



The SESK Party Game

STUFF EVERY TRAVELER SHOULD SAY IN SWAHILI

How to play (30 seconds)

1. The reader reads a card and its three answers out loud.
2. Everyone says "One, two, three, Goldilocks!" and holds up 1, 2, or 3 fingers.
3. The reader flips the card and reads the answer and the Why.
4. Everyone who was right takes a point.
5. The reader reads the joke with a straight face. Anyone laughs or groans? The reader takes a point. Nobody got it right? The reader takes a point.
6. Pass the deck left. Most points when the points run out wins.

What you need

These cards and the point tokens on the last two pages. No tokens? Use coins, buttons, pebbles, or marshmallows. 3 to 10 players, ages 8 and up.

Expert rule: Bet It

Before the reader flips the card, you may put one of your points on your answer. Right: take your normal point plus one extra. Wrong: your bet goes back to the pile. That's it.

Printing

Print single-sided, on cardstock if you have it. Cut on the dashed lines. Each card is a 3.5 x 5 inch index card. The answer half is upside down on purpose, so the table can't peek.

Cards 1 to 50 of 56. More cards and the free daily online game at sesk.info. Built 2026-10-13.

LANGUAGES



Someone greets you with 'Hujambo'?
What is the standard Swahili reply?

- A** Sijambo
- B** Marahaba
- C** Hujambo

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9563

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I said 'Hujambo?' to my mirror. It said the same thing right back, so we are both fine.

A Sijambo
WHY Hujambo asks if anything is the matter with you. Sijambo answers that nothing is the matter, so you are fine. Replying 'Hujambo' just asks the same question back.

LANGUAGES



In the greeting 'Hujambo', what does the root word 'jambo' literally mean?

- A** News
- B** A matter or affair
- C** Peace

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9564

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
A Swahili teacher asked what's the matter. Hujambo, I said. Technically correct

B A matter or affair
WHY Jambo means a matter, thing or affair. Hu-jambo asks 'you have nothing the matter?' and si-jambo answers 'I have nothing the matter', which is a polite way of saying all is well.

LANGUAGES



Someone asks you 'Habari gani?' Which reply means 'fine' or 'good'?

- A** Hapana
- B** Kwaheri
- C** Nzuri

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9565

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
What's the news? Nzuri! No news is good news, and good news is nzuri.

C Nzuri
WHY Habari gani literally asks 'what news?' The usual answers are nzuri, njema, salama or safi, all meaning fine or good. Hapana means no and kwaheri means goodbye.

LANGUAGES



How do you ask 'How is your morning?' in Swahili?

- A** Habari za jioni?
- B** Habari za asubuhi?
- C** Habari za usiku?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9566

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why is asubuhi the friendliest word? It always starts the day on a good note.

B Habari za asubuhi?
WHY Add a time of day after 'habari za' (news of). Asubuhi is morning, mchana is afternoon, jioni is evening and usiku is night. Answer it with nzuri, just like plain habari.

LANGUAGES



Who should you greet with 'Shikamoo'?

- A** A close friend your own age
- B** A small child
- C** An elder or older person

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9567

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
My grandpa loves Swahili lessons. Every time I say shikamoo, he gets a little taller.

C An elder or older person
WHY Shikamoo is the respectful greeting a younger person says first to someone older, like a grandparent, teacher or parent figure. It is heard most in Tanzania and on Zanzibar, where greeting etiquette matters a lot.

LANGUAGES



You greet an elder with 'Shikamoo'. What do they normally answer?

- A** Marahaba
- B** Sijambo
- C** Poa

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9568

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Shikamoo and marahaba are the best pair in Swahili. They never leave each other hanging.

A Marahaba
WHY Shikamoo and marahaba always go together: the younger person says shikamoo, the elder replies marahaba. Sijambo answers hujambo, and poa is street slang for cool.

LANGUAGES



What does the Swahili greeting 'Shikamoo' literally mean?

- A** I am delighted
- B** I touch your feet
- C** Welcome home

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9569

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Shikamoo means I touch your feet. Good thing it is a greeting and not a handshake.

B I touch your feet
WHY Shikamoo comes from a phrase meaning 'I touch your feet', showing humble respect to an older person. 'I am delighted' is the meaning of the elder's reply, marahaba.

LANGUAGES



A young person greets you with 'Mambo?' What is the casual reply?

- A** Marahaba
- B** Sijambo
- C** Poa

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9570

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Mambo? Poa! That's the whole conversation, and honestly, it's poa.

C Poa
WHY Mambo or Mambo vipi! means 'what's up?' and is street talk between friends your age. Answer poa (cool), sah or freshi. Use it with peers, never with elders, who should get shikamoo.

LANGUAGES



How do you ask a whole group 'How are you all?' in Swahili?

- A** Hujambo?
- B** Hamjambo?
- C** Sijambo?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9571

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE I greeted a busload of tourists with 'Hamjambo?' and got a 40-person 'HatuJambo!' Best echo ever.

B Hamjambo? **WHY** The jambo greeting changes with how many people you greet. Hujambo is for one person; Hamjambo is for you all. The group replies HatuJambo, meaning we are fine.

LANGUAGES



How do you say 'please' in Swahili?

- A** Asante
- B** Samahani
- C** Tafadhali

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9572

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE Tafadhali has four syllables. That's a lot of please for one little word.

C Tafadhali **WHY** Tafadhali turns a plain command into a polite request: 'Karibu, kaa tafadhali' is 'Welcome, please sit.' Asante means thank you and samahani means excuse me or sorry.

LANGUAGES



Your whole safari crew helped you. Which word thanks all of them at once?

- A** Kwaherini
- B** Asanteni
- C** Karibuni

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9573

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE I thanked the whole tour bus with asanteni. The driver asked for his own asante, so I gave him two.

B Asanteni **WHY** Asanteni thanks a group. Kwaherini says goodbye to a group, and karibuni welcomes a group.

LANGUAGES



A shopkeeper calls out 'Karibu!' as you walk past. What are they saying?

- A** Welcome
- B** Goodbye
- C** Excuse me

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9574

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE Every shop in Zanzibar said karibu. I've never felt so welcome while holding so little money.

A Welcome **WHY** Karibu means welcome, and you will hear it in shops, homes and hotels. Answer with asante. 'Karibu ndani!' means welcome inside, and karibu also answers 'asante', like 'you're welcome'.

LANGUAGES



How do you say 'My name is...' in Swahili?

- A** Jina lako ni...
- B** Ninatoka...
- C** Jina langu ni...

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9575

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I introduced myself as 'Jina langu ni Hungry,' The waiter brought me chapati, so it worked.

C Jina langu ni... **WHY** Jina is name, langu is my and ni is is. Jina lako ni nan? asks 'What is your name?', and ninatoka means 'I come from'.

LANGUAGES



How do you ask someone 'What is your name?' (literally 'You are called who?') in Swahili?

- A** Unaitwa nani?
- B** Unatoka wapi?
- C** Uko wapi?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9576

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I asked my GPS 'Unaitwa nani?' It said 'Recalculating,' 'Strange name.'

A Unaitwa nani? **WHY** Unaitwa nani? means 'you are called who?' The answer starts with naitwa, I am called. Unatoka wapi? asks where you are from, and uko wapi? asks where you are right now.

LANGUAGES



A vendor offers you a souvenir you don't want. How do you say 'no' in Swahili?

- A** Hapana
- B** Ndiyo
- C** Asante

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9577

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I learned hapana on day one of my trip. My wallet thanked me on day two.

A Hapana **WHY** Hapana is no. 'Hapana, asante' (no, thank you) is the polite way to turn down a seller. Ndiyo is yes, and asante alone only says thank you.

LANGUAGES



What is the number 5 in Swahili?

- A** Tatu
- B** Tano
- C** Tisa

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9578

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Give me tano! That's a Swahili high five.

B Tano **WHY** Count one to ten: moja, mbili, tatu, nne, tano, sita, saba, nane, tisa, kumi. Tatu is 3 and tisa is 9, so tano sits right in the middle.

LANGUAGES



How do you say 11 in Swahili?

- A** Kumi na moja
- B** Kumi na mbili
- C** Mia moja

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9579

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Kumi na moja means ten and one. Swahili math shows its work.

A Kumi na moja
WHY Kumi is ten and na means and, so 11 is ten and one. Kumi na mbili is 12, and mia moja is 100.

LANGUAGES



A price tag says 'shilingi mia moja'. What does 'mia' mean?

- A** Ten
- B** One hundred
- C** One thousand

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9580

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I gave the vendor mia moja and a smile. He kept the shillings but gave back the smile.

B One hundred
WHY Mia means hundred, so mia moja is 100 and mbili is 200. Kumi is ten and elfu is thousand. Hundreds come up all the time with shilling prices.

LANGUAGES



A driver says the fare is 'shilingi elfu moja'. How much is that?

- A** 100 shillings
- B** 10 shillings
- C** 1,000 shillings

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9581

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I heard 'elfu' and thought the driver said 'elf'. Turns out the fare was not magical.

C 1,000 shillings
WHY Eflu is thousand, so elfu moja is 1,000 and elfu mbili is 2,000. Mia is 100 and kumi is 10. Prices in shillings often run into the thousands, so elfu is a must-know word.

LANGUAGES



What is the Swahili word for the shillings used to pay in Kenya?

- A** Dola
- B** Shilingi
- C** Pesa

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9582

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I tried to pay in compliments, but the shopkeeper only took shilingi.

B Shilingi
WHY Kenya's money is the shilling, shilingi in Swahili. Pesa is the general word for money, and dola means dollars. Tanzania and Uganda use shillings too, but each has its own.

LANGUAGES



You want to bargain. How do you say 'Please lower the price' in Swahili?

- A** Ongeza kidogo, tafadhali
- B** Bei rahisi sana
- C** Punguza bei, tafadhali

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9583

SESK.INFO

I said 'punguza bei' so nicely that the vendor lowered the price and raised my spirits.

STRAIGHT FACE

WHY Punguza means reduce or lower, and bei is price. Ongeza kidogo means add a little more, the opposite. Bei rahisi sana means a very cheap price, which no vendor wants to hear from a buyer.

C Punguza bei, tafadhali

LANGUAGES



While bargaining, what does 'Bei ghalii' mean?

- A** The price is too high!
- B** That is a fair price.
- C** Please give me change.

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9584

SESK.INFO

I said 'bei ghalii' to the souvenir seller. He said 'bei ghalii' to my bargaining skills.

STRAIGHT FACE

WHY Ghalii means expensive, so bei ghalii is a high price. Say it with a smile to start bargaining. A fair price is bei nafuu, and a cheap one is bei rahisi.

A The price is too high!

LANGUAGES



In Swahili time, what is 'saa moja asubuhi' (literally 'hour one, morning')?

- A** 1:00 am
- B** 7:00 am
- C** 6:00 am

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9585

SESK.INFO

My alarm in Tanzania said saa moja. I was six hours early and right on time.

STRAIGHT FACE

WHY Near the equator the sun rises around 6 am all year, so the Swahili day starts counting at sunrise. The first hour, saa moja, is 7 am. Add or subtract six hours to convert.

B 7:00 am

LANGUAGES



Your guide says to meet at 'saa nane mchana'. What time on your watch is that?

- A** 8:00 pm
- B** 8:00 am
- C** 2:00 pm

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9586

SESK.INFO

I showed up at 8 for a saa nane meeting. Six hours early is still technically punctual.

STRAIGHT FACE

WHY Nane means eight and mchana means afternoon. Travelers who read 'nane' as 8 o'clock show up six hours off. Count eight hours from 6 am and you get 2 pm.

C 2:00 pm

LANGUAGES



What does the Swahili question word wapi mean?

- A** When?
- B** Where?
- C** Who?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9587

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I asked wapi my map was. It was in the last place I looked, of course.

B Where?
WHY Wapi is the question word for places. It usually comes at the end, as in Choo kiko wapi? (Where is the toilet?).

LANGUAGES



What is the Kenyan Swahili word for a shared minibus taxi?

- A** Dala dala
- B** Bodaboda
- C** Matatu

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9588

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the matatu break up with the bus? It needed its own route in life.

C Matatu
WHY In Kenya, the vans and minibuses that run set routes around cities are called matatus. In Tanzania the same ride is a dala dala.

LANGUAGES



You are boarding a dala dala in Tanzania. How do you ask 'What's the fare?'

- A** Ni mbali kutoka hapa?
- B** Nauli kiasi gani?
- C** Kituo cha basi kiko wapi?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9589

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the dala count its passengers twice? It wanted fare play.

B Nauli kiasi gani?
WHY Nauli means fare and kiasi gani asks how much. A dala dala is Tanzania's shared minibuses; in Kenya it is a matatu.

LANGUAGES



What kind of ride is a bodaboda in East Africa?

- A** Motorcycle or bicycle taxi
- B** Public bus
- C** Ferry boat

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9590

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the bodaboda take the long way? It wanted to drum up extra fare.

A Motorcycle or bicycle taxi
WHY Bodaboda means a bicycle taxi or motorcycle taxi, handy for short trips. Agree on the fare before you climb on.

LANGUAGES



What does the Swahili phrase pole pole mean?

- A** Quickly
- B** Stop here
- C** Slowly

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9591

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I learned pole pole on safari, mostly because the tortoise was giving directions.

C Slowly
WHY Pole pole means slowly or gently. A well known saying is Pole pole ndio mwendo: slow, slow is the way to go.

LANGUAGES



How do you ask where the toilet is in Swahili?

- A** Choo ni nini?
- B** Choo kiko wapi?
- C** Choo ni wakati gani?

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9592

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the tourist practice Choo kiko wapi? Because it was the number one phrase.

B Choo kiko wapi?
WHY Choo means toilet or restroom. Kiko wapi asks where it is, the same pattern as Kituo cha basi kiko wapi? (Where is the bus station?).

LANGUAGES



What does the Swahili word chakula mean?

- A** Food
- B** Drink
- C** Money

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9593

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the tourist learn chakula first? Because priorities.

A Food
WHY Chakula is the general word for food. Its plural, vyakula, means foods or kinds of food.

LANGUAGES



How do you say water in Swahili?

- A** Maziwa
- B** Chai
- C** Maji

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9594

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I asked for maji and got a glass of water, which was a liquid experience.

C Maji
WHY Maji means water. Tafadhali kunywa maji means please drink water, good advice on a hot day.

LANGUAGES



What is nyama choma in East Africa?

- A** Vegetable stew
- B** Grilled or roasted meat
- C** Fried fish

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9595

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Nyama choma is so good it should be called nyama charm-a.

B Grilled or roasted meat
WHY Nyama means meat, and kuchoma means to roast. Lessons often write the full form, nyama ya kuchoma.

LANGUAGES



What is ugali in East Africa?

- A** Sweet donut
- B** Spicy rice
- C** Stiff maize porridge

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9596

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Ugali never panics in the kitchen. It always holds its shape.

C Stiff maize porridge
WHY Ugali is a stiff porridge made from maize (corn) flour and water. It is a staple served with stews, greens or grilled meat.

LANGUAGES



What does hoteli mean in Swahili?

- A** Hospital
- B** Hotel or restaurant
- C** Post office

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9597

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I booked a hoteli that turned out to be a restaurant. The food was so good I forgot I needed a bed.

B Hotel or restaurant
WHY Hoteli means a hotel, and it is also used for a place to eat. Context tells you whether it has beds or just meals.

LANGUAGES



How do you say room in Swahili, as in a hotel room?

- A** Chumba
- B** Choo
- C** Chumvi

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9598

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I asked for a chumba with a view. I got a great view of another chumba.

A Chumba
WHY Chumba means room. Ninataka chumba means I want a room. Do not mix it up with choo, the toilet.

LANGUAGES



What is a duka in Swahili?

- A** Bus stop
- B** Restaurant
- C** Shop or store

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9556

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I went into a duka for one thing and left with three, which makes it a super duka.

C Shop or store
WHY Duka means a shop or store. Duka la dawa is a pharmacy and duka la vitabu is a bookstore.

LANGUAGES



What does soko mean in Swahili?

- A** Market
- B** School
- C** Hospital

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9600

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why did the tomato go to the soko? It wanted to catch up with its peels.

A Market
WHY Soko means market, the place to buy fruit, vegetables and everyday goods. Kwenda sokoni means to go to the market.

LANGUAGES



A seller asks if you need help. How do you say 'I am just looking' in Swahili?

- A** Ninakula tu
- B** Ninaangalia tu
- C** Ninaogelea tu

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9601

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I said Ninaangalia tu, then I bought a basket, so I was not just looking after all.

B Ninaangalia tu
WHY Kuangalia means to look, ni-na- makes it I am, and tu means just or only. It lets you browse without promising to buy.

LANGUAGES



What does safari mean in Swahili?

- A** Journey or trip
- B** Lion
- C** Camera

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9602

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I planned a safari to the grocery store, but there were no wildebeest in aisle five.

A Journey or trip
WHY Safari simply means journey or trip. English borrowed the word for a wildlife tour.

LANGUAGES



How do you say lion in Swahili?

- A** Tembo
- B** Simba
- C** Twiga

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9603

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Simba is the only lion that can sing on Broadway and still catch dinner.

B Simba
WHY Simba means lion. Tembo is elephant and twiga is giraffe, the other two big names on a safari checklist.

LANGUAGES



How do you say elephant in Swahili?

- A** Kiboko
- B** Chui
- C** Tembo

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9604

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I asked for the Swahili word for elephant and got two good answers. It was a tembo and ndovu situation.

C Tembo
WHY Tembo means elephant, and ndovu is another word for the same animal. Kiboko is hippo and chui is leopard.

LANGUAGES



How do you say giraffe in Swahili?

- A** Twiga
- B** Tembo
- C** Simba

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9605

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
The giraffe won the spelling bee because twiga starts with T, for tall.

A Twiga
WHY Twiga means giraffe. You will hear it often on safari in Kenya and Tanzania.

LANGUAGES



How do you say hippopotamus in Swahili?

- A** Kifaru
- B** Kiboko
- C** Chui

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9606

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
Why do you not argue with a kiboko? It always gets the last splash.

B Kiboko
WHY Kiboko means hippopotamus. Kifaru is rhino and chui is leopard, so do not mix them up on safari.

LANGUAGES



How do you say doctor in Swahili?

- A** Polisi
- B** Daktari
- C** Mwalimu

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9607

SESK.INFO

I told the daktari I felt like a deck of cards. He said he would deal with me later.

STRAIGHT FACE

B Daktari **WHY** Daktari is the everyday word for a medical doctor. Polisi is police and mwalimu is teacher.

LANGUAGES



How do you say hospital in Swahili?

- A** Daktari
- B** Duka
- C** Hospitali

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9608

SESK.INFO

I went to the duka instead of the hospital and asked for a bandage. They sold me a chapati.

STRAIGHT FACE

C Hospitali **WHY** Hospitali means hospital Nitaenda hospitalini means I will go to the hospital.

LANGUAGES



When someone trips or drops something, which Swahili word shows sympathy?

- A** Haraka
- B** Pole
- C** Sawa

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9609

SESK.INFO

I dropped my chapati and someone said pole. The chapati did not get up.

STRAIGHT FACE

B Pole **WHY** Pole is used to say sorry or I feel for you after a small mishap, an illness or a tiring day. Pole sana means very sorry.

LANGUAGES



How do you say goodbye to one person in Swahili?

- A** Kwaheri
- B** Kwaherini
- C** Karibu

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9610

SESK.INFO

I practiced kwaheri so much that my mirror started waving back.

STRAIGHT FACE

A Kwaheri **WHY** Kwaheri is the standard goodbye to one person. Use kwaherini for a group.

LANGUAGES



What does tutaonana mean in Swahili?

- A** Good morning
- B** Welcome
- C** See you later

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

#9611

SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I said tutaonana to my reflection and now it will not leave me alone.

WHY Tutaonana means we will see each other, a friendly see you later. Kwaheri, tutaonana baadaye means goodbye, see you later.

C See you later

LANGUAGES



How do you say 'Thank you very much' in Swahili?

- A** Asante sana
- B** Karibu sana
- C** Pole sana

FLIP FOR THE ANSWER

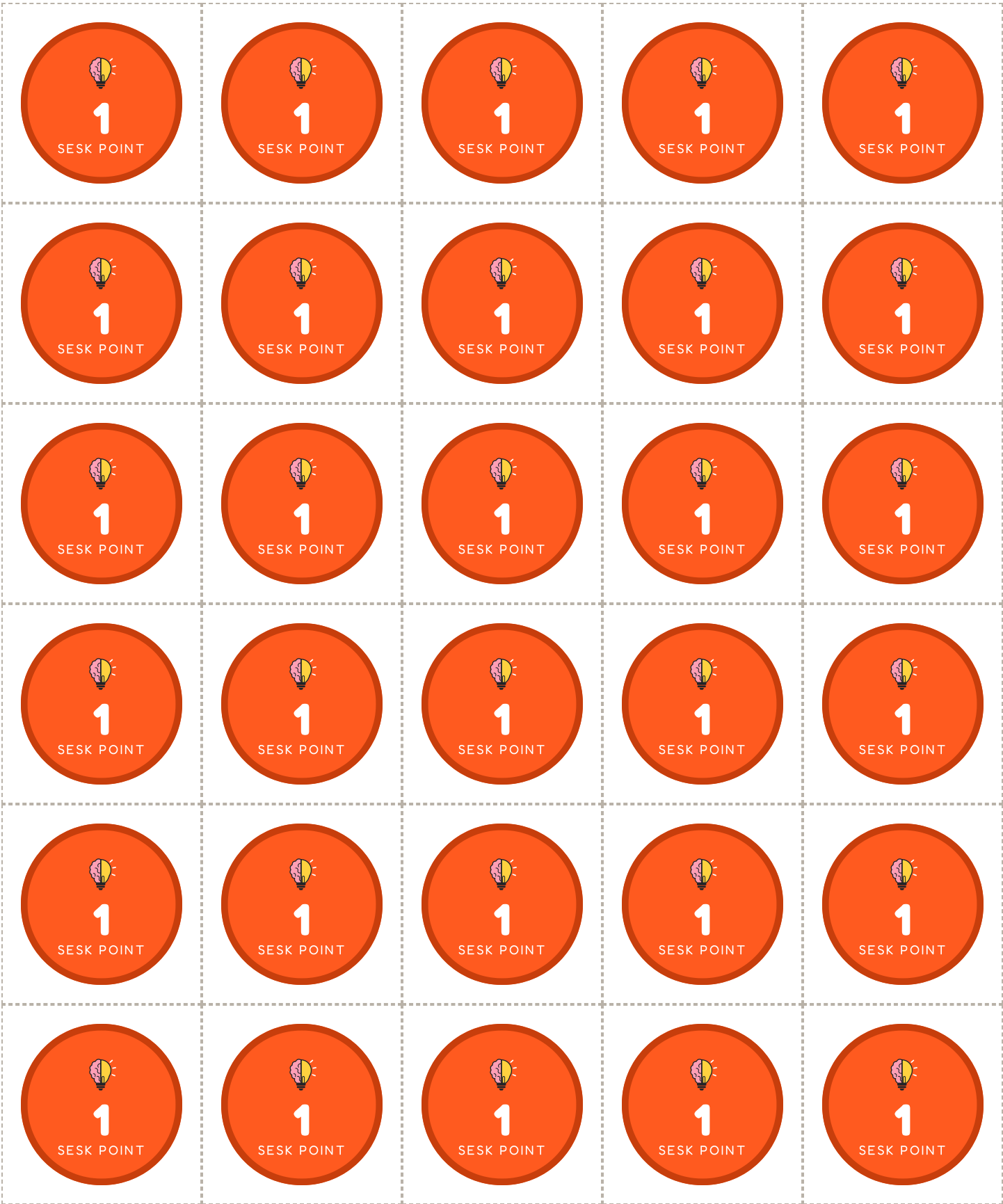
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SESK.INFO

STRAIGHT FACE
I said asante sana so many times on safari that the lions started saying karibu.

WHY Asante is thank you, and adding sana makes it 'very much'. Karibu sana means you are very welcome, and pole sana means I am very sorry for your trouble.

A Asante sana



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