

IMPERFECTIVE AND PERFECTIVE ASPECTS HANDOUT

Each English infinitive has two equivalents in Serbian. 'To read' can be translated either by **čitati** or **pročitati**.

Čitati is called the imperfective infinitive or the infinitive of the imperfective aspect. From the imperfective infinitive you can form the present tense, the imperfective past and the imperfective future:

Čitati present tense: **čitam, čitaš, čita**, etc.

past tense: **čitao, čitala, čitalo, čitali**, etc.

future tense: **čitaću, čitaćeš, čitaće**, etc.

Pročitati is called the perfective infinitive or the infinitive of the perfective aspect. From the perfective infinitive you can form the perfective past and the perfective future and use the verb in the present tense form only together with auxiliary verbs:

Pročitati present tense - **On želi da pročita**. *He wants to read it.*

- **On je pročitao**. *He read, has read, had read, etc.*

- **On će pročitati**. *He will read.*

IMPERFECTIVE AND PERFECTIVE PAIRS

The two verbs are usually very similar. The two most common ways in which perfective verbs differ from their imperfective partners are

- (a) by the addition of a prefix or
- (b) by internal modification.

a) Some common perfective pairs with prefixes

<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Perfective</i>
piti	popiti
pisati	napisati
gledati	pogledati
raditi	uraditi
čitati	pročitati
jesti	pojesti
šetati	prošetati
znati	saznati
učiti	naučiti

b) Some common imperfective/perfective pairs which differ as a result of internal modification

<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Perfective</i>
spremati	spremiti
počinjati	početi
završavati	završiti
kupovati	kupiti
prodavati	prodati
davati	dati
pozivati	pozvati
posećivati	posetiti
ustajati	ustati

Note that some verbs don't have both aspects:

Doručkovati, ručati, večerati....

Videti, reći, kazati, ići....

DIFFERENCES IN USAGE BETWEEN THE IMPERFECTIVE AND PERFECTIVE ASPECTS

Imperfective aspect

a) Habitual or repeated action:

Gledala sam televizor svakog dana. *I watched/used to watch television every day.*

Maja će često putovati u Niš. *Maja will often travel/will be traveling to Nis.*

b) Unfinished or continuous action:

Stiv je gledao televizor. *Steve was watching television.*

Maja će cele godine raditi u kancelariji. *Maja will be working in the ofce the whole year.*

c) Emphasis on the process of an action:

On voli da gleda televizor. *He loves to watch/watching television.*

d) After certain verbs:

After the verb **počinjati** *to begin*, **završavati** *to finish*, **produžavati** *to continue* the imperfective infinitive is always used: **Maja počinje da sprema dokumenta za sastanak.** *Maja is beginning to prepare documents for the meeting.*

Perfective aspect

a) Single actions with the emphasis on completion or result:

Maja je pročitala potrebna dokumenta. *Maja has read the necessary documents.*

Note: this could also mean *Maja had read the necessary documents*, dependent on the context, as there is no pluperfect past in Serbian.

Sutra će Maja dati poklon Stivu. *Tomorrow Maja will give a present to Steve.*

Ja hoću da pročitam ovu knjigu. *I want to read (finish reading/read to the end) this book.*

b) A series of actions, each one completed before the next one starts:

Ja sam ustala, istuširala se i obukla. *I got up, took a shower and dressed.*

c) The start of an action:

Certain verbs e.g. **igrati** to play, have a perfective formed with the prefix **za-**, which is only used to convey the sense of initiating the action: **on je zaigrao** he started to play.

b) An action performed for a limited period of time:

Many verbs e.g. **gledati, piti, jesti**, have perfective formed with the prefix **po-**, which gives the meaning to do (something) for a while so **pogledati, popiti, pojesti** correspond to English *to have a look, to have a drink, to have something to eat.*

Exercises:

1. Use the correct aspect of the verbs:

1. Svetlana obično oko pola sedam, ali tog dana u osam. (ustajati/ustati)
2. Svakog jutra ona doručak i kafu, ali tog jutra nije.....
..... doručak i nije kafu. (spremati/spremiti, piti/popiti)
3. Ona obično novine ali je kasnila i nije imala vremena
..... novine. (kupovati/kupiti).
4. Svetlana nikada ne ali je tog jutra na posao.
(kasniti/zakasniti)
5. Ona u agenciji do 4.30 ali je u petak do 7.30. (ostajati/ostati)
6. Zoran i Svetlana će film zato što oni vole da filmove. (gledati/pogledati)

2. Replace the imperfective with the perfective future:

Pisaću pismo.

Čitaću knjigu.

On će spremiti ručak.

Ona će jesti burek.

Ona će piti kafu.

Maja će kupovati poklone.

Stiv će raditi domaći rad.

Mi ćemo gledati film.

3. Replace the imperfective with the perfective past:

Maja je spremala dokumenta.

Stiv je ustajao rano ujutro.

Ona je učila da vozi.

Stiv je kupovao sendviče u prodavnici.

Galerija je prodavala sliku.

Maja je pisala pismo.

Mi smo čekali Stiva.

Oni su jeli bonbone.

Stiv je šetao po gradu.

On je završavao izveštaj