Bring in Spanish: Traer vs Llevar (Rule + Examples)

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Quick answer: "Bring" in Spanish is **traer**: *¿Me traes un café?* means "Can you bring me a coffee?" When something moves **away** from you or the place you're talking about, Spanish uses **llevar** ("to take") instead: *Llevo el postre a la fiesta* – "I'll bring (take) dessert to the party."

English speakers mix up traer and llevar all the time, because English uses "bring" in situations where Spanish uses "take." This guide covers the rule, the conjugations, everyday phrases with "bring," and the mistakes to avoid. There's a quiz at the end.

Bring in Spanish: the short version

English	Spanish	Example
to bring (toward here)	**traer**	*Trae tu libro mañana.* – Bring your book tomorrow.
to bring / take (toward there)	**llevar**	*Te llevo los documentos.* – I'll bring you the documents.
to bring back (return)	**devolver / traer de vuelta**	*Devuélveme el cargador.* – Bring my charger back.
to bring up (a topic)	**sacar (un tema)**	*No saques ese tema.* – Don't bring that up.
to bring someone along	**traer / llevar a alguien**	*¿Puedo llevar a mi hermana?* – Can I bring my sister?

Traer vs llevar: the rule

It all comes down to **direction**, seen from where the speaker is:

- **Traer** = to bring something **here**, toward the speaker. *Tráeme agua, por favor.* – Bring me some water, please.
- **Llevar** = to take something **there**, away from the speaker. *Lleva esta carta a la oficina.* – Take this letter to the office.

The tricky part: English often says "bring" when you're going to *someone else's* place. Spanish speakers think in terms of where they are right now, so they usually use **llevar**:

- English: "What should I bring to your party?" → Spanish: *¿Qué llevo a tu fiesta?*

- The host answers from their own place: *¡Trae algo de beber!* – Bring something to drink!

A quick test: if "take" also works in English, use **llevar**. If only "bring" works, it's **traer**.

Traer conjugation (irregular)

Traer is irregular: watch out for **traigo** in the present and the **traj-** stem in the past.

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)
yo	traigo	traje
tú	traes	trajiste
él / ella / usted	trae	trajo
nosotros	traemos	trajimos
vosotros	traéis	trajisteis
ellos / ustedes	traen	trajeron

Gerund: *trayendo*. Past participle: *traído*. For every tense, see our full **traer conjugation guide**.

Llevar conjugation (regular)

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)
yo	llevo	llevé
tú	llevas	llevaste

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)
él / ella / usted	lleva	llevó
nosotros	llevamos	llevamos
vosotros	lleváis	llevasteis
ellos / ustedes	llevan	llevaron

Other meanings of llevar

- **To wear:** *Lleva un vestido rojo.* – She's wearing a red dress.
- **To have been (time):** *Llevo dos años en Colombia.* – I've been in Colombia for two years.
- **To take (time):** *El proyecto lleva mucho tiempo.* – The project takes a lot of time.
- **To give someone a ride:** *¿Te llevo a casa?* – Can I give you a ride home?

Useful phrases with "bring"

- **¿Me trae la cuenta, por favor?** – Could you bring me the check, please? (Great for restaurant Spanish.)
- **¿Qué te trae por aquí?** – What brings you here?
- **No olvides traer tu pasaporte.** – Don't forget to bring your passport.
- **Para llevar** – to go / takeout (*Un café para llevar*)
- **Traer mala suerte** – to bring bad luck
- **Traer a colación** – to bring up (a topic), formal

Common mistakes

- ✕ **Te traigo el regalo a tu casa → ✓ Te llevo el regalo a tu casa.** You're going there, so use llevar.
- ✕ **Yo trao → ✓ Yo traigo.** The yo form is irregular.
- ✕ **Trají / trayó → ✓ Traje / trajo.** The preterite uses the stem traj-, with no accents.
- ✕ **Trajieron → ✓ Trajeron.** There's no "i" in the ellos form.

Regional note: in parts of Latin America you'll hear *traer* used a bit more loosely, but the traer = here / llevar = there rule always works.

Quick quiz: traer or llevar?

1. Mamá, ¿me _____ (traer/llevar) un vaso de agua? (you're at home, Mom is in the kitchen)
2. Mañana yo _____ (llevar) el pastel a la oficina.
3. Ayer mis amigos _____ (traer) pizza a mi casa.
4. ¿Qué _____ (yo, llevar) a la cena de tus padres?
5. Yo siempre _____ (traer) mi almuerzo al trabajo. (said while at work)

▶ **Show answers**

Keep practicing

More verb pairs that trip up English speakers: recordar vs acordarse, saber vs conocer and ver vs mirar.

Frequently asked questions

How do you say "bring" in Spanish?

Use traer when something comes toward the speaker (Tráelo aquí – Bring it here). Use llevar when it goes somewhere else (Llévalo a la fiesta – Bring/take it to the party).

Is traer regular or irregular?

Irregular: traigo (present yo), traje, trajiste, trajo (preterite), trayendo (gerund).

How do you say “bring it back” in Spanish?

Devuélvelo (return it) or Tráelo de vuelta (bring it back here). See volver vs regresar vs devolver .

What does “para llevar” mean?

“To go” or “takeout,” as in ¿Para comer aquí o para llevar? – For here or to go?

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