

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 can 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.

[**MS: Pronouns + in the infinite form the pronoun?** is adapted to the word. **levantarse**. **levantarme**, **yo me levanto**.]

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. There is one more word that is different, but not a go-go word: haber (to have). As **tener** it also means **to have**, but it is used when talking about the past. We will investigate this in detail later.

go-go
words

Spelling Changes. Some verbs do not follow the rules of the previous section, i.e. there is a spelling change in the **yo** form ².

- **Verbs ending in -guir the yo form ends in go.** The **yo** form ends in **go**, e.g. **extinguir** (to extinguish) is **yo extingo**.
- **Verbs ending in -ger or -gir, the g in the yo form changes to a j.** For instance **dirigir** (to direct) we get ‘yo dirijo’ for ‘I direct’.

Here are some common verbs that use these two rules:

Infinitive	Meaning	yo form
extinguir	to extinguish	extingo
dirigir	to direct	dirijo
escoger	to choose	escojo
exigir	to demand	exijo
recoger	to pick up	recojo

Table 3: Verbs with -guir, -ger and -gir ending have different **yo** forms.

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

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	er-Ending	Example (querer)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo qu iero	I want
tú	-es	tú qu ieres	you want
el/ella/usted	-e	el qu iere	he/she/you want(s)
nosotros	-emos	nostros qu eremos	we want
vosotros	-éis	vosotros qu eréis	you want
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos qu ieren	they/you want

Table 4: The verb *querer* conjugated.

Here are some common verbs for which **e** become **ie**, note that these follow the same pattern as *querer* in Table 4:

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 caliento
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/turn on	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 5: Some common verbs for which the last e in the stem becomes ie when conjugated.

2. **o becomes ue.** For example the word **soñar** (to dream) conjugates as follows:

Subject	ar-Ending	Example (soñar)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo sueño	I dream
tú	-as	tú sueñas	you dream
el/ella/usted	-a	el sueña	he/she/you dream(s)
nosotros	-amos	nostros sonamos	we dream
vosotros	-áis	vosotros soñáis	you dream
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-an	ellos sueñan	they/you dream

Table 6: The verb sonar conjugated.

Another one is the word **oler** (to smell), for which also an h is added at the beginning when the first letter of the word is changed:

Subject	er-Ending	Example (oler)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo huelo	I smell
tú	-es	tú huelas	You smell
el/ella/usted	-e	el huele	he/she/you smell(s)
nosotros	-emos	nostros olemos	we smell
vosotros	-éis	vosotros oléis	you smell
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos huelen	they/you smell

Table 7: The verb oler conjugated.

Below again you can find common verbs with this vowel change.

Verb	Meaning	Example
absolver	to absolve	yo absuelo
acordarse (de)	to agree on/remember	yo me acuerdo de
almorzar	to have lunch	yo almuerzo
aprobar	to approve	yo apruebo
cocer	to boil/bake	yo cueco
colgar	to hang (up)	yo cuelgo
conmover	to move	yo conmuevo
contar	to count	yo cuento
costar	to cost	yo cuesto
demoler	to demolish	yo demuelo
demostrar	to demonstrate/prove	yo demuestro
devolver	to return	yo devuelvo
disolver	to dissolve	yo disuelvo
doler	to hurt	yo duelo
dormir	to sleep	yo duermo
encontrar	to find	yo encuentro
envolver	to wrap	yo envuelvo
llover	to rain	yo lluevo
moler	to grind	yo muelo
morder	to bite	yo muerdo
morir	to die	yo muero
mostrar	to show	yo muestro
mover	to move	yo muevo
oler	to smell	yo huelo
poder	to be able to	yo puedo
probar	to taste, to prove	yo pruebo
promover	to promote	yo promuevo
recordar	to remember	yo recuerdo
remover	to remove	yo remuevo
resolver	to resolve	yo resuelvo
retorcer	to twist	yo retuerto [MS: why -to?]
revolver	to mix/shake	yo revuelvo
rogar	to beg	yo ruego
soler	to be accustomed to	yo suelo (means: I usually)
sonar	to sound	yo sueno
soñar	to dream	yo sueño
torcer	to twist	yo tuerzo
tronar	to thunder	yo trueno
volar	to fly	yo vuelo

Table 8: Some common verbs for which the o in the stem becomes ue when conjugated.

Again for all of these and the following vowel changes prefixes count as well. For instance the words **comprobar** (to check/prove), **descontar** (to deduct/exclude) and **descolgar** (to take down) undergo a vowel change as well.

3. **e becomes i.** As an example we use **repetir** (to repeat).

Subject	ir-Ending	Example (repetir)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo rep í to	I repeat
tú	-es	tú rep í tes	You repeat
el/ella/usted	-e	el rep í te	he/she/you repeat(s)
nosotros	-imos	nostros rep e timos	we repeat
vosotros	-ís	vosotros rep e tís	you repeat
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos rep í ten	they/you repeat

Table 9: The verb repetir conjugated.

There are only a few common words with that scheme:

Verb	Meaning	Example
conseguir	to get	yo cons igo
corregir	to correct	yo corr ijo
decir	to say/tell	yo dig o
despedir	to fire/to say goodbye/to dismiss	yo desp ido
elegir	to elect	yo el ijo
impedir	to impede/prevent	yo imp ido
medir	to measure	yo mid o
pedir	to ask for	yo pid o
perseguir	to follow/chase	yo pers igo
repetir	to repeat	yo rep ito
reírse	to laugh	yo me r ío
seguir	to follow	yo sig o
servir	to serve	yo sir vo
sonreírse	to smile at	yo me sonr ío (to smile at me)
vestirse	to get dressed	yo me vist o

Table 10: Some common verbs for which e becomes i in the stem when conjugated.

4. **i becomes ie.** There exist only two commonly used verbs with this vocal change: **adquirir** (to acquire) and **inquirir** (to inquire).

Subject	ir-Ending	Example (adquirir)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo ad <u>qu</u> iero	I acquire
tú	-es	tú ad <u>qu</u> ieres	You acquire
el/ella/usted	-e	el ad <u>qu</u> iere	he/she/you acquire(s)
nosotros	-imos	nosotros ad <u>qu</u> irimos	we acquire
vosotros	-ís	vosotros ad <u>qu</u> irís	you acquire
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos ad <u>qu</u> ieren	they/you acquire

Table 11: The verb *adquirir* conjugated.

Subject	ir-Ending	Example (inquirir)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo in <u>qu</u> iero	I inquire
tú	-es	tú in <u>qu</u> ieres	You inquire
el/ella/usted	-e	el in <u>qu</u> iere	he/she/you inquire(s)
nosotros	-imos	nosotros in <u>qu</u> irimos	we inquire
vosotros	-ís	vosotros in <u>qu</u> irís	you inquire
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-en	ellos in <u>qu</u> ieren	they/you inquire

Table 12: The verb *inquirir* conjugated.

5. **u becomes ue.** Finally for this vowel change, there is only one commonly used verb: **jugar** (to play).

Subject	ar-Ending	Example (jugar)	Meaning
yo	-o	yo ju ego	I play
tú	-as	tú ju egas	You play
el/ella/usted	-a	el ju ega	he/she/you play(s)
nosotros	-amos	nosotros ju gamos	we play
vosotros	-áis	vosotros ju gáis	you play
ellos/ellas/ustedes	-an	ellos ju egan	they/you play

Table 13: The verb *jugar* conjugated.

Irregular Verbs. Finally there are some common verbs with irregular yo forms³, otherwise they follow the standard patterns of the -ar tack and the -er/-ir track (in the so far discussed present tense):

³<https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/spanish-present-tense-forms>

Infinitive	Meaning	yo form
caber	to fit	quepo
caer	to fall	caigo
conocer	to know	conozco
dar	to give	doy
hacer	to do/make	hago
poner	to put	pongo
saber	to know	sé
salir	to leave/to go out	salgo
traducir	to translate	traduzco
traer	to bring	traigo
valer	to be worth	valgo
ver	to see	veo

Table 14: Verbs with irregular yo forms.

Furthermore there are four of the most common verbs that are irregular. These are **ser** (to be), **estar** (to be), **ir** (to go) and **haber** (to have) . The corresponding conjugations are⁴:

⁴<https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/spanish-irregular-present-tense>

Subject	Conjugation of ser	Meaning
yo	yo soy	I am
tú	tú eres	you are
el/ella/usted	el es	he/she is, you are
nosotros	nosotros somos	we are
vosotros	vosotros sois	you are
ellos/ellas/ustedes	ellos son	they/you are

Subject	Conjugation of estar	Meaning
yo	yo estoy	I am
tú	tú estás	you are
el/ella/usted	el está	he/she is, you are
nosotros	nosotros estamos	we are
vosotros	vosotros estáis	you are
ellos/ellas/ustedes	ellos están	they/you are

Subject	Conjugation of ir	Meaning
yo	yo voy	I go
tú	tú vas	you go
el/ella/usted	el va	he/she/you go(s)
nosotros	nosotros vamos	we go
vosotros	vosotros vais	you go
ellos/ellas/ustedes	ellos van	they/you go

Subject	Conjugation of haber	Meaning
yo	yo he	I have
tú	tú has	you have
el/ella/usted	el hay, usted ha	he/she has, you have
nosotros	nosotros hemos	we have
vosotros	vosotros habéis	you have
ellos/ellas/ustedes	ellos han	they/you have

Table 15: Very common irregular verbs.

3 Pronouns

In the positive infinite form pronouns are attached in the opposite order as in English to the word. For instance,

4 Moods in Spanish

There exist three **moods** in Spanish⁵:

1. **Imperative mood:** for giving commands. Remember that we have two tracks of verbs, the -ar track and the -ir/-er track. However, the informal commands are built differently. We start with them. Furthermore, in the imperative mode the go-go words turn into ga-ga's! For instance **digo** (I tell/I say) becomes **diga** (Tell! or Say!).
- **Positive (Affirmative) informal commands on the -ar track:** Use the present tense and drop the -s ending. For instance with the words **comprar** (to buy), **aprender** (to learn) and **escribir** (to write) we have following.

Imperative
Mood,
i.e. Com-
mands

Verb	Present tense	Tú command	Example	Meaning
comprar	tu compras	compra	Compra la camiseta!	Buy the T-shirt!
aprender	tu aprendes	aprende	Aprende español!	Learn Spanish!
escribir	tu escribes	escribe	Escribe el ensayo!	Write the essay!

Pronoun placement. The pronouns have to be attached to the verb as it is a positive command and often an accent is used:

Verb	Tu form	Pronouns	Example	Meaning
traer	traes	lo (it)it)	Traelo.	Bring it.
traer	traes	me (me), lo (it)	Tráemelo.	Bring it to me.
decir	dices	lo (it)	Dígalo. (or dilo)	Say it.
decir	dices	se (him/her), lo (it)	Dígaselo.	Say it to her.
comprar	compras	se (him/her), lo (it)	Cómpraselo.	Buy it for him.
poner	pones	los (them)	Ponte los zapatos ¡Póntelos!	Put on your shoes. Put them on!

- **Negative informal commands on the -ar track:** For the negative informal commands, go to the stem word, take the present tense form and switch tracks. That is words ending in -ar become -er and vice versa and of course use a negative word **no** (not) or **nunca**(never):

⁵<https://www.spanishdict.com/guide/subjunctive-vs-indicative-in-spanish>

Verb	Present tense	Tú command	Example	Meaning
comprar	tu compras	no compres	No compres la camiseta!	Don't buy ...!
aprender	tu aprendes	no aprendas	No aprendas español!	Don't learn ...!
escribir	tu escribes	no escribas	Nunca escribas el ensayo!	Never write ...!

- **Formal commands:**

- **Nosotros commands**

- **Indirect commands**

- **Informal commands on the -ir/-er track:** Use the present tense and drop the -r ending

2. **Indicative mood:** to talk about facts or things that are believed to be true and concrete.
3. **Subjunctive mood:** to talk about desired, doubts, wishes, conjectures, and possibilities.

5 Tenses

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

5.1 Present

- Simple Present Tense:

Verbs

absolver	to absolve	cf., 8
acertar	to hit/guess	cf., 6
acordarse de	to agree on/remember	cf., 8
adquirir	to acquire	cf., 10
almorzar	to have lunch	cf., 8
aprender	to learn	cf., 13
aprobar	to approve	cf., 8
atender	to attend to	cf., 6
atravesar	to cross/go through	cf., 6
caber	to fit	cf., 11
caer	to fall	cf., 11
calentar	to warm	cf., 6
cerrar	to close	cf., 6
cocer	to boil/bake	cf., 8
colgar	to hang (up)	cf., 8
comenzar	to begin	cf., 6
comer	to eat	cf., 2, 3
comprar	to buy	cf., 13
comprobar	to check/prove	cf., 8
confesar	to confess	cf., 6
conmover	to move	cf., 8
conocer	to know	cf., 11
conseguir	to get	cf., 9
contar	to count	cf., 8
corregir	to correct	cf., 9
costar	to cost	cf., 8
dar	to give	cf., 11
decir	to say/tell	cf., 9
defender	to defend	cf., 6
demoler	to demolish	cf., 8
demonstrar	to demonstrate/prove	cf., 8
descender	to descend	cf., 6
descolgar	to take down	cf., 8
descontar	to deduct/exclude	cf., 8
despedir	to fire/to say goodbye/to dismiss	cf., 9
despertarse	to wake up	cf., 6
devolver	to return	cf., 8
direct	to direct	cf., 4
dirigir	to direct	cf., 4
disolver	to dissolve	cf., 8
divertirse	to have fun	cf., 6
doler	to hurt	cf., 8
dormir	to sleep	cf., 8
elegir	to elect	cf., 9

empezar	to begin	cf., 6
encender	to light/turn on	cf., 6
encerrar	to enclose/lock	cf., 6
encontrar	to find	cf., 8
entender	to understand	cf., 6
envolver	to wrap	cf., 8
escoger	to choose	cf., 4
escribir	to write	cf., 13
exigir	to demand	cf., 4
extinguir	to extinguish	cf., 4
fregar	to scrub/wash	cf., 6
gobernar	to govern/rule	cf., 6
haber	to have	cf., 4, 11
hablar	to speak	cf., 2, 3
hacer	to do	cf., 4
hacer	to do/make	cf., 11
helar	to freeze	cf., 6
impedir	to impede/prevent	cf., 9
inquirir	to inquire	cf., 10
ir	to go	cf., 11
jugar	to play	cf., 10
llover	to rain	cf., 8
medir	to measure	cf., 9
mentir	to lie	cf., 6
moler	to grind	cf., 8
morder	to bite	cf., 8
morir	to die	cf., 8
mostrar	to show	cf., 8
mover	to move	cf., 8
negar	to deny	cf., 6
nevar	to snow	cf., 6
oler	to smell	cf., 7, 8
pedir	to ask for	cf., 9
pensar	to think	cf., 6
perder	to lose	cf., 6
perseguir	to follow/chase	cf., 9
poder	to be able to	cf., 8
poner	to put	cf., 11
preferir	to prefer	cf., 6
probar	to taste, to prove	cf., 8
promover	to promote	cf., 8
querer	to want	cf., 5, 6
recoger	to pick up	cf., 4
recomendar	to recommend	cf., 6
recordar	to remember	cf., 8
remendar	to mend/patch	cf., 6

remover	to remove	cf., 8
repetir	to repeat	cf., 9
resolver	to resolve	cf., 8
retorcer	to twist	cf., 8
revolver	to mix/shake	cf., 8
reírse	to laugh	cf., 9
rogar	to beg	cf., 8
saber	to know	cf., 11
salir	to leave/to go out	cf., 11
seguir	to follow	cf., 9
sentar	to sit down	cf., 6
sentir	to feel	cf., 6
servir	to serve	cf., 9
ser	to be	cf., 11
soler	to be accustomed to	cf., 8
sonar	to dream	cf., 7
sonar	to sound	cf., 8
sonreírse	to smile at	cf., 9
soñar	to dream	cf., 8
sugerir	to suggest	cf., 6
tener	to have	cf., 6
torcer	to twist	cf., 8
traducir	to translate	cf., 11
traer	to bring	cf., 11, 13
tronar	to thunder	cf., 8
tropezar	to stumble	cf., 6
valer	to be worth	cf., 11
venir	to come	cf., 6
ver	to see	cf., 11
vestirse	to get dressed	cf., 9
vivir	to live	cf., 2, 3
volar	to fly	cf., 8

Nouns

el ensayo

the essay

cf., 13

Pronouns

los	them	cf., 13
lo	(cf., 13
me	me	cf., 13
se	him/her	cf., 13