

Learning Languages: Te Reo Māori Novice: focus, communication skills & language topics

The New Zealand Curriculum, September 2026 version. Optional learning area — schools offering Te Reo Māori: Years 9–10 from 1 January 2027; Years 0–8 from 1 January 2029 (full implementation by end of 2030). Print in A3 or zoom on digital.

Sequence	Novice focus	Whakarongo Listening	Pānui Reading	Kōrero ā-waha Speaking	Kōrero ā-tuhi Writing	Pāhekoheko Interacting	Language example topics
Strand focus	Novice 1, 2, and 3 are proficiency-based, not year-based — they may be taught at any year level.	Ko te reo torohū — Receptive skills. "During Novice ..., students will:"		Ko te reo whakaputa — Productive skills. "During Novice ..., students will:"			Non-exhaustive examples of language students might use and understand.
Novice 1	In Novice 1 and 2, teachers play a central role in supporting students to build a strong connection between te reo Māori and the cultural values carried within the language. Teachers guide students to notice how language varies across hapū, iwi, and rohe and how values like manaakitanga and whanaungatanga shape behaviour and relationships. By weaving cultural knowledge into everyday learning, teachers help students see te reo Māori as a living expression of identity, community, and connection. While all five modes (speaking, listening, reading, writing, and interacting) are taught, oral language is the foundation for communication in the Novice teaching sequence.	- identify the sounds of letters of the Māori alphabet (arapū), letter combinations, intonation, and stress patterns - recognise and understand simple, familiar spoken words, phrases, and sentences - recognise and understand simple classroom language.	- identify letters of the Māori alphabet (te arapū Māori) - recognise and understand simple, familiar written words, phrases, and sentences.	- imitate the pronunciation, intonation, stress, and rhythm of Māori words, phrases, and sentences - respond appropriately to simple, familiar instructions and simple questions.	- write vowels with macrons where appropriate - write simple, familiar words, phrases, and sentences using the conventions of written language, such as appropriate spelling and punctuation.	Novice 1 and 2 (shared) - initiate spoken encounters in te reo Māori, using simple greetings, questions, and statements - exchange information in highly practised contexts related to themselves and their immediate environment - use strategies when communicating, such as relying on a practised format, using facial expressions and gestures, asking others to repeat themselves, and utilising supporting visuals and prompts - begin to interact and communicate in te reo Māori in a culturally appropriate way.	Greetings and farewells · Sign-offs · Challenging syllable sounds · Introducing self and others · Communicating feelings · Parents and caregivers · Numbers (0–19, multiples of 10, 21–99, counting objects) · Age · Current residence · Communicating where one's home is · Loan words · Days · Months · Present location · Locative indicator · Locative noun · Demonstratives · Present tense · Asking about things · Thanking · Apologising · Special occasions · Complimenting people · Set phrases for leading karakia
		- recognise and understand familiar spoken words even in some unfamiliar contexts - begin to understand slightly more complex or less familiar reo Māori phrases and sentences - understand and respond to simple classroom instructions and respectful expressions.	- understand short written texts consisting of familiar reo Māori words, phrases, and sentences - begin to understand slightly more complex or less familiar reo Māori phrases and sentences.	- begin to use pronunciation, intonation, stress, and rhythm for emphasis and to clarify meaning - produce simple phrases and simple sentences relating to familiar contexts.	- reproduce letter combinations and punctuation for reo Māori words, phrases, and sentences in familiar contexts - write a series of simple sentences in te reo Māori describing the appearance or characteristics of something.		Names · Pronouns · Terms of address · Direct address using titles · Whānau relationships · Number of people · Physical characteristics · Personality · Dates · Birthdates · Place of family origin · Relationships between people · Time · Language to support interactions
Novice 3	In Novice 3, teachers guide students to use introductory mihi to express identity and share whakapapa and connections to whenua. Teachers show students how metaphorical language enriches and enhances meaning, and that communication reflects collective values and respect for others' perspectives. Students learn how to use kiwaha to reflect cultural values, emotion, and social norms, and to enrich everyday conversations. Teachers engage with the maramataka and mātauranga Māori to create meaningful experiences for students and help deepen their understanding of Māori worldview knowledge.	- understand specific detail and overall meaning in familiar contexts and in some unfamiliar contexts - begin to understand short oral texts that contain some unfamiliar language.	- understand specific detail and overall meaning in a range of short written texts consisting mainly of familiar language - begin to understand short written texts that contain some unfamiliar language.	- describe familiar events, people, and things - present about matters of immediate personal relevance and importance.	- prepare and write short texts on familiar topics - use reference tools ethically and responsibly (e.g. dictionaries, artificial intelligence (AI), glossaries) to support learning and extend their vocabulary.	- communicate information on the spot in contexts relevant to themselves, others, and their immediate environment - use strategies to sustain a conversation such as self-correcting, relying on known language to compensate for missing vocabulary, and utilising reference resources (as appropriate) - use a range of formulaic language to support meaningful interactions - begin to interact/communicate confidently in culturally appropriate ways.	Pepeha elements · Listing multiple elements · Mihi · Statements of identity · Whakatauki/whakatauākī · Possession · Active sentences – present, simple past, and future tense · Communicating about travel · Communicating about means of travel · Communicating likes · Communicating dislikes · Justification statements · Quality · Quantity · Required quantity · Weather · Seasons · Imperatives · Requesting object/s · Negative imperatives · Past continuous tense · Past tense (have/has) · Kiwaha – Colloquialisms

Two knowledge strands run through every Novice sequence: Cultural and Sociolinguistic Knowledge (how language is shaped by culture and context — cultural practices, values, beliefs, and social norms) and Linguistic Knowledge (how language works — pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling). Both connect to a shared practice; communicative practices drive the learning.

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate local dialects and mātauranga ā-iwi/ā-hapū. Language examples are neither mandatory nor the only language to be taught.

Source: Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga — The New Zealand Curriculum, Learning Languages: Te Reo Māori Novice (September 2026).