

Spanish Grammar

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1 Subjects and Verbs

The key in learning an new language is to understand how to use the verbs. Therefore, we concentrate on these. There exist two tracks of verbs in Spanish, those verbs ending in **-ar** and those ending in **-er** or **-ir**. For instance, we have **hablar** for to **speak**, and **comer** for to eat and **vivir** meaning to live¹.

tracks of
verbs

Pronunciation. The pronunciation is easy in Spanish as words are pronounced as they are written but there is only **one single stress** in each word. If there is an apostrophe the corresponding vowel/syllable is stressed, otherwise the second to last syllable is stressed. For instance, we have **hab-lar**, thus **hab** is stressed. In Spanish the leading **h** is not pronounced, thus hablar is pronounced as **ah**-blahr, with the bold part being stressed. Furthermore, the **v** is pronounced as **b**, and **ll** as **j**.

Present Tense Conjugation. To conjugate -ar verbs, remove the -ar ending and add the corresponding ending of the desired subject. For instance with the word **hablar** (to speak) we get the top part in Table 1.

Note that **el** is masculine, **ella** is feminine and **usted** is formal for you. In case of group of peoples we have **ellos** for groups of man or mixed groups, **ellas** for groups consisting only of woman, and **ustedes** for taking formally to a group. For -er endings, remove the -er ending and add the corresponding subject ending. We use **comer** (to eat) as example, cf. Table 1.

And very similar to the -er verbs, are the -ir verbs, where only the **nosotros** and **vosotros** endings are different. For **vivir** (to live) is presented in the bottom part of Table 1.

¹also see <https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/spanish-present-tense-forms>

Subject	ar-Ending	Example (hablar)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo hablo	I speak
tú	-as	tú hablas	you (informal) speak
el/ella/usted	-a	el habla	he/she/you (formal) speak(s)
nosotros	-amos	nosotros hablamos	we speak
vosotros	-áis	vosotros habláis	you (informal) speak
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-an	ellos hablan	they/they (fem.)/you speak

Subject	er-Ending	Example (comer)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo como	I eat
tú	-es	tú comes	you eat
el/ella/usted	-e	el come	he/she/you eat(s)
nosotros	-emos	nosotros comemos	we eat
vosotros	-éis	vosotros coméis	you eat
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos comen	they/you eat

Subject	ir-Ending	Example (vivir)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo vivo	I live
tú	-es	tú vives	you live
el/ella/usted	-e	el vive	he/she/you live(s)
nosotros	-imos	nosotros vivimos	we live
vosotros	-ís	vosotros vivís	you live
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos viven	they/you live

Table 1: Standard rules for the conjugation of verbs to different subjects.

2 Special, Stem-Changing and Irregular Verbs

Special Verbs. First of all there are a handful special verbs that do not follow the regular pattern in the **yo** form, though they are easy to remember as they are very common. This of course also means that they are important to know. These are:

Infinitive	Meaning	yo form	Meaning
decir	to say/tell	yo digo	I tell
hacer	to do	yo hago	I do
poner	to put	yo pongo	I put
salir	to go out/leave	yo salgo	I go out
suponer	to suppose	yo supongo	I suppose
tener	to have	yo tengo	I have
traer	to bring	yo traigo	I bring
venir	to come	yo vengo	I come

Table 2: Irregular verbs.

We call these words the **go-go words** as they end in -go. Additionally to these words other words ending in -poner fall into the same category.

go-go
words

Vowel Changes. In the present tense some verbs undergo a vowel change in the last vowel of the stem of the verb, when it is *stressed*. Recall that without accent the second to last syllable is stressed and always only one syllable of each word is stressed in Spanish. There can be following changes.

1. e becomes ie. For instance the word **querer** (to want) conjugates as follows:

Subject	ir-Ending	Example (querer)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo quiero	I want
tú	-as	tú quieres	you want
el/ella/usted	-a	el quiere	he/she/you want(s)
nosotros	-imos	nosotros queremos	we want
vosotros	-ís	vosotros queréis	you want
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-an	ellos quieren	they/you want

Table 3: The verb *querer* conjugated.

Here are some common verbs for which **e** becomes **ie**, note that these follow the same pattern as *querer* in Table 3:

Verb	Meaning	Example
acertar	to hit/guess	yo acierto
atender	to attend to	yo atiando
atravesar	to cross/go through	yo atravieso
calentar	to warm	yo caliente
cerrar	to close	yo cierro
comenzar	to begin	yo comienzo
confesar	to confess	yo confieso
defender	to defend	yo defiendo
descender	to descend	yo desciendo
despertarse	to wake up	yo me despierto
divertirse	to have fun	yo me divierto
empezar	to begin	yo empiezo
encender	to light/ignite	yo enciendo
encerrar	to enclose/lock	yo encierro
entender	to understand	yo entiendo
fregar	to scrub/wash	yo friego
gobernar	to govern/rule	yo gobierno
helar	to freeze	yo hiel
mentir	to lie	yo miento
negar	to deny	yo niego
nevar	to snow	yo nievo
pensar	to think	yo pienso
perder	to lose	yo pierdo
preferir	to prefer	yo prefiero
querer	to want	yo quiero
recomendar	to recommend	yo recomiendo
remendar	to mend/patch	yo remiendo
sentar(se)	to sit down	yo me siento
sentir	to feel	yo siento
sugerir	to suggest	yo sugiero
tener	to have	tú tienes
tropezar	to stumble	yo tropiezo
venir	to come	tú vienes

Table 4: Some common verbs for which the last e in the stem becomes ie when conjugated.

2. o becomes ue
3. e becomes i
4. i becomes ie
5. u becomes ue

Some verbs do not follow the rules of the previous section, i.e. there are some irregular

verbs ².

- Verbs ending in -guir: The yo form ends in go, e.g. extinguir (to extinguish) is yo extingo.
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3 Moods in Spanish

There exist three **moods** in Spanish³:

- **Indicative mood:** to talk about facts or things that are believed to be true and concrete.
- **Subjunctive mood:** to talk about desired, doubts, wishes, conjectures, and possibilities.
- **Imperative mood:** for giving commands.

Imperative mode: go-go words turn into ga-ga's!

4 Tenses

There exist present, past and future tenses in Spanish as well:

4.1 Present

- Simple Present Tense:

²<https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/spanish-present-tense-forms>

³<https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/subjunctive-vs-indicative-in-spanish>

Verbs

acertar	to hit/guess	cf., 5
atender	to attend to	cf., 5
atravesar	to cross/go through	cf., 5
calentar	to warm	cf., 5
cerrar	to close	cf., 5
comenzar	to begin	cf., 5
comer	to eat	cf., 2, 3
confesar	to confess	cf., 5
defender	to defend	cf., 5
descender	to descend	cf., 5
despertarse	to wake up	cf., 5
divertirse	to have fun	cf., 5
empezar	to begin	cf., 5
encender	to light/ignite	cf., 5
encerrar	to enclose/lock	cf., 5
entender	to understand	cf., 5
extinguir	to extinguish	cf., 6
fregar	to scrub/wash	cf., 5
gobernar	to govern/rule	cf., 5
hablar	to speak	cf., 2, 3
hacer	to do	cf., 4
helar	to freeze	cf., 5
mentir	to lie	cf., 5
negar	to deny	cf., 5
nevar	to snow	cf., 5
pensar	to think	cf., 5
perder	to lose	cf., 5
preferir	to prefer	cf., 5
querer	to want	cf., 4, 5
recomendar	to recommend	cf., 5
remendar	to mend/patch	cf., 5
sentar	to sit down	cf., 5
sentir	to feel	cf., 5
sugerir	to suggest	cf., 5
tener	to have	cf., 5
tropezar	to stumble	cf., 5
venir	to come	cf., 5
vivir	to live	cf., 2, 3