

The Preterite (past) tense

use and regular verb conjugation

The Preterite (past) tense is used when the speaker desires to focus on *completed events* rather than background information surrounding the events or specific details.

In each of the following examples, the verb refers to a specific event that happened, which is the focus of the sentence:

The book *fell*.

The parade *began* at 1:00. (focus on the action of beginning).

My friends *called* me on the cell phone.

I *went* to the market five times (repeated events)

When focusing on the beginning or the ending of an action or event, or when speaking about the entire event (I *bought* the car), the preterite past-tense is used.

-ar endings	
-é	-amos
-aste	-asteis
-ó	-aron

-er / -ir endings	
-í	-imos
-iste	-isteis
-ió	-ieron

When conjugating verbs in the preterite, one does not need to change the stems of stem-changing verbs (such as *contar* or *entender*) unless the verb ends in *-ir* (see below). An example of a stem-changing verb in the preterite is given below (*pensar*).

Three examples of conjugations are given below:

trabajar (to work)	
trabajé	trabajamos
trabajaste	trabajasteis
trabajó	trabajaron

vender (to sell)	
vendí	vendimos
vendiste	vendisteis
vendió	vendieron

pensar (e:ie) (to think)	
pensé	pensamos
pensaste	pensasteis
pensó	pensaron

Spell-changing verbs:

-gar / -car / -zar verbs

To maintain correct pronunciation, *all* verbs ending in *-gar*, *-car*, or *-zar* have the following spelling change in the *yo-form* *only* of the preterite tense. All other forms of the verbs follow the preceding rules.

- gar: -gué llegar (yo *llegué*), jugar (yo *jugué*), etc.
(tú *llegaste*, él *llegó*, nosotros *llegamos*,
vosotros *llegasteis*, ellos *llegaron*)
- car: -qué tocar (yo *toqué*), sacar (yo *saqué*), etc.
- zar: -cé empezar (yo *empecé*), tropezar (yo *tropecé*),
etc.

To practice these concepts, please visit:

<http://www.studyspanish.com/tutorial.htm>
(exercises 63, 65)
<http://www.conjuguemos.com> (exercises 7, 8)
<http://www.spaleon.com/pret.php>

i:y +í verbs

Anytime there is an unaccented “*ii*” between two other vowels, it should be changed to a “*y*” to avoid being swallowed up. Additionally, all of the other “*ii*” in the verb endings of these verbs require an accent.

leer: yo *leí*, tú *leíste*, él *leyó*, nosotros *leímos*, vosotros *leísteis*, ellos *leyeron*

creer: yo *creí*, tú *creíste*, él *creyó*, nosotros *creímos*, vosotros *creísteis*, ellos *creyeron*

oír: yo *oí*, tú *oíste*, él *oyó*, nosotros *oímos*, vosotros *oísteis*, ellos *oyeron*

huír: yo *huí*, tú *huíste*, él *huyó*, nosotros *huímos*, vosotros *huísteis*, ellos *huyeron*