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Nouns

Nouns in Irish belong to one of two classes, or genders, known as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. These have only partial overlap with biological gender, and apply to all nouns, including those that refer to inanimate objects.

For nouns referring to people and animals, the gender usually matches that of the biological sex of the referent, as in the following examples:

Masculine nouns
fear (man)
tarbh (bull)
rotha (ram)
sagart (priest)

Feminine nouns
bean (woman)
bó (cow)
caora (sheep)
bean rialta (nun)

There are, however, some exceptions. For example, **cailín** (girl) is a grammatically masculine noun, while **stail** (stallion) is feminine.

Nouns referring to inanimate objects can be thought of as being arbitrarily assigned to a gender class, which must simply be learned along with the form and meaning of the word. As the examples above and below indicate, there is no consistent and obvious relation between the form or meaning of a word and its gender.

Masculine nouns
bád (boat)
teach (house)
pláta (plate)
bord (table)

Feminine nouns
curach (currach) (a kind of boat)
fuinneog (window)
gloine (glass)
leaba (bed)

Nouns of different genders generally have different patterns of declension (form changes that mark grammatical role) and agreement with elements that occur in phrases with them. The former may be marked by suffixes; the latter by changes to the initial consonant.

Sometimes particular nouns may belong to different genders in different regional variants.

See Also:
Declension of Nouns

Declension of Nouns

"Declension" refers to changes in the form of nouns and adjectives according to the role they play in the sentence. These different roles, and the grammatical markings that signal them are known as "cases".   In Irish, these changes are marked by a combination of suffixation and consonant changes.   The cases distinguished in Irish are the following:

Common Case
This case is used for nouns functioning as the subject or object of a sentence. It corresponds to both nominative and accusative in other languages.

Tá fear anseo.   (A man is here.)
Tá an teach ansin.   (The house is there.)
Feicim an fear.   (I see the man.)
Feicim an teach.   (I see the house.)

Genitive Case
This case is used for nouns serving as the possessor of some other noun.

cóta an fhir   (the man's coat)
doras an tí   (the door of the house)

For the form of the genitive case, refer to the sections on the five noun declensions.

Vocative Case
This case is used primarily with nouns denoting humans to address the individual directly.

A Sheáin!   'Séan' (when calling him by name)
A Bhríd!   'Bríd' (when calling her by name)
A dhaoine uaisle   'Ladies and gentlemen...'

The vocative case is formed by adding the particle "**a**" before the noun and leniting an initial consonant.   Additionally, a final broad consonant in masculine names becomes slender.

Formerly, Irish had a dative case, used after prepositions, such as 'in', 'under', 'with', etc. This still survives in a few fixed expressions and in songs and poetry, but in most spoken varieties of the language, it is obsolete, and the common form is generally used with prepositions.

Irish nouns are traditionally organized into several declension classes according to the way their genitive singular form is marked. There are five main declension classes, some of which have only a few members, and several irregular nouns which have unique forms.   The most common declension classes are illustrated below.

First Declension
Masculine nouns ending in a broad consonant form their genitive by making the final consonant slender.   In some cases a vowel change is also involved.

a man   **fear**   of a man   **fir**

a priest	**sagart**	of a priest	**sagairt**
a cup	**cupán**	of a cup	**cupáin**

Following the definite article, "**an**" (the), the initial consonant of genitive singular nouns in this declension class undergo the lenition mutation.   The consonants /t/, /d/, and /s/, however, are not lenited after "**an**".   Instead, an /s/
changes to /t/, which is marked by adding the letter /t/ before the /s/ in spelling.

the man	**an fear**	of the man	**an fhir**
the priest	**an sagart**	of the priest	**an tsagairt**
the cup	**an cupán**	of the cup	**an chupáin**

Second Declension
Feminine nouns in this class end in a consonant and form the genitive by adding the suffix **-e**.   If the final consonant of the common form is broad, it becomes slender.

a window	**fuinneog**	of a window	**fuinneoige**
a stone	**cloch**	of a stone	**cloiche**
a step	**céim**	of a step	**céime**
an opportunity	**deis**	of an opportunity	**deise**
a street	**sráid**	of a street	**sráide**

In this class, the Common form is lenited after the article "**an**".   The genitive is not lenited after the article, but the article itself changes to "**na**".   The consonants /t/, /d/, and /s/ are unlenited after "**an**", but with the change of /s/ to /t/, as in the genitive case above.

the window	**an fhuinneog**	of the window	**na fuinneoige**
the stone	**an chloch**	of the stone	**na cloiche**
the step	**an chéim**	of the step	**na céime**
the opportunity	**an deis**	of the opportunity	**na deise**
the street	**an tsráid**	of the street	**na sráide**

Third Declension
These nouns end in a consonant and may be either masculine or feminine.   They form their genitive singular   by adding the suffix **-a** (and broadening a slender final consonant).   The mutation rules and articles follow the appropriate forms for the gender of the noun.

the time	**an t-am** (m.)	of the time	**an ama**
the doctor	**an dochtúr** (m.)	of the doctor	**an dochtúra**
the meat	**an fheoil** (f.)	of the meat	**na feola**

Fourth Declension
This class of nouns does not have a distinct form in the genitive.   It includes all nouns ending in the diminutive **-ín**, most nouns ending in a vowel, and a few others.   Most are masculine, but a few are feminine, and the article choice and mutation rules apply accordingly.

the girl	**an cailín**	of the girl	**an chailín**
the town	**an baile**	of the town	**an bhaile**
the name	**an t-ainm**	of the name	**an ainm**

Fifth Declension

Most fifth declension nouns are feminine and end in a vowel or a slender consonant.   The genitive singular is formed in various ways, always including a consonant.   Kinship terms (including a few masculine ones) and a few others simply broaden their slender consonant.

the father	**an t-athair**	of the father	**an athar**
the mother	**an mháthair**	of the mother	**na máthar**
Christmas	**an Nollaig**	of Christmas	**na Nollag**

Others add a suffix, often **-ach**, but sometimes **-n** or **-d**.

the city	**an chathair**	of the city	**na cathrach**
the train	**an traein**	of the train	**na traenach**
the sheep	**an chaora**	of the sheep	**na caorach**
the person	**an phearsa**	of the person	**na pearsan**
the friend	**an chara**	of the friend	**na carad**

Irregular Nouns

Some of the most common irregular nouns are listed below.

woman	**bean**	of a woman	**mná**
house	**teach**	of a house	**tí**
bed	**leaba**	of a bed	**leapa**
month	**mí**	of a month	**míosa**
God	**Dia**	of God	**Dé**
day	**lá**	of a day	**lae**

See Also:
Nouns

Plural Forms of Nouns

The plural formation of Irish nouns is varied and complex.   A number of suffixes or consonant changes are used, sometimes combined with vowel changes, and are not predictable by declension class for the most part, although a few general tendencies can be discerned.   The plural form of a given noun may vary considerably from region to region, and must simply be learned along with the noun for the regional variant being acquired.   Official Standard plurals are given here, and are quite common in usage, but will not always correspond to the form found most frequently in a given Gaeltacht.   After the definite article, genitive plural nouns display the eclipsis mutation.   For example:

na fir	the men	**na bhfear**	of the men
na ceisteanna	the questions	**na gceisteanna**	of the questions

Some common plural formation processes are listed below.

1.   A broad final consonant becomes slender.   This is used exclusively with masculine nouns of the first declension, but not with all such nouns. Those nouns that form their plural this way have a Common plural that is identical to the Genitive singular.   Conversely, the Genitive plural retains the broad consonant, making it identical to the Common singular:

	Singular		Plural	
Common:	**bád**	boat	**báid**	boats
Genitive:	**báid**	of a boat	**bád**	of boats
Common:	**fear**	man	**fir**	men
Genitive:	**fir**	of a man	**fear**	of men

2.   Other nouns (including some in the first declension) form their plurals by adding a suffix. In these cases, the Genitive plural is usually the same as the Common plural form. The most common plural suffixes are listed below.

Singular	Suffix	Plural	
fuinneog	**-a**	**fuinneoga**	windows
cloch		**clocha**	stones
súil	**-e**	**súile**	eyes
cóta	**-í**	**cótaí**	coats
buachaill		**buachaillí**	boys
bus	**-anna**	**busanna**	buses
ceist		**ceisteanna**	questions
deirfiúr	**-(a)cha**	**deirfiúracha**	sisters
teanga		**teangacha**	tongues
scéal	**-ta**	**scéalta**	stories
saol		**saolta**	lives
scéalaí	**-the**	**scéalaithe**	storytellers
croí		**croíthe**	hearts

3. When the final (unstressed) syllable of a noun contains an /l/ or /r/, the plural may be formed by adding a suffix and deleting the vowel next to the /l/ or /r/.

Singular   Plural
doras   door   **doirse**   doors

4. One of the above plural forms may be accompanied by a change in the vowel of the noun.

Singular   Plural
fear   man   **fir**   men

5. Irregular plural formation

Singular   Plural
bean   woman   **mná**   women
cara   friend   **cairde**   friends
bó   cow   **ba**   cows
teach   house   **tithe**   houses

See Also:
<u>Nouns</u>
<u>Declension of Nouns</u>

Verb Conjugation: Overview

Irish verbs fall into two regular classes, depending primarily on the number of syllables in the verb stem.   These will be called "first conjugation" and "second conjugation", and the suffixes that mark the various tenses are slightly different for each.   A consistent difference between the two conjugations is that first conjugation verb suffixes have a short vowel and second conjugation suffixes have a long vowel.   Other differences will appear in the examples. There are also a number of verbs that are irregular, in that the form of the verb stem itself varies from tense to tense.

Verbs are conjugated to show the time reference and sometimes, but not always, include suffixes signaling the subject of the sentence (usually the actor, or the individual experiencing a state expressed by the verb). In cases where the subject is not identified by a distinct suffix, it is expressed by a separate pronoun (or noun).   These will be included in the sample conjugations.   Noun subjects use the same form of the verb as the pronouns 'he' and 'she' (**sé, sí**).

See Also:

Present Tense

The present tense is characterized by suffixes ending in "**nn**".   The vowel of the suffix varies according to the conjugation. Depending on the context and the meaning of the verb, the present tense may refer to something that is being asserted at the moment of speaking (e.g., 'I see Seán now.') or to something that happens on a regular   basis ('I see Seán once a year,' or   'I eat breakfast every morning.').   To express actions (such as eating) that take place at the moment of speech, a progressive construction is used.

Sample forms for the present tense of regular verbs are given below.

First Conjugation

First conjugation verbs form the present tense by adding suffixes directly to the verb stem in most cases. The suffixes are **-(a)im** (pronounced [m]) in the first person singular, **-(a)imid** (pronounced [m'id']--not used in Connemara) in the first person plural, and **-(e)ann** (pronounced [n]) in all other persons.   The parenthesized (**a**) is used when the final consonant of the stem is broad, but not otherwise; the parenthesized (**e**) is used when the final stem consonant is slender. They do not change the pronunciation.

bris (break)

I	**brisim**	we	**briseann muid, brisimid**
you	**briseann tú**	you (pl)	**briseann sibh**
he, it	**briseann sé**	they	**briseann siad**
she, it	**briseann sí**		

glan (clean)

I	**glanaim**	we	**glanann muid, glanaimid**
you	**glanann tú**	you (pl.)	**glanann sibh**
he	**glanann sé**	they	**glanann siad**
she	**glanann sí**		

Second Conjugation

Second conjugation verbs drop the second syllable and add the endings **-(a)ím** (pronounced [i:m']) in the first person singular, **-(a)ímid** (pronounced [i:m'id']--not used in Connemara) in first person plural or **-(a)íonn** (pronounced [i:n]) in other persons.

mínigh (explain)

I	**míním**	we	**míníonn muid, mínímid**
you	**míníonn tú**	you (pl.)	**míníonn sibh**
he	**míníonn sé**	they	**míníonn siad**
she	**míníonn sí**		

ceannaigh (buy)

I	**ceannaím**	we	**ceannaíonn muid,**
			ceannaímid
you	**ceannaíonn tú**	you (pl.)	**ceannaíonn sibh**
he	**ceannaíonn sé**	they	**ceannaíonn siad**
she	**ceannaíonn sí**		

Habitual and Immediate Present

The verb 'to be' is distinguished in form according to whether the time reference is to actual present time (the moment of speech) or to an habitual state which holds on a regular basis.   For immediate present (right now), **tá** is used; for habitual present, a form similar to the second conjugation forms is attached to the imperative stem **bí**.

Tá mé (or **Táim**) **anseo (anois)**.
I am here (now).

Tá Bríd anseo (anois).
Bríd is here (now).

Bím anseo (go minic).
I am here (often).

Bíonn Bríd anseo (go minic).
Bríd is here (often).'

Other verbs do not have distinct tense forms that show this meaning difference.   Action verbs (such as walk, eat, sing, fly, tell, etc.) generally are interpreted as referring to habitual action when the present tense is used.   A present progressive construction is used to refer to an immediate present action at the moment of speech.   Verbs of perception and mental state (e.g., see, hear, think, believe, notice, etc.) in the present tense form can be interpreted as referring either to immediate or habitual present, depending on the context.

Past Tense

The past tense is used to denote a single event in the past. It is formed from the verb stem alone, with the initial consonant lenited.   All forms of the past tense are generally used without subject suffixes; optional first and third person plural suffixes are also current in some regions.

First Conjugation

bris (break)

I	**bhris mé**	we	**bhris muid, bhriseamar**
you	**bhris tú**	you (pl)	**bhris sibh**
he/she	**bhris sé/sí**	they	**bhris siad, bhriseadar**

glan (clean)

I	**ghlan mé**	we	**ghlan muid, ghlanamar**
you	**ghlan tú**	you (pl)	**ghlan sibh**
he/she	**ghlan sé/sí**	they	**ghlan siad, ghlanadar**

Second Conjugation

mínigh (explain)

I	**mhínigh mé**	we	**mhínigh muid, mhíníomar**
you	**mhínigh tú**	you (pl.)	**mhínigh sibh**
he/she	**mhínigh sé/sí**	they	**mhínigh siad, mhíníodar**

ceannaigh (buy)

I	**cheannaigh mé**	we	**cheannaigh muid, cheannaíomar**
you	**cheannaigh tú**	you (pl.)	**cheannaigh sibh**
he/she	**cheannaigh sé/sí**	they	**cheannaigh siad, cheannaíodar**

Verbs beginning with a vowel prefix a **d'** to the verb stem instead of lenition.   Verbs beginning with /f/ both lenite the /f/ and prefix **d'**.

ól (drink)
D'ól mé. (I drank.)

fiafraigh (ask)
D'fhiafraigh mé. (I asked.)

Imperfect (Past Habitual) Tense

The imperfect, or past habitual, tense, refers to an action that occurred regularly over time in the past.   It can be translated in English as 'used to do' or 'would do' (with the meaning 'used to'), as well as by a simple past, with habitual meaning derived from context.   Person suffixes are used to signal the subject in the first   person singular (and optionally plural), the second person singular, and optionally in the third person plural.   The basic form of the past habitual (without person suffixes) is **-(e)adh** (pronounced [x]) , added to the stem of first conjugation verbs and **-(a)íodh** (pronounced [i:x]) , added to the first syllable of the stem of second conjugation verbs. The Official Standard gives a first person plural form, which is also listed, though not in use in all spoken varieties of Connemara Irish.

First Conjugation

bris (break)

I	**bhrisinn**	we	**bhrisíodh muid, bhrisimis**
you	**bhristeá**	you (pl.)	**bhriseadh sibh**
he	**bhriseadh sé**	they	**bhrisidís, bhriseadh siad**
she	**bhriseadh sí**		

glan   (clean)

I	**ghlanainn**	we	**ghlanadh muid, ghlanaimis**
you	**ghlantá**	you (pl.)	**ghlanadh sibh**
he	**ghlanadh sé**	they	**ghlanaidís, ghlanadh siad**
she	**ghlanadh sí**		

Second Conjugation

mínigh (explain)

I	**mhínínn**	we	**mhíníodh muid, mhínímis**
you	**mhíníteá**	you (pl.)	**mhíníodh sibh**
he	**mhíníodh sé**	they	**mhínídís, mhíníodh siad**
she	**mhíníodh sí**		

ceannaigh (buy)

I	**cheannaínn**	we	**cheannaíodh muid, cheannaímis**
you	**cheannaíteá**	you (pl.)	**cheannaíodh sibh**
he	**cheannaíodh sé**	they	**cheannaídís, cheannaíodh siad**
she	**cheannaíodh sí**		

In addition to the tense (and person) suffixes, an initial consonant is lenited and **d'** is

prefixed to an initial vowel or /f/, as in the past tense.

First Conjugation

D'ólainn.
I used to drink.

D'óladh sí.
She used to drink.

Second Conjugation

D'fhiafraínn.
I used to ask.

D'fhiafraíodh sí.
She used to ask.

Future Tense

The future tense marks verbs referring to events that are to take place in the future. It is formed by adding the endings **-f(a)idh** (pronounced []) to first conjugation verbs and **-óidh** or **-eoidh** (both pronounced [o:]) to second conjugation verbs (ending in broad and slender consonants, respectively). There are no person endings used regularly in the future tense in most varieties of Irish.

First Conjugation

bris (break)
brisfidh (will break)

glan (clean)
glanfaidh (will clean)

Second Conjugation

mínigh (explain)
míneoidh (will explain)

ceannaigh (buy)
ceannóidh (will buy)

Other Personal Endings, Response Forms

In the dialects of Munster (West Kerry, Cork, and Waterford), suffixes marking the person of the subject are used routinely instead of separate pronouns in a number of cases. These same suffixes are used in other dialects as well in response to questions, but (except for the first person present) not normally in non-response forms.   The additional suffixes that are so used in Connemara are given below.

First Conjugation

Present	I	**brisim**	**glanaim**
	you	**brisins**	**glanains**

Past	I	**bhriseas**	**ghlanas**
	you	**bhrisis**	**ghlanais**
		bhrisir	**ghlanair**
	they*	**bhriseadar**	**ghlanadar**

 (*The past 'they' forms are sometimes used in non-responses as well.)

Future	I	**brisfead**	**glanfad**
	you	**brisfis**	**glanfais**
		brisfir	**glanfair**

Second Conjugation

Present	I	**míním**	**ceannaím**
	you	**miníns**	**ceannaíns**

Past	I	**mhíníos**	**cheannaíos**
	you	**mhínís**	**cheannaís**
		mhínír	**cheannaír**
	they*	**mhíníodar**	**cheannaíodar**

 (*The past 'they' forms are sometimes used in non-responses as well.)

Future	I	**míneod**	**ceannód**
	you	**míneois**	**ceannóis**
		míneoir	**ceannóir**

Indicative Mood

The indicative mood is used for making assertions of fact, or denials, or for asking questions.

Tá sé ag báisteach anseo.
It is raining here.

Níl sé ag báisteach in Éirinn.
It is not raining in Ireland.

An bhfuil sé ag báisteach i Sasana?
Is it raining in England?

There are four or five tenses in the indicative mood for the verb 'to be': the present and present habitual tenses (distinguished in form only for the verb **tá** 'be'), the past tense, the imperfect tense, and the future tense.   These are formed by adding suffixes to the main verb stem as described in the sections for each tense.

See Also:
Present Tense
Imperfect Tense
Past Tense
Future Tense

Imperative Mood

The imperative mood is used to give commands.   In the singular form (a command given to one person), it consists simply of the verb stem, with no additions.

Ith do dhinnéar!
Eat your dinner!

Stop é sin!
Stop that!

Mínigh an freagra dom!
Explain the answer to me!

A negative command places **ná** 'don't'   before the verb.   **Ná** prefixes **h-** to a vowel.

Ná bris an ghloine!
Don't break the glass!

Ná hith é sin!
Don't eat that!

For a command given to more than one person, a plural imperative ending **-(a)igí** is used. If the verb is a second conjugation verb with a stem ending in **-igh**, that syllable is dropped before adding the ending.

Stopaigí!
Stop!

Mínigí an freagra!
Explain the answer!

The imperative forms of other persons are considerably more rare.   However, the first person plural form ('Let's...") is found with some frequency.   It is:

First Conjugation   Second Conjugation
brisimis   **mínímis**
glanaimis   **ceannaímis**

Some dialects use the pronoun **muid** in place of the suffix **-mis** (**brise muid**, etc.).

When third person forms are used, they are identical to the past habitual forms, first person is the same as the present ending.

See Also:

Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive mood is found only in subordinate clauses, introduced by the particle **go** 'that'.   Such a clause may appear on its own to express a wish, preceded by the particle **go**, which causes eclipsis.

Go sabhála Dia sinn!
(May) God save us!

Go dtaga do ríocht.
Thy kingdom come.

More often, however, it is dependent on some other main clause, and signals an uncertainty or lack of commitment to the reality of the event expressed by the verb, usually because it hasn't yet occurred.

Fan go dtaga siad.
Wait until they come.

Beidh mé imithe sula dtaga tú ar ais.
I'll be gone before you come back.

There are only two subjunctive tenses, the present and the past. The present subjunctive of regular first conjugation verbs is formed by adding the suffix **-a** to a verb stem ending in a broad consonant, and **-e** to
a verb stem ending in a slender consonant.   Second conjugation verbs add **-(a)í**. The past subjunctive of regular verbs is identical to the past habitual indicative, but without lenition. It may also be used in
contrary-to-fact conditions with **dhá** 'if'.

Dúirt sé linn fanacht go dtagadh sé ar ais.
He told us to wait until he came back.

Dhá dtéinn ann, gheobhainn an t-airgead.
If I were to go, I'd get the money.

In actual usage, the subjunctive is very rare in colloquial Irish, limited for the most part to fixed expressions such as:

> **Go sabhála Dia sinn!**
> (May) God save us

given above, or:

> **Go raibh maith agat.**
> Thank you.

(literally May you have good.').   In most other cases, the present subjunctive is replaced by a future form and the past subjunctive by a conditional.

See Also:

Conditional Mood

The conditional mood expresses a possibility that might be true under certain conditions that do not, however, hold in fact. It is expressed in English by 'would', and in Irish by a special set of verbal suffixes, which combine elements of the future and the imperfect endings of the indicative mood.   The basic ending (with separate subject noun or pronoun) is **-f(e)adh** (pronounced [x]) for the first conjugation and **-ódh** or **-eodh** (pronounced [o:x]) in the second conjugation. The same forms that include information about the person of the subject in the ending for the imperfect also do so in the conditional mood, with minimal differences. In addition to the tense (and person) suffixes, an initial consonant is lenited and **d'** is prefixed to an initial vowel or /f/, as in the past tenses.

First Conjugation

bris (break)

I	**bhrisfinn**	we	**bhrisfimis, bhrisfeadh muid**
you	**bhrisfeá**	you (pl.)	**bhrisfeadh sibh**
he	**bhrisfeadh sé**	they	**bhrisfidís, bhrisfeadh siad**
she	**bhrisfeadh sí**		

glan   (clean)

I	**ghlanfainn**	we	**ghlanfaimis, ghlanfadh muid**
you	**ghlanfá**	you (pl.)	**ghlanfadh sibh**
he	**ghlanfadh sé**	they	**ghlanfaidís, ghlanfadh siad**
she	**ghlanfadh sí**		

Second Conjugation

mínigh (explain)

I	**mhíneoinn**	we	**mhíneoimís, mhíneodh muid**
you	**mhíneofá**	you (pl.)	**mhíneodh sibh**
he	**mhíneodh sé**	they	**mhíneoidís, mhíneodh siad**
she	**mhíneodh sí**		

ceannaigh (buy)

I	**cheannóinn**	we	**cheannóimís, cheannódh muid**
you	**cheannófá**	you (pl.)	**cheannódh sibh**
he	**cheannódh sé**	they	**cheannóidís, cheannódh siad**
she	**cheannódh sí**		

Examples with initial vowel, or /f/:

First Conjugation

D'ólfainn. (I would drink.)
D'ólfadh sí.   (She would drink.)

Second Conjugation

D'fhiafróinn. (I would ask.)
D'fhiafródh sí. (She would ask.)

Irish does not distinguish between 'would' and 'would have'.   The conditional forms are used for both meanings, and context is needed to determine which is intended.   Conditional forms are always used with **dá**
'if'.

Dá mbrisfeá an ghloine, chuirfeadh sé fearg ar Bhríd.
If you broke the glass, it would make Bríd angry.
        OR
If you had broken the glass, it would have made Bríd angry.

Irregular Verbs

There are just eleven verbs that form some of their tenses irregularly. Unfortunately, as is the case in many languages, these are among the most frequently used verbs. In most cases, the irregularity involves changes to   the stem form of the verb in particular tenses. Some of these verbs also have special dependent forms, which are used in negative sentences, questions, and various subordinate clause settings instead of consonant mutation.   The irregular verbs are listed below under their imperative stems and verbal noun forms, and paradigms are given for those tenses which are formed irregularly.   In each case, any tenses not shown are formed regularly from the imperative stem according to rules given elsewhere.

1. **bí**   (pl.   **bígí**, 'Let's' **bíomaid**, other persons: **bíodh**) 'be' ;   VN: **bheith**

This is the most highly irregular of all the verbs.   Each tense uses a different stem form, and some require still other negative and imperative stems.   In addition, as noted in the discussion of tenses, **bí** distinguishes a simple present and present habitual tense.

Present tense	**tá**
Negative	**níl**
Question	**an bhfuil**
Autonomous	**táthar, níltear, an bhfuiltear**

Present habitual	**bím, bíonn tú/sé/sí/muid/sibh/siad**
Autonomous	**bítear**

Past	**bhí**
Negative	**ní raibh** (pronounced [ro])
Question	**an raibh**
Autonomous	**bhíothadh** (pron. [vi:u:]) **ní/an rabhadh** (pron. [ra:u:])
	(or **bhíothas** in Official Standard) (or **rabhthas** in Official Standard)

Imperfect

I	**bhínn**	we	**bhíodh muid**
you	**bhíteá**	you	**bhíodh sibh**
he	**bhíodh sé**	they	**bhídís**
she	**bhíodh sí**		
Autonomous	**bhítí**		

Future	**beidh** (all persons) (pronounced [bei])
Autonomous	**beifear** (pron. [be:fr] or [be:a:r])

Conditional Mood

I	**bheinn**	we	**bheadh muid, bheimís**
you	**bheifeá**	you	**bheadh sibh**
he	**bheadh sé**	they	**bheidís, bheadh**

siad

she **bheadh sí**
Autonomous **bheifí** (pron. [ve:fi:] or
[ve:hi:])

Subjunctive **raibh**
Mood
    Go raibh maith agat.
    Thank you.

2. **tabhair** (pl. **tugaí**) 'give' (pronounced [tor']); VN: **tabhairt**

Present **tugaim, tugann**
Autonomous **tugtar**

Past **thug**
Autonomous **tugadh**

Imperfect **thugainn, thugtá, thugadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, thugaidís**
Autonomous **thugtaí**

Future **tabharfaidh**
Question Formed regularly.
Negative Formed regularly.
Autonomous **tabharfar**

Conditional **thabharfainn, thabharfá, thabharfadh se/si/muid/sibh,**
thabharfaidís
Autonomous **thabharfaí**

Subjunctive **go dtuga**

3. **faigh** (get)

Present **faighim, faigheann** (pronounced [fa:m], [fa:n]); VN: **fáil**
Autonomous **faightear**

Past **fuair**
Negative **ní bhfuair**
Question **an bhfuair**
Autonomous **fuarthas, or friothadh** (pron. [fri:u:])

Imperfect Formed regularly, like a first conjugation verb.

Future **gheobhaidh** (pronounced [yo], or [yof])
Negative **ní bhfaighidh** (pronounced [ni:wi:]
Question **an bhfaighidh** (ponounced [wi:]

| Autonomous | **gheofar** |

| Conditional | **gheobhainn, gheofá, gheobhadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, gheobhaidís** |
| Autonomous | **gheofaí** |

| Subjunctive | **go bhfagha**   (pronounced [wa:]) |
| Past Subjunctive | **go bhfaghadh** (pronounced [wa:x]) |

  4.   **tar** (p. **taraigí**) 'come';   VN: **teacht, tíocht**

| Present | **tagaim, tagann**   (in some dialects **tigim**,   **tigeann**) |
| Autonomous | **tagtar** |

| Past | **tháinig** |
| Autonomous | **thángthas** |

| Imperfect | Formed regularly from the present stem. |

| Future | **tiocfaidh** |
| Autonomous | **tiocfar** |

| Conditional | **thiocfainn, thiocfá, thiocfadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, thiocfaidís** |
| Autonomous | **thiocfaí** |

| Subjunctive | **go dtaga** |

  5.   **teigh** (pl. **téigí**)   'go';   VN: **dul** (pronounced [gol'] in Connemara, [dul] elsewhere)

| Present | **téim, téann** |
| Autonomous | **téitear** |

Past	**chuaigh** 'went'
Negative	**ní dheachaigh**
Question	**an ndeachaigh**
Autonomous	**chuathas (ní dheachthas, an ndeachthas)**

| Imperfect | **théinn, théatá, théadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, théidís** |
| Autonomous | **théití** |

| Future | **rachaidh** (or **gabhfaidh**) |
| Autonomous | **rachfar** |

| Conditional | Formed regularly from the future stem. |

Subjunctive　　　　　　**go dté**

6. **feic** 'see'; VN: **feiceáil**

This verb is irregular only in the past tense.

Past	**chonaic**
Autonomous	**chonacthas**

Negative	**ní fhaca**
Autonomous	**ní fhacthas**

Question	**an bhfaca**
Autonomous	**an bhfacthas**

Autonomous　　　　　　**facthas**

7. **clois** 'hear'; VN: **cloisteáil**

This verb is irregular only in the past tense.

Past	**chuala**
Autonomous	**cloiseadh**

8. **déan** (pl. **déanaigí**) 'do, make'; VN: **déanamh**

This verb is irregular only in the past tense.

Past	**rinne**
Autonomous	**rinneadh**
Dependent form	**dearna** (plus appropriate mutation)
Negative	**ní dhearna**
Question	**an ndearna**

Some speakers in Connemara use only **rinne** in all past tense contexts, instead of using the dependent forms. In other regions, **dhein** is used as a regular past form.

Rinne mé an obair.
I did the work.

An ndearna tú an sciorta? OR **An rinne tú an sciorta?**
Did you make the skirt?

Ní dhearna mé tada. OR **Ní rinne mé tada.**
I didn't do anything.

9. **ith** (pl.. **ithigí**) 'eat', VN: **ithe**

This verb is irregular only in the future tense and conditional mood, where it adds the regular

endings to the stem **íos-**:

Future	**íosfaidh**
Conditional	**d'íosfainn, d'íosfá, d'íosfadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, d'íosfaidís**

In colloquial usage, some speakers have extended use of the future/conditional stem to the present tense, so in addition to **ithim** (I eat) and **itheann tú** (you eat),   one also hears **íosaim**   (I eat), **íosann tú** (you eat), etc.

10. **abair** (pl.   **abraigí**)   'say';   VN: **rá**

Present   **deirim, deireann**   (more rarely **abraím, abraíonn**)

Frequently the ending is omitted from this verb when a separate subject is used, giving **deir tú**,   **deir sí**, etc.

Among older speakers, a distinct dependent form is sometimes used in negatives or in questions.

Ní abraím,   an abraíonn tú?

But this is becoming increasingly rare.

Past	**dúirt**
Autonomous	**dúradh**

Generally, the /d/ is not pronounced in negative and question forms in speech.

Níor 'úirt mé.
(I didn't say.)

Ar 'úirt tú?
Did you say?

Imperfect	**dheirinn, dheirteá, dheireadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, dheiridís**
Future	**déarfaidh**
Conditional	**déarfainn, déarfá, déarfadh sé/sí/muid/sibh, déarfaidís**
Subjunctive	**go ndeire**

11.   **beir**   (pl. **beirigí**)   'bear, give birth, catch';   VN: **breith**

The autonomous forms of this verb are quite common in the sense of 'to be born'.

Present	**beirim, beireann**
Autonomous	**beirtear**

Past	**rug**
Autonomous	**rugadh**

Imperfect	**bheirinn, bheirteá, bheireadh**

Autonomous	**bheirtí**
Future	**béarfaidh**
Autonomous	**béarfar**
Conditional	**bhéarfainn, bhéarfá, bhéarfadh, bhéarfaidís**
Autonomous	**bhéarfaí**
Subjunctive	**go mbeire**

Impersonal and Passive

Irish does not have one construction corresponding in form and usage to the English passive. Several constructions accomplish a similar effect under various circumstances.

Passive Progressive

The closest thing in form to an English passive is found in the progressive tenses, although it is rather rare in actual usage.   In this usage, the affected individual is the subject, the verbal form is progressive, preceded by   **do** and a possessive pronoun that matches the subject in reference, and the actor follows optionally in a phrase with **ag**, here serving as the equivalent of 'by' in English.

Tá foireann Chiarraí dhá mbualadh ag Corcaigh.
Literally:
Is team Kerry do   +   their beating by Cork.
OR
The Kerry team is being beaten by Cork.

Tá mé do mo bhualadh.
I'm being beaten.

Perfect Passive

This looks very similar to an English passive, but there are subtle differences in the meaning. The affected individual is the subject of 'be', and the main verbal action is expressed by a past participle (verbal adjective), and the actor may be expressed in a phrase with **ag**. However, the semantic effect is not necessarily that of a passive, but rather focuses on completion of the activity.

Tá an leabhar léite ag Peadar.
Is the book + read by + Peadar.
OR
Peadar has the book read.

Impersonal (Autonomous Verb) Inflections

Sometimes inaccurately called a passive, this construction is both more limited and more widespread than a passive.   It uses a distinct set of endings in each indicative tense, known as the 'autonomous forms', and signals that the identity of the actor is either unknown or irrelevant.   It is often translated as an English passive but differs from it in that the actor can never be specified.   It can also be translated with an impersonal subject like 'one' or 'someone' or 'people'.   This is the equivalent of French **'on'** or German **'man'**.

Labhraítear Gaeilge anseo.
Irish is spoken here.   OR   One speaks Irish here.

Gortaíodh Máire.
Máire was injured.   OR   Someone injured Máire.

Deirtear go mbíonn sé te anseo.
It is said that it is hot here.   OR   They say it's hot here.

Another significant difference between the Irish autonomous forms and the English passive is that autonomous forms are found with intransitive verbs, which cannot be passivized in English.

Táthar go deas anseo.
One is nice here.   OR   People are nice here.

Éirítear go moch sa teach seo.
One rises early in this house.

The following are the autonomous endings for each tense.

	First conjugation		Second conjugation	
Present	**-t(e)ar**	bristear	**-(a)ítear**	mínítear
		glantar		ceannaítear
Past	**-(e)adh)**	briseadh	**-íodh**	míníodh
	(pron [u:])	glanadh	(pron. [iu])	ceannaíodh
Imperfect	**-t(a)í**	bristí	**-(a)ítí**	mínítí
		glantáí		ceannaítí
Future	**-f(e)ar**	brisfar	**-(e)ofar**	míneofar
	(pron. [a:r])	glanfar	(pron. [a:r])	ceannófar
Conditional	f(a)í	bhrisfí	**-(e)ofaí**	mhíneofaí
	(pron. [i:])	ghlanfaí	(pron. [i:])	cheannófaí

Autonomous forms of irregular verbs are given in the appropriate sections. The autonomous forms of the present subjunctive are the same as those of the present indicative.

Negative Constructions

Negative sentences are formed by preceding the verb with a negative particle.   In all tenses, except the past tense of regular verbs, this particle is **ní**.   It causes lenition of an initial consonant.

Positive		Negative	
Feicim.	I see.	**Ní fheicim.**	I don't see.
Beidh sí.	She will be.	**Ní bheidh sí.**	She won't be.
Dhúnadh an siopa.	The shop used to close.	**Ní dhúnadh an siopa.**	The shop didn't use to close.

In negative imperatives, the particle takes the form **ná**.

Déan é!	Do it!	**Ná déan é!**	Don't do it!

In negative questions and subordinate clauses, the negative particle is **nach** in all but the past tense of regular verbs.   **Nach** causes the eclipsis mutation, which overrides any other mutation that might be used in non-negative sentences.

Nach mbeidh tú anseo?	Won't you be here?
Dúirt sé nach mbeadh sé mall.	He said that he wouldn't be late.

In the past tense, when the verb is regular, the particle takes the form **níor** in main clauses and **nár** in subordinate clauses and negative questions.   The following past tense verb is lenited as usual. The **d'** before a vowel is lost.

Bhris sé é.	He broke it.	**Níor bhris sé é.**	He didn't break it.
D'ith mé é.	I ate it.	**Níor ith mé é.**	I didn't eat it.
Deir sé gur bhris sé é.	He says that he broke it.	**Deir sé nár bhris sé é.**	He says that he didn't break it.

A few irregular verbs allow a choice between **nach** and **nár** in past subordinate clauses and negative questions.

Níor tháinig sé.
He didn't come.

Deir sé nach dtáinig sé.   OR   **Deir sé nár tháinig sé.**
He says that he didn't come.'

Nach dtáinig sé?   OR   **Nár tháinig sé?**
Didn't he come?

Verbal nouns are negated by placing **gan** 'without' before the verbal noun phrase.

Dúirt siad liom gan siúl.
They told me not to walk.

Tá Bríd sásta gan é sin a dhéanamh.
Bríd is happy not to do that.

Interrogatives

Irish questions do not change word order as English questions do. Instead, the verb being questioned is preceded by a question particle.   In most cases this is **an**, which causes eclipsis of the initial consonant in the following verbs. This overrides any other mutation associated with the tense.

Feiceann tú é.
You see it.
An bhfeiceann tú é?
Do you see it?

Beidh sí anseo.
She'll be here.
An mbeidh sí anseo?
Will she be here?

Thagadh muid go minic.
We used to come often.
An dtagadh sibh go minic?
Did you used to come often?

In the past tense of regular verbs, however, the question particle takes the form **ar**, and the lenition remains (but not a /d/ before vowels).

Bhris tú é.
You broke it.
Ar bhris tú é?
Did you break it?

D'ith tú é.
You ate it.
Ar ith tú é?
Did you eat it?

Subordinate questions are formed in exactly the same way.   Irish doesn't use 'if' to signal questions in subordinate clauses as English does.

An mbeidh sé anseo?
Will he be here?
Fiafraigh de an mbeidh sé anseo.
Ask him if he'll be here.

An gcloiseann tú mé?
Do you hear me?
Níl mé cinnte an gcloiseann tú mé.
I'm not sure if you hear me.

Negative questions are formed with **nach** (in most tenses), or with **nár** (in regular past tenses).   **Nach** is accompanied by eclipsis of regular verbs, and a dependent form of irregular verbs.   Verbs following **nár** retain the past tense lenition.

Nach mbíodh Seán sa rang?
Didn't Sean use to be in the class?

Nach bhfuil Bríd go deas?
Isn't Bríd nice?
Nár bhris tú é?
Didn't you break it?

Answering Questions

Irish has no single word for 'yes' or 'no'.   Therefore, to respond to a question requiring an affirmative or negative answer, the verb is repeated in the appropriate form.   Personal endings are used where they exist for the tense being expressed.   Many speakers use personal endings in responses even where the original statement or question doesn't have them.

Question	Affirmative Response	Negative Response
An mbeidh tú ag an teach ósta anocht? Will you be at the pub tonight?	**Beidh.** Yes.	**Ní bheidh.** No.
An siúilidís abhaile? Did they use to walk home?	**Shiúilidís.** Yes.	**Ní shiuilidís.** No.
An bhfaca tú an scannáin sin? Did you see that film?	**Chonaic.** Yes.	**Ní fhacas.** No.

See also Answering Questions with the Copula.

Constituent Questions

In addition to the questions above, which expect an answer of 'yes' or 'no', there are also questions that ask for missing information, using question words equivalent to 'who,' 'what,' etc.   These question words are placed first in the sentence, followed by the particle **a**, and either lenition or eclipsis (or the dependent form of irregular verbs), depending on the question word.   The principal question words are listed below.

Leniting

Cé	who	**Cé atá ansin?**	Who is there?
Céard (also **Cad**)	what	**Céard a bhíodh ansin?**	What used to be there?
Cén uair	when	**Cén uair a bhí sé anseo?**	When was he here?
Cé acu	which	**Cé acu a bheidh in am?**	Which one will be on time?

Eclipsing

Cén chaoi	how	**Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?**	How are you?
Cén fáth	why	**Cén fáth a mbíodh tú tinn?**	Why were you sick?
Cá (Cén áit)	where	**Cá raibh tú aréir?**	Where were you last night?
Cén t-am	what time	**Cén t-am a mbeidh sé anseo?**	What time will he be here?

Note that there is no **a** following **cá** 'where' (but there would be following **cén áit**).   This is

because **cá** is a contracted form, which condenses '**cén áit a**' into this one syllable.   It never occurs on its own, only followed by a verb. To ask 'where?', in reference to something previously mentioned, and without specifying the verb, use '**cén áit**'.

Because these questions are essentially the same form as relative clauses, the special relative verb forms may be used where appropriate, after the leniting group of question words only.

Verbal Nouns

Irish has a single verb category, the verbal noun, that serves the function of the English infinitives, present participles, gerunds, and sometimes nouns formed from verbs as well. Thus, the single form **pósadh** (from the verb **pós**)   can be translated as 'to marry,' 'marrying,' or 'marriage,' depending on the context.

Níl Peige ag iarraidh pósadh.
Peggy doesn't want to marry.

Beidh Seán agus Máire ag pósadh amárach.
Sean and Mary will be marrying tomorrow.

Bhí an pósadh aréir.
The marriage was last night.

Although derived from verbs and serving many of the functions of English verbal forms, they are grammatically nouns, and may have genitive case and plural forms when used as nouns. Direct objects which follow transitive verbal nouns are in the genitive case, being treated as possessors of the action, and if pronominal, take the form of possessive particles before the verbal noun and following **do** (which replaces **ag** in the examples below).

Beidh Máire ag pósadh Sheáin.	Mary will be marrying Sean.
Beidh Seán ag pósadh Mháire.	Sean will be marrying Mary.
Beidh sí dhá phósadh.	She will be marrying him.
Beidh sé dhá pósadh.	He will be marrying her.
Beidh mé do do phósadh.	I will be marrying you.

In other constructions, however, often translated as English infinitives, the direct object precedes the verbal noun, separated from it by the particle **a**, which causes lenition on the verbal noun.   No special case form is required in such sentences, and ordinary pronouns are used.

Tá Máire sásta Seán a phósadh.	Mary is willing to marry Sean.
Tá mé sásta thú a phósadh.	I am willing to marry you.
Tá Liam sásta í a phósadh.	He is willing to marry her.

Negations of these constructions are introduced by **gan**.

Tá Bríd sásta gan Peadar a phósadh.	Bríd is happy not to marry Peter.
Tá mise sásta gan pósadh freisin.	I am happy not to marry, too.

Note that if an object doesn't precede the verbal noun, there is no **a** and no lenition.

The verbal noun forms are quite varied (and may differ for a single verb in different regions), though not quite so varied as noun plural forms.   The suffix **-adh**, for **pósadh** is a common form, but there are many others, among them, **-ú**, **-amh**, **-t**, **-áil**, **-acht**, a change in the final consonant, or no change at all from the stem form.   A few common examples in Connemara Irish are given below, but in general, the verbal noun form should simply be learned with the

verbs.

Stem	Suffix	Verbal Noun	Translation
pos	-adh	**pósadh**	marry
buail		**bualadh**	beat, hit
glan		**glanadh**	clean
bris		**briseadh**	break
mínigh	-ú	**míniú**	explain
salaigh		**salú**	soil, dirty
críochnaigh		**críochnú**	finish
tosaigh		**tosú**	begin
déan	-amh	**déanamh**	do, make
caith		**caitheamh**	throw, spend
léigh		**léamh**	read
seas		**seasamh**	stand
bain	-t	**baint**	dig
imir		**imirt**	play
oscail		**oscailt**	open
labhair		**labhairt**	speak
tóg	-áil	**tógáil**	build, take
fág		**fágáil**	leave
teastaigh		**teastáil**	need, be lacking
gabh		**gabháil**	catch, take, go
ceannaigh	-acht	**ceannacht**	buy
fan		**fanacht**	stay, wait
éist		**éisteacht**	listen
imigh		**imeacht**	go away, leave
cuir	consonant change	**cur**	put
siúil		**siúl**	walk
braith		**brath**	depend
cogair		**cogar**	whisper
ól	no change	**ól**	drink
díol		**díol**	sell
foghlaim		**foghlaim**	learn
rith		**rith**	run

Past Participle (Verbal Adjective)

The form known as the verbal adjective is the equivalent of a past participle in grammatical descriptions of other languages.   It is used in forming the perfect construction ('to have done something')   and, frequently, as a simple adjective as well, signifying a state of being.   It is generally formed   by adding **-ta** or **-tha** to verb stems ending in a broad consonant or vowel, and **-te** or **-the** to stems ending in a slender consonant or vowel.

Stem	Verbal Adjective	Translation
bris	**briste**	broken
glan	**glanta**	cleaned
críochnaigh	**críochnaith**	finished
mínigh	**mínithe**	explained
cuir	**curtha**	put
oscail	**oscailte**	opened
díol	**díolta**	sold
fág	**fágtha**	left
tuit	**tuite**	fallen
déan	**déanta**	done

Periphrastic Forms (Compound Tenses)

There are a number of constructions which are formed using **bí** 'be' as an auxiliary verb (marking tense and the person of the actor) and a verbal noun or adjective form for the main verbal idea.   Sometimes called 'compound tenses', these constructions carry specialized meanings, which can usually be expressed in any tense.

Progressive Forms

Progressive forms in Irish express an ongoing action as of the moment of speaking (in the present progressive) or as of some other time of reference (in other tenses); their function is closely analogous to the corresponding forms in English.   The progressive is formed by combining the verb **bí** 'be' (in any tense or mood) with the verbal noun following the particle **ag**.

Tá Brian ag ithe.
(Brian is eating.)

Bhí Cáit ag léamh.
(Cáit was reading.)

Bheadh muid ag rith.
(We would be running.)

The object of a transitive verbal noun follows the verbal noun, and is in the genitive case. All other modifiers of the verbal noun also follow.

Tá Brian ag ithe na feola.
(Brian is eating the meat.)

Bhí Cáit ag léamh an leabhair.
(Cáit was reading the book.)

Bheadh muid ag rith go scioptha.
(We would be running fast.)

The genitive form of an object is not generally used, however, if the noun is indefinite and modified by an adjective or other qualification.

Tá mé ag léamh leabhar maith.
(I'm reading a good book.)

Tá tú ag déanamh sár-obair.
(You are doing great work.)

Nor is the genitive form used if the object is possessed, although its initial consonant is generally lenited.

Beidh Cáit ag pósadh mhac an bhúistéara.
(Cáit will be marrying the butcher's son.)

If the object of the verbal noun is a pronoun, it appears as the appropriate possessive particle before the verbal noun and **ag** changes to **do** (which merges with the possessive particles **a**, and **ár** as **dh**).

Beidh mé do do phósadh.
(I will be marrying you.)

Beidh tú do mo phósadh.
(You will be marrying me.)

Beidh Máire ag pósadh Sheáin.
(Mary will be marrying Sean.)

Beidh sí dhá phósadh.
(She will be marrying him.)

Beidh Seán ag pósadh Mháire.
(Sean will be marrying Mary.)

Beidh sé dhá pósadh.
(He will be marrying her.)

Perfect Constructions

The English perfect forms, such as 'I have seen Mary,' and 'They have read the book,' can correspond to two different Irish constructions, with different nuances of meaning.

1. To emphasize the completion of an action, a parallel form is used, composed of the verb **bí** 'be', and the verbal adjective.   With transitive verbs, the effect is similar to that of a passive.

Tá Séan imithe.
(Sean has (is) gone.)

Tá an leabhar léite.
(The book is (has been) read.)

Tá an dinnéar ite.
(The dinner is eaten.)

The actor of a transitive verb is expressed in a phrase with **ag** 'by'.   The effect here is to focus on the actor's accomplishment of the action much more strongly than in English.

Tá an leabhar léite ag Máirtín.
(Martin has read the book / has the book read.)
        i.e., has accomplished the act of reading

Tá an dinnéar ite ag Máire.
(Mary has the dinner eaten / has eaten her dinner.)
        i.e., emphasizing that it is gone

2. A meaning closer to that of the English perfect in its 'recent past' use is achieved by a construction using a verbal noun phrase and the preposition **tar éis** 'after'.   The emphasis is on the immediacy of the event expressed by the verb.

Tá Pádraig tar éis imeacht.
(Padraig has just left.)

Tá mé tar éis caint léi anois.
(I have just now spoken to her.)

If the verbal noun has an object, it is in the position preceding the verbal noun and separated from it by the particle **a**, which causes lenition.

Tá mé tar éis an obair a chríochnú.
(I've just finished the work.)

Tá muid tar éis iad a fheiceáil.
(We have just seen them.)

A literal translation of this construction is sometimes found in the English of Ireland: 'I'm after talking to her,' 'We're just after seeing them,' etc.

Future Periphrastic Constructions

1. Irish can express an immediate future event with a verbal noun construction analogous to that of the perfect, using a preposition such as **ar tí** 'about to'.   An object, if any, precedes the verbal noun.

Tá Seán ar tí imeacht.
(Sean is about to leave.)

Bhí muid ar tí dinnéar a ithe.
(We were about to eat dinner.)

Other prepositions are also used, including **le** or **chun**, depending on the dialect.   The effect of these may be somewhat less immediate, but signals intent or expectation.

Tá Liam le dul ar saoire.
(Liam is to go on holiday.)

Tá siad chun an teach a dhíol.
(They are (planning) to sell the house.)

Le and **chun** can be used to introduce clauses subordinate to another verb, and expressing purpose.

Tháinig mé anseo le Gaeilge a fhoghlaim.
(I came here (in order) to learn Irish.)

Tá muid ag obair le maireachtáil.
(We are working to live.)

2. A periphrastic future, similar to that of the English 'going to' can be formed using the progressive form of **téigh** 'go'.

Tá mé ag dul ag snámh.
(I'm going swimming.)

Tá muid ag dul ag imirt peile.
(We're going to play football.)

An bhfuil tú ag dul ag breathnú ar an teilifís?
(Are you going to watch TV?)

Adjectives

Declension and Agreement of Adjectives

When adjectives modify a noun within the same phrase (e.g., 'a good book', 'the red house,' 'my big dog,'), they typically follow the noun and agree with it in number and gender.

Number

Plural adjectives are formed by adding the suffix **-a** to a broad consonant, and **-e** to a slender consonant.   Adjectives ending in a vowel do not have a plural suffix.

teach dearg	a red house
tithe dearga	red houses
duine maith	a good person
daoine maithe	good people
hata buí	a yellow hat
hataí buí	yellow hats

In addition, if the plural noun ends in a slender consonant, the first consonant of the adjective is lenited (if it is a consonant which has a lenited form).

fear maith	a good man
fir mhaithe	good men
bád beag	a small boat
báid bheaga	small boats

This plural form is used for all adjectives, except the genitive plural when the noun forms its plural with a slender consonant.   In these cases, the genitive plural of the noun and adjective are the same as the common form in the singular.

an fear óg	the young man
na fir óga	the young men
na bhfear óg	of the young men

Gender

Adjectives show agreement with feminine nouns in the common form by lenition of the initial consonant.

bean bhocht	a poor woman
deoch mhór	a big drink
scoil bhreá	a fine school
tír shaibhir	a rich country

Adjectives have distinct forms in the genitive singular case only. These differ according to whether they are modifying a masculine or a feminine noun.

Masculine genitive singular adjectives are lenited and their final consonant becomes slender (**-ach** becomes **-igh**).

fear mór   a big man
cóta an fhir mhóir   the big man's coat

teach beag   a small house
doras an tí bhig   the door of the small house

Most feminine genitive singular adjectives are formed by adding **-e** (and making the preceding consonant slender if it isn't already). Adjectives ending in **-(e)ach** use **-(a)í** in the feminine genitive, and those ending in **-úil** become **-úla**.   The lenition found on feminine adjectives in the non-genitive forms is lost in the genitive.

tír mhór   a big country
muintir na tíre móire   the people of the big country

bó bhradach   a trespassing cow
lao na bó bradaí   the trespassing cow's calf

cathair shuimiúil   an interesting city
muintir na cathrach   the people of the interesting city
suimiúla

Adverbs

Adverbs may be formed from adjectives by addition of the particle **go**, which prefixes **h-** to a vowel but does not alter a consonant.

maith	good
go maith	well
cúramach	careful
go cúramach	carefully
álainn	beautiful
go hálainn	beautifully
scioptha	quick
go scioptha	quickly

The particle **go** is not used when the adverb is further qualified.

cúramach go leor	carefully enough, fairly carefully
sách cúramach	sufficiently carefully
réasúnta cúramach	reasonably carefully

Adverbs of time and place likewise do not use the particle **go.**

inniu	today
inné	yesterday
anuraidh	last year
anseo	here
ansin	there
ansiúd	over yonder

Directional and Positional Adverbs

There is a set of adverbs signaling direction which change in form according to whether they are used to indicate motion or position, and whether motion is toward or away from the speaker (or another specified reference point).   These include the adverbs referring to 'up' and 'down' and the compass points.   Generally, the forms beginning with **th-** indicate position without movement, those with **s-** indicate movement away from the speaker, and those beginning with **an-** signal motion toward the speaker.   The remainder of the form shows the general direction: **-uas** is above, and **-íos** is below.

thuas	up (location)
thíos	down (location)
suas	upward (from speaker)
síos	downward (away from speaker)
anuas	downward (toward speaker, lit. 'from up')
aníos	upward (toward speaker, lit. 'from down')

Tá Liam ag dul suas.
(Liam is going up.)

Tá Liam thuas.
(Liam is up [somewhere].)

Tá Liam ag teacht aníos.
(Liam is coming up [from below].)

Tá Liam ag dul síos.
(Liam is going down.)

Tá Liam thíos.
(Liam is down [there].)

Tá Liam ag teacht anuas.
(Liam is coming down [from above].)

Similarly:

thiar	in the west
siar	to the west
aniar	from the west
thoir	in the east
soir	to the east
anoir	from the east
thuaidh/ó thuaidh	in the north
ó thuaidh	to the north
aduaidh	from north
theas/ó dheas	in the south
ó dheas	to the south
aneas	from the south
thall	over yonder
sall/ anonn	toward yonder
anall	from yonder

The adverbs for 'in', 'out' and 'home' have two forms, for position and motion (any direction).

POSITION		MOTION	
istigh	inside	**isteach**	toward inside, inward
amuigh	outside	**amach**	toward outside, outward
sa mbaile (or **sa bhaile**)	at home	**abhaile**	toward home, homeward

Comparison

Both adjectives and adverbs are compared by use of a comparative suffix (usually the same as the feminine genitive) and the preceding comparative marker **níos** (which replaces **go** in the case of adverbs). The standard against which the comparison is made is marked by **ná**.

Tá Áine níos óige ná Seán.
(Áine is younger than Seán.)

Téann carr níos scioptha ná capall.
(A car goes faster than a horse.)

More rarely, the comparative form, without **níos**, is used following the copula, **is**.

Is óige Áine ná Seán.
(Áine is younger than Seán.)

Is scioptha a chuaigh an carr ná an capall.
(The car went faster than the horse.)

Superlatives use the same form, with **is** preceding.   They always follow the noun they modify (i.e., are not used as predicates, as in 'I am youngest').

an gasúr is óige
(the youngest child)

an carr is scioptha
(the fastest car)

Sometimes, in the past or conditional forms, **níb(a)** is used instead of **níos**. **Ab** may be used in the superlative in these cases.

Bhí an aimsir níba dheise inné ná inniu.
(The weather was nicer yesterday than today.)

B'í Áine an cailín ab óige.
(Áine was the youngest girl.)

The following adjectives have irregular comparative/superlative forms.

maith	good
fearr	better, best
breá	fine
breátha	finer, finest
dócha	likely
dóichí	more/most likely

fada	long, far
faide	longer, longest, farther, farthest
furasta	easy
fusa	easier, easiest
dona	bad
measa	worse, worst
te	hot
teo/teocha	hotter, hottest
mór	big
mó	bigger, biggest
beag	small
lú	smaller, smallest

An equal degree of comparison is expressed by   '**chomh...le...**'.   To follow with a sentence, replace **le** by **is a** + relative clause.

Tá Bríd chomh mór le Tomás.
(Bríd is as big as Tomás.)

Níl an capall sin chomh scioptha 'is a bhí sé.
(That horse isn't as fast as he was.)

Pronouns

Personal Pronouns

The personal pronouns are:

Singular		Plural	
I	**mé**	we, us	**muid, sinn**
you	**tú, thú**	you	**sibh**
he, him, it	**sé, é**	they, them	**siad, iad**
she, her, it	**sí, í**		

The difference between **muid** and **sinn** is primarily regional; **muid** is used in Connacht, **sinn** is an older form, still used in Munster. The difference in the other forms for each person is situational. The forms with initial /s/ (**sé**, **sí**, **siad**) are used for subjects that immediately follow the verb. The forms without /s/, (**é**, **í**, **iad**) are used for direct objects, for subjects that don't immediately follow a verb (i.e., subjects of the copula, the second of two conjoined pronouns, in verbal noun constructions, and when forms of **bí** have been omitted in special constructions). **Tú** and **thú** are distinguished the same way, but less consistently. **Tú** is sometimes used in contexts that would require **é**, **í**, or **iad** in the third person forms.

Tá mé anseo.	I am here.
Feiceann siad mé.	They see me.
Tá tú anseo.	You are here.
Feicim thú.	I see you.
Tá sí anseo.	She is here.
Feicim í.	I see her.
Is í mo dheirfiúr í.	She is my sister.
Bhí Bríd anseo agus í tinn.	Bríd was here, (and she was) sick.
Ba mhaith liom í a bheith anseo.	I would like for her to be here.

There is no separate pronoun corresponding to 'it' in English. **Sé/é** are used when the reference is to a grammatically masculine noun, and **sí/í** when the noun referred to is feminine.

Longer forms are used for special contrastive emphasis, where extra stress would be used in English. The contrast forms are:

mise	**muidne, sinne**
tusa, thusa	**sibhse**
seisean, eisean	**siadsan, iadsan**
sise, ise	

These are used not only to highlight a contrast between two individuals (where contrastive stress would be used in English), but whenever two pronouns are conjoined with **agus** 'and' or other conjunctions, or when a pronoun appears on its own.

Tháinig mise in am, ach bhí seisean mall.
(I came on time, but he was late.)

Bhí seisean agus ise ag an scoil.
(He and she were at the school.)

Cé atá ansin?   Mise.
(Who's there?   Me.)

Forms with féin

Pronouns may also be combined with **féin** 'self' to signal that the person they refer to is at the center of attention.

Bhí sé féin anseo aréir.
(He himself was here last night.)

Beidh mé féin agus Síle ar ais arís.
(Myself and Sheila will be back again.)

Pronouns with **féin** are also used reflexively.

Chonaic siad iad féin.
(They saw themselves.)

Ar ghortaigh tú thú féin?
(Did you hurt yourself?)

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are expressed by particles before the noun that refer to the thing possessed.   These particles are unstressed and most cause a mutation on the first consonant of the noun, lenition in the singular (except for **a** 'her'), and eclipsis in the plural.

Singular   Plural

mo theach	my house	**ár dteach**	our house
do theach	your house	**bhur dteach**	your house
a theach	his house	**a dteach**	their house
a teach	her house		

Before vowels, **mo** and **do** contract to **m'**, **d'**, **a** 'her' prefixes **h-**, and the plural forms prefix **n-**.

Singular   Plural

m'athair	my father	**ár n-athair**	our father
d'athair	your father	**bhur n-athair**	your father
a athair	his father	**a n-athair**	their father
a hathair	her father		

Note that the only thing differentiating the third person forms, 'his,' her,' and 'their'', is the mutation that each causes on the noun; the actual particles are identical.

For contrast forms of possessive pronouns, a suffix is added to the noun (not to the possessive particle).

Singular   Plural

mo theachsa	my house	**ár dteachna**	our house
do theachsa	your house	**bhur dteachsa**	your house
a theachsan	his house	**a theachsan**	their house
a teachsa	her house		

Northern dialects use separate contrast pronouns in the third person forms.

a theach seisean	his house
a teach sise	her house
a dteach siadsan	their house

Prepositions and Pronouns

Many prepositions in Irish are conjugated, so that if they have a pronoun object, it is expressed in a suffix to the preposition, along the same lines as subject pronouns that are suffixed to verbs in some forms. There is some regularity to the forms that can be identified across prepositions in some cases, but others (especially the third person forms) are somewhat idiosyncratic. The following paradigm illustrates the pattern.

ag   'at, by'

Singular   Plural

agam	by me	**againn**	by us
agat	by you	**agaibh**	by you (pl.)
aige	by him	**acu**	by them
aici	by her		

Other prepositions and their inflected forms are listed below.

ar 'on

orm	orainn
ort	oraibh
air	orthu
uirthi	

as 'out of'

asam	asainn
asat	asaibh
as	astu
aisti	

chuig 'toward'

chugam	cugainn
chugat	chugaibh
chuig	chucu
chuici	

de 'from, of'

díom	dínn
díot	díbh
de	díobh
di	

do 'to, for

dom	dúinn
duit	daoibh
dó	dóibh
di	

faoi 'under

fúm	fúinn
fút	fúibh
faoi	fúthu
fúithi	

i 'in'

ionam	ionann
ionat	ionaibh
ann	iontu

inti

ionsar 'to'

ionsorm   ionsorainn
ionsort   ionsoraibh
ionsair   ionsorthu
ionsuirthi

le 'with'

liom   linn
leat   libh
leis   leo
léi

ó 'from'

uaim   uainn
uait   uaibh
uaidh   uathu
uaithi

roimh 'before

romham   romhainn
romhat   romhaibh
roimh   rompu
roimpi

thar 'over'

tharam   tharainn
tharat   tharaibh
thairis   tharstu
thairsti

trí 'through'

tríom   trínn
tríot   tríbh
tríd   tríothu
tríthi

um 'about'

umam   umainn
umat   umaibh
uime   umpu
uimpi

In addition, **idir** 'between' has just plural suffixes.

eadrainn, eadraibh, eatarthu

A few   prepositions do not have conjugated forms and simply use ordinary pronouns as their objects.

gan é   without him
seachas mise   besides me
go dtí thú   up to you

Prepositions

Prepositions are the connecting words that show relationships other than subject and object in a sentence.

ag an mbord   at the table
faoin mbord   under the table
leis an mbord   with the table
ar an mbord   on the table
don bhord   to/for the table

Irish uses both simple prepositions, like those shown above, and compound prepositions.

in aice leis an   next to the table
mbord

Simple Prepositions

In earlier periods, some prepositions took a special dative form, of which vestiges remain in certain fixed expressions.

de ló agus d'oíche   by day and by night
(**ló** is an old dative form of **lá** 'day')

In contemporary speech, however, the common form of nouns is used.   A vestige of the older case forms is retained in the initial mutations, but these vary by preposition, by context, and by region, and a distinct dative form is no longer consistently discernible.

Used on their own, and followed directly by a noun, prepositions vary in whether they cause a mutation of the initial consonant of their object noun. This variation is consistent across all regional dialect forms.   Some do not cause a mutation at all.

le Máirtín   with Máirtín
ag Cáit   by Cáit
as Sasana   out of England

Others cause lenition.

do Máirtín   to Máirtín
ar Cháit   on Cáit
faoi Cháisc   at Easter

Only one preposition, **i(n)** 'in',   causes eclipsis.

i bParas   in Paris
in Éirinn   in Ireland

When a preposition combines with a singular definite article before a noun, the mutation pattern changes, and these patterns are subject to regional variation.   The preposition + article combination creates some contractions as well.   **In** 'in' combines with the singular article as **sa**, and with the plural article as **sna**.   Prepositions ending in a vowel merge with

the article.   **De + an** becomes **den**, **do + an** becomes **don**, **faoi** + **an** becomes **faoin**.

In Connemara, the prepositions **de** and **do** plus the article still cause lenition.

den bhord   from the table
don bhean   to the woman

 All others cause eclipsis.

ar an mbord   on the table
sa mbosca   in the box
faoin gcrann   under the tree

 In Munster dialects (Kerry, Cork, Waterford), **sa**, **de** and **do** with the article all lenite; the rest eclipse.   All the above forms are the same, therefore, except:

sa bhosca   in the box

 In Donegal, all preposition + article combinations cause lenition.

ar an bhord   on the table
faoin chrann   under the tree
sa bhosca   in the box

 The plural article after prepositions does not affect the initial sounds of nouns, except to prefix **h-** to vowels as in the common form.

leis na sagairt (m.)   with the priests
faoi na crainnte (m.)   under the trees
leis na mná (f.)   with the women
sna sráideanna (f.)   in the streets
sna h-oifigí (f.)   in the offices
ar na h-oileáin (m.)   on the islands

 The translations of Irish prepositions, especially the simple prepositions, are approximate, and there may be many different translations into English of each, depending on the context.   Sometimes they are used idiomatically, where no preposition at all is used in English.

ag dul in éineacht le Peige   going with Peige
ag caint le Peige   talking to Peige
ag súil le Peige   waiting for Peige
ag cuidiú le Peige   helping Peige

 When the object of a simple preposition is a pronoun ('with her,' 'by you,' from me', etc.), it is incorporated into the preposition as an ending, similar to the endings marking the subject in conjugated verbs.

Compound Prepositions

Compound prepositions typically consist of a simple preposition and another word, historically a noun, that together form a fixed expression with a prepositional (relational) meaning. Because of their origins, compound prepositions require the genitive form of a noun object.

ós cionn na fuinneoige	above the window
ar son na hÉireann	for the sake of Ireland
go ceann míosa	for a month

There are many compound prepositions in Irish. A few of the most common are listed here.

os cionn	above
os comhair	in front of
in aghaidh	against
ar son	for the sake of
le haghaidh	for (the purpose of)
tar éis	after
i ndiaidh	after, following
go ceann	for (a period of time)
i gceann	within (a period of time)
i rith	during
de réir	according to
dainneoin	in spite of, despite
ar fud	throughout
in aice	near, in the vicinity of
ar nós	like

Pronoun objects of compound prepositions appear as possessive particles before the second word of the compound.

os mo chionn	above me
os do chomhair	in front of you
ina aghaidh	against him
ar a son	for her sake
len ár n-aghaidh	for us
i bhur n-aice	next to you (pl.)
ina ndiaidh	after them

Occasionally, compound prepositions, like **in aice**, may be compounded further with a simple preposition, like **le**. In this case, the rules for the simple preposition are followed.

in aice le Colm	next to Colm
in aice leat	next to you
in aice leis an teach	next to the house

Numerals

The number system of Irish is rather more complex than that of English. Not only are separate forms for cardinal and ordinal numerals found, but separate forms are used for counting people, and some numerals differ according to whether they are used alone or the item counted is named.

1. Cardinal numerals

In counting (without naming the object counted) or when using the number as part of a name (Henry VIII, Room 10, Bus 4, etc.), the following number forms are used.

1	**a haon**
2	**a dó**
3	**a trí**
4	**a ceathair**
5	**a cúig**
6	**a sé**
7	**a seacht**
8	**a hocht**
9	**a naoi**
10	**a deich**
11	**a haon déag**
12	**a dó dhéag**
13	**a trí déag**
14	**a ceathair déag**
15	**a cúig déag**
16	**a sé déag**
17	**a seacht déag**
18	**a hocht déag**
19	**a naoi déag**
20	**fiche**
21	**fiche haon**
22	**fiche dó**, etc.

Numbers by tens from 20 to 100:

20	**fiche**
30	**tríocha**
40	**ceathracha or daichead**
50	**caoga or leathchéad**
60	**seasca**
70	**seachtó**
80	**ochtó**
90	**nócha** (or **naocha**)
100	**céad**

1,000	**míle**
1,000,000	**milliún**

2. Counting objects

When the noun being counted is named, the forms of some cardinal numbers between one

and ten change, as shown below.   Each numeral also triggers a mutation of an initial consonant.   Numbers six and below cause lenition, seven through ten cause eclipsis (n-prefixed to a vowel).   Singular forms of the noun are used throughout.

1	**bád amháin**	one boat
	úll amháin	one apple
	aon bhád amháin	only one boat
	aon úll amháin	only one apple

2	**dhá bhád**	**dhá úll**
3	**trí bhád**	**trí úll**
4	**cheithre bhád**	**cheithre úll**
5	**chúig bhád**	**chúig úll**
6	**sé bhád**	**sé úll**
7	**seacht mbád**	**seacht n-úll**
8	**ocht mbád**	**ocht n-úll**
9	**naoi mbád**	**naoi n-úll**
10	**deich mbád**	**deich n-úll**

Above 10, the unit number precedes the noun and the decimal follows.   The same mutations apply according to the unit number:

11	**aon bhád déag**	**aon úll déag**
12	**dhá bhád déag**	**dhá úll déag**, etc.
18	**ocht mbead déag**	**ocht n-úll déag**
33	**trí bhád tríocha**	**trí úll tríocha**
67	**seacht mbád seasca**	**seacht n-úll seasca**
100	**céad bád**	**céad úll**
1000	**míle bád**	**míle úll**

A few nouns, mostly referring to measurements of time or volume (**ubh** 'egg' is an exception), use special plural forms after numerals 3-10.   In these cases the numbers 1-6 do not lenite (but those ending in vowels prefix **h-** to a vowel-initial noun).   The numbers 7-10 still cause eclipsis.

| **(aon) bhliain amháin** | (only) one year |
| **(aon) ubh amháin** | (only) one egg |

| **dhá bhliain** | two years |
| **dhá ubh** | two eggs |

| **trí bliana** | three years |
| **trí h-uibhe** | three eggs |

| **cheithre bliana** | four years |
| **cheithre h-uibhe** | four eggs |

| **cúig bliana** | five years |
| **cúig uibhe** | five eggs |

| **sé bliana** | six years |
| **sé h-uibhe** | six eggs |

| **seacht mbliana** | seven years |

seacht n-uibhe   seven eggs

ocht mbliana   eight years
ocht n-uibhe   eight eggs

naoi mbliana   nine years
naoi n-uibhe   nine eggs

deich mbliana   ten years
deich n-uibhe   ten eggs

3. Personal Numerals

Between one and twelve, special numerals are used to refer to people.

duine   (amháin)   one person
beirt   two people
triúr   three people
ceathrar   four people
cúigear   five people
seisear   six people
seachtar   seven people
ochtar   eight people
naonúr   nine people
deichniúr   ten people
aon duine dhéag   eleven people
dhá dhuine dhéag   twelve people

These personal numerals may be used alone, as nouns in their own right, or followed by nouns referring to people, which may be in the singular or plural.   Only **beirt** lenites.

beirt fhear   two men
triúr banaltra(í)   three nurses
ceathrar deirfíúr(acha)   four sisters
cúigear múinteoir(í)   five teachers
seisear saga(i)rt   six priests
seachtar cailín(í)   seven girls
ochtar buachaill(í)   nine boys
deichniúr máthair(eacha)   ten mothers

4. Ordinal numerals

Ordinal numerals show the order of an object in a sequence.   The Irish ordinals from 1-10 are as follows. They are followed by a singular noun form, do not change an initial consonant, and prefix **h-** to a vowel.   They may be preceded by the article **an**, which lenites **céad** and prefixes **t-** to **ochtú**.

céad   first
dara/darna   second
triú   third
ceathrú   fourth
cúigiú   fifth
séú   sixth

seachtú	seventh
ochtú	eighth
naoú	ninth
deichiú	tenth

an chéad bhean	the first woman
an tríú bean	the third woman
an t-ochtú bean	the eighth woman

For numbers above ten, the unit number takes the ordinal suffix **-u**; as does 20, 100, 1000, etc.); the numerals for 30-90 take the suffix **-dú**.

an t-aonú bean déag	the eleventh woman
an dóú bean déag	the twelfth woman
an tríú bean déag	the thirteenth woman
an fichiú bean	the twentieth woman
an tríochadú bean	the thirtieth woman
an daicheadú bean	the fortieth woman
an caogadú bean	the fiftieth woman
an seascadú bean	the sixtieth woman
an seachtadú	the seventieth woman
an t-ochtódú bean	the eightieth woman
an nóchadú bean	the ninetieth woman
an céadú bean	the hundredth woman
an míliú bean	the thousandth woman
an milliúnnú bean	the millionth woman

5. Fractions

Ordinal numerals are used for fractions, except for half and third.

leath	1/2
trian	1/3
ceathrú	1/4
cúigiú	1/5
dhá chúigiú	2/5

leathphunt	1/2 pound
dhá phunt go leith	2-1/2 pounds

More complex fractions use cardinal numerals with **ar** 'on'.

11/12	**a haon déag ar a dó dhéag**
19/20	**a naoi déag ar fiche**

6. Dates

In dates, the day precedes the month.

3.5.55	**an tríu lá Bealtaine**	**naoi déag caoga cúig**	May 3, 1955

Conjunctions and Connectors

Coordinating conjunctions

The primary conjunctions that can link any two words of the same class are **agus** 'and', **nó** 'or' and **ná** 'nor' (used in negative sentences).

Tháinig Bríd agus Bairbre.	Bríd and Bairbre came.
Bhí Tomás nó Pádraig anseo.	Tomás or Pádraig was here.
Ní raibh Peadar ná Nóra sásta.	Neither Peadar nor Nóra was happy.
Bhí muid tuirseach agus cantalach.	We were tired and crabby.
Níl mé cinnte an bhfuil sé tinn nó caochta.	I'm not sure if he's sick or drunk.
Níl mé sásta ná compóirteach.	I'm neither pleased nor comfortable.
Bhí siad i gCorcaigh agus i nGaillimh.	They were in Cork and Galway.
Beidh sí anseo nó ag an siopa.	She'll be here or at the shop.
Ní raibh tú anseo ná ansin.	You were neither here nor there.

Each of these conjunctions, as well as **ach** 'but', can link full sentences as well.

Bhí an lá go breá agus bhí na daoine sásta.	The day was fine and the people were pleased.
Tiocfaidh sé amárach nó imeoidh muide.	He'll come tomorrow or we'll leave.
Beidh mise anseo ach ní bheidh m'fhear ann.	I'll be here, but my husband won't be.

Subordinating ach and agus

Ach and **agus** also introduce verbless clauses that function to further qualify the main predicate.   When **ach** is used this way, the meaning approximates 'if only' or 'as long as'.

Beidh an múinteoir sásta ach an obair a bheith déanta go maith.
(The teacher will be happy providedthe work is done well.)

Beidh neart airgid agat, ach post a fháil.
(You'll have plenty of money, if only you get a job/once you get a job.)

Agus can be used to introduce any sentence in which **bí** would be the verb, if the sentence were used on its own.   The translation varies with the context, but the basic meaning includes simultaneity with the action of the main verb.

Tá Páidín ag an teach ósta agus é ag casadh amhrán.
(Paidin is at the pub, singing songs.)
        Compare:
Tá sé ag casadh amhrán.
(He was singing songs.)

Tháinig Bríd isteach, agus gúna nua uirthi.
(Bríd came in wearing a new dress.)
        Compare:
Bhí gúna nua uirthi.
(She was wearing a new dress.)

Tharla go leor rudaí agus Máire thar sáile.
(Many things happened while Maire was overseas.)
        Compare:
Bhí Máire thar saile.
(Maire was overseas.)

Tiocfaidh sé ar scoil, agus é tinn.
(He'll come to school, even if he's sick.)
        Compare:
Beidh sé tinn.
(He'll be sick.)

Other subordinate clauses

1.   The most common subordinate clause type is introduced by the subordinating particle
go 'that'.   It causes eclipsis of the subordinate verb, or a dependent form of irregular verbs.
Go has a variety of uses, including introducing indirect (reported) speech, purpose clauses,
later time reference ('until'), and wishes, probabilities,   or expectations of unrealized events.

Deir Seán go bhfuil sé ag báisteach.
(Sean says it's raining.)

Tabhair dom an leabhar go léifidh mé é.
(Give me the book so that I can read it.)

Fan go dtiocfaidh sé ar ais.
(Wait until he comes back.)

Tá súil agam go mbeidh tú ar ais.
(I hope you'll be back.)

B'fhéidir go mbeidh sé ar ais.
(Maybe he will be back.)

Ní móide go mbeidh sé ar ais.
(It is unlikely that he'll be back.)

Go also introduces subjunctive verbs:

Go n-éirí an bóthar leat.
(May you have a good trip.)

Unlike English 'that', **go** may never be omitted.

When introducing regular past tense verbs, the form **gur** is used.   Negative clauses are
introduced by **nach** (past tense **nár**).

Dúirt siad gur tharla timpiste.
(They said that an accident happened.)

Tá súil agam nach mbeidh tú tinn.
(I hope you won't be sick.)

2.   Conditional clauses are introduced by one of two words meaning 'if'. **Má**, which lenites a following verb, is used to introduce a condition which has some probability of becoming reality.   It can be followed by any tense except the future. When future time is intended, the present habitual tense is used.

Má bhíonn sé te amárach, snámhfaidh muid sa loch.
(If it is warm   tomorrow, we'll swim in the lake.)

Má chloisim   Áine, cloiseann sí mise freisin.
(If I hear Aine, she hears me, too.)

Má tá tú tinn, ba cheart duit dul chuig an dochtúr.
(If you are sick, you should go to the doctor.)

Má bhí Máirtín ansin, bhí Nuala ann freisin.
(If Mairtin was there, Nuala was there too.)

Má can also be used to express 'even if'.

Bhí airgead ag Séamas, ach má bhí féin, níor cheannaigh sé tada.
(Seamas had money, but even if he did, he didn't buy anything.)

For conditions which are hypothetical and unreal, **dá** (**dhá** in Connemara and some other regions) is used.   **Dá** causes eclipsis on the following verb and is followed only by the conditional mood (the clause signaling the consequence of the condition is also in the conditional form).

Dhá gcuirfeadh sé sneachta mí Lúnasa, bheadh iontas orainn.
(If it were to snow in August, we'd be surprised.)

Irish makes no distinction between present and past conditions; thus sentences such as these are ambiguous, but the context usually makes the intent clear.

Dhá mbeadh sé tinn, ní thiocfadh sé.
(If he were sick, he wouldn't come. / If he had been sick he wouldn't have come.)

The negative of both **má** and **dhá** is **mara** (sometimes written **mura**), which causes eclipsis.   Before past tense verbs, it is **murar**.

Mara mbeadh sé fliuch, ní bheadh muid fuar.
(If it weren't wet, we wouldn't be cold.)

Marar bhris tú an ghloine, tá an t-adh ort.
(If you didn't break the glass, you are lucky.)

Má combines with the copula as **más**; **dá** as **dá mba**

Más múinteoir ní níl mórán airgid aici.
(If she's a teacher, she hasn't much money.)

Dá mba dochtúr í, bheadh sí soibhir.
(If she were a doctor, she'd be rich.)

3.   The third major subordinate clause type is the relative clause, introduced by the particle

a, leniting or eclipsing according to the context.

See Also:
Relative Clauses

4. A number of adverbial clauses are introduced by specific adverbial particles plus **go** or relative **a**. These include:

Particle	Type	Meaning
sula	(eclipsing)	before
sul má	(leniting)	before
nuair a	(leniting)	when
sa gcaoi go	(eclipsing)	so that
marach go	(eclipsing)	but for the fact that
cé go	(eclipsing)	although

Word Order

In the usual case the word order of a sentence in Irish begins with the verb, followed by the subject.   If there is an object, indirect object, or any adverbs, they follow in that order.

Tháinig Séamas.	Seamas came.
Tháinig Séamas go luath.	Seamas came early.
Phós an sagart an lanúin.	The priest married the couple.
Chuir mé an bosca ar an orlár.	I put the box on the floor.
Thug Liam an t-airgead do Cholm.	Liam gave the money to Colm.
Thug Liam an t-airgead do Cholm inné.	Liam gave the money to Colm yesterday.

If the object is a pronoun, however, it tends to be placed at the end of the sentence.

Chuir mé ar an orlár é.	I put it on the floor.
Thug Liam do Cholm inné é.	Liam gave it to Colm yesterday.

Predicates of **bí** also follow the subject.

Tá sí compóirteach anseo.	She is comfortable here.
Bhí siad ag an scoil inné.	They were at the school yesterday.

The word order after the copula varies somewhat from this pattern.   In general, the predicate (new information) immediately follows the copula, and the subject comes last.

Is múinteoir é.	He is a teacher.
Is deas an lá é.	It;'s a nice day.

But the order is somewhat more complex in identification sentences involving names and contrastive pronoun predicates.

See Also:
Copula

Exceptional Orders

Occasionally, object nouns may be placed at the beginning of the sentence. This is rather rare, and the effect is somewhat poetic and formal.

Focal nár dhúirt sé.
(Not a word did he say.)

Especially long subjects, such as those containing a relative clause, may be placed before the verb to avoid breaking the flow of the sentence with a long phrase.   In this case a pronoun referring back to the subject occupies the normal position after the verb.

An cailín a chonaic tú aréir tá sí anseo aríst anocht.
The girl that saw you last   is she here again tonight.
night
Meaning: The girl you saw last night is here again tonight.

Various elements of a sentence can be emphasized by placing them at the beginning of the sentence, with the remainder of the sentence forming a relative clause:

Instead of
   Chuaigh mise go Ciarraí ar an mbus inné.
   (I went to Kerry on the bus yesterday.)
   [Literally: Went I to Kerry on the bus yesterday.]

one can emphasize any element by placing it first (with a preceding copula understood, but not usually expressed).

(Is) mise a chuaigh go Ciarraí ar an mbus inné.	It's I who went to Kerry on the bus yesterday.
(Is) go Ciarraí a chuaigh mé ar an mbus inné.	It's to Kerry that I went on the bus yesterday.
(Is) ar an mbus a chuaigh mé go Ciarraí inné.	It's on the bus that I went to Kerry yesterday.
(Is) inné a chuaigh mé go Ciarraí ar an mbus.	It's yesterday I went to Kerry on the bus.

See Also:
Copula

The Two Verbs 'To Be'

A rather unusual feature of Irish verbs is the fact that two distinct sets of forms are used to translate the English verb 'be' under different circumstances. For those who are familiar with Spanish, this is not unlike the distinction between **ser** and **estar** in that language.   The two Irish forms are   **bí**, known traditionally as the "substantive verb", and the copula, **is**.

Bí

Bí, also frequently referred to as **tá** (its present tense form), is known traditionally as the 'substantive verb'.   It can be fully conjugated in all tenses and persons, just like any other verb, although its tense forms are highly irregular. (See <u>Irregular Verbs</u> for the complete conjugation of **bí.**)

Grammatically, **bí** is also just like any other verb, coming first in the sentence, followed by a subject (either a separate noun or pronoun or a suffix, depending on the tense and person, as shown in the conjugations), and then it's predicate and any remaining adverbial information.

Tá Bríd anseo.
(Bríd is here.)

Bhí Peadar anseo inné.
(Peadar was here yesterday.)

However, **bí** is not used everywhere that English 'be' is.   Its use is limited to the expression of existence, locations, and attributes of a subject, and as an auxiliary verb.

Existence and Location

In the simplest form of existential sentences, the predicate position is filled by **ann**, literally 'in it', but in this usage merely signalling existence.

Tá deá-aimsir agus droch-aimsir ann.
(There is good weather and bad weather.)

Ní bheidh ár leithéad ann arís.
(Our like will not exist again.)

More often a location is specified, either by an adverb or a prepositional phrase, and this fills the same position as **ann**.   **Ann** is not necessary in this case.

Tá go leor daoine anseo.	There are many people here.
Tá úllaí ar an mbord.	There are apples on the table.
Tá báisteach san iarthar.	There's rain in the west.

Such sentences commonly begin with 'there is' in English (unless the verb 'exist' is used), but the Irish sentences simply begin with the verb and proceed like any other.   **Ann** can be thought of as equivalent to 'there' in such sentences, but it is used only when no other location is specified, and appears in the predicate position at the end, rather than at the beginning.

Tá fir anseo; tá mná ann freisin.   There are men here; there are women, too.

The same structure is used to name the location of a specific individual.

Bhí mé anseo inné.
(I was here yesterday, too.)

Tá Gaillimh in Éirinn.
(Galway is in Ireland.)

Tá an cat faoin gcathaoir.
(The cat is under the chair.)

Ann can also be used in these sentences as a kind of pronominal form, to indicate a location that has already been mentioned. In this case it can be translated as 'there' or not translated at all.

Tá Peige sa mbaíle agus tá Bairbre ann freisin.
(Peggy is at home and Barbara is, too.)

Predicate Adjectives

Bí is also used to describe attributes of an individual.   In these cases, a descriptive adjective occupies the predicate position after the subject being described.   It does not change to agree with the subject in gender or number.

Tá Mícheál tinn.
(Michael is sick.)

Tá Máire tinn.
(Mary is sick.)

Tá na daoine sin soibhir.
(Those people are rich.)

Tá na leapacha compórtach.
(The beds are comfortable.)

A small set of adjectives, when used as predicates of **bí**, are preceded by the particle **go**, normally used for adverbs.   These are all adjectives expressing evaluation.   **Go** prefixes **h-** to a vowel; consonants are not affected.

Tá an bia go maith.
(The food is good.)

Tá tú go hálainn.
(You are wonderful.)

Tá an aimsir go breá.
(The weather is fine.)

Bhí an lá go hiontach.
(The day was wonderful.)

When these are used attributively, i.e., directly modifying a noun in the same phrase, **go** is omitted.

bia maith   good food

cailín álainn   a beautiful girl
aimsir bhreá   fine weather
lá iontach   a wonderful day

The following is the full set of predicate adjectives which normally take **go** when used as predicates.

maith   good, well
dona   bad
deas   nice
breá   fine
iontach   wonderful
aoibhinn   pleasant
álainn   beautiful
olc   bad, wicked, bad-tempered

Used as a predicate adjective referring to people, **maith** 'good' can also refer to health.

Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?
(How are you?)

Tá mé go maith.
(I am well.)

Auxiliary Verbs

Bí is also the verb used as an auxiliary (helping verb) to form the progressive and perfect forms of other verbs. (See <u>Compound Tenses</u>)

Omission of bí

Bí may be omitted in a clause that is conjoined with another preceding clause.

Bhí mé anseo agus mé tinn.
(I was here, and sick.)

Tháinig Tomás, agus fearg air.
(Tomás came, and he was angry. / Tomás came angry.)

In contrast to English 'be', Irish **bí** may not be used to link two nouns or noun phrases, in sentences such as 'I am Bridget,' or 'Tim is a doctor.'   This type of construction is the domain of the copula, **is**.

The Copula is

Is, known as the copula, is sometimes called a defective verb, because it only has two tense forms.   In fact it is more like a particle that attaches to the beginning of another word, usually a noun, to link it to a subject in a way similar to 'be' in English.   Sentences formed with **is** are quite different from those with other verbs, however, and they will be described in this section.

The copula is not conjugated for different subjects, which are always expressed by separate

nouns or pronouns, and it only has two forms for different tenses.   Is can be used for present or future meaning, and **ba** (with lenition) is used for past or conditional meanings. There are no habitual tenses of the copula.

Present/Future	**Is múinteoir mé.**	I am/will be a teacher.
Past/Conditional	**Ba mhúinteoir é.**	He was/would be a teacher.

When it is really critical to distinguish time reference, a special construction consisting of   **bí** and a prepositional phrase can be used.

Tá mé i mo mhúinteoir.	I am a teacher. (lit. I am in my teacher.)
Bhí tú i do mhúinteoir.	You were a teacher.
Beidh siad ina múinteoirí.	They will be teachers.

The question and negative particles used with the copula are the same as for all verbs, but instead of preceding the copula, they incorporate it. Thus **ní** means 'is not' , **an** means 'is?', **nach** means 'isn't?' .   Introducing a subordinate clause with a copula, **gur** (instead of **go**) is used. The copula forms of these particles do not cause lenition or eclipsis; **ní** prefixes **h-** to vowels.

Ní feirmeoir é.	He is not a farmer.
An dochtúir thú?	Are you a doctor?
Nach múinteoir í do mháthair?	Isn't your mother a teacher?
Deir sí gur múinteoir í.	She says that she's a teacher.

In actual spoken usage, there is a good deal of variation in the forms of the copula particles. For example, in Connemara and other Connacht dialects, the question particle may take the form **ar**; before a vowel it appears as **ab**, and **gur** appears as **gurb**.

Ar dochtúr thú?	Are you a doctor?
Ab innealtóir thú?	Are you an engineer?
Deir Pádraig gurb innealtóir é.	Pádraig says he's an engineer.

With **ba**, the official standard forms of the negative, question, and subordinate copula are **níor**, **ar**, **nár**, and **gur**.   Before vowels, they are **níorbh**, **arbh**, **nárbh**, and **gurbh**.   In spoken varieties, such as that of Connemara, they also may appear as **ní ba**, **an mba**, **nach mba** and **go mba** instead.

Ar mhaith leat tae?	Would you like tea?
An mba mhaith leat tae?	

Deir sé gur mhaith leis caife.	He says he'd like coffee.
Deir sé go mba mhaith leis caife.	

Types of Copula Sentences

The primary use of the copula is to link two nouns. There are also some special idiomatic usages in which the copula introduces an adjective or prepositional phrase.   Each use shows word order and other features which differentiate it from other sentence patterns of the language.

Classification Sentences

The copula is used to classify individuals as members of a set, or class of individuals.   In this case, the copula precedes an indefinite noun or phrase that names the class. This noun or phrase is the predicate. The second noun is the subject, the individual being identified as a member of the class.   If the subject is a pronoun, the accusative form is used rather than the nominative as the subject of full-fledged verbs.   If the subject is a noun or noun phrase, a pronoun of the same gender and number may precede it in some dialects.   For example:

Is siopa é sin.	That is a shop.	shop it that
Is dochtúr í.	She is a doctor.	doctor she
Is múinteoir (é) Séamas.	Séamas is a teacher.	teacher he
Is cat (é) mo pheata.	My pet is a cat.	cat he my pet
Is leabhar maith (é) Cré na Cille.	Cré na Cille is a good book	good it book

When the predicate noun has an adjective modifying it, as in the last example, it is also possible to invert the order of the noun and adjective, placing a definite article (**an** or **na**) between them.   This has the effect of shifting the emphasis to the description (we know **Cré na Cille** is a book; the speaker is focusing on its quality).

Is maith an leabhar é Cré na Cille.	Cré na Cille is a **good** book.
Is maith an ceoltóir é Máirtín.	Máirtín is a **good** musician.
Is deas an bhean í Áine.	Aine is a **nice** woman.

In the present tense, it is common to omit the copula, although it is still understood.

Maith an cailín (thú)!   (You're a) good girl!

Identification Sentences

These sentences link two nouns or phrases with a specific reference (names, pronouns, nouns with a possessive or definite article) and signal that the two refer to the same individual.

a.	**Is mise Caitlín.**	I am Caitlin.
b.	**Ar thusa bean an tí?**	Are you the landlady?
c.	**Is é Eoghan mo dheartháir.**	Eoghan is my brother.
d.	**Is í Bríd an bhanaltra.**	Bríd is the nurse.
e.	**Is iad mo ghasúir iad.**	They are my children.
f.	**Is é an sagart an múinteoir.**	The priest is the teacher.
g.	**Is é an múinteoir an sagart.**	The teacher is the priest.

The word order of identification sentences does not always follow the predicate-subject order of the classification sentences.   In general, if one of the two individuals linked is expressed by a contrast form of a pronoun (or a pronoun reinforced with **féin** 'self'), that pronoun comes first, as in (a) and (b) above.   If a proper name (preceded by a matching unstressed pronoun), that comes first, as in (c) and (d).   An unstressed pronoun subject always comes last, as in (e). If two common noun phrases are linked, as in (f) and (g), the

one that is first is interpreted as the new information of the sentence.   That is, the sentence in (f) can be taken to answer the implicit question 'Which person is the teacher?'   To answer the question   'Which person is the priest?', the opposite order would be used, as in (g).   In contrast, a sentence like (c) could be used to answer either Who is Eoghan?   or Who (which one) is your brother?

The examples above also demonstrate that only a pronoun can immediately follow the copula in identification sentences.   If one of the two individuals being linked by the sentence is a name or other definite noun phrase which would follow the copula, it must be preceded by a simple pronoun that matches in gender and number, as in (c)-(g) above.

Idiomatic Uses

The copula is also used in a range of idiomatic constructions consisting of adjective and prepositional phrase predicates.

Adjectives alone can be used in a limited way with the copula for an exclamatory effect. This usage is generally found with adjectives of evaluation, typically those same adjectives which appear with **go** in the predicate of **bí**.

Is maith thú!   Good for you!
Nach deas é sin!   Isn't that nice!

More common are adjective + prepositional phrase combinations which take on a specialized meaning.   These meanings vary somewhat as the tense of the copula changes as well as the form of the adjective.   Some common examples:

Is maith le: likes	**Is maith liom tae.**	I like tea.
Ba mhaith le: 'would like, wants'	**Ba mhaith liom bainne, más é do thoil é.**	I'd like some milk please.
Is maith do: 'is good for'	**Is maith duit bainne.**	Milk is good for you.
Is fearr le: 'prefers'	**Is fearr le Ciarán caife (ná tae).**	Ciaran prefers coffee (to tea).
B'fhearr le: 'would prefer, would rather'	**B'fhearr linn fanacht anseo.**	We'd rather stay here.
Is féidir le: 'is able'	**An féidir leat cuidiú liom?**	Can you help me?
Ní miste le: 'doesn't mind'	**Ní miste liom fanacht.**	I don't mind waiting.
Ní mór do: must, should	**Ní mór duit an obair a chríochnú go sciopta.**	You must finish the work quickly.
Is cuma le: 'doesn't mind, doesn't care'	**Is cuma le Colm cé atá anseo.**	Colm doesn't care who is here.
Ba cheart do: 'should'	**Ba cheart dom dul abhaile.**	I should go home.

More generally, an adjective plus **le** 'with' is used with the copula to express a subjective evaluation on the part of the object of **le**.   Thus **is maith liom é**, 'I like'   means literally 'it

is good with me (i.e., in my opinion).'   Similarly:

Is deacair liom é.	I find it difficult.
Is aoibhinn liom é.	I find it pleasant.
Ba bhreá liom é.	I'd consider it fine, I'd like it a lot.

Certain prepositions occur alone with the copula with specialized function as well.   **Le** 'with' after the copula expresses ownership.   **As** or **ó** are used similarly to express place of origin.

Is le Máirín an teach sin.	That house is Máirín's. (Máirín owns that house.)
Is as Sasana muid.	We are from England.

Emphatic Uses of the Copula

Various elements of a simple sentence can be emphasized by placing them with a copula at the beginning of the sentence; the remainder of the sentence forms a relative clause introduced by **a**.   Pronouns separate a definite noun or phrase from the copula, as in identification sentences. The effect of this usage is to focus attention on the word or phrase that appears with the copula, and such sentences often imply the exclusion of others.   The copula may frequently be omitted (along with an accompanying unstressed pronoun), but is understood.

(Is í) Bríd a bhí mall.	It is Bríd who was late.
(Is) mise a tháinig go luath.	It's I who came early.
(Is) inné a d'imigh siad.	It's **yesterday** that they left. (not today, or day before yesterday, etc.)
(Is) go Corcaigh a chuaigh siad.	It's to Cork that they went.'
(Is) ag ithe atá muid.	We're **eating**. (not drinking, or sleeping, etc.)

As the translations indicate, these have an analogue in the English so-called cleft sentences, of the form 'It is X that...   However, the structure is used much more frequently in Irish, including cases where is would sound awkward in English (It is eating that we are).   English speakers often use contrastive stress in an ordinary sentence structure to accomplish the same effect:

> We went to Cork **yesterday**.
> **We** went to Cork yesterday.
> We went **to Cork** yesterday.

Irish does not shift the stress in this way, but relies more consistently on the cleft sentence emphasis with the copula.

See Also:
Word Order

If the element being emphasized is itself from a copula sentence, different mechanisms are used.   To place emphasis on the classification in a sentence like

> **Is múinteoir mé.**   (I am a teacher.)

one of the following is used:

Múinteoir is ea mé
OR   I am a **teacher**.
Múinteoir atá ionam.

Answering Questions with the Copula

The copula is always unstressed and does not appear alone. Therefore it cannot be used to answer yes or no to questions, without some other form to support it.   For classification sentences and cleft sentences with indefinite nouns or phrasal elements emphasized, the copula in responses is supported by **ea**, and the combination **is ea** is often contracted to **sea**.

Question	Yes	No
Ar banaltra thú? (Are you a nurse?)	**Is ea ('Sea).**	**Ní hea.**
Inniu a tháinig sibh? (Was it today you came?)	**'Sea.**	**Ní hea.**
An ag ithe atá siad? (Are they **eating**?)	**'Sea.**	**Ní hea.**

In identification-type sentences, the appropriate pronoun supports the copula, and contraction is common.

Ab é Tomás d'athair? Is Tomás your father?	**'Sé.** Yes, he is.	**Ní hé. Is é m'uncail é.** No, he's my uncle.
Ar thusa an doctúr? Are you the doctor?	**Is mé.** Yes, I am.	**Ní mé.** No, I'm not.

Adjectival and prepositional phrase idioms repeat the adjective or prepositional phrase.

An maith leat fataí? Do you like potatoes?	**Is maith.** Yes.	**Ní maith.** No.
Ar leat an carr sin? Is that carr yours?	**Is liom.** Yes.	**Ní liom.** No

Origin questions, however, are answered with **'sea / ní hea**.

Ab as Éirinn thú? Are you from Ireland?	**'Sea.** Yes.	**Ní hea.** No.

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are used, like adjectives, to narrow the range of possible reference of a noun to a specific individual. In both Irish and English, the noun whose referent the clause identifies precedes the clause, which in English contains a gap in the position the noun would fill in the clause.

the book which I bought   (I bought the book)

the boy who was sick   (the boy was sick)
the child I saw   (I saw the child)
the girl that I was talking to   (I was talking to the girl)

As the examples indicate, the clause may be introduced by a number of different forms in English: who, which, that, or even nothing at all. In Irish, it is always introduced by **a**, though the effects of **a** on the remainder of the clause vary according to the role of the noun in the clause.

Type 1

If the noun is a subject or object of the verb in the relative clause, there is simply a gap in that position within the clause, as in English.

an bhean a chonaic sé _   (chonaic sé an bhean)
the woman that he saw _   (he saw the woman)

an bhean a chonaic _ é   (chonaic an bhean é)
the woman who saw him

With regular verbs, the particle **a** causes lenition of the first consonant.

an bhean a fheicim   (feicim an bhean)
the woman that I see

In sentences where the subject and object don't have separate forms, the order of the words remaining may leave an ambiguity.

an bhean a chonaic mé.   (chonaic mé an bhean) OR (chonaic an bhean mé)
                     the woman whom I saw OR the woman who saw me

Type 2

If the noun at the head (front) of the clause is the object of a preposition or a possessor within the clause, a pronoun of the same gender and number is kept in the clause, and the verb is marked by eclipsis or the dependent form of irregular verbs.

an bhean a raibh mé ag caint léi
the woman that I was talking to
(lit. the woman that I was talking to her)

an bhean a mbeidh a mac ag casadh ceoil
the woman whose son will be playing music
(lit. the woman that her son will be playing music)

Traditionally, the first type of relative clause (with gap and lenition) is called the 'direct relative' and the second (with pronoun and eclipsis) is called the 'indirect relative'.

In Munster dialects, the indirect relative clause may be introduced by **go** instead of **a**.

In Connacht and Ulster dialects, direct relative clauses may use a special verb form ending

in **-s** in the present (habitual) and future tenses.

an bhean a bheas anseo
the woman who will be here

an bhean a bhíonns anseo
the woman who is (regularly) here

Likewise, in Donegal, **bíos**, without lenition, is used as a relative form of the present habitual tense of **bí**.

There is never lenition of relative **tá**, and the particle **a** is written as one word with it.

an bhean atá anseo   (tá an bhean anseo)
the woman who is here (now)

Negative relative clauses, both direct and indirect, are introduced by **nach** and eclipsis. No relative ending is used, even in the present and future.

an bhean nach bhfuil anseo	the woman who isn't here
an bhean nach mbeidh anseo	the woman who won't be here
an bhean nach mbeidh a mac anseo	the woman whose son won't be here

Regular past tense verbs are already lenited and do not use the relative ending **-s**, so the only signal that they are in a direct relative clause is the presence of **a** and the word order, with the noun first.   Since a lenited past tense verb cannot undergo eclipsis as well, the particle changes instead in indirect relatives.   Past indirect relatives are introduced by **ar**, negatives by **nár**.

Direct
an bhean a phós Seán	the woman who married Seán / the woman whom Seán married
an bhean nár phós	the woman who didn't marry

Indirect
an bhean ar phós a hiníon Liam	the woman whose daughter married Liam
an bhean nár phós a hiníon	the woman whose daughter didn't marry

Irregular verbs that have separate dependent forms use the ordinary particles **a** and **nach** in the past tense.

an bhean nach bhfaca sé   'the woman he didn't see'

an bhean a bhfaca a mac mé	the woman whose son saw me
an bhean nach bhfaca a mac mé	the woman whose son didn't see me

Constituent questions, which are simply relative clauses headed by a question word, follow the same patterns. (See also <u>Interrogatives</u> for further information.)

Cé a chonaic tú?	Who did you see?
Cé nach bhfaca tú?	Who did you not see?

Cé a bhfaca tú Máire leis?
OR   Who did you see M. with?
Cé leis a bhfaca tú Máire?

Relative Clauses and the Copula

There is no distinct relative form of the copula.   When the present form is used in a relative clause (usually with one of the idiomatic functions; relative clauses of identification and classification forms are generally avoided), it looks just as it does in a simple sentence. The past/conditional forms may be preceded by the particle **a**, but it is not obligatory.

Is maith liom tae.   I like tea.
Sin é an deoch is maith liom.   That is the drink which I like.

Ba maith liom píosa cáca.   I'd like a piece of cake.
Sin é an rud (a) ba mhaith liom.   That's the thing that I would like.

Indirect relative clauses with the copula take the form **ar**, and include a pronoun within the subordinate clause, as with regular verbs.

Is le Donncha an t-airgead.   The money belongs to Donncha.
Tabhair an t-airgead don duine ar   Give the money to the person it belongs to.
leis é.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Two forms of pronouns are found in the third person, one beginning with s, and one beginning with a vowel for each person.

sé/é   he/him/it
sí/í   she/her/it
siad/iad   they/them

These are sometimes thought of as being subject (forms with s) and object (without s) pronouns respectively, but that is an oversimplification.   In fact the forms with s are used as subject pronouns only when they directly follow the verb.

Bhí sé anseo.   He was here.
Tháinig siad inné.   They came yesterday.
Chonaic sí mé.   She saw me.

In other instances, the forms without s are used as subjects.

When there is no verb expressed:

Chonaic mé Liam agus é tinn.
(I saw Liam, and he sick.)

When the pronoun is separated from the verb by another pronoun conjoined with it:

Bhí mé féin agus í féin ann.
(She and I were here.)

When the pronoun precedes the verb in a verbal noun construction:

Ba mhaith liom iad a bheith anseo.
(I'd like for them to be here.)

When the pronoun is subject of a copula:

Is í mo dheirfiúr í.
(She is my sister.)

These are the same forms used for pronoun objects as well.

Feicim iad.   I see them.
Feiceann siad í.   They see her.
Feiceann sí é.   She sees him.
D'ith sí é.   She ate it.

A more accurate characterization of the distinction between the two forms of pronouns is that the forms beginning with s are clitic particles, used only for subjects that immediately follow the verb of which they are subject. The forms without s are used in all other cases,

regardless of whether they function as subject or object.

Pronoun with **is**

Definite nouns and noun phrases can never immediately follow the copula **is**.   Definite forms include any noun with the definite article **an/na**, any noun with a possessive marking, and any proper name.   When these occur in copula constructions, they are always separated from the copula by a pronoun of the same gender and number:

Is iad na gasúir a ghlan an seomra.
(It's the children who cleaned the room.)

Is é m'athair an garda.
(My father is the policeman.)

Is í Cáit an múinteoir.
(Cáit is the teacher.)

In classification sentences (cross reference), a pronoun may also separate the two nouns being linked.

Is dochtúr í Aine.	Aine is a doctor.
Is dochtúr é Muiris.	Muiris is a doctor.
Is dochtúirí iad mo chairde.	My friends are doctors.

In this case the pronoun matches the gender (and number) of the subject (the second noun). This usage is not as rigidly required as the pronoun after **is**, and dialects vary in how regularly the pronoun appears, but it is quite common.

The Article

There is no indefinite article (equivalent to English a/an) in Irish.

cailín   girl, a girl
bád   boat, a boat

The only article is the definite article, roughly equivalent to English the.   It has two forms.

an   is used for all singular nouns, except feminine nouns in the genitive case

na   is used for all plural nouns and for feminine nouns in the genitive case

Examples:
Masculine

an bád	the boat	**na báid**	the boats
an bháid	of the boat	**na mbád**	of the boats

Feminine

an chearc	the hen	**na cearca**	the hens
na circe	of the hen	**na gcearca**	of the hens

It will be noted that various consonant mutations are linked to the use of the article in particular gender+case combinations.   These are discussed more specifically in the section on Declension of Nouns.

The definite article is used somewhat more widely in Irish than in English, being found, for example, with the names of certain countries and languages, and in other cases where no article would be used in English.

an Fhrainc	France
an Ghaeilge	Irish
an cheimic	chemistry
an Cháisc	Easter
an pholaitíocht	politics
an dífhostaíocht	unemployment
an brón	sorrow

Initial Mutations

The Celtic languages are characterized by a number of processes, known as 'initial mutations',   which change the initial sound of a word in certain contexts.   Sometimes the trigger for a mutation is a particular word or particle preceding the vowel or consonant that changes; in other cases it is a specific grammatical configuration (e.g., a specific verb tense or noun case) that causes the change, regardless of the particular words involved. Or it may be a combinatin of the two.   These mutations occur so commonly in the language that hardly a sentence can be found in a typical conversation that doesn't contain examples of at least one and often several.   Therefore, it is important to learn both the changes that occur (the mutations) and the conditions under which they occur   (the triggers, or environments).

The primary mutations affect consonants, although a few changes to words beginning with vowels are also found.   Not every consonant is affected by each mutation pattern, but if a consonant is affected, it is affected in every case where the consonant begins a word in the relevant environment.   The mutations found in Irish are discussed and illustrated in this section.   They are Lenition, Eclipsis, h-prefixation, t-prefixation to consonants, and t-prefixation to vowels.

Lenition

Lenition (sometimes inaccurately called 'aspiration') is the most common of the mutations, and the most complex.   It affects the consonants
        p, **b**, **m**, **f**, **t**, **d**, **s**, **c**, and **g**
in a wide range of contexts.   The changes are marked in spelling by adding an h after the affected consonant. The changes to pronunciation all involve weakening the pronunciation of the consonant in some way, often by letting the air flow through the mouth more freely while the consonant is being produced.

Specific changes for each consonant are as follows:

Original Consonant	Spelling Change	Pronunciation	Examples (original - lenited)
p	**ph**	/f/	**p**óca - **ph**óca
b	**bh**	/v/ or /w/*	**b**ean - **bh**ean
m	**mh**	/v/ or /w/*	**m**áthair - **mh**áthair
f	**fh**	becomes silent	**f**uinneog - **fh**uinneog
t	**th**	/h/	**t**each - **th**each
d	**dh**	/ G/#	**d**ubh - **dh**ubh
s	**sh**	/h/	**s**agart - **sh**agart
c	**ch**	/x/^	**c**óta - **ch**óta
g	**gh**	/ G/#	**g**aoth - **gh**aoth

Notes

*The alternate pronunciations of lenited b and m depend in part on the regional variant spoken.   For some dialects, the pronunciation is always /v/ in both cases. In others, such as those of Connemara, the pronunciation /v/ is used when the original consonant is slender or followed by another consonant (e.g.,   **bhean**, **bhrúigh**, **mhill**) and the pronunciation /w/ is found when the original consonant is broad, and followed by a vowel (e.g., **mháthair**, **bhuachaill**, etc.).

#The lenited pronunciation of d and g (/G/) is produced by keeping the mouth in the same

position as for /g/ but letting the air pass through between the tongue and the top of the mouth rather than blocking it off entirely; the result is a kind of buzzing sound, akin to gargling if prolonged.   For lenited slender d and g, the tongue is a bit more forward in the mouth, producing a sound rather like an emphatic pronunciation of English y.   Similarly, the pronunciation of /x/ (spelled ch)   is like that of /k/, but with air passing through. It is like the ch in the German **Bach** or Scottish **Loch Lomond**, etc.

It will be noticed that lenited consonants also appear occasionally in the middle and at the end of some words (e.g., the th in **máthair** and **gaoth** above, and the ch in **teach** and bh in **dubh**).   This is a result of historical changes in pronunciation which are related to the grammatically conditioned alternations found initially.   Pronunciations in these positions are generally the same as in initial position, except as noted below.   There is some regional variation in the pronunciation of medial and final consonants, which is best learned by listening to native speakers.   A few noteworthy cases will be outlined here. Unless otherwise specified, the regional pronunciation described is for Connemara Irish.

In word-final position th is generally silent, unless a word beginning with a vowel follows in the phrase.   In Cois Fharraige, just west of Galway city, th is often unpronounced in the middle of words as well; elsewhere it is generally pronounced as above.

Final dh and gh are generally silent in the regions north of the Shannon, but in dialects of Munster in the south they may be pronounced as /g/, especially when slender.   In the middle of a word, their pronunciation is more like English y, and they often combine with adjacent vowels to form a diphthong /ay/   as in **praghas**, which is a borrowing of the English word 'price'.   In this case the sequence agha represents the same sound as the letter i' in the English word. Similarly, the sequence adh in **adharc** (horn) represents the same sound.

When broad bh or mh (phonetically /w/) are found word medially, a similar process of combination often produces the diphthong /aw/.   This can be seen in the borrowed word **dabht** (doubt) and in the native word **samhlaigh** (imagine), where the sequence amh represents the diphthong /aw/ (what in English would be spelled ow).

Some older speakers also distinguish between unlenited and lenited n and l, although the distinction is not marked in spelling and seems to be dying out in recent generations. For those who do distinguish, the unlenited initial n and l are pronounced as if double (see Alphabet and Pronunciation).

Some of the most noteworthy functions of lenition include marking verbs referring to past time and conditional mood, and signalling the grammatical function and gender of nouns, especially when they are accompanied by the definite article, and agreement of modifying adjectives. See the sections on verb tenses,   Declension of Nouns, and Declension and Agreement of Adjectives   for further discussion.   Lenition is also triggered by a number of specific (usually unstressed, particle-like) words, including the numbers 1-6, the prepositions **ar** (on), **faoi** (under), **do** (for) and others, the negative particle **ní**, and the relative particle **a**, among others.

Lenition does not occur when the word which would be affected follows a word which ends with a homorganic consonant (one produced with the tongue in the same position in the mouth).   Thus, nouns beginning with t, d, or s are not lenited after the definite article **an**, even when other nouns would be, because **an** ends with a sound produced with the tongue in the same position as for t, d, and s.

an carr   the car
doras an chairr   the door of the car

BUT

an teach   the house
doras an tí   the door of the house

Although a masculine genitive noun is lenited after **an** (the),   **teach** (house) is not, because of the juxtaposition of the n and t in the phrase. Similarly a noun like **doras** (door) would be unlenited in this position. Nouns beginning with s are also not lenited, but are affected by t-prefixation to consonants, see below.

Eclipsis

The eclipsis mutation affects a somewhat smaller number of consonants, and has the effect of causing a voiceless consonant to become voiced and a voiced one to become nasalized. It is written by placing the consonant representing the new pronunciation in front of the original consonant, and is found only in word-initial position.   The consonants affected by eclipsis are **p**, **t**, **c**, **f**, **b**, **d**, **g**:

Original Consonant	Spelling Change	Pronunciation	Examples (original -eclipsed)
p	**bp**	/b/	**p**óca - **bp**óca
t	**dt**	/d/	**t**each - **dt**each
c	**gc**	/g/	**c**ailín - **gc**ailín
f	**bhf**	/v/ or /w/*	**F**rainc - **bhF**rainc
b	**mb**	/m/	**b**ord - **mb**ord
d	**nd**	/n/	**d**uine - **nd**uine
g	**ng**	/N/%	**g**aoth - **ng**aoth

*The pronunciation of bhf follows the pattern described for lenited b and m in the Lenition section.

% The pronunciation of ng is like the same sequence in English 'sing'. For English speakers, it takes some practice to pronounce this sound at the beginning of a word. It helps to pronounce the preceding word trigger as a unit with the word containing the eclipsed g.

Common triggers of eclipsis include the verbal subordinate particle **go**, the question particle **an**, the numbers 7-10, plural possessive pronouns, and the preposition **in** (in), among others.   In some dialects, the sequence of a preposition+ definite article **an** also causes eclipsis in the noun that follows.

h-prefixation

When a word starts with a vowel, and is preceded by certain unstressed particles which end in a vowel, an /h/ is prefixed,   in both pronunciation and spelling, to the second word, separating the two vowels.

an oifig   the office   **na hoifigí**   the offices
bean álainn   a beautiful woman   **tá sí go hálainn**   she is beautiful

The particles which trigger   h-prefixation have no effect on words beginning with a consonant; that is, they are non-leniting particles. Particles which lenite a following

consonant do not cause h-prefixation, even if they end in a vowel.

t-prefixation to consonants

The only consonant affected by this mutation is s, whether   broad (/s/) or slender (/S/). Where lenition of a noun is expected after the definite article (see Lenition section), an s will be replaced by /t/ (broad or slender, to match the original), written before it.

an siopa	the shop	**doras an tsiopa**	the door of the shop
an sagart	the priest	**teach an tsagairt**	the priest's house

t-prefixation to vowels

A different configuration causes prefixation of a t- to nouns beginning with vowels.   In this case, the t is set off from the word it is attached to in spelling by a hyphen.   This mutation takes place only on masculine nouns after the definite article in the common form.   The pronunciation is a broad /t/ in words beginning with a, o, or u, and slender /t'/ in words beginning with i' or e.

athair	father	**an t-athair**	the father
uisce	water	**an t-uisce**	the water
im	butter	**an t-im**	the butter

The genitive case of masculine nouns, and the common case of feminine nouns, do not cause t-prefixation.

abhainn	river	**an abhainn**	the river
ainm an athar	the name of the father		
blas an uisce	the taste of the water		
blas an ime	the taste of the butter		

Alphabet and Pronunciation

Irish is written with the Roman alphabet, as is English, but normally only eighteen of our twenty-six letters are used. They are the following:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u

In words borrowed from English, the other letters are occasionally used, especially j and v (e.g., **jab** job, **vóta** vote).

The pronunciation of the letters varies somewhat from that of English, however. The differences will be explained in this section.

Consonants

For the most part, consonants have about the same value as in English, but with one major difference: in Irish, each consonant letter (except h) represents two different sounds, known as broad and slender.   In addition to the normal position of the tongue and mouth that produces each consonant, slender consonants generally involve raising the tongue slightly

toward the roof of the mouth (hard palate), without actually making contact, while broad consonants are formed by raising the very back of the tongue slightly, and relaxing and rounding the lips. The difference between broad and slender consonants in writing is indicated by the adjacent vowels, according to the spelling rule slender with slender, broad with broad. Slender consonants will always be adjacent to the slender vowels e and i'; broad consonants will be preceded and followed by a, o, or u. Groups of consonants are all either slender or broad. Some examples:

	Slender	Broad
b	bí	buí
	lúib	leadhb
c	ciúin	cúl
	craic	bac
d	daide	tada
	báid	bád
f	fíor	faoi
	feall	fáil
g	giall	gaol
	aige	ag a
l	léine	lae
	áille	álainn
m	mí	maigh
	cáim	cam
n	ní	naoi
	fúinn	fonn
p	peann	pá
	scaipthe	capall
r	stóir	stór
	doras	doire
s	seol	sólás
	aois	síos
t	tír	tuí
	ait	at

Notes on consonants

The letters c and g (both broad and slender) in Irish are always pronounced hard, that is, as in the English cat and give, never as in city or gist.

Broad d and t are pronounced with the tongue slightly farther forward than in English, pressing against the back of the teeth. Slender d and t are more like the English consonants in tongue position.

The letter s stands for both the sound written in English as s and the sound written sh. The latter sound is the Irish slender s, which is always adjacent to an i' or e in Irish spelling.

Double l and n

In addition to the broad/slender distinction for l and n illustrated above, in the middle of and at the ends of words, there is a distinction of slender sounds written with single or double letters. For most speakers, this distinction is lost at the beginning of a word where the pronunciation is generally as if the consonants were spelled double.

Vowels

Irish spellings are rich in vowels, because not only are these letters used for the vowels that are actually pronounced, but vowels may also be used in spelling to signal the consonant quality (broad or slender), without being pronounced. Thus many Irish words contain sequences of two or three vowels, which may represent only one vowel sound. Learning which vowels are pronounced and which simply mark consonant quality is one of the major challenges of mastering Irish spelling.

Long and short vowels are distinct in Irish. The latter are slightly longer in duration and pronounced with tenser mouth muscles than the former. Unstressed short vowels are pronounced very short indeed, usually sounding something like uh. In most words, the first syllable is the one that is stressed.

Vowels marked with an accent (e.g., **á**) are long vowels. Any time an accented vowel appears in a sequence, that is the vowel pronounced, and the others can be assumed to be present only to mark the neighboring consonants. For example:

eá	Seán
ái	áit
eái	Sheáin
éa	Séamas
éi	céim
oí	croí
aí	scéalaí
uí	buí
uío	buíochas
ói	bróige
úi	cúis
iú	siúl
iúi	ciúin

Other long vowels are not marked with an accent, but certain spelling sequences automatically represent a long vowel, as the following examples illustrate.

Pronounced like á:	**a** or **ea** followed by **n**, **nn**, **ll**, **rr**, or **m-** (unless another vowel follows)
	crann
	am
	carr
	ard
	mall
	geall
	ceann
Pronounced like é:	**ae**, **aei**
	tae
	Gaeilge
	traein
Pronounced like í:	**i** or **io** followed by **n**, **nn**, **ll**, **rr**, **m-** (unless another vowel follows)
	tinn
	tintreacha
	timpiste
	im
	cionn
	ao, **aoi**

saor
naoi

Pronounced like ó: **eo**, **eoi**
leor
ceo

Other vowel sequences likewise are pronounced as single vowels.

ea, **eai** (unless followed by the consonants noted above) and **ai** at the beginning of a word are pronounced approximately like the /a/ in the English hat:

bean
fear
seaicéad
aisteach

Other sequences are pronounced the same as the single vowels above:
ai following a consonant is pronounced like /a/:

bainis
cailín

io is pronounced like /i/:

fios

oi is pronounced like /e(i)/:

toil
oiread

ui is pronounced like /i/:

uisce
fuil

iu is pronounced like /u/:

fluich
tuirseach

Diphthongs

In a few cases, sequences of vowels are pronounced as two vowels, called diphthongs.
ia   bia
                dian
ua   nuacht
                suas

Other diphthongs are created by the combination of certain lenited consonants and vowels. since broad bh and mh are pronounced like the English /w/, they combine with a to form the diphthong /au/, as in the English now. For example:

samhradh
tábhachtach

Sometimes omh is also pronounced this way, as in **domhan**. But more often, omh is pronounced like ú:

comharsa
romhat

Another diphthong in Irish is spelled by the combination of gh or dh (in the middle of words) with a preceding vowel, usually a(i) or o(i). These combinations are pronounced /ai/, as in the English eye. For example:

slaghdán
staighre
Maidhc
foighid

The gh that combines with a may be either broad or slender, as the examples show. Broad dh, however, combines with a as a simple vowel, pronounced the same as á: **adhmad**. Likewise, broad gh as well as dh combined with o are pronounced like ó: **modh**, **foghlaim**. Sometimes ogh is pronounced as the diphthong /au/: **toghchán**.

Finally, a single o may be pronounced as /au/ if it is followed by broad **nn**, **ll**, **rr**, or **r** and another consonant:

donn
poll
corr
bord

Certain other sequences of vowels plus slender consonants are pronounced /ai/:

moill
ceird
éirí
oibre
coicís
raimhre

Other Vowel Changes

When o or ó appears next to an m or n, they may be pronounced more like u or ú. Occasionally, an é will be pronounced like í in the same position:

mór
nó
seomra
déanta

The Irish spelling rules, though complex, are fairly regular, but they do have exceptions. Thus in the following examples, **ea** is pronounced like e rather than as noted above, **oi** is like i' rather than e, **eo** is not long, and the í is pronounced like a diphthong.

beag

oileán
seo
eochair
claí

Such cases are relatively uncommon, and must simply be learned as exceptions.