

Tagalog Verb Affixes: An Overview

This is an excerpt from [Learning Tagalog: Fluency Made Fast and Easy, Course Book 2](#).

Tagalog verbs generally consist of a root and one or more affixes¹. In Course Book 1, we encountered **(-)um-**, **mag-**, **ma-**, **maka-** and **-in** affixes. Those are among the most common examples.

In fact, there are over 80 Tagalog verb affixes that are commonly used in conversation. Take a look at the list of [Tagalog verb affixes](#) at the end of this book (p. 218). As you can see, there are several **-an** affixes, several **ma-** affixes and so on. Those affixes share the same form but differ in meaning and use. Luckily, many verb roots are used only with a few affixes. Some of the affixes on the list are not used as often as others.

Examples of verbs with different **ma-** affixes:

ma- 1 (doer-POD)

to do something (expresses various kinds of actions)

Natulong siya. – *He/she slept.*

ma- 2 (doer-POD)

to do something unintentionally; or,

to get into a certain state unintentionally

Nagulat ako. – *I was surprised.*

ma- 6 (object-POD)

to perceive something

Narinig mo ba ang balita? – *Did you hear the news?*

Lit. *Was heard by you [question] the news?*

¹ Exceptions: (1) Certain roots, such as **sabi**, **akala'** and **alam** (followed by the doer expressed as a Ng phrase). (2) Certain commands, such as **tuloy (ka/kayo)**. (3) Pseudo-verbs. With a few exceptions, these roots can also be used with verb affixes.

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Note that in the last example, the POD, **ang balita'**, is the object of the action. The doer, **mo**, is expressed as a Ng phrase.

In English, the subject is usually the doer and sometimes the object of the action. In Tagalog, however, the POD can be the doer, object, direction, location, beneficiary, instrument, cause, or reference of the action. It is the verb affix that indicates this role. The most common roles of the POD are doer, object, and direction (in that order).

With some verbs, there is never a POD. An example would be the verb **umulan** which means "to rain."

Conclusion #1: Understanding Tagalog sentences with verbs

To understand a Tagalog sentence with a verb, you need to look at the verb (affix) to know the role of the POD and of the other parts of the sentence.

See also ETG p. 105/91 (Roles of the POD) for more examples.

Conclusion #2: Forming Tagalog sentences with verbs

To form a Tagalog sentence with a verb, choose a POD depending on the situation. Then pick a verb that gives the POD the correct role. When there is a definite² object in a basic sentence, it generally becomes the POD.

The list of affixes on p.218 can help you get an overview and recognize patterns. However, there are no simple rules to determine which affixes a particular root can take.

² Definite means that it cannot be mistaken for another. It is specific and identifiable. Examples: *that car, John, she, the mailbox, his letter, my arrival, our dinner*. Examples of indefinite phrases: *a car, some letters*.

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The most practical way to learn the verbs is to hear them repeatedly in natural dialogues. With practice, forming sentences will become second nature to you.

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