

LESSON 42

The Declension of Adjectives

As mentioned in Lesson 1 and Lesson 4 adjectives can be used predicately, i.e. following the verb **To Be**. The adjective never changes in this situation:

Masculine noun	Tha am balach beag - The boy is small
Feminine noun	Tha a' chaileag beag - The girl is small
Plural nouns	Tha na balaich beag - The boys are small
	Tha na caileagan beag - the girls are small

Adjectives which directly qualify their nouns are said to be used attributely. These adjectives must agree with their nouns in three ways: number, gender and case. Lesson 4 dealt with the nominative case of both the nouns and their adjectives. These are only mentioned again here for comparison.

Lenition of Adjectives

All adjectives can be lenited except for those beginning with: **l, n, r, sg, sm, sp** or **st**.

Masculine Nouns

The nominative, dative and genitive forms of masculine nouns were met in Lesson 3, Lesson 6, Lesson 34 and Lesson 39 respectively. The change in the adjective closely matches the change in its noun except that the adjective is always lenited in the genitive singular:

	Nominative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	Use the basic form	For <u>definite</u> nouns lenite the basic form	Lenite the basic form and insert an i if final vowel is broad
	gille glic - a wise boy an gille glic - the wise boy	le gille glic - with a wise boy leis a' ghille ghlic - with the wise boy	gille ghlic - of a wise boy a' ghille ghlic - of the wise boy
	cat mòr - a big cat an cat mòr - the big cat	le cat mòr - with a big cat leis a' chat mhòr - with the big cat	cait mhòir - of a big cat a' chait mhòir - of the big cat
Plural	All plurals add a terminal -a or an -e to the basic form		
	gillean glìce - wise boys na gillean glìce - the wise boys	le gillean glìce - with wise boys leis na gillean glìce - with the wise boys	ghillean glìce - of wise boys nan gillean glìce - of the wise boys
	cait mhòra † - big cats na cait mhòra - the big cats	le cait mhòra † - with big cats leis na cait mhòra † - with the big cats	chat mòra - of big cats nan cat mòra - of the big cats
	Nominative	Dative	Genitive

† Nouns (whether masculine or feminine) which have a final **i** in their plural always lenite the following adjective

Feminine Nouns

The nominative, dative and genitive forms of feminine nouns were met in Lesson 3, Lesson 6, Lesson 34 and Lesson 39 respectively:

	Nominative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	For <u>definite</u> nouns lenite the basic form	Lenite the basic form and insert an i if final vowel is broad †	Lenite the basic form and insert an i if final vowel is broad ‡
	caileag ghlic - wise girl a' chaileag ghlic - the wise girl	le caileig ghlic - with a wise girl leis a' chaileig ghlic - with the wise girl	caileige gllice - of a wise girl na caileige gllice - of the wise girl
	cùis mhòr - a big affair a' chùis mhòr - the big affair	le cùis mhòir - with a big affair leis a' chùis mhòir - with the big affair	cùise mòire - of a big affair na cùise mòire - of the big affair
Plural	All plurals add a terminal -a or an -e to the basic form		
	caileagan gllice - wise girls na caileagan gllice - the wise girls	le caileagan gllice - with wise girls leis na caileagan gllice - with the big girls	caileagan gllice - of wise girls na caileagan gllice - of the wise girls
	cùisean mòra - big affairs na cùisean mòra - the big affairs	le cùisean mòra - with big affairs leis na cùisean mòra - with the big affairs	chùisean mòra - of big affairs na cùisean mòra - of the big affairs
	Nominative	Dative	Genitive

† As mentioned in Lesson 7 the trend is for feminine singular dative nouns, particularly in the spoken language, to be identical to the nominative. This erosion is also reflected in the agreement of the adjective.

‡ A characteristic of monosyllabic feminine singular genitive adjectives is the addition of a terminal **-e**. Polysyllabic feminine singular genitive adjectives do not generally add a terminal **-e** and the trend (both written and spoken) is for these to be identical to masculine ones. Monosyllabic feminine singular genitive adjectives resist this trend since the corresponding monosyllabic feminine singular genitive nouns have mostly retained the terminal **-e** (see Lesson 35). However, as shown in the table above, it is expected that if you do in fact go ahead and add a terminal **-e** to polysyllabic nouns then the adjective should agree and consequently remain unlenited.

There is at present considerable variation regarding declension of the feminine singular nouns and their adjectives. Except for some common idiomatic structures the nominative has all but replaced the dative in the spoken language. Regarding the feminine singular genitive there exists a higher register (formal prose and speech) which uses grammatical forms and a lower register (colloquial spoken and written) which exhibits a marked erosion toward the equivalent masculine form for both nouns and adjectives:

High Register	Various Intermediates Might Arise †		Low Register
caileige glìce - of a wise girl na caileige glìce - of the wise girl	caileig glìce na caileig glìce	caileige ghlic na caileige ghlic	caileig ghlic na caileig ghlic
faoileige mòire - of a big seagull na faoileige mòire - of the big seagull	faoileig mòire na faoileig mòire	faoileige mhòir na faoileige mhòir	faoileig mhòir na faoileig mhòir
cùise mòire - of a big affair na cùise mòire - of the big affair		cùise mhòir na cùise mhòir	cùis mhòir na cùis mhòir
làimhe glìce - of a wise hand na làimhe glìce - of the wise hand		làimhe ghlic na làimhe ghlic	làimh ghlic na làimh ghlic

† Low register adjectives should only be used with their corresponding low register nouns. Associating high register adjectives with low register nouns and vice versa should be avoided. Likewise intermediate forms are best avoided.

Internal Modifications in Adjectives

Polysyllabic adjectives are slenderised by inserting an **i** after a final broad vowel or changing a final **ea** to **i**. There is never any terminal **-e** added for the feminine genitive singular. In

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular
beartach - rich	beartaich	bheartaich	beartaich
bòidheach - beautiful	bòidhich	bhòidhich	bòidhich
dìleas - loyal	dìlis	dhìlis	dìlis
freagarrach - suitable	freagarraich	fhreagarraich	freagarraich
salach - dirty	salaich	shalaich	salaich

There is no internal change where the adjective already has a final **i** or when the it ends in a vowel:

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular
cofhartail - comfortable		chofhartail	cofhartail
cruinn - round		chruinn	cruinne
eireachdail - handsome		eireachdail	eireachdail
fada - long		fhada	fada
tana - thin		thana	tana
tinn - ill		thinn	tinne

However, most monosyllabic adjectives with a final broad vowel undergo an analogous process of slenderisation as nouns (see Lesson 7 and Lesson 34). As with nouns the process can involve internal vowel modification with the slenderisation of the final vowel to **i**.

To help you the Vocabulary section shows the fully slenderised feminine genitive singular adjective from which other forms can be derived.

Type 1

An **i** is inserted after the broad vowel. This type contains mostly those with a final **a** or **ao** in the basic form:

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular (terminal -e)
àrd - high	àird	àird	àirde
blàth - warm	blàith	bhlàith	blàithe
caol - narrow	caoil	chaoil	caoile
mòr - big	mòir	mhòir	mòire

Type 2

An **i** is inserted after a change in the single broad vowel, e.g. **o** >> **ui** and **a** >> **oi**. Neither modification is particularly common but they are found in a number of commonly used adjectives:

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular (terminal -e)
bog - soft	buig	bhuig	buige
dall - blind	doill	dhoill	doille
donn - brown	duinn	dhuinn	duinne
gorm - blue	guirm	ghuirm	guirme
trom - heavy	truim	thruim	truime

Type 3

The substitution of a final broad vowel in a diphthong with **i**, e.g. **ea** and **eu** >> **ei**

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular (terminal -e)
dearg - red	deirg	dheirg	deirge
deas - right	deis	dheis	deise
geur - sharp	gèir	ghèir	gèire
searbh - bitter	seirbh	sheirbh	seirbhe

Type 4

The substitution of a diphthong with **i**, e.g. **ea** >> **i**:

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular (terminal -e)
beag - small	big	bhig	bige
geal - white	gil	ghil	gile
sean - old	sin	shin	sine

Type 5

The substitution of the diphthong **ia** with **èi**:

Basic	Internal Change	Masculine Genitive Singular (lenited)	Feminine Genitive Singular (terminal -e)
cian - distant	cèin	chèin	cèine
ciar - dusky, swarthy	cèir	chèir	cèire
liath - grey, greyed out	lèith	lèith	lèithe

Adjectives Coming Before the Noun

There are a few common adjectives which can only be used before a noun:

ath - next

a h-uile - every

corra - a few

deagh - good

dearbh - the very, exact, ideal

droch - bad

fìor - true, exceptional

gach - each

iomadach, iomadh - many a

prìomh - main, prime

mion - minor, petty

sàr - exceptional

seann - old

These adjectives do not change in any case. They all however lenite the following noun except for **a h-uile**, **iomadach/iomadh** and **gach**:

an ath bhliadhna - next year

a h-uile duine - everyone

corra dhuine - a few men

deagh dhùrachdan - good wishes

an dearbh rud - the ideal thing, the very thing

droch shìde - bad weather

fìor ghaisgeach - a true hero
gach madainn - each day
iomadach là/iomadh là - many a day
prìomh shràid - main street
mion chànanan - minority languages
sàr bhoireannach - an exceptional woman
seann chraobh - old tree

Some other conventional adjectives may also be seen in the before a noun position, when particular emphasis is required, in which case they all lenite the following noun. A number of associations have become permanent indicated by a hyphen:

mòr bheinn - great mountain	dearg amadan - a total fool
cruaidh fheum - desperate need	cruaidh-chàs - extreme hardship
garbh bheinn - rough mountain	dubh-fhacal - enigma (dark word)
dearg chuthach - derangement	dubh-chàineadh - intense criticism

NEW WORDS

Adjectives

ath - next (before noun)	beartach - rich
bog - soft	breac - speckled
caol - narrow	cian (cèin also as basic form) - distant
ciar - dusky, swarthy	clì - left
cruinn - round	dall - blind
deagh - good (before noun)	dearbh - exact, the very (before noun)
deas - right (side)	droch - bad (before noun)
garbh - rough	gòrach - stupid
gruamach - grumpy, gloomy	milis - sweet
òg - young	sean - old (after noun)
seann - old (before noun)	searbh - bitter
sracte - torn	trom - heavy

Nouns

amadan (m) - fool, clown	bata (m) - walking stick, baton
càineadh (m) - criticism	cànan (m), cànan (f) - language
càs (m) - hardship	cuthach (m) - rage
faobhar (m) - edge of a blade	gaisgeach (m) - hero
gleans (m) - shine, finish	gràdh (m) - love
greim/grèim (m) - grip, a portion of food	mòran (m) - much, many, a lot
turas (m) - trip, journey, instance	corrach (f) - finger
bruach (f) - bank (of river etc)	feadhainn (f) - some, ones (collective noun)
dùrachd (f) - wish, tiding	
làmh (f) - handle	

All exercises use a high register. As you do these think about the low colloquial forms you are likely to hear.

EXERCISE 1 Translate into English

1. Bha mòran uinneagan beaga anns an t-seann chaisteal ann
2. 'S toil leam flùraichean gorma ach 's beag orm an fheadhainn phurpaidh
3. Gheàrr mi mo chorrage air faobhar na sgeine gèire
4. Tha mo bhean a' glanadh nan soithichean salach
5. Thèid sinn a-rithist an sin an ath thuras
6. A bheil sibh eòlach air prìomh shràid a' bhaile ùir?
7. Tha e na amadan leis a' bhriogais ghoirid bhric air
8. Thug an duine deagh chomhairle dhuinn
9. Bha an dearg chuthach oirre le feirg mhòir
10. Tha na caoraich dhubha ag ithe an fheòir mhilis
- 11a. Bha mi nam laighe fon ghrèin bhlàith
- 11b. Bha mi nam laighe ann an teas na grèine blàithe
- 12a. Bha an t-eun breac air druim an eich dhuibh
- 12b. Tha na h-eòin bheaga air druim na caorach duibhe
- 13a. Cùm grèim math air làmh a' chopain daoir
- 13b. Cùm an copan daor sin sàbhailte nad ghrèim
- 14a. Shuidh corra dhuine còmhla air a' chathair mhòir ghuirm
- 14b. Shuidh mi air an fheur ghrod fhliuch
- 15a. Fosgail doras an t-seòmair bhig
- 15b. Dùin doras na h-eaglaise bige
- 16a. Ràinig a h-uile duine mullach na beinne àirde
- 16b. Bha iad air mullach an t-seann chaisteil
- 17a. Chaidh e a-muigh anns an uisge throm
- 17b. Thàinig i a-staigh dhan t-seòmar bhlàth
- 18a. Bha a' ghlainne ghlan nam làimh dheis
- 18b. An robh am peann nad làimh chlì? Bha
- 19a. Tha dèideag bhrìste aig a' chaileig òig
- 19b. Tha dèideag na caileige òige brìste
- 20a. Tha an cat fon bhòrd bheag
- 20b. Tha an cù fon chathair bhig
- 21a. Dè tha ceàrr air spòg na piseige bige?
- 21b. Dè tha ceàrr air spòg a' choin bhig?
- 22a. 'S e droch naidheachd a tha ann
- 22b. 'S e deagh naidheachd a tha ann
- 23a. Tha seacaid dhonn agam le pòcaid mhòir oirre
- 23b. Tha pòcaid na seacaide duinne agam sracte
- 24a. 'S toil leam gleans an fhuilt bhàin fhada aice
- 24b. 'S toil leam gleans an fhuilt chèir ghoirid aige
- 25a. Chluich iad anns an allt gharbh
- 25b. Shiùbhail iad air an abhainn ghairbh

- 26a. Tha iomadach duine ann dhen bharail neònaich sin
26b. Tha iomadh tè ann dhen bharail ghòraich sin
27a. Choimhead mi air obair a' bhalaich thruim
27b. Choimhead mi air obair na caileige truime
28a. Seo bata na cailliche doille
28b. Seo bata a' bhodaich dhoill
29a. Chuala mi an sgeul bho nighean an duine ghruamaich
29b. Chuala mi an naidheachd bho mhac na mnà gruamaich
30a. Bha na caileagan òga nan suidhe air an leabaidh bhuig chofhartail
30b. Bha na balaich òga nan suidhe air a' chloich fhuair chruaidh

EXERCISE 2 Translate into English

anns an àite shàbhailte; air oidhche chiùin; leis na balaich dhona
biadh nan cearc(an) dubha; eaglais a' bhaile mhòir; bruach na h-aibhne luaithe
air a' mhuir ghuirm; aig deireadh na sgeulachd fada; aig an uinneig fhosgailte
spòg a' chait dhuinn; làmh a' chopain chruinne; anns a' ghlainne chruinn
teas là ghrianaich; bhon oibriche dhìleas; anns an allt dhomhainn
fad a fuilt lèith; thairis air an drochaid chaoil; earball na luch a bige
comhairle duine ghlic; cobhair deagh charaid; blasad bainne ghoirt
ceòl a guth bhòidhich; air a' chois chlà agam; air na h-achaidhean gorma
teas nan teintean blàtha; cinn nam balach beaga; gràdh na caileige bàine

LESSON 42: ANSWERS 1

1. There were many small windows in the old castle
2. I like blue flowers but I dislike the purple ones
3. I cut my finger on the edge of the sharp knife
4. My wife is cleaning the dirty dishes
5. We'll go there again next time
6. Are you acquainted with the main street of the new town?
7. He's a fool with his short speckled pattern trousers
8. The man gave us some good advice
9. She was delirious with a great anger
10. The black sheep are eating the sweet grass
- 11a. I was lying under the warm sun
- 11b. I was lying in the heat of the warm sun
- 12a. The speckled bird was on the back of the black horse
- 12b. The small birds were on the back of the black sheep
- 13a. Keep a good grip on the expensive cup
- 13b. Keep that expensive cup safe in your grip
- 14a. A few folk sat together on the big blue chair
- 14b. I sat on the rotten wet grass
- 15a. Open the door of the small room
- 15b. Close the door of the small church
- 16a. Everyone reached the top of the tall mountain
- 16b. They were on the roof of the old castle
- 17a. He went out in the heavy rain
- 17b. She came in to the warm room
- 18a. The clean glass was in my right hand
- 18b. Did you have a pen in your left hand? Yes
- 19a. The young girl has a broken toy
- 19b. The young girl's toy is broken
- 20a. The cat is under the wee table
- 20b. The dog is under the wee chair
- 21a. What wrong with the wee kitten's paw?
- 21b. What wrong with the wee dog's paw?
- 22a. It's bad news
- 22b. It's good news

LESSON 42: ANSWERS 2

- 23a. I have a brown jacket with a large pocket on it
 - 23b. The pocket of my brown jacket is torn
 - 24a. I like the shine of her long blond hair
 - 24b. I like the shine of his short dark hair
 - 25a. They played in the rough burn
 - 25b. They travelled on the rough river
 - 26a. Many a man is of that strange opinion
 - 26b. Many a woman is of that silly opinion
 - 27a. I looked at the work of the heavy boy
 - 27b. I looked at the work of the heavy girl
 - 28a. Here's the old blind woman's walking stick
 - 28b. Here's the old blind man's walking stick
 - 29a. I heard the story from the grumpy man's daughter
 - 29b. I heard the news from the grumpy woman's son
 - 30a. The young girls were sitting on the soft comfortable bed
 - 30b. The young boys were sitting on the cold hard stone
- 23a. I have a brown jacket with a large pocket on it
23b. The pocket of my brown jacket is torn
24a. I like the shine of her long blond hair
24b. I like the shine of his short dark hair
25a. They played in the rough burn
25b. They travelled on the rough river
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27b. I looked at the work of the heavy girl
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28b. Here's the old blind man's walking stick
29a. I heard the story from the grumpy man's daughter
29b. I heard the news from the grumpy woman's son
30a. The young girls were sitting on the soft comfortable bed
30b. The young boys were sitting on the cold hard stone
- the heat of the warm fires; the small boys' heads; the
green fields
the music of her beautiful voice; on my left leg; on the
the taste of sour milk
the advice of a wise man; the help of a good friend;
the tail of the small mouse
the length of her grey hair; over the narrow bridge;
deep burn
the heat of a sunny day; from the loyal worker; in the
the round glass
the brown cat's paw; the handle of the round cup; in
open window
on the blue sea; at the end of the long story; at the
bank of the rapid river
the food of the black hens; the city('s) church; the
in the safe place; on a calm night; with the bad boy
- love of the fair girl
the heat of the warm fires; the small boys' heads; the
green fields
the music of her beautiful voice; on my left leg; on the
the taste of sour milk
the advice of a wise man; the help of a good friend;
the tail of the small mouse
the length of her grey hair; over the narrow bridge;
deep burn
the heat of a sunny day; from the loyal worker; in the
the round glass
the brown cat's paw; the handle of the round cup; in
open window
on the blue sea; at the end of the long story; at the
bank of the rapid river
the food of the black hens; the city('s) church; the
in the safe place; on a calm night; with the bad boy