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Word Formations

¿Cuánto sabe usted?

How Much Do You Know Already?

1. What's an **autorzuelo**?
2. How do you change a cup into a tiny cup in Spanish?
3. Turn the adjective **triste** into a verb form.
4. What noun is derived from the verb **gastar**?
5. What verb is derived from the noun **vaso**?



Diminutives and Augmentatives

Forming Diminutives

Formación de diminutivos

There are two important groups of words in Spanish that are created by adding a suffix to a noun—the diminutives and the augmentatives. The diminutive suffix **-ito** implies endearment or a decrease in size, though it may also be used sarcastically. Note how the ending denotes both gender and number:

el libro (book) → **el librito** (small book)
la mesa (table) → **la mesita** (small table)

mi hermano (brother) → **mi hermanito** (my dear, little, and/or younger brother)
mi hermana (sister) → **mi hermanita** (my dear, little, and/or younger sister)

mis hermanitos (my dear/little/younger brothers or sisters)

Some words change in spelling when the suffix is added. These include any proper names:

- **g → gu** **amigo → amiguito** **Miguel → Miguelito**
(friend → dear friend)
- **c → qu** **hueco → huequito** **Paco → Paquito**
(hole → little hole)
- **z → c** **lápiz → lapicito** **Luz → Lucita**
(pencil → little pencil)

If the noun ends in **-n**, **-r**, or has more than one syllable and ends in **-e**, then the suffix **-cito/-cita** is added instead of **-ito/-ita**:

la sartén (pan)	→ la sartencita (small pan)
el borrador (eraser)	→ el borradorcito (small eraser)
el dulce (sweet)	→ el dulcecito (small sweet)

The suffix **-ecito/-ecita** is also added to two-syllable nouns ending in **-o** or **-a** that have **ie** or **ue** in the first syllable. Notice how the **-o** or **-a** is dropped first:

las piernas (legs)	→ las piernecitas (short or thin legs)
la pierna (leg)	→ la piernecita (little leg)
la tienda (store)	→ la tiendecita (little store)

The suffixes **-zuelo/-zuela** and **-illo/-illa** are considered other diminutive endings in Spanish, but they generally express disgust or sarcasm:

la falda (skirt)	→ la faldilla (cheap skirt)
el actor (actor)	→ el actorzuelo (lousy actor)
la casa (house)	→ la casilla (insignificant house)

Sometimes, Spanish uses the diminutive form with adjectives and adverbs:

sol (alone)	→ solito (all alone)
chica (small)	→ chiquita (very small)
verde (green)	→ verdecito (greenish)
poco (small amount)	→ poquito (very small amount)
cerca (close)	→ cerquita (very close)
ahora (now)	→ ahorita (right now)

TIP

A few diminutive forms are actually separate words in Spanish:

el bolso (handbag)	→ el bolsillo (pocket)
la mano (hand)	→ la manecilla (clock hand)
la cabra (goat)	→ la cabrilla (kind of fish)



LA PRÁCTICA 1

Use diminutives as you translate these English phrases into Spanish:

1. very soon **prontito** _____
2. poor little thing _____
3. pocket _____
4. granny _____
5. tiny garden _____
6. sweet Carlos _____
7. dear owner _____
8. small body _____
9. a little early _____
10. frail little doctor _____
11. puppy _____
12. small party _____
13. tiny voice _____
14. reddish _____
15. small light _____

Forming Augmentatives

Formación de aumentativos

Most nouns form augmentations in Spanish by adding **-ón** or **-ona**. These suffixes normally imply an increase in size, but may also be used in sarcasm:

la jarra (jar)

→ **el jarrón** (big jar)

la maleta (suitcase)

→ **el maletón** (giant suitcase)

la mujer (woman)

→ **la mujerona** (large woman)

la soltera (single woman)

→ **la solterona** (old maid)

la nariz (nose)

→ **el narizón** (big-nosed)

el grito (shout)

→ **el gritón** (loud-mouth)

In fact, **-ón** and **-ona** are often added to the stems of verbs to form adjectives. Notice how most of these words describe a person in a negative way:

llorar (to cry)

→ **llorón** (one who cries too much)

Nanita es muy llorona. (Nanita is a big crybaby.)

quejarse (to complain)

→ **quejón** (one who complains a lot)

Ellos son quejones. (They are big complainers.)

preguntar (to ask)

→ **preguntón** (one who asks too many questions)

Tú eras preguntona. (You were too inquisitive.)

By adding the augmentative suffix **-ote** or **-ota** to a noun, one implies a stronger, more negative meaning to the concept of increased size:

los ojos (eyes)

→ **los ojotes** (giant, ugly eyes)

la camisa (shirt)

→ **la camisota** (huge, repulsive shirt)

The suffix **-ucho** or **-ucha** also suggests some form of ugliness in Spanish, but without the size:

carro (car)

→ **carrucho** (old, beat-up car)

casa (house)

→ **casucha** (shabby, run-down house)

TIP

Several words ending in the same letters as the augmentative suffixes have unique meanings and do not necessarily indicate ugliness or an increase in size:

el ratón

mouse

el islote

islet

el guapote

handsome man

el callejón

alley

el sillón

armchair



LA PRÁCTICA 2

First identify the original nouns, adjectives, or adverbs within these augmentatives, and then translate them into English:

1. orejona oreja

big-eared female

2. zapatote

3. preguntón

4. malazo

5. cuartucho _____

6. contestón _____

7. grandote _____

8. tarjetota _____

9. flacucho _____

10. gordaza _____

Other Word Formations

Forming Nouns from Verbs

Formación de sustantivos basados en verbos

Several nouns are derived from the past participle of the verb. Notice how the **-ar** endings change to **-ada**, while the **-er** and **-ir** endings change to **-ido**:

oír (to hear)	→ el oído (ear)
comer (to eat)	→ la comida (food)
entrar (to enter)	→ la entrada (entrance)
subir (to climb)	→ la subida (climb)
llegar (to arrive)	→ la llegada (arrival)
salir (to leave)	→ la salida (exit)
mirar (to look)	→ la mirada (look)

Some nouns are derived from **-ar** verbs that change their endings to **-o** or **-a**. Notice that a few nouns include the irregular stem changes:

trabajar (to work)	→ el trabajo (job)
esperar (to wait)	→ la espera (waiting)
gastar (to spend)	→ el gasto (expense)
ayudar (to help)	→ la ayuda (help)
dudar (to doubt)	→ la duda (doubt)
charlar (to chat)	→ la charla (chat)
caminar (to walk)	→ el camino (road)
besar (to kiss)	→ el beso (kiss)
cocinar (to cook)	→ la cocina (kitchen)

Other nouns actually change to forms of their irregular base verbs:

volar (to fly)	→	el vuelo (flight)
comenzar (to begin)	→	el comienzo (beginning)
decir (to say)	→	el dicho (saying)
volver (to return)	→	la vuelta (return)
caer (to fall)	→	la caída (fall)

Several nouns ending in **-ción** are derived from **-ar** verbs. Remember that words ending in **-tion** in English generally end in **-ción** in Spanish:

<i>investigation</i>	investigar	→	investigación
<i>operation</i>	operar	→	operación
<i>separation</i>	separar	→	separación
<i>complication</i>	complicar	→	complicación
<i>preparation</i>	preparar	→	preparación

Spanish nouns ending in **-amiento** are derived from **-ar** verbs, and verbs ending in **-imiento** are derived from **-er** and **-ir** verbs:

aflojar (to loosen)	→	aflojamiento (slackening)
conocer (to know)	→	conocimiento (knowledge)
agotar (to exhaust)	→	agotamiento (exhaustion)

Similarly, nouns ending in **-ancia** are derived from **-ar** verbs, while nouns ending in **-encia** are derived from **-er** and **-ir** verbs. Note the similarities between the English and Spanish noun forms:

<i>tolerance</i>	tolerar	→	tolerancia
<i>appearance</i>	aparecer	→	apariencia
<i>preference</i>	preferir	→	preferencia
<i>importance</i>	importar	→	importancia
<i>vigilance</i>	vigilar	→	vigilancia

TIP

Many nouns in Spanish do not fit a normal pattern, and must be memorized separately:

el transporte	<i>transportation</i>
el aviso	<i>announcement</i>
la asistencia	<i>attendance</i>



LA PRÁCTICA 3

Create a noun from the verbs provided. Use the English translation:

1. amar	<i>loved one</i>	<u>el amo</u>
2. alinear	<i>alignment</i>	<u></u>
3. contar	<i>bill</i>	<u></u>
4. rezar	<i>prayer</i>	<u></u>
5. anular	<i>annulment</i>	<u></u>
6. coincidir	<i>coincidence</i>	<u></u>
7. crecer	<i>growth</i>	<u></u>
8. competir	<i>competition</i>	<u></u>
9. asistir	<i>attendance</i>	<u></u>
10. abrazar	<i>hug</i>	<u></u>

Give the noun form of each verb and then translate it into English:

11. pagar	<u>el pago</u>	<u>payment</u>
12. cargar	<u></u>	<u></u>
13. abrazar	<u></u>	<u></u>
14. aumentar	<u></u>	<u></u>
15. entregar	<u></u>	<u></u>
16. tragar	<u></u>	<u></u>
17. practicar	<u></u>	<u></u>
18. regresar	<u></u>	<u></u>
19. espantar	<u></u>	<u></u>
20. fracasar	<u></u>	<u></u>

More Ways to Form Nouns

Otros modos de formar sustantivos

In Spanish, nouns are often formed by simply adding suffixes to other nouns. For example, by adding **-astro** or **-astra** to the names for one's relatives, the members of a step-family are created:

hijo (son)	→	hij astro (stepson)
madre (mother)	→	madr astra (stepmother)
hermano (brother)	→	herman astro (stepbrother)

To associate a person with a specific noun, many words simply drop their final vowel and add the suffix **-ero** or **-era**:

el viaje (trip)	→	el viajero (traveler)
el mensaje (message)	→	la mensajera (messenger)
la marina (navy)	→	el marinero (sailor)
el chocolate (chocolate)	→	el chocolatero (one who loves chocolate)
el reloj (clock)	→	el relojero (clockmaker)

Words ending in **-ero** and **-era** often refer to occupations or professions in Spanish. By replacing the suffix with **-ería**, one can identify his or her respective place of employment:

carpintero (carpenter)	→	carpintería (woodshop)
panadero (baker)	→	panadería (bakery)
joyero (jeweler)	→	joyería (jewelry store)

The suffix **-ero** or **-era** also indicates a container for the item designated by the noun:

la leche (milk)	→	la lechera (milk pitcher)
la sal (salt)	→	el salero (salt shaker)
la flor (flower)	→	el florero (flower vase)

When added to a noun, the suffixes **-ada** and **-azo** often indicate a hit or strike by the object designated by the noun:

la pata (paw)	→	la patada (kick)
el serrucho (saw)	→	la serruchada (cut with a saw)
el puñal (dagger)	→	la puñalada (stab)
la cabeza (head)	→	el cabezazo (head butt)
la flecha (arrow)	→	el flechazo (blow by an arrow)
la bala (bullet)	→	el balazo (gun shot)

The suffix **-ada** or **-ado** also indicates the full amount that the object designated by the noun is able to hold:

la boca (mouth)	→	el bocado (mouthful)
el camión (truck)	→	la camionada (truckful)
el puño (fist)	→	el puñado (fistful)
la cuchara (spoon)	→	la cucharada (spoonful)

Although it is not heard often, the suffix **-ada** can be used to describe the regular actions of the person designated by the noun:

el muchacho (kid)	→	la muchachada (kid's prank)
el tonto (silly person)	→	la tontada (action of a silly person)
el bufón (clown)	→	la bufonada (clownish behavior)

Spanish has several other suffixes that are used to create nouns with special meanings:

-al	la manzana (apple)	→	el manzanal (apple tree)
	la pera (pear)	→	el peral (pear tree)
-anza	enseñar (to teach)	→	la enseñanza (teaching)
	matar (to kill)	→	la matanza (killing)
-dura	morder (to bite)	→	la mordedura (bite)
	picar (to sting)	→	la picadura (sting)
-eza	natural (natural)	→	la naturaleza (nature)
	bello (beautiful)	→	la belleza (beauty)
-ense	Canadá (Canada)	→	canadiense (Canadian)
	Costa Rica (Costa Rica)	→	costarricense (Costa Rican)



LA PRÁCTICA 4

Fill in the blanks with new nouns formed from the words in bold:

1. Al _____ le gusta el **pastel**.
2. El **té** está en la _____.
3. Le dió una _____ con el **cuchillo**.
4. El _____ trabaja en una **cárcel**.
5. Te dí un _____ con el **codo**.

6. No hay **sal** en el _____.
7. El **payaso** hizo una _____.
8. Me tiró la **piedra** y me cayó una _____ en la cabeza.
9. El _____ trabajará en la **cocina**.
10. La **sopa** está en la _____.
11. Tiró una _____ con la **pala**.
12. El **libro** está en el _____.
13. La _____ no tenía ese **mueble**.
14. Me dió una _____ con la **palma**.
15. Él es mi **padre** y él es mi _____.

Forming Verbs from Nouns and Adjectives

Formación de verbos basados en sustantivos y adjetivos

Several verbs in Spanish can be formed by adding a suffix or prefix to a noun or adjective. The following nouns are transformed into verbs by adding an **-ar** ending and the prefix **en-**:

el ladrillo (brick)	→	enladrillar (to pave with bricks)
el vaso (glass container)	→	envasar (to bottle)
la máscara (mask)	→	enmascarar (to mask)
el yeso (plaster)	→	enyesar (to plaster)
la harina (flour)	→	enharinar (to flour)

Other verbs are created simply by adding the suffix **-ear** to a noun:

la gota (drop)	→	gotear (to drip)
el paso (step)	→	pasear (to stroll)
el golpe (punch)	→	golpear (to punch)

The following adjectives are transformed into verbs by adding an **-ar** ending and the prefix **a-**:

barato (inexpensive)	→	abaratar (to lower the price)
llano (flat)	→	allanar (to flatten)
blando (soft)	→	ablandar (to soften)
flojo (loose)	→	aflojar (to loosen)
largo (long)	→	alargar (to lengthen)

Other adjectives are transformed into verbs simply by adding **-ecer** to their stems:

húmedo (moist)	→ humedecer (to moisten)
oscuro (dark)	→ oscurecer (to darken)
lánguido (listless)	→ languidecer (to languish)

By adding the prefix **en-** and the suffix **-ecer** to some adjectives, still more verbs can be created:

duro (hard)	→ en dur ecer (to harden)
triste (sad)	→ en trist ecer (to sadden)
negro (black)	→ en negr ecer (to blacken)

The prefix **em-** replaces **en-** when the adjective begins with **b** or **p**:

pobre (poor)	→ em pobr ecer (to impoverish)
bello (beautiful)	→ em bell ecer (to make beautiful)

Most suffixes and prefixes in Spanish combine or build upon one another to create new words:

la frente (front) → **enfrentar** (to confront) → **el enfrentamiento** (confrontation)

la riqueza (richness) → **enriquecer** (to enrich) → **enriquecido** (enriched)

el sordo (deaf person) → **ensordecer** (to deafen) → **ensordecedor** (deafening)

Bear in mind that Spanish has a variety of prefixes that change the meanings of words when they are attached:

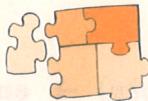
des (not)	desafortunadamente (unfortunately)
entre (between)	entrecruzar (to interweave)
ante (before)	anteayer (the day before yesterday)



LA PRÁCTICA 5

Change the following nouns and adjectives to their verb forms:

1. la tecla (key)	teclear	(to type)
2. duro (hard)		(to harden)
3. rojo (red)		(to redden)
4. la batalla (battle)		(to battle)
5. el papel (paper)		(to wrap in paper)
6. el gancho (hook)		(to hook up)
7. dulce (sweet)		(to sweeten)
8. la capucha (hood)		(to put on a hood)
9. grande (large)		(to enlarge)
10. el párpado (eyelid)		(to blink)



EL REPASO

Identify the following parts of speech, and then use them in a sentence:

1. interesante	adjective	La película fue interesante.
2. para		
3. nunca		
4. verde		
5. ellos		
6. el pasajero		
7. cuyo		
8. aquellos		
9. ti		
10. cubana		