

VERB ASPECT - IMPERFECTIVE AND PERFECTIVE VERBS

Most of Czech verbs exist in pairs. One verb is imperfective and one is perfective.

What is the difference between them?

Imperfective verbs are able to express all three categories of time: present, future and past.

They often express repeated action and unfinished action.

An action expressed by imperfective verb can be completed, but you realise it only from a context, this grammar form doesn't express this information.

Perfective verbs don't have present tense, ONLY future and past. The form looking like the present express future in effect.

They express, that you do something only once and you always finish an activity.

Example: DĚLAT - UDĚLAT

budu dělat (I will be doing something in future, for some time, I can do it
once or several times and it is not clear, if I finish an action)

Imp. DĚLAT dělám (I am doing something now, for some time, and again – I don't
know if I finish it or not)
dělal/a jsem (I was doing something, I probably did not finish this activity)

udělám (I will do something only once and I will finish my work)

Perf. UDĚLAT NO PRESENT FORM

udělal/a jsem (I did something, only once, and I finish it.)

OR PLATIT _ ZAPLATIT

budu platit (I will be paying – If I use the imperfective verb here, I
can pay for 1 minute, but theoretically also for 30 minutes or for one hour and I can pay once, twice or
ten times. Of course probably not – but this possibility is theoretically here.)

Imp. PLATIT platím now

Platil/a jsem (I was paying, I don't know for how long, I don't know
how many times and I don't know – theoretically – if I paid the whole amount).

Zaplatím (I will pay once, in one short moment, I will pay the whole amount because I will finish the action)

Perf. ZAPLATIT NO PRESENT FORM

zaplatil/a jsem (I payed once and everything)

There is a synoptic table of functions of imperfective and perfective verbs here:

	FUTURE		FUTURE
IMPERFECTIVE VERBS	PRESENT	PERFECTIVE VERBS	____ PRESENT ____
	PAST		PAST
Uncompleted activity		Completed activity	
Repeated activity		Action happens only ones	
_____	_____	_____	YYYYYYYYYY _____

Imperfective verbs express all three tenses – future, present and past. They usually express an uncompleted activity and also repeated activity.

Perfective verbs cannot express present tense, only future and past. They are used for expressing completed and not repeated activities.

If you have couples of verbs in dictioneries, so ALWAYS the IMPERFECTIVE verb is written on the left and PERFECTIVE on the right:

DĚLAT / UDĚLAT

PLATIT / ZAPLATIT

Perfective verbs are made by prefixes, suffixes, they can have changes in stem and some of them are irregular. There is NO RULER how to make perfective verbs from their imperfective couples. You have to learn all of them by heart.

Examples:

mýt se / umýt se (wash)

kupovat / koupit (buy)

čistit / vyčistit (si zuby) (clean)

opravovat / opravit (repair, correct)

pít /vypít (drink)

vysvětlovat / vysvětlit (explain)

končit / skončit (finish)

dávat / dát (give)

číst / přečíst (read)

ukazovat / ukázat (show)

psát / napsat (write)

říkat / říct (say)

léčit / vyléčit (treat)

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!BRÁT / VZÍT (take)

Verbs of motion (jít, jet, letět and some other) are a specific category in Czech and rules for imperfective and perfective verbs don't work for them 100%.

Verb BÝT exists only in imperfective form.

And one supporting advice at the end:

You can exist in Czech surrounding even without active use of perfective verbs. You MUST understand them, of course. But if you use all verbs only in imperfective forms in your speech, your Czech – however it won't be 100% correct - will be fully understandable.