

# Verbs with ber- prefix

You will have noticed by now that many Indonesian verbs commence with the prefix *ber-*. Basically there are two types of verbs with the *ber-* prefix:

1. Those formed by adding the *ber-* prefix to a root noun
2. Those formed by adding the *ber-* prefix to a root verb

## Ber- + noun

When attached to a noun, the *ber-* prefix forms verbs with the meaning of "to have" or "to wear" whatever is denoted by the root word. Some examples of this are:

- a) Nama = name  
Bernama = to have the name of ...  
Eg. Anak-anak Pak dan Ibu Sudarmo bernama Sulastri dan Bambang.

- b) Umur = age  
Berumur = to have the age of ...  
Eg. Saya berumur enambelas.

**AWAS!** When the noun is the name of a form of transport, for example *sepeda*, *mobil*, *becak* etc., the addition of the *ber-* prefix usually gives the meaning of "to go by" that form of transport.

Contoh: Anwar naik sepeda ke sekolah  
↓  
Anwar bersepeda ke sekolah

## Ber - + verb

When the *ber-* prefix is attached to a verb root the resulting verb is a reflexive verb; that is to say, the subject (person) is performing the action on itself. It is therefore a verb that only affects itself and not anyone or anything else. There is no object (noun) in these sentences.

*Contoh:* berlari = to run

Berlari cannot be used to say “I run a company” or “I’ll run you out of town”. It can only be used when saying you are physically doing the action of running.

*Contoh:* berjalan = to walk

Berjalan cannot be used to say “I walk the dog”. It literally means “to walk yourself”.

## Latihan

Study the following sentences carefully. Each one contains a verb. Identify the verb by highlighting it, and then state whether it is a noun with *ber-* attached, or a reflexive verb with *ber-* attached. In each case, note how the verb affects only the person doing it – it does not directly involve an object or any other person.

1. Saya beradik tiga orang.
2. Bis kota ini berhenti di depan rumah saya.
3. Kain batik yang halus itu berharga Rp 25.000.
4. Hari ini saya tidak bisa bernyanyi karena kerongkongan saya sakit.
5. Kaum Muslim wajib bersembayang lima kali sehari.
6. Sepatu ini sangat bermutu.
7. Bapak saya sedang berbicara dengan Pak Doktor.
8. Dokter biasanya berpakaian putih.

**AWAS!** If the first syllable of the root word begins or ends with the letter r, then the prefix added is *be-* NOT *ber-*.