

SECOND EDITION

Spanish Grammar in Context

Juan Kattán-Ibarra
Angela Howkins



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Preface

There comes a point in language study where an understanding of how a language functions is vital for progress to be made. *Spanish Grammar in Context* is designed to give students who are in the final years of school or the early stages of university study, and adult learners who are at an equivalent stage, an understanding of how Spanish functions in a practical and relevant way. More advanced students may also find the book both interesting and useful for review and revision purposes.

The starting point of each chapter is an authentic text in which a particular grammatical point is highlighted. This focuses the student's attention on this part of speech and how it functions in context. There then follows a clear and concise explanation of both form and usage, with examples from the text or from everyday language. Differences in usage between Peninsular and Latin American Spanish are noted. The subsequent exercises provide practice of the grammar points highlighted and explained in the text. Exercises vary from the practice of form and use within the context of a single sentence through gap-fill to more open-ended communicative types of exercises. Translation exercises are included, especially where usage differs considerably from English and so can cause problems for English speakers. Except for those exercises which are of a communicative nature, a key is provided for the exercises of each chapter, thus making the book ideal for self-study. In the classroom context, it can be used for the study of grammar and/or of a topic area, as the texts chosen lend themselves to exploitation beyond the study of the grammar point in question.

The texts are taken from authentic sources from all over the Spanish-speaking world. They include excerpts from contemporary literature, and from newspaper and magazine articles, including 'agony aunt' letters, and have a richness and variety which make them intrinsically interesting to read. Some exercises relate to the topic of the text, others simply practise the particular grammatical point, the aim of all types being to help students to a greater understanding of function and to a greater confidence when using the language for their own communicative purposes.

The book is divided into two main parts, one which deals with aspects of the verb, and the other which deals with nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions and all other parts of speech which go to make up a sentence. Chapters can be studied sequentially, or in random order, according to whichever grammar point the student wishes to study, thus making it a useful and handy reference/revision tool. However, chapters which deal with related grammar points are grouped together (for example, the present and imperfect subjunctive), and each chapter has suggested further reading for those who wish to take their study beyond the scope of the book. As each text is taken from an authentic source, it naturally produces examples of grammar not explicitly studied in that particular chapter. These are indicated in the chapter under the heading "Other points to note in the text", so that students may study the text beyond the confines of the grammatical point for which it has been chosen, or teachers may exploit it further in the classroom. The consolidation exercises found at the end of the book comprise six texts, three journalistic and three literary, each with questions which give students the opportunity to test their knowledge of grammar. A glossary of grammatical terms and a table of irregular verbs are also included to make the book as user-friendly as possible.

The book does not pretend to be exhaustive in its coverage but focuses on those areas of grammar which are important for effective communication. At all times grammar is presented not as an end in itself but as the necessary tool for effective communication. The approach encourages students not only to read for comprehension and pleasure, but also to have an awareness of how the language is used. By developing skills of observation and analysis in their studies, students will be able to enhance their productive skills

and so reap the rewards that language study brings.

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Spain: *Quo*, 'Trucos para hacer turismo sin arruinarte', July 1996, 'Cómo ponerse en forma en 30 días', 'Duele el sol', July 1997; *El País*, '364 días en automóvil', 23 September 2001; *El País Semanal*, 'Lo que aprendí en la escuela', 'Decálogo del ciudadano silencioso', 12 September 1999; *Expansión*, 'Un libro es más importante que un pan bien hecho: entrevista con Isabel Allende', 15 November 1997; *DT*, 'Esclavos de la tecnología', September 2001; *Blanco y Negro, ABC*, 'Entrevista: Montserrat Caballé', 29 May 1988, 'Veintiocho años, y en paro', 26 November 1995; 16, 'A la caza del meteorito', 15 October 2000, 'Nacho Paunero: Maltratar a un animal es delito y es necesario denunciarlo', 9 July 2006; *CNR*, 'Nos estamos fumando el planeta', 20 October 1998; 'Volando hacia el abismo', July 2006; *Cambio 16*, 'Entrevista con Mario Molina', 15 July 1996, 'El sol, ¿amigo o enemigo?', 19 July 1998, 'La dieta mediterránea', 21 November 1988, 'La España beoda', 21 December 1987; *Tribuna*, 'Consejos para evitar incendios', 15 July 1996; *Prima*, 'Estrategias para encontrar empleo: la entrevista', October 1996; *Tiempo*, 'Retrato del nuevo español', 11 May 1987, 'Si usted quiere un hijo perfecto', 17 November 1997, 'El homo erectus, el primer balseiro del estrecho de Gibraltar', 17 November 1997, 'El efecto invernadero', 14 July 1997; *Carta de España*, 'Imanol Arias: "no soy un galán"', 1-30 August 1989; *El Mundo*, 'Estados Unidos está en el proceso de convertirse en un país hispano', 8 July 2006; excerpts from *Queda la noche* by Soledad Puértolas, Editorial Planeta-De Agostini, S.A.; Chile: *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, 'Latinoamericanos, los más apasionados y belicosos del mundo', 26 November 2000; *El Metropolitano*, 'Al rescate de la Amazonia', 13 October 1999; 'Palabra de forjador ambiental', 30 October 1999; *La Tercera*, 'Dos tercios de la población mundial vivirá en ciudades en el año 2025', 6 July 2000, 'Alerta sobre alteración de costas del mundo', 24 April 2001, 'El futuro de la raza humana', 21 October 2006; *El Mercurio*, Santiago, '¿Qué habría sucedido si ...?', 24 February 2001, 'Plácido Domingo: el artista total', 25 March 1990, '¿Para esto estudié tanto?', 26 June 1999, 'Parece que maduré, aunque no quería', 15 October 1999, 'El barco donde estaba el paraíso', 17 April 1994, 'La escritura me ha dado poder', 13 December 2003; *Revista de El Sábado de El Mercurio*, 'El hombre digital', 28 January 2006; *La Nación*, 'El amor es mi único discurso', 16 March 1995; Venezuela: *El Universal*, 'Automóviles y caminos inteligentes, la meta para dentro de 30 años', 9 May 1991; Bolivia: *Presencia*, 'Bosque más antiguo del planeta se encuentra en Chile', 12 March 1991; Mexico: *Este país*, Greenpeace, 'Ingeniería genética: Frankenstein o el moderno Prometeo', October 1995; *El Universal*, 'Las quejas de las esposas modernas', 23 April 2000, 'Los incas realizaban sacrificios humanos', 26 October 2000; Uruguay: *El País*, 'Ejercicio físico es protector de la salud', 6 April 1991; Argentina: *Buena Salud*, 'El desmayo por estrés', 'Las conflictivas camas solares', 'La anemia y el deporte', N° 26; Compañía Editora Espasa Calpe Argentina S.A., Buenos Aires, excerpt from the novel *Boquitas pintadas* by Manuel Puig, © Herederos de Manuel Puig, with kind permission from Guillermo Schavelzon & Asociados, Agencia Literaria, Barcelona, España.

Glossary of grammatical terms

- Adjective** A word which provides more information about a noun: *His/her house is very **big*** Su casa es muy **grande**. *It's a **real** pity* Es una **verdadera** lástima.
- Adverb** A word used to provide more information about a verb, an adjective or another adverb: *He/she treated me **badly*** Me trató **duramente**. *It was **extremely** difficult* Fue **extremadamente** difícil. *They behaved **incredibly** well* Se comportaron **increíblemente** bien.
- Article** There are two types of articles, **definite** and **indefinite**. Definite articles in Spanish are **el, la, los, las** *the* in English. Indefinite articles are **un, una** *a, an* in English: ***the** boy **el** chico; **a** magazine **una** revista.*
- Clause** A group of words within a sentence which has its own verb. A **main clause** functions on its own; a **subordinate clause** is dependent on another clause. In *I'll tell her when she arrives* Se lo diré cuando llegue, "*I'll tell her*" "*Se lo diré*", the main clause, can function on its own; "*when she arrives*" "*cuando llegue*", the subordinate clause, is dependent on the main clause.
- Conjunction** A word like *and* **y**, *or* **o**, *but* **pero**, which joins words or groups of words.
- Definite article** See **Article**.
- Demonstrative** Words like **este, esta** *this*, **esos, esas** *those*, are called demonstratives: ***this** book **este** libro; **those** ideas **esas** ideas.*
- Direct object** See **Object**.
- Finite verb** A verb form such as the one in *They work hard* **Trabajan mucho**, is said to be **finite** because it indicates **tense, person** and **number**. Gerunds, infinitives and past participles are non-finite verb forms.
- Gender** In Spanish, all nouns are either masculine or feminine. For example, *el colegio* *the school*, is masculine, while *la universidad* *the university*, is feminine. Nouns referring to male people are masculine and those referring to female persons are feminine.
- Gerund** Refers to the forms of the verb ending in **-ando** and **-iendo**, e.g. **hablando, comiendo, viviendo**. Some of its uses correspond to those of the verb form ending in **-ing** in English, e.g. *She is **eating***. Está **comiendo**.
- Imperative** See **Mood**.
- Indefinite article** See **Article**.
- Indicative** See **Mood**.
- Indirect object** See **Object**.
- Infinitive** The basic form of the verb, as found in the dictionary. In Spanish, infinitives end in **-ar, -er** and **-ir**, e.g. *hablar* *to speak*, *comer* *to eat*, *vivir* *to live*.
- Irregular verb** A verb which does not behave according to a set pattern.
- Modal verb** An auxiliary verb which is used with another verb to convey a certain mood or intention, e.g. *We **must** do it* **Debemos** hacerlo (obligation); *We **can't** help you* No **podemos** ayudarte (possibility). Among modal verbs in Spanish we find **poder** *to be able to*, **can**, **deber** *must*, **tener que** *to have to*.
- Mood** Refers to the forms verbs can take depending on how these are used. There are three moods of the verb: **indicative**, normally associated with statements of fact, e.g. ***They are coming** tomorrow* **Vienen** mañana; **imperative**, used for commands, directions and instructions, e.g. ***Come** here!* ¡**Ven** aquí!; and **subjunctive**, normally associated with doubt, possibility, wishes, etc., e.g. *I don't think they'll **come*** No creo que vengan. See **Subjunctive mood**.

Noun A word like *table mesa, cat gato, kindness bondad*.

Number Used to indicate whether something is *singular* or *plural*, e.g. *the hotel el hotel* is singular, *the hotels los hoteles* is plural.

Object In the sentence *I gave him the keys Le di las llaves*, the phrase *the keys*, which undergoes the action of the verb in a direct way, is said to be the direct object, while *him*, the recipient of the giving, is the indirect object. An object can be a noun or noun phrase, e.g. *the keys*, or a pronoun, e.g. *him*.

Passive and active A sentence such as *The police caught the thief La policía atrapó al ladrón*, containing a subject (*the police*) carrying out the action expressed by the verb, is said to be an *active* sentence. In *The thief was caught by the police El ladrón fue atrapado por la policía*, the object of the active sentence (*the thief*), undergoing the action expressed by the verb, becomes the subject, and the agent carrying out the action (*the police*) is introduced by the preposition *by*, *por* in Spanish. This type of sentence is called *passive*.

Personal pronoun As the name suggests, personal pronouns refer to persons, e.g. *I yo, he él, she ella, we nosotros, him lo, le, us nos*. See **Pronoun**.

Possessive A word like *my mi, mine mío, her su, hers suyo*.

Preposition A word such as *to a, in en, between entre*, which provides information such as direction, location, time.

Pronoun A word that stands in place of a noun or noun phrase which has already been mentioned, e.g. *My brother is a teacher. He is a teacher. Mi hermano es profesor. Él es profesor. This hotel is much better. This one is much better. Éste hotel es mucho mejor. Éste es mucho mejor. My bedroom is small. Hers is big. Mi habitación es pequeña. La suya es grande*.

Reflexive pronoun A word such as *myself me; yourself te, se; ourselves nos*.

Reflexive verb When the subject and the object of a verb are one and the same, the verb is said to be reflexive, for example, *I hurt myself Me herí. We hid ourselves Nos ocultamos*.

Relative clause A group of words which refers back to something previously mentioned in the sentence, a noun or a pronoun, known as the *antecedent*. See also **Relative pronoun**.

Relative pronoun A word like *que who, whom, that, which, el/la cual that, whom, which, cuyo whose, which* introduces a relative clause. See **Relative clause**.

Subject In a sentence such as *My wife prepared a delicious meal Mi mujer preparó una comida deliciosa, my wife*, the person performing the action denoted by the verb, is the subject of the sentence. A subject can be a single word or a group of words.

Subjunctive mood The subjunctive mood is used very rarely in modern English, but there are remnants of it in sentences such as the following: *I insist that he come Insisto que venga. I wish he were here Ojalá estuviera aquí*. Spanish uses the subjunctive much more frequently than English.

Subordinate clause See **Clause**.

Tense Changes in the verb which indicate aspects of time are referred to as tenses, for example, present tense, future tense, preterite tense. In *He works in a bank Trabaja en un banco*, the verb is in the present tense. In *He worked there for a long time Trabajó allí durante mucho tiempo*, the verb is in the preterite tense.

Verb A verb is a word such as *to speak hablar, to exist existir, to feel sentir*, which can denote actions, states, sensations, etc.

| Part One:
| The verb

1

The present tense

Text

In an interview, the Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo talked about what he does before a performance, and about his spare time. The language is colloquial, and in it you will find a number of verb forms which correspond to the present tense. Read the interview for understanding first, then read it again and see how the present tense has been used.

Plácido Domingo: el artista total

- *¿Cómo es un día de Plácido Domingo antes de una función?*
- **Intento** que sea completamente tranquilo, **procuro** no aceptar ningún
5 compromiso, no tener que hacer absolutamente nada. Me **quedo** en casa, repasando, estudiando, leyendo algo, y **trato** de estar en silencio.
- *¿Qué cuidados físicos **toma** el mismo*
10 *día de una presentación? ¿**Sigue** algún régimen especial?*
- **Como** una comida muy ligera, **puede** ser un poquito de pollo a la parrilla, o un poco de ternera. Muy poquito,
15 porque con el estóago lleno no se **puede** cantar.
- *Entre sus formas de descanso, como buen español, ¿se **cuenta** la siesta?*
- Me encantaría dormirla todos los días
20 y no **puedo**, sobre todo en este país. En Estados Unidos se **arregla** uno la vida de tal forma, que no se **puede** y ¡**es** tan saludable!
- *¿Cuántas horas **duerme** en la*
25 *noche?*
- En días normales **duermo** como ocho horas, el día de la función **trato** de dormir hasta once, pero después de una presentación, me **es** muy difícil.
- 30 Hoy eran las cinco y todavía no podía conciliar el sueño. Porque te **quedas** excitado, no sólo en el papel, sino que por la función misma.
- *¿Dónde **veranea** Plácido Domingo?*
- 35 – **Depende**, **vamos** a la playa la mayoría de las veces, y hemos tratado de que las últimas vacaciones sean siempre en México, ya que mi madre **vive** allí. **Vamos** a Acapulco, que me
40 **gusta** mucho.

The present tense

1 USAGE

The present tense is used:

- a** To refer to an action or a state of affairs which is valid in the present.

Mi madre **vive** allí. (línea 38) *My mother lives there.*

- b** To refer to something which is generally true or universal.

No **se puede** cantar. (l. 15–16) *You can't sing.*

Other examples are **se arregla, puede, es**. (l. 21, 22, 23).

- c** To refer to habitual actions.

Duermo como ocho horas. (l. 26) *I sleep about eight hours.*

There are a number of other examples of this use in the text. Consider for instance **intento, procuro** (1.3, 4), **me quedo** (1.6), **toma** (1.9).

- d** To refer to a timeless fact or situation.

Me gusta mucho. (l. 39–40) *I like it very much.*

Also, **puedo** (1.20), **es** (1.23), **depende** (1.35).

- e** To refer to actions taking place at the moment of speaking.

El niño **duerme**. (for 'Está durmiendo') *The child is sleeping.*

- f** To express ability.

Toca el piano. *He/she plays the piano.*

- g** To refer to the future, especially to pre-arranged events and, generally, with verbs of movement.

En mayo **se elige** un nuevo presidente. *A new president will be elected in May.*

Mañana **llega** Antonio. *Antonio is arriving tomorrow.*

- h** To refer to the past (historic present).

La guerra **termina** en 1939. *The war ended in 1939.*

- i** To refer to an action which began in the past and is still in progress.

Hace cinco años que **viven** allí. *They've been living there for five years.*

j As an imperative, especially in directions and instructions.

En la esquina **doblas** a la derecha. *You turn right at the corner.*

k In requests.

¿Me **pasas** el pan? *Will you pass the bread?*

2 FORMATION

Regular verbs

Spanish verbs fall into three categories according to the ending of the infinitive (the base or dictionary form of the verb): **-ar**, **-er** and **-ir**. Most verbs are “regular”, that is, they follow a fixed pattern in their conjugation. To form the present tense, remove the **-ar**, **-er** or **-ir** of the infinitive and add the endings for the present tense:

	tomar	comer	vivir
yo	tomo	como	vivo
tú	tomas	comes	vives
usted/él/ella	toma	come	vive
nosotros/as	tomamos	comemos	vivimos
vosotros/as	tomáis	coméis	vivís
ustedes/ellos/ellas	toman	comen	viven

Stem-changing verbs

A number of verbs change their stem (the infinitive, e.g. **tomar**, minus the ending: **tom-**) in the present tense, in all but the first and second person plural, but otherwise their endings are those of regular verbs. Verbs like **contar(se)** (l. 18) *to include, be included, count*, **poder** (l. 16) *to be able to, can*, **dormir** (l. 24, 26) *to sleep* and **seguir** (l. 10) *to follow*, are stem-changing, as you will see from their forms below.

o into ue

–ar: **cuento**, **cuentas**, **cuenta**, **contamos**, **contáis**, **cuentan**.
–er: **puedo**, **puedes**, **puede**, **podemos**, **podéis**, **pueden**.
–ir: **duermo**, **duermes**, **duerme**, **dormimos**, **dormís**, **duermen**.

e into i

–ir: **sigo**, **sigues**, **sigue**, **seguimos**, **seguís**, **siguen**.

e into ie

There are no examples of this type of change in the text, but there are many such verbs, e.g. **empezar** *to begin*, **pensar** *to think*, **entender** *to understand*, **querer** *to want*, **preferir** *to prefer*, **venir** *to come*. Here are the present tense forms of three of these verbs:

–ar: **empiezo**, **empiezas**, **empieza**, **empezamos**, **empezáis**, **empiezan**.
–er: **entiendo**, **entiendes**, **entiende**, **entendemos**, **entendéis**, **entienden**.
–ir: **prefiero**, **prefieres**, **prefiere**, **preferimos**, **preferís**, **prefieren**.

Stem changes occur not only in the present tense but also in other tenses, such as the preterite ([Chapter 2](#)), the present subjunctive ([Chapter 14](#)) and imperfect subjunctive ([Chapter 15](#)), and also in the imperative ([Chapter 17](#)) and the gerund ([Chapter 9](#)).

Spelling changes

A number of verbs, not considered irregular, undergo changes in the written form of the stem. The following examples illustrate spelling changes affecting some present tense forms, but note that spelling changes also occur in other tenses:

seguir (l. 10) *to follow*, (yo) **sigo**; **vencer** *to conquer*, (yo) **venzo**; **coger** *to catch*, (yo) **cojo**; **conocer** *to know*, (yo) **conozco**; **construir** *to build*, (yo) **construyo**, (tú) **construyes**, (usted, él, ella) **construye**, (ustedes, ellos, ellas) **construyen**.

Verbs derived from these, and most verbs with a similar spelling, undergo similar changes. For spelling rules affecting verbs see pages 264–5.

Irregular first person singular

Many verbs are irregular in the first person singular (**yo**) of the present tense. Among these we find:

caer <i>to fall</i>	caigo	salir <i>to go out</i>	salgo
hacer <i>to do, make</i>	hago	traer <i>to bring</i>	traigo
poner <i>to put, place</i>	pongo	valer <i>to be worth</i>	valgo

Some are also stem-changing: **decir** *to say, tell* (**digo**, **dices**, **dice...**), **venir** *to come* (**vengo**, **vienes**, **viene...**), **tener** *to have* (**tengo**, **tienes**, **tiene.**), etc.

Irregular verbs

A number of verbs are called “irregular” because they do not follow a fixed pattern in their conjugation. Verbs like **ser** (l. 1) *to be*, and **ir** (l. 39) *to go*, fall within this category. The following are their present tense forms:

	ser	ir
yo	soy	voy
tú	eres	vas
usted/él/ella	es	va
nosotros/as	somos	vamos
vosotros/as	sois	vais
ustedes/ellos/ellas	son	van

See also **Irregular verbs** on pages 261–4.

OMISSION OF SUBJECT PRONOUNS

Subject pronouns (**yo**, **tú**, **él**, etc.) are usually omitted in Spanish, unless there is ambiguity, as for **usted**, **él**, **ella**, which share the same verb endings, and also for emphasis or contrast. **Usted** (abbreviated **Vd.**) and **ustedes** (abbreviated **Vds.**) are heard more often as a sign of politeness.

LATIN AMERICAN USAGE

The **vosotros/as** subject pronoun, used for familiar address in the plural, and the corresponding form of the verb, are not used in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, where **ustedes** is used in both formal and familiar address.

In the Río de la Plata area (Argentina and Uruguay), **vos** is used instead of **tú**. Regular present tense forms for **vos** are different from those of **tú** above: **vos tomás, vos comés, vos vivís**. Stem changes affecting the **tú** form of the verb, e.g. **tú tienes**, do not apply to the **vos** forms, e.g. **vos tenés**. The irregular form **eres** (from **ser**) becomes **sos: vos sos** (see also [Chapters 14, 17](#) and [25](#)).

Other points to note in the text

- Verb (+ preposition) + infinitive: *procuro no aceptar* (l. 4), *no tener que hacer* (l. 5), *trato de estar* (l. 8), *puede ser* (l. 12–13), etc. (see [Chapters 8](#) and [28](#))
- Gerund: *me quedo ... repasando* (l. 6–7), *estudiando, leyendo* (l. 7) (see [Chapter 9](#))
- Negation: *procuro no aceptar ningún compromiso* (l. 4–5), *no tener que hacer... nada* (l. 5–6), *no sólo ... sino* (l. 32) (see [Chapter 27](#))

See for further information:

Batchelor and Pountain, pp. 373–4

Butt, pp. 4–6

Butt and Benjamin, pp. 206–9

Kattán-Ibarra and Pountain, pp. 59, 64–8, 72–3, 39
407

Muñoz and Thacker, pp. 71, 215

EXERCISES

1 Complete these sentences by putting the appropriate present tense ending to each verb.

- Mañana (yo) sac ____ las entradas y luego te llamo ¿vale?
- Si (tú) no estudié ____, no aprendí ____ nada.
- Plácido Domingo y su mujer visitó ____ a su madre que vivió ____ en Acapulco.
- Usted escribió ____ artículos para *La Vanguardia* ¿verdad?
- En la discoteca Rosario y yo bailé ____ y bebí ____ mucho.
- El Día de Reyes los niños españoles recibieron ____ regalos.
- Ustedes hablaron ____ muy bien inglés.
- Oye, Rafa, ¿tú y Pili subieron ____ en el ascensor?
- Hace diez años que (nosotros) vivimos ____ en Santander.
- Antes de una función, los músicos intentaron ____ no hacer nada.
- ¿Por qué no guardaron ____ (vosotros) las cosas en el armario?
- De día Fernando trabajó ____ como guía y de noche tocó ____ la guitarra en un bar. Llegó ____ a casa agotado.
- Hoy día (nosotros) pasamos ____ menos tiempo con la familia.
- Todos los días Begoña corre ____ en el parque.
- (Yo) compré ____ el periódico en el quiosco de la esquina y lo leí ____ mientras desayuné en el bar.

2 Put the verb in brackets into the correct form of the present tense.

- a Mi padre me (decir) _____ que yo no (conducir) _____ bien.
- b ¿No _____ (conocer, tú) a la hermana de Enrique? Yo, sí que la _____
- c ¿A qué hora (empezar) _____ el partido?, que yo no (conducir),
- d ¿Cuándo (pensar, vosotros) _____
- e En mis ratos libres (oír) _____
- f Si (querer, tú) _____ tocar bien el piano, (tener) _____ que dedicarle muchas horas
- g Mariana (jugar) _____ bien al ajedrez.
- h Todavía no (saber, yo) _____ a qué hora (volver, yo) _____ el jueves.
- i ¿Me (dejar, tú) _____ tu diccionario un momento? No (tener, yo) _____ el mío.
- j (Calentar, usted) _____ el aceite, (freír) _____ las patatas* y (añadir) _____ el jamón.
- k Cuánto _____ (llover) en este país!
- l Y luego (venir, ellos) _____ y nos (decir) _____ que no lo (querer) _____
- m Como (saber, tú) _____ el camino, yo te (seguir) _____.
- n No (ir, ellos) _____ a tomar la sopa, (preferir) _____ los entremeses. Y también (pedir) _____ más pan.
- o En invierno (soler, yo) _____ dormir unas ocho horas por noche, pero en verano (dormir) _____ menos.
- * *In Latin American Spanish: las papas.*

3 Use one of the verbs below to complete each sentence.

pintar	ir	mentir	empezar	servir
nevar	ser	perder	abrir	conseguir
conducir	asistir	dormir	comer	medir

- a Los vegetarianos no _____ carne.
- b Un artista _____ cuadros.
- c _____ mucho en la Sierra Nevada.
- d Si _____ el pasaporte, tienes que ir a la comisaría.
- e Las corridas de toros _____ a las cinco de la tarde.
- f En días normales Plácido Domingo _____ ocho horas.
- g Ustedes _____ escoceses ¿verdad?
- h La mayoría de la gente _____ de Nueva York a Miami en avión.
- i La cena se _____ a partir de las nueve.
- j Los británicos _____ por la izquierda.
- k Esta habitación _____ 3 metros de ancho.
- l Si no _____ entradas, no pueden ir al concierto.
- m Ese grupo de estudiantes sólo _____ a clase por la mañana.
- n Qué mentiroso es Miguel! _____ tanto que nadie le cree cuando dice la verdad.
- o Aquí los comercios no _____ hasta las diez.

4 Translate into Spanish using the present tense to refer to the future.

‘On Friday, we’ll be saying goodbye to María. What shall we give her as a present?’

‘She likes jewellery. Shall we give her some earrings?’

‘Yes, why not? I’ll phone her tonight to tell her that there’s a party at my house Thursday night.’

‘And we’ll buy the earrings when?’

‘Shall we leave it until Wednesday? I have to go to Paris and I’ll not be back until Tuesday.’

‘O.K. Where shall we meet? Outside the jeweller’s?’

‘Yes. I’ll see you there at ten.’

- 5** After rereading the interview with Plácido Domingo, write, as in a report, or tell a partner in Spanish what he says he does before a performance.
- 6** A Spanish film crew has come to your town and you have the chance to interview the director. Prepare questions to find out:
- what time s/he starts and finishes work
 - whether s/he eats with the actors
 - to relax, what books s/he reads
 - what music s/he listens to
 - what programmes s/he watches on television
 - what sport s/he does to keep fit.

You may think of other questions you can formulate using the present tense to add to this list.

- 7** Imagining that you are the film director, make up answers to the questions in exercise **6**.
- 8** How similar and how different is your lifestyle to the one outlined here by Rafael? Discuss with a partner and/or write a response detailing the similarities and differences in lifestyle.
- Yo, normalmente, desayuno en un bar cerca del trabajo. Tomo un zumo de naranja, un café con leche y una tostada.
 - A media mañana, vuelvo al bar con los compañeros de trabajo y tomo otro café.
 - A la hora de comer, voy a casa y como con mi familia. Veo un poco de tele antes de volver a trabajar.
 - Cuando termino de trabajar, no voy directamente a casa. Me reúno con los amigos en un bar al lado de casa.
 - Dos veces a la semana, voy al gimnasio para mantenerme en forma.
 - Los fines de semana, suelo ir al pueblo con la familia. Tenemos una casa allí y es donde siempre pasamos las vacaciones.
-

2

The preterite

Text

The following passage comes from a novel by the late Argentinian writer Manuel Puig, better known for his work *El beso de la mujer araña* (*The Kiss of the Spider Woman*). The main grammatical point here is the preterite tense, known in English as the simple past. Read the text and study its use.

Boquitas pintadas

- El ya mencionado jueves 23 de abril de 1937 Juan Carlos Jacinto Eusebio Etchepare **se despertó** a las 9:30 cuando su madre **golpeó** a la puerta y **entró** al cuarto. Juan Carlos no **contestó** a las palabras cariñosas de su madre. La taza de té **quedó** sobre la mesa de luz. Juan Carlos **se abrigó** con una bata y **fue**
- 5 a cepillarse los dientes. El mal gusto de la boca **desapareció**. **Volvió** a su habitación, el té estaba tibio, **llamó** a su madre y **pidió** que se lo calentara. A las 9:55 **tomó** en la cama una taza de té casi hirviente, con la convicción de que ese calor le haría bien al pecho. **Pensó** en la posibilidad de beber constantemente cosas muy calientes y envolverse en paños calientes, con los
- 10 pies junto a una bolsa de agua caliente, la cabeza envuelta en una bufanda de lana con únicamente la nariz y la boca descubiertas, para terminar con la debilidad de su aparato respiratorio.

Manuel Puig, *Boquitas pintadas*, © Herederos de Manuel Puig

The preterite

1 USAGE

- a To refer to actions which took place and were completed at some point in the past. In this context it may be accompanied by time phrases such as **ayer** *yesterday*, **el lunes pasado** *last Monday*, **hace una semana** *a week ago*, **el verano pasado** *last summer*, **el ya mencionado jueves 23 de abril de 1937** (1. 1).
- b In a narrative context it is often used alongside the imperfect tense ([Chapter 3](#)), with the preterite signalling a completed action or series of actions, and the imperfect providing a descriptive framework.

Volvió a su habitación, el té **estaba** tibio, **llamó** a su madre y **pidió** que se lo calentara. (1. 5–6). *He returned to his room, the tea was cold, he called his mother and asked her to heat it for him.*

The description in this sentence is provided by the imperfect tense form **estaba** *it was*.

- c To refer to an action which was completed before another one took place or to one which was interrupted at some point in the past.

Después que **cenó, salió** a dar un paseo. *After he/she had dinner, he/she went out for a walk.* **Trabajó** allí hasta que la **despidieron**. *She worked there until she was sacked.*

- d To refer to actions which took place over a prolonged period of time but ended in the past.

Vivieron en la Argentina durante quince años. *They lived in Argentina for fifteen years.*

THE PRETERITE AND THE IMPERFECT

The distinction Spanish makes between the preterite and the imperfect ([Chapter 3](#)) is very important, as this affects meaning. Note the difference between the following sentences:

Trabajé en un banco. *I worked in a bank.*

Trabajaba en un banco. *I worked/was working/used to work in a bank.*

Trabajé signals a completed past event, while **trabajaba** refers to an ongoing past action. A suitable time phrase for the first sentence might be **desde 1995 hasta 1999** *from 1995 till 1999*. To the second example one could add **en aquel tiempo** *at that time*.

2 FORMATION

Regular verbs

entrar	volver	vivir
entré	volví	viví
entraste	volviste	viviste
entró	volvió	vivió
entramos	volvimos	vivimos
entrasteis	volvisteis	vivisteis
entraron	volvieron	vivieron

Su madre **golpeó** a la puerta y **entró** al cuarto. (l. 2–3) *His mother knocked on the door and entered the room.*

No **contestó** ... (l. 3) *He did not reply ...*

Volvió a su habitación. (l. 5–6) *He returned to his room.*

El mal gusto de la boca **desapareció**. (l. 5) *The bad taste in his mouth disappeared.*

Vivieron allí muchos años. *They lived there for many years.*

Stem-changing verbs

- a Some-**ir** verbs, like **pedir** *to ask for*, in line 6, change the e of the stem into i in the third person singular (**Vd., él, ella**) and plural (**Vds., ellos, ellas**)

Pidió que se lo calentara. (l. 6) *He asked her to heat it for him.*
¿Qué pidieron? What did they ask for?

Among other verbs like **pedir** we find **corregir** to correct, **despedir(se)** to say goodbye, **divertirse** to have fun, **elegir** to choose, **mentir** to lie, **preferir** to prefer, **sentir(se)** to feel, **reír(se)** to laugh, **servir** to serve, **vestir(se)** to dress, etc.

b Dormir to sleep, like **dormirse** to fall asleep, and **morir(se)** to die, change the **o** of the stem into **u** in the third person singular and plural.

Se **durmió** inmediatamente. *He/she fell asleep immediately.*
Durmieron toda la mañana. *They slept all morning.*

Irregular verbs

A number of very common verbs, like **ir** to go, in line 4, have irregular preterite forms.

Fue a cepillarse los dientes. (l. 4–5) *He went to brush his teeth.*

The following list includes only the most common irregular verbs. For their forms see the **Irregular verbs** on pages 261–4:

andar to walk, **caber** to fit, to be contained, **dar** to give, **decir** to say, **estar** to be, **haber** to have (auxiliary), **hacer** to do, make, **ir** to go (conjugated like **ser**), **poder** to be able, **poner** to put, **querer** to want, **saber** to know, **ser** to be (conjugated like **ir**), **tener** to have, traer to bring, **venir** to come, **ver** to see.

Compounds of these verbs, for example **componer** to compose, **contener** to contain, **deshacer** to undo, are also irregular.

Spelling changes

A few verbs undergo spelling changes in the first person singular (**yo**) only: **c** changes to **qu** before **e**, e.g. **buscar** to look for, **busqué**; **tocar** to touch, play **toqué**.

g changes to **gu** before **e**, e.g. **llegar** to arrive, **llegué**; **pagar** to pay, **pagué**.

z changes to **c** before **e**, e.g. **comenzar** to begin, start, **comencé**; **empezar** to begin, start, **empecé**.

For other spelling rules affecting verbs see pages 264–5.

Other points to note in the text

- Prepositions: *a* (l. 2), *sobre* (l. 4), *con* (l. 4), *en* (l. 7), *para* (l. 11), etc. (see [Chapter 28](#))
- Reflexive verbs: *se despertó* (l. 2), *se abrigó* (l. 4), *cepillarse* (l. 5), *envolverse* (l. 9) (see [Chapter 12](#))
- Definite article: *el...* *jueves* (l. 1), *a las 9:30* (l. 2), *las palabras* (l. 3), *cepillarse los dientes* (l. 5), etc. (see [Chapter 18](#))

See for further information:

Batchelor and Pountain, pp. 376–7

Butt, pp. 6–7

Butt and Benjamin, pp. 209–14

Kattán-Ibarra and Pountain, pp. 60, 68–9, 75–6, 41
418–20

Muñoz and Thacker, pp. 84, 91, 220, 224

EXERCISES

1 Complete these sentences by putting the appropriate preterite tense ending to each verb.

- a (yo) Pas dos ____ horas viendo la tele y luego sal ____ a dar un paseo.
 - b ¿(tú) Estudi ____ castellano en la universidad y no le *El Quijote*?
 - c La madre de Juan Carlos le prepar ____ una taza de té pero él no la beb.
 - d ¿A qué hora (usted) entr ____ y por qué no cog ____ * los papeles?
 - e (nosotros) Viaj ____ a Córdoba en autocar y de allí sali ____ para Resistencia.
 - f ¿(vosotros) Mand ____ los informes pero no recib ninguna respuesta? Qué raro!
 - g Los amigos de Juan Carlos le llam y luego sub ____ a visitarle.
 - h Ustedes encontr ____ el sitio sin dificultad ¿verdad? ¿Volv ____ en taxi o en autobús?
 - i Su hijo no les escrib ____ ni les llam ____ una sola vez.
 - j Decid ____ quedarnos la noche en Santo Domingo.
 - k Los dos jóvenes intent ____ aprender quechua antes de emprender su viaje a los Andes.
 - l (Ellos) no lo encontr ____ nada fácil y no aprend ____ mucho.
 - m ¿Dónde (tú) conoc ____ a tu mujer?
 - n El tren lleg ____ con dos horas de retraso y por eso Marisol perd ____ el último autobús.
 - o (Yo) Alquil ____ un coche en Guadalajara y recorr ____ toda la provincia.
- * *In some Latin American countries, notably Argentina, **tomar** should be used rather than **coger**, which has sexual connotations.*

2 Put the verb in brackets into the correct form of the preterite.

- a El verano pasado (ir, yo) ____ por primera vez a Cuba. (Ser) ____ una experiencia maravillosa.
 - b Carmen no (saber) ____ qué hacer y por eso no (hacer) ____ nada.
 - c (Andar, nosotros) ____ y (andar) ____ pero estábamos completamente perdidos y no (poder) ____ encontrar la casa.
 - d ¿Dónde (estar, vosotros) ____ ayer? ¿Por qué no (venir) ____ a clase?
 - e No nos (servir, ellos) ____ la paella como era debido así que (ir, nosotros) ____ a pedir el libro de reclamaciones pero nos (decir, ellos) ____ que no existía.
 - f ¿Y esto lo (traducir, ustedes) ____ cuando (estar) ____ en Bolivia?
 - g – Me encanta tu poncho. ¿Dónde lo (comprar, tú) ____?
– No lo (comprar) ____ yo. Me lo (traer) ____ Carlos de Argentina.
 - h No (tocar, yo) ____ nada. (Entrar ____, (poner) ____ los papeles en el escritorio pero no (tocar) ____ nada.
 - i – El jueves (empezar, yo) ____ a trabajar a las ocho.
– No. Usted (empezar) ____ más tarde.
– No, no es verdad. (Llegar, yo) ____ a las ocho menos cuarto, (tomar) ____ un café y (ponerme) ____ a trabajar. Luego (venir) ____ Carlos y entre una cosa y otra no (tener, yo) ____ tiempo para terminarlo.
 - j Cuando ella (ver) ____ a dos ladrones salir por la ventana de su casa, (coger)* ____ una piedra, (ponerse) ____ a gritar y a seguirlos, y (conseguir) ____ retenerlos.
- * See note above about the use of **coger**.

- 3 The following text is written using the historic present. Rewrite it using the preterite tense.

Carlos Gardel, el famoso cantante de tango, nace con el nombre de Charles Gardes en Francia a finales de 1890. Sus padres deciden probar fortuna en Argentina y el 9 de marzo de 1893 llegan a Buenos Aires. Es aquí donde nace su interés por la música y donde adopta el nombre de Carlos Gardel. Recibe clases de solfeo de algunos de los cantantes más conocidos de la época y en 1917 incorpora el tango a su repertorio y se convierte en cantor de tangos. Escribe canciones, sale en películas y llega a ser uno de los intérpretes de tango más famosos del mundo. Muere el 24 de junio de 1935 en Medellín, Colombia, cuando su avión se estrella contra otro.

- 4 Put the verb in brackets into the correct form of the preterite, then imagine and recount in Spanish what Juan Carlos did for the rest of that day, after he finally got up.

Esa mañana Juan Carlos no se sentía bien cuando (despertarse) _____ y por eso no (querer) levantarse. Su madre le (dar) _____ un té pero en vez de beberlo (ir) _____ al cuarto de baño. El té (enfriarse) _____ y su madre (tener) _____ que prepararle otro. Después de beberlo, Juan Carlos (dormirse) _____ y (dormir) _____ hasta la hora del almuerzo cuando (levantarse) _____.

- 5 You lead such a busy life that you note down everything in your diary. Using this extract from last Friday, give an account of what you did that day. You may wish to add information to this bare outline.

mañana

7, 30 gimnasio

9, 00 desayuno

9, 30 hora con el dentista

10, 00 reunión con jefe de sección

1, 30 Bar La Flor – aperitivos con Jaime y Susana tarde

tarde

2, 30 Restaurante La Oficina – almuerzo con Nacho

4, 30 preparar informe para semana que viene

7, 30 casa, llamar a Adolfo – su cumpleaños

8, 30 Bar Gregorio – copas con la pandilla

9, 30 cena y cine con M

- 6 Read these answers that Antonio gave you about his latest holidays. Then write the questions you asked him to elicit these answers.

a Bueno, fui a La Habana, Cuba.

b Estuve una semana allí.

c No, no viajé solo. Fui con unos amigos.

d Viajamos primero en autobús hasta el aeropuerto y allí tomamos un avión que nos llevó a La Habana.

e Nos alojamos en un hotel en un complejo turístico bastante alejado del centro.

f El primer día dimos un paseo por la parte vieja de la ciudad.

g Visitamos el Museo de la Revolución y también una fábrica de tabacos. **h** Por la noche no salimos, no.

i Hizo un tiempo espléndido – sol y calor todos los días.

j Compré lo típico – unas maracas, unos CDs de son cubano y habanos, por supuesto.

k Me lo pasé estupendamente bien.

- 7 Write an account of a real or imaginary holiday, saying where you went, with whom, how you travelled,

what you did there, etc.

3

The imperfect

Text 1

The Spanish film director Pedro Almodóvar was asked why he left his parents' home when he was young. As you read this, and the interviews which follow, focus attention on the use of the imperfect tense.

“Parece que maduré, aunque no quería”

– *¿Por qué huir?*

– Porque tanto ella como mi padre habían decidido un futuro inmediato para mí que no **era** el que yo **quería**,

5 aunque fuera un niño. Yo ya **sabía** algunas cosas de mi vida y no **coincidían** con el futuro que ellos **proyectaban**: me habían buscado trabajo en un banco del pueblo y les

10 dije que no **quería**. Pero no me **dejaban** partir. Amenazaron con mandarme incluso a la Guardia Civil, pero les dije que no, que me **iba**. Después vieron que **era** en serio,

15 que no **era** un capricho, que **estaba** dispuesto a irme a Madrid a seguir estudiando, a ser dueño de mi vida y a crear mi futuro. Entonces, como muchos chicos, me fui dándole

20 una patada a la puerta y estuve separado de ellos.

Revista *Wikén*, Diario *El Mercurio*, Chile

Text 2

The Chilean writer Isabel Allendes talk about her childhood.

“Un libro es más importante que un pan bien hecho”

– *¿De dónde nace su rebeldía contra la autoridad masculina?*

– De muy, muy pequeña. Yo me crié en una casa de hombres, en una familia

5 muy severa. La vida **era** austeridad, esfuerzo, disciplina, sufrimiento. No se **discutía** nunca una decisión de mi abuelo. Después **venían** mis tíos, que **eran** unos bárbaros. Ellos **tenían**

10 la libertad y la autoridad que mi madre nunca tuvo. Creo que de muy chica me di cuenta de eso y me rebelé contra esa autoridad. Yo **vivía** en una sociedad donde lo que mandaba era

15 siempre masculino, y para colmo, me tocó un golpe militar. Y no hay nada más autoritario, más

masculino que eso.

Diario *Expansión*, España

Text 3

Gabriel García Márquez, the Colombian writer, remembers his grandparents.

El barco donde estaba el paraíso

- ¿Qué tanta influencia tuvo tu abuela en tu formación?
- El esposo de mi abuela, mi abuelo, **era** un coronel de las guerras civiles de
5 fines de siglo pasado, que tuvo actuaciones verdaderamente notables de valor, de arrojo, de
determinación. Así lo recuerdo ahora. En aquel momento no lo **podía** juzgar:
10 él **era** el jefe, el coronel de la casa. Yo **vivía** en el mundo de las mujeres; él **era** el único hombre en una
casa llena de mujeres. Cuando llegué, yo **era** el segundo hombre,
15 pero **estaba** entre las mujeres, y lo **veía** a él desde el punto de vista de las mujeres y me **daba** cuenta de
que nadie le **hacía** caso. El mundo aquél y el mundo entero **giraban** alrededor
20 del sol por la determinación de las mujeres. Y, claro, el centro de ese universo de mujeres **era** la
abuela. La abuela, que se **llamaba** Tranquilina y que **era** la persona más
25 intranquila y más móvil que yo recuerde.

Diario *El Mercurio*, Chile

The imperfect

1 USAGE

The imperfect tense is used:

- a** Generally, to refer to an ongoing state or action in the past, whose beginning or end is not specified. In this context, English normally uses the simple past or, depending on the meaning, a construction with *used to*. Most imperfect tense forms in the texts correspond to this usage.

Yo ya **sabía** algunas cosas ... (T. 1, l. 5–6) *I already knew a few things ...*

Yo **vivía** en el mundo ... (T. 3, l. 11) *I lived in a world ...*

Consider also **era**, **quería** (T. 1, l. 4), **venían**, **eran** (T. 2, l. 8, 9), **podía** (T. 3, l. 9).

- b** In narrative contexts, in conjunction with the preterite, where the imperfect provides the background description for the actions expressed by the preterite. In English, both correspond to the simple past.

Yo me crié en una casa de hombres ... (T. 2, l. 3–4) *I was brought up in a house full of men.*

La vida **era** austeridad ... (T. 2, l. 5) *Life was austerity ...*

- c** To refer to past habitual actions, expressed in English through the simple past or the *used to* form.

Giraban alrededor del sol. (T. 3, l. 19–20) *They revolved around the sun.*