

Spanish Grammar:

Radical-changing (stem-changing) Verbs

Radical-changing Verbs

Some verbs have a change of spelling in the stem or main part of the verb. These verbs fall into 3 categories:

- ✱ those whose e changes to ie
- ✱ those whose o changes to ue
- ✱ those whose e changes to i

Radical-changing verbs

	e → ie (preferir)	o → ue (volver)	e → i (pedir)
yo	prefiero	vuelvo	pido
tú	prefieres	vuelves	pides
él / ella / usted	prefiere	vuelve	pide
nosotros	preferimos	volvemos	pedimos
vosotros	preferís	volvéis	pedís
ustedes	prefieren	vuelven	piden

* Note: the nosotros and vosotros parts do not change!

Radical-changing verbs

These 4 radical-changing verbs only have one or two forms:

nevar	-	nieva	(it snows)
llover	-	llueve	(it rains)
costar	-	cuesta(n)	(it/they cost(s))
doler	-	duele(n)	(is/are hurting)

Radical-changing verbs

Here is a list of verbs which change e to ie:

e → ie verbs:	empezar (to begin)
	tener (to have) (but tengo* – I have)
	pensar (to think)
	sentir (to feel)
	sentarse (to sit down)
	despertarse (to wake up)
	preferir (to prefer)
	venir (to come) (but vengo* - I come)

* irreg. forms

Radical-changing verbs

Here is a list of verbs which change o to ue:

o → ue verbs:

poder (to be able to)

mostrar (to show)

encontrar (to find)

probarse (to try on)

dormirse (to fall asleep)

moverse (to move)

volver (to return)

Radical-changing verbs

Here is a list of verbs which change e to i:

pedir (to ask)

elegir (to choose)

e → i verbs:

repetir (to repeat)

servir (to be of use/service)

decir (to say) (but digo* - I say)

vestirse (to get dressed)

* irreg. form

Radical-changing verbs practice

Choose the correct spelling in each case:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Empiezas/Empuezas a las dos. | (empezar – to begin) |
| 2. ¿Volvéis/Vuelvéis pronto? | (volver – to return) |
| 3. No encuentro/encuentro a nadie. | (encontrar – to meet) |
| 4. Siento/Sento mal. | (sentir – to feel) |
| 5. José elige/elige el español. | (elegir – to choose) |
| 6. Prefere/prefiere el francés. | (preferir – to prefer) |
| 7. Tienen/Tenen dos gatos. | (tener – to have) |
| 8. ¿Para qué serve/sirve esto? | (servir – to be of use) |

Radical-changing verbs practice

Use these Infinitives to put the sentences opposite into Spanish:

- Decir (to say)
- Volver (to return)
- Pensar (to think)
- Empezar (to begin)
- Repetir (to repeat)
- Poder (to be able to)

1. She says “Yes!”
2. The teacher is coming back.
3. He thinks a lot.
4. Are you (sing. formal) able to do this?
5. I say “No thanks”.
6. You repeat “No, no”.
7. Can we go into town?
8. She begins to read a book.