This is an introduction to 'Iipay Aa, the language spoken by the northern Kumeyaay people in southern California. Its content is specifically based on the Mesa Grande dialect. It was made by a student and may contain errors. For more information, visit learniipayaa.weebly.com.

This is part of an anticipated four-part series:

Part 1: Basic Phrases and Grammar
Part 2: Basic Words
Part 3: Supplemental Words
Part 4: Intermediate Grammar

Some words have a (plural form). Synonyms are separated by commas.

I. Greetings

Hello: Haawka!
Hello everyone: Haawka 'iipay nyaamat

My name is ___.
___ wii nyechuuhi.

His/her name is ___.
___ wiich chuuhii.

What is your name?
'Ich wiich mechuuhii?

What's his/her/its name?
'Ich wiich chuuhii?

How are you?
Memeyuu temeyuu? (if listener is standing)
Memeyuu temewaa? (if they're sitting)
Memeyuu temeyaq? (if they're lying down)
Memeyuu temenyeway? (to multiple people)

I'm good!
'Aahan ta'waa.
'Aahan ta'nyeway. (plural)
**Goodbye**
Nya'aamh (I'm going, said by person leaving)
Nyamaamh keyima (Okay, off you go, said by person staying)
Nya'naamh (We're going)
Keyima kenaam (You all can go, said to multiple people leaving)

II. Common Phrases

Yes. 'E-en, Haa
No. Umaaw
Ok. Hoo
Hey! Lak!
Wow! Li!
Well then! Ih!

Thank you: 'uuhayi'
That's all: peyapaches
That's all, amen: nyipaches
I think so: 'iichachvu

III. Common Questions:

How? Mu'yuuch? (present or past), Mu'yuuk? (future)
Huh? Matta?
What are you doing, What are you up to? 'Uuch mema'wii?
What is it? 'Uuchechu?
What time is it? Nyamu'yumchu?
When? Ma'yum?
Where am I? Maay 'ewaa?
Where are you going? Maayum maa?
Where are you? Maay mewaa?
Where at? Maayvi?
Where from? Maayk?
Where is ___? ___ maay ewaa?
Where to? Maaym?
Who is it? Maapchu?
Why? Mu'yuum?
IV. This, that:

Peyaa = this, right here where I am.
Nyip = that thing there you can see.
Puu = that, way over there or out of sight.

Examples:

Nyip 'uuche chu? What's that?
Peyaa nyehatt. This is my dog.

V. Common Commands:

Commands are formed by adding the prefix ke- (before consonant) or k- (before vowel) after removing the w- third-person prefix, if any. If the verb ends in a long vowel, it is shortened and a glottal stop is added.

Come in! Kwehap!
Do it! Kewi'!
Do something! Kema'wi'!
Drink! Kesi'!
Eat! Kesaaw!
Go away! Kaam! (Kenaam!)
Hurry up! Walwal ki'!
Look at that! Kumna!
Look! Kewuuw!
Scram/Run away! Kelu'!
Shut up! Hwally ki'!
Stay here/there! Tekewa'! (Tekenyeway!)
Try it! Ketema'!
Wait! Kepshuw!

"Let's ___" is made by adding -h to the end of a verb conjugated for "we".
Let's talk: 'uchewayph
Let's do it! Kuma! (can be placed before a "let's ___" verb)

VI. Basic Sentences

Simple "to be" sentences do not need a verb. You can simply link two nouns next to each other:

Peyaa pweebl. This is a village.
'Ehatt borreeg. The animal is a sheep.
Other sentences use verbs that we think of as adjectives in English, using the order Subject - Verb:

'Ewaa 'ehwatt. The house is red.
'Ethaa hepeshiw. The water is blue.
Kavaay 'estik. The horse is small.
Kapii 'iikuu. The church is big.

Statements can be emphasized with the -s or -ches suffixes at the end of a sentences. -s is used for verbs while -ches can be used for verbs or nous.

Vaakches. It's a cow.
'Emaayches. It's really tall.
Tenays. It's really late.
Wenuws. He sure ran.

*Saying "and"

No word is needed to join two words or statements. If you see two words of identical construction, they might be conjoined as we would with "and" in English.

Mansaan duurraas. Apples and peaches.
Ewuuw yip. He looks and listens.

VII. Tense

The basic form of the verb such as "wenak" is the simple present and past, meaning "he sits" and "he sat". It can also mean "usually does" and "used to do". Words such as pily "now" and tenaay "yesterday" specify time. The 'w' at the beginning of some words represents the third-person pronoun and is replaced by other prefixes in first and second person.

"He's reading" is "leerr tewaa", where a main verb is followed by a helping verb which indicates the subject's position while doing the action.

For stationary actions:
___ tuuyuuw. (while standing)
___ tewaa. (while sitting; default position)
___ tuuyaq. (while lying down)

For verbs of motion:
___ tewaa. (while going; default)
___ tuuyiw. (while coming)

If it is something you are seeing right in front of you, pa'- is used in place of tuu- or te- on the helping verbs.
**Person**

First-person prefix: ' or 'e-
Second-person prefix: m- or me-
The bare form of verbs is the third-person singular. If the verb starts with a "w", the first or second-person prefix takes the place of that letter. Study these examples:

wamp, "walk"
'Enyaach 'amp. I walk.
Maach mamp. You walk.
Puuch wamp. He walks.

hemia, "sleep"
'Enyaach 'ehemia
Maach mehemia
Puuch hemia

ewuuw, "see"
'Enyaach 'ewuuw
Maach mewuuw
Puuch ewuuw

The pronouns 'enyaach "I", maach "you", and puuch"he/she/it" are not needed and should not be used except for emphasis or clarification.

**Future Tense**

Simply add -h to the verb. That means the action has not happened.

Aapull. He swims.
Aapullh. He will swim.
'Eyiw. I came.
'Eyiwh. I will come.
Meyip. You hear.
Meyiph. You will hear.

**VIII. Negation**

Add the suffix -h to the verb, then follow it with the verb "umaaw", meaning "not". Note the changes during conjugation:

Waayp. He talks.
Waayph umaaw. He does not talk.
'Enuw. I run.
'Enuwh 'emaaw. I don't run.
Muusay. You laugh.
Muusayh memaaw. You don't laugh.

A future statement can be negated by adding -h to "umaaw":

Waamh umaawh.
He will not go away.
'Epehekwiih 'emaawh.
I won't stop.
Puwkh memaawh.
You won't come back.

IX. Case

Case can be indicated by the word order: Subject - Object - Verb. Most often, it is also marked with the suffix -ch on the subject:
'Elattch 'ehaa wesii. The dog drinks water.

Sometimes an "e" is placed before -ch to ease pronunciation:
'Iikwichech chuukwar. The man gives a speech.

An unmarked noun is likely to be the object:
Shawii wemaa. He eats shawii.

In some cases both the subject and object can be omitted:
Yip. She hears him.
Winy. He gives it to her.

X. Want To

To express need or desire to do something, the conjugated verb is given the ending -hlly and followed with the verb "war". Desired objects are in the accusative case, using no endings.

Leech wesiihlly war. He wants to drink milk.
'Esuw 'ar. I need food.
Kukwaayp mesaawhlly mar. You want to eat meat.
XI. Prepositional Suffixes

These do what prepositions do in English. For example:

'ewaa: house
'ewaam: to the house, with the house
'ewaai: in or on the house
'ewaally: inside or into the house
'ewaak: from the house

The word "there" works similarly:

puy: there
puum: to there
puuk: from there

XII. Definite Article

Bare nouns such as 'ily can mean "a tree" or "the tree". To clarify that there is a single, specific thing in question, the definite article is used in the form of a suffix after the noun.

- vu Basic form, used for the accusative case.
- vech From -ch, nominative form.
- vi From -i, meaning "at, in, on".
- vek From -k, meaning "from".
- velly From -lly, meaning "into, inside".
- vem From -m, meaning "to, with".

See if you can identify the meanings of all the words and suffixes in the following passage:


A man is sitting inside the house. Then he leaves the house and walks to the ocean. A fish is in the water. The man sees the fish. He takes out a gun. He shoots the fish with the gun. The man brings the fish to the house.

XIII. Saying "because"

This is expressed with a verb meaning "that's why, for that reason". The cause is stated before the effect.

He/they: puknaa
I/we: pukenaa
You: pukmenaa
In a sentence, add the suffix -ch for past and present or -k for future.

Metaawar. Puknaach hemaa.
He was tired. That's why he slept.

Nyiiwarh. Puknaak wenyayh.
He will be hungry. That's why he will hunt.

XIV. Yes/No Questions

To make a past-tense question, add -a to a verb:

Puu mewuuwa? Did you see him?
Wesaawa? Did he eat?

You can answer with the verb itself:
'Ewuuw. I saw him.
Wesaawh umaaw. He did not eat.

To make a third-person, present-tense question, use the ending -chu:

'Elymaamch wemiichu? Is the kid crying?
Kuuchuttch waamchu? Is the boss going away?

To ask a question about the person you're talking to, use -chmeyu:

Menyiiwarchmeyu? Are you hungry?
Mehemaapchmeyu? Are you blind?

These endings are also used with question words:

Maaym kushuhuu waa-a? To where did the thief go?
Maayvi 'ehiiwaa-a? Where at did you go fishing?
Ma'yum 'ehattch wipa? When did the dog bark?
Maapch puy ewaachu? Who's there?
Maap mewuuwa? Whom did you see?
'Uuch mechuwchmeyu? What are you making?