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Go here for a great website on Spanish verbs.

Verb Tenses:

Present. Examples of the present tense would be like... "I am, you are, he is, we go, the person over there says".....etc...

Preterit. Describes something that happened one time in the past. A past event that has already ended would qualify for the preterit tense. Also, an event that interrupts the background of something qualifies for the preterit tense. "while I was showering (imperfect), the phone rang (preterit)

Imperfect. Describes things you used to do, conditions in the past, actions that you did habitually, an action that hasn't ended yet, or the background of an event. I use the acronym CHUBB (Condition, Habitual Action, Undefined Action, Background, and Belief) to help me remember which tense to use.

Future-You can do future tenses in one of two ways: By forming a sentence using IR+A+ infinitive, or by conjugating the verb in the future tense.

The future tense is conjugated by doing the following: take the infinitive of the verb and add an é, ás, á, amos, or an to the ending, depending on the subject. For example, "yo iré tu irás el irá, nosotros iremos, or ellas iran."

So, if you want to say "I will go to the park" you would say "voy a ir al parque" or you can say "iré al parque." Note that you can not say "yo voy a iré." When you use the ir+a formula, you can only use the infinitive form of the verb afterwards.

Present Subjunctive. Expresses what you want another person to do, a possibility, or an emotion. I use the acronym DOPE (Desire, Obligation, Possibility, Emotion) to help be remember which tense to use. Sometimes I use the acronym OPENED (Obligation, Possibility, Emotion, Negation, Enthusiasm, Doubt) to help me remember when to use the subjunctive. More detail later.

Past Subjunctive. Expresses what you wanted another person to do, a possibility, or an emotion you had in the past. I use the acronym DOPE (Desire, Obligation, Possibility, Emotion) to help be remember which tense to use. Sometimes I use the acronym OPENED (Obligation, Possibility, Emotion, Negation, Enthusiasm, Doubt) to help me remember when to use the subjunctive. More detail later.

Present Progressive. Describes An Action in progress. I am walking, you are drinking, we are driving, etc.

Conditional. used to say "what WOULD happen."

PluPerfect. Used to describe events that you have done prior to another past action. "I had completed my assignment."

PluPerfect Subjunctive. Used to say "what you would have done if something else had happened. "Si yo hubiera tenido dinero, yo habria viajado a Mexico." (If I had had money, I would have gone to Mexico.)

** My old boss doesn't like this tense. He prefers to say "si yo tuviera dinero, yo viajaria."

Present Perfect. Used to describe events you have been doing on up to or including the present. "I have completed my assignment..."

Here are some examples of sentences using the various forms

Present: Yo soy de los Estados Unidos

Preterite: Yo Fui al parque una vez la semana pasada.

Imperfect: Cuando yo era niño, yo tocaba el violin.

Present subjunctive: Yo quiero que tú no bebas el licor. Me alegro de que tú no bebas el licor, dudo que tú bebas el licor, es posible que tú bebas el licor, no es extraño que tú bebas el licor, es imperativo que tú no bebas el licor.

Past subjunctive (also called imperfect subjunctive:) Yo queria que ella almorzara conmigo. Me alegro que no bebieras el licor. When using the phrase 'como si' you must always use the past subjunctive.

Present progressive: Yo estoy caminando por la calle para reunirse con mis amigos.

Conditional: Yo habria tomado el licor.

Pluperfect: Yo habia caminado por la calle ayer.

Present Perfect: Yo ya he hecho mis quehaceres para mi madre.

How to conjugate yo, tu, el/ella/usted, nosotros, ellos/ustedes:

Depending on the verb (AR, IR, ER)

Present tense:

AR-O, AS, A, AMOS, AN for example Hablo, Hablas, Habla, Hablamos, Hablan
ER/IR-O, ES, E, EMOS, EN for example Como, Comes, Come, Comemos, Comen

Preterit tense:

AR--E, ASTE, O, AMOS, ARON for example hablé, hablaste, habló, hablamos, hablaron.
ER/IR-I, ISTE, IO, IMOS, IERON. For example, comí, comíste, comió, comimos, comieron.

Imperfect:

AR-ABA, ABAS, ABA, ABAMOS, ABAN for example hablaba, hablabas, hablaba, hablabamos, hablaban,
ER/IR-IA, IAS, IA, IAMOS, IAN for example comía, comías, comía, comíamos, comían.

Present Subjunctive:

If the verb is an AR verb, take the root (I think of it as the "yo" conjugation) and change the ending to an E. Then follow the pattern for conjugating as usual, but keep the ending starting with E. If the verb is an ER/IR verb, take the root and change the ending to an A. for example, Hablar is--Hable, hables, hable, hablemos, hablen, And Comer is--Coma, comas, coma, comamos, coman. You do not necessarily need the word "QUE" in the sentence in order to make it a subjunctive. For example, if you tell a group of people to stand up, you would say "Levantense!" Or if you are expressing a desire to someone else, you could say "no me mires" or "como quieras"

Past Subjunctive:

If the verb is an AR verb, take the root and change the ending to ARA, ARAS, ARA, ARAMOS, ARAN. For example, Hablara, Hablaras, Hablara, Hablaramos, Hablaran. If the verb is an ER/IR verb, take the root and change the ending to IERA, IERAS, IERA, IERAMOS, IERAN for example Comiera, comieras, comiera, comieramos, comieran.

Present Progressive

If the verb is AR than the ending changes to ANDO. If the verb is ER/IR, the ending changes to IENDO. For example, estoy hablando or estas comiendo.

Conditional-Simply add 'ia, ias, ia, iamos, ian.' To the end of the infinitive verb. For example, Yo comeria means "I would eat" while ellas comerian means "they would eat." Be careful, there are some verbs that conjugate differently, such as "Haber" which is "Habria" not "Haberia"

Pluperfect

-this is the Spanish way of saying "I/you/she/we/they had done" something. If the verb is AR then it is conjugated like the following: Subject + habia/habias/habia/habiamos/habian and the ending changes to ADO, if the verb is ER/IR the conjugation is the same but the ending changes to IDO. For example, "yo habia hablado" means "I had spoken" while "nosotros habiamos comido" means "we had eaten"

Present Perfect

this is the Spanish way of saying "I/you/she/we/they have done" something. If the verb is AR then it is conjugated like the following: Subject + he/has/ha/hemos/han and the ending changes to ADO, if the verb is ER/IR the conjugation is the same but the ending changes to IDO. For example "yo habia vuelto" means "I had come back" while "nosotros habiamos asistido a una reunion" means "we had attended a meeting."

*you can only say the singular "ido/ado" even if more than one person did the action. For example, "Raul y Julia han sido amantes" not "sidos." The explanation given to me by my old professor was that you don't say "we have beenS" so you don't say "sidos"

Other endings for words-

-Mente, means -ly for example "facilmente" means "easily" while "facil" means "easy"

-Ado,-Ido, means "-ed" for example "cerrado" means "closed" while "cerrar" is "to close"

False cognates:

Words that sound like their English equivalents, but aren't. Two important ones are the following:

Embarazar-To impregnate. Never say "estoy embarazada porque la pluma exploto." You would use the verb "Avergonzar" which means "to embarrass"

Excitar-To excite (sexually) Unless you want someone to know that you are sexually excited, never say "estoy excitada." Say instead "me entusiasma que" "This thing excites me/I am enthusiastic because of this thing."

Constipado/a-To have a cold. Sounds like "constipated" but it isn't.

Cagar-Sounds like "to cage" like you would do to a villan, but actually means "to shit."

The verbs encerrar or encarcelar could be used for “to cage/lock up”
Asistir- to attend. This sounds like assist, but is attend.
Atender- to assist. This sounds like attend, but is assist.

The verb “To become”

There are 4 ways to say “to become” They are all used differently, depending on the situation.
Ponerse-Use to describe an involuntary, temporary change, like a change in health. Me puse nervioso cuando algo paso.

Volverse-Use to describe an involuntary, permanent change, like a change in mental state. Me volvi loco cuando me contrate schizophrenia.

Hacerse-Use to describe something that happened as a result of lots of work. Elizabeth se hizo una enfermera.

Llegar a Ser-Use to describe something that happens after a long period of time. Llegué a ser un santo despues de 30 anos de rezar.

*One interesting thing about “llegar a” is that it implies a long period of time, regardless of the verb that follows it.

Word Gender

As you know, all words have gender and number. The masculine words are el/los and end with o, and the feminine words are la/las and end with a. In general, Spanish is a sexist language, as evidenced by the words that end with a letter not A or O being masculine (usually) However, there are exceptions:

El dia

El problema

La mano

La Nariz

Comparisons:

More than--Mas que, “tengo mas dias sin licor que un recién llegado”

Less than-- menos que, “tengo menos dias sin licor que mi padrino”

as much as-Tan como, “tan alto como Magic Johnson,” tanto como “Tengo tanto dinero como el Banco de America” OR tantos como “tengo tantos dias como su padrino.”

More useful words:

Algo-Something

Alguien-Someone

Nada-Nothing

Nadie-Nothing

Este-This

Esta-This (feminine)

Ese-That

Esa-That (feminine)

Aquel-That (one) “quiero aquel gato en la ventana”

Aquella-That (one) feminine “aquella noche, nos casamos”

Esto-This (used when you don't name the object, as in “que es esto?”)

Eso-That (used when you don't name the object, as in "que es eso?")

Double Negatives

In Spanish, double negatives are used to imply what we in English only need one negative to say:

No hay nadie en el banco,

No hay nada en el mundo que mi computadora no haga por mi.

**notice the subjunctive because it is a negation, even though it is a fact that my computer does everything. Tricky!!

Para/Por

Para is used for the following situations:

Purpose: Estoy para ir.

Destination: El tren para Madrid sale a las seis

Deadline: Este examen es para mañana

Recipient: Este sueter es para Jana.

All others are por.

*an interesting thing is saying "Thanks for doing stuff" in Spanish. It uses "por" but then you use the infinitive of the following verb rather than the progressive "ando/iendo" like we would do in English. (The English equivalent of ING in things like...thanks for beING, sayING)

Gracias Por ser, NOT Gracias por siendo.

Gracias Por traducir, NOT Gracias por traduciendo.

Etc..

Reflexive verbs:

Things you do to yourself need a reflexive verb. For example:

Me peino el pelo.

Me bano.

Me ducho. (shower)

Me lavo las manos.

***Note, you can not use possessive pronouns when you are referring to a body part after a reflexive verb. Which is why I cant say, "me peino mis unas." Even though "I paint^my nails." In Spanish it translates to "I paint myself, the nails."

Mine or Yours?

Es el mio/la mia (it is mine)

Es la tuya/el tuyo (it is yours)

Es el suyo/la suya (it is his/hers)

Usted:

Always use usted with strangers, bosses, elders. I usually make sure to use "usted" in my sentences, so even if I say something like "como estas usted?" by mistake, they would see that I was at least trying to be polite J

Other Random factoids:

With the word 'SI' you can either use the imperfect subjunctive or the present tense, but never the present subjunctive.

Only women are allowed to say "este hombre es malo." If I say that, It's like me saying in a flirting way "oh, hes such a bad bad boy." Guys would say "el es un hombre de buen humor, buen voluntad, etc" Same goes for "este hombre es bueno." If a guy said that, he would be seen as homosexual.

Only men are allowed to call someone "buey" apparently. A woman friend of mine likes to be a rebel and call men "bueys" and watch them get all freaked out. J

Accent marks for PC machines:

Hold down the ALT key and type the following sequences on your 10-key number pad:

0225-á

0233-é

0237-í

0243-ó

0250-ú

0241-ñ

0161-¡

0191-¿