



# The Use of Vos in Spanish

¡Hola, vos! Vos. Who or what is *vos* in Spanish? In English, we use the personal pronoun 'you' when referring to the second person singular (or plural – don't worry, we'll save that one for another time!). In Spanish, however, there are different ways to refer to the same concept!

Now, you've probably heard of *tú*, the most standard form. There is also *usted*, which we use to show respect or create distance between us and the person we're speaking with. And then there is *vos*! Have you heard about *vos* before? Why is there even a need for three words that refer to the same concept? Let's just say, one of the beauties of language is that it doesn't always make sense!

## *Vos* in context

*Vos* is mostly a part of informal speech. If you imagine a horizontal line, *usted* is on the very left wearing formal attire, *tú* is right in the middle being all dressy casual, and *vos* is on the far right end wearing jeans and a T-shirt. In some places or circumstances, *vos* might even be more informal, wearing shorts and flip-flops. It all depends on the social context and region!

Interestingly enough, *vos* originates from an archaic form of Spanish in which *vos* was the way to address kings and other important people. Back then, it was the way to show respect in Spain! As the Spanish language continued evolving both in the old continent and in the Americas, the formal use of *vos* disappeared from common speech.

*Vos* in its formal form is now only used during special ceremonial events or in literary works that reflect the language of other times. A great example of a literary work that uses *vos* in the formal form is the oldest preserved Spanish epic poem:

### *El Cantar de mio Cid*

*"Con vos nos iremos, Cid, por yermos y por poblados;  
no os hemos de faltar mientras que salud tengamos,  
y gastaremos con vos nuestras mulas y caballos  
y todos nuestros dineros y los vestidos de paño,  
siempre querremos servirlos como leales vasallos."  
Aprobación dieron todos a lo que ha dicho don Álvaro.*



## Conjugating vos

The use of *vos* doesn't only have an impact in the conjugation of the **present tense**. It also influences the conjugation of the verb when used in an **imperative mood** and in the **subjunctive**. These are examples of regular and irregular verbs in all three tenses:

### TÚ vs. VOS CONJUGATIONS - regular verbs

#### -ar Verbs

	Present Simple	Imperative (Commands)	Subjunctive
<b>Tú</b>	cantas, pagas	canta, paga	cantes, pagues
<b>Vos</b>	cantás, pagás	cantá, pagá	cantés, pagués

#### -er Verbs

<b>Tú</b>	comes, bebes	come, bebe	comas, bebas
<b>Vos</b>	comés, bebés	comé, bebé	comás, bebás

#### -ir Verbs

<b>Tú</b>	vives, cubres	vive, cubre	vivas, cubras
<b>Vos</b>	vivís, cubrís	viví, cubrí	vivás, cubrás

Note the accent on the second syllable in the vos form. In the tú form, the first syllable is stronger, but in the vos form, we emphasize the second. So even though the spelling is similar, the pronunciation is notably different.

### TÚ vs. VOS CONJUGATIONS - irregular verbs

#### -ar Verbs

	Present Simple	Imperative (Commands)	Subjunctive
<b>Tú</b>	juegas, cuelgas	juega, cuelga	juegues, cuelgues
<b>Vos</b>	jugás, colgás	jugá, colgá	jugués, colgués

#### -er Verbs

<b>Tú</b>	tienes, haz	ten, haz	tengas, hagas
<b>Vos</b>	tenés, hacés	tené, hacé	tengás, hagás

#### -ir Verbs

<b>Tú</b>	sales, duermes	sal, duerme	salgas, duermas
<b>Vos</b>	salís, dormís	salí, dormí	salgás, durmás

Note that if an irregular verb is stem-changing, those changes don't occur in the vos form.



## Different forms of *vos*

As you know, Spanish is the official language of 21 countries! And the language has evolved differently in various regions. Therefore, there are three forms of *voseo* still in use today and their use depends on the region and social context.

All three forms are in the Americas! Let's check them out:

1. *vos* pronoun paired with the *vos* conjugation
2. *tú* pronoun paired with the *vos* conjugation
3. *vos* pronoun paired with the *tú* conjugation

## *Vos* in a map

As mentioned above, how people use *vos* in Spanish depends on the region or country. This distinction encompasses both the *combination of pronoun and conjugation* and the *context* in which speakers use *vos*. Below you can find some examples from different regions:

### *Mexico*

Mexicans mainly use both the *tú* pronoun and conjugation. Only in southern states like Tabasco and Chiapas speakers use *vos* in very specific social contexts: it's either used by the unschooled population or in the family circle of educated people.

### *Central America*

Most Central American countries generally accept the use of *vos* in all social classes. Slightly more formal situations require the use of *tú pronoun + tú conjugation*. The use of *vos* has two levels in this region:

- **Most common:** *tú pronoun + vos conjugation*
- **More informal:** *vos pronoun + vos conjugation*

### *Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay*

The region of Río de Plata accepts the use of the *vos pronoun + vos conjugation* without any reservations. However, using the *pronoun tú + vos conjugation* can be seen as more prestigious than using the *vos pronoun + vos conjugation*.



## Vos takeaway

So, *recuerda* (*tú*) or *recordá* (*vos*) – just keep in mind – that if you ever want to use *vos*, you should first learn how it is used in the country or region you’re in! In some regions, you only use the *vos* pronoun, *vos* conjugation, or both together. And while in some places it’s okay to use it the first time you meet someone, in others you only use it when you’re really close to the other person.

It may seem like a lot to take into account just for one pronoun, but practice makes it a lot easier and *vos podés!*

## Exercise

On the next pages, you’ll find some exercises to practice the conjugation of *vos*!



# The Use of Vos in Spanish

Conjuga (*tú*) - or *conjugá* (*vos*) - the following verbs in the **present tense** and write the English translation:

	vos	tú	inglés
jugar	_____	_____	_____
tener	_____	_____	_____
salir	_____	_____	_____
colgar	_____	_____	_____
hacer	_____	_____	_____
dormir	_____	_____	_____
cantar	_____	_____	_____
comer	_____	_____	_____
vivir	_____	_____	_____
pagar	_____	_____	_____
beber	_____	_____	_____
cubrir	_____	_____	_____
ser	_____	_____	_____
creer	_____	_____	_____



## The Use of Vos in Spanish

- **Conjuga** (*tú*) - or **conjugá** (*vos*) - the following verbs in **the subjunctive**:

Quiero que (ir - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa.

English: \_\_\_\_\_

No quiero que (tener - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ frío.

English: \_\_\_\_\_

Quiero que (comer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ pastel.

English: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Conjuga** (*tú*) - or **conjugá** (*vos*) - the following verbs in **the imperative**:

(ir - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa.

(ir - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa

English: \_\_\_\_\_

(hacer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ tus tareas.

(hacer - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ tus tareas.

English: \_\_\_\_\_

(comer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ verduras.

(comer - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ verduras.

English: \_\_\_\_\_



## Answer Key: The Use of Vos in Spanish

Conjuga (*tú*) - or *conjugá* (*vos*) - the following verbs in the **present tense** and write the English translation:

	<b>vos</b>	<b>tú</b>	<b>inglés</b>
jugar	<i>jugás</i>	<i>juegas</i>	<i>to play</i>
tener	<i>tenés</i>	<i>tienes</i>	<i>to have</i>
salir	<i>salís</i>	<i>sales</i>	<i>to leave</i>
colgar	<i>colgás</i>	<i>cuelgas</i>	<i>to hang</i>
hacer	<i>hacés</i>	<i>haces</i>	<i>to do</i>
dormir	<i>dormís</i>	<i>duermes</i>	<i>to sleep</i>
cantar	<i>cantás</i>	<i>cantas</i>	<i>to sing</i>
comer	<i>comés</i>	<i>comes</i>	<i>to eat</i>
vivir	<i>vivís</i>	<i>vives</i>	<i>to live</i>
pagar	<i>pagás</i>	<i>pagas</i>	<i>to pay</i>
beber	<i>bebés</i>	<i>bebes</i>	<i>to drink</i>
cubrir	<i>cubrís</i>	<i>cubres</i>	<i>to cover</i>
ser	<i>sos</i>	<i>eres</i>	<i>to be</i>
creer	<i>creés</i>	<i>crees</i>	<i>to believe</i>



## Answer Key: The Use of Vos in Spanish

- Conjuga (*tú*) - or *conjugá* (*vos*) - the following verbs in **the subjunctive**:

Quiero que (ir - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *vayás* \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa.

English:       *I want you to go to the house.*      

No quiero que (tener - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *tengás* \_\_\_\_\_ frío.

English:       *I don't want you to be cold.*      

Quiero que (comer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *comás* \_\_\_\_\_ pastel.

English:       *I want you to eat cake.*      

- Conjuga (*tú*) - or *conjugá* (*vos*) - the following verbs in **the imperative**:

(ir - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *Vení* \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa.

(ir - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ *Ven* \_\_\_\_\_ a la casa

English:       *Come to the house.*      

(hacer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *Hacé* \_\_\_\_\_ tus tareas.

(hacer - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ *Haz* \_\_\_\_\_ tus tareas.

English:       *Do your chores.*      

(comer - vos) \_\_\_\_\_ *Comé* \_\_\_\_\_ las frutas.

(comer - tú) \_\_\_\_\_ *Come* \_\_\_\_\_ las frutas.

English:       *Eat the fruits.*