Conjugating Singular Animate Intransitive Verbs (VAI)

Animate Intransitive Verbs (VAI) are verb forms where one animate being performs an action. These verbs refer both to actions that the person is doing at the moment and actions the person does on a regular basis. For example, "ojibwemo" can mean "she is speaking Ojibwe" (meaning right at the moment) or "she is a speaker of Ojibwe."

The third person is the root form of VAI verbs and is not conjugated. Note that there is no distinction of gender in third person verb forms:

Ojibwemo. She or he speaks or is speaking Ojibwe.

In the first person the prefix changes based on the first letter of the verb. This occurs in both singular *and* plural forms. Use **ni-** before *most* consonants:

Nimino-ayaa. I am fine. Ninagam. I sing.

However, when the verb begins in **d**, **g**, **j**, use **nin-** or **in-**. The initial "n" is dropped by some speakers:

(N)indagoshin. I arrive.

(N)ingiiwe. I am going home. (N)injiibaakwe. I am cooking.

If the verb begins with a vowel, use **(n)ind-**: **(N)ind**ataage. I am gambling.

Slim Shady (n)indizhinikaaz. My name is Slim Shady.

Some dialects use (n)im- when the verb begins with a b:

(N)imbakade. I am hungry.

If the verb begins in an "o," it lengthens. This occurs in both 1st and 2nd person prefixes:

Ojibwemo. She speaks Ojibwe. Indoojibwem. I speak Ojibwe. You speak Ojibwe.

This is important to remember, as it is not just applied to singular Animate Intransitive Verbs, but also plural forms in *all four* verb forms as well as the possession of nouns.

The indicator also changes in the second person based on the first letter of the verb. Use **gi-** before *all* consonants:

Gibimose. You are walking.
Gigiiwe. You are going home.
Gijiibaakwe. You are cooking.

Use **gid-** before *all* vowels:

Gidabwez. You are sweating. Gidoojaanimiz ina? Are you busy?

Note that when a VAI ends in -A, -I, -O, the final vowel drops off in the first and second person singular forms only:

Niwiisin.I am eating.Giwiisin.You are eating.Wiisini.She or he is eating.

And

Use "miinawaa" to connect two verbs, as in "and" in English.

Indayekoz miinawaa nibakade. I am tired and hungry.

Questions

"Ina" is used to ask a yes/no question. In a sentence, "ina" is ALWAYS SECOND:

Gidabwez ina? Are you sweating? Erik ina manoominike? Is Erik ricing?

Asemaa na gigii-adaawen? Did you buy tobacco?

Note that the initial vowel in "ina" is often dropped, especially when the preceding word ends in a vowel.

Word Order

Word order in Ojibwe is more flexible than in English. There a few hard and fast rules, such as that "ina," is always second, but generally the order of words is less important in Ojibwe than in English. However, a good way to construct your sentences in Ojibwe is putting the verb before the subject of the sentence.

Giikaji Erik. Erik is cold.

This is roughly the opposite of English sentences, but again not following this pattern does not make the sentence incorrect. Saying "Erik giikaji" does not sound as funny in Ojibwe as "Cold Erik is" sounds in English (unless you are Yoda).

Examples of Time Particles

Apane Always
Endaso-dibik Every night
Endaso-giizhik Every day
Noongom Today, now

Common Prefixes

aano- in vain

Aano-wewebanaabii. He is fishing in vain.

nitaa- have ability

Nitaa-jiibaakwe. He knows how to cook.

Common Suffixes

-kaazo pretends to

Anokiikaazo. He is pretending to work.

-(i)maagozi smell like -(i)naagozi appear like -(i)pogozi taste like -(i)taagozi sound like

These suffixes can be attached to a noun or a verb.

Bakadenaagozi. He looks hungry. Ma'iinganinaagozi. He looks like a wolf.