

Imperative (command)

The imperative is the command form of the verb, and translates into English as “Do it!”. The imperative occurs with second person singular and second person plural subjects only. Example imperative forms are: *Xá!* “Eat it!”, and *Yeexá!* “You all eat it!”. Some verbs do not have imperative forms, due to their semantics (meaning). An example is *kut aawataan* “s/he misplaced it”. Because under normal circumstances, you wouldn’t command someone to misplace something, fluent Tlingit speakers reject imperative forms for this verb. In such cases, “[does not occur]” is indicated in the imperative field.

There are three things to discuss with respect to the structure of the imperative form: 1) the conjugation prefix, 2) the classifier, and 3) the presence or absence of the second person singular subject prefix. The verb stem with respect to vowel length and tone is not predictable in the imperative form.

Remember that all verbs use one of the four conjugation prefixes (*na-*, *ga-*, *ga-*, or \emptyset - (unmarked)). The imperative is one of few forms that requires the conjugation prefix. The conjugation prefix occurs after any thematic prefixes (*x’a-*, *ka-*, *ya-*, *tu-*, and *ji-* are examples of thematic prefixes), and before the subject prefix. The imperative form always contains the –I form of the classifier (\emptyset -, *da-*, *sa-*, *s-*, *sha-*, *sh-*, *la-*, or *l-*). The classifier always occurs directly before the stem. The first two pairs of examples below have the \emptyset - classifier, which is represented in the hyphenated forms in parentheses, but does not show up in the spoken form. The first pair of examples shows a *na-* conjugation verb while the second pair shows a *ga-* conjugation verb. In the second of the first pair of examples, note the position of the conjugation prefix *na-* after the thematic prefix *x’a-* and before the second person plural subject prefix *yi-*. Note also that the first example in each pair does not have an overt second person singular subject prefix, but that it is understood by virtue of the command being given directly to the listener (shown in the English translation by putting “you” in parentheses). The conditions for an overt second person singular subject prefix will be discussed with the next set of examples below. The second person plural subject prefix however, is always present.

<i>X’anawóos’!</i>	<i>(x’a- + na- + \emptyset- + -wóos’)</i>	“(You) ask him/her!”
<i>X’anaywóos’!</i>	<i>(x’a- + na- + yi- + \emptyset- + -wóos’)</i>	“You all ask him/her!”
<i>Gasháat!</i>	<i>(ga- + \emptyset- + -sháat)</i>	“(You) catch it!”
<i>Gaysháat!</i>	<i>(ga- + yi- + \emptyset- + -sháat)</i>	“You all catch it!”

Notice in the above examples the contraction that takes place with the conjugation prefixes *na-* and *ga-* and the second person plural subject prefix *yi-*, producing *nay-* and *gay-* respectively. This contraction is consistent throughout the language where any of the conjugation prefixes (*na-*, *ga-*, or *ga-*) occur next to the second person plural subject prefix *yi-*. It should be noted here that there is additionally another dialect variant for this contraction. For some speakers, *na-* plus *yi-* becomes *neey-*, *ga-* plus *yi-* becomes *geey-*, and *ga-* plus *yi-* becomes *geey-*.

The verbs in the following examples both contain the -I classifier *da-*. The first is a *ga-* conjugation verb and the second a *ø-* conjugation verb. Note that both contain the second person singular subject prefix *ee-*, which becomes short (*i-*) when followed by a classifier containing a vowel. The presence of the second person singular subject prefix *ee-/i-* is contingent on the presence of one of the following classifiers: *da-*, *s-*, *sh-*, or *l-*. What these classifiers have in common is that they are of the -I form (lacking the vowel *i-*) and also have what is called the “D component”. This label is less transparent, but it refers to an organization of the classifiers into groups which pattern together in the grammar, some of which contain the letter *d-*. Please refer to the discussion on classifiers to review this topic. The relevance of this to the imperative form is that the second person singular subject prefix is present in the imperative form for verbs which have -I classifiers with the D component. Again, these are *da-*, *s-*, *sh-*, or *l-*.

<i>Gidaxéet'!</i>	(<i>ga- + ee- + da- + -xéet'</i>)	“Sweep!”
<i>Gaydaxéet'!</i>	(<i>ga- + yi- + da- + -xéet'</i>)	“You all sweep!”
<i>Idaná!</i>	(<i>ee- + da- + -ná!</i>)	“Drink it!”
<i>Yidaná!</i>	(<i>yi- + da- + -ná!</i>)	“You all drink it!”

In the first example above, we see the contraction of the conjugation prefix *ga-*, the second person singular subject prefix *ee-* and the classifier *da-*, resulting in the loss of the conjugation prefix vowel (*a-*) and the shortening of the subject prefix to *i-*, producing *gida-*. The shortening of the subject prefix only takes place when followed by a classifier with a vowel (*da-*). The following example, a *na-* conjugation verb, shows that the subject prefix remains long (*ee-*) when followed by a classifier that doesn't have a vowel (*s-*, *sh-*, or *l-*).

<i>Aneest'eix'!</i>	(<i>a- + na- + ee- + s- + -t'eix'</i>)	“Troll!”
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Sometimes second person singular imperative verb forms are deceiving with respect to their classifier form. Specifically, some second person singular imperative verb forms appear to have a D-component (*s-*, *sh-*, or

I- classifier, but lack the second person singular subject prefix (where you would expect it to be present). In fact, the classifier vowel has dropped out, as can be seen by comparing with the second person plural forms. This dropping of the vowel in second person singular forms follows from the language's preference to not have multiple open syllables (syllables ending in a vowel) in a row. The following pairs of examples show that while the second person singular forms lack the classifier vowel, the plural forms have retained it.

<i>Yéi nasné!</i>	<i>(na- + sa- + -né)</i>	“(You) fix it!”
<i>Yéi naysané!</i>	<i>(na- + yi- + sa- + -né)</i>	“You all fix it!”
<i>Gashgóok!</i>	<i>(ga- + sha- + -góok)</i>	“(You) learn how to do it!”
<i>Gayshagóok!</i>	<i>(ga- + yi- + sha- + -góok)</i>	“You all learn how to do it!”
<i>Galgú!</i>	<i>(ga- + la- + -gú)</i>	“(You) wipe it!”
<i>Gaylagú!</i>	<i>(ga- + yi- + la- + -gú)</i>	“You all wipe it!”

As is discussed elsewhere, some Tlingit verbs require an object pronoun rather than a subject pronoun. These verbs are called objective verbs and use the object pronouns. One familiar example is *xat yak'éi* “I am good”, where the object pronoun *xat* ‘me’ is used rather than the subject prefix *xa-* “I”. The second person singular object pronoun *i-* is a prefix and is written as part of the verb, while the second person plural object pronoun is *yee*, a word written separately from the verb. For example, *iyak'éi* “you are good” and *yee yak'éi* “you all are good”. Objective verbs always have the second person singular and second person plural object pronouns present in the imperative, regardless of the classifier. Note that the second person singular object prefix *i-* occurs before all other prefixes, as can be seen in the examples below.

<i>Igak'éi!</i>	<i>(i- + ga- + -k'éi)</i>	“Be good!”
<i>Yee gak'éi!</i>	<i>(ga- + -k'éi)</i>	“You all be good!”
<i>Yéi inatí!</i>	<i>(i- + na- + -tí)</i>	“Be that way!”
<i>Yéi yee natí!</i>	<i>(na- + -tí)</i>	“You all be that way!”
<i>A kát isax'ákw!</i>	<i>(i- + sa- + -x'ákw)</i>	“Forget it!”
<i>A kát yee sax'ákw!</i>	<i>(sa- + -x'ákw)</i>	“You all forget it!”
<i>Itukla.aan!</i>	<i>(i- + tu- + ga- + la- + -.aan)</i>	“Be kind!”
<i>Yee tukla.aan!</i>	<i>(tu- + ga- + la- + -.aan)</i>	“You all be kind!”