

# Lesson 9:

## Swahili Noun Classes

### Noun Classes [ngeli za Kiswahili]

Nouns in Kiswahili are grouped into various noun classes because of two main reasons:

- 1.their characteristics as a noun**
- 2.Kiswahili's vowel harmony**

There are 9 noun classes in Kiswahili. Each noun class has both a singular and a plural form, to make 18 total.

<b>M - WA</b>	<b>[A - WA]</b>
<b>KI - VI</b>	<b>[KI - VI]</b>
<b>M - MI</b>	<b>[U - I]</b>
<b>JI - MA</b>	<b>[LI - YA]</b>
<b>N - N</b>	<b>[I - ZI]</b>
<b>U - U</b>	<b>[U - ZI]</b>
<b>U - U</b>	<b>[U - U]</b>
<b>KU - KU</b>	<b>[KU - KU]</b>
<b>PA - PA</b>	<b>[PA - PA]</b>
<b>MU - MU</b>	<b>[MU - MU]</b>

# Lesson 9a:

## Noun Classes

### M - WA

<b>M - WA</b>	<b>[A - WA]</b>
KI - VI	[KI - VI]
M - MI	[U - I]
JI - MA	[LI - YA]
N - N	[I - ZI]
U - U	[U - ZI]
U - U	[U - U]
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

### M - WA [A - WA]

This noun class has the following nouns:

- A).** nouns of people that start with **M-** in singular and **WA-** in plural
- B).** other nouns of people
- C).** wanyama [animals]
- D).** ndege [birds]
- E).** wadudu [insects]
- F).** samaki [fish]

## A). Nouns of people that start with **M-** in singular and **WA-** in plural

mtoto/watoto	[child/children]
mgeni/wageni	[visitor/visitors]
mfaransa/wafaransa	[French person/French people]
mjomba/wajomba	[uncle/uncle]
mke/wake	[wife/wives]
mkulima/wakulima	[farmer/farmers]
mpishi/wapishi	[cook/cooks]
msichana/wasichana	[girl/girls]
mtu/watu	[person/people]
mume/waume	[husband/husbands]
mvulana/wavulana	[boy/boys]
mzee/wazee	[elder/elders]
mzungu/wazungu	[white man/white men]
mjerumani/wajerumani	[German person/German people]
mwanamume/wanaume	[man/men]
mwanamke/wanawake	[woman/women]
mwalimu/walimu	[teacher/teachers]
mwanafunzi/wanafunzi	[student/students]
mwafrika/waafrika	[African person/African people]

## B). Other nouns of people

baba/baba	[father/fathers]
babu/babu	[grandfather/grandfathers]
dada/dada	[sister/sisters]
kaka/kaka	[brother/brothers]
mama/mama	[mother/mothers]
nyanya/nyanya	[grandmother/grandmothers]
rafiki/rafiki	[friend/friends]
shangazi/shangazi	[aunt/aunts]
kipofu/vipofu	[blind person/blind people]
kiziwi/viziwi	[deaf person/deaf people]

## C). Wanyama [animals]

mbwa/mbwa	[dog/dogs]
paka/paka	[cat/cats]
ng'ombe/ng'ombe	[cow/cows]
simba/simba	[lion/lions]
ndovu/ndovu	[elephant/elephants]

## D). Ndege [birds]

kuku/kuku	[hen/hens]
kasuku/kasuku	[parrot/parrots]
tai/tai	[eagle/eagles]
bata mzinga/bata mzinga	turkey/turkeys]

## E). Wadudu [insects]

nyuki/nyuki	[bee/bees]
mbu/mbu	[mosquito/mosquitoes]
nzi/nzi	[fly/flies]

## F). Samaki [fish]

ngege/ngege	[tilapia/tilapia]
papa/papa	[shark/sharks]

### Zingatia [Note]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **A-** in singular and **WA-** in plural for sentence formation.

## Sentence Formation

Mifano:

- M**wanafunzi **a**nasoma. [The student is reading.]  
**W**anafunzi **w**anasoma. [The students are reading.]
- M**walimu **a**naimba. [The teacher is singing.]  
**W**alimu **w**anaimba. [The teachers are singing.]
- Rafiki **a**likuwa nyumbani. [The friend came home.]  
Rafiki **w**alikuwa nyumbani. [The friends came home.]
- Mama **a**nataka kuku. [The mother is cooking chicken.]

Mama **w**anapika kuku.

[The mothers are cooking chicken.]

# Lesson 9b:

## Noun Classes

### KI - VI

M - WA	[A - WA]
<b>KI - VI</b>	<b>[KI - VI]</b>
M - MI	[U - I]
JI - MA	[LI - YA]
N - N	[I - ZI]
U - U	[U - ZI]
U - U	[U - U]
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

### KI - VI [KI - VI]

This noun class has the following nouns:

- A). nouns that take **KI-** in singular and **VI-** in plural
- B). nouns that take **CH-** in singular and **VY-** in plural
- C). body parts [sehemu za mwili]
- D). names of languages [majina ya lugha]

### A). Nouns that take **KI-** in singular and **VI-** in plural

kiti/viti	[chair/chairs]
kitabu/vitabu	[book/books]

kiatu/viatu	[shoe/shoes]
kisu/visu	[knife/knives]
kikombe/vikombe	[cup/cups]
kilima/vilima	[hill/hills]
kisiwa/visiwa	[island/islands]
kiazi/viazi	[potato/potatoes]
kitunguu/vitunguu	[onion/onions]
kitu/vitu	[thing/things]
kitanda/vitanda	[bed/beds]
kioo/vyoo	[mirror/mirrors]
kiberiti/viberiti	[match/matches]

## B). Nouns that take **CH-** in singular and **VY-** in plural

chuo/vyuo	[school/schools; college/colleges]
choo/vyoo	[restroom/restrooms]
chakula/vyakula	[food/foods]
chumba/vyumba	[room/rooms]
cheti/vyeti	[certificate/certificates]
chama/vyama	[party/parties; association/associations]
chuma/vyuma	[iron/irons]
chombo/vyombo	[container/containers; utensil/utensils]
cheo/vyeo	[rank/ranks]

## C). Body Parts [sehemu za mwili]

kichwa/vichwa	[head/heads]
kiuno/viuno	[waist/waists]
kifua/vifua	[chest/chests]
kidole/vidole	[finger/fingers]

## D). Names of Languages [majina ya lugha]

Kiarabu	[Arabic]
Kifaransa	[French]
Kiingereza	[English]
Kichina	[Chinese]
Kijapani	[Japanese]

## Zingatia [Note]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **KI-** in singular and **VI-** in plural for sentence formation.

## Sentence Formation

Mifano:

1. <b>Kichwa kinauma.</b>	[The head is hurting.]
<b>Vichwa vinauma.</b>	[The heads are hurting.]
2. <b>Kiti kilivunjwa.</b>	[The chair was broken.]
<b>Viti vilivunjwa.</b>	[The chairs were broken.]
3. <b>Chuo kimefungwa.</b>	[The school has been closed.]
<b>Vyuo vimefungwa.</b>	[The schools have been closed.]
4. <b>Chakula kitapikwa.</b>	[The food will be cooked.]
<b>Vyakula vitapikwa.</b>	[The foods will be cooked.]



# Lesson 9c:

## Noun Classes

### M - MI

M - WA	[A - WA]
KI - VI	[KI - VI]
<b>M - MI</b>	<b>[U - I]</b>
JI - MA	[LI - YA]
N - N	[I - ZI]
U - U	[U - ZI]
U - U	[U - U]
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

### **M – MI [U - I]**

This noun class has the following nouns:

- A). majina ya miti [names of trees]
- B). majina ya mimea [names of plants]
- C). sehemu za mwili [body parts]
- D). nouns that take **M-** in singular and **MI-** in plural
- E). radicals that start with a vowel:
  - i. nouns that take **MW-** in singular and **MI-** in plural
  - ii. particular cases: singular prefix **MU-**

## A). Majina ya miti [names of trees]

mti/miti	[tree/trees]
mnazi/minazi	[coconut tree/coconut trees]
mchungwa/michungwa	[orange tree/orange trees]
mwembe/miembe	[mango tree/mango trees]
mtofaa/mitofaa	[apple tree/apple trees]
mpapai/mipapai	[papaya tree/papaya trees]
mndimu/mindimu	[lime tree/lime trees]
mpera/mipera	[guava tree/guava trees]
mgomba/migomba	[banana tree/banana trees]

## B). Majina ya mimea [names of plants]

mmea/mimea	[plant/plants]
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## C). Sehemu za mwili [body parts]

mdomo/midomo	[mouth/mouths]
mkono/mikono	[hand/hands]
mguu/miguu	[leg/legs]
mfupa/mifupa	[bone/bones]
mgongo/migongo	[back/backs]
moyo/mioyo	[heart/hearts]
mwili/miili	[body/bodies]

## D). Nouns that take **M-** in singular and **MI-** in plural

mfano/mifano	[example/examples]
mji/miji	[city/cities]
mkoba/mikoba	[bag/bags]
mfuko/mifuko	[bag/bags]
mlango/milango	[door/doors]
mtihani/mitihani	[exam/exams]
mjarabu/mijarabu	[test/tests]
mlima/milima	[mountain/mountains]
mpira/mipira	[ball/balls]
mkate/mikate	[bread/breads]
mtoto/mitoto	[river/rivers]
mungu/miungu	[god/gods]

mchezo/michezo	[game/games]
moto/mioto	[fire/fires]
mskiti/misikiti	[mosque/mosques]
msitu/misitu	[forest/forests]
mswaki/miswaki	[toothbrush/toothbrushes]
mto/mito	[river/rivers, pillow/pillows]

## E). Radicals that start with a vowel:

i. nouns that take <b>MW-</b> in singular and <b>MI-</b> in plural	
mwaka/miaka	[year/years]
mwavuli/miavuli	[umbrella/umbrellas]
mwezi/miezi	[month/months]
mwiba/miiba	[thorn/thorns]
mwisho/miisho	[end/ ends]
ii. particular cases: singular prefix <b>MU-</b>	
muhindi/mihindi	[corn]
muhogo/mihogo	[cassava/cassavas]
muwa/miwa	[sugarcane]

### Zingatia [Note]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **U-** in singular and **I-** in plural for sentence formation.

### Sentence Formation

Mifano:	
1. <b>Mti ulianguka.</b>	[The tree fell.]
<b>Miti ilianguka.</b>	[The trees fell.]
2. <b>Mkono unauma.</b>	[The hand hurts.]
<b>Mikono inauma.</b>	[The hands hurt.]
3. <b>Mkoba umeoshwa.</b>	[The bag has been washed.]
<b>Mikoba imeoshwa.</b>	[The bags have been washed.]

# Lesson 9d:

## Noun Classes

### JI - MA

M - WA	[A - WA]
KI - VI	[KI - VI]
M - MI	[U - I]
<b>JI - MA</b>	<b>[LI - YA]</b>
N - N	[I - ZI]
U - U	[U - ZI]
U - U	[U - U]
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

### JI - MA [LI - YA]

Nouns in this class can start with any letter in their singular form but their plural forms must take **MA-**.

This noun class has the following nouns:

- A).** manufactured products, natural or built places, abstract or concrete concepts
- B).** sehemu za mwili [parts of the body]
- C).** matunda na vitu vya kawaida [fruits and natural objects]
- D).** majina ya vitu ambavyo havihesabiki [These nouns exist only in the plural form and are things which cannot be counted. They take **MA-** in both singular and plural form]

## A). Manufactured products, natural or built places, abstract or concrete concepts

### **Manufactured products:**

blanketi/mablanketi	[blanket/blankets]
dirisha/madirisha	[window/windows]
gari/magari	[car/cars]
gazeti/magazeti	[newspaper/newspapers]
godoro/magodoro	[mattress/mattresses]
sanduku/masanduku	[box/boxes]
jiko/mekeo	[gas cooker/gas cookers]

### **Natural or Built places:**

baraza/mabaraza	[veranda/verandas]
daraja/madaraja	[bridge/bridges]
duka/maduka	[shop/shops]
shamba/mashamba	[farm/farms]
soko/masoko	[market/markets]
ziwa/maziwa	[lake/lakes]
jimbo/majimbo	[state/states]

### **Abstract or Concrete concepts:**

jina/majina	[name/names]
kosa/makosa	[mistake/mistakes]
neni/maneni	[word/words]
jambo/mambo	[issue/issues]
jiwe/mawe	[stone/stones]
somo/masomo	[subject/subjects; lesson/lessons]
wazo/mawazo	[thought/thoughts]
jibu/majibu	[answer/answers]
swali/maswali	[question/questions]
jukumu/majukumu	[responsibility/responsibilities]
juma/majuma	[week/weeks]

## B). Sehemu za mwili [parts of the body]

jicho/macho	[eye/eyes]
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jino/meno	[tooth/teeth]
bega/mabega	[shoulder/shoulders]
goti/magoti	[knee/knees]
sikio/masikio	[ear/ears]
tumbo/matumbo	[stomach/bowels]
paja/mapaja	[thigh/thighs]

### C). Matunda na vitu vya kawaida [fruits and natural objects]

#### **Fruits:**

chungwa/machungwa	[orange/oranges]
embe/maembe	[mango/mangoes]
limau/malimau	[lemon/lemons]
nanasi/mananasi	[pineapple/pineapples]
papai/mapapai	[pawpaw/pawpaws]
dafu/madafu	[coconut/coconuts (with milk)]
tofaa/matofaa	[apple/apples]

#### **Natural Objects:**

jani/majani	[leaf/leaves]
yai/mayai	[egg/eggs]
rinda/marinda	[dress/dresses]

### D). Majina ya vitu ambavyo havihesabiki [nouns of things that cannot be counted, which exist only in the plural form]

maji/maji	[water]
mafuta/mafuta	[oil]
maharagwe/maharagwe	[beans]
mahindi/mahindi	[corn]
mali/mali	[wealth]
maafa/maafa	[misfortune]
matata/matata	[problems]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **LI-** in singular and **YA-** in plural for sentence formation.

## Sentence Formation

Mifano:

1. Chungwa <b>limenunuliwa</b> .	[The orange has been bought.]
<b>Machungwa yamenunuliwa</b> .	[The oranges have been bought.]
2. Gari <b>limefika</b> .	[The car has arrived.]
<b>Magari yamefika</b> .	[The cars have arrived.]
3. <b>Jicho linauma</b> .	[The eye hurts.]
<b>Macho yanauma</b> .	[The eyes hurt.]
4. <b>Maji yamemwangika</b> .	[The water has been poured.]
<b>Maji yamemwangika</b> .	[The water has been poured.]

# Lesson 9e:

## Noun Classes

### N - N

M - WA	[A - WA]
KI - VI	[KI - VI]
M - MI	[U - I]
JI - MA	[LI - YA]
<b>N - N</b>	<b>[I - ZI]</b>
U - U	[U - ZI]
U - U	[U - U]
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

### N - N [I - ZI]

This noun class is the broadest noun class and has the following nouns:

- A).** Manufactured products, natural or built places, abstract or concrete concepts
- B).** Foods, fruits, and vegetables

The N-N noun class has many noun words borrowed from English. It contains some nouns which start with the prefix **N-** although several nouns in this class do not. These nouns are written identically in singular and plural forms.



## A). Manufactured products, natural or built places, abstract or concrete concepts

### **Manufactured objects:**

barua/barua	[letter/letters]
chupa/chupa	[bottle/bottles]
dawa/dawa	[drug/drugs; medicine/medicines]
kalamu/kalamu	[pen/pens]
karatasi/karatasi	[paper/papers]
ngoma/ngoma	[drum/drums]
sabuni/sabuni	[soap/soaps]
sahani/sahani	[plate/plates]
sufuria/sufuria	[pan/pans]
suruali/suruali	[trouser/trousers]
chaki/chaki	[chalk/chalk]
dola/dola	[dollar/dollars]
kompyuta/kompyuta	[computer/computers]
nguo/nguo	[cloth/cloths]
soksi/soksi	[sock/socks]
shilingi/shilingi	[shilling/shillings]
meza/meza	[table/tables]
taa/taa	[light/lights]
senti/senti	[cent/cents]
nyumba/nyumba	[house/houses]

### **Nature:**

ardhi/ardhi	[earth; ground]
bahari/bahari	[sea]
baridi/baridi	[cold]
barafu/barafu	[ice]
hewa/hewa	[air; atmosphere]
nuru/nuru	[light]
mvua/mvua	[rain]
njia/njia	[way]
bandari/bandari	[harbor]
barabara/barabara	[road]
nchi/nchi	[country]

### Abstract concepts:

ajali/ajali	[accident/accidents]
bahati/bahati	[luck/lucks]
furaha/furaha	[joy/joys]
hasara/hasara	[loss/losses]
hatari/hatari	[danger/dangers]
huzuni/huzuni	[sadness/sadnesses]
nguvu/nguvu	[strength/strengths]
shida/shida	[problem/problems]
thamani/thamani	[value/values]
dakika/dakika	[minute/minutes]
sifa/sifa	[praise/praises; reputation/reputations]
ndoto/ndoto	[dream/dreams]
shughuli/shughuli	[business/businesses]

### B). Foods, fruits, and vegetables

chai/chai	[tea/teas]
chumvi/chumvi	[salt/salts]
kahawa/kahawa	[coffee/coffees]
mboga/mboga	[vegetable/vegetables]
nazi/nazi	[coconut/coconuts]
ndizi/ndizi	[banana/bananas]
nyama/nyama	[meat/meats]
pilipili/pilipili	[pepper/[peppers]
siagi/siagi	[butter; margarine]
sukari/sukari	[sugar/sugars]
njugu/njugu	[groundnut/groundnuts]

### Zingatia [Note]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **I-** in singular and **ZI-** in plural for sentence formation.

### Sentence Formation

Mifano:

1. Kalamu **i**meanguka. [The pen has fallen.]  
Kalamu **zi**meanguka. [The pens have fallen.]
2. Njia **i**mefungwa. [The way has been closed.]

Njia **zimefungwa**.

[The ways have been closed.]

# Lesson 9f:

## Noun Classes

### U - U

M - WA	[A - WA]
KI - VI	[KI - VI]
M - MI	[U - I]
JI - MA	[LI - YA]
N - N	[I - ZI]
<b>U - U</b>	<b>[U - ZI]</b>
<b>U - U</b>	<b>[U - U]</b>
KU - KU	[KU - KU]
PA - PA	[PA - PA]
MU - MU	[MU - MU]

**U - U** [U - ZI]

**U - U** [U - U]

This noun class has the following nouns:

- A). concrete nouns with various plurals
- B). uncountable nouns, with no plural form
- C). nouns that are mostly formed from adjectives, nominals, or verbal roots
- D). names of countries

## A). Concrete nouns with various plurals

### U - NY:

uso/nyuso	[face/faces]
uzi/nyuzi	[thread/threads]
ua/nyua	[courtyard/courtyards]
ufa/nyufa	[crack/cracks]
uma/nyuma	[fork/forks]

### U - ND:

ulimi/ndimi	[tongue/tongues]
udevu/ndevu	[beard/beards]

### U - MB:

ubao/mbao	[board/boards]
ubavu/mbavu	[rib/ribs]
ubawa/mbawa	[wing/wings]

### U - Ø:

unywele/nywele	[one hair/hair]
ufunguo/funguo	[key/keys]
ukuta/kuta	[wall/walls]
upande/pande	[side/sides]
uvumbi/vumbi	[grain of dust/dust]
upanga/panga	[machete/machetes]
upepo/pepo	[wind/winds]

### W - NY:

wakati/nyakati	[time/times]
wembe/nyembe	[razor blade/razor blades]
wimbo/nyimbo	[song/songs]

## B). Uncountable nouns, with no plural form

Nouns in this category remain the same in both singular and plural sentence formation when using a verb(s).

udongo/udongo	[soil; ground]
ugali/ugali	[corn paste]
uji/uji	[porridge]

ulimwengu/ulimwengu	[world]
umeme/umeme	[electricity]
umri/umri	[age]
unga/unga	[flour]
usingizi/usingizi	[sleep]
uwongo/uwongo	[a lie]

## C). Nouns that are mostly formed from adjectives, nominals, or verbal roots

Nouns in this category remain the same in both singular and plural sentence formation when using a verb(s).

<b>Nominal roots:</b>	<b>NOUN - NOUN</b>
jamaa - ujamaa	[group of people - community]
kijana - ujana	[young person - young age]
mzee - uzee	[old person - old age]
maskini - umaskini	[poor person - poverty]
mchawi - uchawi	[witch - witchcraft]
mfalme - ufalme	[king - kingdom]
mtoto - utoto	[child - childhood]

<b>Verbal roots:</b>	<b>VERB - NOUN</b>
kuiba - uwizi	[to steal - theft]
kukosa - ukosefu	[to miss - deficiency]
kupenda - upendo	[to love - love]
kuweza - uwezo	[to be able - capacity]
kusahau - usahaulifu	[to forget - forgetfulness]

## D). Names of countries

Ufaransa	[France]
Uganda	[Uganda]
Uingereza	[England]
Ujerumani	[Germany]
Ureno	[Portugal]
Urusi	[Russia]

When using a verb, this noun class uses **U-** in singular and **ZI-** in plural for sentence formation. However, uncountable nouns and nouns that are formed from adjectival, nominal, or verbal roots only use **U-**.

## Sentence Formation

Mifano:

1. Ulimi <b>unauma</b> .	[The tongue hurts.]
<b>Ndimi zinauma</b> .	[The tongues hurt.]
2. Ufunguo <b>umepotea</b> .	[The key has been lost.]
Funguo <b>zimepotea</b> .	[The keys have been lost.]
3. Ubavu <b>umevunjika</b> .	[The rib has broken.]
<b>Mbavu zimevunjika</b> .	[The ribs have broken.]
4. Ugali <b>umepikwa</b> .	[The cornmeal has been cooked.]
Ugali <b>umepikwa</b> .	[The cornmeal has been cooked.]
5. Upendo wao <b>umesifika</b> .	[Their love has been praised.]
Upendo wao <b>umesifika</b> .	[Their love has been praised.]