

## The Imperfect

אֶשְׁמַר	אֲנִי	I
תִּשְׁמַר	אַתָּה	you (m. sg.)
תִּשְׁמְרִי	אַתְּ	you (f. sg.)
יִשְׁמַר	הוא	he
תִּשְׁמַר	היא	she
נִשְׁמַר	אֲנַחְנוּ	we
תִּשְׁמְרוּ	אַתֶּם	you (m. pl.)
תִּשְׁמַרְנָה	אַתֶּן	you (f. pl.)
יִשְׁמְרוּ	הֵם	they (m.)
תִּשְׁמַרְנָה	הֵנָּה	they (f)

### Three things help distinguish the conjugation of the imperfect from the perfect:

1. The vowel pattern (יִשְׁמַר rather than שְׁמַר)
2. The use of prefixes as well as suffixes
3. Distinction between masculine and feminine in the third person plural

### A few other things of note:

1. As with perfects, suffixes that begin with a vowel draw the accent to themselves. Therefore, the second person feminine singular (תִּשְׁמְרִי), second person masculine plural (תִּשְׁמְרוּ), and third person masculine plural (יִשְׁמְרוּ) all have vowel reduction in the second syllable.
2. The suffix נָה does not draw the accent, and thus the second and third person feminine plural (both תִּשְׁמַרְנָה) are accented on the second syllable.

Other imperfect vowel patterns:

ישלח

Verbs with a guttural second or third consonant will have a patach as the second stem vowel. (Stative verbs, which express a state of being, [like קטן, to be small] also often use this vowel pattern, and often have unusual vowel patterns in the perfect as well.)

אֲשַׁלַּח	אֲנִי	I
תִּשְׁלַח	אַתָּה	you (m. sg.)
תִּשְׁלַחִי	אַתְּ	you (f. sg.)
יִשְׁלַח	הוא	he
תִּשְׁלַח	היא	she
נִשְׁלַח	אֲנַחְנוּ	we
תִּשְׁלַחוּ	אַתֶּם	you (m. pl.)
תִּשְׁלַחְנָה	אַתֶּן	you (f. pl.)
יִשְׁלַחוּ	הֵם	they (m.)
תִּשְׁלַחְנָה	הֵנָּה	they (f)

## יִקְרָא

Verbs that have an **א** as the third consonant will have a kamatz as the second stem vowel.

אֶקְרָא	אֲנִי	I
תִּקְרָא	אַתָּה	you (m. sg.)
תִּקְרָאִי	אַתְּ	you (f. sg.)
יִקְרָא	הוא	he
תִּקְרָא	היא	she
נִקְרָא	אֲנַחְנוּ	we
תִּקְרָאוּ	אַתֶּם	you (m. pl.)
תִּקְרָאנָה	אַתֶּן	you (f. pl.)
יִקְרָאוּ	הֵם	they (m.)
תִּקְרָאנָה	הֵנָּה	they (f)

Note the somewhat unusual vowels in the second and third person feminine plural.

### Uses of the Imperfect

There are three broad categories of uses for the imperfect:

The simple future

*He will rule*  
*They will go*  
*She will write*

Repeated or habitual actions

*He always writes*  
*She goes to the store every day*  
*He reads the same book over and over again*

Actions that are in some way contingent. This includes actions that are dependent on or are a response to some other action, and expressions of a wish or desire. This type of imperfect is also

used after interrogative pronouns or adverbs (who, what, why, how, etc.), and with particles expressing conditionality (if, though, perhaps) or purpose (in order that, for, because, lest). Often this use of the imperfect is translated with auxiliary verbs like can, could, should, would, must, may.

*He should do his laundry more often*

*I wish you would clean the kitchen*

*Let us go to the store*

*Why are you dunking the cat in the toilet?*

*Stop dunking the cat in the toilet, lest I smite you*

*Perhaps when the cat bites you, you will stop dunking her in the toilet*

*Who told you to dunk the cat in the toilet?*