

EL TIEMPO PRETÉRITO

The preterite tense is used to express actions that began and ended at a definite time in the past.

1. -AR Verbs

Compare the endings of the **-ar** verb *hablar* in the present tense and the preterite tense.

subject	present tense	subject	preterite tense	meaning
yo	hablo	yo	hablé	I spoke, did speak
tú	hablas	tú	hablaste	you spoke, did speak
él ella usted	habla	él ella usted	habló	he spoke, did speak she spoke, did speak you spoke, did speak
nosotros nosotras	hablamos*	nosotros nosotras	hablamos*	we spoke, did speak
vosotros vosotras	habláis	vosotros vosotras	hablasteis	you spoke, did speak
ellos ellas ustedes	hablan	ellos ellas ustedes	hablaron	they spoke, did speak you spoke, did speak

*Note that the present and preterite tense *nosotros* forms are identical.

2. -ER and -IR Verbs

The **-er** and **-ir** verbs, if you recall, have almost the same endings in the present tense. In the preterite tense, their endings are identical. Look at the following table for a comparison of the present and preterite tenses of the verbs *comer* and *vivir*.

subject	present of comer	preterite of comer	present of vivir	preterite of vivir
yo	como	comí	vivo	viví
tú	comes	comiste	vives	viviste
él ella usted	come	comió	vive	vivió
nosotros nosotras	comemos	comimos	vivimos*	vivimos*
vosotros vosotras	coméis	comisteis	vivís	vivisteis
ellos ellas ustedes	comen	comieron	viven	vivieron

*Note that the present and preterite tense *nosotros* forms of the *-ir* verbs are identical.

Notice that there are accent marks on the endings in the **yo** form and the **él**, **ella** and **usted** forms.