

BEGINNER VERB LIST CARDS: GENERAL INFORMATION, HOW TO READ AND USE

Why Stem Forms?

Because of how flexible Cherokee words are, and how much they change from one context to another, it complicates the typical process of making lists of vocabulary words to study and memorize. When a word can change so much from one sentence to another, what exactly should you put on a *flash card* to memorize?

For verbs, I think the best answer to that question is bare Stem Forms, without Pronomials or Tense Suffixes attached—at least at first. The Stem Forms are the most “flash-cardable” version of a verb. If you know where the Stem begins and ends, and you know your other Morphemes (Pronomials, Prepronomials, Tense Suffixes) and where to put them, then you know everything you need to know in order to use the verb in any given Person or Tense.

In my experience, I had a really hard time learning verbs by studying fully conjugated Index Forms. I would learn how to say the finished Index Forms just fine, but it left me feeling generally unable to use the verb productively outside of the specific Index Forms I’d memorized. Studying Index Forms makes it harder to see the core of the verb as the “Building Block” that it is, where the “seams” are. I would forget important things about how different tenses were formed, because I would only feel familiar with the Tenses and Persons of the Index Forms I’d studied. I wouldn’t be able to remember whether a verb’s Stem began with a vowel or not—things like that.

There are two possible solutions to this: 1) either make fully conjugated Index Form cards for every conceivable Person and Tense you can think of, or 2) study at the Stem Form level first. The latter is way more efficient, for obvious reasons.

You *absolutely* should move on to studying fully conjugated Index Forms for a verb once you’ve memorized the Stem Forms by heart, of course. And once you’re comfortable with the most common Index Forms, you should move on to studying the verb in the context of fully formed sentences. All of that is still important—I don’t want to discourage you from studying Index Forms. I just think it makes more sense to *begin* studying verbs by memorizing Stem Forms.

In any other language, you acquire vocabulary by memorizing words, then you practice using the words in sentences. In Cherokee, the best analogue to this process is studying Stem Forms first, then studying how to form fully conjugated versions of the verb (which is equivalent to using the Stems to form “sentences,” since fully conjugated verbs express complete ideas), and then move on to studying how the verb works with other words around it in a true Cherokee sentence.

That’s just my opinion on it, though—your brain may work differently from mine, and another strategy may work better for you. But this is what I think makes the most sense, and what has worked best for me.

How I Label Stem Forms

PRC	Present Continuous Stem
NCMP	Incompletive Stem
NCMP+	Incompletive Plus Stem (NCMP and PRC are identical)
CMP	Completive Stem
N/CMP	“Pletive” Stem (NCMP and CMP are identical)
N/CMP+	“Pletive” Plus Stem (PRC, NCMP, and CMP are all identical)
IMM	Immediate Stem
INF	Infinitive Stem

Other Labels

[B]	“Set B” Verb. This label means the verb is Idealized Esoterically, and so follows a different paradigm for how Pronomials are used. In other words, it’s a “Set B” verb, and the typical Index Forms you’re used to seeing will use Set B instead of Set A. If you <i>don’t</i> see this label, think of the verb as a “Set A” verb.
--------------	---

Bound Prepronomials: If a verb requires a particular Prepronomial, I’ll include that Prepronomial in brackets after the Stem Form, like this: [de³³], or [wi²].

Singular, Nonsingular, or Plural Verbs: If a particular verb is only ever seen with one particular category of Pronomials in terms of number—i.e., the verb is *only* used for Singular persons, or *only* used for 3+ Persons, etc., I will label each Stem Form with the relevant number in brackets as follows:

[1]	Singular (verb only used with Singular Pronomials).
[1-2]	Non-Plural (verb only used with Singular or Dual Pronomials).
[2+]	Nonsingular (verb only used with Dual or Plural Pronomials).
[3+]	Plural (verb only used with Plural Pronomials).

/a²¹/ and /g/: If a verb uses /g/ in the 3rd Person Singular, you’ll usually see an /a/ vowel in Parentheses at the beginning of the Stem—this is the primary way I distinguish between verbs that take /a²¹/ or /g/ in the 3rd Person Singular.

/h/ and /?/ Alternation: I don’t note whether /h/ or /?/ Alternation takes place in any of these cards. I couldn’t come up with a way to note it that didn’t make each card feel over cluttered with information. You’ll just need to check the CED. Eventually you’ll develop a strong intuition for when and where it happens, but until then you’ll have to double check the CED Index Forms if you want to be sure.