

Spanish Verbs – Past Tense

El pretérito

Regular

- The preterit tense is used to express events that have occurred in the past. It generally corresponds to the simple past tense in English.
- Steps to conjugate regular -AR, -ER, or -IR verbs in the preterit tense:
 - Identify the infinitive form of the verb.
 - Drop the -AR, -ER, or -IR ending from the infinitive form of the verb.
 - Add the appropriate ending.

-AR verbs			
yo	-é	nosotros	-amos
tú	-aste	vosotros	-asteis
él/ella/ usted	-ó	ellos/ellas/ ustedes	-aron

comprar – *to buy*

yo compré – <i>I bought</i>	nosotros compramos – <i>We bought</i>
tú compraste – <i>You bought</i>	vosotros comprasteis – <i>You (pl.) bought</i>
él/ella/usted compró – <i>He/she/you (formal) bought</i>	ellos/ellas/ustedes compraron – <i>They/you (pl.) bought</i>

- ER and -IR verbs have the same conjugation endings in the preterit tense.

-ER/-IR verbs			
yo	-í	nosotros	-imos
tú	-iste	vosotros	-isteis
él/ella/ usted	-ió	ellos/ellas/ ustedes	-ieron

comer – *to eat*

yo comí – <i>I ate</i>	nosotros comimos – <i>We ate</i>
tú comiste – <i>You ate</i>	vosotros comisteis – <i>You ate (pl.)</i>
él/ella/usted comió – <i>He/she/you (formal) ate</i>	ellos/ellas/ustedes comieron – <i>They/you (pl.) ate</i>

escribir – *to write*

yo escribí – <i>I wrote</i>	nosotros escribimos – <i>We wrote</i>
tú escribiste – <i>You wrote</i>	vosotros escribisteis – <i>You (pl.) wrote</i>
él/ella/usted escribió – <i>He/she/you (formal) wrote</i>	ellos/ellas/ustedes escribieron – <i>They/you (pl.) wrote</i>

Usos del pretérito

1. The preterit usually refers to a single completed action or state in the past.

- Ayer fuimos al cine.**

We went to the movies yesterday.

- Mi padre leyó el periódico esta mañana.**

My father read the newspaper this morning.

2. The preterit can be specific and refer to the beginning or the ending of an action.

- La fiesta comenzó a las siete y media pero no llegamos hasta las ocho.**

The party began at seven thirty but we didn't arrive until eight.

3. The only time the preterit is used to express a repeated action in the past is when the action is considered a single complete unit.

- El mes pasado escribí cinco cartas a mi amigo Esteban.**

Last month I wrote five letters to my friend Esteban.

- La semana pasada mi hermana fue al gimnasio tres veces.**

Last week my sister went to the gym three times.

4. The preterit is also used to describe a chain of events in the past.

- Llegué a casa, abrí la puerta, entré en la casa, fui a la sala y me senté en el sofá.**

I arrived home, opened the door, entered the house, went to the living room and sat on the sofa.

Irregular

- ↗ In the preterit tense some very common verbs have an irregular stem.
 - All of these verbs, whether -AR, -ER or -IR, use the same set of conjugation endings.

Special endings for irregular stem verbs in the preterit			
yo	-e	nosotros	-imos
tú	-iste	vosotros	-isteis
él/ella/ usted	-o	ellos/ellas/ ustedes	-ieron

- ♦ In order to form irregular stem verbs in the preterit, the irregular stem must be memorized.
 - The special endings for the verbs are added directly to the irregular stem of the verb.

Verb	Irregular Stem	Conjugations
andar – to go	anduv-	anduve, anduviste, anduvo, anduvimos, anduvisteis, anduvieron
estar – to be	estuv-	estuve, estuviste, estuvo, estuvimos, estuvisteis, estuvieron
tener – to have	tuv-	tuve, tuviste, tuvo, tuvimos, tuvisteis, tuvieron
caber – to fit	cup-	cupe, cupiste, cupo, cupimos, cupisteis, cupieron
saber – to know	sup-	supe, supiste, supo, supimos, supisteis, supieron
querer – to want or to love	quis-	quise, quisiste, quiso, quisimos, quisisteis, quisieron
poner – to put	pus-	puse, pusiste, puso, pusimos, pusisteis, pusieron
*hacer – to make or to do	hic-	hice, huiste, hizo, hicimos, hicisteis, hicieron
poder – to be able to	pud-	pude, pudiste, pudo, pudimos, pudisteis, pudieron
venir – to come	vin-	vine, viniste, vino, vinimos, vinisteis, vinieron
**traer – to bring	traj-	traje, trajiste, trajo, trajimos, trajisteis, trajeron
**decir – to say	dij-	dije, dijiste, dijo, dijimos, dijisteis, dijeron

*In the third person singular form of the verb *hacer*, the **c** changes to a **z**.

In the third person plural forms of **traer and **decir** the **i** is dropped from the **ieron** ending.

↗ In the preterit two of the most important verbs, *ser* and *ir*, are irregular.

- The conjugations of these verbs are exactly the **same**.

ser – to be	
fui	fuimos
fuiste	fuisteis
fue	fueron

ir – to go	
fui	fuimos
fuiste	fuisteis
fue	fueron

- *El examen de español fue muy difícil.*

The Spanish exam was really difficult.

- *Ayer fui al supermercado.*

I went to the supermarket yesterday.

↗ The verbs *dar* and *ver* are both irregular in the preterit tense and conjugate in a similar way.

dar – to give	
di	dimos
diste	disteis
dio	dieron

ver – to see	
vi	vimos
viste	visteis
vio	vieron

- *Ayer le di un regalo a Juanita.*

Yesterday I gave a gift to Juanita.

- *Después de clase, los estudiantes vieron su maestro en la cafetería.*

After class, the students saw their teacher in the cafeteria.