

Present Tense in Kurmanji Kurdish — Dema Niha di Kurmancî de

Kurdistan Voice | Lesson 06 | Final teaching edition

Learning goals — Armancên fêrbûnê

Identify the present indicative (dema niha), conjugate a regular verb with person endings, recognize the di- and na- patterns, distinguish direct and oblique pronouns in present transitive clauses, ask simple present-time questions, and recognize why not every verb behaves regularly.

1. Present tense in Kurmanji — Dema niha

The present indicative is used for ongoing situations, habits and general truths. English often distinguishes “I read” and “I am reading”, while Kurmanji may use the same form: **Ez dixwînim**. The surrounding context establishes the intended reading. For example, **Ez her roj dixwînim**. means “I read every day”; **Ez niha dixwînim**. means “I am reading now”.

2. Building the present indicative — Avakirina dema niha

A common teaching pattern is **di- + present stem + person ending**. For **xwendin** (“to read/study”), the present stem is **xwîn-**: di + xwîn + im → **dixwînim**. Some verbs have irregular stems or special prefixes; the formula is not a universal rule.

3. The complete xwendin paradigm — Çêkirina lêkera xwendin

Use the same stem and change the person ending. In common standard forms: **ez dixwînim**, **tu dixwînî**, **ew dixwîne**, **em dixwînin**, **hûn dixwînin**, **ew dixwînin**. The third-person plural and first/second-person plural have identical verb endings, so the pronoun clarifies who acts.

Person	Kurmanji	English
ez	dixwînim	I read
tu	dixwînî	you read
ew	dixwîne	he/she reads
em	dixwînin	we read
hûn	dixwînin	you (plural) read
ew	dixwînin	they read

4. Present stems — Rehên dema niha

The infinitive is not the present stem. Learn them as pairs: **xwendin** → **xwîn-** (read), **dîtin** → **bîn-** (see), **kirin** → **k-** (do/make), **xwarin** → **xw-** (eat), **nivîsîn** → **nivîs-** (write). For example, **Ez dibînim** (“I see”), **Ez dikim** (“I do”), **Ez dixwim** (“I eat”), **Ez dinivîsim** (“I write”). Check unfamiliar verbs in a reliable dictionary rather than removing -in mechanically.

Infinitive	Present stem	Example
xwendin	xwîn-	dixwînim
dîtin	bîn-	dibînim
kirin	k-	dikim
xwarin	xw-	dixwim
nivîsîn	nivîs-	dinivîsim

5. Affirmative sentences — Hevokên erênî

A simple clause often has subject-object-verb order. **Ez kitêbê dixwînim.** — “I read the book.” **Tu nanê dixwî.** — “You eat the bread.” **Em kurdî diaxivin.** — “We speak Kurdish.” In present transitive clauses, a definite object is commonly oblique; the specific form depends on the noun phrase.

6. Negative present — Dema niha ya neyînî

For many regular present-indicative verbs, the negative uses **na-** instead of **di-**: **Ez dixwînim** → **Ez naxwînim** (“I read → I do not read”); **Tu dibînî** → **Tu nabînî** (“You see → You do not see”); **Ew dinivîse** → **Ew nanivîse** (“He/she writes → does not write”). Some verbs and moods follow different patterns; do not apply na- to every tense or construction.

Affirmative	Negative
Ez dixwînim.	Ez naxwînim.
Tu dibînî.	Tu nabînî.
Ew dinivîse.	Ew nanivîse.

7. Questions — Pirs di dema niha de

Yes/no questions may be expressed through intonation and context: **Tu dixwî?** — “Are you reading?/Do you read?” Question words typically occur before the verb: **Tu çi dixwî?** — “What are you reading?” **Tu kengî dixwî?** — “When do you read?” **Tu li ku dixwî?** — “Where do you study/read?” The last question's meaning depends on context.

8. Present transitive alignment — Rewşa lêkerên gerguhêz

In a canonical present transitive sentence, the agent is direct and the object oblique: **Ez te dibînim.** (“I see you.”) The agent **ez** is direct; the object **te** is oblique. Compare the past transitive **Min tu dîtî.** (“I saw you.”). This contrast is central to Kurmanji split alignment; a later past-tense lesson explains the system in depth.

9. Intransitive verbs — Lêkerên negerguhêz

An intransitive verb does not take a direct object in its basic frame. For example, **Ez diçim.** (“I go/am going”), **Tu têyî.** (“You come/are coming”; regional variants exist), and **Ew radizê.** (“He/she sleeps/is sleeping”). Notice that **çûn**, **hatin** and **razan** are not formed by blindly applying the regular di- + stem formula.

10. Frequent special verbs — Lêkerên taybet

Important high-frequency forms include **ez diçim** (“I go”), **ez tîm** (“I come”), **ez dikarim** (“I can”), and the present copula **ez xwendekar im** (“I am a student”). These constructions have distinct grammatical behavior. In particular, **karîn** (“be able to”) belongs in the separate modal-verb lesson.

11. Present copula — Pêvebera dema niha

The present copular pattern is different from regular lexical present verbs: **Ez baş im.** (“I am well”), **Tu baş î.** (“You are well”), **Ew baş e.** (“He/she is well”), **Em baş in.** (“We are well”). The endings attach to a predicate and should not be mistaken for a di- conjugation. Regional orthography may join or separate forms differently.

12. Time expressions — Peyvên demê

Common time expressions include **niha** (“now”), **her roj** (“every day”), **gelek caran** (“often/many times”), **îro** (“today”), and **carinan** (“sometimes”). Compare **Ez niha dixwînim.** (“I am reading now”) with **Ez her roj dixwînim.** (“I read every day”).

13. Short dialogues — Axaftin

Dialogue A: A: **Tu çi dikî?** (“What are you doing?”) B: **Ez kitêbê dixwînim.** (“I am reading the book.”) A: **Tu her roj dixwînî?** (“Do you read every day?”) B: **Erê, ez her roj dixwînim.** (“Yes, I read every day.”)

Dialogue B: A: **Tu kurdî diaxivî?** (“Do you speak Kurdish?”) B: **Erê, ez kurdî diaxivim.** (“Yes, I speak Kurdish.”)

14. Typical learner errors — Çewtiyên gelemperî

Do not use an infinitive as a conjugated verb (**ez xwendin**); do not assume all present stems equal the infinitive minus -in; do not use the same person ending for every subject; do not insert di- into the present copula; do not equate English present progressive with a uniquely progressive Kurmanji form; and do not use oblique **min** as the agent in an ordinary present transitive clause.

15. Practice exercises — Rahênan

- A. Complete:** Ez dixwîn__; tu dixwîn__; ew dixwîn__; em dixwîn__.
- B. Negate:** Ez dixwînîm; tu dibînî; ew dinivîse.
- C. Translate:** “I read every day”; “Are you reading?”; “We speak Kurdish”; “I do not see you.”
- D. Identify present stem:** xwendin, dîtin, nivîsîn, xwarin.
- E. Explain:** Why can **Ez dixwînîm** mean both “I read” and “I am reading”?
- F. Identify:** Which form is a copula: **dixwîne** or **baş e**?

16. Answer key — Bersiv

- A.** -im, -î, -e, -in.
- B.** Ez naxwînîm; tu nabînî; ew nanivîse.
- C.** Ez her roj dixwînîm; Tu dixwînî?; Em kurdî diaxivin; Ez te nabînîm.
- D.** xwîn-, bîn-, nivîs-, xw-.
- E.** The present indicative is compatible with habitual and ongoing readings; time adverbials/context clarify.
- F.** **baş e** contains a copular ending; **dixwîne** is a lexical verb.

17. Reference notes — Çavkanî

Recommended descriptions include W. M. Thackston, *Kurmanji Kurdish: A Reference Grammar* (2006); Geoffrey Haig and Ergin Öpengin, *Introduction to Special Issue: Kurdish — A Critical Research Overview* (2018); and Geoffrey Haig's linguistic work on Northern Kurdish. Examples are written for instruction, not quoted from these references. The lesson follows a standard-oriented teaching variety; regional variation remains possible. Native-speaker editorial review is recommended for subsequent editions.

18. Next lesson — Dersa pêş

Lesson 07: Past Tense (Dema Borî). Future lessons will cover future tense, perfect constructions, and modal expressions (karîn, divê, xwestin) independently.