

## Prohibitive (negative command)

The prohibitive is the negative command form of the verb, and translates into English as “Don’t do it!”. With a first person subject, the prohibitive translates as “Let me not do it”. The focus here will be on the prohibitive with second person subject, since these are the forms collected for this resource. Example prohibitive forms are: *Líl eexáak!* “Don’t eat it!”, and *Líl yixáak!* “Don’t you all eat it!”. As with the imperative forms, there are some verbs that are semantically awkward in the prohibitive form, in which case “[does not occur]” is indicated in the prohibitive field.

Structurally, the prohibitive form is based on the negative imperfective, the negative repetitive imperfective, and/or the negative perfective forms. In other words, there are three varieties of prohibitive: the imperfective prohibitive, the repetitive imperfective prohibitive, and the perfective prohibitive. For some verbs, all three types of prohibitive exist, but for most, there is a preferred one among the three. It is not clear whether there is much of a semantic distinction between the three, but Leer (1991) has posited that the imperfective prohibitive and perfective prohibitive both mean “don’t do it” while the repetitive imperfective prohibitive means “don’t ever do it”. Act and state verbs (which have basic imperfective forms) tend to use the imperfective prohibitive while event and motion verbs (which lack basic imperfective forms) use either (or both of) the perfective prohibitive and repetitive imperfective prohibitive.

Like all negative forms, the prohibitive requires a choice of negative particles: *líl*, *tlél/tléil*, or *hél* meaning “not”, “don’t” or “no”. The choice of particle seems to be based on individual speaker preference and not regional dialect and therefore any of these are correct for any region. In this resource, *líl* is used with all prohibitive forms, simply for consistency. The prohibitive form is exactly like the corresponding negative imperfective, negative repetitive imperfective, or negative perfective form plus the addition of the prohibitive suffix *-(i)k* or *-(u)k*. The vowel *-i/-u* in the suffix is present only when the verb stem ends in a consonant. When the stem ends in a vowel, the suffix is simply *-k*. As can be seen in the first set in the examples below, verbs with a stem ending in a consonant such as: *-gwaal* take the suffix *-ik*. The second set shows a verb stem ending in a vowel *-xá*, which takes the suffix *-k*. Note also that open verb stems (those ending in a vowel) with a short vowel (*a*, *e*, *i*, *u*) become long when the suffix *-k* is added. As you can see, the stem goes from *-xá* to *-xáak* when the prohibitive suffix is added. As a side note, the first in each set below are negative imperfective forms and the second are imperfective prohibitive forms.

*Tlél eegwaal.* “You’re not beating it.”  
*Líl eegwaalík!* “Don’t beat it!”

*Tlél eexá.* “You’re not eating it.”  
*Líl eexáak!* “Don’t eat it!”

Here’s another example. The first given below is the negative imperfective form and the second is the imperfective prohibitive form. Notice that the stem is short in the negative imperfective: *-ná* and long in the prohibitive: *-náak*.

*Tlél idaná.* “You aren’t drinking it.”  
*Líl idanáak!* “Don’t drink it!”

Verb stems ending in voiceless consonants undergo a change when the prohibitive suffix is added. Specifically, the following voiceless consonants become voiced before the prohibitive suffix: *t --> d*, *tl --> dl*, *ts --> dz*, *ch --> j*, *k --> g*, *k̄ --> ġ*. This is a natural phenomenon in speech and occurs in English all the time, as well as many other languages of the world. Let’s look at a few examples to clarify. In the set below, we see the verb stem *-shát*, ending in *t*, become *-shádík* in the prohibitive. The *t* on the verb stem becomes *d* before the prohibitive suffix *-ík*.

*t --> d*

*Tlél ilashát.* “You’re not holding it.”  
*Líl ilashádík!* “Don’t hold it!”

Similarly, the verb stem below *-xook* ending in *k* becomes *-xoogúk* in the prohibitive, the *k* becoming *g* when the prohibitive suffix is added.

*k --> g*

*Tlél isaxook.* “You’re not drying it.”  
*Líl isaxoogúk!* “Dont dry it!”

Finally, we have below the verb stem *-x’aa<sub>k</sub>w* ending in *k<sub>w</sub>*, which becomes *-x’aa<sub>ġ</sub>ú<sub>k</sub>* in the prohibitive. Here the *k* becomes *ġ* in the prohibitive.

*k̄ --> ġ*

*Tlél a káx iseix’aa<sub>k</sub>w.* “You don’t forget it.”  
*Líl a káx iseix’aa<sub>ġ</sub>ú<sub>k</sub>!* “Don’t forget it!”

Notice also that the tone on the prohibitive suffix is always the opposite of the tone on the stem. If the stem has a low tone, the suffix takes a high tone. If the stem has a high tone, the suffix takes a low tone and vice versa, if the stem has a low tone, the suffix takes a high tone. The final example above leads us to another topic. When is the prohibitive suffix *-ik* and when is it *-uk*? If the verb stem ends in a rounded consonant (one with a *w* following it such as *kw*, *k'w*, *gw*, *xw*) as in the example above, the prohibitive suffix will be *-uk*. Also, if the verb stem has a rounded vowel *oo* or *u*, the prohibitive suffix will have the rounded vowel *-uk*. Here's an example. The negative perfective form below has the stem *-nook*. In the prohibitive, the stem becomes *-noogúk*, the prohibitive suffix having the vowel *u* since the vowel in the stem (*oo*) is rounded.

*Tlél át yisanook.*                    “You didn't carry him/her around.”  
*Líl át yisanoogúk!*                “Don't carry him/her around!”

An exception to this rule is the verb “go, walk”, with the stem *-goot*. Even though this verb stem has the rounded vowel *oo*, speakers often use the prohibitive suffix *-ik* as shown in the following set, the first of which is a perfective form and the second a perfective prohibitive form:

*Tlél gé aadé yigoot?*                “Didn't you go there?”  
*Líl aadé yigoodík!*                “Don't go there!”

Speakers do tend to use the *-uk* suffix with the verb stem *-goot* for repetitive imperfective prohibitive forms. The set below contains a repetitive imperfective form followed by the repetitive imperfective prohibitive form. (Note that the repetitive imperfective suffix *-k* found on the end of the first example given below becomes *-g* when the prohibitive suffix *-uk* is added on the second example below).

*Tlél gé aadé yoo eegútk?*            “Don't you go there (regularly)?”  
*Líl aadé yoo eegútguk!*            “Don't go there!”

The prohibitive is one of the few forms in Tlingit for which the verb stem is predictable. It is predictable in that it will be identical to its partner form. If you know the second person negative imperfective, perfective, or repetitive imperfective form, it should be easy to construct the associated prohibitive form from there, simply by adding the prohibitive suffix with the appropriate vowel and tone.