

Tense Suffixes: Placed at the end of a verb to indicate the timeframe of an action.

/ (?) a² /

Present Tense Action.

Describes an action, activity, occurrence—something *happening*—presently, right now. Can include internal conditions or feelings, the line between “action” and “state of being” is fluid.

Seen in:	PRC Statements	a ²¹ sa ² la ² di ³ ?a ²	<i>He’s lifting it.</i>
		a ²¹ gwa ² du ²² li ²³ ha ²	<i>I want it. (or) He/It wants me.</i>
	IMM Stem Forms	hi ² sa ² la ² dv ¹¹ ga ²	<i>Lift it!</i>

/ (?) i² /

General Timeless Copular.[†] Infinitive Copular.

Describes a state of being that is occurring in a timeless or “General Present” sense. Can be translated as “it is,” or “it is that way,” especially when seen in its long form /i²³?i²/, or paired with the Infinitive Root Suffix forms /d(i²)/, /sd(i²)/, etc.

Seen in: [‡]	Infinitives	u ²² da ² di ²³ nv ³³ di ²	<i>For him to limp, it is.[§]</i>
	Derived Words	u ²² wo ¹¹ ni ⁴⁴ hi ³ sdi ²³ ?i ²	<i>His speech. (or, Lit.) It is for him to speak.</i>
		u ²² wo ¹¹ ni ⁴⁴ hi ³ sgi ²	<i>Speaker. (or, Lit.) He is a speaker.</i>
	CMP Spec. Futr.	da ² ga ² wo ²² ni ²³ si ²	<i>He will speak. (or, Lit.) Then it will be he speaks.</i>

/ v²²(?i²) /

Commanded Future Action, Anticipated Future Action.

Flattened tone indicates an unreal (i.e., not actual) action. The action *may* happen, or is anticipated, but it is not occurring presently. However, the action is not spoken of *conceptually*—it is Unreal in the sense of a potentially Real action that has not yet manifested or occurred, not in the higher conceptual sense seen in Derived forms. Used for Future Commands. When seen with non-2nd Person Pronouns it can be translated as “x *shall* [verb],” or “*may* x [verb].”

Seen in:	CMP Gen. Futr.	ga ² wo ³³ ni ²² sv ²² ?i ²	<i>S/he shall speak.</i>
		do ² na ³³ da ² go ²² hv ²² ?i ²	<i>May you and I see each other again!</i>

[†] JW has also called this the “Present Tense State of Being” Suffix, but I find this terminology confusing because the Suffix is basically *never* seen on a Present Continuous verb form.

[‡] Arguably, every Tense Suffix whose long form ends with /?i²/ incorporates this Tense Suffix. So, for example, you could think of the long form of the Reportative Past /v²³?i²/ literally translating as “then *it was*,” or the Habitual /o³³?i²/ as meaning “habitually *it is*.”

[§] In Basic Infinitive Forms, I’d argue this “Copular Tense” Suffix is serving a basically *gestural* role that feels awkward when translated literally into English. For this reason, it’s usually overlooked (or intentionally omitted) when literally translating Basic Infinitives.

/ v²(³?i²) /

Experienced Past.

A Real Past action that was personally experienced or witnessed by the speaker.

Seen in:	NCMP Past	ji ² go ² hwa ⁰ ti ²³ sgv ²³ ?i ²	<i>I was seeing it.</i>
	CMP Past	a ²¹ gi ² go ²² hv ²³ ?i ²	<i>I saw it.</i>

/ v⁴(⁴?i²) /

“Timeless” Tense.

Refers to *the concept of* some specific action occurring with no specific timeframe. Used to form dependent “when” clauses. Also used to derive nouns from NCMP and CMP Stems by framing an action timelessly.

Seen in: See “*Dependent ‘When’ Clauses*” section, below.
 Past-Tense Based Derivations. See “*Derivations*” Section below.

/ o³(³?i²) /

Habitual Action.

An action that is done regularly in the “general” Present, without referencing any specific instance or occurrence of the action. Used to state that an actor does the action regularly, that the actor currently *has a habit* of doing the action.

Seen In: NCMP Hab. ga²¹su²³hv³sgo³³?i² *I fish. (or) I regularly fish. (or) I have a habit of fishing.*

/ e³(³?i²) /

Nonexperienced Past. Reportative Past. Interrogative Past.

Used to make statements about past occurrences while signalling the speaker doesn’t have personal knowledge about what happened, is not certain about what happened, or is trying to avoid judgments about what happened—because the speaker was either not present for the event, or because the speaker is asking a question about what happened.

Seen In:	NCMP Rep. Past	na ²¹ dv ³³ ne ²² he ³³ ?i ²	<i>He was [reportedly, supposedly] doing it.</i>
	CMP Rep. Past	nu ²¹ dv ³³ ne ²² le ³³ ?i ²	<i>He [reportedly, supposedly] did it.</i>
	All Past Questions	Do nu ²¹ dv ³³ ne ²² le ³³ ?	<i>What did he [reportedly, supposedly] do?</i>

/ e³³sd(i²) /

Progressive Future. NCMP Future. CMP Future Perfect.

Used to make NCMP Statements about future events—statements that an action *will be in the process* of occurring. In fact, this Tense Suffix is actually an INF Form of the “Going” Adverbial Suffix. So constructions using this Tense Suffix could be literally translated as “[the verb action] is *going* to be so.”

Seen In:	NCMP Fut.	da ²¹ gi ² lv ²³ hwi ⁰ sda ¹¹ ne ²² he ³³ <u>sdi²</u>	<i>I'll be working. (or, Lit.) I'm going to be working.</i>
	CMP Fut. Perf.	a ²¹ gi ² lv ²³ hwi ⁰ sda ¹¹ ne ²² <u>le³³sdi²</u>	<i>I will have worked.</i>

/ (v²³)gi² /

Distant, Vague Past. Storytelling Tense.

Indicates the speaker doesn't know *exactly* when a CMP Past action occurred. Sometimes used in storytelling, but not widely used by today's Cherokee speakers. Nearly archaic.

Seen In: Traditional Stories

/ x³i³dv² /

CMP Past Participle.

~ / x³i³da² /

A CMP Past Tense form that is ambiguous as to whether the completed past action was witnessed by the speaker. Has a slightly less-verbal, more adjectival quality to it—form is often used to derive both nouns and adjectives.[†]
Esoteric.

Seen In:	CMP Past Part.	u ²¹ wo ³³ ni ²³ si ³ <u>dv²</u>	<i>He had spoken.</i>
	Past Part. Noun	ka ² no ²³ he ³ <u>da²</u>	<i>A story. (or, Lit.) It was [a thing] told.</i>
	Past Part. Adj.	u ²² ne ²³ gu ³³ ji ³ <u>da²</u>	<i>Mean. (or, Lit.) S/he [has been] mean.</i>

[†] If the CMP Exp. Past can be translated as “he [verbed] it,” the CMP Past Participle by comparison may translate more like “he had verbed,” or “it was [verbed] by him.” This is what I mean when I say it has an “adjectival” quality—it seems to *describe* a state of affairs in which the action *was done*.

Combined Infinitive Tense Suffixes

/ di²(³?i²) /
Basic Form INF

/ sdi²(³?i²) /
Subject Foc. INF

/ hdi²(³?i²) /
Motion Foc. INF

Formed by combining the Unreal Towards Morpheme /d(i²)/ with the Infinitive Copular /(?)i²/. In the long form, where the Infinitive Copular is fully pronounced, the Unreal Towards undergoes vowel lengthening to take a Penultimate Rising Tone. This “Combined” Tense Suffix can be translated as “when and if [the action] comes, at any time, then it will be so.” The Timeless quality of this construction, along with tone changes in the pronomial and root, are the ultimate source of the “action-as-idea” meaning of INF Stems. More specifically modified forms are made with the addition of Root Suffixes, almost always either Subject Focus /s/ or Motion Focus /h/.

As is the way with Root Suffixes, the change in meaning with these morphemes is only to shift the emphasized focus of the idealized action. Subject Focus examples place the emphasis on the Subject (Doer) of the idealized action, and Motion Focus examples place emphasis on the action itself.

Seen In:

Infinitives

u²²wo²²hwe²³lo³²**di²**

For him/her to write.

u²²wo¹¹ni²³hi³**sdi²**

For him/her to speak.

u²²tv²²da¹¹sdo³**hdi²**

For him/her to listen.

By: J.R. Lancaster, a learner. May contain mistakes.