

Experience vs Disposition or Tha mi sùndach

Even though the heading may seem confusing and tricky, this is actually quite straightforward.

In Gaelic you have the apparently confusing choice between two ways of saying things like I'm angry or I'm happy; you can do a periphrastic (roundabout way of saying) construction and say **tha sùnd orm** or you can add the adjectival suffix **-ach** and use the verb **bi**: **tha mi sùndach**. There's a huge number of these expressions, so let's look at a few more first:

tha sùnd orm	tha mi sùndach	I'm cheerful
tha an fhearg orm	tha mi feargach	I'm angry
tha am pathadh orm	tha mi pàiteach	I'm thirsty
tha an t-acras orm	tha mi acrasach	I'm hungry
tha an t-eagal orm	tha mi eagalach	I'm afraid
tha fiabhras orm	tha mi fiabhrasach	I'm feverish

And so on. In theory there is not limit to the number of pairs you could find because **-ach** as an ending is very productive and you can stick it on to as many nouns as you can find.

So what's the catch? The catch is that Gaelic makes a very fine distinction here which is difficult to make in English in as few words - experience versus disposition. Or in other words, between something that is temporary and something that is permanent.

Tha sùnd orm for example means that I am cheerful right now, perhaps because I've won the lottery or have been told that Bill Gates has donated \$5,000,000 to Akerbeltz. But that could change quite quickly, say if I had some bad news. **Tha mi sùndach** on the other hand means that I am cheerful by nature, ie even in the worst circumstances I am cheerful. If the **pathadh** is on you, it's just now, a drink and you'll be fine, but if you're **pàiteach**, you're forever feeling thirsty. In English we have to use roundabout ways of making this difference, eg **tha an fhearg orm** 'I am angry right now' vs **tha mi feargach** 'I am angry by nature' or use different words eg in **tha galar orm** 'I am ill' and **tha mi galarach** 'I am diseased'.

That's essentially it. The only slightly confusing thing is that with **existentials air** can be used to describe a permanent state eg **tha beul mór air Mórág** 'Mórág has a (physically) big mouth'. But as we explained on the page on that, context usually supplies the right meaning.