

STRUCTURE OF CORNISH VERBS

NOMINAL STRUCTURE

In the **nominal** structure, the verb is inflected only according to tense, and within an individual tense the verb (either main or auxiliary) remains invariant, taking the form of the third-person singular; a personal pronoun subject is expressed, and precedes the verb. This structure applies only to affirmative statements. The table shows the present tense of *gweles* 'to see'.

<i>my a wel</i>	I see
<i>ty a wel</i>	thou seest
<i>ev a wel</i>	he sees
<i>hi a wel</i>	she sees
<i>ni a wel</i>	we see
<i>hwi a wel</i>	you see
<i>i a wel</i>	they see
<i>an ki a wel</i>	the dog sees
<i>an dus a wel</i>	the people see

VERBAL STRUCTURE

In the **verbal** structure, the verb is conjugated according to both tense and person. It takes the form: **Verbal particle + (Stem + Ending) + Optional Enclitic**

Verbal particle

The choice of particle depends on the type of the clause, as shown in this table:

Type of clause	Particle	Standard clause	Meaning	Notes
+ve statement (main)	<i>y</i>	<i>hedhyw y prenav</i>	today I buy	1
-ve statement (main)	<i>ny</i>	<i>ny brenav</i>	I buy not	
+ve statement (secondary)	∇ or <i>y</i>	<i>pan brenav</i>	when I buy	2
-ve statement (secondary)	<i>ny</i> or <i>na</i>	<i>pan ny brenav</i>	when I buy not	
+ve command	∇	<i>pren!</i>	buy!	
-ve command	<i>na</i>	<i>na bren!</i>	buy not!	
+ve question	<i>a</i>	<i>a brenydh?</i>	buyest thou?	
-ve question	<i>a ny</i>	<i>a ny brenydh</i>	buyest thou not ?	3
+ve answer	∇	<i>prenav</i>	yes	4
-ve answer	<i>na</i>	<i>na brenav</i>	no	4
+ve wish	<i>re</i>	<i>re brenno!</i>	may he buy!	

Notes:

- 1 Cases of the *y*-particle starting an affirmative statement (main clause) are extremely rare; *y* was usually preceded by an adverb (word, phrase or clause).
- 2 Some conjunctions were followed by the particle, e.g. *ma* 'that' (in the form *may*); others were followed directly by the verb, e.g. *pan* 'when', *mar* 'if', *del* 'as'.
- 3 Evidence from *BK.* suggests that *dar ny* was an alternative interrogative negative particle.
- 4 Whereas in Middle Cornish, 'yes' and 'no' were expressed by using the verb in question, in Late Cornish, *ïa* and *na* were used.

Stem

The stem of the verb may suffer **initial mutation** caused by the preceding particle, as follows:

Particle	<i>y</i>	<i>ny</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a ny</i>	<i>re</i>
Mutation	5	2	2	2	2	2

The vowel in the stem may suffer **affection** in certain verbs, usually *o* > *e* or *a* > *e*.

Ending

The ending comprises a **tense marker** + a **personal marker**.

Mood	Indicative				Subjunctive		Imperative
	Tense	Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Pluperfect	Present	
Marker	(none)	(none)	s (partial)	s	doubling consonants and devoicing	(none)	
S 1	-av	-en (1)	-is	-sen	-iv	-en	
S 2	-ydh	-es (1)	-sys	-ses	-i	-es	-∇
S 3	-∇	-a	-as	-sa	-o	-a	-es
P 1	-yn	-en	-syn	-sen	-yn	-en	-yn
P 2	-owgh	-ewgh	-sowgh	-sewgh	-owgh	-ewgh	-ewgh
P 3	-ons	-ens	-sons	-sens	-ons	-ens	-ens
I	-ir				-er		

Notes:

- 1 Some verbs have *-yn* and *-ys* for the 1st and 2nd singular imperfect indicative.
- 2 There is potential ambiguity between the 1st person singular and plural in the imperfect tenses.

Here is an example of a regular verb: *prena* ‘to buy’.

Mood	Indicative				Subjunctive		Imperative
	Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Pluperfect	Present	Imperfect	
Marker	(none)	(none)	s (partial)	s	doubling consonants and devoicing		(none)
S 1	prenav	prenen	prenis	prensen	prenniv	prennen	
S 2	prenydh	prenes	prensys	prenses	prenni	prennes	pren
S 3	pren	prena	prenas	prensa	preнно	preнна	prenes
P 1	preyn	prenen	prensyn	prensen	prennyn	prennen	preyn
P 2	prenowgh	prenewgh	prensowgh	prenewgh	prennowgh	prennnewgh	prenewgh
P 3	premons	premens	premons	premsens	prennons	prennens	premsens
I	premir				premmir		

Enclitics

An enclitic may be used to emphasize the subject, or to resolve an ambiguity. There are three sets of enclitics which may be used:

- (1) The simple enclitics are written as separate words and usually stressed, e.g. *ny welav vy* ‘I do not see’.
- (2) The reduced enclitics are attached to the verb and usually unstressed, e.g. *ny welydhta* ‘thou dost not see’; in the 2nd singular, the ending is often omitted, being indicated by an apostrophe; e.g. *ny wel'ta* ‘thou dost not see’.
- (3) The double enclitics are written as separate words and are occasionally used when great emphasis on the subject is required; they are stressed on the second of the two syllables.

	1 sg.	2 sg.	3 sg. m.	3 sg. f.	1 pl.	2 pl.	3 pl.
Simple	<i>vy</i>	<i>sy, jy</i>	<i>ev</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>hwi</i>	<i>i</i>
Reduced	<i>-ma</i>	<i>-ta</i>	<i>-va</i>				
Double	<i>mevy, evy</i>	<i>tejy</i>	<i>eev</i>	<i>hyhi</i>	<i>nyni</i>	<i>hwyhwi</i>	<i>ynsi</i>