Overview of the Qal Imperfect

I. Indispensable to understanding this form is the memorization of the paradigm of קַטֶל. Master that as soon as you can, including all vowel points and dageshes. Use the ב, ג, ד, ר prefixes, and the נה י suffixes to identify person, gender, and number.

II. Changes in the weak verbs.
A. Gutturals:
   1. routine changes שלָחַזק יָעְמד יָעֶּשה
   2. changes due to quiescent אֹיאַכְל (3ms) אֹתּאַכְל (3fs, 2ms) אַכְל (1cs) etc. There are six verbs of this type: The bride seized (לָחַז) her bridegroom and said (אמר), `I am willing (אבה) to eat (אכל) all you bake (אפה) though I perish (אבד).

B. Lāmed ḫ verbs. Unless the first consonant is a guttural (e.g. יָעֶּשה) the recognition points memorized from the paradigm (תְקִיָּק etc.) remain. לָנה°ִּתְגֶלַגְל לִּתְגָלַג. Then if there are only two root consonants, and the prefix and first consonant are pointed like the paradigm, the word is lāmed ḫ.

C. Pē nūn verbs. The recognition point for the qal imperfect will be the hîreq under the prefix. If there are only two root consonants, and the first of these has a dagesh forte, the word is pē nūn. The verb לָכַח often behaves as if it were pē nūn: אַכְל.

D. Pē wāw verbs. The prefix vowel in the Qal imperfect is șērê and the yôd of the root is lost. If there are only two root consonants and the prefix is pointed with a șērê, the root is pē wāw, which will be written as pē yôd in Hebrew. The verb לָכַח often behaves as if it were Pē wāw: יַכִּח. True pē yôd verbs are not difficult: יַכִּח.

E. Hollow verbs. The prefix vowel is qāmes. What remains after the removal of the prefix, is something that looks like the dictionary form: מַשְׂה (which in the case of Hollow verbs is the infinitive rather than 3ms as with most verbs). Note the hip imperfect of such verbs: מִשָּה.

III. Changes brought about by the Waw Consecutive.

A. Pē yôd and Pē aleph. Retraction of the accent and shortening of stem vowel in some forms: נָלַגְל (which in the case of Hollow verbs is the infinitive rather than 3ms as with most verbs). Note: נָלַגְל is from הָלַג.

B. Hollow verbs show retraction of the accent and shortening of the stem vowel מָשָׂה מָשָׂה מָשָׂה.

C. Lāmed ḫ verbs show apocopation = loss of final ḫ. A sègôl is then inserted between the two root letters. מָכַךְ but מִכּךְ. Some lāmed ḫ verbs merely lengthen the prefix vowel to a șērê. מָכַךְ, but מִכּךְ.

D. Lāmed ḫ AND pē gutteral. מָשָׂה מָשָׂה.

E. נָלַגְל is Qal imperfect 3ms from הָלַג.