SEEING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VER VS MIRAR: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

To see **(Ver)** and to look **(Mirar)** are verbs used to recreate, through language, the sense of sight. They do not have the same meaning, but they are interrelated.

Mirar is something we do with our body and **Ver** is something that happens in our mind. Between **Mirar** and **Ver** there is a link:

1. Ver is what happens when the action of mirar is successful. For example:

- **He mirado** las montañas – I've **looked** at the mountains.

2. When the action of looking is successful, we see:

- He visto las montañas – I've seen the mountains.

3. This explains why we can look and yet not see:

- Yo sabía que estaba allí porque oía perfectamente la sirena. Sin embargo, por más que **miraba** a lo lejos, no conseguía **ver** el barco. – I knew it was there because I could hear the siren. However, no matter how far I **looked**, I could not **see** the ship.

4. Looking is something that can only be done with physical objects (or objects that are not represented as physical). For example:

- A lo largo de mi vida como galerista, he **mirado** muchos cuadros. – Throughout my life as a gallery owner, I have **looked** at many paintings.

5. Instead, it's strange to say:

- A lo largo de mi vida como galerista, **he mirado** cambios tremendos en el mercado del arte. – Throughout my life as a gallery owner, I have **seen** tremendous changes in the art market.

6. We can perfectly well use *seeing* here because we are referring to the intellectual perception of realities that are not physical:

- A lo largo de mi vida como galerista he **visto** cambios tremendos en el mercado del

arte. – Throughout my life as a gallery owner, I have **seen** tremendous changes in the art market.

Ver Conjugation

The Verb Ver in its conjugation is an irregular verb, meaning that some of its conjugations do not follow the -er ending conjugation patterns.

Present Tense

English	Spanish
I see	Yo veo
You see	Tú ves
He, she sees	Él, ella ve
We see	Nosotros vemos
You see	Usted ve (Formal, singular)
You see	Ustedes ven (Formal, plural)
They see	Ellos, Ellas ven

Preterite Tense

English	Spanish
I saw	Yo vi
You saw	Tú viste
He, she saw	Él, ella vio
We saw	Nosotros vimos

English	Spanish
You saw	Usted vio (Formal, singular)
You saw	Ustedes vieron (Formal, plural)
They saw	Ellos, Ellas vieron

Future Tense

English	Spanish
I will see	Yo veré
You will see	Tú verás
He, she will see	Él, ella verá
We will see	Nosotros veremos
You will see	Usted verá (Formal, singular)
You will see	Ustedes verán (Formal, plural)
They will see	Ellos, Ellas verán

Common Scenarios

These are the most common scenarios in which the verb VER is used in Spanish.

Seeing someone or something

- Ayer pasé por tu casa y **vi** a tu hermano – Yesterday I passed by your house and **saw** your brother.
- Mañana iré a **ver** la casa nueva – Tomorrow I will go to **see** the new house

To watch tv, movies, & sports

- ¿Quieres **ver** una película? – Do you want to **see** a movie?
- Estoy **viendo** la televisión – I'm **watching** TV.

Talking about visiting or meeting someone

- Vamos a **ver** a mi prima, está en la ciudad – Let's go **see** my cousin, she's in town.
- Mis amigos vendrán a **verme** esta noche – My friends are coming to **see** me tonight.

Asking for advice on looks

- Este vestido es nuevo; ¿cómo me **veo**? – This dress is new; how do I **look**?
- ¿Cómo crees que me **vería** con el cabello corto? – How do you think I would **look** with short hair?

Ver "expressions"

There are a large number of popular expressions containing the word VER that are widely used in Spanish, here are some of them:

- Si te he **visto**, no me acuerdo – If I've **seen** you, I don't remember. (To express the detachment with which the ungrateful usually pay for the favors they received.)
- **Ver** para creer – **Seeing** is believing. (To express that you do not believe in something just by hearing it, just by seeing it.)
- Ya **veremos** – We will **see.** (Expressing doubt that something will be realized).

Mirar Conjugation

The verb MIRAR in its conjugation is regular and follows the pattern of verbs with the -ir ending.

Present Tense

English	Spanish
I look	Yo miro
You look	Tú miras
He, she looks	Él, ella mira
We look	Nosotros miramos
You look	Usted mira (Formal, singular)
You look	Ustedes miran (Formal, plural)
Ellos, ellas miran	They look

Preterite Tense

English	Spanish
I looked	Yo miré
You looked	Tú miraste
He, she looked	Él, ella miró
We looked	Nosotros miramos
You looked	Usted miró (Formal, singular)
You looked	Ustedes miraron (Formal, plural)
They looked	Ellos, ellas miraron

Future Tense

English	Spanish
I will look	Yo miraré
You will look	Tú mirarás
He, she will look	Él, ella mirará
We will look	Nosotros miraremos
You will look	Usted mirará (Formal, singular)
You will look	Ustedes mirarán (Formal, plural)
They will look	Ellos, Ellas mirarán

Common Scenarios

We use this verb to basically ask someone to pay attention to someone or something.

To pay attention to someone or something

- **Mira** hacia arriba, parece que va a llover – **Look** up, it looks like it's going to rain.
- **Mira** cómo lo hago y luego puedes intentarlo – **Look** how I do it, and then you can try it.

To ask for attention

- **Mira** esto, ¿qué opinas? – **Look** at this, what do you think?
- **¡Mira!** Parece que se han mudado nuevos vecinos – (**Look!**) It looks like new neighbors have moved in.

Mirar "expressions"

- **Mira** lo que haces – **Look** before you leap. (To warn the person who is about to do something bad or risky, so that he/she reflects on it and avoids it.)
- **Mira** quién habla – It takes one to know me. (To reproach someone for the same

defect that he criticizes in someone else).
- **Mirar** por encima del hombro – **Look** down at. (To express someone's arrogance).
- **Mirar** algo por encima – Glance at over. (To indicate that something has been seen very quickly and without much attention).

¿Ver o mirar televisión?

The doubt resolves itself if we already know that looking is only possible with physical things, while seeing is something that can happen to us both with the physical and the immaterial.

The word television can refer here to two very different realities: a television set or television content.

When we say "mirar televisión", we are properly referring to the device. On the other hand, "ver televisión" can refer to the object in the living room or to a movie.

That said, it's not superfluous to clarify that this is the standard explanation, but that in the use of ver and mirar televisión variation can be found throughout the Hispanic world, as is logical (and even desirable) in a language spoken by 400 million people.