

STIÙIREADH GRÀMAIR

This guidance has been created by a team of researchers from the University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (UHI), advised by the Comataidh Comhairleachaidh Cànan (a committee of traditional Gaelic speakers convened by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in 2015). The guidance addresses specific questions about usage and seeks to answer those questions. It is not intended to be a complete guide to all aspects of the points covered.

This guidance is aimed at readers who already have a knowledge of Gaelic to act as a reference guide rather than as a basic text for learning the language.

For each point, there is a summary as to why the issue was researched and the recommendations which can be made for contemporary linguistic norms. This summary is included in the Background and Recommendation sections for each case. This is followed by a guide to the grammatical feature based on the recommendation made.

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GLOSSARY

compound preposition – a two-word, fixed phrase which functions like a simple preposition and takes the dative case. It is often formed by an adverb followed by a simple preposition (e.g. *còmhla ris*).

conjugate – to change the verb depending on such factors as tense, person and number.

dative – a type of case-marking which follows many simple prepositions, e.g. *aig a' chaileig bhàin* (cf. *a' chaileag bhàn*)

definite – a noun is definite when preceded by the definite article (e.g. *a'*) or a possessive pronoun (*mo, do, a*, etc.).

dependent – the form of the verb which is used with, or 'depends' on, other particles e.g. **a** *bheil*, **cha** *tèid*, **nach** *dèan*.

direct object – the object is the thing or person that an action happens to. It is direct if there is no preposition (at, on, with, etc.), i.e. there is a direct relationship between the verb and its object: e.g. *Tha mi a' ceannach leabhar*.

emphatic – when emphasis is shown, i.e. emphatic **pronouns** are *mise, thusa, esan*, etc.

genitive – a type of case-marking in Gaelic which indicates possession or close association (e.g. *taigh an fhìr mhòir*) and which also occurs after some prepositions (e.g. *chun, mu dheidhinn*).

hypercorrection – where a grammatical rule in one situation is incorrectly applied to another situation, often when aiming at a more prestigious usage.

indefinite – a noun without the definite article ('the') or a possessive pronoun (*my, your*, etc.).

independent – the form of the verb that is used 'independently' without other particles (*an, cha, nach*), e.g. *tha, thèid, nì*.

indirect object – the object is the thing or person that an action happens to. It is indirect if it is used with a preposition (at, on, with, etc.), i.e. the relationship between the verb and its object is not direct: e.g. *Tha mi a' dol dhan bhaile*.

inversion – reversal of the basic order of words, i.e. placing the noun before the verb; *Tha mi ag ionnsachadh Spàinntis > Feumaidh mi Spàinntis ionnsachadh*.

inverted – put in the reversed position from the basic order, subject to **inversion**.

intransitive – a verb or use of a verb which doesn't have an object, e.g. *tha e a' falbh, bha iad a' rànaid*.

lenition – the process or result of 'softening' a consonant shown in Gaelic writing by adding an *h*.

modal verbs – a type of verb that expresses necessity or possibility, e.g. *feum, faod*.

non-inverted – is not put in the reversed position from the basic order, not subject to **inversion**.

personal pronoun – the word that indicates a person, *mi, thu, e, i*, etc.

possessive pronoun – a pronoun that indicates possession of something, *mo, do, a*, etc.

progressive – the form of the verb that expresses an action in progress, e.g. *a' leughadh, a' seinn, a' dèanamh*.

preposition – a word which comes before a noun or noun phrase to express a relation to another word; *air, aig, le, ri, mu dheidhinn, airson* (see simple preposition).

pronoun – a word that refers either to the participants in the discourse (e.g. *mi, thu*) or to someone or something mentioned elsewhere in the discourse, e.g. *e, i, siud*.

reflexive – referring back to the same subject, e.g. *bhruidhinn mi rium fhèin*.

relative clause – part of a sentence that cannot exist independently and describes a noun that comes before it in the main part of the sentence, e.g. *an geama a bhios a' chlann-nighean a' cluiche*.

relative pronoun – pronoun used to introduce a relative clause, e.g. *an leabhar a sgrìobh mi, an obair nach do rinn mi*.

simple preposition – a type of word which comes before a noun or noun phrase to express a relation to another word; *air, aig, le, ri*. In Gaelic they are typically one word except for *ann an*.

stranding – when a preposition occurs somewhere other than immediately adjacent to its object; for example, at the end of a sentence (e.g. *an duine a bha mi a' bruidhinn ris*)

suffix – an element that is added to the end of a word, e.g. *mo mhàthair-sa*.

transitive – a verb or use of a verb which has an object, e.g. *Nuair a bha e a' fàgail an taighe*.

CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

^l – lenites the following consonant

I. GENITIVE CASE WITH THE PROGRESSIVE

BACKGROUND

When a verb is in the **progressive**, it expresses an action in progress, e.g. *a' leughadh*, *a' seinn*, *a' dèanamh*.

Traditionally, singular nouns governed by the verbal noun in the progressive appeared in the **genitive** case, e.g. *tha mi a' faicinn balaich bhig* 'I see a little boy'. However, current practice is that **indefinite** nouns tend to be in the basic form (e.g. *tha mi a' faicinn balach beag*), whilst **definite** examples are in the genitive, e.g. *tha mi a' faicinn a' bhalaich bhig*. Both traditional speakers and professional users find the modern usage acceptable, where a distinction is made between definite and indefinite instances.

In current grammatical descriptions, indefinite plural nouns lenite in the genitive case. In recent written Gaelic, this is still generally true for **suffixed plurals** (*a' ceannach bhrògan*). However, nouns with **slenderised plurals** are seen to vary between the basic form (*a' faicinn b(h)alaich*) and genitive forms (*a' faicinn bhalach*).

RECOMMENDATIONS

For definite nouns governed by a progressive verbal noun, the genitive is recommended.

The genitive is no longer required for indefinite singular nouns when they are governed by a progressive verbal noun. For indefinite suffixed plurals governed by a progressive verbal noun, lenition is recommended (*a' faicinn chaileagan*). For indefinite slenderised plurals governed by a progressive verbal noun, the lenited genitive form continues to be recommended (*a' faicinn bhalach*).

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. DEFINITE NOUNS

Both singular and plural definite nouns governed by progressive verbal nouns are in the genitive case.

SINGULAR EXAMPLES

Masculine

<i>am balach</i>	> <i>a' faicinn a' bhalaich</i>
<i>am biadh</i>	> <i>a' deasachadh a' bhìdh</i>
<i>an saoghal</i>	> <i>a' cruthachadh an t-saoghail</i>
<i>an ceòl</i>	> <i>a' cluinntinn a' chiùil</i>

Feminine

<i>a' chaileag</i>	> <i>a' moladh na caileig(e)*</i>
<i>an duilleag</i>	> <i>a' tionndadh na duilleig(e)*</i>
<i>a' phiob</i>	> <i>a' lasadh na pioba</i>
<i>a' ghrian</i>	> <i>a' leantainn na grèine</i>

* The final -e in polysyllables is often dropped.

PLURAL EXAMPLES

Suffixed Plurals

<i>na dorsan</i>	> <i>a' dùnadh nan dorsan</i>
<i>na bailtean</i>	> <i>a' lionadh nam bailtean</i>
<i>na gillean</i>	> <i>a' cluinntinn nan gillean</i>
<i>na brògan</i>	> <i>a' glanadh nam brògan</i>

Slenderised Plurals

<i>na balaich</i>	> <i>a' faicinn nam balach</i>
<i>na h-òrain</i>	> <i>a' seinn nan òran</i>
<i>na h-eich</i>	> <i>a' stiùireadh nan each</i>
<i>na giomaich</i>	> <i>a' glacadh nan giomach</i>

* Some suffixed plurals are commonly used with short forms, e.g. *Comhairle nan Eilean*, *Comann nam Pàrant*.

B. INDEFINITE SINGULAR NOUNS

Indefinite singular nouns governed by a progressive verbal noun are not changed from the basic form.

EXAMPLES

Masculine

a' faicinn balach
a' faighinn cuideachadh
a' rùsgadh ubhal
a' seinn òran

Feminine

a' faicinn caileag
a' faighinn pòg
a' sgrìobhadh litir
ag ithe briosgaid

C. INDEFINITE PLURAL NOUNS

SUFFIXED PLURALS

For nouns like *caileag*, *baile* etc. which add a suffix to form their plural, lenition is recommended when governed by a progressive verbal noun (*a' faicinn chaileagan*).

EXAMPLES

bàtaichean > *a' faicinn bhàtaichean*
phàipearan > *a' sgaoileadh phàipearan*
clachan > *a' briseadh chlach(an)**
naidheachdan > *a' sgaoileadh naidheachdan*

* Some suffixed plurals are commonly used with short forms identical to the basic plural form. These are still lenited.

SLENDERISED PLURALS

Nouns like *balach*, *eun*, *Gàidheal*, etc. have slenderised plurals in their basic form (*balaich*, *eòin*, *Gàidheil*). In the genitive they are not slenderised and are lenited. This continues to be the recommended form.

EXAMPLES

Gàidheil > *a' riochdachadh Ghàidheil*
pinn > *a' ceannach pheann*
bùird > *a' glanadh bhòrd*
òrain > *a' seinn òran*

However, it is recognised that basic forms are becoming more common, both unlenited and lenited.

- *a' faicinn balaich* (slenderised, not lenited)
- *a' faicinn bhalaich* (slenderised and lenited)

THOIR AN AIRE! WATCH OUT

Although a progressive verbal noun is used in the following examples, the genitive does not apply to the nouns in **bold**. Where the noun follows a verbal noun (e.g. *diùltadh* in this example) but is part of a noun phrase with another verb (e.g. *fhàgail*):

- *Na daoine a bha a' diùltadh **an Eaglais Shaor** fhàgail*
- *Bha iad ag iarraidh **an leabhar** a leughadh*

Where the noun is part of a noun phrase. In the following examples, the genitive only applies to the last noun in the series of nouns:

- *a' tuigsinn **ceistean** nan croitearan*
- *a' tuigsinn **obair** a' chroiteir*

2. DATIVE CASE MARKING

BACKGROUND

In modern Gaelic, the **dative case** is associated with **simple prepositions** (e.g. *air, le*) and some **compound prepositions** (e.g. *còmhla ri*). Changes to the feminine dative, like other forms of traditional case marking in Gaelic, must be viewed within the context of long-term grammatical changes in the language.

The previous grammatical norm was that feminine nouns mark the dative case through slenderisation and related vowel changes (e.g. *aig a' chaillich bhig*), although speakers now often apply it inconsistently. This is borne out by the fact that a majority of professional and traditional speakers in the study considered both slenderised forms and unslenderised forms to be acceptable. In a study of recent written Gaelic, a difference was found between **indefinite** and **definite** forms: basic forms (e.g. *air craobh*) were more common with indefinite examples, but slenderised dative forms (e.g. *air a' chraoibh*) were more common with definite ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For **indefinite** nouns, use of the basic form is recommended for feminine nouns as it appears that unslenderised feminine nouns are more commonly used today than the slenderised form.

For **definite** nouns, dative case marking is recommended.

However, alternative slenderisation usage for feminine nouns (detailed below) is not to be considered wrong.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. THE DATIVE WITH DEFINITE MASCULINE NOUNS

The article changes to *a' L* (before *b, c, g, m, p*), *an t-* (before *s, sl, sn, sr*), *an t* (before *f*), and *an* (all other letters) and the following noun and adjective(s) are lenited where possible.

EXAMPLES

<i>am baile mòr</i>	> <i>anns a' bhaile mhòr</i>	<i>an crodh bochd</i>	> <i>leis a' chrodh bhoichd</i>
<i>am balach beag</i>	> <i>aig a' bhalach bheag</i>	<i>an t-òran math</i>	> <i>leis an òran mhath</i>
<i>an saoghal mòr</i>	> <i>mun t-saoghal mhòr</i>	<i>am monadh garbh</i>	> <i>tron mhonadh gharbh</i>

B. THE DATIVE WITH INDEFINITE MASCULINE NOUNS

There is no difference between the dative and the basic form for indefinite masculine nouns (and accompanying adjectives). Nouns are lenited following prepositions that trigger lenition (e.g. *bho, de, do, fo, mu, ro, tro*).

EXAMPLES

<i>balach mòr</i>	> <i>le balach mòr</i>	<i>baile grànda</i>	> <i>tro bhaile grànda</i>
<i>àm sònraichte</i>	> <i>aig àm sònraichte</i>	<i>òran math</i>	> <i>mu òran math</i>
<i>sruth beag</i>	> <i>ann an sruth beag</i>	<i>sgeul ainmeil</i>	> <i>bho sgeul ainmeil</i>

C. THE DATIVE WITH DEFINITE FEMININE NOUNS

It is recommended that the traditional case marking for definite feminine nouns (i.e. slenderisation) is used (Type A below). However, forms which are not slenderised (Type B) are also frequently used nowadays and should not be considered incorrect.

Type A: the final consonant of the noun and any following adjective is slenderised if possible. Note that certain nouns (e.g. *bean*, *bò*) have irregular dative forms (e.g. *aig a' mhnaoi*, *leis a' bhoin*).

EXAMPLES

<i>an uinneag mhòr</i>	> <i>tron uinneig mhòir</i>	<i>a' chlach throm</i>	> <i>leis a' chloich thruim</i>
<i>mo phiuthar bheag</i>	> <i>bho mo phiuthair bhig</i>	<i>a' ghrian bhlàth</i>	> <i>fon ghrèin bhlàith</i>
<i>a' choinneamh chudromach</i>	> <i>aig a' choinneimh chudromaich</i>		

Type B: as in the basic form for feminine nouns, the article is *a' L* or *an L*, and any following adjective is lenited where possible.

EXAMPLES

<i>an uinneag mhòr</i>	> <i>tron uinneag mhòr</i>	<i>a' chlach throm</i>	> <i>leis a' chlach throm</i>
<i>mo phiuthar bheag</i>	> <i>bho mo phiuthar bheag</i>	<i>a' ghrian bhlàth</i>	> <i>fon ghrian bhlàth</i>
<i>a' choinneamh chudromach</i>	> <i>aig a' choinneamh chudromach</i>		

D. THE DATIVE WITH INDEFINITE FEMININE NOUNS

It is recommended that indefinite feminine nouns are not changed from the basic form (Type A below). However, traditional case marking where feminine nouns are slenderised (Type B) continues to be used and is not incorrect. Nouns are lenited following prepositions that trigger lenition (e.g. *bho*, *de*, *do*, *fo*, *mu*, *ro*, *tro*).

Type A: identical to the basic form.

EXAMPLES

<i>craobh mhòr</i>	> <i>air craobh mhòr</i>	<i>clach ghlas</i>	> <i>ri clach ghlas</i>
<i>nighean bheag</i>	> <i>le nighean bheag</i>	<i>cailleach chaomh</i>	> <i>do chailleach chaomh</i>

Type B: the final consonant of the noun and any following adjective is slenderised if possible. Note that certain nouns (e.g. *bean*, *bò*) have irregular dative forms (e.g. *ri mnaoi*, *le boin*).

EXAMPLES

<i>craobh mhòr</i>	> <i>air craoibh mhòir</i>	<i>clach ghlas</i>	> <i>ri cloich ghlais</i>
<i>nighean bheag</i>	> <i>le nighinn bhig</i>	<i>cailleach chaomh</i>	> <i>do chaillich chaoimh</i>

E. THE DATIVE WITH PLURAL NOUNS

Plural nouns following simple prepositions are identical to the basic form of the plural.

EXAMPLES

<i>bàtaichean mòra</i>	> <i>air bàtaichean mòra</i>	<i>na bàtaichean mòra</i>	> <i>air na bàtaichean mòra</i>
<i>creagan àrda</i>	> <i>ri creagan àrda</i>	<i>na creagan àrda</i>	> <i>ris na creagan àrda</i>
<i>lusan beaga</i>	> <i>le lusan beaga</i>	<i>na lusan beaga</i>	> <i>leis na lusan beaga</i>

3. VARIATION IN VERB FORMS

BACKGROUND

Gaelic has ten irregular verbs: *abair, beir, cluinn, dèan, faic, faigh, rach, ruig, thig, thoir*. Dialectal variation is found with particular forms. For example, the most common conditional form of *rach* is *rachadh* (*rachainn, rachamaid*), but there are several alternative forms. Another example of dialectal variation involves the imperative of *rach*, which can be *rach / na rach, thèid / na tèid, or theirig / na teirig*.

Other variation in irregular verb forms is arguably the result of incomplete acquisition of the language. For instance, the future relative forms of *dèan* and *thoir* recommended in textbooks and dictionaries are *nì* and *bheir*, but 'regularised' forms such as *dèanas* and *bheireas* are increasingly encountered (though the latter may also have a dialectal basis). More extreme examples of this include regularised past tense forms like *cha do chunnaic mi* or *cha do dh'fhaic mi* in place of the traditional *chan fhaca mi*.

While forms like *bhiodh sinn, rachadh sinn* etc. are an established alternative for *bhiomaid, rachamaid* etc., it is unclear to what extent regularised first person conditionals like *rachadh mi* are acceptable variants nowadays for the traditional conjugated form *rachainn*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We have no evidence to recommend any changes to the established model of irregular verbs in Gaelic.

GUIDANCE

Note:

Isg.	– 1st person singular (<i>mi</i>)	2sg.	– 2nd person singular (<i>thu</i>)
Ipl.	– 1st person plural (<i>sinn</i>)	2pl.	– 2nd person plural (<i>sibh</i>)

Alternative forms are shown after commas.

ABAIR – AG RÀDH, A' RÀITINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	thuir, thubhairt	a thuir, thubhairt	tuirt, tubhairt
FUTURE	their	a their	abair
CONDITIONAL	theireadh Isg. theirinn Ipl. theireamaid	a theireadh Isg. a theirinn Ipl. a theireamaid	abradh Is. abrainn Ipl. abramaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. abair 2pl. abraibh		

BEIR – A' BREITH, A' BEIRSINN, A' BEIRSTINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	rug	a rug	do rug
FUTURE	beiridh	a bheireas	beir
CONDITIONAL	bheireadh Isg. bheirinn Ipl. bheireamaid	a bheireadh Isg. a bheirinn Ipl. a bheireamaid	beireadh Isg. beirinn Ipl. beireamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. beir 2pl. beiribh		

BI – A BHITH

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PRESENT	tha	a tha	(bh)eil
PAST	bha	a bha	robh
FUTURE	bidh, bithidh	a bhios, a bhitheas	bi
CONDITIONAL	bhiodh, bhitheadh* Isg. bhithinn Ipl. bhiomaid, bhitheamaid	a bhiodh, a bhitheadh Isg. a bhithinn Ipl. a bhiomaid, a bhitheamaid	biodh, bitheadh Isg. bithinn Ipl. biomaid, bitheamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. bi 2pl. bithibh		

* Following the *Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (2009)*, the monosyllabic forms *bidh*, *bhiodh*, *cha bhiodh* are the norm and the forms *bithidh*, *bhitheadh*, etc. are used to show emphasis.

CLUINN – A' CLUINNINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	chuala	a chuala	cuala
FUTURE	cluinnidh	a chluinneas	cluinn
CONDITIONAL	chluinneadh Isg. chluinninn Ipl. chluinneamaid	a chluinneadh Isg. a chluinninn Ipl. a chluinneamaid	cluinneadh Isg. cluinninn Ipl. cluinneamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. cluinn 2pl. cluinnibh		

DÈAN – A' DÈANAMH, A' DÈANADH

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	rinn	a rinn	do rinn, d' rinn
FUTURE	nì	a nì	dèan
CONDITIONAL	dhèanadh Isg. dhèanainn Ipl. dhèanamaid	a dhèanadh Isg. a dhèanainn Ipl. a dhèanamaid	dèanadh Isg. dèanainn Ipl. dèanamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. dèan 2pl. dèanaibh		

FAIC – A' FAICINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	chunnaic*	a chunnaic*	faca
FUTURE	chì	a chì	faic
CONDITIONAL	chitheadh Isg. chithinn Ipl. chitheamaid	a chitheadh Isg. a chithinn Ipl. a chitheamaid	faiceadh Isg. faicinn Ipl. faiceamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. faic 2pl. faicibh		

* Following the *Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (2009)*, *chunna* is also an acceptable variant.

FAIGH – A' FAIGHINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	fhuair	a fhuair	d' fhuair
FUTURE	gheibh	a gheibh	faigh
CONDITIONAL	gheibheadh Isg. gheibhinn Ipl. gheibheamaid	a gheibheadh Isg. a gheibhinn Ipl. a gheibheamaid	faigheadh Isg. faighinn Ipl. faigheamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. faigh 2pl. faighibh		

RACH – A' DOL

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	chaidh	a chaidh	deach, deachaidh
FUTURE	thèid	a thèid	tèid
CONDITIONAL	rachadh* Isg. rachainn Ipl. rachamaid	a rachadh Isg. a rachainn Ipl. a rachamaid	rachadh Isg. rachainn Ipl. rachamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. rach, theirig 2pl. rachaibh, theirigibh		2sg. rach, teirig 2pl. rachaibh, teirigibh

* Alternative forms include:

deigheadh (deighinn, deigheamaid)

reigheadh (reighinn, reigheamaid)

reaghadh (reaghainn, reaghamaid)

RUIG – A' RUIGSINN, A' RUIGHINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	ràinig	a ràinig	do ràinig, d' ràinig
FUTURE	ruigidh	a ruigeas	ruig
CONDITIONAL	ruigeadh Isg. ruiginn Ipl. ruigeamaid	a ruigeadh Isg. a ruiginn Ipl. a ruigeamaid	ruigeadh Isg. ruiginn Ipl. ruigeamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. ruig 2pl. ruigibh		2sg. ruig 2pl. ruigibh

THIG – A' TIGHINN

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	thàinig	a thàinig	tàinig
FUTURE	thig	a thig	tig
CONDITIONAL	thigeadh Isg. thiginn Ipl. thigeamaid	a thigeadh Isg. a thiginn Ipl. a thigeamaid	tigeadh Isg. tiginn Ipl. tigeamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. thig 2pl. thigibh		

THOIR – A' TOIRT, A' TABHAIRT

	INDEPENDENT	RELATIVE	DEPENDENT
PAST	thug	a thug	tug
FUTURE	bheir	a bheir	toir, tabhair
CONDITIONAL	bheireadh	a bheireadh	toireadh
	Isg. bheirinn Ipl. bheireamaid	Isg. a bheirinn Ipl. a bheireamaid	Isg. toirinn Ipl. toireamaid
IMPERATIVE	2sg. thoir 2pl. thoiribh		

4. DIRECT OBJECT INVERSION

BACKGROUND

The failure to invert objects properly, when required, has been noted as one of the most common mistakes made by Gaelic-medium education pupils. In recent written Gaelic, there is no evidence to support non-inverted forms. However, it appears that a minority of professional users and traditional speakers are more accepting of non-inversion, particularly in Lewis. The limited acceptability of non-inverted forms does not provide strong evidence to alter the existing grammatical description.

Modal verbs (*feum, faod*, etc.) and several idioms that express possibility, ability, wishes etc. (*bu chòir, is urrainn, bu toil*, etc.) may govern a verbal noun (underlined), e.g. *feumaidh sinn falbh, chan fhaod sibh ithe an seo, tha iad ag iarraidh coinneachadh riut*. When a direct object is present in one of these constructions, it precedes the verbal noun and the verbal noun is lenited, if possible, by a preceding *a'*, e.g. *feumaidh sinn an duine a chuideachadh, chan fhaod sibh na h-ùbhlán ithe, tha iad ag iarraidh leabhar ùr a cheannach*.

When the direct object is a personal pronoun, a possessive pronoun is used, and the verbal noun is lenited as appropriate, e.g. *feumaidh sinn do chuideachadh, chan fhaod sibh an ithe*.

Intentional constructions (e.g. *tha mi a' dol a dh'fhaighinn duais*), direct objects in the progressive (*bidh mi ga fhaighinn*) and relative clauses (*sin na dh'fheumas sinn a dhèanamh*) add extra layers of confusion for learners and younger speakers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The non-inverted forms are not recommended for situations where the language represents a linguistic model (e.g. formal writing, teaching materials, grammars). Better pedagogical material is needed to help learners and younger speakers master this usage.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. NOUNS AND NOUN PHRASES

Where the object is a noun or noun phrase and is **direct** (i.e. no preposition is used), the following pattern is used:

feum / faod + subject + object + a' + verbal noun (lenited)

When the verbal noun starts with a vowel or *fh*, the particle *a* is usually omitted, and this can also happen where the object ends with a vowel. Even when the noun phrase is quite long, it is inverted. Non-inverted usage should be avoided, e.g. *feumaidh sinn cuideachadh an duine, chan fhaod sibh ceannach leabhar ùr*.

EXAMPLES

In the following examples, the direct object is underlined:

Is urrainn dhuinn an duine a chuideachadh

Feumaidh iad Beurla (a) bhruidhinn

Faodaidh sibh mòran ionnsachadh bhuapa

Bu chòir dhaibh an toiseach, an saoghal agus beatha nan daoine anns a' chumantas a grùdadh

B. PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Where the direct object is a pronoun, the possessive pronoun (*mo*, *do*, etc.) is used. The masculine third-person singular personal pronoun (*a*^L) is typically omitted before a verbal noun beginning with a vowel or *fh*.

EXAMPLES

In the following examples, the object is underlined:

Bu chòir dha mo phàigheadh
Faodaidh iad do thoirt dhachaigh
Am feum mi (a) fhosgladh?
Chan fheum sinn a glasadh
Feumaidh sibh ar cuideachadh!
Feumaidh mi ur fàgail an-dràsta
Chan fhaod sibh an ithe

The following kinds of usage are to be avoided: *feumaidh sinn cuideachadh thu*, *chan fhaod sibh ithe iad*, *tha iad ag iarraidh ceannach e*.

THOIR AN AIRE! WATCH OUT

There are several expressions which do not *typically* invert even though inverted forms can be found. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

faighinn cuidhteas: *Dh'fheumadh iad faighinn cuidhteas e* – They had to get rid of it.

toirt an aire: *Feumaidh sinn toirt an aire gu bheil seo fìor* – We must notice that this is true.

5. IMPERSONALS WITH RACH

BACKGROUND

Clear and unambiguous norms exist for *rach* impersonal forms (often called 'passives') and most speakers use them correctly. However, some interpret the leniting **particle** *a* as the **possessive pronoun** *a*, 'his', and incorrectly extend that interpretation by using possessive pronouns elsewhere. For example, the correct *rach* impersonal for 'the books were sold' is *chaidh na leabhraichean a reic*, but it is not unusual to encounter *chaidh na leabhraichean an reic*. This is a form of **hypercorrection** where a grammatical rule in one situation is incorrectly applied to another situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no rationale for changing the current grammatical norms, but better guidance is warranted. Additionally, current grammars do not include the established practices of using regular emphatic **pronouns** (e.g. *mise, thusa*) when the direct object pronoun is emphatic: *chaidh esan a thogail* (cf. *chaidh a thogail-san*). This is discussed in §B below.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. RACH IMPERSONALS WITH NOUNS

Where the **direct object** is a **noun** following *rach*, the following pattern is used:

- *rach* + noun (or noun phrase) + *a*^l + verbal noun (lenited)

It is important to note that the *a* between the noun and verb is **not** a **possessive pronoun**. It is a non-inflecting particle: it does not change form and it always lenites the following verbal noun where possible.

EXAMPLES

An rachadh na daoine bochda a mharbhadh?
Chaidh an riaghaltas a stèidheachadh
Thèid na taighean a thogail

Cha deach a' bhò bheag bhàn a lorg
Cha deach na daoine a chumail às
An deach an obair a thug mi dhut a dhèanamh?

B. RACH IMPERSONALS WITH PRONOUNS

Where the direct object is a **pronoun**, the **possessive pronoun** (*mo, do*, etc.) is used. The possessive pronoun 'his' (*a*) may be omitted before a **verbal noun** beginning with a vowel or *fh*.

EXAMPLES

Chaidh mo thogail
Chaidh do phutadh
Chaidh (a) fhosgladh
Chaidh a toirt

Chaidh ar toirt
Chaidh ur càineadh
Chaidh an togail

Three ways of emphasising pronouns in *rach* impersonals are found today. The first, which uses an **emphatic pronoun**, is the most commonly used. The second, which adds an **emphatic suffix** to the **verbal noun**, is less commonly used nowadays. The third, which uses the **reflexive fhèin**, is also sometimes found.

EXAMPLES

I *Chaidh mise a thogail*
II *Chaidh mo thogail-sa*
III *Chaidh mi fhìn a thogail*

C. ELISION OF THE PARTICLE

The particle *a* is commonly omitted before verbal nouns beginning with vowels and *fh*. Similarly, in speech, the *a* is rarely heard if the noun itself ends in a vowel. More **vernacular** writing styles may reflect this as well.

EXAMPLES

An tèid an duine ainmeachadh? *Chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh*
Chaidh na h-uinneagan fhosgladh *Cha deach a' chaora lorg*

D. RELATIVE CLAUSES

Where a noun comes before *rach*, e.g. *na taighean a chaidh a thogail* 'the houses which were built', the same norms as in §A apply: noun + **relative pronoun** + *rach* + *a*^l + verbal noun (lenited).

Again, the *a* before the verbal noun is not a possessive pronoun. It is a non-inflecting particle which does not change form and which lenites the following verbal noun when possible.

EXAMPLES

Chì sinn na taighean a chaidh a thogail *Siud an uinneag a chaidh fhosgladh*

Some Gaelic users use possessive pronouns in these cases (e.g. *chì sinn na taighean a chaidh an togail*), but this is a **hypercorrection** and is not recommended.

THOIR AN AIRE! COMMON MISTAKES

As mentioned, because the 3rd person **possessive pronoun** *a* ('his' / 'her') looks and sounds identical to the **non-inflecting particle** *a*, it can be misinterpreted. It is important to understand the difference between well-formed sentences such as *chaidh a thogail* – where the *a* is a possessive – and ones such as *chaidh an taigh a thogail*, where the *a* is a particle. Compare the following:

✓ <i>chaidh an togail</i>	✓ <i>chaidh na taighean a thogail</i>	× <i>chaidh na taighean an togail</i>
✓ <i>chaidh a taghadh</i>	✓ <i>chaidh nighean a thaghadh</i>	× <i>chaidh nighean a taghadh</i>
✓ <i>chaidh an ceannach</i>	✓ <i>chaidh taighean a cheannach</i>	× <i>chaidh taighean an ceannach</i>

Some confusion may also arise from the fact that there are other impersonal structures which do use **possessive pronouns**:

Bha iad air an toirt dhachaigh cf. > *Chaidh an toirt dhachaigh*

Fhuair iad an àrach air croit (lit. They got their upbringing) cf. > *Chaidh an àrach air croit* (They were raised)

6. LENITION OF VERBAL NOUNS

BACKGROUND

Modal verbs (*feum, faod*, etc.) and several idioms that express possibility, ability, wishes etc. (*bu chòir, is urrainn, bu toil*, etc.) govern a verbal noun, e.g. *feumaidh sinn falbh, chan fhaod sibh ithe an seo, tha iad ag iarraidh bruidhinn*. When the verbal noun is used **intransitively** (when there is no object), it is generally not lenited, though there is some variation with instances like *dol* and *tighinn*, e.g. *feumaidh tu dol ann* versus *feumaidh tu a dhol ann; chan fhaod thu tighinn a-steach* versus *chan fhaod thu a thighinn a-steach*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The established practice of not leniting intransitive verbal nouns in these constructions is recommended. However, exceptions are to be made for *bith*, which is always lenited in this structure, *dol* which is typically lenited and *tighinn*, which is lenited in certain dialects.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

Where the verbal noun has no direct object, the following pattern is used:

feum / faod + subject + verbal noun (non-lenited)

EXAMPLES

*Feumaidh sibh **seinn***
*Chan fhaod sibh **ithe** an seo*
*Bu chòir dhut **faighneachd** an toiseach*

However, *bith* is always lenited (*a bhith*), *dol* is typically lenited, and *tighinn* is frequently lenited.

EXAMPLES

*Chan fhaod sibh a **bhith** cinnteach*
*Feumaidh tu **dol** / **a dhol** ann*
*Cha b' urrainn dhaibh **tighinn** / **a thighinn** aig an àm ud*

7. TRANSLATING 'TO' INTO GAELIC

BACKGROUND

There is some concern about an increasing overuse of the Gaelic preposition *do* in all contexts where the corresponding English preposition 'to' would be used. The questionnaire investigated *do* with the verbs *cuir*, *sgriobh*, *bruidhinn* and *tuit* in order to assess whether innovative usage was acceptable. While results show that *do* is increasingly acceptable as the preposition to be used with the verbs *cuir* and *sgriobh*, this does not appear to be generalised to a situation where using the preposition *do* for 'to' is acceptable with all verbs. While it appears that fluency requires knowing which preposition is appropriate with which verb or adjective, this kind of information is not readily available or up to date in current dictionaries or other reference material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A good dictionary should be consulted for appropriate usage. Better resources are required to address the issue that verb and preposition combinations are not the same between Gaelic and English.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

The English preposition 'to' is not equivalent to only one preposition in Gaelic. Depending on the verb and context, it might be translated as *do*, *ri*, *gu* (*gus*, *chun*), or zero. Please note that the following list is not intended to be exhaustive.

DO – TO, FOR

dhomh, *dhu(i)t*, *dha*, *dhi*, *dhuinn*, *dhuibh*, *dhaibh*

With the **definite article** ('the'), it can be *dhan* or *don*.

<i>a' dol do</i>	going to / into	<i>Chaidh iad don bhaile</i> <i>Thuit iad dhan loch</i>	They went (in)to the town They fell into the loch
<i>a' sealltainn do</i>	show to	<i>Bha i a' sealltainn dealbh dhaibh</i> <i>Seall dhomh do làmh</i>	She was showing a picture to them She was showing them a picture Show me your hands
<i>a' toirt do</i>	give to	<i>Thug e litir dhomh</i>	He gave a letter to me He gave me a letter
<i>a' toirt an aire do</i>	pay attention to	<i>Thoir an aire dhomh</i>	Notice me Look after me
<i>ag ionnsachadh do</i>	teach to	<i>Dh'ionnsaich i dhomh brochan a dhèanamh</i>	She taught me to make porridge
<i>a' buntainn do</i>	belong to	<i>Seo an eaglais dham buineadh e</i>	This was the church that he belonged to
<i>cò dha</i>	to / for whom	<i>Cò dha a tha thu ga dheasachadh?</i>	For whom are you preparing it? Who are you preparing it for?

THOIR AN AIRE! WATCH OUT

Although *sgriobh do* is sometimes used to mean 'writing to', in more traditional usage it means 'writing for / on behalf of'.

<i>a' sgrìobhadh do</i>	writing for	<i>Bha e a' sgrìobhadh don phàipear-naidheachd</i>	He was writing for the newspaper
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A – TO

A^l is a reduced form of *do* that is often used with **indefinite** nouns (without 'the'). It adds *dh'* before vowels.

<i>a' dol a</i>	to go to	<i>Chaidh mi a Bharraigh</i>	I went to Barra
		<i>Thèid mi a dh'Obar Dheathain</i>	I'll go to Aberdeen

GU, GUS – TO, UNTIL, IN ORDER TO

thugam, thugad, thuige, thuice, thugainn, thugaibh, thuca

Gu is used with **indefinite** nouns. It is often used with a place or point in time.

Gus is used with **definite** nouns. It is also used with verbs meaning 'until' or 'in order to'.

<i>a' dol gu</i>	going to	<i>Tha tràan a' dol bho Ghlaschu gu Dùn Èideann</i>	The train is going from Glasgow to Edinburgh
<i>a' sgrìobhadh gu</i>	writing to	<i>Sgrìobh mi litir gu Calum</i>	I wrote a letter to Calum
<i>a' cur gu</i>	sending to	<i>Chuir i post-d thugam</i>	She sent an email to me She sent me an email
		<i>a' cur gu feum</i>	putting to use
		<i>a' cur gu bàs</i>	putting to death
<i>a' tighinn gu</i>	coming to	<i>Thàinig an turas gu crìch</i>	The journey came to an end
<i>gu ruige seo</i>	until now		
<i>gu ìre</i>	to an extent		
<i>gus</i>	to	<i>Fuirich an seo gus a-màireach</i>	Stay here until tomorrow
<i>gus</i>	until	<i>Chan fhada gus an tig i</i>	Not long until she comes
<i>gus</i>	in order to	<i>'S e an leabhar as fheàrr gus Gàidhlig ionnsachadh</i>	It's the best book for learning Gaelic

CHUN - TO

Chun is another variant of *gu* used with 'the'. *Chun* is used with the **genitive** case.

<i>chun</i>	to	<i>Chaidh sinn chun an dorais</i>	We went to the door
		<i>Sgrìobh mi litir chun na sgoile</i>	I wrote to the school

RI – TO, DURING, WITH

rium, riut, ris, rithe, rinn, ribh, riutha

<i>a' bruidhinn ri*</i>	talking to / with	<i>Bruidhnidh mi riut a-màireach</i>	I'll talk to you tomorrow
<i>tha agam ri</i>	to have to (do something)	<i>Tha againn ri falbh a dh'aithghearr</i>	We have to leave soon
<i>coltach ri</i>	similar to	<i>Tha iad coltach ri chèile</i>	They are similar to one another

* *a' bruidhinn le* is also common in Uist.

AIR – ON, RARELY TO

orm, ort, air, oirre, oirnn, oirbh, orra

<i>faisg air</i>	close to	<i>baile faisg air an drochaid</i>	a town close to the bridge
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8. RELATIVE CLAUSES WITH PREPOSITIONS

BACKGROUND

In English there are two ways of forming a **relative clause** with a **preposition**: (a) 'fronting', e.g. *the woman to whom I was talking*; and 'stranding', e.g. *the woman I was talking to*. Grammatical descriptions of Gaelic tend to highlight the former, e.g. *an tè ris an robh mi a' bruidhinn*. However, there is a certain amount of confusion as to whether 'stranding' is also acceptable usage, either with or without marking the preposition to agree with the subject, e.g. *an tè a bha mi a' bruidhinn rithe*, *an tè a bha mi a' bruidhinn ris*.

Traditional speakers still have a strong preference for the 'fronting' approach to forming relative clauses with prepositions. At the same time, there is evidence that 'stranding' can also be acceptable in vernacular usage and historical examples of it pre-dating the twentieth century can be found. However, it is also apparent that there is disapproval towards the stranding construction from some professional and some traditional speakers.

RECOMMENDATION

The 'fronting' approach is still to be recommended, particularly in situations where the language represents linguistic models (e.g. formal writing, teaching materials, grammars).

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

WITHOUT A PREPOSITION

When forming a non-prepositional relative clause, the following pattern is used:

Positive: noun + *a*^l + relative verb form + ...

Negative: noun + *nach* + dependent verb form + ...

EXAMPLES

an tè a sgrìobh an leabhar seo

an eaglais a chunnaic mi

am fear a dh'fhosgail an doras

a' chlann a chuidicheas an tidsear

an tè nach do sgrìobh an leabhar seo

an eaglais nach fhaca mi

am fear nach fhosgail an doras

a' chlann nach cuidich an tidsear

WITH A PREPOSITION

When forming a relative clause with a preposition, the preferred pattern is as follows:

Positive: noun + definite form of preposition + *an* + dependent verb form + ...

Negative: noun + definite form of preposition + *nach* + dependent verb form + ...

EXAMPLES

an tè ris an robh mi a' bruidhinn

an eaglais air am bi mullach ùr

an t-snàthainn leis an robh am pasgan air a cheangal

an tè ris nach robh mi a' bruidhinn

an eaglais air nach bi mullach ùr

PREPOSITIONAL STRANDING

However, the following pattern may also be encountered. It is more likely to appear in speech than in writing. It is not recommended in texts where the language acts as a linguistic model (e.g. formal writing, teaching materials, grammars).

noun + *a'* + relative verb form (lenited) + ... + prepositional pronoun

In these cases, speakers disagree on whether the prepositional pronoun should agree with the noun.

EXAMPLES

an tè a bha mi a' bruidhinn rithe / ris

an eaglais a bhios mullach ùr oirre / air

9. FORMS OF NUMBERS AND NOUNS

BACKGROUND

There is some confusion about the inflection of adjectives after the numeral *dà*. However, traditional speakers prefer the use of lenited singular adjectives, i.e. *dà chù mhòr*, and reject the plural form of the adjective *mhòra*.

In addition, there are competing systems for expressing numeric quantities. For instance, the following are all possible ways of expressing '24 books' and it is unclear which is most commonly used: *ceithir leabhraichean air / thar fhichead*, *ceithir leabhraichean fichead*, *fichead leabhar agus / 's a ceithir*. Traditional speakers prefer versions of '24 books' where the noun comes between the 4 and the 20, i.e. *ceithir leabhraichean air fhichead*, *ceithir leabhraichean fichead*. The recommended structure for mathematics in school has been to place the numbers before the noun, i.e. *fichead 's a ceithir leabhraichean*. This has become common in school subjects beyond mathematics and is growing more common outside of schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following *dà* and a noun, adjectives are singular and lenited, i.e. *dà chù mhòr*.

Of the competing systems for expressing numbers, no one form is recommended over the others for general use. However, it is recognised that the form which places the noun last is the preferred convention in school mathematics teaching. Guidance for schools is given by Stòrlann on the Mirean website.¹

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. NUMBERS 1 TO 10

Nouns are lenited after *aon*, except for *d-*, *t-*, and *s-*. Nouns are lenited where possible after *dà*.

Adjectives are lenited after *dà*. Adjectives are also lenited when they follow plural nouns formed by slenderisation, e.g. *eòin bheaga*, *coin mhòra*.

Certain nouns typically appear as singular with numbers 3-10, including *bliadhna*, *latha* and *sgillinn*.

aon bhaile mòr
dà bhaile mhòr
trì bailtean mòra
ceithir bailtean mòra
còig bailtean mòra
sia bailtean mòra
seachd bailtean mòra
ochd bailtean mòra
naoi bailtean mòra
deich bailtean mòra

aon chat beag
dà chat bheag
trì cait bheaga
ceithir cait bheaga
còig cait bheaga
sia cait bheaga
seachd cait bheaga
ochd cait bheaga
naoi cait bheaga
deich cait bheaga

¹ <https://storlann.co.uk/mirean/>

B. NUMBERS 11 TO 19

With 11-19, the traditional pattern places the noun before *deug*. When the plural is formed by slenderisation it is lenited, i.e. *trì cait dheug*. In schools' mathematics teaching, the noun comes at the end.

aon bhaile deug
dà bhaile dheug
trì bailtean deug
ceithir bailtean deug
còig bailtean deug
sia bailtean deug
seachd bailtean deug
ochd bailtean deug
naoi bailtean deug

aon chat deug
dà chat dheug
trì cait dheug
ceithir cait dheug
còig cait dheug
sia cait dheug
seachd cait dheug
ochd cait dheug
naoi cait dheug

Schools usage

aon deug bailtean
dà dheug bailtean
trì deug bailtean
ceithir deug bailtean
còig deug bailtean
sia deug bailtean
seachd deug bailtean
ochd deug bailtean
naoi deug bailtean

C. NUMBERS 20 TO 29

The singular form of the noun is used after *fichead*. With numbers 21-29, the traditional pattern is to place *air fhichead* or *fichead* after the noun. In schools' mathematics teaching, the noun comes at the end.

fichead baile
aon bhaile air fhichead
dà bhaile air fhichead
trì bailtean air fhichead
ceithir bailtean air fhichead
còig bailtean air fhichead
sia bailtean air fhichead
seachd bailtean air fhichead
ochd bailtean air fhichead
naoi bailtean air fhichead

fichead cat
aon chat fichead
dà chat fichead
trì cait fichead
ceithir cait fichead
còig cait fichead
sia cait fichead
seachd cait fichead
ochd cait fichead
naoi cait fichead

Schools usage

fichead bòrd
fichead agus a h-aon bùird*
fichead agus a dhà bùird
fichead agus a trì bùird
fichead agus a ceithir bùird
fichead agus a còig bùird
fichead agus a sia bùird
fichead agus a seachd bùird
fichead agus a h-ochd bùird
fichead agus a naoi bùird

* also as *fichead 's a h-aon*

10. TRANSLATING 'IF' INTO GAELIC

BACKGROUND

The English **conjunction** 'if' has two different functions. The first of these is to express a condition, e.g. 'if I have time, I'll go too'. The second is to express an alternative to 'whether', e.g. 'I don't know if I'll have time'. In Gaelic, these functions are expressed by more than one word. The conditional function is expressed with *ma* and *nan*, e.g. *ma bhios ùine agam, thèid mise ann cuideachd; nam biodh ùine agam, rachainn ann cuideachd*. For 'whether', the interrogative particle *an* is used for (non-negative) questions, e.g. *An tèid i ann? Chan eil fhios agam. Chan eil fhios agam an tèid i ann*. Influence from English has led to this distinction being blurred, and there is some uncertainty as to whether usages like *chan eil fhios agam ma thèid i ann* should be considered acceptable nowadays.

RECOMMENDATION

Non-traditional usages like *chan eil fhios agam ma thèid i ann* are likely the result of incomplete acquisition or understanding of Gaelic grammar, and require a clearer understanding of the existing grammatical norm. The traditional distinction between conditional clauses (with *ma* or *nan*) and non-conditional questions (*an*) is recommended.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

When 'if' can be substituted by 'assuming that' without changing the meaning of the sentence, this means that it is introducing a conditional clause, e.g.

- if she is going, I will go there too = assuming that she is going
- if she went, I would go there too = assuming that she went

In these examples, there are two events: If A happens (she goes), B will happen (I go too), i.e. **B happening is conditional on A happening**. When there is a condition, the 'if' is translated into Gaelic as either *ma* or *nan*. *Nan* is only used with the conditional tenses. *Ma* is used with all other tenses.

MA

Ma is typically used with the future tense but can also be found with past and future tenses.

EXAMPLES

PAST

Ma dh'fhàg thu an sin e, càit a bheil e?

Ma rinn e am-bliadhna e, cha dèan e an-ath-bhliadhna e

Ma bha an doras fosgailte, cha do mhothaich e

PRESENT

Ma tha an t-airgead aice, gheibh i an càr

Ma tha càil a dhìth oirbh an seo, cuiribh fios thugam

Ma tha bàrd nas fheàrr ann, chan aithne dhòmhsa e

FUTURE

Thig còmhla rium, ma thogras tu

Ma dh'fhàsas tu tinn, thig dhachaigh sa bhad!

Ma bhios tìde againn, nì sinn feasgar e

NAN (NAM)

With *nan*, both clauses of the sentence are in the conditional tense. *Nan* becomes *nam* before *b, p, f, m*.

EXAMPLES

Nam b' e dotair a bhiodh annad, dh'fheumadh tu an cuideachadh
Dè chanadh d' athair nam biodh e ann?
Nan rachadh againn air an glacadh, bheireamaid dhachaigh iad

The form *nan robh* is also often used instead of the conditional form.

EXAMPLES

Nan robh an cothrom againn, dè dhèanamaid?
Am biodh e na bu thoilichte a-nis nan robh e air Ealasaid a phòsadh?

B. IF = WHETHER

When 'if' can be substituted by 'whether' without changing the meaning of the sentence, this means that it is introducing a **subordinate question**, e.g.

- I don't know if she will be there = I don't know whether she will be there
- He asked if she would be there = he asked whether she would be there

In contrast to above, with these examples, there is no action that is conditional on another action. In these cases, the 'if' should be translated into Gaelic as the interrogative particle *an* (or *am* before *b, p, f, m*.)

EXAMPLES

<i>Faighnich do Lachlan a bheil e a' tighinn</i>	Ask Lachlan if / whether he's coming
<i>Saoil an e Anna a th' ann</i>	I wonder if / whether that's Anna
<i>Chan eil fhios agam am bi iad ann</i>	I don't know if / whether they'll be there
<i>Ged nach robh fhios aige an robh mi a' tighinn</i>	Even though he didn't know if / whether I was coming

Usages of the following kind are to be avoided:

*Chan eil fhios agam **ma** bhios i ann*
*Dh'fhaighnich e **nam** biodh i ann*

11. DIRECT OBJECT FORMS WITH GA

BACKGROUND

When a verbal noun in the **progressive** governs a personal pronoun, this appears in the form of a **possessive pronoun** fused with *ag*, e.g. *ag + am > tha mi gam faicinn* 'I am seeing them'. There is a clear consensus among both professional and traditional speakers that forms like *tha mi a' faicinn iad* are unacceptable. With emphatic and reflexive pronouns, things are less clear, with some uncertainty about whether *tha mi gam faicinn-san*, *tha mi gam fhaicinn fhèin* is still normal usage (for 'I am seeing THEM', and 'I am seeing myself', respectively), or whether it is considered acceptable to use *tha mi a' faicinn iadsan*, *tha mi a' faicinn mi fhèin*.

RECOMMENDATION

There is little evidence to conclude that usages like *tha mi a' faicinn iad* or *tha mi a' faicinn iadsan* are considered acceptable by most traditional Gaelic speakers and writers. The traditional forms are still to be considered normal usage: *tha mi gam faicinn*, *tha mi gam faicinn-san*.

GRAMMATICAL GUIDANCE

A. PRONOUNS AS DIRECT OBJECTS

Sometimes the **direct object** of a verbal noun in the progressive is a normal **personal pronoun**, as in the English 'I am seeing you / him / her / it / them'. When expressing these in Gaelic, the object precedes the verbal noun, in the form of a **possessive pronoun** fused with the particle *ag*. Usages such as *tha mi a' faicinn thu* are to be avoided.

EXAMPLES

at my	gam ^l or ga mo ^l	<i>A bheil thu gam chluinntinn?</i>
at your (singular)	gad ^l or ga do ^l	<i>Chan eil mi gad thuigsinn</i>
at his	ga ^l	<i>Bha Anna ga dhèanamh</i>
at her	ga ^{h-}	<i>Bidh mi ga h-iarraidh</i>
at our	gar ⁿ⁻	<i>An robh thu gar faicinn? Nach robh e gar n-aithneachadh?</i>
at you (plural, polite)	gur ⁿ⁻	<i>Cha bhi mi gur creidsinn Bha mi gur n-ionndrainn</i>
at their	gan, gam	<i>Bidh thu gan teagasg fad na bliadhna</i>

The first three forms here are followed by lenition (indicated by ^l). The 3rd person feminine forms prefix an *h-* to words beginning with a vowel (indicated by ^{h-}). The 1st and 2nd person plurals prefix an *n-* onto words beginning with vowels (indicated by ⁿ⁻). The 3rd person plural 'gan' changes to 'gam' before *b*, *p*, *f*, *m*.

B. EMPHATIC PRONOUNS AS DIRECT OBJECTS

Sometimes the direct object of a verb in the progressive is an **emphatic** personal pronoun, as in the English 'I am seeing YOU / HIM / HER / IT / THEM'. When expressing these in Gaelic, the object again precedes the verbal noun, in the form of a possessive pronoun fused with the particle *ag*, and the appropriate emphatic **suffix** is added to the verbal noun.

EXAMPLES

gam ^l or ga mo ^l	-sa	Carson a tha iad gam sheachnadh-sa?	Why are they avoiding <u>me</u> ?
gad ^l or ga do ^l	-sa	Tha mi ga do chur-sa fo gheasaibh	I'm putting <u>you</u> under a spell
ga ^l	-san	Bhiodh Tormod ga iarraidh-san cuideachd	Norman would want <u>him</u> too
ga ^h	-se	Tha iad ga freagairt-se	They are answering <u>her</u>
gar ⁿ	-ne	Nach eil iad gar cuideachadh-ne?	Aren't they helping <u>us</u> ?
gur ⁿ	-se	Tha mi gur tuigsinn-se co-dhiù	I understand <u>you</u> at least
gan	-san	Tha e trang gan cuideachadh-san	He is busy helping <u>them</u>

Usages such as *tha mi a' faicinn thusa* are to be avoided.

C. REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS AS DIRECT OBJECTS

Sometimes the direct object of a verbal noun in the progressive is a reflexive personal pronoun, as in the English 'I am seeing myself' or 'they are seeing themselves'. When expressing these in Gaelic, the object again precedes the verbal noun, in the form of a possessive pronoun fused with the particle *ag*, and the reflexive *fhèin* (or *fhìn*) follows the verbal noun. Usages such as *tha mi a' faicinn mi fhìn* are to be avoided.

EXAMPLES

gam ^l or ga mo ^l	-sa	Carson a tha mi gam chàineadh fhèin?	Why am I criticising myself?
gad ^l or ga do ^l	-sa	Tha thu gad fhaicinn fhèin gu soilleir	You are seeing yourself clearly
ga ^l	-san	Bhiodh Iain ga mheas fhèin fortanach	Iain would think himself lucky
ga ^h	-se	Tha i ga freagairt fhèin	She is answering herself
gar ⁿ	-ne	Bha sinn gar cuideachadh fhèin	We were helping ourselves
gur ⁿ	-se	Tha sibh gur cluinntinn fhèin	You are hearing yourselves
gan	-san	Tha iad gam marbhadh fhèin	They are killing themselves

THOIR AN AIRE! WATCH OUT

ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS

The spelling of *gam / gad* etc. as *gham / ghad* can sometimes be found in writing which reflects its pronunciation in Lewis dialects. This is not a spelling mistake but is not considered standard spelling.

PRONOUN STRANDING

Sentences which use the pattern *Tha mi a' faicinn iad* are not considered to be standard usage in modern Scottish Gaelic. However, this pattern can be found in certain dialects that are uncommon today, such as East Sutherland and Easter Ross.