

17 Minute Languages: Serbian Grammar at a Glance!

The Serbian language

Serbian is part of the language family of **Slavic languages**.

More than **300 million people** worldwide speak a Slavic language as their mother tongue.

Often speakers of different Slavic languages can (more or less) understand each other.

For example: Up to the breakup of former Yugoslavia, Serbian was one part of the “Serbo-Croatian language”.

Until now speakers of Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian can easily communicate with each other in their native languages – and understand each other without greater problems.

Of course, from time to time one of them would need to clarify some specific vocabulary.

But, if you start out learning Serbian, you will have no difficulties in diving into Croatian or Bosnian afterwards.

Let's start our journey with learning our first words
– in six different Slavic languages!

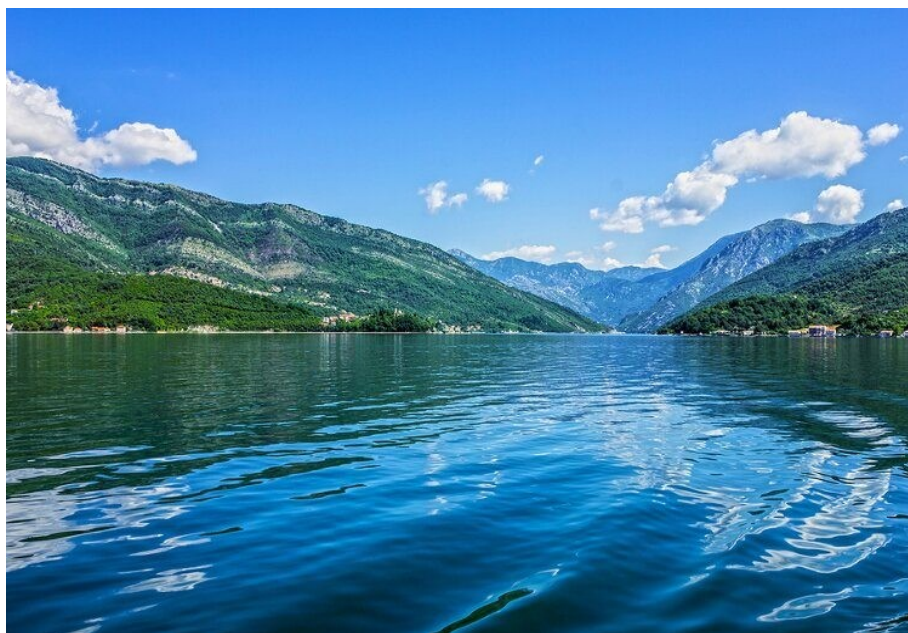


Comparison of some Slavic languages

English	Czech	Polish	Bulgarian	Russian	Croatian	Serbian
sister	sestra	siostra	sestrā	sestrā	sestra	sestra
day	den	dzień	den	den`	dan	dan
mother	matka	matka	majka	mat`	majka	majka
fish	ryba	ryba	riba	ryba	riba	riba

Did you realize how similar the words are?
Well, of course, we picked words that are pretty similar in the six languages
...

And please, be aware that Russian and Serbian are written in **Cyrillic** – but we provided the entries in the Latin script for better comparison.
Therefore the next chapter will teach you the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet.



The Serbian Cyrillic alphabet

Everybody who wants to learn Serbian must deal with a new script. Serbian is written in both, the Latin and Cyrillic alphabet. In the constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Cyrillic alphabet has been stated as the standard script since 2006. But in reality, all Serbs know both alphabets and all sorts of texts are written in either the one or the other script.

But do not fear!
Learning the Cyrillic script is not difficult at all.
For example, there are some letters that are very similar to those in the Latin alphabet.

Letters that are similar or even identical in the Cyrillic and Latin alphabet

Cyrillic script	Latin script	pronounced as...
A / а	A / a	[a]
E / е	E / e	open [ɛ]
J / ј	J / j	short, not stressed [i]
K / к	K / k	[k]
M / м	M / m	[m]
O / о	O / o	open [ɔ]
T / т	T / t	[t]

Excellent!

You have already learned the first seven letters!

Now you have to pay close attention:

In the next table we will show you the Cyrillic letters, which look very similar to letters from the Latin alphabet – but are pronounced completely different.

Please, watch out! These letters resemble letters from the Latin alphabet – but they are pronounced completely different!		
Cyrillic alphabet	Latin alphabet	pronounced as ...
B / В	V / v	[w]
H / Н	N / n	[n]
P / p	R / r	[r]
C / c	S / s	[s]
Y / y	U / u	[u]
X / x	H / h	aspirated [x]

You already got to know some Cyrillic letters.

It's time to learn the [Cyrillic alphabet for the Serbian language](#) in a big overview.

The Serbian Cyrillic alphabet

After you have already learned some letters in Cyrillic, we will now show you the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet in a large overview.

The Serbian Cyrillic alphabet			
Capital letter	Lower case letter	Latin script	Pronunciation
А	а	A / a	[a]
Б	б	B / b	[b]
В	в	V / v	[w]
Г	г	G / g	[g]
Д	д	D / d	[d]
Ђ	ђ	Đ / đ	[dʒ]
Е	е	E / e	[ɛ]
Ж	ж	Ž / ž	[ʒ]*
З	з	Z / z	[z]
И	и	I / i	[i]
Ј	ј	J / j	[j]
К	к	K / k	[k]
Л	л	L / l	[l]
Љ	љ	Lj / lj	[ʎ]
М	м	M / m	[m]

H	н	N / n	[n]
Њ	њ	Ñj / ñj	[ɲ]
O	o	O / o	[ɔ]
П	п	P / p	[p]
Р	р	R / r	[r]
С	с	S / s	[s]
Т	т	T / t	[t]
Ћ	ћ	Ć / ć	[tɕ]
У	у	U / u	[u]
Ф	ф	F / f	[f]
X	x	H / h	[x]
Ц	ц	C / c	[z]
Ч	ч	Č / č	[tʃ]
Џ	џ	Dž / dž	[dʒ]
Ш	ш	Š / š	[ʃ]

You do not know these letters yet:

In Serbian there are some letters – even in the Latin alphabet – that you as a native English speaker do not know yet.

We will show you these in an extra table here.

Serbian letters you (probably) don't know yet			
Capital letter	Lower case letter	Latin script	Pronunciation
Ђ	ђ	Đ / đ	[dz]
Ж	ж	Ž / ž	[ʒ]
Љ	љ	Lj / lj	[ʎ]
Њ	њ	Ñj / ñj	[ɲ]
Ћ	ћ	Ć / ć	[tɕ]
Ч	ч	Č / č	[tʃ]
Џ	џ	Dž / dž	[dʒ]
Ш	ш	Š / š	[ʃ]

* This letter is pronounced similar to the pronunciation of the letter “j” in French.

Examples in English: jam, jeans, jar

Examples in French: Jacques (personal name), journaliste (journalist)

When you learn Serbian, you have to remember five new letters and their pronunciation. These are:

Ћ (h), **Ж** (ж), **Ђ** (đ), **Љ** (lj) and **Њ** (nj)

In Serbian there are also combinations of two letters that are counted as one and are also spoken. However, these are not treated as two separate letters, but are counted as one letter. These “double letters” are:

Ѓ (g), **Ђ** (đ) and **Њ** (nj)

Serbian nouns:

You should know first that there is no article in Serbian.

Every noun in Serbian has its own grammatical gender though – there are male (m), female (f) and neuter (n) nouns.

The last letter of a noun indicates the grammatical gender of the noun.

For example:

mladić (m) – youngster, young man

žena (f) – woman

more (n) – sea

Rules of thumb:

How will I recognize a Serbian noun's gender?

- **Masculine** nouns often end in a **consonant**.

For example:

момак / momak – man

- **Feminine** nouns usually end in **-a**.

For example:

жена / žena – woman

- **Neuter** nouns normally end in **-e** or **-o**.

For example:

more / more – sea

Please note:

There are numerous exceptions to the above mentioned rules.

You will be on the safe side if you memorise the Serbian noun's gender from the start.

Building the plural of Serbian nouns

The following table shows you the general rules for building the plural forms of Serbian nouns:

How to build the plural of Serbian nouns		
	singular	plural
masculine	consonant For example: потпис / potpis (signature)	-i For example: потписи / potpisi (signatures)
feminine	-a For example: жена / žena (woman)	-e For example: жене / žene (women)
neuter	-e, -o For example: село / selo (village)	-a For example: села / sela (villages)

Nonetheless ...

You have to take a closer look at some exceptions:

Exceptions in building the plural form of masculine Serbian nouns:

- (1) Please look out for masculine nouns ending in g, h or k: These consonants at the end of the word change when adding an -i for building the plural.
г → з / г → з
 For example:
 супруг / suprug – супрузи / supruzi
 (husband – husbands)
х → ц / һ → с
 For example:
 тепих / tepih – теписи / tepisi
 (carpet – carpets)
к → ц / к → с
 For example:
 путник / putnik – путници / putnici
 (passenger – passengers)
- (2) Some male nouns form their plural with the ending: -ови / -ovi.
 For example:
 град / grad – градови / gradovi
 (city – cities)
- (3) Some nouns ending on a soft consonant form their plural with the ending: -еви / -evi.
 For example:
 чај / čaj – чајеви / čajevi
 (tea – teas)

Exceptions in building the plural form of feminine Serbian nouns:

As a rule we already know that most feminine Serbian nouns end in -a. However, if you encounter a feminine noun ending in a consonant, you can treat it like a masculine noun and add an -и / -и for building the plural.

For example:

болест / bolest – болести / bolesti

(disease – diseases)

ствар / stvar – ствари / stvari

(thing – things)

Exceptions in building the plural form of neuter Serbian nouns:

Some neuter Serbian noun consisting of two syllables, form their plural with -на/ -на.

For example:

име / ime – имена / imena

(name – names)

7 cases of the Serbian language:

If we want to master Serbian, we have to deal with **seven** (that's right ... seven ...) **cases**.

Below we will give you an overview over those seven cases and their functions within a Serbian sentence.

1st case: Nominative

The subject of every Serbian sentence is in the nominative case.

If you are asking for the subject in a Serbian sentence, you use the interrogative pronouns **Тко/ Тко?** (who?-m/f) / **Шта/ Što?** (what?-n).

For example:

Петар поклања својој пријатељици Ани букет цвећа./

Petar poklanja svojoj prijateljici Ani buket cveća.

(Petar gives flowers to his friend Ana.)

2nd case: Genitive

The genitive in Serbian describes relations – like ownership, temporal relations or spatial distances.

We also use the genitive in Serbian when we talk about quantity and numbers of persons or things.

The genitive is used to describe the origin of persons or things.

Some Serbian prepositions demand to be combined together with a genitive form.

For example:

- без / bez (without)
- до / do (until)
- испод / ispod (underneath)
- из / iz (out of)
- иза / iza (hinter)
- изнад / iznad (above)
- код / kod (by)
- од / od (from)
- по / po (on)
- поред / pored (next to)
- преко / preko (over)
- пре / pre, против / protiv (against)
and many more...

Also certain expressions of time only want to be seen and heard together with the genitive.

If you are asking for a genitive form in a Serbian sentence, you use the interrogative pronouns *Kora?*/ *Koga?* (whose?-m/f) or *Čera?*/ *Čega?* (whose?-n).

For example:

Ово је цвеће **Анине сестре.**/

Ovo je cveće **Anine sestre.**

(These are the flowers **of Ana's sister.**)

Она живи одвојено од породице./

Ona živi odvojeno **od porodice.**

(She lives separated **from her family.**)

3rd case: Dative

The function of the dative in a Serbian sentence is to mark the indirect object.

If you analyse a Serbian sentence and you want find out where the dative form is located, you ask:

Komy?/ *Komu?* (whom?, when the noun in the dative is animated)

Čemu?/ *Čemu?* (whom?, when the noun in the dative form is inanimated)

Some Serbian verbs are always followed by the noun in the dative, e.g.:

- дати/dati (to give)
- даровати/darovati (to gift)
- рећи/reći (to say)
- купити/kupiti (to buy)
- написати/napisati (to write down)
- послати/poslati (to send)
- пожалити се/požaliti se (to regret)

Also you need to get acquainted with Serbian prepositions that ask for the usage of the dative: к/к, ка/ка, наdomак/nadomak, насупрот/nasuprot, према/preма, против/protiv, упркос/uprkos, надохват/nadohvat

For example:

Петар поклања својој пријатељици Ани букет цвећа./

Petar poklanja svojoj prijateljici Ani buket cveća.

(Petar gives flowers to his friend Ana.)

4th case: Accusative

The function of the accusative in a Serbian sentence is to mark the direct object.

If you are searching for the accusative in a Serbian sentence, you ask:

Кога?/ Koga? (Who?)

Чера/ Čega? (What?)

The accusative is often used together with verbs that signalize a movement.

For example:

бацити/baciti, (to throw)

довести/donijeti, (to bring)

јурити/juriti, (to hurry)

возити се/voziti se (to drive)

Some Serbian prepositions call for the use of the accusative, e.g.:

кроз/kroz, (through)

међу/među, (in between)

на/на, (on top of)

над/nad, (above)

низ/niz, (out of)

о/о, (of)

по, (over smth.)

под/pod, (under smth.)

пред/pred, (in front of)

у/у, (in)

за/za (for sth./so.)

For example:

Петар поклања својој пријатељици Ани букет цвећа./

Petar poklanja svojoj prijateljici Ani buket cveća.

(Petar gives flowers to his friend Ana.)

5th case: Locative

A Serbian noun with a locative ending describes the whereabouts / the location of a person or an object.

If you try to track down a noun in the locative in a Serbian sentence, you ask:

Где / Gdje? (where?)

О чему / O čemu (where of?)

And please remember: the locative in Serbian always comes with a preposition!

It can come with the following:

- на/на (on)
- о/о (of)
- по/по (over smth.)
- у при/у при (at)

For example:

Анино цвеће стоји на столу./

Anino cveće stoji na stolu.

(Anas flowers are on the table.)

6th case: Instrumental

With the instrumental case Serbian describes the means / the device with what an action is executed.

With the help of these question words, you can identify Serbian nouns with instrumental endings:

Са ким / S kim? (with whom?)

Чиме / Čime? (with what?)

Please, try to get acquainted with this new case ending.

The English language doesn't know a case like this.

These prepositions stand together with instrumental case endings:

- међу/ међу (in between)
- изнад (a)/ nad (a) (above)
- под (a)/ pod (a) (under smth.)
- пре/ pred (in front of)
- са (a)/s(a) (with)
- за/ za (for sth. /so.)

For example:

Ана реже цвеће ножем./

Ana reže cveće nožem.

(Ana cuts the flowers with a knife.)

7th case: Vocative

We find vocative case endings in Serbian whenever we want to address another person.

For example:

Ана, донео сам ти цвеће./

Ana, doneo sam ti cveće.

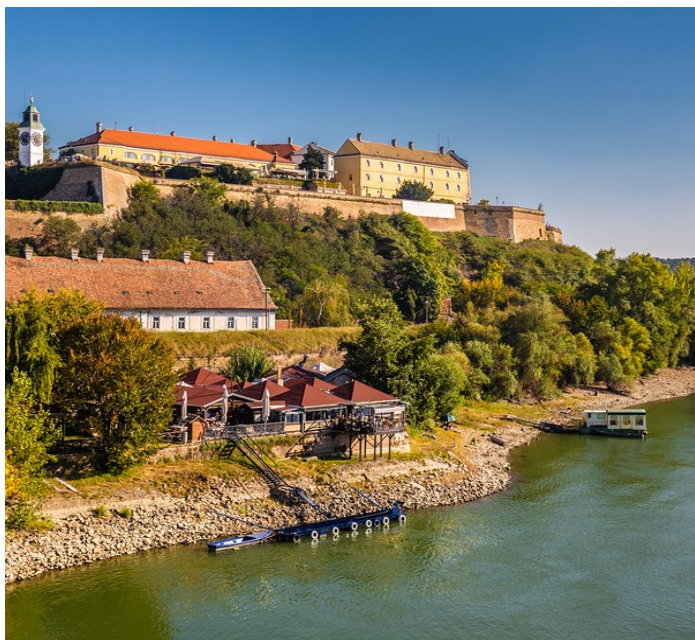
(Ana, I brought you flowers.)

To build correct sentences in Serbian, you have to learn the case endings by heart.

To help you in learning all the case endings, we want to provide you with a system:

Serbian nouns can be grouped in three types of declension: the “a declension”, the “e declension” and the “i declension”.

The following chapter will show you tables and tell you more about this system.



Three types of declension in Serbian

1. a-declension:

This group contains all masculine (m) and neuter (n) nouns which take the -a ending in the genitive singular.

The following table provides you with a synopsis:

Synopsis: Case endings of -a declension		
	Singular	Plural
Nom.	m: consonant; n: -e,-o	m: -и, n: -а/ -и, n: -а
Gen.	-а	-а
Dat. / Loc.	-у/ -у	-има/ -има
Acc.	m: consonant; n: -e, -o	m: -e, n: -а
Instr.	-ом, -ем/ -ом,-ем	-има/ -има
Voc.	m: -e, -u; n: -e, -o	m: -и, n: -а/ -и, n: -а

2. e-declension

All feminine nouns ending in -e in the genitive singular, follow this declension pattern.

The following table provides you with a synopsis:

Synopsis: Case endings of -e declension		
	Singular	Plural
Nom.	-a	-e
Gen.	-e	-a
Dat. / Loc.	-и/ -i	-ама/ -ама
Acc.	-у/ -u	-e
Instr.	-ом/ -ом	-ама/ -ама
Voc.	-о	-e

3. i-declension

All female nouns end in -i in the genitive singular.

Overview: Case endings of I-declination

	Singular	Plural
Nom. / Acc.	consonant	-и/ -i
Gen. / Vok.	-у/ -i	-у/ -i
Dat. / Loc.	-и	-има/ -има
Instr.	-у, -ју/ -и, -ју	-има/ -има

Serbian adjectives

Serbian adjectives adapt to the noun they refer to. Doing this, they take the same gender (masculine, feminine or neuter), the same number (singular or plural) and the same case as the noun they refer to.

How can you recognise the grammatical gender of Serbian adjectives?

- Masculine adjectives end in a consonant or -i.
For example:
ВЕЛИК страх(m) / velik strah(m) (great fear)
- Feminine adjectives end in -a.
For example:
ВЕЛИКА нада(f) / velika nada(f) (great hope)
- Neuter adjectives end in -o.
For example:
ВЕЛИКО село(n) / veliko selo(n) (large village)

There are two types of Serbian adjectives:

- descriptive adjectives
- relative adjectives

What's good to know about descriptive adjectives in Serbian?

The function of descriptive adjectives in Serbian is to name the qualities and characteristics of animate and inanimate beings. Serbian descriptive adjectives are declined and can be compared.

- Firstly there are **definite** descriptive adjectives. They have the same case endings as Serbian possessive pronouns. You find the definite form of a descriptive adjective if it answers to the following question:
Који? / Који? (Which (one)?)
For example:
Који је твој шал? / Који је твој šal? /
Мој шал је онај зелени? / Мој šal је онај zeleni.
(Which scarf is yours? My scarf is the **green** one.)
- Secondly we have to distinguish **indefinite** descriptive adjectives. They have the same case endings as the Serbian nouns. You find the indefinite form of a descriptive adjective if it answers to the question:
Какав? (What (kind of)?)
For example:
Какав је сендвич? / Какав је sendvič?
Сендвич је укусан. / Sendvič је ukusan.
(What's the sandwich like? The sandwich is **delicious**.)

Regarding comparison:

When it comes to comparison of adjectives, the distinction of these two types plays no role any more. For both types of descriptive adjectives the same rules apply for building the comparison forms.

Rules for comparison of Serbian descriptive adjectives:

Comparative degree:

word stem of descriptive adjective + ији/-ији (m); ија/-ија (f); ије/-ије (n)

For example:

стар / star (old → elder):m: старији / starijif: старија / starijan: старије / starijeхладан / hladan (cold → colder):m: хладнији / hladniјиf: хладнија / hladniјаn: хладније / hladniје

Superlative degree

нај/нај + comparative degree

For example:

стар / star (old → eldest):m: старији / stariји (elder) – најстарији / najstariји (eldest)f: старија / stariја (elder) – најстарија / najstariја (eldest)n: старије / stariје (elder) – најстарије / najstariје (eldest)

Commonly used adjectives with irregular comparison:

good:

добар / dobar → бољи / bolји → најбољи / najbolји

bad:

лош / loš → гори / gorи → најгори / najgorи

big, tall:

велик / velik → већи / veći → највећи / najveći

small, short:

мали / mali → мањи / manји → најмањи / najmanји**What's good to know about relative adjectives in Serbian?**

Let's take a closer look at the second type of adjectives in Serbian, the relative adjectives.

Relative adjectives describe the relations between animate/inanimate beings.

The English language would tend to use several nouns to describe relations like this – but Serbian is handling this job with the help of adjectives.

For example:

морски ваздух / morsки vazduh (sea air)градски аутобус / gradски autobus (city bus)Ја научим граматику српског језика.Učim gramatiku srpskog jezika.

(I'm learning Serbian grammar(lit.: the grammar of the Serbian language).)

Који је био ваш студентски живот?Kakav je bio tvoj studentski život?

(What was your student life like?)

The related adjectives occur only in the certain form, are declined, but they cannot be put in forms of comparison.

Relative adjectives can be derived from nouns by adding an ending (e.g.: -ски/-ski; -њи/-nji).

A subcategory of relative adjectives are possessive adjectives:

They are formed from nouns.

There are male, female and substantive forms.

These have to be declined.

For example:

Анин брат / Anin brat (Ana's brother)

Маријанова сестра / Marijanova sestra (Marijan's sister)

бакина хаљина / bakina haljina (grandmother's dress)

Serbian adverbs:

This chapter provides some good news for you:

Serbian adverbs are not distinguished by gender – they always and only have one form.

And: Serbian adverbs are not declined.

The comparison of Serbian adverbs follows the same rules as Serbian adjectives.

For example:

Адриан добро кува./ Adrian dobro kuva.

(Adrian cooks well.)

Маријан кува боље./ Marijan kuva bolje.

(Marijan cooks better.)

Мој отац кува најбоље./ Moj otac kuva najbolje.

(My dad cooks best.)



The Serbian verb system

The **infinitive** ending of all Serbian verbs is either -ći or -ti.
This is how you will encounter them when you look something up in your Serbian dictionary.

For example:

бити / biti (to be)

питати / pitati (to ask)

Finding the **infinitive stem** of a verb:

suffix on -ti: delete this suffix to get the infinitive stem

ending on -sti / -ći: infinitive stem form = present stem form

You need the infinitive stem form to build the past and the conditional tense.

The four verb classes are named: a-/e-/je-/i-class

Finding the present stem of Serbian verbs:

1. pers. sentence in the present tense - present tense

The present tense form is needed to form the remaining tenses.

What is the 'aspect' of a Serbian verb?

Let's tackle a brand new grammatical concept!

Maybe you already heard of this or read about it: Serbian verbs also come with an 'aspect'.

Understanding what the grammatical concept of the aspect is, may decide over your success in learning Serbian. (So, maybe you'd like to read more about this. We would like to refer you to the corresponding entry in Wikipedia for further studying.)

The term 'aspect' refers to the **line of sight** that the narrator of sentence has on the events.

The aspect of a verb helps to describe **how** (the manner/ the modality) the events take place.

Serbian verbs distinguish a **imperfective** and a **perfective** aspect.

The following table shows the differences and will help you to pick the correct aspect type.

Synopsis: Verbal aspect in Serbian

Imperfective verbal aspect:	Perfective verbal aspect:
keyword: time and time again ...	keyword: now!
focus is on the progression of the action	focus is on the result of the action
happens time and time again / recurring action	happens only one time
Марко продаје аутомобиле./ Marko prodaje automobile. (Marko sells cars.)	Марко је брзо продао свој стари ауто./ Marko je brzo prodao svoj stari auto (Marko quickly sold his old car.)

Presence form of the important verb "biti" (to be):

Presence forms of the verb "to be".	
I am	ја сам / ja sam
you are	ти си / ti si
he, she, it is	он, она, оно је / он, она, оно je
we are	ми смо / mi smo
you are	ви сте / vi ste
they are	они, оне, она су / oni, one, ona su

Negation of "biti"	
I am not	ја нисам / ja nisam
you are not	ти ниси / ti nisi
he, she, it is not	он, она, оно није / он, она, оно nije
we are not	ми нисмо / mi nismo
you are not	ви нисте / vi niste
they are not	они, оне, она нису / oni, one, ona nisu

Formation of the perfect participle:

norm: infinitive stem form + ending

Endings for the past participle:

m:	-о/-о (sg.)	-ЛИ/-ли (pl.)
f:	-ла/-ла (sg.)	-ле /-ле (pl.)
n:	-ло/-ло (sg.)	-ла/-ла (pl.)

Building the past tense:

norm: (negated) present tense of the verb „biti“ + past participle

For example:

m: ја сам ишао/ ja sam išao

f: ја сам ишла/ ja sam išla
(I went)

m: ја нисам ишао/ ja nisam išao;

f: ја нисам ишла/ ja nisam išla
(I did not go)**Past tense of the verb „biti“:**

- Ја сам био (m) / била (f) / Ja sam bio (m) / bila (f)
– I have been
- ти си био (m) / била (f) / Ti si bio (m) / bila (f)
– you have been
- он(а) је био (m) / била (f) / Он(а) je bio (m) / bila (f)
– he / she has been
- ми смо били/биле / mi smo bili/bile
– we have been
- ви сте били/биле / vi ste bili/bile
– you have been
- они су били/биле / oni su bili/bile
– they have been

Aorist tense of the verb “biti” (to be):

This chapter presents you another “new” tense that the Serbian language features: the aorist.

It's important to know that **only perfective verbs** are able to build a aorist form. (Maybe you'd like to revise the chapter on the [aspect](#) in this context.)

As this verb form is only used in written Serbian, we will leave it at presenting you the aorist form of the verb “biti” (to be) – as you will later need these to build the [conditional](#).

If you translate the Serbian aorist into English, we advice you to use the imperfect – as you certainly noticed above.

Aorist tense of the verb “biti” (to be):

This chapter presents you another “new” tense that the Serbian language features: the aorist.

It's important to know that only perfective verbs are able to build a aorist form.

бих / bih – I was

би / bi – you were

би / bi – he was

бисмо / bismo – we were

бисте / biste – you were

бише / biše – they were

Building the past perfect in Serbian:

If you really love reading Serbian novels, you will encounter the Serbian past perfect.

Today this verb form is mostly vanished from spoken language and only found in literature.

So, you don't have to be actively able to build the tense – it's enough to recognise it when you read it in a text.

General rule for building the past perfect:

past tense of “biti” + past participle

If you want to look up the corresponding chapters, please visit the chapter on the [past tense form of “biti”](#) and the rules and explanations on building the [past participle](#) of Serbian verbs.

For example:

m: Ја сам био ишао / ja sam bio išao

f: Ја сам била ишла / ja sam bila išla

(I had gone)

Building the future tense in Serbian:

Now, let's take a look into the future and learn to express everything we wish for in the Serbian future tense.

General rule for building the Serbian future tense:

present tense of “htjeti” + infinitive of the verb

ја **ћу** / ja ću – I will

ти **ћеш** / ti ćeš – you will

он, она; оно **ће** / **он, она, оно ће** – he/she/it will

ми **ћемо** / mi ćemo – we will

ви **ћете** / vi ćete – ihr werdet; oni će – you will

о**ће** / **оће** – they will

Please note that the future tense in serbian as shown can be translated in Serbian as both 'will' and 'going to' future.

For example:

Време ће бити добро / Vreme će biti dobro. – The weather will be good.

Ја ћу учити/ја ćу učiti – I'm going to study

Building the conditional:

General rule for building the conditional:

aorist form of “biti” + past participle

For example:

m: Ја бих плакао / ja bih plakao

f: Ја бих плакала / ja bih plakala

(I would cry)

Building the passive participle:

You will need this verb form to build (or recognize) the passive voice in Serbian.

General rule for building the passive participle:

infinitive stem + ending

m: sg: -н /-n; pl.: -ни / -ni

f: sg: -на /-na; pl.: -не / -ne

n: sg: -но /-no; pl.: -на / -na

For example:

Лепо је бити вољен / Lijepo je biti **voljen**.

(It's nice to be loved.)

Serbian pronouns:

Personal pronouns are declined and there are two types: stressed and unstressed.

Serbian personal pronouns

Please keep in mind that there is a profound difference between English and Serbian when it comes to using personal pronouns:

Personal pronouns are much less frequently used in Serbian.

The average Serbian sentence doesn't usually mention the personal pronouns, because the verb form already shows who is meant.

But, whenever the pronoun is to be emphasised, the personal pronoun is mentioned.

Synopsis: Serbian personal pronouns (nominative form)

Singular:

ја / ja (I)

ти / ti (you)

он / on (he)

она / ona (she)

оно / ono (it)

Plural:

ми / mi (we)

ви, Ви / vi, Vi (you-informal, you-formal)

они / oni (they-m)

оне / one (they-f)

она / ona (they-n)

The stressed, long form can be found at the beginning of a sentence and after prepositions like a / i / ni.

For example:

Њему је помогао учитељ, мени није./

Njemu je pomogao učitelj, meni nije.

(The teacher helped **him** – not **me**.)

The unstressed, short forms count as [clitics](#).

For example:

Изненадила их је./

Iznenadila ih je.

(She surprised **her**.)

Serbian possessive pronouns:

Just like English, Serbian uses **possessive pronouns** to mark possession.

Serbian possessive pronouns behave like adjectives – they adjust to the word they refer to in gender, number and case ending.

For example:

мој тата / moj tata (my father)

моја кућа / moja kuća (my house)

моје село / moje selo (my village)

The demonstrative pronouns in Serbian:

These pronouns have the task to show something or to refer to something. They are declined according to the scheme of the short form of adjectives.

Overview:

m:	овај/ovaj – this one	тај/taj – this one	огај/onaj – this one
f:	ова/ova – this one	та/ta – this one	ога/ona – this one
n:	ово/ovo – that one	то/to – that one	оно/ono – that one

Interrogative pronouns in Serbian:

Most Serbian interrogative pronouns have to be declined. We will show you an overview of the most common interrogative pronouns in nominative form as a starting point for further studying.

Ко? / Тко? - Who?
 Шта? / Šta? - What?
 Какав? / Kakav? - What kind?
 Кад, Када? / Kad?, Kada? - When?
 Зашто? / Zašto? - Why?
 Где? / Gdje? - Where?
 Колико / Koliko? - How much?

Building Serbian sentences

Basic structure of Serbian sentences:

Let's take a look at the basic structure behind Serbian sentences:

Subject (N) – predicate – indirect object (D) - direct object (A).

A subject (in the nominative form) is followed by the verb/ the predicate. After this we find a indirect object (in the dative form) and last but not least the direct object (with an accusative case ending).

For example:

Ана пише свом оцу писмо/
 Ана (subject) пише (predicate) svome ocu (indirect object) pismo (direct object).

Ана writes a letter to her father.

Negation in Serbian sentences:

To negate a Serbian sentence, we use the tiny word “ne”. You place “ne” in front of the verb.

For example:

Мобилни телефон **не** ради./
 Mobitel **ne** radi.
 (The mobile/cell phone does **not** work.)

If a Serbian sentence contains an auxiliary verb (e.g.: biti – to be), “ne” merges with the auxiliary verb.

For example:

Златко нема новца./

Zlatko **nema** novca.

(Zlatko has no money. /Zlatko does not have money.)



The Clitic (support words) in Serbian:

The clitics are monosyllabic “supporting words” that have a fixed place in the sentence structure.

The correct placement of clitics is the true mastery of the Serbian language.

Clitics always appear in the following order:

1. first comes the question particles “ли/li”
2. followed by the verbal particles
сам/sam, си/si, је/je, смо/smo, сте/ste, су/su
(short for “biti” in the present tense)
ћу/ću, ћеш/ćeš, ће/će, ћемо/ćemo, ћете/ćete
(short for “htjeti”)
бих/bih, би/bi, бисмо/bismo, бисте/biste
(aorist forms of “biti”)
3. in third place are the pronominal particles
(first in the dative, then in the accusative)
4. in the fourth place follows the unstressed form of the reflexive pronoun „се /se“

For example:

Знаш ли где је WC (тоалет)?/

Znaš li gde je WC (toalet)?

(Do you know where the restrooms are?)

И ја бих радије становала сама./

I ja bih radije stanovala sama.

(I would also rather live alone.)

Serbian numbers		11-20	
0-10		једанаест/jedanaest	11
нула/nula	0	дванаест/dvanaest	12
један/jedan	1	тринаест/trinaest	13
два/dva	2	четрнаест/četрнаest	14
три/tri	3	петнаест/petnaest	15
четири/četiri	4	шеснаест/šesnaest	16
пет/pet	5	седамнаест/sedamnaest	17
шест/šest	6	осамнаест/osamnaest	18
седам/sedam	7	деветнаест/devetnaest	19
осам/osam	8	двадесет/dvadeset	20
девет/devet	9		
десет/deset	10		

21-1.000	
двaдeceт (и) jeдaн/dvadeset (i) jedan	21
двaдeceт (и) двa/dvadeset (i) dva	22
тpидeceт/trideset	30
тpидeceт jeдaн /trideset jedan	31
тpидeceт двa/trideset dva	32
чeтpдeceт/četrdeset	40
чeтpдeceт jeдaн/četrdeset jedan	41
чeтpдeceт двa/četrdeset dva	42
пeдeceт/pedeset	50
шeздeceт/šezdeset	60
ceдaмдeceт/sedamdeset	70
ocaмдeceт/osamdeset	80
дeвeдeceт/devedeset	90
cтo/sto	100
хиљaдa/hiljada	1.000

Days of the week	
Days of the Week	
пoнeдeљaк/ ponedjeljak	Monday
yтopaк/ utorak	Tuesday
cријaу/ srijda	Wednesday
чeтвpтaк/ četrvtak	Thursday
пeтaк/ petak	Friday
cyбoтa/ subota	Saturday
нeдeљa/ nedjelja	Sunday

For example:

У cyбoтy идeм y биoскoп.

U subotu idem u bioskop.

(On Saturday, I will go to the cinema.)

Cyбoтoм и нeдeљoм нe мopaмo paдити.

Subotom i nedjeljom ne moramo raditi.

(We don't have to work on Saturdays and Sundays.)

17 Minute Languages: Serbian Grammar at a Glance!

Space for your own notes: