

Future

The future form has a range of possible meanings. Among them are these translations: “s/he will do it; s/he is going to do it”, or “it will happen”. Examples are *ak̄wax̄áa* “s/he will eat it” and *kuk̄ahóon* “I will sell it”. Especially in the second person, but also in the third and fourth person, the future can be used prescriptively (as a command or suggestion to do something), as in *gāgeetóow* “you are to read it” or “you should read it”; and *gāx̄dux̄áa* “it should be eaten”. The prescriptive use of the future is found in instructions for making something (recipes, for example), or explanations of how something should be done (such as performing rites). The future can also be a way to translate the English “can”. For example, *I tuwáa ksagwéini k̄geetóow* “you can read it if you like”. In order to give the meaning “can”, the future is usually accompanied by some kind of conditional phrase such as *I tuwáa ksagwéini* “if you like”.

The future form is characterized by the future prefix string *ga-u-ga-* and the –I form of the classifier (*sa-*, *s-*, *sha-*, *sh-*, *la-*, *l-*, *ø-*, or *da-*). The future prefix string contracts with the different subject prefixes in different ways. To illustrate, look at the future paradigm below, where the contractions produced by combining the future prefix string with each of the subject prefixes are given in bold type. Note also the –I classifier *da-*.

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|------------------------------|--|
| <i>kuk̄dashóoch</i> | “I will strength-train (by bathing in cold water)” |
| <i>gāgidashóoch</i> | “you will strength-train” |
| <i>gux̄dashóoch</i> | “s/he will strength-train” |
| <i>gāxtudashóoch</i> | “we will strength-train” |
| <i>gāxyidashóoch</i> | “you all will strength-train” |
| <i>gāxdushóoch</i> | “someone will strength-train” |

It is important to know that there are variations for most of the subject prefix plus future prefix combinations. For example, sometimes the first person singular future subject prefix is *kuk̄a-* and sometimes it is *kk̄wa-*. Factors that influence the shape of the contractions are: 1) the presence of a vowel-final thematic prefix (*ka-*, *tu-*, *ji-*, etc.) or a preverb ending in a vowel (*kei*, *yei*, *yoo*, etc.), and 2) the shape of the classifier, specifically whether or not the classifier has a vowel. For comparison with the paradigm above, another is given below, again with the subject prefix plus future prefix combinations in bold. The verb given below has the thematic prefix *x̄'a-* and the (-I) classifier *ø-* while the above paradigm has no thematic prefix and the (-I) classifier *da-*. Note the differences

between the subject prefix plus future prefix combinations between the two paradigms.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>x'akkwawóos'</i> | "I will ask him/her" |
| <i>x'akgeewóos'</i> | "you will ask him/her" |
| <i>ax'akgwawóos'</i> | "s/he will ask him/her" |
| <i>x'agaxtoowóos'</i> | "we will ask him/her" |
| <i>x'agaxyeeewóos'</i> | "you all will ask him/her" |
| <i>x'agaxduwóos'</i> | "someone will ask him/her" |

Please refer to the attached future prefix combination chart to see the full range of combinations of the future prefix string and each of the subject prefixes with different thematic prefixes and classifiers.

In addition to the future prefix string *ga-u-ga*, some verbs require another element in the future tense. All *ga-* conjugation verbs require the preverb *kei* and *ga-* conjugation verbs require the preverb *yei* in the future tense. Here are a couple of examples. The imperative form is given in each set below to show the conjugation prefix of the verbs.

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|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Igak'éi!</i> | "Be good!" |
| <i>kei kkwak'éi</i> | "he/she/it will be good" |
| <i>Ga.éex'!</i> | "Invite him/her!" |
| <i>yei akkwa.éex'</i> | "s/he will invite him/her" |

The future tense is among the more predictable verb forms in Tlingit, with respect to vowel tone and length in the verb stem. Remember that for most verb forms in Tlingit, the only unpredictable element is the vowel length and tone in the stem. All other elements (prefixes, classifier, etc.) can be gleaned from other forms of the verb. A vast majority of verb stems have long vowels with high tone in the future tense (*áa, ée, éi, óo*). The exception is verbs with invariable stems (stems that never change, regardless of verb form), which are not long and high. In those cases, the verb stem will be the same in the future tense as it is in the perfective, imperfective, imperative, and so on. Here is an example of two verbs with invariable stems. Note that in the first, the stem is consistently short and high *-núkts* throughout the paradigm, and in the second, the stem is always long and low *-tseen*. Neither verb has a long, high stem in the future form and this is because the stems are invariable.

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| <i>linúkts</i> | “he/she/it is sweet” | (imperfective) |
| <i>wulinúkts</i> | “he/she/it was sweet” | (perfective) |
| <i>kei guḵlanúkts</i> | “he/she/it will be sweet” | (future) |
| <i>litseen</i> | “he/she/it is strong” | (imperfective) |
| <i>wulitseen</i> | “he/she/it was strong” | (perfective) |
| <i>kei guḵlatseen</i> | “he/she/it will be strong” | (future) |

Of course, there are a few exceptions to the general rules stated above. There are a few verbs that have variable stems AND don't have long, high stems in the future tense. The known exceptions are: *akḡwal'eix* “s/he will dance”, *yéi kḡkḡwanook* “s/he will do it”, *yéi sh tugḡdanook* “s/he will feel that way”, *yéi akḡwa.oo* “s/he will wear it”, and *yéi akḡwayaa* “s/he will look like him/her/it”.

Unless you are dealing with a verb that has an invariable verb stem which is not long and high, OR one of the exceptions given above, it is reasonably safe to guess that the future tense of a Tlingit verb will have a long, high vowel in its stem.

Now let's look at the negative future. The negative future translates as “s/he won't do it; s/he isn't going to do it” or “it's not going to happen”. The negative future is formed by adding the negative particle *tlél/tléil*, and like the affirmative future, requires the -I form of the classifier. The only difference between the affirmative and negative future forms (besides the presence of the negative particle *tlél/tléil*), will be the tone on the verb stem for some verbs. For other verbs, the two forms are identical. Here are some guidelines to help you predict what the verb stem will look like in the negative future form.

The majority of Tlingit verbs have long, low stems in the negative future, the most common pattern being an affirmative future with a long, high stem and a negative future with a long, low stem. A long, low vowel in Tlingit is one of the following: *aa*, *ee*, *ei*, *oo*. Here are a few examples of verbs with long, high stems in the affirmative future and long, low stems in the negative future. All stems are given in bold.

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>akḡwaxáash</i> | “s/he will cut it” |
| <i>tlél akḡwaxaash</i> | “s/he won't cut it” |
| <i>agḡlatséek</i> | “s/he will barbecue it” |
| <i>tlél agḡlatseek</i> | “s/he won't barbecue it” |

ak̄wast'éix “s/he will fish/troll”
tlél ak̄wast'eix “s/he won't fish/troll”

du éex' aguxlatóow “s/he will teach it to him/her”
tlél du éex' aguxlatoow “s/he won't teach it to him/her”

There are two groups of exceptions to this pattern. The first exception is verbs with invariable stems (stems that don't change according to tense/aspect). In these cases, the verb stem will be the same for the negative future as it is for the positive future, imperfective, perfective, and so on. A few common verbs with invariable stems are given below, first in the imperfective (present tense) and then in the negative future. There are two things to notice in the sets below: 1) the stem (highlighted in bold) is the same in each set for both the imperfective and negative future forms and, 2) the -I form of the classifier is used in the negative future (*ø-*, *la-*, and *ø-* respectively).

yasátk “he/she/it is fast” (imperfective)
tlél kei k̄wasátk “he/she/it won't be fast” (neg. future)

linúkts “it is sweet” (imperfective)
tlél kei guxlanúkts “it won't be sweet” (neg. future)

aawatóow “s/he read it” (imperfective)
tlél ak̄watóow “s/he won't read it” (neg. future)

In the dictionary, you can tell that a verb stem is invariable by looking at the Leer-Edwards theme (described in detail elsewhere). At the end of the verb stem, the presence of a tilde (~) indicates a variable stem and the absence of a tilde indicates an invariable stem. For example, see the verb theme given below for the verb *yasátk* “he/she/it is fast”, and note the absence of a tilde following the (invariable) stem:

O-ø-sátk (ga state)
“for O to be fast (at doing things)”

To compare, here is a verb with a variable stem, as indicated by the tilde following the stem:

O-S-ø.óos'~ (na act)
“for S to wash O”

This brings us to the second group of exceptions to the general pattern stated above. Verbs with only two stem variants never have long, low stems. They only have either short, high stems (*á, é, í, ú*) or long, high stems (*áa, ée, éi, óo*). For these verbs, the negative future will have a long, high stem, just like the affirmative future. You can tell how many variations a stem has by looking at the Leer-Edwards theme. Verb stem variation is described in detail elsewhere, but suffice it to say here that if the stem in the theme is given as long and high, that verb has only two variants, and the negative future (and affirmative future) will have a long, high stem.

Here is a handy trick in determining the stem length and tone for a given verb in the negative future. If using the Leer-Edwards theme as your reference, the negative future tense will always have the same verb stem as the one given in the theme (regardless of whether the verb stem is variable or invariable). For example, the theme given above “for S to wash O”, shows the stem with a long, high vowel: *-.óos’~* Based on this, we can assume that the negative future will have a long, high stem.

akḡwa.óos’ “s/he will wash it”
tlél akḡwa.óos’ “s/he won’t wash it”

The majority of verbs have three stem variants and fall into the generalization stated above, where affirmative future forms have long, high stems and the corresponding negative future forms have long low stems. The themes representing these verbs will have a long, low stem, as in the following example.

O-S-ø-xaash~ (na act)
“for S to cut O with knife, saw O”

From the theme above, we can derive that the negative future form will have a long, low stem, as confirmed in the example below.

tlél akḡwaxaash “s/he won’t cut it”

To summarize, the most common stem form for the negative future is a long, low stem. However, there are some exceptions. A quick and easy way to determine the stem form of a given verb in the negative future is by referencing the Leer-Edwards theme. The negative future form will have the same stem form as given in theme. The attached future prefix combination chart will help you determine the rest of the verb word for any given subject prefix.