



The Glancecard Explained

CONTENTS

What is a verb	4
How many types of verbs are there in Irish	5
What makes a verb irregular	5
Telling the different verbs apart	6
What can the card show me?	7
Is that the whole story?	8
What else is not covered?	9
SIDE 1	10
I, You, He, She, We, You, They - GRAMMATICAL PERSON	11
ORDÚ.	12
SIMPLE PAST TENSE: INNÉ	13
PRESENT (HABITUAL) TENSE: GACH LÁ.	14
FUTURE TENSE: AMÁRACH	15
VERBAL NOUN	16
VERBAL ADJECTIVE	16
IRREGULAR VERBS	17
SIDE 2	18
THE PREPOSITIONAL PRONOUN	19
POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES	21
LONG VERBS	22
COMMON QUESTIONS	23

FOREWORD

The Glance card is a useful item for any learner of the Irish language. It may not look like the most user-friendly tool when you first pick it up, but once you understand how it works, you won't want to miss it.

We have broken the glance card into its functional areas and written some instructions on what they are and how to use them.

INTRODUCTION

What is a Verb?

A verb is a word which generally conveys an action of some sort, although it may not always be to do with simple movement. So common verbs in English are BREAK, RUN, WALK, TELL, DISCUSS etc

When you look up an Irish verb in a dictionary the entry will be for what is known as the verb stem (or root) Eg CUIR to put, BRIS to break, ABAIR to say and DÓIGH to burn.

The Glance Card shows this verb stem in the first column, because it also doubles as the imperative form* for the second person singular. (*imperative: 'Tell the truth!', 'Walk away')

Do not confuse this with the infinitive**, which is what many people would expect to find in a dictionary. The infinitive is mostly (but not always) different from the stem. After you read all the instructions given here for both sides of the card, go back and see if you can find the four examples on the card where the imperative is the same as the infinitive.

****The Infinitive:**

The construction 'To + simple form of verb, but used as a noun, adverb or adjective

To run away was the only solution.

'to run' used as a noun

The grandmother came to the house to tell a story.

'to tell' used as an adverb (to explain why she came)

The grandmother always had a story to tell.

'to tell' used as an adjective (to further explain 'story')

How many types of verbs are there in Irish?

Irish has three main types of verb. These are known as

1. First conjugation (or type 1) and sometimes also referred to as short verbs
2. Second conjugation (or type 2) and sometimes also referred to as long verbs
3. Irregular verbs

What makes a verb irregular?

The basic definition of irregularity is common to most European languages and means that the verb stem changes completely when going to another tense.

In English we say “I go to the shops” but in the past tense it becomes “I went to the shops” so the stem has changed completely from *go* to *went*. Not many English speakers would even think of this as an irregular verb simply because they have been saying it correctly from about the age of three. But anyone learning English as a second language has to hear and understand this.

The same thing happens in Irish: some verb stems change when going from one tense to another. The good news is that while English has at least 200 irregular verbs Irish has only 11.

In addition to the stem change some of these 11 verbs have other slight peculiarities but they are mostly beyond the scope of the Glance Card.

Telling the different verb types apart

You will have to learn the 11 irregular verbs off by heart pretty quickly so the main question remaining is how do you distinguish between the rest, namely the First and Second conjugations ? Here are the rules:

If a verb stem has one syllable it always belongs to the first conjugation

Simple examples are *bris*, meaning to break and *cuir* meaning to put

This also includes those of one syllable where the stem ending is – igh, but the stem itself contains a long vowel or diphthong (examples are *dóigh* (to burn) and *buaigh* (to win)).

It also includes those where the stem ending is – igh but the stem itself does not contain a long vowel or diphthong (examples are *suigh* (to sit down), and *nigh* (to wash)). These verbs, while technically first conjugation, actually use second conjugation endings everywhere except in the future and conditional, but they are still classed as first conjugation. Most textbooks fail to identify these verbs at all, which causes big problems for Irish language learners.

If a verb stem has two syllables it generally belongs to the second conjugation

About half of all second conjugation verbs have a second syllable ending in -igh (eg *coinnigh* (to keep)).

Most of the remaining second conjugation verbs have two syllables of which the second ends in –in, or –il, or –ir, or –is.

There are a handful of other endings found in the second conjugation eg –aim and –ing. In addition, any two syllable stems ending in -(a)ic belong to the first conjugation.

Remember also that by putting a prefix onto a verb you are just changing the usage and not its basic structure so *ath-scríobh* means to rewrite and is still first conjugation; *fo-lig* means to sub let and is still first conjugation.

So what are the exceptions?

If a verb with a two syllable stem has a fada in the second syllable, then its counted as first conjugation and uses the first conjugation endings (eg *tionóil* meaning “to collect” and *coimeád* meaning “to keep”). Try pronouncing it with the wrong endings and you’ll soon see why.

In addition, any two syllable stems ending in *-(a)ic* belong to the first conjugation. Remember too that by putting a prefix onto a verb you are just changing the usage and not its basic structure so:

ath-scríobh means to rewrite and is still first conjugation

fo-lig means to sub let and is still first conjugation

What can the card show me?

Using the card you will be able to find and add the correct endings for any verb type when using the three main tenses: namely the past, the present and the future.

You can form three types of grammatical construction in each tense. This example uses the past tense:

Affirmative statement -

Joe broke the Window - Bhris Joe an fhuinneog

Negative statements –

Joe didn’t break the Window – Níor bhris Joe an fhuinneog

Questions -

Did Joe break the window – Ar bhris Joe an fhuinneog ?

Is that the whole story?

There are certain other types of grammatical construction that you will eventually need but the card does not go this far so don't get flustered trying to make it work

Negative question

Didn't Joe break the Window ? Nár bhris Joe an fhuinneog ?

Affirmative indirect speech

Sam said that Joe broke the window – Dúirt Sam gur bhris Joe an fhuinneog

Negative indirect speech

Sam said that Joe didn't break the window – Dúirt Sam nár bhris Joe an fhuinneog

Likewise, the past present and future are the most commonly encountered tense, and that is what the card concentrates on. There are others that won't be found on the card:

The past habitual

Joe used to break windows

The conditional

Joe would break windows

What else is not covered?

The Glance Card only has limited space so it can't show you everything. Beginners should note that the following are not covered at all.

No guide for overall pronunciation – you will have to listen to an Irish speaker

No mention of when to use lenition or eclipsis, known in Irish as *séimhiú* and *urú*. This is actually quite important when using verbs so consult your textbooks for more details.

Imperatives (Ordú) can be used in Irish for first, second and third person- in singular and plural forms. The card just shows the second person singular because that's also the same as the verb stem.

And finally

You can ignore the letters A-R, and the numbers 1-11, down the edges of side 1 and likewise the letters A-M down the edges of side 2. These do not relate to any of the content on the card.

SIDE 1/TAOBH 1

I	Base form of verb = Order or Imperative	Past tense (yesterday)	Habitual present (every day)	Future tense (tomorrow)	Verbal noun	Verbal adjective	We
You	ná (=negative Imperative)	Negative and interrogative forms			ag (=infinitive)		You (plural)
He She	THE 11 IRREGULAR VERBS						They

Side 1 deals with short verbs and irregular verbs. It displays some of the most commonly-used verbs in the top section plus the irregular verbs in the bottom section. See also the dedicated section for more information about the Irregular Verbs.

I, You, He, She, We, You (pl), they: the grammatical person

The grammatical personas are given on the sides of the card. The singular forms are on the left:

First person: 1 - mé (I)

Second person: 2 - tú (you)

Third person: 3 - sé/ sí (he / she)

On the right are the plural forms:

First person plural: 1 (we)

Second person plural: 2 - sibh (you)

Third person plural: 3 - siad (they)

Further down, we will explain how sentences are phrased. Take note for now that the first person plural (we) has three different box forms (colour coded for the tenses). This shows that a verb, when used in the first person plural, has three different possible endings - one for each tense shown on the card.

We broke ... Bhriseamar

We break (*every day*) Brisimid

We will break Brisfimid

Again: The colour codings on the card indicate the the tenses.

ORDÚ

This is the base form of the verb. It is the form you find in your dictionary when you look up a particular verb. The base form is also the Imperative, or the Order or Command form. For example, when you order a man, woman, boy or girl to close a door, you would say:

“Dún an doras!”

For plural, you need to add *-(a)igí*.

Seasaigí!

Negative Imperative

The middle section, in the first column, shows the negative imperative and how to use, for example: “Don’t close the door!”

Ná dún an doras!

SIMPLE PAST TENSE: INNÉ

INNÉ = YESTERDAY

The Glancecard deals with the simple past tense only. The past habitual (recurring events -e.g. in English "We used to go swimming") is not part of the scope of the Glancecard.

The past tense forms of the verb are in the red column. Of course, past tense is applied to any action that happened in the past, whether 2 minutes ago, or in the last millennium.

Forming the sentence "He closed the door yesterday," we would look up the word for "close" from the red column and find *Dhún*. Now we get the Grammatical person (He), and find *sé*. Put together we get this:

Dhún sé an doras inné.

Negative /Interrogative

The negative and interrogative forms tell us that we use 'Níor' and 'Ar'. For example to say "He didn't close the door yesterday", we get

Níor dhún sé an doras inné.

And to ask "Did he close the door?" we would take the interrogative *ar...?* + the verb + the grammatical person and we get:

Ar dhún sé an doras inné?

The answers here can be *Dhún*. for affirmative, or *Níor dhún*. for negative .

PRESENT (HABITUAL) TENSE: GACH LÁ

GACH LÁ = EVERY DAY

The yellow column shows the habitual present tense form. Consult with a grammar book to find out about the present tense in Irish. This column shows the forms as you would use them if the action is done habitually. Words like 'every day' and 'usually' would give you a clue that you are dealing with the habitual present tense.

She closes the door every day.

Dúnann sí an doras gach lá.

Note how there is a little yellow inset box in the Grammatical Person box of MÉ? The yellow indicates that there is a change in this tense in the first person singular, so "I close the door every day" would be

Dúnaim an doras gach lá.

Whether to enclose the (a) or not depends on the *caol le caol agus leathan le leathan* rule.

NOTE: In the habitual present tense, the ending for "We" is -(a)imid

Negative /Interrogative

The interrogative and negative forms are in the middle-section. Please note:

AN ECLIPSES

NÍ LENITES

(This is not in your glance card!)

So: *An dtuigeann tú mé?* but *Ní thuigeann tú mé.*

FUTURE TENSE: AMÁRACH

AMÁRACH = TOMORROW

The blue column shows the future tense form. The interrogative and negative forms are, again, in the middle-section.

NOTE: In the future tense, the ending for “We” is *-f(a)imid*

again:

AN ECLIPSES

NÍ LENITES

(This is not in your glance card!)

So: *An bhfanfaidh tú?* but *Ní fhanfaidh tú.*

Special form: Caithfidh

Note the change that the column “Caithfidh” undergoes? The triangle is drawing your attention to the extra meaning that ‘caithfidh’ can take.

Be careful when using the future tense form of *caith* (throw, spend, wear), as it takes a special meaning in its future tense form *caithfidh*.

Caithfidh mé can mean “I will throw/ spend/ wear” but it also means “I must”.

VERBAL NOUN

Ainm Briathartha stands for Verbal Noun. These are nouns formed from a verb.

'Ag'-constructions (English -ing endings: e.g "washing")

The simplest of usages that a learner encounters early on are the 'ag' constructions of sentences.

For example:

Tá mé ag ní mo lámha.

The translation is of course "I am washing my hands." (Literally "I am *at washing* of my hands.")

Infinitive (e.g. English: to wash)

See also the explanation for the Infinitive on page 4.

When you use a sentence like "I would like to wash my hands" - *to wash* is the infinitive. Here, too, you will go to the column of Ainm Briathartha for the correct form:

Ba mhaith liom mo lámha a ní.

VERBAL ADJECTIVE

Aidiacht Bhriathartha - English 'the Verbal Adjective': One way to remember what this column represents is that they are adjectives that describe something of having been done. It is similar to the original verb in its meaning, but it has now become an adjective and is used to describe a noun.

For example "My hands are washed." (in the state of having been washed!)

Tá mo lámha nite.

Note: *ólta* (drunk) describes that the carton of milk is now empty, the milk has been drunk: *tá an bainne ólta*. When describing 'under the influence of alcohol,' (or inebriated), *ólta* is used. A better translation would be *ar meisce* (amongst other possibilities).

IRREGULAR VERBS

On Side 1 are the 11 irregular verbs. As in most languages, it is the most commonly used verbs that undergo often radical changes. Note the asterisks in the red column. Let's call them *very irregular verbs*, meaning that their forms change even more dramatically from the past tense to the future tense.

Gheobhaidh has an additional asteriks in the Future tense (blue). Take a look further below the card and along the bottom you find six red boxes and a blue one. All *the very irregular verbs* have been used in a sentence fragment to form a basic question sentence, and the answers have been given both in the affirmative as well as in the negative. The red colour coding indicates that these questions relate to their use in the past tense.

Faigh (get / find) changes most radical in its future form; hence it is a further clue that you are dealing with something highly unusual. The blue colour will remind you that this is a question in the future tense, i.e

An bhfaighidh siad?

Will they get? with possible answers: "They will get." "They won't get."


A few pointers on the verb bí

The yellow column has two entries for the present and the habitual present, making it unique among verbs.


The verbal noun column has a *séimhiú*, again making it unique.

The verbal adjective column is blank, because there is none.


SIDE 2/ TAOBH 2



prepositional pronouns




possessive adjectives




I

TABLE OF LONG VERBS - same principle as Side 1

<p>ná (=negative Imperative)</p>	<p>Negative and interrogative forms</p>	<p>ag (=infinitive)</p>	
---	---	------------------------------------	--




We




You


some common questions



You
(plural)



He
She



They

Side 2 contains a list of long verbs with the same logic applied as explained for Side 1. In addition, you will find the prepositional pronouns, another important part of Irish grammar.

THE PREPOSITIONAL PRONOUN

Please note: The scope of this document is not to explain the different prepositional pronoun uses.

The items in the triangular boxes are the actual prepositions. Refer to the list below for their main meaning (or their *idea* - in italics)

ar	on
ag	at, <i>have</i>
do	to
le	with, <i>ownership</i>
ó	from, <i>wanting</i>
de	to, off
as	out of, from
faoi	under
chuig	to
roimh	before
i	in
thar	over, across
idir	between

The boxes below show the prepositional pronoun, that is the word that is formed when amalgamating the preposition with the pronoun (i.e. me, you).

to look up "on me" go to the *ar* column, and the *mé* column of and you get
orm

THE PREPOSITIONAL PRONOUN *cont.*

The *ag* column stands for “at”, but also *ownership*. If you want to look up the different forms of I, You, He, She, We, You (plural), They + have, you would go through the column as follows:

Example sentence: ___ have/ has a house. (lit. A house is at me/ you/ etc)

Tá teach agam.	I have a house.
Tá teach agat.	You have a house.
Tá teach aige.	He has a house.
Tá teach aici.	She has a house.
Tá teach againn.	We have a house.
Tá teach agaibh.	You have a house.
Tá teach acu.	They have a house.

POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES

To the right of each of the two tables of prepositional pronouns you will find the possessive adjectives for quick reference.

mo - my

do - your

a - his

a - her

ár - our

bhur - your (plural)

a - their

The above is not in your glance card!:

Note that three of these possessive adjectives are *a* (his, her, their). The difference in their use is in how you form the noun following the adjective.

To distinguish between his horse, her horse and their horse you will need to do the following:

his requires lenition:

a chapall

For *her* there is no mutation (except for vowels where a h- prefix is required):

a capall

their eclipses the noun:

a gcapall

LONG VERBS

The principles for the use of long verbs (see also Introduction) are identical to those for using short verbs. Use the explanations as outlined for Side 1.

Note how the long verbs have slightly different endings.

Any verbs (long or short) ending in *-igh* will have the *igh* removed before adding an ending. This is because the *-igh* became a silent consonant cluster when they devised the spelling reform about 60 year ago. But it can still be seen (and of course heard) as a long */-*sound right through the present tense and also in the first person plural of the past tense.

Underlined letters

The underlining seen in the first column on Side 2 refers to syncopation, or the removal of “surplus” vowels when a verb ending is added to the stem for these particular type 2 verbs.

COMMON QUESTIONS

The bottom section on Side 2 gives you a list of interrogative cues or question words, such as

cá where

cé which

conas how etc

Note the colour coding on the question forms of “to be”, i.e. “Where” (*An raibh ...?*), “Are” (*An mbíonn ...?*), “Will” (*An mbeidh ...?*) as introduced in the main section of the table.

Special form of cá

Note how *cá* is followed by the dependent form of a verb (where it exists), followed by an *urú* (eclipsis):

Here are examples that demonstrate this with the verb *bí* when used in the past, present and future tenses:

Where were?

Cá raibh..?

Where are?

Cá mbíonn ..?

Where will be?

Cá mbeidh ..?

NOTE: You would normally have *cár + séimhiú* in the past tense, however, *bí* is one of those verbs that does not take the *r*-forms in the past and also has a separate dependent form in the past.

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