

Basic Vocabulary

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A small list of 'survival' Chichewa vocabulary, by no means all you need to get around!

Word	Plural	English	Word Type
banja	mabanja	family	noun (li ma)
basi		that's all	interjection
bodza	mabodza	lie	noun (li ma)
bwalo	mabwalo	yard, court, grounds	noun (li ma)
bwaji		how?	interrogative
bwenzi	abwenzi	friend	noun (li ma)
bwino		good, well, fine	adverb/adjective
chabe		adv. only, just/ adj. worthless, vain	adverb/adjective
chaka	zaka	year	noun (chi zi)
chala	zala	finger	noun (chi zi)
chiyani		what?	Interrogative noun (chi zi but no plural)
chifukwa	zifukwa	reason	noun (chi zi)
chikondi	chikondi	love	noun (chi zi)
chikwanje	zikwanje	panga knife	noun (chi zi)
chimanga	chimanga	maize	noun (chi zi)
chinangwa	chinangwa	cassava	noun (chi zi)
chingwe	zingwe	string, rope	noun (chi zi)
chinthu	zinthu	thing	noun (chi zi)
chipatala	zipatala	hospital	noun (chi zi)
chipatso	zipatso	fruit	noun (chi zi)
chipewa	zipewa	hat	noun (chi zi)
chisoni	zisoni	sadness, sorrow, pity	noun (chi zi)
chitseko	zitseko	door	noun (chi zi)
chitsime	zitsime	well	noun (chi zi)
chitsulo	zitsulo	iron, piece or thing made of metal	noun (chi zi)
cholinga	zolinga	aim, purpose	noun (chi zi)
chuma	chuma	riches, wealth	noun (chi zi)
dambo	madambo	garden area near a river	noun (li ma)
dengu	madengu	basket	noun (li ma)
dothi	madothi	dirt	noun (li ma)
dzana		day before yesterday	noun (li ma)
dzanja	manja	hand	noun (li ma)
dziko	maiko	country, world	noun (li ma)
dzina	maina	name, noun	noun (li ma)
dzulo		yesterday	adverb {concorde w/ li}
dzuwa		sun	noun (li ma)
-fupi		short, (as prep, near)	adjective w/ double prefix; preposition
imfa	imfa	death	noun (i zi)
kale		before, already	adverb
kanthu		something, anything	noun (ka ti)
kapena		or, maybe	conjunction
-kati		inside, between, among	preposition (with pa or mu)
katundu	katundu	stuff, luggage	noun (mu a)
kaya		"I don't know", expression of doubt on the subject	interjection
kaye		first, for a little bit	adverb
khasu	makasu	hoe	noun (li ma)
khomo	makomo	door, entrance, threshold, home	noun (li ma)
khutu	makutu	ear	noun (li ma)
koma		but	conjunction
kuba		to steal	verb

kubadwa	to be born	verb	
kubisa	to hide	verb	
kubvala	to put on, wear clothes	verb	verb
kubvuta	to cause trouble, trouble	verb	verb
kubwera	to come	verb	
kuchedwa	to be late, too late	verb	
kuchenjera	to be clever, show intelligence	verb	verb
kuchepa	to be few, small	verb	
kucheza	to chat, play, joke	verb	
kuchimwa	to sin	verb	
kuchira	to get better	verb	
kuchita	to do	verb	
kuchoka	to leave, go away`	verb	
kuchotsa	to remove, take away	verb	verb
kuchuluka	to be many, much	verb	
kuda	to be dark, black	verb	
kudabwa	to wonder, be amazed	verb	verb
kudandaula	to complain	verb	
kudula	to cut, cut off	verb	
kudwala	to be sick	verb	
kudya	to eat	verb	
kudziwa	to know	verb	
kudzuka	to wake up	verb	
kufa	to die	verb	
kufika	to arrive	verb	
kufuna	to want	verb	
kufunsa	to ask	verb	
kugawa	to share, divide	verb	
kugona	to sleep	verb	
kugwa	to fall	verb	
kugwira	to catch, hold, touch (kugwira ntchito, to work)	verb	verb
kuika	to put, place	verb	
kuima	to stand	verb	
kuimba	to sing, sound, play(instrument)	verb	verb
kuipa	to be bad	verb	
kukana	to refuse,deny	verb	
kukhala	to be, sit, stay	verb	
kukhoza	to be able, succeed	verb	
kukhuta	to be full, satisfied	verb	
kukoma	to be good, nice, sweet	verb	verb
kukonda	to love	verb	
kukonza	to prepare, repair	verb	
kukula	to grow, be large	verb	
kukwana	to be enough, suffice, be satisfied	verb	verb
kukwera	to climb, ascend	verb	
kulakwa	to do wrong, mistake	verb	verb
kulanda	to steal from, take away	verb	verb
kulankhula	to speak, talk	verb	
kuleka	to leave something, stop doing sthing	verb	verb
kulemba	to write	verb	
kulima	to hoe, cultivate, grow(sense of "grow cabbage")	verb	verb
kulimba	to be hard, firm, strong	verb	verb
kulipira	to pay	verb	
kulira	to cry	verb	
kulola	to allow	verb	
kulowa	to enter	verb	
-kulu	large, big	adjective with double prefix	
kuluma	to bite	verb	
kulumpha	to jump	verb	
kumanga	to tie, tighten, build	verb	

kumasula	to untie, loosen	verb	
kumenya	to hit, beat	verb	
kumva	to hear, understand, feel		verb
kumwa	to drink	verb	
kunama	to lie	verb	
kunena	to say, talk about	verb	
kunyoza	to despise	verb	
kuocha	to burn, roast	verb	
kuomba	to hit, beat, sound	verb	
kuona	to see, be true	verb	
kuononga	to destroy, waste	verb	
kuopa	to fear	verb	
kupanga	to make	verb	
kuperekeza	to accompany	verb	
kupeza	to find	verb	
kupha	to kill	verb	
kuphika	to cook	verb	
kuphuzira	to learn	verb	
kupita	to go	verb	
kuponda	to step on, tread on	verb	
kupsya	to be ripe, cooked	verb	
kupuma	to breathe , rest	verb	
kusamba	to bathe, wash self	verb	
kusauka	to be poor	verb	
kusesa	to sweep	verb	
kusewera	to play	verb	
kusiya	to leave, abandon	verb	
kusochera, sokera	to get lost	verb	
kusowa	to lack, be lost	verb	
kusunga	to keep	verb	
kuswa	to shatter, break something		verb
kutani	to do what, say what		interrogative verb
kutaya	to throw away, lose	verb	
kutenga	to take	verb	
kutentha	to be hot	verb	
kutha	to finish, be used up		verb
kuthamanga	to run	verb	
kuthawa	to run away, escape	verb	
kuthira	to pour	verb	
kuthyola	to break	verb	
kuti	where	Interrogative	
kuti	to say	verb	
kutola	to pick up	verb	
kutsala	to be left behind	verb	
kutsata	to follow	verb	
kutsegula	to open	verb	
kutseka	to close	verb	
kutsika	to go down, descend		verb
kutsogola	to go before, in front		verb
kutsuka	to clean, wash	verb	
kutuma	to send so.body	verb	
kuwerenga	to read, count	verb	
kuweruka	to finish work or school for the day and go home		verb
kuyamba	to start	verb	
kuyankha	to answer	verb	
kuyenda	to travel, walk	verb	
kuyenera	to must, should	verb	
kuyera	to white, light	verb	
kuyesa	to try, consider	verb	
kuzizira	to be cold	verb	

kuzolowera		to become used to	Verb	
lero		today	noun (li ma)	
-li		be	verb	
liwu	mawu	singular: letter, voice/ plural: word, words	noun (li ma)	
madzi	madzi	water	noun (li ma)	
mafuta	mafuta	oil	noun (li ma)	
malo	malo	place, property	noun (li ma)	
malonda	malonda	sales, business, trade	noun (li ma)	
mankhwala	mankhwala	medicine	noun (li ma)	
mawa		tomorrow, the next day	noun, adv	
mbale	abale	relative, friend	noun (mu a)	
mbatata	mbatata	sweet potato	noun (i zi)	
mbeu	mbeu	seed	noun (i zi)	
mbiri		many, much	adjective	
mbuyo		behind	preposition (with pa, ku, mu)	
mbuzi	mbuzi	goat	noun (i zi)	
mchere	mchere	salt	noun (mu mi)	
mdima	midima	darkness; (pl. death, the grave)	noun (mu mi)	
-mene	who, which, when, where		relative pronoun; conjunction	
mfumu	mafumu	chief	noun (composite, I ma)	
mimba	mimba	stomach	noun (mu mi)	
mkazi	akazi	woman, female	noun (mu-a)	
mlendo	alendo	traveller, visitor, stranger	noun (mu a)	
m'mawa, m'mamawa		morning	adverb; noun (mu mi)	
mnyamata	anyamata	boy	noun (mu a)	
mnzanga	anzanga	my friend, companion, fellow	noun (mu a)	
moto	moto	fire	noun (mu mi)	
moyo	miyoyo	life, soul	noun (mu mi)	
mpaka		until	preposition	
mpando	mipando	chair	noun (mu mi)	
mpeni	mipeni	knife	noun (mu mi)	
mphamvu	mphamvu	strength, power	noun (i zi)	
mphatso	mphatso	gift	noun (i zi)	
mphepo	mphepo	wind	noun (i zi)	
mphwanga	aphwanga	my younger relative	noun (mu a)	
mpingo	mipingo	church	noun (mu mi)	
mpunga	mpunga	rice	noun (mu mi)	
msanga		quickly	adverb	
mseu	miseu	road	noun (mu mi)	
msika	misika	market	noun (mu mi)	
mtedza	mtedza	peanut	noun (mu mi)	
mtengo	mitengo	tree, price	noun (mu mi)	
mtima	mitima	heart	noun (mu mi)	
mtsikana	atsikana	girl	noun (mu a)	
mudzi	midzi	village	noun (mu mi)	
mulungu	milungu	God	noun (mu mi)	
munda	minda	garden	noun (mu mi)	
munthu	anthu	person, human	noun (mu-a)	
mvula	mvula	rain	noun (i zi)	
mwamuna	amuna	man, male	noun (mu-a)	
mwana	ana	child, baby	noun (mu a)	
mwezi	miyezi	moon, month	noun (mu mi)	
mzimu	mizimu	spirit, esp. the disembodied spirits of the dead	noun (mu mi)	
ndalama	ndalama	money	noun (i zi)	
ndi		be	verb	
ndí		and, with, by	conjunction; preposition	
ndiwo	ndiwo	relish for nsima	noun (i zi)	
ndodo	ndodo	stick, rod	noun (i zi)	
ngati		as, if, like	conjunction; preposition	
-ngati		how many, how much	interrogative adjective	

ng'ombe	ng'ombe	cow, cattle	noun (i zi)	
njala	njala	hunger, famine	noun (i zi)	
njinga	njinga	bicycle	noun (i zi)	
njira	njira	way, path	noun (i zi)	
nkhani	nkhani	story, matter	noun (i zi)	
nkhuku	nkhuku	chicken	noun (i zi)	
nkhuni	nkhuni	firewood	noun (i zi)	
nsalu	nsalu	cloth	noun (i zi)	
nsapato	nsapato	shoe	noun (i zi)	
nsima	nsima	staple food of maize porridge		noun (i zi)
nsomba	nsomba	fish	noun (i zi)	
nsungwi	nsungwi	bamboo	noun (i zi)	
ntchito	ntchito	work, use	noun (i zi)	
nthawi	nthawi	time	noun (i zi)	
nthenda	nthenda	disease	noun (i zi)	
nthochi	nthochi	banana	noun (i zi)	
nyama	nyama	meat, animal	noun (i zi)	
nyemba	nyemba	beans	noun (i zi)	
nyimbo	nyimbo	song	noun (i zi)	
nyumba	nyumba	house	noun (i zi)	
nzeru	nzeru	wisdom, knowledge	noun (i zi)	
phazi	mapazi	foot	noun (li ma)	
-tali		long, far	adjective w/ double prefix; preposition	
tchire	tchire	bush, woods	noun (li ma)	
thumba	matumba	bag, pocket, sack	noun (li ma)	
tsache	masache	broom	noun (li ma)	
tsamba	masamba	leaf, greens(plural)	noun (li ma)	
tsiku	masiku	day	noun (li ma)	
tsopano		now	adv.	
wiki	mawiki	week	noun (i ma)	