

Conjugating Verbs

We've already conjugated the verbs *biti* and *zvati se* together. Now, we're going to learn the pattern of how to conjugate verbs in the present tense, so that any time you see a verb, you'll be able to conjugate it on your own. First things first—all infinitives end in either “-ti,” “-ći,” or “-sti.” The vast majority of infinitives end in “-ti,” including both of the verbs we've already looked at. Second—there are 3 types of verb conjugations. These are i/e verbs, a/aju verbs, and e/u verbs. These letters refer to the first person singular and third person plural conjugations.

Let's look at some examples:

Voleti/Voljeti (to love) i/e			Čitati (to read) a/aju			Dišati (to breathe) e/u		
	Singular	Plural		Singular	Plural		Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>Ja volim</i>	<i>Mi volimo</i>	1st person	<i>Ja čitam</i>	<i>Mi čitamo</i>	1st person	<i>Ja dišem</i>	<i>Mi dišemo</i>
2nd person	<i>Ti voliš</i>	<i>Vi volite</i>	2nd person	<i>Ti čitaš</i>	<i>Vi čitate</i>	2nd person	<i>Ti dišeš</i>	<i>Vi dišete</i>
3rd person	<i>On/Ona voli</i>	<i>Oni/One vole</i>	3rd person	<i>On/Ona čita</i>	<i>Oni/One čitaju</i>	3rd person	<i>On/Ona diše</i>	<i>Oni/One dišu</i>

In your book and in most handouts, you'll often see the infinitive and then the 1st person conjugation in parenthesis, like this: *voleti/voljeti (volim)*. This is so that you know which type of conjugation the verb is. In other words, if you know the first person conjugation, you should be able to conjugate the verb completely. As you'll notice with the verb *dišati*, you won't always know what type of conjugation the verb is simply by looking at the infinitive. In other words, if we were to look at the infinitive *dišati*, we wouldn't know that it's an e/u verb.

Now, let's talk about some ways that verbs change when we conjugate them. Some verbs, like *kupovati* (to buy), have a cluster of letters in the middle that changes when we conjugate them. So the first person singular conjugation of *kupovati* is *kupujem*. From there, you can extrapolate the rest of the conjugations: *kupuješ*, *kupuje*, etc. It conjugates like a regular e/u verb. The same goes for the verb *pisati* (to write), which has a first person singular conjugation of *pišem*. From there, with that information, you can safely assume that it's a regular e/u verb, and you can conjugate the rest with no problem.

For the time being, we're going to stick with rotary memorization of verbs, their conjugations, and the patterns therein. This is because I want you to become very familiar with how to conjugate verbs, to the point that you should be able to look at a phrase like *Ja volim mačku* and be able to know that the first part means “I love” even if you don't know all of the vocabulary. Once you've got this down, we can start learning the grammar to make more complete sentences.