Irregular Verbs in the Preterite Tense.

When talking about what you do to stay healthy in Spanish, you will find yourself using common irregular verbs: *ser*, *estar*, *hacer*, *tener*, and *ir*. You have probably used these countless times in the present tense. Now, it's time to see these irregular verbs in the preterite tense.

Remember: Verbs are irregular for many reasons. The reality is that these irregular verbs in the preterite tense follow no pattern. You must memorize them in order to use them correctly.

One of the most common reasons a verb is irregular is that when you try to compare your regular endings chart with the chart for these irregular verbs, they won't match perfectly.

Subject pronoun	*-ar*	*-er*	*-ir*
yo	-é	-í	-í
tú	-aste	-iste	-iste
él/ella/usted	-ó	-ió	-ió

Subject pronoun	*-ar*	*-er*	*-ir*
nosotros/nosotras	-amos	-imos	-imos

	-asteis	-isteis	-isteis
vosotros/vosotras			

	-aron	-ieron	-ieron
ellos/ellas/ustedes			

Ser

Take the example of *ser*. When trying to compare *ser* to the preterite tense for regular verbs chart, only three of the endings match. Another reason why *ser* is irregular is because the verb looks completely different from its original form.

Subject pronoun	ser (to be)
yo	fui
tú	fuiste
él/ella/usted	fue

Subject pronoun	ser (to be)
nosotros/nosotras	fuimos

vosotros/vosotras	**fu**isteis
ellos/ellas/ustedes	**fueron**

Examples

Yo **fui** terapeuta.

(I **was** a therapist.)

El Dr. Caraballo **fue** el terapeuta que ayudó a mi hermano a manejar sus emociones.

(Dr. Caraballo **was** the therapist that helped my brother to manage his emotions.)

Estar (a → uv)

Some verbs are irregular because their stem changes. It could be one or more letters that are added only to these verbs in the preterite tense. That's the case for *estar* that adds a -*uv* to its stem.

Subject pronoun	estar (to be)
yo	est**uv**e
tú	est**uv**iste
él/ella/usted	est**uv**o

Subject pronoun	estar (to be)
nosotros/nosotras	est**uv**imos
vosotros/vosotras	est**uv**isteis
ellos/ellas/ustedes	est**uv**ieron

Examples

Estuviste contenta el mes pasado porque estás saludable.

(You **were** happy last month because you are healthy.)

Estuvimos tristes porque perdimos el juego.

(We **were** sad because we lost the game.)

Tener (a → uv)

The verb *tener* is another verb that adds a *-uv* to its stem in the preterite tense.

Subject pronoun	tener (to have)
yo	**tuv**e
tú	**tuv**iste
él/ella/usted	**tuv**o

Subject pronoun	tener (to have)
nosotros/nosotras	**tuv**imos
vosotros/vosotras	**tuv**isteis
ellos/ellas/ustedes	**tuv**ieron

Examples

Tuvimos que mantenernos activos para estar saludables.

(We **had** to stay active to be healthy.)

Tuve que dejar de comer tantos dulces.
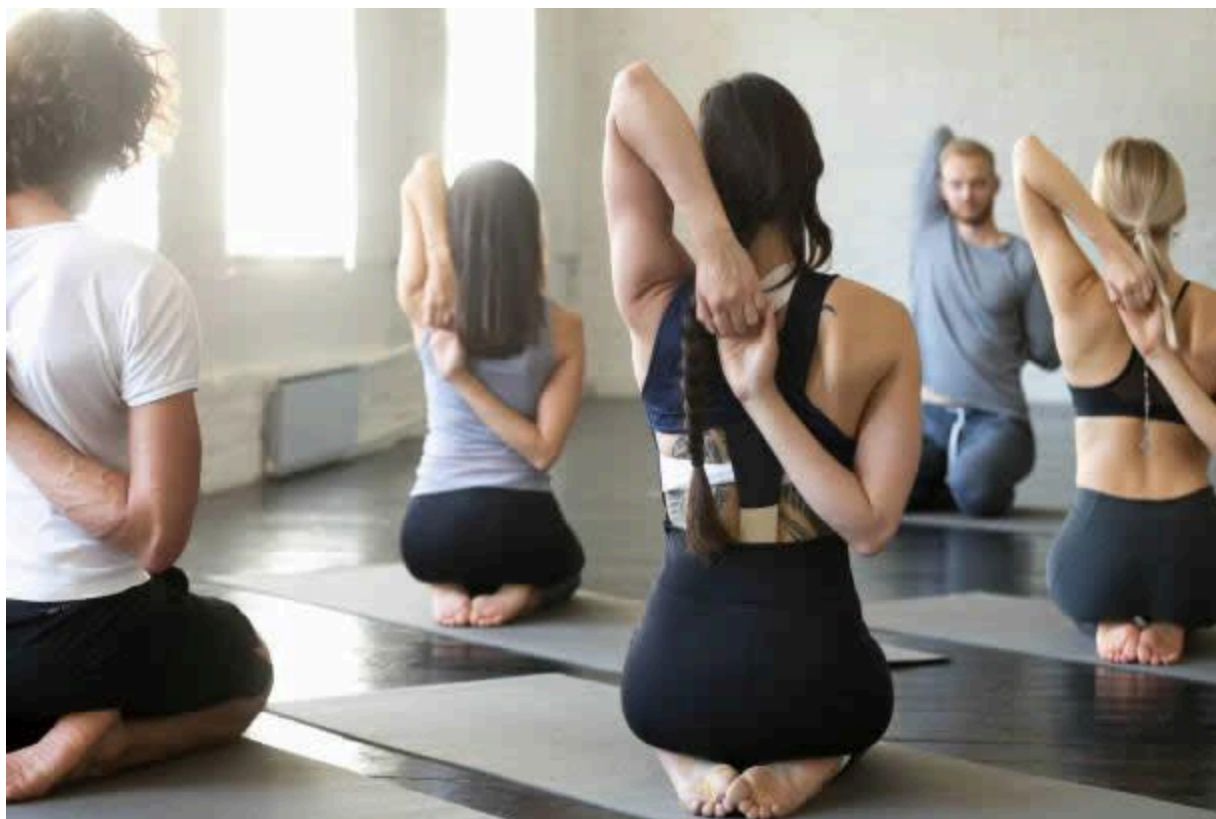
(I **had** to stop eating so much sweets.)

When learning about irregular verbs in the preterite tense, it is important that you don't generalize. For example, *estar* and *tener* both have some changes to their stem. Some people might think that these verbs are stem-changing verbs. But they are not considered stem-changing verbs because there are other irregularities within each verb.

Hacer

The verb *hacer* includes an *i* in its stem, yet it is another verb that is not considered a stem-changing verb.

Subject pronoun	hacer (to do; to make)
yo	**hice**
tú	**hiciste**
él/ella/usted	**hizo**

Subject pronoun	hacer (to do; to make)
nosotros/nosotras	**hicimos**
vosotros/vosotras	**hicisteis**
ellos/ellas/ustedes	**hicieron**

Examples

Hicieron yoga para para manejar las emociones y el estrés

(They **did** yoga to manage emotions and stress.)

Jonás **hizo** ejercicios para tener fuerza.

(Jonás **did** exercise to have strength.)

Ir

Take a couple of seconds to look at the verb *ir*:

Subject pronoun	ir (to go)
yo	**fui**
tú	**fuiste**
él/ella/usted	**fue**

Subject pronoun	ir (to go)
nosotros/nosotras	**fuimos**
vosotros/vosotras	**fuisteis**
ellos/ellas/ustedes	**fueron**

Does it look familiar? That's because *ir* and *ser* have identical forms in the preterite tense. How would you tell them apart? Use the context of the sentence to tell them apart. Let's see how these preterite twins look in a sentence:

Examples

ser (to be)

Ella **fue** mi terapeuta por siete años

(She **was** my therapist for six years.)

ir (to go)

Ella **fue** a la terapeuta para aprender a manejar el estrés.

(She **went** to the therapist to learn how to manage stress.)

Context

Although both verbs look the same, the context tells you that their meaning is different.

Irregular verbs are unique, which is why you need to rely on learning them as they are and using context to understand their meaning. Some other unique verbs are the *-car*, *-gar* and *-zar* verbs. You have seen them in the present tense:

- **Buscar** un pasatiempo (**Find** a pastime.)
- **Jugar** al baloncesto para mantenerme en forma. (**Play** basketball to stay in shape.)
- **Comenzar** la alimentación saludable. (**Start** healthy eating.)

These verbs have a unique characteristic that applies also in the preterite tense. You already know that verbs that end in *-car*, *-gar*, and *-zar* have the following changes:

- *-car* → qu
- *-gar* → <gu
- *-zar* → < c

For example:

- **Busqué** un pasatiempo. (I **found** a pastime.)
- **Jugué** al baloncesto para mantenerme en forma. (I **played** basketball to stay in shape.)
- **Comencé** la alimentación saludable. (I **started** healthy eating.)

Notice that this unique characteristic only takes place in the *yo* form.