### Overview of the Thai Tone Rules

Every syllable of every Thai word has one of the five tones. Tone is determined by:

- The class of the initial consonant.
- Whether the vowel is long or short.
- The sound of the final consonant.
- The presence of a Thai tone mark.

You should know the consonants by class, the sound they make in both initial and final position, and the length and sound of all the vowels before you attempt to learn the tone rules.

We use the length of the vowel and the sound of the final consonant to determine whether a syllable is “dead” or “live”. A dead syllable has a sound that abruptly stops, where the sound of a live syllable fades away slowly.

#### Dead syllables:
- consonant + short vowel
- consonant + short vowel + stop final
- consonant + long vowel + stop final
- consonant + long vowel + sonorant final

**Rule:** Any syllable that ends in a short vowel or a stop final consonant is dead.

#### Live syllables:
- consonant + long vowel
- consonant + long vowel + sonorant final
- consonant + short vowel + sonorant final

**Rule:** Any syllable that ends in a long vowel or a sonorant final consonant is live.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Middle Class Consonants:</th>
<th>The High Class Consonants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ก จ ฉ ด ต บ ป ผ ฝ ฟ ง</td>
<td>ข ฃ ค ฅ ฆ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Low Class Consonants:</th>
<th>The Short Vowels:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ค ฅ ฆ จ ฉ ช ซ ฌ ญ ฎ ฏ ท ฑ ฒ ท</td>
<td>ำ ำ ำ ำ ำ ำ</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Long Vowels:</th>
<th>Sonorant Final Sounds:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>อ  อ  อ  อ  อ  อ  อ  อ  อ</td>
<td>นะ นะ นะ นะ นะ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**aka**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop Final Sounds:</th>
<th>There are 4 Tone Marks:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ก ต บ ป</td>
<td>mộ ek  mộ toe  mộ dtree  mộ jat-dta-waa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When tone marks are used, they act as modifiers to the basic rules:

**Basic Rule when starting with Middle Class**
Without a tone mark, there are two possible tones:

- consonant + live syllable = mid tone
- consonant + dead syllable = low tone

All five tones are possible when tone marks are used:

* rising tone is never used with dead syllables

**Basic Rule when starting with High Class**
Without a tone mark, there are two possible tones:

- consonant + live syllable = rising tone
- consonant + dead syllable = low tone

There are three tones possible and these marks can be used:

**Basic Rule when starting with Low Class**
Without a tone mark, there are three possible tones:

- consonant + live syllable = mid tone
- consonant + (long) dead syllable = falling tone
- consonant + (short) dead syllable = high tone

There are three tones possible and these marks can be used:

With low consonants there are two types of dead syllables:

- long vowel + stop final and short vowel + stop final