

Spanish Commands (Los Mandatos)

Commands (or **imperatives**) are used to tell someone **what to do** or **what not to do**.

They're essential for giving **directions, advice, or instructions** — whether in the classroom, at home, or in real-world interactions.

1) Types of Commands

There are several command forms, depending on **who** you're speaking to:

| Command Type | Used With | English Equivalent |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Tú affirmative | informal "you" | Do something |
| Tú negative | informal "you" | Don't do something |
| Usted / Ustedes | formal you / plural you | Do (formal) |
| Nosotros | "let's" commands | Let's do something |

2) Affirmative Tú Commands (Informal)

To tell a friend, classmate, or child **to do something**, use the **tú affirmative** form.

Formation

Use the **third-person singular (él/ella/Ud.)** form of the **present tense**.

Infinitive Present (él/ella/Ud.) Command

| | | |
|----------|---------|---------------------------|
| hablar | habla | ¡Habla! (Speak!) |
| comer | come | ¡Come! (Eat!) |
| escribir | escribe | ¡Escribe! (Write!) |

Examples:

- ¡Camina más rápido! → Walk faster!
- ¡Come tus verduras! → Eat your vegetables!
- ¡Estudia para el examen! → Study for the exam!

3) Irregular Affirmative Tú Commands

Some tú commands are **irregular** — many are short, common verbs.

Infinitive Command English

| | | |
|-------|------------|---------------|
| decir | di | say, tell |
| hacer | haz | do, make |
| ir | ve | go |
| poner | pon | put |
| salir | sal | leave, go out |
| ser | sé | be |
| tener | ten | have |
| venir | ven | come |

**Mnemonic to remember them:
Ven Di Sal Haz Ten Ve Pon Sé**

Examples:

- ¡Haz tu tarea! → Do your homework.
- ¡Pon la mesa! → Set the table.
- ¡Ven aquí! → Come here.
- ¡Sé amable! → Be kind.

4) Negative Tú Commands

To tell someone **not** to do something, use the **negative tú** form.

Formation

1 Start with the **yo** form of the present tense.

2 Drop the **-o** ending.

3 Add the **opposite ending**:

- **-AR** → **-es**
- **-ER / -IR** → **-as**

Infinitive Yo Form Negative Command

| | | |
|----------|---------|--------------------|
| hablar | hablo | no hables |
| comer | como | no comas |
| escribir | escribo | no escribas |

Examples:

- ¡No hables! → Don't talk!
- ¡No comas eso! → Don't eat that!
- ¡No escribas en la mesa! → Don't write on the table!

Irregular Negative Tú Commands

Use the **yo** form + opposite ending rule, but watch for **stem changes and spelling changes**.

| Infinitive | Irregular Yo Form | Command | English |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| decir | digo | no digas | don't say |
| hacer | hago | no hagas | don't do |
| ir | voy | no vayas | don't go |
| poner | pongo | no pongas | don't put |
| salir | salgo | no salgas | don't leave |
| tener | tengo | no tengas | don't have |
| venir | vengo | no vengas | don't come |
| ser | soy | no seas | don't be |
| dar | doy | no des | don't give |
| estar | estoy | no estés | don't be |
| saber | sé | no sepas | don't know |

5) Usted and Ustedes Commands (Formal)

Used to speak **formally** to one or more people (strangers, elders, superiors, clients).

Formation

1 Take the **yo** form of the present tense.

2 Drop the **-o**.

3 Add **opposite endings**:

Verb Type Usted Ustedes

-AR -e -en

-ER / -IR -a -an

Infinitive Yo Form Ud. Command Uds. Command

hablar hablo **hable** **hablen**

comer como **coma** **coman**

escribir escribo **escriba** **escriban**

Examples:

- ¡Hable más despacio! → Speak more slowly!
- ¡Coma bien! → Eat well!
- ¡Escriban sus nombres! → Write your names!

Irregular Formal Commands

Infinitive Yo Form Ud. Uds. English

dar doy dé den give

estar estoy esté estén be

ir voy vaya vayan go

saber sé sepa sepan know

ser soy sea sean be

Examples:

- ¡Sea puntual! → Be punctual.
- ¡Vayan al hospital! → Go to the hospital.
- ¡Esté tranquilo! → Be calm.

6) Nosotros Commands (Let's...)

Used to suggest that **we** do something together.

Formation

Use the **first-person plural of the subjunctive**:

1 Start with the **yo** form of the verb.

2 Drop the **-o**.

3 Add **opposite ending**:

- **-AR → -emos**
- **-ER / -IR → -amos**

Verb Command English

hablar hablemos Let's talk

comer comamos Let's eat

escribir escribamos Let's write

Examples:

- ¡Hablemos en español! → Let's speak in Spanish!
- ¡Comamos juntos! → Let's eat together!
- ¡Vayamos al cine! → Let's go to the movies!

Irse and *irse* reflexive forms often use the shortened **vamos** instead of *vayamos* in everyday speech:

- *¡Vamos!* → Let's go!
- *¡No nos vayamos!* → Let's not leave!

7) Placement of Pronouns with Commands

A. Affirmative Commands

Attach pronouns **to the end** of the verb.

Example Translation

¡Levántate! Get up!
¡Dímelo! Tell it to me!
¡Háganlo! Do it!
¡Escríbanos! Write to us!

Accent Rule:

Add an accent mark to maintain stress (usually on the third syllable from the end).
→ *dímelo, háganlo, levántate*

B. Negative Commands

Place the pronoun **before** the verb.

| Example | Translation |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| ¡No te levantes! | Don't get up! |
| ¡No me digas! | Don't tell me! |
| ¡No lo hagan! | Don't do it! |
| ¡No nos escriban! | Don't write to us! |

8) Reflexive Verbs with Commands

| Type | Rule | Example |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Affirmative | Attach pronoun to end | <i>¡Siéntate!</i> (Sit down!) |
| Negative | Place pronoun before | <i>¡No te sientes!</i> (Don't sit down!) |
| Nosotros | Drop final "s" before <i>nos</i> | <i>Levantémonos.</i> (Let's get up.) / <i>No nos levantemos.</i> |

9) Spelling Changes in Commands

To preserve pronunciation, certain verbs change spelling:

| Ending | Change | Example | Command |
|--------|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| -car | c → qu | buscar → busque | |
| -gar | g → gu | llegar → llegue | |
| -zar | z → c | empezar → empiece | |

Examples:

- ¡Busque el libro! → Look for the book.
- ¡Lleguen temprano! → Arrive early.
- ¡Empiece la tarea! → Start the homework.

10) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Complete with the correct **command form**.

1. (tú) _____ (venir) aquí.
2. (tú) no _____ (decir) mentiras.
3. (Ud.) _____ (abrir) la ventana.
4. (Uds.) _____ (comer) más frutas.
5. (nosotros) _____ (estudiar) para el examen.
6. (tú) _____ (hacer) la cama.
7. (tú) no _____ (ir) al parque solo.
8. (Ud.) _____ (tener) paciencia.

Answers:

1. ven
2. digas
3. abra
4. coman
5. estudiemos
6. haz
7. vayas
8. tenga

11) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

| Wrong | Correct | Explanation |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Hablas despacio.</i> | <i>¡Habla despacio!</i> | Drop the "s" in tú command. |
| <i>No hablas.</i> | <i>¡No hables!</i> | Use opposite ending. |
| <i>Levantate.</i> | <i>¡Levántate!</i> | Add accent. |
| <i>Dime lo.</i> | <i>¡Dímelo!</i> | Attach both pronouns + accent. |

No háganlo. *¡No lo hagan!* Pronouns before negative command.

12) Summary Chart

| Command Type | How to Form | Example | Translation |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Tú (affirmative) | 3rd person present | <i>Habla.</i> | Speak. |
| Tú (negative) | Yo → drop “o” → opposite ending | <i>No hables.</i> | Don’t speak. |
| Usted | Yo → drop “o” → opposite ending | <i>Hable.</i> | (You formal) speak. |
| Ustedes | Yo → drop “o” → opposite + -n | <i>Hablen.</i> | (You all) speak. |
| Nosotros | Yo → drop “o” → opposite + -mos | <i>Hablemos.</i> | Let’s speak. |

13) Mini Dialogue Practice

A: ¿Pongo la mesa ahora?

B: Sí, ¡ponla por favor!

A: ¿Te ayudo con la comida?

B: No, ¡no la prepares todavía!

A: Entonces, ¿qué hago?

B: ¡Siéntate y relájate!

Why Commands Matter

Commands are essential for:

- **Daily routines and instructions** (*Lávate las manos.*)
- **Classroom communication** (*Escribe, escucha, repite.*)
- **Recipes and directions** (*Corta las verduras, mezcla los ingredientes.*)
- **Polite requests and teamwork** (*Hablemos con respeto.*)

They’re one of the most practical and frequently used structures in conversational Spanish.

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