

Conjugating Stem Changer Verbs (AKA Shoe verbs)

We already know how to conjugate regular -ar, -er, and -ir verbs in the present tense. Well not all Spanish verbs are regular. In this section we will learn about "stem changing" verbs.

A stem-changing verb is as its name implies – a verb in which the stem changes.

But what is a stem?

The stem of a verb is what is left after we take off the -ar, -er, or -ir.

To begin =	Empezar -ar =	empez-	} stems
To want =	Querer -er =	quer-	
To sleep =	Dormir -ir =	dorm-	

How do we know if it is a stem changer?

The infinitive is usually followed by the change in parentheses. There are several types of changes that we will look at.

e → ie o → ue e → I o → u

For example, Querer is an e → ie change. So the change would be indicated like this:

Querer (ie) . Dormir has an o → ue change so it would be indicated like this: dormir(ue)

How do we change it?

We conjugate the verb like we have in the past, but with an added step.

1. take off the -ar, -er, or -ir.
2. Switch the letters in the stem ****EXCEPT IN THE NOSOTROS FORM****

empez-	} Old stems	empiez	} New stems
quer-		quier	
dorm-		duerm	

3. Add the appropriate ending to the new stem.

empiezo	emp <u>e</u> zamos
empiezas	
empieza	empiezan
duermo	du <u>o</u> rminos
duermes	
duerme	duermen

quiero	qu <u>e</u> remos
quieres	
quiere	quieren

Notice that if you draw a creative circle around the forms that change, it looks like a high top shoe.

Verbos con cambios radicales - Stem-changing Verbs

Certain verbs in Spanish have a change in the stressed vowel in the root (stem) of the verb. This change affects the yo, tú, él, ella Ud., ellos, ellas and Uds. forms. There is **no stem change** in the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms.

These verbs, called stem-changing (or radical changing), are mainly two types: **e -> ie** and **o -> ue**.

1. Verbs with e -> ie stem change

subject	empezar - to begin*	querer - to like; to want**	preferir - to prefer***
yo	empiezo	quiero	prefiero
tú	empiezas	quieres	prefieres
él ella usted	empieza	quiere	prefiere
nosotros nosotras	empezamos	queremos	preferimos
vosotros vosotras	empezáis	queréis	preferís
ellos ellas ustedes	empiezan	quieren	prefieren

Note: *Tener* is conjugated like *querer* and *Venir* is conjugated like *preferir* - except their yo forms are irregular (*yo tengo; yo vengo*).

**Comenzar* - (to begin) and *cerrar* (to close) are conjugated like *empezar*.

***perder* - (to lose) is conjugated like *querer*.

****sentir* - (to be sorry) is conjugated like *preferir*.

2. Verbs with o -> ue stem change

subject	colgar - to hang up (phone) *	jugar - to play	volver - to return**	dormir - to sleep***
yo	cuelgo	juego	vuelvo	duermo
tú	cuelgas	juegas	vuelves	duermes
él ella usted	cuelga	juega	vuelve	duerme
nosotros nosotras	colgamos	jugamos	volvemos	dormimos
vosotros vosotras	colgáis	jugáis	volvéis	dormís
ellos ellas ustedes	cuelgan	juegan	vuelven	duermen

Note: Rather than an o, the verb *jugar* has a u in the stem which changes to ue.

**costar* (to cost) and *recordar* (to remember) are conjugated like *colgar*.

***devolver* - (to return something) and *poder* (to be able; can) are conjugated like *volver*.

****morir* - (to die) is conjugated like *dormir*.