

शिखागोविश्वविद्यालये

प्रारम्भिकसंस्कृतम्

FIRST-YEAR SANSKRIT

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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THE

PERFECT TENSE



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THE PERFECT TENSE

The **perfect** (*lit*) is one of three finite past tenses in Sanskrit, alongside the imperfect (*lan*) and the aorist (*lun*).



In Proto-Indo-European, the perfect was a distinct verbal system that had a stative aspect ("he is in a state of having stood" = "he is standing"). But in classical Sanskrit it is a single tense-mood (*lakāraḥ*) associated only with the past tense and no distinction in aspect.





THE PERFECT TENSE

For all intents and purposes there is no difference in meaning between these past tenses.



In traditional grammar, the aorist is prescribed for the past in general, while the imperfect is prescribed for events "not belonging to the present day," and the perfect is prescribed for events of the distant past (lit. not present to the eyes of the speaker). Careful writers will abide by these constraints.





FORMATION

The perfect is made like most other finite verbs: to a **stem** (usually formed with **reduplication**), which alternates between **weak** and **strong** forms, an **ending** expressing person and number is added:

√ক cakār-a

[stem] [ending]





The stem is generally formed by **reduplication**. We'll start by talking about the reduplicant (*abhyāsaḥ*), since it does not change. (In some cases, however, it undergoes *sandhi* with the following root syllable, as we'll discuss later.)





The rules for reduplication are mostly the same as those for the desiderative and third class presents:

- no velar consonants
- no conjunct consonants
- no aspirate consonants
- no long vowels





The difference is that roots with an r or r^- always reduplicate with an a, and never i or u:

- √bhṛ → ba-bhār-a → babhāra
- √kr → ca-kār-a → cakāra





Roots that have *-ya-* in them sometimes reduplicate with *i* rather than *a*:

Similar for *svap*, which reduplicates with *u*:

√svap → su-svāp-a → suṣvāpa





Seven roots beginning with *va-* (*vac*, *vad*, *vap*, *vaś*, *vas*, *vah*, *vā*) reduplicate with *u-* rather than *va-*:



Similarly *yaj* reduplicates with *i*:





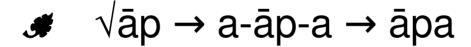
Roots that begins with **vowels** will usually reduplicate with the vowel:







Most roots that begin with a **long vowel**, however, do not form a regular perfect. Instead they form a **periphrastic perfect** (discussed below). The one exception is:







The **strong** forms of the perfect are, as in the present tense (*lat*), the singular of the *parasmaipadam*. All other forms are **weak**.





The general rule is that the root syllable:

- is in the **full grade** (sometimes *guṇaḥ*, sometimes *vṛddhiḥ* see below) in the strong forms; and
- is in the **zero grade** (with *samprasāraṇam* if applicable) in the weak forms.





I have not written the accents here, but the accent is always on the **root syllable** in the strong forms and on the **first syllable of the ending** in the weak forms.





The precise form that the root syllable takes in the strong forms will depend on:

- 1) the phonological shape of the root; and
- 2) the personal ending (first, second, or third person).





Guṇaḥ alone is found in the second person singular parasmaipadam (before the ending -(i)tha):

- \checkmark \forall kṛ → ca-kar-tha → **cakartha** "you did"
- √yaj → i-yaj-tha → iyaṣṭha "you sacrificed" also iyajitha
- √nī → ni-nē-tha → ninētha "you led" also ninayitha





In the third person singular *parasmaipadam*, the root syllables takes what I call *Ņ-vrddhiḥ*, which is **vrddhiḥ** in the case of a final vowel or *a* followed by a single consonant, and otherwise **guṇaḥ**.

- √kr → ca-kār-a → cakāra "she did"





In the third person singular *parasmaipadam*, the root syllables takes what I call *Ņ-vṛddhiḥ*, which is **vṛddhiḥ** in the case of a final vowel or *a* followed by a single consonant, and otherwise **guṇaḥ**.

- √tud → tu-tōd-a → tutōda "she hit"
- √budh → bu-bōdh-a → bubōdha "she awoke"
- √bhid → bi-bhēd-a→ bibhēda

 "she broke"







As usual, N- v_i ddhih is explained by **Brugmann's Law**, which turns Indo-European *o into Sanskrit \bar{a} in open syllables and a in closed syllables:

*gwe-gwom-e → *gwe.gwo.me → jagāma

*kwe-kwor-e → *kwe.kwo.re → cakāra

*bu-bhoudh-e → *bu-bhow.dhe → bubōdha





In the first person singular *parasmaipadam*, either the *guṇaḥ* form, or (in the case of roots with a final vowel or a penultimate *a*) the *vṛddhiḥ* form are acceptable:



In the first person singular *parasmaipadam*, either the *guṇaḥ* form, or (in the case of roots with a final vowel or a penultimate *a*) the *vṛddhiḥ* form are acceptable:

- √nī → ni-nāy-a → nināya "I led"
 ni-nay-a → ninaya
- √bhid → bi-bhēd-a → bibhēda "I broke"







The historically-expected form is *guṇaḥ*, since the first-person *parasmaipadam* ending began with a consonant in Indo-European (*h₂e). But since the consonant was lost (and because first-person perfect forms were relatively rare) it was confused with the third-person form.





Verbal roots that are **superheavy** (long vowel + at least one consonant, or short vowel + two consonants) are not subject to vowel gradation.

For some reason $bh\bar{u}$ belongs to this category as well. It forms both its strong and weak forms with the stem $babh\bar{u}$ -.





The weak stem generally takes the **zero grade**. For roots that have r, i, or u vowels, this is straightforward:

- √bhid → bi-bhid-a → bibhiduḥ "they broke"
- √nī → ni-nī-uḥ → ninyuḥ "they led"
- √kr → ca-kr-uh → cakruh "they did"





For roots that are subject to *samprasāranam* — i.e., those that take i or u as a reduplicant, while having ya or va in the root — the weak stem takes samprasāranam, which then combines with the reduplicant:

- \checkmark √vac → u-uc-uh → **ūcuh** "they spoke"
- √yaj → i-ij-uḥ → ījuḥ "they sacrificed"

 ([a]

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The same applies to roots that begin with vowels:





For roots that have a penultimate *a*, there are two options.





For all those roots with a penultimate a of which the initial sound of the reduplicant would be the same as that of the root (e.g., those beginning with p, t, \acute{s} , etc.), the weak stem is formed **without** reduplication and instead with the vowel \bar{e} :





- √ba(n)dh → ba-badh-uḥ → bēdhuḥ
- "they bound"

 # √tan → ta-tan-uh → tēnuḥ "they stretched"
- √yam → ya-yam-uḥ → yēmuḥ "they restrained"
- √sap → śa-śap-uḥ → śēpuḥ "they cursed"





This same "collapsed perfect" is also available for some other roots ($t\bar{r}$, phal, bhaj, trap, and srath, and $r\bar{a}dh$ meaning "kill," as well as optionally $j\bar{r}$, bhram, tras, phan, $r\bar{a}j$, bhram, bhram, bhram, bhram, bhram, and svan).

√bhram → ba-bhram-uḥ → bhrēmuḥ
babhramuḥ

"they wandered"





The roots *gam*, *khan*, *jan*, *han*, and *ghas* drop the vowel entirely in the weak form of the stem:

- √han → ja-ghn-uḥ → jaghnuḥ "they killed"
- √ghas → ja-ghs-uḥ → jakṣuḥ "they grazed"





NON-REDUPLICATED PERFECTS

There is **one** verb that has no reduplication **at all**, namely *vid* "know," and this is moreover used with a **present** sense:

√vid → vēd-a → vēda "she knows"

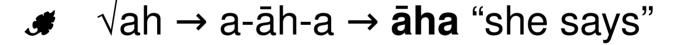
vid-uḥ → **viduḥ** "they know"





NON-REDUPLICATED PERFECTS

(While we're on the topic, the verb *ah* "say," which is **only** used in the perfect, also has a present sense:)



a-ah-uh → āhuh "they say"





FORMATION: ENDINGS

Note that there is **no separate active and passive** in the perfect. The *ātmanēpadam* forms are sometimes used with a passive sense, but generally the perfect is used **actively**, i.e., in agreement with the agent of the verbal action.

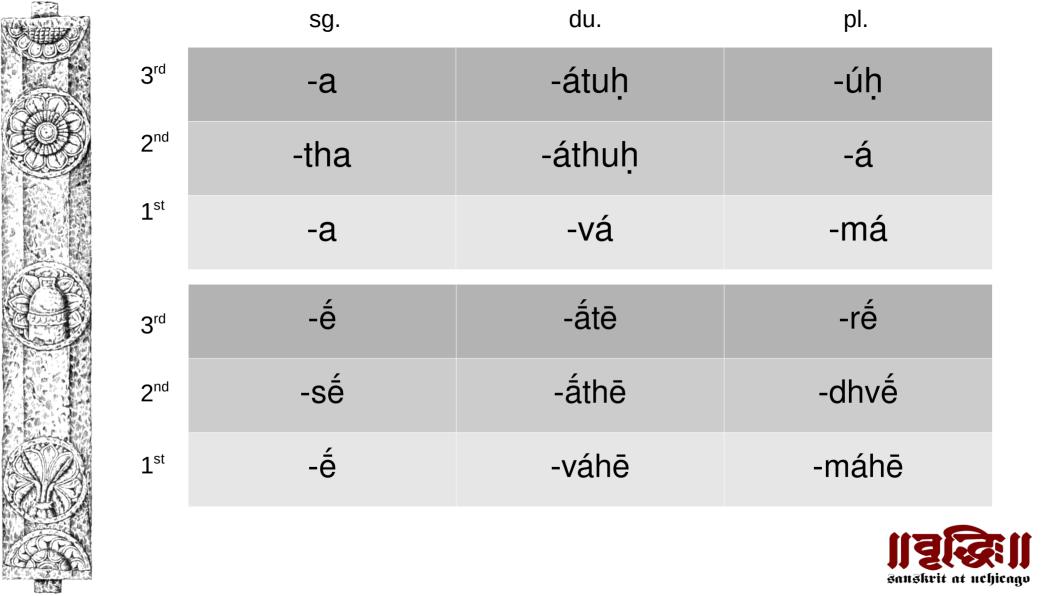




FORMATION: ENDINGS

The perfect has a distinct set of endings, comparable in some cases to endings we've already seen:







Note that the endings of the **first person singular parasmaipadam**, **third person singular parasmaipadam**, and **second person plural parasmaipadam** are all identical (-a). You have to look at the form of the **stem** to tell them apart!





These endings are used by all verbs. Most verbs, however, add the augment *i* between the root and endings beginning with a consonant. This augment is always found before the third person plural ātmanēpadam, so the ending is effectively -iré.

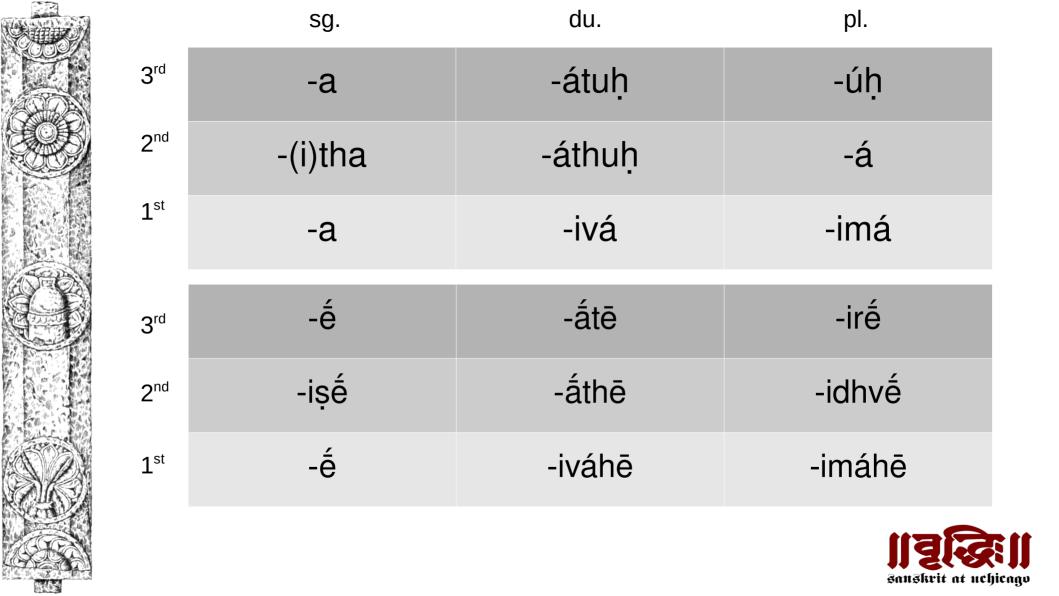


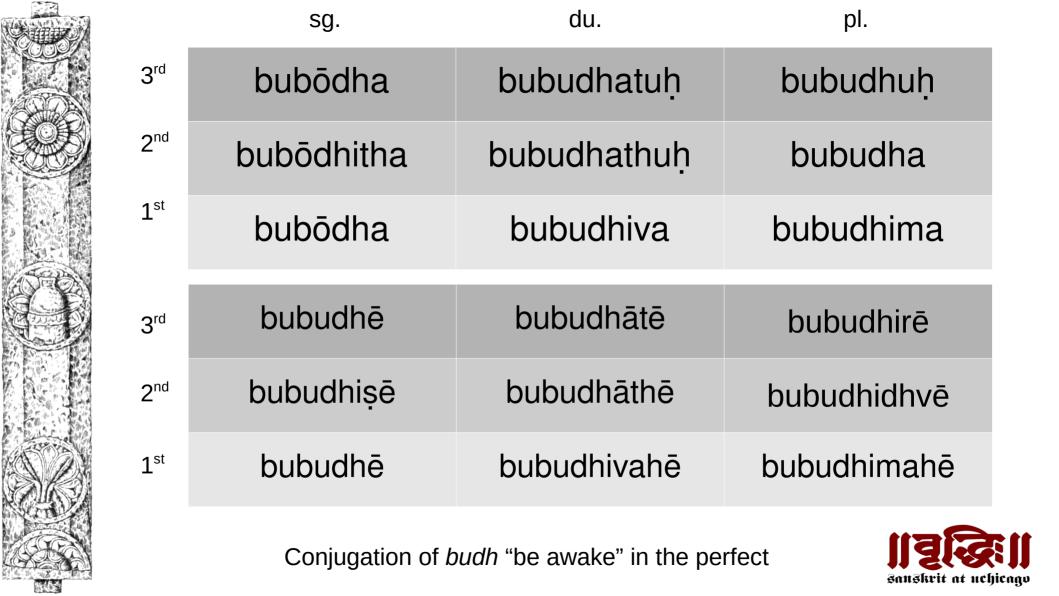


The augment tends to be used before all of the other endings that begin with a consonant, except for the *tha* of the second person singular *parasmaipadam*. In this last case the use of the augment can be considered **optional**.

Hence the endings for most verbs are effectively:



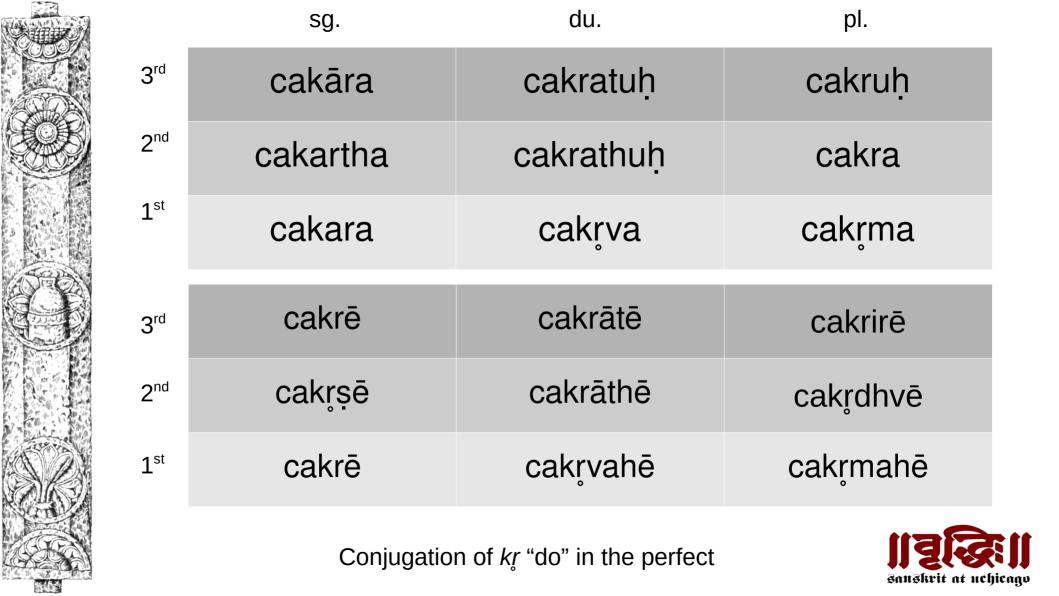






But eight verbs (*kr*, *bhr*, *sr*, *vr*, *dru*, *śru*, *stu*, and *sru*) **never** take the augment outside of the third person plural *ātmanēpadam*.

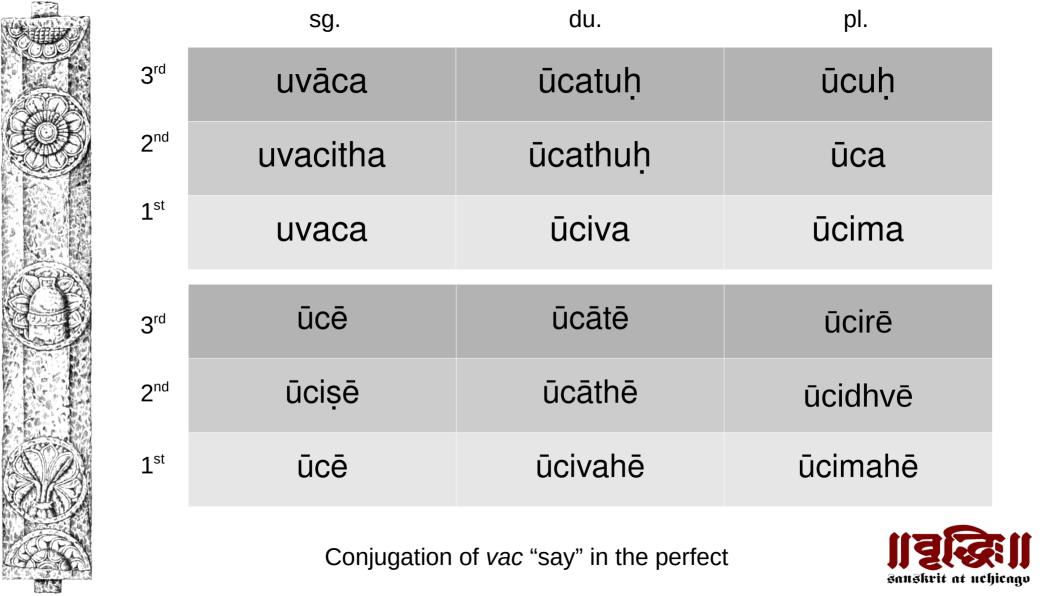






Here is the conjugation of the root *vac*, which exhibits *samprasāraṇam*:

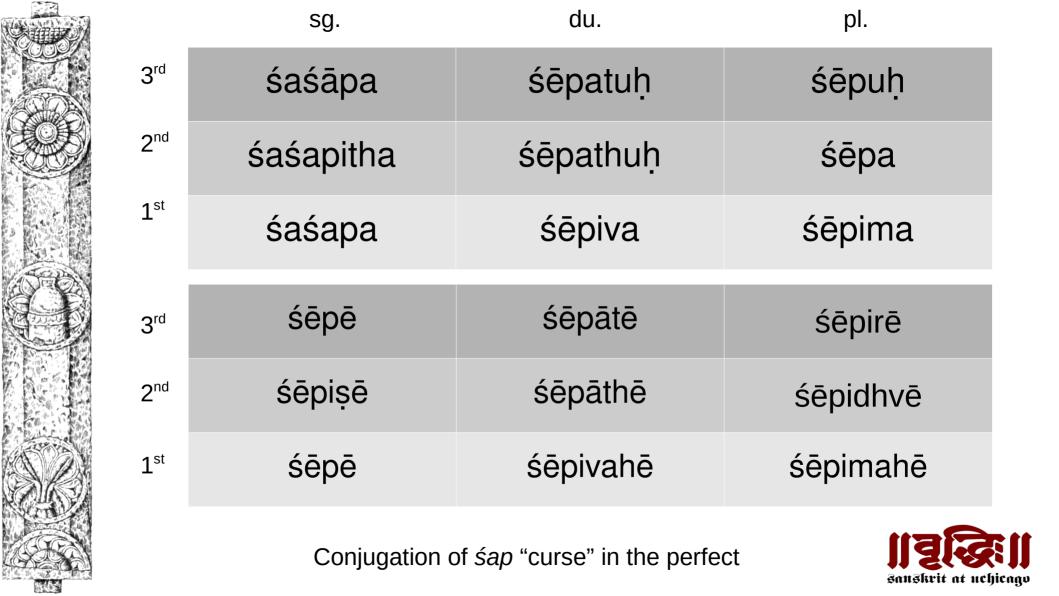






And here is the conjugation of the root *śap* "curse," which takes a "collapsed" perfect in the weak forms:

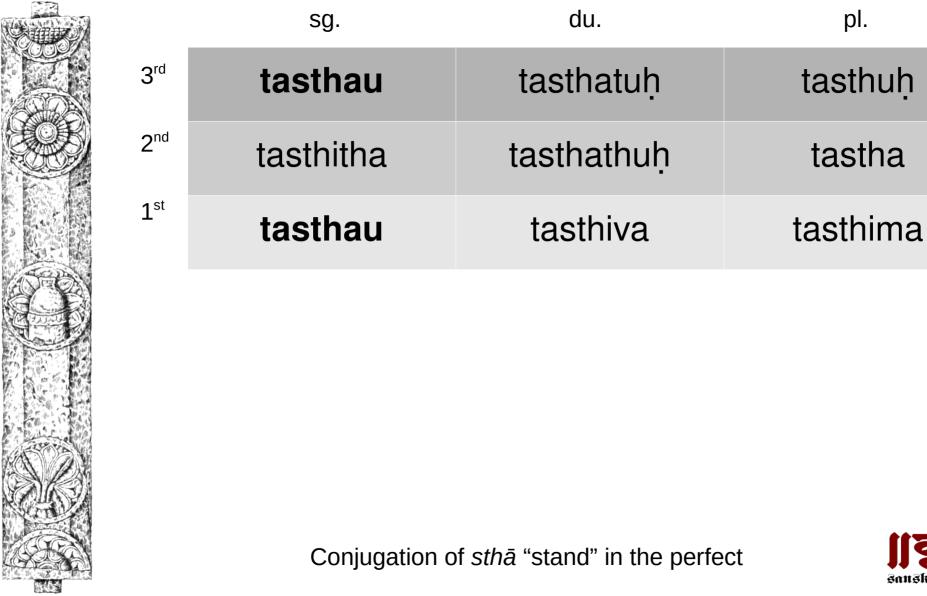






Roots that end in \bar{a} or a diphthong have special forms in the perfect. They form their first and third person parasmaipadam with the ending -au, directly after the final consonant of the root, and they lose their root vowel before endings beginning with a vowel.









FORMATION: SANDHI

Besides the presence or absence of the augment i, there are a few sandhi issues to cover. We can mention the root $bh\bar{u}$, which as noted above does not undergo vowel gradation in the perfect. It uses *v* as a glide between the root and endings beginning with a vowel:









FORMATION: SANDHI

Finally, a note on the *sandhi* of a root-final i, \bar{i} , u or \bar{u} before endings beginning with a vowel. The general rule is that they are converted into a semivowel:

√nī → ni-nī-uh → ninyuh "they led"





FORMATION: SANDHI

But if the root-final vowel is preceded by **more than one consonant**, then a glide (*iy* or *uv*) is used:

- √krī → ci-krī-uḥ → cikriyuḥ "they bought"
- √sru → su-sru-uh → susruvuh "they heard"





PARTICIPLES

The perfect has, like other verbal systems, its own *parasmaipadam* and *ātmanēpadam* participles, which will be discussed separately.

- vidvān "one who knows"
- jajñānaḥ "one who has been born"





Not every verbal root can form the perfect tense in the way we've just described. Specifically:

- roots beginning with either a long vowel (e.g. ūh) or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants (e.g., indh);
- roots consisting of more than one syllable;
 - this includes all **deverbal** roots, e.g., causatives, desideratives, intensives, and tenth-class roots.





Besides these formal criteria, a number of other roots have to use a periphrastic perfect (*day*, *ay*, *ās*, *kās*, *kāś*, and optionally *uṣ* and *vid*).





The periphrastic perfect involves:

- forming a verbal noun by adding -ām to the verbal root; then
- adding the conjugated perfect form of any of the following verbs:

as "to be" (āsa, āsuḥ, etc.)

kr "to do" (cakāra, cakruḥ, etc.)

bhū "to be" (babhūva, babhūvuh, etc.)





- ūhām āsa "he conjectured"
- indhām babhūva "he kindled"
- bōbudhām āsa "he was completely awake"
- bubōdhisām āsa "he wanted to be awake"



The *ātmanēpadam* forms of *as*, *kr*, or *bhū* can be used in a passive sense:

- ūhām āsē "it was guessed"
- bōdhayāṁ cakrē "he was woken up"
- cōrayāṁ babhūvē "it was stolen"



