

# The imperative



MOOD	Imperative
TIME	Refers to the present
KEY PHRASES	Any command
STRUCTURE	Simple: VERB BASE + VERB ENDING

The imperative deals with a single aspect of the language—giving commands. We call the imperative a mood rather than a tense, because commands do not vary according to time as the tenses do. The only time frame involved in a command is “now,” as in “Clean your room *now*.”

Statements in the imperative are direct. There are no qualifiers, such as “*I want you to clean your room*” or “*You should clean your room*.” The message is straightforward, often containing only one word—“Go!” “Stop!” “Look!” “Wait!” “Listen!”

The understood recipient of any command is “you.” Even when admonishing yourself to do something, you are speaking to yourself as “you” (the **tú** form in Spanish). We can, however, also give “we” commands, which in English usually begin with “let’s”—“Let’s dance,” “Let’s eat,” “Let’s go.”

This chapter covers commands in five sections: a section for each of the four forms of “you” in Spanish (**tú**, **usted**, **vosotros**, and **ustedes**), and a fifth section for “we,” or **nosotros**, commands. Verbs for which the affirmative command (“Go!”) differs from the negative command (“Don’t go!”) in Spanish will be covered, as will the use of object pronouns with commands.

One final note: Work with the imperative establishes a good foundation for working with the present subjunctive, which is introduced in the next chapter.

## tú commands

### Regular affirmative commands

A regular affirmative command is formed by simply dropping the *s* from the second-person singular conjugated form, as follows.

Hablas.	<i>You speak.</i>	>	¡Habla!	<i>Speak!</i>
Comes.	<i>You eat.</i>	>	¡Come!	<i>Eat!</i>
Vives.	<i>You live.</i>	>	¡Vive!	<i>Live!</i>

**Traducción** Rewrite the following affirmative commands in Spanish, using tú commands.

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Study! _____   | 11. Sell! _____     |
| 2. Work! _____    | 12. Pay! _____      |
| 3. Look! _____    | 13. Suffer! _____   |
| 4. Listen! _____  | 14. Count! _____    |
| 5. Read! _____    | 15. Fly! _____      |
| 6. Run! _____     | 16. Begin! _____    |
| 7. Walk! _____    | 17. Think! _____    |
| 8. Dance! _____   | 18. Sleep! _____    |
| 9. Write! _____   | 19. Continue! _____ |
| 10. Decide! _____ | 20. Confess! _____  |

## Regular negative commands

A regular negative command is formed as follows.

- 1 Begin with the present tense first-person singular (yo) form of the verb.
- 2 Remove the -o ending. This is called the "yo stem."
- 3 For -ar verbs, add -es. For -er and -ir verbs, add -as.

EXAMPLES    **hablo** > **habl-** > **hables**  
                   **como** > **com-** > **comas**  
                   **escribo** > **escrib-** > **escribas**

¡No hables!	<i>Don't speak!</i>	¡No compres el pescado!	<i>Don't buy the fish!</i>
¡No comas!	<i>Don't eat!</i>	¡No vendas la casa!	<i>Don't sell the house!</i>
¡No escribas!	<i>Don't write!</i>	¡No abras la puerta!	<i>Don't open the door!</i>

NOTE When the yo form ends in -oy, such as in *estar*, the -oy is removed to form the "yo stem."

## Standard orthographic (spelling) changes

Before the letter e, the following orthographic changes come into play.

◆ c > qu

No tocas el piano.	>	¡No toques el piano!
<i>You don't play the piano.</i>		<i>Don't play the piano!</i>

◆ g > gu

No juegas al béisbol.	>	¡No juegues al béisbol!
<i>You don't play baseball.</i>		<i>Don't play baseball!</i>

◆ z > c

No comienzas.  
You don't begin.

> ¡No comiences!  
Don't begin!

EJERCICIO

19·2

**Traducción** Rewrite the following negative commands in Spanish, using tú commands.

1. Don't look! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Don't sing! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Don't study! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Don't run! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Don't think! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Don't drink the water! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Don't arrive late! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Don't practice now! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Don't pay the bill! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Don't organize the papers! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Don't read my diary! \_\_\_\_\_
12. Don't dance on the table! \_\_\_\_\_
13. Don't open the windows! \_\_\_\_\_
14. Don't admit anything! \_\_\_\_\_
15. Don't believe anything! \_\_\_\_\_

## Irregular tú commands

There are very few verbs that have irregular commands in the **tú** form. Listed below are the most common infinitives for these verbs, with both their affirmative and negative command forms.

INFINITIVE	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
decir	<b>di</b>	<b>no digas</b>
hacer	<b>haz</b>	<b>no hagas</b>
ir	<b>ve</b>	<b>no vayas</b>
poner	<b>pon</b>	<b>no pongas</b>
salir	<b>sal</b>	<b>no salgas</b>
ser	<b>sé</b>	<b>no seas</b>
tener	<b>ten</b>	<b>no tengas</b>
venir	<b>ven</b>	<b>no vengas</b>

**Traducción** Rewrite the following irregular commands in Spanish, using tú commands.

1. Put the book here! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Tell the truth! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Make the bed! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Leave the house! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Come to the kitchen! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Be kind! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Go to the living room! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Have the money by tomorrow! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Don't put the shoes on the table! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Don't say anything! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Don't make the beds! \_\_\_\_\_
12. Don't leave now! \_\_\_\_\_
13. Don't come tomorrow! \_\_\_\_\_
14. Don't be selfish! \_\_\_\_\_
15. Don't go shopping today! \_\_\_\_\_
16. Don't have animals in the house! \_\_\_\_\_

## Affirmative commands with object pronouns

With an affirmative command, the object pronoun(s) are attached directly to the end of the verb in its imperative form.

¡Estúdialo!	<i>Study it!</i>	¡Hazme un favor!	<i>Do me a favor!</i>
¡Tráemelo!	<i>Bring it to me!</i>	¡Dinos el secreto!	<i>Tell us the secret!</i>
¡Déme el libro!	<i>Give me the book!</i>	¡Levántate!	<i>Stand up!</i>
¡Déjame en paz!	<i>Leave me alone!</i>	¡Tráigame el libro!	<i>Bring me the book!</i>

Note that the original stress pattern is retained for pronunciation. In Spanish words that end with a vowel, an **n**, or an **s**, the natural stress falls on the next-to-last syllable. When the addition of an object pronoun (or pronouns) would affect the original stress pattern, a written accent is added so that the stress remains on the originally stressed syllable. For the verb **dar**, the command form **dé** often retains its written accent with an object pronoun attached, although the original stress would be retained without it.

Habla.	<i>He speaks.</i>	¡Habla!	<i>Speak!</i>	¡Háblame!	<i>Speak to me!</i>
Mira.	<i>He looks.</i>	¡Mira!	<i>Look!</i>	¡Míralos!	<i>Look at them!</i>
Come.	<i>He eats.</i>	¡Come!	<i>Eat!</i>	¡Cómelo!	<i>Eat it!</i>

When two object pronouns are involved, remember the RID rule:

**Reflexive, Indirect, Direct**

A reflexive pronoun precedes an indirect or direct object pronoun, and an indirect object pronoun precedes a direct object pronoun. If both the indirect and direct object pronouns begin with the letter *l*, the indirect pronoun changes to *se*, as in the last example below. (This rule for the order of object pronouns applies for all imperatives—*tú*, *usted*, *vosotros*, *ustedes*, and *nosotros* commands.)

¡Dímelo!	<i>Tell it to me!</i>	¡Cómpratelo!	<i>Buy it for yourself!</i>
¡Dámelas!	<i>Give them to me!</i>	¡Dáselo!	<i>Give it to him!</i>

**EJERCICIO**

**19·4**

**Traducción** Rewrite the following affirmative commands in Spanish, using *tú* commands.

1. Buy it [m.]! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sell it [f.]! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sit down! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Go to bed! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Take a bath! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Tell me a story! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Put it [m.] here! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Go away! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Put them [f.] there! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Leave us alone! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Tell it [m.] to us! \_\_\_\_\_
12. Write it [f.] to me! \_\_\_\_\_
13. Sing it [f.] to her! \_\_\_\_\_
14. Buy it [m.] for me! \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do it [m.] for yourself! \_\_\_\_\_

## Negative commands with object pronouns

With a negative command, the object pronoun(s) precede the verb in its imperative form. The object pronoun is independent of the verb. When there are two object pronouns, the RID rule applies.

¡No me mires!	<i>Don't look at me!</i>	¡No lo hagas!	<i>Don't do it!</i>
¡No le des el dinero!	<i>Don't give him the money!</i>	¡No se lo digas!	<i>Don't tell it to him!</i>
¡No lo pongas allí!	<i>Don't put it there!</i>	¡No los compres!	<i>Don't buy them!</i>

**Traducción** Rewrite the following negative commands in Spanish, using tú commands.

1. Don't read it [m.]! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Don't drink it [f.]! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Don't kiss it [m.]! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Don't tell me lies! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Don't lie to me! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Don't go away! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Don't stand up! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Don't take a shower! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Don't go to bed! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Don't hate me! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Don't give it [f.] to him! \_\_\_\_\_
12. Don't tell it [m.] to them! \_\_\_\_\_
13. Don't sell it [m.] to us! \_\_\_\_\_
14. Don't read it [m.] to me! \_\_\_\_\_
15. Don't sing it [f.] to her! \_\_\_\_\_

## usted commands

### Regular commands

Regular **usted** commands have a single form for both affirmative and negative commands. They are formed as follows.

- 1 Begin with the present tense first-person singular (**yo**) form of the verb.
- 2 Remove the **-o** ending. This is called the "yo stem."
- 3 For **-ar** verbs, add **-e**. For **-er** and **-ir** verbs, add **-a**. (Remember to incorporate the standard orthographic changes.)

EXAMPLES	<b>hablo</b>	>	<b>habl-</b>	>	hable
	<b>como</b>	>	<b>com-</b>	>	coma
	<b>escribo</b>	>	<b>escrib-</b>	>	escriba

¡Hable!	<i>Speak!</i>	¡Ponga!	<i>Put!</i>	¡Esté!	<i>Be!</i>
¡Coma!	<i>Eat!</i>	¡Tenga!	<i>Have!</i>	¡Dé!	<i>Give!</i>
¡Escriba!	<i>Write!</i>	¡Traiga!	<i>Bring!</i>	¡Comience!	<i>Begin!</i>

NOTE When the **yo** form ends in **-oy**, such as in **estar**, the **-oy** is removed to form the “**yo stem**.” Both **estar** and **dar** have third-person **usted** command forms that would be identical to other words with the same spelling. Therefore, the command forms carry an accent mark to distinguish them (**dé**, as distinct from **de** (“of, from”); **esté**, as distinct from **este** (“this”).

EJERCICIO

19·6

**Traducción** Rewrite the following regular commands in Spanish, using **usted** commands. Assume that the object pronoun “it” is always masculine.

1. Sing! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sell! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Count! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Pay! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Run! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do it! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Play the piano! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Read it! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Bring it here! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Stand up! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Give it to me! \_\_\_\_\_
12. Tell it to me! \_\_\_\_\_
13. Don't tell me a lie! \_\_\_\_\_
14. Don't wait for us! \_\_\_\_\_
15. Don't rob the bank! \_\_\_\_\_
16. Give me the money! \_\_\_\_\_
17. Sit down! \_\_\_\_\_
18. Put it there! \_\_\_\_\_
19. Don't do it! \_\_\_\_\_
20. Tell him a story! \_\_\_\_\_

## Irregular commands

There are only three irregular **usted** commands.

ir	¡Vaya!	Go!
saber	¡Sepa!	Know!
ser	¡Sea!	Be!

## EJERCICIO

19·7

**Traducción** Rewrite the following irregular commands in Spanish, using **usted** commands.

1. Go away! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Know it [m.]! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Be good! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Don't go away! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Don't be bad [f.]! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Don't go to the party! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Know everything for tomorrow! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Go to the front of the room! \_\_\_\_\_

## ustedes commands

**Ustedes** commands are nearly identical to **usted** commands, the only difference being an **n** added to the end for the plural form. The same form is used for both affirmative and negative commands. This is true for all verbs, whether regular or irregular.

¡Hablen!	Speak!	¡Váyanse!	Go away!
¡No coman!	Don't eat!	¡Sépanlo!	Know it!
¡Escriban!	Write!	¡Sean amables!	Be kind!

NOTE The **ustedes** form is used in both formal and informal situations in Spanish America.

## EJERCICIO

19·8

**Traducción** Rewrite the following commands in Spanish, using **ustedes** commands.

1. Work! \_\_\_\_\_
2. Think! \_\_\_\_\_
3. Don't do that! \_\_\_\_\_
4. Don't leave! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Sit down! \_\_\_\_\_
6. Put them [m.] here! \_\_\_\_\_
7. Don't tell me anything! \_\_\_\_\_
8. Play the piano! \_\_\_\_\_
9. Play baseball! \_\_\_\_\_
10. Bring me the food! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Tell him the secret! \_\_\_\_\_



## Regular negative commands

Regular negative **vosotros** commands are formed as follows.

**-ar VERBS** Add **-éis** to the "yo stem."

**-er VERBS** Add **-áis** to the "yo stem."

**-ir VERBS** Add **-áis** to the "yo stem."

¡No trabajéis!	<i>Don't work!</i>	¡No me lo digáis!	<i>Don't tell it to me!</i>
¡No bebáis!	<i>Don't drink!</i>	¡No nos traigáis nada!	<i>Don't bring us anything!</i>
¡No escribáis!	<i>Don't write!</i>	¡No se lo deis!	<i>Don't give it to him!</i>

Note that the negative **vosotros** commands of **ir**, **saber**, and **ser** mirror that of the **usted** commands for these verbs.

ir	¡No vayáis conmigo!	<i>Don't go with me!</i>
saber	¡No sepáis todo!	<i>Don't know everything!</i>
ser	¡No seáis antipáticos!	<i>Don't be mean!</i>

## Negative commands for stem-changing -ir verbs

For negative **vosotros** commands, stem-changing -ir verbs show stem changes of **e > i** and **o > u**.

pedir	¡No pidáis!	<i>Don't request!</i>	dormir	¡No durmáis!	<i>Don't sleep!</i>
servir	¡No sirváis!	<i>Don't serve!</i>	morirse	¡No os muráis!	<i>Don't die!</i>
seguir	¡No sigáis!	<i>Don't follow!</i>	repetir	¡No repitáis!	<i>Don't repeat!</i>

### EJERCICIO

## 19·10

**Traducción** Rewrite the following negative commands in Spanish, using **vosotros** commands.

1. *Don't eat!* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Don't speak!* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Don't play here!* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *Don't sing!* \_\_\_\_\_
5. *Don't sleep in the park!* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *Don't boil the water!* \_\_\_\_\_
7. *Don't fall asleep!* \_\_\_\_\_
8. *Don't leave!* \_\_\_\_\_
9. *Don't take the money!* \_\_\_\_\_
10. *Don't follow me!* \_\_\_\_\_
11. *Don't go to bed!* \_\_\_\_\_
12. *Don't go away!* \_\_\_\_\_

## nosotros commands

Both affirmative and negative **nosotros** ("we") commands generally translate as "let's" statements in English: "Let's eat," "Let's dance," "Let's go." Regular **nosotros** commands are formed as follows.

- 1 Begin with the present tense first-person singular (**yo**) form of the verb.
- 2 Remove the **-o** ending. This is called the "yo stem."
- 3 For **-ar** verbs, add **-emos**. For **-er** and **-ir** verbs, add **-amos**. (Remember to incorporate the standard orthographic changes.)

EXAMPLES	<b>hablo</b>	>	<b>habl-</b>	>	<b>hablemos</b>
	<b>como</b>	>	<b>com-</b>	>	<b>comamos</b>
	<b>escribo</b>	>	<b>escrib-</b>	>	<b>escribamos</b>

¡Hablemos!	<i>Let's talk!</i>
¡Comamos!	<i>Let's eat!</i>
¡Escribamos!	<i>Let's write!</i>

**NOTE** When the **yo** form ends in **-oy**, such as in **estar**, the **-oy** is removed to form the "yo stem." This pattern has been presented several times in this chapter. Knowing this pattern will help greatly in the study of the present subjunctive.

## Notable characteristics of commands

- 1 Stem-changing verbs—except stem-changing **-ir** verbs—do not change in the **nosotros** form.

¡Contemos el dinero!	<i>Let's count the money!</i>
¡Pensemos!	<i>Let's think!</i>
¡Movamos los muebles!	<i>Let's move the furniture!</i>
¡Volvamos!	<i>Let's return!</i>

- 2 Stem-changing **-ir** verbs show the following changes in **nosotros** commands.

<b>o &gt; ue</b> VERBS	The <b>o</b> changes to <b>u</b> .	EXAMPLE	<b>dormir</b>	¡Durmamos!	<i>Let's sleep!</i>
<b>e &gt; ie</b> VERBS	The <b>e</b> changes to <b>i</b> .		<b>mentir</b>	¡Mintamos!	<i>Let's lie!</i>
<b>e &gt; i</b> VERBS	The <b>e</b> changes to <b>i</b> .		<b>pedir</b>	¡Pidamos!	<i>Let's ask!</i>

- 3 Verbs ending with **-car**, **-gar**, and **-zar** make the necessary standard orthographic changes where needed (**c > qu**, **g > gu**, **z > c**).

¡Toquemos el piano!	<i>Let's play the piano!</i>
¡Paguemos la cuenta!	<i>Let's pay the bill!</i>
¡Comencemos!	<i>Let's begin!</i>

- 4 With reflexive verbs, drop the **s** of the conjugated verb before adding **nos**. Otherwise, add all object pronouns directly to the end of the conjugated form.

Levantemos + nos = ¡Levantémonos!	<i>Let's stand up!</i>
Sentemos + nos = ¡Sentémonos!	<i>Let's sit down!</i>
Acostemos + nos = ¡Acostémonos!	<i>Let's go to bed!</i>

5 To form a negative **nosotros** command, just add **no** before the verb.

¡No trabajemos!  
¡No volemos!  
¡No nos bañemos!

*Let's not work!*  
*Let's not fly!*  
*Let's not take a bath!*

EJERCICIO  
19-11

**Traducción** Rewrite the following regular commands in Spanish, using **nosotros** commands.

1. *Let's study!* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Let's walk!* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Let's not study!* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *Let's not eat!* \_\_\_\_\_
5. *Let's sell the car!* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *Let's do something!* \_\_\_\_\_
7. *Let's not do anything!* \_\_\_\_\_
8. *Let's eat lunch!* \_\_\_\_\_
9. *Let's put the dog outside!* \_\_\_\_\_
10. *Let's sing to them!* \_\_\_\_\_
11. *Let's not lie!* \_\_\_\_\_
12. *Let's not begin now!* \_\_\_\_\_
13. *Let's tell the truth!* \_\_\_\_\_
14. *Let's not say anything!* \_\_\_\_\_
15. *Let's buy it [m.]!* \_\_\_\_\_

There are only three verbs with irregular **nosotros** commands (though **ir** has both reflexive and nonreflexive forms). Note that **ir** has different affirmative and negative forms.

ir	¡Vamos!	<i>Let's go!</i>	¡No vayamos!	<i>Let's not go!</i>
irse	¡Vámonos!	<i>Let's go away!</i>	¡No nos vayamos!	<i>Let's not go away!</i>
saber	¡Sepamos!	<i>Let's know!</i>	¡No sepamos!	<i>Let's not know!</i>
ser	¡Seamos!	<i>Let's be!</i>	¡No seamos!	<i>Let's not be!</i>

**Traducción** Rewrite the following irregular commands in Spanish, using **nosotros** commands.

1. *Let's know everything!* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *Let's be kind!* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Let's not go to the party!* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *Let's go away tonight!* \_\_\_\_\_
5. *Let's not be cowards (el cobarde)!* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *Let's go to the movies tomorrow!* \_\_\_\_\_
7. *Let's be honest people!* \_\_\_\_\_
8. *Let's not go away this afternoon!* \_\_\_\_\_