

One of my most rewarding activities is creating language learning experiences for both independent learners and teachers. I LOVE writing units and experiences that can be easily adapted to different textbooks and are very flexible for teachers to be able to adapt to their specific groups. Putting the pressure on early in the process helps me be more creative with the hard work out of the way.

This unit might be best done in Spanish 2 but also makes a nice late Spanish 1 unit as it has some preterite. Add some imperfect and this can be a good bridge unit into Spanish 3 with students reviewing and improving their narration skills. I love that culture so seamlessly blends in with celebrations, too.

If you are an independent learner, you can use this, too. Look through the tasks and lessons. While the readings and such are not included here, the plans give you a starting point to search for Spanish content to learn about specific events. Use these as prompts to write about celebrations that you have experienced. These naturally incorporate the past tense, so you'll be building those skills. I recommend also recording yourself doing these tasks. Take the transcript and run it through Chat GPT. It can give you corrections and suggestions on how to improve your speech.

## **ACTFL Standards Summary**

### Spanish 2 – Unit: Past Events & Celebrations

This unit aligns with all five ACTFL World-Readiness Standards (5 Cs) and supports students moving from Novice High to Intermediate Low proficiency.

- **Communication:** Students interpret, discuss, and present information about past celebrations using the preterite tense through reading, listening, speaking, and writing tasks.
- **Cultures:** Students explore and compare Hispanic celebrations and traditions, understanding how cultural practices reflect values and perspectives.
- **Connections:** Students connect Spanish to other disciplines such as social studies and ELA by narrating events, analyzing texts, and interpreting multimedia sources.
- **Comparisons:** Students compare Spanish and English language structures (past tense, time expressions) and cultural approaches to celebrations.
- **Communities:** Students use Spanish to share real-life experiences and engage in meaningful, authentic communication beyond isolated classroom drills.

Overall Focus:

Students develop narration skills in the past tense while deepening cultural understanding through celebrations and traditions.

See below for vocabulary, lesson plan ideas, essential questions and Can Do's.

What did you do on your last vacation presentation, pair work, mini-essay and video.

Regular preterit verbs.

## **Grammar Focus**

### **1. Preterite Tense (El Pretérito)**

-AR Verb Example (hablar): yo hablé, tú hablaste, él/ella habló, nosotros hablamos, ellos hablaron

-ER/-IR Verb Example (comer, vivir): yo comí / viví, tú comiste / viviste, él/ella comió / vivió, nosotros comimos / vivimos, ellos comieron / vivieron

Irregular Verbs: ir/ser (fui, fuiste...), tener (tuve, tuviste...), hacer (hice, hiciste...), estar (estuve...), poder (pude...)

### **2. Expressions of Time in the Past:**

ayer - yesterday

anoche - last night

el año pasado - last year

la semana pasada - last week

hace (una semana/un mes/un año) - a (week/month/year) ago

cuando era niño/a - when I was a child

## **Key Vocabulary**

### **Family Members and Relationships:**

madre - mother

padre - father

hermana - sister

hermano - brother  
abuelo/a - grandfather / grandmother  
tío / tía - uncle / aunt  
primo / prima - cousin  
nieto / nieta - grandson / granddaughter  
sobrino / sobrina - nephew / niece

### **Holidays and Traditions:**

la Navidad - Christmas  
el Día de los Muertos - Day of the Dead  
el cumpleaños - birthday  
la Pascua - Easter  
la Nochevieja - New Year's Eve  
la celebración - celebration  
la tradición - tradition

### **Childhood Activities:**

jugar con juguetes - to play with toys  
leer cuentos - to read stories  
ver dibujos animados - to watch cartoons  
montar en bicicleta - to ride a bike  
saltar la cuerda - to jump rope  
coleccionar (monedas, muñecos) - to collect (coins, dolls)  
pelearse - to fight (reflexive)

### **Party and Celebration Terms:**

la fiesta - party  
el pastel - cake  
los globos - balloons  
los regalos - gifts  
la piñata - piñata  
la música - music  
los invitados - guests

# Grammar Focus

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## Sentence Starters for Practice

Cuando era niño/a, yo...

El año pasado, nosotros...

En la fiesta, ellos...

De pequeño/a, me gustaba...

El fin de semana pasado, yo...

Mis amigos y yo jugamos...

## Spanish 2: Past Events & Celebrations

Length: 10 Lessons

Proficiency Target: Novice High → Intermediate Low

Grammar Focus: Regular & Irregular Preterite, Time Expressions

Assessment: Mini-essay + Oral Presentation - *Una celebración especial*

## Essential Questions:

- How do I describe and narrate a celebration in the past?
- How are celebrations and traditions different across cultures?
- How can I talk about what I used to do and what I did at a specific event?

## Can-Do Statements:

- I can describe what I did during a celebration or holiday.
- I can use the preterite tense to talk about past events.
- I can talk about family members and party-related vocabulary.
- I can ask and answer questions about past events.
- I can present and write about a memorable celebration.

## Key Vocabulary Categories

- Family & Relationships: *madre, abuelo, primo, tío...*
- Holidays & Traditions: *la Navidad, el cumpleaños, el Día de los Muertos, la Nochevieja...*
- Party Items & Activities: *la fiesta, el pastel, los globos, la música, los regalos, bailar, celebrar...*
- Time Expressions: *ayer, anoche, el año pasado, hace una semana...*
- Childhood Connections (optional/extension): *ver dibujos animados, coleccionar, jugar con juguetes...*

## Grammar Focus

- Regular Preterite Verbs: *hablar, comer, vivir...*
- Irregular Preterite Verbs: *ir/ser, tener, hacer, estar, poder...*
- Time Expressions in the Past: *ayer, anoche, hace una semana, cuando era niño...*

## Lesson Breakdown

### Lesson 1 - Celebrations & Holiday Vocabulary

Objective: I can identify and talk about different celebrations and holidays.

- Intro activity: Name That Holiday (images/symbols)

- Vocab input: Family + party items + holiday names
- Partner chat: *¿Qué celebras tú con tu familia?*
- Exit: Write a sentence about a celebration you like

## Lesson 2 - The Preterite Tense: Regular Verbs

Objective: I can use regular preterite verbs to describe past events.

- Input: Review of -AR, -ER, -IR preterite endings
- Verb chart activity (hablar, comer, vivir)
- Practice: Complete a short paragraph about a birthday party
- Exit: Write 3 regular preterite sentences

## Lesson 3 - Irregular Preterite Verbs

Objective: I can use irregular preterite verbs to describe actions at a celebration.

- Input: *ir, ser, tener, estar, hacer*
- Game: Preterite Verb Conjugation Relay
- Partner practice: Fill-in-the-blank dialogue (*fui, hice, estuve...*)
- Exit: Write a sentence with *hacer* and one with *ir*

## Lesson 4 - Time Expressions in the Past

Objective: I can use time expressions to say when something happened.

- Input: Expressions like *ayer, anoche, hace una semana...*
- Activity: Match time expressions with events
- Writing practice: Describe 3 things you did last week using past expressions
- Exit: Sentence using a time expression + preterite verb

## Lesson 5 - Reading & Listening: A Party in the Past

Objective: I can understand a short story about a past celebration.

- Read: *Una fiesta de cumpleaños* (adapted input story)
- Comprehension: T/F and sequencing
- Video (optional): A short video about a celebration (e.g., quinceañera or Día de los Muertos)
- Exit: One thing the person did at the party

## **Lesson 6 - Partner Interview: What Did You Do?**

Objective: I can ask and answer questions about past events at a celebration.

- Review: Party and family vocab + preterite
- Partner interview: *¿Qué hiciste en tu última fiesta?*
- Sentence starters provided
- Activity: Swap partners and report what the last person said
- Exit: Write 2 things a classmate did at a party

## **Lesson 7 - Writing Practice: Planning the Mini-Essay**

Objective: I can plan and draft a short paragraph about a celebration I attended.

- Graphic organizer: Who, What, When, Where, What happened?
- Sentence starters: *El año pasado fuimos a... Comimos... Bailamos...*
- Begin mini-essay draft: *Una celebración especial*
- Peer review checklist
- Exit: Share your favorite sentence with a classmate

## **Lesson 8 - Speaking Practice: My Past Celebration**

Objective: I can present about a past celebration using visuals and past tense.

- Finalize draft of writing
- Students create visuals (photo, drawing, or slide)
- Practice: Oral rehearsal in partners or small groups
- Peer feedback: Two questions for each presenter
- Exit: Write one question you would ask a classmate about their celebration

## **Lesson 9 - Final Assessment: Writing & Speaking**

Objective: I can describe a past celebration in writing and speaking.

- Mini-Essay: Submit final version of *Una celebración especial*
- Presentation: 1-2 minute talk about a real or fictional celebration
  - Include: time expressions, 5+ preterite verbs, family/party vocab
- Peer review & feedback forms
- Exit: Self-assessment checklist

## Lesson 10 - Cultural Connections & Wrap-Up

Objective: I can compare celebrations in different cultures.

- Input: Video or reading - *Tradiciones hispanas: Día de los Muertos, Navidad, Nochevieja...*
- Venn Diagram: Compare a Spanish-speaking celebration to a personal one
- Optional Group Project: Plan a class celebration with assigned roles
- Game: Celebration vocab bingo or Kahoot
- Exit: Reflection - *What can I now do when talking about celebrations in the past?*

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