



Introduction to Verbs

M&R §§87–89, 127, 195–205

ENG240Y Old English / Mon 27 Sep 2010

Verb classes

- Strong: form their preterites and past participles using vowel gradation:
singan > sang > sungon > sungen
- Weak: form their preterites and past participles by adding a dental suffix *d/t*:
lāeran > lāerde > lāerdon > lāered
- Anomalous: do not answer to these categories, or combine them

All verb classes commonly prefix the past ptc. with *ge-*
gesungen, gelāered

Conjugation

- Person: first, second, third
- Number: singular, plural
- Tense: present, preterite
- Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative

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ic fremme

wē fremmað

þū fremest

gē fremmað

hē fremeð

hīe fremmað

Cf. early Modern English 'I do, thou dost, he doth'

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ic singe

wē singađ

þū singest

gē singađ

hē singeđ

hīe singađ

ic sang

wē sungon

þū sunge

gē sungon

hē sang

hīe sungon

Tense

- OE present : MnE present, future (simple/continuous)
- OE preterite: MnE past, present perfect, past perfect (simple/continuous)
- resolved tenses: *habban/bēon*/modal + participle/infinitive
 - ic fremme
 - ic fremede
 - ic hæbbe gefremed
 - ic hæfde gefremed
 - þæt wæs gefremed
 - hē sceal fremman
 - is fela tō fremmenne

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- **Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative**
 - Hēo fremep þæt
 - Ic wille, þæt hēo fremme þæt (cf. ‘that she do that’)
 - Ic wille, þæt wē fremmen þæt
 - Ic wolde, þæt hēo fremede þæt
 - Ic wolde, þæt wē fremeden þæt
 - Freme þæt!
 - Fremmap þæt!

Voice

- NB: no *inflectional* passive, and hence no voice.

Passivity can still be expressed:

- through *bēon* or *wēorðan* + past participle:

Hē wēarð ācenned

Se cāsere wæs ofslagen

- through impersonal *man* with an active verb:

Man brohte his hēafod on ānum disce

Man gehalgode twēgen biscopas

(cf. German *man* and, more distantly, MnE *one*)

- NB the verb *hātan* can be used as a true passive verb:

Saga hwæt ic hātte

(cf. Sum consul Boetius wæs hāten, *formed with bēon*)

bēon

- originally three verbs: *bēon*, **es-*, *wesan*
- two common conjugations of the present: *eom*, *bēo*

<i>present ind. 1</i>	<i>present ind. 2</i>	<i>present subj. 1</i>	<i>present subj. 2</i>
ic eom	ic bēo	ic sīe	ic bēo
þū eart	þū bist	wē sīen	wē bēon
hē is	hē biþ		
wē sind	wē bēoþ		
<i>preterite ind.</i>	<i>preterite subj.</i>	<i>imperative 1</i>	<i>imperative 2</i>
ic wæs	ic wære	wes	bēo
þū wære	wē wæren	wesap	bēoþ
hē wæs			
wē wæron			