

Lesson 09 — Perfect and Compound Tenses in Kurmanji Kurdish

Dema Temamkirî û Demên Hevedudanî — Kurdistan Voice Grammar Series 09

Learning objectives — Armancên fêrbûnê

Recognize the difference between simple past, past habitual and perfect constructions; understand how participial forms and copular endings interact; identify important agreement questions; and avoid treating English tense labels as one-to-one equivalents.

1. What is perfect aspect? — Dema tamamkirî çi ye?

A perfect construction commonly connects an earlier event to a later reference point, often the present. English “I have arrived” differs from “I arrived” in emphasis. Kurmanji also distinguishes completed past events from constructions expressing a result or relevance at another time. The mapping is not always identical to English.

2. Review of the simple past — Dubarekirina dema borî

Ez hatim. — I came. / I arrived. Ez çûm. — I went. Ez dihatim. — I used to come / I was coming. The simple past and imperfective past are already covered in Lesson 07; here they serve as points of comparison.

3. Perfect of intransitive verbs — Dema tamamkirî ya lêkerên negerguhêz

A common present-perfect-like pattern of hatin “to come” is: Ez hatime. — I have come. Tu hatîyî. — You have come. Ew hatiye. — He/she has come. Em hatine. — We have come. Hûn hatine. — You (plural) have come. Ew hatine. — They have come. Orthographic and dialectal variants exist, especially in the second-person singular.

4. From past stem to participial form — Ji rehê borî bo forma beşdarî

Many perfect forms use a participial base derived from a past stem, often with -î, together with copular/person material. Compare hat- → hatî- in forms of hatin. This is a useful observation, not a mechanical rule that predicts every verb. Memorize attested full forms and compare varieties.

5. A timeline: past versus perfect — Xeta demê

Simple past: an event located in the past (Ez hatim — I came). Perfect: a prior event understood in relation to a later reference point (Ez hatime — I have come). English translations are approximate and depend on discourse. The perfect is not simply “the past with an extra ending.”

6. Transitive perfect: a caution — Hişyariya lêkerên gerguhêz

Past transitive clauses have split alignment: Min ew dît. — I saw him/her. Perfect forms of transitive verbs introduce further issues of participial morphology, agreement, argument structure and dialect variation. A full transitive-perfect paradigm should be checked against a reference grammar and a competent Kurmanji speaker; this introductory lesson deliberately does not invent a single universal paradigm.

7. Result and current relevance — Encam û girîngiya niha

A perfect often suggests a resulting state or present relevance, but it does not always assert that a physical result remains unchanged. Context matters. Contrast a narrative of yesterday's events with a speaker reporting an arrival that matters to the conversation now.

8. Other compound tense constructions — Demên hevedudanî yê din

Kurmanji has additional complex tense-aspect and mood constructions. Their distribution depends on verb class, dialect and syntactic context. A label such as “past perfect” should be tied to a documented Kurmanji form, not created by translating the English auxiliary word-for-word.

9. Questions and negation — Pirs û neyînî

Simple-past negation: Ez nehatim. — I did not come. Perfect negation can vary in form and placement across constructions and dialects; use a vetted paradigm before generalizing. A yes/no question can rely on intonation: Tu hatî? — Have you come? This is a pedagogical example, not a claim that every variety uses identical spelling.

10. Time adverbs — Peyvên demê

duh — yesterday; berê — earlier; niha — now; hêj — still/yet; berî niha — before now. Adverbs are helpful cues but do not determine a tense by themselves. For example, “yesterday” often favors a narrative simple past, whereas a present-relevance reading may favor a perfect construction.

11. Comparison chart — Tabloya berawirdkirinê

Ez hatim — I came (simple past). Ez dihatim — I was coming / used to come (past imperfective). Ez hatime — I have come (perfect-like form). The three forms differ in morphology and typical discourse function.

12. Learner errors — Çewtiyên fêrbûnan

Do not equate every English “have + participle” sentence with one fixed Kurmanji construction. Do not infer the participle of an unfamiliar verb solely from its English translation. Do not ignore split alignment when moving from intransitive to transitive verbs. Do not confuse the past imperfective prefix di- with a perfect marker.

13. Short dialogue — Axaftina kurt

A: Tu hatî? — Have you come? B: Erê, ez hatime. — Yes, I have come. A: Tu kengî hatî? — When did you come? B: Ez duh hatim. — I came yesterday. The shift illustrates a present-relevance question followed by a simple-past time-specific answer.

14. Exercises — Rahênan

A. Match: Ez hatim / Ez dihatim / Ez hatime with “I have come” / “I came” / “I was coming.” B. Complete the perfect of hatin: Ez ___; Ew ___; Em ___. C. Translate: “I came yesterday”; “I have come”; “I used to come.” D. Explain in one sentence why transitive perfects need special care. E. Identify the simple-past negative: Ez nehatim or Ez dihatim? F. Which form more naturally emphasizes present relevance: Ez hatim or Ez hatime?

15. Answer key — Bersiv

A. hatim = I came; dihatim = I was coming/used to come; hatime = I have come. B. hatime; hatiye; hatine. C. Ez duh hatim; Ez hatime; Ez dihatim. D. Kurmanji past transitive alignment and perfect agreement/morphology interact and can vary by dialect. E. Ez nehatim. F. Ez hatime, though context always matters.

16. References and editorial scope — Çavkanî

Reference starting points: W. M. Thackston, *Kurmanji Kurdish: A Reference Grammar* (2006); Geoffrey Haig and Ergin Öpengin, research on Kurmanji morphosyntax and variation; published Kurdish grammars and native-speaker editorial review. This lesson is an introductory pedagogical guide; the transitive-perfect paradigm and dialect-specific negatives are intentionally not presented as settled universal rules.

17. Next lesson — Dersa pêş

Lesson 10 — Modal Verbs and Modal Expressions (Lêker û Gotinên Modal): karîn, divê, xwestin and related constructions.

Quick-reference tables

Form	Approximate English	Function
Ez hatim	I came	Simple past
Ez dihatim	I was coming / used to come	Past imperfective
Ez hatime	I have come	Perfect-like

Person	Perfect of hatin
ez	hatime
tu	hatîyî
ew (singular)	hatiye
em	hatine
hûn	hatine
ew (plural)	hatine