

## Tense & Aspect

Tense suffixes on verbs give information about the time of the event (past and future) in Ichishkíin. Aspect markers indicate how the event takes place in time (such as over a period of time or at regular intervals). The basic set of suffixes is past, future, ongoing and habitual, as seen in the example below:

<i>ixásunatyá</i>	's/he rode along' (past)
<i>ixásunatítá</i>	's/he will ride along, she is going to ride along' (future)
<i>ixásunatishá</i>	's/he is riding along' (ongoing)
<i>ixásunatíxá</i>	's/he rides along' (habitual)

## Aspect

### Continuous (imperfective) aspect

The suffix *-sha* indicates ongoing or continuous action. It is often compared to and translated by the English continuous with '*-ing*'.

<i>ináxtishá</i>	's/he/it is crying'
<i>i'ayíkshá</i>	's/he/it is sitting'

The suffix *-sha* is also used with verbs that express a state of being rather than an action. In this case, the *-sha* suffix indicates present tense and that the state is lasting or ongoing.

<i>Aw pa'anáwíshá</i>	'They are hungry'
<i>iwaníkshá Láacha</i>	'he is named /his name is Láacha.'

### Irregular

There is an exception to this. The verb *wa-* 'be' does not take the ending *-sha* in the present tense, but it nonetheless expresses an ongoing state.

<i>iwá wat'uymá</i>	's/he is the oldest'	<i>iwá amáay</i>	's/he/it is hidden'
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### Habitual Aspect

The habitual suffix *-xa* indicates that the action expressed by the verb is done habitually, usually or regularly over a period of time.

<i>pyaxí ayáyat ilatíxa</i>	'Pyaxí blooms beautifully'
<i>ku nwím nwím pápawyak ukxa</i>	'and every year they gather together'
<i>panp'íwixá Nch'iwánapa</i>	'They fish at the Columbia River.'

### Variants of *-xa*:

- *nxa* is used with some verb stems that end in a consonant
- *nxa* is used with some stems that end in a vowel.

The verb stem determines whether *-xa*, *-nxa* or *-nxa* is used. This is similar to the variation in past tense suffixes. From a language learning perspective, it seems best for students to learn the correct form of the habitual as they learn the verbs.

A consistent rule is that a verb stem ending in *x* will use *-nxa* for habitual:

*awtash awkú papatanawíix nxa* ‘And then we argue about it’

Many verb stems ending in velar or uvular consonants (the front and back *k* series) take the form *-nxa*, however, this is not entirely consistent:

*ku pa'anwík nxana* ‘and they would spend the winter there’

*Áyatma máyts isim paxwyákxa* ‘The women sweat only in the morning’

There are also pairs of examples in which the two suffixes *-nxa* and *-xa* are used on the same verb in the same construction by the same speaker:

*anakw nk pawaník nxa “Blue Mountains”* ‘the ones they call ‘Blue Mountains’’

*anakw nk pawaníkxa Taptíil* ‘the one they call ‘Taptíil’’

If the verb ends in a vowel, the habitual suffix will be either *-xa* or *-nxa*. This depends on the final vowel of the verb as well as whether the verb is historically an *n-stem* verb. Verbs ending in *i* that are *zero-stem* verbs, as well as all verbs ending in *a* or *aa* take the habitual form *-xa*.

*iwáwyaxa myánashmaman* ‘he whips the children’

*pa'aníxa wapsíkiki* ‘they make them of string’

For *n-stem* verbs ending in *i*, *ii* and *u*, *uu* the suffix *-nxa* is used, although again, there are exceptions.

*chaw mish papxwínxa kunkínk* ‘they don’t think anything of that’ (they usually ignore it)

*kwaat nash pnúnxa* ‘I sleep soundly’

## Tense

### Future Tense

The suffix expressing future is *-ta*. Its form does not change.

*itúxta* 's/he will return'  
*i'anáwita* 's/he will be hungry'

### Past Tense

Past tense is a bit tricky in Ichishkín but which suffix should be used is often predictable depending on the final sound of the verb stem:

If the verb ends in *a*, *u*, long *ii* or a diphthong the past tense is almost always *-na*:

*ishúkwaana* 's/he knew'      *isápsikw ana* 's/he taught'

If the verb ends in a consonant, the past tense is usually *-a*:

*iwalptáyka* 's/he sang'      *it úpa* 's/he jumped'

But if the verb ends in a consonant *and* is an **n-verb**, the past tense will be *-na*:

*iyíkna* 's/he heard'  
*ikútkutna* 's/he worked'

An **n-verb** ending in *-i* also has past tense *-na*.

*ip' shkwína* 's/he smiled'  
*ihulína* 'it was windy; it blew'

A **zero-verb** ending in *i* (short *i*) has past tense suffix *-ya*.

\*\*In that case, a final unstressed *i* deletes, because of the following glide (*wisaláti-* is the verb root).

*iwisalátya* 's/he hunted'

### Irregular Past Tense

The verbs *wa-* 'be' and *nuu-* 'say' have irregular past tenses. For both of these verbs, the past tense ending is *-cha*.<sup>1</sup> In the case of *wachá*, the final syllable is stressed.

*iwachá k'p s*  
 'it was cold'

<sup>1</sup> Rigsby and Rude 1996 refer to Nez Perce correspondences and analyze the past tense form of the copula as *wáč-á*, with *wáč-* an allomorph of *wa-* and *-á* the past tense marker (1996: 688). In their analysis, the past tense is regular, but it does not explain why we see the same pattern for *nuu* 'say' or the stress shift.

However, with root *nuu-* the suffix does not take the stress.

*inúucha* ‘Ay, xay!’

‘he said, ‘hello, friend!’’

Language learners may do best to learn the full irregular forms *iwachá* ‘s/he, it was’ and *inúucha* ‘s/he, it said’ as unanalyzable chunks rather than breaking the words into pieces.

### Combined tense and aspect markers

Aspect and tense markers can combine to give meanings such as give ‘past habitual’ and ‘future on-going’. There are four combined tense and aspect markers: *-shana*, *-shata*, *-xana*, *-xata*.

*ixásunatishana* ‘s/he was riding along’

*ixásunatixana* ‘s/he used to ride along’

*ixásunatishata* ‘s/he will be riding along’

*ixásunatixata* ‘s/he will be regularly or habitually riding along’

These four combined markers are the only possible combinations of the tense and aspect suffixes. The order does not vary: the aspect markers directly follow the verb, and are followed by the tense markers. The two aspect markers never co-occur and the two tense markers never co-occur.

**Past tense** forms *-shana* and *-xana* are most common.

*Chaw íxwi itsts úupshana puuy* ‘The snow was not yet melting’

*kútash winaníxana* ‘And we used to swim’

**Future forms** are *-shata* and *-xata*.

*iwyákwshtikshata* ‘he will be doing wrong’

*ku paníchxata tkwátat* ‘and they will store up food’