

Lesson 48:

Tenses

Tenses [nyakati]

There are five major tenses in Swahili:

- Present [wakati uliopo]
- Present Perfect [wakati uliopo hali timilifu]
- Past [wakati uliopita]
- Future [wakati ujao]
- Habitual [wakati wa mazoea]

A). Present [wakati uliopo]

The present tense uses **-NA-**

Sentensi:

1. Mimi **ninasoma** Kiswahili. [I am studying/reading Kiswahili.]
2. Sisi **tunasoma** Kiswahili. [We are studying/reading Kiswahili.]

B). Present Perfect [wakati uliopo hali timilifu]

The present perfect tense uses **-ME-**

Sentensi:

1. Mimi **nimesoma** Kiswahili. [I have read/studied Kiswahili.]
2. Sisi **tumesoma** Kiswahili. [We have read/studied Kiswahili.]

C). Past [wakati uliopita]

The past tense uses **-LI-**

Sentensi:

1. Mimi **nilisoma** Kiswahili. [I read/studied Kiswahili.]
2. Sisi **tulisoma** Kiswahili. [We read/ studied Kiswahili.]

D). Future [wakati ujao]

The future tense uses **-TA-**

Sentensi:

1. Mimi **nitasoma** Kiswahili. [I will read/study Kiswahili.]
2. Sisi **tutasoma** Kiswahili. [We will read/study Kiswahili.]

E). Habitual [wakati wa mazoea]

The habitual tense uses **HU-**

If your intention is to express an idea that happens on a regular basis, use the habitual tense which is represented by the **HU-** prefix on the verb.

Sentensi:

1. Mimi **huoga** kila asubuhi.
[I shower every morning.]
2. Mimi **hupiga** mswaki kila asubuhi.
[I brush my teeth every morning.]
3. Mimi **hula** kiamsha kinywa.
[I eat breakfast.]
4. Mimi **huenda** darasani saa tatu asubuhi.
[I go to class at 9am.]
5. Mimi **hula** chakula cha mchana saa sita mchana.
[I eat lunch at noon.]
6. Mimi **huenda** nyumbani saa kumi jioni.
[I go home at 4pm.]
7. Mimi **hucheza** jioni.
[I play in the evening.]
8. Mimi **hula** chakula cha jioni saa moja usiku.
[I eat dinner at 7pm.]
9. Mimi **husoma** saa tatu na nusu usiku.
[I study at 7:30pm.]

10. Mimi **hulala** saa nne usiku.

[I go to sleep at 10pm.]

11. Wanafunzi **husoma** Kiswahili kila siku.

[Students read/study Kiswahili every day.]

12. Yeye **huzungumza** sana.

[He/She talks a lot.]

13. Mwalimu **hufundisha** saa tatu asubuhi.

[The teacher teaches at 9am.]

F). Conditional [wakati tegemezi; -NGE- na -NGALI-]

In Kiswahili, conditional tenses are represented by -NGE- and -NGALI-

-NGE- is a prefix that is used in verbs to express a condition that can still be realized.

-NGE- expressions have two parts:

- the condition
- the consequence

Mfano:

- *the condition:* U**nge**-wa-ona, [If you were to see them,]
- *the consequence:* u**nge**-wa-penda. [you would like them.]

Sentensi:

1. **Tungewakuta wangekula** maembe.

[If we were to find them, they would eat mangoes.]

2. **Ningekaa** Florida **ningekula** machungwa.

[If I were to live in Florida, I would eat oranges.]

3. **Ningeishi** Chicago **ningeona** theluji.

[If I were to live in Chicago, I would see snow.]

4. **Ningesoma** Kiswahili **ningenda** Kenya.

[If I were to study Kiswahili, I would go to Kenya.]

5. **Ungena** televisheni **ungelala** mapema.

[If you were to watch television, you would go to sleep early.]

6. **Ningecheza** **ningechoka**.

[If I were to play, I would be tired.]

7. Ningeishi Kentucky ningekula Kentucky Fried Chicken.

[If I were to live in Kentucky, I would eat Kentucky Fried Chicken.]

The Regret Marker -**NGALI**-

-NGALI- is a prefix that is used in verbs to express a condition that can no longer be realized (too late).

-NGALI- expressions have two parts:

- the event or act no longer possible
- the result too late to come true

Mfano:

- *event no longer possible:* U-**ngali**-wa-ona [If you had seen them,]
- *result too late to come true:* u-**ngali**-wa-penda. [you would have liked them.]

Sentensi:

1. Tungaliwakuta wangalikula maembe.

[If we had found them, they would have eaten mangoes.]

2. Ningalikaa Florida ningalikula machungwa.

[If I had lived in Florida, I would have eaten oranges.]

3. Ningaliishi Chicago ningaliona theluji.

[If I had lived in Chicago, I would have seen snow.]

4. Ningaliisoma Kiswahili ningalienda Kenya.

[If I had studied Kiswahili, I would have gone to Kenya.]

5. Ungaliona televisheni ungalilala mapema.

[If you had watched television, you would have gone to sleep early.]

6. Ningalicheza ningalichoka.

[If I had played/danced, I would have been tired.]

7. Ningaliishi Kentucky ningalikula Kentucky Fried Chicken.

[If I had lived in Kentucky, I would have eaten Kentucky Fried Chicken.]

Zingatia [Note]

Both **-NGE-** and **-NGALI-** forms are used interchangeably for both the events/acts that can still be realized and those that are no longer possible, and although **-NGE-** is 'supposed' to be used in the **present** and **-NGALI-** in the **past**, the line between the two is blurred and both can still be used interchangeably.