

# **SERBIAN FOR BEGINNERS:**

## **TENSES AND VERB FORMS**

### **IN SERBIAN LANGUAGE**

**A QUICK GUIDE TO TENSES AND  
VERB FORMS**





## 1. PRESENT TENSE (SADAŠNJE VREME)

**Use: To describe actions happening now or habitual actions.**

### FORMATION:

**VERB STEM + PERSONAL ENDINGS FOR EACH SUBJECT:**

**JA (I): -M (JA RADIM – I WORK)**

**TI (YOU): -Š (TI RADIŠ – YOU WORK)**

**ON/ONA/ONO (HE/SHE/IT): - / (RADI – HE WORKS)**

**MI (WE): -MO (MI RADIMO – WE WORK)**

**VI (YOU, PLURAL OR FORMAL): -TE (VI RADITE – YOU WORK)**

**ONI/ONE/ONA (THEY): -E/-U/-JU (ONI RADE – THEY WORK)**

### EXAMPLES:

**JA UČIM SRPSKI. (I AM LEARNING SERBIAN.)**

**ONI JEDU RUČAK. (THEY ARE EATING LUNCH.)**

### COMMON MISTAKES:

**STUDENTS OFTEN USE THE INFINITIVE FORM BY MISTAKE:**

**JA UČITI INSTEAD OF JA UČIM.**

## 2. PAST TENSE (PROŠLO VREME)

**Use: To describe actions that have already happened.**

### FORMATION:

**PRESENT TENSE OF THE VERB TO BE (JA SAM, TI SI...) +  
PAST PARTICIPLE (RADIO, RADILA, RADILO...):**

**JA SAM** RADIO (I WORKED)  
**TI SI** RADILA (YOU WORKED)  
**ON JE** RADIO (HE WORKED)

### EXAMPLES:

**JA SAM BIO/BILA U BEOGRADU. (I WAS IN BELGRADE.)**  
**MI SMO ZAVRŠILI LEKCIJU. (WE FINISHED THE LESSON.)**

### EXCEPTION:

**SOME VERBS CHANGE THEIR STEM: "IĆI" BECOMES  
"IŠAO/IŠLA" (TO GO).**

### COMMON MISTAKES:

**INCORRECT USE OF GENDER AGREEMENT:  
JA SAM RADILA (FOR FEMALE) INSTEAD OF  
JA SAM RADIO (FOR MALE).**

### 3. FUTURE TENSE (BUDUĆE VREME)

Use: To talk about actions that will happen.

#### FORMATION:

SHORT FORM OF THE VERB **HTETI** (WILL) + INFINITIVE OF THE VERB:

JA **ĆU** RADITI (I WILL WORK)

TI **ĆEŠ** RADITI (YOU WILL WORK)

ON/ONA/ONO **ĆE** RADITI (HE/SHE/IT WILL WORK)

#### EXAMPLES:

SUTRA **ĆU UČITI** SRPSKI. / **UČIĆU** SUTRA SRPSKI.

(TOMORROW I WILL STUDY SERBIAN.)

ONI **ĆE PUTOVATI** SLEDEĆE NEDELJE. / **PUTOVAĆE** SLEDEĆE NEDELJE.

(THEY WILL TRAVEL NEXT WEEK.)

#### COMMON MISTAKES:

OMITTING "ĆU/ĆEŠ/ĆE" (WILL) AND JUST USING THE VERB:  
JA RADITI (NCORRECT) INSTEAD OF JA ĆU RADITI. / RADIĆU  
(CORRECT)

## 4. CONDITIONAL (POTENCIJAL)

Use: To express wishes, possibilities, or hypothetical situations.

### FORMATION:

BIH (WOULD) + PAST PARTICIPLE OF THE VERB:

JA **BIH** RADIO (I WOULD WORK)  
TI **BI** RADILA (YOU WOULD WORK)  
ON **BI** RADIO (HE WOULD WORK)

### EXAMPLES:

JA BIH VOLEO DA IDEM U SRBIJU.  
(I WOULD LIKE TO GO TO SERBIA.)

ONI BI UČILI SRPSKI KADA BI IMALI VREMENA.  
(THEY WOULD LEARN SERBIAN IF THEY HAD TIME.)

### COMMON MISTAKES:

USING **ĆU** INSTEAD OF **BIH**:

JA **ĆU** RADITI. (I WILL WORK)  
JA **BIH** RADIO. (I WOULD WORK).

## 5. IMPERATIVE (IMPERATIV)

**Use: To give orders, to make suggestions, to give advice or to invite.**

**Formation:**

**DROP THE FINAL VOWEL (-U OR -E) OF THE 3RD PERSON PLURAL OF THE PRESENT TENSE + THE IMPERATIVE ENDINGS.**

1. ONI ID**U**

(TI) ID-**I**

(MI) ID-**IMO**

(VI) ID-**ITE**

ONI RAD**E**

RAD**I**

RAD**IMO**

RAD**ITE**

2. ONI PRIČAJ**U**

PRIČAJ-**/**

PRIČAJ-**MO**

PRIČAJ-**TE**

**Example:**

**Idi u prodavnicu po hleb, molim te.**

(Go to the store for bread, please.)

**Pričajte mi o tome.**

(Tell me about it.)

**Pevajmo zajedno!**

(Let's sing together!)



## EXERCISE TIME

Translate the following sentences  
into Serbian:

I will go to the market tomorrow.  
They used to eat breakfast every day.  
We are learning Serbian now.  
She was happy yesterday.  
I would help you if I had time.  
Tell me what happened, please.

### Common Mistakes to Avoid:

Mixing present and past tense: Students often confuse present tense with past forms.

Remember that past participles change according to **gender and number!**

**Incorrect future tense:** Don't forget the "**ću/ćeš/će**" before the verb in the future tense.

**Gender agreement:** Always check the gender of the subject when forming the past tense.

**By practicing these tenses, you'll improve your Serbian fluency in no time!**

**HAPPY LEARNING!**



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