

# Verbal Nouns, Infinitives, and Objects of Verbs

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## Verbal Nouns and Objects of Verbs

Hopefully, you have been learning Gaelic verbs using both the imperative form and the verbal noun. For example,

**Pòg!** [Imperative, Kiss!]                      **a' pògadh** [Verbal Noun, kissing]

From these two forms and the rules, you can make all the other forms of the verb.

We make all the forms of the verb that have a tense (a time element) from the imperative (e.g. past, future, conditional), and the forms of the verb without a tense from the verbal noun (e.g. the infinitive).

Other lessons are concerned with the forms of the verb with tense. This lesson focuses on the verbal noun.

Some points to consider about verbal nouns:

- No tense is associated with them.
- They are verbs because they express actions or processes.
- They are nouns because they are the names of actions (English -ing words).
- Not all verbal nouns in Gaelic have the same ending, as they do in English.
- Some are the same as the imperative (seinn, òl).
- Some are irregular (ràdh).
- Some have more than one form (smaoineachadh v. smaointinn)

There are three groupings of verbal noun use. We will look at each.

**Note:** In this lesson, I have selected verbs for examples which can take direct objects (called transitive verbs). Not all verbs can take direct objects.

**Example:** Tha Iain a' còcaireachd dìnnear anns a' chidsin. \ John is cooking dinner in the kitchen. Dinner is the direct object.

### I. Progressive (Currently occurring action)

This is the basic form that you have used since the start of learning Gaelic.

**Format:** Bi + verbal noun.

#### A. Basic Form

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1)Tha mi a' còcaireachd.      | \ I am <b>cooking</b> .        |
| 2)Tha e ag ithe.              | \ He is <b>eating</b> .        |
| 3)Carson a tha thu ag ithe?   | \ Why are you <b>eating</b> ?  |
| 4)Bha an duine a' sgrìobhadh. | \ The man was <b>writing</b> . |

- 5) Bha an tuathanach a' fliuchadh. \ The farmer was **watering**.  
6) Bithidh i a' faighinn. \ She is **getting/finding**.

**Note:** If you can replace the particle **a'** or **ag** with "in the act of" than this is the form of the verbal noun you are using.

English also had a similar construction, but it has become old fashioned.

**Example:** The dogs were a-running.

There are several things to note about this use of the verbal noun in Gaelic:

1. Verbs of thought and perception (think, feel, hear, see, understand, believe, etc.) in the progressive form represent longer periods of time than the tensed form of the verbs (smaoineachadh, faireachdainn, cluinntinn, faicinn, tuigsinn, creidsinn).

**Example:** I was watching the sunset (longer period of time), but then the sun went down (a moment of time).

2. Verbs of perception in the progressive form can express ability.

7) A bheil thu ag èisteachd càil? \ Can you hear anything? Do you hear anything?

3. The progressive form is used to express PRESENT HABITUAL actions (using the future tense of 'Bi'). (The habitual past uses the conditional forms.)

8) BITHIDH mi A' DOL dhan taigh-bidh gach Dihaoine airson dinnear.  
Every Friday I GO to a restaurant for dinner.

4. The progressive form of the Gaelic verbal noun only expresses action, not position. In English, the verbal noun expresses both action and position. In Gaelic, we use NAM/NAD to express position.

9) Tha mi a' suidhe. ACTION: Literally, I am in the act of sitting. Translated as, '(Currently,) I **am sitting**.'

10) Tha mi nam\* shuidhe. POSITION: Literally, I am in my sitting. Translated as, '(Currently,) I **am sitting** (down).'

NAM/NAD is explored in a different lesson. [See Appendix 4 of the 'Book of Is.']

## B. With a Noun Object

If the noun object is indefinite, it is in the nominative form. If the noun object is definite, most correctly it should be in the genitive form, but is becoming more common to see it in the nominative form.

The noun object comes after the verbal noun.

- 11)Tha mi a' faighinn ubhal. I am (in the act of) getting an apple. INDEFINITE NOUN OBJECT  
12)Tha mi ag ithe an ubhail. I am (in the act of) eating the apple. DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (GENITIVE)  
13)Tha mi ag ithe an t-ubhal. I am (in the act of) eating the apple. DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (NOMINATIVE)

### C. With a Pronoun Object

If the object is a pronoun, we must use GAM/GAD. GAM/GAD represents the merger of the possessive pronouns and the preposition 'aig.'

aig	+	mo*	=	gam*
aig	+	do*	=	gad*
aig	+	a*	=	ga*
aig	+	a	=	ga (h- before vowels)
aig	+	ar	=	gar (n- before vowels)
aig	+	ur	=	gur (n- before vowels)
aig	+	an	=	gan (gam before m, b, f, p)

Note that the GAM/GAD inherits the lenition of the possessive pronouns.

The pronoun object comes before the verbal noun.

- 14)Tha mi a' faighinn ubhal.  
I am (in the act of) getting an apple. INDEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (as above)  
15)Bithidh mi ga ithe.  
Literally, I will be at its (masculine) eating. I will eat it. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
16)Tha e ga chòcaireachd.  
He is cooking it (masculine). PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
17)Tha i gan sgrìobhadh.  
She is writing them. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
18)Bha esan gam faighinn.  
He was getting them. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
19)Bha mi ga h-ithe an-dè.  
I was eating it (feminine) yesterday. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

Since Scottish Gaelic doesn't have a present tense other than Bi + verbal noun, this is the only way we can say things like 'I am eating it.' In the other tenses, we can go right into the tense - but we might not want to depending on the meaning.

- 20)Bha e gan còcaireachd. He was cooking them. PRONOUN OBJECT  
21)Chòcairich e iad. He cooked them. PREDICATE

22) Bha e gan còcaireachd nuair a dh'fhòn a mhàthair.  
He was cooking them when his mother called.

Do you see the longer duration of 'cooking' versus the moment when the phone rang?

### D. With "a bhith"

The infinitive of the verb 'Bi' is 'a bhith' and means 'to be.' It is frequently used with verbal nouns.

23) Tha mi ag iarraidh a bhith aig an taigh.  
I am (in the act of) wanting to be at home.

24) 'S fheàrr leam a bhith a' sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig.  
I prefer to be (in the act of) writing Gaelic.

25) Is toigh leam cèic.  
I like cake.

26) B' fheàrr leam a bhith ga ithe.  
I prefer to be eating it.

## II. Intent (Future action)(Verb of motion + infinitive)

This form requires a verb of motion and a verbal noun.

Rach! Thig! Falbh! Cuir (as send)! Fòn! Sgrìobh!

If the verb here is not one of motion, then follow the patterns in Part I.

In this case, in addition to a verb of motion, we will need to use the infinitive form of a verb. This is made from the verbal noun using the following rules:

1. Remove the apostrophe from the "a"
2. Lenite the verbal noun.
3. If the verbal noun starts with a vowel, put " dh' " in front.
4. If the verbal noun starts with f + vowel, lenite and put " dh' " in front.

Examples:

a' coiseachd becomes a chois eachd

ag èisteachd becomes a dh'èisteachd

a' faighinn becomes a dh'fhaighinn

a' reic becomes a reic

## A. Basic Form

- 27)Tha mi a' dol a chois eachd aig dà uair. \ I am going to walk at two o'clock.  
28)Bithidh mi a' dol a dh'ithe aig sia uairean. \ I will be going to eat at six o'clock.  
29)Bha sinn a' dol a dh'fhalbh airson Alba an-diugh. \ We were going to leave for Scotland today.  
30)Tha sinn a' dol a chois eachd dhan bhùth. \ We are going to walk to the shop.

## B. With a Noun Object

With a noun object, it should be in genitive case.

- 31)Chaidh e a cheannach pàipear-naidheachd.  
He went to buy a newspaper. INDEFINITE NOUN OBJECT  
32)Tha sinn a' dol a cheannach taigh ùr.  
We are going to buy a new house. INDEFINITE NOUN OBJECT  
33)Thèid mi a dh'fhaighinn a' bhainne.  
I will go to get the milk. DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (GENITIVE)  
34)Tha sinn a' dol a cheannach an taighe.  
We are going to buy the house. DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (GENITIVE)  
35)Tha mi a' dol a dh'ithe an ubhail.  
I am going to eat the apple. DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT (GENITIVE)

## C. With a Pronoun Object

With a pronoun object, we use GAM/GAD as before.

- 36)Tha mi a' dol ga ithe.  
Literally, I am going (to be) at its eating (masculine). I am going to eat it.  
PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
37)Tha sinn a' dol ga cheannach.  
We are going to buy it. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
38)Bithidh mi a' dol ga h-òl.  
I am going to drink it (feminine). PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED  
39)Bithidh mi a' dol ga òl.  
I am going to drink it (masculine). PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

## III. Complementary (Inverted Nominal)

This very important form complements a verb at the front of a sentence with a verbal noun/infinitive-ish verb at the back to complete the meaning. This will be come clear when you see the examples.

To form this version of the verbal noun/infinitive we use the following rules:

1. Remove the apostrophe from the “a”
2. Lenite the verbal noun, if possible.
3. If the verbal noun starts with a vowel, leave off the “a” altogether.
4. If the verbal noun starts with “f” + a vowel, leave off the “a” and lenite.

Examples:

**a’ ceannach** becomes **a cheannach**

**ag èisteachd** becomes **èisteachd**

**a’ faighinn** becomes **fhaighinn**

**a’ reic** becomes **a reic**

This format is used with many verbs/verb like phrases, such as:

Is phrases:

Is toigh + le

Bu toigh + le

Is fheàrr + le

B’ fheàrr + le

’S urrainn + do

B’ urrainn + do

Bu choir + do

’S fheàrr + do

Bi phrases:

Tha mi ag iarraidh

Tha cuimhne agam

Tha dùil agam ri

Tha eagal orm

Tha mi a’ diùltadh

Tha cho math dhomh

Tha mi airson

Modal Verbs:

Feum

Faod

## A. Basic Form

40) Is toigh leis ithe.

41) ’S urrainn do Raibeart snàmh.

42) Tha mi ag iarraidh òl.

43) Tha mi a’ diùltadh draibheadh.

\ He likes to eat.

\ Robert can swim.

\ I am wanting to drink.

\ I am refusing to drive.

## B. With a Noun Object

Usually the noun object is in the nominative case (which is why it is called the Inverted Nominal), but if the main verb is used in conjunction with the preposition “ri,” then the object is in the Dative Case.

44) Bha esan toilichte sin a chluinntinn.

He was happy to hear that. DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

45) Am bu toil leibh an car fhaicinn?

Would you like to see the car? DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT INVERTED

46) 'S fheàrr leam isbean ithe.

I would prefer a sausage to eat.] INDEFINITE NOUN OBJECT INVERTED

47) Bu toigh leam an t-ubhal a cheannach.

I would like to buy the apple] DEFINITE NOUN OBJECT INVERTED

## C. With a Pronoun Object

This form uses POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS for pronoun objects.

48) Bu toigh leam a cheannach.

I would like to buy it. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

49) Feumaidh esan a ithe.

He must eat it. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

50) Tha dùil agam riut mo chuideachadh.

I expect you to help me. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

## D. With “a bhith”

However, if you insert ‘a bhith,’ then you can use GAM/GAD.

51) Bu toigh leam a bhith an t-ubhal a cheannach.

I would like to be buying the apple. NOUN OBJECT INVERTED

52) Bu toigh leam a bhith ga cheannach.

Literally, I would like to be at its buying. I would like to be buying it. PRONOUN OBJECT INVERTED

Sin agaibh e!

### Sources and Further Readings

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