

Spanish Verbs FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Cecie Kraynak



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About the Author

While some people get revved up at car races and others ride the wild waves of the stock market, Cecie Kraynak gets her jollies traveling to Spanish-speaking countries, chatting it up with complete strangers, and haggling with the local merchants.

Cecie inherited her love of Spanish language and culture from her mother, Jo Anne Howard, also a Spanish major, who cultivated Cecie's innate interest and encouraged her to travel and study abroad. From the heartland of Crawfordsville, Indiana, Cecie first set out to study at the University of the Americas in Cholula, Mexico, and later spent her junior year abroad at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Spanish and secondary education in 1980 from Purdue University, and also received her Master's degree in Spanish literature from Purdue. During her grad school years, Cecie taught Spanish to undergraduates and served as the graduate assistant for Purdue's summer study program in Mexico City.

After graduating in 1983, Cecie began what was to become a 20-year career teaching Spanish to junior high and high school students. She continues to teach and travel and has served as a consultant on several Spanish learning guides, including *Teach Yourself Spanish in 24 Hours* (MacMillan) and *Spanish for Healthcare Professionals* (Barron's).

Dedication

To Joe, without whom this book would never have made it to press; to my mother, who shared her love of Spanish with me in the first place; and to my high school Spanish teacher, Marilyn Britton, who gave me such a fantastic foundation in Spanish grammar and usage.

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Introduction

Verbs seem simple enough, right? They're action words. They describe what's happening, what happened, or what will happen. In practice, however, they become a little more complicated. They change depending on the time the action occurred, the being or number of beings performing the action, the likelihood that an action or condition can occur, and whether the action is a statement, question, or command.

In your native language, you automatically select the correct verb form without thinking twice about it, but when you're picking up a new language, you need to figure out how to *conjugate* the different verb types so that they agree with the subject of the sentence — I; you (singular); he, she, or it; we; you (plural); or they — and express the action in the right tense — past, present, or future, just to name a few. I'd name them all right here, but Spanish has a total of 14 tenses. And if that isn't enough to drive you batty, some Spanish verb stems even change their spellings.

Yep, Spanish verbs are pretty much out to get you. Fortunately, *Spanish Verbs For Dummies* is here to help you survive the onslaught and make sense of the confusing rules and regulations and to drill you on the most common exceptions. Each chapter is packed with examples, conjugation charts, and plenty of exercises to drive the point home.

This book is your opportunity to prove to yourself that you've mastered Spanish verbs and can use them in a sentence. With *Spanish Verbs For Dummies*, a little practice reading conjugation charts, and a pencil or pen, you're well-prepared to tackle even the most irregular verbs in the Spanish language.

About This Book

Spanish Verbs For Dummies is a refresher course, reference book, and workbook all rolled into one and seasoned with just a dash of humor. Each chapter addresses a tense by showing you how to form it (in Spanish, of course), illustrates how to use the tense in context, and then tests your mettle with exercises that help you determine whether you've mastered the lesson.

Most of the exercises you meet along the way are true/false questions or actual translations. I could've thrown in some multiple choice or matching exercises, but in Spanish, you typically find out very little from such activities, so I decided to stick with something a little more challenging.

One nice thing about this workbook and other *For Dummies* books is that you can choose to work all the way through the book from Chapter 1 to the very end, or you can skip around however you like. If you've already mastered a particular tense, for example, you don't have to spend time reviewing it and scribbling answers in the book. That way, you can devote more time to the conjugations that are most perplexing. Dive in wherever you want, and if you need to swim back to shore, that's fine, too.

Conventions Used in This Book

I used several conventions in this book to present the information in a consistent format. As you work through the book, you may bump into the following items:

- ✓ **Conjugation boxes:** As you begin to use this book, you will no doubt notice that I chose a rather conventional method to introduce the different verb conjugations. I use what I refer to as the *conjugation box*, which looks like this:

pedir (e-i) = to ask for	
yo pido	nosotros/as pedimos
tú pides	vosotros/as pedís
él, ella pide Ud.	ellos/as piden Uds.

This handy little tool acts like a mental billboard. It displays the **Spanish verb**, its English meaning, and then conjugates the verb, presenting the three singular conjugations in the left column and the three plural conjugations in the right column.

- ✓ **Vocabulary chart:** Vocabulary charts provide a quick rundown of common words or expressions typically providing the **Spanish word** in the left column with its English equivalent in the right column. In some cases, the charts contain additional columns to illustrate different forms, such as a present participle.
- ✓ **Instructions for practice activities:** I include instructions for each set of practice activities. The instructions are intended to be short and sweet, so you can quickly proceed to the task at hand.
- ✓ **Answer keys:** At the end of each chapter is an Answer Key that provides the correct answers to all practice activities within the chapter. In some cases where you answer **cierto** (true) or **falso** (false), I simply provide a translation of the statements in question, because technically no answer is right or wrong.

You're likely to spot the following abbreviations, as well. Don't let them throw you off course.

- ✓ sing. (singular)
- ✓ pl. (plural)
- ✓ m. or masc. (masculine)
- ✓ f. or fem. (feminine)

Each chapter of this book begins with a concise explanation of the topic at hand — typically a specific Spanish verb tense conjugation, just in case you need a brief refresher. However, this book assumes that you've already had *some* exposure to the topic, either in a class or in another book, such as *Spanish For Dummies* by Susan Wald and the Language Experts at Berlitz (Wiley Publishing).

After the brief review of the verb tense and a few pertinent examples, each chapter follows up with practice opportunities to reinforce what you discovered.

Foolish Assumptions

When writing this book, I made the following foolish assumptions about you:

- ✓ You already have a background in Spanish, have learned all of the verb tenses, and are looking for an opportunity to review and practice that knowledge. If you're a rank beginner, *Spanish For Dummies* is a great place to start.
- ✓ You've taken at least two years of Spanish or the equivalent.
- ✓ You're boning up on Spanish verbs for your own edification or your son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, niece, nephew, or special someone is taking their second or third year of Spanish, and you want to help, but you haven't looked at a verb conjugation for years.
- ✓ You love Spanish (like me!), and you actually enjoy conjugating verbs. . . . Okay, so that may be pushing it just a little.

How This Book is Organized

All books in the *For Dummies* series are divided into parts so that you can zero in on your topic of preference and quickly skip anything that looks boring or inconsequential. The chapters in *Spanish Verbs For Dummies* fall into the following seven parts.

Unlike most other Spanish verb books on the market, which group lessons according to tense, *Spanish Verbs For Dummies* starts with the easier verb forms and progresses to the more complex. I think this approach makes the topic a little less intimidating and much more accessible for most beginning learners, but feel free to skip around. Use the following part descriptions as your road map.

Part I: Presenting the Present Tense

The present is the culmination of the past and the springboard to the future, making it the perfect place to begin any discussion of Spanish verbs. This part introduces Spanish verbs, provides plenty of practice with regular verbs in the present tense, shows you how to phrase commands and questions, and then leaves you coming and going with the verbs **venir** and **ir**. In this part, I promise not to dig up anything from the past or mention concerns about the future.

Part II: Exploring Some Exceptional Exceptions

Every language rule has its exceptions, and the rules covering Spanish verbs are no exceptions. The chapters in this part help you deal with Spanish verbs that don't know how to behave. You figure out how to express your likes and dislikes with the verb **gustar**, differentiate between being and *being* with the verbs **ser** and **estar**, cope with the peculiarities of stem-changing and spelling-changing verbs, and deal with a handful of other Spanish verb oddities.

Part III: Working Out with the Remaining Simple Tenses

Although everyone lives in the present, you constantly look back at the past and forward to the future, so you need a way to describe actions that happen at different times. The chapters in this part show you how to form the six remaining simple tenses: preterit, imperfect, future, conditional, subjunctive (mood), and imperfect subjunctive. This part focuses on regular verbs, so you don't have to worry about the nasty exceptions. Those are covered in Part IV.

Part IV: Coping with Irregular Verbs

Mastering the rules and regulations that govern the conjugation of Spanish verbs can take you only so far. Eventually, you need to find out how to conjugate the irregular verbs — the verbs that break the rules. The chapters in this part show you how to conjugate the most common irregular verbs in the seven simple tenses and provide plenty of practice activities to help tattoo the conjugation charts onto your gray matter.

Part V: Getting Help with the Helping Verb Haber

When it comes to Spanish verbs, even Spanish verbs can use a little help. Through the use of the verb **haber** you can transform the seven simple tenses into seven compound tenses to describe actions that generally happened *before* other actions. Sound confusing? Well, you're right; it's confusing. But the chapters in this part make the concept crystal clear and provide hands-on examples and exercises that can make it seem like second nature.

Part VI: Part of Tens

No *For Dummies* book would be complete without a Part of Tens to provide you with some quick tips and a couple handfuls of useful tidbits you can immediately put to good use. *Spanish Verbs for Dummies* provides three chapters of 10 items each — 30 in all! Here you pick up 10 Spanish idioms, 10 verbs for holidays and other special occasions, and the 10 most frequently asked questions in Spanish (and their replies). I was going to include 10 Spanish curses, but my editor censored the chapter.

Part VII: Appendixes

Throughout this book, you may come across exercises that include some unfamiliar words, so I stuck a few appendixes at the back of the book for quick reference. As you can quickly see by scanning them, they are in no way intended as comprehensive references. If you want a thorough reference, you can purchase any of several Spanish dictionaries or specialized Spanish verb references. I included a brief English/Spanish and Spanish/English glossary to help you with the vocabulary that you may not know and a list of common irregular verb conjugations.

Icons Used in This Book

Every *For Dummies* book has a generous collection of notes, tips, warnings, and other essential and entertaining insights spattered across its pages, and this book is no different. To prevent you from inadvertently overlooking some particularly valuable piece of advice, I flagged each of these golden nuggets of knowledge with one of the following icons.



Example icons pop up wherever it's best for me to *show* you, rather than *tell* you how to form or use a particular verb conjugation. Before you begin an exercise, check out the Example icons to see how it's done.



Tip icons appear to cue you in on a time-saving suggestion or shortcut. If I know an easier way to perform a particular task or remember a tough-to-grasp concept or conjugation, I share it with you by way of these tips.



Remember icons are there to poke you in the ribs so you make sure to commit to memory an important tidbit of information. The points marked with these icons can usually make your life a little easier.



Practice icons flag the beginning of a practice exercise. In some cases, you may want to skip ahead to the practice exercise to test your knowledge *before* you read my explanation of it. If you can complete the exercise correctly on your own, you may not need the brief refresher course. If you get fewer than eight out of ten answers correct, though, you may need to review.

Where to Go from Here

So much for the preliminaries. Now it's time to dive right in to the sea of Spanish verbs and immerse yourself in its 14 tenses and a never-ending stream of conjugation charts, rules, and exceptions.

The most important advice I can give you before you start your journey is to take a fearless, confident approach when checking out any topic, especially a second or third or fourth language. You didn't learn your first language without making countless mistakes, and you certainly won't learn your next language without a few trips and stumbles. The only people who don't make it are the students who quit. Stick with it, make bold mistakes, and if you're committed to communicating with someone in Spanish, you'll eventually get it.

And don't forget — if you haven't already read *Spanish For Dummies*, be sure to pick up a copy and start practicing some conversational Spanish. *Spanish For Dummies* shows you the bare-bones basics and then provides chapter after chapter showing you how to use your Spanish in the real Spanish-speaking world.

Part I

Presenting the Present Tense

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Honey, can you look in the phrase book and tell me how 'scrambled' is pronounced in Spanish?"

In this part . . .

The present is a pivotal point — the culmination of the past and the springboard to the future. As such, the present is a good place to start when studying verbs in any language and a great place to begin brushing up on the basics.

In this part, I introduce you to Spanish verbs, the subject pronouns that commonly accompany them, and the four main verb types. You get to warm up with some regular verbs in the present tense, modify actions with adverbs, build sentences, and figure out how to speak in the passive voice (for those rare occasions when you want to remove yourself from what you have to say). You also encounter some special constructions including commands, yes/no questions, and interrogatives.

Chapter 1

Springing into Action with Spanish Verbs

In This Chapter

- ▶ Dissecting and classifying Spanish verbs
- ▶ Getting subject pronouns involved in the action
- ▶ Identifying the four main verb types

Before you immerse yourself in any heavy-duty verb conjugations, take some time to brush up on the basics so you can effectively communicate using the various verb types. You need to understand

- ✓ What a verb is
- ✓ What the basic verb types are
- ✓ What sorts of subject pronouns you can use to describe the being performing the action
- ✓ What a conjugation chart is

This chapter eases you into the subject of Spanish verbs by defining verbs and showing you how to classify them. You discover how to identify the parts of a verb, the subject pronouns that identify the person or thing performing the action, and the four different types of verbs you may meet on the street. The exercises in this chapter give you a solid framework on which to build your newfound skills.

Recognizing the Four Main Verb Types

Spanish verbs hang out in their own cliques, and each group has its own way of doing things. If you're going to have any success dealing with Spanish verbs, you'd better be able to identify which of the four following groups a verb belongs to:

- ✓ **Regular verbs:** These verbs are easy to get along with because they follow the regular conjugation rules for **-ar**, **-er**, and **-ir** verbs. You'll like these guys (see the next section and Chapter 2).
- ✓ **Stem-changing verbs:** These verbs morph depending on how you use them in a sentence. You'll encounter three types of stem-changing verbs, classified according to their stem changes: *e* to *i*, *e* to *ie*, and *o* to *ue* (see Chapter 8).
- ✓ **Spelling-change verbs:** Consonant spelling changes occur in some of the conjugated forms of these verbs. The changes enable the verbs to comply with pronunciation rules of the particular letters. The affected consonants are *c*, *g*, and *z* (see Chapter 8)

- ✓ **Reflexive verbs:** Whenever you do something to yourself, you use a reflexive verb to express the fact that the action is performed or “reflected back” on you, the subject of the sentence. Reflexive verbs are accompanied by reflexive pronouns, like *herself* or *themselves*; for example, “Barry poked *himself* in the eye.” The reflexive pronoun has to agree with the subject of the sentence and follow the placement rules for all *object pronouns*, the pronouns that receive the action (see Chapter 3).

Getting the Lowdown on Regular Spanish Verbs

Verbs are action words. They’re the movers and the shakers of the world. They describe the action that is taking place, has taken place, or will take place. They command, they question, they conjecture, and they describe states of being. No sentence is complete without one.

A raw verb is expressed as an *infinitive*. In English, that means the *to* form — “to eat,” for example. Nobody’s doing the eating, and the eating is not being done at any specific time or in any specific way, and nobody’s really eating anything. An infinitive is an action, pure and simple.

In Spanish, you have no *to* to rely on. Spanish expresses the infinitive form of its verbs through verb endings: **-ar**, **-er**, and **-ir**. For example, **hablar** (to speak), **comer** (to eat), and **vivir** (to live). All Spanish verbs use one of these three endings. When you chop off the **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir** endings, the remaining letters make up the *verb stem*.



Below are some regular Spanish verbs. Determine each verb’s stem and classify it as an **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir** verb, as I show you in the following example:

hablar = *habl*, - *ar*

1. vivir = _____, - _____
2. comer = _____, - _____
3. abrir = _____, - _____
4. presentar = _____, - _____
5. mirar = _____, - _____
6. astar = _____, - _____
7. escribir = _____, - _____
8. leer = _____, - _____
9. romper = _____, - _____
10. suprimir = _____, - _____

Meeting Subject Pronouns Face to Face

I, we, you, he, she, it, and they are the English subject pronouns. They tell the verb who or what is performing the action, and they dictate the form of the verb you must use. In English, he *shops*, but they *shop*.



Spanish uses nine subject pronouns: (**yo, tú, usted, él, ella, nosotros or nosotras, vosotros or vosotras, ustedes, and ellos or ellas**). The subject pronoun determines the conjugated form of the verb. Just like in English, the Spanish infinitive form of the verb means that no one is doing the action, but the conjugated form signifies that some individual or group is performing the action. Whenever you conjugate a verb, you set up a chart, like the one that follows, and fill in each subject pronoun's accompanying verb form.

Spanish Subject Pronouns	
yo = I nosotras = we (female group)	nosotros = we (mixed or male group)
tú = you (familiar) vosotras = you (familiar, female group)	vosotros you (familiar, mixed or male group)
él = he ella = she usted (Ud.) = you (formal)	ellos = they (mixed or male group) ellas = female group ustedes (Uds.) you (formal)



Although **usted** is usually abbreviated to **Ud.** when written, you still pronounce it **usted**. Likewise, although **ustedes** is usually abbreviated to **Uds.** when written, you still pronounce it **ustedes**.

The **vosotros** form (*you* plural, familiar) is used almost exclusively in Spain. In its place, other countries use the **Uds.** form of the verb. Also, keep in mind that in English, only one *you* is used for all four of the Spanish *you*'s (although sometimes for the plural *you*, you may say "you guys" if you're from the North or "y'all" if you're from the South — so in that way English-speakers sort of create a plural *you*).



Select the correct Spanish subject pronoun to replace the following names or nouns. (Unless specified, the familiar *you* is the singular form.) Here's an example:

Jim = *él*

11. my friends (mixed or male group) = _____
12. the students (mixed or male group) = _____
13. she = _____
14. you (familiar) = _____
15. my parents = _____
16. my best friend (male) = _____
17. Bob and Tom = _____
18. her dad = _____
19. Susan = _____
20. George and I = _____

Answer Key

Below are some regular Spanish verbs. Determine each verb's stem and classify it as an **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir** verb.

1. vivir = *viv*, - *ir*
2. comer = *com*, - *er*
3. abrir = *abr*, - *ir*
4. presentar = *present*, - *ar*
5. mirar = *mir*, - *ar*
6. gastar = *gast*, - *ar*
7. escribir = *escrib*, - *ir*
8. leer = *le*, - *er*
9. romper = *romp*, - *er*
10. suprimir = *suprim*, - *ir*

Select the correct Spanish subject pronoun to replace the following names or nouns.
(Unless specified, the familiar *you* is the singular form.)

11. my friends (mixed or male group) = *ellos*
12. the students (mixed or male group) = *ellos*
13. she = *ella*
14. you (familiar) = *tú*
15. my parents = *ellos*
16. my best friend (male) = *él*
17. Bob and Tom = *ellos*
18. her dad = *él*
19. Susan = *ella*
20. George and I = *nosotros*