

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)

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. gastar = _____, - _____
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 Subject Pronouns

| | |
|--|--|
| yo = I | nosotros = we (mixed or male group) nosotras = we (female group) |
| tú = you (familiar) | vosotros you (familiar, mixed or male group) vosotras = you (familiar, female 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*