



CHAPTER 11

THE PRETERIT TENSE

Chapter Check-In

- ☐ Conjugating regular verbs in the preterit tense
- ☐ Predicting spelling changes in the *yo* form
- ☐ Understanding stem changing verbs in the preterit
- ☐ Learning the patterns of irregular preterit verbs
- ☐ Using the preterit tense in appropriate situations

There are two past tenses in Spanish: the preterit and the imperfect. This chapter provides a clear explanation of the preterit tense. In addition to the regular patterns of verb forms in the preterit, there are many irregular preterit forms and some spelling changes to learn. To differentiate between the two Spanish past tenses, you learn the situations where the preterit tense is appropriate. You will also learn a list of special vocabulary words called indicators that help you know when to use the preterit tense.

Regular Verbs in the Preterit Tense

To conjugate a regular verb in the preterit tense, remove the infinitive ending and add the appropriate endings. For an *-ar* verb that is regular in the preterit, use the endings from Table 11-1. (Not all verbs that are regular in the present tense are regular in the preterit. Preterit irregulars will be presented later in this chapter.)

Table 11-1 Preterit Endings for Regular *-ar* Verbs

<i>Singular pronoun</i>	<i>Ending</i>	<i>Plural pronoun</i>	<i>Ending</i>
<i>yo</i>	<i>-é</i>	<i>nosotros/nosotras</i>	<i>-amos</i>
<i>tú</i>	<i>-aste</i>	<i>vosotros/vosotras</i>	<i>-asteis</i>

Singular pronoun	Ending	Plural pronoun	Ending
<i>él</i>	–ó	<i>ellos</i>	–aron
<i>ella</i>	–ó	<i>ellas</i>	–aron
<i>usted</i>	–ó	<i>ustedes</i>	–aron

The endings are a little confusing because the *él*, *ella*, and *usted* forms end in –ó in the preterit tense, but the *yo* form ends in –o (no accent) in the present tense. Be sure to notice the accent mark on the preterit forms because that is the only difference. The *yo* form of all regular preterit verbs always has an accent mark as well. Don't forget to pronounce these words with the stress on the last syllable.

Also notice that regular –ar verbs will have the same *nosotros* form in the preterit as they do in the present tense. The only way you will know whether an –ar verb in the *nosotros* form is in the preterit or present tense is the context of the sentence. Later in this chapter you will learn specific vocabulary words that serve as preterit indicators. If you see one of these words in the sentence, you will know the verb is conjugated in the preterit tense.

Hablar (to speak) is a regular verb in the preterit, so it will serve as a good example. Table 11-2 is a conjugation chart for the verb *hablar* in the preterit tense. Since the preterit is a past tense, these forms translate to the English past tense form “spoke.”

Table 11-2 Preterit Forms of the Regular –ar Verb *Hablar*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo hablé</i> (I spoke)	<i>nosotros/nosotras hablamos</i> (we spoke)
<i>tú hablaste</i> (you [familiar] spoke)	<i>vosotros/vosotras hablasteis</i> (you [familiar] spoke)
<i>él habló</i> (he spoke)	<i>ellos hablaron</i> (they spoke)
<i>ella habló</i> (she spoke)	<i>ellas hablaron</i> (they spoke)
<i>usted habló</i> (you [formal] spoke)	<i>ustedes hablaron</i> (they [formal] spoke)

Table 11-3 shows that the endings for –er verbs and –ir verbs are the same for regular verbs in the preterit tense.

Table 11-3 Preterit Endings for Regular *-er* and *-ir* Verbs

Singular pronoun	Ending	Plural pronoun	Ending
<i>yo</i>	<i>-í</i>	<i>nosotros/nosotras</i>	<i>-imos</i>
<i>tú</i>	<i>-iste</i>	<i>vosotros/vosotras</i>	<i>-isteis</i>
<i>él</i>	<i>-ió</i>	<i>ellos</i>	<i>-ieron</i>
<i>ella</i>	<i>-ió</i>	<i>ellas</i>	<i>-ieron</i>
<i>usted</i>	<i>-ió</i>	<i>ustedes</i>	<i>-ieron</i>

Notice that the *nosotros/nosotras* form of an *-ir* verb looks exactly the same in both the present and preterit tenses, but an *-er* verb has a different *nosotros* form in the preterit. The *nosotros/nosotras* form in the present tense is the only form where *-er* and *-ir* verbs are different. Since all of the endings are completely the same for *-er* and *-ir* verbs in the preterit, the *nosotros/nosotras* forms will be tricky for a while.

Comer (to eat) is an *-er* verb that has regular preterit endings. Look carefully at the preterit verb forms in Table 11-4, which are translated to the English past tense form “ate.”

Table 11-4 Preterit Forms of the Regular *-er* Verb *Comer*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo comí</i> (I ate)	<i>nosotros/nosotras comimos</i> (we ate)
<i>tú comiste</i> (you [informal] ate)	<i>vosotros/vosotras comisteis</i> (you [informal] ate)
<i>él comió</i> (he ate)	<i>ellos comieron</i> (they ate)
<i>ella comió</i> (she ate)	<i>ellas comieron</i> (they ate)
<i>usted comió</i> (you [formal] ate)	<i>ustedes comieron</i> (you [formal] ate)

The verb *escribir* (to write) is a regular *-ir* verb in the preterit. Table 11-5, which shows the English past tense form of *wrote*, is a good example of regular *-ir* verb forms in the preterit tense.

Table 11-5 Preterit Forms of the Regular *-ir* Verb *Escribir*

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>yo escribí</i> (I wrote)	<i>nosotros/nosotras escribimos</i> (we wrote)
<i>tú escribiste</i> (you [informal] wrote)	<i>vosotros/vosotras escribisteis</i> (you [informal] wrote)
<i>él escribió</i> (he wrote)	<i>ellos escribieron</i> (they wrote)
<i>ella escribió</i> (she wrote)	<i>ellas escribieron</i> (they wrote)
<i>usted escribió</i> (you [formal] wrote)	<i>ustedes escribieron</i> (you [formal] wrote)

Different *Yo* Forms in the Preterit Tense

In Chapter 1, I discuss the spelling and pronunciation rules of Spanish. These rules are extremely consistent, and some times a conjugated form of the verb must change its spelling to maintain the correct pronunciation. This happens in the *yo* form of specific verbs in the preterit tense, because adding *-í* or *-é* to the base of the verb messes up the pronunciation of the word. The spelling change is meant to maintain the same basic sound as the infinitive.

Verbs that end in *-gar*

Remember that the consonant *g* is pronounced hard (like the *g* in good) or soft (like the *g* in gym) depending on the vowel that follows the *g*. If a Spanish verb ends in *-gar*, the infinitive is pronounced with a hard *g* sound. However, when you remove the *-ar* infinitive ending and add the *yo* preterit ending, the hard *g* is suddenly followed by *-é* and would be pronounced as a soft *g*. To maintain the hard *g* sound of the infinitive, the letter *u* is added between the *g* and *é*. This creates the hard *g* sound that resembles the infinitive pronunciation.

Whenever you see a verb ending in *-gué*, you can assume the *u* is only there to produce the correct hard *g* sound, and you don't pronounce the *u*. The ending sounds like the English synonym for happy—"gay."

To simplify matters, remember that a verb that ends in *-gar* will change *g-* to *gu-* in the *yo* form of the preterit. Table 11-6 is the preterit conjugation chart for the verb *pagar* (to pay) which serves as a good example.

Table 11-6 The Preterit Forms of the Verb *Pagar*

Singular	Plural
yo pagué (<i>I paid</i>)	nosotros/nosotras pagamos (<i>we paid</i>)
tú pagaste (you [informal] paid)	vosotros/vosotras pagasteis (you [informal] paid)
él pagó (he paid)	ellos pagaron (they paid)
ella pagó (she paid)	ellas pagaron (they paid)
usted pagó (you [formal] paid)	ustedes pagaron (you [formal] paid)

The following verbs are all regular *-ar* verbs in the preterit tense, and since they all end in *-gar*, you must change the *g* to *gu* in the *yo* form and then use the regular *yo* ending. All other preterit forms of these verbs are completely regular forms for a regular *-ar* verb in the preterit tense.

<i>agregar</i> (to add)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = agregué
<i>apagar</i> (to extinguish, to turn off)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = apagué
<i>cargar</i> (to load)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = cargué
<i>encargar</i> (to put in charge, to entrust)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = encargué
<i>entregar</i> (to hand in, to hand over)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = entregué
<i>jugar</i> (to play a sport)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = jugué
<i>llegar</i> (to arrive)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = llegué
<i>obligar</i> (to compel, to oblige)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = obligué
<i>pegar</i> (to beat, to glue)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = pegué

Verbs that end in *-car*

The Spanish letter *c* is a lot like the letter *g*. It has a hard sound (like the English letter *k*) and a soft sound (like the English letter *s*). The *c* is pronounced soft when it's followed by *-i* or *-e*. The *c* is pronounced hard when it's followed by *-o*, *-a*, or *-u*. Any verb that ends in *-car* will have the hard *c* sound in its infinitive form. This must be maintained in all the conjugated forms, but the preterit *yo* ending causes problems. When you add *-é* to the base of a verb ending in *-car*, the *c* becomes a soft sound, which is unacceptable. So you must change the letter *c* to *qu* only in the *yo* preterit form. The resulting ending (*-qué*) is pronounced like the English name *Kay*. The combination of letters *-qu* is always pronounced like the English letter *k*, and you never say the *u* sound. It is never pronounced like

the English word *queen*. Table 11-7 is the preterit conjugation chart for the verb *tocar* (to play an instrument, to touch), which is an example for all regular *-ar* verbs in the preterit that end in *-car*. A list of other verbs that end in *-car* follows Table 11-7 and will be conjugated like *tocar*.

Table 11-7 The Preterit Forms of the Verb *Tocar*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo toqué</i> (I played)	<i>nosotros/nosotras tocamos</i> (we played)
<i>tú tocaste</i> (you [informal] played)	<i>vosotros/vosotras tocasteis</i> (you [informal] played)
<i>él tocó</i> (he played)	<i>ellos tocaron</i> (they played)
<i>ella tocó</i> (she played)	<i>ellas tocaron</i> (they played)
<i>usted tocó</i> (you [formal] played)	<i>ustedes tocaron</i> (you [formal] played)

To simplify the rule: if a verb ends in *-car*, change *c* to *qu* in the *yo* form of the preterit.

Some common verbs that end in *-car*:

<i>aplicar</i> (to apply)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>apliqué</i>
<i>buscar</i> (to seek, to look for)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>busqué</i>
<i>colocar</i> (to place, to put)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>coloqué</i>
<i>comunicar</i> (to communicate)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>comuniqué</i>
<i>dedicar</i> (to dedicate)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>dediqué</i>
<i>educar</i> (to educate)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>eduqué</i>
<i>explicar</i> (to explain)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>expliqué</i>
<i>fabricar</i> (to make, to manufacture)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>fabriqué</i>
<i>indicar</i> (to indicate)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>indiqué</i>
<i>marcar</i> (to mark)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>marqué</i>
<i>masticar</i> (to chew)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>mastiqué</i>
<i>pescar</i> (to fish)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>pesqué</i>
<i>publicar</i> (to publish)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>publiqué</i>
<i>sacar</i> (to take out)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>saqué</i>
<i>significar</i> (to mean)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>signifiqué</i>

Verbs that end in *-zar*

Chapter 1 discusses a simple rule about the letter *z* in Spanish—whenever *z* is followed by *e*, it changes to *c*. This rule becomes important in the preterit tense because the verbs that end in *-zar* will change spelling in the *yo* form. Since the *yo* form has the ending *-é*, the *z* must change to *c*. Look at the preterit conjugation of the verb *cruzar* (to cross) in Table 11-8 as an example.

Table 11-8 The Preterit Forms of the Verb *Cruzar*

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>yo crucé</i> (I crossed)	<i>nosotros/nosotras cruzamos</i> (we crossed)
<i>tú cruzaste</i> (you [informal] crossed)	<i>vosotros/vosotras cruzasteis</i> (you [informal] crossed)
<i>él cruzó</i> (he crossed)	<i>ellos cruzaron</i> (they crossed)
<i>ella cruzó</i> (she crossed)	<i>ellas cruzaron</i> (they crossed)
<i>usted cruzó</i> (you [formal] crossed)	<i>ustedes cruzaron</i> (you [formal] crossed)

Common verbs that end in *-zar*:

<i>abrazar</i> (to embrace, to hug)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>abracé</i>
<i>alcanzar</i> (to reach)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>alcancé</i>
<i>amenazar</i> (to threaten)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>amenacé</i>
<i>avanzar</i> (to advance)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>avancé</i>
<i>gozar</i> (to enjoy)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>gocé</i>
<i>lanzar</i> (to throw)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>lancé</i>
<i>realizar</i> (to fulfill, to realize [one's dream])	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>realicé</i>
<i>rezar</i> (to pray)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>recé</i>
<i>tropezar</i> (to stumble, to trip)	preterit <i>yo</i> form = <i>tropecé</i>

I to y

When the stem of the verb ends in a vowel, some spelling changes are necessary in certain forms in the preterit. This special spelling change only happens in the preterit tense and is not considered a stem changer. If there are three vowels in a row and the middle one is the letter *i*, you must change the *i* to *y*. The preterit endings for *-er* and *-ir* verbs will cause the

i>y spelling change to happen in the third person forms (*él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas,* and *ustedes*) and an accent will be added to any other letter *i* in the base of the verb in the conjugation chart. Table 11-9 is a conjugation chart of the verb *caer* (to fall). It serves as an example so look carefully at the accent marks. Consider the *él* form of the verb. If you simply added the ending *–ió* to the base of the verb *ca-*, the result would be *caió*. Since there are three vowels and the middle one is the letter *i*, it changes to *y* in the chart. Notice this also happens to the third person plural form of the verb.

Table 11-9 Preterit Forms of the Verb *Caer*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo caí</i> (I fell)	<i>nosotros/nosotras caímos</i> (we fell)
<i>tú caíste</i> (you [informal] fell)	<i>vosotros/vosotras caísteis</i> (you [informal] fell)
<i>él cayó</i> (he fell)	<i>ellos cayeron</i> (they fell)
<i>ella cayó</i> (she fell)	<i>ellas cayeron</i> (they fell)
<i>usted cayó</i> (you [formal] fell)	<i>ustedes cayeron</i> (you [formal] fell)

Other verbs that have a base ending in a vowel will be conjugated like *caer*. For example:

<i>creer</i>	to believe
<i>leer</i>	to read
<i>oír</i>	to hear
<i>poseer</i>	to possess

There are many verbs that end in *–uir*. Following are a few common *–uir* verbs, but remember to use the “*i* to *y*” change in the third person forms of any verb that ends in *–uir*.

<i>construir</i>	to construct, to build
<i>contribuir</i>	to contribute
<i>distribuir</i>	to distribute
<i>huir</i>	to flee, to run away
<i>incluir</i>	to include

Table 11-10 shows the conjugation for the verb *construir*.

Table 11-10 Preterit Forms of the Verb *Construir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo construí</i> (I built)	<i>nosotros/nosotras construimos</i> (we built)
<i>tú construiste</i> (you [informal] built)	<i>vosotros/vosotras construisteis</i> (you [informal] built)
<i>él construyó</i> (he built)	<i>ellos construyeron</i> (they built)
<i>ella construyó</i> (she built)	<i>ellas construyeron</i> (they built)
<i>usted construyó</i> (you [formal] built)	<i>ustedes construyeron</i> (you [formal] built)

Stem Changers in the Preterit Tense

Chapter 4 discusses stem-changing verbs in the present tense. If a verb is a stem changer in the present tense it will not stem change in the preterit unless it is an *-ir* verb. No *-ar* or *-er* verbs will stem change in the preterit.

Stem-changing verbs ending in *-ir*

An *-ir* verb that stem changes in the present tense will stem change in the preterit, but only in the third person forms (*él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas, and ustedes*). Any *-ir* verb that stem changed *o>ue* will stem change *o>u* in the preterit. Table 11-11 demonstrates the preterit patterns for an *-ir* verb that stem changes *o>ue* in the present tense.

Table 11-11 The Preterit Forms of *Dormir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo dormí</i> (I slept)	<i>nosotros/nosotras dormimos</i> (we slept)
<i>tú dormiste</i> (you [informal] slept)	<i>vosotros/vosotras dormisteis</i> (you [informal] slept)
<i>él durmió</i> (he slept)	<i>ellos durmieron</i> (they slept)
<i>ella durmió</i> (she slept)	<i>ellas durmieron</i> (they slept)
<i>usted durmió</i> (you [formal] slept)	<i>ustedes durmieron</i> (you [formal] slept)

There are several *-ir* verbs that stem change *e>ie* in the present tense. Any *-ir* verb that stem changes *e>ie* in the present tense, will stem change *e>i* in the preterit, but only in the third person forms (*él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas,*

ustedes). Table 11-12, which conjugates the verb *mentir* (to tell a lie), exemplifies the conjugation chart for all the verbs in the list that follows.

Table 11-12 The Preterit Forms of *Mentir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo mentí</i> (I told a lie)	<i>nosotros/nosotras mentimos</i> (we told a lie)
<i>tú mentiste</i> (you [informal] told a lie)	<i>vosotros/vosotras mentisteis</i> (you [informal] told a lie)
<i>él mintió</i> (he told a lie)	<i>ellos mintieron</i> (they told a lie)
<i>ella mintió</i> (she told a lie)	<i>ellas mintieron</i> (they told a lie)
<i>usted mintió</i> (you [formal] told a lie)	<i>ustedes mintieron</i> (you [formal] told a lie)

Common verbs conjugated like *mentir* in the preterit tense:

<i>convertir</i>	to convert
<i>divertirse</i>	to enjoy oneself
<i>hervir</i>	to boil
<i>sentir</i>	to feel, to regret
<i>preferir</i>	to prefer

If an *-ir* verb stem changes *e>i* in the present tense, it will also stem change *e>i* in the preterit, but only in the third person forms (*él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas, ustedes*). Table 11-13, which conjugates the verb *pedir* (to request), demonstrates the patterns of the preterit conjugations of the verbs that follow.

Table 11-13 The Preterit Forms of *Pedir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo pedí</i> (I requested)	<i>nosotros/nosotras pedimos</i> (we requested)
<i>tú pediste</i> (you [informal] requested)	<i>vosotros/vosotras pedisteis</i> (you [informal] requested)
<i>él pidió</i> (he requested)	<i>ellos pidieron</i> (they requested)
<i>ella pidió</i> (she requested)	<i>ellas pidieron</i> (they requested)
<i>usted pidió</i> (you [formal] requested)	<i>ustedes pidieron</i> (you [formal] requested)

Common verbs conjugated like *pedir* in the preterit tense:

<i>impedir</i>	to impede, to prevent
<i>medir</i>	to measure
<i>reñir</i>	to quarrel, to scold
<i>repetir</i>	to repeat
<i>seguir</i>	to follow

Irregulars in the Preterit Tense

Some verbs are truly irregular in the present tense because the stem form of the verb morphs into something unrecognizable. Do not think of these verbs as stem changers because they do not follow the patterns that stem-changing verbs follow. These verbs also do not use the normal preterit endings, but there is a consistent set of endings for all of these irregular verbs.

Some of the most commonly used verbs in the language are irregular in the preterit. This should motivate you to learn these irregular forms. Table 11-15 is a special group of endings that are used for all of the irregular verbs in the following sections. Notice that there are no written accent marks on any of the forms.

Table 11-15 Endings For Irregular Preterit Verbs

<i>Singular pronoun</i>	<i>Ending</i>	<i>Plural pronoun</i>	<i>Ending</i>
<i>yo</i>	<i>-e</i>	<i>nosotros/nosotras</i>	<i>-imos</i>
<i>tú</i>	<i>-iste</i>	<i>vosotros/vosotras</i>	<i>-isteis</i>
<i>él</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>ellos</i>	<i>-ieron</i>
<i>ella</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>ellas</i>	<i>-ieron</i>
<i>usted</i>	<i>-o</i>	<i>ustedes</i>	<i>-ieron</i>

U-stem verbs

Several of the irregular verbs have a *u* as part of the stem form of the verb in the preterit even though these verbs do not have a *u* in their infinitive form. The irregular stem that is listed next to the verbs in the following chart is used for every form of the preterit conjugation. All of the following verbs take the endings from Table 11-15 to form the preterit conjugation chart.

<i>andar</i> (to walk)	changes to	<i>anduv-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>estar</i> (to be)	changes to	<i>estuv-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>tener</i> (to have)	changes to	<i>tuv-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>poner</i> (to put)	changes to	<i>pus-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>poder</i> (to be able)	changes to	<i>pud-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>saber</i> (to know)	changes to	<i>sup-</i>	in all preterit forms

The verb *tener* (to have) is extremely common, so memorize the forms of *tener* in the preterit (see Table 11-16) to help you remember the patterns of all of the *u* stem verbs in the previous chart.

Table 11-16 Preterit Forms of *Tener*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo tuve</i> (I had)	<i>nosotros/nosotras tuvimos</i> (we had)
<i>tú tuviste</i> (you [informal] had)	<i>vosotros/vosotras tuvisteis</i> (you [informal] had)
<i>él tuvo</i> (he had)	<i>ellos tuvieron</i> (they had)
<i>ella tuvo</i> (she had)	<i>ellas tuvieron</i> (they had)
<i>usted tuvo</i> (you [formal] had)	<i>ustedes tuvieron</i> (you [formal] had)

I-stem verbs

Certain verbs have an irregular stem with the letter *i* in it. It is extremely important to remember that these verbs are not considered stem changers in the preterit tense although some of them may have been stem changers in the present tense. Just like the *u*-stem verbs, *i*-stem verbs do not follow the rules of a stem changing verb in the preterit and do not use the normal endings a stem changing verb uses. The verbs below have a completely different stem that is used for every form of the preterit. The endings used for these irregular verbs are different than the regular endings used by a real “stem-changing” verb. Because they are irregular, they use the irregular endings from Table 11-15.

<i>hacer</i> (to make, to do)	changes to	<i>hic-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>querer</i> (to want, to love)	changes to	<i>quis-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>venir</i> (to come)	changes to	<i>vin-</i>	in all preterit forms

The *i*-stem verbs from the previous chart will be conjugated like *venir* (see Table 11-17) in the preterit tense.

Table 11-17 Preterit Forms of *Venir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo vine</i> (I came)	<i>nosotros/nosotras vinimos</i> (we came)
<i>tú viniste</i> (you [informal] came)	<i>vosotros/vosotras vinisteis</i> (you [informal] came)
<i>él vino</i> (he came)	<i>ellos vinieron</i> (they came)
<i>ella vino</i> (she came)	<i>ellas vinieron</i> (they came)
<i>usted vino</i> (you [formal] came)	<i>ustedes vinieron</i> (you [formal] came)

Even though *hacer* uses the same endings as *venir* in the preterit, there's one spelling change you have to make on the *él*, *ella*, and *usted* forms of *hacer* to preserve the soft *c* sound. As you can see in Table 11-18, you must change the *c* to a *z* in front of the *-o* ending.

Table 11-18 Preterit Forms of *Hacer*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo hice</i> (I made)	<i>nosotros/nosotras hicimos</i> (we made)
<i>tú hiciste</i> (you [informal] made)	<i>vosotros/vosotras hicisteis</i> (you [informal] made)
<i>él hizo</i> (he made)	<i>ellos hicieron</i> (they made)
<i>ella hizo</i> (she made)	<i>ellas hicieron</i> (they made)
<i>usted hizo</i> (you [formal] made)	<i>ustedes hicieron</i> (you [formal] made)

J-stem verbs

The irregular verbs that end in the letter *j* use the same endings as the other irregular preterit verbs with one exception. Notice in Table 11-19 that the third person plural ending of the verb *decir* is *-eron*. Any time the irregular stem ends in *j*, the *ellos*, *ellas*, and *ustedes* endings will lose the letter *i* and become *-jeron*. All the verbs that follow will be conjugated like *decir*.

<i>decir</i> (to say, to tell)	changes to	<i>dij-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>traer</i> (to bring)	changes to	<i>traj-</i>	in all preterit forms

<i>conducir</i> (to drive, to lead)	changes to	<i>conduj-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>producir</i> (to produce)	changes to	<i>produj-</i>	in all preterit forms
<i>traducir</i> (to translate)	changes to	<i>traduj-</i>	in all preterit forms

Table 11-19 Preterit Forms of *Decir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo dije</i> (I said)	<i>nosotros/nosotras dijimos</i> (we said)
<i>tú dijiste</i> (you [informal] said)	<i>vosotros/vosotras dijisteis</i> (you [informal] said)
<i>él dijo</i> (he said)	<i>ellos dijeron</i> (they said)
<i>ella dijo</i> (she said)	<i>ellas dijeron</i> (they said)
<i>usted dijo</i> (you [formal] said)	<i>ustedes dijeron</i> (you [formal] said)

Really irregular preterit verbs

The really irregular verbs in the preterit follow no patterns and must simply be memorized. The verbs *ser* (to be) and *ir* (to go) happen to have the exact same forms in the preterit. You will be able to tell which verb is being used in the context of a sentence because any form of *ir* will always be followed by the preposition *a*. Table 11-20 is worth learning because it has the preterit forms of two of the most common verbs in the language.

Table 11-20 Preterit Forms of the Verbs *Ser* and *Ir*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo fui</i> (I was; I went)	<i>nosotros/nosotras fuimos</i> (we were; we went)
<i>tú fuiste</i> (you [informal] were; you went)	<i>vosotros/vosotras fuisteis</i> (you [informal] were; you went)
<i>él fue</i> (he was; he went)	<i>ellos fueron</i> (they were; they went)
<i>ella fue</i> (she was; she went)	<i>ellas fueron</i> (they were; they went)
<i>usted fue</i> (you [formal] were; you went)	<i>ustedes fueron</i> (you [formal] were; you went)

Dar (to give) and *ver* (to see) are two verbs that are commonly learned together in the preterit tense because their forms are similar. *Ver* uses the regular endings for a normal *-er* verb in the preterit and is only irregular because it does not have accent marks. What makes *dar* strange is that it is conjugated like *ver* even though it is an *-ar* verb. Notice that there are no accents on any of the forms in Table 11-21 (*ver*) or Table 11-22 (*dar*), and that the forms of *dar* are not the normal forms for an *-ar* verb.

Table 11-21 Preterit Forms of *Ver*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo vi</i> (I saw)	<i>nosotros/nosotras vimos</i> (we saw)
<i>tú viste</i> (you [informal] saw)	<i>vosotros/vosotras visteis</i> (you [informal] saw)
<i>él vio</i> (he saw)	<i>ellos vieron</i> (they saw)
<i>ella vio</i> (she saw)	<i>ellas vieron</i> (they saw)
<i>usted vio</i> (you [formal] saw)	<i>ustedes vieron</i> (you [formal] saw)

Table 11-22 Preterit Forms of *Dar*

Singular	Plural
<i>yo di</i> (I gave)	<i>nosotros/nosotras dimos</i> (we gave)
<i>tú diste</i> (you [informal] gave)	<i>vosotros/vosotras disteis</i> (you [informal] gave)
<i>él dio</i> (he gave)	<i>ellos dieron</i> (they gave)
<i>ella dio</i> (she gave)	<i>ellas dieron</i> (they gave)
<i>usted dio</i> (you [formal] gave)	<i>ustedes dieron</i> (you [formal] gave)

Preterit Tense Situations

Now that you have mastered conjugating verbs in the preterit tense, you must learn when the preterit tense is appropriate.

There are certain situations in the past that will be stated using the preterit tense. Usually preterit situations have something to do with completed actions that can be placed at a specific point in time. The acronym **SAFE** will help you remember the types of situations in the past that require you to use the preterit tense. In the English examples below, the verbs in bold

print would be conjugated in the preterit in Spanish because of the way they are used in the sentence.

Use the preterit tense of the verb when the sentence indicates:

- Specific instance or number of instances

Le llamé tres veces. Él me llamó ayer.

He **called** him **three** times. He **called** me **yesterday**.

- Action that interrupts ongoing events

Ella llamó mientras yo trabajaba.

She **called** while I was working.

- Focus on beginning or ending of action

Llovió a las seis y media en punto.

It **rained** at exactly 6:30.

- Enclosed amount of time (line segment)

Los árabes controlaron mucho de España por más de 700 años.

The Arabs **controlled** much of Spain for over 700 years.

Preterit Tense Indicators

While understanding the types of situations that require the preterit is helpful, it is even more useful to learn the specific vocabulary words and expressions that indicate that the preterit is probably the appropriate tense to use in the sentence. The following are considered **preterit indicators** because each will require the verb that follows it to be in the preterit tense. This list includes words that automatically require the past tense, and you can be certain the preterit is the correct past tense to use if the verb is used in front of or following one of these expressions.

<i>anoche</i>	last night
<i>ayer</i>	yesterday
<i>el pasado</i>	last
<i>el lunes pasado</i>	last Monday
<i>el mes pasado</i>	last month
<i>el año pasado</i>	last year
<i>el fin de semana pasado</i>	last weekend

<i>el verano (otoño, invierno) pasado</i>	last summer (fall, winter)
<i>la primavera pasada</i>	last spring
<i>la semana pasada</i>	last week
<i>de repente</i>	suddenly

There are other words that serve as preterit indicators only when the sentence is definitely in the past. Something else in the context of the sentence or a previous sentence must indicate that the sentence is in the past, otherwise these indicators may be used with other tenses. However, if you know you need a past tense and you're not sure which of the two, look for one of the following words to indicate that the preterit is the appropriate past tense.

If there's a blank in front of the indicator, the verb you will be conjugating in the preterit will be in front of, rather than after, the indicator. A line in front of the phrase indicates that the verb that precedes the phrase will be in the preterit.

<i>esta mañana</i>	this morning
<i>esta tarde</i>	this afternoon
<i>esa mañana</i>	that morning
<i>esa tarde</i>	that afternoon
<u> </u> <i>a tiempo</i>	on time
<u> </u> <i>de nuevo</i>	again
<i>por fin</i>	finally
<i>en fin</i>	finally
<u> </u> <i>por primera vez</i>	for the first time
<u> </u> <i>una vez</i>	once

Chapter Checkout

Using the verb in parentheses, write the correct form of the verb in the preterit tense for each of the following sentences. Don't forget to consider the subject and use the appropriate form. Each sentence has a preterit indicator. See if you can identify it.

1. *Anoche yo _____ con mi esposo. (bailar)*
2. *Ayer Marta y su padre _____ a la fiesta. (venir)*
3. *El mes pasado Juan y Carla _____ a México. (conducir)*
4. *Nosotros _____ a la clase el lunes pasado. (ir)*
5. *Yo _____ al tenis ayer. (jugar)*

Answers: 1. *bailé (anoche)* 2. *vinieron (ayer)* 3. *condujeron (el mes pasado)*
4. *fuimos (el lunes pasado)* 5. *jugué (ayer)*