

# The Progressive Tenses

The progressive tenses are formed with the present participle (or **gerundio** in Spanish). They express a continuing action in the present, the past, or the future. The English equivalent of these constructions consists of a form of the auxiliary verb *to be* followed by a present participle, the *-ing* form of the verb.

*The detective **is searching** for the victim.*

*She **was singing** when I came in.*

*I **will be waiting** before you get to the station.*

In the three examples above, the action is in progress, not yet completed, and it is taking place at that moment, whether in the present, the past, or the future. In Spanish, this construction is known as **la forma continua**. It is made up of a form of **estar** plus **el gerundio** (*Estoy leyendo, I am reading*).

## The Forms of the Present Participle in Regular, Irregular, and Stem-Changing Verbs

With their **-ndo** ending, the Spanish **gerundio** forms are easy to spot.

### Regular Verbs

For regular verbs you will:

- drop the **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir** from the infinitive, and add the corresponding ending, **-ando** for **-ar** verbs and **-iendo** for **-er** and **-ir** verbs.

sacar	to take out	sacando
beber	to drink	bebiendo
sufrir	to suffer	sufriendo

Remember that **-er** and **-ir** verbs have the same ending.

El autobús <b>está llegando</b> a la estación.	<i>The bus <b>is arriving</b> at the station.</i>
Estoy <b>aprendiendo</b> a cocinar con Hernán.	<i>I <b>am learning</b> to cook with Hernan.</i>
Ahora ellos <b>están firmando</b> el contrato.	<i>Now <b>they are signing</b> the contract.</i>

## ejercicio

9-1

**Imagínate.** Tú estás en la playa, ¿qué ves? Indicate with an **X** what is probably happening at this moment at the beach. If the statement doesn't fit, leave a blank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Un chico está caminando por la arena.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Dos señoras están comprando zapatillas en la tienda.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Una chica está escuchando la radio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Tú estás haciendo los ejercicios del libro de español.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Los niños están construyendo un castillo de arena.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Una señora está pasando la aspiradora.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Tú no estás haciendo nada.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Unos señores están pescando.

## Present Participle Endings in **-yendo**

Verbs with stems that end in a vowel have slightly different present participle forms.

- For **-er** and **-ir** verbs with stems ending in a vowel, add **-yendo**.

Lara <b>está leyendo</b> las instrucciones en la receta.	<i>Lara <b>is reading</b> the instructions in the recipe.</i>
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The following is a list of commonly used present participles that end in **-yendo**:

Verbs ending in <b>-er</b>			Verbs ending in <b>-ir</b>		
<b>atraer</b>	to attract	<b>atrayendo</b>	<b>construir</b>	to build	<b>construyendo</b>
<b>caer</b>	to fall	<b>cayendo</b>	<b>contribuir</b>	to contribute	<b>contribuyendo</b>
<b>contraer</b>	to contract	<b>contrayendo</b>	<b>destruir</b>	to destroy	<b>destruyendo</b>
<b>creer</b>	to believe	<b>creyendo</b>	<b>huir</b>	to flee	<b>huyendo</b>
<b>leer</b>	to read	<b>leyendo</b>	<b>incluir</b>	to include	<b>incluyendo</b>
<b>traer</b>	to bring	<b>trayendo</b>	<b>influir</b>	to influence	<b>influyendo</b>
			<b>oír</b>	to hear	<b>oyendo</b>

## ejercicio

9-2

*Un poco de lógica.* From the previous list of present participles choose the one that fits the meaning of each of the following sentences.

1. La chica está \_\_\_\_\_ la radio.
2. El criminal está \_\_\_\_\_ de la policía.
3. El huracán está \_\_\_\_\_ los árboles.
4. En la playa, los niños están \_\_\_\_\_ un castillo de arena.
5. ¡El pastel está \_\_\_\_\_ las moscas!
6. Tus comentarios están \_\_\_\_\_ a complicar la situación.

### Stem-Changing Verbs

Verbs with stem changes in the present have the following present participle forms:

- Some **-ir** verbs change the stem vowel **o** to **u**. Two verbs in this group are:

<b>dormir</b>	to sleep	<b>durmiendo</b>
<b>morir</b>	to die	<b>muriendo</b>

¿Quién **está durmiendo** en mi sofá?

*Who **is sleeping** on my sofa?*

- Some **-ir** verbs change the stem vowel **e** to **i**. For example, for **repetir**:

El maestro **está repitiendo** las  
instrucciones a los alumnos.

*The teacher **is repeating** the instructions  
to the students.*

Here is a list of commonly used verbs with the **e** to **i** change in the gerund:

<b>advertir</b>	to warn	<b>advirtiendo</b>	<b>reír</b>	to laugh	<b>riendo</b>
<b>competir</b>	to compete	<b>compitiendo</b>	<b>reñir</b>	to fight	<b>riñendo</b>
<b>conseguir</b>	to get	<b>consiguiendo</b>	<b>repetir</b>	to repeat	<b>repitiendo</b>
<b>consentir</b>	to agree	<b>consintiendo</b>	<b>seguir</b>	to follow	<b>siguiendo</b>
<b>convertir</b>	to convert	<b>convirtiéndose</b>	<b>sentir</b>	to feel	<b>sintiendo</b>
<b>decir</b>	to say	<b>diciendo</b>	<b>servir</b>	to serve	<b>sirviendo</b>
<b>hervir</b>	to boil	<b>hirviendo</b>	<b>sugerir</b>	to suggest	<b>sugiriendo</b>
<b>mentir</b>	to lie	<b>mintiendo</b>	<b>venir</b>	to come	<b>viniendo</b>
<b>pedir</b>	to ask for	<b>pidiendo</b>			

*Note:* We suggest that you review stem-changing verbs in the third-person singular of the preterit tense (Unit 4). They mirror the changes in the present participle.

### Irregular Present Participles

- The verbs **ir** and **poder** have irregular gerund forms:

<b>ir</b>	to go	<b>yendo</b>
<b>poder</b>	to be able	<b>pudiendo</b>

## ejercicio

9-3

**Decide.** From the list of verbs, choose the one that fits, and write the present participle to complete the meaning of each of the following sentences.

competir	hervir	seguir
decir	reñir	servir

1. El camarero está \_\_\_\_\_ la cena.
2. El agua está \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Las autoridades están \_\_\_\_\_ al criminal.
4. ¿Por qué siempre estás \_\_\_\_\_ con tus vecinos?
5. Todos los atletas están \_\_\_\_\_ en los juegos preliminares del estado.
6. Ahora, la profesora está \_\_\_\_\_ que vamos a tomar un examen.

### Placement of Reflexive Pronouns and Other Object Pronouns with the Present Participle

As a rule, reflexive pronouns precede the conjugated forms of verbs. The pronouns may be attached to the end of the present participle, however. An alternate Spanish form has the pronoun *preceding* the conjugated form of **estar** in the progressive construction. Both constructions are equally common. Observe the placement of the reflexive pronouns in the examples that follow:

El gato <b>no</b> está despertándose.	} <i>The cat is not waking up.</i>
El gato <b>no</b> <i>se</i> está despertando.	

The same rules apply to direct or indirect object pronouns.

¿Quién está vendiéndolo?	} <i>Who is selling it?</i>
¿Quién <i>lo</i> está vendiendo?	

Note the accent mark on **despertándose** and **vendiéndolo**. When a pronoun is added to the Spanish present participle, the accent mark indicates the original stressed vowel.

## ejercicio

9-4

**En el cine.** ¿Qué están haciendo las personas en el cine? Indica con una **X** si estás de acuerdo. Leave a blank if the statement does not fit.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Unos espectadores están afeitándose en el teatro.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Unos jóvenes están alquilándoles (*renting*) una película de horror a sus amigos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Tus amigos te están esperando en el lobby del teatro.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. La Sra. López está vendiendo unos tomates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Es este momento, Lucy está sentándose en una butaca (*armchair*).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tú estás lavándote los dientes.

## When Is the Present Progressive Used in Spanish?

The present progressive, as its name states, indicates an action in progress in the present. In the previous exercises and examples you have seen its Spanish form expressed with the present tense of **estar** followed by the **-ando** or **-iendo** verb forms.

Chris **está preparando** la cena.

*Chris is preparing dinner.*

Juan **está aprendiendo** a usar el nuevo programa de la computadora.

*Juan is learning to use the new computer program.*

The present progressive in Spanish is used:

- to express an action that is in progress now.

Laura **se está duchando**.

*Laura is taking a shower (is showering).*

Note that the action is not finished: Laura is not done taking her shower.

- to say that an action is continuing in the present.

**Estoy aprendiendo** a manejar.

*I am learning to drive.*

This example also indicates an action in progress, but the process is gradual. It takes time to learn to drive.

The present progressive is not used in Spanish as frequently as it is in English. Spanish normally uses the present tense—*not* the present progressive—to describe an action happening now. However, the English equivalent of the simple Spanish present is often a progressive form:

**Traigo** las manzanas en la bolsa.

*I am bringing the apples in my bag.*

### ejercicio

9-5

*¿Qué están haciendo ahora? Escribe la forma apropiada del presente de **estar** y el gerundio de los verbos entre paréntesis.*

1. El ladrón \_\_\_\_\_ (esconder) la evidencia del robo (*robbery*).
2. El reloj \_\_\_\_\_ (dar) las ocho.
3. ¿Quiénes \_\_\_\_\_ (gritar) en el pasillo (*corridor*)?
4. Los hermanos Díaz \_\_\_\_\_ (esperar) el autobús para ir a Málaga.
5. ¿Y Marlo? ¿\_\_\_\_\_ (dormir) la siesta?
6. Andy \_\_\_\_\_ (vivir) una pesadilla (*nightmare*).

## ejercicio

9-6

*En español. Usa el verbo **estar** + el gerundio.*

1. The fans (**fanáticos**) are watching a good game. \_\_\_\_\_
2. It is not raining now. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The team is playing well. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The trainer (**entrenador**) is encouraging (**animar**) his players (**jugadores**). \_\_\_\_\_
5. A beer vendor (**vendedor**) is climbing up the stairs. \_\_\_\_\_
6. He is yelling: "Peanuts, beer!" \_\_\_\_\_
7. Now the band is playing music. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The fans are having fun. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The other team is losing the game. \_\_\_\_\_

## The Progressive Forms in Other Tenses

In Spanish, as in English, there are progressive forms in all tenses and moods. Here are some examples:

El reportero **estaba investigando**  
el incidente.

*The reporter **was investigating** the incident.*

Pedro **estuvo buscándote** ayer por  
la mañana.

*Pedro **was looking for you** yesterday morning.*

**Estaríamos durmiendo.**

*We **might have been sleeping**.*

*Note:* A continuing action in the past can be expressed with the imperfect tense *or* with the imperfect of **estar** + **gerundio**.

Yo dormía.  
Yo estaba durmiendo. } *I was sleeping.*

Both examples above communicate the same idea: the action was in the process of taking place, and it was of unspecified duration.

## ejercicio

9-7

*En el banco. Practiquemos un poco. Describe la escena en el banco ayer. Usa el verbo **estar** en el imperfecto de indicativo (**estaba, estabas, estaba...**) + el gerundio.*

1. Carlos (buscar) una silla para sentarse. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Marta y Raúl (rellenar) una planilla (*form*). \_\_\_\_\_
3. La secretaria (escribir) una nota. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Las telefonistas (responder) a los clientes por teléfono. \_\_\_\_\_
5. El cajero (*teller*) (recibir) los depósitos de los clientes. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Dos señoras (hacer) unas preguntas en el pasillo. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Yo (cambiar) euros por dólares. \_\_\_\_\_
8. El director de finanzas (tomar) un café. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Marta (leer) un libro en la fila (*line*). \_\_\_\_\_

**ejercicio****9-8**

*Preguntas personales. Contesta en español.*

1. ¿Qué estás haciendo ahora? \_\_\_\_\_
2. ¿Quién está gobernando los Estados Unidos ahora? \_\_\_\_\_
3. ¿Qué libro estás leyendo? \_\_\_\_\_
4. ¿Con quién estabas hablando ayer por teléfono? \_\_\_\_\_
5. ¿Qué estabas haciendo anoche a las diez? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Verbs of Motion in Progressive Tenses**

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The **formas continuas**, or progressive tenses formed with the present participle (**-ando, -iendo** forms), are used with the verbs **seguir** and **continuar** and with verbs of motion such as **andar, ir**, and **venir**. As with **estar**, they emphasize an action that continues, is repeated, or is not finished.

**Sigue trabajando** para la misma  
compañía chilena.

**Ando buscando** trabajo.

**Van diciendo** que somos una pareja.

**Vienen caminando.**

*He/She is still working for the same Chilean  
company.*

*I am looking for a job.*

*They are going around saying we are a couple.*

*They come walking.*

These forms are also used in other tenses and moods. The following examples are in the past, future, and conditional.

Thomas **andaba buscando** a su  
hermana.

¿**Irás caminando** o en auto?

¿**Continuarías viendo** esta película?

*Thomas was looking for his sister.*

*Will you go walking or by car?*

*Would you continue watching this movie?*

## ejercicio

9-9

*En español. Usa el verbo entre paréntesis para traducir el verbo en cursiva.*

1. Miriam *continues* singing the same song. (seguir) \_\_\_\_\_
2. My son *is* looking for a job. (andar) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who *continues* making noise (**ruido**)? (continuar) \_\_\_\_\_
4. We'll *go* searching for an answer. (ir) \_\_\_\_\_
5. They will not *continue* lying. (seguir) \_\_\_\_\_
6. She *is* losing hope. (estar) \_\_\_\_\_
7. He will *go on* supporting (**apoyar**) his friends. (continuar) \_\_\_\_\_
8. *Were* you (**tú**) working in this office yesterday? (estar) \_\_\_\_\_

## Present Participle: Spanish Compared to English

We have studied **-ando**, **-iendo** forms in uses equivalent to the English progressive tenses. In that role, the **gerundio** is equivalent to the English present participle.

There are three other considerations regarding the present participle:

- As the equivalent of the English present participle, used in a phrase *without* an auxiliary verb such as **estar**.

**Meneando** la cola, el gato se sentó en el sofá.

*Swaying its tail, the cat sat down on the sofa.*

Los huéspedes, **esperando** pacientemente en la fila, hablan del tiempo.

*The guests, **waiting** patiently in line, talk about the weather.*

Note the phrases above followed or enclosed by commas. In English these are called participial phrases.

The Spanish infinitive, and not **el gerundio**, is used in sentences as a noun.

**Bailar** es divertido.

*Dancing is fun.*

In the example above, literal translation into the **-ando**, **-iendo** Spanish forms is not possible.

- In Spanish, always use the infinitive after prepositions.

**Después de desayunar**, ya estaba corriendo por el barrio.

*After **having breakfast**, he/she was running around the neighborhood.*

- **Al** + infinitive is equivalent to *upon* + present participle in English.

**Al escuchar** sonar el teléfono, se levantaron.

*Upon **hearing** the phone ring, they got up.*



**ejercicio****9-10**

*En la piscina. ¿El gerundio o el infinitivo? Escribe la forma apropiada del gerundio o el infinitivo del verbo entre paréntesis, de acuerdo a la frase.*

1. Ando \_\_\_\_\_ (buscar) a mis amigos.
2. Quiero encontrarlos para \_\_\_\_\_ (ir) a la piscina.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (nadar) es un ejercicio excelente y muy relajante.
4. Por fin, después de \_\_\_\_\_ (encontrar) a Marcos, estamos ya en la piscina.
5. ¡Hay mucha gente \_\_\_\_\_ (disfrutar) esta mañana en la piscina!
6. Delia está \_\_\_\_\_ (broncearse) al sol.
7. Pedro está \_\_\_\_\_ (flotar) en la piscina.
8. Alina y Tony siguen \_\_\_\_\_ (dormir).

**ejercicio****9-11**

*En el maratón. Traduce. Usa el vocabulario útil.*

We are reporting to you live from Central Park. We see many participants who are getting ready to run the marathon. The spectators are anxiously awaiting the beginning of this sports event. The athletes are trying to relax, smiling. Here, to my right, you can see volunteers who are working hard, distributing bottles of water to the runners. The camera operators and reporters from Channel 1 are working hard to inform the viewers. Upon hearing the signal, the runners are leaving, smiling again to our cameras. And as you (Uds.) can observe, I am following the runners of this marathon from the Channel 1 van, bringing (to) you the latest news. Continue watching this special program on your favorite channel, Channel 1.

**vocabulario útil**

anxiously	ansiosamente	sports event	el evento deportivo
camera operator	el/la camarógrafo(a)	to get ready	prepararse
live	en vivo	to relax	relajar(se)
marathon	el maratón	to report	reportar
reporter	el reportero(a)	TV channel	el canal de televisión
runner	el/la corredor(a)	van	la camioneta
signal	el disparo	viewer	el público