

Noteworthy Infinitives

As you know by now, many verbs are irregular in Spanish. However, many of these irregular verbs fall into categories and you can recognize them by their infinitives. In this unit we will break them down.

Verbs ending with *-cer* preceded by a vowel: The following verbs all end in *-cer*. On closer inspection, however, you will notice that the *-cer* is preceded by a vowel. All such verbs are irregular only in the *yo* form, where a *z* precedes the *c*. All other conjugated forms are regular in the present tense.

conocer (<i>to know a person</i>)		parecer (<i>to seem</i>)	
conozco	conocemos	parezco	parecemos
conocemos	conocéis	pareces	parecéis
conoce	conocen	parece	parecen

Below is a list of commonly used verbs in this category, along with their respective *yo* forms.

agradecer	to be thankful	<i>yo agradezco</i>
aparecer	to appear	<i>yo aparezco</i>
conocer	to know a person	<i>yo conozco</i>
crecer	to grow	<i>yo crezco</i>
desaparecer	to disappear	<i>yo desaparezco</i>
establecer	to establish	<i>yo establezco</i>
merecer	to deserve, merit	<i>yo merezco</i>
nacer	to be born	<i>yo nazco</i>
obedecer	to obey	<i>yo obedezco</i>
ofrecer	to offer	<i>yo ofrezco</i>
parecer	to seem	<i>yo parezco</i>
pertenecer	to belong	<i>yo pertenezco</i>
placer	to please, gratify	<i>yo plazco</i>
reconocer	to recognize	<i>yo reconozco</i>
yacer	to lie down	<i>yo yazco</i>

ejercicio

I-9-1

1. Yo (conocer) _____ a Juan.
2. Yo (pertenecer) _____ a un club.
3. Yo no (reconocer) _____ a nadie aquí.
4. Yo (ofrecer) _____ cien dólares al ganador.
5. Yo (merecer) _____ un aumento (*raise*).
6. Este programa me (parecer) _____ absurdo.
7. Estos libros me (pertenecer) _____.
8. Cada día muchos bebés (nacer) _____ en el mundo.
9. Si un bebé no come bien, no (crecer) _____ bien.
10. A veces un fantasma (aparecer) _____ en los sueños de los supersticiosos.

Verbs ending with *-ucir*: Verbs that end with *-ucir* are similar to verbs ending with *-cer* in that a *z* is inserted in the *yo* form. As with the preceding, *-cer* verbs, all other forms are regular.

producir (<i>to produce</i>)		traducir (<i>to translate</i>)	
produzco	producimos	traduzco	traducimos
produces	producís	traduces	traducís
produce	producen	traduce	traducen

Verbs in this category:

conducir	to conduct, drive	<i>yo conduzco</i>
deducir	to deduce	<i>yo deduzco</i>
deslucir	to tarnish, spoil	<i>yo desluzco</i>
inducir	to induce, persuade	<i>yo induzco</i>
introducir	to insert, introduce	<i>yo introduzco</i>
lucir	to light up, display	<i>yo luzco</i>
producir	to produce	<i>yo produzco</i>
reducir	to reduce	<i>yo reduzco</i>
traducir	to translate	<i>yo traduzco</i>

ejercicio I-9-2

Responde a las siguientes preguntas con frases completas:

1. ¿Conduces un coche automático o de marchas (*stick shift*)? _____

2. ¿Produces mucho trabajo? _____
3. ¿Traduces muchas frases en este libro? _____
4. ¿Qué produce el panadero? _____
5. ¿Introduces una moneda en el teléfono público? _____

6. ¿Normalmente, reducen los impuestos los políticos? _____

Verbs ending with -cer or -cir preceded by a consonant: When a verb ending with *-cer* or *-cir* is preceded by a consonant, the *yo* form will have the *c* replaced by *z*. All other forms are regular.

ejercer (<i>to exert, exercise</i>)		zurcir (<i>to mend</i>)	
ejerzo	ejercemos	zurzo	zurcimos
ejerces	ejercéis	zurces	zurcís
ejerce	ejercen	zurce	zurcen

Verbs in this category:

convencer	to convince, persuade	yo <i>convenzo</i>
ejercer	to exert, exercise	yo <i>ejerzo</i>
esparcir	to scatter, spread	yo <i>esparzo</i>
vencer	to conquer, defeat	yo <i>venzo</i>
zurcir	to mend, darn	yo <i>zurzo</i>

ejercicio I-9-3

1. I scatter seeds (*semillas*) in the garden. _____
2. I conquer the enemy (*el enemigo*). _____
3. I darn the socks (*los calcetines*). _____

4. I exert a lot of energy (*la energía*) on my studies. _____

5. The warriors (*los guerreros*) conquer their enemies. _____

Verbs ending in -ger or -gir: The *g* is soft (sounds like *h*) in the infinitive, and that same sound must be retained in its conjugated form. Since a *g* before an *o* in Spanish is hard (as in *go*), the *g* in the *yo* form will change to *j* in order to keep it soft. All other forms are regular.

coger (to catch, seize, grab)		corregir [e → i] (to correct)	
cojo	cogemos	corrijo	corregimos
coges	cogéis	corriges	corregís
coge	cogen	corrige	corrigen

Verbs in this category:

coger	to catch, seize, grab	yo cojo
colegir (e → i)	to deduce	yo colijo
corregir (e → i)	to correct	yo corrijo
dirigir	to direct	yo dirijo
elegir (e → i)	to elect, choose	yo elijo
escoger	to select	yo escojo
exigir	to demand, require	yo exijo
fingir	to pretend	yo finjo
proteger	to protect	yo protejo
recoger	to pick up, gather	yo recojo
sumergir	to submerge, immerse	yo sumerjo
surgir	to surge, spurt	yo surjo

ejercicio I-9-4

1. I protect my family. _____

2. I correct my problems. _____

3. The teacher (*el maestro*) corrects many papers (*trabajos*). _____

4. Sometimes I pretend to be happy when I am sad. _____

5. I select my friends with a lot of care (*el cuidado*). _____

6. Every four years we elect a new leader (*el líder*). _____

7. I pick up my socks from the floor (*el suelo*). _____
8. I catch a taxi for the airport (*el aeropuerto*). _____
9. I demand a lot from my employees (*empleados*). _____
10. I submerge the sweater in cold water. _____

Verbs ending in -aer: When an infinitive ends in *-aer*, its *yo* form will end with *-aigo*. All other forms will be regular.

caer (<i>to fall</i>)		traer (<i>to bring</i>)	
caigo	caemos	traigo	traemos
caes	caéis	traes	traéis
cae	caen	trae	traen

Verbs in this category:

atraer	to attract	<i>yo atraigo</i>
caer	to fall	<i>yo caigo</i>
contraer	to contract	<i>yo contraigo</i>
raer	to scrape, rub off	<i>yo raigo</i>
retraer	to bring back	<i>yo retraigo</i>
sustraer	to remove, subtract	<i>yo sustraigo</i>
traer	to bring	<i>yo traigo</i>

ejercicio

I-9-5

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the verb:

1. Usualmente yo (traer) _____ algo a una fiesta.
2. El pintor (raer) _____ la vieja pintura del lienzo (*canvas*).
3. El azúcar (atraer) _____ a las moscas.
4. Juan (contraer) _____ matrimonio con María el próximo mes.
5. Los estudiantes de matemáticas (sustraer) _____ la cantidad mínima de la cantidad máxima.

Verbs ending in -uir (not preceded by a g): In the previous categories, we saw verbs which, when conjugated, became irregular only in the *yo* form. The following group of infinitives produces irregular conjugations in all the singular forms, as well as the third person plural. In each of these forms a *y* is added to the stem.

huir (<i>to flee, run away</i>)		destruir (<i>to destroy</i>)	
huyo	huimos	destruyo	destruimos
huyes	huís	destruyes	destruís
huye	huyen	destruye	destruyen

Verbs in this category (along with the *yo* form):

concluir	to conclude	<i>yo concluyo</i>
constituir	to constitute	<i>yo constituyo</i>
construir	to construct, build	<i>yo construyo</i>
contribuir	to contribute	<i>yo contribuyo</i>
destruir	to destroy	<i>yo destruyo</i>
fluir	to flow	<i>yo fluyo</i>
huir	to flee, run away	<i>yo huyo</i>
incluir	to include	<i>yo incluyo</i>
influir	to influence	<i>yo influyo</i>

ejercicio

I-9-6

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the verb:

- Yo (construir) _____ una casa de madera.
- Yo nunca (contribuir) _____ dinero a un político.
- El río (fluir) _____ al oeste.
- El plato (huir) _____ con la cuchara (*spoon*).
- Los libros de H. L. Mencken me (influir) _____ mucho.
- La bomba (destruir) _____ el edificio.
- Tú (concluir) _____ la reunión a las ocho de la noche.
- El homicidio (constituir) _____ un crimen grave.
- El novelista siempre (incluir) _____ varios personajes en los libros.
- Las bibliotecas (contribuir) _____ mucho a la sociedad.

Verbs ending in *-guir*. Earlier in this unit, we looked at verbs ending in *-ger* or *-gir* that had to retain the soft *g*. In this section, our job is to retain the hard *g* throughout the conjugations. In infinitives ending in *-guir*, the *u* is merely a hard sound marker; without it, the *g* would be soft. Because the infinitive has a hard *g* sound, so must its conjugations. And because *g* in front of *o* is a naturally hard sound, the *u* is no longer necessary. Thus, in the *yo* form, the *u* is dropped. All other forms are regular.

distinguir (<i>to distinguish</i>)		seguir [<i>e</i> → <i>i</i>] (<i>to follow</i>)	
distingo	distinguimos	sigo	seguimos
distingues	distinguís	sigues	seguís
distingue	distinguen	sigue	siguen

Verbs in this category:

conseguir (<i>e</i> → <i>i</i>)	to get, obtain	<i>yo consigo</i>
distinguir	to distinguish	<i>yo distingo</i>
erguir (<i>e</i> → <i>i</i>)	to erect, lift up	<i>yo irgo*</i>
extinguir	to extinguish	<i>yo extingo</i>
perseguir (<i>e</i> → <i>i</i>)	to pursue, persecute	<i>yo persigo</i>
seguir (<i>e</i> → <i>i</i>)	to follow	<i>yo sigo</i>

*In *erguir*, the stressed *e* changes to *i*: *irgo*; *irgues*; *irgue*; *erguimos*; *erguís*; *irguen*.

ejercicio

I-9-7

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate verb form:

- Yo (distinguir) _____ entre lo bueno y lo malo.
- La policía (seguir) _____ al criminal.
- Yo (extinguir) _____ las velas (*candles*).
- Yo (conseguir) _____ trabajo en la compañía telefónica.
- Los líderes (erguir) _____ un monumento a la libertad.
- En el verano los mosquitos me (perseguir) _____.
- Naomi (conseguir) _____ toda su ropa por catálogo.
- Mis clases de matemáticas e inglés (seguir) _____ a mi clase de español.
- Muchas personas no (distinguir) _____ el rojo del verde.
- Yo te (seguir) _____ a la fiesta.
- Ustedes no (conseguir) _____ nada de esta oficina.
- Los bomberos (*firefighters*) (extinguir) _____ el incendio.