The Perfect $sdm.n.f$

Generally speaking the (non-emphatic) perfect is a tenseless verb form that expresses **completed action** (from the speaker’s standpoint). This is an aspect, not a tense.

Morphologically, it is an easily recognizable verb form of suffix conjugation in which the suffix $n$ directly follows the verbal stem and it is followed by a suffixed pronominal or a nominal subject: $sdm.n.f$ or $sdm.n$ $X$. Syntactically, the perfect can appear as: (1) The main verbal predicate of a sentence (usually introduced by the particle $iw$ or one of the introductory words $\varphi h.n$ or $wn.in$); (2) A verbal phrase in a subordinate (most often adverb or noun) clause. The **perfect** is normally reserved for **transitive** verbs. For completed action described by an **intransitive** verb (such as verbs of motion) Middle Egyptian usually employs the **stative**. The perfect is negated by the negative particle $ni$ (or $nn$) and (irrespective of transitivity or intransitivity) it is primarily used for **present** tense negation of an action, inability, or negation of necessity.

Examples:

Comparison of the **stative** (for intransitive verbs) and the **perfect** (for transitive verbs):

- $tni.kw$ $ph.n.i$ $i3w$ $wi$ “I grew old, I reached old age…”
  [Urk. IV, 10, 6] (The **stative** of the intransitive verb $tni$ “grow old” is followed by the **perfect** of the transitive verb $ph$ “reach.”)
- $sm.k(w)$ $m$ $wp(w)t$ $nt$ $nb.i$ $pn$ $ir.n.(i)$ $mrt.n.f$ “I went down on a mission of this my lord, I did what he wished/desired.” [Khetty Stela, 6] (The **stative** of the verb of motion $smi$ is followed by the **perfect** of the transitive verb $iri$. The object of the perfect is $mrt.n.f$, a perfect relative form.)

Perfect as a **main verbal predicate** of a sentence:

- $iw$ $ir.n.i$ $t3s.i$ “I have made my border” [Semna Stela II, 4];
- $iw$ $m3.n$ $st$ $hm.f$ “His majesty has seen it” [Semna Stela II, 13-14]
  (Note the Middle Egyptian word order. The variant Uronarti Stela has only $iw$ $m3$ $st$.)
- $ist$ $wi$ $m$ $tp$ $n$ $m3s.n$ $iw$ $\varphi h.3.n.i$ $r$ $wn-m3s.$ “When I was at the head of our army, I have fought really.” [Urk. IV, 7, 8] (The
particle *ist* allows the adverb clause to stand in front of the main clause; the latter is introduced by the particle *iw.)*

*Then I stretched my legs…* [ShS. 45];

*Then I satisfied myself…* [ShS. 52-53] (perfect with **omitted subject**);

*Then the majesty of Upper of Lower Egypt Huni died* [Pr. II, 7-8] (with the king’s name Huni¹ as **topicalized subject**);

*I acquired all magic* [Irtysen Stela, 7] (The artisan-sculptor Irtysen asserts his skills. The perfect has **omitted subject** and the **topicalized object** is referred by the resumptive dependent pronoun *sw.*)

*Then he said to them* [Pr. II, 4] (with a rare use of the introductory word *dr.n* grammatically similar to *ist*);

*Look, we have reached the Residence/home* [ShS. 2-3].

**Perfect in noun clauses:**

*He says as follows: ‘I spent my youth in the town of Nekheb.’* [Urk. IV, 2, 9] Admiral Ahmose’s tomb biography. (*r ntt* “as follows/inasmuch as” lit. “with respect to the fact that” introduces the noun clause. *hprw* means “form, shape, stages of growth.” The Egyptian phrase *ir.f hprw.f m* can be rendered as “he spends his youth in” or “he has his upbringing in,” lit. “he passes his stages of growth in.” *nhb* is the ancient Nekheb, near the present day El Kab, south of Luxor.)

**Perfect in adverb clauses:**

¹ Nysuteh, 2637-2613 BC, last king of the 3rd Dynasty.
“His (the king’s) heart was happy in the valor of victory as he has taken possession of the southerners and the northerners” [Urk. IV, 5, 14];

“His majesty commanded” [Bull Hunt Scarab, 10] (The particle ist marks the following adverb clause.)

Perfect in negation:

“I will not foretell…” [Neferti, 26];

“One cannot not know what (may) happen” [Pr. II, 2]. (The subject is the impersonal pronoun tw, and the object is hprt, a perfective active participle);

“One cannot endure…” [Neferti 50];

“He cannot be approached” [Urk. IV, 615, 10];

“I was not negligent about my army” [Kamose Stela 2, 25]. (Negated perfect of the intransitive verb bꜣg ꜣ “lazy.”)