

How to say things in Wembawemba

Lesson 1. How many?

two

Wembawemba makes a clear distinction when 'two' are involved, you have to add **-pula** to the noun, so one says

wirrengen-pula two dogs

nyarremben-pula two old men

The word **wirimbula** 'ears' incorporates the notion of 'two'

You can also show 'two' by using **kinpula** 'these two', **nyunpula** or **manyapula** 'those two'

nyunpula wirrengen those two dogs

kinpula nyarremben these two old men

(**kinpula** is from **kinya** 'this' and **nyunpula** and **manyapula** are from **nyunya** and **manya** 'that')

If you wanted to be really emphatic about there being two of anything you would do it both ways say

Kinpula wirrengen-pula this pair of dogs

More than two

Unless you wanted to be specific you didn't express whether you meant one or many, so **wirrengen**, and **nyarremben** could refer to one or to many dogs and old men respectively, it was usually obvious in the context anyway. If you wanted to be more specific you would put **-para** at the end of a word to show that there were more than two:

nyaremben-para the old men

Or you could say

lambruk nyaremben a lot of old men

or you could use **kinmer** 'these' of **nyunmer** and **manyamer** 'those'

as in

kinmer nyaremben these old men

nyunmer wirrengen

those dogs

There are a number of instances, particularly with words referring to inanimates, where repetition indicated a large number

piyal

red gum tree

piyal-piyal

a lot of red gum trees

There are a few words that have a fixed form to indicate more than two

paingkuk

child

pembengkuk

children

lerrk

woman

lerrk-mul

a lot of women

Leeson 2. Describing something

If you are describing something you do not put in the verb 'to be'. So if you want to say

These trees are big

you simply say- in the preferred word order-

Kurrumbit kinmer piyal

Big these trees.

for

That is a bad dog

you say

Yathaminyuk nyunya wirengen

Bad that dog

If you put in the word **yiri** 'very', really', that usually comes first

Yiri yathaminyuk nyunya wirengen

Very bad that dog

If the sentence doesn't have 'this' and 'that', you put it preferably another way round and say

piyal kurumbit

tree(s) big

The tree is big or 'The trees are big'

wirengen yathaminyuk

Dog bad

Dog(s) bad

The dog is bad or 'The dogs are bad'.

Exercises for 1 and 2

Getting words you don't know out of the green Wembawemba Dictionary translate the following:

1. These are really bad children
2. Those old men are skinny (thin)
3. This woman is really fat
4. The meat is raw
5. This meat is smelly
6. These two babies are good
7. That mob of women are really bad
8. The child is dirty
9. That tree is very big
10. Two stupid people
11. A lot of possums
12. These two stones are black
13. This camp is big
14. Ghosts are white
15. kurrkity are sweet

Lesson 3. Who is doing what

The person doing something is expressed by markers attached to the end of the verb: these markers generally represent abbreviated forms of the personal pronouns which we will learn about later.

Singular – Only one is doing it

		Example	
1 st person, I am doing it	-anda	yangganda	I am walking along
2 nd person you are doing it	-ar	yanggar	You are walking along
3 rd person he/she is doing it	-	yangga	He/she is walking along

Dual – two are doing it

		Example	
1 st person inclusive: we two you and I	-angal	yanggandal	We two, you and I are going
1 st person exclusive: he/she and I, but not you	-angalang	yanggandalang	We two he/she and I are going
You two	-awal	yanggawal	You two are going
They two	-pula	yanggapula	They two are going

Plural – more than two are doing it

We, including you	-angur	yanggangur	We are all going
We, but not you	-angurang	yanggangurang	We, but not you are going
You lot	-aty	yanggaty	You lot are going
They, more than two	-an	yanggan	They are all going

They are attached to the verb *following* the tense marker.

4. Who is doing what and when: Tense marking

Present tense	-a (elided before person markers)	happening now
Past tense	-in	it happened

Future

-iny

Examples

yangginanda I went

yanginyanda I'll go

wuka 'to give' and nyaka 'to see' lose the k and put in a y in the past, so you say wuyin 'gave' and nyayin 'saw'

Exercises

Using this information we can now make up many sentences in Wembawemba – here are just a few

1. The old woman is walking along
2. The dogs ate the meat
3. I'll go away
4. They saw a ghost
5. You two were drinking
6. We (not you) speak Wembawemba
7. We all (including you) will gather up firewood
8. You lot got the firewood yesterday
9. The children were fighting
10. Those two left one another
11. They are burying the money
12. Those old men died
13. We two you and I gave the meat
14. We'll all (that is including you) have a feast
15. You stole the money
16. The baby is sleeping
17. The two old men were sleeping
18. The old women were winging
19. The fat woman is eating,
20. The ghost came up close

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EXAMPLE VERBS

yangga	go
tyaka	eat
nyaka	see
nyengga	sit
wurreka	speak

PERSONS

yangg-anda	I go	yangg-angal	we two go	yangg-angur	we lot go
		yangg-angalang	we two <u>not</u> you go	yangg-angurang	we lot <u>not</u> you go
yangg-ar	you go	yangg-awal	you two go	yangg-aty	you lot go
yangga	he, she goes	yangga-pula	they two go	yangg-an	they all go

TIME

past	-in	yangg-n-anda	I went (note that nyaka has nyayin for the past)
future	-iny	yangg-iny-anda	I'll go

COMMANDS

to one person	-i, -ak,	yanggi	go!	takak	hit (him)!
to a lot of people	-akaty	yanggakaty	go you lot!	takakaty	hit (them) you lot!

HEAD-WORDS

wemba	not
windya, windyaluk	where?
nyatyerruwa	when?
nyanya(r)	how? what?
nyuka, nyula, nyuwa	here
kila, kiwa	now

INTENSITY

doing things over and over again	-ila, ula, kupa	he drinks	kupula	he drinks all the time
doing things hard etc	-uwa tyaka	he eats	tyakuwa	he gorges himself

EXAMPLE SENTENCES

note kinmer kuli- that mob	We two (not you) are sitting down
	I didn't see that mob
	That mob are eating all the time
	I am going now
	How are you going?