

# The Present Tense of Stem-Changing Verbs: *e* → *ie*, *e* → *i*, *o* → *ue*

(El tiempo presente de los verbos de cambio radical)

There is a fairly large group of verbs in Spanish that undergo changes in their stem when conjugated in the present tense.

These changes occur only in the first and second persons singular and third persons singular and plural.

When a line is drawn around the forms that change, the resulting shape vaguely resembles a boot or high-top shoe; thus, these verbs are sometimes informally called “boot” or “shoe” verbs.

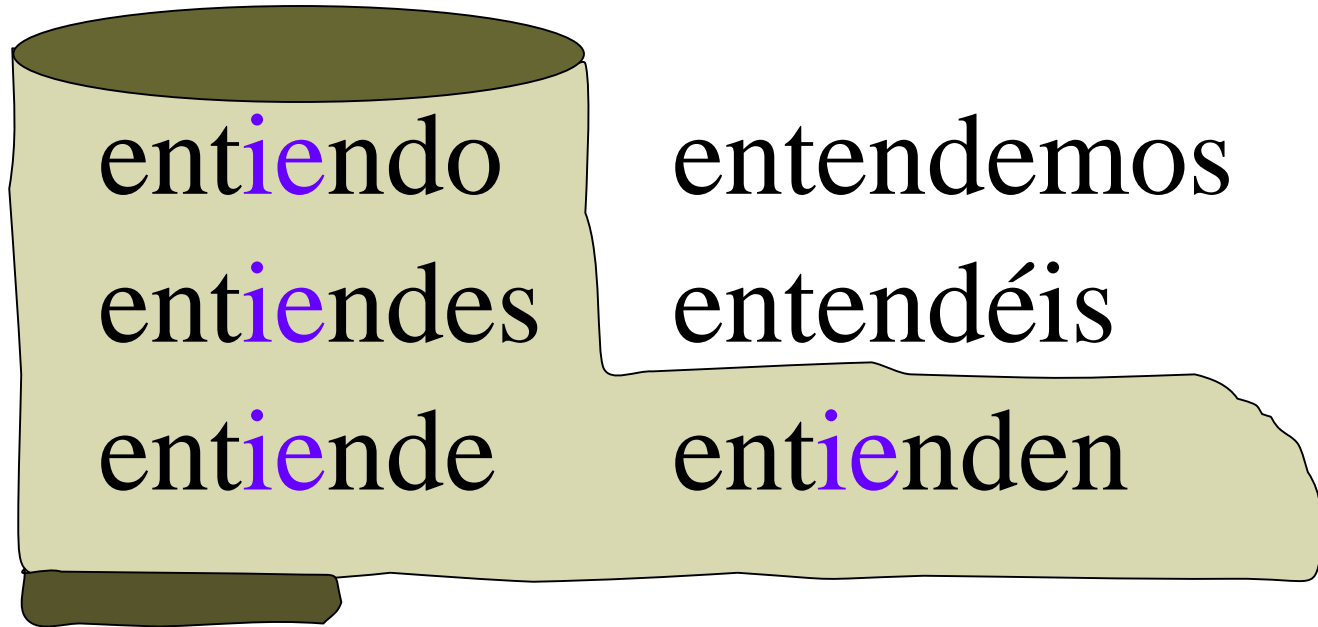


There are three types or classes of “boot” verbs.

# Type 1: e → ie

We'll use *entender*, to understand, as an example of this type.

## entender



The stem undergoes the change only when stressed.

Here are some other common e → ie verbs:



empezar

to begin

cerrar

to close

preferir

to prefer

querer

to want, to love

# tener, venir

The verbs *tener* and *venir* are what might be called partial stem-changing verbs; the *yo* forms do not have the stem change, but they do have an irregularity.

tengo

tienes

tiene

tenemos

tenéis

tienen

**Tengo** exámenes mañana.

I have exams tomorrow.

vengo

vienes

viene

venimos

venís

viene

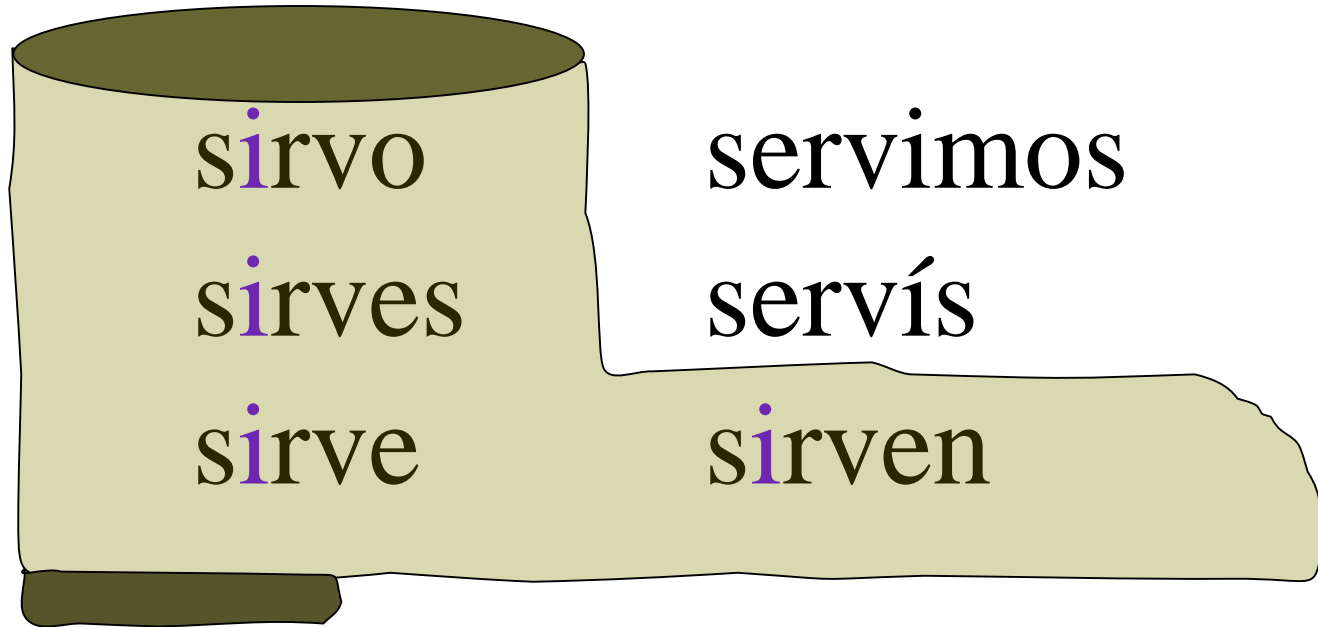
**Vengo** de la biblioteca.

I'm coming from the library.

# Type 2: e → i

We'll use *servir*, to serve, as an example of this type.

## servir



sirvo	servimos
sirves	servís
sirve	sirven

Note: All e → i verbs are **-ir** verbs.

Here are some other common e → i verbs:



pedir

to ask for, to request

repetir

to repeat, to have a  
second helping

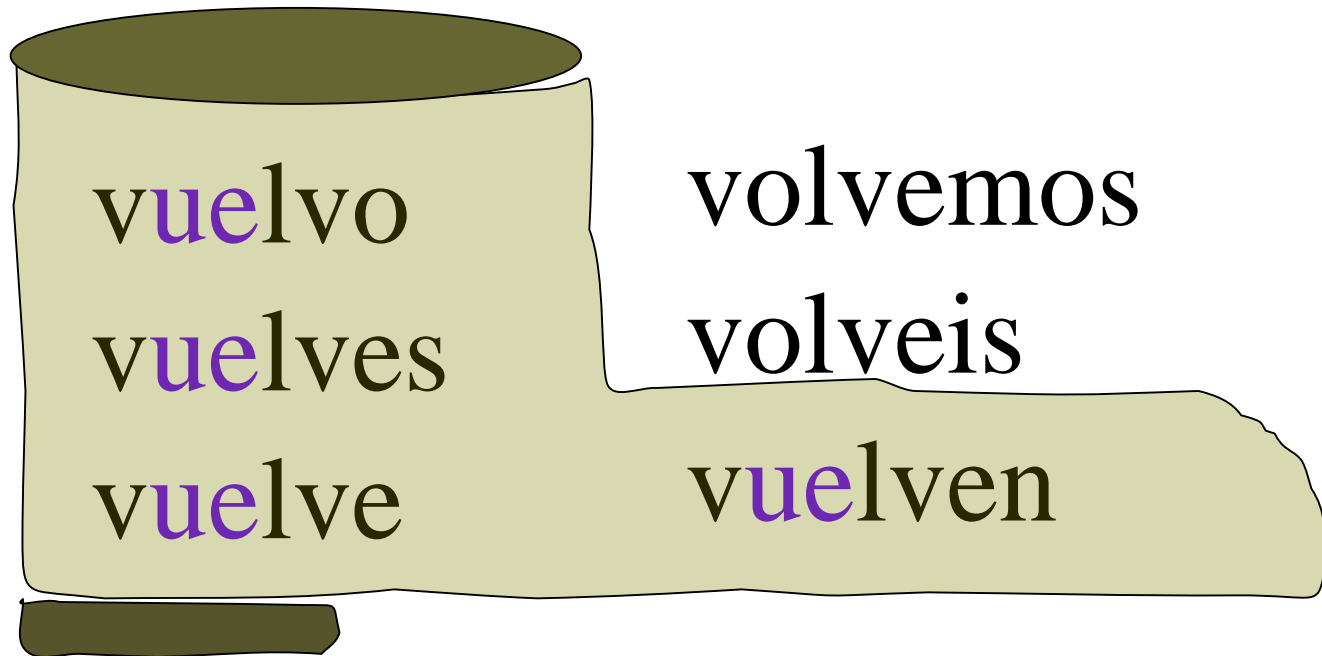
seguir

to follow; to  
continue

# Type 3: o → ue

We'll use *volver*, to return, as an example of this type.

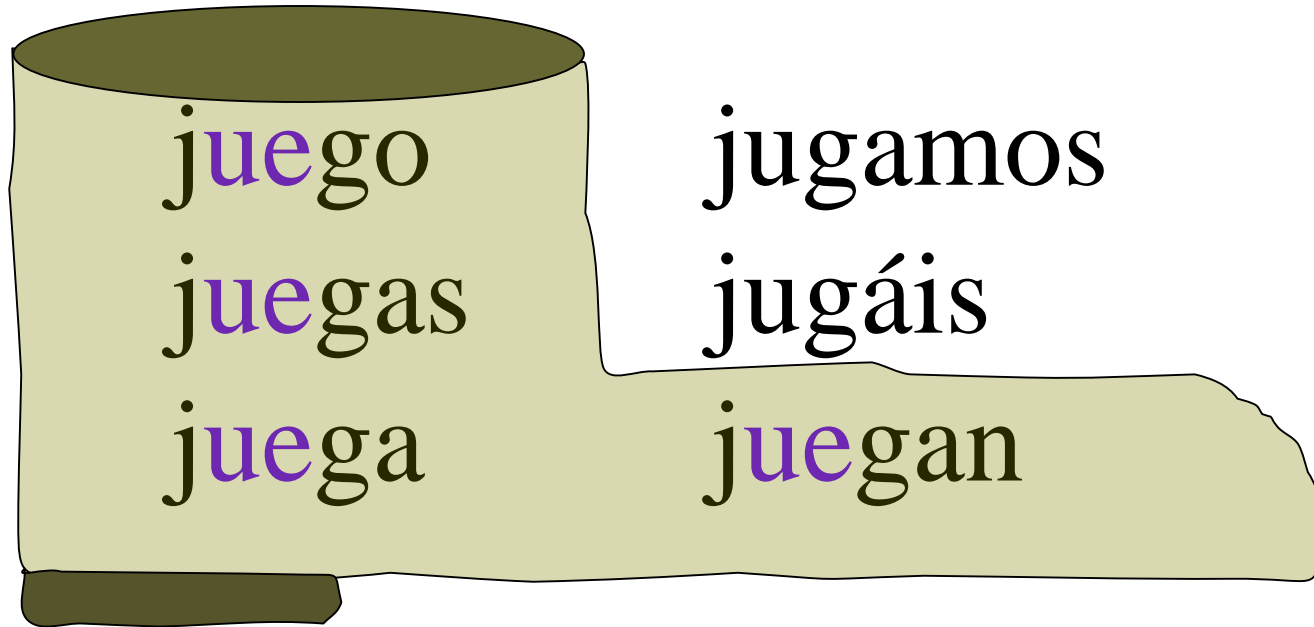
## volver





The verb *jugar*, to play (games or sports), follows the same pattern as *o* → *ue* verbs, but the change is *u* → *ue*.

## jugar



Here are some other common **o** → **ue** verbs:

dormir

to sleep



encontrar

to find

poder

to be able; can

contar

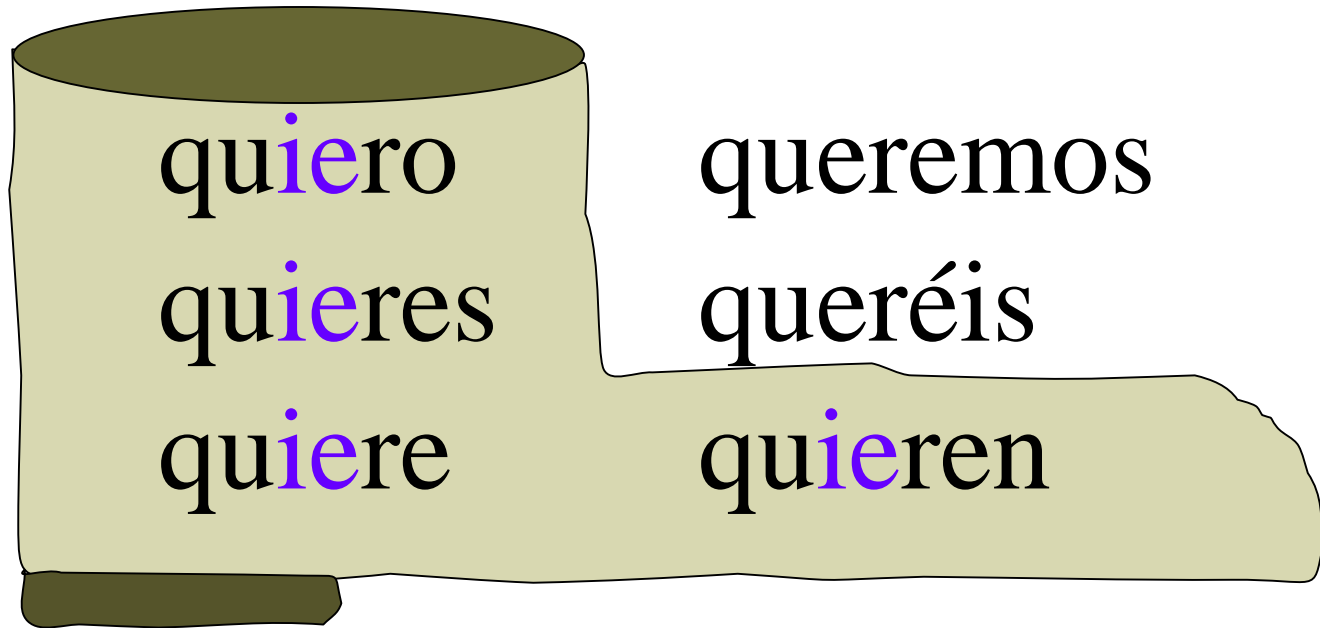
to count

# The verbs *querer* and *preferir*

Expressing desires and  
preferences

*Querer* and *preferir* are important stem-changing verbs that have multiple uses.

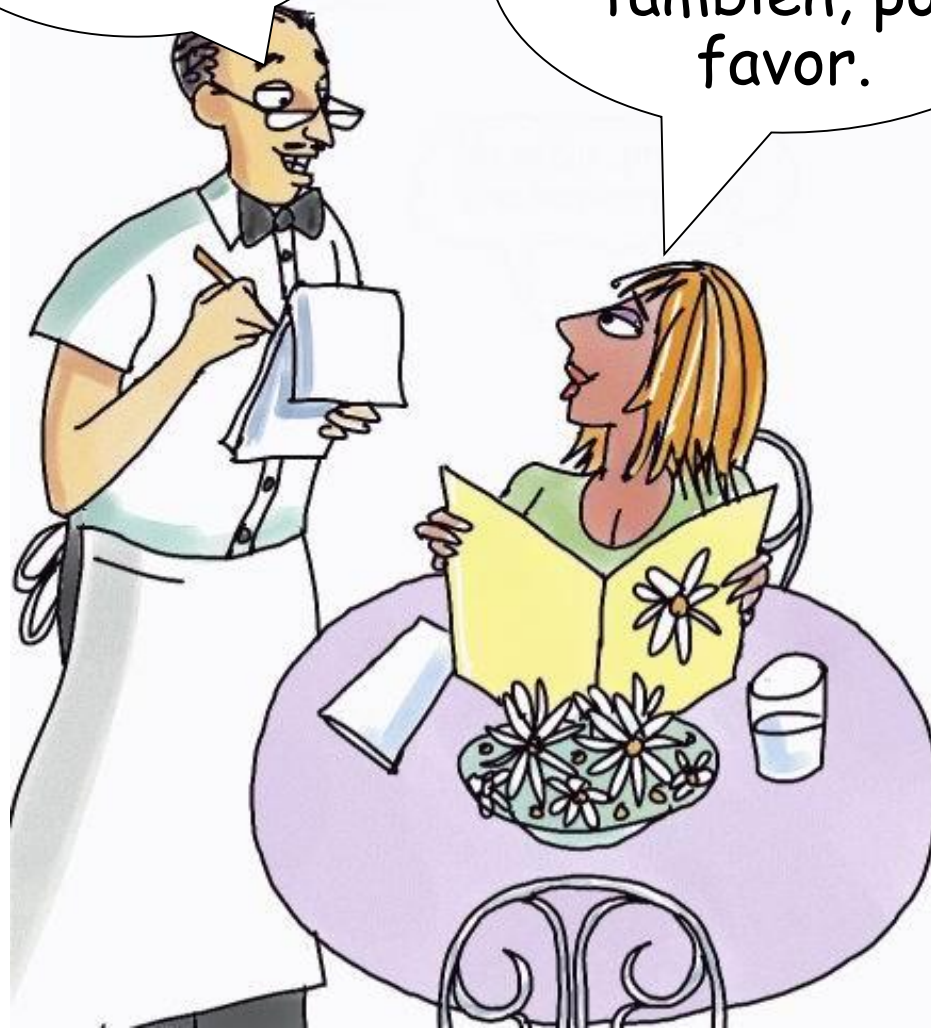
# querer



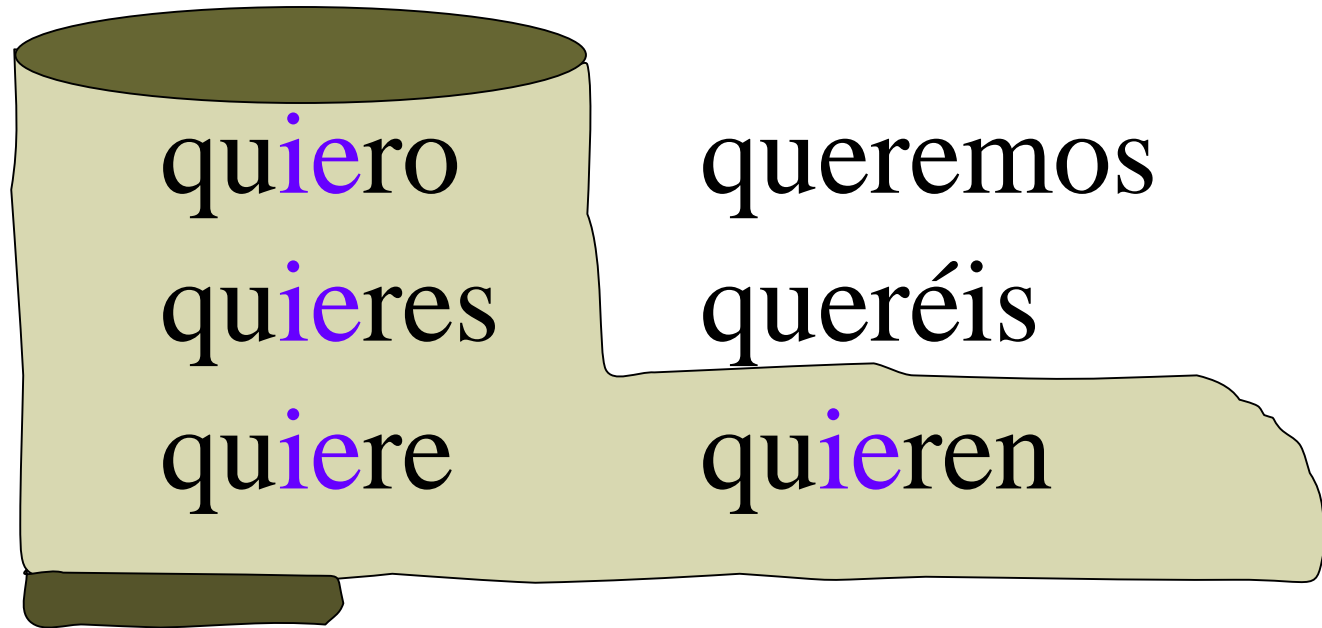
When used with a thing as the direct object,  
*querer* means to want.

¿Quiere un  
sándwich  
de pollo?

Sí, y quiero  
papas fritas  
también, por  
favor.

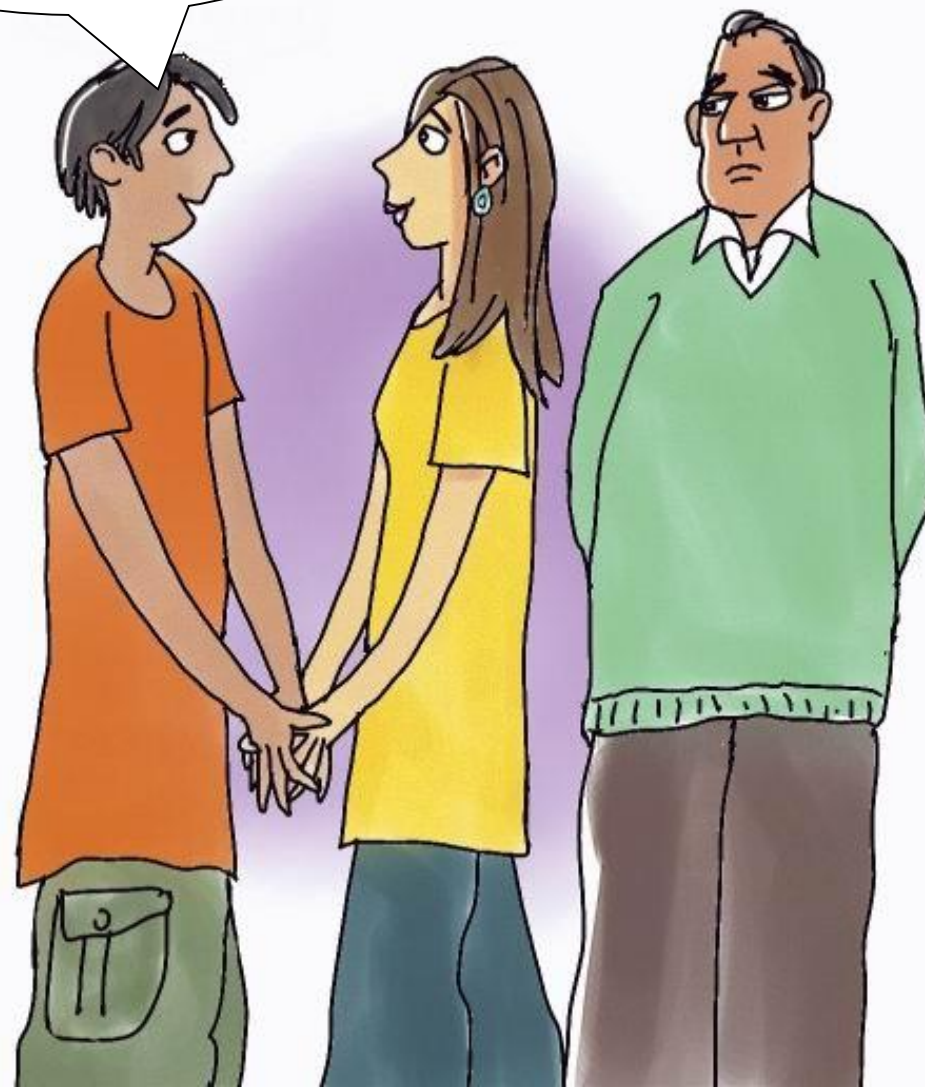


# querer

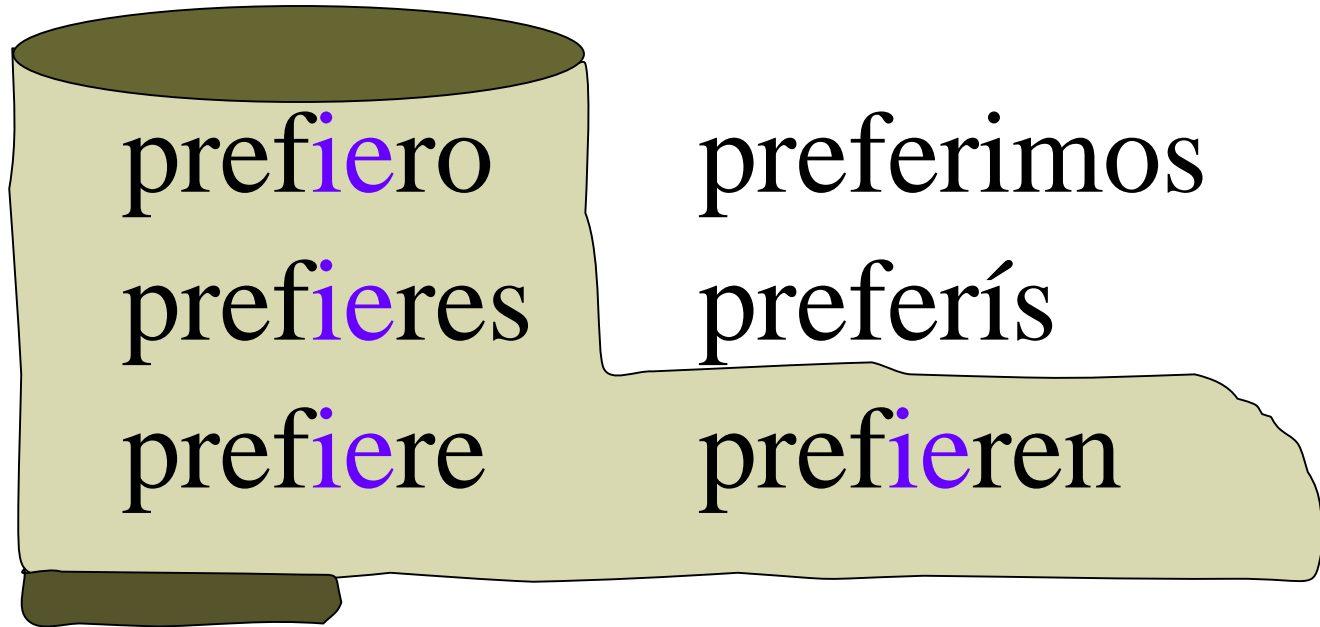


When used with a person as the direct object, *querer* means to love.

Quiero mucho  
a su hija, señor  
Vega.



# preferir

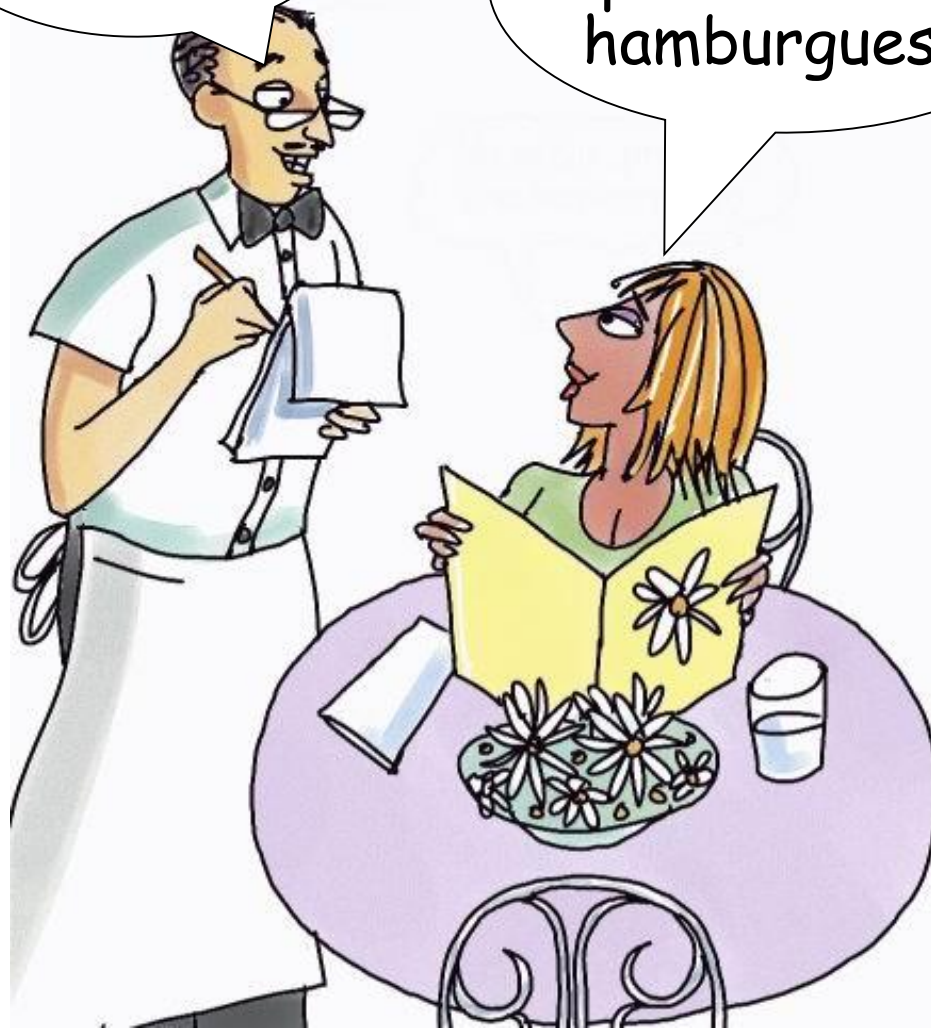


*Preferir*, of course, means to prefer.



¿Quiere un  
sándwich  
de pollo?

No señor,  
prefiero una  
hamburguesa.



Both *querer* and *preferir* can be used with an infinitive directly after them

We start with an appropriate person and number of *querer* or *preferir* . . . and then add any infinitive.

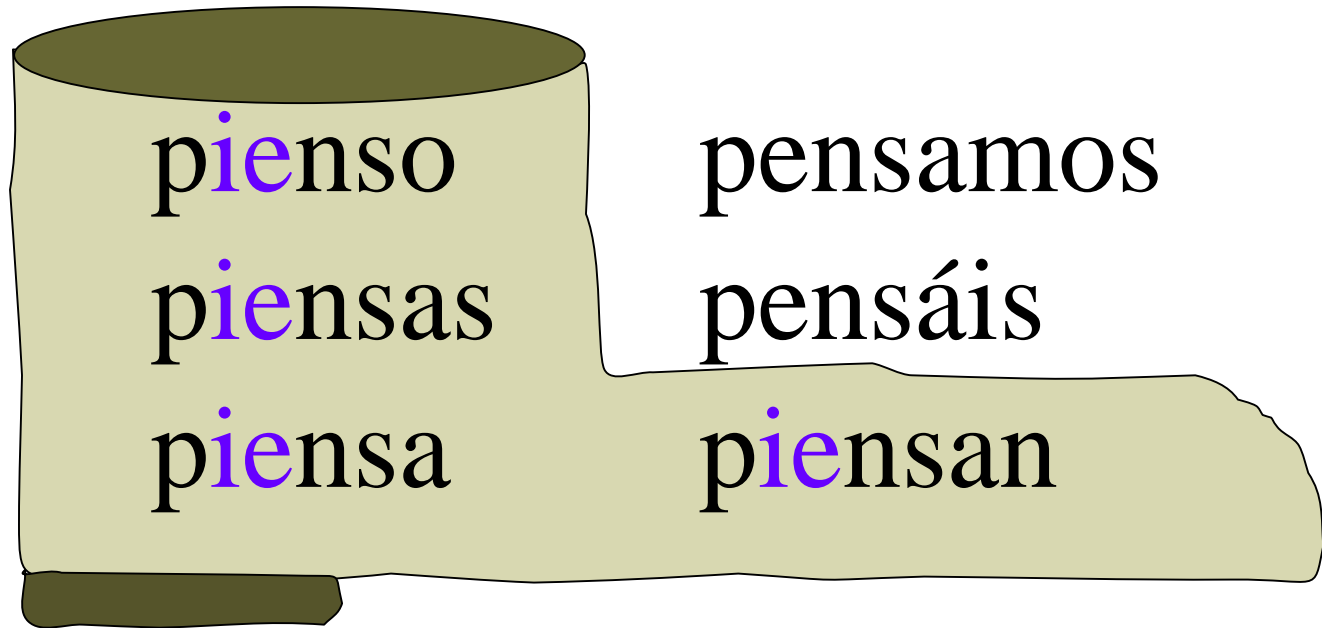
quiero	queremos	}	estudiar	leer
quieres	queréis		escribir	comer
quiere	quieren		viajar	aprender
			bailar	dormir

Rafael **quiere** esquiar, pero su novia **prefiere** patinar.

Rafael wants to ski, but his girlfriend prefers to skate.

# Thinking and planning

The verb *pensar* is another very useful stem-changing verb.



# Thinking and planning

*Pensar* basically means “to think.”

Me gusta ir al parque para  
*pensar* y descansar.

I like to go to the park to  
think and rest.



# Thinking and planning

*Pensar en* means “to think about.”

*Gabriela siempre piensa en sus estudios.*

Gabriela is always thinking about her studies.

*Pensamos en el bienestar de la familia.*

We're thinking about the wellbeing of the family.

*¿En qué piensas?*

What are you thinking about?

# Thinking and planning

*Pensar de* means “to think of” (to have an opinion about.)

¿Qué piensas de las novelas de Márquez?

What do you think of Márquez’s novels?

*Pensar que* means “to think that” (in answer to the above question, for example.)

Yo pienso que sus novelas son maravillosas.

I think that his novels are wonderful.

# Thinking and planning

*Pensar* also has a special use . . .

*pensar* + *infinitive* =  
to plan *to do* something

Pensamos escuchar  
música en el parque esta  
tarde.

We're planning to listen  
to music in the park this  
afternoon.



# Thinking and planning

¿Qué piensas hacer después de clase?

Después de clase, yo pienso . . .

¿Qué piensas hacer este fin de semana?

Este fin de semana, pienso . . .

¿Qué piensan hacer Uds. (tú y tu familia)  
en las vacaciones de verano?

En las vacaciones de verano, pensamos . . .



**FIN**