

Orion Grammar / Chelv'pretju Kolarit

The most important thing to note, before we touch the language, is that when we speak of Orions, we do not speak of a singular Orion planet, Orion species, or Orion government. What we call the Orions is in fact a multi-planetary culture which exists in the wreckage of a previous empire.

This empire, at its peak, colonized or subjugated 49 planets and 22 species throughout the Orion Arm of the galaxy. Due to free movement among the planets, the various member races hybridized to a degree that one can no longer discern any of those species clearly. However, this hybridization and the re-emergence of masked traits is likely responsible for the wide range of phenotypes among the Orions. Terrans are most familiar with the green-skinned type, but Orions in fact exist with blue, gray, ruddy, or even violet skin. Likewise, pheromone production varies even among families.

How the empire crumbled could be the subject of another book (and many excellent works exist on the topic). Suffice it to say that it was not a single collapse or conquest, but a gradual corruption of the central government, frequent assassinations, and neglect of outlying territories, to the point that by the time Terrans made contact, the Orion Empire no longer existed in any real sense.

Federation diplomats have made efforts toward establishing ties with the Orions, but they have universally failed. What was not initially understood was that the Orions do not in fact have anything like a universal, functional government. The Orion worlds exist in a state of near-anarchy, with the role of government fulfilled by various Houses, clans, and syndicates. Too often, an ambassador has believed they were making a *treaty* with "Orion" while their Orion counterparts understood the Federation to be making a *deal* with their *House*. Orion itself remains neutral, if only because there is no force which can unify the Orion peoples long enough to sign a treaty with anyone, nor to police that treaty once made.

All of this, of course, has effects on the Orion languages. There are, of course, several currently in use, nine spoken and at least two gestural. The latter come from one of the original Orion planets where the inhabitants did not possess a sense of hearing. The genes for deafness still exist at a higher than average rate among Orion peoples. But the gestural languages have an additional purpose among Orions today.

First is the so-called "tactful dance," used in upper-class Orion circles to communicate subtext over the top of a spoken dialogue, especially in negotiations. For instance, a speaker may say verbally that she hopes nothing bad will happen to you, while maintaining a graceful pose which implies that the statement is a threat.

Second is sometimes called "slaves' cant" and is much more subtle, involving small movements of the face and fingers. It has been adopted by enslaved persons within the Orion sphere of influence to have private conversations when others may be nearby to hear.

We will not be learning either language today. They are mentioned simply to remind the learner that, no matter how good their lexical knowledge or universal translator, there will be subtext happening that they are highly likely to miss.

The three most common spoken languages are generally called by outsiders “high Orion,” “middle Orion,” and “low Orion,” in reference to the social classes where they are commonly used. High Orion is the original imperial language, and as such is used by persons of great influence within Orion society, especially among the older Houses. Middle Orion is the lingua franca of the Orion cultural sphere of influence and is the most common.

However, this text will deal with low Orion only. This language is simpler than either of the others, likely the result of its rapid adoption by non-native speakers in carceral environments. To put it bluntly: this is the language of slaves. Unlike the “slaves’ cant,” it is not secret and may be readily learned by anyone. It is not used to hide things from their captors, but to most easily communicate with new arrivals and to explain everything needed to know.

It is a sad fact of Terran-Orion relations that low Orion is by far the most useful for a human to know. The majority of Orions living within the Federation have a history of servitude which led them to seek asylum on a member planet. Thus it is often referred to as simply “Orion.”

Knowledge of low Orion—or as it is called within the language, **lev Kolari** or **spina Kolari**—will allow you to speak with captives and those recently freed who do not speak Standard. Obviously this is far too sensitive a situation to rely on a universal translator, with the shades of meaning that are always lost. Even captives who do speak Standard will be set more at ease if spoken to in their own language.

Kolari had its birth as a creole, and as such you will find a number of different grammatical standards existing in parallel. The largest contributors to Kolari are the extinct languages Leiv Lizut, from Alnitak IV, and Prent’lixt, which may have come from somewhere near Rigel. We will divide nouns and verbs into groups according to what rules you will need to use to deal with them, keeping in mind that there is no longer any strict distinction between words from one language and those from another.

This introduction closes with one final reminder: Orion stereotypes are rife within the Federation, based mainly on the limited selection of Orions the Federation has dealt with. Some of these stereotypes are encouraged by Orions, who feel their power is greater the more they are underestimated by others. But you will not be ready to learn anything about Orions unless you first forget everything you think you know. Hopefully through study of the language and primary texts, you will slowly gather a much more complex and accurate view of the Orion worlds.

Pronunciation

Low Orion has been described as “rasping” or “harsh,” but if it sounds that way when you speak it, you’re probably doing it wrong. Yes, it possesses a lot of aspirants, but they’re spoken softly, not like you’re hacking up a hairball or speaking Klingon.

The greatest challenge for Terrans is the vowel signified (in the common romanization) with the letter x. This is a pure aspirant, which will sound somewhere between a cat hissing, a palatal aspirant (kh), and the “sh” sound, depending on how it appears in the word, as well as where the speaker is from. When used as a consonant, it’s not that hard, but it may also be used as a vowel between two consonants. Most Standard speakers end up including a slight other vowel in there, for instance saying “mxt” as “mækht.” Orions will know what you mean.

Kolari contains consonant combinations that don’t exist in Standard, so remember on encountering these to say the consonants together rather than inserting a vowel, as your instinct will be. **Ravd**, **mext**, **trimft**, are one syllable; if you catch yourself extending them into two, practice. These combinations aren’t incompatible with the human mouth, only difficult for the monolingual Standard speaker.

vowels	IPA symbol	Standard equivalent
a	ɐ	a as in father
aa	ɐː	ah extended a bit
ai	aɪ	as in eye
au	aʊ	as in now
e	e	e as in bet
ei	eɪ	ai as in pain
i	i	ee as in lee
o	o	o as in tone
u	u	u as in prune
uu	uː	oo extended a bit
y	y	a “narrower” ee, as in Greek upsilon
x	x	a hiss or rasp

Note that, like in Standard, these vowels will vary a bit depending on where in the word they fall—though not to the same degree. The only solution here is to listen to as much spoken Kolari as you can. The Orion soap opera *Skir bri'Caj el'esh* (A deal for my House) is popular among Kolari learners, as the plot is predictable and the vocabulary and syntax are rarely advanced.

consonants	IPA	Standard example
b	b	as in boy
k or c	k	as in key, cat
ch	t͡ɕ	as in chat but a little softer and further back
d	d	as in dog
f	ɸ	as in film, a bit breathy, with both lips
g	g	as in go
h	h	as in hat
j or zh	ʒ	as in measure, garage
kh or x	x	a soft palatal aspirant or hiss as jalapeno, loch
l	l	as in lamb
m	m	as in mouse
n	n	as in nose
p	p	as in pop
r	ɹ	as in rose
rh	ɹ ^h	a breathy r
s	s	as in sign, but a little hissy
sh	ɕ	a very soft sh as in shed
t	t	as in tell
th	θ	as in thigh
v or bh	v	as in vex, very breathy
y	ʌ	as in yet

Romanization note: Some Orion letters have two transliteration options. These are used more or less interchangeably, based on what the Standard speaker will instinctively be able to pronounce. For instance, mxn reminds the reader that x is a unique sound, whereas x'dori may make them try to pronounce it "eks dori," so it's often spelled kh'dori instead. Remember that the sound is the same either way: a palatal hiss.

In this text, we will attempt to consistently use x over kh, j over zh, and v over bh. Y is used for both consonant and vowel y, which are different letters in the Kolari alphabet. But other texts using Standard letters sometimes make different choices.

The Orion alphabet has no q, w, or z. Borrow words with these sounds will replace them with ku, u, and j. (See how **ganzu**, from middle Orion, changes to **ganju** when spelled in low Orion.)

Emphasis

There is no single rule about where to place the emphasis in Orion words. In most cases, the emphasis is decided not based on the word itself, but on its part of speech and etymology. Therefore there will be pronunciation notes throughout showing where the emphasis falls in each category of words.

The most important thing to know is that the emphasis doesn't shift when you add prefixes, suffixes, or verb endings. It tends to stay on the core syllable of the word, if you can find it. In two-syllable words with no affixes, the emphasis will be on the first syllable of the word.

Punctuation

Orion punctuation is not dissimilar to Standard punctuation, containing marks whose usage is roughly the same as the Terran apostrophe, comma, and period. Therefore these symbols are used when writing Orion in Roman letters.

There are, however, a few points it's important to know. First is that, unlike in Vulcan or Klingon, the apostrophe is not used to show a glottal stop. Orion does not use glottal stops. Instead, their "small mark" (**xlori**) is used as the apostrophe in Standard, to show letters have been omitted. Occasionally it joins affixes even when no letters have been omitted. To the extent possible, the words connected by an apostrophe should be pronounced as one. **Sh'dori** and **j'hordak** are two-syllable words with no hesitation between the segments. **On'prode** is three, again with no pause. Only when this results in something genuinely unpronounceable do Orion speakers insert a tiny vowel, as Standard speakers do in *didn't*, *could've*: **v'dori** contains a tiny schwa, and in **tr'flars**, the r is pronounced as a vowel.

Second, what is duplicated as a comma in Standard letters, **skor velt**, has no grammatical meaning or rules. It is included in writing as a breath mark, so readers know to take a brief pause. That means there is no grammatical point which is clarified with commas, and all grammar must make sense without any marks. You will add **skorn velt** at will to control the pace of reading and add emphasis. In handwriting, the length of the **skor** will express the length

of the pause, which means they can variously be transliterated as a comma, semicolon, colon, em dash, or even ellipses.

The long stop, **skor skena**, sets off sentences like our period.

Names

As in most Terran cultures, Orion naming recognizes two names, one for the individual, one for the family. Individual names can be just about anything: nouns, adjectives, harmonious letter combinations, etc. Last names are subject to stricter rules.

The Houses (**Cajen**) are an important part of Orion culture. Not every family is a House. A House can be seen as more of a large corporation or minor nation, ruled by a biological lineage. Its membership comes in two levels, the immediate leaders and heirs of the House and its more distant members—including unrelated employees and slaves. For instance, House Tendi is led by the immediate Tendi family, who use the house name, Tendi, simply as a last name. More distant members of the House will be called instead **shar Tendi**, implying people dedicated to House Tendi, and slaves will use **ve'Tendi**, belonging to House Tendi.

Examples:

D'vana Tendi

Resk shar Tendi

Trex ve'Tendi

More normal families simply use last names as Terrans do, adopting the last name of either the biological father or mother. (Which is chosen will depend on the Orion subculture.)

Vren Roxta

Abra Tovtir

Chosen families (**caj'lyn**) have a different mechanism. When the family chooses one another—whether this begins with marriage, adoption, sworn sisterhood, etc.—a new name is chosen for the family as well. Often it's some totem or virtue important to the members. New members of the family show their belonging to it by changing their names to match. Popular last names among survivors of the slave trade include **Myxta**, Perseverance, or **Vro**, Free.

While names do have gender connotations to Orions, you will not be able to tell a masculine from a feminine name by its ending. Many names for both men and women end in -a or -o.

Common first names:

Andra, Kolxun, J'naia, Shuulo, Drexte, Har'yen, Rhyuk

Nouns

Most nouns fit into one of two groups. Type 1 nouns, inherited from the highly inflected Leiv Lijut, have gender and honorific/diminutive endings. Type 2 nouns come from Prent'lixt, which is uninflected, so all you'll need to know is singular and plural.

What if you see a type 2 noun with type 1 endings?? This happens all the time, just like FSE "tooken" or "goed." But unlike in FSE, there is no stigma on invented "incorrect" forms. As the language is not standardized, one form is as good as another.

Type 1 nouns

Type one nouns have endings for gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter), number (singular or plural), and register (respectful or diminutive). The latter mainly comes up with people, and then only with people who are in some way unequal to you. But you may also find that these endings are used to distinguish big and small things: **xora**, stone, means a fairly large rock or boulder, whereas **xori** suggests a pebble, a rock small enough to pick up.

Type 1 nouns usually end in a, ar, or i, but not always, especially if a compound has been made.

For our example, we will use **lynota**, sister (specifically, a chosen or foster sister).

neutral	lynota: sister
respectful	lynotar: older sister
diminutive	lynoti: younger sister

The masculine version will appear in the dictionary separately, as the difference in masculine and feminine isn't entirely regular with nouns. (Fortunately, it is with adjectives, so adjectives will appear in the dictionary with both forms, eg. **vrola/vrula**: beautiful.)

neutral	lynuda: brother
respectful	lynudar: older brother
diminutive	lynudi: younger brother

Look at the second-to-last syllable in each word. The vowel in this syllable is called the root vowel. It will receive the emphasis. In a few cases, the root vowel appears in the last syllable because an ending has been dropped: **ot**, mistress, for instance, used to be **ota**, and its root vowel is *o*. In the masculine, the last syllable reappears: the word for master is **uta**.

In general, words with a root vowel of *a* or *o* are feminine, while words with a root vowel of *e* or *u* are masculine. Words with *i* as the root vowel are considered neuter.

For this reason, sometimes a noun or adjective has its root vowel changed to *i* to make it neuter. While it is considered appropriate to use the feminine for mixed groups or when the referent is unknown (such that **lynotan** means siblings), there are a few cases when it's seen as important to remove gender altogether. That is especially the case in the small community of nonbinary Orions.

While some Orion cultures are matriarchal and others are patriarchal, the strong sexual dimorphism of the species has led gender roles to be fairly important everywhere. It is difficult for many Orions to even think of what it might mean not to fit into either category. However, nonbinary Orions do exist. They often create i-nouns and adjectives to refer to themselves, as in **lynita**, sibling. Or they may prefer using type 2 words, which are ungendered by nature.

Some nouns, such as words for people or words derived from a participle, are listed in the dictionary as v, variable gender. That means the word can readily be changed in gender to match the usage in a sentence. So **milado**, author, changes to **miledo** to refer to a male author. More progressive Orions might prefer to use **milido** for both.

Plurals simply involve adding an *-n* if the noun ends in a vowel and *-en* if it ends in a consonant.

	feminine	masculine
neutral	lynotan: sisters	lynudan: brothers
respectful	lynotaren: big sisters	lynudaren: big brothers
diminutive	lynotin: little sisters	lynudin: little brothers

Pronunciation tip: As said before, the emphasis is on the root syllable. That emphasis remains in place if suffixes are added: hence lynótar changes to lynótaren in the plural.

A few more examples of type 1 nouns:

badi: mother

hedri: father

pola: birth sister

pula: birth brother

vret: aunt, including foster aunt

vedi: uncle, including foster uncle

xota/xuda: trusted one (referring to one's sibling in incarceration)

ot: mistress

uta: master

brida: ship

Type 2 nouns

There are many more type 2 nouns than type 1, and they can have any kind of ending. Plurals are made with *-n* after a vowel and *-en* after other consonants. Adding an *-i* to make a word diminutive is still very common, even if it means a word ends in two i's: **j'mi**, darling, becomes **j'mii**, little darling. One *i* is pronounced right after the other, without a break, resulting in an *i* sound which goes on for twice as long as a single *i*.

Emphasis is irregular but tends to land on whatever syllable is the root of the word. For instance, **hastamun**, which means *desert-mix*, is emphasized on **hasta**, desert: hástamun. Whereas **slenvajli**, which is a compound meaning *outside-empire-person*, has the emphasis on **vaj**, empire, because every other syllable is an affix attached to *empire*: slenvájli.

Examples of type 2 nouns:

caj: house, as in family

tax: house, as in the building

mxn: body

mi: heart

lisk: associate, fellow slave

mesht: a catlike animal which can be a pet or run feral in cities

vaj: empire

slenvajli: alien

yumanli: human

kas: woman

kej: man

Possession

There are many different relationships which Standard grammar reduces to the possessive. Sam's mother, Sam's cat, Sam's shoes, the shoe's lace. Obviously Sam's mother belongs to

Sam in a very different way than his shoes do, but grammatically, they're the same in Standard: apostrophe + s, or the word "of."

In Orion, there are four different types of possession, which it's vital to distinguish. If you say "you are my lover," with the possessive of ownership, you're liable to get dumped.

Possessives can go either before or after the noun they modify. That is because they are adjectives, and adjectives have specific rules about where they are placed—which we will learn later.

Possessive of ownership

This possessive is what we would generally think of as possession: when you actually own something (or someone). For this we use the prefix **ve'**.

mesht ve'caj: the cat belonging to the family

tax ve'kas: the woman's house

Possessive of fealty

This one is less common, and it denotes an upward ownership or otherwise imbalanced relationship.

ot el'dubi: master of the slave

tambra el'mesht: owner of the cat

elt el'brida: captain of the ship

el'kej caj: the man's house

Possessive of relationship

This is the one you would use for your father, lover, child, and so on. Never use any other possessive for a person unless you are discussing a sapient trafficking situation. You add the suffix **-la**. It comes after the plural suffix **-n**.

lynota badila: the (chosen) sister of the mother

meshtla pol: the cat's (biological) sister

badi kasinla: the mother of the girls

Possessive of association:

This is your leftovers category: where you might say "my foot" or "the lace of the shoe," situations where two things definitely belong together in some sense, but it isn't ownership and they're not people. You use the suffix **-t**, where it makes a legal combination, and **-et** otherwise.

When unsure, use this form. Since it's the shortest, it tends to be favored for a number of purposes.

jerid yumanlit: human food

vajt mi: the heart of the empire

japrata pretent: the meaning of the words

Now there's a lot of overlap in situations where you would use one versus another. For instance, a civilian shipowner might use **ve'** for a ship, but a captain might use **-la** (because she personifies the ship). Leaders of great houses like to use **ve'** freely for their things and their slaves, whereas the anarcho-socialist communities of certain space stations often don't use **ve'** at all, but use **-t** for any stuff they might happen to be using at the moment.

Enslaved persons may have **ve'** as part of their name. In that case, use what the person uses when introducing themselves to you, even if it rankles. They choose to use it for reasons of their own, and they don't owe it to you to gloss over the reality of their situation because of human discomfort.

(Note: If you have any intention of working with victims of the slave trade, you owe it to yourself and your contacts to read *Owned: Autonomy Within and After Bondage*, by Talikt Vro. Well-meaning Federation citizens can cause a great deal of offense and harm by trampling into trafficking situations with insufficient knowledge.)

Where a situation is hierarchical, **el'** may be used for the head of one's House, the captain of one's ship, or one's patron deity. (Other gods one worships, but is not personally dedicated to, take **-la**.)

Family members and friends are always **-la**. Other than that, **-t** is generally appropriate for most things, and unlike **ve'**, has no chance of being offensive.

mesht ve'kas

the family's cat

mi yumanlit

the human's heart

lynuda kejla

the man's brother

tax ve'caj

the family's house

lisk hedrila

father's associate

mxn slenvajlit

the alien's body

Verbs

Kolari, having its origins in a creole, as Standard does, has two overlapping methods of showing tense, voice, aspect, mood, and more. The most basic method is with endings, similar to the Romance languages. Then more complicated forms are shown with helping verbs, as the vast majority of Standard tenses are.

Unlike in Standard, the two methods are used together. When you use a helping verb, you will always pair it with a verb of the basic tense you need.

Endings

We'll start with the endings, which show tense. The endings don't include any information about person or number, which makes them much easier to learn than many Terran languages. Let's look at an example.

lyne: to choose

lyni: choose

lynua: chose

lynia: will choose

The passive voice has its own different tense endings:

lyneth: to be chosen

lynist: is chosen

lynutha: was chosen

lyniath: will be chosen

There are also two subjunctive forms. We'll go more into them in the section on syntax, because they often come up in complex sentences.

lynara: would choose

lynura: would have chosen

A smaller subset of verbs conjugate like **ei**, to be. You'll recognize them by ending in **-ei** in the infinitive. There are no passive forms.

ai: is

au: was

iya: will be

ej: being

ira: would be

aura: would have been

Instead of subject pronouns or personal endings, a subject prefix is often included to show the subject of the verb. These come in just a few varieties:

sh'lyni: I or we choose

x'lyni: you choose

v'lyni: he, she, or they choose

s'lyni: it chooses

In each case, the prefix is glided into the verb where possible, without a pause or glottal stop.

Pronunciation note: Emphasis in verbs is on the last syllable of the stem, no matter how the endings change. So **lýne**, **lýnua**, **lýnatha**, **sh'lýnura**.

Ex sh'lyni.

I choose you.

Esh x'lynua.

You chose me.

Shin mesht lynia.

We will choose a cat.

Sh'lynist.

I am chosen.

Frei esh x'lynutha.

You were chosen by me.

Kasi lyniath.

The girl will be chosen.

Maru sh'ai.

I am hungry.

Vrola x'au.

You were beautiful.

Kasi iya vro.

The girl will be free.

Verbal nouns and adjectives

Kolari has six kinds of participles, compared to Standard's two (present active and past passive).

Active present participle: **lynej**, choosing

Active past participle: **lynuj**, having been choosing, formerly choosing

Active future participle (rare): **lynij**, going to choose, planning on choosing

Passive present participle: **lynata**, currently being chosen

Passive past participle: **lynatha**, having been chosen in the past

Passive future participle: **lynasta**, worthy of being chosen, ought to be chosen

The present active participle of a verb uses the ending *-ej* (pronounced *-ezh*): **meshten maxtej**, fighting cats. It is type two, ungendered. The past active participle, ending in *-uj*, is less common. **Meshten maxtuj** would be the cats that used to be fighting. The future exists, but is almost never used.

The passive participles, present and past, are almost the same: *-ata* vs *-atha*. The difference in meaning is slight and does not exist in Standard (which has only a past form). Consider the

difference between something that has been broken (past passive participle) and someone who is currently loved (present passive participle). The future has no parallel in Standard, though you may know it from the famous Latin phrase, *Carthago delenda est*, Carthage must be/ought to be destroyed. This form is used to convey a sense of fittingness or worthiness for a thing to happen. Someone described as **durasta** is lovable, not just in the sense of it being possible, but in the sense of it being fitting.

Durasta x'ai.

You are worthy of love.

Because they are type one, their endings can change. **kas duratha**, a beloved woman. **kejen durethan**, beloved men. The gender shift is regular: feminine *-atha* becomes masculine *-etha*, with mixed groups or unknown gender using the feminine, and *-itha* as an option when neither gender is desirable. Plurals use an added *-n*. However, the syllable that shifts (the second to last) isn't the syllable that receives the emphasis in this case. The emphasis goes to the verb root, according to the rules for verbs. **dúratha**, **vórethan**, **basmánatha**.

Participles can be used substantively, as nouns. So **duratha**, by itself, would be someone or something that has been loved. Sometimes, however, the suffix *-yal* is used for a substantive participle, either active or passive. Sometimes letters are dropped to attach it. You'll mainly see this with existing nouns that derive from verbs: **dubyal**, obligated one, or **kreyal**, something that has been created. You don't need to learn how to make these—they'll appear in the lexicon.

For our verbal noun, instead of a gerund, we simply use the infinitive. It can have prefixes and suffixes added as needed.

lyne: to choose, the act of choosing

lynet: of choosing, related to choosing

bri'lyne: in order to choose, for the purpose of choosing

Lynatha kasi iya vro.

The girl who was chosen will be free.

Mesht maxtej lyniath.

A cat, who is fighting, will be chosen.

Toxite sh'duri.

I love to travel.

Bri maxte sh'rau.

I came to fight.

Helping verbs

Most other specific shades of meaning attached to a verb come in the form of helping verbs. These words usually appear directly before the verb and are not conjugated. Standard speakers will find this setup familiar: we too have just a few verb tenses that involve changing the verb itself (break, broke, broken) and the rest is all down to the helping verbs: will break, did break, have broken, etc.

It's the same in Orion: a few basic verb tenses, modified with helping verbs, get us almost infinite verb possibilities. The same helping verb, **vah**, must, can go with a verb of any tense. With the present, it means "must choose," but in the past, we'd translate it more like, "had to choose," and in the future, "will have to choose."

This table shows meanings for each combination of helping verb and tense.

helping verb	with present verb	with past verb	with future verb
vah	vah lyni: must choose	vah lynua: had to choose	vah lynia: will have to choose
ben	ben lyni: should choose	ben lynua: should have chosen	ben lynia: it will be a good idea to choose
tak	tak lyni: can choose	tak lynua: could choose	tak lynia: will be able to choose
hol	hol lyni: might choose in this moment	hol lynua: might have chosen	hol lynia: might choose sometime in the future
sul	shi sul lyni: let me choose	shi sul lynua: I chose, with your permission	shi sul lynia: when the chance comes up, let me choose
et	et lyni: going to choose right now	et lynua: intended to choose	et lynia: I have every intention of choosing in the future
vir	vir lyni: habitually choose	vir lynua: used to choose	vir lynia: will be habitually choosing

gat	gat lyni: is choosing (ongoing present, generally as a background to another verb)	gat lynua: was choosing [when another thing happened]	gat lynia: will be choosing [when that other thing happens]
rel	rel lyni: have chosen (completed action)	rel lynua: had chosen [when...]	rel lynia: will have chosen [by then]

It may take practice to see when you would use these and the shades of meaning they lend the sentence. Grammatically, you can get by without them, but in colloquial Orion, at least half of sentences use them.

As you can see, these helping verbs help show aspect as well as mood: whether an action is completed or ongoing, whether it's possible or actual. Complicated sentences can be formed using these. These are only the most common ones, too. There are more for *under orders*, *but unwillingly*, *I did it*, or *despite my emotional state*, *I did it*, or *I will neither confirm nor deny that I did it*.

You can sometimes stack helping verbs, though the order you use does matter. It's hard to explain to a Kolari learner what the right order for helping verbs is, but getting it wrong sounds as odd as saying "I have might known" sounds to an English speaker. Stick with one in most cases, and you'll get the hang of stacking them eventually.

Ni brida vir sh'konditi.

I [regularly] work on a ship.

Ni tax gat sh'au kuun lynota skal'rau.

I was at home when my sister returned.

Bri vore sh'viri du rel v'kuulua.

I came to help but she had already died.

Et tak sh'lyni.

I am going to be able to choose.

Vir vah sh'lyni.

I always have to choose.

Imperatives

We have several different choices depending on the hierarchy of the one to whom you are giving the command.

With equals:

To make a command, one uses the bare stem of the verb, dropping off all its endings.

Maxt!

Fight!

Lyn duun!

Choose now!

Sometimes it's impossible to pronounce the bare stem, in which case an *-a* is added.

Tav studra!

Take it!

With subordinates, the future tense is often used instead. You *will* do the thing.

X'maxtia!

You will fight!

Pex lynia duun!

You will choose now!

With superiors, the subjunctive ending *-ara* is used.

Maxtara, var.

Would you fight, sir.

Lynara, badi, duun.

Would you choose now, mother.

In all of these cases, the word **isi** negates a command.

Isi maxt!

Do not fight!

Isi x'maxtia.

You will not fight.

Isi maxtara.

Would you please not fight?

Adjectives

Adjectives, like nouns, come in type 1 and type 2 variants. Type 1 adjectives change form to match in gender and number with the noun. The change is absolutely regular:

- if the root vowel is *a*, it changes to *e*
- if the root vowel is *o*, it changes to *u*

What if the noun has no gender? In that case, the gender of the adjective will match the speaker's closest approximation of the gender of the thing itself. So if your beautiful associate is female, you'd say **lisk vrola**, but if he's male, you would say **lisk vrula**.

Most Orions, when dealing with an ungendered word, think of objects as masculine and animals as feminine, with a few exceptions. Groups of both masculine and feminine individuals will be referred to with a feminine plural adjective: **lisen vrolan**. And, as with nouns, you can change the root vowel to *i* to make the word completely ungendered: **shla lisk vrila**, my beautiful nonbinary associate.

Fortunately most adjectives are type 2 and as such have no gender. They also don't change in the singular vs. plural. Modj, large, will remain unchanged regardless of what it describes. **Modj mesht**, big cat; **caj modj**, big family; **hasta modj**, big desert; **modj vaje**n, large empires.

Most adjectives go *after* the noun they modify. The exception for this is adjectives that limit or specify—adjectives which tell *which* rather than *what kind*.

For instance, if there are two cats in the room, you might say **modj mesht** to specify the larger of the two cats. But if there's one cat and the fact that it's big is more of a descriptor, you would put the adjective after the noun: **mesht modj**.

Think about it this way. If you called your sister **lynota vrola**, you're just giving her a compliment. But if you called her **vrola lynota**, you insulted all your other sisters. My *beautiful* sister, to distinguish her from all your other sisters.

It is possible, given Orion sentence order, to have an adjective sitting between two nouns, and hence it becomes unclear which noun it belongs to. Try to avoid this happening in your writing, either by sentence order or by inserting a **skor velt**.

Kas modj kej dori.

A large woman loves a man?

A woman loves the large man??

Instead, write:

Kas dori modj kej.

A woman loves the large man.

Or,

Kas modj, kej dori.

A large woman loves a man.

A comma would never appear in this case in English, but remember, in Kolari, you can add a comma wherever you want. In speech as well, you'd pronounce each noun phrase in a group, making it clear which adjectives belong with which nouns.

Demonstratives

Kolari lacks articles such as *a*, *an*, and *the*. In their place, it has a few demonstratives. These work as adjectives when used with a noun (always before it) or as pronouns when used alone. The pronoun forms usually have a *-v* or *-s* added—*v* if it's a person, *s* if it's a thing. We'll talk about that more when we get to pronouns.

To speak of *a* cat, or *a* man, doesn't require any extra word in Kolari. We would just say **mesht**, **kej**. If we want to say *the* cat or *the* man, we'd need to be more specific. *The* means a couple different things if you think about it. Could mean "the aforementioned," "the only," or "the famous."

na: the aforementioned. **na mesht**: the cat we were speaking of earlier. **Nas** may then be used in the next sentence to mean *he* or *that one*—it will be the pronoun used to refer to the cat for at least the next paragraph. (Note: animals are always referred to with the words for things, not persons. Using **nav** would imply you believed the cat was sapient.)

cha: the only or most famous. **Cha Vaj**: *the* Empire, no question which one, we mean the Orion Empire.

A few other demonstratives are more like *this* or *that*.

vre: this, something near the speaker. **vre mesht**: the cat right here on my lap.

ju: that, something near the addressee or not very far away, **ju mesht**: that cat over by you

bru: that, something far from either of us. **bru mesht**: that cat that's been wandering the neighborhood.

Vre, **ju**, and **bru** have a number of derivatives, so just remember the distance increases with each: **vre** is something close, **ju** is something in the same room or near the person you're talking to, and **bru** is something distant.

In some constructions, the difference almost amounts to first, second, and third person. One might say **vre Kolarin** to mean *we Orions*, **ju yumanlin** to mean *you humans*, **bru tlingonlin** to mean *those Klingons* when no one present is Klingon. Or **vre mila**, *my book, this book I have*, **ju mila**, *your book*, **bru mila**, *that book* that doesn't belong to either of us.

If you remember that limiting adjectives go before the noun and nonlimiting adjectives go after, it should be obvious that a) all demonstrative adjectives go before the noun, because by definition they limit it, and b) you use demonstrative adjectives a lot less when you have a limiting adjective. You don't need to say "*the* beautiful woman" when we already know which woman—the beautiful one. If you use a demonstrative adjective, you'll probably put all the other adjectives after the noun: this woman, who happens to also be beautiful, brave, whatever.

kas vrola blesk: a beautiful, young woman

vrola kas blesk: of all the women around, the beautiful one, who happens to be young

ju kas vrola blesk: that woman there, who is beautiful and young

vrola blesk kas: of all the women, the only one who is both beautiful and young

Comparison

It's not enough to be able to say *good*, we need to also be able to say *better* and *best*! A few words do have irregular comparatives like *good* in Standard, but most form regularly with a suffix.

To form the comparative—better, more beautiful, bigger—we add **-(e)na**. **modj**: **modjna**, bigger. **tha**: **thana**, more. **vrola**: **vrolana**, more beautiful.

To form the superlative—best, most beautiful, biggest—we add **-(e)l**. **modj**: **modjel**, biggest. **tha**: **thal**, most. **vrola**: **vrolal**, most beautiful.

An important word to know is **tryn**, which depending on the context means "so," "as" or "than."

tryn caxt: so hot

tryn caxt tryn taka: as hot as a star;

caxtena tryn taka: hotter than a star

Tryn can itself be made comparative and superlative. **Tryna**, the comparative, means "too____."

tryna caxt: too hot

tryna caxt bri maxte: too hot for fighting

The superlative is **trynel**, meaning “the maximum amount possible.”

trynel vrola: as beautiful as possible, the most beautiful imaginable

Yu tryn: how much, to what degree?

Yu tryn modj ai ju mesht? How [much] big is that cat?

Pronouns

Kolari has a variety of pronouns for different purposes, not necessarily parallel to ours. There’s a tendency for Standard speakers to ask non-Terrans what their pronouns are, when gender is not related to pronouns in any way in most galactic languages.

First-person Kolari pronouns *do* come in gendered forms: the standard one, **shi**, as well as the feminine **vash** and masculine **resh**. Second-person pronouns are based entirely on hierarchy, having respectful, authoritative, and egalitarian forms. And third-person pronouns have options for persons or things, while using demonstrative pronouns to distinguish multiple third-person referents.

First-person pronouns

shi: I, me, we, gender-neutral. This is commonly used by everyone, especially in situations where gender is already clear.

	singular	plural
subject	shi	shin (we, exclusive) shixt (we, inclusive)
object	esh	eshen (we, exclusive) eshext (we, inclusive)
verb prefix	sh’	sh’
possessive (relationship)	shla	shla
possessive (association)	esht	esht

Notes:

1. the inclusive and exclusive forms of we are simple: if you mean *we*, as in “you and I,” you use the inclusive forms. But if you mean *we*, as in “me and my friends and *not* you,” use the exclusive.
2. As you can see, most forms are the same in the singular and plural.

3. The verb prefix will attach to a verb to show who's doing the action. Therefore, the subject pronoun won't see a lot of action; it's used for emphasis or other times you might need a subject form besides as the subject of a verb.
4. The possessives of ownership and fealty are formed exactly like with regular nouns, using the object form. **ve'esh**, **el'esh** both mean "my."

Now for the feminine and masculine pronouns. You can use them:

- when introducing yourself
- when not wearing traditional gender markers or when they can't be seen: in an environment suit, over audio comms
- when you get the impression someone is reading you wrong
- to emphasize your gender in some way—which comes up fairly often in both matriarchal and patriarchal Orion cultures. For instance, if you are a woman, that's information you want to convey in matriarchal cultures as early as possible. Likewise, in patriarchal cultures, a masculine identity is something to make sure they don't miss. Orions sometimes have difficulty telling the genders of humans, since we are less sexually dimorphic and don't wear their traditional gender signals. If you want them to know your gender, these pronouns are how to do it.

You are never required to use them, though if you don't, you may be asked for your honorific. This can be a work or military title, or you can select the gendered civilian **ot** (Ms./ma'am) or **uta** (Mr./sir). **Var** is an honorific that works for everyone. But the deeper question here is what gender of nouns and adjectives to use for you. If you still use the neutral **shi** and pick a neutral honorific, people will mostly default to the -i- forms. If you don't want that, use the gendered first-person pronoun of your choice at least once!

Mistaking another person's gender is not seen as offensive unless the person is part of the privileged gender in their subculture and you fail to recognize that. So in a matriarchal culture, calling a man either feminine or neuter words isn't considered offensive and most will not mind, but calling a woman anything but feminine words *is*. In gender-egalitarian societies, mistaking gender isn't generally cause for offense. But you may find that people start getting very pointed about using gendered first-person pronouns until you've caught on. Do not apologize. Just find the next possible opportunity to do it right, like slipping in the correct honorific.

The gendered first-person pronouns do not have plurals. You will use the plurals of **shi** (**shin**, **shixt**) when referring to a group you're part of.

vash: I, me, feminine.

subject	vash
object	vosh
verb prefix	sh'
possessive (relationship)	vashla

possessive (association)	vosht
--------------------------	-------

rush: I, me, masculine

subject	resh
object	rush
verb prefix	sh'
possessive (relationship)	reshla
possessive (association)	rusht

Second-person pronouns

Hierarchy is very important on many Orion worlds; however, more progressive Orions will minimize the hierarchical forms. Learning the equal forms is the most important, especially among expat Orion communities within the Federation, though you should at least recognize the others if you hope to get the full meaning out of Orion literature. Master them before ever attempting to bargain in Orion.

The moment when Orions begin to use equal pronouns with one another is significant, as in some human cultures they use the first name. So is the moment when parents first address their child with equal pronouns, signifying they consider the child an adult now. When someone addresses you with an equal pronoun, immediately make the switch yourself to accept their offer of intimacy. If you don't, you will appear to reject it. It is the superior who extends this offer first.

xa: you, equal.

	singular	plural
subject	xa	xan
object	ax	axen
verb prefix	x'	x'
possessive (relationship)	xla	xla
possessive (association)	axt	axt

thox: you, respectful: when the other person is superior to you. Use this with strangers when you are the one new to the group; with anyone to whom you owe a debt; with elders; with anyone of whom you are asking a favor.

	singular	plural
subject	thox	thoxen
object	thox	thoxen
verb prefix	x'	x'
possessive (relationship)	thoxla	thoxla
possessive (association)	thoxt	thoxt

pex: you, downward: when the other person is your inferior. Use this with persons who owe you goods or services; with children; with students; with persons who come to you asking a favor. You need to be cautious, because you'll look too big for your britches if you use it when you're not supposed to. Your best bet is to use pex with people who are using thox for you.

	singular	plural
subject	pex	pexen
object	pax	paxen
verb prefix	x'	x'
possessive (relationship)	pexla	pexla
possessive (association)	paxt	paxt

lex: you, one. This word is used in a general sense, as in English when we say "that feeling when you..." or "one does not simply walk into Mordor." When you use this pronoun, it doesn't mean the person you're talking to at all, although it's counted as second person because it is still based on x.

	singular	plural
subject	lex	lexen
object	lax	laxen

verb prefix	x'	x'
possessive (relationship)	lexla	lexla
possessive (association)	laxt	laxt

Third person pronouns

ve: he, she, they, used only for persons

	singular	plural
subject	ve	ven
object	ev	even
verb prefix	v'	v'
possessive (relationship)	vla	vla
possessive (association)	evt	evt

sav: it, they, used for things, and also (in a dismissive sense) for slaves and other legal non-persons. As a general rule, don't use this one on people, and don't trust those who do. It's much more disrespectful than the authoritative forms, which are perfectly okay to use with a subordinate at work or your child.

	singular	plural
subject	sav	saven
object	tav	taven
verb prefix	s'	s'
possessive (relationship)	sva	sva
possessive (association)	savt	savt

Third-person pronouns are also commonly replaced with the demonstrative pronouns **vrev**, **juv**, and **bruv**, for people, and **vres**, **jus**, and **brus** for things. When a lot of nouns are being referred to, they are often introduced with a demonstrative adjective, and then the demonstrative pronoun is used thereafter. This is true even when there is no real difference of distance between the two of them.

Ju kas ai lynota eshla. Juv ai vrola.

That woman is my sister. She is beautiful.

Vre mesht k'brus maxtua. Brus vres taktua.

This cat fought with that one. That one hurt this one.

This means that the “gay pronoun problem” of Standard does not exist in Kolari. In fiction, **vrev** may be used for the more familiar character (in modern close-third novels, the point-of-view character), while **juv** will be used for important secondary characters and **bruv** for strangers who appear briefly in the narrative, or for the third person to be introduced in a scene.

Occasionally one may need to put these in the plural: **vren**, **jun**, **brun**: these ones, those ones, those ones yonder. The v or s disappears. In the possessive, however, it remains: **juvt**, **vresla**, etc. In the possessive plural, it's gone again: **vrent**, **junla**, **brunt**.

Using the pronouns

For the subject of verbs, Kolari usually uses a prefix rather than the full pronoun. This prefix is spelled as separated with an apostrophe, but don't perform a glottal stop. We romanize it that way because they are spelled with a small mark there in the Kolari alphabet, which helps make clear which part is the verb and which is the prefix. Try to glide the prefix into the noun in a single syllable when possible.

Prefixes are attached directly to the verb itself, after any helping verbs.

Tak sh'vori.

I can help.

When would you *not* use the prefix? Generally, if it doesn't give all the information you need: say, when you want to fit in a chance to use **vash** or **resh**, or you want to make sure it's clear you're speaking for a group.

You also use the subject pronouns as the complement of a being verb:

Elt el'brida ai shi.

The captain of the ship is me.

Or when the subject is compound:

Shi o elt iya brin.

The captain and I will be there.

Relative pronouns

Standard has the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that*. Not even all native Standard speakers understand which is to be used when, let alone when to use *who* vs. *whom*. Fortunately, Kolari's relative pronouns are fairly simple. There is just one, **kov**, which comes in only seven forms.

You will remember the distinction between limiting and nonlimiting adjectives from a previous lesson. Here, we do the same thing, but with the whole clause. Therefore **kov** can mean *who*, *which*, or *that*, depending on what it refers to and where in the sentence it is placed. The whole relative clause is placed before the noun it describes when it limits the meaning of that noun, and afterward when it only adds additional description. In Standard, that distinction is usually made with a comma.

Vre kej ai Brekt tov x'lodi.

This man is Brekt, *whom you know*.

Vrev ai tov x'lodi kej.

This is the man *[that] you know*.

	person	thing
subject	kov	kos
object	tov	tos
possessive (relationship)	kla	kla
possessive (association)	ekt	sakt

We'll learn how to craft relative clauses in a later lesson. For now, just learn the different forms.

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. We use them to add meaning or change meaning, so they can be essential to the sentence or just descriptive. Unlike adjectives, this doesn't always define where they're placed. By preference, adverbs modifying a verb go directly after the verb—but for flavor they can be placed just about anywhere.

Type 1 nouns and adjectives can be turned into adverbs by changing the ending to **-u**. **Lynotu**: in a sisterly way, the way a sister acts. **Vrolu**: beautifully. **Hashu**: quietly.

Type 2 nouns and adjectives usually become adverbs by adding -ma. **Clurma**: coldly. **Guthma**: together (in a group of two). **-ma** can also be added to other parts of speech at times: **bo**, and, becomes **boma**, also.

Many prepositions become adverbs by adding **-t**. **Je**, after, behind, becomes **jet**, afterward.

Many adverbs aren't derived from other words, and therefore have no particular endings.

A few common adverbs:

guthuun: again

Esh x'vorua guthuun.

You helped me again.

bas: fully, completely

Shi bas konditua.

I worked completely (i.e. I finished my work).

tha: much, a lot

Ex tha sh'dori.

I love you a lot.

Adverbs can be comparative and superlative in exactly the same way as adjectives.

clurma > **clurmana**: more coldly; **clurmal**: most coldly

hashu > **hashuna**: more quietly; **hashul**: most quietly

tha > **thana**: more; **thal**: most

Interrogatives

Not all questions words are adverbs, but they work the same way whether adverbs, adjectives, or pronouns. They appear at the beginning of the sentence (along with the noun they modify in the case of **yu**, which is an adjective), followed by the main verb, followed by any other words.

yu: which (adj)

yev: who (subject pron)

yav: whom (object pron)

yus: what (subject pron)

yos: what (object pron)

yin: where (adv)

yuun: when (adv)

yol: how (adv)

yai: why (adv)

In many cases, questions beginning in these words are answered with related adverbs. **Yuun**, for instance, is *when* in the sense of a question, whereas **kuun** is *when* as a relative adverb, used to answer that question.

Yu kas ai vrev? Vrev ai shla badi.

What woman is this? This is my mother.

Yev v'ai? Ve ai lynoti juvla.

Who is she? She is the younger sister of that one.

Yav x'duri? Ju kas sh'duri.

Whom do you love? I love that woman.

Yus ai vres? Vres ai jerid.

What is this? This is food.

Yos x'lau? Lun sh'lau.

What did you say? I said yes.

Yin x'ai? Kin ai vrev sh'ai.

Where are you? I am where this one is.

Yuun aisi? Kuun badi skal'rai.

When is it? When mother comes back.

Yol sh'rei jin? Kol brida x'vri.

How do I go there? In the way that you use a ship (i.e. by taking a ship).

Yai x'rei? Kai sh'exti.

Why are you going? Because I want to.

Yes or no questions are formed differently. We'll learn about them under Syntax.

Correlatives

We can place some of the most common adverbs, demonstratives, and relatives on a chart, showing their connections.

	query	relative pronoun	near demonstrative	middle demonstrative	far demonstrative
adjective	yu	ko	vre	ju	bru
	which?	which	this	that	that over there
person	yev	kov	vrev	juv	bruv
	who?	that/who	this person	that person	that person
thing	yus	kos	vres	jus	brus
	what?	which	this one	that one	that one
place	yin	kin	vrin	jinn	brin
	where?	where	here	there	yonder
time	yuun	kuun	duun	juun	bruun
	when?	when	now	soon	then
way	yol	kol	vrol		bröl
	how?	in such a way	this way		that way
reason	yai	kai			
	why?	because			

Yin x'ai? Vrin, kin x'ai.

Where are you? Here, where you are.

Yuun tak x'voria? Kuun jin rel sh'toxite.

When can you help? When I have traveled there.

Syntax

Sentence order

Kolari's component languages differed on sentence order, with the result that a variety of sentence orders are considered acceptable. However, they also differed on questions of noun case, which led to all case markers being dropped. This could cause some confusion about which noun is the subject and which is the object, so in practice the noun (or group of nouns connected by conjunctions) which comes first is the subject and the noun that comes second is the object. However, when the subject is represented by a prefix, it stays directly attached to the verb while the object may appear before it.

The sentence order chosen will tell you a lot. There are several different sentence orders possible, with different meanings.

Indicative

The simplest is (S) O V, which is the indicative. This kind of sentence simply tells you facts, as opposed to asking questions or making suggestions.

Badi mesht lyi. Mother chooses a cat.

If a prefix is used, it goes with the verb as usual, meaning there is no subject at the front.

Mesht v'lyi. She chooses a cat.

It's also acceptable to put the verb before the object, as we do in Standard, with no difference in meaning.

Badi lyi mesht.

Mother chooses a cat.

This tends to happen more often when the noun groups are complicated, to avoid confusion, or when using a being verb.

Badi ai vrola.

Mother is beautiful.

It won't happen when the subject is simply a prefix, as that would put the verb at the very beginning. **Mesht v'lyi** is *she chooses a cat*, while **v'lyi mesht** means something different—it becomes a question! It's important not to mix this up, as Kolari does not use question marks.

A helping verb, if used, goes directly in front of the verb, but before any prefixes.

Badi mesht tak lyi.

Mother can choose a cat.

Mesht tak v'lyni.

She can choose a cat.

Badi tak lyni mesht.

Mother can choose a cat.

Questions

In questions, the sentence order becomes V (S) O. This will be familiar to Standard speakers, as we do roughly the same thing. Consider the examples.

Lyni badi mesht? Does Mother choose a cat?

V'lyni mesht? Does she choose a cat?

Again, helping verbs stick close to the main verb.

Tak lyni badi mesht? Can Mother choose a cat?

Tak v'lyni mesht? Can she choose a cat?

Split sentence order

In English, sometimes we can structure a sentence in such a way that you can tell that the sentence is talking about a counterfactual.

What might have been

He would have wanted

I might have known

I wish I were

In general, we're using helping verbs and changing them into the past tense. In these structures, it's implied that the thing didn't happen. The thing that might have been, wasn't. The thing I wish I were, I'm not. I don't have to include *not* because the whole sentence wouldn't be structured that way if there were any chance it were true. (See what I did there?)

Kolari tends to do this by using what we call split or inverted sentence order. Only sentences that contain a helping verb can be inverted. Normally, a helping verb goes directly before the verb: (S) O HV V. But in split sentence order, the helping verb is removed from the verb and put at the very beginning of the sentence.

Consider the difference:

Badi mesht tak lynua. Mother could choose a cat (and did).

Tak badi mesht lynua. Mother could have chosen a cat (but didn't).

Split orders are more common with the past tense, but can appear anywhere to give the sentence a note of being in some way counterfactual or containing an implication that some part of it probably won't happen.

Badi mesht tak lyni. Mother can choose a cat (she is currently able to do it).

Tak badi mesht lyni. Mother *could* choose a cat (she can, but we expect that she won't).

It can even occur in the future tense, though that's a lot less common. For instance,

Tak badi mesht lynia. Mother will be able to choose a cat (but she probably won't).

For this distinction to work, there have to be some words that would normally fall between the helping verb and the verb. Where the subject is replaced by a prefix, and there is no object or any other modifiers, S O HV V and HV S O V will look exactly the same. Orions tend to embrace this ambiguity:

Vah sh'lynua: I had to choose (and I'm not telling you whether or not I did).

A few possibilities for how the meaning might change in reversed order are included in this table. Note that reversed order is only commonly used with some tenses and not others.

helping verb	with present verb	with past verb	with future verb
vah	shi vah lyni: I must choose vah shi lyni: I must choose (and don't want to)	shi vah lynua: I had to choose (and did) vah shi lynua: I had to choose (and didn't)	shi vah lynia: will have to choose vah shi lynia: I will have to choose (but I have no intention to)
ben	shi ben lyni: I should choose ben shi lyni: I <i>should</i> choose (but don't intend to)	shi ben lynua: it was the right thing to choose, and I did ben shi lynua: I should have chosen	shi ben lynia: it will be a good idea to choose ben shi lynia: it will be a good idea to choose (and I won't do it)
tak	shi tak lyni: I can choose tak shi lyni: I <i>could</i> choose	shi tak lynua: I could choose, and did tak shi lynua: I could have chosen, and didn't	shi tak lynia: I will be able to choose and will tak shi lynia: I will be able to choose (but won't do it)
hol	shi hol lyni: I might choose in this moment	shi hol lynua: it was uncertain for a while but	shi hol lynia: I might choose sometime in the

	hol shi lyni: I might choose (but I probably won't)	I did choose hol shi lyni: I might have chosen, but didn't	future hol shi lynia: I might choose in the future, but don't count on it
sul	shi sul lyni: let me choose (I want to but won't without your permission) sul shi lyni: let me choose (but I bet you won't)	shi sul lynua: I chose, which you let me do sul shi lynua: I wanted to choose, but you didn't let me	shi sul lynia: when the chance comes up, let me choose sul shi lynia: you probably won't let me choose, but <i>please</i> let me
et	shi et lyni: I'm going to choose right now et shi lyni: I'm totally planning to choose (but don't count on it)	shi et lynua: I intended to choose, and did et shi lynua: I meant to choose but didn't	shi et lynia: I have every intention of choosing et shi lynia: I intend to choose, but doubt I'll have a chance
vir	shi vir lyni: I habitually choose vir shi lyni: I habitually choose, but not this time	shi vir lynua: I used to choose (and still do) vir shi lynua: I used to choose (and now don't)	shi vir lynia: I will be habitually choosing vir shi lynia: it'll be my habit to choose, but I won't always
en	shi en lyni: if I am choosing (I probably am) en shi lyni: if I were choosing	shi en lynua: if I chose (I did) en shi lynua: if I had chosen	shi en lynia: if I choose (I probably will) en shi lynia: if I choose (I probably won't)

Using the subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is something we don't exactly have in Standard, except for remnants. It appears in Romance languages, such as Latin, to express a number of different things. In Kolari, it's most often used in dependent clauses.

If, lest, in order to

A common use of the subjunctive is in an if-clause, or any clause where the result of the dependent clause relies entirely on how the independent clause turns out.

In English, we use the regular mood (called the indicative) for both clauses.

If you build it, he will come.

But in Kolari, we use the subjunctive: something more like "if you build it, he *would* come."

If sentences are the most common situation for using the subjunctive mood. We are saying that if one situation is the case, another one is also very likely the case. In Kolari, *if* is a helping verb, **en**.

Badi en x'vori, ve mesht lynara.

If you help mother, she would choose a cat.

Mesht v'durara, tav en v'lyni.

She would love a cat if she chooses it.

As you can see, the clause with *if* uses an indicative verb + a helping verb (*en*), but the other clause uses the subjunctive (*-ara*) regardless of what order the clauses come in.

We can also flip the first clause into reversed order, which means you're probably *not* going to help your mother. Since the second verb remains subjunctive, we're saying that if you did, she would, even though we know you won't and therefore she won't. That subjunctive verb just tells us that its action depends entirely on the main verb's action.

En badi x'vori, ve mesht lynara.

If you were to help mother (implied: you probably won't), she would choose a cat.

The past subjunctive is used most often with an inverted sentence order. We are saying a state existed in a past time when something could have happened, but that state is no longer in existence, and therefore it presumably didn't happen. In short: it's counterfactual.

En badi mesht lynua, tav v'durura.

If mother had chosen a cat, she would have loved it.

You'd only use normal order and assume the whole thing could have happened if, perhaps, you don't know whether the first clause happened or not.

Badi mesht en lynua, tav v'durura.

If mother chose a cat, she presumably loved it.

You can also use the present subjunctive after a past verb, like so:

Badi mesht en lynua, tav v'durara.

If mother chose a cat, she presumably loves it now.

Now you *could* use the indicative for both clauses, but that rarely happens. It basically implies that there is no way both clauses won't take place.

Badi en x'vori, ve mesht lynia.

If you help mother, she *will* choose a cat.

This is a very strong construction though, amounting to a promise. Generally speaking, the result of an if-clause goes in the subjunctive unless a) the if-clause is in normal order (as in, it might very well happen), and b) the connection between the two clauses is ironclad, like *if you drop something, it will fall*.

Other words using the subjunctive include **shkel** (in order to) and **idra** (lest). These are both conjunctions and don't have the complications of a helping verb—though you could, of course, include a different helping verb in the sentence. Only indicative verbs get helping verbs—subjunctive ones simply hang on the main verb.

Badi mesht lynua, shkel tav v'trura.

Mother chose a cat so that she could have it.

Badi mesht vori, idra s'kuulara.

Mother helps a cat, lest it die.

Subjunctive clause as the object of a verb

In Standard, we often have a scenario where one clause is the object of the verb of the other clause.

I hope *we get there soon*.

I think *you are right*.

He told me *you were a friend*.

The word “that” can be used or omitted.

I know *that you want it*.

We don't often reverse the order of these clauses, because in Standard, the object comes last. But we could.

That you need it, you already told me.

In Kolari, the subjunctive is used for this. Because the usual sentence order is (subject), object, verb, that order can be maintained when a subjunctive object clause is used.

Shi xa virara exti.

I want *you to come*.

This leaves you with two subject pronouns in a row. The first one, of course, is the subject of the sentence; the other is the subject of the dependent clause. In writing, you won't have trouble

with this; in spoken Kolari, it may take some practice to sort out in your mind. Pay attention to the way the speaker clusters the words and where they pause.

This is one of those cases, however, where SVO tends to be used, in order to clearly separate the clauses. You can do it either way; just ask yourself which way is clearest and flows best.

Badi duri xa virura.

Mother loves *that you came*.

When translating into English, the verb forms might vary a lot. Sometimes we use the infinitive for this, sometimes helping verbs. Kolari sticks pretty closely to the subjunctive any time it's a whole clause as the subject of the sentence.*

Shi sh'virura lau.

I said *I would come*.

*The qualification is because when *just a verb* is the object of the sentence, you use the infinitive.

Toxite sh'exti.

I like *to travel*.

Xa toxitara sh'exti.

I like *you to travel*.

Subjunctive clauses can also occasionally act as the subject of the sentence. In that case, you'd put them first.

Xa virura tru ax baslai.

That you came speaks well of you.

Polite commands

The final time you might use the subjunctive is as a polite command. Using the subjunctive alone works as if there were a deleted main clause saying, "if it pleases you" or "if you would."

Vorara, badi.

Might you help, mother?

Negation

Much negation happens by means of helping verbs and sentence order. You can probably see a lot of ways you might imply something didn't or wouldn't happen using what you know already.

But you can also simply negate any word by adding **ix** or **i-/ik-** as a prefix.

Ax sh'duri ix.

I do not love you.

Ax sh'iduri.

I don't *love* you.

Ikax sh'duri.

I don't love *you*.

Some words may already be negative, such as **ikextata**, unwanted. To negate that negation, you'll need to use the standalone **ix**. It can go anywhere, but by preference not next to the word already prefixed with **i-**.

Ix ve ai ikextata.

He is not unwanted.

A double negative results in a weak positive. It's not *not* that, but that doesn't necessarily mean it *is* that either. He's a little bit wanted; we put up with him.

To make a negative stronger, you can use **djol**, in any way. Combined with a negative, it has the sense of *at all*.

Ikax sh'duri djol!

I don't love you at all!

Relative clauses

Relative clauses are tucked into a sentence similarly to how they work in English: in the place where the word it replaces would go, the whole clause goes, beginning with a relative pronoun and ending with the verb.

In English, a clause can be limiting or nonlimiting, a distinction sometimes made by the choice of *that* or *which* and sometimes by commas. In Orion, the distinction is made, as with adjectives, by placement. A relative clause before the noun it modifies is limiting; a relative clause after the noun is descriptive.

Badi tov v'lynua mesht duri.

Mother loves the cat that she chose. (That specific cat which we are defining here as the one she chose.)

Badi mesht tov v'lynua duri.

Mother loves the cat, which she chose. (We already know which cat, so the clause is only adding description about the cat.)

Wait! In the first sentence, how do we know the mother isn't the one being chosen, instead of the cat? Context is a useful clue here. But Kolari speakers will often choose to move the verb here, making it convenient block between the subject and object.

Badi duri tov v'lynua mesht.

Mother loves the cat that she chose.

The relative pronoun will take the case appropriate for its job within the clause, as in Standard. If you know how to use who/whom, this won't be a challenge. Just ask: is the relative pronoun the subject or object of the verb inside the clause?

Kov plori kej kluviath.

The man who asks will be answered.

Tov sh'plori kej kluvia.

The man whom I ask will answer.

Kej kov prodi p'rai.

A man, who is talking, leaves.

Kej tov sh've'prodi p'rai.

A man, whom I was talking to, leaves.

Adverb clauses

Adverb clauses most commonly use the correlatives in the chart earlier. They don't use the same words used for questions, as we do in Standard. "When are they coming? They are coming when they are ready." In Kolari, those two uses of *when* would be different words.

There is no real distinction made between clauses of this type that modify nouns vs verbs, so we'll be talking about them together: all clauses that begin with where, when, how, because, etc. In Standard, we see that "I walked when the sun had come up" has an adverb clause, whereas "I walked in the morning, when the sun had come up," could arguably be an adjective clause. Kolari would call both when-clauses.

As with all other modifiers we've described so far, the distinction between limiting and describing is important. In the case of adverb clauses, there are entirely different words used when the clause is limiting vs. describing. That's because adverb clauses can show up pretty much anywhere in a sentence, so placement isn't as useful.

In Standard, you may have noticed, this distinction is made by commas. “I met him where lilacs grow,” vs. “I met him in the garden, where lilacs grow.” In the second example, the whole clause can be dropped out without changing the meaning of the sentence—it’s just adding detail.

where (limiting): **kin**.

Kasi ni gatol kin lynotar tavdi toli.

The girl studies at the school *where her sister teaches*.

where (nonlimiting): **drin**.

Kasi ni’gatol drin lynotar tavdi toli.

The girl studies at the school, *where her sister teaches*.

Kin and **drin** can take prepositional prefixes to show direction.

Vu kin lynoti rau v’rai.

She goes *to where* (archaic English would say “whither”) *her sister went*.

Pi kin lynoti rau viri.

She comes *from where* (whence) *her sister went*.

when (limiting): **kuun**.

Vu ex sh’viria kuun konda fuuri.

I will come to you *when work ends*.

when (nonlimiting): **druun**.

Vu ex sh’viria thuuna, druun konda fuuri.

I will come to you later, *when work ends*.

how: **kol**.

Ev kol lex glivi sh’malmua.

I showed him *how one dances*. (In Standard we would say “how to dance”—that’s not a construction Kolari uses.)

because: **kai**.

Ev sh’malmua kai v’iklodi.

I showed him *because he didn’t know*.

Participial phrases

In Standard, we very often make a whole phrase out of a participle.

In the middle of the room was a vase *shattered on the floor*.

I asked the man *taking down names on a pad of paper* where the bathroom was.

You'll be happy to know that the way Kolari does it is fairly similar. The participle goes first in the phrase, followed by the object of the participle (if any), followed by any modifiers. A key difference, however, is that a participle is placed the same way as any other adjective. You might have noticed that participial phrases in Standard are placed differently from regular adjectives.

Shi mesht *chortej ma tax* duri.

I love a cat *playing in the house*.

Because the participle doesn't limit the noun—I love the cat, and the fact that it is playing in the house is an add-on—it comes after the noun. That works just the same as with any other adjective.

X'rubua *lynatha frei liju* kej?

Did you see the man *chosen by the people*?

In this sentence, we are explaining which man—the one chosen by the people—and therefore we put the participial phrase before the noun.

There is an opportunity for ambiguity here. What happens if a participial phrase lands between two nouns, such that you don't know to which noun it belongs?

Kasi *chortej ma tax* mesht tri.

The girls, playing in the house, have a cat?

The girls have a cat that is playing in the house??

Kolari speakers will tend to avoid that ambiguity by moving the verb.

Kasi *chortej ma tax* tri mesht.

The girls, who are playing in the house, have a cat.

Kasi tri *chortej ma tax* mesht.

The girls have a cat playing in the house.

Prepositions

Prepositions work like those in English: they begin a prepositional phrase with an object and any number of modifiers. Prepositional phrases can act as adjectives, adverbs, or rarely nouns. They are placed where the corresponding part of speech would be.

Kasin ma gatol chorti.

Some girls, *who are in the school*, play.

Ma gatol kasin chorti.

Those girls *who are in the school* play.

Kasin chorti ma gatol.

Some girls play *in the school*.

Since this time the prepositional phrase is an adverb, it goes right after the verb.

The object of a preposition, if it's a pronoun, uses the object form of the pronoun.

Kej tav kasua ve esh.

The man gave it *to me*.

Many prepositions can be appended to the beginning of words with an apostrophe, to modify a noun or a verb with a particular meaning. So **j'rei** means to *go behind* or to follow, and **j'hordak** is *the darkness behind*, a shadow. **J'mi**, darling, means *behind the heart*, as in, the person is kept close to the self.

In English, a number of verbs include a preposition or take an object with a prepositional phrase: look at, talk to, put up with. In Kolari, these verbs instead have a prepositional prefix and take an object the usual way. So **ve'prode** is to talk to, **th'rube** is to look at, etc.

Tov ve'prodi xa?

Who are you talking to?

Isi th'rubara.

Please don't look.

Conjunctions

Many types of complex sentences don't require a conjunction at all, such as the subjunctive clauses mentioned above. Some are combined using adverbs, like when, because, in this way.

But a few basic coordinating conjunctions also exist, just like in English: and, but, or, etc.

and: **bo** (when connecting clauses); **o** (when connecting words and phrases)

or: **hi**

but/ yet/ however: **kra**

so/ with the result that: **vrai**

at the same time: **xyluun**

No grammatical distinction in Orion relies on commas—half-stops are placed for breath according to no particular rule—so you can simply put a clause on either side of the conjunction without a comma.

Affixes

One thing that makes Kolari vocabulary easier to learn is the large number of words that derive from other words. So if you can remember a small number of roots, you'll be able to produce a much larger number of derivatives, if only you know the right affixes to use.

When adding affixes, generally no vowel is inserted between the root and the affix unless not having one would produce an illegal combination such as *md* or *dt*. When affixing puts two vowels together, one is generally deleted, though there's no hard-and-fast rule.

Remember that the stress of the word is always going to stick to the main roots, not the affixes. **máxtado**, **gachúul**.

Here are a few examples of prefixes and suffixes in action.

-ar: augmentative. **lynuda**: brother; **lynudar**: big brother.

-do: a person who makes something. **mila**: book; **milado**: author.

dol-: insufficiently, not enough. **durej**: loving; **doldurej**: insufficiently loving.

dron-: defect, disorder. **kujev**: the act of reading; **dronkujev**: dyslexia

-dru: a person who does something. **maxte**: fight; **maxtedru**: fighter.

-i: diminutive. **lynota**: sister; **lynoti**: little sister

i-/ik-: un-, non-, not. **durej**: loving; **idurej**: unloving

-in: place. **fese**: train; **fesin**: training place.

-iva: tool. **maxte**: fight; **maxtiva**: weapon.

-ju: group, collective. **tole**: study; **tolju**: class.

-li: a person from a place. **yumanli**, **andorli**, **tlinganli**

-ona: a situation where something is happening. **maxte**: fight; **maxtona**: a fight, a match

-one: to cause something to become. **clur**: cold; **clurone**: to cool something down.

-os: turns an adjective into a noun. **clur**: cold; **cluros**: coldness

-sha: some, some kind of. **kej**: man; **kejsha**: some guy.

-sir: desirous of doing something. **tole**: study; **tolesir**: wishing to study.

-takt: capable of something. **dure**: love; **duretakt**: lovable.

-v: an act or discipline. **tole**: study; **tolev**: education.

-yal: can create a substantive participle, similarly to **-ej** or **-ata**. **dubre**: owe; **dubyal**: indebted one, slave.

In a few cases, there are affixes that mean the exact same thing, but go on different words. You can't always predict which will go with which words. Initially, these derived from different languages, so they tend to go on words derived from the same language, but even that isn't a sure thing.

-u vs -ma

The Leiv Lizut affix for turning an adjective into an adverb (essentially, **-ly** in Standard) was **-u**, after removing the usual **-a** ending. In Prent'lixt, it was **-ma**. The result is that type one adjectives and nouns usually take **-u** while type two take **-ma**. This isn't hard and fast, though, and some words which aren't adjectives or nouns may take one of these suffixes as well. Pay attention to which words have an **-u** form and which have a **-ma** form, because in general, only one or the other is correct.

vrola > vrolu: beautifully

badi > badu: in a motherly way, like a mother does

bola > bolu: necessarily

While:

clur > clurma: coldly

dron > dronma: badly, evilly

ju > juma: together, as a group

bo > boma: also

And no small number of adverbs are slightly or completely irregular compared to their adjectives:

spiv > spit: low > downward

flakt > bas: good > well

-ia vs. -ft

These two affixes both turn nouns into adjectives: mother into motherly, life into alive. As before, -ia tends to go with type 1 nouns and -ft with type 2, but not always, and some have unique forms. -ia is added after removing the ending -a, -i, or ar.

badi > badia: motherly

xori > xoria: rocky

keji > kejia: boyish

hiva > hivia: like a tool, useful

While:

kaun > kauneft: noisy

koledru > koledruft: thief-like

All numbers become ordinal by adding -ft, sometimes with a few letters omitted or combined:

bin > bift: first

gud > guft: second

shof > shoft: third

ga- vs. -in

These two affixes, in contrast, have drifted apart in meaning. While initially they both meant “place,” ga- came to mean a specific, concrete location, like a building, while -in is more abstract. Therefore the same word can take either affix, but with a slight difference in meaning.

gatol: school building

tolin: school institution

ganift: bathtub

niftin: bathroom

gachuul: empty place, hence vacuum

dudrin: debt place, hence bank

A word added to another after an apostrophe means the two words are related, and generally can be translated “the x of y.” Hence **caj’lyn**, family of choice, or **suronan’vros**, songs of freedom or freedom songs. In that case, each word has its own separate emphasis, as if they were different words.

Words can also be connected with an apostrophe when a small word is modifying a main word. For instance, prepositions can join onto verbs or nouns with an apostrophe, dropping their vowels if they aren’t needed for pronunciation.

p’rei: to go away

j’hordos: after-darkness (shadow)

A few adverbs combine the same way.

skal’rei: to come back, return.

Stacking affixes

Occasionally, a word will have multiple affixes. There’s no simple rule for how they are stacked, but they are always added before core parts of grammar (verb endings, plural endings). The plural ending (n) is always added before the possessive endings -la and -t.

tole: study

tolin: school

tolinen: schools

tolinent: of the schools

Special cases and idiomatic usage

Double object

Sometimes a word may have two direct objects. In Standard, we simply put them next to each other.

Call *me Ishmael*.

He appointed *me the heir*.

She taught *the students math*.

In Kolari, we have to distinguish which is the more direct object (in the above sentences, *me*, *me*, and *students*) and which is more explanatory (*Ishmael*, *heir*, *math*). The former will go before the verb, while the latter will go after.

Esh tak x'tulori Gaila.

You can call *me Gaila*.

Uta keji krua dubyal.

The master made *the boy a slave*.

The second object can be a verb, in which case it's in the infinitive.

Kas toledrun havdia sure.

The woman will teach *the students to sing*.

The particle **-si**

In Standard, we say "There is a boat," "There are problems," "It's raining." All three of these would be translated with Kolari **aisi**, meaning *there is* or *there are*. **Eisi** simply consists of the being verb **ei**, plus the particle **-si**, and is conjugated accordingly.

lyasi jerid?

Will there be food?

Konda aisi bri rute.

There is work to be done.

Eisi is also used in a number of idiomatic phrases: weather, time, or in reference to the situation in general.

Fliva aisi.

It's raining.

Ausi nina?

Was it sunny out?

Kuun aisi?

What time is it?

Ni shoft aisi.

It's the third hour.

Tintej aisi.

It's frightening.

Lei, being irregular, has no passive form. Therefore **-si** is used with **lei** to convey the meaning "it is said" or "they say."

Idudse ai vros, laisi.

Not owing a debt is freedom, they say.

Less frequently, **-si** may be affixed to another verb, to show it has no real subject other than just "the situation in general."

Esh tintisi.

It scares me.

Usage of bri for purpose

The preposition **bri** usually translates as *for*. (*For* in the sense of exchange—I gave him a credit for a cookie—would be **sfa**.) And you can usually translate it that way even when it's used idiomatically, but it can be a little clunky. So consider how you might rephrase these sentences:

Konda aisi bri rute.

There is work for doing.

There is work to do.

Kej bri brida flede sh'skirtua.

I hired a man for to load the ship.

I hired a man to load the ship.

Bri is also used in comparatives, like this:

tryna caxt bri maxte: too hot for fighting

When **bri** takes a verb as its object in this kind of idiom, always use the infinitive.

How is that different from a purpose clause using **shkel** + subjunctive? Simple: **bri** takes a single verb by itself, whereas **shkel** is used with a whole clause.

Bri maxte sh'virua.

I came to fight.

Shkel shi tlingonlin maxtura sh'virua.

I came so that I could fight the Klingons.

Verb pairs

Standard has a few pairs of verbs that are regularly confused: sit and set, lay and lie, for instance. We also have plenty of verb pairs that are related in meaning but sound nothing alike: teach and learn, buy and sell, offer and accept. The same action is taking place in either, but who is doing the action differs between the words in the pair.

Lev Lijut had a special verb voice between active and passive called the middle voice which was used for when an action was intransitive, reflexive, or involved receiving some kind of action from someone else. This is currently obsolete, hence why it wasn't included in the verb forms given. But the -s- marker that was formerly the sign of the middle voice has been absorbed into a number of vocabulary words. When you see a word ending in -se, you will nearly always find that it has this kind of meaning and is one of a pair.

A few examples will make clear what the difference is.

dudre: to hold a debt from someone

dudse: to owe

helfe: to feel (to reach out and feel something else)

helse: to feel (a sensation inside your own body—I feel happy, etc)

japre: to mean, intend, imply

japse: to infer, understand, take a meaning

jutre: to share, give without cost

jutse: to receive, to share in something offered

nerte: to set down, place

nerse: to stand, sit, rest in a place

There is no grammatical difference between these verbs: they conjugate the same way, and some of the -se verbs can take objects. But the meaning is different. Fortunately, unlike Standard sit/set and lie/lay, the structure is regular enough that you can easily tell which of these words has which meaning. The one ending in -se is the one that is more related to oneself, less outwardly active.

Of course that relies on the cultural understanding of how these words are taken. We might think “to owe” is the more active word, but in Orion culture, it is enforcing a debt on someone else that is more active.

Krediten sh’dudri ste juv.

I hold a debt for credits from that person.

Krediten sh’dudsi ve juv.

I owe credits to that person.

Numbers

Cardinal numbers: These numbers are for counting or for enumerating.

Ni bosh: bin, gud, shof, bosh!

On four: one, two, three, four!

Taten trin sh’trai.

I have five daughters.

When used as adjectives, the same rule applies as with all adjectives and adjective phrases: they appear after the noun except when they limit the noun.

bin: one

gud: two

shof: three

bosh: four

trin: five

bivd: six

dril: seven

poch: eight

lem: nine

gol: ten

vint: hundred

Ordinal numbers: these are for describing order, as in first, second, third.

Shoft tet badila shla sh'ai.

I am my mother's third son.

bift: first

guft: second

shoft: third

bosheft: fourth

trimft: fifth

biveft: sixth

drift: seventh

pocheft: eighth

left: ninth

golft: tenth

vimft: hundredth

There are also a few prefixes and suffixes it's essential to know, in order to build larger numbers.

golu-: ten plus...

-igol: times ten

vintu-: hundred plus...

-ivint: times one hundred

So we can make fifteen by simply combining ten and five using **-u-**: **golutrin**. Or fifty by combining them the other way around with **-i-**: **trinigol**. 55 would be **trinigolutrin**.

Large numbers can get unwieldy: 567 would be **trinivintubivdigoludril**. Therefore they can be written in separate words, with u being used more as a conjunction: **trinivint u bivdigol u dril**.

The emphasis when speaking these numbers will always be on the number portion, not the connectors **i** and **u**.