

OPTATIVE MOOD (-AYIM / -ALIM)

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

1. Function

In everyday Turkish, the optative is mainly used with ben and biz.

With ben, it expresses a decision, intention, offer, or willingness to do something.
With biz, it is commonly used to make suggestions and propose shared actions.

Geleyim. — Let me come. / I think I'll come.

Ben de geleyim mi? — Shall I come too?

Gidelim. — Let's go.

Gidelim mi? — Shall we go?

2. Forms

Ben: -(y)Aylm

gel → geleyim

git → gideyim

oku → okuyayım

bekle → bekleyeyim

Biz: -(y)Allm

gel → gelelim

git → gidelim

oku → okuyalım

bekle → bekleyelim

3. Buffer Consonant

When the verb ends in a vowel, add -y- before the optative ending.

oku → okuyayım, okuyalım

bekle → bekleyeyim, bekleyelim

4. Stem Change: git- and et-

Before the optative ending, git- and et- become gid- and ed-.

git → gideyim, gidelim

et → edeyim, edelim

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5. Key Usage Patterns

Ben, decision or offer
Erken yatayım. — I think I'll go to bed early.
Ben de geleyim mi? — Shall I come too?

Biz, plain suggestion
Gidelim. means "Let's go."
Hava güzel. Biraz yürüyelim. — It's nice out. Let's take a walk.

Biz, question form
Gidelim mi? means "Shall we go?" The question form asks the other person what they think.

Biz, with hadi
Hadi gidelim. — Come on, let's go.

6. Negation

gitmeyeyim — let me not go / I'd better not go
gitmeyelim — let's not go

7. Contrast with the Future

Okuyacağım. — I will read it.
Okuyayım. — Let me read it. / I think I'll read it.

The future describes a future action. The optative can express the speaker's intention, decision, willingness, offer, or suggestion.

Examples:

- Bugün erken yatayım. — I think I'll go to bed early today.
- Gidelim mi? — Shall we go?
- Biraz dinleneyim. — Let me rest a little.
- Hadi yemek yapalım. — Come on, let's cook something.
- Ona bir mesaj yazayım. — Let me write him/her a message.
- Yarın buluşalım mı? — Shall we meet tomorrow?
- Gitmeyeyim, yorgunum. — I'd better not go, I'm tired.
- Bu konuyu şimdi konuşmayalım. — Let's not talk about this now.

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Notes:

- The optative is mainly used with ben and biz in everyday Turkish.
- Add -y- whenever the stem ends in a vowel.
- git- and et- become gid- and ed- before the optative ending.
- Gidelim is a plain suggestion; Gidelim mi? asks the other person what they think.
- The future and the optative can both talk about future actions, but they work differently. The optative commonly expresses intention, willingness, offers, and suggestions