

Family descriptions are a perfect way to practise useful vocabulary, adjective agreement, and past-tense verbs. Below you will find clear explanations in English, corrected Spanish examples you can copy, and practical tasks to help you internalise the grammar.

Common family vocabulary and sample sentences

Start with these basic family nouns and short sentences. Notice how adjectives and articles change with gender and number.

- **el padre / la madre** — Mi padre es de México. (My father is from Mexico.)
- **los padres** — Mis padres están divorciados. (My parents are divorced.)
- **la sobrina** — Mi sobrina Natasha vive en Houston. (My niece Natasha lives in Houston.)
- **el hermano / la hermana** — Mi hermano estudia psicología. (My brother studies psychology.)
- **el novio / la novia** — Elizabeth tiene un novio. (Elizabeth has a boyfriend.)
- **los perros** — Tienen dos perros. (They have two dogs.)

Adjective agreement: the essentials

In Spanish, adjectives must match the noun in **gender** and **number**. Here are the most common patterns:

- Adjectives ending in -o change to -a for feminine and add -s for plural: pequeño, pequeña, pequeños, pequeñas.
- Adjectives ending in -e or a consonant usually use the same form for masculine and feminine, and add -s or -es for plural: inteligente, inteligentes; feliz, felices.
- Adjectives that are originally nouns or professions often add -a for feminine: profesor, profesora; amigo, amiga.

Examples:

- Mi hermana es **inteligente** / Mis hermanas son **inteligentes**.
- Mi padre está **divorciado** / Mis padres están **divorciados**.
- La profesora era **estricta** / Las profesoras eran **estrictas**.

Ser, estar and tener — short guide

These three verbs are used constantly when talking about family.

- **Ser** — to describe identity, origin, profession (Mi padre es mexicano; ella es profesora).
- **Estar** — to describe states or locations (Mis padres están divorciados; Natasha vive en Houston — note: vivir = to live).
- **Tener** — to express possession, age, or relationships (Tengo dos padres; Elizabeth tiene un novio).

Past tenses: imperfect vs preterite (quick overview)

Talking about family often requires past tenses. Two common past tenses are the imperfect and the preterite.

- **Imperfect** (era, vivía, estudiaba): used for background descriptions, habitual actions, or ongoing states in the past. Example: *Elizabeth era profesora* — She was (used to be / was a) teacher.
- **Preterite** (fue, vivió, estudió): used for completed actions or events at a specific time.

Some verbs are irregular in the preterite. Important ones to know:

- **ser / ir** — fui, fuiste, fue, fuimos, fuisteis, fueron
- **tener** — tuve, tuviste, tuvo, tuvimos, tuvisteis, tuvieron
- **estar** — estuve, estuviste, estuvo, estuvimos, estuvisteis, estuvieron

Corrected short family paragraph in Spanish

Hola. Yo tengo dos padres. Mis padres están divorciados. Elizabeth vive en Houston y era profesora. Elizabeth tiene un novio y pasa mucho tiempo con él. Mi sobrina Natasha vive en Houston. Natasha estudia en la universidad y trabaja en un hospital. Julia es española pero también es británica. Lucas estudia psicología en la Universidad de East Anglia en Norwich. Amy y Julia y Lucas tienen dos perros, se llaman Rollo y Floki. Yo

vivo sola. Irene es venezolana y tiene dos hijos. Casi todos mis parientes hablan español, por eso tengo que practicar mucho.

Notes on common mistakes and corrections

- Use **mi / mis** for possessives: mi padre, mis padres.
- Make adjectives agree: *están divorciados*, not *están divorciables*.
- Use the correct verb forms: *vive* (he/she lives), *vivía* (used to live or was living), *estudia* (he/she studies).

Practice tasks

1. Translate these sentences into Spanish:
 1. My parents are divorced.
 2. My niece studies at university.
2. Fill in the blanks with the correct adjective form:
 1. Mi hermano es _____ (intelligent).
 2. Mis hermanas son _____ (small).
 3. La profesora era muy _____ (strict).
3. Conjugate the verbs in preterite or imperfect as appropriate:
 1. Elizabeth (ser) _____ profesora cuando era joven.
 2. Lucas (estudiar) _____ psicología el año pasado.
 3. Paul (tener) _____ un trabajo en un laboratorio.
4. Correct these sentences:
 1. Mis padres estan divorciables.
 2. Natasha s medical Universidad Hospital Julia.
 3. Amy s me hermana.
5. Write 5 sentences about your own family. Use at least:
 - One adjective that matches gender and number
 - The verb **tener**
 - One past tense (imperfect or preterite)

Suggested answers (quick)

1. Translations

- Mis padres están divorciados.

- Mi sobrina estudia en la universidad.

2. Adjective blanks

- Mi hermano es **inteligente**.
- Mis hermanas son **pequeñas**.
- La profesora era muy **estricta**.

3. Conjugations (examples)

- Elizabeth **era** profesora cuando era joven. (imperfect)
- Lucas **estudió** psicología el año pasado. (preterite)
- Paul **tuvo** un trabajo en un laboratorio. (preterite)

4. Corrections

- Mis padres **están divorciados**.
- Natasha **estudia en la universidad y trabaja en el hospital** (or: Natasha estudia en la universidad). Clarify missing verbs and structure.
- Amy **es mi hermana**.

Final tips

Practice by describing real or imaginary families aloud and in writing. Focus first on correct noun-adjective agreement and using simple present verbs. Then add short past sentences using the imperfect for descriptions and the preterite for completed facts. Frequent short practice beats rare long sessions.

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