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MAKES  
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# Spanish Verb Tenses

**SECOND  
EDITION**

- *Learn when and why each tense is used in Spanish*
- *Build your language skills and communicate with confidence*
- *Practice with more than 200 entertaining exercises*

**Dorothy Richmond**

**BESTSELLING WORKBOOK**  
for Learners of Spanish

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ar; acabar; acar  
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cordarse; acorta  
arse; acostumbra  
actuar; bailar; b  
arse; barrer; bat  
; bendecir; besa  
ar; brillar; brinda  
cear; burlar; bu  
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emigrar; empeza

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# **Spanish Verb Tenses**

**SECOND EDITION**

**Dorothy Richmond**



New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City  
Milan New Delhi San Juan Seoul Singapore Sydney Toronto

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*To Martin, Daisy, and Lily*

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# Introduction

More than any other aspect of learning a foreign language, verbs challenge the learner. *Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* is a systematic, logical approach to the study of Spanish verbs, including their tenses, moods, and special uses. This information is provided in workbook format, with clear explanations of each use of a verb. Each section contains a variety of exercises that relate directly to the material just covered and that also include previously covered material for constant review.

This second edition of *Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* retains the structure and format of the first edition. The changes are mainly in its content: There are many new paragraphs for translation, and cultural references have been brought into the 21st century.

*Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* takes you far beyond the rote memorization so commonly associated with studying verbs and tenses, and enables you to fully grasp the important as well as the subtle role that verbs play in every sentence we utter, write, read, or think.

The verb is the engine of the sentence. Without a verb, the sentence technically and figuratively goes nowhere. Thus, a careful, systematic study of verbs in any language is crucial to communication in any form.

Yet this careful study of the verbs need not be the drudge work so commonly associated with verbs, namely, memorizing a zillion conjugations. If you think of working with verbs as creating a scaffold for the language, which is really what verbs provide, the task at hand can seem far more meaningful and less daunting.

You may have seen several Spanish verb books already, and you may be wondering what, if anything, another verb book on the market could add. What sets *Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* apart from other Spanish verb books is its scope and its intent to teach the full picture with regard to verbs.

Many books devoted to Spanish verbs provide you with conjugations and little else. Sometimes exercises are provided, but the emphasis is nearly always on the mechanical aspect of conjugating the verb, rendering these books more verb dictionaries than actual teaching or reviewing texts. While correctly conjugating a verb is an extremely important aspect of speaking and writing well, it is still pure mechanics unless you understand the implications of the use of one verb form over another and why you choose a particular use.

*Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* offers you not only hundreds of verbs with their particular conjugations, but also lets you know both *when* and *why* a particular verb should be used: You are given social, philosophical, and linguistic reasons and applications for the use of verbs.

The Spanish word for *tense*, in the grammatical sense, is **tiempo**, which is also the Spanish word for “time.” The philosophical and psychological aspects of time, so cen-

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tral to working with the tenses, unfortunately are often overlooked. To take something so rich as language—the vehicle of thought—and pare it down to its technical particulars is to take something that is beautiful and diminish it.

My experience with students of Spanish has taught me that the difficulty of the task before them is rarely what determines either the level of interest or the degree of success. What I have learned is that a step-by-step, logical approach—one that includes clear explanations and reasons for learning Spanish well—intrigues the learner. Interest and secure understanding—not ease and surface performance—are the genuine guarantors of success.

There are three main parts to this book:

- ◆ **Part I: The present tense** The 12 chapters in Part I thoroughly cover verb usage in the present tense: basic conjugation of regular verbs, formation of questions, detailed information on the challenging verbs **ser** and **estar** (the verbs “to be”), use of the personal **a**, reflexive verbs, a host of irregular verbs along with their uses and nuances, and the present progressive mood.
- ◆ **Part II: The past, future, conditional, and perfect tenses** Part II covers the six most basic indicative tenses (after the present): preterite, imperfect, future, conditional, present perfect, and past perfect. Their conjugations and various applications are discussed, and ample exercises are included.
- ◆ **Part III: The imperative, the subjunctive, and the passive voice** This final section of the text begins with the imperative (command form), which establishes a foundation for the next chapter, the present subjunctive. These are followed by the imperfect subjunctive, future perfect, conditional perfect, present perfect subjunctive, pluperfect subjunctive, and, finally, the passive voice, which covers all tenses in this special use.

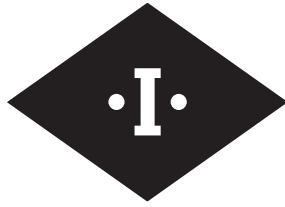
In the exercises in this text, you should assume that the English “you” is both singular and informal—translated by the Spanish **tú**—unless it carries the notation “[pl.]” or “[formal].” English “you all” is translated by the informal plural form **vosotros** unless it carries the notation “[formal].” Exercise items with ambiguity of gender carry the notation “[m.]” or “[f.]” as clarification.

Following the text are two appendixes: verb conjugation charts for all the tenses except the present, and a helpful list of verbs that require a preposition before a following word for specific usages. A complete answer key for all of the exercises follows the appendixes. Also included are contextual glossaries, both Spanish-English and English-Spanish.

*Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* will be helpful to motivated high school and college students, as well as to adults who are either starting fresh or returning to study Spanish. It is an excellent companion to any Spanish language basic text and is a superb review workbook. *Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Verb Tenses* is also a sound reference source for both teachers and students of Spanish.

It is my sincere hope that this book will help those studying Spanish—at any level—to achieve their goals of speaking, writing, and reading this beautiful language with greater competence, confidence, and enjoyment.

Dorothy Richmond



# THE PRESENT TENSE

TENSE	Present
TIME	Refers to both the specific <i>now</i> (at this moment) and the general <i>now</i> (these days, this time period)
KEY PHRASES	“Now,” “today,” “these days”—any word group that expresses the specific or general <i>now</i>
STRUCTURE	Simple tense: VERB BASE + VERB ENDING

The present tense is used to report what is happening and what is true now. The present tense can be pin-point specific or it can cover vast amounts of time. Whether the action expressed is true only at this very moment or includes a truth that sweeps over eons, the key is that—at its core—it is true *now*. Consider four kinds of “present” below.

## The specific present—“right now”

*It is 10:32:44 P.M.*  
*At this very moment I see a shooting star.*  
*I now pronounce you husband and wife.*

## The broader, yet enclosed present

*I work out at the gym four times a week.*  
*Every Friday, Mitch brings doughnuts to the office.*  
*We go to Mexico three or four times a year.*

## The progressive present

*I am eating a bagel.*  
*You are studying.*  
*He is reading a book.*

## The general, ongoing present

*Nearly all countries have some form of organized government.*  
*The president of the United States lives in Washington, D.C.*  
*The pope is the head of the Catholic Church.*

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# Conjugation of regular verbs



## The basics of verbs

As you begin your study of verb tenses in Spanish, it is important to understand the basic terminology relating to verbs and their formation.

**CONJUGATION** The word *conjugation* has two related meanings in Spanish grammar: (1) one of the three groups of verbs classified by the infinitive ending (-**ar**, -**er**, and -**ir** verbs); (2) the set of verb forms consisting of the verb base plus verb endings that correspond to the subject pronouns.

**INFINITIVE** The verb in its pure form—the idea of the verb, without any expression of action. In English, all infinitives include the word “to”: “to sing” “to eat,” “to live.” In Spanish, all infinitives belong to one of three conjugations, which is determined by the infinitive ending: -**ar**, -**er**, or -**ir**. The infinitive is like a hand grenade before you pull the pin—no real action, but a lot of potential.

**INFINITIVE ENDING** The -**ar**, -**er**, or -**ir** ending that identifies the verb conjugation to which the verb belongs, for example, -**ar**: **cantar** (“to sing”), -**er**: **comer** (“to eat”), -**ir**: **vivir** (“to live”).

**VERB BASE** The unique part of the infinitive that distinguishes the meaning of the verb. When the infinitive ending -**ar**, -**er**, or -**ir** is removed, what remains is the verb base. The verb base of **cantar** is **cant-**, the base of **comer** is **com-**, and the base of **vivir** is **viv-**. The verb base is also called the stem or root of the verb.

**VERB ENDING** Specific endings added to the verb base in order to conjugate the verb. The verb endings for -**ar** verbs, for example, are -**o**, -**as**, -**a**, -**amos**, -**áis**, -**an**, and each ending corresponds to a subject pronoun.

**CONJUGATED VERB FORM** The verb form that consists of the verb base and an appropriate verb ending to correspond to the subject of the verb. These conjugated forms express action with reference to the subject, for example, **Mary canta** (“Mary sings”). In this sentence, “sings” is a conjugated verb. When you conjugate a verb, you pull the pin from the hand grenade and release its action.

**REGULAR VERB** A verb whose verb base remains intact, with regular -**ar**, -**er**, or -**ir** endings attached to it when conjugated.

**IRREGULAR VERB** A verb whose verb base does not remain intact, or one that when conjugated does not take regular -**ar**, -**er**, or -**ir** endings.

**SUBJECT** The actor(s) in the sentence. For example, the sentences “Mary sings,” “We eat,” and “I live” have as their subjects “Mary,” “We,” and “I,” respectively.



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# Conjugating verbs

In English, not a lot of conjugation goes on: “I speak,” “you speak,” “he speaks,” “she speaks,” “we speak,” “they speak.” Only the third-person singular makes a change in the present tense of most English verbs, taking on the ending “-s.”

In Spanish, there are six different verb endings for each verb tense, corresponding to the six subject pronoun groups—the singular and plural of first-person, second-person, and third-person subject pronouns. Each conjugated verb form in Spanish indicates who is performing the action (expression of person and number), as well as when the action occurred (verb tense).

## Subject pronouns

In English, there are seven subject pronouns: “I,” “you,” “he,” “she,” “it,” “we,” and “they.” Spanish has the same basic set of subject pronouns, but with additional forms that express gender. In Spanish, “we,” “they,” and the second-person plural form of “you” have both masculine and feminine forms. In addition, there are four words that express “you” in Spanish—singular and plural forms of both a formal and an informal “you.”

### Subject pronouns

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
yo	<i>I</i>	nosotros	<i>we</i> (masc., masc. & fem.)
		nosotras	<i>we</i> (fem.)
tú	<i>you</i> (informal)	vosotros	<i>you</i> (informal, masc., masc. & fem.)
		vosotras	<i>you</i> (informal, fem.)
él	<i>he</i>	ellos	<i>they</i> (masc., masc. & fem.)
ella	<i>she</i>	ellas	<i>they</i> (fem.)
usted	<i>you</i> (formal)	ustedes	<i>you</i> (formal)

It is important to note that the informal plural **vosotros** form is used primarily in Peninsular Spanish (that is, in Spain), while throughout most of Latin America **ustedes** is used in both formal and informal situations. For the most part, the word “it” is an understood subject in Spanish, and thus Spanish has no specific word for “it” as a subject pronoun.

## Principles of conjugation

- 1 To conjugate a verb in Spanish, begin with the infinitive.

EXAMPLE **cantar** (“to sing”)

- 2 Find the verb base, which is what remains when the infinitive ending is removed from the infinitive.

EXAMPLE **cantar** minus **-ar** equals **cant-**, the verb base

- 3 Add the verb ending that corresponds to the subject of the verb directly to the verb base.

EXAMPLE For the subject “I” (**yo**): **cant-** (verb base) + **-o** (verb ending) = **canto** (“I sing”)

# Regular -ar verbs

## Regular -ar endings

yo	-o	nosotros	-amos
		nosotras	-amos
tú	-as	vosotros	-áis
		vosotras	-áis
él	-a	ellos	-an
ella	-a	ellas	-an
usted	-a	ustedes	-an

NOTE Common abbreviations are **Ud.** for **usted**, and **Uds.** for **ustedes**. Both are commonly used in writing and always capitalized.

Below is the fully conjugated verb **hablar**.

### hablar to speak, talk

yo hablo	<i>I speak</i>	nosotros hablamos	<i>we speak</i> (masc., masc. & fem.)
		nosotras hablamos	<i>we speak</i> (fem.)
tú hablas	<i>you speak</i>	vosotros habláis	<i>you all speak</i> (masc., masc. & fem.)
		vosotras habláis	<i>you all speak</i> (fem.)
él habla	<i>he speaks</i>	ellos hablan	<i>they speak</i> (masc., masc. & fem.)
ella habla	<i>she speaks</i>	ellas hablan	<i>they speak</i> (fem.)
Ud. habla	<i>you speak</i>	Uds. hablan	<i>you all speak</i>

Below are several common regular -ar verbs, followed by exercises in which you can practice conjugating the verbs and creating simple sentences.

## VOCABULARIO

<b>amar</b>	to love	<b>hablar</b>	to speak, talk
<b>andar</b>	to walk	<b>llegar</b>	to arrive
<b>bailar</b>	to dance	<b>llevar</b>	to wear, carry
<b>buscar</b>	to look for, search for	<b>mirar</b>	to watch, look at
<b>caminar</b>	to walk	<b>pagar</b>	to pay (for)
<b>cantar</b>	to sing	<b>practicar</b>	to practice
<b>comprar</b>	to buy	<b>preparar</b>	to prepare
<b>entrar (en)</b>	to enter (into)	<b>tocar</b>	to touch, play ( <i>an instrument</i> )
<b>escuchar</b>	to listen (to)	<b>tomar</b>	to take
<b>esperar</b>	to hope, wait (for)	<b>trabajar</b>	to work
<b>estudiar</b>	to study		

NOTE When translating some Spanish verbs, the English equivalent may include a preposition after the verb form, for example, **escuchar** (“to listen to”): **yo escucho la radio** (“I listen to the radio”).

**Traducción** Traduce las frases siguientes.

1. *I sing.* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *You sing.* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *He sings.* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *We sing.* \_\_\_\_\_
5. *They [m.] sing.* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *I pay.* \_\_\_\_\_
7. *We pay for the house.* \_\_\_\_\_
8. *You pay.* \_\_\_\_\_
9. *They [f.] pay.* \_\_\_\_\_
10. *She studies.* \_\_\_\_\_
11. *He studies.* \_\_\_\_\_
12. *I study.* \_\_\_\_\_
13. *We study.* \_\_\_\_\_
14. *You walk.* \_\_\_\_\_
15. *We walk.* \_\_\_\_\_
16. *I work.* \_\_\_\_\_
17. *He works.* \_\_\_\_\_
18. *They work.* \_\_\_\_\_
19. *We work.* \_\_\_\_\_
20. *He dances.* \_\_\_\_\_
21. *I love.* \_\_\_\_\_
22. *You love.* \_\_\_\_\_
23. *She loves.* \_\_\_\_\_
24. *We love.* \_\_\_\_\_
25. *They love.* \_\_\_\_\_
26. *I practice.* \_\_\_\_\_
27. *He practices.* \_\_\_\_\_
28. *They enter.* \_\_\_\_\_
29. *I watch the house.* \_\_\_\_\_
30. *I look at the garden.* \_\_\_\_\_
31. *They watch the car.* \_\_\_\_\_

32. *She listens.* \_\_\_\_\_
33. *They [f.] listen.* \_\_\_\_\_
34. *I listen.* \_\_\_\_\_
35. *He buys the car.* \_\_\_\_\_
36. *I buy the dog.* \_\_\_\_\_
37. *You buy the house.* \_\_\_\_\_
38. *I speak with Miguel.* \_\_\_\_\_
39. *She pays for the books.* \_\_\_\_\_
40. *We study Spanish.* \_\_\_\_\_

### EJERCICIO

**¿Cuál es verdadero o falso para ti? (Which is true or false for you?)**  
*Escribe la respuesta—una V (verdadero) o una F (falso)—en el espacio en blanco.*

1. \_\_\_\_ Yo hablo inglés.
2. \_\_\_\_ Yo trabajo en un banco.
3. \_\_\_\_ Yo estudio español en la escuela.
4. \_\_\_\_ Yo canto muy bien.
5. \_\_\_\_ Yo bailo muy bien.
6. \_\_\_\_ Yo toco el piano.
7. \_\_\_\_ Yo compro la ropa en Sears.
8. \_\_\_\_ Yo miro la televisión en el dormitorio.
9. \_\_\_\_ Yo preparo café en la mañana.
10. \_\_\_\_ Mi amigo/amiga habla español.
11. \_\_\_\_ Mi amigo/amiga trabaja en una tienda.
12. \_\_\_\_ Mi amigo/amiga toca la guitarra.

## Negative sentences

To make an affirmative sentence negative, simply add **no** directly before the verb.

**Yo no hablo** portugués.  
**Nosotros no trabajamos** aquí.  
**Tú no escuchas** la radio.  
**Vosotros no estudiáis** francés.  
**Él no canta** con el coro.  
**Ellos no esperan** el autobús.

***I don't speak*** Portuguese.  
***We don't work*** here.  
***You don't listen to*** the radio.  
***You all don't study*** French.  
***He doesn't sing*** with the choir.  
***They don't wait for*** the bus.

EJERCICIO

¿Cuál es verdadero o falso para ti?

1. \_\_\_\_ Yo no estudio italiano.
2. \_\_\_\_ Yo no toco el trombón.
3. \_\_\_\_ Yo no ando a la escuela.
4. \_\_\_\_ Yo no llevo uniforme a la escuela.
5. \_\_\_\_ Yo no hablo con mis amigos por teléfono.
6. \_\_\_\_ Yo no canto en la iglesia.
7. \_\_\_\_ Mis amigos y yo no estudiamos español.
8. \_\_\_\_ Mis amigos y yo no miramos la televisión.
9. \_\_\_\_ Mi mejor (*best*) amigo/amiga no trabaja en un restaurante.
10. \_\_\_\_ Mi mejor amigo/amiga no toca el violín.

EJERCICIO

1·2

Traducción

VOCABULARIO	el arpa	<i>harp</i>	la mañana	<i>morning</i>
	bien	<i>well</i>	el nombre	<i>name</i>
	especial	<i>special</i>	rápidamente	<i>fast</i>
	la guitarra	<i>guitar</i>	el restaurante	<i>restaurant</i>
	la lección	<i>lesson</i>		

*Hello. My name is Paco. I study Spanish in the morning and I work in a restaurant in the afternoon. My friends speak Spanish. I practice my lessons with my friends. They speak fast. I do not speak fast. My teacher speaks Spanish and English. She also plays the guitar, and sometimes we sing and sometimes we dance the flamenco. I practice the flamenco in my house in the evening with a friend or with my cousins. They dance very well. I wear special shoes when I dance. Sometimes my daughter Daisy plays the harp. She plays very well. I play the piano. I don't play the harp.*

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# Regular -er verbs

To conjugate regular -er verbs, begin with the verb base and add the -er endings.

## Regular -er endings

yo	-o	nosotros	-emos
		nosotras	-emos
tú	-es	vosotros	-éis
		vosotras	-éis
él	-e	ellos	-en
ella	-e	ellas	-en
usted	-e	ustedes	-en

Below is the fully conjugated verb **comer** (“to eat”).

## comer to eat

yo como	nosotros comemos
	nosotras comemos
tú comes	vosotros coméis
	vosotras coméis
él come	ellos comen
ella come	ellas comen
usted come	ustedes comen

Below are several common regular -er verbs, followed by exercises in which you can practice conjugating the verbs and creating simple sentences.

## VOCABULARIO

<b>aprender</b>	to learn	<b>deber</b>	to owe
<b>beber</b>	to drink	<b>leer</b>	to read
<b>comer</b>	to eat	<b>meter (en)</b>	to put (into)
<b>cometer (un error)</b>	to make (a mistake)	<b>poseer</b>	to possess, own
<b>comprender</b>	to understand	<b>romper</b>	to break
<b>correr</b>	to run	<b>temer</b>	to fear, dread
<b>creer</b>	to believe	<b>vender</b>	to sell

## EJERCICIO

### 1.3

#### Traducción

1. I learn. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I drink. \_\_\_\_\_
3. He drinks. \_\_\_\_\_
4. You eat. \_\_\_\_\_
5. We eat. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I understand. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I don't understand. \_\_\_\_\_
8. They understand. \_\_\_\_\_
9. You understand. \_\_\_\_\_
10. You don't understand. \_\_\_\_\_
11. I run. \_\_\_\_\_
12. You run. \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 13. <i>She runs.</i> _____         | 27. <i>I put.</i> _____            |
| 14. <i>They don't run.</i> _____   | 28. <i>You put.</i> _____          |
| 15. <i>We run.</i> _____           | 29. <i>He puts.</i> _____          |
| 16. <i>I believe.</i> _____        | 30. <i>We put.</i> _____           |
| 17. <i>I don't believe.</i> _____  | 31. <i>They [m.] put.</i> _____    |
| 18. <i>He believes.</i> _____      | 32. <i>They [f.] put.</i> _____    |
| 19. <i>We owe.</i> _____           | 33. <i>We break.</i> _____         |
| 20. <i>I read.</i> _____           | 34. <i>They [f.] break.</i> _____  |
| 21. <i>You read.</i> _____         | 35. <i>I break.</i> _____          |
| 22. <i>You don't read.</i> _____   | 36. <i>You sell.</i> _____         |
| 23. <i>He reads.</i> _____         | 37. <i>We sell.</i> _____          |
| 24. <i>She reads.</i> _____        | 38. <i>I don't sell.</i> _____     |
| 25. <i>We read.</i> _____          | 39. <i>She doesn't sell.</i> _____ |
| 26. <i>I make a mistake.</i> _____ | 40. <i>We learn.</i> _____         |

**EJERCICIO**

**¿Cuál es verdadero o falso para ti?** *Mark the following statements either true (V) or false (F). Note that when the subject is understood from the conjugated verb form (for example, **Como** = I eat), the subject pronoun is not required in Spanish.*

1. \_\_\_\_ Como mucho en McDonald's.
2. \_\_\_\_ Bebo leche cada día.
3. \_\_\_\_ No comprendo francés.
4. \_\_\_\_ Leo los libros de Stephen King.
5. \_\_\_\_ Aprendo mucho en mi clase de español.
6. \_\_\_\_ Macy's vende ropa.
7. \_\_\_\_ La biblioteca vende libros.
8. \_\_\_\_ Corro en el maratón de Londres.
9. \_\_\_\_ A veces (*at times*) cometo errores.
10. \_\_\_\_ Normalmente, el gato bebe leche.
11. \_\_\_\_ Creo en fantasmas.
12. \_\_\_\_ Muchas personas en los Estados Unidos comprenden español.

## Traducción

VOCABULARIO	el autor, la autora	<i>author</i>	también	<i>also</i>
	el lápiz	<i>pencil</i>	usualmente	<i>usually</i>
	el regalo	<i>gift</i>	el vaso	<i>(drinking) glass</i>
	la revista	<i>magazine</i>	a veces	<i>sometimes</i>

*I read a lot of books. When I read a book, I usually eat pizza or drink a glass of milk or water. I learn a lot from my books. I also owe a lot of money to the bookstore. My parents read books and magazines, but I read more. The bookstore in my city sells books, magazines, pens, pencils, gifts, and much more. We don't eat in the bookstore, but sometimes we drink coffee there. My family and I own many books. Sometimes an author makes a mistake, but usually not.*

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## Regular -ir verbs

To conjugate regular **-ir** verbs, begin with the verb base and add the **-ir** endings. Note that the endings, listed below, are identical to the endings for **-er** verbs except for the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms.

### Regular -ir endings

yo	<b>-o</b>	nosotros	<b>-imos</b>
		nosotras	<b>-imos</b>
tú	<b>-es</b>	vosotros	<b>-ís</b>
		vosotras	<b>-ís</b>
él	<b>-e</b>	ellos	<b>-en</b>
ella	<b>-e</b>	ellas	<b>-en</b>
usted	<b>-e</b>	ustedes	<b>-en</b>

Below is the fully conjugated verb **vivir** (“to live”).

### **vivir** to live

yo vivo	nosotros vivimos
	nosotras vivimos
tú vives	vosotros vivís
	vosotras vivís
él vive	ellos viven
ella vive	ellas viven
usted vive	ustedes viven



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