

Defective Verbs

Defective Verbs: What are they?

Defective Verbs - verbs which do not have all tenses.

Defective Verbs: A Selection

In Scottish Gaelic, there are four main types of defective verbs. **Note:** I'm including the essential ones. There are a few others which I'm sure you will find in time.

1. Verbs with only a past tense.

Arsa - said. Used in reported speech only. Requires a noun subject or emphatic pronoun. An alternative to using "thuirt" all the time.

"Tha thu ceart," arsa' esan rium. \ "You are correct," he said to me.
"Chan eil an cat gorm," arsa an duine. \ "The cat is not blue," said the man.

Theab - almost or nearly.

Theab i tuiteam. \ She almost fell.
An do theab iad tuiteam? \ Did they almost fall?
Theab mi dhol ann. \ I almost went (there).

2. Verbs with only imperative forms. Imperative forms are commands!

Trobhad! Trobhadaibh! \ come here

Trobhad an seo a Sheumais! \ Come here Seumas!

Tiugainn!, Tiugainnibh! \ come (on), come along, let's go

Tiugainn a ghràidh! \ Come here dear!

Siuthad! Siuthadaibh! \ go on, proceed. A term of encouragement.

Siuthad a ghràidh! \ Go on dear!

Thalla! Thallaibh! \ go away. Sometimes used as the command to Go! instead of Rach!, the imperative form of the irregular verb 'to go.'

Thalla is cagainn bruis! \ Go away and eat a shrub! (Not a nice thing to say, but useful to know!)

3. Auxiliary verbs

The verb forms from here on out require the inverted nominal when the second verb in the sentence has an object. Remember, in this situation, the object goes before the verb. Nouns participating in a prepositional phrase do not invert.

Faod - May. Used for asking permission. Follows future tense rules.

Am faod mi falbh? \ May I leave?

Faodaidh. \ Yes

Chan fhaod. \ No (Remember, cha likes to lenite. FH is generally silent, leaving an initial vowel sound. Cha responds to this, adding an 'n'.)

Feum - Must, have to, need to

Feumaidh mi falbh. \ I must leave.

Am feum mi ithe? \ Must I eat?

Feumaidh. \ Yes.

Chan fheum. \ No.

Nach f(h)eum mi òl? \ Must I not drink? (Nach doesn't cause lenition, but when used with verbs with initial 'f', lenition frequently occurs for ease of pronunciation.)

4. Verbs formed using the assertive verb "Is" and a preposition or prepositional pronoun

'Is' is a defective verb, only having two tenses - present and past. The past is frequently used as a conditional - especially in the following constructions. In the present tense, the dependent form of the 'Is' verb disappears, leaving just the 'cha,' 'an,' and 'nach' portion.

This first group of constructions requires the use of the preposition 'le'. Using these "Is + le" constructions, the blanks can be filled with nouns or verbal nouns. Give it a try.

| | |
|--------|-----------|
| leam | with me |
| leat | with you |
| leis | with him |
| leatha | with her |
| leinn | with us |
| leibh | with you |
| leotha | with them |

Is toil + le - Like (present tense only. Use the verb còrd for other uses.)

Is toil leum _____. \ I like _____.

Cha toil leam _____. \ I don't like _____.

An toil leis _____? \ Does he like _____?

Nach toil leis _____? \ Doesn't he like _____?

Is toil leis sgona. \ He likes scones.

Cha toil leam sgadan cus. \ I don't like herring much.

Cò 's toil mil-dheoch òl? \ Who likes drinking mead?

Bu toil + le - Would like (note the use of the past tense of the 'Is' verb.)

Bu toil leam _____. \ I would like _____.
Cha bu toil leam _____. \ I would not like _____.
Am bu toil leis _____? \ Would he like _____?
Nach bu toil leis _____? \ Wouldn't he like _____?
Bu toil leatha cofaidh. \ She would like coffee.

'S fheàrr + le - Prefer (Present tense, 'Is' verb.)

'S fheàrr leatha _____. \ She prefers _____.
Chan fheàrr leatha _____. \ She does not prefer _____.
An fheàrr leat _____? \ Do you prefer _____?
Nach fheàrr leat _____? \ Don't you prefer _____?
'S fheàrr leatha fionn. \ They prefer wine.

B' fheàrr + le - Would Prefer (Past tense, 'Is' verb.)

B' fheàrr leinn _____. \ We would prefer _____.
Cha b' fheàrr leinn _____. \ We would not prefer _____.
Am b' fheàrr leatha _____? \ Would they prefer _____?
Nach b' fheàrr leatha _____? \ Wouldn't they prefer _____?
B' fheàrr leat an càic. \ You would prefer the cake.

This next group of constructions requires the use of the preposition 'do':

dhomh to me
dhut to you
dha to him
dhi to her
dhuinn to us
dhuibh to you
dhaibh to them

'S fheàrr + do - Had better (Warning! The preposition has changed!)

'S fheàrr dhuinn _____. \ We had better _____.
Chan fheàrr dhuinn _____. \ We had better not _____.
An fheàrr dhuibh _____? \ Had you better _____?
Nach fheàrr dhuibh _____? \ Hadn't you better _____?
'S fheàrr do Sìm leughadh. \ Simon had better read.

Bu choir + do - Should

Bu choir dha _____. \ He should _____.
Cha bu choir dha _____. \ He shouldn't _____.
Am bu choir dhi _____? \ Should she _____?
Nach bu choir dhi _____? \ Shouldn't she _____?
Bu choir do Pheigi falbh. \ Peggy should leave.

'S urrainn + do - Can (ability)

'S urrainn dhomh _____. \ I can _____.
Chan urrainn dhomh _____. \ I can't _____.
An urrainn dhut _____? \ Can you _____?
Nach urrainn dhut _____? \ Can't you _____?
'S urrainn dha dannsadh. \ He can dance.

B' urrainn + do - Could

B' urrainn do Bob _____. \ Bob could _____.
Cha b' urrainn do Bob _____. \ Bob couldn't _____.
Am b' urrainn do Bob _____? \ Could Bob _____?
Nach b' urrainn do Bob _____? \ Couldn't Bob _____?
B' urrainn dhi snàmh. \ She could swim.

(Fh)eudar + do - must (Am Faclair Beag says this is used only in the past or conditional, but Colin Mark seems to contradict this).

Is eudar dhomh an car a reic. \ I must sell the car.
Is eudar dhomh ithe. \ I must eat.

An rud nach gabh a leasachadh 's fheudar cur suas leis.

/ What you can't change, you must put up with (It's no use crying over spilt milk)

B' (fh)eudar + do - Had to ('S fheàrr + do has a quality of an action not completed, while b' eudar + do has a quality where actions are completed.)

B' eudar dha òl. \ He had to drink.
B' eudar dhi an taigh fhàgail. \ She had to leave the house.
B' eudar dhomh tilleadh dhachaidh. \ I had to return home.

Unlike the previous "Is + le" constructions, these "Is + do" constructions only permit the use of verbal nouns. You can swim, but you can't cookie!