

EL PRETÉRITO

Nombre _____

To form regular verbs in the preterite you do the following:

-ar verbs: drop the -ar and add the following endings:			
		<i>(I spoke, you spoke, etc.)</i>	
-é	-amos	yo hablé	nosotros hablamos
-aste	-asteis	tú hablaste	vosotros hablasteis
-ó	-aron	él habló	ellos hablaron

Note that the *nosotros* form is identical in the preterite and the present tenses for *-ar* verbs.

examples:

Yo **hablé**.

I *spoke*.

Hablamos con Juan.

We *spoke* with John.

Tú **miraste** la película.

You *watched* the movie.

Vosotros **comprasteis** palomitas.

You *bought* popcorn.

Ella me **llamó** tres veces.

She *called* me three times.

Ellos **contaron** el dinero.

They *counted* the money.

-er and -ir verbs: drop the -er or -ir and add the following endings:					
		<i>(I ate, you ate, etc.)</i>		<i>(I opened, you opened, etc.)</i>	
-í	-imos	yo comí	nosotros comimos	yo abrí	nosotros abrimos
-iste	-isteis	tú comiste	vosotros comisteis	tú abriste	vosotros abristeis
-ió	-ieron	él comió	ellos comieron	él abrió	ellos abrieron

Note: Most stem-changing verbs change only in the present tense (*not* in the preterite), e.g., *contar* (to count): *yo cuento* (I count); *yo conté* (I counted). The exceptions to this are *-ir* stem-changing verbs, and are discussed under **irregular verbs**, on page 88.

examples:

Escribí una carta.

I *wrote* a letter.

Comimos pizza.

We *ate* pizza.

Vendiste tu casa.
You *sold* your house.

Rompisteis las ventanas.
You *broke* the windows.

Ella **bebió** tres vasos de leche.
She *drank* three glasses of milk.

Ellos **abrieron** las cajas.
They *opened* the boxes.

Before working with the preterite, it is important to be familiar with the more common preterite "markers," or words and phrases that indicate specific time frames. Several are listed below.

ayer	yesterday	la semana pasada	last week
anoche	last night	el mes (año) pasado	last month (year)
esta mañana	this morning	hace _____	_____ ago
esta tarde	this afternoon	ayer por la mañana/tarde	yesterday morning/afternoon

Para tí, ¿cuál es verdadero o falso?

- _____ 1. Hablé por teléfono ayer por la tarde.
- _____ 2. Comí una ensalada anoche.
- _____ 3. Abrí las ventanas en mi casa hace dos horas.
- _____ 4. Miré la televisión anoche.
- _____ 5. Bebí jugo de naranja esta mañana.
- _____ 6. Asistí a la escuela la semana pasada.
- _____ 7. Compré un coche el año pasado.
- _____ 8. Vendí mi casa el mes pasado.

ejercicio

II-1-1

1. I bought a shirt yesterday. _____
2. You studied last night. _____
3. She worked for two hours. _____
4. We washed the dishes. _____
5. They sang five songs. _____
6. I ran to the corner. _____
7. You wrote a letter. _____
8. She opened the door. _____
9. We didn't open those windows. _____

10. They sold the car. _____
11. We danced the tango last night. _____
12. They spoke with the owner. _____
13. I took a shower this morning. _____
14. You washed your hair. _____
15. They went to bed at eleven-thirty. _____

¡Te toca a ti!

Responde, con frases completas, a las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Hablaste por teléfono anoche? _____
2. ¿Dónde te compraste la camisa? _____
3. ¿Qué comiste anoche? _____
4. ¿Qué recibiste para tu último cumpleaños? _____
5. ¿Escuchaste la radio hoy? _____
6. ¿Tomaste café ayer por la mañana? _____
7. ¿Bailaste el fin de semana pasado? _____
8. ¿Estudiaste español el año pasado? _____

Orthographic Changes in Regular Verbs

There are three standard orthographic (spelling) changes in Spanish which affect verbs in the preterite as well as in other tenses. In the preterite, these changes occur only in the first person singular *yo* form. They are as follows:

1. verbs ending in **-gar**: insert a **u** before the **e**: **yo llegué** (I arrived)
2. verbs ending in **-car**: the **c** changes to **qu** before the letter **e**: **yo practiqué** (I practiced)
3. verbs ending in **-zar**: the **z** changes to **c** before the letter **e**: **yo empecé** (I began)

The reason for the first two changes is phonetic: in order to retain the original hard **g** and **c** sounds, the letter **u** is inserted (the letters **g** and **c** are soft before the vowels **e** and **i**). In the last change it is because the letter **z** *never* directly precedes the letter **e** in Spanish (except in rare cases when **ze** are the first two letters of a word).

Some frequently used verbs in these categories, with the preterite *yo* form:

llegar	to arrive	<i>yo llegué</i>
jugar	to play (a game)	<i>yo jugué</i>

pagar	to pay (for)	<i>yo pagué</i>
regar	to water (a plant)	<i>yo regué</i>
segar	to mow (grass, etc.)	<i>yo segué</i>
tragar	to swallow	<i>yo tragué</i>
vagar	to wander	<i>yo vagué</i>
aparcar	to park	<i>yo aparqué</i>
buscar	to look for, search	<i>yo busqué</i>
clarificar	to clarify	<i>yo clarifiqué</i>
clasificar	to classify	<i>yo clasificué</i>
destacar	to stand out	<i>yo destaqué</i>
empacar	to pack	<i>yo empaqué</i>
justificar	to justify	<i>yo justifiqué</i>
practicar	to practice	<i>yo practiqué</i>
sacar	to take out, take a picture	<i>yo saqué</i>
tocar	to touch, play (an instrument)	<i>yo toqué</i>
autorizar	to authorize	<i>yo autoricé</i>
comenzar	to commence, begin	<i>yo comencé</i>
empezar	to begin	<i>yo empecé</i>
organizar	to organize	<i>yo organicé</i>
rezar	to pray	<i>yo recé</i>
simbolizar	to symbolize	<i>yo simbolicé</i>
trazar	to trace	<i>yo tracé</i>
tropezarse (con)	to bump (into)	<i>yo me tropecé</i>

Remember: Only verbs in the *yo* form are affected by these orthographic changes.

ejercicio

II-1-2

1. I practiced the piano for an hour. _____
2. I arrived at two o'clock. _____
3. I organized the party. _____
4. I began to dance on the table. _____
5. I played the guitar for two hours at the reception. _____

6. I played tennis with the pro (*el jugador profesional*). _____

7. I took twenty pictures of my cat. _____
8. I authorized the purchase. _____
9. I classified the information. _____

10. I bumped into your house's step (*el peldaño*). _____
11. I parked the car in a prohibited space. _____
12. I never stood out in English for my pronunciation. _____
- _____
13. I swallowed the medicine without thinking. _____
- _____
14. I paid the gas bill. _____
15. I watered my friend Lola's plants. _____

Final note: While these three types of verbs do not exactly follow the regular pattern of forming the preterite tense, they are still considered regular verbs in the preterite because these changes occur at *all* times in *all* tenses.

Irregular Verbs in the Preterite

There are several irregular verbs in the preterite. While patterns do emerge and the endings are similar, it is important to understand the various types of conjugations.

The following eleven verbs all take this set of endings:

-e	-imos
-iste	-isteis
-o	-ieron

1. andar to walk	anduv-	anduve; anduviste; anduvo . . .
2. estar to be	estuv-	estuve; estuviste; estuvo . . .
3. tener to have	tuv-	tuve; tuviste; tuvo . . .
4. caber to fit	cup-	cupe; cupiste; cupo . . .
5. haber auxiliary, to have	hub-	hube; hubiste; hubo . . .
6. poder to be able to	pud-	pude; pudiste; pudo . . .
7. poner to put, place	pus-	puse; pusiste; puso . . .
8. saber to know	sup-	supe; supiste; supo . . .
9. hacer to make, do	hic-	hice; hiciste; hizo . . .
10. querer to want	quis-	quise; quisiste; quiso . . .
11. venir to come	vin-	vine; viniste; vino . . .

Note:

- Verbs 1–3 take the letter *uv* in the new stem; 4–8 take a *u*; and 9–11 take an *i*.
- The only exception above is the third person singular of *hacer*, which is *hizo*. (The *c* changes to *z* to avoid the *k* sound.)
- There are no accent marks on these irregular endings.
- For their full conjugations, consult the preterite verb chart in the appendix.

Para ti, ¿cuál es verdadero o falso?

- _____ 1. Tuve una fiesta hace dos semanas.
- _____ 2. Anduve a la escuela esta mañana.
- _____ 3. Anoche no pude dormir.
- _____ 4. No hice nada ayer.
- _____ 5. Alguien vino a mi casa el fin de semana pasado.
- _____ 6. Puse los zapatos en el armario anoche.
- _____ 7. Estuve increíblemente enfermo/a ayer.
- _____ 8. Anduve al cine esta semana.

ejercicio**II-1-3**

1. I walked to the store. _____
2. He came to my party. _____
3. Last night I couldn't sleep. _____
4. They had an accident last Tuesday. _____
5. We made the beds this morning. _____
6. When did you know (find out) the answer? _____
7. You (*pl. fam.*) were here for no more than ten minutes. _____
8. I put the clothes in the closet. _____
9. What did you do last night? _____
10. They had to work for ten hours yesterday. _____
11. I put on my shoes. _____
12. We were there for half an hour. _____
13. Who made these invitations? _____
14. She didn't come to the meeting because she had an accident. _____

15. I was in the store for twenty minutes and then I came here. _____

¡Te toca a ti!

¿Qué hiciste ayer? List ten things that you did yesterday:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Ser and ir: The preterite conjugations for *ser* and *ir* are identical. But don't worry, because the context will carry the desired meaning, and *ser* is used less often than *ir* in the preterite.

ser		ir	
<i>(I was, you were, etc.)</i>		<i>(I went, you went, etc.)</i>	
fui	fuimos	fui	fuimos
fuiste	fuisteis	fuiste	fuisteis
fue	fuleron	fue	fuleron

ejercicio II-1-4

1. I went to the game. _____
2. I was president of the club for one year. _____
3. He went to the store (in order) to buy eggs. _____
4. why did you go away? _____

5. They didn't go yesterday because they went last week. _____

6. We didn't go to the wedding. _____
7. Did you (*pl. fam.*) go to school today? _____
8. Who was the big winner yesterday? _____
9. The party was terrible. _____
10. The meeting was/went well. _____
11. Anita and Pepe were boyfriend/girlfriend (*novios*) for two years, but they never went to Venice.

12. He was my best friend for ten years. _____
13. We went separately (*por separado*) to the same store. _____

14. Where did you (*pl. form.*) go last night? _____
15. How was the party? _____ It was a disaster!

Decir and traer: The verbs *decir* (to say, tell) and *traer* (to bring) are conjugated as follows:

decir		traer	
<i>(I said/told, you said/told, etc.)</i>		<i>(I brought, you brought, etc.)</i>	
dije	dijimos	traje	trajimos
dijiste	dijisteis	trajiste	trajisteis
dijo	dijeron	trajo	trajeron

Verbs related to, and conjugated in the same manner as *traer*:

atraer	to attract	(atraje, etc.)
distraer	to distract	(distraje, etc.)
retraer	to bring back, dissuade	(retraje, etc.)
sustraer	to remove, take away	(sustraje, etc.)

ejercicio

II-1-5

1. I told the children my name. _____
2. You told me a lie. _____
3. He brought wine to the party. _____
4. He said that he spoke with Carlos last week. _____
5. We said that we didn't eat the cookies. _____
6. The television distracted me. _____
7. What did you (*pl. form.*) say to Mary? _____
8. What did you tell her? _____
9. His manners attracted me. _____
10. What did he say when you told him that you wrote the letter? _____

11. I didn't tell them anything. _____
12. What did you bring us? _____
13. They didn't tell me the truth. _____
14. Did he tell you what he told me yesterday? _____
15. The sugar attracted the flies. _____

Dar and ver: The verbs *dar* and *ver* are very similar in their preterite conjugations and thus are easy to learn together. While *dar* is clearly irregular, *ver* is irregular only in that the accent marks on the first and third person singular are omitted. Their conjugations are as follows:

dar		ver	
<i>(I gave, you gave, etc.)</i>		<i>(I saw, you saw, etc.)</i>	
di	dimos	vi	vimos
diste	disteis	viste	visteis
dio	dieron	vio	vieron

ejercicio

II-1-6

1. I gave John a package yesterday. _____
2. I saw John yesterday. _____

3. She gave me a book. _____
4. She saw us at the movies. _____
5. What did you give him for his birthday? _____
6. Which (What) movie did you (*pl. fam.*) see last night? _____

7. When they saw me, they gave me the money. _____

8. You (*pl. form.*) didn't give us anything. _____
9. Did you see the cat that Miguel gave me? _____
10. I didn't see the present that they gave us. _____

traducción

II-1-7

I went to Puerto Rico last January. It was wonderful! A friend of mine is a travel agent, and when she offered me the opportunity to go to the Caribbean for a week of sun and fun—for very little money—I said to her, “When do we go?” The day that we left it snowed six inches here. When we arrived in San Juan, sun, heat, and sand greeted us. We took a taxi to our hotel, I took my bathing suit out of my suitcase and we went to the beach. The next day we went to El Yunque, the rain forest, where we walked for hours and saw many beautiful birds and trees. I couldn't believe it—it was so beautiful! The next day we went to Luquillo Beach and swam and read and relaxed. We did this every day until—alas!—we had to return to reality.

vocabulario

alas!	¡ay!	(to) offer	ofrecer
bathing suit	el traje de baño	rain forest	la selva tropical
beach	la playa	(to) relax	relajarse
bird	el pájaro	sand	la arena
fun	la diversión	(to) snow	nevar
inch	la pulgada	(to) take out	sacar
(the) next day	al día siguiente	travel agent	el/la agente de viajes

-ir stem-changing verbs: As mentioned earlier, most stem-changing verbs change only in the present. However, *-ir* stem-changing verbs make small changes in the preterite. There are three kinds of *-ir* stem-changing verbs in the present tense, and they make the following changes in the preterite, but *only* in the third person singular and plural.

In *o* → *ue* verbs in the present, the *o* changes to *u* in the preterite:

dormir (to sleep)	
<i>(I slept, you slept, etc.)</i>	
dormí	dormimos
dormiste	dormisteis
durmió	durmieron

In *e* → *ie* verbs in the present, the *e* changes to *i* in the preterite:

mentir (to lie)	
<i>(I lied, you lied, etc.)</i>	
mentí	mentimos
mentiste	mentisteis
mintió	mintieron

In *e* → *i* verbs in the present, the *e* changes to *i* in the preterite:

pedir (to request, ask for)	
<i>(I requested, you requested, etc.)</i>	
pedí	pedimos
pediste	pedisteis
pidió	pidieron

Verbs in these categories:

o → *ue* verbs in the present:

dormir to sleep
morir to die

e → *ie* verbs in the present:

advertir to advise, warn
mentir to lie
preferir to prefer
sentir(se) to feel

e → *i* verbs in the present:

medir to measure, be long
pedir to request, ask for
repetir to repeat
seguir to follow, continue
servir to serve

ejercicio

II-1-8

1. She slept for ten hours. _____
2. They lied to me. _____
3. He requested more coffee. _____
4. The cockroaches died. _____
5. Our lawyer warned us of the danger (*el peligro*). _____

6. At that moment she preferred not to say anything. _____

7. Did they advise you of your rights? _____
8. Dorothy followed the yellow brick (*de ladrillos*) road. _____

9. They repeated the question twice. _____
10. He asked for a raise. _____

Verbs that change *i* → *y* in the preterite: In those *-er* and *-ir* verbs in which a vowel immediately precedes the infinitive ending, the third person singular and plural change from *i* to *y*. In all other forms there is a written accent over the letter *i*:

creer (to believe)	
<i>(I believed, you believed, etc.)</i>	
creí	creímos
creíste	creísteis
creyó	creyeron

Verbs in this category:

		él	ellos
caer	to fall	cayó	cayeron
caer(se)	to fall down	se cayó	se cayeron
creer	to believe	creyó	creyeron
leer	to read	leyó	leyeron
oír	to hear	oyó	oyeron
poseer	to possess	poseyó	poseyeron
proveer	to provide	proveyó	proveyeron

exceptions:

1. The verb *traer* (and its compound verbs *atraer* and *distraer*): see page 91 for their conjugations.
2. Verbs ending in *-guir* (e.g., *seguir*): the *u* is not pronounced.
3. Verbs ending in *-uir* (e.g., *destruir*) make the change from *i* → *y*; however, the written accent over the *i* appears only in the first person singular form. See as follows:

destruir (to destroy)	
<i>(I destroyed, you destroyed, etc.)</i>	
destruí	destruimos
destruiste	destruisteis
destruyó	destruyeron

Verbs in this category:

	él	ellos
construir to build, construct	construyó	construyeron
contribuir to contribute	contribuyó	contribuyeron
destruir to destroy	destruyó	destruyeron
fluir to flow, run	fluyó	fluyeron
huir to flee, run away	huyó	huyeron
incluir to include	incluyó	incluyeron
influir to influence	influyó	influyeron

ejercicio **II-1-9**

1. John didn't hear me. _____
2. They read my book twice. _____
3. The trees fell down during the storm. _____
4. Romeo and Juliet ran away. _____
5. The caterers (*los abastecedores*) didn't provide enough bread. _____
6. The thieves (*los ladrones*) destroyed our house. _____
7. Did you read my newspaper? _____
8. They contributed one hundred fifty dollars last year. _____
9. The dish ran away with the spoon. _____

10. Humpty Dumpty fell down. _____
11. The tears flowed from my eyes. _____
12. The branch fell from the tree. _____
13. They fled from the scene of the crime. _____
14. They constructed an enormous house. _____
15. Why didn't he include us? _____

Verbs ending in -ucir: All verbs ending with *-ucir* are conjugated like *producir*.

producir (to produce)	
<i>(I produced, you produced, etc.)</i>	
produce	produjimos
produjiste	produjisteis
produjo	produjeron

Verbs in this category:

		él	ellos
conducir	to drive, lead	condujo	condujeron
deducir	to deduce, infer	dedujo	dedujeron
inducir	to induce, lead	indujo	indujeron
introducir	to introduce	introdujo	introdujeron
producir	to produce	produjo	produjeron
reducir	to reduce, cut down	redujo	redujeron
traducir	to translate	tradujo	tradujeron

ejercicio II-1-10

1. I produced a movie last year. _____
2. You translated the document well. _____
3. We drove to the theater. _____
4. The magician produced a rabbit from the hat. _____
5. You (*pl. fam.*) drove twenty miles. _____

6. I translated this sentence from English to Spanish. _____

7. We led the boys to the cafeteria. _____
8. They drove us to the wedding. _____
9. How many pages did you translate? _____
10. How far (*hasta dónde*) did you drive? _____
11. I deduced the answer. _____
12. The President didn't reduce taxes (*los impuestos*) last year. _____

traducción II-1-II

H. L. Mencken was a great writer. He was born in Baltimore in 1880, where he lived his entire life, and he died in 1956. He wrote many essays on politics and social issues, but his principal interest, I believe, was language, in particular, the English of the United States. One of his most famous books is *The American Language*, in which Mencken discussed the richness of the United States and how many other languages influenced this language. He also produced a series of autobiographies and diaries. He read all types of literature and possessed a strict personal ethic. He believed that a person should work hard, play hard, and above all, think.

vocabulario			
(to be) born	nacer	language (particular)	el idioma
essay	el ensayo	politics	la política
ethic	el credo	richness	la riqueza
issue	la cuestión	type	la clase
language (general)	el lenguaje	writer	el escritor

Verbs that change meaning in the preterite: Because the preterite tense implies that an action occurred either at or over a specific period of time, certain verbs change meaning in this tense. Note that the action of the following verbs is more mental/emotional than physical.

Verbs in this category:

	present	preterite
conocer	to know (a person/place)	to meet <i>Conocí a Juan hace dos años.</i> <i>I met John two years ago.</i>
poder	to be able (to do something)	to manage (to do something) <i>Ella pudo encontrarlo.</i> <i>She managed to find it.</i>
no poder	not to be able (to do something)	to fail (to do something) <i>No pudimos encontrarlo.</i> <i>We couldn't/failed to find it.</i>
querer	to want	to try <i>Quise salir.</i> <i>I tried to leave /I wanted to leave very badly.</i>
no querer	not to want	to refuse <i>Él no quiso comer.</i> <i>He refused to eat.</i>
saber	to know (a fact/information)	to find out (learn) <i>¿Cuándo lo supiste?</i> <i>When did you find (it) out?</i>
sentir	to feel	to regret, be sorry <i>Sentí llamarla.</i> <i>I regretted calling /I was sorry I called her.</i>
tener	to have	to have (at a certain time) <i>Ella tuvo un bebé ayer.</i> <i>She had a baby yesterday.</i>

Para ti, ¿cuál es verdadero o falso?

- _____ 1. No pude dormir anoche.
- _____ 2. Conocí a mi mejor amigo/a hace más de cinco años.
- _____ 3. Tuve un accidente de coche el año pasado.
- _____ 4. Pude pagar los impuestos el año pasado antes del quince de abril.
- _____ 5. Leí el periódico esta mañana y supe mucho de los dilemas políticos.
- _____ 6. En mi cumpleaños pasado no quise comer nada.
- _____ 7. Una amiga mía tuvo un bebé este año.
- _____ 8. Mis padres se conocieron en una cita a ciegas (*blind date*).