

Basic Spanish - Verbs

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Regular Verbs

In Spanish, many verbs follow an easy to understand conjugation scheme.

The conjugation of a regular verb depends on the ending of its infinitive. (The infinitive is the basic form of the verb that you find in the dictionary; for example, English infinitives are always written with *to*, like the verbs *to run* or *to speak*.) All Spanish infinitives end in the letter *r*, and the three regular conjugation patterns are classified into *-ar*, *-er*, and *-ir* verbs.

Unlike English, Spanish verbs conjugate depending on the person; that is, they change depending on who is being talked about. This occurs in the English verb **to be** (e.g. I *am*, you *are*, he *is*, etc.) but in Spanish this occurs for all persons in all verbs. As a result, pronouns are usually omitted because they can be inferred from the conjugation.

	Person in English		Person in Spanish	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
First	I	We	Yo	Nosotros
Second	You	You all	Tú	Vosotros
Third	He / She / It	They	Él / Ella Usted	Ellos / Ellas Ustedes

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Spanish distinguishes between the singular **you** (informal *tú*, formal *usted*) and the plural **you** (informal *vosotros*, formal *ustedes*). Both *tú* and *vosotros* have their own conjugation patterns; *usted* follows the same pattern as *él/ella* and *ustedes* follows the same pattern as *ellos*.

In Latin America, *vosotros* is almost unheard of, and *ustedes* is exclusively used instead.

Nosotros (we) has a feminine *nosotras* that is used when the entire group is composed of females. Likewise, *vosotros* and *ellos* have feminine forms *vosotras* and *ellas*.

Present Tense (en)

	Singular	Plural
First	I play	We play
Second	You play	You all play
Third	He / She / It plays	They play

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Regular -ar Verbs

	Singular	Plural
First	-o	-amos
Second	-as	-áis
Third	-a	-an

Example: Cant-ar (To sing)

	Singular	Plural
First	Cant-o	Cant-amos
Second	Cant-as	Cant-áis
Third	Cant-a	Cant-an

Regular -er Verbs

	Singular	Plural
First	-o	-emos
Second	-es	-éis
Third	-e	-en

Example: Beb-er (To drink)

	Singular	Plural
First	Beb-o	Beb-emos
Second	Beb-es	Beb-éis
Third	Beb-e	Beb-en

Regular -ir Verbs

	Singular	Plural
First	-o	-imos
Second	-es	-ís
Third	-e	-en

Example: Part-ir (To split)

	Singular	Plural
First	Part-o	Part-imos
Second	Part-es	Part-ís
Third	Part-e	Part-en

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Examples

- Llorar ("to cry"): lloro, lloras, llora, lloramos, lloráis, lloran
- Cocinar ("to cook"): cocino, cocinas, cocina, cocinamos, cocináis, cocinan
- Comer ("to eat"): como, comes, come, comemos, coméis, comen
- Leer ("to read"): leo, lees, lee, leemos, leéis, leen
- Vivir ("to live"): vivo, vives, vive, vivimos, vivís, viven
- Cubrir ("to cover"): cubro, cubres, cubre, cubrimos, cubrís, cubren

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Notes

- There are many more "-ar" verbs than "-er" or "-ir". Make sure you are most familiar with these endings.
- The second person plural is highlighted because that tense is only used in the variety of Spanish used in Spain. In other Spanish dialects the third person plural form is used instead.
- When reading texts, you will need to know the person of the verb at a glance. Notice the pattern:
 - "O" denotes I
 - "S" denotes You
 - A vowel that is not "O" denotes He/She/It
 - "MOS" denotes We
 - "IS" denotes You All
 - "N" denotes They

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To declare the presence or existence of something (e.g. "there is," "there are"), Spanish uses *hay*, which is a special conjugation of the verb *haber* (to have). Its past form ("there was," "there were") is *hubo*.

Another form in the past (meaning roughly "there used to be") is *había*. Its future form ("there will be") is *habrá*. All these forms are invariable in singular and plural: *Había un gato aquí, Había dos gatos aquí*.

Attempting to construct plural forms of them ("*habían*", "*habrán*") is a very common error and is severely frowned upon.

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Irregular Verbs

Spanish verbs are a complex area of Spanish grammar, with many combinations of tenses, aspects and moods (up to fifty conjugated forms per verb). While conjugation rules are relatively straightforward, a large number of verbs are irregular. Among these, some fall into more-or-less defined deviant patterns, while others are uniquely irregular and need to be memorised.

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25 most common Irregular Verbs

No.	Spanish	English	Conjugations
1	ser	to be (essential/permanent quality)	ser
2	estar	to be (health, location, state)	estar
3	tener	to have	tener
4	hacer	to do, make	hacer
5	poder	to be able, can	poder
6	decir	to say, tell	decir
7	ir	to go	ir
8	ver	to see	ver
9	dar	to give	dar
10	saber	to know (information)	saber
11	querer	to want, love	querer
12	llegar	to arrive, come, reach	llegar
13	pasar	to pass, to pass on, to spend (time), to happen	pasar
14	deber	to owe, must, should, ought to	deber
15	poner	to put, place, set	poner
16	parecer	to seem, appear	parecer
17	quedar	to stay, remain	quedar
18	creer	to believe	creer
19	hablar	to speak	hablar
20	llevar	to carry, bring	llevar
21	dejar	to leave, abandon, to let, allow	dejar
22	seguir	to follow, continue	seguir
23	encontrar	to find, encounter	encontrar
24	llamar	to call, to name	llamar

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Spanish has two different words that can be translated with "to be".

Ser is used more for more permanent characteristics ("*Soy Luis*") whereas **estar** is used for more temporary or changeable conditions, such as location ("*La papelera está al lado del escritorio*", "The trash can is beside the desk") and feeling ("*Estoy bien*").

A good way to remember when to use "estar" is by using the rhyme, "To tell how you feel or where you are, always use the verb estar."

Ser	To be (characteristic)	estar	To be (condition)
(yo) soy	I am	(yo) estoy	I am
(tú) eres	You are (informal, singular)	(tú) estás	You are (informal, singular)
(él/ella) es	He/She/It is	(él/ella) está	He/She/It is
(usted) es	You are (formal, singular)	(usted) está	You are (formal, singular)
(nosotros/-as) somos	We are (m./f.)	(nosotros/-as) estamos	We are (m./f.)
(vosotros/-as) sois	You are (informal, plural, m./f.)	(vosotros/-as) estáis	You are (informal, plural, m./f.)
(ellos/ellas) Son	They are (m./f.)	(ellos/ellas) están	They are (m./f.)
(ustedes) Son	You are (formal, plural)	(ustedes) están	You are (formal, plural)

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tener	to have
(yo) tengo	I have
(tú) tienes	you have (informal, singular)
(él/ella) tiene	he/she/(it) has
(usted) tiene	you have (formal, singular)
(nosotros/-as) tenemos	we have (m./f.)
(vosotros/-as) tenéis	you have (informal, plural, m./f.)
(ellos/ellas) tienen	they have (m./f.)
(ustedes) tienen	you have (formal, plural)

hacer	to do/make
yo hago	I do
tú haces	You (informal) do
él/ella/ello/uno hace	He/she/one does
usted hace	You (formal) do
nosotros hacemos	We do
vosotros hacéis	You all (informal) do
ellos/ellas hacen	They do
ustedes hacen	You all (formal) do

Note: The verb "*haber*" is a very important auxilliary verb, meaning, "to have," used with a past participle, as in, for example, "He has gone," "*El ha ido.*" (*This is of course not to be confused with the regular transitive verb, "tener," which means "to have."*)

But "*haber*" also has another meaning. It is the impersonal verb that means "to be," used in a specific way, as in, for example, "there is snow," "*Hay nieve.*"

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poder	can	decir	To say/tell
(yo) podría	I could	(yo) digo	I say
(tú) podrías	you could (informal, singular)	(tú) dices	You say
(él/ella) podría	he/she/(it) could	(él/la) dice	He/she says
(usted) podría	you could (formal, singular)	(usted) dice	You say
(nosotros/-as) podríamos	we could (m./f.)	(nosotros) decimos	We say
(vosotros/-as) podríais	you could (informal, plural, m./f.)	(vosotros) decís	You say
(ellos/ellas) podrían	they could (m./f.)	(ellos) dicen	They say
(ustedes) podrían	you could (formal, plural)	(ustedes) dicen	You say

ir	to go	ver	to watch/to see/
(yo) voy	I go	(yo) veo	I see
(tú) vas	you go (informal, singular)	(tú) ves	you see
(él/ella) va	he/she/(it) goes	(él/ella) ve	he/she sees
(usted) va	you go (formal, singular)	(usted) ve	you see
(nosotros/-as) vamos	we go (m./f.)	(nosotros/-as) vemos	we see
(vosotros/-as) vais	you go (informal, plural, m./f.)	(vosotros/-as) veis	you see
(ellos/ellas) van	they go (m./f.)	(ellos/ellas) ven	they see
(ustedes) van	you go (formal, plural)	(ustedes) ven	you see

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dar	to give	querer	to want
(yo) doy	I give	(yo) quiero	I want
(tú) das	you give	(tú) quieres	you want
(él/ella) da	he/she/(it) gives	(él/ella) quiere	he/she/(it) wants
(usted) da	you give	(usted) quiere	you want
(nosotros/-as) damos	we give	(nosotros/-as) queremos	we want (m./f.)
(vosotros/-as) dais	you give	(vosotros/-as) queréis	you want
(ellos/ellas) dan	they give	(ellos/ellas) quieren	they want (m./f.)
(ustedes) dan	you give	(ustedes) quieren	you want

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Stem Changing Verbs

In Spanish, some verbs change their stems when they are conjugated. These verbs are known as *stem-changing verbs*. Many of these verbs are important and often used. There are three different types of stem changing verbs in Spanish:

e → ie

e → i

o → ue

The stem change is done for the second 'e' (not the first one) - in general the stem always changes for the last vowel before the **-ar/-er/-ir** ending.

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Examples

Entender

To Understand

Querer

Want

entiendo	I	Quiero
entiendes	You	Quieres
entiende	He/She/It	Quiere
entendemos	We	Queremos
entendeis	You all	Queréis
entienden	They	Quieren

- *Querer* can be followed by the infinitive (*quiero empezar* means "I want to start").
- Remember *tener*? Well, that is a stem changing verb too: *tengo, tienes, tiene, tenemos, tenéis, tienen!*
- *Pensar* is normally followed by *que*, meaning "to think that"

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Here is a list of some other common stem changing verbs:

e -> ie	e -> i	o -> ue
cerrar (<i>to close</i>)	competir (<i>to compete</i>)	almorzar (<i>to eat lunch</i>)
comenzar (<i>to begin</i>)	conseguir (<i>to get, obtain</i>)	costar (<i>to cost</i>)
defender (<i>to defend</i>)	pedir (<i>to ask for, order</i>)	encontrar (<i>to find</i>)
empezar (<i>to start, begin</i>)	reír (<i>to laugh</i>)	morir (<i>to die</i>)
mentir (<i>to lie</i>)	repetir (<i>to repeat</i>)	mostrar (<i>to show</i>)
pensar (<i>to think</i>)	seguir (<i>to follow, continue</i>)	mover (<i>to move</i>)
perder (<i>to lose</i>)	servir (<i>to serve</i>)	recordar (<i>to remember</i>)
preferir (<i>to prefer</i>)	sonreír (<i>to smile</i>)	volver (<i>to return</i>)

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Examples

- *Quiero almorzar a las dos menos cuarto.*
I want to have lunch at 1:45.
- *Usualmente, vamos a Rusia en noviembre, pero Juan prefiere ir a España: quiere aprender el idioma.*
Usually, we go to Russia in november, but Juan prefers going to Spain; he wants to learn the language.
- *Pasado mañana, vais a cenar en el hotel. ¿Entendéis?*
The day after tomorrow, you're going to dine in the hotel. Do you all understand?
- *Cuando voy a Nueva Zelanda, quiero alojarme en un albergue juvenil, pero Santiago prefiere los chalets.*
When I go to New Zealand, I want to stay in a youth hostel, but Santiago prefers villas.
- *Entiendo que se puede fumar en las habitaciones individuales, ¿no?*
I understand you can smoke in the single rooms, right?
- *¿Piensas que las mujeres van a ser amables?*
Do you think the women are going to be nice?