

QuickStart Spanish Conjugation Guide

How to Use and Remember The 10 Most Common Verbs in Spoken Spanish

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The Purpose of this Guide

This guide is designed to help you identify, memorize, and understand how to use the 10 verbs most commonly used in spoken Spanish. Although this guide will focus on the Spanish spoken in Mexico (I'm a native speaker) you can use it to speak Spanish all over the world.

Why these verbs?

Let's imagine you want to learn how to be a bartender quickly to get a job around town. Would you start by learning hundreds of drinks from around the world? or would you find out which are the most popular drinks around your area, and learn those first? Probably the second option, right? Like this, you'd get the job and learn more as you go. The idea behind this list of verbs is similar. Find out what's useful and used most often, so you can focus on that first to improve your Spanish faster. It's classic 80/20.

The 80/20 Principle:

According to Entrepreneur and Author, David Koch; "The 80/20 Principle asserts that a minority of causes, inputs or efforts usually lead to a majority of the results, outputs or rewards" (David Koch, *The 80/20 Principle*, Doubleday Publishing.) In other words, it's the few things that matter most. We can use the 80/20 Principle in Spanish to prioritize to move faster. In this case, by defining a segment of verbs and words (usually around 20%) that are used most often in common conversations. By focusing on that 20% you can get disproportionate results in the progress of your language skills.

How to use this Guide

1. First, look at the table with the **Top 10 Verbs used in Spoken Spanish**. It will allow you to focus on the verbs you will most often in conversations.
2. Second, learn the most common conjugations for the top 10 verbs by looking at the **Accelerated First Person Conjugation Table**. It will help you move faster by expressing your own needs and desires. If you want to get started quickly without going deep, you can stop here.
3. Third, when you are ready to move beyond the basics that will get you started quickly; look at the **Conjugation Table with the Most Common tenses for the Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish**. It will help you understand and memorize the conjugations for the 7 most common tenses in everyday Spanish.

Accelerated Memorization Table of Top 10 Verbs used in Spoken Spanish

On this section, I will explain how to use the verb table you will find on the next page.

- **The 1st and 2nd column** show the **verbs sorted by frequency** in their “raw” infinitive form. The verbs that are used most often are shown first.
- **The 3rd column** shows the approximate **pronunciation** of each verb, using the pronunciation of English as a guideline.
- **The 4th column** displays the **meaning** of each verb in English.
- **The 5th column** (and this is an important one) shows a **Mnemonic sentence** for each verb. Mnemonics are mental associations designed to help you memorize new information quickly. When you read each mnemonic sentence, imagine a mental image that is as vivid as possible, including colors, sounds, smells, textures, exaggerated sizes, shapes and even people you know or famous personalities. Don’t worry if it feels like a crazy dream. The more original and unique you make it, the easier it will be to remember.
- **The 6th column** has a few **notes that explain each mnemonic** to make sure the mental association is clear (be flexible and have fun. It’s all about using your imagination!)
- **The 7th column** displays a sample sentence of each verb using a first person present tense conjugation.

After you learn the Top 10 Verbs shown on the next page, you can start creating sentences using these shortcuts (click these links): [Talking about the FUTURE](#) / [Talking about the PAST](#)

	Verb	Approximate Pronunciation	Meaning	Mnemonic	Notes about Mnemonic	Sample Sentence
1	ser	“sehr”	to be (permanent)	I AM a SIR according to the Queen	The word “Sir” sounds similar to “ser” in Spanish, which means “to be” and is used for characteristics that are permanent and essential.	Soy un ser humano I am a human being
2	estar	“eh-star”	to be (temporary)	STARS ARE always moving in the sky	The verb “Estar” also means “to be” and it is used to talk about non-permanent characteristics. This “temporary” nature is similar to the position STARS hold in the sky as they move during the night. Also, the word “STAR” sounds similar to the verb “estar” in Spanish.	Estoy en casa I am at home
3	ir	“eer”	to go	I GO to IR eland for BEER	The verb “to go” in Spanish, is “IR” and its spelling is included in the word “IReland” and its approximate pronunciation is contained in the last 4 letters of the word “bEER”	Yo voy a mi trabajo I go to my job
4	haber	“ah-behr”	to have (auxiliary)	I HAVE seen A BEAR today	In Spanish, “Haber” is the auxiliary verb “to have” which is used for conjugations (as in “I have seen”) and the phrase “A BEAR” sounds similar to “Haber”	Yo he estudiado I have studied
5	tener	“teh-nehr”	to have (something)	I HAVE TEN ER doctors helping me	In Spanish, “Tener” means “to have” and it is used mostly for things you can hold or own. The phrase “TEN ER doctors” includes the spelling of “Tener”	Yo tengo tiempo I have time
6	saber	“sah-behr”	to know (knowledge)	I KNOW Winnie the Pooh is A BEAR	The second half of the phrase “Pooh is A BEAR” contains the pronunciation of the verb “Saber” which means “To know” in Spanish.	Yo sé poco Español I know a little Spanish
7	poder	“poh-dehr”	to be able to	I CAN put the flower POT THERE	“POT THERE” sound similar to “Poder” which means “to be able to” in Spanish.	Yo puedo pensar rápido I can think quickly
8	querer	“keh-rehr”	to want	A CARE BEAR always WANTS a hug!	“CARE BEAR” sounds a little similar to “Querer” which means “To want” in Spanish	Yo quiero una ensalada I want a salad
9	hacer	“ah-sehr”	to do	I DO A SER vice for the community everyday	The first 4 letters of the phrase “A SER vice” sound similar to “Hacer” which means “To do” in Spanish	Yo hago muchas cosas I do many things
10	ver	“behr”	to see	I SEE a BEAR	The word “BEAR” sounds similar to “Ver” which means “To see” in Spanish	Yo veo la televisión I watch television

Accelerated 1st Person Conjugation Table of Top 10 Verbs used in Spoken Spanish

In this section, we'll learn how to use the 1st person conjugation table available on the next page.

- **The 1st and 2nd columns** show the **verbs sorted by frequency** in their “raw” infinitive form.
- **The 3rd column** displays the **meaning** of each verb in English.
- **The 4th column** shows the **ending they have in the infinitive** form (ar, er, ir)
- **The 5th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **present tense**.
- **The 6th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **preterite tense**.
- **The 7th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **imperfect tense**.
- **The 8th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **conditional tense**.
- **The 9th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **future tense**.
- **The 10th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **present perfect tense**.
- **The 11th column** shows the 1st person conjugation for the **subjunctive present tense**.

On the next page, you'll find a table with the 1st person conjugation of the top 10 verbs most frequently used in everyday Spanish.

As you can see in the table, 8 out of those 10 verbs, have “er” endings in the infinitive form. 1 of them ends in “ar” and 1 of them ends in “ir.”

	Verb	Meaning	Ending	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future	Present perfect	Subjunctive present
1	Ser	to be (permanent)	ER	Yo soy (Irregular)	Yo fui (Irregular)	Yo era (Irregular)	Yo sería	Yo seré	He sido	Yo sea (Irregular)
2	Estar	to be (temporary)	AR	Yo estoy (Irregular)	Yo estuve (Irregular)	Yo estaba	Yo estaría	Yo estaré	He estado	Yo esté (Irregular)
3	Ir	to go	IR	Yo voy (Irregular)	Yo fui (Irregular)	Yo iba (Irregular)	Yo iría	Yo iré	He ido	Yo vaya (Irregular)
4	Haber	to have (auxiliary)	ER	Yo he (Irregular)	Yo hube (Irregular)	Yo había	Yo habría (Irregular)	Yo habré	He habido	Yo haya (Irregular)
5	Tener	to have (something)	ER	Yo tengo (Irregular)	Yo tuve (Irregular)	Yo tenía	Yo tendría (Irregular)	Yo tendré (Irregular)	He tenido	Yo tenga (Irregular)
6	Saber	to know (knowledge)	ER	Yo sé (1st person Irregular)	Yo supe (Irregular)	Yo sabía	Yo sabría (Irregular)	Yo sabré	He sabido	Yo sepa (Irregular)
7	Poder	to be able to	ER	Yo puedo (Irregular)	Yo pude (Irregular)	Yo podía	Yo podría (Irregular)	Yo podré	He podido	Yo pueda (Irregular)
8	Querer	to want	ER	Yo quiero (Irregular)	Yo quise (Irregular)	Yo quería	Yo querría	Yo querré	He querido	Yo quiera (Irregular)
9	Hacer	to do	ER	Yo hago (1st person Irregular)	Yo hice (Irregular)	Yo hacía	Yo haría (Irregular)	Yo haré	He hecho	Yo haga (Irregular)
10	Ver	to see	ER	Yo veo (1st person Irregular)	Yo vi (Irregular)	Yo veía (Irregular)	Yo vería	Yo veré	He visto	Yo vea (Irregular)

The Present Tense:

For the present tense, all the 1st person conjugations shown in the previous page have irregular conjugations.

As a note, 3 verbs have, what I call “1st person irregular conjugations” which are displayed using orange in the table. That means only the first-person conjugation has an irregular conjugation, but the rest of the nouns (you, he, she...) follow a regular pattern.

Now, let's group and deconstruct the distribution of conjugations for the top 10 verbs in the present tense so they are easier to remember.

Ser & Estar

For the present tense, we can see that for the first 2 verbs in the table, “Ser” and “Estar,” you can easily find the first person conjugation by removing the “er” and “ar” endings of both verbs, and replacing them with “oy.” By doing this we get the correct first person conjugations, which are “Soy” and “Estoy”

An easy way to remember both conjugations is to think about the following mental image as vividly as possible:

“I like my **present**, it **is** a **toy** made of **soy**”

Here’s the same sentence with a few notes in parenthesis:

“I like my **present** (as in “present tense”), it **is** a **toy** (sounds a little like “estoy” which means “I am” in Spanish and is used to talk about temporary characteristics) made of **soy** (it sounds and it’s spelled like “soy” which means “I am” in Spanish and is used to talk about permanent characteristics)

20% down, 8 to go. Now that we have memorized the first person present tense conjugations of the 2 most frequently used verbs in spoken Spanish, let's continue with the next set of verbs.

Tener & Hacer

For the present tense first person conjugation of “tener” (to have) and “hacer” (to do) all you have to do is remove the “er” ending of both verbs, and replace it with the ending “go.”

That will turn “tener” into “**tengo**” (the correct first person conjugation)
and it will turn “hacer” into “**hacgo**” (the “almost” correct conjugation)

Although “**hacgo**” should be “**hago**,” both words are very similar and it’s easy to remember that you only need to remove the letter “c” to get it 100% right.

This mental image will help you memorize both conjugations. Imagine it as vividly as possible:
“I **make a go** kart **now** and I **have ten go** karts at home”

Here's the same sentence with a few notes in parenthesis:

“I **make** (which means “hacer” in Spanish) **a go** (“a go” sounds similar to “hago”) kart **now** (as in “the present”) and I **have** (which means “tener” in Spanish) **ten go** (“ten go” sounds similar to “tengo”) karts at home”

This phrase will help you remember the present tense (**now**) conjugations “hago” (**a go** kart) and “tengo” (**ten go** karts.) 40% down, 6 to go.

Saber & Haber

For the present tense first person conjugation of “saber” (to know) and “haber” (the auxiliary verb “to have” as in “I have thought about it”) all you have to do is keep the first letter of each verb and replace the rest of the word for the letter “e.” Yes, it’s that simple! That will turn “saber” into “sé” (it has an accent, but don’t stress too much about it at first) and it will turn “haber” into “he.”

Here’s an example with each sentence:

- I **know** how to speak Spanish - Yo **sé** hablar español.
- I **have** learnt Spanish - Yo **he** aprendido español.

The following metal association is an easy way to remember how to conjugate both verbs:

“I know I have seen a bear on E entertainment television before”

Here’s the same sentence with a few notes in parenthesis:

“I know (which in Spanish is “yo sé”) I **have** (which in Spanish is “yo he”) seen **a bear** (“a bear” sounds similar to “haber” (the auxiliary “to have”) and “saber” which means to know) on **E** Entertainment (The letter “E” will help you remember that to get the correct present tense 1st person conjugation you just need to keep the first letter of “saber” (to know) and “haber” (the auxiliary “to have) and then add the letter “E” next to the letter “S” for saber and the letter “H” for haber) television before.” 60% down, 4 to go.

Ver & Ir

For the present tense first-person conjugation of the verbs “ver” (to see) and “ir” (to go) you need to remove the final “r” in “ver” and replace it with the letter “o” and you’ll get the right conjugation “veo.”

To get the right conjugation for “ir” (to go) you can use the first person conjugation of “ver, (which is “veo”) as a trampoline to make things easier. So, you start with “veo” add the letter “y” at the end and then get rid of the letter “e” so you end up with “voy.”

Let’s review the process:

- Ver (to see) / ve (remove the “r”) / veo (replace it with “o”)
- Ir (to go) / veo (start with the 1st person conjugation of “ver”) / veoy (add a “y” at the end) / voy (and get rid of the “e”)

Here’s a simple mental association to help you remember (imagine it as vividly as possible):

“I **SEE** a smelly **BEAR** with terrible **B.O.** and I **GO** to **IR**eland for **bEER** with a **BOY**”

Here’s the same sentence with a few notes in parenthesis:

I **SEE** (ver - to see) a smelly **BEAR** (“bear” sounds like “ver”) with terrible **B.O.** (in Spanish, “B.O.” is pronounced “beh-oh” which sounds like “veo” and means “I see”) and I **GO** (ir - to go) to **IR**eland for **bEER** with a **BOY** (IReland starts with “ir” (to go) bEER sounds like “ir” (to go) and “BOY” sounds like “voy” which means “I go” in Spanish.) 80% down, 2 to go.

Querer & Poder

For the present tense first-person conjugation of “querer” (to want) and “poder” (to be able to/can) there are 2 steps you need to follow:

- First, you keep the first letter of both verbs, get rid of the rest of the verb, and then replace it with the vowels “ueo.” That will turn “querer” into “queo” (70% correct) and it will turn “poder” into “pueo” (80% correct.)
- Second, In the case of “querer” you need to add the letters i & r. Add the letter “i” after the “u” (to make the “kee” sound) and the “r” after the “e.” So you’d go from “queo” to “quiero.” With the verb “poder” you need to add the letter “d” after the letter “e.” So you’d go from “pueo” to “puedo.”

Here’s a simple mental association to help you remember (imagine as vividly as possible):

A **CARE BEAR WANTS** a **KEY HERO** to open a door and says “I **CAN** put the flower **POT THERE**, “**POOH ERO**sion stops today!”

Here’s the same sentence with a few notes in parenthesis:

A **CARE BEAR** (“care bear” sounds a little like “querer”) **WANTS** (to want / querer) a **KEY HERO** (sounds a little like “quiero”) to open a door and says “I **CAN** (to be able / poder) put the flower **POT THERE**, (“pot there” sounds a little like “poder”) “**POOH ERO**sion stops today! (“Pooh ero” sounds a little like “puedo”)

Conjugation Table with the Most Common Tenses for Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish

On this section, we'll learn how to use the conjugation table available on the next pages.

- **The 1st and 2nd column** show the **verbs sorted by frequency** in their “raw” infinitive form.
- **The 3rd column** displays the **meaning** of each verb in English.
- **The 4th column** shows the **ending they have in the infinitive** form (ar, er, ir)
- **The 5th column** shows the conjugations for the **present tense**.
- **The 6th column** shows the conjugations for the **preterite tense**.
- **The 7th column** shows the conjugations for the **imperfect tense**.
- **The 8th column** shows the conjugations for the **conditional tense**.
- **The 9th column** shows the conjugations for the **future tense**.
- **The 10th column** shows the conjugations for the **present perfect tense**.
- **The 11th column** shows the conjugations for the **subjunctive present tense**.

NOTE: Regular conjugations are shown in **black** font. Irregular conjugations are shown in **red**.

On the next pages, you'll find a table with the conjugations of the top 10 verbs most frequently used in everyday Spanish.

Conjugation Table with the Most Common tenses for the Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish (Part 1)

#	Verb	Meaning	Ending	Noun	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future	Present perfect	Subjunctive (present)
1	Ser	To be (permanent)	ER	Yo	soy	fui	era	sería	seré	he sido	sea
				Tú	eres	fuiste	eras	serías	serás	has sido	seas
				Él / Ella	es	fue	era	sería	será	ha sido	sea
				Nosotros	somos	fuimos	éramos	seríamos	seremos	hemos sido	seamos
				Ustedes	son	fueron	eran	serían	serán	han sido	sean
				Ellos	son	fueron	eran	serían	serán	han sido	sean
2	Estar	To be (permanent)	AR	Yo	estoy	estuve	estaba	estaría	estaré	he estado	esté
				Tú	estás	estuviste	estabas	estarías	estarás	has estado	estés
				Él / Ella	está	estuvo	estaba	estaría	estará	ha estado	esté
				Nosotros	estamos	estuvimos	estábamos	estaríamos	estaremos	hemos estado	estemos
				Ustedes	están	estuvieron	estaban	estarían	estarán	han estado	estén
				Ellos	están	estuvieron	estaban	estarían	estarán	han estado	estén
3	Ir	To go	IR	Yo	voy	fui	iba	iría	iré	he ido	vaya
				Tú	vas	fuiste	ibas	irías	irás	has ido	vayas
				Él / Ella	va	fue	iba	iría	irá	ha ido	vaya
				Nosotros	vamos	fuimos	íbamos	iríamos	iremos	hemos ido	vayamos
				Ustedes	van	fueron	iban	irían	irán	han ido	vayan
				Ellos	van	fueron	iban	irían	irán	han ido	vayan

Conjugation Table with the Most Common tenses for the Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish (Part 2)

#	Verb	Meaning	Ending	Noun	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future	Present perfect	Subjunctive (present)
4	Haber	To have (auxiliary)	ER	Yo	he	hube	había	habría	habré	he habido	haya
				Tú	has	hubiste	habías	habrías	habrás	has habido	hayas
				Él / Ella	ha	hubo	había	habría	habrá	ha habido	haya
				Nosotros	hemos	hubimos	habíamos	habríamos	habremos	hemos habido	hayamos
				Ustedes	han	hubieron	habían	habrían	habrán	han habido	hayan
				Ellos	han	hubieron	habían	habrían	habrán	han habido	hayan
5	Tener	To have (something)	ER	Yo	tengo	tuve	tenía	tendría	tendré	he tenido	tenga
				Tú	tienes	tuviste	tenías	tendrías	tendrás	has tenido	tengas
				Él / Ella	tiene	tuvo	tenía	tendría	tendrá	ha tenido	tenga
				Nosotros	tenemos	tuvimos	teníamos	tendríamos	tendremos	hemos tenido	tengamos
				Ustedes	tienen	tuvieron	tenían	tendrían	tendrán	han tenido	tengas
				Ellos	tienen	tuvieron	tenían	tendrían	tendrán	han tenido	tengas
6	Saber	To know (knowledge)	ER	Yo	sé	supe	sabía	sabría	sabré	he sabido	sepa
				Tú	sabes	supiste	sabías	sabrías	sabrás	has sabido	sepas
				Él / Ella	sabe	supo	sabía	sabría	sabrás	ha sabido	sepa
				Nosotros	sabemos	supimos	sabíamos	sabríamos	sabremos	hemos sabido	sepamos
				Ustedes	saben	supieron	sabían	sabrían	sabrán	han sabido	sepan
				Ellos	saben	supieron	sabían	sabrían	sabrán	han sabido	sepan

Conjugation Table with the Most Common tenses for the Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish (Part 3)

#	Verb	Meaning	Ending	Noun	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future	Present perfect	Subjunctive (present)
7	Poder	To be able to	ER	Yo	pu edo	pu de	podía	podr ía	podré	he podido	pu eda
				Tú	pu edes	pu diste	podías	podr ías	podrás	has podido	pu edas
				Él / Ella	pu ede	pu do	podía	podr ía	podrá	ha podido	pu eda
				Nosotros	pu edemos	pu dimos	podíamos	podr íamos	podremos	hemos podido	pu edamos
				Ustedes	pu eden	pu dieron	podían	podr ían	podrán	han podido	pu edan
				Ellos	pu eden	pu dieron	podían	podr ían	podrán	han podido	pu edan
8	Querer	To want	ER	Yo	qui ero	qui se	quería	querr ía	querré	he estado	qui era
				Tú	qui eres	qui siste	querías	querr ías	querrás	has estado	qui eras
				Él / Ella	qui ere	qui so	quería	querr ía	querrá	ha estado	qui era
				Nosotros	qui eremos	qui simos	queríamos	querr íamos	querremos	hemos estado	qui eramos
				Ustedes	qui eren	qui sieron	querían	querr ían	querrán	han estado	qui ieran
				Ellos	qui eren	qui sieron	querían	querr ían	querrán	han estado	qui ieran
9	Hacer	To do	ER	Yo	ha go	hi ce	hacía	har ía	haré	he hecho	ha ga
				Tú	ha ces	hi ciste	hacías	har ías	harás	has hecho	ha gas
				Él / Ella	ha ce	hi zo	hacía	har ía	hará	ha hecho	ha ga
				Nosotros	ha ecemos	hi cimos	hacíamos	har íamos	haremos	hemos hecho	ha gamos
				Ustedes	ha cen	hi cieron	hacían	har ían	harán	han hecho	ha gan
				Ellos	ha cen	hi cieron	hacían	har ían	harán	han hecho	ha gan

Conjugation Table with the Most Common tenses for the Top 10 Verbs in Spoken Spanish (Part 4)

#	Verb	Meaning	Ending	Noun	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future	Present perfect	Subjunctive (present)
10	Ver	To see	ER	Yo	veo	vi	veía	vería	veré	he visto	vea
				Tú	ves	viste	veías	verías	verás	has visto	veas
				Él / Ella	ve	vio	veía	vería	verá	ha visto	vea
				Nosotros	vemos	vimos	veíamos	veríamos	veremos	hemos visto	veamos
				Ustedes	ven	vieron	veían	verían	verán	han visto	vean
				Ellos	ven	vieron	veían	verían	verán	han visto	vean

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