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Large script: [Devanagari ⇕]
Small script: [Roman ⇕]

Types of uninflected words

In Sanskrit, we often modify a word's sounds to change its meaning. We often modify both verbs:
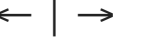
गम् → गमिष्यसि

gam → gamiṣyasi

go → You will go.

And nominals:

नर → नरेषु

nara → nareṣu

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These kinds of changes are called **inflection**. Sanskrit uses inflection extensively, so it is sometimes called a *highly inflected* language.

Sanskrit also has a large class of words that we can call **uninflected words** (*avyayāni*, "unchanging"), sometimes also called **indeclinables** in English. These words are "fixed" in a way that nominals and verbs are not. Uninflected words can still go through sandhi changes, but otherwise, they always stay the same:

त्वं **न** गच्छसि।

tvaṃ na gacchasi.

You do not go.

अहं **न** गमिष्यामि।

ahaṃ na gamiṣyāmi.

I will not go.
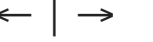
गजा **न** गच्छेयुः।

gajā na gaccheyuḥ.

The elephants might not go.

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There are a few important categories of uninflected words:

First are what we might call **prepositions**. In English, this term refers to words like "over," "under," "around," and so on. In Sanskrit, this term refers to words that are usually used as verb prefixes:

गच्छन्ति → आगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → *āgacchanti*
They go. → They come ("go here").

गच्छन्ति → संगच्छन्ति

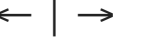*gacchanti* → *saṃgacchanti*
They go. → They meet ("go together").

Prepositions are part of a larger class of words call *nipātāḥ*, which are miscellaneous words:

रामः सीता च

rāmaḥ sītā ca
Rama and Sita

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

Hey Rama! Where are you?

Finally, we have **adverbs**, which modify the verb in some way. Many of them are created from adjectives:

मन्द → मन्दम्

manda → *mandam*

slow → slowly

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Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

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The *upasarga*

Also known as: the preverb, the preposition, the verb prefix

In traditional grammar, verb prefixes are considered a type of uninflected word.

We learned about several different verb prefixes in the core lessons:

गच्छन्ति → समागच्छन्ति

gacchanti → samāgacchanti

they go → they come together; they convene ("go together here")

These verb prefixes are part of a list of twenty special uninflected words. When these words are used as verb prefixes, they are called ***upasarga***s. But these words have other meanings and uses, too.

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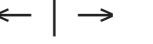
Word	Basic meaning
अति *ati*	beyond, over, excessive
अधि *adhi*	above, over
अनु *anu*	after, along
अप *apa*	away from
अपि *api*	close to
अभि *abhi*	towards
अव *ava*	down, downward
	here, near

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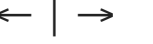
उद्	up, upward
ud	
उप	next to, under
upa	
दुस्	bad, difficult
dus	
नि	in, into
ni	
निस्	out, out of
nis	
परा	far away, gone
parā	
परि	around, about
pari	
प्र	forward

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backward, against

prati

वि

apart, separate

vi

सम्
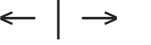
together; complete, full

sam

सु

good, easy

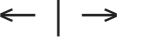*su*

How to use an *upasarga*

An *upasarga* usually does one of three things. First, it might change the root's meaning in a straightforward way:

गच्छन्ति → संगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → saṃgacchanti

they go → they meet ("go together")

Sanskrit for beginners

they lead → They unite ("lead (others) together")

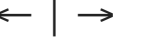Second, it might create a totally new meaning. This new meaning usually depends on cultural context:

गच्छन्ति → अवगच्छन्ति

gacchanti → avagacchanti

they go → they understand

Third, it might intensify the root's basic meaning or leave it unchanged:

जयति → संजयति

jayati → saṃjayati

they conquer → they (intensely or fully) conquer

We can also use multiple *upasarga*s at a time:

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

*gacchanti → **sama**gacchanti*

they go → they come together; they convene ("go together here")

नयन्ति → समानयन्ति

*nayanti → **samā**nayanti*

they lead → they gather ("lead together here")

Many Sanskrit verbs use the prefix *a-*, which usually indicates the past tense.
When we use an *upasarga*, we place it *before* this *a-*:

आ + अगच्छन् → आगच्छन्

ā + agacchan → āgacchan

They came.

परि + अगच्छन् → पर्यगच्छन्

pari + agacchan → paryagacchan

They went around.

In older Sanskrit, the *upasarga* is a more independent word and can appear
almost anywhere in the sentence. But in later Sanskrit, the *upasarga* usually

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Other uses of these words

Some of these words can be used independently of any verb. Here are some common examples.

api has the sense of "also" or "even" when it follows a word:

रामो वनं गच्छति। लक्ष्मणो ऽपि वनं गच्छति।
rāmo vanaṃ gacchati. lakṣmaṇo 'pi vanaṃ gacchati.
Rama goes to the forest. Lakshmana also goes to the forest.
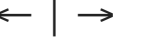
रामो न रावणाद् अपि भीतः।
rāmo na rāvaṇād api bhītaḥ.
Rama is not even afraid of Ravana.

api can also be used to ask simple yes/no questions. If it is used this way, it appears at the beginning of the sentence:

अपि त्वं सुखिनी।
api tvaṃ sukhinī.

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← | →

Another common example is *prati*. It can be used with a noun in case 2 like so:

राम प्रति

rāmaṃ prati

regarding Rama, ...

तत् प्रति

tat prati

regarding that, ...

Sanskrit for beginners

← | →

Large script: Devanagari

Small script: Roman

Other prefixes

The *upasarga* is the most common type of verb prefix. But there are other verb prefixes that we can use with a verb, too. In this lesson, we will learn about some of these prefixes.
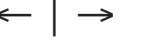
gati

There is a miscellaneous group of prefixes called **gati**. Usually, these prefixes are used only with specific roots. Here are some common *gati* prefixes:

करोति → अलंकरोति

karoti → alaṃkaroti

does, makes → decorates, adorns

Sanskrit for beginners

does, makes → honors, respects

करोति → नमस्करोति

karoti → namaskaroti

does, makes → honors, venerates

गच्छति → अन्तर्गच्छति

gacchati → antargacchati

goes → "goes within"; disappears

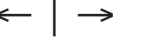## भवति → आविर्भवति

bhavati → āvirbhavati

becomes → becomes apparent or manifest

-sāt

In addition to the prefixes we have seen so far, we can also turn *nominals* into verb prefixes.

We can create one type of nominal prefix by adding *-sāt* to the end of the nominal stem. Usually, we use this prefix with the words *kṛ* ("do, make") or *bhū*

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भस्म → भस्मसात्करोति

bhasma → bhasmasātkaroti

ash → turns (something else) to ash

भस्म → भस्मसाद्भवति

bhasma → bhasmasādbhavati

ash → becomes ash

cvi

There is one more type of nominal prefix worth knowing. This type is quite common:
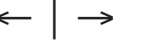

कृष्ण → कृष्णीकरोति

kṛṣṇa → kṛṣṇīkaroti

black → (someone) makes black

कृष्ण → कृष्णीभवति

kṛṣṇa → kṛṣṇībhavati

black → (someone) becomes black

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complex technical meaning that is difficult to explain.)

Roughly, here is how we create a *cvi* prefix. The last *a* or *i* of the nominal stem becomes *ī*:

कृष्ण → कृष्णीकरोति

kṛṣṇa → kṛṣṇīkaroti

black → (someone) makes black

शुचि → शुचीकरोति

śuci → śucīkaroti
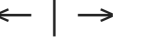
clear, bright → (someone) makes clear

The last *u* becomes *ū*:

पशु → पशूकरोति

paśu → paśūkaroti

beast, animal → (someone) makes (someone else) a beast or animal

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

मातृ → मात्रीकरोति

mātṛ → mātrīkaroti

mother → (someone) makes (someone else their) mother

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

Large script: Devanagari

Small script: Roman

ca, *vā*, and others

In this lesson, we will learn about many small but common uninflected words.
For ease of reference, we will discuss these words in alphabetical order:

अथ एव एवम् इति इव च तु न वा विना सह स्म हि

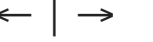*atha eva evam iti iva ca tu na vā vinā saha sma hi*

atha often marks the start of a new topic:

अथ प्रथमो ऽध्यायः

atha prathamo 'dhyāyaḥ

Now begins the first chapter.

Sanskrit for beginners

sometimes as "only" or "alone":

राम एव लक्ष्मणस्य भ्राता

rāma eva lakṣmaṇasya bhrātā

Rama truly is Lakshmana's brother.

अहम् एव बलवान्।

aham eva balavān.

I alone am strong.

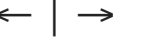*evam* means "thus" or "in that matter":

स एवम् उवाच।

sa evam uvāca.

Thus did he speak.

स एवं कृत्वा गृहम् अगच्छत्।

sa evaṃ kṛtvā gṛham agacchat.

He, after acting thus, went home.

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

अहम् बलवान् इति बालो मन्यते

aham balavān iti bālo manyate

The boy thinks that he is strong. (interpretation 1)

The boy thinks, "I am strong." (interpretation 2)

इति प्रथमो ऽध्यायः

iti prathamo 'dhyāyaḥ

So ends the first chapter.

रामो गत इति शृणोति

rāmo gata iti śṛṇoti

He hears that Rama has left. (interpretation 1)

He hears, "Rama has left." (interpretation 2)

iva means "like" or "as if." It follows directly after the word it describes. In the examples below, notice how important the case endings are. By using *siṃhaḥ* in case 1, we describe the case 1 word *rāmaḥ*. By using *mṛgam* in case 2, we describe the case 2 word *rāvaṇam*:

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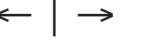
ramaḥ siṃha iva ravaṇaṃ hanti.

Rama kills Ravana as if he (Rama) were a lion.

रामो मृगम् इव रावणं हन्ति।

rāmo mṛgam iva rāvaṇaṃ hanti.

Rama kills Ravana as if he (Ravana) were a deer.

रामो रावणम् सिंहो मृगम् इव हन्ति।

rāmo rāvaṇam siṃho mṛgam iva hanti.

Rama kills Ravana as a lion would a deer.

ca means "and":

रामः सीता च गच्छतः।

rāmaḥ sītā ca gacchataḥ.
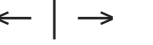
Rama and Sita go.

रामः सीता गजश् च गच्छन्ति।

rāmaḥ sītā gajaś ca gacchanti.

Rama, Sita, and the elephant go.

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रामो वनं गच्छति। दशरथस् तु न वनं गच्छति।

rāmo vanaṃ gacchati. daśarathas tu na vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest. But Dasharatha does not go to the forest.

na means "not":

रामो न गच्छति।

rāmo na gacchati.

Rama doesn't go.
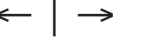
vā means "or":

रामः सीता वा गच्छति।

rāmaḥ sītā vā gacchati.

Rama or Sita goes.

रामः सीता गजो वा गच्छति।

rāmaḥ sītā gajo vā gacchati.

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vinā means "without":

रामो दशरथेन विना वनं गच्छति।

rāmo daśarathena vinā vanaṃ gacchati.

Rama goes to the forest without Dasharatha.

saha means "with":

रामः सीतया सह वनं गच्छति।

rāmaḥ sītayā saha vanaṃ gacchati.

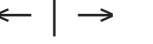Rama goes to the forest with Sita.

sma often means "indeed" or "truly," but when it follows a present tense verb, it expresses the past tense:

रामो वने निवसति स्म।

rāmo vane nivasati sma.

Rama lived in the forest.

Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

रामो रावणं हन्ति। रामो हि रावणाद् बलवत्तरः

rāmo rāvaṇaṃ hanti. rāmo hi rāvaṇād balavattaraḥ

Rama kills Ravana. After all, Rama is stronger than Ravana.

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Sanskrit for beginners   ← | →

Large script: [Devanagari ⏵]
Small script: [Roman ⏵]

Adverbs

Adverbs are uninflected words that describe how some action was done:

गजो मन्दं चरति

gajo mandaṃ carati

The elephant walks slowly.
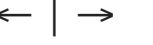
We can change any adjective into an adverb by using it in its neuter case 1 singular form:

मृदु → स मृदु भाषते।

mṛdu → sa mṛdu bhāṣate.

Sanskrit for beginners