

No-Frills Spanish
Express Version
Beginning Spanish
Level 1
Class 1
The Present Tense
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Basic vocabulary

Familiarize yourself with these verbs and expressions prior to listening to class 1.

-AR verbs

bailar	<i>to dance</i>
caminar	<i>to walk</i>
cantar	<i>to sing</i>
cocinar	<i>to cook</i>
escuchar	<i>to listen, to listen to</i>
estudiar	<i>to study</i>
hablar	<i>to speak</i>
manejar	<i>to drive</i>
nadar	<i>to swim</i>
practicar	<i>to practice</i>
trabajar	<i>to work</i>
viajar	<i>to travel</i>

-ER verbs

aprender	<i>to learn</i>
beber	<i>to drink</i>
comer	<i>to eat</i>
correr	<i>to run</i>
leer	<i>to read</i>

-IR verbs

abrir	<i>to open</i>
escribir	<i>to write</i>
vivir	<i>to live</i>

Other useful words and expressions

ayer	<i>yesterday</i>
bien	<i>well</i>
de vez en cuando	<i>once in a while</i>
esta mañana	<i>this morning</i>
esta tarde	<i>this afternoon</i>
esta noche	<i>this evening</i>
frecuentemente	<i>frequently</i>
hoy	<i>today</i>
lento	<i>slow, slowly</i>
luego	<i>later</i>
mañana	<i>tomorrow</i>
mañana a la una	<i>tomorrow at one (o'clock)</i>
mañana a las dos	<i>tomorrow at two (o'clock)</i>
mañana a las tres	<i>tomorrow at three (o'clock)</i>
mañana por la mañana	<i>tomorrow morning</i>
mañana por la tarde	<i>tomorrow afternoon</i>
mañana por la noche	<i>tomorrow evening</i>
más tarde	<i>later</i>
mucho	<i>a lot</i>
muy poco	<i>very little</i>
muy bien	<i>very well</i>
nunca	<i>never</i>
rápido	<i>fast, quickly</i>
raras veces	<i>rarely</i>
siempre	<i>always</i>
todo el día	<i>all day</i>
todos los días	<i>everyday</i>

Conjugating verbs

Subject pronouns

To conjugate a verb simply means changing the infinitive of that verb to another form. Conjugation involves picking
(1) a _____ and
(2) a _____. When you pick a verb tense you are picking a time reference for your verb: present, past or future.

Here are the subjects you can use when conjugating a verb. In grammatical terms these are called *subject pronouns*.

yo *I*

tú *you (informal)*

usted *you (formal)*

él *he*

ella *she*

nosotros *we*

nosotras *we (females)*

vosotros *you plural (informal) in Spain (masc. , masc. & fem.)*

vosotras *you plural (informal) addressing females in Spain*

ustedes *you plural (form. & inform. Latin America; form. in Spain)*

ellos *they (masculine or mixed group)*

ellas *they (group of females only)*

The standard for conjugating verbs is to do so by giving the forms that correspond to the above subjects in the order in which they appear above.

Conjugating “-ar”, “-er”, and “-ir” verbs

Here’s how the conjugation of verbs works.

Each class of infinitive has its own set of endings to conjugate in a particular “tense” or *time* reference. If you want to conjugate a verb you have to pick a subject and then a tense or time reference. To begin, let’s pick the present as our time reference. The following endings are those used to express actions or states in the **present** tense:

	-ar 1st	-er 2nd	-ir 3rd
yo	-o	-o	-o
tú	-as	-es	-es
usted, él, ella	-a	-e	-e
nosotros, nosotras	-amos	-emos	-imos
vosotros, vosotras	-áis	-éis	-ís
ustedes ellos ellas	-an	-en	-en

In order to conjugate the verb all you have to do is remove the “-ar”, “-er” or “-ir” from the infinitive and replace it with the ending that corresponds to the subject pronoun you wish to use.

For example:

1. hablar, remove the “-ar” ending and you are left with:
2. habl (this is referred to as the root of the verb)
3. yo = “-o” ending, If I choose “yo” as my subject then I add “-o” to the root and I then have:
4. yo hablo

Congratulations! You have conjugated your first verb.

Here are some more sample conjugations:

hablar (*to speak*)

yo	hablo	
tú	hablas	
él	habla	(ella or usted (Ud.) also work here)
nosotros	hablamos	(nosotras also works here)
vosotros	habláis	(vosotras also works here)
ellos	hablan	(ellas & ustedes (Uds.) also work here)

comer (*to eat*)

yo	como	
tú	comes	
ella	come	(or Ud. or él)
nosotras	comemos	(or nosotros)
vosotras	coméis	(or vosotros)
ellas	comen	(or ellos & Uds.)

vivir

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

What do verbs conjugated in the present tense mean?

When you conjugate a verb in the present tense each form can have various meanings depending on context. Here is an example:

The following conjugated verb is a complete sentence in Spanish and can mean several things depending on context.

Yo como.

I eat

I do eat

I am eating

I will eat, I shall eat, or I am going to eat when used with a word that refers to the future, i. e. *mañana* (tomorrow).

Thus,

Mañana yo como en un restaurante.

means:

Tomorrow I will eat in a restaurant.

Here are more examples. Can you give the four meanings for each sentence?

Yo estudio.

Ella camina.

Nosotros cantamos.

Ellos viven.

What are the four meanings for each of these sentences?

Yo canto mucho.

Yo bailo mucho.

Yo cocino mucho.

Yo aprendo mucho.

Ella camina mucho.

Ella ayuda mucho.

Ella baila mucho.

Nosotros cantamos mucho.

Nosotros aprendemos mucho.

Nosotros cocinamos mucho.

Making a question out of a statement.

If you have a statement like

Ella habla español.

She speaks Spanish.

You can convert this into a question by switching the order of the subject and the verb:

¿Habla ella español?

So for every statement you can make just switch the order of the subject and the verb and you have a question.

Ellos bailan.

They dance.

¿Bailan ellos?

Do they dance? Lit. "Dance they?"

Usted habla español.

You speak Spanish.

¿Habla usted español?

Do you speak Spanish?

Congratulations again! You have now learned all you need to know to produce hundreds of your own original sentences in Spanish.

Now the *fun* part: producing your own sentences in Spanish. Say goodbye to canned phrases!

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Production Exercises

As you do this exercise cover the answers with a blank sheet of paper as you go down the list. When you have finished writing your answer in the blank provided, then uncover the answer and check your work.

Exercise 1. Conjugate the verb 'caminar'.

usted (caminar)

Usted camina.

You walk.

You do walk.

You are walking.

You will walk.

tú (caminar)

Tú caminas.

You walk.

You do walk.

You are walking.

You will walk.

yo (caminar)

Yo camino.

I walk.

I do walk.

I am walking.

I will walk.

ellas (caminar)

Ellas caminan.

They walk.
They do walk.
They are walking.
They will walk.

nosotros (caminar)

Nosotros caminamos.

We walk.
We do walk.
We are walking.
We will walk.

él (caminar)

Él camina.

He walks.
He does walk.
He is walking.
He will walk.

vosotros (caminar)

Vosotros camináis.

You walk.
You do walk.
You are walking.
You will walk.

ustedes (caminar)

Ustedes caminan.

You walk.

You do walk.

You are walking.

You will walk.

ellos / ellas (caminar)

Ellos caminan.

They walk.

Ellas caminan.

They do walk.

They are walking.

They will walk.

Exercise 2. Now try with the verb 'comer'.

usted (comer)

Usted come.

You eat.
You do eat.
You are eating.
You will eat.

tú (comer)

Tú comes.

You eat.

yo (comer)

Yo como.

I eat.

ellas (comer)

Ellas comen.

They eat.

nosotros (comer)

Nosotros comemos. We eat.

él (comer)

Él come.

He eats.

vosotros (comer)

Vosotros coméis.

You eat.

ella (comer)

Ella come.

She eats.

ustedes (comer)

Ustedes comen.

You eat.

tú y yo (comer)

Tú y yo comemos.

You and I eat.

Exercise 3. Now try with the verb 'vivir'.

usted (vivir)

Usted vive.

You live.
You do live.
You are living.
You will live.

tú (vivir)

Tú vives.

You live.

yo (vivir)

Yo vivo.

I live.

ellas (vivir)

Ellas viven.

They live.

nosotros (vivir)

Nosotros vivimos.

We live.

él (vivir)

Él vive.

He lives.

vosotros (vivir)

Vosotros vivís.

You live.

Juan (vivir)

Juan vive.

Juan lives.

ella (vivir)

Ella vive.

She lives.

ustedes (vivir)

Ustedes viven.

You live.

Exercise 4. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the indicated verb.

1. Yo _____ todo el día. (trabajar)
2. Mañana yo _____ todo el día. (trabajar)
3. Ella _____ en San Antonio. (vivir)
4. Ustedes _____ muy bien. (cantar)
5. Tú _____ mucho. (estudiar)
6. Ellos _____ todos los días. (practicar)
7. Usted _____ muy bien. (cocinar)
8. Nosotros _____ mucho. (nadar)
9. Tú _____ rápido. (aprender)
10. Pedro _____ lento. (manejar)
11. Ellos _____ mucho. (comer)
12. Yo _____ de vez en cuando. (leer)
13. Ellas _____ mañana a la una. (practicar)
14. ¿ _____ tú? (escuchar)
15. Ella no _____ mucho. (hablar)