

# VERBAL NOUNS: –MAK VS –MA

by Seda Sürel

## INTRODUCTION

Turkish distinguishes between the infinitive (–mAk) and the verbal noun (–mA).

Both forms allow actions to be treated as nominal elements, but they differ in morphological behavior and syntactic distribution.

### 1. Function

Verbal nouns encode actions or events as nominal units. They function as subjects, objects, or complements within a sentence, depending on their form.

### 2. Forms

Turkish uses two non-finite verbal forms:

- –mAk: the infinitive.
- –mA: the verbal noun.

The two forms are not interchangeable. Their selection is determined by the syntactic requirements of the main verb.

### 3. Morphology

#### –mAk (Infinitive)

- Forms the infinitive.
- Does not take possessive suffixes.
- Does not take case suffixes.
- Does not enter nominal inflection.

#### Suffix shapes:

- –mAk → mak / mek

#### Vowel harmony examples:

- gelmek
- gitmek
- okumak

#### –mA (Verbal Noun)

- Forms a verbal noun.
- Enters the nominal inflection system.
- Takes possessive suffixes marking the subject of the action.
- May take case suffixes after possessive marking.
- Behaves morphologically as a noun.

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## Suffix shapes:

- mA → ma / me

## Vowel harmony examples:

- okuma
- gelme
- gitme

## Possessive Inflection of –mA

The verbal noun formed with –mA takes possessive suffixes in the same way as nouns.

## Illustrative forms:

- okumam
- okuman
- okuması
- okumamız

## After possessive marking, case suffixes may be added:

- okumamı
- okumana
- okumasından

## Morphological Contrast

- mAk mAk undergoes vowel harmony (mak / mek) but forms a fixed infinitival form and does not undergo further nominal inflection.
- mA undergoes vowel harmony (ma / me) and full possessive and case inflection.

## 4. Syntax

- mAk clauses function as non-finite verb complements or as sentence subjects and generally precede the main verb in Turkish.
- mA clauses function syntactically as noun phrases and may appear as subjects or objects.

Only –mA forms can carry possessive and case morphology.

## 5. Usage

- mAk is used with verbs that select infinitival complements.
- mA is used when the action itself is treated as an entity within the noun system.

The choice between –mAk and –mA is determined by grammatical structure.

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## Examples

- Okumak faydalı bir hobidir.
- (Reading is a useful hobby.)
- Kitap okumak istiyorum.
- (I want to read a book.)
- Erken gelmek zor.
- (Coming early is difficult.)
- Okumamı istiyor.
- (He/She wants my reading.)
- Erken gelmen önemli.
- (Your coming early is important.)
- Burada çalışmayı planlıyoruz.
- (We are planning to work here.)

## Notes

- –mA forms do not take possessive or case suffixes.
- –mA forms behave as nouns and take both possessive and case suffixes.
- The subject of a –mA clause is marked by a possessive suffix.
- The distinction between –mA and –MA is morphological and syntactic, not stylistic.