



# Quechua

*Runasimi*, also known as *Quechua*, is an Indigenous language spoken primarily in the Andean region of South America. It is one of the oldest languages in the Americas and was the lingua franca of *Tawantinsuyu*, also known as the Inca Empire. With approximately 8 to 10 million speakers today, it is recognized as an official language in countries like Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

The origin of the word Runasimi is best understood when split in half, with 'runa' meaning person and 'simi' meaning mouth, tongue, or language. Combined, it means "the people's language," but also refers to its origins as an oral-based language. While they did not document through written words such as Latin-based languages, Runasimi used *kipu*, which was a documentation system through cords and knots. Runasimi has contributed many words to the lexicons of languages such as English, Spanish, and Aymara, and vice-versa. Some examples include *ñaño/a* (sister/brother), *papa* (potato), *ch'arki* (jerky), and *puma* (cougar).

Here, at LaGuardia Community College, we aim to introduce you to the basics of Quechua through vocabulary, grammar, and cultural anecdotes to enrich your learning experience.

## The Quechua Culture

Runasimi has many dialects based on region and cultural groups. Because of this, the word Quechua refers to the language family, but most dialects have their own unique name. These dialects are typically split in the following: Northern Quechua of Ecuador, Colombia, and the Amazons; Central Quechua of the central highlands of Peru; Southern Quechua of southern Peru as well as Bolivia and northern Argentina and Chile. Due to the differences between dialects, there is disagreement on the standardization of the written aspect of Runasimi, which allows for fluidity.

The Quechua languages are intertwined with cultural practices and beliefs of the Andean peoples. For example, the term *ayni* represents the principle of reciprocity and mutual help, not just amongst family, but also neighbors and the entire village. This was a practical way to share labor, especially during the colonial period, but has flourished into a fundamental social value that reinforces community bonds. Another example is the word "pacha," which refers to the planet Earth, as well as time and space.

## Learning Quechua

Learning basic phrases is a great way to start. Here are some common Quechua phrases along with their meanings:

- *Allinllachu?*: Hello, how are you?
- *Allinmi kani, kanri?*: I am good, and yourself?
- *Imanallatak?*: How are you doing?
- *Minchankaman!*: See you next time!
- *Alli punlla!*: Good morning!
- *Alli tuta!*: Good night!

- *Arí*: Yes
- *Manan*: No
- *Imataq sutiyki?*: What is your name?
- *Ñuka Illarimi kani.*: I am Illari/My name is Illari.
- *Maymantak kanki?*: Where are you from?
- *Nueva-Yorkmantami kani.*: I am from New York.
- *Inglés simita rimanki?*: Do you speak English?
- *Manan yachanichu.*: I don't understand.

Numbers are essential in any language. Here are the numbers 0 to 10 in Quechua:

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| • 0: nima        | • 6: suqta   |
| • 1: huk         | • 7: qanchis |
| • 2: iskay       | • 8: pusaq   |
| • 3: kimsa       | • 9: isqun   |
| • 4: tawa/chusku | • 10: chunka |
| • 5: pichqa      |              |

This guide will help you learn some basic words in Quechua. Take your time to practice each section and try to use the new words in your daily conversations.

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • <b>wasi</b> : house                | • <b>allpa</b> : dirt, soil          |
| • <b>runa</b> : person               | • <b>mihuna</b> : food               |
| • <b>mama</b> : mother               | • <b>aycha</b> : meat                |
| • <b>tata</b> : father               | • <b>ch'aska</b> : star              |
| • <b>wawa</b> : child                | • <b>michi/misi</b> : cat            |
| • <b>urqu</b> : mountain             | • <b>anku/allku</b> : dog            |
| • <b>yaku</b> : water                | • <b>huñuy</b> : to gather           |
| • <b>inti</b> : sun                  | • <b>rikuy</b> : to see              |
| • <b>killa</b> : moon                | • <b>rimay</b> : to speak            |
| • <b>pacha</b> : Earth, time, space. | • <b>yachay</b> : to know, to learn. |

Below are some everyday Quechua phrases.

- **Allin p'unchay**: Good day
- **Imaynalla kashanki?**: How are you?
- **Minchakaman**: See you later
- **Ñuqa runasimi qanri**: I speak Quechua
- **Maymantatak qanki?**: Where are you from?

## Where Can I Start at LaGuardia Community College

At LaGuardia Community College, the Modern Languages and Literatures Program offers dynamic courses in diverse languages, fostering global understanding and communication skills. Our dedicated faculty prepare students for exciting, multilingual futures, embracing cultural richness and enhancing career opportunities in our interconnected world. For more information about our world language courses and schedule, visit <https://lagcclm1.github.io>.