

Basic verb conjugation.

The first thing you have to know about Spanish is: we conjugate the verb differently depending on the person. By this I mean that “I eat” and “you eat” have the same form of the verb: “eat”, but in Spanish it's slightly different. Check the differences between English and Spanish.

to eat		comer	
I	eat	yo	como
you	eat	tú	comes
he	eat	él/ella	come
we	eat	nosotros/nosotras	comemos
you(pl)	eat	vosotros/vosotras	coméis
they	eat	ellos/ellas	comen

But don't panic: all regular verbs can be conjugated if you know the three “model” verbs, one ending in “ar”, one ending in “er” and one ending in “ir”. Here they are.

infinitive	cantar		beber		vivir
participle	cantado		bebido		vivido
gerund	cantando		bebiendo		viviendo
yo	canto	yo	bebo	yo	vivo
tú	cantas	tú	bebes	tú	vives
él/ella	canta	él/ella	bebe	él/ella	vive
nosotros/nosotras	cantamos	nosotros/nosotras	bebemos	nosotros/nosotras	vivimos
vosotros/vosotras	cantais	vosotros/vosotras	bebéis	vosotros/vosotras	vivís
ellos/ellas	cantan	ellos/ellas	beben	ellos/ellas	viven

This means that any time you find a verb and the infinitive ends in “ar”, you can conjugate it (unless it's irregular) like the verb “cantar”.

You may have noticed that the participle and the gerund are also included. Both will be essential a bit later in the course.

Now, let's imagine you find a new verb such as “cortar” (to cut). How would you conjugate it? Well, all you have to do is get the infinitive, which in this case is “cortar” and look at the ending. This one ends in “ar”, so it belongs to what we call in Spanish “first conjugation”, and it will be conjugated just like “cantar”, that is:

infinitivo	cortar
participio	cortado
gerundio	cortando
yo	corto
tú	cortas

él/ella	corta
nosotros/nosotras	cortamos
vosotros/vosotras	cortais
ellos/ellas	cortan

Verbs “ser” and “estar”.

The most important verb in Spanish is the verb “ser”, which means “to be”. Oddly enough, we have two verbs for “to be”: “ser” and “estar”.

We use the verb “ser” when we describe a state or quality of something or someone if that quality or state is permanent, but if it's temporary we use “estar”. For example, if I say I'm tall, I would say “yo soy alto”, but if I say I'm sick, I say “yo estoy enfermo”.

We also use “estar” for spatial location and durative periphrasis (what is called in English “present continuous” (you know, like in “you ARE eating”).

Unfortunately they are both irregular. Here are the impersonal forms and the present.

infinitivo	ser	estar
participio	sido	estado
gerundio	siendo	estando
yo	soy	estoy
tú	eres	estás
él/ella	es	está
nosotros/nosotras	somos	estamos
vosotros/vosotras	sois	estáis
ellos/ellas	son	están

I know it sounds stupid, but a good way to learn them is to mumble them to yourself while walking (specially if you do it a tempo with your steps).