

The Imperative or How to order people around

The imperative is the form of verbs used to give commands or to forbid something (in the negative). In Gaelic it corresponds to the citation form of verbs, i.e. the form of a the verb you will find in a dictionary. To give a command to more than one addressee, the suffix **-(a)ibh** [IV] is added to the root, e.g.

glan seo!	clean this!
glanaibh seo!	clean this! (to more than one)
ith seo!	eat this!
ithibh seo!	eat this! (to more than one)

If a basic verb phrase includes a preposition, this is usually dropped in the imperative, e.g.

éisd ri rud eigin	to listen to something
> éisd seo!	listen to this!
> éisdibh seo!	listen to this! (to more than one)
feuch ri rud eigin	to try something
> feuch seo!	try this!
> feuchaibh seo!	try this! (to more than one)

Emphasis is expressed by using the emphasized personal pronouns, e.g.

éisd thusa seo!	you listen to this!
éisdibh sibhse seo!	you guys listen to this!
feuch thusa seo!	you try this!
feuchaibh sibhse seo!	you guys try this!

There are also imperative forms for the first and third persons singular and plural. These carry a sense of encouragement or request, best translated as 'let ...' - also referred to as subjunctive forms. The third person is always followed by a personal pronoun. Thus the full paradigm of suffixes is:

-(e)am	1. Person Singular 'let me ...!'
-ø	2. Person Singular '...!'
-(e)adh e/i	3. Person Singular 'let him/her ...!'
-(e)amaid	1. Person Plural 'let us ...!'
-(a)ibh	2. Person Plural 'you guys ...!'
-(e)adh iad	3. Person Plural 'let them ...'

Examples (NB: 'let' in the imperative does not carry the meaning of 'give permission' but more like a suggestion or encouragement, like in English 'let's go!' or à la Marie Antoinette 'let them eat cake!')

òladh ise uisge!	let her drink water!
òlamaid uisge!	let us drink water!

The negative is formed by putting **na** in front of the imperative forms. **Na** prefixes **h-** to a verb beginning with a vowel, e.g.

na glan seo!	do not clean this!
na glanaibh seo!	do not clean this! (to more than one)
na h-ith seo!	do not eat this!
na h-ithibh seo!	do not eat this! (to more than one)

There are a few verbs which are only used in the imperative:

thugainn/thugnaibh	let's go!
trohad/trobhadaibh	come along!
siuthad/siuthadaibh	go on, carry on, go for it!