Understand in Spanish: Entender vs Comprender (+ Examples)

Updated November 3, 2026



Quick answer: The two ways to say "understand" in Spanish are **entender** and **comprender**. *No entiendo* and *No comprendo* both mean "I don't understand." **Entender** is the one you'll hear most in everyday conversation. **Comprender** sounds a little more formal and is often used for understanding something deeply, or understanding how someone feels.

English speakers search for this a lot, and for good reason: “I don’t understand” is one of the first phrases you need in a new language. This guide covers what each verb means, how to conjugate both, the most useful phrases (like “Do you understand?” and “I understand you”), and the mistakes learners make most often. There’s a short quiz at the end.

Understand in Spanish: the short version

English	Spanish	Example
to understand	**entender**	*Entiendo la pregunta.* – I understand the question.
to understand (deeply, formal)	**comprender**	*Comprendo tu situación.* – I understand your situation.
I don’t understand	**No entiendo / No comprendo**	*Perdón, no entiendo.* – Sorry, I don’t understand.
Do you understand?	**¿Entiendes? / ¿Entiende?** (formal)	*¿Entiende las instrucciones?* – Do you understand the instructions?
I understand you	**Te entiendo / Lo entiendo**	*Te entiendo perfectamente.* – I understand you perfectly.
understanding (noun)	**la comprensión / el entendimiento**	*comprensión lectora* – reading comprehension

Entender: meaning and conjugation

Entender is the everyday word for “to understand.” Use it for words, instructions, people, jokes, a language, or how something works.

¿Entiendes español? – Do you understand Spanish?
No entendí el chiste. – I didn't get the joke.

Entender in the present tense (stem change e → ie)

Entender is a stem-changing verb: the **e** becomes **ie** in every form except nosotros and vosotros. The preterite is regular.

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)
yo	entiendo	entendí
tú	entiendes	entendiste
él / ella / usted	entiende	entendió
nosotros	entendemos	entendimos
vosotros	entendéis	entendisteis
ellos / ustedes	entienden	entendieron

For every tense and practice exercises, see our full **entender conjugation guide**, or look up any form in the **Spanish verb conjugator**.

Examples with entender

- *Entiendo un poco de español.* – I understand a little Spanish.
- *¿Me entiendes si hablo rápido?* – Do you understand me if I speak fast?
- *Ahora entiendo por qué llegaste tarde.* – Now I understand why you were late.
- *Mi jefe no entiende de computadoras.* – My boss doesn't know about computers. (*entender de* = to know about a subject)

Comprender: meaning and conjugation

Comprender also means "to understand," and in most sentences you can swap it for entender. It tends to sound a bit more formal, and native speakers often choose it when they mean understanding something fully, or showing empathy.

Comprendo cómo te sientes. – I understand how you feel.
Es difícil comprender la física cuántica. – Quantum physics is hard to understand.

Comprender is regular

Good news: comprender has no stem change. It follows the regular -er pattern in every tense.

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)
yo	comprendo	comprendí
tú	comprendes	comprendiste
él / ella / usted	comprende	comprendió
nosotros	comprendemos	comprendimos
vosotros	comprendéis	comprendisteis
ellos / ustedes	comprenden	comprendieron

Want to see the full regular -er pattern? Read our guide to AR, ER and IR verbs.

Comprender can also mean "to include"

In formal writing, comprender sometimes means "to include" or "to cover": *El curso comprende diez unidades* – The course includes ten units. Entender never has this meaning.

Entender vs comprender: which one should you use?

	Entender	Comprender
How common	Very common in speech	Common, slightly more formal
Typical use	Words, instructions, how something works	Feelings, ideas, deeper understanding
Stem change?	Yes (e → ie): entiendo	No: comprendo
Extra meaning	*entender de* = to know about	to include (formal)
Example	*No entiendo esta palabra.*	*Comprendo tu decisión.*

A simple rule: when in doubt, use **entender**. Nobody will think it's wrong, and it's what you'll hear most in Mexico, Colombia, Spain and everywhere else.

PRACTICE WITH A TUTOR

Put this into practice in a real conversation

Our native Spanish tutors start at $14 an hour, and you can meet one in a free 15-minute intro call today.

Book a free 15-min intro

Not sure who? Take the match quiz →

Useful phrases with "understand"

- **No entiendo. ¿Puede repetir, por favor?** – I don't understand. Can you repeat that, please?

- **¿Me entiende?** – Do you understand me? (formal)
- **¿Entendiste?** – Did you get it?
- **Entendido.** – Understood. / Got it.
- **Ya entiendo.** – Now I get it.
- **Te entiendo.** – I understand you / I know how you feel.
- **Más despacio, por favor. No entiendo bien.** – Slower, please. I don't understand well.
- **Si entiendo bien…** – If I understand correctly…
- **Darse a entender** – to make yourself understood (*Me doy a entender en español.*)
- **Un malentendido** – a misunderstanding

Common mistakes

- **× Yo entendo → ✓ Yo entiendo.** Don't forget the e → ie stem change.
- **× Yo compriendo → ✓ Yo comprendo.** Comprender has no stem change.
- **× ¿Entiendes a mí? → ✓ ¿Me entiendes?** Use the object pronoun before the verb.
- **× No entiendo lo dices → ✓ No entiendo lo que dices.** "What you're saying" is *lo que dices*.
- **× Realizo que… (meaning "I realize") → ✓ Me doy cuenta de que…** "Realize" is *darse cuenta*, not realizar.

Quick quiz: entender or comprender?

Fill in the blank with the correct present-tense form.

1. Yo no _____ (entender) la tarea.
2. ¿Ustedes _____ (entender) inglés?
3. Nosotros _____ (comprender) tu situación.
4. Ella _____ (entender) de mecánica.

5. Ayer no _____ (yo, entender) nada en la reunión.

▼ **Show answers**

1. entiendo
2. entienden
3. comprendemos
4. entiende
5. entendí

Keep practicing

Want more verb pairs that confuse English speakers? Read recordar vs acordarse, saber vs conocer and ver vs mirar. If you'd rather practice out loud, a tutor will say "¿entiendes?" as often as you need.

Frequently asked questions

How do you say "I don't understand" in Spanish?

No entiendo is the most common way. No comprendo is also correct and sounds a little more formal. Add ¿Puede repetir, por favor? (Can you repeat that, please?) to keep the conversation going.

What is the difference between entender and comprender?

They both mean "to understand" and are usually interchangeable. Entender is more common in everyday speech; comprender sounds a bit more formal and is often used for understanding feelings or ideas deeply.

Is entender irregular?

Entender is a stem-changing verb (e → ie): entiendo, entiendes, entiende, entienden. Its endings are regular, and the preterite (entendí, entendiste, entendió) has no stem change.

What does “entendido” mean?

Entendido means “understood” or “got it.” It’s the past participle of entender and a common way to confirm instructions at work.

PRACTICE WITH A TUTOR

Put this into practice in a real conversation

Our native Spanish tutors start at $14 an hour, and you can meet one in a free 15-minute intro call today.

Book a free 15-min intro

Not sure who? Take the match quiz →