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# Malay

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# Malay

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# acknowledgments

## about the author

Having lived in Malaysia on and off for 16 years, Susan Keeney first started to learn Malay in the kitchens and back rooms of obscure places like Kajang and Serdang. She wound up teaching communication courses (in both Malay and English) at various universities and colleges in Malaysia. She is now teaching elementary school students (in English) in California.

## from the author

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## from the publisher

The *Malay phrasebook* was edited by first time kite-fighter Meg Worby, who learned the rules from Senior Editors, Master of Games Karin Vidstrup Monk and Chief Top Spinner Karina Coates. Quizmaster Ben Handicott proofed the book and designer Patrick Marris finished the maze of layout in record time. His layout relay team mate, champion 'Rubex cuber' Belinda Campbell, was also the creator of the beautiful illustrations, and they were both encouraged from the sidelines by vocal Senior Designer Fabrice Rocher. Natasha Velleley provided the competition map and Emma Koch expertly coached the steps of the traditional 'dance of the dictionary'; medals must also go to Karin Vidstrup Monk, Sophie Putman, Ben Handicott and Karina Coates for their unbeatable expertise and assistance at the crucial stages. Tam Yewming and Kusnandar answered every question right. Publishing Manager Jim Jenkin left his competent fingerprint on the final layout and had the box seat for all the fun and games.

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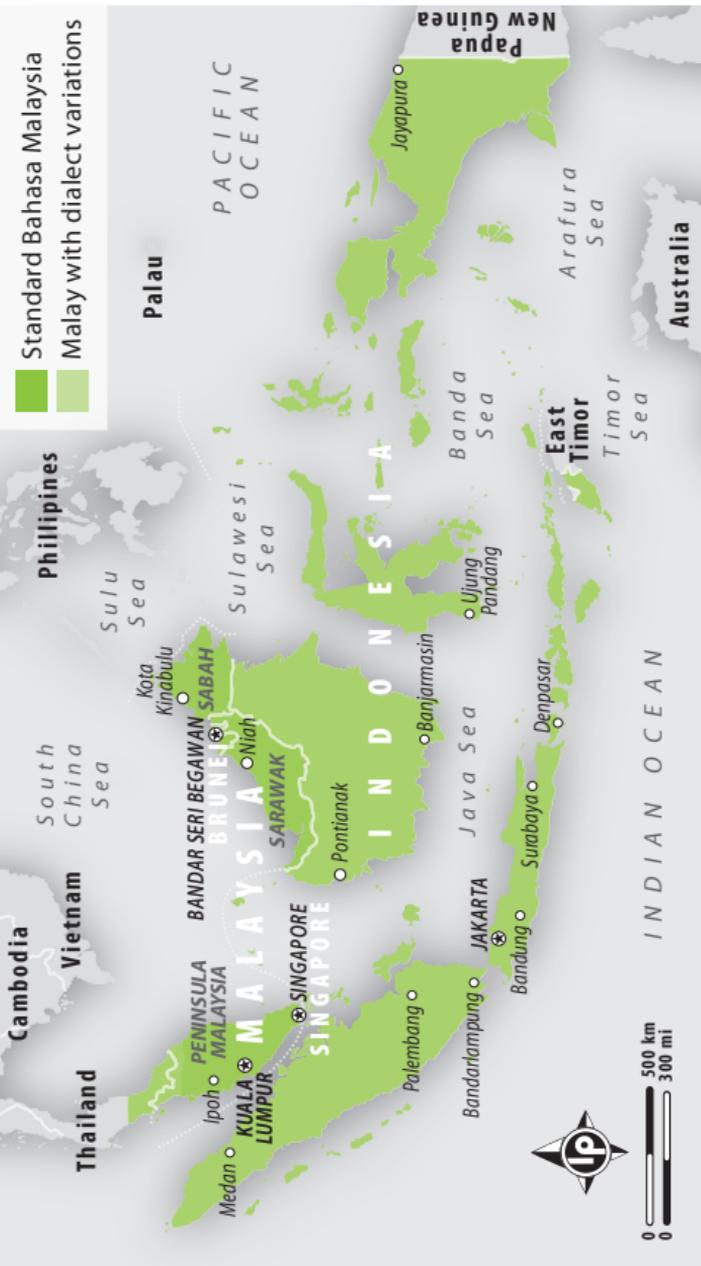
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# malay



# INTRODUCTION

The national language of Malaysia is Malay. Malaysians refer to it as *Bahasa Malaysia* (Language of Malaysia) or *Bahasa Melayu* (Language of the Malays). It's been the language in government and schools since the early '70s, so nearly every Malaysian speaks it, either as their first or second language.

Don't be confused by the terminology. 'Malays' are those who are racially considered Malay, usually Muslim, who also speak the language Malay. Malaysians are, of course, anyone who is a Malaysian citizen.

Malay is a member of the Western Austronesian language family and is spoken with slight variations throughout Malaysia and some parts of southern Thailand, Singapore and Brunei. In Malaysia, it's by no means the only language. Multiracial Malaysia is of course multilingual. Chinese Malaysians, who form approximately one third of the population, belong to many different dialect groups, including Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Teochew and Hainanese, and many also speak Mandarin. Indian Malaysians have linguistic backgrounds in Tamil and Malayalee; other groups speak Punjabi, Gujerati and Bengali. They account for about 10% of the population.

Wherever you go in Malaysia you will see shop signs in a rainbow of languages and scripts. Malay uses the Roman alphabet, but was originally written in *jawi*, an adaptation of Arabic script created during the introduction of Islam in the 14th century. You might notice the *halal* sign in *jawi* script, which shows food is kosher for Muslims. At the crossroads of many trade routes, Malaysia's language has a potpourri of influences. In addition to Arabic (*mahkamah*, 'court'), there's Portuguese (*garfu*, 'fork'), Sanskrit (*istana*, 'palace'), Chinese (*mee*, 'noodles'), and English, (*elektrik*, 'electric').

Classical Malay was almost lost during British colonisation. It was the traders and merchants who kept the language alive during these times. 'Bazaar Malay' became a lingua franca and was the basis for the *Bahasa Melayu* we know today.

*Bahasa Melayu* also forms the basis for *Bahasa Indonesia*, but while Indonesian has been influenced by Dutch, Malaysian has adopted more English words, making it a dream of a language to learn for English speakers. English is Malaysia's second tongue, and is a compulsory subject in schools from the age of seven. Words such as 'clinic' and 'antibiotic' are incorporated into Malay through a change of spelling (*klinik* and *antibiotik*) and educated Malays often tend to mix languages in their daily conversations. English is commonly spoken in urban areas and it's not difficult to find someone who speaks some, even in rural areas.

While standard Malay is spoken in Kuala Lumpur, other regions of Malaysia have their own dialects that vary in pronunciation and accent. Regional accents can be strong, with variations in vocabulary. In Kelantan, *Apa khabar?*, 'How are you?' becomes *Guano demo?*. But never fear, your attempts at standard Malay will definitely be understood!

### BAHASA MALAYSIA OR BAHASA MELAYU?

In this country where racial tensions still bubble under the surface of every decision, the difference between these two terms is loaded with meaning.

After the race riots of 1969 the government made many moves to address economic inequities, including a declaration that Malay should become the national language and the medium of instruction in all schools. But what to call the language?

*Bahasa Malaysia*, 'the language of Malaysia', was considered a unifying name, implicitly for Malaysians of all origins. In 1989 however, the members of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (The Hall of Language and Publishing), who are predominantly Malay, decided to change it back to *Bahasa Melayu*, 'the language of the Malays'. This move was seen by some to be a racially possessive, 'our language, not yours' move. It remains the official name.

*Bahasa Melayu* is an easy language to learn to speak. The spelling is largely phonetic; tenses are simple to use and you don't have to worry about gender in grammar. This makes for fast progress and plenty of communication. You'll get a kick out of learning Malay, and remember that, even a simple *terima kasih*, **te-ree-muh kah-si(h)**, 'thank you', will please the people you meet. *Selamat belajar*, **se-lab-maht be-lab-jar**, 'happy learning' and now *jumlah!*, **joom-lah(h)!** – 'let's get to it!'

## MALAY & INDONESIAN

*Bahasa Melayu* and *Bahasa Indonesia* have only a few differences in vocabulary and pronunciation. The structure and other aspects of grammar remain the same in both languages. This means that this book could stay in your bag for travels further south, and the same goes for our *Indonesian phrasebook* – a great read – in Malaysia. The differences in vocabulary include some of the most common words:

ENGLISH	MALAY	INDONESIAN
after	<i>selepas</i>	<i>sesudah</i>
afternoon	<i>petang</i>	<i>sore</i>
beef	<i>daging lembu</i>	<i>daging sapi</i>
brother	<i>abang/adik</i>	<i>kakak/laki-laki</i>
can (as in 'I can')	<i>bisa</i>	<i>boleh</i>
car	<i>boleh</i>	<i>kereta</i>
city	<i>bandar</i>	<i>kota</i>
cold (adj)	<i>sejuk</i>	<i>dingin</i>
cute (eg, baby)	<i>manis/cun</i>	<i>lucu</i>
invite	<i>menjemput</i>	<i>mengundang</i>
Mr	<i>Tuan/Encik</i>	<i>Bapak</i>
Mrs	<i>Puan</i>	<i>Ibu</i>
office	<i>pejabat</i>	<i>kantor</i>
room	<i>bilik</i>	<i>kamar</i>
shoes	<i>kasut</i>	<i>sepatu</i>
shop	<i>kedai</i>	<i>toko</i>
toilet	<i>tandas/toilet</i>	<i>WC; kamar kecil</i>