

BASIC SPANISH



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<http://www.top-tour-of-spain.com>

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Table of Contents

• Introduction	3
• Singular Nouns – Part I	4
• Singular Nouns – Part II	6
• Singular Nouns – Part III	7
• Plural Nouns	9
• Definite Article – Part I	11
• Definite Article – Part II	13
• Indefinite Article	14
• Cardinal Numbers 1-10	16
• Cardinal Numbers 11-20	18
• Cardinal Numbers 21-99	19
• Adjectives – Part I	21
• Adjectives – Part II	23
• There Is/There Are	24
• 25 Common Words – Part I	26
• 25 Common Words – Part II	27
• Accent	28
• Personal Pronouns	30
• Regular –ar Verbs	33
• Regular –er Verbs	35
• Regular –ir Verbs	37
• Using Verbs	38
• Common –ar Verbs	40
• Common –er Verbs	41
• Common –ir Verbs	42

Introduction

Are you planning to visit Spain?

Why not learn a little of the language before you come?

A basic grounding in Castilian Spanish (in other words, the Spanish spoken in Spain) will help you:

- enter the **real** Spain
- get to know the locals
- better enjoy its rich culture

Learning Spanish need not be difficult, boring, or time-consuming.

Just a quick 10 minutes a day with this mini-ebook will help you get to grips with the language.

Don't spend hours each day watching television programmes that bore you!

Enjoy yourself - with family and friends - learning a little Spanish!

You'll surely be well-rewarded for your efforts when that holiday comes!

Chapter 1

Singular Nouns – Part I

What is a noun?

A noun is a word used to denote a:

- person
- place
- thing

All Spanish nouns are either masculine or feminine.

Usually - although not always - masculine nouns end with **–o** and feminine nouns end with **–a**

Examples of masculine nouns which end in **–o** would be:

- vasoglass
- plato plate
- cuchillo knife
- libro book

Examples of feminine nouns ending in **–a** would be:

- taza cup
- mesa table
- cuchara spoon
- cabeza head

Sometimes, with nouns relating to persons or animals, the **-o** or **-a** at the end will change, depending on whether it relates to male or female.

Some examples of this are:

- gato male cat
- gata female cat

- abuelo grandfather
- abuela grandmother

- tío uncle
- tía aunt

- chico boy
- chica girl

Chapter 2

Singular Nouns – Part II

In Chapter 1, we said that Spanish nouns are either masculine or feminine, that nouns ending in **–o** tend to be masculine, whilst those ending in **–a** tend to be feminine.

There are, however, some exceptions to this rule.

Common examples of nouns ending in **–a** which are masculine are:

- clima climate
- día day
- idioma language
- mapa map
- planeta planeta
- poema poem
- problema problem
- programa programme
- sistema system
- sofá sofa
- telegrama telegramme
- tema theme, subject

In the same way, some nouns which end in **–o** are classed as being feminine, although there are not so many of them. Examples are:

- mano hand
- radio radio

Chapter 3

Singular Nouns – Part III

Unfortunately, not all Spanish nouns end in **–o** or **–a**.

1. Nouns ending in **–d** and **–z** tend to be feminine, as in:

- edad age
- paz peace

2. Nouns ending in **–ión** tend to be feminine, as in:

- canción song
- religión religion

3. Nouns ending in **–e** tend to be masculine, as in:

- aceite oil
- diente tooth

4. Nouns ending in **–n** tend to be masculine, as in:

- andén pavement/sidewalk
- corazón heart

5. Nouns ending in **–r** tend to be masculine, as in:

- azúcar sugar
- lugar place

6. Nouns ending in **-l** tend to be masculine, as in:

- ángel angel
- hotel hotel

7. Singular nouns ending in **-s** tend to be masculine, as in:

- autobús bus
- interés interest

Added to that, masculine nouns that end in a consonant often have a corresponding feminine form that ends in **-a**:

- profesor/a teacher
- doctor/a doctor

Chapter 4

Plural Nouns

There are various rules to follow when making nouns into the plural.

1. Nouns which end in a **vowel** just add **-s**:

- libro + s = libros (books)
- casa + s = casas (houses)
- debate + s = debates (debates)

2. Nouns which end in a **consonant** add **-es**:

- pared + es = paredes (walls)
- profesor + es = profesores (teachers)

3. Nouns which end in **-ión** drop the written accent and add **-es**:

- conversación + es - ´ = conversaciones (conversations)
- televisión + es - ´ = televisiones (televisions)

4. Nouns which end in **-z** change the **z to c** and add **-es**:

- luz luces (lights)
- voz voces (voices)

5. Nouns ending in **-s** and **-x** which do **NOT** have the spoken emphasis placed on the last syllable keep the same singular and plural:

- lunes Monday(s)
- tórax thorax(es)

6. However, nouns ending in **-s** which have the spoken emphasis placed on the last syllable follow the general rule and add **-es**:

- mes + es = meses (months)
- interés + es = intereses (interests)

Chapter 5

Definite Article – Part I

What is the definite article?

In English, the definite article is the word “the”.

The **English** definite article is **invariable**.

In other words, it is the same regardless of whether the noun it introduces is masculine or feminine (although we do not really differentiate between masculine and feminine nouns in the English language), singular or plural.

On the other hand, the **Spanish** definite article is **variable**.

It is made to agree with the noun and therefore has four forms, depending on whether the noun it introduces is:

- masculine singular
- feminine singular
- masculine plural
- feminine plural

The four forms of the Spanish definite article are as follows:

- **el** is used for masculine singular nouns
- **la** is used for feminine singular nouns
- **los** is used for masculine plural nouns
- **las** is used for feminine plural nouns

Examples of their use would be:

- el niño the boy
- la niña the girl
- los niños the boys
- las niñas the girls

Chapter 6

Definite Article – Part II

In Chapter 5, we learnt that the definite article in Spanish is variable, and agrees with the noun, depending on whether the latter is masculine, feminine, singular or plural.

There are, however, exceptions to this rule ...

With feminine nouns beginning with **-a** or **-ha** which have the spoken emphasis placed on the first syllable, the masculine definite article is used:

- el agua the water
- el hambre the hunger

This is - basically - because it sounds better.

Chapter 7

Indefinite Article

What is the indefinite article?

The **indefinite article** is used when **not** referring to a specific thing.

The **definite article** is used when you **are** referring to a specific thing.

In English, the indefinite article can be:

- a
- an
- some

Like the definite article, the **indefinite article** is **variable** and has four forms.

These are:

- **un** the masculine singular form
- **una** the feminine singular form
- **unos** the masculine plural form
- **unas** the feminine plural form

Un and **una** can mean **a**, **an** or **one**.

Examples of the indefinite article in use are:

- un niño a boy/one boy
- una niña a girl/one girl
- unos niños some boys
- unas niñas some girls

Unos niños could, in fact, be referring to a mixed group of boys and girls.

This is because, with mixed groups, as long as there is at least one male member, the **masculine plural** noun is used.

Chapter 8

Cardinal Numbers 1-10

You've already learnt how to refer to a noun using either the definite or indefinite article.

But what happens if you want to specify a number?

For this, you will need to know your **cardinal numbers**.

The cardinal numbers one to ten are as follows:

- 1 - uno
- 2 - dos
- 3 - tres
- 4 - cuatro
- 5 - cinco
- 6 - seis
- 7 - siete
- 8 - ocho
- 9 - nueve
- 10 - diez

If you just look over the previous chapter on the Indefinite Article, you'll realize that the number **one** changes from **uno** to **un** before a masculine noun and from **uno** to **una** before a feminine noun.

For example:

- un niño one boy
- una niña one girl

Use **uno** when counting generically, as in:

- one, two, three, four, etc
- uno, dos, tres, cuatro, etc

Use **un** or **una** when counting specifically, as in:

- one banana, one apple, etc
- un plátano, una manzana, etc

Chapter 9

Cardinal Numbers 11-20

Following on from the last chapter, the cardinal numbers eleven through to twenty are as follows:

- 11 – once
- 12 – doce
- 13 – trece
- 14 – catorce
- 15 – quince
- 16 – dieciséis
- 17 – diecisiete
- 18 – dieciocho
- 19 – diecinueve
- 20 – veinte

In Spanish, the numbers 16 through to 19 are actually contractions.

For example, the Spanish for 16 – **dieciséis** – literally means **ten and six**, but joined together, as shown below:

- dieciséis = diez y seis
- diecisiete = diez y siete
- dieciocho = diez y ocho
- diecinueve = diez y nueve

Chapter 10

Cardinal Numbers 21-99

The cardinal numbers twenty-one to thirty are:

21 – veintiuno

22 – veintidós

23 – veintitrés

24 – veinticuatro

25 – veinticinco

26 – veintiséis

27 – veintisiete

28 – veintiocho

29 – veintinueve

30 – treinta

You'll notice that, like the cardinal numbers 16 to 19, the numbers 21 to 29 are contractions of the Spanish for **twenty and one** etc:

- veintiuno = veinte y uno
- veintidós = veinte y dos, etc

Numbers between 40 and 100 are **not** usually done as contractions but add **y uno ... y dos** etc.

40 – cuarenta

50 – cincuenta

60 – sesenta

70 – setenta

80 – ochenta

90 – noventa

Consequently, the Spanish for sixty-two would be **sesenta y dos**.

Other examples are:

79 setenta y nueve

86 ochenta y seis

93 noventa y tres

Chapter 11

Adjectives – Part I

What is an adjective?

An adjective is a word used to describe or add information about a noun or pronoun, as in:

the **white** cat

In Spanish, most adjectives are **variable** and change form depending on whether the word they describe is masculine, feminine, singular or plural, as in:

- el gato **blanco** the white (male) cat
- la gata **blanca** the white (female) cat
- los gatos **blancos** the white (male) cats
- las gatas **blancas** the white (female) cats

Many Spanish adjectives end in **–o** and, as we can see from the above example of **blanco** (white), this type of adjective has four forms:

- **blanco** masculine/singular form
- **blanca** feminine/singular form
- **blancos** masculine/plural form
- **blancas** feminine/plural form

Adjectives that end in **–e**, however, do not change form for the masculine and feminine but remain the same for both:

- el chico **pobre** the poor boy
- la chica **pobre** the poor girl

However, they do change form from the singular to the plural by adding – s:

- los chicos **pobres** the poor boys
- las chicas **pobres** the poor girls

Similarly, most adjectives which end in a consonant do not change form for the masculine and feminine, but they do change form for the plural by adding –es:

- el hombre **fiel** the faithful man
- la mujer **fiel** the faithful woman
- los hombres **fieles** ... the faithful men
- las mujeres **fieles** the faithful women

Some adjectives of nationality which end in a consonant do not, however, follow this rule but add an –a to the feminine forms:

- el hombre **español** the Spanish man
- la mujer **española** the Spanish woman
- los hombres **españoles** ... the Spanish men
- las mujeres **españolas** the Spanish women

Adjectives which end in –or, –án, ón and –ín also have a feminine form:

- el hombre **hablador** the talkative man
- la mujer **habladora** the talkative woman
- los hombres **habladores** the talkative men
- las mujeres **habladoras** the talkative women

Chapter 12

Adjectives – Part II

You'll have probably noticed from the previous chapter that, as a general rule, in Spanish the adjective comes **after** the word it describes – unlike English where it comes before.

However, adjectives which express **quantity** (ie how much or how many) tend to be placed **before** the noun, for example:

- **mucho** trabajo much work
- **poco** dinero little money

There are also occasions when a descriptive adjective can precede the noun, for example, when it refers to a quality which is inherent and usually taken for granted, as in:

- la **blanca** nieve the **white** snow

In Spanish, there are also just a few adjectives which have a different meaning depending on whether they are placed before or after the noun.

For example:

- un hombre **pobre** ... a poor man (in the sense of unfortunate)
- un **pobre** hombre ... a poor man (in the sense of little money)

Chapter 13

There Is/There Are

So far, you've learnt all about nouns, can describe them using adjectives, and know how to explain how many there are with the use of cardinal numbers.

Let's now expand your ability to talk about nouns by using the Spanish for **there is** and **there are**.

This is very easy to do in Spanish, for there is just one word which can be used for either of these two expressions.

That word is:

hay

(pronounced like the English word "eye")

To recap, the word **hay** has two meanings:

- there is
- there are

For example:

- **Hay** una chica bonita en la calle.
There is a pretty girl in the street.
- **Hay** dos libros grandes en la mesa.
There are two big books on the table.

Hay can also be used in questions.

(By the way, the Spanish use two question marks – a reverse one at the start of the phrase/sentence plus a normal one at the end.)

¿Hay?

can mean two things:

Is there?

Are there?

For example:

- **¿Hay** una chica bonita en la calle?
Is there a pretty girl in the street?
- **¿Hay** dos libros grandes en la mesa?
Are there two big books on the table?

Hay can also be used to answer questions: **¿Hay** una chica bonita en la calle?

Sí. **Sí hay.** (Yes. **Yes there is.**)

- **¿Hay** dos libros grandes en la mesa?
No. **No hay.** (No. **No there aren't.**)

So, depending on whether the answer is positive or negative, you just answer:

Sí hay.

or

No hay.

Simple, isn't it?!

Chapter 14

25 Common Words – Part I

Below, you'll find twenty-five commonly-used words.

- a to/at
- agua (el) water
- ahora now
- año (el) year
- antes before/earlier
- aquí here
- bien well
- buen (o) good
- cada each
- comida (la) food/meal
- como as/like
- ¿Cómo? How?
- con with
- corto short
- cosa (la) thing
- cuando when
- ¿Cuándo? When?
- de of/from/by
- después after/later
- día day
- diferente different
- donde where
- ¿Dónde? Where?
- en in/on/into
- entre between/among

Chapter 15

25 Common Words – Part II

And, here you have twenty-five more!

- gente (la) people
- lugar (el) place
- mal (o) bad
- más more
- menos less
- mismo same
- mucho much/many (pl)
- muy very
- no no, not
- noche (la) night
- nombre (el) name
- nuevo new
- número (el) number
- o or
- otro other/another
- pequeño small
- pero but
- por for/by/along
- porque because
- si if
- sí (with accent) yes
- también also
- tan so
- viejo old
- y and

Chapter 16

Accent

When speaking or reading Spanish words, how do we know which syllable of the word should be emphasized?

With the exception of words which end in **-mente**, all Spanish words have just one syllable that is stressed or emphasized.

In words where there is no written accent, you can work out which syllable should be stressed by looking at the ending of the word:

1. Words which end in a consonant, EXCEPT **-n** or **-s** have the emphasis placed on the **last syllable**. For example:

español Spanish

espa**ñol** (emphasis placed on last syllable)

2. Words which end in a **vowel**, **-n** or **-s** are stressed on the **penultimate syllable** (ie last but one). For example:

diferente different

difer**ente** (emphasis placed on last-but-one syllable)

Occasionally, the above rules are not followed.

When this happens, the word is given an acute accent to show which syllable should be stressed. For example:

- árbol tree (**á**rbol)
- número number (**nú**mero)

The written accent is also used for other reasons, outlined below.

1. To differentiate certain words, as in:

- sí yes (with a written accent on the “i”)
- si if (with no written accent)

2. An accent is placed on certain words in interrogative or exclamative sentences, such as the word **donde**, when it is used as a question:

- ¿Dónde? Where?

3. An accent is placed on the word **o** (or) when it comes between figures so that it's not confused with the figure for zero:

- 3 ó 4 3 or 4

4. An accent occurs when **i** or **u** is preceded or followed by another vowel:

- baúl trunk

Chapter 17

Personal Pronouns

What are Personal Pronouns?

Personal Pronouns are words like **I, you, he, she, we, they**. They are the words we use to replace nouns and it is useful to know them before starting on verbs and verb conjugations.

A complete list of the Spanish Personal Pronouns follows:

Singular	yo I
	tú you (familiar)
	él he
	ella she
	usted you (polite)
Plural	nosotros we (masculine or mixed group)
	nosotras we (feminine)
	vosotros you (familiar, masculine or mixed group)
	vosotras you (familiar, feminine)
	ellos they (masculine or mixed group)
	ustedes you (polite)

Spanish Personal Pronouns are a little more complicated than their English equivalent. Some have feminine and masculine forms and there are a variety of ways of saying the English **you**. Let's look at some of them a little closer.

The word **nosotros** – meaning **we** – is used either by an entirely male group or by a group containing at least one male.

If the group contains ONLY females, **nosotras** would be used.

So, in Spanish, there are two ways to say **we**:

- nosotros we (masculine or mixed group)
- nosotraswe (purely female group)

The same rules apply to the Spanish equivalent of they:

- ellos they (when referring to a masculine or mixed group)
- ellas they (when referring to a purely female group)

Now, let's take a look at the various ways of saying **you**.

Firstly, the Spanish language has **polite** and **familiar** forms of the word **you**.

Usted is the polite (singular) form and would be used for addressing strangers/older people/bosses etc, in order to show respect.

Tú is the familiar (singular) form and would be used when talking to family/friends/work companions etc.

These two ways of saying **you** also have plural forms.

If addressing more than one person to whom you should show respect, you would use **ustedes** (ie the plural of usted):

- ustedes you (polite, plural, masculine or feminine)

If the people you are addressing are family/friends/acquaintances, you would use the plural form of **tú**.

The plural form of **tú** also has masculine and feminine versions:

- vosotros you (familiar, plural, masculine or mixed group)
- vosotras you (familiar, plural, purely female group)

To recap on “you”:

- one friend/family member – **tú**
- one stranger/older person – **usted**
- more than one friend/family member – **vosotros/vosotras**
- more than one stranger/older person – **ustedes**

In the written form, **usted** can be abbreviated to **Ud** or **Vd**.

Similarly, **ustedes** can be abbreviated to **Uds** or **Vds**.

This book concentrates on Castilian Spanish (ie the Spanish spoken in Spain) and you will find that the rules relating to **vosotros/vosotras** do not apply in Latin American countries.

Chapter 18

Regular –ar Verbs

As with English, Spanish verbs are either regular or irregular.

There are three types of regular verbs in Spanish: those ending in –ar; those ending in –er; and those ending in –ir.

Examples of the infinitives of verbs in these three categories are:

- **hablar** to speak
- **comer** to eat
- **vivir** to live

Today, we will concentrate on the first group – regular verbs ending in –**ar** such as **hablar** – and learn how to conjugate it in the present indicative tense.

If you were to conjugate the verb “**to speak**” in the present tense in English, it would be like this:

to speak (infinitive)
I speak
you (singular) speak
he/she speaks
we speak
you (plural) speak
they speak

You’ve already learnt about Spanish personal pronouns and how to use them in the previous lesson. Now, you just need to know the verb endings.

The present tense of **hablar** and all **regular** verbs ending in **–ar** would be as follows:

- Singular

yo habloI speak

tú hablas you (familiar) speak

él/ella/Vd habla he/she/you (polite) speak/s

- Plural

nosotros/as hablamos we speak

vosotros/as habláis you (familiar) speak

ellos/ellas/Vds hablan they/you (polite) speak

You conjugate regular **–ar** verbs by taking the infinitive (ie to speak) which, in this case, is:

hablar

And remove the **–ar** ending in order to get the root, which would be

habl (= hablar – ar)

To this root, you then add the following endings:

-o

-as

-a

-amos

-áis

-an

This results in the full conjugation of the present tense, as you saw above. Although we have used **hablar** as our example, the same rule would apply to any **regular** verbs which end in **–ar**.

Chapter 19

Regular –er Verbs

In the last lesson, you learnt that the Spanish language has three types of regular verbs - **-ar**, **-er**, and **-ir** verbs – as in:

hablar

comer

vivir

You also learnt how to conjugate **-ar** verbs in the present indicative tense using **hablar** as the example.

In this lesson, we'll concentrate on regular verbs ending in **-er**, taking **comer** (to eat) as the example, and learn how to conjugate that in the present tense.

First of all, we'll take the infinitive (to eat) – **comer** – and find the root of the verb by knocking off the **-er** ending:

com (= comer – er)

To this root, we'll add the endings for the present tense of regular **-er** verbs, as follows:

-o

-es

-e

-emos

-éis

-en

Consequently, the present indicative tense of the verb **comer** would be:

- Singular

yo como I eat

tú comes you (familiar) eat

él/ella/Vd come he/she/you (polite) eat/s

- Plural

nosotros/as comemos we eat

vosotros/as coméis you (familiar) eat

ellos/ellas/Vds comen they/you (polite) eat

These same endings do not just apply to **comer** but to all **regular –er** verbs.

Chapter 20

Regular –ir Verbs

You know how to conjugate **regular –ar** and **–er** verbs in the present indicative tense. Now let's look at the last group – the verbs ending in **–ir**. We'll take **vivir** (to live) as our example.

Once again, find the root of the verb by removing the ending which, in this case, will leave:

viv

Then, depending on the person you wish to speak in, add the endings:

o

es

e

imos

ís

en

In other words, the full present tense of the verb **vivir** would be:

- Singular

yo vivo I live

tú vives you (familiar) live

él/ella/Vd vive he/she/you (polite) live/s

- Plural

nosotros/as vivimos we live

vosotros/as vivís you (familiar) live

ellos/ellas/Vds viven they/you (polite) live

Again, the above rules apply to any **regular** verb ending in **–ir**.

You now know how to decline **all** regular verbs in the present indicative tense!

Chapter 21

Using Verbs

Because verb endings vary so much more in Spanish than they do in English, it's not always necessary to use the personal pronoun with the verb.

For example, you could say:

- Hablas españolYou speak Spanish
- Como mucha frutaI eat a lot of fruit
- Vivimos en EspañaWe live in Spain

None of the above sentences need personal pronouns because it's obvious from the ending of the verb who the subject is.

It is, however, sometimes necessary to include the personal pronoun in order to **clarify** who it is we are talking about, as in the case of **vive**. If left on its own, it could mean **he/she lives** or **you live**. Therefore you'd include the personal pronoun:

él vive

ella vive

Vd vive

Nevertheless, very often in conversation, it's obvious who the subject is and, if this is the case, the personal pronoun is not included.

Sometimes, personal pronouns are included purely to add **emphasis**:

Yo como carne y **tú** comes pescado

I eat meat and **you** eat fish

When using two verbs in a row, the first is conjugated and the second comes in the infinitive:

- Deseo comer paella I wish to eat paella

In Spanish, if you wish to imply **negation**, you place the word **no** before the verb:

- El niño **no** come The boy doesn't eat
- **No** hablo español I don't speak Spanish

If you wish to use the **interrogative** form and ask a question, you have to remember to place a reversed question mark at the beginning of the sentence.

If using the verb alone, without the personal pronoun, this is all you have to do to form a question in the present tense. For example:

- ¿Hablas español? Do you speak Spanish?

When including the personal pronoun, you just reverse the normal position of the verb and the pronoun. For example:

- ¿Habla Vd español? Do you speak Spanish?

(as opposed to "Vd habla español", which would mean "You speak Spanish.")

Chapter 22

Common –ar Verbs

You know how to decline the present tense of regular –ar verbs so, here's a list of 25 for you to practise with!

- alquilar to rent
- ayudar to help
- bailar to dance
- buscar to look for
- comprar to buy
- contestar to answer
- dejar to allow, to leave
- entrar (en) to enter (into)
- enviar to send
- esperar to hope, to wait/for
- ganar to earn, to win
- gastar to spend
- llegar to arrive
- llevar to wear, to carry
- mirar to look at, to watch
- necesitar to need
- olvidar to forget
- pagar to pay/for
- preguntar to ask
- preparar to prepare
- regresar to return
- tomar to take, to drink
- trabajar to work
- viajar to travel
- visitar to visit

Chapter 23

Common –er Verbs

Here 's a list of 25 regular –er verbs.

- aprender to learn
- beber to drink
- ceder to give in
- comer to eat
- cometer to commit
- comprender to understand
- correr to run
- creer to believe
- deber to have to, to owe
- depender (de) to depend (on)
- esconder to hide
- exceder to exceed
- leer to read
- meter (en) to put (into)
- ofender to offend
- poseer to possess
- proceder to proceed, to come from
- prometer to promise
- proveer to provide
- responder to reply
- romper to break
- sorprender to surprise
- suceder to happen
- temer to fear
- vender to sell

Chapter 24

Common –ir Verbs

And, to finish off with, here's a list of 25 regular –ir verbs.

- abrir to open
- admitir to admit
- asistir a to attend
- confundir to confuse
- cubrir to cover
- decidir to decide
- describir to describe
- descubrir to discover
- discutir to argue, to discuss
- dividir to divide
- escribir to write
- evadir to evade
- existir to exist
- fundir to melt
- hundir to sink
- imprimir to print
- ocurrir to happen, to occur
- omitir to omit
- partir to leave, to divide
- permitir to allow, to permit
- recibir to receive
- subir to climb
- sufrir to suffer
- unir to unite
- vivir to live

You have learnt a lot, haven't you?!

Keep going over this e-book to refresh your memory. When you really know all it holds, there's no doubt you've acquired an excellent grounding in the language! Give yourself a pat on the back!

Now, you just need to whiz over to Spain and get lots of practise!

Whether your interest in Spain is holidays, living, or you're just an armchair traveler, discover all the information you need at:

<http://www.top-tour-of-spain.com>

See you in the sun!

Linda Plummer

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