

Perfective Habitual

The perfective habitual form has a couple different shades of meaning, depending on the context. One is to indicate a situation which happens frequently, and especially predictably in conjunction with another situation. An example is: *Tlákw xat wusteení, xat x'anawóos'ch*. “He asks me every time he sees me.” The perfective habitual form in this sentence is *xat x'anawóos'ch* “s/he asks me (every time)”. The formula for this particular shade of meaning is every time A happens (“he sees me”), then B happens (“he asks me”). Often in conversation or oral narrative, the condition A is left out entirely, and all that is uttered is the B part (he asks me (every time)). Because the presence of a particular condition A is optional, the perfective habitual form is translated into English with (every time) following in parentheses. This aims to capture that the verb given in this form is habitual, and sometimes dependent on another condition.

The perfective habitual form also appears frequently in oral narrative where it often gives a slightly different connotation, indicating a habitual situation in the past. In this case, the translation “s/he'd do it (habitually, in the past)” seems appropriate. The following example comes from a video recording of Lena Farkas of Yakutat telling about her childhood: *Ax tláach ax éesh du éet udashéeych wé tsaá*. “My mother would help my father with the seal.” The perfective habitual form illustrated in the sentence is *du éet udashéeych* “she would help him”, indicating a situation in the past which occurred habitually. In this particular narrative, the speaker is describing a typical summer in her childhood, and the activities that her family would regularly engage in. This is the second shade of meaning of this form.

Throughout the online verb resource, this form is translated into English using the first shade of meaning described above “s/he does it (every time)”. This saves giving two different translations for every perfective habitual form in the resource, but it is important to remember that another very common connotation is the second shade of meaning described above, “s/he would do it (habitually, in the past)”.

There are three things to discuss with respect to the structure of the perfective habitual form: 1) the conjugation prefix, 2) the classifier, and 3) the *-ch* suffix. The verb stem with respect to vowel length and tone is not predictable in the perfective habitual form.

Remember that all verbs use one of the four conjugation prefixes (*na-*, *ga-*, *ga-*, or *ø-* (unmarked)). The perfective habitual is one of few forms that requires the conjugation prefix. The conjugation prefix occurs after any thematic prefixes (*x'a-*, *ka-*, *ya-*, *tu-*, *jí-*, etc.), and before the subject

prefix. In addition to this prefix, the perfective habitual requires a suffix: *-ch*. Here's a familiar example:

Yéi nateech Yéil. "That's the way Raven (always) is".

Yéi nateech is the perfective habitual form of the verb *yéi yatee* "he/she/it is that way". By looking at the above example, we see that this verb uses the *na-* conjugation prefix. The perfective habitual suffix *-ch* is also illustrated here.

The perfective habitual form always contains the *-I* form of the classifier (*ø-*, *da-*, *sa-*, *s-*, *sha-*, *sh-*, *la-*, or *l-*). Remember that the classifier always occurs directly before the stem. In the example above, the classifier is *ø-*, which is the *-I* form of the *ya-/ø-* pair. In the following example, note the conjugation prefix and the classifier:

gala.éil'ch "it gets salty (every time)"

The imperfective form of this verb is *li.éil* "it's salty". From the above perfective habitual form, we can see that this verb uses the *ga-* conjugation prefix. The classifier, which is *li-* in the imperfective form, changes to the *-I* form *la-* in the perfective habitual, as expected. Again, the *-ch* suffix is required.

A variety of contractions take place when combining the conjugation prefix with other verbal prefixes. Example perfective habitual forms using each of the conjugation prefixes are given below. Things to take note of are the position of the conjugation prefix, the *-I* form of the classifier, and the *-ch* suffix. For each following verb form, the underlying form is given below it in parentheses. This shows exactly what prefixes each verb form is made up of, and illustrates some of the contractions that take place. For complete charts of all prefix combinations, please see the prefix combinations link from the *575+ Tlingit Verbs* homepage.

na- conjugation verbs:

1. *naḡatóowch* "I read it (every time)"
(*na-* + *ḡa-* + *ø-* + *tóow-* + *-ch*)
2. *kanḡaníkch* "I tell about it (every time)"
(*ka-* + *na-* + *ḡa-* + *ø-* + *ník-* + *-ch*)
3. *akanas.éich* "S/he grows it (every time)"
(*a-* + *ka-* + *na-* + *sa-* + *.áa-* + *-ch*)

ga- conjugation verbs:

4. *gaxahées'ch* "I borrow it (every time)"
(*ga- + xa- + ø- + hées'- + -ch*)
5. *du toowú ksagóowch* "S/he gets happy (every time)"
(*du toowu ga- + sa- + góo- + -ch*)
6. *kut gagútch* "S/he gets lost (every time)"
(*kut ga- + ø- + gút- + -ch*)

Ga- conjugation verbs:

7. *kasgáaxch* "I ask for it (every time)"
(*ga- + xa- + s- + gáax- + -ch*)
8. *axlashátch* "S/he holds it (every time)"
(*a- + ga- + la- + shát- + -ch*)
9. *áx agateech* "S/he installs it there (every time)"
(*áx a- + ga- + ø- + tee- + -ch*)

Another important feature of the perfective habitual form applies only to verbs using the Ø- conjugation prefix. All Ø- conjugation verbs require the irrealis prefix *u-* in the perfective habitual form. The *u-* may change form depending on the neighboring prefixes. When following an open syllable ending in *a-*, the *a-* and *u-* combine to make *oo-*. See the following examples.

Ø- conjugation verbs:

10. *uxlayéxch* "I make it (every time)"
(*u- + xa- + la- + yéx- + -ch*)
11. *akooch'ák'wch* "S/he carves it (every time)"
(*a- + ka- + u- + ø- + ch'ák'w- + -ch*)
12. *oos.éeych* "S/he cooks it (every time)"
(*a- + u- + sa- + .éey- + -ch*)

Comparing a few of the example perfective habitual forms given so far to their imperfective counterparts shows that the verb stem may change in length and/or tone between the two forms. It is important to remember that this change is not predictable from verb to verb, and must be memorized.

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kaḡanéek “I tell about it” *kanḡaníkch* “I tell about it (every time)”
ḡalayéiḡ “I am building it” *uḡlayéḡch* “I build it (every time)”
akach’áak’w “he’s carving it” *akooch’ák’wch* “he carves it (every time)”

Now let’s look at the negative perfective habitual. The negative perfective habitual translates as “s/he hasn’t done it yet”. Like its positive counterpart, the negative perfective habitual requires the –I form of the classifier, the verb’s conjugation prefix, and the –*ch* suffix. There are only two potential differences between the positive and negative perfective habitual forms. The first is that the negative form requires the irrealis prefix *u-*. For all *na-*, *ga-*, and *ḡa-* conjugation verbs, this is a difference from the positive form. All *Ø-* conjugation verbs however, require the irrealis *u-* prefix in the positive perfective habitual, so there will be no change in the negative form in this respect. In the table below, compare the positive and negative perfective habitual forms, noting the addition of the irrealis prefix *u-* in the negative forms. Remember that *u-* can show up as *w-*, or *oo-*, depending on the neighboring prefixes that it contracts with. The examples in this table are all either *na-*, *ga-*, or *ḡa-* conjugation verbs.

Perfect. Hab (+)	English	Perfect. Hab (-)	English
<i>naḡatóowch</i>	I read it (every time)	<i>tlél naḡwatóowch</i>	I haven’t read it yet
<i>kanḡaníkch</i>	I tell about it (every time)	<i>tlél koonḡaníkch</i>	I haven’t told about it yet
<i>akanas.éich</i>	s/he grows it (every time)	<i>tlél akoonas.éich</i>	s/he hasn’t grown it yet
<i>gaḡahées’ch</i>	I borrow it (every time)	<i>tlél gooḡahées’ch</i>	I haven’t borrowed it yet
<i>ḡut gagútch</i>	s/he gets lost (every time)	<i>tlél ḡut googútch</i>	s/he hasn’t gotten lost yet
<i>kaḡáaḡch</i>	I ask for it (every time)	<i>tlél kḡwasḡáaḡch</i>	I haven’t asked for it yet
<i>aḡlashátch</i>	s/he holds it (every time)	<i>tlél ooḡalshátch</i>	s/he hasn’t held it yet
<i>áḡ aḡateech</i>	s/he installs it there (every time)	<i>tlél áḡ ooḡateech</i>	s/he hasn’t installed it there yet
<i>uḡlayéḡch</i>	I make it (every time)	<i>tlél uḡlayéḡch</i>	I haven’t made it yet
<i>akooch’ák’wch</i>	s/he carves it (every time)	<i>tlél akooch’ák’wch</i>	s/he hasn’t carved it yet
<i>oos.éeych</i>	s/he cooks it (every time)	<i>tlél oos.éeych</i>	s/he hasn’t cooked it yet

Now look at the examples in the following table, which are all \emptyset -conjugation verbs. Note that because the positive form already has the irrealis prefix *u-*, there is no difference between the positive and negative perfective habitual forms for these verbs.

Perfect. Hab (+)	English	Perfect. Hab (-)	English
<i>uxlayéxch</i>	I make it (every time)	<i>tlél uxlayéxch</i>	I haven't made it yet
<i>oos.éeych</i>	s/he cooks it (every time)	<i>tlél oos.éeych</i>	s/he hasn't cooked it yet

The second potential difference between the positive and negative perfective habitual is the verb stem, which may or may not change with respect to vowel length and tone. So far, all of the above examples have the same verb stem form in both the positive and negative forms. The following are examples of verbs whose stems are different in the positive and negative forms. Again, we cannot predict which verbs will have different stems in the positive and negative forms, or how they will change, we just have to learn each verb individually.

Perfect. Hab (+)	English	Perfect. Hab (-)	English
<i>akooch'ák'wch</i>	s/he carves it (every time)	<i>tlél akooch'áak'wch</i>	s/he hasn't carved it yet
<i>yakoolkéés'ch</i>	it goes out (every time) (fire)	<i>tlél yakoolkís'ch</i>	it hasn't gone out yet (fire)
<i>kei xwsanúkch</i>	I lift him/her/it up (every time)	<i>tlél kei xwsanookch</i>	I haven't lifted him/her/it up yet
<i>udatláxch</i>	it gets moldy (every time)	<i>tlél udatlaaxch</i>	it hasn't gotten moldy yet