

## PRESENT TENSE (SADAŠNJE VREME)

Before teaching you how to inflect (or 'conjugate') present tense of regular verbs, below I give a paradigm for present tense of the verb **biti** 'to be'. Like in English, this verb is irregular, hence, you have to memorize it.

### I Present tense of Irregular Verbs

**Table 1: PRESENT TENSE OF THE VERB BITI 'TO BE' – FULL OR LONG FORM**

Person	<b>biti</b> 'to be' present tense	Examples		
Ja (I)	<b>jesam</b> (am)	Ja jesam dobro. (I am well.)		
Ti (you)	<b>jesi</b> (are)	Ti jesi dobro. (You are well.)		
On/ona/ono (he/she/it)	<b>jeste</b> (is)	On jeste dobro. (He is well.)	Ona jeste dobro. (She is well)	Ono jeste dobro. (It is well)
Mi (we)	<b>jesmo</b> (are)	Mi jesmo dobro. (We are well.)		
Vi (you)	<b>jeste</b> (are)	Vi jeste dobro. (You are well.)		
Oni/one/ona (they)	<b>jesu</b> (are)	Oni jesu dobro. (They are well (for males))	One jesu dobro. (They are well – (for females))	Ona jesu dobro. (They are well (for neuter gender))

The present tense forms of **biti** in the above table are called full or long forms. In Serbian, these full present tense forms of **biti** are used only for purposes of emphasis. In a normal conversation, one would use '**clitic**' or 'short' or 'truncated' forms of **biti**. So, you are to use only the short forms of **biti**, as shown in Table 2 below.

You can see what I mean by seeing the corresponding English translation of the Serbian sentences in Table 2 below. So in a way, clitics are found in English too, as in: **I'm**, where '**m**' is a shortened form of **am**; or in **haven't** which stands for **have not**; or if you speak in Texas vernacular, you can say **y'll** for **you all**.

**Table 2: PRESENT TENSE OF THE VERB BITI 'TO BE' – CLITIC OR SHORT FORM**

Person	' <b>jesam</b> '	Examples		
Ja (I)	<b>sam</b> (am)	Ja sam dobro. (I'm well.)		
Ti (you)	<b>si</b> (are)	Ti si dobro. (You're well.)		
On/ona/ono (he/she/it)	<b>je</b> (is)	On je dobro. (He's well.)	Ona je dobro. (She's well)	Ono je dobro. (It's well)
Mi (we)	<b>smo</b> (are)	Mi smo dobro. (We're well.)		
Vi (you)	<b>ste</b> (are)	Vi ste dobro. (You're well.)		
Oni/one/ona (they)	<b>su</b> (are)	Oni su dobro. (They're well (for males))	One su dobro. (They're well – (for females))	Ona su dobro. (They're well (for neuter gender))

## II Present Tense of Regular Verbs

### Steps:

1. You need to know infinitive (or dictionary) verb forms.  
Infinitives end in: **-ti**, **-ći**, or **-sti** (as in **raditi** 'to work,' **peći** 'to bake,' **jesti** 'to eat').
2. Take out the above infinitive endings and what's left becomes an infinitive stem, or base form. For example, infinitives: **raditi**, **peći**, have the corresponding infinitive stems: **radi-**, **pek-**
3. Now to make the present tense, you add the present tense endings shown in Table 3 and Table 4 to the base stem (of step 2).
4. **For irregular verbs (and they are many) you need to know what the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural present tense form looks like** and that becomes your present tense stem. So, you need to memorize those. Soon, I'll compile a list of these irregular verbs. But for now, just remember what the general rule is (steps 1-3) and you are ready to go.

**Table 3: GENERAL PRESENT TENSE ENDINGS**

(For specific endings, see Table 5)

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
First person	<b>-m</b>	<b>-mo</b>
Second person	<b>-š</b>	<b>-te</b>
Third person	<b>--</b>	<b>-e/-ju/-u*</b>

As I said above, Table 3 gives the 'general' present tense endings. Table 4 gives the specific endings (in bold-face) arranged according to the conjugation class, i.e. the group in which a certain verb falls. This idea is analogous to declination classes for nouns.

**Table 4: THREE VERB CONJUGATION CLASSES – PRESENT TENSE FORMS**

	I: <b>-im</b> verbs	II: <b>-am</b> verbs	III: <b>-(j)em</b> verbs	
Person	<b>Raditi</b> (to work)	<b>Pitati</b> (to ask)	<b>Pisati</b> (to write)	<b>Peći</b> (to bake)
Ja (I)	Rad- <b>im</b> (work)	Pit- <b>am</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>em</b> (write)	Peč- <b>em</b> (bake)
Ti (you)	Radi- <b>iš</b> (work)	Pit- <b>aš</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>eš</b> (write)	Peč- <b>eš</b> (bake)
On/ona/ono (he/she/it)	Rad- <b>i</b> (work)	Pit- <b>a</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>e</b> (write)	Peč- <b>e</b> (bake)
Mi (we)	Rad- <b>imo</b> (work)	Pit- <b>amo</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>emo</b> (write)	Peč- <b>emo</b> (bake)
Vi (you)	Rad- <b>ite</b> (work)	Pit- <b>ate</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>ete</b> (write)	Peč- <b>ete</b> (bake)
Oni/one/ona (they)	Rad- <b>e</b> (work)	Pit- <b>aju</b> (ask)	Piš- <b>u</b> (write)	Pek- <b>u</b> (bake)

There are two most frequently used verbs that have an **irregular present tense stem** as well **irregular present tense conjugation for the first person singular** (the endings are given in boldface). These are verbs **hteti** 'want' and **moći** 'can'. Their paradigm is given below.

**Table 5: PRESENT TENSE OF  
HTETI 'WANT' AND MOĆI 'CAN'**

Person	'hteti'	'moći'
Ja (I)	<b>Hoć-u</b> (want)	<b>Mog-u</b> (can)
Ti (you)	<b>Hoć-eš</b> (want)	<b>Mož-eš</b> (can)
On/ona/ono (he/she/it)	<b>Hoć-e</b> (want)	<b>Mož-e</b> (can)
Mi (we)	<b>Hoć-emo</b> (want)	<b>Mož-emo</b> (can)
Vi (you)	<b>Hoć-ete</b> (want)	<b>Mož-ete</b> (can)
Oni/one/ona (they)	<b>Hoć-e</b> (want)	<b>Mog-u</b> (can)