

Fáilte | Welcome!

Welcome to Duolingo's Irish course! In this course you will learn the official standard (**an Caighdeán Oifigiúil**) of Irish. But note, this is a written, and not a spoken standard. Irish is spoken in three main dialects, corresponding to three Irish provinces of Munster (south), Ulster (north), and Connacht (west). The audio in this course was recorded by a native speaker of the Connacht dialect.

So what makes Irish different? What might challenge you as you try to learn? Well, tonnes of things! To be honest, even the basics of Irish are very different from what you're probably used to.

The best advice we can give is that with Irish, learning things off by heart and trying to base your learning on grammar will only get you so far. It's a very irregular language, and most rules that try to generalise come with many exceptions.

Just take it as slowly as you need to, and nothing should challenge you very much. There is a really good article about some of the more fascinating peculiarities here:

<https://multikulti.wordpress.com/2014/09/15/10-reasons-why-irish-is-an-absolutely-awesome-language/>

We'll also address a couple below. So let's get started then!

Intro

The Irish alphabet is short and sweet:

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

The vowels can take an added accent, the **fada** (pronounced 'foddah'):

á é í ó ú

The *fada* lengthens and alters the sound on the vowel.

The rest of the English alphabet, **j k q v w x y z**, especially v, is gradually being naturalised into Irish due to the many loanwords we take in.

Learn how to type accented letters here: <https://www.duolingo.com/comment/4278237>

Word Order

Most English sentences use the "Subject-Verb-Object" word order. For example, in the sentence *He eats food*, *he* is the subject, *eats* is the verb, and *food* is the object.

In Irish, a slightly different word order is used: "V-S-O". Here is the same sentence in Irish:

Itheann sé bia. The verb in this sentence is **itheann** (a form of the verb *to eat*), the subject is **sé** (*he*), and the object is **bia** (*food*).

In summary: Irish sentences start with their verbs!

- **Ithim bia** | I **eat food**
- **Itheann an fear bia** | The man **eats food**
- **Ólann sí bainne** | She **drinks milk**

To be, or not to be...

Irish makes it interesting when you want to say what something "is", because you need to choose the right version of the verb "to be"! There are two versions. called **bí** and **an chopail**.

- **Bí** is Irish for *to be*, and is one of only eleven irregular verbs in the whole language.
That's handy!

bí	to be
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tá mé/táim	I am
------------	------

tá tú	you (sing.) are
-------	-----------------

tá sé	he/it is
-------	----------

tá sí	she/it is
-------	-----------

tá muid/táimid	we are
----------------	--------

tá sibh	you (pl.) are
---------	---------------

tá siad	they are
---------	----------

Notes: tá + mé (I) = táim, tá + muid (we) = táimid. These contractions are called the synthetic form.

- **An chopail** (the *copula*) is a defective verb with its own funky grammar. It doesn't even follow the normal word order rules! The word you are talking about goes in the middle.

copail	copula
---------------	---------------

is ... mé	I am
-----------	------

is ... tú	you (sing.) are
-----------	-----------------

is ... é	he/it is
----------	----------

is ... í	she/it is
----------	-----------

is ... sinn/muid we are

is ... sibh you (pl.) are

is ... iad they are

The copula is for when you're **introducing** something or someone, like "Is bean í" (She is a woman) or "Is úll é" (It is an apple). Bí is for when you're **describing** something or someone, like "Tá sí ard" (She is tall) or "Tá sé blasta" (It is tasty). You'll learn the basics of both here, and later you'll learn some more about each of them!

Basics 2

Tips and notes

Buntús 2 | Basics 2

You're still here. That's wonderful! We'll start with a strange but important little rule:

"Caol le caol agus leathan le leathan."

This is the *golden rule* of Irish spelling and it is important for all sorts of things all the time. It's actually quite a consistent and well-observed rule across Irish, which is very rare. You should get very used to it, to the point that a word which doesn't follow the rule will stand out to you. The phrase literally means "slender with slender and broad with broad", and it refers to vowels in a word.

Slender vs broad is a way to group the vowels in two distinct groups:

leathan <i>broad</i>	caol <i>slender</i>
a	e
o	i
u	

The rule says that the vowels on either side of any *consonant* should match: they should both be slender, or both be broad. It's actually an important rule, because certain consonants, especially **s** and **t** will change their sound appreciably depending on whether they are slender or broad.

To see if the stem of a verb is broad or slender, look at the last vowel in that stem.

For example, take the verbs **dún** and **bris**. The last vowel in **dún** is broad, so you would use broad endings when conjugating this verb. Similarly you would use slender endings when conjugating **bris**.

A bit about Verbs

We do have two present tenses in Irish, which function just like in English. Let's start with the present habitual. This describes what one does on a regular basis, not what one is doing right now. Verbs in Irish are split into three main groups: the first conjugation, the second conjugation and the irregular verbs.

1. The first conjugation

Basically, these verbs have only one syllable. In the present tense the ending is, generally, added directly onto the stem. Examples are **dún** ("close"), **ól** ("drink"), **bris** ("break")

Examples:

- **dúnaim** / *close*
- **dúnann sé** *he closes*
- **brisim** / *break*
- **briseann sé** *he breaks*
- **ólaimid** *we drink*

Notice how sometimes it takes two words, and sometimes just one. In present tense verbs, **mé** and **muid** are often not used; they can be incorporated into their verb to make the 'synthetic form'.

2. The second conjugation

These verbs have more than one syllable. To conjugate and use them correctly takes a bit more intuition, but you'll be *grand*!

The words come in two halves for you to identify. They will have a root and a stem. To conjugate them, you will remove the stem and replace it with an appropriate ending. There aren't too many endings to learn.

Examples of 2nd-conjugation verbs are *bailigh*, *ceannaigh*, *oscail*, and *inis*. Watch how their stems are removed/alterd to take the ending:

- **bailíonn tú** *you collect*
 - **ceannaímid** *we buy*
 - **insím** / *tell*
 - **osclaíonn sibh** *you open*
-

3. Irregular verbs

Oh no, a different beast altogether... No hassle, there are only 11 of these! Some of them appear quite regular most of the time, but all of them have at least one tense in which they don't obey the standard rules, so it is necessary to memorise these 11 verbs in all their forms and tenses! Just to warn you, they are:

- **abair** *say*
- **beir** *bear/carry/bring*
- **bí** *be*
- **clois** *hear*

- **déan** *do/make*
- **feic** *see*
- **faigh** *get*
- **ith** *eat*
- **tabhair** *give*
- **tar** *come*
- **téigh** *go*

But seriously, they're not that bad.

Welcome to Phrases!

Hello!

The formal way to greet someone is by saying **Dia duit**. Literally this means *God to you*. Here is something to note:

- **Dia duit** is used when greeting one person.
- **Dia daoibh** is used when greeting more than one person.

The proper response is **Dia is Muire duit**, which literally means *God and Mary to you*.

- **Dia is Muire duit** is used when replying to one person.
- **Dia is Muire daoibh** is used when replying to more than one person.

Note on the Sociology of Ireland: These forms are old, formal, and in sharp decline. There is a complicated relationship between Ireland and the Catholic church in recent history, and many younger speakers consciously avoid the nearly-obsolete religious constructions of yore. We don't *officially* teach you this here, because we decided to stick with The Standard so we *have* to teach you "*dia duit*" and so on. Just be aware you're more likely to hear somebody greet you with a typical English greeting like "hiya", or even by avoiding a "hello" and just asking how you are – Conas atá tú? –

To have

We don't say "have" in Irish, that's way too simple and direct. Instead the verb **bí** (*be*) is used together with the preposition **ag** (*at*).

To express that you have something, you say that it is "at you" - implying that it is close by you, in your possession. If you want to say *Paul has a book*, think of this as meaning *A book is at Paul*, or *There is a book at Paul*. The Irish for this is **Tá leabhar ag Pól**.

When you want to write *at* followed by a pronoun, the two words join together to make a "prepositional pronoun". For example, **ag** and **mé** combine to form **agam** (*at me*). Here is **ag** in all its forms:

English	Irish
---------	-------

at	ag
at me	agam
at you (singular)	agat
at him	aige
at her	aici
at us	againn
at you (plural)	agaibh
at them	acu

Examples of **bí + ag**:

- **Tá oráiste agam** *I have an orange*
 - **Tá pláta acu** *They have a plate*
 - **Tá cailín ag Pól** *Paul has a girl/girlfriend*
-

To speak or to have?

When talking about languages in Irish there are distinct ways to translate the two meanings of the English "speak".

1) "I speak Irish" would translate as "Labhraím Gaeilge" if "speak" was referring to the act of speaking the language ("I speak Irish every day")

2) "I speak Irish" would translate as "Tá Gaeilge agam" (literally "I have Irish") if "speak" was referring to the ability to speak, or the knowledge of, the language.

So when you say "I (can) speak [language]", in Irish you literally say "I have [language]"

Welcome to Food!

Is maith liom

There is no verb meaning *to like* in Irish. Instead the copula is used, together with the adjective **maith** (*good*) and a version of the preposition **le** (*with*).

To express that you like something, you say that it is **maith liom** (*good with me*). In this case, **maith** is understood as a noun meaning "a good thing" and **maith liom** being "a thing I consider good". For example, if you want to say *I like cake*, think of this as meaning *Cake is a thing I consider good*. The Irish for this is **Is maith liom cáca**.

Here is **le** in its main forms:

Irish	English
-------	---------

le	with
----	------

liom	with me
------	---------

leat	with you (singular)
------	---------------------

leis	with him
------	----------

léi	with her
-----	----------

linn	with us
------	---------

libh	with you (plural)
------	-------------------

leo	with them
-----	-----------

Examples:

- **Is maith liom arán** *I like bread*
- **Is maith leat an fíon** *You like the wine*
- **Is maith le Pól sicín** *Paul likes chicken*
- **Is maith le páiste siúcra** *A child likes sugar*

Now that that's cleared up, you get going on the lessons and we'll see you in the next skill.

Plurals

Tips and notes

Definite and Indefinite Articles

Let's review Irish articles so you know how to apply your existing knowledge to plurals.

Indefinite Articles

There are no indefinite articles in Irish. Where in English you would say *a* or *an* before a noun, in Irish you just say the noun itself. For example, **buachaill** can mean either *boy* or *a boy*.

When it comes to plurals, the Irish system is similar to that in English. **Buachaillí** means *boys*, so no definite article is used in either language.

Definite Articles

There are two forms of the definite article in Irish.

An is used for singular nouns and is translated as *the* in English. For example, **an buachaill** means *the boy**. †

Na is used for plural nouns and is also translated as *the* in English. For example, **na buachaillí** means *the boys*. †

Note

There are two things you should note!

- **An** vs. *An*: The Irish **an** (definite article, singular) should never be confused with the English *an* (indefinite article, before vowels, sometimes the letter h). Be careful with these two!
- **An** = *The*, **Na** = *The*, but **An** ≠ **Na**: The two Irish definite articles **an** and **na** both mean *the* in English, but remember that they have different uses in Irish.

†: In the nominative case. The way these articles are used change a bit in the other cases, but we will deal with these later when we come to them.

Welcome to Eclipsis!

It's time to learn a very peculiarly Celtic feature; initial mutation!

Urú (*eclipsis*) is where one or two letters are added before a word in certain situations. This changes the spelling and pronunciation of the word, but not the meaning. Only some initial letters can be eclipsed: *b, c, d, f, g, p, and t*. Words that begin with other letters do not undergo eclipsis at all.

Here are the extra letters that are added before the word:

Initial letter	Example	Eclipsi s	Example
b	baile	m	m baile
c	cailín	g	g cailín
d	doras	n	n doras
f	fuinneog	bh	bh fuinneog
g	geata	n	n geata

p poll b **bpoll**

t teach d **dteach**

Different dialects of Irish have different rules about when eclipsis should be used. It would be extremely confusing to list them all here! It is more important to pick a single system and to stick with it for consistency - so in this course, we will teach the system traditionally used in Standard Irish.

Eclipsis is used in the following situations:

1. Possessive Adjectives

Eclipsis occurs where a word comes after **ár** *our*, **bhur** *your* (plural), and **a** *their*.

Examples:

- **ár gcailín** *our girl*
 - **a mbuachaill** *their boy*
-

2. Numbers

Eclipsis occurs after the numbers seven to 10.

Examples:

- **seacht gcapall** *seven horses*
 - **naoi dteach** *nine houses*
-

3. Preposition + Definite Article

Eclipsis occurs after certain prepositions where they are joined by the singular definite article **an**:

Preposition + singular definite article	English translation
ag an	at the
ar an	on the
faoin (<i>faoi</i> + <i>an</i>)	under/about the
leis an	with the
ón (<i>ó</i> + <i>an</i>)	from the

roimh an	before the
thar an	over the
tríd an	through the
um an	about/around the

Other prepositions used with **an** (for example, **idir an** *between the*) do not cause eclipsis.

Examples:

- **ar an mbord** *on the table*
- **thar an bhfuinneog** *over the window*

An exception to this rule is that the word should not be eclipsed if it begins with *d* or *t*.

Examples:

- **ag an doras** *at the door*
- **roimh an teach** *before the house*

If the word begins with *s* and is feminine, a *t* is placed in front of it — except for nouns beginning with *sc*, *sf*, *sm*, *sp*, *st* or *sv*.

Example:

- **leis an tseanbhean** *with the old woman*

If the word begins with *s* and is masculine, no change occurs.

Example:

- **leis an salann** *with the salt*

4. Other Words

Eclipsis is also added after the words **i** *in*, **dá** *if*, **mura** *if/unless*.

Example:

- **i mbosca** *in a box*

Words starting with a vowel

Words that start with a vowel do not technically undergo eclipsis, but they do get the letter *n*-added to them wherever other words would be eclipsed — unless they come after a word that finishes with the letter *n*.

Examples:

- **úll** *apple*
- **ár n-úll** *our apple*
- **seacht n-úll** *seven apples*
- **ar an úll** *on the apple*

A dash is placed between the letter *n* and the vowel — unless that vowel is a capital letter.

Examples:

- **Uachtarán** *President*

- **ár nUachtarán** *our President*

Some words that start with a vowel are normally preceded by **t-** when they follow the word **an** *the*. For these words, after preposition + definite article combinations the **t-** is left out.

Examples:

- **an t-ollmhargadh** *the supermarket*
- **ag an ollmhargadh** *at the supermarket*

That might be a lot of information to process, but it should make sense once you see it in action. Good luck and see you in the next skill :D

Welcome to the Lenition skill!

Séimhiú (*lenition*) is where an extra *h* is added between the first and second letters of a word in certain situations. This changes the spelling and pronunciation of the word, but not the meaning. Only some initial letters can be lenited: *b, c, d, f, g, m, p, s,* and *t*. Words that begin with other letters do not undergo lenition at all.

Here are examples of words being lenited:

Initial letter	Example	Lenition	Example
b	buachaill	bh	b huachaill
c	cailín	ch	c hailín
d	doras	dh	d horas
f	fuinneog	fh	f huinneog
g	geata	gh	g heata
m	mála	mh	m hála
p	poll	ph	p holl
s	seomra	sh	s heomra
t	teach	th	t heach

Lenition is used in the following situations.

1. Feminine Nouns

Feminine nouns are lenited after the definite article **an** in the nominative case.

Examples:

- **mairteoil** *beef*, **an mhairteoil** *the beef*
- **bean** *woman*, **an bhean** *the woman*

An exception to this rule is that feminine nouns beginning with *d* or *t* are not lenited. Another exception is that nouns beginning with *s* becomes *ts* if the *s* precedes a vowel, *l*, *n* or *r*.

Examples:

- **an deasc** *the desk*
 - **an traein** *the train*
 - **an tsubh** *the jam*
 - **an tsláinte** *the health*
 - **an tsnaidhm** *the knot*
 - **an tsráid** *the street*
-

2. Feminine Adjectives

Singular feminine nouns cause lenition of the following adjective.

Examples:

- **bean mhaith** *a good woman*
- **an mhairteoil dhearg** *the red beef*

Note: Only when the adjective **directly** follows its noun.

3. Possessive Adjectives

Lenition occurs after **mo** *my*, **do** *your*, **a** *his*.

Examples:

- **mo chara** *my friend*
 - **do mhadra** *your dog*
 - **a mhac** *his son*
-

4. Numbers

Lenition occurs after the numbers one to six.

Examples: **sé chapall** *six horses*

- **trí bhuidéal** *three bottles*
-

5. Vocative Case

The vocative case is used when directly addressing someone or something, as in **Cá bhfuil tú, a chailín?** *Where are you, girl?* Lenition is used after the vocative particle **a**.

(Note that masculine nouns and names are also slenderised after the vocative particle: **fear** becomes **a fhir**, and **Pól** becomes **a Phóil**.)

More on this case in a later skill.

6. Prepositions

Lenition occurs after the words **ar** on, **de** off, **den** off the, **do** to/for, **don** to the, **faoi** under/about, **ó** from, **roimh** before, **sa/san** in the, **trí** through, **um** around/about.

Examples:

- **don bhuachaill** *to the boy*
- **sa pháirc** *in the field*

An exception is that words beginning with *d, t, s* are not lenited after **den**, **don**, **sa** or **san**.

Examples:

- **den doras** *off the door*
 - **sa teach** *in the house*
 - **don sú** *to the juice*
-

7. Other Words

Lenition is also used after the phrase **nuair a** *when*, the prefixes **ró-** *too* and **an-** *very*, and the word **má** *if* (unless the next word is a version of **tá** or **deir**). Other special cases will be highlighted in other lessons.

Examples:

- **nuair a bhrisim** *when I break*
 - **ró-mhór** *too big*
 - **an-mhaith** *very good*
 - **má dhúnann sé** *if he closes*
-

DeNTaLS-DoTS

This is a handy mnemonic! If a word begins with *d, t* or *s* and it would normally be lenited according to the above rules, but the word that came before it in the sentence ends with *d, n, t, l* or *s*, then the word is not lenited.

Examples:

- **den sagart** *off the priest*
- **an-te** *very hot*

Phew! I hope that wasn't too complicated. It will start to make sense when you see some more examples! Good luck and see you in the next skill

Possessives

Tips and notes

When possessives are used in Irish, certain changes occur to the following word. There are two systems: one for words starting with a consonant, and one for word starting with a vowel.

Words starting with a consonant

Here are the possessive adjectives and changes that occur when a word begins with a consonant:

English	Irish	Change	Example
my	mo	lenition	mo ch óta
your (singular)	do	lenition	do ch óta
his/its	a	lenition	a ch óta
her/its	a	no change	a cóta
our	ár	eclipsis	ár g cóta
your (plural)	bhur	eclipsis	bhur g cóta
their	a	eclipsis	a g cóta

Before words starting with *fh* + a vowel, **mo** and **do** are abbreviated to **m'** and **d'**, with no space before the next word.

Examples:

- **fón** *phone*
- **m'fhón** *my phone*
- **d'fhón** *your phone*

If the word begins with a consonant that does not undergo lenition (or eclipsis), the spelling remains unchanged.

Examples:

- **léine** *shirt*
- **mo léine** *my shirt*
- **ár léine** *our shirt*
- **a léine** *his/her/its/their shirt*

Words starting with a vowel

Here are the possessive adjectives and changes that occur when a word begins with a vowel:

English	Irish	Change	Example
my	m'	no change	m'oráiste
your (singular)	d'	no change	d'oráiste

his/its	a	no change	a oráiste
her/its	a	h	a h oráiste
our	ár	n-	ár n -oráiste
your (plural)	bhur	n-	bhur n -oráiste
their	a	n-	a n -oráiste

Instead of lenition or eclipsis, here you can see two other initial letter mutations used in Irish: the *h-prefix* and the *n-prefix*.

- The h-prefix is used after the word **a** (when it means *her*). Note that there is no hyphen.
- The n-prefix is used after **ár**, **bhur**, and **a** (when it means *their*). Note the hyphen between the *n-* and the word.

You can also see from the examples above that **m'** and **d** are used instead of **mo** or **do**, with no space before the next word.

A

The possessive adjective **a** can mean *his*, *her*, *its* or *their*. If you look at the tables above, you can see how to identify which one is used. It is usually clear from context, and from the word that follows the possessive.

Verbs: Present 1

Tips and notes

In Irish, it is important to note that there are *two* present tenses: the present, and the present habitual. The present describes what one **is doing** (right now) and the present habitual is used to describe what one **does** (every day, every week, and so on).

In this skill you will learn verbs in the present habitual. You previously met the endings for conjugating regular verbs in the present habitual tense in Basics 2. But, let's revisit them here.

1. The first conjugation

These verbs have only one syllable¹, and the root form seen in the dictionary is identical to the stem used for verb conjugation. In the present tense the ending is, generally, added directly onto the stem. Examples are **dún** ("close"), **ól** ("drink"), **bris** ("break")

Pronoun	Broad ending	Example	Slender ending	Example
I	-aim ¹	dúnaim	-im ²	brisim

you (singular)	-ann tú	dúnann tú	-eann tú	briseann tú
he/it	-ann sé	dúnann sé	-eann sé	briseann sé
she/it	-ann sí	dúnann sí	-eann sí	briseann sí
we	-aimid ¹	dúnaimid	-imid ²	brisimid
you (plural)	-ann sibh	dúnann sibh	-eann sibh	briseann sibh
they	-ann siad	dúnann siad	-eann siad	briseann siad

¹There is a small handful of first conjugation verbs that have more than one syllable. They aren't considered irregular- just a bit odd. These will be dealt with later.

²In present tense verbs, **mé** and **muid** are generally not used; instead, they are incorporated into the verb that precedes it, to make what is known as the "synthetic form".

Examples:

- **dúnaim** / close
- **dúnann sé** he closes
- **brisim** / break
- **briseann sé** he breaks

2. The second conjugation

These verbs have more than one syllable.

Many end in *-aigh* and *-igh* in the root form seen in the dictionary; to get the stem used for conjugation, the last syllable of the root is removed (i.e. remove the *-aigh/-igh*). The endings are then added to that stem. Examples include **ceannaigh** *buy*, **bailigh** *collect*. The stems for these would be **ceann-** and **bail-**.

Others end in *-ail/-il*, *-ain/-in*, *-ais/-is* or *-air/-ir*. To get the stem, the last syllable of the root is removed *but* the very last letter is kept, and then the appropriate ending is added. Examples include **inis** *tell* and **oscail** *open*. The stems for these would be **ins-** and **oscl-**.

Pronoun	Broad ending	Example	Slender ending	Example
I	-aím	osclaím	-ím	bailím
you (singular)	-aíonn tú	osclaíonn tú	-íonn tú	bailíonn tú

he/it	-aíonn sé	osclaíonn sé	-íonn sé	bailíonn sé
she/it	-aíonn sí	osclaíonn sí	-íonn sí	bailíonn sí
we	-aímid	osclaímid	-ímid	bailímid
you (plural)	-aíonn sibh	osclaíonn sibh	-íonn sibh	bailíonn sibh
they	-aíonn siad	osclaíonn siad	-íonn siad	bailíonn siad

Examples:

- **bailíonn tú** *you collect*
 - **ceannaímid / ceannaíonn muid** *we buy*
 - **insím** *I tell*
 - **osclaíonn sibh** *you open*
-

3. Irregular verbs

The last group of verbs in Irish are the irregular verbs. There are only 11 of these. Some of them appear quite regular most of the time, but all of them have at least one tense in which they don't obey the standard rules, so it is necessary to memorise these 11 verbs in all their forms and tenses!

The question form

To ask a question in this tense using a verb, you use the question word **an** and add an eclipsis (**urú**) to the verb if possible.

Examples:

- **Dúnann tú** *You close*
- **An ndúnann tú?** *Do you close?*
- **Briseann sí** *She breaks*
- **An mbriseann sí?** *Does she break?*

The irregular verb **bí** *be* is an exception:

- **Tá tú** *You are*
- **An bhfuil tú?** *Are you?*
- **Táimid** *We are*
- **An bhfuilimid?** *Are we?*

The negative form

To put a verb in the present habitual tense into the negative form, you use the negation word **ní** and add a lenition (**séimhiú**) to the verb if possible.

Examples:

- **Dúnann tú** *You close*
- **Ní dhúnann tú** *You do not close*

- **Briseann tú** *You break*
- **Ní bhriseann sí** *She does not break*

Again, the verb **bí** is an exception in this tense, as well as the verb **abair** say:

Bí

- **Tá tú** *You are*
- **Níl tú?** *You are not*
- **Táimid** *We are*
- **Nílimid?** *We are not*

Abair

- **Deir tú** *You say*
- **Ní deir tú** *You do not say*
- **Deirimid** *We say*
- **Ní deirimid** *We do not say*

Yes or No?

Irish has no word for "yes" or "no". That means when someone asks a questions using a verb like those above, you either answer with the positive form of the verb (the standard conjugated form) or the negative form (as seen above)

Example:

- **An ndúnann tú an doras?** *Do you close the door?*
- **Dúnaim (an doras)** *Yes, I close the door. (literally just "I close (the door)")*
- **Ní dhúnaim (an doras)** *No, I do not close the door (literally just "I do not close (the door)")*

Colors

Tips and notes

Adjectives (such as colors) generally come after the noun in Irish. Their spelling is modified so that they agree with the noun, in number and in gender.

Masculine singular nouns

An adjective that follows a masculine singular noun does not change (for example, **an bosca dubh** *the black box*).

Feminine singular nouns

An adjective that follows a feminine singular noun is lenited if possible (for example, **an eilifint dhubh** *the black elephant*).

Plural nouns

An adjective that follows a plural noun has its spelling changed to the plural form of that adjective. If the noun ends with a slender consonant, the adjective is **also** lenited.

What is a slender consonant? A slender consonant is a consonant with a slender vowel (e é or i í) next to it. For example, in the word **beoir**, *r* is a slender consonant.

Getting Descriptive

In this skill, we give you the basic vocabulary to describe most of the colours. One fun quirk in Irish is that there aren't of lots of words for all the different shades on the spectrum. Instead, you describe a particular colour by naming something that has that colour, or adding some detail (such as another colour!). So for example, you could distinguish something that is **spéirghorm** *sky-blue* from something that is **gormghlas** *blue-green*, or contrast **dearg** *red* with **bándearg** *pink (literally white-red)*. Use the vocabulary you learn and get creative to think of how you could say things like 'blood-red', and 'forest green'!

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Questions

Tips and notes

C question words

When asking a question in English, you generally use a W question word such as *who*, *where*, *what*. Similarly, in Irish you generally use a C question word such as *cé*, *cá*, *cad*.

Here are some examples of C question words:

English	Irish
who	cé
what	cad / céard
which	cén
where	cá
when	cathain
what time	cén uair / cá huair / cén t-am
whose	cé leis
what place	cá háit / cén áit
why	cén fáth
how	conas / cad é mar
how many / how much	cé mhéad / cá mhéad

Yes and no

There is no direct translation for the words *yes* and *no* in Irish. Where in English you would use these words to answer a question, in Irish you repeat the verb from the original question in either the positive or the negative form. (You can choose to omit the pronoun if you like - unless you are using a synthetic form of the verb.)

Examples:

- Do you play soccer? Yes. = Do you play soccer? I play. = **An imríonn tú sacar? Imrím.**

- Do you eat cheese? No. = Do you eat cheese? I do not eat. = **An itheann tú cáis? Ní ithim.**
- Does she work in the city? Yes. = Does she work in the city? She works. = **An oibríonn sí sa chathair? Oibríonn (sí).**
- Do the children listen to you? No. = Do the children listen to you? They do not listen. = **An éisteann na páistí leat? Ní éisteann (siad).**

Prepositions 1

Tips and notes

Prepositions (**réamhfhocail**) are short words that express relationships between things, like *to*, *for*, *with*, *on*, *between*.

In Irish most prepositions are usually written on their own, but when you use them together with a pronoun (*me*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *us*, *them*), the two words get contracted together to make what are known as *prepositional pronouns* (**forainmneacha réamhfhocla**).

Here are five prepositional pronouns in all their forms:

Pronoun	on	with	at	from	to, toward/s
(none)	ar	le	ag	ó	chun (chuig)
me	orm	liom	agam	uaim	chugam
you (singular)	ort	leat	agat	uait	chugat
he, it	air	leis	aige	uaidh	chuige
she, it	uirthi	léi	aici	uaithi	chuici
us	orainn	linn	againn	uainn	chugainn
you (plural)	oraibh	libh	agaibh	uaibh	chugaibh
them	orthu	leo	acu	uathu	chucu

Examples:

- **Tá an fear liom** *The man is with me*
- **Ritheann an cailín chuici** *The girl runs to/toward/towards her*

When used in specific ways, some prepositions have special idiomatic meanings in Irish. You already met the idiomatic use of **ag** to mean *have* in Basics 2; here are some other examples.

The basic meaning of this word is *on*. For example, **Ritheann sé ar bhóthar** means *He runs on a road*.

When used with the verb **bí**, it conveys the idea of obligation to do something. For example, **Tá orm rith** means *I must run*. (The literal translation of the phrase would be "It is on me to run".)

- **Tá ort snámh** *You must swim*
 - **Tá ar Phól éisteacht** *Paul must listen*
 - **Tá orthu siúl** *They must walk*
-

Ó

The basic meaning of this word is *from*. For example, **Ritheann sé ó theach** means *He runs from a house*.

When used with the verb **bí**, it conveys the idea of wanting something. For example, **Tá bia uaim** means *I want food*. (The literal translation of the phrase would be "food is from me".)

- **An bhfuil léine uait?** *Do you want a shirt?*
- **Tá madraí uaidh** *He wants dogs*
- **Tá uathu siúl** *They want to walk*
- **Tá úll ó Phól** *Paul wants an apple*
- **Tá na páistí ó bhean** *A woman wants the children*

Another way to express wanting something is to use the verb **teastaigh** (*to be wanted/needed*), followed by a version of **ó**. Written this way, **Teastaíonn bia uaim** is the alternative way to say *I want food*; it can also mean *I need food*. (A literal translation would be "food is needed from me".)

- **Teastaíonn na leabhair uaithi** *She wants/needs the books*
- **Teastaíonn seacláid uaimid** *We want/need chocolate*
- **Teastaíonn uaim snámh** *I want/need to swim*
- **Teastaíonn cáca ó chailín** *A girl wants/needs a cake*
- **An dteastaíonn na hataí?** *Are the hats needed?*

Dates and Time

Tips and notes

In previous skills you will already have met lenition and eclipsis, the two most important initial mutations that can occur to words in Irish. Here are some other more minor changes that can occur.

Words beginning with vowels

If a masculine singular noun starts with a vowel, a *t-* is added at the start of the word after the definite article **an** (for example, **am time**, **an t-am the time**; **uisce water**, **an t-uisce the water**). A hyphen is placed between the letter *t* and the vowel —unless that vowel is a capital letter (for example, **an tUachtarán the President**).

Exceptions include **euro euro**, **iomad a great number**, and **oiread amount**. These are written as **an euro**, **an iomad** and **an oiread** respectively. Other exceptions include the following number words: **aon one**, **aonú first**, **ochtó eighty**, **ochtú eighth**, **ochtódú eightieth**.

If a plural noun starts with a vowel, a *h* is added at the start of the word after the definite article **na** (for example, **ainmneacha** *names*, **na hainmneacha** *the names*). No hyphen is used.

Words beginning with s

If a feminine singular noun starts with *s*, AND the *s* is itself followed by a vowel, *l*, *n* or *r*, then a *t* is added at the start of the word after the definite article **an** (for example, **seanbhean** *old woman*, **an tseanbhean** *the old woman*). No hyphen is used.

The Irish calendar

The names of the seasons and months in the Irish calendar reflect ancient Gaelic culture and tradition.

The seasons of the year are:

English	Irish	Duration
Spring	Earrach	February to April
Summer	Samhradh	May to July
Autumn, Fall	Fómhar	August to October
Winter	Geimhreadh	November to January

The seasons are based around the summer and winter solstices (the longest and shortest days of the year, which take place around 21 June and 21 December respectively in the northern hemisphere) and the equinoxes (the days in spring and autumn on which night and day are of equal length, around 20 March and 22 September in the northern hemisphere). The summer solstice in June is deemed to be the high point of summer and the months of summer are May, June and July accordingly. The other seasons are similarly centred around the winter solstice in December, and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes in March and September.

The months of the year are:

English	Irish
January	Eanáir
February	Feabhra
March	Márta
April	Aibreán

May	Bealtaine
June	Meitheamh
July	Iúil
August	Lúnasa
September	Mean Fómhair
October	Deireadh Fómhair
November	Samhain, Mí na Samhna
December	Nollaig, Mí na Nollag

Bealtaine, **Lúnasa** and **Samhain** were all originally pagan festivals occurring around these times. **Meán Fómhair** and **Deireadh Fómhair** literally mean *middle of the harvest* and *end of the harvest*. **Nollaig** also means *Christmas*.

Family
Tips and notes

Muintir, teaghlach, clann

If you look up *family* in an English-Irish dictionary, you could be presented with all of the above as potential translations - but each has a different meaning!

Muintir is probably the closest to the English word *family* or *kinsfolk*, and in its broadest sense it can include parents, children and siblings as well as extended relations.

Teaghlach means *family* in the sense of *household*, a group of people living together under the same roof - most commonly parents and children.

Clann refers to the group of children that belong to a set of parents. For example, **mo chlann** could mean *my own children*, or *my siblings and I*. If a girl says that there are five people in her **clann**, it means that she has four other brothers or sisters.