

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.

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>

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

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

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>

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

já: čtu	my: čteme
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Ukážeme ti všechno!
you everything

verb: *ukázat / ukáží-*