It's extraordinary how far a high-pitched 'eee' can get you. Wonderfully emotive, in Salone drama-laden sounds can convey more intensity and feeling than the most florid of sentences. Inject a well-chosen note of scepticism and you can probably secure a reduction on your latest hoped-for purchase; a slightly slower, more drawn-out eh acts as a show of disbelief - useful whether discussing politics or taxi prices - while a powerfully empathetic hmmm, combined with some head shaking at your interlocutor's tales of misfortune can win you a friend for life. Oh means sorry.

Another way to show disdain is with the lip-sucking that might accompany a plumber's estimate. Try tutting and breathing in sharply through clenched teeth, leaving your tongue at the roof of the mouth. Add a shake of the head and some narrowed eyes and you'll look thoroughly dissatisfied.

Old-school English English in Sierra Leone can be deliciously formal, starchy and wonderfully antiquated (just when you never thought you'd hear the phrase 'nefarious acts' spoken aloud, think again). Whereas someone English might reach for the words 'not much' to describe something they don't do very often, a Sierra Leonean might deliver 'seldom'. Likewise, archaic English makes a showing in many Krio words: almbolg (from humbug) for disturb; soks (from socx) for angry; likingla (from looking glass) for mirror; punda (from yonder) for over there; droks (from drawers) for underwear; mokoa (from motor car) for car; pala (from parlour) for living room; and soka (from sober) for serious.

Sierra Leone's English often has some odd flavours. Do not think someone is about to start a fight with you or jump on the defensive if they come up to you asking, 'What is your problem?' for example. More often it's an attempt to offer assistance.

If you hear a phrase such as 'shweng shweng' or some vaguely oriental-sounding variant, it means people can't understand a word you say. It's a comic phrase that describes the way people in Sierra Leone think foreign languages sound, pretty much a Salone take on 'gobbledygook'.

Basic Krio phrases Spellings of Krio words below follow an attempt at making them easy to say without resorting to the phonetic language in which it is taught. It should get you on the right track, but listen out for accent and pronunciation on the streets, and practice.

Greetings
hello
hello everybody
how are you? (literally, how is the body?)
how are you sir/madam?
good morning
good morning sir/madam
good morning everybody
how's the morning going?
good afternoon
good evening
how's the night?
how is the family/wife/work?

Responses
I'm fine (the body is fine)
not bad, how are you?
di bodi fine
di bodi nor bad, how usf?
kusheh-o
una kusheh-o
aw di bodi?
aw du sa/ma?
mohnin-o
mohnin sa/ma
una goodmomin-o
aw di monis dry go?
good afiann
giw imsin-o
aw dis met?
aw di fambul den/weh/woh?

Meeting someone
what's your name?
my name is...
I'm glad to meet you
I'm very glad to meet you
what do you do (for work)?
see you later

Thanking people
thank you
thank you everybody
say thanks to your people/family for me
I thank you very much

Flirting
I bought this ring for you
that girl is as good looking as my girlfriend
I want you to be my girlfriend
don't you have a wife?
I'm not married
I like/want you
I rather like him/her

Dealing with hassle
please don't waste my time
everyone has his own troubles
leave me alone
shut your mouth
don't bug me
go away/get out (very strong, but not quite as rude in the same way as it is in English)
I'm very tired
my money is finished
what makes you want to fight?
I don't have anything
there is nothing
leave me alone/don't bug me

Money and shopping
how much do you want to pay?
how much do I have to pay?
how much for the...
won't you lower the price for me?
can't you give me a price reduction?
it's too expensive
I will reduce the price
here's your money

ah tel god tehnik
ah wol, aw yu seh?
di bodi de na klos
weh ah de de fine
di afiann nih bad

we yu nenn?
ah nenn...
ah gladi foh mit yu/ah gladi foh sabi yu
mohfiah ah gladi toubka foh mit yu
nu woe tin yu de du?
we go si bek
tenki yah
una all tenki
tell yu fambul dem tenki for mi
ah tell yu bobehu bobehu terki

ah bai dis ring foh yu
da gal fein leh me gal
ah go want melk yu bi mi gal.fren
yu noh get wehk?
ah noh mared
ah leh k yu
mi at sek am
du yah noh wes me tehni
ofalman de pan in yu waal na
lehf mi
seh yu mot
leh go mi

foh kohf
ah tai baad
mi kohpoh deh deh
weuh mek yu leh foh fehi
ah noh get natin
natin noh de
slak mi

ouh mohs yu wan pe mi?
ouh mohs ah foh pe?
ouh mohs foh di...
yu noh go leh mi?
u nor go less mi smol?
ue tu dia
ah go leh
luk yu mohi
OK it's not bad
I'm just looking
can you help me?
how much does this item cost?
you have to give me change

Accommodation
how much is a room for the night?
can you do my laundry for me?
I want room service
do you have a taxi service here?
do you have internet?

Eating and drinking
I'm hungry
it's time to eat
can I have the menu please?
do you have everything on the menu?
what do you have and what do you not have?
I am not ready to order yet
can I have some water?
can you bring the bill?
you can keep the change
please serve us right now, we will go soon
I don't like (hot) pepper too much
how's the food?
it's good
too much hot pepper
the food is tasty
I like it
it's enough
add more/some
how much for this meal?
can I have my bill?
haven't you made a mistake?
here's the money, where's my change?
we don't have change now
wait a bit
we would...like...
I am full, thanks
come on let's eat, you're invited
I have just eaten, I'm full
I can't now, let's try another time
I like cold beer
let's chill at the bar
can I have the water?
I am drunk
he's a bit tipsy

Getting around
driver, are you going to...?
how much should I pay you?
draysia, u de go na...?
how moths ah for pay ya?

Questions
who is
which
which one
which kind
which type
what do you call this?
which part
what
what's the time?
how
where
when

Health
I have come to see the doctor
I am not feeling well doctor
I have a headache
my whole body is hurting
I want to do the test
which hospital/chemistry should I go to?
how much should I pay?
Is this the medicine I should take?
I get pain in my...
hand/arm, back, stomach, head, neck, throat

Draysia, ah wan cha cha ya
Draysia, drop mi naya
u kin dol u music smol draysia?
aw fa
aw fa u de go?
rahnum o'khloke ye de leh?
ustem you de go?
ri tay dohn bohs
ri rod bad thum
ee geht plenty galsanip
meki di pasenja dehn kam dolung una kam
dohn
mek ohdman go insai bak
u ri noh wohn fof tap na rod
u rod rich?
yu kin sho mi di rod foh...
ou fa ee dat frohm ya?
usat dis rod dea go?
hek temg/small small
yu kin show mi di rod for go na tohng?
yu kin show mi di supamarketi/
bich/kerb/shop/police station/hospital is?
can you show me where I can get a taxi?
please show me the market
where is the hotel/restaurant/toilet near here?

Questions
who is
which
which one
which kind
which type
what do you call this?
which part
what
what's the time?
how
where
when

300
Everyday nouns

bank  bahnk
market  makit
home  om
house  os
town

Useful words and phrases

yesterday
today
tomorrow
day after tomorrow
please/I’m sorry (a beg is for emphasis)
I try
don’t be discouraged
take care, be cool, take things as they come
sorry (expression of sympathy)
is that right?
that’s right
what can you do about it?
tit for tat
man has to rely on his fellow man for survival
he’s stubborn
don’t cheek me
gossip
I sleep late
fake
stingy
do your flies up
show off
except

yehstade
tide
tumara
nehxst tumara
duya (ah beg)
ah de trai
noh poil yu at
na foh bia
osh yaa
nohto so?
na so
aw foh du?
yu du mi; ah du yu
man liv bai man
he get strong eahrs
dohn was mi faes
kongossa
I slip pasmak
guinea guinea
krabbit
bloh yu nohs
bluff
unlehhs