



To command in Spanish

Commands are one of the most common language functions in Spanish. So we recommend you pay close attention and complete the exercises carefully.

Commands are used when ordering, or telling someone what to do. This is often referred to as the "imperative" form of the verb. By now, you are well acquainted with the fact that Spanish has both a formal and an informal style of speech ("tú" / "Ud.").

This difference applies also to commands. Informal, or familiar, speech is used among friends, coworkers or relatives. Formal speech is generally used to be polite or to express respect to superiors or elderly people. For that reason, the formal commands are often referred to as polite commands.

Here are some examples of formal or polite commands:

1) Por favor, hable ud. más lentamente.

(Please speak more slowly)

2) Escriban uds. la carta.

(Write the letter)

3) Pasen ustedes, por favor.

(Please come in)

4) Camine usted adelante y yo lo sigo.

(Walk ahead and I'll follow)

5) Anote usted mi número telefónico.

(Write down my telephone number)

Note that affirmative and negative commands use the same verb forms. To make a negative sentence, just add "No" before the verb. Also note that the subject pronouns "Ud." and "Uds." may or may not be used. Using them adds a degree of formality or politeness to the command.

Study these examples:

1) No hablen por favor.

(Please don't speak)

2) No coman ustedes antes de que todos se sienten.

(Don't eat before everyone is seated)

3) No usen estas sillas.

(Don't use these chairs)

4) No sea usted tan difícil.

(Don't be so difficult)

5) No compren sin mirar los precios.

(Don't buy before checking the prices)

Now that we have covered the formal commands, let's study the informal commands, the commands that are used in daily speech. The affirmative informal ("tú") commands are formed the same way as the present indicative "Ud." form:

hablar - ar + a = habla

comer - er + e = come

escribir - ir + e = escribe

Also, remember that we usually don't use the pronoun.

Here are some examples:

1) Come la cena con calma.

(Eat dinner calmly)

2) Habla en voz alta.

(Speak up)

3) Entrégame la carta que envió ella.

(Give me the letter she sent)

4) Termina la tarea rápido.

(Finish homework quickly)

5) Vete de aquí o llamaré a la policía.

(Get out or I'll call the police)

Note that the negative informal commands use the "tú" form of the present subjunctive. In an affirmative informal command you would say "Termina de comer", but in the negative it would be "No termines de comer". This is an important difference.

You can see it clearly in these examples:

1) No hables así frente a tus padres.

(Don't talk like that in front of your parents)

2) No comas tanta pizza. (Don't eat so much pizza)

3) No te muevas, puede morderte.

(Don't move, it may bite you)

4) ¡No entres! Aún me estoy cambiando.

(Don't come in! I am still getting dressed)

5) Es importante que no vuelvas tan tarde.

(It's important that you don't come back so late)

For further practice, translate these sentences into English:

- 1) Por favor, pase por aquí y siéntese.
- 2) No mire por la ventana todo el tiempo.
- 3) Entrégame el dinero y vete.
- 4) No sea usted tan insistente.
- 5) Escriba usted su nombre en el documento.
- 6) ¡No me mires así!
- 7) Ya te dije que no uses mi auto.
- 8) Cierra la puerta con llave al salir.

Answers:

- 1) Please, come this way and sit down.
- 2) Don't look out the window all the time.
- 3) Give me the money and leave.
- 4) Don't be so pushing.
- 5) Write your name on the document.
- 6) Don't look at me like that!
- 7) I already told you not to use my car.
- 8) Lock the door when you leave.