

## Verbs: the present tense

How do Czech verbs conjugate in the present tense?

How many different types of present-tense conjugations are there?

How can we tell which verbs conjugate according to which type?

**Verbs in English do not change their form much** at all in the simple present tense. For example, the verb *to read* has only two forms in the simple present: *read* and *reads*, the first for the pronouns *I, you, we*, and *they* and the second for *she* or *he*. Czech verbs in the present tense change form a lot, so the forms equivalent to Czech *read(s)* are:

	<i>Číst</i>	to read		
<i>čtu</i>	I read ( <i>já</i> )		<i>čteme</i>	we read ( <i>my</i> )
<i>čteš</i>	you read ( <i>ty</i> )		<i>čtete</i>	you read ( <i>vy</i> )
<i>čte</i>	s/he reads ( <i>ona/on</i> )		<i>čtou</i>	they read ( <i>ony/oni</i> )

Note that there is a **common element in all forms of the Czech verb**: the verbal root and stem *čt-*. The forms differ, however, in the **ending that is added and that coincides with a specific personal pronoun**: *-u* for first-person singular (*já*), *-eš* for second-person informal/singular (*ty*), *-e* for third-person singular (*ona/on*), *-eme* for first-person plural (*my*), *-ete* for second-person formal/plural (*vy*), and *-ou* for third-person plural (*ony/oni*). As you can see, the **Czech present tense is more formally complicated than the English simple present**.

English does, however, have a progressive present (*I am reading, you are reading, she is reading...*), which is a complication that Czech lacks. The **Czech simple present form *Čteme* can mean either *We read* or *We are reading***, and context should make clear which meaning is intended.

The conjugation of *číst* above is just one type of present-tense (or non-past) conjugation in Czech, and, to make things easy, **we can identify five conjugational types in all** (*číst* belongs to Type V). To determine which conjugational type a verb belongs to, **we look at the verbal infinitive and the third-person singular form** of the verb:

	<u>Infinitive Ending</u>	<u>3rd-Person Sg Ending</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Type I:	-at	-á	<i>dělat (dělá), poslouchat (poslouchá)</i>
Type II:	-it / -et	-í	<i>vařit (vaří), mluvit (mluví), vidět (vidí)</i>
Type III:	-ovat	-uje	<i>jmenovat se (jmenuje se), pracovat (pracuje)</i>
Type IV:	-nout	-ne	<i>tisknout (tiskne), zapomenout (zapomene)</i>
Type V:	-st / -ct / -zt and others	-e	<i>číst (čte), psát (píše), chápat (chápe)</i>



Bydlíš na koleji nebo v bytě?  
in dorms or apartment                      verb: *bydlet*

100 filmů, které musíte před smrtí vidět.  
which before death                      verb: *muset*

**Some verbs in -et fall into a subtype with one variant ending: the third-person plural form ends in -ejí or -ějí.** Verbs in this subtype in standard Czech include *umět* (to know how to), *rozumět* (to understand), and prefixed verbs of motion like *přicházet* (to come or arrive) and *odcházet* (to go away or leave).

Proč neumějí plavat?  
why to-swim                      verb: *umět*

Češi penězům nerozumějí.  
Czechs money                      verb: *rozumět*

Přicházejí problémy.                      verb: *přicházet*

Studenti odcházejí pracovat do USA.  
to-work to                      verb: *odcházet*

**In colloquial Czech, there is some general confusion among the endings in the third-person plural for Type II verbs:** -í is sometimes used even for the subtype and also the -ejí/-ějí ending (often reduced to -ej/-ěj) can be generalized to regular Type II verbs.

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### Type III: -ovat; -uje    Endings: -uji (-uju), -uješ, -uje, -ujeme (-ujem), -ujete, ují (-ujou)

já:        **pracuji** (-uju)    my:        **pracujeme** (-ujem)  
ty:        **pracuješ**            vy:        **pracujete**  
ona/on: **pracuje**            oni/oni: **pracují** (-ujou)

This type includes a **large number of verbs**, including *many* everyday ones like *potřebovat* (to need), *studovat* (to study), *(po)děkovat* (to thank), and *tancovat* (to dance). **Many foreign roots are represented** in this type like *analyzovat*, *prezentovat*, and *bombardovat*. Alternate endings in colloquial Czech for first-person singular and plural as well as third-person plural are given in parentheses.

Kolik informace vlastně potřebujeme?  
how-much really                      verb: *potřebovat*

Ještě studuju ale zároveň i pracuju.  
still but at-the-same-time                      verbs: *studovat, pracovat*

Děkujeme Ti za všechno!  
for everything                      verb: *děkovat*

Jana tancuje převážně rumbu a sambu.                      verb: *tancovat*

mostly

Média <u>analyzují</u> Obamův projev. speech	verb: <i>analyzovat</i>
Proč vychrtlé krásky <u>prezentují</u> módu? why scrawny beauties fashion	verb: <i>prezentovat</i>
Meteority <u>bombardují</u> Měsíc. moon	verb: <i>bombardovat</i>

Some verbs with **monosyllabic infinitives that do not end in -ovat** can be placed here; the most common is the verb **hrát** (to play) with the verbal stem *hraj-* (*hrají/hraju, hraješ, hraje...*).

<u>Hrajeme si</u> loutkové divadlo. puppet theater	verb: <i>hrát si</i>
Mluvící papoušek <u>hraje</u> počítačové hry. talking parrot games	verb: <i>hrát</i>

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**Type IV: -nout; -ne**      **Endings: -nu, -neš, -ne, -neme (-nem), -nete, -nou**

já: <b>zapomenu</b>	my: <b>zapomeneme (-nem)</b>
ty: <b>zapomeneš</b>	vy: <b>zapomenete</b>
ona/on: <b>zapomene</b>	oni/oni: <b>zapomenou</b>

Verbs in **-nout form a coherent type**. Many of the verbs here (like *zapomenout*) are perfective, which means that the conjugational forms given here have a future meaning: they represent a non-past—not a present—tense. The colloquial variant of the first-person plural is given in parentheses. **Some common verbs here are *tisknout*** (to print), ***hubnout*** (to lose weight), and ***vládnout*** (to rule, govern, control).

Co mám dělat, když <u>zapomenu</u> přístupové heslo? I-should if log-in	verb: <i>zapomenout</i>
<u>Tiskneme</u> vizitky a letáky. business-cards flyers	verb: <i>tisknout</i>
Jestli sníš méně, <u>hubneš</u> . if you-eat less	verb: <i>hubnout</i>
Kolika počítačům <u>vládnou</u> hackeři? how-many hackers	verb: <i>vládnout</i>

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**Type V: -st/-ct / -zt and others; -e**      **Endings: -u (-i), -eš, -e, -eme (-em), -ete, -ou (-í)**

já: <b>čtu</b>	my: <b>čteme</b>
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Ukážeme ti všechno!  
you everything

verb: *ukázat / ukáží-*