

## THE SERBIAN PRESENT TENSE (SADAŠNJE VREME)

Here I discuss only the present tense of regular verbs in Serbian. For the conjugation of irregular verbs, such as **'biti'** (be), **hteti** (want) and **moći** (can) please see [irregular verbs](#).

### I The Present Tense of Regular Verbs

The present tense in Serbian is used to describe:

- i) the habitual action: *Ja plivam svaki dan.* 'I swim every day'
- ii) the action occurring now: *Ja plivam sada.* 'I am swimming now'.
- iii) to express future events: *Idem sutra u bioskop.* 'I am going tomorrow to the movie theater'.

**Formation of the present tense** is a tricky process, because there are many verbs that 'misbehave', i.e. they have somewhat unpredictable present tense stems.

- But we could roughly say that the present tense is made by taking out the verb's infinitive endings **-iti/ati/eti** and inserting the present tense endings to the infinitive stem (see Table 1 below).

We can express this using a formula:

- **Present tense = infinitive stem + present tense ending (of Table 1)**  
Where, **infinitive stem = infinitive verb** (what is listed in the dictionary) **minus infinitive ending: -iti/eti/ati.**
- Here is an example:  
**raditi – iti = rad** (infinitival stem) + **im** (present tense suffix) = **radim** (I work).

There are three present tense endings (or conjugations) for three classes of verbs: **-im**, **-am-** and **-em**. Table 1 below, shows the present tense endings for these three verb classes. The actual examples are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1: The Present Tense Endings for Three Classes of Verbs**

	SINGULAR			PLURAL		
First person	<b>.im</b>	<b>.am</b>	<b>.em</b>	<b>-imo</b>	<b>-amo</b>	<b>-emo</b>
Second person	<b>.iš</b>	<b>.aš</b>	<b>.eš</b>	<b>-ite</b>	<b>-ate</b>	<b>-ete</b>
Third person	<b>.i</b>	<b>.a</b>	<b>.e</b>	<b>-e</b>	<b>-aju</b>	<b>-u</b>

**Table 2: Three present tense verb classes – examples**

I: <b>-im</b> verbs	II: <b>-am</b> verbs	III: <b>-em</b> and <b>-jem</b> verbs	
<b>Raditi</b> (to work)	<b>Pitati</b> (to ask)	<b>Spasti</b> (to rescue)	<b>Čuti</b> (to hear)
Rad- <b>im</b> (I work)	Pit- <b>am</b> (I ask)	Spas- <b>em</b> (I rescue)	Ču- <b>jem</b> (I hear)
Rad- <b>iš</b> (you work)	Pit- <b>aš</b> (you ask)	Spas- <b>eš</b> (you rescue)	Ču- <b>ješ</b> (you hear)
Rad- <b>i</b> (he/she/it works)	Pit- <b>a</b> (he/she/it ask)	Spas- <b>e</b> (he/she/it rescue)	Ču- <b>je</b> (he/she/it hear)
Rad- <b>imo</b> (we work)	Pit- <b>amo</b> (we ask)	Spas- <b>emo</b> (we rescue)	Ču- <b>jemo</b> (we hear)
Rad- <b>ite</b> (you work)	Pit- <b>ate</b> (you ask)	Spas- <b>ete</b> (you rescue)	Ču- <b>jete</b> (you hear)
Rad- <b>e</b> (they work)	Pit- <b>aju</b> (they ask)	Spas- <b>u</b> (they rescue)	Ču- <b>ju</b> (they hear)

#### Notes about the present tense forms in Table 2:

- Notice that in Table 2, all the verb forms appear with no pronouns. For example, the verb form **'radim'** means 'I work', but there is no personal pronoun 'I'. Unlike English, where you cannot just say 'work' to mean 'I work', in Serbian, of course, you can. We generally don't use

a personal pronoun in the subject position, like **Ja radim** 'I work'. We use it only for emphasis. For more details, see the discussion on [word order](#).

Now you're ready to use verbs in the present tense. Easy?

Yes, but... While for many verbs the above formula works, there are many verbs where the infinitive stem is somewhat modified, so, it is not predictable, which means, you need to memorize it. This is especially the case with the **-em** verbs.

I describe each conjugation class: **-im**, **-am** and **-em**, in separate files, so please read these files carefully.

### How to negate a verb

To negate a verb, you need to add the particle '**ne**' in front of the verb. Note that the irregular verb **jesam** is an exception to that rule, because the negative particle is **ni**, not **ne**.

Examples of negated verbs:

**Ja ne volim** 'I do not like'

**Ti ne želiš** 'You do not wish'.

While in English we have to add a supporting verb 'do' before 'not', in Serbian, the negative particle **ne** is enough.

### Present tense conjugations of some frequently used verbs

Below, is a list of some frequent verbs (both regular and irregular) in the present tense for all three classes of verbs.

**Table 6: Three present tense verb classes – more examples**

English	Infinitive	Present tense – for all persons singular: first line plural: second line	Verb class
be	biti	sam, si, je, smo, ste su	irregular
want	hteti	hoću, hoćeš, hoće hoćemo, hoćete, hoću	irregular
can	moći	mogu, možeš, može možemo, možete, mogu	irregular
sleep	spavati	spavam, spavaš, spava, spavamo, spavate, spavaju	-am
read	čitati	čitam, čitaš, čita, čitamo, čitate, čitaju	-am
ask	pitati	pitam, pitaš, pita pitamo, pitate, pitaju	-am
know	znati	znam, znaš, zna, znamo, znate, znaju	-am
have	imati	imam, imaš, ima imamo, imate, imaju	-am
talk	razgovarati	razgovaram, razgovaraš, razgovara razgovaramo, razgovarate, razgovaraju	-am
speak	pričati	pričam, pričaš, priča pričamo, pričate, pričaju	-am
watch	gledati	gledam, gledaš, gleda gledamo, gledate, gledaju	-am
get	dobiti	dobijem, dobiješ, dobije dobijemo, dobijete, dobiju	-em

give	davati (impf)	dajem, daješ, daje dajemo, dajete, daju	-em
go	ići	idem, ideš, ide idemo, idete, idu	-em
hear	čuti	čujem, čuješ, čuje čujemo, čujete, čuju	-em
eat	jesti	jedem, jedeš, jede jedemo, jedete, jedu	-em
believe	verovati	verujem, veruješ, veruje verujemo, verujete, veruju	-em
call	zvati	zovem, zoveš, zove zovemo, zovete, zovu	-em
sell	prodati	prodajem, prodaješ, prodaje prodajemo, prodajete, prodaju	-em
bring	dovesti (perfective)	dovedem, devedeš, devede dovedemo, dovedete, dovedu	-em
ask for	tražiti	tražim, tražiš, traži tražimo, tražite, traže	-im
beg, pray	moliti	molim, moliš, moli molimo, molite, mole	-im
work	raditi	radim, radiš, radi radimo, radite, rade	-im
bring	doneti	donosim, donosiš, donosi donosimo, donosite, donose	-im
learn	učiti	učim, učiš, uči učimo, učite, uče	-im
desire	želeti	želim, želiš, želi želimo, želite, žele	-im
love	voleti	volim, voliš, voli volimo, volite, vole	-im
say	govoriti	govorim, govoriš, govori govorimo, govorite, govore	-im
come	doći	dolazim, dolaziš, dolazi dolazimo, dolazite, dolaze	-im
see	videti	vidim, vidiš, vidi vidimo, vidite, vide	-im