

Forming Participles in Spanish

(Los Participios del Español)

A **participle** is a **verbal adjective** — a form of the verb that describes a completed action or a resulting state.

In Spanish, the **past participle (participio pasado)** is the most common type and is used in:

- **Perfect tenses** (with *haber*)
- **Adjectival phrases** (to describe nouns)
- **Passive voice** (with *ser*)

1) What Is a Past Participle?

The **past participle** is the equivalent of English **-ed** or **-en** forms:

English Spanish

studied estudiado

written escrito

eaten comido

It can be used:

- As part of **compound tenses** → *he comido* (I have eaten)
- As an **adjective** → *la puerta cerrada* (the closed door)
- In the **passive voice** → *fue escrito* (was written)

2) How to Form Regular Past Participles

Forming a regular past participle is simple:

Formula:

Verb stem + ending

Verb Type Ending Example Participle English

-AR	-ado	hablar	hablado	spoken
-ER	-ido	comer	comido	eaten
-IR	-ido	vivir	vivido	lived

Examples:

- *He hablado con ella.* → I have spoken with her.
- *Hemos comido temprano.* → We have eaten early.
- *Han vivido aquí por años.* → They have lived here for years.

3) Accent Marks on Some -ER and -IR Participles

If the verb stem ends in a vowel (after removing -er or -ir), **add an accent mark** on the **i** in **-ído** to maintain pronunciation.

Infinitive Participle English

leer	leído	read
oír	oído	heard
traer	traído	brought
creer	creído	believed
caer	caído	fallen
reír	reído	laughed

Examples:

- *He leído muchos libros.* → I have read many books.
- *Hemos oído la noticia.* → We have heard the news.

4) Irregular Past Participles

Some verbs have **irregular participle forms** that must be memorized.

Infinitive Participle English

abrir	abierto	opened
cubrir	cubierto	covered

decir	dicho	said
escribir	escrito	written
hacer	hecho	done, made
morir	muerto	died
poner	puesto	put, placed
resolver	resuelto	resolved
romper	roto	broken
ver	visto	seen
volver	vuelto	returned

Examples:

- *He escrito una carta.* → I have written a letter.
- *Has hecho la tarea.* → You have done the homework.
- *La puerta está abierta.* → The door is open.

Tip: Many irregular participles end in **-to** or **-cho**.

5) Double Irregulars (Commonly Confused Forms)

Some verbs have **both regular and irregular** participles.

The meaning or use depends on whether it's used as a **verb** (compound tense) or as an **adjective**.

Verb	Irregular (preferred in compound tenses)	Regular (adjectival use)
imprimir	impreso (<i>he impreso</i>)	imprimido (<i>página imprimida</i>)
freír	frito (<i>he frito los huevos</i>)	freído (<i>patatas freídas</i>)
proveer	provisto (<i>he provisto materiales</i>)	proveído (<i>material proveído</i>)

Examples:

- *El documento fue impreso.* → The document was printed.
- *Las copias están imprimidas.* → The copies are printed.

6) Using Participles in Different Constructions

A. With *haber* (Perfect Tenses)

Use the participle with *haber* to form compound tenses.

Tense	Formula	Example	Translation
Present Perfect	he + participle	<i>He comido.</i>	I have eaten.
Past Perfect (Pluperfect)	había + participle	<i>Había estudiado.</i>	I had studied.
Future Perfect	habré + participle	<i>Habré terminado.</i>	I will have finished.
Conditional Perfect	habría + participle	<i>Habría ido.</i>	I would have gone.

Rule: The participle **never changes form** when used with *haber*.

Ellos han comido. (not *comidos*)

B. With *estar* (to describe a state or result)

Used as an **adjective** to describe how something is *after* an action.

Examples:

- *La puerta está cerrada.* → The door is closed.
- *El trabajo está hecho.* → The work is done.
- *Las ventanas están abiertas.* → The windows are open.

When used as adjectives, **participles must agree** in **gender and number** with the noun:

- *cerrado / cerrada / cerrados / cerradas*
- *hecho / hecha / hechos / hechas*

C. With *ser* (Passive Voice)

Used to form the **passive voice**, showing what was *done* and by *whom*.

Formula:

ser + participle + por + agent

Example

El libro fue escrito por Cervantes.

La canción fue compuesta por Shakira.

Los cuadros fueron pintados por Picasso.

Translation

The book was written by Cervantes.

The song was composed by Shakira.

The paintings were painted by Picasso.

Here, too, the participle **agrees in gender and number** with the noun it describes:

- *fue escrito / fue escrita / fueron escritos / fueron escritas*

7) Agreement Rules Recap

Construction

Agreement?

Example

With *haber*

No agreement *Ellos han comido.*

With *estar*

Yes

Las puertas están cerradas.

With *ser* (passive)

Yes

El edificio fue construido.

8) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

1. He _____ (hacer) mi tarea.
2. Las ventanas están _____ (abrir).
3. El libro fue _____ (escribir) por Isabel Allende.
4. ¿Has _____ (ver) esa película?
5. Los platos están _____ (lavar).

Answers:

1. hecho
2. abiertas
3. escrito
4. visto
5. lavados

9) Practice: Translate

1. The letter is written.
2. I have opened the door.

3. The students have studied.
4. The food was prepared by the chef.
5. The windows are closed.

Answers:

1. La carta está escrita.
2. He abierto la puerta.
3. Los estudiantes han estudiado.
4. La comida fue preparada por el chef.
5. Las ventanas están cerradas.

10) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Wrong

Correct

Why

He abrido la puerta.

He abierto la puerta.

“Abrir” has irregular participle *abierto*.

Hemos comidos mucho.

Hemos comido mucho.

No agreement after *haber*.

La puerta fue cerrar.

La puerta fue cerrada.

Use participle after *ser*.

Las mesas están limpiar. Las mesas están limpias.

Use adjective form, not infinitive.

11) Quick Summary Chart

Verb Type	Ending	Example	English
-AR	-ado	hablado	spoken
-ER / -IR	-ido	comido, vivido	eaten, lived
Irregulars	abierto, dicho, hecho, puesto, roto, visto, vuelto, escrito, muerto, resuelto	—	—
Used with <i>haber</i>	perfect tenses	<i>he comido</i>	I have eaten
Used with <i>estar</i>	result state	<i>está cerrado</i>	is closed
Used with <i>ser</i>	passive voice	<i>fue escrito</i>	was written
Agreement	only with ser / <i>estar</i>	<i>puertas cerradas</i>	closed doors

Why Participles Matter

Participles are the foundation for:

- All **perfect tenses** (*he comido, había estudiado, habríamos ido*)
- The **passive voice** (*fue construido, fue escrito*)
- Descriptive **adjectives** showing result or condition (*cerrado, roto, abierto*)

They allow learners to describe **completed actions, results, and states** clearly and naturally — essential for fluency and advanced proficiency.

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