

Kurmanji Grammar Series 17: Articles, Demonstratives and Determiners

ENGLISH + KURMANJI ONLY

Introduction — Destpêk

English uses a, an, the, this, that, my, some, and every to specify nouns. Kurmanji does not match the English article system word for word. Definiteness, indefiniteness, demonstratives, possession, number, and case interact. This guide uses English explanations and Kurmanji examples only.

1. English articles versus Kurmanji

English a/an marks an indefinite singular noun; the usually marks an identifiable noun. Kurmanji commonly marks an indefinite noun with -ek, while identifiable nouns can appear without an English-style definite article. Forms such as -eke have other morphological uses and should not be taught as a universal equivalent of English the. Case and ezafe affect noun endings.

2. Indefinite noun examples

Kurmanji	English	Note
pirtûkek	a book	indefinite singular
mêrek	a man	indefinite singular
jinek	a woman	indefinite singular
zarokek	a child	indefinite singular
malek	a house	indefinite singular
Ez pirtûkek dixwînim.	I am reading a book.	sentence
Min pirtûkek kirî.	I bought a book.	sentence
Pirtûk li ser maseyê ye.	The book is on the table.	context identifies the book

3. Definite reference is contextual

A bare noun may refer to an identifiable or generic entity depending on context. English the is not inserted as one invariant Kurmanji word. Compare Pirtûk li vir e. (The book is here.) and Ez pirtûkek dixwazim. (I want a book.)

4. Demonstratives: direct-case forms

Distance	Singular	Plural	English
near	ev	ev	this / these
far	ew	ew	that / those

5. Demonstratives and oblique case

Kurmanji distinguishes direct and oblique case. In the oblique, demonstrative forms reflect gender and number. The forms below are shown as standalone demonstratives or determiners in common standard descriptions; noun morphology also changes according to the phrase.

6. Demonstrative forms: reference table

Reference	Direct	Oblique	English
near masculine singular	ev	vî	this
near feminine singular	ev	vê	this
near plural	ev	van	these
far masculine singular	ew	wî	that
far feminine singular	ew	wê	that
far plural	ew	wan	those

7. Demonstratives in sentences

Kurmanji	English
Ev pirtûk baş e.	This book is good.
Ew mal mezin e.	That house is big.
Ev zarok li vir in.	These children are here.
Ew zarok li wir in.	Those children are there.
Ez vî kurî nas dikim.	I know this boy.
Ez vê jinê nas dikim.	I know this woman.
Ez van zarokan nas dikim.	I know these children.
Ez wî kurî nas dikim.	I know that boy.
Ez wê jinê nas dikim.	I know that woman.
Ez wan zarokan nas dikim.	I know those children.

8. Why the forms change

In the present tense, a direct object normally takes oblique case, so *Ev kur li vir e.* (This boy is here.) contrasts with *Ez vî kurî dibînim.* (I see this boy.). The noun and demonstrative must be treated as a phrase; do not change *ev* to *vî* in every context.

9. Possession through ezafe

Kurmanji	English	Structure
pirtûka min	my book	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
mala te	your house	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
kurê wî	his son	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
mala wê	her house	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
hevalê me	our friend	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
pirtûka we	your (plural) book	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
mala wan	their house	noun + ezafe + oblique pronoun
pirtûkên min	my books	plural ezafe

10. Possessive determiners are not a separate English-style set

English my/your/his/her are pre-nominal determiners. Kurmanji typically uses a noun with an ezafe linker followed by an oblique pronoun: mala min, mala te, mala wî, mala wê, mala me, mala we, mala wan. The ezafe form depends on the possessed noun, not simply on the possessor.

11. Quantifiers and distributives

Kurmanji	English	Example
hemû	all	Hemû zarok hatin. — All the children came.
her	every / each	Her roj ez dixwînim. — I study every day.
hin	some	Hin zarok li vir in. — Some children are here.
gelek	many / a lot of	Gelek kes hatin. — Many people came.
çend	several / how many	Çend kes hatin? — How many people came?
hinek	some / a little	Hinek av dixwazim. — I want some water.
tu ... ne	no / any (negative contexts)	Tu kes nehat. — Nobody came.

12. Numbers as determiners

Numbers specify quantity: yek pirtûk (one book), du pirtûk (two books), sê zarok (three children), pênc mal (five houses). Kurmanji noun number and case after numerals do not always mirror English plural marking; study numeral constructions separately.

13. More complete English-Kurmanji comparisons

English	Kurmanji
This is my book.	Ev pirtûka min e.
That is her house.	Ew mala wê ye.
I see this woman.	Ez vê jinê dibînim.
I see those children.	Ez wan zarokan dibînim.
These books are new.	Ev pirtûk nû ne.
Some people are here.	Hin kes li vir in.
Every child learns.	Her zarok fêr dibe.
I bought a book.	Min pirtûkek kirî.
The book is here.	Pirtûk li vir e.
My books are new.	Pirtûkên min nû ne.
Our friend is here.	Hevalê me li vir e.
I know that boy.	Ez wî kurî nas dikim.

14. Demonstratives versus pronouns

Ev and ew can also be used pronominally. Ew can mean that/those or he/she/they depending on grammar and context. Avoid assigning one English gloss to every occurrence.

15. Common mistakes

Do not treat English the as a mandatory separate Kurmanji word. Do not confuse direct ev/ew with oblique vî/vê/van/wî/wê/wan. Do not treat English my as a preposed independent Kurmanji word: mala min, not min mala in ordinary possessive ezafe. Do not assume English plural -s appears after every Kurmanji numeral.

16. Mini dialogue — Axaftin

A: Ev pirtûka kê ye? — Whose book is this?

B: Ev pirtûka min e. — This is my book.

A: Tu vê pirtûkê dixwî? — Are you reading this book?

B: Erê, lê ew pirtûk jî baş e. — Yes, but that book is good too.

17. Exercises — Rahênan

1. Translate: a book; this book; that house.
2. Give the near demonstrative oblique forms for masculine, feminine, plural.
3. Give the far demonstrative oblique forms for masculine, feminine, plural.
4. Translate: my book; her house; their house.
5. Translate: I know this woman.
6. Translate: I see those children.
7. Translate: Some children are here.
8. Translate: Every day I study.
9. Explain why English the has no single universal Kurmanji equivalent.
10. Explain the function of -ên in pirtûkên min.

18. Answer key — Bersiv

1. pirtûkek; ev pirtûk; ew mal.
2. vî; vê; van.
3. wî; wê; wan.
4. pirtûka min; mala wê; mala wan.
5. Ez vê jinê nas dikim.
6. Ez wan zarokan dibînim.
7. Hin zarok li vir in.
8. Her roj ez dixwînim.
9. Reference and definiteness depend on context and morphology, not one fixed article.
10. Plural ezafe linker joining a plural noun to its possessor.

19. Sources and editorial note

Further reading: W. M. Thackston, *Kurmanji Kurdish: A Reference Grammar* (2006); Geoffrey Haig and Ergin Öpengin on Kurmanji structure and variation. This teaching guide summarizes common patterns; dialects and speaker judgments vary. Independent native-speaker review is recommended before treating examples as definitive.

20. Next steps

This lesson fills the previously omitted articles, demonstratives, and determiners topic. Future advanced lessons could examine oblique case, ezafe, and agreement in greater depth.