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In Spanish, tú is the informal way to say "you" and usted is the formal way.Knowing when and how to use them can be challenging in the beginning. But in this post, you'll learn the difference between tú vs. usted? In Spanish, we use tú and usted to refer to a person we're talking to (these are the singular second-person subject pronouns). They both mean "you."Tú is used in an informal context when talking to someone you don't know very well. How to Conjugate Verbs in the Tú and Usted FormsHere are the present simple tense conjugations for tú and usted with a few common Spanish verbs: Object pronoun is te and for usted it's le. For example: Te llamo mañana. (I'll call you tomorrow.) Le dije que llegaría tarde. (I told you that I would arrive late.) When to Use Tú Children and animals, you should use the tú form. Ya pasó la hora de irte a la cama. Ve a cepillarte los dientes. (It's past your bedtime. Go brush your teeth.) ¿Tienes hambre? Ya te doy la comida. (Are you hungry? I'll give you food now/soon.) Young peopleIf you're a teenager or in your 20s, use tú in pretty much any situation where you're speaking to people your age. Hola amigo, ¿quieres ir al cine más tarde? (Hey friend/bud, do you want to go to the movie theater later?) Cierto, eres el novio de Lily. ¿Cómo te llamas? (Right, you're Lily's boyfriend. What's your name?) Friends and familyPeople who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. It can be a bit more delicate for people who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. It can be a bit more delicate for people who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. It can be a bit more delicate for people who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. It can be a bit more delicate for people who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. It can be a bit more delicate for people who you're close to or are social with are addressed with tú. un café conmigo? (We need to catch up. Do you want to have a coffee with me?) ¡Primo! ¡No te he visto en años! (Cousin! I haven't seen you in years!) Work colleagues you know wellThis one depends strongly on company culture. In arts organizations or non-profits, you're more likely to use tú with everyone, whereas in a bank, usted is more common ¿Puedes ayudarme a organizar la inauguración de la galería? (Can you help me organize the gallery opening?) InsultsNot to encourage insulting people, but if you're going to do it, it would be strange to use usted as it's a sign of respect. ¿Qué te pasa? ¿Nunca aprendiste a conducir? (What's wrong with you? Didn't you ever learn to drive?) ¡Cállate! Estoy tratando de ver la pelicula. (Shut up! I'm trying to watch the movie.) When to Use Usted Older peopleIf you're a child or a teenager address you with tú, but it's better to show respect and use the more formal form. This is also true if you're an adult. addressing an elderly person or someone who's much older than you. Hola señora Cervantes, ¿cómo está hoy? (Hi Mrs. Cervantes, how are you today?) Profe, ¿de dónde es usted? (Teacher, where are you from?) Bureaucratic situationsIn general, you should use usted in all legal, bureaucratic and administrative situations. ¿Podría decirme dónde se realizan las entrevistas para la visa? (Could you tell me where the visa interviews are conducted?) Por favor, avíseme si necesita algo más para procesar mi solicitud. (Please let me know if you need anything else to process my request.) In businessWithin your company, follow the corporate culture. When dealing with those outside of your company in business contexts you'll definitely use usted. Bosses used to be able to address underlings with tú but this is now considered pretty ugly. If there's a difference in assigned power roles, you might use usted just to be safe and show respect, both to those whom you manage and those who manage you. ¿Puede reunirse mañana a las 10:00 en nuestra oficina? (Can you meet tomorrow at 10:00 at our office?) Por favor revise la propuesta y déjeme saber lo que piensa. (Please review the proposal and let me know what you think.) With people you don't knowlf you're speaking to someone on the street for directions, or anyone who you don't already know personally, use usted. Disculpe, ¿podría decirme qué hora es? (Excuse me, could you tell me what time it is?) Perdone, ¿está en la fila para pagar? (Sorry, are you in line to pay?) If you're ever not sure which one to use, just use usted. It's better to be too formal than too informal to avoid causing offense. You can also just ask. As a non-native speaker, especially, you can plead ignorance and learn from the situation. The phrase to use is: ¿Nos podemos tutear? — Can we use tú? Ustedes vs. VosotrosUstedes is the plural of tú—making it informal. In Spain, vosotros is the plural of tú—making it informal. In Spain, vosotrosUstedes is the plural of tú—making it informal. or more people that doesn't include ourselves. It's like the Spanish equivalent of y'all or you all. Here's how to conjugate their verb forms: When it comes to people you're just meeting, you can typically start using tú once you get to know them better—as long as they're not in a position of authority or your elder. For example, in most cases, you'll always use usted with your own parents. The best rule to follow as a foreigner would probably just be to wait until they start using tú to address you. This is what I do, and it works pretty well. But this also depends on the region. For example, in Colombia, it's very common for married couples to use usted with each other. Or for parents to use usted with their children. It's pretty much interchangeable with tú. The bottom line: pay attention to your environment and try to blend in. The only way to do this is by talking to and listening to native speakers. You can do this easily and online with a program like FluentU. Regional Variations of Tú and UstedThese are some of the main regional variations in using the different second-person subject pronouns in Spanish. The only exception is that an elderly person can be addressed with usted as a sign of respect.Latin America tends to use usted much more often than Spain in general, for example, between a mother and a child, without this meaning any formal relationship. In some regions of Latin America, such as Argentina, Uruguay and parts of Central America, vos is used instead of tú. This alternative form comes with its own conjugation and is used in informal settings. These are just some of the regional variations, and there can also be variations between people of the same region. For example, I know adults in Ecuador who always address their parents as usted, and others who always use tú. If you're going to be traveling or living in a Spanish-speaking country, it's best to look up the specific usage where you're going or ask someone who lives there if you can. Tú vs. Usted Practice QuizConjugate the verbs according to the correct pronoun. Then check your answers below. 1. ¿(Tú — venir) a la fiesta esta noche? (Are you coming to the party tonight?)2. (Tú — hacer) siempre un gran trabajo en tus proyectos. (You always do a great job on your projects.)3. ¿(Usted — necesitar) ayuda con algo? (Do you need help with anything?)4. ¿(Tú — poder) ayudarme con esta tarea? (Can you help me with this homework?)5. ¿(Usted — querer) una taza de café? (Do you want a cup of coffee?)6. (Usted — tener) _____ mucha experiencia en esta industria. (You have a lot of experience in this industry.)7. (Tú – ser) _____ una persona muy amable y divertida. (You are a very kind and fun person.)8. ¿(Usted – trabajar) _____ en esta empresa? (Do you work in this company?)9. ¿Qué (estar) tomando (tú)? (What are you drinking?)10. (Usted — llegar) siempre temprano a las reuniones. (You always arrive early to the meetings.) Answer key:1. Vienes2. Haces3. Necesita4. Puedes5. Quiere6. Tiene7. Eres8. Trabaja9. Estás10. LlegaWhen you're around native speakers, try to actively listen for the distinction between formal and informal registers. This will give you more confidence in your responses and lets you learn from new situations. Eventually, it will start to feel more natural to you and you won't have to think much before choosing how to address someone. If you want to learn Spanish with authentic materials but need a little extra support, then you need to know about FluentU. FluentU lets you consume the same content as native Spanish speakers, but with tools to make it easier to pick up the language while you watch. You'll learn Spanish as it's actually spoken by real people, unlike programs that use scripted content. You can bring our learning tools directly to YouTube or Netflix with the FluentU Chrome Extension, or check out our curated video library full of clips that cover a wide range of topics, as you can see here: FluentU brings native videos within reach with interactive subtitles. You can tap on any word to instantly see its meaning, an image, and its audio pronunciation. Click on the word for additional examples and to add it to your flaschards To reinforce what you've learned, you'll complete engaging exercises and see more examples of the key words from the video. FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU app from the iTunes or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website on your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU website or tablet or table Google Play store. Click here to take advantage of our current sale! (Expires at the end of this month.) Have conversations faster, understand people when they speak fast, and other tested tips to learn faster. More info If you're new to the language, it's easy to see how usted vs tú in Spanish may cause some confusion: both words are used to address a single person as you. They each have specific rules for when and how they're used, so it's important to choose the right one. In simple terms, there are two basic rules that explain the difference between tú and usted is more formal Rule 2. Tú has its own conjugations, while usted uses third-person conjugations like él and ella If you remember the first rule about formality, you'll choose the right word between tú and usted nearly every time. The second rule about conjugation takes more practice, but once you've grasped it you'll choose the right word between tú and usted nearly every time. The second rule about conjugation takes more practice, but once you've grasped it you'll choose the right way every time. when and how to use each one, starting with levels of formality and then getting into their grammar rules. We should also mention that the English subject pronoun you has several other translations in Spanish, with tú and usted only used in singular to address one person. For a comprehensive lesson on every option, please see our post on tú vs usted vs vosotros vs ustedes. Tú vs Usted in Spanish: Formality The most important difference between usted and tú is their levels of formality. You don't really have this distinction in English since you address anyone as you, whether you're talking to a child, to an elder, to a client, or even to the president. Many languages, such as French with tu vs vous, exhibit important levels of politeness through their you pronouns. In Spanish, we do this with tú vs usted. In Spanish, tú is known as the familiar or informal you, while usted is the polite or formal you, whereas choosing to use usted introduces a greater level of protocol or respect. So when do you use tú vs usted in Spanish? Let's see the main factors to consider when choosing to use one over the other. Keep in mind that several of these remain fairly subjective, so there are often contexts where either one can work just fine. And if you're a beginner Spanish student you'll also have a degree of flexibility, since locals will understand that you aren't speaking your native language! Recommended: How to Learn Spanish, tú. The verb to describe the act of addressing someone with tú is tutear, while tuteo is the name for this informal form of address. Don't forget to include the accent mark to differentiate between tú vs tu, since the unaccented tu is the possessive adjective meaning your. So who should you tutear? 1. When there is a relationship of trust between people. It's very normal to use tú when we talk with friends, family, classmates, and so on. Couples use tú with each other, as do coworkers who see each other all the time. 2. To talk with children. You should always use tú in Spanish when talking with kids, and also try to use simple vocabulary. 3. Between people who appear to be a similar age, even when they don't know each other. It's quite common for strangers to address each other as tú when there's a perception of being social peers in the same age range or younger, which has an added element of breaking down barriers. This is a normal instance of tutear practiced when interacting with a person on the street you stop to ask for directions, another participant at an event or party, or someone you meet at a bar, while it's sometimes also used between same-age peers in interactions with hotel receptionists, waiters and waitresses, salespeople, and so on. When to use tú among people of the same age, salespeople, and so on. When to use tú among people of the same age, salespeople, and so on. When to use tu among people of the same age, salespeople, and so on. When to use Usted Usted is the formal you in Spanish. While we saw that it's often fine to use tu among people of the same age, salespeople, and so on. When to use Usted Usted is the formal you in Spanish. there are some important exceptions where you should definitely opt for usted. So when do you use usted in Spanish? 1. To talk with older people. In Spanish? 1. To talk with older people. In Spanish? 1. To talk with older people. In Spanish? matter of being "older" than the speaker. If you're in your 20s, for instance, you should systematically be using usted with your friends or family, it's very common to use usted with your friends or family, it's very common to use usted with your friends or family. señora. These are the Spanish equivalents of sir and ma'am, while they're also used in place of the formal titles of Mr., Ms., and Mrs. If you normally use any of these with someone, you should definitely also usteadar them. 3. When talking to your boss or anyone above you in a work hierarchy. Whenever you speak with a colleague who has a higher rank within the company, especially your boss, it's important to use usted as a sign of respect. They will probably use usted with your coworkers who you can consider peers and address with tú. 4. To talk with anyone in a position of authority. If you're speaking to a border guard, a police officer, a judge, or even a security guard or a civil servant, you should always demonstrate some deference by using the formal you. In school contexts, this applies to your teachers, professors, and administrators. Addressing any of these authority figures with the friendly tú form is a blatant gesture of disrespect that risks backfiring on you! When to use Usted vs Tú Most of these rules on the difference between usted and tú are pretty straightforward. If you're talking with your family or with anyone where you need to demonstrate a sense of social hierarchy, you use tú. With elders or with anyone where you need to demonstrate a sense of social hierarchy, you use tú. zone of people who might be your peers? We saw how it's common enough for people to tutear each other in a lot of in-between contexts, so in such circumstances, when do you use usted in Spanish rather than tú? The reality is that there's really a lot of variation in how people choose to apply different standards between tú and usted. It often comes down to regional differences, local norms, or even just how much distance is intended between the two speakers. Tú is good for keeping things informal and creates a level of distance. This distance can be added intentionally, even where usted may not be the default. If you overhear your friend speaking emphatically with his father and he suddenly switches to using usted, for example, they're probably having an argument and the added formality is intended to put some distance between them. If you're at a party and address a particularly attractive person as tú, on the other hand, their significant other may take offence at the level of familiarity you're suggesting by not using usted. As you can see, tutear can be used to insert a level of familiarity, even if it doesn't necessarily exist. If a shopkeeper starts acting friendly and calls you tú, perhaps it's because they want you to feel comfortable and buy something. You might do the same though, using the friendly tú as part of your bargaining tactic! Usted is often the safest bet if you're unsure, especially where you don't know someone. In some cultures it can even be common for people to stick with usted with people they know, only moving on to tú once they decide that they're really friends. At the end of the day, whether to use usted vs tú in Spanish is all about what the two people feel comfortable with. If you're unsure you can just ask. And don't be surprised if, once you first ustedar someone, they instead tell you it's ok to tutear them! Grammar: Conjugating with Tú vs Usted Now that we've covered the main differences: tú has its own set of second-person conjugations just like you in English, whereas usted requires the use of third-person conjugations, like he, and it in English. This means that usted in Spanish takes the same conjugations as él and ella, and is treated as a third-person pronoun applies across the different categories of personal pronouns, so if usted is a sentence's subject then its corresponding reflexive or object pronouns need to match. Here are the various forms of both tú and usted when they appear in different parts of a sentence, with links to our full lessons about each category of Spanish personal pronouns: Let's sum up this first rule of tú vs usted: Tú acts as a second-person singular pronoun Usted acts as a third-person singular pronoun This same rule applies to other grammatical categories such as possessive adjectives or possessive pronouns. For example, your in Spanish is tu or tus for tú, whereas for usted it's su or sus. Conjugating Tú vs Usted Now that the rules are clear, we're ready to explore the difference between usted and tú conjugations. Let's start by seeing how a few of the most important Spanish verbs are conjugated with both. Click through to see all the conjugations of each verb, along with explanations of their nuances. We're including the yo conjugations of each verb for good measure, since you likely already know those. Here are each of their first-, second-, and third-person singular conjugations in the simple present tense: Verb: Spanish - English yo conjugation (first-person) usted, él, ella conjugation (third-person) ser - to be soy eres es estar - to be estoy estás está tener - to have tengo tienes tiene hacer - to do, the conjugation usually ends in a vowel with usted. Example sentences using Tú Now that we've seen the conjugations and the pronouns associated with tú, let's see them in action with a bunch of example sentences. Remember that since the unique verb conjugations are enough to identify the subject, including the subject pronouns is usually optional in Spanish. We'll start simple, using some of the basic verbs whose present tense conjugations we just saw. We're also highlighting another prepositional pronoun in the first sentence: contigo means with you when addressing tú. In the second sentence we highlight tu, the associated possessive adjective. ¿Estás perdida? Si quieres, yo puedo ir contigo hasta la estación de policía. - Are you lost? If you want, I can go with you to the police station. Tienes que hacer tu tarea. - You have to do your homework. ¿Quieres comer ahora o más tarde? - Do you want to eat now or later? ¿Puedes decirme el precio de ese pantalón? - Can you tell me the price of those pants? Now let's see some examples of tú conjugations in other tenses. ¿Podrías traerme el menú? Por favor. - Could you bring me the menu? Please. Tú me dijiste que irías conmigo a la fiesta, no me dejes solo. - You told me you would go to the party with me, don't leave me alone. Finally, let's see some sentences where we use some of the other pronouns when we speak with someone we're addressing as tú. Vine temprano para ayudarte con el proyecto. - I came early to help you with the project. Mamá, te voy a invitar a almorzar hoy. - Mom, I'm going to invite you to lunch today. Example sentences using Usted Now let's do the same thing with usted. In the following example sentences we highlight the usted verb conjugations, the associated object pronouns, and the third-person singular possessive adjective su, meaning your when used with usted. The first few examples are in other tenses. ¿Cómo está hoy, señor Francisco? - Mr. Francisco?, how are you today? ¿Quiere que le ayude con la cena? - Do you want me to help you with dinner? Recuerde que su reunión comienza en 15 minutos. - Remember that your meeting starts in 15 minutes. ¿Quiere que mande a alguien a comprar su almuerzo? - Do you want me to send someone to buy your lunch? Usted era muy guapa de joven. - You were very pretty as a young woman. ¿Podría decirme su apellido para buscar su reservación? - Could you tell me your last name to find your reservation? Aquí están los documentos que solicitó temprano. - Here are the documents you requested early. Example sentences depending on whether the speaker is addressing someone as tú or usted. We'll show the tú sentence first, followed by the usted sentence, and then show the English translation. We highlight all of the words that need to reflect tú vs usted to demonstrate the differences between the two sentences. ¿Tú eres su mamá? - ¿Usted es su mamá? - ¿Usted es su mamá? - Are you her mom? ¿Te siente bien? - ¿Se siente bien? - Do you feel good? ¿Quiere gue la despierte temprano, señora Patricia? - Do vou want me to wake vou up early, [Mrs.] Patricia? Hola Pablo, ¿cómo estás? ¿En gué puedo avudarte? - Hola señor Pablo, ¿cómo está? ¿En gué puedo esto. - Let me help you with this. ¿Quieres algo para beber? - ¿Quiere algo para beber? - Do you want something to drink? ¿Me das tu número de teléfono? - ¿Me da su número de teléfono? - ¿Quiere algo para beber? - Do you want something to drink? ¿Me das tu número de teléfono? - ¿Me da su número d difference between usted and tú in Spanish? Can you think of some interactions where you're still unsure about whether you'd address the other person as tú or usted? And are you clear on the grammar differences between tú and usted, which are both used to address someone as you in Spanish. Formality: Tú is more informal. Usted is more formal. Usted is more formal. Grammar: Tú is a second-person pronoun. Usted acts as a third-person pronoun. The level of formality between these two options is the most important concept to master. To sum up the rules, tú is used when addressing friends, family children, and social peers. On the other hand, usted is used with anyone where a level of formality is important, including authority figures, higher-ups in a work hierarchy, elders, and people who are older than the speaker. Tú implies closeness between people, while usted inserts some distance. The grammar rules that differentiate tú and usted are trickier to master, but are pretty straightforward when reduced to the fundamentals: tú is the second-person singular pronouns: él and ella. These fundamental grammar rules apply to verb conjugations, as well as to any other associated words like object pronouns: and possessives. The focus of today's post was strictly on the difference between tú and usted in singular. Remember that Spanish also has plural forms for each of these. The rules are similar, but with some very important regional particularities. Check our related post to explore the full range of words for You in Spanish. As far as understanding when to use usted vs tú, we hope you appreciated this post with everything you need to know about the singular you in Spanish! 11.8K Using usted vs. tú in Spanish! stee for a communicate effectively and properly in all settings, formal and casual. While they both translate to "you," their subtle nuances unlock a deeper understanding of Spanish culture and social dynamics. As you learn Spanish, it's important to know when and how to use tú (pronounced as "too") and usted (pronounced as "too") and usted (pronounced as "too") and usted (pronounced as "too") and uster pronouns helps you avoid social dynamics. faux pas: A misplaced tú can be disrespectful, while an overly formal usted may not leave a good impression. What are the main differences between usted and tú? Grammatically, usted and tú are very similar. Both pronouns translate to the singular "you" and are used to address one person. uses and conjugations are distinct. Here's a brief overview of the differences between usted and tú in Spanish: Formality: Usted is a formal pronoun used to talk to family and peers. Conjugation: Usted requires the third-person singular conjugation of the verb. Tú requires the second person singular conjugation of the verb. Overall Tone: Usted creates a more polite and distant tone. Tú creates a more casual and friendly tone. Respect for elders and authority figures is deeply rooted in Spanish culture. This is evident in Spanish culture. into social interactions, from asking for directions to ordering food in a restaurant. You'll also use usted in formal written communication, such as business emails, letters, and reports. When unsure, start with usted in a formal written communication, such as business emails, letters, and reports. social norms are shifting in Spain and Latin America, with tú becoming a more common choice for addressing others, compared to the more formal usted? = What is your name? ¿De dónde es? = Where are you from? Disculpe, ¿usted sabe dónde está el baño? = Excuse me, do you know where the bathroom is? Did you notice that some examples include the pronoun usted while others don't? Since the verb conjugation usually indicates who the subject is, the subject is, the subject pronoun is optional. Consider including the subject pronoun in some situations to add emphasis, avoid ambiguity, or sound slightly more formal. You're visiting your grandfather in Bogotá. Be prepared to address him using usted to show respect. ¿Quiere algo de comer's precial to me. = Do you want something to eat? You're at a bustling open-air market in Mexico City on a Saturday morning. Drawn to a stall overflowing with exotic fruits, you approach the friendly using usted. ¿Tiene Ud. mangos orgánicos? = Do you have organic mangos? ¿Cuánto le debo? = How much do I owe you? ¿Acepta usted tarjetas de crédito? = Do you take credit card? In written Spanish, usted is often abbreviated as Ud. Determined to excel in Spanish class this semester, you want to make a positive impression on your teacher who is an older traditionalist. Addressing him formally with usted is a great start. ¿Me permite ir al baño, señor? = May I go to the bathroom, Sir? ¿Puede usted repetir eso, por favor? = Can you repeat that, please? ¿Puedo hablar con usted, Sr. Morales? = Can I talk to you, Mr. Morales? = Can I talk to you, Mr. Morales? Titles like señor (sir/Mr.), señora (ma'am/Mrs.), and señorita (miss/Ms.) usually signal the use of usted. In contrast to usted, the informal pronoun tú reflects the closeness between family and friends. Tú reigns supreme in casual interactions, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere. You wake up to the smell of gallo pinto (fried rice and beans) wafting from downstairs. You head to the kitchen where you find your Costa Rican cousin preparing breakfast. Create a friendly, relaxed tone with tú. Tú eres un buen cocinero = You're a good cook. Esto está rico. ¿Me das la receta? = This is delicious. Can you give me the recipe? No necesitas lavar los platos. = You don't need to do the dishes. Generally, tú is your go-to pronoun for friends, family, acquaintances, and loved ones—including your pets! In some Spanish-speaking countries, however, usted may be used when addressing older family figures. You're participating in a cultural exchange in Santiago, Chile, and it's your first day of school. You sit down next to a friendly-looking boy to have lunch. This is the perfect opportunity to practice informal Spanish conversation using tú. ¿Qué estás comiendo? = What are you eating? ¿Prefieres pollo o cerdo? = Do you prefer chicken or pork? Juan, ¿tú quieres compartir mi postre? = Juan, do you want to share my dessert? With classmates, you can always use tú regardless of whether you are meeting them for the first time. With colleagues, only use tú with those you know well. You're eating a snack in a park in Santiago while your Chilean niece plays with her friends. A 7-year-old boy named Eduardo comes up to you and asks you to play with him. Using tú creates a friendly and approachable atmosphere. Corres demasiado rápido. = You run too fast. ¡Ten cuidado, Eduardo! = Be careful, Eduardo! ¿Quieres jugar con esos niños? = Do you want to play with those kids? Children also use tú when speaking with each other. You're browsing the shelves of a charming bookstore in Seville. You reach for Don Quijote de la Mancha, only to find a young woman reaching for the same book. She appears to be about the same age as you, so you address her using tú. Disculpa, ¿tú estás mirando este libro también? = Excuse me, are you looking at this book too? ¿Has leído este libro? = Have you read this book? ¿Qué te gusta leer? = What do you like to read? Using usted correctly in conversation starts with verb form. When you enter the world of formal Spanish conversations, learning verb conjugations for usted becomes essential By understanding the patterns, you can conjugate any regular verb in the usted form to speak politely: ¿Habla Ud. italiano? = Do you speak Italian? ¿Lo comprende? He tratado de explicarlo lo mejor posible. = Do you understand? I've tried to explain it as best I can. ¿Donde vive usted? = Where do you live? While most Spanish verbs follow predictable patterns for conjugation, irregular verbs have a unique pattern that you'll begin to memorize as you learn and practice. Familiarizing yourself with these irregularities is essential for expressing yourself appropriately in formal situations. Irregular verbs in context: Gracias. Usted es muy amable. = Thank you. You are very kind. ¿Adónde va? La reunión empieza en dos minutos. = Where are you going? The meeting starts in two minutes. Disculpe, señora, ¿usted me puede ayudar, por favor? = Excuse me, ma'am, can you help me, please? Using tú requires specific verb conjugations different from conjugations for usted. Conjugating the tú form confidently is a significant step toward fluency in spoken Spanish. The short answer is yes, you need the accent mark for tú. Without it, the word has a different meaning of a word. Tú and tu are homonyms, words that are spelled the same but have different meanings. The accent helps distinguish them. Tú is a possessive adjective that indicates who owns something. It translates as "your." ¿Este es tu libro? = Is this your book? Here's how to conjugate some of the most common Spanish verbs in the tú form in the present tense. By understanding the patterns the verbs follow, you'll find it useful to learn how to conjugate verbs in the tú form for all 18 Spanish verb tenses. Verb EndingExample VerbTú Conjugation-ARtomar (to drink)tomas-ERleer (to read)lees-IRescribir (to write)escribes Take a look at how regular verbs are conjugated in the tú form for casual conversation: ¿Tomas café? = Do you drink coffee? ¿Lees mucho en tu tiempo libre? = Do you drink coffee? ¿Lees mucho en tu tiempo libre? = Do you read a lot in your free time? ¿Escribes en francés y en español? - Do you write in French and Spanish? This table focuses on a few common irregular verbs and their conjugations in the present tense specifically for tú. These verbs will empower you in informal Spanish conversations, as they're used frequently in everyday interactions. Irregular VerbTú Conjugationtener (to be)eresestar (to be)e go) vaspoder (to be able to) puedes Check out these examples: ¿Qué estás haciendo? = What are you doing? Eres mi mejor amigo. = You are my best friend. Tú vas a la fiesta, ¿verdad? = You are going to the party, right? The primary function of tú and usted in Spanish is to act as subject pronouns. These pronouns also have corresponding direct object pronouns, indirect object pronouns, and reflexive pronouns. Understanding how these pronouns work together will help you to navigate formality and express yourself accurately in Spanish. Spanish direct object pronouns for tú is te, whereas the direct object pronoun for usted is lo or la depending on if the direct object is masculine or feminine. Spanish indirect object pronoun for tú, whereas le corresponds to usted. Reflexive pronouns indicate that someone or something is performing an action on or for itself. Te and se accompany reflexive verbs in the tú and usted forms respectively. The following examples demonstrate how these pronounte veo mañana. Lo veo mañana. I'll see you tomorrow. indirect object pronoun¿Te puedo pedir un favor? ¿Le puedo pedir un favor? Can I ask you a favor? reflexive pronounDeberías ponerte un abrigo. You should put on a coat. Beyond the familiar tú and formal usted, there are three additional pronouns for addressing "you" depending on the region and level of formality. Ustedes and vosotros are the plural counterparts of the singular usted and tú. Whereas, vos fills a similar role to tú.Here's a brief overview: Subject PronounFormalityNumberRegionExample Verb Endings (Present Tense)vosinformalpluralSpain -áis -éis, -ísustedesformal and informalpluralSpain (only formal) and Latin America-an, -en Are you taking a trip to Spain? Learn how to use vosotros and impress the locals! You've got the basics down, but your journey doesn't end here. Use these strategies to solidify your understanding of tú vs. usted in Spanish: Role-play different scenarios with a friend or your Rosetta Stone tutor, practicing when to use tú and usted. Write dialogues for various situations, such as ordering food at a restaurant (using tú). Observe how native speakers use tú and usted in different situations. Find audio recordings of native Spanish speakers listen to podcasts, or watch movies and TV shows in Spanish. For a deeper understanding of usted vs.tú, immerse yourself in the language. Rosetta Stone's Dynamic Immersion method doesn't rely on rote memorization but rather helps learners build understanding organically through context. Tú and usted are more than just translations of "you." Understanding them is an important step toward fluency in Spanish conversation. Here's a brief recap: Tú and usted are subject pronouns that translate as "you." Use tú when speaking to friends, family, children, and acquaintances for a casual and friendly tone. Use usted when addressing strangers or people older than you or in formal situations for a polite and respectful tone. Each pronoun requires specific verb conjugations. As the pronoun is often omitted, using the appropriate verb ending indicates whether you are speaking to someone formally or informally. 0 FacebookTwitterPinterestEmail RELATED ARTICLES Have you ever wondered why some people use "tu" while others use "usted" when speaking Spanish? It's not just a random choice but a reflection of social dynamics, respect, and formality. Understanding the difference can make your conversations more appropriate and engaging. Dive into this fascinating aspect of the Spanish language and discover how to navigate these nuances like a pro. Join us as we unravel the intricacies of Spanish language etiquette! In Spanish, "tú" and "usted" both mean "you," but they are used in different contexts. "Tú" is the informal way to say "you." It is used when talking to friends, family members, or people your age or younger. It's casual and conveys a sense of closeness or familiarity. For example, you might say, "¿Cómo estás?" (How are you?) to a friend. "Usted," on the other hand, is the formal version of "you." It is used in more respectful or professional settings. You use "usted" when speaking to someone older, in a position of authority, or when you want to show respect. For instance, you would say, "¿Cómo está usted?" when talking to your boss or a stranger The choice between "tú" and "usted" also depends on cultural norms and personal preferences. In some Spanish-speaking countries, "usted" is used more frequently, even among younger people or in less formal settings. Knowing when to use "tú" and "usted" is used more frequently, even among younger people or in less formal settings. appreciate the nuances of the Spanish language and culture. You'll notice that a very important difference is the accent, the tu is considered a possessive adjective. That is: "tú" is "you" and "tu" is "you" and "tu" is "you". Let's just have a quick review of the Spanish personal pronouns Spanish Personal Pronouns English Personal Pronouns Yo (singular) I Tú / vos (singular - informal) You Usted (singular - formal) You El / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Vosotros (plural - Informal) You Usted (singular - formal) You El / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You El / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Informal) You El / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) You (you all) Ellos / Ella (singular) He / She Nosotros (plural - Spain) Yo native speakers will struggle if asked to conjugate a verb with this one. When you learn Spanish, you learn speakers barely use the subject pronouns. The conjugation of the work is what you must pay attention to. Let's get started with some of the most common verbs: Now, with some common Spanish reflexive verbs: In Spanish, "tú and "vos" both mean "you" but are used in different regions. The informal pronoun vos is not related to vosotros. In the times of the Spanish nobility which in English would translate to "your grace". Vos is a pronoun that evolved from those times. In Latin American Spanish, vos can be found with a predominant status in: Argentina Uruguay Paraguay El Salvador Guatemala Honduras Nicaragua Costa Rica Some other Spanish-speaking countries use tú and vos are: Bolivia Colombia Panamá Chile Venezuela Ecuador And there are those which only use tú: Perú Puerto Rico Dominican Republic Spain Cuba México Even when we say vos is not related to vosotros, there are regional dialects that use a combination of those two. That is, using the pronoun vos with the verb being conjugated as vosotros. Examples of it can be heard in the Zulia state in Venezuela and the Azuero Peninsula in Panama. No sabía que vos sois zurdo: I didn't know you are left-handed On the other hand, tú is sometimes conjugated as vos in Chile. Don't worry, all native Spanish-speakers will understand if you conjugate everything with tú. Use tú with friends and family: Although in some regions you may hear people using usted to call their parents, this is becoming less and less common. Also, people who are close to you deserve that friendly tú. Tú me gustas: I like you. ¿Cómo estás, mamá?: How are you, mom? Use tú to talk with young folks like you: it feels awkward to call someone your age usted!: We are the same age, so don't be so formal. Oye, te gusta el rock?: Hey, do you like rock? Use tú to talk with colleagues and classmates: people working or studying with you are people you see often and you most likely know a little. Pedro, ¿tú tienes la tarea que mandó el profe hoy?: Pedro, do you have the homework the teacher sent today? Trabajamos en la misma oficina deberíamos conocernos mejor, ¿tú no crees?: We're working in the same office, we should get to know each other, don't you tell me you don't speak to your pets! Carlitos, ¿tú quieres ganarte cinco dólares?: Carlitos, do you want to earn five dollars? ¿Quién es una buena chica? ¡Tú eres una buena chica!: Who's a good girl? You're may show lack of education. Older people might address young people using tú; although certain exceptions can be made: a teacher calling students usted in class to keep a professional distance, for example. Juan, ¿pudo usted completar la tarea para hoy?: Juan, were you able to complete today's homework? Usted siéntase tranquilo, abuelo. Ya le hago el desayuno: You just sit back, grandpa. I'll make you breakfast. Use usted in general when addressing people in bureaucratic or administrative situations. You don't mean to disrespect in this kind of context. Recuerden ustedes, por favor, que la asamblea comienza en diez minutos: Please remember that the assembly begins in ten minutes. Tienen ustedes ahora el derecho a palabra: You now have the right to speak. Use usted for business: talking to your boss or to someone from another company. It shows professionalism. For example: ¿Podría hablar con usted después de la reunión, Sr. Ramirez?: May I have a word with you after the meeting, Mr. Ramirez? Usted quedó asignada como la nueva directora de Recursos Humanos, Sra. Fajardo: You were assigned as the new Human Resources Director, Ms. Fajardo. Use usted with people you don't know: the first time you address a person on the street, using usted shows you are being polite. Disculpe usted, caballero. ¿Me podría decir qué hora es?: Excuse me, sir. Could you please tel me what time it is? Buenos días Sra. Rodríguez, ¿cómo está usted hoy?: Good Morning, Mrs. Rodríguez. How are you today? As described before, a young person using tú to refer to older people is odd and not well seen. If this happens, people may consider that the younger person has either bad manners or has a level of confidence already agreed with the elder. This isn't something unusual, even in English, someone can request to not be called by using a formal title but to be treated on a first-name basis. Depending on the situation and the context, that could also be taken as flirting and it would be very common in Spanish. Pay attention to the details! Remember, if you are not sure about what to go for with a person, use usted. It's safe and polite. People will ask you to call them by their first name — or like we say in Spanish, "tutear" — when they feel the time is appropriate to do so. "Tutear" — when they feel the time is appropriate to do so. "Tutear" means addressing a person with the informal tú for the sake of trust or familiarity. If you have known somebody for quite some time and you want to address them according to the new levels of confidence, you could ask: "¿Nos podemos tutear?" "Ustedear" is not a common word but is valid in Spanish. Native speakers prefer to say "tratar de usted", and that means giving or asking someone the treatment of respect with the formal pronoun usted. Even when this article is not about these two, it is important to point out the difference given that they were shown at the beginning. It was already said that vosotros is only used in Spain and that people in Latin America and the majority of Spaniards do not know how to conjugate with it. Both pronouns are not strictly formal, they can be used as the plural form of "you" as well. Example: Ustedes son profesores libres: You are free teachers. In conclusion, these two mean the same but are used in different places. In mastering the nuances of 'tú' and 'usted' immersion is key. Pay close attention to native speakers as they effortlessly navigate between these pronouns, absorbing not just the words, but the cultural subtleties they carry. Remember, when in doubt, erring on the side of formality with 'usted' demonstrates respect and courtesy, fostering positive interactions in any Spanish-speaking setting Now, armed with this newfound understanding, it's time to put your knowledge into action and have fun experimenting with these linguistic distinctions. Whether practicing with friends, conversing with locals, or immersing yourself in Spanish media, each interaction is an opportunity to refine your language skills and deepen your cultural appreciation. And if you're seeking a supportive environment to hone your Spanish skills further, look no further than SpanishVIP. With our free classes or free 7-day trial of our group classes and vibrant community of learners, you'll find the perfect space to engage, grow, and connect with fellow language enthusiasts. So, embrace the journey ahead with enthusiasm and curiosity. Practice makes perfect, and every step you take brings you closer to fluency and cultural fluency. Until our next encounter, ¡Hasta luego! The hardest concepts to grasp in a new language are the ones that don't have a difference between the formal and informal second-person singular pronoun ("you"), but certain languages, including Spanish, do. This just adds a little extra hurdle to your understanding. Fortunately, learning when to use tú and usted isn't too difficult, and a few guidelines will have you well on your way. Using Usted both formal and informal situations. The object pronoun for usted is lo or la (used to simplify sentences like "I called you," so that he llamado, depending on the gender of the person being addressed). There are some obvious situations when usted is called for: a child speaking to a parent a student speaking to a teacher a patient speaking to a doctor a person speaking to a police officer a person speaking to a prospective business partner As these examples show, usted is a form of respect to others. And as a general rule, if you're unsure which to use, you should go with usted. It's much less of a faux pas to be a little more formal than to be not formal enough. Conjugating Usted Ending/Word -ar -er -ir ser ir tener hacer Present -a -e es va tiene hace Preterite -ó -ió fue fue tuvo hizo Imperfect -aba -ía -ía era iba tendrá hará Conditional -aría -erá -irá será irá tendrá hará Using Tú is the informal counterpart to usted. The plural of tú is vosotrosent -a -e es va tiene hace Preterite -ó -ió -ió fue fue tuvo hizo Imperfect -aba -ía -ía era iba tendrá hará Conditional -aría -erá -irá será irá tendrá hará Conditional -aría -erá -irá será irá tendrá hará Using Tú is the informal counterpart to usted. and vosotras, but that's mainly used in Spain. The object pronoun for tú is te (used to simplify sentences like "I called you," so that llamado a tú becomes te llamado.). There are a few situations where using tú is accepted no matter what: an elder speaking to someone young a person speaking to their pet friends and family of roughly the same age speaking to one another a person insulting another person But tú can be tricky. You never want to make the mistake of calling someone, it might be difficult to know when to make the switch from formal. A good rule of thumb for the Spanish learner is to simply wait for the other person to start calling you tú. Assuming there's no power imbalance in the relationship (a teacher calling you tú is not permission to do the same to them), you should be good. Spanish speakers, especially today, don't always go around addressing every stranger as usted, however. In some Latin Ame think it's a little odd for you to use usted when there's no clear power imbalance. As always, we err on the side of caution because the Spanish-speaking world is vast and cultures vary, but if you keep getting a tú in response to your usted, you might want to consider loosening up a bit. Conjugating Tú Ending/Word -ar -er -ir ser ir tener hacer Present as -es eres vas tienes haces Preterite -aste -iste fuiste fuiste fuiste tuviste hiciste Imperfect -abas -ías eras ibas tendrás harías Recap Quiz Think you know the basics of when to use tú and usted? See how you do on this quick quiz. (function(d,s,id){var js,fjs=d.getElementsByTagName(s)[0];if(d.getElementById(id))return;js=d.createElement(s);js.id=id;js.src=' � ; fjs.parentNode.insertBefore(js,fjs); } (document, 'script', 'exco-sdk')); There are two main forms of addressing someone in Spanish, the "tú" form (the informal form) and the "usted" form (the formal form). As a beginner, it's important to know when to use each one — especially if you're doing your best to fit in and sound natural in a Spanish-speaking country. In general, you should use the "tú" form with people who are your colleagues. In your travels, you'll notice that some cultures tend to be more informal than others. For example, Spain tends to use formal speech less often than what you'll find in Mexico. In Latin America, a good rule of thumb is to default to formal speech when in doubt. Use "Usted" with older people and those who you want to show more respect to. For example, at work, you would address your boss with "usted" and not with "tú." Even if your boss is younger than you, "usted" would be the correct word to use, unless you've been asked by your boss to use "tú". Most people in Mexico also use "usted" with their grandparents, their friends' parents, and sometimes even their own parents or other family members who are older than them. In general, you can use it with anyone who looks older than you — even if you just met them randomly on the street. If you've been friends with being addressed by "usted," they might ask you to use the informal you and call them by "tú" instead. These are some phrases they may use: Puedes tutearme: You can address me informally. Puedes hablarme de tú: You can address me informally. Háblame de "tú", por favor: Please use "tú" when talking to me. If you're learning Spanish so you can visit Spanish-speaking countries, chances are you'll end up lost at some point as you explore (it happens to everyone, don't worry! Check out some phrases you can use to ask for directions in Spanish. Here we're going to give you some examples of phrases you can use using "tú" and "usted" to talking to people if you were to need help finding a place while traveling. ¿Puedes ayudarme?: Can you help me? Notice we're using the verb "poder" conjugated with "tú." Remember you'd use this phrase only with people who look younger than you. ¿Puede ayudarme?: Can you help me? Notice how we're now conjugating "poder" with the formal you "usted." Sometimes when you're talking to simply because the verbs conjugated with "usted" are just like verbs conjugate verbs with "él" or "ella." For example; the verb "estar" is conjugated as: Yo estay Tú estás Él / Ella / Eso / Usted está Nosotros estamos Ustedes / Ellos / Ellas estánSo, by adding the "usted" to a phrase you can avoid confusing the people you're talking to. ¿Cómo está?: How are you (informal)? / How is he or she? ¿Cómo esta usted?: How are you (formal)?Making a first impression is always important — especially if you're in a foreign country. Knowing the difference between "tú" and "usted" will help you navigate the various cultural customs while also giving you the confidence to interact with new people. It's a vital tool to have in your Spanish-learning toolkit! From vuestra merced (lit. "your mercy" (etymological) or "your grace" (idiomatic)), an honorific style.[1] In 17th-century Spanish, there were a number of variants, including the intermediate forms vuesasted and vusted. Cf. Portuguese você, Galician vostede, Catalan vostè, Asturian vusté and Sardinian bostè. The following list has the variants reported by Coromines and Pascual, [2] with their reported first year of attestation: bosanzé, 1620 (Lope de Vega, Pedro Carbonero, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Lope de Vega, Pedro Carbonero, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Lope de Vega, Portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1631 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as said by (ex-)Muslims)boxanxé, ca. 1632 (Quevedo, Libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas más, portrayed as sa (Vélez de Guevara. El Rev en su imagen. portraved as criminal cant)vuarced, ca. 1630vuasted, 1617vucé, 1626vuesasted, 1697vuested, 1619 Despite similar phonetics, semantics, and plausible chronology, most likely unrelated to Arabic أستاد (ustad), which is ultimately from a different Indo-European root (via borrowing from Persian into Arabic). IPA(key): /us'ted/ [us'ted] Rhymes: -ed Syllabification: us ted usted m or f by sense (plural ustedes) Functionally, usted and ustedes are second person pronouns, but grammatically, the verbs they govern are conjugated in the third person. (This is the same distinction as seen in English with the difference between "You are welcome to stay here longer" but "Your Excellency is welcome to stay here longer.") In Andalucia, ustedes uses the forms associated with vosotros. See Appendix: Spanish pronouns for details. Compare Sanskrit []]]