

# 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.

# VERBAL NOUNS: -MAK VS -MA

by Seda Sürel

## 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.

# VERBAL NOUNS: -MAK VS -MA

by Seda Sürel

## 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

- -mAk 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 -mAk and -mA is morphological and syntactic, not stylistic.