

SPANISH FOR GENIUSES



Verbs,
pronouns,
prepositions and
beginner
vocabulary

by

Andromeda Jones

Spanish for Geniuses:
Beginner grammar and vocabulary

By Andromeda Jones

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Introduction

Spanish for Geniuses: Verbs, pronouns, prepositions and beginner vocabulary is a free accompanying guide to the original book Spanish for Geniuses: Advanced classes to get you speaking with fluency and confidence.

It contains extra verb tables, preposition lists and vocabulary functions that I was not able to fit into the original book. Spanish for Geniuses is a series of books for people who wish to learn advanced Spanish up to fluency level.

I chose the title Spanish for Geniuses not because only a genius can learn a language but because there are certain genius ways to learn it quicker and more proficiently than the traditional study route. My methods are explored in the original book Spanish for Geniuses book while you can find additional material in this verb and preposition book here.

About this series

The Spanish for Geniuses series are written for English speakers who wish to learn Spanish to a high level. For this reason it talks a lot about the way we use our native language as (I discovered when teaching English) understanding how our own grammar works is the key to understanding the grammar of other foreign languages including Spanish.

Because I live in Spain the emphasis is on Castilian Spanish but it can be applied to South American also as, with the exception of Argentina and Uruguay, there are only a few differences in vocabulary and pronunciation.

About the author

I am a British English teacher teaching in Spain. Ten years ago I started out like you – learning Spanish though my own interest. Somewhere along the way I got ambitious and started noting and categorising the phrases people used around me to create a resource that went way beyond traditional Spanish language books.

I published because I figured that there were others out there like me who could use them. Those being the *aficionados* – the people who wanted to do more than order a meal –the people who want to know everything – or at least as much as the could.

This is why I wrote Spanish for Geniuses. For Geniuses like you.

1. The alphabet

Spanish (unlike English) is a phonetic language meaning that you say the word how it is spelt, using all of the vocals. But first you must learn the alphabet.

A - *ah*

B - *beh*

C - *seh* (*put your tongue between your teeth, almost as if to pronounce 'th'*)

D - *deh*

E - *eh*

F - *ef-e*

G - *heh* (*this is usually a hard sound, pronounced from the back of the throat*)

H - *ah-che* (*H is almost never pronounced and therefore a word like 'hijo' (son) is actually spoke 'ijo'*).

I - *ee*

J - *hotah*

K - *kah*

L - *el-eh*

M - *em-eh*

N - *en-eh*

Ñ - *en-yeh* (*careful attention must be paid to distinguish between the two 'n' vocals.*)

O - *oh*

P - *peh*

Q - *coo*

R –air-eh

S – es-eh

T – teh

U – oo

V – veh

W – oveh-dobley

X – ek-is

Y – y-grega

Z - seh-tah

Additional sounds

‘Ch’ is the same as English like Church.

‘ll’ in Spain and most of South America is pronounced like ‘y’ as in ‘yacht’.

‘rr’ pronounced by rolling your ‘rs’ like a purring cat. It is important to get the hang of it as some words are only distinguishable by the amount of rs. For example, ‘perro’ means ‘dog’, if you don’t roll your rs however, you are saying ‘pero’ (‘but’).

The letters ‘**b**’ and ‘**v**’ make a sound that is exactly the same.

2. Demonstratives: This, that, these and those

Demonstratives show how far away a noun is in relation to the speaker. This can refer to both distance or time. For example, ‘This cat next to me’ or ‘That day you got your first job.’

Demonstratives in Spanish are masculine, feminine or neutral. For the full list take a look at these tables below.

Singular

| | This | That | That (over there) |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| masculine | este | ese | aquel |
| feminine | esta | esa | aquella |
| neutral | esto | eso | aquello |

Plural

| | These | Those | Those (over there) |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| masculine/neutral | estos | esos | aquellos |
| feminine | estas | esas | aquellas |

Note that there is no real masculine in plural. Use the neutral version, ‘estos’ and ‘esos.’

The first two columns are used in much the same way as English. If the object is within reach then you use the ‘este/esta’ or ‘estos/estas’ changing the gender depending on the noun. If it is out of reach use ‘ese/esa’ or ‘esos/esas’.

The difficulty comes with ‘aquel’ of which there is no equivalent in English but you can translate it as ‘over there,’ ‘back when’ or ‘beyond.’

For example:

‘Mira aquellos pajaritos’ – ‘Look at those birds over there.’

‘Aquel día, cuando era joven,’ – ‘That day, back when I was young.’

Demonstratives as pronouns

When a demonstrative is used in place of a noun then the first ‘e’ carries an accent. For example in a conversation about two ‘bebidas’ (drinks) someone might say:

‘Quieres ésta o ésa?’ – ‘Do you want this one or that one?’

In a conversation about ‘zapatos’ (shoes), one might say:

‘Prefiero ésos que éstos’ – ‘I prefer those ones to these ones.’

3. Possessives

Possessive adjectives

It could be said that Spanish is obsessed with plurals. Not content with making adjectives plural ('Las casas grandes,' for example) it has to make the possessive plural also. For example, 'mi coche' changes to 'mis coches' for more than one car. The same is true for all the possessive adjectives:

| | Singular | Plural |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| my | mi | mis |
| your | tu | tus |
| his | su | sus |
| her | su | sus |
| its | su | sus |
| our | nuestro/a | nuestros/as |
| your (plural) | vuestro/a | vuestros/as |
| their | su | sus |

Notice that 'his', 'her', 'its' and 'their' all have the same possessive 'su'. For example in the sentence 'Su hija se llama Lucia' it could be 'his', 'her' or 'their' daughter is called Lucia.

Notice also that 'nuestro' and 'vuestro' change gender depending on the gender of the noun – 'Nuestra casa es blanca' (our house is white), 'Vuestra comida está buena' (your food is good), 'Nuestro pueblo es pequeño' (our village is small), 'Vuestro hijo es guapo' (your son is handsome)

Whose bag is it anyway?

To ask a possessive question in English we use the interrogative pronoun 'whose'. In Spanish this is expressed with 'de quién.'

For example:

‘¿De quién es este bolsa?’ – Whose bag is this? (Or literally ‘Of whom is this bag?’)

‘¿De quien es este perrito?’ – Whose dog is this?

The answer is also with ‘de.’ ‘La bolsa es de mi hija,’ – The bag is my daughter’s.

‘El perrito es de mi vecina,’ –The dog is my neighbour’s.

Possessive pronouns

In English these are ‘mine’, ‘your’, ‘ours’ and so on. They are used when we want to reorder the possessive sentence. For example, ‘It is my sofa’ or ‘The sofa is mine.’

| | Singular | Plural |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| mine | mío/mía | míos/mías |
| your | tuyo/tuya | tuyos/tuyas |
| his | suyo/suya | suyos/suyas |
| hers | suyo/suya | suyos/suyas |
| ours | nuestro/nuestra | nuestros/nuestras |
| yours (vosotros) | vuestro/vuestra | vuestros/vuestras |
| theirs/yours (usted) | suyo/suya | suyos/suyas |

Like possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns are plural if you are speaking about more than one object – ‘Los libros son nuestros’ (the books are ours) or ‘Las fotos son tuyas’ (the photos are yours) Note that the possessive pronoun changes its gender depending on the gender of the object, not the person who owns it.

4. Pronouns

Subject pronouns

Subject pronouns are as follows in Spanish.

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| I | yo |
| you (informal) | tú |
| you (formal) | usted |
| he | él |
| she | ella |
| it | lo/la/le |
| we | nosotros/nosotras |
| you (plural) | vosotros/vosotras |
| they/you (formal, plural) | ellos/ellas |

With verbs they work like this. Note, however, you don't have to use them as the subject (I, you etc) is understood by the verb ending.

Yo leo – I read

Tú lees – you read

Él lee – he reads

Ella lee – she reads

Usted lee – you read (formal)

Nosotros leemos – we read (masculine)

Nosotras leemos – we read (feminine)

Vosotros leéis – you read (plural informal, masculine)

Vosotras leéis – you read (plural, informal, feminine)

Ellos leen – they read (masculine)

Interrogative pronouns

These form question sentences and are:

Qué – This is ‘what’ when paired with a noun: ‘¿Qué hora es?’ – what time is it? and ‘how’ when paired with an adjective: ‘Qué grande es tu perro’ – how big is your dog (This is not a question but rather an exclamation.

Cuál and cuáles in plural – This is ‘which.’ BUT: Cuál is used in place of qué in all ‘ser’ questions unless the question is ‘what is that?’ (¿qué es eso?)

Quién and quiénes in plural – This is ‘who.’ For example, ‘¿Quién es tu jefe?’ – who is your boss or ‘¿Quiénes son tus maestros?’ – Who are your teachers?

Cuál vs quéAs stated above, if the question uses ‘ser’ verb then it is preceded by ‘cuál’; meaning that many questions that would start with ‘what’ in English actually start with ‘which,’ for example:

‘¿Cuál es tu nombre?’ - ‘What is your name?’ (or ‘Which is your name?)

‘¿Cuál es la fecha?’ - ‘What is the date?’

‘¿Cuáles son las clases que te gustan?’ – ‘What are the classes that you like?’

In English ‘which,’ is used to choose between a few options (usually 10 or less). Spanish does not use ‘cuál’ this way. In sentences without ‘ser’, the question is made with qué even if there are only a few options. For example:

‘¿Qué planta quieres?’ – ‘Which floor (in a building) do you want?’

‘¿Qué vaso prefieres?’ – ‘Which glass do you prefer?’

‘¿Qué libro me has dado, el rojo o el azul?’ – ‘Which book have you given me, the red one or the blue one?’

Other question words

Dónde – This is ‘where’. This combines with ‘a’ to create ‘to where’ in direction questions for example, ‘¿Adonde vas?’ – Where are you going?
Or literally, ‘To where are you going?’

Cuándo – This is ‘when.’

Por qué – This is ‘why.’

Como – This is ‘how.’

Why and Because

‘Por qué’ (‘why’) is easily confused with ‘porque’ (‘because’); the two words conjoined and without an accent (quite literally, ‘for what?’)

The two are distinguished in speech by making the ‘qué’ sharper with ‘why’ (‘por *qué*’) and lengthening the ‘or’ part of ‘because’ to make ‘*porque*.’

Object pronouns

Object pronouns substitute the noun. In English these are ‘me’, ‘him’, ‘her’ and so on. For example, in the sentence ‘Give Sam the pen,’ Sam is a noun, which can be changed to ‘Give her the pen.’ In Spanish the pronoun either comes before the verb as a separate word or after joined with the verb.

Note, however, that where you place the pronoun changes the meaning. When you place a pronoun before the verb you are describing an action when you place it after you are giving command.

For example:

‘Le da el boli’ – he is giving her the pen.

‘Dale el boli’ – give her the pen.

Object pronouns in Spanish are:

| | Direct object | Indirect object |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| me | me | me |
| you | te | te |
| him | lo/le | le |
| her | la | le |
| it | lo | le |
| us | nos | nos |
| you (informal, plural) | os | os |
| you (formal, plural) | los/las | les |
| them | los/las | les |

More examples include:

Hazle tostada – Make him some toast

Os llamo mañana – I will call you tomorrow

Míralos jugando – Look at them playing

Les Pasa la sal – Pass them the salt

Direct and indirect object pronouns

As you can see object pronouns are a little more complicated in Spanish and that is because they change depending on whether you are referring to the direct or indirect object.

Direct and indirect objects are nothing to be afraid of – we have them in English.

How direct and indirect objects work

The majority of sentences have two objects. The direct object is the noun or pronoun on the receiving end of the action for example, ‘Pass me the pen’ – it is the pen here that is receiving the action (by being passed around).

The indirect object is the person or entity *for* whom you are doing the action. In the above sentence the indirect object is ‘me’. Another way to say this would be ‘Pass the pen *for* me’.

In English indirect objects are often indicated with the prepositions ‘for’ or ‘to.’ For example ‘Explain the problem to us’ – the problem is the direct object while ‘us’ is the indirect object. With pronouns this is ‘Explain it to us.’

In the Spanish equivalent of this sentence the direct object is signified with ‘lo’ and the indirect with ‘nos.’ So it would be ‘explicamelo’ – The indirect object goes first followed by the direct (or in other words ‘lo’ and ‘la’ go at the end). Explain to him the problem would be ‘Explicale el problema.’

The le, lo, la rule

If I were to say in Spanish ‘Give them to them’ I would end up with ‘Daleslas.’ These are far too many ‘l’ words for comfort. To avoid the Repetition of all those ‘l’ sounds ‘le’ and ‘les’ change to ‘se’ when paired with ‘lo,’ ‘la’, ‘los’ or ‘las.’

So the above sentence would be ‘Daselas.’

More examples

'Explicase lo' – explain it to her.

'Prestate se lo' –lend him/them it.

Prepositional pronouns

These pronouns are used after prepositions such as para, con or de. They are:

| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| mí | me |
| ti | you |
| él | him |
| ella | her |
| nosotros | us |
| usted | you (formal, plural) |
| vosotros | you (informal, plural) |
| ellos/ellas | them |

Note: 'me' is pronounced 'meh.'

For example:

‘Vivo cerca de ellos’ – I live close to them

‘Me gusta a ti’ – I like you

‘La casa es para nosotros’ – The house is for us

‘Voy al mercado con vosotros’ – I am going to the market with you.

Conmigo/ Contigo

Con is also commonly combined with mí and ti to make conmigo – ‘with me’ and contigo ‘with you.’ For example, ‘Vienes conmigo?’ Are you coming with me? ‘Si, voy contigo’ – Yes I am going with you.

There is also ‘consigo’ to mean ‘with him’, ‘with her’ or ‘with them.’

However, it is hardly used to mean ‘with them’ as it is not clear who you are referring to. Instead most people prefer to say ‘con ellos’ or ‘con ellas.’

Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns connect two clauses together in a sentence – such as, ‘the man who mows the lawn’ or ‘the pen which I use for work.’

In Spanish relative pronouns are ‘que’ (that), ‘cual’ and ‘quien.’ Unlike interrogative pronouns they do not contain accents.

Which pronoun do I use?

To understand which pronoun to use first we must take a moment to analyse relative clauses in English. Relative clauses are divided into two types; defining and non-defining.

In defining clauses, the clause is not separated from the rest of the sentence with commas.

For example:

‘The woman who teaches me French is called Sabine’ or ‘the shoes which you bought me are blue.’

In both these sentences ‘who’ (referring to a person) and ‘which’ (referring to a thing) can be substituted for ‘that.’

‘Que’ is also the pronoun you use in Spanish: ‘La mujer que me enseña francés se llama Sabine’ and ‘los zapatos que me compraste son azules.’

With non-defining clauses, the clause (which is often superfluous to the sentence) is removed from the rest of the sentence with commas.

For example:

‘Maria, who is my neighbour, is a really good singer.’

In English non-defining clauses must use ‘who’ for people and ‘which’ for things.

In Spanish, however, you use ‘que’ for non-defining clauses also. When referring to a person you could use ‘quien’ but this is optional.

For example, the above sentence would be:

‘Maria, que es mi vecina, es muy buena cantante’ or ‘Juan, que es mi antiguo maestro , me ofreció un trabajo’ – Juan, who is my old teacher, offered me a job.

El que, la que, los que, las que – that which or the one which

Before you get too excited, not every relative clause can be connected with just ‘que.’

‘El que’, ‘la que’, ‘los que’ and ‘las que’ refer to a particular person or object. Their gender and quantity is reflected in the pronoun. In English this would be ‘the one’ or ‘the one which.’

For example:

If you want someone to pass you a pencil and you don’t want just *any* one but rather the one closest, you would say:

‘Pásame el que está más cerca’ – pass me the one which is closest.

If you were talking about your neighbours and wanted to express precisely which one, you would say, ‘¿Sabes a quien me refiero? La que tiene el perro blanco’ – do you know who I am speaking about? The one with the white dog.

When ‘que’ (that) becomes ‘which’ with prepositions

‘El que’, ‘la que’, ‘los que’ and ‘las que’ become ‘in which’ ‘of which’ and ‘with which’ with the prepositions ‘en’, ‘de’ and ‘con.’

For example:

‘La casa en la que vivimos es muy grande’ – the house in which we live is very big (or ‘the house which we live in is very big’).

‘Las clases de las que hablábamos ayer, empiezan mañana’ – the classes of which we were speaking yesterday, start tomorrow (or ‘the classes which we were speaking about yesterday start tomorrow’).

‘El ordenador con el que estudia está roto’ – the computer with which he studies is broken (or ‘The computer which he studies with is broken’).

Lo que – what or which

If speaking about an idea or feeling then you use the neutral ‘lo que.’ In English this is ‘what’ or ‘which.’

For example:

‘Él siempre quiere ver películas de acción, lo que me molesta’ – he always wants to watch action movies, which annoys me.

‘No escuché lo que estaba diciendo’ – I didn’t listen to what he was saying.

‘Ellos no saben lo que quieren hacer en la vida’ – they don’t know what they want to do with their lives.

El cual, la cual, los cuales, las cuales

‘El cual’, ‘la cual’, ‘los cuales’, ‘las cuales’ can be used in place of ‘el que’, ‘la que’, ‘los que’ and ‘las que’. However, these pronouns are old-fashioned and not commonly used.

When who becomes whom

‘Whom’ is used when a person is the object of a sentence.

For example:

‘The woman whom I love is coming to live with me.’

‘Whom’ sounds old-fashioned now and we hardly use it in English, but it is still essential in Spanish.

In Spanish ‘who’ becomes ‘whom’ when it is preceded by a preposition, most commonly ‘con’, ‘de’ or ‘a’.

For example:

‘¿Con quién vas a la boda?’ – with whom are you going to the wedding?

‘¿De quién hablas?’ – about whom are you speaking?

If there is no obvious preposition then you put 'a'.

For example:

'Saludamos a Jorge a quien vimos jugando ayer en el parque' – we said hello to Jorge whom we saw playing in the park yesterday.

'El criminal a quien capturaron ayer había robado el banco' – the criminal whom was captured yesterday had robbed the bank.'

Cuyo/cuya and cuyos/cuyas – whose

'Whose' is the possessive pronoun – for example, 'Facebook, whose app is on my tablet, is a social networking site.'

In Spanish this would be 'Facebook, cuya aplicación está en mi tablet, es un sitio de redes sociales.'

'Cuyo' is 'whose' for masculine nouns while 'cuya' is for feminine. It is 'cuya' in the example above because 'whose' refers to 'aplicación,' which is feminine, and not 'Facebook'.

Other examples include:

'Mi madre, cuyo negocio va muy bien, acaba de vender su primer cuadro' – my mother whose business is doing very well, just sold her first painting.

'Nuestro vecino, cuya hija es médica, ha comprado un nuevo coche' – our neighbour whose daughter is a doctor has just bought a new car.

Alguien and algo – someone and something

Another pair of essential pronouns are 'alguien' (someone) and 'algo' (something). These are used with affirmative statements and questions. For example:

'¿Tienes algo de comer?' – do you have anything to eat?

'Tengo algo, pero no te gusta' – I have something, but you don't like it.

'¿Conoces a alguien francés?' – do you know anyone French?

'Sí, conozco a alguien' – yes I know someone.

Negatives

The negatives of these sentences would be with ‘nada’ (nothing or not anything) and ‘nadie’ (no one or not anyone). For example:

‘No, no tengo nada de comer’ – no, I don’t have anything to eat.

‘No tengo nada’ – I have nothing.

‘No, no conozco a nadie francés’ – I don’t know anyone French

Note that ‘a’ goes before ‘nadie’ in this case because you are referring to a person. This is known as the personal ‘a.’ For more information see the [prepositions chapter](#).

Algún sitio – somewhere

‘Somewhere’ in Spanish is most commonly ‘algún sitio’ (although there are more variations). It is used for affirmative sentences and questions.

For example:

‘¿Conoces algún sitio donde pueda tomar un café?’ – do you know anywhere where I can have a coffee?’

‘Sí, conozco un sitio al fondo de la calle’ – Yes, I know somewhere at the end of the street.

Negatives

The negative of this sentence would be with ‘ningún sitio,’ meaning ‘nowhere’ or ‘not anywhere’. For example:

‘No, no conozco ningún sitio donde puedas tomar un café’ – no, I don’t know anywhere where you can have a coffee.’

‘No conozco ningún sitio’ – ‘I know nowhere.’

The whole someone, something, somewhere question can be summed up in this table:

| | Affirmative | Negative | Question |
|--------------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| someone/anyone | alguien | nadie | alguien |
| something/anything | algo | nada | algo |

somewhere/anywhere

algún sitio

ningún
sitio

algún
sitio

Part II: The present tense

5. Ser vs Estar

There are two 'to be' verbs in Spanish, one for permanent characteristics 'ser' and one for impermanent things like emotions and physical states 'estar.'

Working out whether to use 'ser' or 'estar' is one of the biggest problems English speakers face when learning Spanish but there are rules to help you.

Ser

The verb table for ser is:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| I am | soy |
| you are | eres |
| he is | es |
| she is | es |
| it is | es |
| we are | somos |
| you are (plural, informal) | sois |
| you are (plural, formal) | son |
| they are | son |

We use ser when:

It is the identity of the person or thing: 'Soy Ricardo', 'es parquet.'

The profession of someone: 'Julia es médica,' 'Juan es peluquero' – Juan is a hairdresser. Note that when referring to professions there is no article (un or una).

To describe things which are not likely to change: Such as characteristics of appearance and personality. 'Madrid es grande', 'el cielo es azul', 'los coches son caros,' 'Juana es alta', 'mi tía es simpática'.

Relationships between people: 'Éste es mi marido', 'ellos son mis hermanos', 'Julia es mi jefa' – Julia is my boss.

Price: '¿Cuánto cuestan los zapatos?' 'Son 25 euros,'

Time: ‘Es la una’ – it’s one o’clock, ‘son las ocho y media’ – it’s eight thirty.

Dates: ‘Hoy es el ocho de marzo’ – today is the 8th of March, ‘mañana es viernes’ – tomorrow is Friday.

With passive voice. ‘El edificio fue construido hace 12 años’ – the building was built twelve years ago.

Estar

The table for estar is:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| I am | estoy |
| you are | estás |
| he is | está |
| she is | está |
| it is | está |
| we are | estamos |
| you (informal, plural) | estáis |
| you (formal, plural) | están |
| they | Están |

We use estar for:

Temporary moods: ‘Estoy aburrido’ – I am bored, ‘estamos emocionados por la fiesta’ – we are excited about the party, ‘está preocupado por las notas’ – he is worried about his marks.

Temporary physical states: ‘Ella está malita hoy’ – she is sick today, ‘estoy cansado’ – I am tired, ‘estás muy delgado ahora mismo,’ – you’re very slim at the moment.

A temporary situation with the preposition ‘de’: ‘Sara es abogada pero ahora está de camarera’ – Sara is a lawyer but right now she is a waitress.

Location: ‘El supermercado está al lado de correos’ – the supermarket is next to the post office. ‘Madrid está a 400 km de la costa’ – Madrid is 400 km from the coast.

In continuous tenses with ‘ando’ and ‘iendo’ to form the gerund (gerundio): ‘Estoy mirando el cuadro’ – I am looking at the painting or ‘están jugando juntos’ – they are playing together.

Expressions with estar

Estar a + date: This is another way to express the date.

‘Estamos a cinco de marzo’ – It is the 5th of March.

‘Estar a punto de’ + infinitive and ‘estar para’ + infinitive: To express something is about to happen.

‘Estoy a punto de llamarte’ – I am just about to call you.

‘Está para comer’ – he is about to eat.

Estar por + noun: To express what you are in favour of.

‘Estamos por la democracia’ – we are for democracy.

6. Regular verbs in present

The present is by far the most used tense in Spanish. In fact if you only wanted to learn enough of the language to ‘defenderse’ (‘get by’) as Spanish speakers say, you could learn this and nothing more as it is used in place of so many other tenses. But before I go into how the present tense is used let’s look at the structure.

The basics

Verbs in Spanish end in either -ar, -er or -ir. Take a look at these regular verbs in the following lists:

| -ar | |
|------------|-------------|
| arreglar | to sort out |
| bajar | to go down |
| cocinar | to cook |
| comprar | to buy |
| continuar | to continue |
| limpiar | to clean |
| organizar | to organise |
| preparar | to prepare |
| sacar | to take out |
| trabajar | to work |

| -er | |
|------------|------------|
| beber | to drink |
| comer | to eat |
| correr | to run |
| creer | to believe |
| leer | to read |
| romper | to break |
| vender | to sell |
| | |
| -ir | |
| abrir | to open |

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| compartir | to share |
| cubrir | to cover |
| decider | to decide |
| descubrir | to discover |
| escribir | to write |
| subir | to go up |
| vivir | to live |

To change a root verb such as ‘cocinar’ (‘to cook’), remove the -ar, -er, or -ir part of the verb and add an appropriate ending. This is called conjugating the verb and it works like this:

Cocinar (-ar verb)

Cocino – I cook

Cocinas – you cook (informal)

Cocina – he, she, it, you (formal) cooks

Cocinamos – we cook

Cocináis – you cook (plural, informal)

Cocinan – they cook or you cook (plural, formal)

Beber (-er verb)

Bebo – I drink

Bebes – you drink (informal)

Bebe – he, she, it, you (formal) cooks

Bebemos – we drink

Bebéis – you drink (plural, informal)

Beben – they drink or you drink (plural, formal)

Escribir (-ir verb)

Escribe – I write

Escribes – you write

Escribe – he, she it, you (formal) writes

Escribimos – we write

Escribéis – we write

Escriben – they write or you write (plural, formal)

Note: You do not have to use the subject pronoun ‘yo’, ‘tú’, ‘él’, ‘ella’ and so on before the verb as the listener understand who is being referred to by the verb endings. Just in case you don’t remember the subject pronouns here they are again with the verb ‘leer’ (‘to read’).

Yo leo – I read

tú lees – you read

él lee – he reads

ella lee – she reads

usted lee – you read (formal)

nosotros leemos – we read (masculine)

nosotras leemos – we read (feminine)

vosotros leéis – you read (plural informal, masculine)

vosotras leéis – you read (plural, informal, feminine)

Ellos leen – they read (masculine)

ellas leen – they read (feminine)

ustedes leen – you read (plural, formal)

Note: If you are referring to a group of both men and women then use the masculine forms (‘ellos’, ‘nosotros’ and ‘vosotros’).

Negatives and questions

Again, to make the verb negative put a ‘no’ before it. For example:

‘Como carne pero no como cerdo’ – I eat meat but I don’t eat pork.

‘Mis padres leen los periódicos, pero no escriben mensajes de correo electrónico’ – My parents read newspapers but they don’t write emails.’

For questions, the sentence remains in its affirmative form and the speaker changes the intonation of their voice so that the listener understands it’s a question.

When is the present tense used in Spanish?

When you think about it, we hardly use the present in English. It is used for routines and giving orders and the majority of the time we use other tenses to express what is happening now, what will happen in the future and what has just happened. This is not the case in Spanish. All of these ideas (within reason) can be expressed with present.

The present tense is used for:

Routines and habits. Just as in English if you want to talk about something that happens regularly you use present.

For example:

‘Compro la comida los lunes’ – I buy food on Monday.

‘Al medio día yo y mis compañeros corremos en el parque’ – at midday my companions and I run in the park.

To describe an action that is happening now. This is a crucial one; in English this would almost always be in the continuous tense (‘I am playing football’). Though Spanish has a continuous tense also, it is not nearly as used.

For example:

‘¿Juegas a fútbol con nosotros?’ – are you playing football with us?

‘¿Qué haces con esa pintura?’ – what are you doing with that paint?

‘Julio llega ahora y comemos’ – Julio is arriving now and we will eat.

For more about the present versus the continuous tense take at the [continuous chapter](#).

To describe an event that will take place in the near future. Normally a future time marker is used for clarification.

For example:

‘¿Te llamamos sobre este asunto mañana por la tarde, vale?’ – we will call you about the issue tomorrow afternoon, ok?

‘A este ritmo no acabo esta semana’ – at this rate we won’t finish it this week.

‘En navidad mi familia me visita’ – at Christmas my family will visit me.

For more about the present versus the future tense, take a look at the [future chapter](#).

To ask about a preference or permission (this can often be interpreted as shall):

‘¿Pintamos la sala or el dormitorio primero?’ – shall we paint the living room or the bedroom first?

‘¿Juegas a fútbol o a tenis?’ – do you play football or tennis?

‘¿Te ayudo llevar los libros?’ – shall I help you carry the books?

For something that started in the past and continues until now. In English this would be expressed with the present perfect tense – for example, ‘I have known him for two years.’ In Spanish you use present with the expression ‘desde hace’ to represent the time.

For example:

‘Le conozco desde hace dos años’ – I have known him for two years.

‘Vive aquí desde hace diez años’ – she has been living here for ten years.

‘Trabajan aquí desde hace cinco meses’ – they have been working here for five months.

7. Irregular present tense verbs

Before you get too carried away with your new found language skills it is important to note that there is a long list of verbs in the present tense that are irregular. This is not done to trick language learners but rather to help the word flow smoothly off the speaker's tongue.

Take the verb 'querer' ('to want' or 'to love'). If you continued with the standard system 'I want' would be 'quero' which is awkward to say. To avoid this problem we instead change the verb to 'quiero' which is much easier to say. This is called a stem change.

There are six main stem changes and I will go into each below.

Ar and Er Verbs

When 'e' changes to 'ie': Typical verbs 'querer', 'pensar', 'entender'

As with 'querer' there are many verbs where the first 'e' changes to 'ie'. Look at the system below. All of these verbs end in -er or -ar.

E > ie

| Pensar (to think) | Entender (to understand) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| pienso | entiendo |
| piensas | entiendes |
| piensa | entiende |
| pensamos | entendemos |
| pensáis | entendéis |
| piensan | entienden |

Note that with nosotros and vosotros there is no stem change.

Common verbs that follow this pattern:

| -Ar | | -Er | |
|------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| acertar | to guess | defender | to defend |
| atravesar | to cross | descender | to descend |
| cerrar | to close | encender | to light up |
| comenzar | to start | perder | to lose |
| empezar | to begin | querer | to want |
| nevar | to snow | | |
| recomendar | to recommend | | |

Note that with nosotros and vosotros there is no stem change.

When o changes to ue: Typical verbs volver, jugar, sonar

The next set of verbs changes the first 'o' or 'u' to 'ue'. All end in -ar or -er. Take a look below.

The next set of verbs changes the first 'o' or 'u' to 'ue'. All end in -ar or -er. Take a look below.

| O -> ue | U -> ue |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| volver | jugar |
| vuelvo | juego |
| vuelves | juegas |
| vuelve | juega |
| volvemos | jugamos |
| volvéis | jugáis |
| vuelven | juegan |

Again the verb in nosotros and vosotros form stays the same.

Common verbs that follow this pattern are:

| -Ar |
|-----------------------|
| acordarse to remember |

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| acostarse | to go to bed |
| almorzar | to eat a morning snack |
| aprobar | to approve |
| colgar | to hang up |
| costar | to cost |
| demonstrar | to demonstrate |
| encontrar | to find |
| soñar con | to dream |
| volar | to fly |

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| -Er | |
| conmover | to move emotionally |
| devolver | to return something |
| doler | to hurt |
| llover | to rain |
| morder | to bite |
| mover | to move |
| oler | to smell |
| poder | to be able to |

NOTE: The verb ‘oler’ (to smell) is very irregular. For all present tense forms except for nosotros and vosotros, an ‘h’ precedes the word and so it is: ‘yo huelo’, ‘tú hueles’, ‘él, ella huele’, ‘nosotros olemos’, ‘vosotros oléis’ and ‘ellos huelen’.

Ir verbs

Stem change verbs with ‘ir’ endings come in three categories.

When ‘e’ changes to ‘ie’. Typical verbs: **Preferir, sentir, mentir.**

The second ‘e’ in the verb changes to ‘ie’ except in nosotros or vosotros form.

| |
|-----------|
| preferir |
| prefiero |
| prefieres |
| prefiere |

| |
|------------|
| preferimos |
| preferís |
| Prefieren |

Common verbs that have this form:

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| advertir | to notify |
| convertir | to convert |
| divertirse | to have a good time |
| hervir | to boil |
| mentir | to like |
| referir | to refer to |
| sentir | to regret |
| sentirse | to feel |

When ‘o’ changes to ‘ue.’ Verbs: dormir and morir.

There are only two verbs that use this stem change. These are ‘dormir’ (to sleep) and ‘morir’ (to die).

Note that again there is no stem change for nosotros and vosotros.

| |
|--------------------------|
| Dormir (to sleep) |
| duermo |
| duermes |
| duerme |
| dormimos |
| dormís |
| duermen |

When ‘e’ changes to ‘I’. Typical verbs: Pedir, seguir, vestir.

This is when the ‘e’ of the main verb changes to ‘i’. This change is one of the hardest to master as the difference in pronunciation is small, but essential to learn. Take a look at the pattern below. As usual nosotros and vosotros remain the same.

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Pedir (to ask for, to order)

pido

pides

pide

pedimos

pedís

piden

Common verbs that follow this pattern are:

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| despedir | to fire from a job |
| despedirse | to say goodbye |
| impedir | to avoid, impede |
| medir | to measure |
| perseguir | to pursue, follow |
| reírse de | to laugh at |
| repetir | to repeat |
| seguir | to follow, continue |
| servir | to serve |
| sonreírse | to smile |
| vestirse | to get dressed |

Verbs ending in uir. Typical verbs: incluir, destruir, sustituir.

With these verbs you change the ‘uir’ to ‘y’ before the conjugation except for nosotros and vosotros which remain the same. For example

Incluir (to include)

incluyo

incluyes

incluye

incluimos

incluís

incluyen

Note that verbs ending in ‘guir’ such as ‘seguir’ and ‘perseguir’ do not follow this pattern.

Common verbs with this stem change include:

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| atribuir | to attribute |
| concluir | to conclude |
| contribuir | to contribute |
| destruir | to destroy |
| distribuir | to distribute |
| huir | to flee |
| influir | to influence |
| sustituir | to substitute |

Common verbs with this stem change include:

Verbs that are irregular in first person only

There is also a final list of verbs that are irregular only in the 'yo' form. These are:

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| caber (to fit) | quepo (i fit) |
| caer (to fall) | caigo (i fall) |
| dar (to give) | doy (i give) |
| estar (to be) | estoy (i am) |
| hacer (to do) | hago (i do) |
| poner (to put) | pongo (i put) |
| saber (to know) | sé (i know) |
| salir (to leave, go out) | salgo (i go out) |
| traer (to bring) | traigo (i bring) |
| valer (to be worth) | valgo (i value) |
| ver (to see) | veo (i see) |

8. Gustar and back to front verbs

There is a list of verbs in Spanish that follow a different pattern which runs: Indirect object pronoun + verb in third person singular or plural.

For example:

‘Me gusta la fruta’ – I like fruit (or literally, ‘the fruit is liking me’)

The concept ‘fruit’ is uncountable, and so ‘gustar’ is in singular. When the subject is plural it changes to ‘gustan,’ for example:

‘Me gustan los plátanos’ – I like bananas.

More examples

‘Le gusta el vino’ – he likes wine.

‘Le gustan los bombones’ – he likes chocolates.

To add emphasise speakers often put ‘a’ + prepositional pronoun, so the whole structure works like this:

(A mí) me gusta – I like.

(A ti) te gusta – you like.

(A él) le gusta – he likes.

(A ella) le gusta – she likes.

(A usted) le gusta – you like.

(A nosotros) nos gusta – we like.

(A vosotros) os gusta – you like.

(A ellos/ellas) les gusta – they like.

(A ustedes) les gusta – they like.

With another verb

If you want to use another verb with 'gustar' you use the infinitive with no preposition.

'¿Te gusta cocinar?' – Do you like to cook?

'No, no me gusta cocinar' – No, I don't like to cook.

Saying how much you like something

You place any adverb to say how much or how little you like something directly after 'gustar' for example, 'Me gusta mucho pintar' – I like painting a lot.

Gustar in other tenses

Back to front verbs are in third person for all tenses. For example:

'Le gustó pintar con los niños' – he liked painting with the children.

'¿Te gustaría ir al cine?' – would you like to go to the cinema?

Other verbs that follow this pattern

Apetecer – to fancy

'¿Te apetece un café?' – do you fancy a coffee?

Doler – to hurt

'Le duele el brazo' – his arm hurts or it hurts him, the arm.

Faltar – to lack

Nos faltan dos semanas mas hasta el fin del curso – we lack two more weeks until the end of the course, or there are two weeks left until the end of the course.

Encantar – to love

'Le encantó conocerte' – he loved meeting you.

Importar – to mind, matter

'No me importa tu perro' – I don't mind about your dog.

Interesar – to interest

'Los museos no me interesan mucho' – museums don't interest me much

9. Giving orders: The imperative tense

When giving orders English and Spanish speakers use the imperative tense. In English, this is the root verb without the subject ('take this paper', for example).

We use the imperative to soften the sentence. For example, you wouldn't say 'you give me this pen' – the 'you' makes it a harsh and offensive. However, it is perfectly acceptable to say 'give me this pen' particularly if you add a 'please' at the end. Omitting the subject pronoun ('you' in this case) softens the command.

The same happens in Spanish. You wouldn't say:

'Tú, dame el boli.' – 'you give me the pen.'

You would say:

'Dame el boli' – 'give me the pen.'

How to make an imperative

To create an imperative when speaking to an individual, change the verb into the third person. The object pronoun goes directly after the verb.

More examples:

'Mírame' – look at me.

'Ayúdale' – help him.

'Pásales el pan' – pass them the bread.

Giving commands to more than one person

If you wish to give a command to a group of people then you must use a new verb conjugation. This is 'ad' for verbs that end in –ar, 'id' for –ir verbs and 'ed' for -er verbs. Take a look at this table:

| Ar verbs | Imperative | Imperative |
|----------|------------|------------|
|----------|------------|------------|

| | single | plural |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| hablar | habla | hablad |
| pasar | pasa | pasad |
| llevar | lleva | llevad |
| trabajar | trabaja | trabajad |

| Ir verbs | Imperative | Imperative |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | single | plural |
| escribir | escribe | escribed |
| abrir | abre | abrid |
| vivir | vive | vivid |

| Er verbs | Imperative | Imperative |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | single | plural |
| beber | bebe | bebed |
| comer | come | comed |
| aprender | aprende | aprended |

For example:

‘Comed las patatas’ – you (lot) eat the potatoes.

‘Llevad esto a correos’ – you (lot) take this to the post office.

‘Aprended estos verbos este fin de semana’ – you (lot) learn these verbs this weekend.

Negatives

This is where it gets tricky; Spanish has a whole other tense called the subjunctive that English doesn't have. The subjunctive is used to cast doubt on something, making the sentence more polite. You use this tense for negative imperatives. When you think about it, ‘look at me’ is a far more polite sentence than, ‘don't look at me’ which is why Spanish speakers add that extra level of politeness with the subjunctive.

The subjunctive works like this:

-ar verbs

To create a third person singular conjugation, remove the 'a' and add an 'es'.

For example with the verb 'hablar':

Positive imperative: 'habla conmigo' – speak to me.

Negative imperative: 'no hables conmigo' – don't speak to me.

-er and -ir verbs

To create a third person singular conjugation, remove the 'e' and add 'as'.

For example, with the -er verb 'aprender':

Positive imperative: 'aprende otros idiomas' – learn other languages.

Negative imperative: 'No aprendas palabrotas' – don't learn swear words.

With the -ir verb 'abrir'

Positive imperative: 'abre la puerta' – open the door.

Negative imperative: 'No abras el cajón' – don't open the draw.

Please note that these subjunctive stem changes are for regular verbs only. For check out our free accompanying book 'Spanish for Geniuses: verbs, prepositions and beginner vocabulary'.

Negative imperatives in plural

Plural negatives are made from the vosotros form of the verb changing the 'a' in -ar verbs to 'e' and the 'e' and 'i' in -er and -ir verbs to 'a'.

For example:

Organizar – to organise

'No organizeis la fiesta, lo haré yo misma' – don't organise the party, I will organise it myself.

Beber – to drink

‘No bebáis el agua, está mal hoy’ – don’t drink the water, it’s bad today.

Escribir – to write

‘No escribáis en la pared’ – don’t write on the wall.

Irregular imperatives

There are also a few imperatives that are irregular in singular form. These are:

| Verb | Imperative |
|-------------|-------------------|
| decir | di |
| hacer | haz |
| ir | ve |
| poner | pon |
| salir | sal |
| ser | sé |
| tener | ten |
| venir | ven |

10. The future

Just like in English, there are several ways to say the future in Spanish, all of which we will cover in the following chapter.

Ir a – going to

The easiest way to express the future is by using the word ‘ir’. Spanish speakers use ‘ir’ for future in the same way we use ‘to go’ but in the present tense instead of continuous. ‘Ir’ is an irregular verb that runs:

Yo voy – I go.

Tú vas – you go.

Él, ella, eso va – he, she, it goes.

Usted va – you (formal) go.

Nosotros vamos – we go.

Vosotros vais – you (plural, informal) go.

Ellos van – They or you go.

Ustedes van – You (plural, formal) go.

To express the future you use **‘ir’ in present + a + infinitive**. For negatives you simply put ‘no’ before the verb.

For example:

‘Voy a ir al supermercado’ – I am going to go to the supermarket.

‘Ella no va a la fiesta’ – She isn’t going to the party.

‘Esta tarde vamos a jugar a fútbol y luego a ver a nuestra abuela’ – this afternoon we are going to play football and then see our grandmother.

It is important to note that while ‘going to’ in English expresses a prearranged trip or plan (as opposed to ‘will,’ which expresses a more unpredictable future), Spanish makes no such distinction. You can use it for things that you can predict with some certainty will happen and those which you feel will only probably happen.

For example:

‘Voy a ir la casa de mi abuela y le llevaré chocolate...’ – I am going to go to my grandmother’s house and bring her chocolate...

‘...y se lo va a comer todo’ – ...and she will eat it all.

Will

The second type of future in English is ‘will.’ Its closest equivalent in Spanish is the future tense, which is formed by attaching an ending to the infinitive verb. The endings are the same whether the verb ends in -ar, -er or -ir. They are:

| Hablar | Pedir | Volver |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| hablaré | pediré | volveré |
| hablarás | pedirás | volverás |
| hablará | pedirá | volverá |
| hablaremos | pediremos | volveremos |
| hablaréis | pediréis | volveréis |
| hablarán | pedirán | volverán |

Irregular verbs

There are a few irregular verbs in future. These are:

Verbs like poner (‘to put’): For these verbs drop the ‘e’ or ‘i’ and add ‘dr’ + future.

Pondré, pondrás, pondrá, pondremos, pondréis, pondrán.

Other verbs with the same structure:

Salir – saldré.

Tener – tendré.

Valer – valdré

Venir – vendré.

Verbs like ‘saber’ (‘to know’): For these verbs drop the vowel of the infinitive and add the future.

Sabré, sabrás, sabra, sabremos, sabréis, sabrán.

Other verbs with the same structure include:

Caber – cabré

Haber – habré

Poder – podré

Querer – querré

Completely irregular verbs

Decir ('to say') and hacer ('to do') are completely irregular:

Decir: Diré, dirás, dirá, diremos, diréis, dirán.

Hacer: Haré, harás, hará, haremos, haréis, harán.

When to use to the future tense

It sounds obvious but the future tense in Spanish is used to talk about something that will happen in the future. In most cases this actually means the distant future.

For example:

'El año que viene cambiaré de trabajo' – next year I will change my job.

'Quedaremos el proximo mes para terminar la reunión' – we will meet next month to finish the meeting.

'En 10 años serán ricos' – in 10 years they will be rich.

It is also used for a prediction in either the present or the future.

For example:

'El pronóstico dice que nevará mañana' –the forecast says that it will snow tomorrow.

'Él se cree que Madrid ganará la liga' – he thinks that Madrid will win the league.

'No sacarán buenas notas este año porque no han estudiado' –they probably won't get good results this year because they haven't studied.'

11. The conditional tense

The conditional is 'would' or 'could' in English. It is formed by adding *ía* to the end of the verb. Here are some examples with an -ar, -er and -ir verb.

| Guardar (to keep) | Creer (to believe) | Traducir (to translate) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| guardaría | creería | traduciría |
| guardarías | creerías | traducirías |
| guardaría | creería | traduciría |
| guardaríamos | creeríamos | traduciríamos |
| guardaríais | creeríais | traduciría |
| guardarían | creerían | traducirían |

Irregular verbs in the conditional

Verbs that are irregular in future are also irregular in the conditional. To conjugate, make the verb into future, take away the last vowel and add *-ía*. Take a look at this list:

| Present | Future | Conditional |
|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| caber | cabré | cabría |
| decir | dare | daría |
| haber | habré | habría |
| hacer | hare | haría |
| poder | podré | podría |
| querer | querré | querría |
| salir | saldré | saldría |
| saber | sabré | sabría |
| tener | tendré | tendría |
| valer | valdré | valdría |

| | | |
|-------|--------|---------|
| venir | vendré | vendría |
|-------|--------|---------|

The uses of the conditional tense

Hypothetical sentences

Just as in English, in Spanish you can use the conditional to communicate something that may happen in the present or future. For example:

‘Maria dijo que prepararía la comida’ – Maria said she would prepare the food.

‘No caminaría en el bosque por la noche’ – I wouldn’t walk in the woods at night.

‘Ella viviría en otro país pero no cambiaría su rutina’ – she would live in another country but she wouldn’t change her routine.

‘Podríamos comprar otra tele, ésta es muy antigua’ – we could buy another TV, this one is very old.

If clauses

The conditional is also used in conjunction with the past subjunctive to form an ‘if’ clause. For example:

‘Si vinieras conmigo al baile, iría contigo al festival’ – If you came with me to the dance, I would go with you to the festival.

‘Podría tomar un café con ella si salieras con mi hermano una noche’ – I could have a coffee with her if you went out with my brother one night.

For more on ‘if’ clauses see [The subjunctive](#) in past chapter.

Being Polite: Podría and Gustaría

Just as in English, you use ‘podría’ (could) and ‘gustaría’ (would like) to convey politeness. ‘Gustaría’ works in exactly the same way as gustar:

Indirect object pronoun (le, les and so on) + **gustaría** (for singular items) or **gustarían for plural + infinitive**.

For example:

‘Me gustaría tener dos niños’ – I would like two children.

‘¿Te gustaría tomar un café?’ – would you like to have a coffee?

‘Le gustaría ir a Italia pero no me gustaría ir en avión’ – he would like to go to Italy but I wouldn’t like to fly (go by plane).

Podría is also + infinitive.

For example:

‘¿Podrías pasarme un sacapuntas?’ – could you pass me a pencil sharpener?

‘No podría comer patatas cada día, pero mi hermano podría’ – I couldn’t eat potatoes every day but my brother could.

Be careful: ‘Could’ in English means the conditional and the past, so when constructing sentences make sure you don’t use ‘podría’ when you actually meant ‘podía’ (was able to) or ‘pudo’ (could in past).

12. The past

The preterite ‘el pretérito’

The simple past in Spanish is known as ‘el pretérito’ and expresses an action that happened in the past that is now finished.

For example:

‘Ella llamó a su madre ayer para desearle feliz cumpleaños’ – she called her mother yesterday to wish her happy birthday.

‘Compraron el coche hace veinte años y aún funciona’ – they bought the car twenty years ago and it still works.

It is, however, only the first of several past tenses, all of which I will go into in this book.

To form the preterite you take away the -ar, -er and -ir from the infinitive and add the below endings.

| Comprar (to buy) | Describir (to describe) | Beber (to drink) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| compré | describí | bebí |
| compraste | describiste | bebiste |
| compró | describió | bebió |
| compramos | describimos | bebimos |
| comprasteis | describisteis | bebisteis |
| compraron | describieron | bebieron |

NOTE: The -ar and -ir verbs have the same ending as the present in the ‘nosotros’ form. However, it changes in -er form.

Verbs with spelling changes in the preterit

There is a list of verbs that have spelling changes in the preterit. They don’t affect the pronunciation of the word significantly.

The rules

Verbs that end in -gar, change the 'g' to 'gu': Jugar, jugué.

Verbs that end in -car change the c to qu: sacar, saqué.

Verbs that end in -zar change the z to c: abrazar, abracé.

Common verbs that have these endings:

| -car | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| atacar | to attack |
| buscar | to look for |
| chocar | to crash |
| explicar | to explain |
| pescar | to fish |
| practicar | to practice |
| sacar | to take out |
| tocar | to touch/ play an instrument |

| -gar | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| apagar | to put out a light |
| cargar | to load |
| castigar | to punish |
| entregar | to deliver |
| jugar | to play |
| negar | to deny |
| pagar | to pay |
| pegar | to glue, to hit |

| -zar | |
|-------------|--------|
| abrazar | to hug |

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| alcanzar | to reach |
| almorzar | to have lunch |
| cruzar | to cross |
| empezar | to begin |
| lanzar | to launch |
| rezar | to pray |
| tropezar con | to trip, to stumble |

Spelling changes with ‘y’ in preterite

There is another set of verbs which change the final ‘i’ to ‘y’ in the third person singular and plural form. Again this does not affect pronunciation. For example:

Construir (to construct): Construí, construiste, construyó, construimos, construisteis, construyeron

Creer (to believe): Creeí, creíste, creyó, creimos, creísteis, creyeron

Leer (to read): Leí, leíste, leyó, leímos, leísteis, leyeron

Common verbs with this spelling change

Caer – to fall

poseer – to own

concluir – to finish, conclude

contribuir – to contribute

distribuir – to distribute

incluir – to include

oír – to hear

Verbs with stem changes in the present and preterite

Ar verbs in the present with stem changes do not have changes in the preterite. Ir verbs that have changes in the present do.

| Seguir (to follow) | Dormir (to sleep) | Sentir (to feel) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| seguí | dormí | sentí |
| segiste | dormiste | sentiste |
| sigio | durmió | sintió |
| segimos | dormimos | sentimos |
| segisteis | dormisteis | sentisteis |
| sigieron | durmieron | sintieron |

| Verbs like seguir | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| conseguir | to get |
| convertir | to turn into |
| reír | to laugh |
| repetir | to repeat |
| pedir | to ask for |
| servir | to serve |
| sonreírse | to smile |
| vestirse | to get dressed |

| Verbs like dormir | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| morir | to die |

| Verbs like sentir | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| divertirse | to have fun |
| mentir | to lie |
| preferir | to prefer |

Verbs with ‘I’ in the stem

Hacer (to do, make): Hice, hiciste, hizo, hicimos, hicisteis, hicieron

Querer (to want): Quise, quisiste, quiso, quisimos, quisisteis, quisieron

Venir (to come) : Vine, viniste, vino, vinimos, vinisteis, vinieron

Verbs that have a 'j' in the stem

Atraer (to attract): Atraje, atrajiste, atrajo, atrajimos, atrajisteis, atrajeron

Decir (to say): Dije, dijiste, dijo, dijimos, dijisteis, dijeron

Producir (to produce): Produje, produjiste, produjo, produjimos, produjisteis, produjeron

Traer (to bring): Traje, trajiste, trajo, trajimos, trajisteis, trajeron

Traducir (to translate): Traduje, tradujiste, tradujo, tradujimos, tradujisteis, tradujeron

Irregular verbs in the preterite

Andar (to walk) anduve, anduviste, anduvo, anduvimos, anduvisteis, anduvieron

Estar (to be) estuve, estuviste, estuvo, estuvimos, estuvisteis, estuvieron

Dar (to give) di, diste, dio, dimos, disteis, dieron

Tener (to have) tuve, tuviste, tuvo, tuvimos, tuvisteis, tuvieron

Caber (to fit) cupe, cupiste, cupo, cupimos, cupisteis, cupieron

Poder (to be able to) pude, pudiste, pudo, pudimos, pudisteis, pudieron

Poner (to put) puse, pusiste, puso, pusimos, pusisteis, pusieron

Saber (to know) supe, supiste, supo, supimos, supisteis, supieron

Ser and ir (to be, to go) fui, fuiste, fue, fuimos, fuisteis, fueron

Ver (to see) vi, viste, vio, vimos, visteis, vieron

What is the preterite used for?

Spanish speakers use the preterite to express:

1) Something that happened in the past and is finished.

‘Él habló con su profesora ayer pero no mencionó el problema’ – he spoke to his teacher yesterday but he didn’t mention the problem.

2) Something that happened at a particular moment and is now complete.

‘La semana pasada comencé mi nuevo trabajo pero no vi a mií antigua amiga’ – last week I started my new job but I didn’t see my old friend.

Imperfect

The next past tense is the imperfect. This tense expresses a repetitive or ongoing action in the past. In English this is expressed by ‘used to’ (as in ‘I used to swim every day’) or the past continuous (‘I was studying all day yesterday’).

The imperfect is very popular in Spain and is often used more than the preterite, possibly because the conjugation of the verb is much more simple.

-Ar verbs

For -ar verbs, take away the ending and add ‘ba’ in a system that runs like this:

| |
|--------------------------|
| Hablar (to speak) |
| hablaba |
| hablabas |
| hablaba |
| hablábamos |
| hablabais |
| hablaban |

That’s right, the ‘yo’, ‘él’, ‘ella’ and ‘usted’ forms are the same.

-Er and -ir verbs

For -er and -ir verbs, take away the ending and add ía. For example:

| Vender (to sell) | Compartir (to share) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| vendía | compartía |
| vendías | compartías |
| vendía | compartía |
| vendíamos | compartíamos |
| vendíais | compartíais |
| vendían | compartían |

Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs in the imperfect are 'ir', 'ser' and 'ver.'

| Ir (to go) | Ser (to be) | Ver (to see) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| iba | era | veía |
| ibas | eras | veías |
| iba | era | veía |
| íbamos | éramos | veíamos |
| ibais | erais | veíais |
| iban | eran | veían |

When is the imperfect used in Spanish?

The imperfect describes an ongoing or repeated action in the past.

The closest equivalent of the imperfect in English is 'used to', for example:

'Vivía en Madrid' – I used to live in Madrid.

'Él jugaba a fútbol cuando era joven' – he used to play football when he was young.

13. Between the past and present: The perfect tense

In English, the present perfect expresses an action in the past that continues to now.

For example:

‘I have eaten strawberries and a banana today.’

Or

‘She has not finished her dinner so she can’t watch TV’.

This is a very popular tense in Spanish and one of the easiest pasts to master and so I certainly recommend taking the time to learn it.

The present perfect is made from the verb **haber + the verb participle**.

The participle is made from dropping the verb ending and adding:

–ado for -ar verbs, such as, ‘hablado’ (‘spoken’), ‘arreglado’ (‘arranged’) or ‘terminado’ (‘finished’).

And

–ido for -er and -ir verbs – such as, ‘comido’ (‘eaten’), ‘bebido’ (‘drunk’), ‘elegido’ (‘chosen’).

‘Haber’ changes form depending on the subject and breaks down like this:

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------|--------|
| yo | he | nosotros/nosotras | hemos |
| tú | has | nosotros/vosotras | habéis |
| él, ella, ud | ha | ellos, ellas, uds | han |

Regular -ar, -er and –ir verbs are therefore conjugated like this:

| Jugar (to play) | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| he jugado | hemos jugado |

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| has jugado | habéis jugado |
| ha jugado | han jugado |

| Correr (to run) | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| he corrido | hemos corrido |
| has corrido | habéis corrido |
| ha corrido | han corrido |

| Subir (to go up) | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| he subido | hemos subido |
| has subido | habéis subido |
| ha subido | han subido |

Irregular participles

The participles of some verbs are irregular but they all end in 'o'. These include:

| | |
|------------|----------|
| abrir | abierto |
| cubrir | cubierto |
| decir | dicho |
| hacer | hecho |
| disolverse | disuelto |
| escribir | escrito |
| imprimir | impreso |
| morir | muerto |
| poner | puesto |
| resolver | resuelto |
| romper | roto |
| ver | visto |
| volver | vuelto |

When is the present perfect used

The present perfect in both English and Spanish expresses:

Something that started in the past and continues until now:

‘Él ha sacado la basura hoy’ – he has taken out the rubbish today.

‘Hemos hablado con el jefe esta semana’ – we have spoken with the boss this week.

Something that happened in the past but you don’t know when or it is not important when:

‘He visto todas las películas de Rocky’ – I have seen all the Rocky films.

‘Han visitado Nueva York’ – they have visited New York.

Negatives and questions

To make the above example negative you would add ‘nunca’ either before or after the verb or at the end of the sentence.

‘Nunca he visto las películas de Rocky’ – I have never seen the Rocky films.

‘No han visitado Nueva York nunca’ – they have never visited New York.

To make the Spanish equivalent of ‘Have you ever...?’ tag ‘alguna vez’ on the end of the question.

For example:

‘¿Has visto las películas de Rocky alguna vez?’ – Have you ever seen the Rocky films? (Or literally, ‘have you seen the Rocky films one time?’)

¿Han visitado Nueva York alguna vez? – Have you ever visited New York?

The past perfect/ ‘There was’

This brings us to ‘there was’ + noun. ‘Haber’ has two possibilities in past: ‘Hubo’ in preterite, which runs:

Hube, hubiste, hubo, hubimos, hubisteis, hubieron + noun.

Or

‘Había’ in imperfect, which runs:

Había, habías, había, habíamos, habíais, habían + noun.

‘Hubo’ expresses a singular event in the past that is finished.

For example:

‘Hubo una tormenta la semana pasada’ – there was a storm last night.

‘Había’ expresses something that was ongoing or still exists.

For example:

‘Había tres puertas rojas en el teatro’ – there were three red doors in the theatre (and there still are).

For this reason ‘hubo’ is hardly used. Many Spanish speakers don’t even use it when the event was singular and in the past, preferring instead ‘había’.

For example, it is common to hear:

‘Había una fiesta en mi barrio anoche’ – there was a party in my neighbourhood last night.

‘Había una reunión en el colegio de mi hermana la semana pasada’ – there was a meeting at my sister’s school last week.

Therefore I recommend not worrying about ‘hubo’ and expressing ‘there was’ with ‘había,’ as this is the way most people speak.

The full structure of **había + participle** is:

| |
|------------------|
| Salir (to leave) |
|------------------|

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| había salido | habíamos salido |
| habías salido | habíais salido |
| había salido | habían salido |

14. The continuous tense

The continuous tense expresses an action happening in the present moment. In English it is formed with 'to be' verb + gerund ('ing'). such as, 'I am walking to work.'

Spanish the present continuous is formed with **'estar' + verb + gerund.** The gerund formed by taking away the ending and adding 'ando' for '-ar' verbs and 'iendo' for -er and -ir verbs.

For example:

'Estoy lavando la ropa' – I am washing the clothes.

'Está aprendiendo español' – he is learning Spanish.

'Estamos abriendo la puerta' – we are opening the door.

Irregular verbs

'Ir' and 'poder' are completely irregular.

Ir – yendo.

Poder – pudiendo.

When is the present continuous used in Spanish

The continuous tense is ubiquitous in English and now you know the form, you may be tempted to use it all the time – however, it is not nearly so commonly used in Spanish.

The continuous is used to express:

An action that is happening right now:

'El niño está durmiendo en la cama – the child is sleeping in the bed.'

'Estoy preparando la cena' – I am preparing dinner.

An action that is ongoing (though may not be happening at this moment):

‘Él está aprendiendo francés’ – he is learning French.

With the adverb mientras (while) to express two ongoing actions:

‘Él estaba limpiando la casa mientras ella estaba regando las plantas’ – he was cleaning the house while she was watering the plants.

With llevar + verb in gerund to express an action that started in the past and continues into the present:

‘Llevan dos años trabajando aquí’ – they have been working here for two years.

‘Llevo cantando profesionalmente desde hace tres años – I have been singing professionally for three years.

Stem changing verbs in gerund

When –iendo changes to -yendo

‘-iendo’ changes to ‘-yendo’ -er and -ir verbs that end in a vowel. For example:

| Er verbs | | |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| atraer | to attract | atrayendo |
| caer | to fall | cayendo |
| creer | to believe | creyendo |
| leer | to read | leyendo |
| traer | to bring | trayendo |

| Ir verbs | | |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| construir | to build | construyendo |
| contribuir | to contribute | contribuyendo |
| destruir | to destroy | destuyendo |
| huir | to flee | huyendo |
| incluir | to include | incluyendo |
| influir | to influence | influyendo |

| | | |
|-----|---------|--------|
| oír | to hear | oyendo |
|-----|---------|--------|

When ‘o’ changes to ‘u’

Two -ir verbs change the stem vowel from ‘o’ to ‘u’. These are:

Dormir – to sleep – durmiendo

Morir – to die – muriendo

When ‘e’ changes to ‘i’

Some -ir verbs change the stem from ‘e’ to ‘i’. Here is a list of the common ones:

| | | |
|-----------|------------|--------------|
| advertir | to warn | advirtiendo |
| competir | to compete | compitiendo |
| conseguir | to get | consigiendo |
| convertir | to convert | convirtiendo |
| decir | to say | diciendo |
| hervir | to boil | hirviendo |
| mentir | to lie | mintiendo |
| pedir | to ask for | pidiendo |
| reír | to laugh | riendo |
| repetir | to repeat | repitiendo |
| seguir | to follow | siguiendo |
| sentir | to feel | sintiendo |
| servir | to serve | sirviendo |
| sugerir | to suggest | sugiriedo |
| venir | to come | viniendo |

Irregular verbs

‘Ir’ and ‘poder’ are completely irregular.

Ir – to go – yendo

Poder – to be able to – pudiendo

When the continuous is not used in Spanish

For the future: This is normally expressed in present or future tense.

‘Estudiaré todo el fin de semana’ – I am studying all weekend.

‘Vuelo a París el viernes’ – I am flying to Paris on Friday.

Exclamations: This is also normally expressed in present tense.

‘¡Qué haces!’ – What are you doing!

‘¿Por qué no juegas con nosotros?’ – Why aren’t you playing with us?

At the beginning of sentences: This is always with the infinitive of the verb.

‘Bailar es bueno para la alma’ – dancing is good for the soul.

‘Cocinar fuera es más divertido – cooking outside is more fun.

After prepositions: This is also always the infinitive.

‘Juan tiene miedo de dormir solo’ – Juan is scared of sleeping alone.

In addition to these rules, remember that while English speakers tend to lean towards speaking in continuous, Spanish speakers lean towards the present simple. Therefore many sentences where you would use continuous in English you would often put into present in Spanish, particularly about things that are not happening at this minute. For example:

‘Intento no gastar tanto dinero este mes’ – I am trying not to spend so much money this month.

‘Me hace ilusión conocer a tu hermano’ – I am looking forward to meeting your brother.

‘Me encuentro mal, me voy a casa’ – I am feeling sick, I am going home.

Uses in past

You can also change to past with *estaba* (imperfect) or *estuvo* (preterite). The same rules apply; if the action is finished, use the preterite. However, if the action happened over a long period of time, or continues to be true, use the imperfect.

For example:

‘*Los niños estuvieron estudiando inglés ayer*’ – the children were studying English yesterday.

‘*Estaba pensando en abandonar mis estudios*’ – I was thinking about dropping out of college (and I am still thinking about it).

15. Reflexives

Reflexives consist of the **verb + a reflexive pronoun**. They express that the subject does the action to themselves.

For example:

‘Ella se cortó con el cuchillo’ – she cut herself with the knife.

‘Él canta cuando se ducha – he sings to himself when he takes a shower (or in Spanish, ‘showers himself).

Spanish reflexive pronouns are:

| | |
|-----|----------------------------------------|
| me | myself |
| te | yourself |
| se | yourself (formal), himself, herself |
| nos | ourselves |
| os | yourselves |
| se | themselves |

For example:

| Despertarse (to wake up) | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| me despierto | nos despertamos |
| te despiertas | os despertáis |
| se despierta | se despiertan |

Placement of the reflexive

If there is only one verb in the sentence the reflexive usually goes before the verb as a stand-alone word.

‘Me despierto a las siete por la mañana’ – I wake up at seven o’clock in the morning.

If there are two or more verbs in the sentence the reflexive goes either before the verb as a stand-alone word or at the end, joined to last verb.

‘Se va a lavar’ or ‘va a lavarse’ – he is going to wash himself.

If you have two reflexive verbs together (referring to the same subject), then only use one reflexive.

For example:

‘Quiere afeitarse y peinarse’ – he wants to wash and comb himself.

When do you use the reflexive?

Spanish uses reflexives far more than English and you are probably wondering why. Take a look at the cases below.

Case 1: Personal care

Personal grooming is something you do to yourself, these verbs are therefore reflexive. In Spanish you wouldn't say ‘I am going to have a bath’ but rather ‘I am going to bath myself’ (‘voy a bañarme’). Equally you don't say ‘to get dressed’ but rather ‘to dress yourself’.

Take a look at these personal care verbs below.

Afeitarse – to shavelavarse to wash

Abrigarse – to put on a coat

Bañarse – to bath

Cepillarse – to brush

Ducharse – to shower

Limarse – to file ones nails

Mirarse – to look at oneself

Maquillarse – to put on makeup

Peinarse – to comb ones hair

Pintarse (los labios) – to put on lipstick

Ponerse – to put on (clothes)

Quitarse – to take off

Secarse – to dry oneself

Vestirse – to get dressed

Other common reflexive verbs

These verbs have no common category, however, they are all reflexive.

Acordarse de – to remember.

Acostarse – to go to bed.

Despedirse – to say to goodbye.

Divertirse – to have fun.

Dormirse – to fall asleep.

Llamarse – to call someone a name.

Olvidarse de – to forget.

Probarse – to try (something).

Sentarse – to sit.

Sentirse – to feel.

Case 2: When the reflexive is ‘get’ in English

You may be wondering how to say, ‘I got lost’ or ‘I am getting cold’? Well, in Spanish this is often expressed with the reflexive verb meaning that instead of saying something happened to you, you say you did it to yourself.

The above examples would be:

‘Me perdí’ (literally, ‘I lost myself’) and ‘me estoy enfriando’ (‘I am cooling myself’).

More ‘get’ reflexives

Aburrirse de – to get bored of.

Acercarse a– to get close to.
Calentarse – to get hot.
Cansarse – to get tired.
Casarse con – to get married to.
Confundirse – to get confused.
Disgustarse de/con – to get upset by or with.
Divorciarse – to get divorced.
Emocionarse – to get excited.
Emborracharse – to get drunk.
Enfadarse con – to get angry with.
Enfermarse – to get sick.
Enfriarse – to get cold.
Estresarse por – to get stressed about.
Marearse – to get dizzy.
Mojarse – to get wet.
Perderse – to get lost.
Preocuparse – to get worried.
Quemarse – to get burnt.

Case 3: When the reflexive means the general ‘you’

In English ‘you’ can mean ‘you’ singular, plural or the general ‘you’ expressed in the past as ‘one’.

For example:

‘You can’t live on Mars yet’ – this is not referring to an individual but rather everybody.

In Spanish this is made with **se + verb in third person singular** or **plural**. It is most commonly used with the verb ‘poder’ (to be able to).

For example:

‘No se puede esquiar en verano’ – you (or one) can’t ski in summer.

‘Se pagan los impuestos a fin del año – you pay your taxes at the end of the year.

‘Se puede vivir sin coche’ – one can live without a car.

Case 4: Emphasis

The reflexive is used for emphasis. In English this would often be expressed with the preposition ‘up’. For example:

‘Se lo comió todo’ – he ate it all up.

‘¡Estúdiatelo!’ – really study it!

Each other

While reflexives mean the interaction with the self, each other means an interaction with another. In Spanish ‘each other’ is also expressed in reflexive with either ‘se’ or ‘nos.’ For example:

‘Nos conocemos desde hace mucho tiempo’ – we have known each other a long time ago.

‘Se quieren mucho’ – they love each other a lot.

‘Nos vemos el lunes y hablamos más del asunto’ – we will see each other on Monday and speak with each other more about the subject.

‘Se parecen, tus hijos’ – your children look like each other.

The other way to say ‘each other’ is by using **el uno al otro** for masculine or neutral subjects and **la una a la otra** for feminine. This form adds clarification and emphasis but it is still be placed with the verb in reflexive.

For example:

‘Ayer, jugaban el uno con el otro en el jardín’ – they were playing with each other yesterday in the garden.

‘Se dieron un regalo el uno al otro’ – they gave each other a present.

‘Nos vemos, la una a la otra, como amigas’ – we see each other as friends.

16. The subjunctive

Subjunctive in present

In Spanish there are two ways of speaking; one is indicative where the speaker talks about actions or events which they are certain are true. This is expressed in all normal tenses – the present, the past, continuous and so on. The second way is subjunctive when the speaker is not certain about an action or event, most likely because they are not the person who will do the action.

Think of it like this: we are both going to a party and when you arrive I want you to call me. I know for sure when I will arrive as I am in control of this action, but I am not sure when you will arrive and so I say:

‘Cuándo llegues a la fiesta llámame’ (in subjunctive form) as opposed to ‘cuándo llegas a la fiesta llámame’ (in indicative).

This I am sure throws up lots of questions about when exactly the speaker has sufficient doubt to use the subjunctive. But don’t worry, the subjunctive is not an arbitrary tense that people use if and when they feel like it. There are strict rules about when to use it, all of which I will go into. But first let’s look at the structure.

If the verb ends in an -ar in infinitive, you change the ‘a’ to ‘e’. Likewise, if it ends in an -er or -ir you change it to ‘a’. The ‘o’ of the ‘yo’ form completely disappears. Take a look at these tables:

| Arreglar | Entender | Escribir |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| arregle | entienda | escriba |
| arregles | entiendas | escribas |
| arregle | entienda | escriba |
| arreglemos | entendamos | escribamos |
| arregléis | entendáis | escribáis |
| arreglen | entiendan | escriban |

NOTE: The first and third person forms have the same endings.

NOTE: Also that stem changing verbs such as entender keep their form but with a different ending.

More examples:

| Verb | Indicative | Subjunctive |
|---------|------------|-------------|
| pensar | piensa | piense |
| perder | pierde | pierda |
| escoger | escoje | Escoja |
| dormir | duerme | Duerma |
| incluir | incluye | Incluya |

Irregular verbs in 'yo' form

Verbs that are irregular in the 'yo' form that end with 'go' change to 'ga' for all persons of the verb in subjunctive. For example:

Caer: Caiga, caigas, caiga, caigamos, caigáis, caigan.

Hacer: Haga, hagas, haga, hagamos, hagáis, hagan.

Poner: Ponga, pongas, ponga, pongamos, pongáis, pongan.

Salir: Salga, salgas, salgamos, salgáis, salgan.

Traer: Traiga, traigas, traiga, traigamos, traigáis, traigan.

Valer: Valga, valgas, valga, valgamos, valgáis, valgan.

Other irregular verbs in the present

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Dar | dé, des, dé, demos, deis, den |
| Estar | esté, estés, esté, estemos, estéis, estén |
| Haber | haya, hayas, haya, hayamos, hayáis, hayan |
| Ir | vaya, vayas, vaya, vayamos, vayáis, vayan |
| Saber | sepa, sepas, sepa, sepamos, sepáis, sepan |
| Ser | sea, seas, sea, seamos, seáis, sean |
| Caber | quepa, quepas, quepa, quepamos, quepáis, quepan |
| Ver | vea, veas, vea, veamos, veáis, vean |

The present perfect subjunctive

The present perfect subjunctive is ‘haber’ (in subjunctive) + participial. It is conjugated like this:

**Haber comido – to
have eaten**

haya comido

hayas comido

haya comido

hayamos comido

hayáis comido

hayan comido

When do you use the subjunctive?

The short the answer is after ‘que,’ but let’s give some more clarification. Imagine you need to ask your friend to do something. In English this would be with the verb ‘want’ or ‘need’ + infinitive.

For example:

‘I want you to buy some bread at the supermarket.’

Spanish doesn’t work like this; between ‘want’ and ‘buy’ there is a **que + subjunctive** meaning that the sentence runs:

‘I want that you buy some bread at the supermarket’ or ‘Quiero que compres pan en el supermercado.’

The ‘que’ + subjunctive adds doubt, making it more polite; I know if I will go to the supermarket but I don’t know if you will go for me. If you’re speaking about yourself, you know what you will do and so the structure is ‘querer + infinitive’:

‘Quiero comprar pan en el supermercado...’ – I want to buy bread in the supermarket...

‘Pero quiero que vayas a la papelería’ – but I want you to go to the stationery shop.

The past subjunctive

Ar verbs

The past subjunctive is formed by putting the verb in the preterite third person singular, then taking off the 'ó' and adding appropriate conjugation.

For example:

'Hablar' becomes 'habló' in preterite third person singular, 'comprar' becomes 'compró', 'llevar' becomes 'llevó'.

To make them past subjunctive conjugate like this.

| Hablar | Comprar | Llevar |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| hablara | comprara | llevara |
| hablaras | comparas | llevaras |
| hablara | comprara | llevara |
| habláramos | compráramos | lleváramos |
| hablarais | comprarais | llevarais |
| hablaran | compraran | llevaran |

Alarm bells may now be ringing as this conjugation looks very similar to future. So how do you distinguish between the two?

Well the answer is that future conjugations carry an accent (except nosotros form), so end with a harder á sound. This conjugation carries no accents (except nosotros, which does) and so has a soft ending.

Er and ir verbs

To conjugate these verbs again change the verb to preterite, third person singular. Take away the 'ó' and add the appropriate ending.

Poder becomes 'pudo' in preterite third person singular, 'tener' becomes 'tuvo', 'venir' 'vino' and 'decidir' 'decidió'.

To make them past subjunctive conjugate like this.

| Poder | Tener |
|--------------|--------------|
| podiera | tuviera |
| podieras | tuvieras |
| podiera | tuviera |
| podiéramos | tuviéramos |
| podierais | tuvierais |
| podieran | tuverian |

| Venir | Decedir |
|--------------|----------------|
| viniera | decidiera |
| vineiras | decidieras |
| viniera | decidiera |
| viniéramos | decidiéramos |
| vinierais | deciderais |
| vinieran | decideran |

Irregular verbs in preterite third person

If the verb is irregular in preterite then it naturally becomes irregular in the past subjunctive. Take a look at these irregular verbs.

| Verb | Preterite | Past subjunctive |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| andar | anduvo | anduviera |
| caber | cupo | cupiera |
| caer | cayó | cayera |
| dar | dio | diera |
| decir | dijo | dijera |
| ser and ir | fue | fuera |
| poner | puso | pusiera |
| poder | pudo | podiera |
| ver | vio | viera |

| | | |
|--------|-------|----------|
| querer | quiso | quisiera |
|--------|-------|----------|

The second way to make the past subjunctive

There is another conjugation for the past subjunctive and that is again to change the verb to third person, singular, preterite and add 'ase' for -ar verbs and 'ese' for -er and -ir verbs. For example:

| Aterrizar (To land) | Pedir (to ask for) | Caer (to fall) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| aterrase | pidiese | cayese |
| aterrases | pidieses | cayeses |
| aterrase | pidiese | cayese |
| aterrásemos | pidiésemos | cayésemos |
| aterraseis | pidieseis | cayeseis |
| aterrasen | pidiesen | cayesen |

When do you use the past subjunctive?

If clauses

The past subjunctive is something called the second conditional in English. A typical sentence runs like this:

‘If I had a yacht, I would sail around the world.’ The verb after ‘if’ is in simple past (had), but you are not speaking about the past. Instead you are referring to now, about something you don’t have.

We change have to had in this case to show the listener that are speaking about something that isn’t currently real. Spanish has the same idea but instead of changing a present verb to past it changes it to the past subjunctive. The above sentence would therefore be:

‘Si tuviera un yate, navegaría por el mundo.’

The second half of the sentence contains ‘would sail’. Would is made in Spanish with the conditional tense (by adding an -ía conjugation to the end of the verb).

More examples:

‘Si comieras menos chocolate, perderías peso’ – if you ate less chocolate you would lose weight.

‘Si él no fumara saldría con él’ – if he didn’t smoke, I would go out with him.

‘Si quisiéramos impedir el cambio climático dejaríamos de conducir coches’ – if we wanted to stop climate change we would stop driving cars.

17. The pluperfect subjunctive

The final subjunctive is the pluperfect (or third conditional in English). It is used when speaking about a hypothetical past. For example:

‘Si hubiera conseguido el trabajo, habría comprado un coche nuevo’ – If I had got the job, I would have bought a new car.

‘Si hubiera aprobado el examen, te lo habría dicho’ – If I had passed the exam, I would have told you.

This entire sentence refers to something that is an impossible, alternative past.

Structure

The structure relies on ‘haber’ in past subjunctive and conditional form. Here are the conjugations.

| Haber – past subjunctive | Haber – conditional |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| yo hubiera | yo habría |
| tú hubieras | tú habrías |
| él, ella, lo, la hubiera | él, ella, lo, la habría |
| nos hubiéramos | nos habríamos |
| vos hubiérais | vos habrías |
| ellos hubieran | ellos habrían |

The structure runs:

Si + hubiera + participle + habría + participle

More examples:

‘Si hubiéramos cambiado de colegio habríamos hecho francés’ – If we had changed school, we would have taken French.

‘Si hubieras hablado con él lo habrías entendido’ – if you had spoken to him, you would have understood.

18. Prepositions

There are not as many prepositions in Spanish as there are in English, and if you can learn which go with certain verbs then you are well on your way to mastering the language. First let's look at a common cause of confusion among English speakers: para vs por.

Para vs por

‘Para’ and ‘por’ both mean ‘for’ in English but there are some important distinctions between the two.

Para

Think of ‘para’ like an arrow going towards a destination. In this way it can mean either ‘to’ or ‘for’ in English. For example, you buy a present but who is it for? (or ‘going to’):

‘El regalo es para John’ – the present is for John.

You receive a new table cloth but where is it for? (or ‘going to’):

‘El mantel es para la cocina’ – the table cloth is for the kitchen.

Uses of para:

A purpose: In English this would be with ‘to’ or ‘in order to’. In Spanish it is **para + infinitive**.

‘Compraré una aspiradora para limpiar la casa’ – I will buy a vacuum cleaner to clean the house.

‘¿Qué quieres para comer?’ – what do you want to eat?

‘Ella ahorra dinero para comprar un nuevo ordenador’ – she saves money in order to buy a new computer.

The recipient of something:

‘He comprado tres entradas de cine para nosotros’ – I have bought three cinema tickets for us.

A final destination: If you want to speak about where you finally end up on your travels you could use para.

‘Fuimos para Córdoba la semana pasada’ – we went to Córdoba last week.

‘Salimos para el colegio a las ocho y media’ – we leave for school at eight thirty.

Deadline: It is used to express a final time limit or deadline in the future.

‘Tengo que terminar el informe para el viernes’ – I have to finish the report for (or before) Friday.

Standard: If something is different from the standard you use ‘para’ to make the comparison.

‘Para ser un libro del colegio es muy corto’ – for a school book it’s very short.

‘Las habilidades la lectura de su hija son muy avanzadas para su edad’ – your daughter’s reading skills are very advanced for her age.

Opinion: ‘Para’ is also translated as ‘in my opinion.’

‘Para mí el trimestre es demasiado largo’ – in my opinion the school term is too long.

‘Para ellos el fútbol es aburrido’ –in their opinion football is boring.

To express whether someone is in the mood for something:

‘No estoy para bromas hoy’ – I am not in the mood for jokes today.

‘Está (de humor) para jugar hoy’ – he is in the mood for playing today.

‘No están (de humor) para discutir – they are not in the mood for arguing.

‘Está para tenis hoy’ – he is in the mood for tennis today.

Por

‘Por’ expresses many ideas, all of which are included below.

Uses of por:

For mañana (‘morning’), tarde, día y noche: ‘Por’ is used to express what part of the day something happens. This would be ‘in’ or ‘at’ in English.

‘Él trabaja por el día y estudia por la noche’ – he works in the day and studies at night.

‘Mañana por la mañana jugamos a tenis’ – tomorrow morning we will play tennis.

To mean or ‘at around about’ when speaking about time:

‘Te veo por las cinco’ – I’ll see you around 5.

‘Llega por las seis’ –he will arrive at about six.

The exchange of something: ‘Por’ also means an equal exchange or a substitute.

‘Te doy una manzana por una pera’ – I will give you an apple for (in exchange for) a pear.

‘Han pagado 50 euros por la comida’ – they have paid 50 euros for (in exchange for) the food.

‘Hablo por mi jefe hoy’ – I am speaking for my boss today (as a substitution).

Emotions: If you have an object for someone (such as a pencil) then you use para. If it is an emotion then it is with ‘por.’ This is also the case when saying thank you.

‘Tengo mucho respeto por Maria’ – I have a lot of respect for Maria.

‘Gracias por venir a la fiesta’ – Thanks for coming to the party.

Motivation: ‘Por’ is also actually short for ‘porque’ (because) and so expresses the motivation for doing something. In English this would be ‘because of’ or ‘due to.’ The structure is **por + infinitive**.

‘Por aprender inglés ha conseguido el trabajo’ – due to learning English, he got the job.

‘Es más feliz por terminar los exámenes’ – she is happier due to finishing her exams.

‘Está deprimida por perder el perrito’ – she is depressed because of losing her dog.

‘Pablo tiene éxito por su personalidad’ – Pablo is successful because of his personality.

Por for 'by'

'Por' means 'by' in the cases of 'by someone' or 'by phone'.

'Las Mellizas fue pintado por Velázquez' – Las Mellizas was painted by Velazquez.

'Oliver Twist fue escrito por Dickens – Oliver Twist was written by Dickens.

'Te lo enviaré por fax' – I will send it to you by fax.

Use of 'por' for electronics:

Por ordenador – by computer.

Por correo electrónico – by email.

Por correo – by mail.

Por fax – by fax.

Por teléfono – by telephone.

Por Internet – on the internet.

NOTE: With Internet it is not Preceded by the indefinite article ('the') and it is always with 'por', for example:

'Buscaba anoche por Internet' – I was searching on the Internet last night.

Por sayings

There are many sayings with 'por'. Here are the most popular:

Por allí – around there.

Por aquí – around here.

Por ejemplo – for example.

Por eso – for that reason.

¡Por fin! – finally!

Por lo general – in general.

Por lo menos – at least.

Por primera vez – for the first time.

Por separado – separately.

Por supuesto – of course.

Por todas partes – everywhere.

The personal a

In Spanish you always put an 'a' before a person if they are the receiver of the action (or the direct object) in a sentence.

For example:

'Mi madre cuida a mi hijo entre semana' – my mother looks after my son in the week.

In this sentence there are two people, (mi madre y mi hijo). Mi madre is the provider of the action (and so therefore the subject) and mi hijo the receiver (and so therefore the object). Therefore the 'a' goes before 'hijo'.

More examples:

'¿Has llamado a Maria?' – have you called Maria?

'Compraré a Paula un regalo para su cumpleaños' – I will buy Paula a present for her birthday.

Note: If the sentence was reordered to make the 'regalo' the direct object 'para' would go before the person.

'Compraré un regalo para Paula para su cumpleaños.'

The personal 'a' is also used for pets or domestic animals that hold an emotional significance.

For example:

'Sofia toca a su gatito' – Sofia strokes her cat.

It is not used for objects or animals which are not emotionally significant.

For example:

'Pedro pone las gallinas en el gallinero' – Pedro puts the hens in the hen house.

Once you get used to using the personal 'a' it actually makes things easier as when it comes to people you don't have to fret about which preposition to use with the verb.

Prepositions lists

Here are lists of prepositions divided by category.

Prepositions used for location

Above – sobre

Across – a través de

Across from – enfrente de

Among – entre

At – a, en

Behind – detrás de

Between – entre

Far from – lejos de

In – en

Inside – dentro de

Near to – cerca de

Next to – al lado de

On – en

On top of – encima de, sobre

Outside – fuera de

To the left – a la izquierda

To the right – a la derecha

Under – debajo de

With – con

Without – sin

Inside – adentro

Downstairs, underneath – abajo

Outside – afuera

Upstairs, above - arriba

Prepositions of movement

Along – a lo largo de

Around – alrededor de

Backwards – hacia atrás

Beyond – más allá de

Forward – hacia Adelante

Sideways – de lado

Through – por

Toward – hacia

Prepositions of geographical location

To the north of – al norte de

To the south of – al sur de

To the east of – al este de

To the west of – al oeste de

To the northeast of – al nordeste de

To the northwest of – al noroeste de

To the southeast of – al sudeste de

To the southwest of – al sudoeste de

Prepositions of time

After – después de

Afterwards – después

Before – antes de

Beforehand – antes

During – durante

In – por

Since – desde

To – a

Until - hasta

Common verbs with ‘a’

All movement verbs: Ir, subir, bajar, volver, venir, llegar, devolver and start verbs, empezar, comenzar, ponerse are followed by the preposition ‘a’.

More verbs:

Acostumbrarse – to get used to doing

Animar a – to encourage

Ayudar a – to help to

Atraverse a – to cross

Correr a – to run to

Comprometerse a – to commit yourself to

Contribuir a – to contribute to

Disponerse a - to be willing to do something

Decidirse a – to decide to
Enseñar – to teach to
Obligar a – to make someone do something
Retar a – to challenge to
Inspirer a – to inspire to
Limitarse a – to limit to
Negarse – to deny to
Ponerse a- (to begin to)
Oponerse a – to oppose to
Presentarse – to present yourself to do something
Probar a – to try to do something
Prometerse a – to promise to do something
Forzar a – to force to do something
Invitar a – to invite to
Meter a – to to take up a hobby
Ofrecer a – to offer to
Sentarse a – to sit down to do something

Common verbs with de

Aburrirse de – to get bored by/with

Acabar de – to have just done something
Acordarse de – to remember something, someone
Alegrarse de – to be glad about something
Aprovecharse de – to take advantage of something
Cansarse de – to get tired of something
Cuidar de – to take care of something
Dejar de – to stop doing something
Depender de – to depend on
Morir de – to die from something
Pararse de – to stop doing something
Probar de – to take a taste of something
Salir de – to go away from a place
Sorprenderse de – to be surprised at
Terminar de – to finish doing something

Common verbs that have a different preposition Spanish than they do in English

Asombrarse de – to be astonished by
Casarse con – to get married to
Soñar con – to dream about
Parecerse a – to look like someone
Sonar a – to sound like

Oler a – to smell like

Saber a – to taste like

Pasar con alguien/algo – to happen to someone/something

Pensar en – to think about

Llegar a – to arrive at

Depender de – to depend on

Cuidar de – to care for

Chocar contra – to crash into

relacionar con – to relate to, to do with

Consistir en – to consist of

Tardar tiempo en – to take time to do something

Tropezar con – to bump into something

Vestirse de – to be dressed in

Sorpresarse de – to be surprised at

Amenazar con – to threaten to – el déspota amenazó con acabar la libertad de prensa – the despot threatened to do away with the free press

Llenar de – to fill with

Cubrir de – to be covered with

Verbs that carry a preposition in English but don't in Spanish

Agredecer – to be grateful for

Anhelar – to long to

Apagar – to turn off

Averiguar – to find out

Bajar – to go down
Buscar – to look for
Caerse – to fall down
Cortar – to cut off, out
Encender – to turn on
Envolver – to wrap up
Escuchar – to listen to
Esperar – to wait for
Lograr – to succeed in
Merecer – to deserve to
Mirar – to look at
Pagar – to pay for
Pedir – to ask for
Poner – to turn on an appliance
Recoger – to pick up
Sacar – to take out
Señalar – to point out
Soplar – to blow out
Subir – to go up

19. Dates and numbers

How to say the date...

Days of Week/ Los días de la semana

Dates of the week are expressed with 'el' +day and for multiple days 'los'. They are not capitalised.

For example:

'El lunes vamos al mercado' – On Monday we are going to the supermarket.'

'Los martes voy al gimnasio' – On Tuesdays I go to the gym.'

Lunes - Monday

Martes -Tuesday

Miércoles -Wednesday

Jueves -Thursday

Viernes -Friday

Sábado -Saturday

Domingo – Sunday

Months of Year/ Los meses del año

Months of the year are Preceded by the preposition 'en' + month. They are also not capitalised.

enero - January

febrero - February

marzo - March

abril - April

mayo - May

junio - June

julio - July

agosto - August

septiembre - September

octubre - October

noviembre - November

diciembre - December

The seasons/ Las estaciones del año.

The months of the year are also Preceded by 'en' and carry a definite article. For example:

'En la primavera empiezo mi trabajo' – In Spring I start my job.

la primavera - spring

el verano -summer

el otoño - autumn

el invierno – winter

Numbers

Numbers work like this:

1. uno
2. dos
3. tres
4. cuatro
5. cinco
6. seis
7. siete
8. ocho
9. nueve
10. diez
11. once
12. doce
13. trece
14. catorce
15. quince
16. dieciséis
17. diecisiete
18. dieciocho
19. diecinueve
20. veinte
21. veintiuno
22. veintidós
23. veintitrés
24. veinticuatro
25. veinticinco
26. veintiséis
27. veintisiete
28. veintiocho
29. veintinueve
30. treinta

Decimal numbers

For numbers above 'deceinueve' (19) take the decimal number and add una, dos, tres.

- 10. diez
- 20. veinte
- 30. treinta
- 40. cuarenta
- 50. cincuenta
- 60. sesenta
- 70. setenta
- 80. ochenta
- 90. noventa
- 100. cien

From 101-199, use "ciento":

- ciento uno
- ciento dos
- ciento tres

Notice there is no 'y' ('and') to separate the hundreds from the tens. There is a 'y' however in the numbers 31-99 (and 131-199, 231-299, 331-399, etc.). For example:

- 122: Ciento ventidos
- 155: Ciento cinenta y cinco
- 189: Ciento ochenta y nueve

Continue in this way until 1000

- 100. cien
- 200. doscientos
- 300. trescientos
- 400. cuatrocientos

500. **quinientos**

600. seiscientos

700. **setecientos**

800. ochocientos

900. **novcientos**

1000. Mil

Ordinal numbers

Primero/a – first

Segundo/a – second

Tercero/a –third

Cuarto/a – forth

Quinto/a – fifth

Sexto/a – sixth

Séptimo/a – seventh

Octavo/a – eighth

Novena/a – ninth

Décimo/a – tenth

Additional information

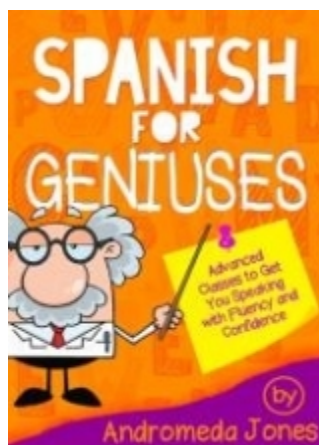
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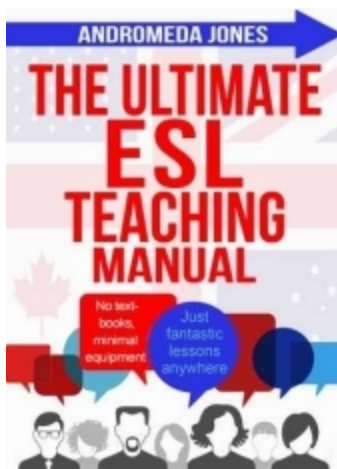
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