

# The Present Progressive & the Gerund

*(El Presente Progresivo y el Gerundio)*

The **present progressive** is used to describe actions that are happening **right now**—what someone is doing at this very moment. This structure helps speakers emphasize that an action is currently in progress.

At the center of this construction is the **gerund** (*el gerundio*), the [Spanish equivalent of the English “-ing” form](#). The gerund is most commonly used with the verb **estar** to form the progressive tenses, allowing learners to express ongoing actions clearly and naturally in Spanish.

## 1) Function and Meaning

- The [present progressive](#) emphasizes an action that is **happening right now** or **in this moment of speaking**.
- The **simple present tense** in Spanish can also describe ongoing actions, but the **present progressive** highlights that the action is **currently in progress**.

### Compare:

- *Yo estudio español.* → I study Spanish. / I'm studying Spanish (general habit).
- *Estoy estudiando español.* → I am studying Spanish (right now).

## 2) Formula

### Subject + Estar (present tense) + Gerundio (-ando / -iendo)

Subject	Form of “estar”	+	Example Gerund	Sentence
yo	estoy	+ hablando	Estoy hablando.	→ I am speaking.
tú	estás	+ comiendo	Estás comiendo.	→ You are eating.
él / ella / Ud.	está	+ escribiendo	Está escribiendo.	→ He/she is writing.

nosotros	estamos	+ viviendo	Estamos viviendo aquí. → We are living here.
ellos / ellas / Uds.	están	+ leyendo	Están leyendo. → They are reading.

The **verb “estar”** changes for the subject, but the **gerund** stays the same.

### 3) How to Form the Gerund (El Gerundio)

The **gerund** corresponds to the English *-ing* form. Form it from the verb stem + these endings:

Verb Type	Ending	Example	Gerund	English
-AR	-ando	hablar	hablando	speaking
-ER	-iendo	comer	comiendo	eating
-IR	-iendo	vivir	viviendo	living

Examples:

- *Estoy hablando con mi amigo.* → I am speaking with my friend.
- *Estamos comiendo pizza.* → We are eating pizza.
- *Ellos están viviendo en Perú.* → They are living in Peru.

### 4) Irregular Gerunds

Some verbs have **spelling changes or stem changes** to preserve pronunciation.

#### a) Stem-Changing -IR Verbs

Only [-IR verbs](#) that stem-change in the present tense also stem-change in the gerund — **e → i** or **o → u**.

Infinitive	Change	Gerund	Meaning
pedir	e → i	pidiendo	asking for
servir	e → i	sirviendo	serving
repetir	e → i	repitiendo	repeating
decir	e → i	diciendo	saying / telling

preferir	e → i	prefiriendo	preferring
dormir	o → u	durmiendo	sleeping
morir	o → u	muriendo	dying

Examples:

- *Está durmiendo.* → He is sleeping.
- *Estamos pidiendo comida.* → We are ordering food.

## b) Spelling Changes for Vowel Stems

If the stem ends in a vowel (after removing *-er* or *-ir*), **-iendo** → **-yendo** to maintain pronunciation.

Infinitive	Gerund	English
leer	leyendo	reading
creer	creyendo	believing
caer(se)	cayendo	falling
oír	oyendo	hearing
traer	trayendo	bringing
construir	construyendo	building
influir	influyendo	influencing

Examples:

- *Estoy leyendo un libro.* → I am reading a book.
- *Ellos están trayendo la comida.* → They are bringing the food.

## c) Reflexive Verbs

With [reflexive verbs](#), place the **reflexive pronoun**:

1. **Before** the form of *estar*, or
2. **Attached** to the end of the gerund (add an accent to keep stress).

Example	Meaning
<i>Me estoy duchando.</i>	I am showering.
<i>Estoy duchándome.</i>	I'm showering.

Both are correct.

**Accent Rule:** When attaching pronouns to a gerund, add an accent to preserve pronunciation (on the vowel before *-ndo*).

## 5) Accent Rules for Pronouns

If one or two pronouns attach to the gerund, add an accent on the vowel **before** the *-ndo*.

Example	Rule
<i>Estoy leyéndolo.</i>	Accent on <b>e</b> (from <i>leyendo</i> ).
<i>Estoy diciéndoselo.</i>	Accent on <b>e</b> (from <i>diciendo</i> ).

## 6) Time Expressions Used with the Present Progressive

Expression	Meaning
ahora	now
en este momento	at this moment
hoy	today
todavía	still
por ahora	for now
últimamente	lately

Example:

- *Ahora estamos estudiando los verbos.* → We're studying verbs right now.
- *Últimamente estoy trabajando mucho.* → Lately, I've been working a lot.

## 7) Difference: Present Progressive vs. Simple Present

Both can express ongoing actions, but the **present progressive** focuses on *what's happening right now*.

Spanish	English	Use
<i>Leo un libro.</i>	I read / I'm reading (general).	Habit / routine.
<i>Estoy leyendo un libro.</i>	I am reading a book (right now).	Ongoing action.

## 8) Other Progressive Tenses with the Gerund

While **estar + gerundio** makes the present progressive, other tenses can use the same pattern to show **past or future ongoing actions**.

Tense	Formula	Example	Meaning
<b>Past Progressive</b>	<i>Estaba + gerundio</i>	<i>Estaba leyendo.</i>	I was reading.
<b>Future Progressive</b>	<i>Estaré + gerundio</i>	<i>Estaré trabajando.</i>	I will be working.
<b>Present Perfect Progressive</b>	<i>He estado + gerundio</i>	<i>He estado estudiando.</i>	I've been studying.

## 9) When *Not* to Use the Gerund in Spanish

Spanish uses the gerund only for actions **in progress** — *not* as a noun, adjective, or future description like English does.

**Incorrect:** *Estoy yendo al cine mañana.*

**Correct:** *Voy al cine mañana.* (Future plan → simple present or *ir a* construction.)

**Incorrect:** *Fumar es malo para tu salud.* → “Smoking” (OK in English, but in Spanish use **infinitive** ☐)

**Correct:** *Fumar es malo para la salud.* (Use *fumar*, not *fumando*.)

Summary rule:

→ Use the **gerund only with auxiliary verbs** (like *estar, seguir, continuar, ir, venir*).

## 10) Other Verbs Commonly Used with the Gerund

The gerund can appear with other verbs to describe *continuing, gradual, or repeated* actions:

Verb + Gerund	Meaning	Example
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<b>seguir / continuar + gerundio</b>	to keep / continue doing something	<i>Sigo estudiando español.</i> → I keep studying Spanish.
<b>ir + gerundio</b>	to go on / little by little	<i>Voy mejorando cada día.</i> → I'm improving little by little.
<b>venir + gerundio</b>	to have been doing (for some time)	<i>Vengo diciendo esto desde el principio.</i> → I've been saying this from the start.
<b>andar + gerundio</b>	to go around doing / keep doing	<i>Anda buscando trabajo.</i> → He's going around looking for work.

These add nuance to describe **duration, repetition, or gradual change**.

## 11) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Complete each sentence with the correct form of *estar + gerundio*.

- Yo \_\_\_\_\_ (hablar) por teléfono.
- Tú \_\_\_\_\_ (leer) un libro interesante.
- Ella \_\_\_\_\_ (dormir) en su habitación.
- Nosotros \_\_\_\_\_ (comer) pizza en la cafetería.
- Ellos \_\_\_\_\_ (escribir) una carta a su abuela.

### Answers:

- estoy hablando
- estás leyendo
- está durmiendo
- estamos comiendo
- están escribiendo

## 12) Practice with Irregular Forms

Fill in with the correct gerund.

- decir* → \_\_\_\_\_
- leer* → \_\_\_\_\_
- traer* → \_\_\_\_\_
- preferir* → \_\_\_\_\_

5. *dormir* → \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:** diciendo, leyendo, trayendo, prefiriendo, durmiendo

### 13) Example Mini-Dialogue

**A:** ¿Qué estás haciendo?

*(What are you doing?)*

**B:** Estoy estudiando para el examen. ¿Y tú?

*(I'm studying for the exam. And you?)*

**A:** Estoy escuchando música y relajándome.

*(I'm listening to music and relaxing.)*

### 14) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

#### Wrong

*Soy leyendo.*

*Estoy leer.*

*Voy a yendo.*

*Estoy fumando  
mañana.*

#### Correct

*Estoy leyendo.*

*Estoy leyendo.*

*Voy a ir.*

*Voy a fumar  
mañana.*

#### Explanation

Use *estar*, not *ser*, for progressive.

Must use gerund form (-ando / -iendo).

Future action uses infinitive, not gerund.

Use *ir a* + infinitive for future.

### 15) Summary Chart

Element	Spanish	Example	English
Formula	estar + gerundio	<i>Estoy comiendo.</i>	I'm eating.
-AR ending	-ando	<i>hablando</i>	speaking
-ER / -IR ending	-iendo	<i>viviendo</i>	living
Irregular spelling	-yendo	<i>leyendo</i>	reading
Stem-changing IR verbs	e → i / o → u	<i>durmiendo</i>	sleeping
Pronoun placement	before <i>estar</i> or attached	<i>Me estoy bañando / Estoy bañándome</i>	I'm showering

# Why This Tense Matters

The **present progressive** is essential for:

- Expressing actions **in progress**
- Describing **what's happening right now**
- Narrating **real-time events**
- Combining with other verbs to show **duration or continuation**

Learning the **gerund** also opens the door to other compound structures (*seguir + gerundio*, *ir + gerundio*, *venir + gerundio*) that give your Spanish richer expression and natural fluency.

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