

Tense Markers

Tense markers are special words that team up with action words and others to tell us when things happen in a sentence or story. In Samoan, tense markers also combine with adjectives and adverbs.

Past Tense

Sa

action incomplete
process focused

Na

action complete
outcome focused

Present Tense

E

Habitual present

‘Ua

Present update

‘O lo‘o

Continuous
“ing” words

Future Tense

O le‘ ā

Future

Action words in Samoan are verbs, adjectives, and adverbs

Do:	fai	Good:	lelei
Run:	tamo'e	Bad:	leaga
Talk:	tautala	Pretty:	aulelei
Think:	mafau	Short:	pu'upu'u
Play:	ta'alo	Happy:	fiafia
Stand:	tu	Smart:	poto
Eat:	'ai	First:	muamua
Try:	taumafai	Last:	mulimuli
Able:	mafai	false:	pepelo
Come:	sau	Cold:	malulu
Bring:	aumai	Hot:	vevela
Want:	fia	Fast:	vave
Use:	fa'aoga	Slow:	telegese
Ask:	fesili	Angry:	ita
Read:	faitau	New:	fou

Subjects are the nouns in a sentence

Room:	potu	Table:	laulau
Bed:	moega	House:	fale
Box:	pusa	Mother:	tina
boy:	tama	Father:	tama
girl:	teine	Year:	tausaga
baby:	pepe	Money:	tupe
Family:	aiga	Job:	galuega
Book:	tusi	Life:	olaga
Day:	aso	Food:	mea'ai
Eye:	mata	Bird:	manu
Fact:	moni	Theater:	tifaga
Hand:	lima	Doctor:	foma'i
Ship:	va'a	Hospital:	falema'i
Plane:	va'alele	Window:	fa'amalama
Sun:	la	Door:	faitoto'a

Subject Phrase Structure Rules

Samoan subject phrases begin with “O”.

The “O” is a present tense marker that translates to:

- singular: “It is”

- plural: “they are”

A subject phrase is singular if it has singular limiters like: le, se, la’u, lo’u, lau, lou, lana, lona, sa’u, so’u, sau, sou, sana, sona, lenei, lena, lela.

Samoan adjectives describe the subject. They are stated after the main subject/noun.

The “O” is omitted when the subject comes after a verb.

Subject Phrase Examples

O se ta'avale: (it is) A car.

O ta'avale: (They're) The cars.

O le teine: (it is) The girl.

O se teine aulelei: (it is) a beautiful girl.

The “O” subject/noun tense marker is dropped when the subject phrase follows an action.

TENSE

E

ACTION

savali

SUBJECT

le teine

Walks

the girl

THE GIRL WALKS

TAS

TENSE

Tense marker

ACTION

verb: action

adjective:
describes noun

adverb:
describes verb

SUBJECT

Noun: person,
place, thing,
idea

Doer of action

TENSE

ACTION

SUBJECT

TENSE

ACTION

SUBJECT

TENSE

ACTION

SUBJECT

TENSE

ACTION

SUBJECT