Grammar Overview

This is a "plain language" grammar.   Like a plain language contract, it aims to use ordinary language and concepts and to avoid specialized terminology. For those who prefer more specialized grammatical terminology, the reference grammar has a technical grammatical index. While it is important and interesting to learn about the language and its structure, for most language learners it is more important to learn the language and to learn how to become an independent learner. The explanations, observations and discovery strategies in the plain language grammar aim to promote active use of the language and to cultivate independent learning skills.

Language can be understood as form and function. The forms are the building blocks. The functions are the way the forms are used based on their meanings.

The basic building blocks of language are sentences. At the core of a sentence is the **noun**, which describes the subject or actor of the sentence, and the **verb** which describes the subject's actual or hypothetical state or actions at a point in time, past, present, future.

Sometimes nouns are replaced by **pronouns**, such as **he, him, she, her, they, them**; hence the name *pro*noun – a word that takes the place of a noun.

Nouns are often quite general, as are verbs. To express more specific ideas, we can *add* **adjectives** to nouns and **adverbs** to verbs. These are called modifiers or complements, since they modify or complete the meaning of a word.

Nouns name people, places, things, ideas and answer the questions: *who or what?*

Verbs name real or hypothetical action or states in the present, past or future. They answer the questions: *what the subject does or is, did or was, will do or will be, could do or could be, should do or should be.*

Adjectives name qualities and answer the question: *which or what kind of?*

Adverbs name manner, times, locations, purposes, causes and quantities, and answer the questions: *when, where, why, how, how many?*

	N	+	V		
	dogs		bark		
Adj —	N	+	V	— Adv	
Frightened	dogs		bark	loud.	
Adj —	N	+	V	— Adv	+ Complement
Frightened	dogs		bark	loud	at mean people

Some words are just nouns or verbs or just adjectives or just adverbs. However, we often use a noun as an adjective, or an adjective as a noun, or a verb as an adjective or an adjective as a verb, or a noun as an adverb or a verb.

In English as in Armenian we show those changes in use by adding prefixes and suffixes to the word. Sometimes we show these change in function through connecting or helping words, before or after the main word, called respectively, **pre**positions or **post**positions.

Moreover, sometimes we need to say something more complex, so we use sentence to modify a noun or verb.

N		V	Adj.	Adv.
Rainbows		are	beautiful.	

N	— Adj.	V	Adj.	Adv.
Rainbows	which appear in the summer	are	beautiful	after the rain falls

The adjectival sentence *which appear in the summer* describes the kind of *rainbows*, and the adverbial sentence *after the rain falls* describes **when** they are beautiful.

Thus, words have a form and a function. They change their form when they change their function.

In Armenian, as in English, nouns and verbs have the most forms and functions. Thus, we will first learn the forms of nouns and verbs, with their basic meanings, then their functions.

Form

1. Nouns

Armenian nouns have a base or dictionary form. To this form we can add suffixes in order to change the noun's meaning or function.

To the base form we can add a number of suffixes that change the noun from singular to plural or change its function from a noun into an adjective or adverb:

-er	-*էր*	plural
-i	-*ի*	of/to
-e	-*է*	from
-ov	-*ով*	with/by

In addition, we can add to most noun forms articles that make the noun more specific or less specific.

mê	*մը*	a
-ê	-*ը*	the
-s	-*ս*	my
-t	-*դ*	you

In one way or another, all noun forms in Armenian are made of the base and some variation or combination of these 8 suffixes.

base	plural, if any	function suffix, if any	article, specifier, if any	Meaning
	-er	i, e, ov	-s, -t, -ê, mê	ê
	-եր	*-ի, -է, -ով*	*-ս, -դ, -ը, մը*	
kirk	-er			book
գիրք	*-եր*			
kirk	-er			books
գիրք	*-եր*			
kirk	-er	-e		from books
գիրք	*-եր*	*-է*		
kirk	-er	-e	-s	from my books
գիրք	*-եր*	*-է*	*-ս*	

1.1 Singular and Plural

The base form of most Armenian nouns is singular. Just as in English we add a suffix to make the noun plural. In English there are several forms *s* or *es* depending upon the last sound of the word. *books* but *churches,* some minor exceptions, such as *ox oxen and* some quite drastic exceptions: *man men*.

> The general rule is that singulars are made plural by adding the suffix **–er** for one syllable words, or **–ner** for words of more than one syllable.

Transliteration	Armenian	Transliteration	Armenian	Meaning
tas	դաս	tas**er**	դաս**եր**	lesson
kaghak	քաղաք	kaghak**ner**	քաղաք**ներ**	city

However, about a dozen one-syllable nouns take **–ner**, because they originally ended in **n**.

Transliteration	Armenian	Transliteration	Armenian	Meaning
ler	լեռ	ler**ner**	լեռ**ներ**	mountain

mad	*Մատ*	mad**ner**	*Մատ**ներ***	finger
tor	*թոռ*	tor**ner**	*թոռ**ներ***	grandchild
mug	*Մուկ*	mg**ner** (mug**er**)	*Մկ**ներ*** (*Մուկ**եր***)	mouse
tsug	*ձուկ*	tsg**ner** (tsug**er**)	*ձկ**ներ*** (*ձուկ**եր***)	fish
tur	*դուռ*	tr**ner**	*դռ**ներ***	door
yez	*եզ*	yez**ner**	*եզ**ներ***	ox

If the noun is a compound word, whose last element is a one-syllable noun, then it forms its plural with – **er.**

գիրք kirk	*գիրք**եր*** kirk**er**	book
դասագիրք tasakirk	*դասագիրք**եր*** tasakirk**er**	textbook

In about a half dozen instances, the plural is based on a more elegant Classical Armenian form:

Transliteration	Armenian	Transliteration	Armenian	Meaning
mart	*մարդ*	mart**ig**	*մարդ**իք***	man, person
digin	*տիկին*	dign**ayk**	*տիկն**այք***	woman
dgha	*տղայ*	dhga**k**	*տղա**ք***	boy
der	*տէր*	diar**k**	*տիար**ք***	lord
baron	*պարոն*	baron**ayk**	*պարոն**այք***	mister

1.2 Forming Adjectives and Adverbs from Nouns

There are three primary suffixes for making nouns into adjectives or adverbs.

-i	- *ի*	of, to
-e	- *է*	from
-ov	- *ով*	with, by

1.3 The suffix -i = 's or of or to.
(u in the plural)

In Armenian as in English, we can say *his work* or if we want to be specific, instead of the adjective *his*, if *his* refers to *a teacher*, we say, *a teacher's work* or *the work of a teacher*.   In English we turn the noun *teacher* into an adjective *teacher's* by adding *'s* or using the helping word *of*.   In Armenian we do this usually by adding an –i.

ուսուցիչի գործը	the work of a teacher
usutsichi kordzê	

However, often in English we do not change the form or use the possessive, even though a noun is used as an adjective.

Transliteration	Meaning
Հայերէնի դասագիրք hayereni tasakirk	Armenian textbook/ the text book of Armenian
պանիրի Հոտ baniri hod	Cheese smell/ smell of cheese

When we refer to a specific person, we add one of the articles, ê/n, s, t, so for example,

բարեկամիս տունը	my friend's house
paregamis dunê	
իր բարեկամին տունը	his friend's house
ir paregamin dunê	

And if his friend is Aram, we would say:

Արամին տունը	Aram's house
Aramin dunê	

(lit. "the house of the Aram," because proper nouns take the definite article).

In English virtually all nouns are transformed into this kind of adjective by adding the same suffix 's.

In Armenian there are 2 other endings that are common and productive and about 50 exceptions, which need to be learned through practice.   In most instances, the *–i* suffix can be used and will be understood, but proper usage requires learning the special ending.

-utyun, utyan

Instead of saying, *kraganutyuni tasê, we say kragan**utya**n tasê "literature class". This is true of all nouns in –uty**u**n.

Infinitives and plurals are in –u

խաղալու ժամանակ khaghal**u** jamanag	time **to** play (all verbs/infinitives used as nouns)
քաղաքներու տուները kaghakner**u** dunerê	the houses **of** the cities

As a large number of monosyllabic nouns, such as **hay** 'Armenian', **hayu** 'of Armenian'.

Finally, there is a very small group of exceptions for plurals, which use the elegant form in **ts** from Classical Armenian.

Transliteration	Armenian	Meaning
hayo**ts**	*Հայոg*	Armenian**s'**
vortvo**ts**	*որդ_ոg*	son**s'**

dignan**ts**	*տիկնան**ց***	women**'s**
marto**ts**	*մարդ**ոց***	people**'s**
dgho**ts** (also commonly dghaneru)	*տղ**ոց*** (*տղաներու*)	boy**s'**

The 50 exceptions fall into 5 groups:

- ոց			
1. քոյր	քր**ոց**	sister	տալ տալ**ոց** husband**'s** sister
2. կին	կն**ոց**	woman/wife	կեսուր կեսր**ոց** wife**'s** mother
3. ընկեր	ընկեր**ոց**	friend, companion	
4. տէր	տիր**ոց**	lord	alternative - տանտէրին, landlord**'s**

-o-

1. հայր	հ**o**ր	father	հայրիկ հայրիկի => հայրի
2. մայր	մ**o**ր	mother	մայրիկ մայրիկի => մայրի
3. եղբայր	եղբ**o**ր	brother	

- ու

1. հայ	հայ**ու**	Armenian	
2. մարդ	մարդ**ու**	man, human being	
3. տղայ	տղ**ու**/տղայ**ի**	boy, child, kid grandfather boy, lad	պապ պապու պապիկիդ մանչ մանչու
4. ճամբայ	ճամբ**ու**/ճամբայ**ի**	road, route	
5. դար	դար**ու**	century	
6. պահ	պահ**ու**	moment, period	
7. ժամ	ժամ**ուն***	hour	e.g., ինչ ժամուն երկար: Այս ժամուն (dative of time)
8. ամիս	ամս**ուն***	month	Ամսուն քանի՞ն է:
9. նաւ	նաւ**ու**	boat	
10. արեւ	արեւ**ու**	sun	արեւի
11. ծով	ծով**ու**	sea	
12. հով	հով**ու**	wind	

13. կով	կով**ու**	cow	
14. հաւ	հաւ**ու**	chicken	
15. խոզ	խոզ**ու**	pig	
16. էշ	իշու/էշ**ու**	donkey	
17. ձի	ձի**ու**	horse	
18. արջ	արջ**ու**	bear	
19. շահ	շահ**ու**/շահ**ի**	interest, profit	գահ　　գահ**ու** throne գլուխ　　գլխ**ու**. e.g., գլխուս վրայ head, on my head (gladly)
20. մահ	մահ**ու**/մահ**ուան**	death	
21. հաշիւ	հաշ**ու** (հաշւոյ, հաշւոյ, հաշիւին, հաշուին)	account, interest	
- ան			
1. աղջիկ	աղջկ**ան** /աղջիկ**ին**	girl, daughter	
2. արիւն	արեան /արիւն**ին**	blood	
3. - ում nouns	ուս**ում** զարգաց**ում**	education　e.g., ուսումի/ուսման ծախսերը educational expenses development, e.g.,զարգացումի/զարգացման միջոցները　means of development	

4. դուռ	դր**ան** /դուռ**ին** քով	door		
5. լեռ	լեր**ան** /լեռ**ին** վրայ	mountain		
	cf. folksy forms			
	կնիկ	little woman, wife		
	էրիկ	little man,		
	էրիկ կնիկ	husband		
		man and wife		
6. շուն	շ**ան**	dog		
	(շ**ան** պէս like a dog)			
7. տուն	տ**ան** /տուն**ի**	house	(տ**ան** հաց house bread, տ**ան** մէջ at home, տ**ան**/տուն**ին** առջեւ in front of the house)	
	մանուկ մանկ**ան**	child		
	ձուկ ձկ**ան**	fish		
	մուկ մկ**ան**	mouse		
	անուն անու**ան**	name		
	թոռ թոռ**ան**	grandchild		
	թոռնիկ թոռնիկ**ին**	grandchild		
8. ծնունդ	ծննդ**եան**	birth		

9. երեկոյ	երեկոյ**եան**	evening (երեկոյեան ժամերգութիւն evening
		service երեկոյեան ժամը 7-ին at 7
		in the evening)
10. առաւօտ	առաւօտ**եան**	morning (առաւօտեան ժամը 8-ին)

- ուան

1. ժամ	ժամ**ուան**	hour
2. օր	օր**ուան**	day
3. շաբաթ	շաբթ**ուան**	week
4. ամիս	ամս**ուան**	month
5. տարի	տար**ուան**	year
6. վաղը	վաղ**ուան**	tomorrow
7. երէկ	երէկ**ուան**	yesterday
8. առտու	առտու**ան**	morning
9. ցերեկ	ցերեկ**ուան**	day (afternoon, **g** 'toward' երեկ 'evening'
		(ցերեկ))
10. գիշեր	գիշեր**ուան**	night
11. իրիկուն	իրիկ**ուան**	evening
12. ձմեռ	ձմեռ**ուան**	winter
13. ամառ	ամառ**ուան**	summer
14. ատեն	ատեն**ուան**	time, period
15. ժամանակ	ժամանակ**ուան**	time
16. անգամ	անգամ**ուան**	time, e.g., 1st time

17. մահ	մահ**ուան**	death Զատիկ - Զատկ**ուան** Easter
- ոյ		
1. Աստուած	Աստուծ**ոյ**	God (Աստուծ**ոյ** սիրոյ or the love of God)
2. սէր	ս**ի**ր**ոյ**	love
3. Անգլիա	Անգլի**ոյ** Անգլիայի	England
Ֆիլատելֆիա	Ֆիլատելֆի**ոյ**	Philadelphia (Ֆիլատելֆի**ոյ** Հայկական ժամը)
Եկեղեցի	Եկեղեց**լոյ**	Church e.g. Եկեղեց**լոյ** սրահը
հոգի	հոգ**լոյ**	soul
որդի	ուղ**լոյ**	son (Յանուն Հօր, եւ Որդւոյ, եւ Հոգւոյն Սրբոյ) In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
	Պոլիս	Պոլ**սոյ** Constantinople
	Վան	Վան**այ** լիճ Lake Van (of Van)
	Սեւան	Սեւան**այ** լիճ Lake Sevan

* also follow –ուան declension