



# Why Verbs Change Shape in Different Languages

KS3 MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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## What is Verb Conjugation?

A **verb** is an action word—like run, eat, or think. In English, verbs mostly stay the same, but in languages like **French**, **Spanish**, and **German**, verbs change their shape depending on who is doing the action and when it happens. This is called **conjugation**.

For example, in Spanish the verb "to speak" is "hablar," but it becomes "hablo" (I speak), "hablas" (you speak), and "habla" (he/she speaks). The verb looks different every time!

## Who Is Doing the Action?

The biggest reason verbs change is because of the **subject**—the person or thing doing the action. Different languages need to show whether it's me, you, them, or someone else performing the action.

Think of it like putting on different uniforms. A football player wears one uniform, a tennis player wears another, and a swimmer wears something completely different—even though they're all athletes. Similarly, the same verb wears different "uniforms" depending on who is using it.

In **French**, "je parle" means "I speak," but "nous parlons" means "we speak." The verb changes from "parle" to "parlons" because the subject changed from one person to many people.

## When Is the Action Happening?

Verbs also change based on **tense**—whether something is happening now, happened in the past, or will happen in the future. In **German**, "ich gehe" means "I go" (present), but "ich ging" means "I went" (past). The verb completely transforms to show time.

Think of it like a traffic light. A green light means "go now," a yellow light means "was going," and red means "went." The verb changes colour to show you what time period we're talking about.

## Why Do Languages Do This?

Languages developed this way to make communication clearer and faster. By changing the verb's shape, speakers can pack more information into fewer words. Instead of saying "I am speaking" every time, you just say one conjugated word that means all of that.

Different languages have different rules because they evolved separately. English kept its verbs simpler (we mostly just add "-ed" for past tense), while **Romance languages** like Spanish and French developed much more complex systems. This is partly because of how **Latin**, their ancient ancestor language, worked.

## Learning Verbs Takes Practice

This is why learning **verb conjugation tables** is such an important part of learning a new language. You're not just memorizing random words—you're learning a pattern that helps you speak correctly and understand what others mean.