

The verb *bí* (*be*) is the most irregular verb in Irish, but also the most used. The verbal noun for *bí* is *beith*. Other forms are given on the following pages.

modh ordaitheach	imperative mood	negative command
bím	may I be	ná bím
bí	(you) be	ná bí
bíodh sé	let him be	ná bíodh sé
bíodh sí	let her be	ná bíodh sí
bímis	let's be	ná bímis
bígí	(y'all) be	ná bigí
bíodh siad	let them be	ná bíodh siad
bítear	let one be	ná bítear

aimsir chaite	past tense	negative statement	positive question	negative question
bhí mé	I was	ní raibh mé	an raibh mé	nach raibh mé
bhí tú	you were	ní raibh tú	an raibh tú	nach raibh tú
bhí sé	he was	ní raibh sé	an raibh sé	nach raibh sé
bhí sí	she was	ní raibh sí	an raibh sí	nach raibh sí
bhíomar	we were	ní rabhamar	an rabhamar	nach rabhamar
bhí sibh	y'all were	ní raibh sibh	an raibh sibh	nach raibh sibh
bhí siad	they were	ní raibh siad	an raibh siad	nach raibh siad
bhíothas	one was	ní rabhthas	an rabhthas	nach rabhthas

aimsir láithreach	present tense	negative statement	positive question	negative question
táim	I am	nílím	an bhfuilím	nach bhfuilím
tá tú	you are	níl tú	an bhfuil tú	nach bhfuil tú
tá sé	he is	níl sé	an bhfuil sé	nach bhfuil sé
tá sí	she is	níl sí	an bhfuil sí	nach bhfuil sí
táimid	we are	nílímíd	an bhfuilímíd	nach bhfuilímíd
tá sibh	y'all are	níl sibh	an bhfuil sibh	nach bhfuil sibh
tá siad	they are	níl siad	an bhfuil siad	nach bhfuil siad
táthar	one is	níltear	an bhfuiltear	nach bhfuiltear

aimsir ghnáthláithreach	present habitual tense	negative statement	positive question	negative question
bím	I do be	ní bhím	an mbím	nach mbím
bíonn tú	you do be	ní bhíonn tú	an mbíonn tú	nach mbíonn tú
bíonn sé	he does be	ní bhíonn sé	an mbíonn sé	nach mbíonn sé
bíonn sí	she does be	ní bhíonn sí	an mbíonn sí	nach mbíonn sí
bíimid	we do be	ní bhímíd	an mbímíd	nach mbímíd
bíonn sibh	y'all do be	ní bhíonn sibh	an mbíonn sibh	nach mbíonn sibh
bíonn siad	they do be	ní bhíonn siad	an mbíonn siad	nach mbíonn siad
bítear	one does be	ní bhítear	an mbítear	nach mbítear

aimsir fháistineach	future tense	negative statement	positive question	negative question
beidh mé beidh tú beidh sé beidh sí beimid beidh sibh beidh siad beifear	I will be you will be he will be she will be we will be y'all will be they will be one will be	ní bheidh mé ní bheidh tú ní bheidh sé ní bheidh sí ní bheimid ní bheidh sibh ní bheidh siad ní bheifear	an mbeidh mé an mbeidh tú an mbeidh sé an mbeidh sí an mbeimid an mbeidh sibh an mbeidh siad an mbeifear	nach mbeidh mé nach mbeidh tú nach mbeidh sé nach mbeidh sí nach mbeimid nach mbeidh sibh nach mbeidh siad nach mbeifear

aimsir ghnáthchaite	past habitual tense	negative statement	positive question	negative question
bhínn bhíteá bhíodh sé bhíodh sí bhímis bhíodh sibh bhídís bhítí	I used to be you used to be he used to be she used to be we used to be y'all used to be they used to be one used to be	ní bhínn ní bhíteá ní bhíodh sé ní bhíodh sí ní bhímis ní bhíodh sibh ní bhídís ní bhítí	an mbínn an mbíteá an mbíodh sé an mbíodh sí an mbímis an mbíodh sibh an mbídís an mbítí	nach mbínn nach mbíteá nach mbíodh sé nach mbíodh sí nach mbímis nach mbíodh sibh nach mbídís nach mbítí

modh coinníolach	conditional mood	negative statement	positive question	negative question
bheinn bheifeá bheadh sé bheadh sí bheimis bheadh sibh bheidís bheifí	I would be you would be he would be she would be we would be y'all would be they would be one would be	ní bheinn ní bheifeá ní bheadh sé ní bheadh sí ní bheimis ní bheadh sibh ní bheidís ní bheifí	an mbeinn an mbeifeá an mbeadh sé an mbeadh sí an mbeimis an mbeadh sibh an mbeidís an mbeifí	nach mbeinn nach mbeifeá nach mbeadh sé nach mbeadh sí nach mbeimis nach mbeadh sibh nach mbeidís nach mbeifí

modh foshuiteach láithreach	present subjunctive	negative statement
go raibh mé go raibh tú go raibh sé go raibh sí go rabhaimid go raibh sibh go raibh siad go rabhtar	may I be may you be may he be may she be may we be may y'all be may they be may one be	ná raibh mé ná raibh tú ná raibh sé ná raibh sí ná rabhaimid ná raibh sibh ná raibh siad ná rabhtar

Bí is used to describe how someone or something is or what they are like.

Táim go maith.

Tá sé an-láidir.

Tá an buachaill ró-bheag.

I'm well.

He is very strong.

The boy is too small.

Bí is used to describe where something is.

Tá an cailín sa ghairdín.

Tá sé sa chistin.

The girl is in the garden.

It's in the kitchen.

Bí is used with *sé* (*he, it*) to describe the weather.

Tá sé go breá.

Tá sé dorchá.

It's fine (weather).

It's dark.

Besides its basic uses to describe what something is like or where it is, *bí* is used in many Irish expressions and idioms.

Bí is used with *ag* (*at*) to express the idea of having. Something is at the person who has it.

Tá carr nua aige.

Tá dhá mhadra ag Seán.

He has a new car.

John has two dogs.

The combination of *bí* and *ag* is also used to express ability in something (you have the thing you have the ability in).

Tá Gaeilge mhaith aige.

Tá snámh ag an bpáiste.

He knows Irish well.

The child can swim.

Bí is used with *ag* and a verbal noun to express the idea of ongoing action (continuous tenses).

Tá Máire ag cócaireacht sa chistin.

Tá an madra ag tafann.

Mary is cooking in the kitchen.

The dog is barking.

Bí is used with *ar* (*on*) to describe feelings. The feeling is on the person feeling it.

Tá ocras orm.

Tá eagla air roimh an madra.

I'm hungry.

He's afraid of the dog.

Bí is also used with *ar* (*on*) to express obligation. The obligation is on the person who has to do it.

Tá orm fanacht sa bhaile.

Tá ar Sheán carr nua a cheanach.

I have to stay at home.

John has to buy a new car.

Bí is used with *faoi* (*under, about*) to describe intentions. The intention is under the person planning it.

Tá fúm dul abhaile go luath.
Tá faoi Mháire é a dhíol.

I intend to go home early.
Mary intends to sell it.

Bí is used with *ó* (*from*) to express the idea of wanting or needing something. Something is from the person wanting it.

Tá teach nua uainn.
Tá gloine bainne ón bpáiste.

We need a new house.
The child wants a glass of milk.

Bí is used with *i* (*in*) and a possessive pronoun to describe what something is. You are in your occupation.

Táim i mo mhúinteoir.
Tá Máire ina hinnealtóir.

I'm a teacher.
Mary is an engineer.

Of course, most of these expressions can be used as positive or negatives statements, positive or negative questions and can appear in any of the tenses and moods we have studied so far.

An bhfuil sé go maith?

Is he well?

Bhí sé an-láidir.

He was very strong.

Ní raibh an cailín sa ghairdín.

The girl wasn't in the garden.

Bíonn sé fuar san oíche.

It's cold at night.

An mbeidh carr nua aige?

Will he have a new car?

An bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith aige?

Does he know Irish well?

Bhíodh Máire ag cócaireacht sa chistin.

Mary would be cooking in the kitchen.

Nach bhfuil ocras ort?

Aren't you hungry?

Bheadh orm fanacht sa bhaile.

I would have to stay at home.

Bhí fúm dul abhaile go luath.

I intended to go home early.

Nach raibh teach nua uaibh?

Didn't you want a new house?

Bhí sí ina múinteoir.

She was a teacher.

Is mise Labhrás Ó Drisceoil. Tá mé i mo chónaí cúpla míle taobh amuigh de Mhala i gCo. Chorcaí. Rugadh agus tógadh ar fheirm m’athar mé. Is dúiche álainn í. Is aoibhinn liom saol na tuaithe in Éirinn. Bíonn cuma álainn ar an dúiche mórthimpeall go háirithe san earrach agus san fhómhair. Bíonn an t-aer úr agus folláin i gcónaí faoin tuath. Tá abhainn bheag ag sileadh láimh le mo theach chónaithe. Caithim uair nó dhó ag iascaireacht inti ó am go chéile. Tá loch mór leathmhíle ón teach agus téim amach ag bádóireacht air sa samhradh. Tá mo scoil féin i Mala. Téim ann ar an mbus scoile. Is baile measartha mór é Mala. Tá na háiseanna ar fad ann. Is féidir le duine aon rud a bhíonn ag teastáil uaidh a fháil ann. Mar sin is annamh a bhíonn orm dul go dtí cathair Chorcaí. Tá súil agam fanacht anseo agus dul le feirmeoireacht nuair a bheidh mé réidh leis an scoil.	I am Labhrás Ó Drisceoil. I live a few miles outside of Mallow in Co. Cork. I was born and raised on my father’s farm. It’s a beautiful area. I love country life in Ireland. The surrounding area is beautiful, especially in the Spring and Fall. The air is always fresh and healthy in the country. There is a small river trickling next to my house. I spend an hour or two fishing in it from time to time. There’s a large lake a half mile from the house and I go out canoeing on it in the summer. My school itself is in Mallow. I go there on the schoolbus. Mallow is a moderately large town. All the amenities are there. A person can find any thing they need there. Therefore it is rare that I have to go to Cork city. I hope to stay here and do farming when I’m done with school.
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is – is mise – I (emphatic) mé – I Labhrás Ó Drisceoil tá – is bí – be! i – in mo – my (lenites) cónaí – living cúpla – a few míle – mile taobh amuigh – outside taobh – side amuigh – outside de – of Mala Co. Chorcaí – Co. Cork contae – county Córcaí – of Cork Córcaigh – Cork rugadh – was born beir – bare!, catch! agus – and tógadh – was raised tóg – build!, take! ar – on feirm – farm athar – of father athair – father dúiche – region, area álainn – beautiful	í – she, it, her aoibhinn – delightful liom – with me le – with saol – life na – of the tuaithe – of countryside tuath – countryside in – in Éirinn – Ireland (dative) Éire – Ireland bíonn – does be cuma – appearance mórthimpeall – around go háirithe – especially san – in the earrach – spring fómhair – fall aer – air úr – fresh folláin – healthy i gcónaí – always faoin tuath – in the countryside faoin – under the faoi – under beag – small ag sileadh – trickling sil – trickle! láimh le – next to lámh – hand	teach chónaithe – house teach – house caithim – I spend caith – spend! uair – hour nó – or dó – two ag iascaireacht – fishing iascaire – fisherman iasc – fish intí – in it, in her ó am go chéile – from time to time ó – from am – time go – to céile – partner loch – lake mór – big leathmhíle – half mile leath- – half míle – mile ón – from the teach – house agus – and téim – I go téigh – go! amach – out ag bádóireacht – boating air – on it ar – on	sa – in the samhradh – summer mo – my scoil – school féin – own, self Mala – Mallow ann – there bus scoile – school bus bus – bus scoile – of school baile – town measartha – somewhat é – he, it áiseanna – amenities áis – amenity ar fad – all is féidir – is possible le – with duine – person aon – any, one rud – thing a bhíonn – that does be ag teastáil – wanting uaidh – from him a fháil – to get fáigh – get! mar sin – therefore mar – like sin – that annamh – rare orm – on me	dul – to go téigh – go! go dtí – to cathair – city Chorcaí – of Cork Corcaigh – Cork tá súil agam – I hope súil – eye agam – at me fanacht – to stay fan – stay!, wait! anseo – here dul – to go le – with feirmeoireacht – farming feirmeoir – farmer nuair a – when beidh – will be mé – I réidh le – done with réidh – ready leis an – with the scoil – school
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The copula, *is*, is used to specify what something is and also shows up in many Irish expressions and idioms. Like *bí*, *is* is used very frequently in Irish. The copula does not change for different persons, and is only used in the present tense, past tense, conditional mood and present subjunctive forms. The past tense and conditional mood forms are the same, and the subjunctive forms are rarely used.

The present tense forms for statements, negative statements and questions are illustrated below. For the most part, these do not affect following words (except *ní* prefixes an *h* to words starting with a vowel).

Is múinteoir mé.	I am a teacher.
Ní múinteoir mé.	I am not a teacher.
An múinteoir thú?	Are you a teacher?
Nach múinteoir thú?	Aren't you a teacher?

The past and conditional forms are illustrated below. All of these forms lenite the following word.

Ba mhúinteoir mé.	I was a teacher.
Níor mhúinteoir mé.	I was not a teacher.
Ar mhúinteoir thú?	Were you a teacher?
Nár mhúinteoir thú?	Weren't you a teacher?

Special expressions are used to answer yes/no questions about what someone or something is.

An múinteoir thú?	Are you a teacher?
Is ea / 'Sea / Sea.	Yes (is so).
Ní hea .	No (is not so).
Ar mhúinteoir thú?	Were you a teacher?
Ba ea .	Yes (was so).
Níorbh ea .	No (was not so).

Different questions and answers are used when asking if someone is a specific thing.

An tú an múinteoir?	Are you the teacher?
Is mé .	Yes (it is I).
Ní mé .	No (it is not I).
Ar tú an múinteoir?	Were you the teacher?
Ba mé .	Yes (it was I).
Níor mé .	No (it was not I).

A different set of pronouns is used with the various forms of *is*.

I	mé	we	muid
you	tú / thú	y'all	sibh
he	é	they	iad
she	í		

The copula in the present tense followed by a noun or adjective and the preposition *le* (*with*) is used to express likes and dislikes. Answers to questions about likes and dislikes include a form of *is* followed by the noun or adjective used in the question.

Is maith liom cáis.	I like cheese (is good with me).
Is breá liom caife.	I love coffee (is great with me).
Is cuma liom tae.	I don't care about tea.
Is fearr liom bainne.	I prefer milk (is better with me).
Is aoibhinn liom sicín.	I love chicken (is delightful with me).
Is fuath liom beoir.	I hate beer (is hatred with me).
An maith leat tae?	Do you like tea?
Is maith.	Yes (is good).
Ní maith.	No (is not good).

The copula in the conditional mood followed by a noun or adjective and the preposition *le* (*with*) is used to say what one would or would not like.

Ba mhaith liom cáis.	I would like some cheese (would be good with me).
Ba bhreá liom caife.	I would love some coffee (would be great with me).
B'fhearr liom bainne.	I would prefer some milk (would be better with me).
Ar mhaith leat tae?	Would you like some tea?
Ba mhaith.	Yes (would be good).
Níor mhaith.	No (would not be good).

The copula with *le* is used to express ownership.

Is liomsa é.	It's mine.
An leatsa an carr?	Is the car yours?
Is liom.	Yes (is with me).
Ní liom.	No (is not with me).

A few expressions use *do* (*to, for*) instead of *le*.

Is mithid duit dul abhaile.	It's time for you to go home.
Is maith duit é a ithe.	It's good for you to eat it.
Is fiú duit é a cheannach.	It's worthwhile for you to buy it.
Is fíor duit.	You're right (is true for you).
Is cuma duit é.	It's none of your business.