

## Direct Commands

Using the Imperative Mood

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The imperative form of verbs, used for giving commands, is one of the more unusual verb forms in Spanish. As a distinctive conjugation, it exists only with *tú* and *vosotros*, that is, in the familiar second person. Different conjugations are sometimes used in the affirmative (do something) and negative (don't). And because direct commands sometimes can sound rude or impolite, the imperative form is avoided sometimes in favor of other verb constructions.

The imperative form of verbs is fairly easy to learn. For regular verbs, the familiar affirmative imperative (the one that goes with *tú* and *vosotros*) is formed simply by dropping the final letter (the *r*) of the infinitive, except for verbs ending in *-ir*, in which case the ending is changed to *-e*; in the plural, the final letter of the infinitive is changed to a *d*. (See examples below.) That's all there is to it. For formal and negative commands, the subjunctive conjugation is used.

The imperative form is equivalent to the use of the unconjugated verb in English without a subject. For example, if you're telling someone in English to look, the command is simply "look." The Spanish equivalent can be *mira*, *mire*, *mirad* or *miren*, depending on whom you are speaking to. The chart below shows the imperative forms; boldface is used to show the ends attached to verb stems:

### Direct commands for *-ar* verbs (using *hablar*, to speak, as an example):

- singular familiar: *habla tú*, no *hables tú* (speak, don't speak)
- singular formal: *hable Ud.*, no *hable Ud.* (speak, don't speak)
- plural familiar: *hablad vosotros*, no *habléis vosotros* (speak, don't speak)
- plural formal: *hablen Uds.*, no *hablen Uds.* (speak, don't speak)

Note that the distinctive imperative form is used only for the familiar affirmative commands. In other cases, the [present subjunctive](#) conjugation is

used. The same is true for *-er* and *-ir* verbs.

### Direct commands for *-er* verbs (using *comer*, to eat, as an example):

- singular familiar: *come tú*, *no comas tú* (eat, don't eat)
- singular formal: *coma Ud.*, *no coma Ud.* (eat, don't eat)
- plural familiar: *comed vosotros*, *no comáis vosotros* (eat, don't eat)
- plural formal: *coman Uds.*, *no coman Uds.* (eat, don't eat)

### Direct commands for *-ir* verbs (using *escribir*, to write, as an example):

- singular familiar: *escribe tú*, *no escribas tú* (write, don't write)
- singular formal: *escriba Ud.*, *no escriba Ud.* (write, don't write)
- plural familiar: *escribid vosotros*, *no escribáis vosotros* (write, don't write)
- plural formal: *escriban Uds.*, *no escriban Uds.* (write, don't write)

The pronouns are included in the above chart for clarity. When used, they follow the verb as shown. The familiar pronouns (*tú* and *vosotros*) are usually omitted in actual use unless needed for clarity or emphasis, while the formal pronouns (*usted* and *ustedes*) are more often used.

Use of the imperative is fairly straightforward. Here are some guidelines for cases where its usage might not be obvious:

- The singular affirmative familiar imperative (used with *tú*) is usually regular. The irregular verbs are these eight, along with verbs derived from them: *decir* (to say), *di*; *hacer* (to make or do), *haz*; *ir* (to go), *ve*; *poner* (to put), *pon*; *salir* (to leave), *sal*; *ser* (to be), *sé*; *tener* (to have), *ten*; *venir* (to come), *ven*. All verbs are regular in the plural affirmative familiar imperative.
- The *vosotros* commands are rarely used in Latin America. Normally, the *ustedes* form is used when speaking even with children or relatives.
- Object pronouns and reflexive pronouns are attached to the affirmative commands and precede negative commands. *Dime*. (Tell me.) *No me digas*. (Don't tell me.) *Escríbeme*. (Write to me.) *No me escribas*. (Don't write to me.) As you can see, when a pronoun is attached an accent may need to be added to the verb to maintain the correct pronunciation. If there are both a direct and indirect object, the indirect object comes first. *Démelo*. (Give it to me.) *No me lo dé*. (Don't give it to me.)
- In written instructions, either the familiar or formal forms can be used, depending on the tone the writer wishes to convey as well as the audience. The familiar form generally comes across as friendlier. *Haz clic aquí*. (Click here.) *Haga clic aquí*. (Click here.) An [impersonal command](#) also can be used.
- Some writers put commands between exclamation points to help indicate that they are commands. When used in that way, the exclamation marks don't necessarily translate to written English. *¡Escucha!* (Listen.)