

VERBS

A verb identifies the action (or lack of it - zero action) that the subject is performing or is being performed upon the subject.

Ex:

The Sun rises from the horizon	Subject: the Sun Verb: rises - identifies the action the Sun is taking
	<i>wbn r^c m 3ht</i> <i>wbn ra m Axt</i>

There are only two verbs in English which are zero action verbs: "be" and "exist". Egyptian has only one: *wnn*, which seems to mean "exist" more often than "be". The two meanings are often mixed in English, too. All other verbs in Egyptian are action verbs.

Egyptian verbs are divided into "classes" depending upon which consonants they contain, how many consonants they contain, and how the consonants are treated. The classes which Hoch identifies are:

EGYPTIAN VERB CLASSES			
Class	Abbreviation	Alternative Name	Gardiner's Terminology
bi-consonantal	2c	biliteral	biliteral
tri-consonantal	3c	triliteral	triliteral
third-weak	3w		tertiaef infirmae
fourth-weak	4w		quartaef infirmae
second-geminating	2g	geminating, doubling	secundae geminatae
anomalous	anom		

In addition to these are the "causative" verbs, so-called because the basic mean of the verb adds the connotation of causing the action with the verb describes. These verbs start with 's', although not all Egyptian verbs that start with 's' are causatives. Causative classes will be identified by putting an 's' in front of the abbreviation, so s3c means causative tri-consonantal, etc.

Both Gardiner and Hoch identify many more classes than these, but there are not many Egyptian verbs which don't fall into one of these classes and those that don't often behave as if they do. Collier and Manley break it down to only four classes: strong (2c and 3c), weak (3w and 4w), doubling (2g), and extra weak (anom).

Verbs are extremely expressive and carry the weight of the meaning of the sentence. They can describe very accurately what the subject is doing or what is being done to the subject. At some point or other

you are going to encounter the technical terms for the various ways that verbs have of expressing just what the subject is doing, so here they are. You don't have to memorize this, but it will come in handy later on so study it carefully. If you have any questions, ask them on Glyphstudy.

QUALITY	CATEGORY	ALTERNATIVE NAME	EXPLANATION
Tense	future	prospective	events happen in the future
	present		events happen in the present can be use to express future or past events
	past	preterite, aorist	events happened in the past
Mood	indicative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tells facts (purportedly), "circumstantial" in Hoch
	subjunctive		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tells non-facts, things that might happen
	optative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies things that are wished for
	imperative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> issues commands
Aspect	completed	perfect, perfective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> action that is over and done with, happened once
	realized		
	extensive	imperfective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> action that is on-going action that happened over a long period of time
	unrealized		
habitual, repetitive		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> repeated action habitual action 	
Voice	active		the subject acts on something/one else
	middle	reflexive	the subject acts on itself
	passive		the subject is acted upon

Verbs normally, but not always, use different forms, that is: spellings and pronunciations, to differentiate between the various categories. In English, for example, verb forms like "love, loves, loved, will love" help distinguish which category is meant. Egyptian does something similar, but because the vowels are not show, Egyptian verb forms often look alike and are differentiated by the context in which they are used. In other words, the exact category of an Egyptian verb is frequently inferred, and can at times be open to more than one interpretation.

The following table gives examples of each of the types.

QUALITY	CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Tense	future	I will see
	present	I see, I am seeing
	past	I saw
Mood	indicative	I see
	subjunctive	I might see, if I saw
	optative	I want to see
	imperative	See!
Aspect	completed	I saw
	realized	I saw
	extensive	I saw, I was seeing
	unrealized	I saw and I am still seeing
	habitual, repetitive	I saw over and over again
Voice	active	I see
	middle	I see for myself
	passive	I am seen

The complete description of a verb contains a selection of one category from each quality. That is: a verb can be "future tense, subjunctive mood, completed aspect, passive voice", and an example of this is "If I were ever to be seen". The quality "aspect" is not usually assigned to English verbs, but it is important for Egyptian verbs. You'll get used to it. English has three more tenses than listed above: future perfect, present perfect, and past perfect, Egyptian doesn't. Egyptian verbs, in fact, usually do not express tense as well as English verbs. For the ancient Egyptians, aspect was more important. The exact tense of a verb was often understood from the context. The exact translation for tense is often ambiguous or arguable.

Now, here's the good news. You do not have to learn all this stuff, just be aware of it. When I refer to one of these forms in the Study Guides, you'll know where to go to look it up.

Whereas English verbs often require more than one word, including what we call "helping verbs" like "have" and mood words like "ought, might, would, could, should" etc., Egyptian verbs usually use only one word to express the same concept. Egyptian has "helping verbs", but they work differently.

FORMS:

Just as English verbs appear in different forms (see, saw, seen, sees), so do Egyptian verbs. Instead of talking about the "present tense indicative" form as we do in English, we might refer to a corresponding "iw sDm.f" (pronounced: yoo sedjemef) form in Egyptian. Egyptian grammars usually use the verb sDm to identify verb forms, other examples of this type of nomenclature include sDm(w).f and sDm.n.f.