

4.2 Stem-changing verbs: e→ie, o→ue

ANTE TODO Stem-changing verbs deviate from the normal pattern of regular verbs. In stem-changing verbs, the stressed vowel of the stem changes when the verb is conjugated.



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- ▶ In many verbs, such as **empezar** (*to begin*), the stem vowel changes from **e** to **ie**. Note that the **nosotros/as** and **vosotros/as** forms don't have a stem change.

The verb **empezar** (e:ie) (*to begin*)

Singular forms

yo	empiezo
tú	empiezas
Ud./él/ella	empieza

Plural forms

nosotros/as	empezamos
vosotros/as	empezáis
Uds./ellos/ellas	empiezan



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- ▶ In many other verbs, such as **volver** (*to return*), the stem vowel changes from **o** to **ue**. The **nosotros/as** and **vosotros/as** forms have no stem change.

The verb **volver** (o:ue) (*to return*)

Singular forms

yo	vuelvo
tú	vuelves
Ud./él/ella	vuelve

Plural forms

nosotros/as	volvemos
vosotros/as	volvéis
Uds./ellos/ellas	vuelven

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- ▶ To help you identify stem-changing verbs, they will appear as follows throughout the text:

empezar (e:ie), volver (o:ue)

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Common stem-changing verbs

e:ie

cerrar	<i>to close</i>
comenzar (a + inf.)	<i>to begin</i>
empezar (a + inf.)	<i>to begin</i>
entender	<i>to understand</i>
pensar	<i>to think</i>
perder	<i>to lose; to miss</i>
preferir (+ inf.)	<i>to prefer</i>
querer (+ inf.)	<i>to want; to love</i>

o:ue

almorzar	<i>to have lunch</i>
contar	<i>to count; to tell</i>
dormir	<i>to sleep</i>
encontrar	<i>to find</i>
mostrar	<i>to show</i>
poder (+ inf.)	<i>to be able to; can</i>
recordar	<i>to remember</i>
volver	<i>to return</i>

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- ▶ **Jugar** (*to play* a sport or game), is the only Spanish verb that has a **u:ue** stem change. **Jugar** is followed by **a** + [*definite article*] when the name of a sport or game is mentioned.



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- ▶ **Comenzar** and **empezar** require the preposition **a** when they are followed by an infinitive.

Comienzan a jugar a las siete.
They begin playing at seven.

Ana **empieza a** escribir una postal.
Ana starts to write a postcard.

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- ▶ **Pensar** + [*infinitive*] means *to plan or to intend to do something*. **Pensar en** means *to think about someone or something*.

¿**Piensan** ir al gimnasio?
Are you planning to go to the gym?

¿**En** qué **piensas**?
What are you thinking about?

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¡INTÉNTALO!

Provide the present tense forms of these verbs. The first item in each column has been done for you.

cerrar (e:ie)

1. Ustedes cierran.
2. Tú _____.
3. Nosotras _____.
4. Mi hermano _____.
5. Yo _____.
6. Usted _____.
7. Los chicos _____.
8. Ella _____.

dormir (o:ue)

1. Mi abuela no duerme.
2. Yo no _____.
3. Tú no _____.
4. Mis hijos no _____.
5. Usted no _____.
6. Nosotros no _____.
7. Él no _____.
8. Ustedes no _____.