

Perfect Tenses

Format: Bi + air + verbal noun. Uses ‘inverted nominal.’

‘Perfect’ tenses describe actions that are completed at the point in time under discussion. The point in time under discussion does not have to be this moment.

In English, these are the ‘have,’ ‘had,’ ‘will have,’ and ‘would have had’ sentences. Not possession!

Present Perfect

Tha mi air ithe. \ I have eaten.
At the point in time that the question is asked, the eating action is completed.
Tha mi air cèic ithe. \ I have eaten cake.
Tha mi air a’ chèic ithe. \ I have eaten the cake.
Tha e air ithe. \ He has eaten.
Tha e air briosaidean ithe. \ He has eaten cookies.

A bheil sibh air ithe? \ Have you (pl.) eaten?
Tha. Tha sinn air ithe. \ Yes. We have eaten.

Dè tha sibh air ithe? \ What have you (pl.) eaten?

Tha sinn làn airson gu bheil sinn air cèic agus briosaidean ithe.
We are full because we have eaten cake and cookies.

Tha an t-acras oirnn airson nach eil sinn air ithe fad an latha!
We are hungry because we have not eaten all day!

Past Perfect

Bha Anna air leughadh. \ Anna had read.
Bha Anna air leabhar a leughadh. \ Anna had read a book.
Note that ‘a’ is used before a non-vowel-initial verbal noun.
Bha Anna air an leabhar a leughadh. \ Anna had read the book.
Bha Seumas air sgrìobhadh a h-uile latha. \ Seumas had written every day.
A bheil Seumas air leabhar a sgrìobhadh? \ Has Seumas written a book?
Bha Seumas air an leabhar a sgrìobhadh. \ Seumas had written the book.

Tha mi air an leabhar a leughadh cuideachd. \ I have read the book also.
Chan eil mi air leabhar a sgrìobhadh. \ I have not written a book.

Tha mi toilichte airson gun robh Seumas air leabhar a sgrìobhadh agus tha mi air a leughadh.

I am happy because Seumas had written a book and I have read it.

Note that in this example the ‘a’ before ‘leughadh’ is not the same ‘a’ used above. This ‘a’ is the possessive pronoun ‘a’ (his or masculine its) which is used for the pronoun object in ‘have read it.’

Dè an t-ainm a tha e air a chur air an leabhar?

What name has he given (put on) the book?

‘Gàidhlig soirbh a thuigsinn.’

\ ‘Gaelic easily understood.’

Cuin a bha thu air an leabhar a leughadh?

\ When had you read the book?

Bha mi air an leabhar a leughadh air an latha dheth agam.

I had read the book on my day off.

Future Perfect

Bidh am balach air a chur air a’ chòta aige.

\ The boy will have put on (him) his coat (the coat at him.)

Bidh am balach air còta a chur air.

\ The boy will have put a coat on (him).

Bidh am balach air an còta a chur air.

\ The boy will have put the coat on (him).

Bidh am balach air a chòta a chur air.

\ The boy will have put his coat on (him).

Am bi a màthair air a còta a chur oirre?

\ Will her mother have put her coat on her?

Bi. Bi a màthair air a còta a chur oirre nuair a tha i air fhàgail airson sgoil.

Yes. Her mother will have put her coat on her when she has left for school.

Cuin a bhios i air fhàgail airson sgoil?

\ When will she have left for school?

Bidh i air fhàgail airson sgoil nuair a bhios an t-uisge air a sgur.

She will have left for school when the rain will have stopped.

Carson a bhios a màthair air còta a chur oirre?

Why will her mother have put a coat on her?

Bidh a màthair air còta a chur oirre airson gum bi i air iarraidh a nighean a bhith tioram.

Her mother will have put a coat on her because she will have wanted her daughter to be dry.

Bidh a màthair air còta a chur oirre airson nach bi i air iarraidh a nighean a bhith fliuch.

Her mother will have put a coat on her because she will not have wanted her daughter to be wet.

Conditional Perfect

Nan robh na luchd-turais air a dhol dhan chaisteal, bhiodh iad air an gearradh-arm fhaicinn.

If the tourists would have gone to the castle, they would have seen the coat of arms.

References and Suggested Readings

Byrne, Michel Gràmar na Gàidhig, 2nd ed., Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, 2004, pp. 129 - 130.