

The verbs

The verbs decline only according to tense, not according to person. The tenses are: Nutid (“now-time” = present), datid (“then-time” = past), førnutid (“before-now-time” = present perfect) and førdatid (“before-then-time” = past perfect). In the dictionary, the verbs are listed in infinitive, usually followed by the past tense ending: *spise, -te: to eat*.

The major differences to English are:

- **No continuous**

Danish verbs do not have a continuous form. *I am running* and *I run* will both be simple present: *Jeg løber* in Danish. And likewise in the past: *I was running* and *I ran* will both be simple past: *Jeg løb*.

In expressions as *I like running* you use infinitive with the infinitive mark *at* (= *to* - pronounced like *o* in *hot*): *Jeg kan lide at løbe*.

- **No future**

In Danish you usually express future with simple present: *Jeg kommer i morgen*. (*I will come tomorrow*). Modal verbs are only used if you want to express modality: plan, intention, possibility etc.

- **Modal verbs**

In English you cannot have a modal verb following a modal verb, but in Danish we love it: *I will be able to* translates into *jeg vil kunne* in Danish. Another thing is that modal verbs tend to be false friends, please don't think that the English word *shall*, always will be *skal* in Danish.

- **Passive**

Passive is formed with *blive* (to become) and not with *være* (to be): *I was hit by a car* translates into *jeg blev ramt af en bil*.

Danish has got another passive form as well: the ending **-s**.

Brødet bages ved 200 grader. (Bake the bread at 200 C)

The **-s** passive is used for instructions, rules etc.

- **Present and infinitive is always spelled differently**

In English you spell *eat* in *I eat* and in *I will eat* in the same way. This does not mean that there is no difference in English, which you may see from *he eats* vs. *he will eat*. In Danish infinitive and present are always spelled differently: the regular present ending is **-r** and the infinitive ending: **-e**.

- **Perfect tenses– two different auxiliaries**

Past and perfect are in principle formed as in English. But for a small group of verbs you will have to use *at være* (*to be*) as auxiliary in stead of *at have* (*to have*) when the verb describes transport or other transitions. See present/past perfect below.

Tree families of verbs – look at the past ending

The regular Danish verb fall into two groups:

1. verbs with *-ede* in past and *-et* in perfect.
2. verbs with *-te* in past and *-t* in perfect.

And then there is – like in English – a group of frequently used, irregular verbs.

Declination of the verbs

| | Infinitive Navnemåde | Present Nutid | Past Datid | Pr. perfect Førnutid | Pa. perfect Førdetid | Imperative Bydemåde |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) | at ringe (to call) | ringer (call) | ringede (called) | har ringet (have called) | havde ringet (had called) | ring! (call!) |
| 2) | at høre (to hear) | hører (hear) | hørte (heard) | har hørt (have heard) | havde hørt (had heard) | hør! (hear!) |
| irr. | at være (to be) | er (am/are/is) | var (was/were) | har været (have been) | havde været (had been) | vær! (be!) |

Please notice that verbs do not decline according to person. *Am, is* and *are* in English will all be *er* in Danish.

The use of the tenses

Infinitive

Like in English infinitive – without *at (to)* - is used after modal verbs:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Jeg vil gerne smage din kaffe</i> | <i>(I would like to taste your coffee)</i> |
| <i>Jeg skal arbejde på søndag</i> | <i>(I am going to work next Sunday)</i> |
| <i>Jeg kan svømme</i> | <i>(I can swim)</i> |
| <i>Jeg må gå</i> | <i>(I must/have to go)</i> |
| <i>Du behøver ikke skifte sko</i> | <i>(You don't have to change your shoes)</i> |

Modalverbs:

Kunne (can, be able to, may); **vill**e (will, shall); **skulle** (shall, will, have to), **måtte** (have to, may); **burde** (ought to/should), **turde** (dare); **gide**, (will, bother to); **behøve** (have to, need to) .

Infinitive without *at* is also used in object + infinitive constructions after verbs describing sensations and the verbs *at lade (to let)* and *at bede (to ask somebody to do something)*:

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|--|
| <i>Jeg så ham løbe i parken. (I saw him running in the park)</i> |
| <i>Jeg hørte ham råbe på hjælp. (I heard him shout for help)</i> |
| <i>Jeg lod tyven gå. (I let the thief go).</i> |
| <i>Jeg bad ham pisse af. (I asked him to piss off.)</i> |

After other verbs infinitive is use with *at (to)*:

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|--|
| <i>Jeg har prøvet at lære grammatikken. (I have tried to learn the grammar)</i> |
| <i>Han ønskede at blive prins. (He wanted to become a prince)</i> |
| <i>Jeg elsker at spille golf (I love playing golf)</i> |
| <i>Han gik uden at sige farvel (He left without saying good bye)</i> |

As you see from the last two examples there is no general Danish equivalent to the use of the **-ing** form describing actions.

Only in verbs describing motion in connection with the verb *komme*, you'll see something a bit like the present continuous:

- *Han kom flyvende/sejlende/hoppende/kravlende.....(He came running/sailing/hopping/crawling..)*

And when describing a remaining in a position:

- *Han blev siddende/liggende/stående/boende (He remained sitting/lying/standing/living)*

Present

Present describes scenes/situations now, always/never or in the future.

Jeg betaler ved kassen. (I pay at the checkout)

Mens jeg betaler, ringer min telefon. (While I am paying, my phone rings)

Jeg betaler altid for min kæreste. (I always pay for my boy friend)

Jeg betaler i morgen. (I will pay tomorrow)

Again: No continuous! *I am paying* and *I pay* are both: *Jeg betaler.*

Like in English you may use historical present to underline crucial points in a past tense narrative:

Det var midnat. Pludselig hører jeg et skud. (It was midnight, suddenly I hear a shot)

Present perfect

The present perfect is basically a kind of present: it describes results or experiences that are relevant now, although they took place or started in the past.

This is very much like in English, but very different from German, French, Italian and Spanish, where present perfect serve as past.

The phrase: *Jeg **har spist**.* (*I have eaten.*) does not describe a situation – it only tells that right now I am not hungry. If you want to describe your dinner at the restaurant, you will have to switch to past:

*Jeg **spiste** på en japansk restaurant i centrum i går, det **var** dyrt men dejligt.*

(I ate at a japanese restaurant in central Copenhagen yesterday. It was expensive, but wonderful.)

Other examples of present perfect describing experience up to now:

Jeg har boet i Danmark 3 måneder. (I have lived in Denmark for 3 months)

Jeg har boot i Danmark 3 måneder i alt. (I have lived in Denmark for 3 months, all together)

Jeg har været i England 3 gange. (I have been to England 3 times)

Jeg har haft 5 forskellige biler. (I have had 5 different cars)

Please notice: two different auxiliaries: *har* or *er*

Verbs that describe transport or other transitions of the subject form perfect with *være* (to be) as auxiliary:

*Han **er** løbet ned i kiosken (He has run down to the kiosk)*

*Han **er** flyttet til København. (He has moved to CPH.)*

But when the same verbs describe an activity or state, they form perfect with *at have*:

*Han **har** løbet 10 km (He has run 10 km)*

*Han **har** flyttet for sin bror. (He has helped his brother moving.)*

Past

Past signalizes distance - that a scene/situation is not here and now. The scene may be past, always in past, or hypothetical – just like in English:

*Jeg **boede** i Frankrig, da jeg **mødte** min kone.*

(I was living in France, when I met my wife.)

*Jeg **gik** i skole hver dag, da jeg **var** lille.*

(I went to school every day, when I was a kid)

*Hvis jeg **vandt** en million, **ville** jeg rejse Jorden rundt.*

(If I won a million, I would travel round the world)

Past perfect

The past perfect describes results or experiences that are relevant to a past situation, although they took place or started before – exactly like present perfect to a situation now.

The phrase: *Jeg **havde spist**, så jeg drak bare en øl. (I had eaten, so I just had a beer.)* tells that I was not hungry.

Other examples of past perfect describing experience up to a past situation:

- *Jeg havde fløjet til England fem gange, men denne gang sejlede jeg.*
- *(I **had flown** to England 5 times, but this time I went by boat.)*
- *Han **havde drukket**, han lugtede af øl. (He had been drinking, he smelled like beer)*

Please notice: two different auxiliaries: *havde* or *var*

Verbs that describe transport or other transitions of the subject form perfect with *være* (to be) as auxiliary:

- *Han **var** løbet ned i kiosken (He had run down to the kiosk)*
- *Han **var** flyttet til København. (He had moved to CPH.)*

But when the same verbs describe an activity or state, they form perfect with *at have*:

- *Han **havde** løbet 10 km (He had run 10 km)*
- *Han **havde** flyttet for sin bror. (He had helped his brother moving.)*

Være/blive, have/få – aspect of state or change

Være describes a state, *blive* a change – quite like *to be* and *to become* or *ge* in English:

- *Jeg **er** altid sulten. / Jeg **bliver** sulten, når jeg går forbi bageren.*
- *I **am** always hungry. / I **get** hungry, when I pass by the bakers shop.*

The principles are the same for other pair: *have/få* :

- *Jeg har altid mange blomster. (I always have a lot of flowers)*
- *Jeg år altid blomster til min fødselsdag. (I always get flowers for my birthday)*