SPANISH VERBS – COMENZAR

On your marks, get set, get started!

In Spanish, there are three verbs to talk about starting an action: **Iniciar, Empezar and Comenzar**. Although there are subtle differences that we may talk about in another article, today we are going to talk about the last one we named, the verb **Comenzar**. Despite sharing etymology with the verb to commence in English, as both come from the Vulgar Latin *cominitiare*, Comenzar is often used more like the verbs to start or to begin. Although, like its cognate (a nice word to talk about sharing etymology), it also tends to be less commonly used than the verb Empezar, which is considered common or colloquial. Now, shall we begin?

I start to Notice an Irregularity

Of the three verbs we were talking about before, ***Comenzar and Empezar*** share not only the meaning (they can be used one or the other without any problem), but also their irregularity. Both verbs have a vowel irregularity and a grammatical irregularity. The first one we are going to see as follows:

- e -> ie, for example: we do not say “Yo comenzo”, we say **“Yo comienzo”**.

And the second one like this:

- z -> c, when it is followed by an E or I, for example: We do not say “(We) Comenzemos”, but “(We) **Comencemos**”.

Verbals of Comenzar

If you think of verbs, the first thing that comes to mind are conjugations, but what if I told you that not everything is what it seems? A Verbal, although born from a verb, no longer works in the same way, that’s why they are no longer conjugated! In total there are 3 types of Verbals: the infinitive (used as a noun), the gerund (used as an adverb) and the participle (used as an adjective); let’s see them!

	Verbal	Common use	Example	English
Infinitive	comenzar (to start / starting)	Non conjugated / Noun	Comenzar a ejercitarse es difícil	Starting to exercise is difficult
Gerund	comenzando (starting)	Adverb/periphrasis	La obra está comenzando	The play is starting
Participle	comenzado (started)	Adjective	Esta semana ha comenzado a hacer sol	This week the sun has started to shine

Comenzar Conjugation: Indicative Mood

Remember those changes we were talking about? In the indicative mood, our first and most common mood, you will be able to observe them in the simple tense. I will leave them highlighted so that it will be easier for you to locate and learn them!

Simple Tenses of the Indicative Mood

Subject	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Conditional	Future
	Future	(start)	(started)	(would start)	(will start)
yo	comienzo	comencé	comenzaba	comenzaría	comenzaré
tú	comienzas	comenzaste	comenzabas	comenzarías	comenzarás
él/ella/ usted	comienza	comenzó	comenzaba	comenzaría	comenzará
comenzará	nosotros	comenzamos	comenzábamos	comenzaríamos	comenzaremos
ellos/ella/ ustedes	comienzan	comenzaron	comenzaban	comenzarían	comenzarán

Examples:

- El público **comenzó** a aplaudir de la emoción – The audience **started** to applaud for excitement.
- **Comenzaré** la universidad este semestre – I **will start** college this semester.

Compound Tenses of the Indicative Mood

Subject	Present Perfect	Preterite Perfect	Past Perfect (Pluperfect)	Conditional Perfect	Future Perfect
	(have/has started)	(had started)	(had started)	(would have started)	(will have started)
yo	he comenzado	hube comenzado	había comenzado	habría comenzado	habré comenzado
tú	has comenzado	hubiste comenzado	habías comenzado	habrías comenzado	habrás comenzado
él/ella/usted	ha comenzado	hubo comenzado	había comenzado	habría comenzado	habrá comenzado
nosotros	hemos comenzado	hubimos comenzado	habíamos comenzado	habríamos comenzado	habremos comenzado
ellos/ellas/ustedes	han comenzado	hubieron comenzado	habían comenzado	habrían comenzado	habrán comenzado

Comenzar Conjugation: Subjunctive Mood

Let's get a little abstract, let's talk about the subjunctive mood, that mood with which you can talk about your deepest desires or your craziest hypotheses. Here the irregularity of the verb can be found in all the persons in the present simple tense.

Simple Tenses of the Subjunctive Mood

Subject	Present	Imperfect	Imperfect 2	Future
yo	comience	comenzara	comenzase	comenzare
tú	comiences	comenzaras	comenzases	comenzares
él/ella/usted	comience	comenzares	comenzase	comenzare
nosotros	comencemos	comenzáramos	comenzásemos	comenzáremos
ellos/ellas/ustedes	comiencen	comenzaran	comenzasen	comenzaren

Examples:

- Que **comenzares** a amarme sería un sueño hecho realidad – For you to **start** loving me would be a dream come true.
- Si **comenzáramos** puntualmente, no terminaríamos tan tarde – If we started on time, we wouldn't finish so late.

Compound Tenses of the Subjunctive Mood

Subject	Present Perfect	Past Perfect (Pluperfect)	Past Perfect 2 (Pluperfect 2)	Future Perfect
yo	haya comenzado	hubiera comenzado	hubiese comenzado	hubiere comenzado
tú	hayas comenzado	hubieras comenzado	hubieses comenzado	hubieres comenzado
él/ella/usted	haya comenzado	hubiera comenzado	hubiese comenzado	hubiere comenzado
él/ella/usted	haya comenzado	hubiera comenzado	hubiese comenzado	hubiere comenzado
nosotros	hayamos comenzado	hubiéramos comenzado	hubiésemos comenzado	hubiéremos comenzado
ellos/ellas/ustedes	hayan comenzado	hubieran comenzado	hubiesen comenzado	hubieren comenzado

Comenzar Conjugation: Imperative Mood

Before you run off to start using this verb, you need to know one last mood. How were you planning to express yourself when you get bossy? I won't take up too much of your time, the imperative mood has only one verb tense (the present) and few people to boss around, so let's go.

Imperative Mood's Conjugations

Subject	Affirmative	Negative
	(start/let's start)	(don't start/let's not start)
tú	comienza	no comiences
nosotros	comencemos	no comencemos
ustedes	comiencen	no comiencen

Examples:

- **No comiences** sin mí, por favor – **Don't start** without me, please.
- **Comiencen** a comer, se les va a enfriar la comida – **Start** eating, your food is going to get cold.

Spanish Verb Comenzar – Quiz/Worksheet

Starting to learn the conjugation of a new verb can be a challenge for some. If learning by doing is your thing, here are a couple of exercises for you! Remember that you can schedule a class with any of our tutors and take this information to a conversational level, believe me, it will be much easier.

1. _____ este año con buen pie, ¿te parece? – Let's start this year off on the right foot, shall we?

2. Ese personaje muere _____ la película, es injusto –That character dies at the beginning of the film, is unfair

3. He _____ a verte con otros ojos, no eres la misma – I have started to see you with different eyes, you are not the same.

4. Mi hijo _____ clases de natación y su respiración mejoró – My son started swimming lessons and his breathing improved.

5. ¿ _____ pronto la Copa Mundial de Fútbol? – Will the World Cup start soon?

Answers

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Kéllyta Quijada - and I wrote this article.

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If you haven't answered the practice questions yet, what are you doing here? Come back and answer them! If, on the other hand, you have already answered and want to see how you did, welcome! Remember that any mistake you may have doesn't mean the end of the world, you just have to start practicing more and more!

1. comencemos

2. comenzando

3. comenzado

4. comenzó

5. comenzará