

6.3 Preterite tense of regular verbs

ANTE TODO

In order to talk about events in the past, Spanish uses two simple tenses: the preterite and the imperfect. In this lesson, you will learn how to form the preterite tense, which is used to express actions or states completed in the past.

Preterite of regular -ar, -er, and -ir verbs

		-ar verbs comprar	-er verbs vender	-ir verbs escribir
SINGULAR FORMS	yo	compré / <i>bought</i>	vendí / <i>sold</i>	escribí / <i>wrote</i>
	tú	compraste	vendiste	escribiste
	Ud./él/ella	compró	vendió	escribió
PLURAL FORMS	nosotros/as	compramos	vendimos	escribimos
	vosotros/as	comprasteis	vendisteis	escribisteis
	Uds./ellos/ellas	compraron	vendieron	escribieron

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- ▶ **¡Atención!** The **yo** and **Ud./él/ella** forms of all three conjugations have written accents on the last syllable to show that it is stressed.
- ▶ The endings for regular **-er** and **-ir** verbs are identical in the preterite.



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- ▶ Note that the **nosotros/as** forms of regular **-ar** and **-ir** verbs in the preterite are identical to the present tense forms. Context will help you determine which tense is being used.

En invierno **compramos** ropa.
In the winter, we buy clothing.

Anoche **compramos** unos zapatos.
Last night we bought some shoes.

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- ▶ **-Ar** and **-er** verbs that have a stem change in the present tense are regular in the preterite. They do *not* have a stem change.

PRESENT

PRETERITE

cerrar (e:ie)

La tienda **cierra** a las seis.

La tienda **cerró** a las seis.

volver (o:ue)

Carlitos **vuelve** tarde.

Carlitos **volvió** tarde.

jugar (u:ue)

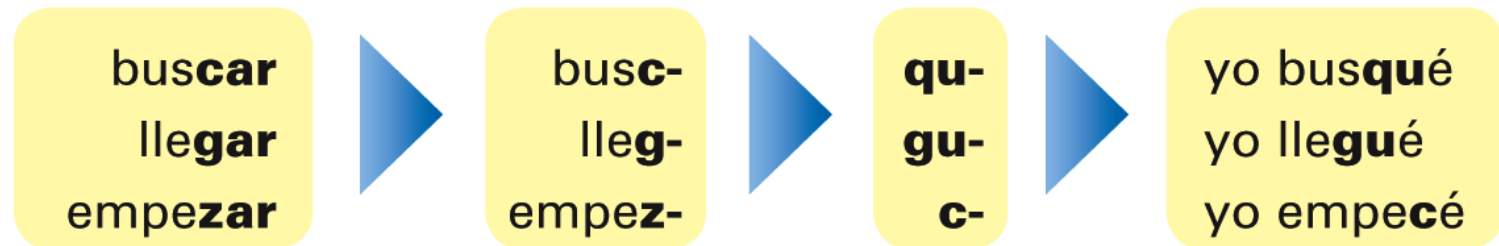
Él **juega** al fútbol.

Él **jugó** al fútbol.

- ▶ **¡Atención!** **-Ir** verbs that have a stem change in the present tense also have a stem change in the preterite.

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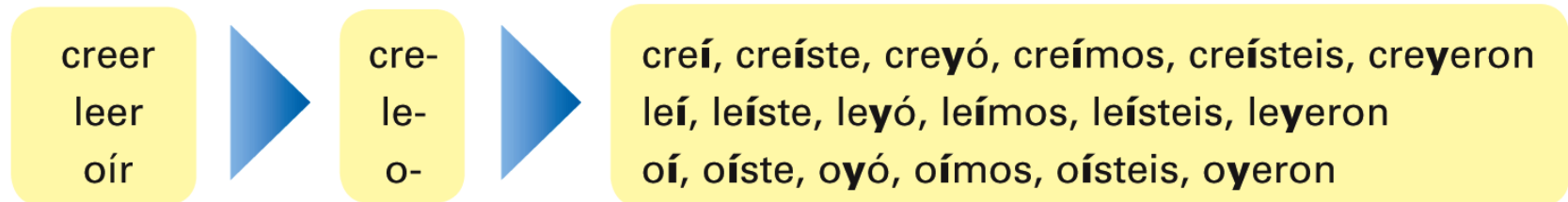
- ▶ Verbs that end in **-car**, **-gar**, and **-zar** have a spelling change in the first person singular (**yo** form) in the preterite.



- ▶ Except for the **yo** form, all other forms of **-car**, **-gar**, and **-zar** verbs are regular in the preterite.

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- ▶ Three other verbs—**creer**, **leer**, and **oír**—have spelling changes in the preterite. The **i** of the verb endings of **creer**, **leer**, and **oír** carries an accent in the **yo**, **tú**, **nosotros/as**, and **vosotros/as** forms, and changes to **y** in the **Ud./él/ella** and **Uds./ellos/ellas** forms.



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- ▶ **Ver** is regular in the preterite, but none of its forms has an accent.

ver → vi, viste, vio, vimos, visteis, vieron

Words commonly used with the preterite

anoche	<i>last night</i>	pasado/a (adj.)	<i>last; past</i>
anteayer	<i>the day before</i>	el año pasado	<i>last year</i>
	<i>yesterday</i>	la semana pasada	<i>last week</i>
ayer	<i>yesterday</i>	una vez	<i>once; one time</i>
de repente	<i>suddenly</i>	dos veces	<i>twice; two times</i>
desde... hasta...	<i>from... until...</i>	ya	<i>already</i>

Ayer llegué a Santiago de Cuba.
Yesterday I arrived in Santiago de Cuba.

Anoche oí un ruido extraño.
Last night I heard a strange noise.

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- ▶ **Acabar de + [infinitive]** is used to say that something has just occurred. Note that **acabar** is in the present tense in this construction.

Acabo de comprar una falda.
I just bought a skirt.

Acabas de ir de compras.
You just went shopping.

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¡INTÉNTALO!

Provide the appropriate preterite forms of the verbs. The first item in each column has been done for you.

comer

salir

comenzar

leer

1. ellas comieron

salieron

comenzaron

leyeron

2. tú _____

3. usted _____

4. nosotros _____

5. yo _____
