Verbs

Present Tense

Czech has only one present tense.

In commonly used language, present tense is often used also to express future. For example: Zítra jsem doma. Co zítra děláš?

The Irregular Verb být (= to be).

The verb být is conjugated irregularly in present tense.

| být | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **positive form** | **negative form** |
| já | jsem | nejsem |
| ty | jsi, in common spoken Czech: (j)seš | nejsi, in common spoken Czech: nejseš |
| on, ona, to | je | není |
| my | jsme | nejsme |
| vy | jste | nejste |
| oni | jsou | nejsou |

Notice the pronunciation: jsem [sem], jsi/jseš [si/seš], je, jsme [sme], jste [ste], jsou [sou].

The Conjugation Types in Present Tense

All Czech verbs are conjugated. There are four conjugation types in present tense:

|  | **já** | **ty** | **on, ona, to** | **my** | **vy** | **oni** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| -Á verbs, for example dělat the infinitive ends in -at + the verb mít | děl-ám | děl-áš | děl-á | děl-áme | děl-áte | děl-ají |
| -Í verbs, for example rozumět the infinitive ends in -et, -ět, -it + the verbs jíst, spát, stát | rozum-ím | rozum-íš | rozum-í | rozum-íme | rozum-íte | rozum-í, rozum-ějí\*\* |
| -OVAT verbs, for example pracovat the infinitive end in -ovat | prac-uju, prac/uji\*\* | prac-uješ | prac-uje | prac-ujeme | prac-ujete | prac-ujou, prac-ují\*\* |
| -E verbs, for example číst the infinitive ends in -ít, -ýt, -ét, -íst, -ést, -ást, -ůst \* | čt-u | čt-eš | čt-e | čt-eme | čt-ete | čt-ou |

\* In this verb group (but exceptionally also in some other verbs, for example být, stát, vědět...), there are typical stem changes.

\*\* The forms marked like this are typical for a written language.

Attention: Some Czech verbs are reflexive, for example jmenovat se, dát si. It means they are accompanied by reflexive pronouns se or si. These pronouns do not change when the verb is conjugated, for example jmenuju se, jmenuješ se, jmenuje se... etc. The reflexive se and si cannot stand at the beginning of a sentence and they occupy the second position in a sentence (more [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20180508005245/http:/mluvtecesky.net/en/grammar/word_order)).

The Negation in Present Tense

To make a negative form, the prefix ne- is added to a verb. It is written together with a verb. For example: Já nejsem z Německa, já jsem z Rakouska.

There is only one exception of this rule - it is a negative form of the 3rd person singular of the verb být which sounds: není. For example: To ~~neje~~ není voda, to je víno.

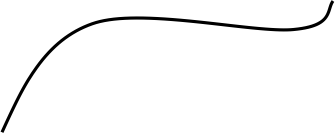
Czech has double or multiple negation, for example Co nikdy neděláš?

In Czech a negative question is often used which plays a role of a suggestion or proposal. For example: Nechceš kávu? Nechceš jít na tenis?

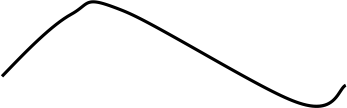
A Question in Present Tense

If you want to make a question just change a sentence intonation. Notice two types of the intonation:

If the question can be answered by "yes" or "no", the question intonation is rising:  
To je tvůj kamarád?  
Vy jste student?



The question cannot be answered "yes" or "no", the intonation is risingly declining:  
Odkud jsi?  
Co děláš?



Past Tense

When past tense making, follow the next steps:

1. In the verbal infinitive drop -t and add -l. You are making the so-called -l form ("-l forma", the active past participle), for example: být – byl, dělat – dělal, pracovat – pracoval, studovat – studoval, rozumět – rozuměl, hledat – hledal, vědět – věděl, vidět – viděl …

Attention: In some verbs (often the monosyllabic ones and verbs ending in -nout), there are irregular -l forms. This irregularity consists in:

* + the shortening stem consonant, for example být – byl, pít – pil, spát – spal, psát – psal
  + changing verb stem, for example číst – četl, chtít – chtěl, jíst – jedl, jít – šel, šla, šli, mít – měl, moct – mohl, umřít – umřel

1. Remember the -l form has a form for the masculine, feminine, neuter and plural.  
   For example the verb být: byl, byla, bylo, byli\*
2. Connect the gender-adequate -l form with an appropriate form of the auxiliary verb být (see the chart). Notice the 3rd person singular and plural have no auxiliary verb.

| **singular** | **plural** |
| --- | --- |
| byl/byla/bylo jsem | byli\* jsme |
| byl/byla/bylo jsi | byli\* jste |
| byl/byla/bylo | byli\* |

The verb být in this chart is used as an example and can be replaced by any other verb.

\* In written Czech you can see the following endings of -l forms in plural: muži byli, banány byly, ženy byly, auta byla. The last form (auta byla) can be also heard in a spoken form of standard language. These endings distinguish the gender but we use here only the form byli to simplify it.

The Formal Way of Addressing in Past Tense

Pane Nový, byl jste doma? - it is used when addressing a man  
Paní Nová, byla jste doma? - it is used when addressing a woman  
Byli jste doma? - it is used when addressing more people

Negation in Past Tense

If you want to make a negative form, add the negative prefix ne- to a full verb. For example:  
Nepracovala jsem.  
Nebyl jsem tam.

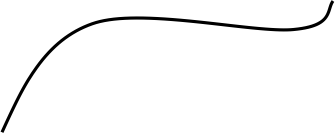
Never add the negative prefix ne- to an auxiliary verb, for example: ~~Byl nejsem~~ tam./~~Nejsem byl~~ tam.

Notice: do not forget double or mutiple negation in Czech: Nikdy jsem nic nedělal.

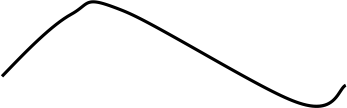
Question in Past Tense

If you want to ask a question just change the intonation:

Byl jsi doma? – Ano./Ne.



Co jsi dělal? – Pracoval jsem.



Notice the short reaction (without the auxiliary verb): Byl jsi doma? – Ano, byl.

Reflexive Verbs in Past Tense

In the 2nd person singular (you-form), the letter contraction can occur in past tense in commonly spoken language:  
Byl jsi doma? → Byls doma?  
Co jsi dělala? → Cos dělala?

The similar contraction occurs also in the standard language in reflexive verbs:  
Díval jsi se na televizi? → Díval ses na televizi?

Future Tense

To express future in Czech, even the present tense can be used, which is typical especially in commonly spoken language. The forms of future tense are also often used. Various verbs make future tense like this:

Future tense of the verb být.

budu  
budeš  
bude

budeme  
budete  
budou

Future tense of imperfective verbs, for example pracovat.\*

budu  
budeš  
bude

budeme  
budete  
budou

+ the infinitive, for example pracovat

Future tense of the verbs of motion jít, jet and letět.

jít  
jet  
letět

(já) půjdu  
(já) pojedu  
(já) poletím

Attention: půjdu is often pronounced like [pudu].

Future tense of perfective verbs, for example zavolat.  
Zavolám do kina. ...

Negation in Future Tense

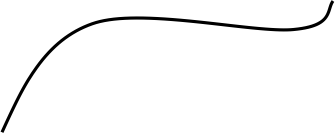
If you want to make a negative form, add the prefix ne- (in front of the auxiliary verb in case of imperfective verbs):

* The verb být: nebudu, nebudeš, nebude...
* Imperfective verbs, for example pracovat: nebudu pracovat, nebudeš pracovat, nebude pracovat...
* Verbs of motion, for example jít: nepůjdu, nepůjdeš, nepůjde...
* Perfective verbs, for example zavolat: nezavolám, nezavoláš, nezavolá...

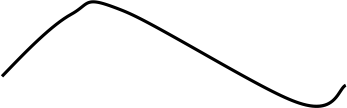
Question in Future Tense

If you want to ask a question just change the intonation (more [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20180508005245/http:/mluvtecesky.net/en/grammar/pronunciation)).

Budeš doma? – Ano./Ne.



Co budeš dělat? – Budu pracovat.



Modal Verbs

Modal verbs have no meaning by themselves but they only modify a meaning of a full verb in a sentence. Remember these modal verbs:  
moct\*, (já) můžu  
muset, (já) musím  
chtít\*, (já) chci  
smět, (já) smím

\* The verb chtít = "to want" is conjugated completely irregularly, it is necessary to learn it by heart: chci, chceš, chce, chceme, chcete, chtějí.

Modal verbs are usually followed by an infinitive, for example: Chci pracovat. Můžu pracovat. Musím pracovat.

After the verb chtít, also the direct object can follow (in the accusative), for example Chci nové auto. Chci to.

Modal meaning of the verb mít

Note the two meanings of the verb mít, a concrete meaning and a modal one. Compare:

* the concrete meaning: Máme auto.
* the modal meaning: Nevím, co mám koupit mamince. Omlouvám se, měla jsem ti zavolat dřív.

Conditional Forms of Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are used in conditional form very often. They express politeness, suggestion, advice but also uncertainty. For example:  
Chtěl/a bych...  
Mohl/a bych...  
Měl/a bych...?  
Měl/a bys...

The Imperative

Regular Forms of The Imperative

To make regular forms of the imperative, use the 3rd person plural verb form (they-form). Remove the ending -ou/-ají/-í and you gain the so-called word root. Then, add the imperative endings according to the table below.

If the word root ends in one consonant, add –, -me, -te, for example:

| **3rd person plural (they-form)** | **imperative ("ty" = "you" in singular)** | **imperative ("my" = "we")** | **imperative ("vy" = "you" in plural)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| učit, (oni) uč-í | uč! | učme! | učte! |

If the word root ends in two consonants, add -i, -eme/-ěme, -ete/ěte, for example:

| **3rd person plural (they-form)** | **imperative ("ty" = "you" in singular)** | **imperative ("my" = "we")** | **imperative ("vy" = "you" in plural)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| říct, (oni) řekn-ou | řekni! | řekněme! | řekněte! |

If the verb ends in the 3rd person plural in -ají, add -ej, -ejme, -ejte to the word root, for example:

| **3rd person plural (they-form)** | **imperative ("ty" = "you" in singular)** | **imperative ("my" = "we")** | **imperative ("vy" = "you" in plural)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| dělat, (oni) děl-ají | dělej! | dělejme! | dělejte! |

In some -Í verbs (the type rozumět), the formal variation of the 3rd person plural is used to make the imperative. For example, in the pair oni rozumí/rozumějí, the variation rozumějí is used to make the imperative.

If the word root ends in d, t, n, the consonant softening occurs, for example uklidit – ukliď, vrátit – vrať, zapomenout – zapomeň.

The imperative forms of the 1st person plural (we) are not very frequent in commonly spoken language.

The Irregular Forms of the Imperative

být - buď! buďte!  
mít – měj! mějte!  
jíst – jez! jezte!  
koupit – kup! kupte!  
mít – měj! mějte!  
přijít – přijď! přijďte!  
sníst – sněz! snězte!  
hrát – hraj! i hrej! hrajte! i hrejte!

Attention: The verb jít has its imperative forms jdi! jděte! but also běž! běžte!

Remember: Pojď sem! Pojďte sem!

The Negative Imperative

The negative imperative is made almost exclusively in imperfective verbs. For example:

| **Infinitives impf./pf.** | **Imperatives impf./pf.** | **Negative imperative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| psát/napsat | piš!/napiš! | nepiš! nepište! |
| brát/vzít | ber!/vezmi! | neber! neberte! |
| dávat/dát | dávej!/dej! | nedávej! nedávejte! |
| prohlížet (si)/prohlédnout (si) | prohlížej (si!)/prodhlédni (si)! | neprohlížej (si)! |

Remember:  
jít, chodit, přijít – nechoď! nechoďte!  
jet, jezdit, přijet – nejezdi! nejezděte!

Note the exception: zapomínat/zapomenout: nezapomínej! nezapomínejte! but also: nezapomeň! nezapomeňte!

The Conditional

To make the conditional, the same -l form (professionally called the past participle) is used as in past tense, for example byl, měl, chtěl, mohl etc. We just add different auxiliary forms.

|  | **-l form (the active past participle) of any verb** | **conditional auxiliary form** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| já | byl/byla/bylo | bych1 |
| ty | byl/byla/bylo | bys |
| on | byl/byla/bylo | by |
| my | byli2 | bychom/bysme3 |
| vy | byli | byste |
| oni | byli | by |

1 Just like auxiliary verbs in past tense, the expressions bych, bys, by, bychom/bysme, byste, by of the conditional occupy the 2nd position in a sentecence. You can find more about the second position in a sentence [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20180508005245/http:/mluvtecesky.net/en/grammar/word_order).

2 In written Czech you can see the following endings of -l forms in plural: byli by (muži), byly by (banány), byly by (ženy), byla by (auta). The last form (neuter) can be also heard in a spoken form of standard Czech. These endings distinguish between genders. In the A1 and A2 levels, we use only the form byli to simplify it.

3 The expression bychom is typical for standard Czech, the expression bysme is used in commonly spoken language. In these days, the form bysem appears in I-form (1st person singular), the form bysi in you-form (2nd person singular).

The Formal Addressing in the Conditional

Byl byste tak hodný? - it is used when addressing a man  
Byla byste tak hodná? - it is used when addressing a woman

Reflexive Vebs in the Conditional

In reflexive verbs in the 2nd person singular (you-form), the ending -s moves to the reflexive pronoun, for example: Dal ~~bys si~~ čaj? → Dal by sis čaj?

Conditional Sentences ("kdyby"-Clauses)

The following chart represents the structure of conditional "if-clauses". The active past participle (-l form) of the verb být is used here only as an example. Any other verb works similarly.

|  | **Clause I** | |  | **Clause II** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **conditional auxiliary form (kdybych...)** | **verb -l form** |  | **verb -l form** | **conditional auxiliary form (bych...)** |
| já | kdybych | byl/byla/bylo |  | byl/byla/bylo | bych |
| ty | kdybys | byl/byla/bylo |  | byl/byla/bylo | bys |
| on, ona, to | kdyby | byl/byla/bylo | , | byl/byla/bylo | by |
| my | kdybychom/kdybysme | byli |  | byli | bychom/bysme |
| vy | kdybyste | byli |  | byli | byste |
| oni | kdyby | byli |  | byli | by |

Compare the order of the clauses in the question. Both options are possible:  
Kdybyste vyhráli milion, co byste dělali?  
Co byste dělali, kdybyste vyhráli milion?

Conditional "aby"-Sentences (Purpose and Object Clauses)

The conjunction ABY = A+BY takes the component BY from the conditional, therefore it changes according to the person and number.

| **singular** | | **plural** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| já | abych měl/-a, abych se učil/-a | my | abychom měli/-y, abychom se učili/-y |
| ty | abys měl/-a, aby ses učil/-a | vy | abyste měli/-y, abyste se učili/-y |
| on, ona, ono | aby měl/-a, aby se učil/-a | oni, ony, ona | aby měl/-a/-o, aby se učil/-a/-o |

The reflexive verbs use aby ses/aby sis in the 2nd person singular: umýt si → aby sis umyl

In the sentence with "abych, abys,…", the verb has always a conditional form: a + by + -l forma, it means there is always the same form for all verb tenses in this type of sentence:

**Present Tense:**

Přichází, aby se poradil.

**Past Tense:**

Přišel, aby se poradil.

**Future Tense:**

Přijde, aby se poradil.

The usage:

* Why? → Purpose:  
  Obléknu se, aby mi nebyla zima. (Obléknu se, protože nechci cítit zimu.)  
  Nezapomeň se objednat, abys nemusel dlouho čekat.
* What? About what? For what? → Object:  
  Přáli jsme si, aby se maminka brzy uzdravila.  
  Dovolte, abych se představil.  
  Profesor požádal studenty, aby si příklad zapsali.  
  Myslel na to, aby poslal včas zprávu.
* In the sentence where ABY-clause represents an object, there is often a verb expressing a wish, wanting, advice or request in the main clause: přát si, chtít, radit/poradit, žádat/požádat.
* How? → Effect:  
  Musím studovat češtinu tak, aby se dorozuměl v nemocnici.

Typical constructions:

**It is/not possible to...**

Není možné, abychom chodili stále pozdě.

**It is/not necessary to...**

Je třeba, aby lékaři prováděli preventivní prohlídky.

**It is/not necessary to...**

Není nutné, abyste byl operován.

**It is/not important to...**

Je důležité, abyste tomu rozuměli.

**It is time to...**

Je už čas, abyste přednesli svůj návrh.

The ABY-clauses can be sometimes also expressed by the infinitive:  
Přijde, aby se poradil. Přijde se poradit.  
Je nutné, abyste tomu dobře rozuměli. Je nutné tomu dobře rozumět.

Imperfective and Perfective Verbs

Most Czech verbs "live in a pair", it means they have the imperfective and perfective aspect, for example dělat/udělat. The aspect is a verbal category by means of which a verb expresses a process or activity from the point of view of incompletion or completion, repetitiveness or one-time-activity.

Imperfective verbs express an action as a process. These verbs express unlimited, unfinished or repeated action. They have past, present and future tense forms.

Perfective verbs express a result of an action or an action in its specific moment, for example at its beginning or end. Perfective verbs do not make present tense forms, they have only past and future tense forms. Note: The forms of perfective verbs with present tense forms actually express a future meaning, for example: Zaplatím. Sejdeme se v 6 hodin. Zavolám ti/vám.

Some verbs have no perfective counterpart, for example modal verbs (chtít, moct, muset) or state of being verbs (být, spát, stát).

Reflexive Verbs in General

Reflexive verbs are always accompanied by the reflexive pronouns se or si which do not change their forms during the conjugation. Se and si cannot stand at the beginning of a sentence but they occupy the second logical position in a sentence (more [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20180508005245/http:/mluvtecesky.net/en/grammar/word_order)).

The Unseparable se/si

Se and si do not have any specific meaning here; they are just an unseparable part of a verb, for example jmenovat se, smát se, stěžovat si, starat se o.

The Separable se/si

Se and si have a specific meaning here.

* se – oneself, si – to oneself, for example:  
  mýt se, oblékat se, připravovat se  
  mýt si ruce, oblékat si svetr, připravovat si lekci
* se, si – each other, reciprocally, for example:  
  mít se rádi, povídat si

The reflexive se is also used to make the reflexive passive voice.

The Passive Voice

There are two types of the passive voice in Czech:

1. the reflexive passive, for example dělá se, vaří se, připravuje se
2. the descriptive passive, for example je dělán, je vařen, je připravován

The Reflexive Passive

The reflexive passive forms are made of the 3rd person singular or plural verb form and the pronoun se. It is used in these meanings:

1. The reflexive passive with a subject  
   Kniha se čte dobře.  
   Oběd se jí v poledne.  
   Písničky se zpívají.
2. The reflexive passive without subject (only the 3rd person singular verb forms are used here). These sentences have a general meaning.  
   Čte se hodně. = Lidé hodně čtou.  
   Jí se v obvykle poledne. = Lidé jí obvykle v poledne.  
   Říká se, že je inflace. = Lidé říkají, že je inflace.

The Descriptive Passive

It is made of the passive participle (-n and -t forms) of a full verb and appropriate forms of the auxiliary verb být. For example the passive infinitive of the verb operovat is být operován, -a, -o, operován-i, -y, -a; present/future/past tense: pacient je/bude/byl operován, pacientka je/bude/byla operována, dítě je/bude/bylo operováno, pacienti jsou/budou/byli operováni, ženy jsou/budou/byly operovány etc.

The passive participle is made by sufixes -n(-en) a -t:

1. the verbs in -at, -ovat:  
   zvát → zván  
   dělat → dělán  
   opakovat → opakován  
   milovat → milován
2. the verbs in -et, -it:  
   vracet → vracen  
   zvolit → zvolen  
   Also: číst → čten
3. the verbs in -nu, -nout:  
   rozhodnout → rozhodnut  
   prohlédnout → prohlédnut  
   Also: vypít → vypit, umýt → umyt  
   Attention:  
   platit → placen, vrátit → vrácen  
   uklidit → uklizen, obsadit → obsazen  
   zjistit → zjištěn  
   přijmout → přijat

In the passive sentence, the object in the accusative becomes the subject of the sentence. The verb is in its passive form and matches the new subject. If the subject of the active sentence (i.e. the agent) is necessary to be expressed, this noun is in the instrumental.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lékař čte zprávu. | → | Zpráva je čtena. Zpráva je čtena lékařem. |
| Fyzioterapeut zahájil léčbu. | → | Léčba byla zahájena. Léčba byla zahájena fyzioterapeutem. |
| Pacient si koupí léky v lékárně. | → | Léky budou koupeny v lékárně. Léky budou koupeny v lékárně pacientem. |

The passive participle expresses the gender (M, F, N) and number (sg., pl.):

|  | **singular** | **plural** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ma, Mi | pozván léčen | pozváni léčeny |
| F | pozvána léčena | pozvány léčeny |
| N | pozváno léčeno | pozvána léčena |

The descriptive passive conjugation

|  |  | **M** | **F** | **N** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| singular | jsem, budu, byl, -a jsem | pozván | pozvána |  |
|  | jsi, budeš, byl, -a jsi | pozván | pozvána |  |
|  | je, bude, byl, -a, -o | pozván | pozvána | pozváno |
| plural | jsme, budeme, byli, -y jsme | pozváni | pozvány |  |
|  | jste, budete, byli, -y jste | pozváni | pozvány |  |
|  | jsou, budou, byli, -y, -a | pozváni | pozvány | pozvána |

The formal addressing:  
jste pozván/a, budete pozván/a, byl/a jste pozván/a

The Basic Verbs of Motion

There are two types of basic verbs of motion in Czech

The "long" (undetermined) verbs of motion

The "long" (undetermined) verbs of motion chodit, jezdit and létat express repeating motion or motion itself, without a concrete goal.

| The "long" (undetermined) verbs of motion | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **infinitive** | **present tense (I-form)** | **past tense (I-form)** | **future tense (I-form)** |
| chodit | chodím | chodil jsem | budu chodit |
| jezdit | jezdím | jezdil jsem | budu jezdit |
| létat | létám | létal jsem | budu létat |

The "short" (determined) verbs of motion

The "short" (determined) verbs of motion jít, jet and letět express a motion in a specifically expressed moment and with a specific goal.

| The "short" (determined) verbs of motion | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **infinitive** | **present tense (I-form)** | **past tense (I-form)** | **future tense (I-form)** |
| jít | jdu | šel/šla jsem | půjdu |
| jet | jedu | jel jsem | pojedu |
| letět | letím | letěl jsem | poletím |

Attention: Both "long" and "short" verbs of motion are imperfective.

The "short " verbs of motion with prefixes

The "short" verbs of motion jít, jet and letět can be connected with prefixes which change their meaning. Notice the verb jet which is used here as an example:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | při- |  | přijet |
|  |  | od- |  | odjet |
|  |  | do- |  | dojet |
| jet | + | s- | = | sjet |
|  |  | v- |  | vjet |
|  |  | vy- |  | vyjet |
|  |  | ob- |  | objet |

Attention: The verbs přijet, odjet, dojet etc. are perfective. More about imperfective/perfective verbs [here](https://web.archive.org/web/20180508005245/http:/mluvtecesky.net/en/grammar/verbs#t_imperfective_perfective).

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