

# The verb TO BE - IS (Part 1: Basics)

## 1. Introduction

By now you are quite familiar with the verb TO BE - BI. Now we are going to explore the other verb TO BE - IS.

Here they are for comparison:

	Bi	English	Is	English
<b>Present Tense</b>	Tha sibh... .	You are... .	Is sibhse... .	You are... .
	Chan eil mi... .	I am not... .	Cha ☁ mhise... .	I am not... .
	A bheil thu... ?	Are you... ?	An ☁ tusa... ?	Are you... ?
	Nach eil i... ?	Isn't she... ?	Nach ☁ ise... ?	Isn't she... ?
<b>Past Tense</b>	Bha sibh... .	You were... .	Bu sibhse... .	You were... .
	Cha robh mi... .	I was not... .	Cha bu mhise... .	I was not... .
	An robh thu... ?	Were you... ?	Am bu tusa... ?	Were you... ?
	Nach robh i... ?	Wasn't she... ?	Nach bu ise... ?	Wasn't she... ?
<b>Future Tense</b>	Bithidh sibh... .	You will be... .		
	Cha bhi mi... .	I will not be... .		
	Am bi thu... ?	Will you be... ?		
	Nach bi sibh... ?	Will you not be... ?		

Notice that IS is missing the future tense. IS is irregular, defective and some would say decaying as it only has two tense forms and frequently appears **invisible** in sentences. If you notice the ☁ symbol in the present tense, it's a symbol I use for the invisible part. It represents the verb portion of the dependent form. I say the verb's essence is there in spirit, perhaps resting on a cloud playing a harp. It's a trick I use to make IS in the present follow the regular pattern. Notice that things return to normal in the past with the BU.

As a general rule, IS always uses the emphatic form of the pronouns. Pay attention to the fact that THU becomes TUSA - it is de-lenited while MISE becomes lenited following BU.

IS is frequently used to equate two nouns. IS is called an **intransitive verb** because it is used to link nouns when they are describing qualities that are unlikely to change. IS is also called an **assertive verb** because you use it to assert that someone or something is someone or something.

For example, we use BI to describe whether or not we are hot, cold, happy, sad, dry or wet because these conditions are likely to change. IS is used when stating our names, our occupations, or other aspects of us that are unlikely to change.

### Emphatic Pronouns

Regular	Emphatic	English
mi	mise	me
thu/tu	thusa/tusa	you
e	esan	he
i	ise	she
sinn	sinne	we
sibh	sibhse	you
iad	iadsan	they

## 2. Cò thusa?

The simplest form of the verb IS is used when asking the question:

**Cò thusa?**                      Who are you?

Notice that we have the word CÒ for WHO and TUSA for YOU but there is no word AM/IS/ARE! It has decayed!

So we have:

**Cò thusa?**                      Who are you?  
**Cò esan?**                        Who is he?  
**Cò ise?**                         Who is she?  
**Cò sibhse?**                      Who are you (plural/formal)?  
**Cò iadsan?**                      Who are they?

This is a quick way of asking someone’s name without having to use “Dè an t-ainm a th’ ort?” \ What’s your name? (literally, What the name that is on you?)

The answer to “Cò thusa?” is the same as for “Dè an t-ainm a th’ ort?” :

Is mise \_\_\_\_\_ .      I am \_\_\_\_\_.

Cò thusa?  
Is mise Geoff.

## 3. “Is” complete

Is follows most of the same patterns as BI:

Present Tense			
Bi		Is	
Tha e fuar.	He is cold.	Is esan Bob.	He is Bob.
Chan eil e fuar.	He is not cold.	Chan ☁ esan Bob.	He is not Bob.
A bheil e fuar?	Is he cold?	An ☁ esan Bob?	Is he Bob?
Nach eil e fuar?	Isn't he cold?	Nach ☁ esan Bob?	Isn't he Bob?
A bheil e fuar?	Is he cold?	An esan Bob?	Is he Bob?
Tha.	Is. (Yes.)	'S e.	Is. (Yes.)
Chan eil.	Is not. (No.)	Chan e.	Is not. (No.)

Note the use of the un-emphatic pronoun in the answers using IS.

Past Tense			
Bi		Is	
Bha thu tinn.	You were sick.	Bu tu an fear.	You were the one.
Cha robh thu tinn.	You were not sick.	Cha bu tu an fear.	You were not the one.
An robh thu tinn?	Were you sick?	Am bu tu an fear?	Were you the one?
Nach robh thu tinn?	Weren't you sick?	Nach bu tu an fear?	Weren't you the one?
An robh thu tinn?	Were you sick?	Am bu tu an fear?	Where you the one?
Bha.	Was. (Yes.)	B' e.	Was. (Yes.)
Cha robh.	Was not. (No.)	Cha b' e.	Was not. (No.)

A difficult thing for English speakers to cope with is the use of the word IS as a statement. Normally when English-speaking-brain sees IS at the beginning of a sentence, it thinks a question is coming.

**Note:** It is important to remember the difference between the **independent** form and the **dependent** forms of the verb. **THA** is **independent** because it only has **one word**. **CHAN EIL** is **dependent** because it **depends on having more than one word!**

Checking that chart again, when you look at **IS**, notice that in the dependent forms, part of the verb is missing! This is why **Is** is said to be decaying. It is present in spirit, but it is not written.

## 4. Linking Nouns

A common use of **IS** is to state that a noun is a noun. For example:

'S e Ameireaganach a th' annam. / I **am** an American.

Literally, this is "It is an American that is in me." Notice the use of both verbs **TO BE** in this construction.

Using this construction we can now be things: men, women, teachers (occupations), Nationalities - any noun at all!

You may recall that I said that **IS** prefers the emphatic pronouns. But clearly '**S E** and **CHAN E** are not using the emphatic pronouns. If you look at the English translations for the constructions that use '**S E** and **CHAN E**, you'll see that the translations feature an **IT** at the beginning of the sentence. This mysterious un-emphatic **E** is a generic masculine it that is present just to make the world go 'round. Don't worry about it, just know that it's always an un-emphatic it. **NOTE:** Sometimes that **E** does become **I** when referencing things that are feminine. It is fairly rare, however.

Here is a list of things you can now be:

Occupations		Nationalities	
bean-taighe (f)	housewife	Albanach	Scotsman
peantair (m)	painter	Ameireaganach	American
dotair (m)	doctor	Astràlianach	Australian
nurs (m)	nurse	Sasannach	Englishman
dràibhear (m)	driver	Eireannach	Irishman
còcaire (m)	cook	Cuimreach	Welshman
bancair (m)	banker	Canadianach	Canadian
bèicear (m)	baker	Spàinnteach	Spaniard

Lastly, you'll notice that using the '**S E** construction requires a possibly unfamiliar word at the end. That's one of those prepositional pronouns.

To express these innate qualities requires the preposition ANN - IN.

Examples

Is mise Geoff.

I am Geoff.

'S e duine a th' annam.

I'm a man.

'S e duine snog a th' annam.

I'm a nice man.

'S e tidsear a th' annam.

I'm a teacher.

An e tidsear a th' ann Geoff?

Is Geoff a teacher?

'S e. 'S e tidsear a th' ann Geoff.

Yes. Geoff is a teacher.

'S e. 'S e tidsear a th' ann.

Yes. He is a teacher.

Nach e Spàinnteach a th' ann Geoff?

Isn't Geoff a Spaniard?

Chan e. 'S e Ameireaganach a th' ann Geoff.

No, Geoff is an American.

Dè an t-ainm a th' air?

What is his name?

Is esan Bob.

He is Bob.

Dè an obair a th' aige?

What is his job?

'S e bèicear a th' ann.

He is a baker.

Ann - In	
annam	in me
annad	in you
ann	in him
innte	in her
annainn	in us
annaibh	in you
annta	in them

Part two of this handout: Verb - Is (Phrases).