cardamom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lirgot, kakola, elaichi</td>
<td></td>
<td>black cardamom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ladaksi) kornyot</td>
<td></td>
<td>caraway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyrma</td>
<td></td>
<td>chilli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usu</td>
<td></td>
<td>cilantro, coriander leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shing-ts’a, dalchin</td>
<td></td>
<td>cinnamon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shing-ngar</td>
<td></td>
<td>a medicinal spice (not cinnamon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li-shi, laung</td>
<td></td>
<td>cloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(gyagari) kornyot, zeera, jeera</td>
<td></td>
<td>cumin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chazga, adarak</td>
<td></td>
<td>ginger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p’ololing, pudina</td>
<td></td>
<td>mint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p’o-a rilu</td>
<td></td>
<td>black pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts’a</td>
<td></td>
<td>salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k’ara</td>
<td></td>
<td>sugar; candy, sweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yump’e, haldi</td>
<td></td>
<td>turmeric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drinks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>cha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>tea (non-hon, e.g. your own tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>solja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>tea (hon, e.g. anybody else’s tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>susma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>butter tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>k’an’e, ts’aja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>salt tea (as opp. to sweet tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>cha ngarmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>sweet tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>ch’u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>ch’u skol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>boiled water (always served hot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>ch’ang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>1 fresh fermented barley wine or beer. 2 alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>skyems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>ch’ang (hon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FONT</td>
<td>arak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning</td>
<td>home-made distilled liquor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase black tea may be known though it will probably be sweetened; otherwise you will have to describe your request. (But I don’t guarantee such an exotic idea will be understood. Imagine a Ladakhi in England slowly sounding out Please put salt and butter in my tea: Of course most English people wouldn’t believe that was really meant. Likewise, a desire for plain unsweetened tea may be disbelieved in Ladakh.)

omā nang k’ara metkan-i cha
milk and sugar without-of tea
k’ara má-nyungun sal
sugar very-little give
k’ara ma-sal-na (r)gyal, ju-ju
sugar not-give-if it’s-good please

Water boiled and then cooled may also be a tricky concept, since for Amchi medicine, the whole point of boiled water is to drink it hot.

ch’u skolte nang †angmo ch’a-chukste
water boiled and cold go-allowed
Special food requests

Vegetarians or people with food restrictions will find these sentences useful. The words you may need to replace are in brackets. Ladakhi vegetarians generally don’t eat eggs, so make it clear if you do.

nyerang (sha) don-ada?
you (meat) eat/drink? (hon)    Do you eat (meat)?
(sha) za-amet
(meat) eat-not

in-ang (†`ul) za-at
but (egg) eat

(sha) tangste inog-a?
(meat) given is-it?

(nyerma) zhimpo ts`or-a-rak
(chilli) delicious I-feel-it-is
(nyerma) má-nyungun sal
(chilli) very--little give

(snum) za-nyan-amet
(oil) eat-can-not

(ts`a) ma-sal-na gyal, ju-ju
(salt) not-give-if it’s-good please

(oma) t`ung-na zumo yongat
(milk) drink-if illness comes

(wichin) za-na zumo yongat
(MSG) eat-if illness comes

dzangs ma-cho!
insincere-refusal don’t-do

dzangs man!
insincere-refusal isn’t

I honestly don’t want more: my refusal is sincere.
Language learning

Ladaksi spera lobs-nyin-rak
*Ladakhi language learn-want-feel*

(---) zerna, chi inok?
What does (---) mean?

(---) say-if, what is

(---) kazuga zer-a-nok?
How do you say (---)?

(---) how say-will

(---) kazuga ði-anok?
How do you spell (---)?

(---) how write-will

--- nang ---i bar-la chi k' yat inok?
What’s the difference between --- and ---?

-- and --of between difference what is

spera má-gyokspa sal-a-rak
You/he/she speaks quickly. *(hon)*

*speech very-quickly give(hon)-I-feel*

ku-le-a mol-ina -le
Could you please speak slowly? *(hon)*

*slowly say (hon)-will?*

yang mol-ina
Please say it again. *(hon)*

*again say-will?-? (hon)*

ma-tsór
I didn’t hear (that).

*not-heard*

chí lo
What did he/she/they say?

*what said*

Hindi mi-shes. Ladaksi nanga mol
I don’t know Hindi. Say it in Ladakhi.

*Hindi not-know. Ladakhi in say(hon)*

Ladaksi nanga mol, ju-ju!
Please, say it in Ladakhi!

*Ladakhi in say please!*

ph`alskat
modern spoken Ladakhi

ch`oskat
Classical Tibetan as in the books

ch`estaks
honorific
I have not found many Ladakhis able to explain the structure of their own language. Ladakhi grammar is not taught in school and the closest that is taught is Classical Tibetan, which has very different grammar, and even that is not usually taught clearly, so that people confuse grammar with arcane spelling. I have learned what I have by asking people a lot of questions: ‘What’s the difference between this and that?’

As you learn, look out for regional differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Pronunciation usually follows regular and consistent patterns which you can figure out if you can read Bodik. The grammar is basically the same across Ladakh, except that some verb endings have different forms, but people will often make the effort to speak Leh-skat to you if you’re just learning.

**Ways to say I don’t know**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladakhi</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>há-le?</td>
<td>Pardon? What did you say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hago-a?</td>
<td>Do you understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ha-ma-go/ha-go</td>
<td>I don’t understand. /I do understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(r)gyus met</td>
<td>I don’t know (about that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi-shes</td>
<td>I don’t know (a language or person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi she!</td>
<td>I have no idea. How should I know?!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi song</td>
<td>What happened?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bodik**

Ladakhi writing, *lit.* Tibetan-letters

u-chen block letter Bodik (as in this book)

u-met cursive Bodik script
Guide to pronunciation

Practice these sounds with a Ladakhi friend—reading about pronunciation is no substitute for listening to a native speaker. Also, try to learn Bodik (written Ladakhi), as it’s easier than it looks and will help you understand pronunciation. The writing and pronunciation section has additional tips.

Ladakhi distinguishes only five vowel sounds:

a  as in father or cup (never as in flat or cat)
i  as in bit or beat
u  as in boot or book
e  as in bet or bait (never silent, so jule has two syllables)
o  as in boat or long.

b g h j l m n s sh w y and z are all basically like English.

zh is as in pleasure, Brezhnev, or the French Je.

ny is as in canyon or onion, or British pronunciation of new.

dz, ky sk, gy, and other combinations should be easy to understand. (Hindi and Urdu speakers should take care to say them smoothly without an extra vowel in the middle.)

Lh is not difficult: try saying h and l at the same time.

r is very slightly trilled with the tip of the tongue almost tapping the roof of the mouth like the Spanish r, but it can vary in context. Listen to how Ladakhis pronounce it.

ng is common in English as in sing. To learn to say it at the beginning of words, close your eyes and repeat singing-ing-ing-ing several times, holding the ng for a long time and paying attention to the position of the tongue in your mouth. Repeat sing-ah several times, and then leave the si part silent and say ngah! There’s no hard g in nga.
**Aspiration:** Ladakhi, like Tibetan, Hindi, Urdu and Thai, distinguishes between *aspirated* consonants (k’, t’, †’, p’, ch’, ts’) which have a puff of air after them, and *unaspirated* ones, which don’t (k, t, †, p, ch, ts).

Although unaware of the difference, English speakers tend to aspirate at the beginning of words and not in the middle or end: in *positive*, *charge* and *That’s tough*, they usually aspirate the p, the ch and the t, but in *opposite*, *matches* and *That stuff*, they use the unaspirated sounds. Some people feel that p sounds like a cross between English p and b, k like a cross between English k and g, and ch like a cross between English ch and j. English and German speakers should try holding the breath while saying unaspirated consonants.

p˙ and p˙’ are like English p: p as in *opposite* or *spy*, and p˙ as in *positive* or *pie*. Occasionally p˙ sounds like English f.

ch and ch˙ are like English ch: ch as in *matches*, ch˙ as in *charge*.

k’ and k˙ are like English k: k as in *locker*, k˙ as in *college*.

t˙ and ts˙ are like *Patsy* or the German *Zed*. Hindi and Urdu speakers should take care not to confuse ts˙ with ch˙.

t, t˙ and d are not like English t and d, but are said with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the front teeth, as in Spanish.

†, †˙, and ‡ are similar to English t and d, but are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curled back into the palate as if to say r. Sometimes there is a faint hint of r in them. Ladakhis hear the normal English t and d as these: † as in *stuff*, †˙ as in *tough*, and ‡ as in *done*. Actually, however, the tip of the tongue should curl further back into the roof of the mouth than in English.

ßh is a unique sound, not found in English or even Tibetan: say sh with your tongue curled into the roof of your mouth.

Accented syllables are occasionally marked (e.g. á, é) in phrases to show the correct stress.

Sounds that are optional or almost disappear in connected speech are in brackets: (r)gyalla, (l)de, du(g)a. Optional sounds before a word often change to s in Leh accent, are pronounced clearly in western Ladakh (Sham), and are silent towards the east.
Vocabulary & phrases

Place names 80
People
  Personal names 82
  Family members 84
Pronouns 85
  Nobody, nothing, and never 86
  Question words 86
  Demonstrative pronouns 87
Verbs 88
Adjectives 95
Post-positions (English prepositions) 98
Conjunctions 100
Exclamations & wishes 101
Days and time 102
Religion 105
Health and emergencies 107
Body parts 109
Agriculture 110
Animals 112
  Wildlife 113,  Birds 114
Trekking 115
  Directions 117,  Landmarks 118
  Weather & sky 119
Transportation: Bus & taxi 120,  Air travel 121
Market 121
Around the house & village 122
  Renting a room 122
  Bedroom & kitchen 123,  Water 124
Food & drink 125
  Vegetables 126,  Fruits & nuts 127
  Spices 128,  Drinks 129
  Special food requests 130
Language learning 131
Ways to say I don’t know 132