

## Conjugated Prepositions Made Easier

Tricky one. They are very old words/forms and it's been a long time since they were first formed, involving things like the Old Irish accusative which have been dead for a long time now, so there is no foolproof way of giving you a simple guide which tells you how you can just form them on the spot.

There's a few pointers that we can give you though.

Broadly speaking you can group modern Gaelic preposition into 5 categories - Regular, Mostly Regular, 3rd Person S, Labial in Root and Decidedly Weird. We have grouped them this way because this then allows you to learn them in groups and perhaps memorise some of rules. We'll also explain their history further down which may also help some of you to understand these pesky little buggers.

Group & Endings	analysed preposition	normal form
REGULAR	ROOT: ag-	aig
-(a)m	ag-am	agam
-(a)d	ag-ad	agad
-e + slenderise	a <sup>g</sup> -e	aige
-e + slenderise + harden	a <sup>c</sup> -e	aice
-(a)inn	ag-ainn	againn
-(a)ibh	ag-aibh	agaibh
-a + harden	ac-a	aca
	ROOT: thug-	gu
	thug-am	thugam
	thug-ad	thugad
	thu <sup>g</sup> -e	thuige
	thu <sup>c</sup> -e	thuice
	thug-ainn	thugainn
	thug-aibh	thugaibh
	thuc-a	thuca

A few things about the above paradigm: ROOT isn't meant in the historical way ie ag- is not the historical derivation of aig, but for the purposes of analysing the modern conjugated prepositions, ag- can be taken as the form from which they are derived.

The superscript <sup>i</sup> means that it's inserted to conform with the caol ri caol rule. Hardening means that if the last consonant in the root is g, you harden this to c.

Group & Endings	analysed preposition	normal form
MOSTLY REGULAR	ROOT: ann-	ann an
-(a)m	ann-am	annam
-(a)d/-(a)t	ann-ad	annad
ROOT	ann	ann
-(th)e + slenderise	inn-te	inn-te
-(a)inn	ann-ainn	annainn
-(a)ibh	ann-aibh	annaibh
-(th)a	ann-ta	annta
	ROOT: or-	air
	or-m	orm
	or-t	ort
	air	air
	o'ir-the	oirre (<oirrthe)
	o'ir-inn	oirnn
	o'ir-ibh	oirbh (<oiribh)
	or-tha	orra (<orrtha)
	ROOT: dhi-	de
	dhi-am	dhiom
	dhi-at	dhiot
	dh-e	dhe
	dhi-(th)	dhi (<dhith)
	dhi-(i)nn	dhinn
	dhi-(i)bh	dhibh
	dhiubh	dhiubh

The most striking feature of this group is that it uses the root form for the 3rd person singular masculine. The other bit to watch out for with **air** is that in the plural the root slenderises. And we get **inn-te** because the root used to be **int-**. But more of the history later.

The prepositions in brackets are other/older spellings of these still kicking about which fit the paradigm much better and which GOC abolished so non-chalantly. <sigh>

The next group is also fairly regular, but different because the 3rd person singular masculine adds an **-s** to the root:

Group & Endings	analysed preposition	normal form
MOSTLY REGULAR	ROOT: as-	á
-(a)m	as-am	asam
-(a)d/-(a)t	as-ad	asad
ROOT + [ʃ]	as-(s)	as
-(th)e + slenderise	a <sup>i</sup> s-te	aiste
-(a)inn	as-ainn	asainn
-(a)ibh	as-aibh	asaibh
-(th)a	as-ta	asta
	ROOT: le-	le
	le-am	leam
	le-at	leat
	le-is	leis
	le <sup>i</sup> -the	leatha (cf léithe)
	le-inn	leinn
	le-ibh	leibh
	le <sup>o</sup> -tha	leotha
	ROOT: ri-	ri
	ri-am	rium
	ri-at	riut
	ri-(i)s	ris
	ri-the	rithe
	ri-(i)nn	ruinn (<rinn)
	ri-(ibh)	ruibh (<ribh)
	ri <sup>u</sup> -tha	riutha
	ROOT: thar-	thar
	thar-am	tharam
	thar-ad	tharad
	tha <sup>r</sup> -is	thairis (air)
	tha <sup>r</sup> -te	thairte
	thar-ainn	tharainn
	thar-aibh	tharaibh
	thar-ta	tharta

As you can see, this bunch is mostly regular except for **ás**, which has [s] instead of the expected [ʃ] and the 3rd person singular feminine **leatha** which is a bit weird. The Irish form **léithe** fits the paradigm perfectly though, not that that is any consolation to us.

Again, <sup>i</sup> gets inserted so the **caol ri caol** rule isn't broken.

Almost there. There next group we decided to call Labial in Root because they - surprise - all contain a labial (b, m, f):

Group & Endings

LABIAL IN ROOT

-(a)m

-(a)d/-(a)t

ROOT + [e]

-pe + slenderise

-(a)inn

-(a)ibh

-pa

ROOT: thar-	thar
tromh-am	tromham
tromh-ad	tromhad
tro <sup>i</sup> mh-e	troimhe
tro <sup>i</sup> mh-pe	troimhpe
tromh-ainn	tromhainn
tromh-aibh	tromhaibh
tromh-pa	tromhpa

ROOT: thar-	thar
romh-am	romham
romh-ad	romhad
ro <sup>i</sup> mh-e	roimhe
ro <sup>i</sup> mh-pe	roimhpe
romh-ainn	romhainn
romh-aibh	romhaibh
romh-pa	romhpa

ROOT: thar-	thar
ua-m	uam
ua-t	uat
ua <sup>i</sup> - <sup>th</sup> e	uaithe
ua <sup>i</sup> -pe	uaipe
ua-inn	uainn
ua-ibh	uaibh
ua-pa	uapa

ROOT: thar-	thar
fodh-am	fodham
fodh-ad	fodhad
fodh-a	fodha
fo <sup>i</sup> dh-pe	foidhpe
fodh-ainn	fodhainn
fodh-aibh	fodhaibh
fodh-pa	fodhpa

ROOT: thar-	thar
um-am	umam
um-ad	umad
u <sup>i</sup> m-e	uime
u <sup>i</sup> m-pe	uimpe
um-ainn	umainn
um-aibh	umaibh
um-pa	umpa

Nothing much to add about this group really. As you will see later on, that weird -p- isn't part of the ending but rather a very old part of the root that crops up now and then, but let's finish this off first and take a look at the Decidedly Weird Group (luckily there's only one preposition, unfortunately it's also perhaps the most common one...):

Group & Endings	analysed preposition	normal form
MOSTLY REGULAR	ROOT: dh(u)-	do
-mh	dh-omh	dhomh
-t	dhu-t	dhut
-a	dh-a	dha
-i	dh-i	dhi
-inn	dhu-inn	dhuinn
-ibh	dhu-ibh	dhuibh
-aibh	dh-aibh	dhaibh

As you can see, compared to the other ones do is really weird. The historical notes aside, there isn't much else unfortunately that we can add that might help you. Except a general note perhaps: for adults, learning a new language invariable involves learning stuff by heart. If you were doing Basque you'd have to cope with over 12.000 forms for the two verbs 'to be' and 'to have' alone ... so learning the few irregular verbs of Gaelic and these few prepositions isn't that bad really. It's really worthwhile putting in the effort though ... they are REALLY common and having to think before coming out with your conjugated preposition really marks you as a learner!!

On to the [history](#) then for the curious minds ...