Speak the world. Let's get speaky.

The Speaky Club

SPANISH FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Spanish Vocabulary Handbook

A1 → C1

7,607 WORDS, PHRASES & STRUCTURES · NATURAL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

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Welcome

From “I know this word” to “I know how to use it.”

This handbook isn't a dictionary. It's the vocabulary we use every day in our classes at The Speaky Club, organised so that you can study it on your own, look things up in seconds and — most importantly — **use it in real conversations**.

Every word comes with a natural English translation (not a word-for-word one), real examples, the structures and prepositions it goes with, and the mistakes English speakers typically make. Because knowing a word is only half the job: the other half is knowing how Spanish speakers actually use it.

A language isn't learned to pass an exam. It's learned to meet people, connect and understand the world beyond your own culture. That's what this book is for.

— The Speaky Club team

How the book works

1. **Five levels, A1 → C1.** Each level assumes you know the one before, so words aren't repeated unless they gain a new meaning.
2. **16 sections per level**: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, connectors, expressions, conversation, constructions, time, feelings, everyday words, topics, common mistakes, false friends and collocations.
3. **The Speaky Toolkit** at the end: verbs + prepositions, the complete speaking toolkit, Spain vs Latin America, register & emails, ser/estar and verbs like gustar.
4. **Master Index**: every main word in alphabetical order, with its level and page number.

How to read an entry

Anatomy of a word

aprovechar

to make the most of / to take advantage of

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **aprovechar algo · aprovechar para + infinitive**

ALSO aprovecharse de alguien = to take (unfair) advantage of someone

To use a moment, a resource or an opportunity well. Very common in everyday Spanish.

aprovechar + noun — *to make the most of something*

› Tenemos que aprovechar el buen tiempo.
We have to make the most of the good weather.

aprovechar para + infinitive — *to take the opportunity to do something*

› Aproveché para llamar a mi madre.
I took the opportunity to call my mum.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aprovechar la ocasión** *to seize the opportunity*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Aproveché de la oferta~~ → ✓ Aproveché la oferta.

Headword & translation
The Spanish word in bold, followed by its most important English translations.

Labels
Part of speech, verb type (regular, irregular, stem-changing), gender for nouns, register and level.

Pattern
The structure the word lives in — especially the preposition. Learn the word *with* its pattern.

Uses
When a word has several meanings, each one gets its own line and example.

Examples
Natural Spanish in dark ink, natural English below it in italics.

Common mistake
✗ marks what English speakers often say. ✓ marks the natural Spanish. An asterisk (*) marks an incorrect form.

Register labels

FORMAL	Emails, work, official situations, writing.
NEUTRAL	Safe everywhere (unlabelled words are neutral).
INFORMAL	Friends, family, colleagues you know well.
COLLOQUIAL	Relaxed spoken Spanish. Great to understand, use with care.
VERY COLLOQUIAL	Slang. Understand it; use it only with friends.

Our base is the standard Spanish of Spain. When Latin America says it differently, you'll see a **Spain & Latin America** note — both are correct.

Make it stick

Six ways to study with this book

01

Learn chunks, not words

Don't learn *tener*. Learn *tengo hambre*, *tengo 30 años*, *tengo que irme*. The patterns and combinations are the real vocabulary.

02

Say the examples out loud

Read every Spanish example aloud, twice. Your mouth needs practice as much as your memory.

03

Make it about you

After each section, write five sentences about your own life using new words. Bring them to class.

04

Five a day

Five new words a day is 150 a month — over 1,800 a year. Small, regular sessions beat long, rare ones.

05

Read the mistakes first

The *Common mistakes* and *False friends* sections save you from the errors that most often give English speakers away.

06

Use it in class

Keep the Speaky Toolkit open during conversation classes. Pick one phrase to try in every class.

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LEVEL A1

A1

Essential Spanish

Your first real words

The absolutely fundamental vocabulary: the verbs, nouns and phrases you need to introduce yourself, talk about your day, order food, ask questions and survive your first real conversations.

AT THIS LEVEL YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Introduce yourself and talk about your family, home and routine
- Ask and answer simple questions
- Say what you like and don't like
- Order food, buy things, tell the time

16 sections **1,311** words, phrases & structures

Every expert was once a beginner.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

01 · The 90 verbs you'll use every single day

Verbs

Verbs are the engine of every Spanish sentence. Here you have the essentials of everyday life, each with its key irregular forms, the structure it likes (tener + años, ir a + place, gustar + thing) and the mistakes English speakers make most often. Don't learn verbs alone: learn them in chunks, like 'tengo hambre' or 'voy a casa', and say the examples out loud.

The big four: ser, estar, tener, ir (+ hay)

If you master these five, you can already say an enormous amount of things. They are all irregular, so learn the present tense by heart.

ser *to be (identity, origin, profession, description)*

VERB · IRREGULAR: SOY, ERES, ES, SOMOS, SOIS, SON · A1

PATTERN **ser + noun / adjective · ser de + place (origin) · ser de + material/owner**

The 'to be' for what something or someone IS: name, nationality, job, personality, what something is like in essence, time and dates. Think of it as the verb of identity.

identity & profession — *who or what someone is*

› Soy Laura y soy profesora.
I'm Laura and I'm a teacher.

ser de + place — *where someone is from*

› Marcos es de Valencia.
Marcos is from Valencia.

description — *what someone or something is like*

› Mi barrio es muy tranquilo.
My neighbourhood is very quiet.

time & dates — *telling the time, the day*

› Son las cinco. Hoy es lunes.
It's five o'clock. Today is Monday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ser de Londres** *to be from London* · **¿Qué hora es?** *What time is it?* · **es que...** *the thing is... (to give an excuse)*

DON'T CONFUSE ser = what something IS (identity, essence) vs estar = where something is or how it is right now (location, state).

NOTE Add the article only if you add an adjective: Es una médica excelente (She's an excellent doctor).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy un profesor~~ → ✓ Soy profesor. With jobs, Spanish normally drops 'un/una' after ser. And ✗ ~~*Estoy de Londres~~ → ✓ Soy de Londres.

estar *to be (location, temporary state, how something is now)*

VERB · IRREGULAR: ESTOY, ESTÁS, ESTÁ, ESTAMOS, ESTÁIS, ESTÁN · A1

PATTERN **estar + place · estar + adjective (state) · estar + -ando/-iendo (be doing)**

The 'to be' for where things are and how people or things are at a particular moment: tired, ill, happy today, busy, open, closed. Also used to say what you're doing right now (estoy trabajando).

location — *where someone or something is*

› ¿Dónde estás? — Estoy en la oficina.
Where are you? — I'm at the office.

state / feeling — *how someone is right now*

› Estoy un poco cansada hoy.
I'm a bit tired today.

estar + -ando / -iendo — *an action in progress*

› Ahora estoy comiendo, te llamo luego.
I'm eating now, I'll call you later.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Cómo estás?** *How are you?* · **estar en casa** *to be at home* · **estar bien / mal** *to be well / not well* · **estar de vacaciones** *to be on holiday*

DON'T CONFUSE estar = location and temporary state vs ser = identity and essential description. La sopa es buena (good soup in general) vs La sopa está buena (this soup tastes good).

NOTE Exception to remember: events use ser for location. La fiesta es en mi casa (the party is at my place).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy cansado / *Soy en Madrid~~ → ✓ Estoy cansado / Estoy en Madrid. Feelings and location take estar.

tener *to have*

VERB IRREGULAR: TENGO, TIENES, TIENE, TENEMOS, TENÉIS, TIENEN A1

PATTERN **tener + noun · tener + X años · tener que + infinitive (have to)**

To have or own something. Spanish also uses tener for age and for many physical sensations where English uses 'to be' (hungry, cold, sleepy, afraid).

possession — *to have, own*

› Tengo dos hermanos y un perro.
I have two brothers and a dog.

tener + años — *age*

› Sofía tiene treinta y dos años.
Sofía is thirty-two.

tener + sensation — *hunger, thirst, cold, heat, sleep, fear*

› ¿Tienes hambre? Yo tengo mucha sed.
Are you hungry? I'm really thirsty.

tener que + infinitive — *to have to, must*

› Mañana tengo que trabajar temprano.
Tomorrow I have to work early.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener hambre / sed** *to be hungry / thirsty* · **tener frío / calor** *to be cold / hot* · **tener sueño** *to be sleepy* · **tener tiempo** *to have time* · **tener razón** *to be right*

NOTE With tener + sensation, use mucho/mucha, not muy: Tengo mucho frío, tengo mucha hambre.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy 30 años / *Estoy hambre~~ → ✓ Tengo 30 años / Tengo hambre. If English says 'I am + age/hungry/cold', Spanish usually says tengo.

ir *to go*

VERB IRREGULAR: VOY, VAS, VA, VAMOS, VAIS, VAN A1

PATTERN **ir a + place · ir en + transport · ir a + infinitive (going to)**

To go somewhere. With a + infinitive, it's the easiest way to talk about the future: voy a cenar = I'm going to have dinner.

ir a + place — *to go somewhere*

› Los sábados voy al mercado.
On Saturdays I go to the market.

ir en + transport — *how you travel*

› Voy al trabajo en metro.
I go to work by metro.

ir a + infinitive — *plans, near future*

› Esta noche vamos a ver una película.
Tonight we're going to watch a film.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ir a casa** *to go home* · **ir de compras** *to go shopping* · **ir a pie / andando** *to go on foot, to walk* · **¡Vamos!** *Let's go! / Come on!*

NOTE Exception: a pie (on foot) uses 'a', not 'en'. En pie means 'standing'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Voy en Madrid / *Voy casa~~ → ✓ Voy a Madrid / Voy a casa. Movement towards a place always needs 'a'. And a + el = al: voy al cine.

hay (haber) *there is / there are*

VERB IRREGULAR, IMPERSONAL: HAY (ONLY THIS FORM IN THE PRESENT) A1

PATTERN **hay + un/una/número/sin artículo + noun · hay que + infinitive (one has to)**

Hay is the impersonal form of haber and means both 'there is' and 'there are'. Use it to say that something exists or to introduce new things, especially with un/una, numbers, mucho, or no article.

> **existence** — *there is / there are*
>
> › En mi calle hay un bar y dos tiendas.
> *On my street there's a bar and two shops.*

> **hay que + infinitive** — *you have to (general obligation)*
>
> › Hay que comprar pan.
> *We need to buy bread.*

› ¿Hay un supermercado por aquí?
Is there a supermarket around here?

› No hay problema.
No problem.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Qué hay?** *What's up? (informal greeting)* · **hay mucha gente** *there are a lot of people*

DON'T CONFUSE hay = something exists (new information) vs está/están = where a specific, known thing is. Hay un banco cerca vs El banco está cerca.

NOTE Hay never changes for plural: hay un gato, hay tres gatos.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay el banco en la plaza~~ → ✓ El banco está en la plaza. ✗ ~~*Hay unos libros / *Son dos bares en mi calle~~ → ✓ Hay dos bares en mi calle. Never use hay with el/la.

Core everyday verbs

Verbs you'll need in your first conversations: what you do, where you live, what you can do.

hacer *to do / to make*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO FORM: HAGO, HACES, HACE, HACEMOS, HACÉIS, HACEN · A1

PATTERN **hacer + noun · ¿Qué haces? · hace + weather**

Covers both 'do' and 'make' in English. It's also the verb for weather (hace sol, hace frío) and appears in lots of fixed expressions.

do / make — *general activities and creating things*

› ¿Qué haces el fin de semana?
What do you do at the weekend?

hace + weather — *describing the weather*

› Hoy hace muy buen tiempo.
The weather's really nice today.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer deporte** *to do sport, to exercise* · **hacer la compra** *to do the food shopping* · **hacer los deberes** *to do your homework* · **hacer la cama** *to make the bed* · **hacer una pregunta** *to ask a question* · **hacer una foto** *to take a photo*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: hacer una foto · Latin America: sacar/tomar una foto (also common in Spain).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pregunto una pregunta~~ → ✓ Hago una pregunta (I ask a question). Many 'do' and 'make' ideas use hacer, but not all: 'have a shower' is ducharse.

poder *can / to be able to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: PUEDO, PUEDES, PUEDE, PODEMOS, PODÉIS, PUEDEN · A1

PATTERN **poder + infinitive · ¿Puedes + infinitive? (requests)**

Ability, possibility and permission. In questions it's the standard polite way to ask someone to do something.

possibility / ability — *can*

› Hoy no puedo salir, tengo que estudiar.
I can't go out today, I have to study.

requests — *could you...?*

› ¿Puedes hablar más despacio, por favor?
Can you speak more slowly, please?

permission — *may I...?*

› ¿Puedo abrir la ventana?
Can I open the window?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Se puede?** *May I come in? / Is it allowed?* · **No puedo más.** *I can't take any more. / I'm exhausted.*

DON'T CONFUSE poder = can (possibility) vs saber + infinitive = can (a learned skill). Sé nadar = I can swim (I know how). Hoy no puedo nadar = I can't swim today (something stops me).

vivir *to live*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · A1

PATTERN **vivir en + place · vivir con + person · vivir solo/a**

To live in a place, or with someone.

› Vivo en Barcelona desde 2020.
I've lived in Barcelona since 2020.

› Ana vive con dos compañeros de piso.
Ana lives with two flatmates.

› ¿Dónde vives?
Where do you live?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **vivir solo / sola** *to live alone* · **vivir en el centro** *to live in the centre* · **vivir en el extranjero** *to live abroad*

NOTE Spanish uses the present for things that started in the past and continue: Vivo aquí desde hace tres años = I've lived here for three years.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Vivo a Madrid~~ → ✓ Vivo en Madrid. 'en' for where you are, 'a' for where you go.

trabajar *to work*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **trabajar en + place/company · trabajar de/como + job · trabajar desde casa**

To work. Use en for the place, de or como for the job.

› Trabajo en un hotel, de recepcionista.
I work in a hotel as a receptionist.

› Los viernes trabajo desde casa.
On Fridays I work from home.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **trabajar mucho** *to work hard / a lot* · **trabajar a tiempo completo / a media jornada** *to work full-time / part-time* · **¿En qué trabajas?** *What do you do (for a living)?*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Trabajo por Google~~ → ✓ Trabajo en/para Google. And ✗ ~~*Trabajo como un camarero~~ → ✓ Trabajo de/como camarero (no article).

estudiar *to study*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **estudiar + subject · estudiar en + place · estudiar para + exam**

To study a subject, at a school or university, or to revise for something.

› Estudio español dos horas a la semana.
I study Spanish two hours a week.

› Diego estudia Medicina en Salamanca.
Diego is studying Medicine in Salamanca.

› Tengo que estudiar para el examen.
I have to study for the exam.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estudiar una carrera** *to study for a degree* · **¿Estudias o trabajas?** *Do you study or work? (classic small-talk question in Spain)*

NOTE University subjects are often capitalised in Spain when they refer to a degree: estudia Derecho (he studies Law).

llamarse *to be called / my name is*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR): ME LLAMO, TE LLAMAS, SE LLAMA… · A1

PATTERN **me llamo + name · ¿Cómo te llamas? · ¿Cómo se llama…?**

ALSO llamar (without se) = to call (someone, on the phone): Te llamo mañana.

The most natural way to say your name and ask for someone's name. Literally 'I call myself'.

› Hola, me llamo Emma. ¿Y tú, cómo te llamas?
Hi, my name's Emma. And you, what's your name?

› ¿Cómo se llama tu profesora?
What's your teacher's name?

› ¿Cómo se llama esto en español?
What's this called in Spanish?

DON'T CONFUSE Me llamo Tom (most common) · Soy Tom (introducing yourself, very natural) · Mi nombre es Tom (correct but more formal, forms and official situations).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me llamo es Tom / *Mi llamo Tom~~ → ✓ Me llamo Tom (or Mi nombre es Tom, more formal). 'Me' with e, not 'mi'.

usar *to use*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **usar + noun · usar algo para + infinitive**

To use something. Very common with technology and everyday objects.

› Uso el móvil para todo.
I use my phone for everything.

› ¿Puedo usar tu ordenador un momento?
Can I use your computer for a moment?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **usar el transporte público** *to use public transport* · **usar una aplicación** *to use an app*

DON'T CONFUSE In Spain you'll also hear utilizar (a bit more formal) and, for clothes, llevar: Llevo gafas (I wear glasses), not ~~*uso gafas~~, although usar gafas is also heard, especially in Latin America.

Daily actions

Eating, buying, opening, starting, finding, waiting: the verbs of an ordinary day.

comer *to eat / to have lunch*

VERB REGULAR (-ER) A1

PATTERN **comer + food · comer en/con · comer fuera**

To eat in general. In Spain, comer also means 'to have lunch', the main meal of the day (around 2–3 pm).

> **to eat** — *eating in general*
>
> › No como carne.
> *I don't eat meat.*

> **to have lunch (Spain)** — *the midday meal*
>
> › Hoy como con mis compañeros de trabajo.
> *Today I'm having lunch with my colleagues.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **comer fuera** *to eat out* · **comer bien / sano** *to eat well / healthily* · **la hora de comer** *lunchtime*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: comer = to have lunch · In much of Latin America lunch is almorzar, and comer is more general.

beber *to drink*

VERB REGULAR (-ER) A1

PATTERN **beber + drink · beber agua / alcohol**

To drink. Without an object, 'beber' often means drinking alcohol.

› Bebo mucha agua en verano.
I drink a lot of water in summer.

› —¿Quieres una cerveza? —No, gracias, no bebo.
"Do you want a beer?" "No thanks, I don't drink."

DON'T CONFUSE beber = to drink (the action) vs tomar = to have (a coffee, a drink). In a bar you say ¿Qué vas a tomar?, not ~~*¿Qué vas a beber~~? (possible, but less natural).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America tomar is used much more than beber for drinking in general.

tomar *to have (food/drink) / to take*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **tomar + drink/food · tomar + transport · tomar el sol**

A super-useful verb: to have something to eat or drink (especially in bars and cafés), to take transport, medicine or the sun.

eat / drink — *to have (a coffee, a tapa)*

› ¿Tomamos un café?
Shall we grab a coffee?

transport — *to take (the bus, a taxi)*

› Tomo el autobús a las ocho.
I take the bus at eight.

other — *medicine, the sun*

› Me gusta tomar el sol en la playa.
I like sunbathing on the beach.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar algo** *to have a drink / something* · **tomar el sol** *to sunbathe* · **tomar una pastilla** *to take a pill* · **¿Qué vas a tomar?** *What are you having?*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: coger el autobús is very common · Latin America: tomar el autobús (avoid coger there — it's vulgar in several countries).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo un café~~ → ✓ Tomo un café. English 'have' for food/drink is tomar (or comer/beber), never tener.

desayunar *to have breakfast*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **desayunar (+ food) · desayunar fuera**

To have breakfast. The food can come directly after the verb: desayuno tostadas = I have toast for breakfast.

› Desayuno a las siete y media.
I have breakfast at half past seven.

› Normalmente desayuno café con leche y tostadas.
I usually have white coffee and toast for breakfast.

NOTE Family of meal verbs: desayunar (breakfast), comer/almorzar (lunch), merendar (afternoon snack), cenar (dinner).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo desayuno / *Como el desayuno~~ → ✓ Desayuno. Spanish has one verb for each meal.

cenar *to have dinner*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **cenar (+ food) · cenar fuera · cenar con alguien**

To have dinner, the evening meal. In Spain dinner is late: 9 or 10 pm is normal.

› Esta noche cenamos en casa de Lucía.
Tonight we're having dinner at Lucía's.

› ¿Qué cenamos hoy?
What are we having for dinner tonight?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **salir a cenar** *to go out for dinner* · **cenar algo ligero** *to have something light for dinner*

NOTE La cena = dinner (noun). El desayuno, la comida, la cena.

cocinar *to cook*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **cocinar (+ food) · cocinar para alguien**

To cook. Hacer is also very common for a specific dish: hago una paella.

› Me encanta cocinar los domingos.
I love cooking on Sundays.

› Javi cocina muy bien.
Javi is a really good cook.

DON'T CONFUSE cocinar = to cook (in general) · hacer la comida/la cena = to make lunch/dinner · la cocina = the kitchen AND cooking/cuisine.

comprar *to buy*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **comprar algo · comprar algo a alguien (buy for/from someone) · comprar en + shop**

To buy. Careful: comprar algo a alguien can mean 'buy something for someone' or 'from someone' — context tells you which.

› Compro el pan en la panadería de abajo.
I buy bread at the bakery downstairs.

› Voy a comprar un regalo para mi madre.
I'm going to buy a present for my mum.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **comprar por internet** *to buy online* · **ir de compras** *to go shopping* · **hacer la compra** *to do the (food) shopping*

pagar *to pay (for)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: PAGUÉ (PAST) · A1

PATTERN **pagar algo (NO preposition) · pagar con tarjeta / en efectivo**

To pay or to pay for something. In Spanish you pay the thing directly: pagar la cuenta = to pay (for) the bill.

› ¿Puedo pagar con tarjeta?
Can I pay by card?

› Hoy pago yo.
It's on me today.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pagar en efectivo** *to pay in cash* · **pagar la cuenta** *to pay the bill* · **pagar el alquiler** *to pay the rent*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Pago por la cena~~ → ✓ Pago la cena. No 'por' for the thing you pay for.

abrir *to open*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · IRREGULAR PARTICIPLE: ABIERTO · A1

PATTERN **abrir algo · abrir a las + time**

To open a door, a window, a shop, an app, a bank account…

› ¿Puedes abrir la ventana? Hace calor.
Can you open the window? It's hot.

› La farmacia abre a las nueve.
The chemist's opens at nine.

OPPOSITE **cerrar** — to close

NOTE Abierto/a is also an adjective: El museo está abierto los domingos.

cerrar *to close / to shut*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: CIERRO, CIERRAS, CIERRA, CERRAMOS, CERRÁIS, CIERRAN · A1

PATTERN **cerrar algo · cerrar a las + time · cerrar con llave**

To close or shut something. Also used for shops and businesses closing.

› Cierra la puerta, por favor.
Close the door, please.

› ¿A qué hora cierra el supermercado?
What time does the supermarket close?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cerrar con llave** *to lock* · **cerrar los ojos** *to close your eyes*

OPPOSITE **abrir** — to open

empezar *to start / to begin*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: EMPIEZO, EMPIEZAS, EMPIEZA, EMPEZAMOS, EMPEZÁIS, EMPIEZAN · A1

PATTERN **empezar algo · empezar a + infinitive · empezar a las + time**

To start something, or for something to start. Before an infinitive you need 'a'.

› La clase empieza a las seis.
The class starts at six.

› Empiezo a trabajar el lunes.
I start work on Monday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **empezar de cero** *to start from scratch* · **empezar un curso** *to start a course*

OPPOSITE **terminar** — to finish

DON'T CONFUSE comenzar = to begin, same meaning and pattern (comenzar a), slightly more formal.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Empiezo trabajar / *Empiezo trabajando~~ → ✓ Empiezo a trabajar.

terminar *to finish / to end*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **terminar algo · terminar de + infinitive · terminar a las + time**

To finish something, or for something to end. To say you finish doing something, use 'de'.

› Termino de trabajar a las cinco.
I finish work at five.

› La película termina muy tarde.
The film ends very late.

OPPOSITE **empezar** — to start

DON'T CONFUSE acabar = to finish, a very common synonym in Spain (acabar de + infinitive). Careful: acabo de comer also means 'I've just eaten'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Termino trabajar / *Termino trabajando~~ → ✓ Termino de trabajar.

poner *to put / to put on / to turn on*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO FORM: PONGO, PONES, PONE, PONEMOS, PONÉIS, PONEN · PARTICIPLE: PUESTO · A1

PATTERN **poner algo en + place · poner la tele/la radio/música**

ALSO ponerse = to put on (clothes) / to become (nervous, ill): Me pongo el abrigo.

To put something somewhere, and also to switch on devices or play music. Very flexible.

put — *place something*

› Pon las llaves en la mesa.
Put the keys on the table.

turn on / play — *devices, music*

› ¿Pongo un poco de música?
Shall I put some music on?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **poner la mesa** *to set/lay the table* · **poner la lavadora** *to put a wash on* · **poner la tele** *to turn on the TV*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: poner la tele · also encender (to switch on) everywhere; prender in Latin America.

dar *to give*

VERB · IRREGULAR: DOY, DAS, DA, DAMOS, DAIS, DAN · A1

PATTERN **dar algo a alguien · dar un paseo · dar las gracias**

To give. Also used in many everyday expressions (go for a walk, say thanks).

› ¿Me das tu número de teléfono?
Can you give me your phone number?

› Te doy mi correo.
I'll give you my email.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar un paseo** *to go for a walk* · **dar las gracias** *to say thank you* · **dar un beso / un abrazo** *to give a kiss / a hug* · **me da igual** *I don't mind / it's all the same to me*

NOTE Dar usually needs an indirect pronoun: le doy, te doy, me da. ¿Me das...? is a friendly way to ask for something.

buscar *to look for / to search*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: BUSQUÉ (PAST) · A1

PATTERN **buscar algo (NO preposition) · buscar a alguien · ir a buscar a alguien (pick someone up)**

To look for something or someone. Spanish doesn't need 'for': buscar ya includes it.

› Busco las llaves, ¿las has visto?
I'm looking for my keys, have you seen them?

› Estoy buscando trabajo.
I'm looking for a job.

› Voy a buscar a los niños al colegio.
I'm going to pick the kids up from school.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **buscar piso** *to look for a flat* · **buscar en internet** *to search online*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Busco para mis llaves~~ → ✓ Busco mis llaves. Use 'a' only for people: Busco a Javi.

encontrar *to find*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: ENCUENTRO, ENCUENTRAS, ENCUENTRA, ENCONTRAMOS, ENCONTRÁIS, ENCUENTRAN · A1

PATTERN **encontrar algo · no encontrar algo**

ALSO encontrarse = to feel (Me encuentro mal = I feel unwell) / to meet by chance.

To find something you were looking for, or to find something by chance.

› No encuentro mi móvil.
I can't find my phone.

› ¡Por fin encuentro un piso bonito y barato!
At last I've found a nice, cheap flat!

DON'T CONFUSE buscar = to look for (the process) vs encontrar = to find (the result).

COMMON MISTAKE English 'I can't find' → Spanish usually just: ✓ No encuentro (not ~~*No puedo encontrar~~, although it's possible).

esperar *to wait (for) / to hope / to expect*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **esperar (a) alguien/algo · esperar + infinitive (hope to) · esperar que... (hope that)**

One verb, three English meanings: wait, hope, expect. Context makes it clear.

wait (for) — *no 'for' needed*

› Te espero en la puerta.
I'll wait for you at the door.

hope — *esperar + infinitive*

› Espero aprobar el examen.
I hope to pass the exam.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **esperar el autobús** *to wait for the bus* · **¡Espera un momento!** *Wait a moment! / Hang on!* · **esperar a alguien** *to wait for someone*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Espero para el autobús~~ → ✓ Espero el autobús. No 'para'. Use 'a' only with people (Espero a Laura).

ayudar *to help*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **ayudar a alguien · ayudar a alguien a + infinitive · ayudar con algo**

To help someone, or to help someone do something.

› ¿Te ayudo?
Can I help you? / Shall I help?

› Mi hermano me ayuda a estudiar.
My brother helps me study.

› ¿Me ayudas con la maleta?
Can you help me with the suitcase?

NOTE La ayuda = help (noun). ¡Ayuda! = Help!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ayudo mi madre~~ → ✓ Ayudo a mi madre (personal 'a'). ✗ ~~*Me ayuda estudiar~~ → ✓ Me ayuda a estudiar.

Daily routine (reflexive verbs)

These verbs carry a pronoun (me, te, se, nos, os, se) because you do the action to yourself. Put the pronoun before the conjugated verb: me levanto, te duchas, se acuesta.

despertarse *to wake up*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME DESPIERTO, TE DESPIERTAS, SE DESPIERTA… · A1

PATTERN **despertarse a las + time · despertarse pronto/tarde**

ALSO despertar (without se) = to wake someone up: Despierto a los niños a las siete.

To wake up (open your eyes). Not the same as getting out of bed (levantarse).

› Me despierto a las siete, pero me levanto a las siete y cuarto.
I wake up at seven, but I get up at quarter past.

› Los domingos me despierto muy tarde.
On Sundays I wake up really late.

NOTE El despertador = alarm clock.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Despierto a las siete~~ → ✓ Me despierto a las siete. Without 'me' it means you wake somebody else up!

levantarse *to get up*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR): ME LEVANTO, TE LEVANTAS, SE LEVANTA… · A1

PATTERN **levantarse a las + time · levantarse pronto/temprano/tarde**
ALSO levantar (without se) = to lift / to raise: levantar la mano (to raise your hand).

To get up, get out of bed. Also to stand up.

› Entre semana me levanto a las seis y media.
On weekdays I get up at half past six.

› ¿A qué hora te levantas?
What time do you get up?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **levantarse temprano** *to get up early* · **levantarse con el pie izquierdo** *to get out of bed on the wrong side*

OPPOSITE **acostarse** — to go to bed

ducharse *to have a shower*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR): ME DUCHO, TE DUCHAS, SE DUCHA… · A1

PATTERN **ducharse por la mañana/noche · ducharse con agua fría**

To shower. One verb in Spanish, three words in English.

› Me ducho por la mañana, antes de desayunar.
I shower in the morning, before breakfast.

› Espera, Marcos se está duchando.
Wait, Marcos is in the shower.

DON'T CONFUSE bañarse = to have a bath / to go for a swim (in the sea, a pool).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tomo una ducha~~ → understood, but much more natural: ✓ Me ducho. (Darse una ducha is also fine.)

acostarse *to go to bed*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING O→UE: ME ACUESTO, TE ACUESTAS, SE ACUESTA… · A1

PATTERN **acostarse a las + time · acostarse tarde/pronto**
ALSO acostar (without se) = to put someone to bed: Acuesto a los niños a las nueve.

To go to bed (to lie down to sleep). Different from dormir (to sleep) and dormirse (to fall asleep).

› Me acuesto sobre las doce.
I go to bed around twelve.

› Los viernes nos acostamos muy tarde.
On Fridays we go to bed really late.

OPPOSITE **levantarse** — to get up

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Voy a la cama~~ → understandable, but ✓ Me acuesto / Me voy a la cama is what natives say.

dormir *to sleep*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: DUERMO, DUERMES, DUERME, DORMIMOS, DORMÍS, DUERMEN · A1

PATTERN **dormir + hours · dormir bien/mal · dormir la siesta**

ALSO dormirse = to fall asleep / to oversleep: Me duermo en el sofá. Hoy me he dormido.

To sleep. With 'se', it means falling asleep or oversleeping.

› Duermo ocho horas cada noche.
I sleep eight hours every night.

› ¿Has dormido bien?
Did you sleep well?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dormir la siesta** *to have a nap* · **dormir poco** *not to sleep much* · **tener sueño** *to be sleepy*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Estoy dormiendo~~ → ✓ Estoy durmiendo. The gerund changes o→u.

Communication

Talking, asking, answering, reading and writing: the verbs you use in class and in every conversation.

hablar *to speak / to talk*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **hablar + language (no article) · hablar con alguien · hablar de/sobre algo**

To speak a language, or to talk to someone about something.

hablar + language — *to speak a language*

› Hablo inglés, francés y un poco de español.
I speak English, French and a bit of Spanish.

hablar con + person — *to talk to/with someone*

› Ayer hablé con mi jefa.
Yesterday I talked to my boss.

hablar de + topic — *to talk about*

› Siempre hablamos de fútbol.
We always talk about football.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hablar por teléfono** *to talk on the phone* · **hablar alto / bajo** *to speak loudly / quietly* · **hablar despacio** *to speak slowly*

DON'T CONFUSE hablar = to speak/talk vs decir = to say/tell (with the words or the message).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Hablo a Ana~~ → ✓ Hablo con Ana. ✗ *~~Hablo el español~~ → ✓ Hablo español (no article after hablar).

decir *to say / to tell*

VERB · IRREGULAR: DIGO, DICES, DICE, DECIMOS, DECÍS, DICEN · PARTICIPLE: DICHO · A1

PATTERN **decir algo (a alguien) · decir que... · ¿Cómo se dice...?**

To say or tell something. Spanish uses one verb for both 'say' and 'tell'.

› ¿Cómo se dice 'window' en español?
How do you say 'window' in Spanish?

› Laura dice que viene más tarde.
Laura says she's coming later.

› ¿Qué dices?
What are you saying? / What did you say?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **decir la verdad** *to tell the truth* · **decir hola / adiós** *to say hello / goodbye* · **¿Diga? / ¿Dígame?** *Hello? (answering the phone, Spain)* · **es decir** *that is / I mean*

NOTE In the street you'll hear 'dime' (tell me) constantly: Dime, ¿qué necesitas?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Dice a mí que...~~ → ✓ Me dice que... (She tells me that...). The person goes as a pronoun before the verb.

preguntar *to ask (a question)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **preguntar algo (a alguien) · preguntar por alguien/algo (ask about/after)**

To ask for information. It's for questions only, NOT for asking for things (that's pedir, A2).

› ¿Puedo preguntarte una cosa?
Can I ask you something?

› Voy a preguntar al camarero dónde está el baño.
I'm going to ask the waiter where the toilet is.

› Tu madre pregunta por ti.
Your mum is asking about you.

NOTE La pregunta = the question.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pregunto un café~~ → ✓ Pido un café (I ask for / order a coffee). ✗ ~~*Pregunto una pregunta~~ → ✓ Hago una pregunta.

contestar *to answer / to reply*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **contestar algo · contestar a alguien / a una pregunta / al teléfono**

To answer a question, a person, a message or the phone.

› No contesta al teléfono.
He's not answering the phone.

› ¿Puedes contestar a mi mensaje?
Can you reply to my message?

› Contesta las preguntas del ejercicio.
Answer the questions in the exercise.

DON'T CONFUSE responder = to answer/respond, a bit more formal. La respuesta = the answer.

leer *to read*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) IN THE PRESENT · GERUND: LEYENDO · A1

PATTERN **leer algo · leer en voz alta**

To read books, messages, the news...

› Leo un poco antes de dormir.
I read a bit before going to sleep.

› ¿Has leído mi mensaje?
Have you read my message?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **leer en voz alta** *to read aloud* · **leer las noticias** *to read the news* · **leer un libro / una novela** *to read a book / a novel*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Estoy leiendo~~ → ✓ Estoy leyendo. The i becomes y between vowels.

escribir *to write*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · IRREGULAR PARTICIPLE: ESCRITO · A1

PATTERN **escribir algo (a alguien) · escribir en español · ¿Cómo se escribe...?**

To write. Also used for texting someone: te escribo = I'll text/message you.

› Te escribo luego por WhatsApp.
I'll message you later on WhatsApp.

› ¿Cómo se escribe tu apellido?
How do you spell your surname?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **escribir un correo** *to write an email* · **escribir a mano** *to write by hand*

NOTE ¿Cómo se escribe? is how you ask 'How do you spell it?'.

Senses & free time

Seeing, looking, listening and playing. Several pairs here are tricky for English speakers: ver/mirar, jugar/tocar.

ver *to see / to watch*

VERB · IRREGULAR: VEO, VES, VE, VEMOS, VEIS, VEN · PARTICIPLE: VISTO · A1

PATTERN **ver algo · ver a alguien · ver la tele / una película / una serie**

To see (with your eyes, or meet someone) and also to watch TV, films and series.

see — *perceive with your eyes*

› Desde mi ventana veo el mar.
From my window I can see the sea.

watch — *TV, films, matches*

› Por la noche vemos una serie.
In the evening we watch a series.

meet — *see a person*

› ¿Nos vemos mañana?
Shall we meet tomorrow? / See you tomorrow?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Nos vemos!** *See you!* · **a ver...** *let's see...* · **ver un partido** *to watch a match*

DON'T CONFUSE ver = see/watch (what reaches your eyes) vs mirar = to look at (deliberately).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Puedo ver el mar~~ → possible, but Spanish usually drops 'can' with senses: ✓ Veo el mar. And ✗ ~~*Veo mi hermana~~ → ✓ Veo a mi hermana.

mirar *to look (at)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **mirar algo / a alguien (no 'at') · ¡Mira!**

To look at something deliberately. ¡Mira! is also used to get attention or start an explanation ('look...').

› Mira esta foto, es de mis vacaciones.
Look at this photo, it's from my holiday.

› Voy a mirar el horario del tren.
I'm going to check the train timetable.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mirar por la ventana** *to look out of the window* · **mirar el móvil** *to check your phone*

DON'T CONFUSE mirar = to look at (intention) vs ver = to see (perception) or watch (TV).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Miro a la foto / *Miro en la foto~~ → ✓ Miro la foto. No 'at'. Use 'a' only for people: Miro a Diego.

escuchar *to listen (to)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **escuchar algo / a alguien (no 'to')**

To listen to something or someone with attention.

› Escucho podcasts en el metro.
I listen to podcasts on the metro.

› ¡Escúchame, por favor!
Listen to me, please!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **escuchar música** *to listen to music* · **escuchar la radio** *to listen to the radio*

DON'T CONFUSE escuchar = listen (attention) vs oír = hear (sound reaches your ears): No te oigo = I can't hear you.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Escucho a la música~~ → ✓ Escucho música. 'to' disappears; 'a' only for people (Escucho a mi profesor).

jugar *to play (games, sports)*

VERB STEM-CHANGING U→UE: JUEGO, JUEGAS, JUEGA, JUGAMOS, JUGÁIS, JUEGAN A1

PATTERN **jugar a + game/sport · jugar con alguien**

To play games and sports, or to play (children). Not for instruments (that's tocar).

› Los martes juego al pádel con Javi.
On Tuesdays I play padel with Javi.

› ¿Jugamos a las cartas?
Shall we play cards?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **jugar al fútbol / al tenis** *to play football / tennis* · **jugar a los videojuegos** *to play video games* · **jugar al ajedrez** *to play chess*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: jugar al fútbol · Latin America: jugar fútbol (without al) is very common.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Juego la guitarra~~ → ✓ Toco la guitarra. ✗ ~~*Juego fútbol~~ → ✓ Juego al fútbol (in Spain).

tocar *to play (an instrument) / to touch*

VERB REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: TOQUÉ (PAST) A1

PATTERN **tocar + instrument · tocar algo (touch) · te toca (it's your turn)**

To play a musical instrument, and to touch something. Also: me toca = it's my turn.

instrument — *play music*

› Mi novio toca el piano.
My boyfriend plays the piano.

touch — *physical contact*

› No toques eso, está caliente.
Don't touch that, it's hot.

turn — *it's someone's turn*

› Ahora te toca a ti.
Now it's your turn.

DON'T CONFUSE tocar = instruments · jugar = games and sports.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Juego el violín~~ → ✓ Toco el violín.

Likes & wants

How to talk about what you like, want, prefer and need. Gustar works 'backwards' — read its card slowly.

gustar *to like (lit. 'to be pleasing to')*

VERB REGULAR (-AR), USED MOSTLY AS GUSTA (ONE THING / INFINITIVE) AND GUSTAN (SEVERAL THINGS) A1

PATTERN **(a mí) me gusta + singular / infinitive · me gustan + plural · me, te, le, nos, os, les**

Gustar works the other way round from 'like': the thing you like is the subject. Me gusta el café = coffee is pleasing to me. So the verb agrees with the thing, not with you.

me gusta + singular — *one thing*

› Me gusta mucho esta ciudad.
I really like this city.

me gusta + infinitive — *activities*

› Nos gusta viajar en verano.
We like travelling in summer.

me gustan + plural — *several things*

› ¿Te gustan los perros?
Do you like dogs?

› A Lucía le gusta el teatro, pero a mí no.
Lucía likes theatre, but I don't.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me gusta mucho** *I really like it* · **no me gusta nada** *I don't like it at all* · **me encanta** *I love it*

NOTE Add 'a mí, a ti, a él...' for emphasis or contrast: A mí me gusta el campo, pero a ella le gusta la ciudad. More phrases in section 11.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo gusto el chocolate~~ → ✓ Me gusta el chocolate. ✗ ~~*Me gusta los libros~~ → ✓ Me gustan los libros. ✗ ~~*Ana gusta bailar~~ → ✓ A Ana le gusta bailar.

querer *to want / to love*

VERB STEM-CHANGING E→IE: QUIERO, QUIERES, QUIERE, QUEREMOS, QUERÉIS, QUIEREN A1

PATTERN **querer + noun · querer + infinitive · querer a alguien (to love someone)**

To want something or to do something. With people (querer a alguien) it means to love — the everyday, warm way to say it.

want + noun — *to want something*

› Quiero un café con leche, por favor.
I'd like a white coffee, please.

want + infinitive — *to want to do*

› Quiero aprender a cocinar.
I want to learn to cook.

love a person — *querer a alguien*

› Te quiero mucho.
I love you very much.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Quieres...?** *Would you like...? / Do you want...? (offers and invitations)* · **sin querer** *by accident, without meaning to*

NOTE Te quiero is used with family, friends and partners. Te amo is stronger and more romantic or poetic.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quiero que ir~~ → ✓ Quiero ir. And ✗ ~~*Quiero a un café~~ → ✓ Quiero un café ('a' only for people).

preferir *to prefer / I'd rather*

VERB STEM-CHANGING E→IE: PREFIERO, PREFIERES, PREFIERE, PREFERIMOS, PREFERÍS, PREFIEREN A1

PATTERN **preferir A (a B) · preferir + infinitive**

To prefer one thing to another, or to prefer doing something.

› Prefiero el té al café.
I prefer tea to coffee.

› ¿Prefieres ir al cine o quedarte en casa?
Would you rather go to the cinema or stay home?

› Hoy prefiero no salir.
I'd rather not go out today.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Prefiero el té que el café~~ → ✓ Prefiero el té al café ('a', not 'que', before the second option).

necesitar *to need*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **necesitar + noun · necesitar + infinitive**

To need something or to need to do something. No 'to' before the infinitive.

› Necesito un bolígrafo, ¿me dejas uno?
I need a pen, can you lend me one?

› Necesitamos hablar.
We need to talk.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **necesitar ayuda** *to need help* · **necesitar descansar** *to need to rest*

DON'T CONFUSE necesitar = need · tener que = have to · hay que = one has to / it's necessary.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Necesito de un taxi / *Necesito a hablar~~ → ✓ Necesito un taxi / Necesito hablar.

Thinking & knowing

Two verbs for 'know' (saber and conocer), and the verbs you need to understand, learn and teach.

pensar *to think*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: PIENSO, PIENSAS, PIENSA, PENSAMOS, PENSÁIS, PIENSAN · A1

PATTERN **pensar que... (opinion) · pensar en algo/alguien (think about) · pensar + infinitive (plan to)**

To think. The preposition changes the meaning: que for opinions, en for thinking about someone or something, + infinitive for plans.

pensar que — *opinion*

› Pienso que es una buena idea.
I think it's a good idea.

pensar en — *think about*

› Siempre pienso en mis amigos de Londres.
I'm always thinking about my friends in London.

pensar + infinitive — *to plan to*

› Pienso viajar a México en verano.
I'm planning to travel to Mexico in summer.

DON'T CONFUSE pensar que and creer que are almost the same for opinions; creo que is more frequent.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pienso sobre ti~~ → ✓ Pienso en ti. ✗ ~~*Pienso es bueno~~ → ✓ Pienso que es bueno (you can't drop 'que').

creer *to believe / to think*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) IN THE PRESENT · GERUND: CREYENDO · A1

PATTERN **creer que… · creer en algo · creer a alguien**

To believe (something, in something, someone) and the most common way to give an opinion: creo que…

› Creo que el museo cierra los lunes.
I think the museum is closed on Mondays.

› —¿Viene Tom? —Creo que sí.
"Is Tom coming?" "I think so."

› No te creo.
I don't believe you.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **creo que sí / creo que no** *I think so / I don't think so* · **¡No me lo creo!** *I can't believe it!*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Creo así / *Creo que so~~ → ✓ Creo que sí. 'I don't think so' = Creo que no.

entender *to understand*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ENTIENDO, ENTIENDES, ENTIENDE, ENTENDEMOS, ENTENDÉIS, ENTIENDEN · A1

PATTERN **entender algo / a alguien · entender de algo (to know about a subject)**

To understand. Your survival verb in Spanish class!

› Perdona, no entiendo. ¿Puedes repetir?
Sorry, I don't understand. Can you repeat that?

› Entiendo el español, pero hablo poco.
I understand Spanish, but I don't speak much.

› ¿Me entiendes?
Do you understand me? / Do you know what I mean?

DON'T CONFUSE comprender = to understand, same meaning, slightly more formal.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No estoy entendiendo~~ → possible, but natives usually say ✓ No entiendo.

saber *to know (facts, information) / to know how to*

VERB IRREGULAR YO FORM: SÉ, SABES, SABE, SABEMOS, SABÉIS, SABEN A1

PATTERN **saber algo · saber + infinitive (know how to) · saber si/dónde/qué...**

To know information or facts, and to know how to do something (a skill).

information — *know a fact*

› ¿Sabes dónde está la estación?
Do you know where the station is?

saber + infinitive — *can (skill)*

› No sé nadar.
I can't swim.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No lo sé. / No sé.** *I don't know.* · **¿Sabes qué?** *You know what?* · **saber cocinar** *to know how to cook / to be able to cook*

DON'T CONFUSE saber = know facts and skills vs conocer = know people, places, things by experience.

NOTE Sé (I know) has an accent; se without accent is a pronoun.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sé Madrid~~ → ✓ Conozco Madrid. ✗ ~~*Sé cómo nadar~~ → ✓ Sé nadar (no 'cómo' needed).

conocer *to know (people, places) / to meet*

VERB IRREGULAR YO FORM: CONOZCO, CONOCES, CONOCE, CONOCEMOS, CONOCÉIS, CONOCEN A1

PATTERN **conocer a alguien · conocer + place / thing**

To know a person, a place or a thing because you have experience of it. Also: to meet someone for the first time, or visit a place for the first time.

people — *know someone*

› ¿Conoces a Marcos? Es mi vecino.
Do you know Marcos? He's my neighbour.

places — *have been to*

› No conozco Sevilla. ¿Es bonita?
I've never been to Seville. Is it nice?

meet — *for the first time*

› Encantada de conocerte.
Nice to meet you.

DON'T CONFUSE conocer = know people/places (experience) vs saber = know facts and skills.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Conozco Laura~~ → ✓ Conozco a Laura (personal 'a'). ✗ ~~*Sé a Laura~~ → ✓ Conozco a Laura.

aprender *to learn*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) · A1

PATTERN **aprender algo · aprender a + infinitive**

To learn something or learn to do something. Remember 'a' before the infinitive.

› Aprendo español para mi trabajo.
I'm learning Spanish for my job.

› Quiero aprender a bailar salsa.
I want to learn to dance salsa.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aprender de memoria** *to learn by heart* · **aprender de los errores** *to learn from your mistakes*

DON'T CONFUSE aprender = to learn (the student) vs enseñar = to teach (the teacher).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Aprendo bailar~~ → ✓ Aprendo a bailar.

enseñar *to teach / to show*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **enseñar algo a alguien · enseñar a alguien a + infinitive**

To teach, and also — very common in Spain — to show someone something.

> **teach** — *a subject or skill*
>
> › Emma enseña inglés en una academia.
> *Emma teaches English at a language school.*

> **show** — *let someone see*
>
> › Te enseño las fotos del viaje.
> *I'll show you the photos from the trip.*

DON'T CONFUSE enseñar (show) = mostrar, which is a bit more formal.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mi madre me enseñó cocinar~~ → ✓ Mi madre me enseñó a cocinar.

Movement

Coming, going out, arriving, coming back and travelling. Watch the prepositions: a (to), de (from), en (by transport).

venir *to come*

VERB · IRREGULAR: VENGO, VIENES, VIENE, VENIMOS, VENÍS, VIENEN · A1

PATTERN **venir a + place · venir de + place · venir en + transport · venir a + infinitive**

To come towards the place where the speaker is. If you are not moving towards the speaker, Spanish uses ir.

› ¿Vienes a mi casa esta tarde?
Are you coming to my place this afternoon?

› Vengo del gimnasio.
I've just come from the gym.

› Mis padres vienen a verme en mayo.
My parents are coming to see me in May.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Ven aquí!** *Come here!* · **el año que viene** *next year*

DON'T CONFUSE venir = come here (towards me) vs ir = go there (away from me).

COMMON MISTAKE Answering an invitation: ✗ *~~¡Sí~~, vengo! (when you go to the other person's place) → ✓ ¡Sí, voy! Spanish chooses the verb from the speaker's position: you GO to someone else's place.

salir *to go out / to leave*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO FORM: SALGO, SALES, SALE, SALIMOS, SALÍS, SALEN · A1

PATTERN **salir de + place (leave) · salir a/con · salir con alguien (go out with, date)**

To leave a place, to go out (for fun), and to go out with someone. Also used for trains and buses departing.

leave a place — *salir de*

› Salgo de casa a las ocho.
I leave home at eight.

go out — *for fun*

› Los viernes salimos con amigos.
On Fridays we go out with friends.

depart — *transport*

› El tren sale a las 10:15.
The train leaves at 10:15.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **salir de fiesta** *to go out partying* · **salir a cenar** *to go out for dinner* · **salir con alguien** *to go out with / date someone*

OPPOSITE **entrar** — to go in, to enter

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Salgo la oficina~~ → ✓ Salgo de la oficina. You always leave 'from' (de) a place.

llegar *to arrive / to get (somewhere)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: LLEGUÉ (PAST) · A1

PATTERN **llegar a + place · llegar tarde / pronto / a tiempo**

To arrive, to get to a place. Spanish uses 'a' (never 'en' or 'to').

› Llego a casa sobre las siete.
I get home at about seven.

› Perdón, llego tarde.
Sorry I'm late.

› ¿Cuándo llegas a Madrid?
When do you arrive in Madrid?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llegar tarde** *to be late, to arrive late* · **llegar a tiempo** *to arrive on time*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Llego en Madrid / *Llego casa~~ → ✓ Llego a Madrid / Llego a casa. English 'arrive in/at' and 'get home' all = llegar a.

volver *to come back / to go back / to return*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: VUELVO, VUELVES, VUELVE, VOLVEMOS, VOLVÉIS, VUELVEN · PARTICIPLE: VUELTO · A1

PATTERN **volver a + place · volver de + place · volver a + infinitive (do again)**

To return to a place. With a + infinitive, it means doing something again.

> **return** — *come/go back*
> › Vuelvo a casa en autobús.
> *I go back home by bus.*

> **volver a + infinitive** — *do again*
> › ¿Puedes volver a explicarlo?
> *Can you explain it again?*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **volver tarde** *to get back late* · **¡Ahora vuelvo!** *I'll be right back!*

DON'T CONFUSE regresar = to return, very common in Latin America, a bit more formal in Spain.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Vuelvo mi libro a la biblioteca~~ → ✓ Devuelvo el libro (to give something back is devolver).

viajar *to travel*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A1

PATTERN **viajar a + place · viajar en + transport · viajar por + region (around)**

To travel. Use 'a' for the destination, 'por' for travelling around a place.

› Me encanta viajar.
I love travelling.

› En agosto viajamos a Italia en tren.
In August we're travelling to Italy by train.

› Quiero viajar por Sudamérica.
I want to travel around South America.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **viajar solo/sola** *to travel alone* · **viajar por trabajo** *to travel for work* · **el viaje** *the trip, the journey*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Viajo en Italia~~ → ✓ Viajo a Italia (destination) / Viajo por Italia (around).

More useful verbs

A quick-reference list of more everyday verbs. Check the note for irregular forms and prepositions.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
caminar	*to walk*	Camino una hora al día. *I walk for an hour a day.*
andar	*to walk / to go*	Very common in Spain for walking: ir andando = to go on foot. Voy al trabajo andando. *I walk to work.*
pasear	*to go for a walk / to stroll*	Walking for pleasure. Also: dar un paseo. Los domingos paseamos por el parque. *On Sundays we go for a walk in the park.*
correr	*to run*	Also: salir a correr = to go for a run. Corro tres veces a la semana. *I run three times a week.*
nadar	*to swim*	¿Sabes nadar? *Can you swim?*
bailar	*to dance*	Nos encanta bailar. *We love dancing.*
cantar	*to sing*	Canto en la ducha. *I sing in the shower.*
llamar	*to call / to phone*	llamar a alguien (personal 'a'). Not reflexive here: llamarse = to be called. Te llamo esta noche. *I'll call you tonight.*
enviar / mandar	*to send*	mandar is more informal and very common. enviar: envío, envías (accent on the í). Te mando la dirección por mensaje. *I'll send you the address by text.*
recibir	*to receive / to get*	For emails, messages, presents. ¿Has recibido mi correo? *Did you get my email?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
visitar	*to visit*	visitar a alguien (people) · visitar + place. For 'see a friend' Spanish often says ver. **Este verano visito a mis abuelos.** *This summer I'm visiting my grandparents.*
invitar	*to invite / to treat (someone)*	invitar a alguien a + noun/infinitive. Te invito = it's on me. **Te invito a un café.** *Let me buy you a coffee.*
preparar	*to prepare / to make*	**Preparo la cena mientras tú pones la mesa.** *I'll make dinner while you set the table.*
limpiar	*to clean*	**Los sábados limpio la casa.** *On Saturdays I clean the house.*
lavar	*to wash*	lavarse = to wash yourself: lavarse las manos / los dientes. **Me lavo los dientes después de comer.** *I brush my teeth after lunch.*
descansar	*to rest / to relax*	**Este fin de semana quiero descansar.** *This weekend I want to rest.*
practicar	*to practise*	Spelling: practiqué (past). For sports: practicar deporte / yoga. **Practico español con una app.** *I practise Spanish with an app.*
repetir	*to repeat / to have seconds*	stem-changing e→i: repito. **¿Puede repetir, por favor?** *Could you repeat that, please?*
cambiar	*to change*	cambiar de + noun (change jobs, flats): cambiar de trabajo. **Quiero cambiar de piso.** *I want to move flats.*
vender	*to sell*	**Venden fruta muy buena en ese mercado.** *They sell really good fruit at that market.*
llevar	*to take (somewhere) / to carry / to wear*	Llevo gafas = I wear glasses. Llevar ≠ traer (bring). **¿Te llevo a casa?** *Shall I take you home?*
traer	*to bring*	irregular yo form: traigo. **¿Qué traigo a la fiesta?** *What shall I bring to the party?*
coger	*to take / to catch / to pick up*	Very common in Spain (coger el metro). Avoid in much of Latin America (vulgar); use tomar. Yo form: cojo. **LatAm:** Spain: coger el autobús · Latin America: tomar el autobús
entrar	*to go in / to come in / to enter*	entrar en (Spain) / entrar a (Latin America, also Spain). **¿Puedo entrar?** *Can I come in?*
subir	*to go up / to get on*	subir al autobús = get on the bus · subir una foto = upload a photo. **Subimos al quinto piso andando.** *We walk up to the fifth floor.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
bajar	*to go down / to get off*	bajar del tren = get off the train · bajar la música = turn the music down. **Bajo en la próxima parada.** *I'm getting off at the next stop.*
sentarse	*to sit down*	reflexive, e→ie: me siento. **Siéntate, por favor.** *Sit down, please.*
conducir	*to drive*	irregular yo form: conduzco. **LatAm:** Spain: conducir · Latin America: manejar **No conduzco en la ciudad.** *I don't drive in the city.*
perder	*to lose / to miss (a train, bus)*	stem-changing e→ie: pierdo. **Siempre pierdo las llaves.** *I'm always losing my keys.*
olvidar	*to forget*	Also olvidarse de: Me olvido de todo. **No olvides el pasaporte.** *Don't forget your passport.*

LEARN THE 'YO' FORM FIRST

Most irregular verbs are irregular in the 'yo' form: tengo, hago, pongo, salgo, conozco, sé. Learn those first and say them about your own life: 'Tengo un perro. Salgo de casa a las ocho.' Personal sentences stick much faster than conjugation tables.

LEARN THE VERB WITH ITS PARTNER

Always note the little word after the verb: ir a, llegar a, salir de, pensar en, empezar a, terminar de. These prepositions are where English speakers slip most, so learn them together as one chunk.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

02 · 150 everyday nouns — always with el or la

Nouns

Every Spanish noun is masculine or feminine, and that affects every word around it. So never learn 'problema': learn 'el problema'. This section gives you high-frequency nouns for people, places, objects, time and ideas, starting with the ones whose gender catches everyone out. (Family, home, food, clothes, weather and the body are in Topic vocabulary.)

THE QUICK RULES (AND THE TRAPS)

Most nouns ending in -o are masculine (el libro) and most ending in -a are feminine (la casa). Words ending in -ción, -sión, -dad and -tad are feminine (la canción, la ciudad, la libertad). Words ending in -ma from Greek are masculine (el problema, el tema). For everything else — especially words ending in -e or a consonant — learn the article with the word: el coche, la calle, el reloj, la flor.

Nouns with tricky gender

The famous exceptions. Learn them now and you'll avoid some of the most common beginner mistakes.

el problema *problem*

NOUN · MASCULINE · A1

PLURAL los problemas

A difficulty or issue. Masculine even though it ends in -a.

› No hay ningún problema.
There's no problem at all.

› Tengo un problema con el ordenador.
I've got a problem with my computer.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡No hay problema!** *No problem!* · **tener un problema** *to have a problem* · **un problema grande / serio** *a big / serious problem*

NOTE Same family (Greek words in -ma, all masculine): el tema, el sistema, el programa, el idioma, el clima, el drama.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*la problema / *una problema buena~~ → ✓ el problema / un problema serio.

el tema *topic / subject / theme*

NOUN MASCULINE A1

PLURAL los temas

The topic of a conversation, lesson, book or song. Masculine despite -a.

› ¿Cuál es el tema de la clase de hoy?
What's the topic of today's class?

› Es un tema muy interesante.
It's a really interesting subject.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cambiar de tema** *to change the subject* · **el tema principal** *the main topic*

NOTE In colloquial Spanish, el tema also means 'the issue / the thing': El tema es que no tengo tiempo (The thing is, I don't have time).

el idioma *language*

NOUN MASCULINE A1

PLURAL los idiomas

A language (Spanish, English, Japanese…). Masculine despite -a.

› ¿Cuántos idiomas hablas?
How many languages do you speak?

› Estudio idiomas en una escuela online.
I study languages at an online school.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aprender un idioma** *to learn a language* · **un idioma extranjero** *a foreign language* · **intercambio de idiomas** *language exchange*

DON'T CONFUSE el idioma = a language (French, Arabic) vs la lengua = language/tongue, used for languages too (lengua materna = mother tongue). Both are fine for 'language'; idioma is more frequent in conversation.

NOTE Languages themselves are masculine and lowercase: el español, el inglés.

el programa *programme / program (TV, software)*

NOUN MASCULINE A1

PLURAL los programas

A TV or radio programme, a computer program, or the programme of an event or course.

› Es mi programa de televisión favorito.
It's my favourite TV programme.

› Necesito instalar un programa nuevo.
I need to install a new program.

NOTE Another masculine -ma word. Also: el sistema, el clima, el esquema.

el día *day*

NOUN MASCULINE A1

PLURAL los días

Day. Masculine although it ends in -a — that's why we say buenos días, not ~~*buenas días~~.

› **Hoy es un buen día para ir a la playa.**
Today's a good day to go to the beach.

› **Trabajo ocho horas al día.**
I work eight hours a day.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Buenos días!** *Good morning!* · **todos los días** *every day* · **al día** *a day, per day* · **el día libre** *day off*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Buenas días / *la día~~ → ✓ Buenos días / el día.

el mapa *map*

NOUN MASCULINE A1

PLURAL los mapas

A map. Masculine although it ends in -a.

› **¿Tienes un mapa de la ciudad?**
Do you have a map of the city?

› **Lo miro en el mapa del móvil.**
I'll check it on the map on my phone.

NOTE Other masculine -a nouns you'll meet: el planeta, el sofá, el pijama (Spain).

la mano *hand*

NOUN FEMININE A1

PLURAL las manos

Hand. Feminine even though it ends in -o: la mano derecha, las manos frías.

› **Lávate las manos antes de comer.**
Wash your hands before eating.

› **Levanta la mano si tienes una pregunta.**
Raise your hand if you have a question.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar la mano** *to shake hands* · **de segunda mano** *second-hand* · **a mano** *by hand*

NOTE With your own body parts Spanish uses el/la, not 'my': Me duele la mano (My hand hurts).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el mano / *las manos frías~~ → ✓ la mano / las manos frías (adjective in feminine).

la foto *photo*

NOUN FEMININE A1

PLURAL las fotos

Photo. Feminine because it's short for la fotografía.

› Te mando las fotos de la boda.
I'll send you the photos from the wedding.

› ¿Nos haces una foto, por favor?
Could you take a photo of us, please?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer una foto** *to take a photo (Spain)* · **sacar una foto** *to take a photo (Spain & Latin America)* · **subir una foto** *to upload / post a photo*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el foto / *un foto bonito~~ → ✓ la foto / una foto bonita.

la moto *motorbike*

NOUN FEMININE A1

PLURAL las motos

Motorbike, scooter. Feminine because it's short for la motocicleta.

› Voy a la oficina en moto.
I go to the office by motorbike.

NOTE Same logic: la radio (radiodifusión), la foto (fotografía), la tele (televisión), la bici (bicicleta).

la radio *radio*

NOUN FEMININE A1

PLURAL las radios

Radio (the medium and, in Spain, the device). Feminine despite -o.

› Escucho la radio en el coche.
I listen to the radio in the car.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: la radio (both the device and the medium) · In parts of Latin America el radio = the radio set.

el agua *water*

NOUN FEMININE A1

PLURAL las aguas

Water. It's FEMININE, but takes el in the singular because it starts with a stressed 'a' sound (el agua sounds better than ~~*la agua~~). Adjectives stay feminine.

› El agua está muy fría.
The water is really cold.

› ¿Me pones un vaso de agua?
Could I have a glass of water?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **agua con gas / sin gas** *sparkling / still water* · **agua del grifo** *tap water*

NOTE Same rule: el aula (classroom), el hambre (hunger: tengo mucha hambre), el área. But: la arena, la amiga (stress is not on the first a).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el agua frío / *la agua~~ → ✓ el agua fría. Plural: las aguas.

la gente *people*

NOUN FEMININE A1

People in general. It's a singular, feminine noun in Spanish, so the verb is singular too.

› La gente aquí es muy simpática.
People here are really friendly.

› Hay mucha gente en la playa.
There are lots of people on the beach.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mucha gente** *a lot of people* · **poca gente** *not many people*

DON'T CONFUSE la gente = people in general vs las personas = people you can count: tres personas (three people), not ~~*tres gentes~~.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La gente son simpáticos~~ → ✓ La gente es simpática. ✗ ~~*muchas gentes~~ → ✓ mucha gente.

las vacaciones *holiday(s) / vacation*

NOUN FEMININE A1

Holidays (time off work or school). Always plural in this meaning.

› ¿Dónde vas de vacaciones este año?
Where are you going on holiday this year?

› Estoy de vacaciones hasta el lunes.
I'm on holiday until Monday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ir de vacaciones** *to go on holiday* · **estar de vacaciones** *to be on holiday* · **¡Felices vacaciones!** *Have a great holiday!*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy en vacación / *Voy en vacaciones~~ → ✓ Estoy de vacaciones / Voy de vacaciones.

el / la turista *tourist*

NOUN MASC. & FEM. A1

PLURAL los / las turistas

Tourist. Nouns ending in -ista are the same for men and women: only the article changes.

› En agosto hay muchos turistas en el centro.
In August there are lots of tourists in the centre.

› Marta es una turista muy organizada.
Marta is a very organised tourist.

NOTE Same pattern: el/la artista, el/la periodista (journalist), el/la dentista, el/la taxista. Also nouns in -nte: el/la estudiante, el/la cantante.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el turisto~~ → ✓ el turista (a man) / la turista (a woman).

People

Many people-nouns change -o to -a for women (el amigo / la amiga); others only change the article (el/la estudiante).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la persona	*person*	Always feminine, even for a man: Tom es una persona muy amable. Somos cuatro personas. *There are four of us.*
el hombre	*man*	Es un hombre muy alto. *He's a very tall man.*
la mujer	*woman / wife*	Also means 'wife': mi mujer. Es la mujer de Diego. *She's Diego's wife.*
el chico / la chica	*boy, young man / girl, young woman*	Used for people up to about 30–40 in Spain: los chicos de la oficina. Hay un chico nuevo en clase. *There's a new guy in class.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el niño / la niña	*child, boy / girl*	los niños = children (also boys and girls together). **Los niños están en el parque.** *The kids are at the park.*
el bebé	*baby*	el bebé for boys and girls in Spain; la bebé is also heard in Latin America.
el amigo / la amiga	*friend*	**Es una amiga del trabajo.** *She's a friend from work.*
el compañero / la compañera	*colleague / classmate / mate*	compañero de trabajo (colleague), de clase (classmate), de piso (flatmate). **Mi compañera de piso es italiana.** *My flatmate is Italian.*
el vecino / la vecina	*neighbour*	**Mis vecinos son muy ruidosos.** *My neighbours are really noisy.*
el profesor / la profesora	*teacher*	Also university lecturer. Informal: el/la profe. **Mi profesora es de Sevilla.** *My teacher is from Seville.*
el / la estudiante	*student*	Same form for both: only the article changes.
el alumno / la alumna	*student, pupil*	Used for someone's students: Tengo veinte alumnos.
el jefe / la jefa	*boss*	**Mi jefa es muy simpática.** *My boss is really nice.*
el señor / la señora	*man, gentleman / woman, lady · Mr / Mrs*	With a surname, use the article when you talk ABOUT someone: el señor García. Not when talking TO them: Buenos días, señor García.
el cliente / la clienta	*customer / client*	la cliente is also used. **Hay muchos clientes hoy.** *There are lots of customers today.*
el camarero / la camarera	*waiter / waitress*	**LatAm:** Spain: camarero · Latin America: mesero (Mexico), mozo (Argentina)
el médico / la médica	*doctor*	Also: el/la doctor/a. Voy al médico = I'm going to the doctor's.
el dependiente / la dependienta	*shop assistant*	**La dependienta es muy amable.** *The shop assistant is very nice.*
el / la policía	*police officer*	la policía also = the police (the institution).
el / la joven	*young person*	plural: los jóvenes (accent appears!). **Es un bar para jóvenes.** *It's a bar for young people.*

Places

Places in your town and beyond. Remember: ir a + place (voy al banco), estar en + place (estoy en el banco).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la ciudad	*city, town*	-dad → feminine. **Vivo en una ciudad pequeña.** *I live in a small town.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el pueblo	*village, small town*	Also 'people' as a nation, but at A1 mostly 'village'. Mi pueblo = my home village. **Los veranos voy al pueblo de mis abuelos.** *In summer I go to my grandparents' village.*
el país	*country*	plural: los países. For 'countryside' say el campo. **¿De qué país eres?** *What country are you from?*
el barrio	*neighbourhood, area*	**Mi barrio es muy tranquilo.** *My neighbourhood is very quiet.*
la calle	*street*	Feminine despite -e. En la calle = on the street / outside. **Vivo en la calle Mayor.** *I live on Calle Mayor.*
la plaza	*square*	**Quedamos en la plaza a las siete.** *Let's meet in the square at seven.*
el centro	*centre / downtown*	el centro de la ciudad; voy al centro = I'm going into town.
la tienda	*shop, store*	**Hay una tienda de ropa al lado.** *There's a clothes shop next door.*
el supermercado	*supermarket*	Informal in Spain: el súper.
el mercado	*market*	**Compro la fruta en el mercado.** *I buy fruit at the market.*
la panadería	*bakery*	-ería = shop: frutería, carnicería, pescadería, librería (bookshop!).
la farmacia	*chemist's, pharmacy*	**¿Hay una farmacia por aquí?** *Is there a pharmacy around here?*
el banco	*bank / bench*	Two meanings: the bank and a bench in the park.
el bar	*bar, café-bar*	In Spain a bar serves coffee, breakfast and tapas, not only alcohol. **Desayuno en el bar de la esquina.** *I have breakfast at the café on the corner.*
la cafetería	*café, coffee shop*	Not a self-service canteen: it's a café.
el restaurante	*restaurant*	
el hotel	*hotel*	The h is silent: [o-TEL].
el hospital	*hospital*	Silent h. Estar en el hospital = to be in hospital.
la escuela	*school*	Also for language schools: escuela de idiomas. For a primary/secondary school, Spain often says el colegio.
la universidad	*university*	-dad → feminine. Informal Spain: la uni. **Estudio en la universidad.** *I study at university.*
la academia	*private school, academy (languages, music…)*	**Doy clases en una academia de inglés.** *I teach at an English school.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la oficina	*office*	**Hoy no voy a la oficina, trabajo desde casa.** *I'm not going into the office today, I'm working from home.*
el parque	*park*	Masculine despite -e.
el museo	*museum*	**Los domingos el museo es gratis.** *The museum is free on Sundays.*
el cine	*cinema / movies*	ir al cine = to go to the cinema.
el teatro	*theatre*	
la biblioteca	*library*	False friend alert: a bookshop is la librería. **Estudio en la biblioteca.** *I study at the library.*
el gimnasio	*gym*	Informal: el gym. ir al gimnasio = to go to the gym. **Voy al gimnasio después del trabajo.** *I go to the gym after work.*
la estación	*station*	-ción → feminine. la estación de tren / de autobuses.
el aeropuerto	*airport*	**Te recojo en el aeropuerto.** *I'll pick you up at the airport.*
la parada	*stop (bus, tram)*	**La parada está enfrente del banco.** *The stop is opposite the bank.*
la playa	*beach*	ir a la playa (go to the beach), estar en la playa (be at the beach).
la montaña	*mountain / the mountains*	**Prefiero la montaña a la playa.** *I prefer the mountains to the beach.*
la iglesia	*church*	
el lugar	*place*	Masculine despite the consonant ending. Also: el sitio (very common in Spain). **Es un lugar precioso.** *It's a beautiful place.*

Things & objects

Objects you carry, use or look for every day.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cosa	*thing*	Super-frequent: una cosa = something. ¿Te puedo preguntar una cosa? **Tengo muchas cosas que hacer.** *I've got lots of things to do.*
el móvil	*mobile phone, cell phone*	**LatAm:** Spain: el móvil · Latin America: el celular **Me he dejado el móvil en casa.** *I've left my phone at home.*
el teléfono	*telephone*	Accent on the é.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ordenador	*computer*	**LatAm:** Spain: el ordenador · Latin America: la computadora / el computador
el portátil	*laptop*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la laptop, la notebook
el libro	*book*	¿Qué libro estás leyendo? *What book are you reading?*
el cuaderno	*notebook, exercise book*	
el bolígrafo	*pen (ballpoint)*	Informal Spain: el boli. **LatAm:** Mexico: la pluma · Argentina: la birome, la lapicera
el lápiz	*pencil*	plural: los lápices (z → c).
el papel	*paper / role*	una hoja de papel = a sheet of paper.
la llave	*key*	Feminine despite -e. ¿Dónde están las llaves del coche? *Where are the car keys?*
el dinero	*money*	Singular in Spanish: El dinero no es todo. No tengo mucho dinero este mes. *I haven't got much money this month.*
la tarjeta	*card*	tarjeta de crédito, tarjeta de embarque (boarding pass). ¿Aceptan tarjeta? *Do you take card?*
el billete	*ticket (transport) / banknote*	Two meanings: un billete de tren, un billete de 20 euros. **LatAm:** Latin America: el boleto (ticket)
la entrada	*ticket (show, museum) / entrance*	For concerts, cinema, matches: entrada, not billete. Ya tengo las entradas para el concierto. *I've already got the tickets for the concert.*
el regalo	*present, gift*	Es un regalo para ti. *It's a present for you.*
la bolsa	*bag (plastic, shopping)*	Handbag = el bolso (Spain).
la mochila	*backpack, rucksack*	
la maleta	*suitcase*	hacer la maleta = to pack.
el paraguas	*umbrella*	Same form in singular and plural: el paraguas / los paraguas.
las gafas	*glasses*	Plural in Spanish, like English. Llevo gafas = I wear glasses. **LatAm:** Latin America: los lentes, los anteojos
el reloj	*watch / clock*	The final j is very soft or silent. plural: los relojes.
la cámara	*camera*	Accent on the first á.
la carta	*letter / menu (restaurant)*	la carta = the menu in a restaurant; el menú = set menu. ¿Nos trae la carta, por favor? *Could you bring us the menu, please?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el periódico	*newspaper*	Accent on the -ó-.
el mensaje	*message, text*	Masculine despite -e. mandar un mensaje = to send a text. **Te dejo un mensaje.** *I'll leave you a message.*
el correo (electrónico)	*email / post*	el correo = email or mail. Also: el email, el mail. **¿Me das tu correo?** *Can you give me your email address?*
la aplicación / la app	*app*	-ción → feminine, so la app too.
el coche	*car*	Masculine despite -e. **LatAm:** Spain: el coche · Latin America: el carro, el auto
el autobús	*bus*	plural: los autobuses (no accent). Informal Spain: el bus. **LatAm:** Mexico: el camión · Argentina: el colectivo
el tren	*train*	ir en tren = to go by train.
el metro	*underground, subway, metro*	**LatAm:** Buenos Aires: el subte
la bicicleta / la bici	*bicycle, bike*	**Voy a clase en bici.** *I cycle to class.*
el avión	*plane*	plural: los aviones (accent disappears).
el taxi	*taxi*	coger/tomar un taxi.

Free time & culture

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la música	*music*	**¿Qué música te gusta?** *What kind of music do you like?*
la canción	*song*	plural: las canciones (no accent). **Me encanta esta canción.** *I love this song.*
la película	*film, movie*	Informal Spain: la peli. **¿Vemos una peli esta noche?** *Shall we watch a film tonight?*
la serie	*TV series, show*	**Estoy viendo una serie española.** *I'm watching a Spanish series.*
el deporte	*sport*	hacer deporte = to do exercise. Masculine despite -e. **Hago deporte tres veces a la semana.** *I exercise three times a week.*
el fútbol	*football, soccer*	Accent on the ú.
el partido	*match, game*	Also 'political party'. **Esta noche hay partido.** *There's a match on tonight.*
el juego	*game*	los videojuegos = video games. For a football game say el partido.
el concierto	*concert, gig*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la fiesta	*party / festival / public holiday*	**El sábado hay una fiesta en casa de Sofía.** *There's a party at Sofía's on Saturday.*
el viaje	*trip, journey*	Masculine despite -e. ¡Buen viaje! = Have a good trip! **¿Qué tal el viaje?** *How was the trip?*
la excursión	*day trip, excursion*	plural: las excursiones.
el cumpleaños	*birthday*	Same in singular and plural. ¡Feliz cumpleaños! **Mi cumpleaños es en marzo.** *My birthday's in March.*
la tele (televisión)	*TV, telly*	ver la tele = to watch TV.

Time, plans & study

Nouns for organising your time. Days, months and seasons are in section 10.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el tiempo	*time / weather*	Two meanings! No tengo tiempo (I have no time). Hace buen tiempo (the weather's nice). Clock time = la hora. **No tengo tiempo para cocinar.** *I don't have time to cook.*
la hora	*hour / time (on the clock)*	¿Qué hora es? = What time is it? Not ~~*¿Qué tiempo es~~? **La clase dura una hora.** *The class lasts an hour.*
la vez	*time (occasion)*	plural: las veces. una vez = once, dos veces = twice. **Es la primera vez que vengo a España.** *It's the first time I've come to Spain.*
el momento	*moment*	un momento = just a moment. en este momento = right now. **Un momento, por favor.** *Just a moment, please.*
el minuto	*minute*	**Llego en cinco minutos.** *I'll be there in five minutes.*
el rato	*while, short time*	Very common in Spain: un rato = a while, a little bit of time. Hasta dentro de un rato = See you in a bit. **Espera un rato.** *Wait a while.*
el plan	*plan*	¿Qué planes tienes para el finde? = What are you up to this weekend? **¿Tienes planes para esta noche?** *Have you got plans for tonight?*
la cita	*appointment / date*	cita con el médico (appointment), una cita (a romantic date). Not 'quote' at this level.
la reunión	*meeting*	plural: las reuniones. **Tengo una reunión a las diez.** *I've got a meeting at ten.*
la clase	*class, lesson / classroom*	Feminine despite -e. dar clase = to teach; tener clase = to have a class. **Tengo clase de español los jueves.** *I have Spanish class on Thursdays.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el curso	*course / school year*	Hago un curso de cocina. *I'm doing a cooking course.*
el examen	*exam, test*	plural: los exámenes (accent appears). Mañana tengo un examen. *I've got an exam tomorrow.*
los deberes	*homework*	Always plural in Spain. Latin America: la tarea. ¿Has hecho los deberes? *Have you done your homework?*

Abstract basics

Small, abstract words you use all the time to talk about ideas, language and life.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la idea	*idea*	¡Qué buena idea! *What a good idea!*
la verdad	*truth*	-dad → feminine. La verdad... = To be honest... / Actually... La verdad, no me gusta mucho. *To be honest, I don't like it much.*
la pregunta	*question*	hacer una pregunta = to ask a question. ¿Puedo hacer una pregunta? *Can I ask a question?*
la respuesta	*answer, reply*	No sé la respuesta. *I don't know the answer.*
la palabra	*word*	¿Qué significa esta palabra? *What does this word mean?*
la frase	*sentence / phrase*	Usually 'sentence': escribe tres frases.
la lengua	*language / tongue*	lengua materna = mother tongue. Also the body part.
el ejemplo	*example*	por ejemplo = for example. ¿Me das un ejemplo? *Can you give me an example?*
el error	*mistake, error*	cometer un error / equivocarse = to make a mistake. Es un error muy común. *It's a very common mistake.*
el mundo	*world*	todo el mundo = everybody (+ singular verb!): Todo el mundo habla inglés. Quiero viajar por todo el mundo. *I want to travel all over the world.*
la vida	*life*	Me gusta la vida en la ciudad. *I like city life.*
el trabajo	*work / job*	Both 'work' (uncountable) and 'a job'. ir al trabajo = to go to work. Busco trabajo. *I'm looking for a job.*
la parte	*part*	Feminine despite -e. ¿De parte de quién? = Who's calling?
el sitio	*place / space, room*	Very common in Spain: ¿Hay sitio? = Is there room? Conozco un sitio genial para cenar. *I know a great place for dinner.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la forma / la manera	*way, manner*	de esta forma / de esta manera = this way.
el número	*number*	Accent on the ú. número de teléfono.
la ayuda	*help*	Gracias por tu ayuda. *Thanks for your help.*
el favor	*favour*	por favor = please · ¿Me haces un favor? = Can you do me a favour?
la suerte	*luck*	¡Suerte! / ¡Buena suerte! = Good luck! tener suerte = to be lucky. ¡Qué suerte! *How lucky! / Lucky you!*
la información	*information*	Uncountable in normal use: Necesito información (not ~~*informaciones~~). For 'a piece of information' you can say un dato. Necesito más información. *I need more information.*
la noticia	*piece of news*	Countable: una noticia = a piece of news; las noticias = the news (TV). Tengo una buena noticia. *I've got some good news.*
la razón	*reason*	tener razón = to be right. plural: las razones. Tienes razón. *You're right.*
la diferencia	*difference*	¿Cuál es la diferencia entre ser y estar? *What's the difference between ser and estar?*
el cambio	*change / exchange*	Also small change (coins) and currency exchange.
la experiencia	*experience*	Es una experiencia increíble. *It's an amazing experience.*
el fin	*end*	el fin de semana = weekend · por fin = at last · al final = in the end.

Animals & living things

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el animal	*animal*	¿Tienes animales en casa? *Do you have any pets?*
el perro / la perra	*dog*	Saco al perro por la mañana. *I take the dog out in the morning.*
el gato / la gata	*cat*	
la planta	*plant / floor (of a building)*	Two meanings: una planta (a plant), la segunda planta (the second floor).
la flor	*flower*	Feminine despite the consonant. plural: las flores.
el árbol	*tree*	Masculine. Accent on the á.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

03 · Describe people, places and things — and make them agree

Adjectives

Spanish adjectives change to match the noun: un piso pequeño, una casa pequeña, dos pisos pequeños. Most go AFTER the noun. Each card shows you the four forms, the opposite, and whether the adjective goes with ser (what something is like) or estar (how it is right now). Learn them in pairs of opposites — it's faster.

AGREEMENT AND POSITION

Adjectives ending in -o have four forms (alto, alta, altos, altas). Adjectives ending in -e or a consonant only change for plural (grande → grandes, azul → azules, feliz → felices). Put the adjective after the noun (una ciudad bonita); a few very common ones like bueno, malo and grande can go before, and then they often shorten: un buen día, un mal momento, una gran idea.

Essential opposites

The pairs you'll use most to describe almost anything.

bueno *good / (food) tasty*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS bueno · buena · buenos · buenas · buen (before a masculine singular noun)

Good in quality, kind as a person (ser bueno), or tasty (estar bueno, for food). Before a masculine singular noun it becomes buen.

> **ser bueno** — *good (quality, kindness)*
>
> › Es un buen restaurante.
> *It's a good restaurant.*

> **estar bueno** — *tasty (food)*
>
> › ¡Esta paella está muy buena!
> *This paella is delicious!*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Buenos días!** *Good morning!* · **buena suerte** *good luck* · **hace buen tiempo** *the weather's nice* · **una buena idea** *a good idea*

OPPOSITE **malo** — bad

NOTE Careful with people: Es buena = she's a good person. Está buena (about a person) = she's hot — very colloquial!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hablas español muy bueno~~ → ✓ Hablas español muy bien. bueno describes nouns; bien describes verbs (how you do something).

malo *bad*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS malo · mala · malos · malas · mal (before a masculine singular noun)

Bad in quality, or a bad/naughty person. With estar it means ill (estar malo, Spain) or gone off (food).

ser malo — *bad (quality)*

› Es una película muy mala.
It's a really bad film.

estar malo — *ill (Spain, informal)*

› Hoy no voy a clase, estoy malo.
I'm not going to class today, I'm ill.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hace mal tiempo** *the weather's bad* · **un mal día** *a bad day* · **una mala noticia** *a piece of bad news*

OPPOSITE **bueno** — good

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me siento malo~~ → ✓ Me siento mal / Estoy mal. To say how you feel, use the adverb mal.

grande *big, large / great*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS grande · grandes · gran (before any singular noun)

After the noun it means big. Before a singular noun it becomes gran and means great or important.

noun + grande — *big*

› Vivo en una casa grande.
I live in a big house.

gran + noun — *great*

› Es una gran ciudad para vivir.
It's a great city to live in.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un gran amigo** *a great friend* · **demasiado grande** *too big*

OPPOSITE **pequeño** — small

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*una casa granda~~ → ✓ una casa grande. Adjectives in -e are the same for masculine and feminine.

pequeño *small, little / young (child)*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS pequeño · pequeña · pequeños · pequeñas

Small in size. With children and siblings it also means young or younger: mi hermano pequeño = my little/younger brother.

› **Mi piso es pequeño pero muy bonito.**
My flat is small but really nice.

› **Cuando era pequeña vivía en Irlanda.**
When I was little I lived in Ireland.

OPPOSITE **grande** — big

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America chico/a is very common for 'small': una casa chica.

nuevo *new*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS nuevo · nueva · nuevos · nuevas

New. After the noun = brand-new; before the noun = new to you, different.

noun + nuevo — *brand-new*

› **Me he comprado un móvil nuevo.**
I've bought a new phone.

nuevo + noun — *another, different*

› **Tengo un nuevo trabajo.**
I've got a new job.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Feliz Año Nuevo!** *Happy New Year!* · **¿Qué hay de nuevo?** *What's new?*

OPPOSITE **viejo** — old

viejo *old*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS viejo · vieja · viejos · viejas

Old, for things. For people it can sound rude: use mayor to be polite.

› **Tengo un coche muy viejo.**
I've got a really old car.

› **Es un viejo amigo del colegio.**
He's an old friend from school.

OPPOSITE **nuevo / joven** — new / young

DON'T CONFUSE viejo = old (things; can be rude for people) · mayor = older, elderly (polite) · antiguo = old, ancient, antique (buildings, furniture).

joven *young*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS joven · jóvenes

Young. Same form for masculine and feminine. The plural adds an accent.

› **Mi profesora es muy joven.**
My teacher is very young.

› **Es una ciudad con mucha gente joven.**
It's a city with lots of young people.

OPPOSITE **mayor** — older, elderly

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*jóvena / *jovenes~~ → ✓ joven / jóvenes.

mayor *older / elderly / main*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS mayor · mayores

Older (in comparisons and siblings), or elderly — the polite word for old people. Also 'main' in some names (la plaza mayor).

› **Mi hermana mayor vive en Berlín.**
My older sister lives in Berlin.

› **Ana es mayor que yo.**
Ana is older than me.

› **Mis vecinos son personas mayores.**
My neighbours are elderly people.

OPPOSITE **menor / pequeño** — younger

NOTE Los mayores = adults, grown-ups (from a child's point of view) or the elderly.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más viejo que yo (about a person)~~ → ✓ mayor que yo. Sounds kinder and more natural.

bonito *pretty, nice, lovely*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS bonito · bonita · bonitos · bonitas

Nice to look at: places, things, clothes, days. With people it's 'pretty', but for people Spain prefers guapo.

› **¡Qué ciudad tan bonita!**
What a lovely city!

› **Tienes una casa muy bonita.**
You have a really nice house.

OPPOSITE **feo** — ugly

DON'T CONFUSE bonito = nice-looking (things, places) vs guapo = good-looking (people) vs precioso = beautiful, gorgeous (stronger).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: lindo/a is the everyday word for both things and people.

feo *ugly / not nice*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS feo · fea · feos · feas

Ugly. Also used for unpleasant situations: Es un poco feo no saludar (It's a bit rude not to say hello).

› El edificio es bastante feo.
The building is quite ugly.

OPPOSITE **bonito / guapo** — pretty / good-looking

NOTE About people it sounds strong. People soften it: no es muy guapo (he's not very good-looking).

guapo *good-looking, attractive*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS guapo · guapa · guapos · guapas

Good-looking — for men AND women (handsome, pretty, beautiful). In Spain it's also an affectionate way to address people (¡Hola, guapa!).

> **ser guapo** — *good-looking in general*
>
> › Su novio es muy guapo.
> *Her boyfriend is really good-looking.*

> **estar guapo** — *looking good today*
>
> › ¡Qué guapa estás hoy!
> *You look great today!*

OPPOSITE **feo** — ugly

NOTE In Spain, very colloquial: ¡Qué guapo! = How cool! (about things): Tu chaqueta es muy guapa.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: guapo · Latin America: lindo/a, bonito/a; guapo can mean 'brave' or 'tough' in some countries.

fácil *easy*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS fácil · fáciles

PATTERN **es fácil + infinitive · fácil de + infinitive**

Easy. Same form for masculine and feminine. Keep the accent on the first a.

› El examen es bastante fácil.
The exam is quite easy.

› Es fácil aprender a decir hola.
It's easy to learn to say hello.

› Es una receta fácil de hacer.
It's an easy recipe to make.

OPPOSITE **difícil** — difficult

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es fácil para aprender~~ → ✓ Es fácil aprender / Es fácil de aprender.

difícil *difficult, hard*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS difícil · difíciles

PATTERN **es difícil + infinitive · difícil de + infinitive**

Difficult. Same pattern as fácil.

› Para mí, la pronunciación es difícil.
For me, pronunciation is difficult.

› Es difícil encontrar piso en el centro.
It's hard to find a flat in the centre.

OPPOSITE **fácil** — easy

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~El español es duro~~ → ✓ El español es difícil. duro = hard (to the touch, or a tough life).

caro *expensive*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS caro · cara · caros · caras

Expensive. Use ser for things that are expensive in general, estar when the price is high right now.

› Londres es una ciudad muy cara.
London is a very expensive city.

› Este mes la fruta está carísima.
Fruit is really expensive this month.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **demasiado caro** *too expensive* · **carísimo** *really expensive*

OPPOSITE **barato** — cheap

barato *cheap, inexpensive*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS barato · barata · baratos · baratas

Cheap. Unlike English 'cheap', it's usually positive (good price), not 'low quality'.

› Hay un restaurante bueno y barato al lado.
There's a good, cheap restaurant next door.

› ¿Hay algo más barato?
Is there anything cheaper?

OPPOSITE **caro** — expensive

alto *tall / high / loud*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS alto · alta · altos · altas

Tall (people, buildings), high (prices, mountains). As an adverb, hablar alto = to speak loudly.

› **Mi hermano es muy alto.**
My brother is very tall.

› **Los precios son muy altos aquí.**
Prices are very high here.

› **No hables tan alto, por favor.**
Don't talk so loudly, please.

OPPOSITE **bajo** — short / low

bajo *short (height) / low / quiet*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS bajo · baja · bajos · bajas

Short (people), low (prices, a wall), and as an adverb hablar bajo = to speak quietly.

› **Soy bastante baja.**
I'm quite short.

› **Vivo en un bajo.**
I live in a ground-floor flat.

OPPOSITE **alto** — tall / high

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*una película baja~~ → ✓ una película corta. For length and time, 'short' is corto, not bajo.

rápido *fast, quick*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS rápido · rápida · rápidos · rápidas

Fast or quick. Also used as an adverb (Habla muy rápido = he talks very fast). Accent on the first a.

› **El AVE es un tren muy rápido.**
The AVE is a very fast train.

› **¿Podemos comer algo rápido?**
Can we grab something quick to eat?

OPPOSITE **lento** — slow

NOTE To ask someone to slow down, use despacio: ¿Puedes hablar más despacio?

lento *slow*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS lento · lenta · lentos · lentas

Slow. For 'speak slowly', prefer despacio.

› **El wifi está muy lento hoy.**
The wifi is really slow today.

› **Es una canción lenta.**
It's a slow song.

OPPOSITE **rápido** — fast

limpio *clean*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS limpio · limpia · limpios · limpias

Clean. Usually with estar (it's clean now), with ser for a person or place that is always clean.

› **La cocina está limpia.**
The kitchen is clean.

› **Es una ciudad muy limpia.**
It's a very clean city.

OPPOSITE **sucio** — dirty

sucio *dirty*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS sucio · sucia · sucios · sucias

Dirty.

› **Tus zapatos están sucios.**
Your shoes are dirty.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la ropa sucia** *dirty laundry*

OPPOSITE **limpio** — clean

People & states

Adjectives to describe how people are, and how they are right now. Ser or estar matters here.

simpático *nice, friendly, likeable*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS simpático · simpática · simpáticos · simpáticas

Nice and friendly to be around. It's a personality adjective, so it goes with ser. Not 'sympathetic'!

› **Mis compañeros son muy simpáticos.**
My colleagues are really nice.

› **La camarera es simpatiquísima.**
The waitress is super friendly.

OPPOSITE **antipático** — unfriendly, unpleasant

DON'T CONFUSE simpático = friendly, pleasant · amable = kind, polite (helps you) · majo/a = nice, lovely (Spain, informal).

NOTE English 'sympathetic' (understanding) = comprensivo in Spanish.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy simpático~~ → ✓ Soy simpático. Personality = ser.

contento *happy, pleased*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS contento · contenta · contentos · contentas

PATTERN **estar contento (con algo/alguien) · estar contento de + infinitive**

Happy or pleased about something right now. Always with estar.

› **Estoy muy contenta con mi nuevo trabajo.**
I'm really happy with my new job.

› **Estamos contentos de estar aquí.**
We're happy to be here.

OPPOSITE **triste** — sad

DON'T CONFUSE estar contento = happy/pleased (about something) vs ser feliz = happy (in life, deeply). More feelings in section 11.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy contento~~ → ✓ Estoy contento.

cansado *tired*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS cansado · cansada · cansados · cansadas

PATTERN **estar cansado (de algo) · estar cansado de + infinitive (tired of)**

Tired. With estar. Estar cansado de = to be tired of / fed up with.

› Estoy muy cansado, me voy a dormir.
I'm really tired, I'm going to bed.

› Estoy cansada de trabajar los sábados.
I'm tired of working on Saturdays.

NOTE Ser cansado (rare) = to be tiring: Este trabajo es muy cansado.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy cansado / *Tengo cansado~~ → ✓ Estoy cansado.

listo *clever (ser) / ready (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS listo · lista · listos · listas

A classic ser/estar pair. Ser listo = to be clever, smart. Estar listo = to be ready.

ser listo — *clever, smart*

› Tu hija es muy lista.
Your daughter is very clever.

estar listo — *ready*

› ¿Estás lista? Nos vamos.
Are you ready? We're leaving.

NOTE ¡Listo! on its own = Done! / All set!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*¿Eres listo para salir~~? → ✓ ¿Estás listo para salir?

libre *free (not busy, available)*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS libre · libres

Free in the sense of available or not occupied: a seat, a table, a person's time. Not free of charge (that's gratis).

› ¿Está libre esta silla?
Is this seat free?

› Mañana tengo la tarde libre.
Tomorrow I have the afternoon off.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el tiempo libre** *free time* · **el día libre** *day off*

OPPOSITE **ocupado** — busy, taken

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La entrada es libre (meaning no cost~~) → usually ✓ La entrada es gratis / gratuita. (Entrada libre exists on signs, but gratis is the everyday word.)

ocupado *busy / taken, occupied*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS ocupado · ocupada · ocupados · ocupadas

Busy (a person), engaged (a phone line, a toilet), taken (a seat). Always estar.

› Ahora estoy ocupada, te llamo luego.
I'm busy right now, I'll call you later.

› El baño está ocupado.
The bathroom's occupied.

OPPOSITE **libre** — free

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy muy ocupado~~ → ✓ Estoy muy ocupado.

Small but essential

Short, super-frequent words for comparing, choosing and identifying.

mejor / peor *better, best / worse, worst*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS mejor · mejores / peor · peores

PATTERN **mejor que · el/la mejor (de) · peor que · el/la peor**

The irregular comparative of bueno/bien (mejor) and malo/mal (peor). With el/la they mean best/worst.

› Este café es mejor que el otro.
This coffee is better than the other one.

› Es el mejor restaurante del barrio.
It's the best restaurant in the neighbourhood.

› Hoy estoy peor que ayer.
Today I feel worse than yesterday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mi mejor amigo/a** *my best friend* · **mejor + infinitive** *it's better to... / you'd better...*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más bueno que / *más malo que~~ → ✓ mejor que / peor que. And ✗ ~~*el mejor restaurante en la ciudad~~ → ✓ el mejor restaurante de la ciudad ('in' after a superlative = de).

otro *another / other*

DETERMINER A1

FORMS otro · otra · otros · otras

Another, other, a different one. It never takes un/una before it.

› ¿Me pones otro café, por favor?
Can I have another coffee, please?

› Prefiero el otro restaurante.
I prefer the other restaurant.

› Otro día, ¿vale?
Some other day, OK?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **otra vez** *again* · **el otro día** *the other day*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*un otro café / *una otra vez~~ → ✓ otro café / otra vez. Never 'un otro'.

mismo *same*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS mismo · misma · mismos · mismas · lo mismo (the same thing)

PATTERN **el mismo / la misma + noun (que) · lo mismo**

The same. Lo mismo = the same thing. After a pronoun it adds emphasis: yo mismo = myself.

› Vivimos en la misma calle.
We live on the same street.

› Tengo el mismo móvil que tú.
I've got the same phone as you.

› Para mí, lo mismo.
Same for me. (when ordering)

NOTE ahora mismo = right now · aquí mismo = right here.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el mismo como tú~~ → ✓ el mismo que tú. 'as' = que here.

favorito *favourite*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS favorito · favorita · favoritos · favoritas

Favourite. Goes after the noun.

› ¿Cuál es tu película favorita?
What's your favourite film?

› El verano es mi estación favorita.
Summer is my favourite season.

DON'T CONFUSE preferido/a = favourite, same meaning.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*mi favorita película~~ → ✓ mi película favorita.

importante *important*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS importante · importantes

PATTERN **es importante + infinitive · lo importante es...**

Important. Same form for masculine and feminine.

› Es importante practicar todos los días.
It's important to practise every day.

› Lo importante es comunicar.
The important thing is to communicate.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es importante de practicar~~ / ~~*Es importante para practicar~~ → ✓ Es importante practicar.

Colours

Colours go after the noun and agree like other adjectives — except a few that never change.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
rojo/a	*red*	**Tengo un coche rojo.** *I've got a red car.*
azul	*blue*	Same for m/f. plural: azules. **Mis ojos son azules.** *My eyes are blue.*
verde	*green*	Same for m/f. Also 'unripe'. **Me encanta tu chaqueta verde.** *I love your green jacket.*
amarillo/a	*yellow*	
blanco/a	*white*	vino blanco = white wine. **Prefiero el vino blanco.** *I prefer white wine.*
negro/a	*black*	café solo (Spain) = black coffee, not ~~*café negro~~.
gris	*grey*	plural: grises. **Hoy el cielo está gris.** *The sky is grey today.*
marrón	*brown*	plural: marrones (no accent). For hair and eyes Spanish uses castaño or marrón. **LatAm:** Latin America: café is very common for 'brown'.
naranja	*orange*	Usually invariable: unas camisetas naranja (naranjas also accepted).
rosa	*pink*	Usually invariable: unos zapatos rosa (rosas also heard). **LatAm:** Latin America: rosado/a
morado/a	*purple*	Also: lila (lilac), violeta.
claro/a	*light (colour)*	azul claro = light blue. Colour + claro/oscuro doesn't agree: unos pantalones azul claro.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
oscuro/a	*dark*	verde oscuro = dark green. Also: Es una habitación muy oscura. **La calle está muy oscura por la noche.** *The street is very dark at night.*
de colores	*colourful, multicoloured*	**Lleva una camiseta de colores.** *She's wearing a colourful T-shirt.*

Describing people

Appearance and personality usually go with ser: Es alto. Es tímida.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
rubio/a	*blond(e), fair-haired*	**Su novia es rubia.** *His girlfriend is blonde.*
moreno/a	*dark-haired / tanned*	Two meanings: dark hair, or estar moreno = to have a tan. **Estás muy moreno, ¿has ido a la playa?** *You're really tanned, have you been to the beach?*
pelirrojo/a	*red-haired, ginger*	
delgado/a	*slim, thin*	Positive or neutral. flaco/a = skinny (informal).
gordo/a	*fat*	Direct and can be rude. Softer: un poco gordito/a, or avoid it.
inteligente	*intelligent, clever*	Same for m/f.
amable	*kind, nice, polite*	Muy amable = very kind of you (thanking). **Gracias, es usted muy amable.** *Thank you, that's very kind of you.*
majo/a INFORMAL	*nice, lovely (person)*	Very common in Spain, not used in Latin America. **Tu hermano es muy majo.** *Your brother's really nice.*
trabajador/a	*hard-working*	**Lucía es muy trabajadora.** *Lucía is very hard-working.*
serio/a	*serious*	**Es un chico muy serio.** *He's a very serious guy.*
tímido/a	*shy*	**Soy un poco tímida al principio.** *I'm a bit shy at first.*
gracioso/a	*funny*	Makes people laugh. Not 'gracious'. **Tu amigo es muy gracioso.** *Your friend is really funny.*
hablador/a	*talkative, chatty*	
callado/a	*quiet (person)*	Ser callado = quiet by nature; estar callado = to be silent right now.
raro/a	*strange, weird / rare*	**Es una persona un poco rara.** *He's a bit of a strange person.*
famoso/a	*famous*	**Es un actor muy famoso en España.** *He's a very famous actor in Spain.*

Describing things & places

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
moderno/a	*modern*	Es un edificio muy moderno. *It's a very modern building.*
antiguo/a	*old, ancient, antique*	For old buildings, towns and objects. Before a noun = former: mi antiguo trabajo. Me encanta la parte antigua de la ciudad. *I love the old part of the city.*
precioso/a	*beautiful, gorgeous*	Stronger than bonito. Not 'precious'. ¡Qué vistas tan preciosas! *What gorgeous views!*
cómodo/a	*comfortable*	Este sofá es muy cómodo. *This sofa is really comfortable.*
incómodo/a	*uncomfortable*	
tranquilo/a	*quiet, peaceful (place)*	For people's feelings see section 11 (estar tranquilo = to be calm). Busco un hotel tranquilo. *I'm looking for a quiet hotel.*
ruidoso/a	*noisy*	Mi calle es muy ruidosa. *My street is very noisy.*
céntrico/a	*central, in the centre*	El piso es pequeño pero muy céntrico. *The flat is small but very central.*
típico/a	*typical, traditional*	comida típica = local, traditional food. ¿Cuál es el plato típico de aquí? *What's the local dish here?*
turístico/a	*touristy, tourist*	
lleno/a	*full*	With estar. Estoy lleno = I'm full (after eating). El metro está lleno. *The metro is packed.*
vacío/a	*empty*	Accent on the í.
abierto/a	*open*	estar abierto. For personality: ser abierto = open-minded, outgoing.
cerrado/a	*closed, shut*	Los domingos la tienda está cerrada. *The shop is closed on Sundays.*
corto/a	*short (length, time)*	For people's height use bajo. 'Long' is largo (watch out: not 'large'). Es un viaje corto. *It's a short trip.*
pesado/a	*heavy / boring, annoying (person)*	¡Qué pesado eres! = You're so annoying! (informal) La maleta es muy pesada. *The suitcase is really heavy.*
ligero/a	*light (weight, food)*	Quiero algo ligero para cenar. *I want something light for dinner.*
caliente	*hot (temperature of things)*	For things and food. For weather say hace calor; for people tengo calor. Cuidado, el plato está caliente. *Careful, the plate is hot.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
frío/a	*cold (things)*	La sopa está fría. For weather: hace frío; for people: tengo frío.
roto/a	*broken*	Participle of romper. With estar. **El ascensor está roto.** *The lift is broken.*

Useful general adjectives

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
diferente	*different*	diferente de / a. Also: distinto/a. **Es muy diferente de Londres.** *It's very different from London.*
igual	*the same, equal / alike*	Es igual = It doesn't matter / It's all the same. **Tu bolso es igual que el mío.** *Your bag is the same as mine.*
posible	*possible*	**¿Es posible pagar con tarjeta?** *Is it possible to pay by card?*
imposible	*impossible*	
necesario/a	*necessary*	No es necesario = There's no need.
gratis	*free (of charge)*	Invariable: los museos son gratis. More formal: gratuito/a. **La entrada es gratis los domingos.** *Entry is free on Sundays.*
primero/a	*first*	primer before a masculine singular noun: el primer día. **Es mi primer viaje a España.** *It's my first trip to Spain.*
último/a	*last / latest*	Accent on the ú. el último tren = the last train. **¿A qué hora sale el último metro?** *What time is the last metro?*
siguiente	*next, following*	el día siguiente = the next day. For 'next week' see section 10.
solo/a	*alone, on your own / lonely*	Adjective: vivo solo, viaja sola. The adverb solo (= only) is in section 04. **Me gusta viajar sola.** *I like travelling on my own.*

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

04 · Small words that change everything: muy, mucho, bien, ya, aquí

Adverbs

Adverbs tell you how, how much, where and to what degree. They're short and frequent, and some of them are classic traps for English speakers: muy vs mucho, bien vs bueno, también vs tampoco, ya vs todavía. Adverbs don't change for gender or number — una casa muy bonita, unos pisos muy bonitos. (Adverbs of time and frequency like siempre, nunca, ahora and temprano are in section 10.)

Quantity & degree

How much, how very, too much, not enough.

muy *very*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **muy + adjective · muy + adverb**

Very. Goes before adjectives and adverbs only — never alone, never before a noun, never after a verb.

- El piso es muy bonito.
  The flat is very nice.
- Hablas muy bien español.
  You speak Spanish very well.
- Estoy muy cansada.
  I'm really tired.

DON'T CONFUSE muy + adjective/adverb (muy bueno, muy bien) vs mucho + verb or noun (como mucho, mucho trabajo).

NOTE In a short answer you can't use muy alone: —¿Es caro? —Sí, mucho. (not ~~*Sí~~, muy.)

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me gusta muy / *Trabajo muy~~ → ✓ Me gusta mucho / Trabajo mucho. ✗ ~~*Tengo muy hambre~~ → ✓ Tengo mucha hambre. ✗ ~~*muy mucho~~ → ✓ muchísimo.

mucho *a lot, much, very much / many*

ADVERB A1

FORMS adverb: mucho (invariable) · before nouns: mucho · mucha · muchos · muchas

PATTERN **verb + mucho · mucho/a + uncountable noun · muchos/as + plural noun**

After a verb it means 'a lot' and never changes. Before a noun it's a quantifier and agrees: mucha gente, muchos amigos.

verb + mucho — *a lot (invariable)*

› Laura viaja mucho por trabajo.
Laura travels a lot for work.

mucho/a/os/as + noun — *a lot of, many (agrees)*

› Hay muchas tiendas en mi calle.
There are lots of shops on my street.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me gusta mucho** *I really like it* · **muchas gracias** *thank you very much* · **mucho gusto** *nice to meet you* · **muchísimo** *very much indeed, loads*

DON'T CONFUSE muy goes with adjectives/adverbs; mucho goes with verbs and nouns.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me gusta muy mucho~~ → ✓ Me gusta muchísimo. ✗ ~~*Mucho gente~~ → ✓ Mucha gente (agrees with gente, feminine).

poco / un poco *not much, little / a bit, a little*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **verb + poco · un poco + adjective/adverb · un poco de + noun**

Careful, these are different! Poco is negative (not much, hardly). Un poco is neutral or positive (a bit, a little).

poco — *not much (negative)*

› Duermo poco.
I don't sleep much.

un poco — *a bit*

› Hablo un poco de español.
I speak a little Spanish.

un poco + adjective — *a bit (often negative adjectives)*

› Estoy un poco cansado.
I'm a bit tired.

NOTE Before a noun poco agrees: poca gente, pocos días. Un poco de doesn't: un poco de agua, un poco de tiempo.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hablo poco español (when you mean '~~;some') → ✓ Hablo un poco de español. 'Poco' sounds like 'hardly any'.

demasiado *too / too much*

ADVERB A1

FORMS adverb: demasiado · before nouns: demasiado · demasiada · demasiados · demasiadas

PATTERN **demasiado + adjective (too) · verb + demasiado (too much) · demasiado/a + noun**

Too or too much — always negative in Spanish (more than you want). Never use it to mean 'very' in a positive way.

› Este hotel es demasiado caro.
This hotel is too expensive.

› Trabajas demasiado.
You work too much.

› Hay demasiada gente aquí.
There are too many people here.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In some Latin American countries demasiado can mean 'very' in a positive way (Está demasiado rico). In Spain it's always 'too'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es demasiado bonito (meaning '~~really lovely') → ✓ Es muy bonito / precioso. Demasiado = more than is good.

bastante *quite, fairly / enough*

ADVERB A1

FORMS bastante · bastantes (before plural nouns)

PATTERN **bastante + adjective/adverb · verb + bastante · bastante(s) + noun**

Quite or fairly (moderately high, often 'more than you'd think'). Also 'enough'.

› Mi barrio es bastante tranquilo.
My neighbourhood is quite quiet.

› Habla bastante bien inglés.
She speaks English pretty well.

› Tengo bastantes amigos aquí.
I've got quite a lot of friends here.

DON'T CONFUSE bastante = quite (a lot) · suficiente = enough (exactly what's needed). Ya es bastante / ¡Basta! = That's enough!

NOTE In Spanish bastante often sounds stronger than British 'quite': Es bastante bueno = It's pretty good.

más *more / most / plus*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **más + adjective + que (comparison) · el/la más + adjective · verb + más · más + noun**

More (and the -er ending in English: más alto = taller). With el/la it makes superlatives: el más barato = the cheapest. Watch the accent: más (more) vs mas (but, literary).

› Madrid es más grande que Sevilla.
Madrid is bigger than Seville.

› ¿Quieres más café?
Do you want more coffee?

› Es el piso más bonito del edificio.
It's the nicest flat in the building.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **más o menos** *more or less, so-so* · **nada más** *nothing else, that's all* · **¿Algo más?** *Anything else?* · **más despacio** *more slowly*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más grande de Sevilla~~ → ✓ más grande que Sevilla (comparisons use que). ✗ ~~*más bueno~~ → ✓ mejor.

menos *less / fewer / least / minus*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **menos + adjective + que · verb + menos · menos + noun · menos cuarto (time)**

Less or fewer (it never changes, even before plural nouns). Also used in telling the time: las cinco menos cuarto = quarter to five.

› Ahora trabajo menos y estoy más contento.
Now I work less and I'm happier.

› Este piso es menos caro que el otro.
This flat is less expensive than the other one.

› Hay menos gente en invierno.
There are fewer people in winter.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por lo menos / al menos** *at least* · **¡Menos mal!** *Thank goodness! / Phew!*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*menas personas~~ → ✓ menos personas. Menos never changes.

tan *so / as (... as)*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **tan + adjective/adverb · tan + adjective + como (as ... as) · ¡Qué + noun + tan + adjective!**

So (intensifier) and as ... as (comparisons of equality). Only before adjectives and adverbs; with nouns and verbs it becomes tanto.

› ¡Estoy tan cansado!
I'm so tired!

› Mi ciudad no es tan grande como Londres.
My city isn't as big as London.

› ¡Qué casa tan bonita!
What a lovely house!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*tan grande que Londres~~ → ✓ tan grande como Londres. ✗ ~~*Trabajo tan~~ → ✓ Trabajo tanto.

casi *almost, nearly*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **casi + verb / adjective / number / nunca / nada / todo**

Almost, nearly. Goes before what it modifies.

› Son casi las diez.
It's nearly ten o'clock.

› Casi no tengo tiempo.
I hardly have any time.

› Ya casi estamos.
We're almost there.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **casi nunca** *hardly ever* · **casi nada** *hardly anything* · **casi todo / todos** *almost everything / everybody*

NOTE Casi no + verb is the easy way to say 'hardly': Casi no duermo = I hardly sleep.

solo *only, just*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **solo + verb / noun / number**

Only, just. Same as solamente. Don't confuse it with the adjective solo/sola (alone).

› Solo tengo diez euros.
I've only got ten euros.

› Solo quiero un café, gracias.
I just want a coffee, thanks.

DON'T CONFUSE solo (adverb) = only: Solo bebo agua · solo/a (adjective) = alone: Vivo sola.

NOTE Spelling: you may see sólo with an accent in older texts. Since 2010 the RAE recommends solo without an accent in all cases.

Manner: how?

bien *well / fine / good*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **verb + bien · estar bien · ¡Qué bien!**

Well (how you do something) and fine/good (how you are, or whether something is OK). It never changes.

verb + bien — *well*

› Cocinas muy bien.
You're a really good cook.

estar bien — *be fine / be OK*

› —¿Cómo estás? —Bien, gracias.
"How are you?" "Fine, thanks."

agreement — *OK, good*

› —¿A las ocho? —Bien.
"At eight?" "OK."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **muy bien** *very well, great* · **estar bien de + noun** *to be fine for: Estoy bien de tiempo (I've got time)* · **¡Qué bien!** *Great! / How nice!*

OPPOSITE **mal** — badly

DON'T CONFUSE bien (adverb: hablar bien, estar bien) vs bueno (adjective: un buen libro, la comida es buena).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy bueno (meaning '~~;fine') → ✓ Estoy bien. ✗ ~~*Hablas bueno~~ → ✓ Hablas bien. Bien = how; bueno = what something is like.

mal *badly / bad, not well*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **verb + mal · estar mal · sentirse mal**

Badly, or not well/not right. Also the short form of malo before masculine nouns (un mal día).

› Hoy me encuentro mal.
I don't feel well today.

› Canto muy mal.
I'm a terrible singer.

› Está mal aparcar aquí.
It's wrong to park here.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **no está mal** *it's not bad (= quite good)* · **fatal** *terrible, awful (very informal: Estoy fatal)*

OPPOSITE **bien** — well

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy malo (meaning '~~;I feel bad about something') → ✓ Me siento mal. (Estoy malo = I'm ill, in Spain.)

Place: where?

Spanish has three 'here/there' words where English has two. Think of distance from the speaker.

aquí *here*

ADVERB A1

Here, close to the speaker. Goes with este/esta (this).

› **Vivo aquí desde hace dos años.**
I've lived here for two years.

› **¡Estoy aquí!**
I'm over here!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por aquí** *around here / this way* · **aquí mismo** *right here* · **Aquí tiene.** *Here you are. (handing something over, formal)*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In much of Latin America acá is very common for 'here' (in Argentina it's the main word).

ahí *there (near you / not far)*

ADVERB A1

There, close to the person you're talking to, or not far from either of you. Goes with ese/esa (that).

› **Tu móvil está ahí, al lado de tu bolso.**
Your phone is there, next to your bag.

› **Ahí está la parada.**
There's the stop.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por ahí** *around, out and about / over there* · **ahí mismo** *right there*

NOTE Salir por ahí = to go out (no particular place): Esta noche salimos por ahí.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse ahí (there), hay (there is) and ¡ay! (ouch!). They sound similar but are very different.

allí *there, over there (far)*

ADVERB A1

There, far from both speakers. Also used for places you are talking about but aren't in (a city, a country).

› **¿Ves ese edificio? Allí trabajo yo.**
Do you see that building? That's where I work.

› **Mis padres viven en Escocia. Allí hace mucho frío.**
My parents live in Scotland. It's really cold there.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **allí arriba / allí abajo** *up there / down there*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA allá is also used, especially in Latin America, and for a vaguer 'over there': más allá = further on.

cerca *near, close (by)*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **cerca (alone) · cerca de + place/noun**

Near. Alone it means nearby; with de you say what it's near.

› ¿Hay un cajero cerca?
Is there a cash machine nearby?

› Vivo cerca de la playa.
I live near the beach.

› La estación está muy cerca.
The station is very close.

OPPOSITE **lejos** — far

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Vivo cerca la playa~~ → ✓ Vivo cerca de la playa. Don't forget de. And de + el = del: cerca del centro.

lejos *far (away)*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **lejos (alone) · lejos de + place**

Far. Same pattern as cerca: lejos de + place.

› ¿Está lejos el museo?
Is the museum far?

› Mi trabajo está un poco lejos de casa.
My work is a bit far from home.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **muy lejos** *very far* · **a lo lejos** *in the distance*

OPPOSITE **cerca** — near

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es lejos~~ → ✓ Está lejos. Location uses estar.

Also, neither, already, still

Four little words English speakers often mix up.

también *also, too, as well*

ADVERB A1

Also, too — for agreeing with or adding to a POSITIVE idea. It can go before the verb or at the end.

› Hablo inglés y también un poco de alemán.
I speak English and also a bit of German.

› Javi viene también.
Javi's coming too.

› —Soy de Manchester. —¡Yo también!
"I'm from Manchester." "Me too!"

OPPOSITE **tampoco** — not … either, neither

NOTE For yo también / a mí también and other ways of agreeing, see section 11.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *—No me gusta. —A mí también. → ✓ A mí tampoco. After a negative sentence, use tampoco.

tampoco *not … either / neither / nor*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **tampoco + verb · no + verb + tampoco**

The negative partner of también: use it to add or agree with a NEGATIVE idea. Before the verb it works alone; after the verb you need 'no' too.

› No como carne y tampoco bebo alcohol.
I don't eat meat and I don't drink alcohol either.

› Tampoco sé su número.
I don't know his number either.

› —No tengo hambre. —Yo tampoco.
"I'm not hungry." "Neither am I."

OPPOSITE **también** — also

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo también no~~ → ✓ Yo tampoco. ✗ ~~*Tampoco no sé~~ → ✓ Tampoco sé / No sé tampoco.

ya *already / now / any more (ya no)*

ADVERB A1

A tiny word with several jobs. Already (something has happened), now/right away, and with no = not any more. On its own, ¡Ya! can mean 'I know' or 'Done!'.

already — *something has happened*

› Ya tengo las entradas.
I've already got the tickets.

ya no — *not any more*

› Ya no vivo en Madrid.
I don't live in Madrid any more.

now / right away — *immediately*

› ¡Ya voy!
Coming! / I'm on my way!

reaction — *I know / I see*

› —Hace frío. —Ya.
"It's cold." "I know."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Ya está!** *Done! / There you go!* · **ya veremos** *we'll see*

OPPOSITE **todavía** — still / not yet

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No vivo en Madrid más~~ → ✓ Ya no vivo en Madrid. 'Not any more' = ya no.

todavía *still / (not) yet*

ADVERB A1

PATTERN **todavía + affirmative (still) · todavía no (not yet)**

Still (something continues), and with no = not yet. Synonym: aún (with an accent), which means the same.

still — *continues*

› Todavía vivo con mis padres.
I still live with my parents.

todavía no — *not yet*

› Todavía no he comido.
I haven't eaten yet.

› —¿Has terminado? —Todavía no.
"Have you finished?" "Not yet."

OPPOSITE **ya** — already

NOTE Pair to remember: ¿Ya...? → Sí, ya. / Todavía no. And: Todavía... → Ya no.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No he comido todavía no~~ → ✓ Todavía no he comido / No he comido todavía.

More useful adverbs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
no	*no / not*	Goes right before the verb (and its pronouns): No lo sé. Spanish allows double negatives: No hay nada. **No me gusta el café.** *I don't like coffee.*
sí	*yes*	With an accent (si without accent = if). Sí que + verb adds emphasis: Sí que hace frío. **—¿Eres de aquí? —Sí.** *"Are you from here?" "Yes."*
nada (adverb)	*(not) at all*	After a negative verb: no + verb + nada. **No me gusta nada.** *I don't like it at all.*
algo (adverb)	*a bit, slightly*	Before adjectives, a little more formal than un poco. **Estoy algo cansada.** *I'm a bit tired.*
tanto	*so much*	With verbs: No trabajes tanto. Before nouns it agrees: tanta gente. **¿Por qué trabajas tanto?** *Why do you work so much?*
así	*like this, like that, this way*	Así así = so-so. ¿Así? = Like this? **Se escribe así.** *It's written like this.*
despacio	*slowly*	The everyday word for speaking or driving slowly. **¿Puedes hablar más despacio?** *Can you speak more slowly?*
juntos/as	*together*	Agrees like an adjective: Vamos juntas. **¿Comemos juntos mañana?** *Shall we have lunch together tomorrow?*
arriba	*up, upstairs, above*	**Mi habitación está arriba.** *My room is upstairs.*
abajo	*down, downstairs, below*	**Te espero abajo.** *I'll wait for you downstairs.*
allá	*over there (far, vague)*	más allá = further on. Very common in Latin America.
acá	*here*	**LatAm:** Latin America (especially Argentina, Uruguay): acá = here. Spain: aquí, acá only in some expressions (ven acá).
más o menos	*more or less / so-so*	**—¿Qué tal el examen? —Más o menos.** *"How was the exam?" "So-so."*
de verdad	*really, honestly*	¿De verdad? = Really? Also: en serio. **De verdad, no pasa nada.** *Honestly, it's fine.*
realmente	*really, truly*	Most -mente adverbs come from the feminine adjective: real → realmente, rápida → rápidamente.
exactamente	*exactly*	**¿Dónde vives exactamente?** *Where exactly do you live?*
perfectamente	*perfectly*	**Te entiendo perfectamente.** *I understand you perfectly.*
especialmente	*especially*	
fácilmente	*easily*	Keeps the accent of fácil.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
totalmente	*totally, completely*	**Tienes totalmente razón.** *You're totally right.*
aproximadamente	*approximately, about*	In conversation: más o menos, unos/unas (unos diez minutos).
quizás / quizá	*maybe, perhaps*	Both spellings are correct. At A1 use it with the present: Quizás voy mañana.

KEEP IT CLOSE TO THE VERB

Spanish adverbs usually go right after the verb: Hablo bien. Como mucho. With an object, both orders work (Hablo muy bien español / Hablo español muy bien). 'No' is different: it always goes before the verb and its pronouns (No lo sé). And remember: muy only before adjectives and adverbs, mucho after verbs.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

05 · a, de, en, con, por, para — the little words that hold Spanish together

Prepositions

Prepositions rarely translate one-to-one. Spanish en covers English in, on AND at; a covers to and at (for time); de covers of, from and the possessive 's. So learn each preposition with its typical uses and a model sentence, not with a single translation. Contractions first: a + el = al, de + el = del — always.

The essential prepositions

a *to / at (time) / personal 'a'*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **ir/llegar/volver a + place · a las + time · verb + a + person · empezar/aprender a + infinitive**

Direction (to), exact time (at), distance, and the famous personal 'a' before a specific person who is the direct object. Also links many verbs to an infinitive.

direction — *to*

› Esta tarde voy a la playa.
This afternoon I'm going to the beach.

time — *at + clock time*

› La clase empieza a las seis.
The class starts at six.

personal 'a' — *before people as direct objects*

› Veo a mis padres los domingos.
I see my parents on Sundays.

distance — *... away*

› La playa está a diez minutos.
The beach is ten minutes away.

verb + a + infinitive — *after empezar, aprender, ir, volver...*

› Voy a aprender a nadar.
I'm going to learn to swim.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a pie** *on foot* · **a veces** *sometimes* · **a la derecha / izquierda** *on the right / left* · **dos veces a la semana** *twice a week*

NOTE Personal 'a' has no English translation. Use it with people (and pets you love), not with things: Busco a mi hermano / Busco mi móvil.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Voy en Madrid~~ → ✓ Voy a Madrid. ✗ ~~*Conozco Laura~~ → ✓ Conozco a Laura. ✗ ~~*a el cine~~ → ✓ al cine.

de *of / from / 's (possession) / about*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **ser de + place · noun + de + noun · de + time + a + time · salir de**

The Swiss-army-knife preposition: origin (from), possession (Ana's), material, content, type, and the start of a time range.

origin — *from*

› Soy de Bristol.
I'm from Bristol.

possession — *'s*

› Es el coche de mi hermana.
It's my sister's car.

type / material / content — *noun + de + noun*

› un vaso de agua, una mesa de madera, la clase de español
a glass of water, a wooden table, the Spanish class

de … a … — *from … to (time)*

› Trabajo de nueve a cinco.
I work from nine to five.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de vacaciones** *on holiday* · **de nada** *you're welcome* · **de la mañana / de la noche** *in the morning / at night (with clock times)* · **de pie** *standing*

NOTE In Spanish the main noun goes first: la clase de español (the Spanish class), un zumo de naranja (an orange juice).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ana'~~s coche / ~~*el Ana coche~~ → ✓ el coche de Ana. ✗ ~~*de el centro~~ → ✓ del centro.

en *in / on / at / by (transport)*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **estar/vivir/trabajar en + place · en + month/season/year · en + transport · pensar en**

Location (in, on, at — Spanish doesn't distinguish), months, seasons and years, and means of transport. It's for where you ARE, not where you go.

inside / at a place — *in, at*

› Estoy en casa / en el trabajo / en Madrid.
I'm at home / at work / in Madrid.

on a surface — *on*

› Las llaves están en la mesa.
The keys are on the table.

time — *in + month, season, year*

› Mi cumpleaños es en julio.
My birthday is in July.

transport — *by*

› Voy al trabajo en bici.
I cycle to work.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en casa** *at home* · **en serio** *seriously* · **en español** *in Spanish* · **en verano** *in summer*

NOTE Exception for transport: a pie (on foot), a caballo (on horseback).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*en el lunes / *en las cinco~~ → ✓ el lunes / a las cinco. Days take just the article; clock times take a. ✗ ~~*Voy en la playa~~ → ✓ Voy a la playa.

con *with*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **con + person/thing · conmigo, contigo (special forms)**

With: company, instrument, ingredients. With mí and ti it fuses into conmigo and contigo.

› Vivo con mi novia.
I live with my girlfriend.

› Un café con leche, por favor.
A white coffee, please.

› ¿Quieres venir conmigo?
Do you want to come with me?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pagar con tarjeta** *to pay by card* · **hablar con alguien** *to talk to someone* · **con gas** *sparkling (water)*

OPPOSITE **sin** — without

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*con mí / *con ti~~ → ✓ conmigo / contigo. But: con él, con ella, con usted.

sin *without*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **sin + noun (no article) · sin + infinitive**

Without. Usually no article after it. Before a verb, use the infinitive (English uses -ing).

› Un café sin azúcar, por favor.
A coffee without sugar, please.

› Salgo de casa sin desayunar.
I leave home without having breakfast.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **agua sin gas** *still water* · **sin problema** *no problem* · **sin duda** *without a doubt*

OPPOSITE **con** — with

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*sin desayunando~~ → ✓ sin desayunar. After any preposition, Spanish uses the infinitive.

para *for / (in order) to*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **para + infinitive (purpose) · para + person (recipient, opinion) · para + time (deadline)**

Purpose, recipient and destination. At A1 remember: para + infinitive = in order to, para + person = for someone or in someone's opinion.

purpose — *(in order) to*

› Estudio español para viajar por Latinoamérica.
I'm studying Spanish to travel around Latin America.

recipient — *for someone*

› Este regalo es para ti.
This present is for you.

opinion — *for me = in my opinion*

› Para mí, es la mejor playa.
For me, it's the best beach.

deadline — *by, for (a day)*

› Los deberes son para el lunes.
The homework is for Monday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Para qué?** *What for?* · **para llevar** *to take away / to go*

DON'T CONFUSE para looks forward (purpose, destination, recipient) vs por looks back or around (cause, through, exchange). Full por/para comes at B1.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estudio por viajar~~ → ✓ Estudio para viajar (purpose = para). ✗ ~~*para tú~~ → ✓ para ti.

por *because of / through, around / per / by*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **por la mañana/tarde/noche · por + place (through, around) · por + cause · gracias por**

At A1, learn por in fixed uses: parts of the day (por la mañana), moving through or around a place, cause (because of), means (por teléfono), and gracias por.

parts of the day — *in the morning, etc.*

› Trabajo por la mañana.
I work in the morning.

through / around — *movement in a place*

› Paseamos por el centro.
We walk around the centre.

means — *by, on*

› Hablamos por teléfono.
We talk on the phone.

cause / thanks — *for, because of*

› Gracias por tu ayuda.
Thanks for your help.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por favor** *please* · **por ejemplo** *for example* · **por aquí** *around here / this way* · **¿Por qué?** *Why?*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: en la mañana / en la tarde is common and correct there. Spain: por la mañana.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gracias para la cena~~ → ✓ Gracias por la cena. ✗ ~~*en la mañana (Spain~~) → ✓ por la mañana.

desde *from / since*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **desde + place (from) · desde + point in time (since) · desde … hasta …**

Starting point in space (from) or in time (since). With the present tense, it expresses something that started in the past and continues.

› Estudio español desde enero.
I've been studying Spanish since January.

› Desde mi ventana veo el parque.
From my window I can see the park.

› Trabajo desde casa.
I work from home.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desde hace + period** *for (a period, still true)*: *Vivo aquí desde hace dos años* · **desde … hasta …** *from … to / until …*

DON'T CONFUSE de … a … and desde … hasta … both mean from … to; desde … hasta … stresses the whole span.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Vivo aquí por dos años / *Vivo aquí desde dos años~~ → ✓ Vivo aquí desde hace dos años. And use the present, not the perfect.

hasta *until / up to / as far as / even*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **hasta + time (until) · hasta + place (as far as) · hasta + greeting**

The end point in time or space. Also used in many goodbyes.

› Trabajo hasta las seis.
I work until six.

› Vamos andando hasta la plaza.
Let's walk as far as the square.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Hasta luego!** *See you later! / Bye!* · **¡Hasta mañana!** *See you tomorrow!* · **¡Hasta pronto!** *See you soon!* · **¡Hasta el lunes!** *See you on Monday!*

NOTE In Spain, ¡Hasta luego! is a very common way to say bye, even if you won't see the person later that day.

entre *between / among*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **entre A y B · entre + plural**

Between two things, or among several. Also used for doing something together (entre todos = all together).

› La farmacia está entre el banco y el bar.
The chemist's is between the bank and the bar.

› Llego entre las siete y las ocho.
I'll arrive between seven and eight.

› Pagamos la cena entre todos.
We all split the bill for dinner.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*entre mí y ti~~ → ✓ entre tú y yo. After entre Spanish uses yo and tú.

sobre *on, on top of / about / around (time)*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **sobre + surface · hablar sobre + topic · sobre las + time (approximately)**

On (top of), about (a topic) and, very common in Spain, 'about/around' with times.

on top of — *on a surface*

› El libro está sobre la mesa.
The book is on the table.

about (topic) — *= de*

› Es un documental sobre el cambio climático.
It's a documentary about climate change.

approximate time — *around, about*

› Llego sobre las nueve.
I'll get there around nine.

DON'T CONFUSE sobre la mesa = en la mesa (en is more common in speech) · hablar sobre = hablar de (de is more common).

hacia *towards / around (time)*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **hacia + place/direction · hacia + time**

Direction (towards) without saying you arrive. Also approximate time, a bit more formal than sobre.

› Camina hacia la estación.
Walk towards the station.

› Llegamos hacia las diez.
We'll arrive around ten.

DON'T CONFUSE a = to (you reach the place) vs hacia = towards (direction only).

contra *against*

PREPOSITION A1

Against: opposition, contact, or sports matches.

› Esta noche el Madrid juega contra el Barça.
Tonight Madrid are playing against Barça.

› Pon la mesa contra la pared.
Put the table against the wall.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar en contra de** *to be against*

según *according to / depending on*

PREPOSITION A1

PATTERN **según + person/source · según + noun (depending on) · ¡Según!**

According to (a source), or depending on. On its own, ¡Según! means 'It depends!'.

› Según el profesor, el examen es fácil.
According to the teacher, the exam is easy.

› Según el día, voy en bici o en metro.
Depending on the day, I go by bike or by metro.

NOTE Synonym for the one-word answer: Depende. (It depends.)

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*según a ella / *según con el profesor~~ → ✓ según ella / según el profesor. No extra preposition. And after según use tú/yo: según tú.

al / del

a + el / de + el (contractions)

PREPOSITION A1

The only two compulsory contractions in Spanish. a + el always becomes al; de + el always becomes del. They don't happen with la, los, las, or with él (the pronoun) or names like El Salvador.

- Voy al supermercado.
  I'm going to the supermarket.
- Vengo del gimnasio.
  I'm coming from the gym.
- Es el móvil de él.
  It's his phone. (pronoun él: no contraction)

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*a el cine / *de el centro~~ → ✓ al cine / del centro. ✓ a la playa, de las ocho (no contraction with la/las).

Where is it? Place expressions

Most of these end in de, so remember the contraction: al lado del banco, enfrente del cine. Use them with estar: El bar está al lado del hotel.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
delante de	*in front of*	Te espero delante del cine. *I'll wait for you in front of the cinema.*
detrás de	*behind*	El parking está detrás del supermercado. *The car park is behind the supermarket.*
al lado de	*next to, beside*	Vivo al lado de una panadería. *I live next to a bakery.*
enfrente de	*opposite, across from*	Not 'in front of'! enfrente = facing, on the other side. El banco está enfrente de la farmacia. *The bank is opposite the chemist's.*
encima de	*on top of, on*	Tus gafas están encima de la mesa. *Your glasses are on the table.*
debajo de	*under, underneath*	El gato está debajo de la cama. *The cat is under the bed.*
dentro de	*inside, in*	Also time: dentro de una hora = in an hour's time. Las llaves están dentro del bolso. *The keys are inside the bag.*
fuera de	*outside, out of*	fuera alone = outside: Hace frío fuera. Vivo fuera de la ciudad. *I live outside the city.*
a la derecha de	*to the right of, on the right of*	El baño está a la derecha de la cocina. *The bathroom is to the right of the kitchen.*
a la izquierda de	*to the left of, on the left of*	Gira a la izquierda. *Turn left.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
al final de	*at the end of*	**Mi casa está al final de la calle.** *My house is at the end of the street.*
en el centro de / en medio de	*in the centre of / in the middle of*	**Hay una fuente en medio de la plaza.** *There's a fountain in the middle of the square.*
alrededor de	*around*	Also approximately: alrededor de cien personas. **Hay muchos bares alrededor de la plaza.** *There are lots of bars around the square.*
junto a	*next to, by*	Same as al lado de, a little more formal or written. Takes a, not de.
en la esquina	*on the corner*	a la vuelta de la esquina = just around the corner. **Hay un bar en la esquina.** *There's a bar on the corner.*
antes de	*before*	+ noun or infinitive: antes de cenar = before dinner / before having dinner. **Me ducho antes de desayunar.** *I shower before having breakfast.*
después de	*after*	+ noun or infinitive: después de clase, después de trabajar. **Después de trabajar voy al gimnasio.** *After work I go to the gym.*

Preposition traps for English speakers

in / on / at → usually en (for where you ARE)

✗ English idea: 'at home', 'on the table', 'in Madrid' need three different words → ~~*a casa~~, ~~*sobre Madrid~~

✓ Estoy en casa. Está en la mesa. Vivo en Madrid.

Spanish uses en for location whether it's in, on or at. You only need something different for direction (a) or exact position (encima de, debajo de...).

- Estoy en la oficina.
  I'm at the office.
- Tu móvil está en el sofá.
  Your phone is on the sofa.

REMEMBER Being somewhere → en. Going somewhere → a.

Movement uses a, not en

✗ ~~*Voy en la playa~~. ~~*Llego en Londres~~.

✓ Voy a la playa. Llego a Londres.

With ir, venir, llegar, volver and other verbs of movement, the destination takes a. En is for being there, or for the transport you use.

- Voy a Barcelona en tren.
  I'm going to Barcelona by train.

Time: a las, el lunes, en julio

✗ ~~*en las cinco · *en el lunes · *a julio~~

✓ a las cinco · el lunes · en julio

Clock times take a (a las cinco). Days take only the article, no preposition (el lunes = on Monday). Months, seasons and years take en (en julio, en verano, en 2025).

› El lunes tengo clase a las seis.
On Monday I have class at six.

REMEMBER a + clock, el + day, en + month.

After a preposition: infinitive, not -ing

✗ ~~*antes de comiendo · *sin hablando · *para aprendiendo~~

✓ antes de comer · sin hablar · para aprender

English uses -ing after prepositions ('before eating'). Spanish always uses the infinitive.

› Gracias por venir.
Thanks for coming.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

06 · Join your ideas: and, but, because, so, then

Connectors

With a handful of connectors, your Spanish stops sounding like a list of short sentences and starts sounding like you. Here they're grouped by what they DO: add, contrast, give a reason, show a result, put things in order, talk about time and conditions. Learn one model sentence for each and start using them in your messages and classes.

Adding ideas

y
and
The basic connector to add words or ideas. Before a word starting with the sound 'i' (i-, hi-) it becomes e.

> Tengo un hermano y una hermana.
> *I have a brother and a sister.*

e
and (before i- / hi-)
Replaces y before words that start with the sound 'i': e Italia, e hijos, e interesante. Not before hie- (agua y hielo) or y-.

> Hablo español e inglés.
> *I speak Spanish and English.*

además
also, besides, what's more
To add an extra argument, often at the start of the sentence, followed by a comma. Stronger than y.

> El piso es muy céntrico. Además, es barato.
> *The flat is very central. What's more, it's cheap.*

ni ... ni ...
neither ... nor ...
To join two negative ideas. If ni ... ni comes after the verb, put no before the verb.

> No bebo ni café ni té.
> *I drink neither coffee nor tea. / I don't drink coffee or tea.*

ni
nor, or (in negative sentences)
Replaces y in negative sentences. Sounds much more natural than 'no ... y no ...'.

> No tengo coche ni moto.
> *I don't have a car or a motorbike.*

Choosing: alternatives

o
or
To offer or choose between options. Before a word starting with the sound 'o' (o-, ho-) it becomes u.

> ¿Café o té?
> *Coffee or tea?*

u
or (before o- / ho-)
Replaces o before words that start with the sound 'o': siete u ocho, uno u otro, mujeres u hombres.

> Hay siete u ocho personas.
> *There are seven or eight people.*

o ... o ...
either ... or ...
To present two options strongly.

> O vamos al cine o nos quedamos en casa.
> *Either we go to the cinema or we stay at home.*

Contrast

pero
but

The basic way to contrast two ideas. No comma before it is needed in short sentences, but it's common in longer ones.

> Es caro, pero es muy bueno.
> *It's expensive, but it's really good.*

aunque
although, even though

To introduce a contrast at the start or in the middle. At A1, use it with facts in the present (indicative).

> Aunque vivo en Madrid, trabajo en Toledo.
> *Although I live in Madrid, I work in Toledo.*

pero también
but also

To add a second, different aspect. Natural in descriptions.

> Es una ciudad bonita, pero también muy cara.
> *It's a beautiful city, but also very expensive.*

Cause: giving reasons

porque
because

To give a reason. One word, no accent. It normally goes in the middle of the sentence, not at the start.

> Estudio español porque me encanta viajar.
> *I'm studying Spanish because I love travelling.*

¿Por qué...?
Why...?

The question. Two words, accent on qué, question marks. The answer starts with porque.

> —¿Por qué no vienes? —Porque estoy cansada.
> *"Why aren't you coming?" "Because I'm tired."*

es que... INFORMAL
the thing is... / it's just that...

Very common in speech to explain or excuse yourself, especially after a question or an apology.

> Perdona, es que hay mucho tráfico.
> *Sorry, it's just that there's a lot of traffic.*

Consequence: the result

por eso
that's why, so, for that reason

Introduces a result of what you just said. Very frequent and easy to use.

> Vivo lejos del centro. Por eso voy en metro.
> *I live far from the centre. That's why I go by metro.*

así que
so

Links a cause and its result in the same sentence. Very common in conversation.

> Hace sol, así que vamos a la playa.
> *It's sunny, so we're going to the beach.*

entonces
so, then (consequence)

Introduces a conclusion or result. In conversation also used to check: ¿Entonces...? = So...?

> —No tengo coche. —Entonces, ¿cómo vienes?
> *"I don't have a car." "So how are you getting here?"*

Putting things in order

Perfect for describing your routine or telling a simple story.

primero

first, first of all

To start a sequence of actions.

> **Primero me ducho, luego desayuno.**
> *First I have a shower, then I have breakfast.*

luego

then, next / later

Next step in a sequence. On its own, also means 'later' (te llamo luego). ¡Hasta luego! = See you later!

> **Luego voy a trabajar en bici.**
> *Then I cycle to work.*

después

after that, afterwards, then

Same as luego in sequences. With de + noun/infinitive it means 'after'.

> **Trabajo hasta las tres y después como con mis compañeros.**
> *I work until three and afterwards I have lunch with my colleagues.*

al final

in the end, finally / at the end

For the last step or the final result. Don't confuse with finalmente (more formal).

> **Al final no vamos a la fiesta.**
> *In the end we're not going to the party.*

por último

lastly, finally

To introduce the last item in a list or a sequence. A bit more formal; good for writing.

> **Por último, me acuesto sobre las doce.**
> *Finally, I go to bed around twelve.*

Time, condition & linking

cuando

when

Links two actions in time. No accent in statements; ¿cuándo? (with accent) is the question.

> **Cuando llego a casa, me ducho.**
> *When I get home, I have a shower.*

si

if

For conditions. No accent (sí with accent = yes). At A1: si + present, + present or future.

> **Si hace buen tiempo, comemos en la terraza.**
> *If the weather's nice, we'll eat on the terrace.*

que

that / who / which

The great Spanish 'glue': it joins a verb to a sentence (creo que..., dice que...) and a noun to a description (el chico que vive aquí). Unlike English 'that', you can never drop it.

> **El chico que trabaja conmigo es de Perú.**
> *The guy (who) I work with is from Peru.*

por ejemplo

for example

To give an example. Can go at the start, middle or end.

> **Me gustan los deportes de equipo, por ejemplo el fútbol.**
> *I like team sports, for example football.*

o sea INFORMAL

I mean, so, in other words

To clarify or reformulate what you just said. Extremely common in speech.

> **Llego el viernes, o sea, pasado mañana.**
> *I'm arriving on Friday, I mean, the day after tomorrow.*

Connector traps

porque / ¿por qué?

✗ *~~¿Porqué estudias español~~? — *~~Por qué me gusta~~.

✓ ¿Por qué estudias español? — Porque me gusta.

Questions use two words with an accent: ¿por qué? Answers use one word without an accent: porque. (El porqué = the reason, a noun — rare at A1.)

› No sé por qué no contesta.
I don't know why he isn't answering.

REMEMBER Question = two words + accent. Answer = one word.

Starting a sentence with porque

✗ *~~Porque llueve~~. No salgo.

✓ No salgo porque llueve. / Como llueve, no salgo.

Porque normally goes after the main idea. To start with the reason, Spanish uses como (since, as) — or simply por eso after it: Llueve, por eso no salgo.

› Llueve, por eso no salgo.
It's raining, so I'm not going out.

y → e, o → u

✗ *~~español y inglés~~ · *~~siete o ocho~~

✓ español e inglés · siete u ocho

Spanish avoids two identical vowel sounds together: y becomes e before 'i' sounds, o becomes u before 'o' sounds. It's about sound, so 'agua y hielo' stays y (hie- sounds like 'ye').

› padres e hijos
parents and children

› uno u otro
one or the other

Never drop 'que'

✗ *~~Creo es buena idea~~. *~~El libro estoy leyendo es genial~~.

✓ Creo que es buena idea. El libro que estoy leyendo es genial.

In English you can drop 'that' ('I think it's a good idea'). In Spanish que is compulsory.

› Dice que viene mañana.
She says she's coming tomorrow.

THE 5-CONNECTOR CHALLENGE

Describe your typical day in five sentences using primero, luego, después, porque and al final. Then do the same for last weekend. It takes two minutes and makes your Spanish sound instantly more fluent.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

07 · Small phrases that make you sound human from day one

Useful expressions

These are ready-made chunks: you don't build them, you just say them. Learn each one as a whole block, together with the situation where it fits. Say them out loud until they come out without thinking.

Everyday basics

Short phrases you'll hear and use dozens of times a day, at home, at work and in the street.

Ya voy. INFORMAL
I'm coming. / Coming!
When someone calls you or rings the doorbell. Literally 'I'm already going'.

> —¡Laura, la cena! —¡Ya voy!
> *"Laura, dinner!" "Coming!"*

Ahora vengo.
I'll be right back. / Back in a minute.
When you leave for a short time. Spanish uses 'come', not 'go back'.

> Voy al baño, ahora vengo.
> *I'm going to the toilet, I'll be right back.*

Aquí tienes.
Here you are. / Here you go.
When you hand something to someone. With usted: 'Aquí tiene'.

> —¿Me das el bolígrafo? —Sí, aquí tienes.
> *"Can you give me the pen?" "Sure, here you go."*

No sé.
I don't know.
The most honest phrase in any language. Add 'la verdad' to sound natural: 'La verdad, no sé.'

> —¿A qué hora empieza? —No sé, la verdad.
> *"What time does it start?" "I don't know, to be honest."*

Me da igual. INFORMAL
I don't mind. / It's all the same to me.
When you have no preference. Careful with tone: it can sound like 'I don't care'.

> —¿Pizza o pasta? —Me da igual, elige tú.
> *"Pizza or pasta?" "I don't mind, you choose."*

Depende.
It depends.
Add 'de' + noun to say what it depends on: 'Depende del tiempo.'

> —¿Vienes mañana? —Depende del trabajo.
> *"Are you coming tomorrow?" "It depends on work."*

¡Cuidado!
Careful! / Watch out!
A warning. Also 'Ten cuidado' (be careful) as advice.

> ¡Cuidado, el café está muy caliente!
> *Careful, the coffee is very hot!*

¡Vamos!
Let's go! / Come on!
To start moving or to encourage someone. 'Vamos a...' = let's...

> ¡Vamos, que llegamos tarde!
> *Come on, we're going to be late!*

¿Qué pasa? INFORMAL
What's happening? / What's wrong? / What's up?
When something seems wrong. Among friends in Spain it's also a casual hello.

> ¿Qué pasa? ¿Estás bien?
> *What's wrong? Are you OK?*

¡Ya está!
Done! / That's it! / There you go!
When you finish something or solve a small problem.

> Un segundo... ¡ya está! Ya funciona.
> *One second... there we go! It's working now.*

Otra vez.
Again. / One more time.
To repeat something. 'Otra vez no' = not again.

> ¡Otra vez llueve!
> *It's raining again!*

Ni idea. INFORMAL

No idea. / I haven't got a clue.

A more relaxed, very common version of 'No sé'.

> —¿Dónde está Diego? —Ni idea.
> *"Where's Diego?" "No idea."*

Being polite

Courtesy and good wishes. Spanish people use these all the time, even with strangers.

Por favor.

Please.

Put it at the end of a request. Spanish is less 'please-heavy' than English: tone and '¿me das...?' already sound polite.

> Un agua, por favor.
> *A water, please.*

Con permiso. FORMAL

Excuse me. (to get past / to leave)

When you need to pass someone, enter a room or leave the table.

> Con permiso, ¿puedo pasar?
> *Excuse me, can I get past?*

¿Se puede?

May I come in?

Knocking at a door, an office or a classroom.

> (Toc, toc) ¿Se puede? —Sí, adelante.
> *(Knock, knock) "May I come in?" "Yes, come in."*

Adelante. / Pasa. / Pase.

Come in. / Go ahead.

To invite someone in or to let them speak first. 'Pasa' (tú), 'pase' (usted).

> Pasa, pasa, estás en tu casa.
> *Come in, come in, make yourself at home.*

Siéntate. / Siéntese.

Sit down. / Have a seat.

Offering a seat. 'Siéntate' (tú), 'siéntese' (usted). Add 'por favor' to soften it.

> Siéntese, por favor. Ahora viene la doctora.
> *Please have a seat. The doctor is coming now.*

¡Que aproveche! / ¡Buen provecho!

Enjoy your meal!

To people who are eating, even strangers in a restaurant. English has no real equivalent.

> —¡Que aproveche! —Gracias, igualmente.
> *"Enjoy your meal!" "Thanks, you too."*

¡Salud!

Cheers! / Bless you!

Two uses: when you raise your glass, and when someone sneezes.

> ¡Salud! Por nuestro nuevo piso.
> *Cheers! To our new flat.*

¡Que te mejores!

Get well soon! / Hope you feel better!

To someone who is ill. With usted: '¡Que se mejore!'

> ¿Tienes gripe? ¡Que te mejores!
> *You've got flu? Get well soon!*

¡Feliz cumpleaños! / ¡Felicidades!

Happy birthday! / Congratulations!

'Felicidades' works for birthdays and any celebration.

> ¡Felicidades, Sofía! ¿Cuántos cumples?
> *Happy birthday, Sofía! How old are you today?*

¡Enhorabuena!

Congratulations! / Well done!

For an achievement: a new job, an exam, a baby. One word, written together.

> ¿Has aprobado? ¡Enhorabuena!
> *You passed? Congratulations!*

¡Que lo pases bien!

Have a good time! / Have fun!

When someone is going to a party, a trip, a dinner. Plural: '¡Que lo paséis bien!'

> ¿Te vas a Sevilla? ¡Que lo pases bien!
> *You're off to Seville? Have a great time!*

¡Buen fin de semana! / ¡Buen viaje!

Have a nice weekend! / Have a good trip!

'Buen/buena' + noun is an easy formula: ¡Buen día! ¡Buena suerte! ¡Buenas vacaciones!

> Hasta el lunes. ¡Buen fin de semana!
> *See you on Monday. Have a nice weekend!*

Reacting simply

The magic formula is '¡Qué + adjective/noun!'. With it you can react to almost anything.

¡Qué bien!

Great! / How nice! / That's great!

Good news, nice plans. Your most useful reaction.

> —Mañana no trabajo. —¡Qué bien!
> *"I'm not working tomorrow." "That's great!"*

¡Genial! INFORMAL

Great! / Brilliant! / Awesome!

Enthusiastic yes to a plan or idea.

> —¿Cenamos juntos el viernes? —¡Genial!
> *"Shall we have dinner together on Friday?" "Brilliant!"*

¡Qué guay! COLLOQUIAL

Cool! / How cool!

Very common among young and not-so-young people in Spain.

Spain & Latin America: Spain: ¡Qué guay! · Mexico: ¡Qué padre! · Argentina: ¡Qué bueno! / ¡Qué copado! · many countries: ¡Qué chévere!

> ¿Te vas a Japón? ¡Qué guay!
> *You're going to Japan? How cool!*

¡Qué pena! / ¡Qué lástima!

What a shame! / That's a pity!

Small disappointments. Not for very serious news (use 'Lo siento mucho').

> —No puedo ir a la fiesta. —¡Qué pena!
> *"I can't come to the party." "What a shame!"*

¡Qué rollo! COLLOQUIAL

What a drag! / How boring!

For something boring or annoying.

> Tengo que trabajar el domingo. ¡Qué rollo!
> *I have to work on Sunday. What a drag!*

¡Qué bonito!

How lovely! / How pretty!

For places, things, gestures. Change the adjective: ¡Qué rico! (yummy), ¡Qué caro! (so expensive).

> ¡Qué bonito es tu piso!
> *Your flat is so lovely!*

¡Qué asco! INFORMAL

Yuck! / Gross! / How disgusting!

Bad smells, bad food, something dirty. Also for bad weather: '¡Qué asco de tiempo!'

> ¡Qué asco! Esta leche está mala.
> *Yuck! This milk has gone off.*

¿En serio?

Really? / Seriously?

Surprise or disbelief.

> —Me caso en junio. —¿En serio? ¡Enhorabuena!
> *"I'm getting married in June." "Really? Congratulations!"*

¡No me digas! INFORMAL

No way! / You're kidding!

Big surprise. Literally 'don't tell me'.

> —Marcos tiene novia. —¡No me digas!
> *"Marcos has a girlfriend." "No way!"*

¡Madre mía! INFORMAL

Oh my God! / Goodness me!

Surprise, shock, being overwhelmed. Extremely common in Spain.

> ¡Madre mía, qué tarde es!
> *Oh my God, it's so late!*

¡Vaya!

Oh no! / Oh dear! / Wow!

Mild surprise, good or bad. The tone tells you which.

> ¡Vaya! Se me ha olvidado el móvil.
> *Oh no! I've forgotten my phone.*

Survival phrases for learners

Your emergency kit. With these phrases a conversation never has to stop: you can always ask, check and slow things down.

¿Cómo se dice ... en español?

How do you say ... in Spanish?

Your number one learning tool. Use it in class and in real life.

> ¿Cómo se dice 'fridge' en español?
> *How do you say 'fridge' in Spanish?*

¿Qué significa ...?

What does ... mean?

When you hear or read a word you don't know.

> Perdona, ¿qué significa 'madrugar'?
> *Sorry, what does 'madrugar' mean?*

¿Cómo se escribe?
How do you spell it? / How is it written?

Names, addresses, new words. People answer by spelling letters: 'Con be' (with a B).

> ¿Tu apellido? ¿Cómo se escribe?
> *Your surname? How do you spell it?*

¿Cómo se pronuncia?
How do you pronounce it?

For tricky words. Then repeat after the person.

> ¿Cómo se pronuncia esta palabra?
> *How do you pronounce this word?*

¿Puedes repetir, por favor?
Can you say that again, please?

The polite way to ask for a repetition. With usted: '¿Puede repetir?'

> Perdona, ¿puedes repetir, por favor?
> *Sorry, could you say that again, please?*

Más despacio, por favor.
More slowly, please.

Native speakers talk fast. It's completely normal to ask.

> Hablas muy rápido. Más despacio, por favor.
> *You speak really fast. More slowly, please.*

No entiendo.
I don't understand.

Say exactly what you don't understand: 'No entiendo esta palabra.'

> Lo siento, no entiendo la pregunta.
> *Sorry, I don't understand the question.*

¿Perdona? / ¿Cómo?
Sorry? / Pardon?

When you didn't hear. Avoid a bare '¿Qué?' with strangers: it can sound abrupt.

> —Son doce euros. —¿Perdona? —Doce euros.
> *"That's twelve euros." "Sorry?" "Twelve euros."*

Hablo un poco de español.
I speak a little Spanish.

A great opener: people will usually slow down for you.

> Hablo un poco de español, pero estoy aprendiendo.
> *I speak a little Spanish, but I'm learning.*

¿Hablas inglés?
Do you speak English?

Your back-up plan. With usted: '¿Habla inglés?'

> Perdone, ¿habla inglés?
> *Excuse me, do you speak English?*

¿Se dice así?
Is that how you say it? / Is that right?

To check your own Spanish. Teachers love this question.

> 'Estoy aburrido.' ¿Se dice así?
> *'Estoy aburrido.' Is that the right way to say it?*

¿Me lo puedes escribir?
Can you write it down for me?

Useful for addresses, names and numbers.

> No lo entiendo bien. ¿Me lo puedes escribir?
> *I can't quite understand. Can you write it down for me?*

¿Cuál es la diferencia entre ... y ...?
What's the difference between ... and ...?

Perfect for pairs that confuse you.

> ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre 'ser' y 'estar'?
> *What's the difference between 'ser' and 'estar'?*

Useful little words

Tiny words, huge impact. Natives use them constantly to agree, start sentences and keep the conversation moving. Add one or two and you'll instantly sound more natural.

vale INFORMAL
OK / fine / sure

To agree, accept a plan or close a topic. The most Spanish word in Spain.

Spain & Latin America: Mostly Spain. Latin America: bueno, dale (Argentina, Uruguay), sale (Mexico), ok.

> —¿Quedamos a las ocho? —Vale.
> *"Shall we meet at eight?" "OK."*

claro
of course / sure / right

A warm, natural 'yes'. 'Claro que sí' = of course. 'Claro que no' = of course not.

> —¿Me ayudas? —¡Claro!
> *"Will you help me?" "Of course!"*

venga COLLOQUIAL

come on / OK then / bye then

To encourage ('¡Venga, tú puedes!'), to accept ('Venga, vale') or to end a call ('Venga, hasta luego').

Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain.

> **Venga, vamos a tomar algo.**
> *Come on, let's go for a drink.*

pues

well / so / then

To start an answer while you think. Super frequent: 'Pues no sé...', 'Pues sí'.

> **—¿Qué haces el sábado? —Pues... nada especial.**
> *"What are you doing on Saturday?" "Well... nothing special."*

oye / oiga INFORMAL

hey / listen / excuse me

To get attention. 'Oye' with friends (tú), 'oiga' with strangers (usted). It isn't rude in Spanish.

> **Oye, ¿tienes un minuto?**
> *Hey, have you got a minute?*

mira INFORMAL

look / listen / you see

To introduce an explanation or an idea, not only to look at something.

> **Mira, el problema es que no tengo tiempo.**
> *Look, the thing is I don't have time.*

a ver

let's see / OK, so

When you're about to check, think or start something. Two words, never 'haber'.

> **A ver... ¿dónde están mis gafas?**
> *Let's see... where are my glasses?*

¿no? / ¿vale?

right? / isn't it? / OK?

Add to the end of a sentence to ask for confirmation, like an English question tag.

> **Eres de Londres, ¿no?**
> *You're from London, aren't you?*

hombre / mujer COLLOQUIAL

come on / well / of course

Not 'man' or 'woman' here: it adds emotion or emphasis. 'Hombre' is often used with anyone.

> **¡Hombre, Javi! ¡Qué sorpresa!**
> *Hey, Javi! What a surprise!*

STEAL THE MUSIC

Pick three little words (for example vale, pues and a ver) and use them on purpose this week, in class and in your messages. They're tiny, but they make your Spanish sound much more natural.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

08 · Hello, nice to meet you, thanks, sorry, see you soon

Conversation vocabulary

Everything you need for your first real conversations: saying hello and goodbye, introducing yourself, thanking and apologising, asking for things and surviving an online class. Practise them as mini-dialogues, with both the question and the answer.

Greetings

In Spain, the time of day matters: 'buenos días' until lunch (around 2 pm), 'buenas tardes' until it gets dark (8–9 pm), then 'buenas noches'.

¡Hola!
Hi! / Hello!
For everyone, any time of day. Combine it: '¡Hola, buenos días!' is very natural in shops.

> ¡Hola, Lucía! ¿Qué tal?
> *Hi, Lucía! How are you?*

Buenos días.
Good morning.
From waking up until lunch, around 2 pm in Spain. Always plural.

> Buenos días, ¿tiene pan integral?
> *Good morning, do you have wholemeal bread?*

Buenas tardes.
Good afternoon. / Good evening.
From lunch until it gets dark (8 or 9 pm). Spanish 'tarde' covers English afternoon and early evening.

> Buenas tardes, tengo una reserva a nombre de Emma.
> *Good evening, I have a reservation under the name Emma.*

Buenas noches.
Good evening. / Good night.
After dark, both to say hello and to say goodbye before bed.

> Buenas noches, mamá. Hasta mañana.
> *Good night, Mum. See you tomorrow.*

¡Buenas! INFORMAL
Hi! / Hiya!
Short, friendly version of buenos días / buenas tardes. Perfect in shops and bars.

> ¡Buenas! Dos cafés, por favor.
> *Hi! Two coffees, please.*

¿Qué tal? INFORMAL
How are you? / How's it going?
The standard friendly greeting. Also '¿Qué tal + noun?': ¿Qué tal el trabajo?

> Hola, Diego, ¿qué tal?
> *Hi, Diego, how's it going?*

¿Cómo estás? / ¿Cómo está usted?
How are you?
'¿Cómo estás?' with friends (tú); '¿Cómo está usted?' with older people or in formal situations.

> Buenos días, señora Ruiz. ¿Cómo está usted?
> *Good morning, Mrs Ruiz. How are you?*

Bien, gracias. ¿Y tú?
Fine, thanks. And you?
The classic answer. Don't forget to return the question: '¿Y tú?' / '¿Y usted?'

> —¿Qué tal? —Muy bien, gracias. ¿Y tú?
> *"How are you?" "Very well, thanks. And you?"*

Regular. / Más o menos. / Fatal. INFORMAL
So-so. / Not bad, not great. / Awful.
Spanish speakers are honest: it's normal to answer 'regular' and explain why.

> —¿Qué tal? —Regular, estoy muy cansado.
> *"How are you?" "So-so, I'm really tired."*

Goodbyes

Adiós.
Goodbye. / Bye.
Neutral and very common in Spain, also when you pass someone in the street. In some countries it can sound a bit final.

> Adiós, ¡gracias!
> *Bye, thanks!*

Hasta luego.
See you later. / Bye.
The most common goodbye, even if you won't see the person again today. Shop assistants say it all the time.

> Gracias, hasta luego.
> *Thanks, bye.*

Hasta mañana.
See you tomorrow.
Leaving work, class, or saying good night.

> Me voy. ¡Hasta mañana, chicos!
> *I'm off. See you tomorrow, guys!*

Hasta pronto.
See you soon.
When you don't know exactly when you'll meet again.

> Ha sido un placer. ¡Hasta pronto!
> *It's been a pleasure. See you soon!*

Hasta el lunes. / Hasta la próxima.
See you on Monday. / Until next time.
'Hasta' + day or event. 'Hasta la próxima' is great at the end of a class.

> Buen fin de semana. ¡Hasta el lunes!
> *Have a good weekend. See you on Monday!*

Hasta ahora. INFORMAL
See you in a minute.
When you'll see the person very soon (a few minutes).

> Bajo al súper. ¡Hasta ahora!
> *I'm popping down to the supermarket. See you in a bit!*

Nos vemos. INFORMAL
See you. / See you around.
Casual goodbye with people you'll see again. 'Nos vemos mañana' = see you tomorrow.

> Venga, nos vemos el viernes.
> *OK then, see you on Friday.*

¡Chao! / ¡Chau! COLLOQUIAL
Bye! / Ciao!
Very informal. 'Chao' in Spain, 'chau' in Argentina and Uruguay.

> ¡Chao, guapa! Te llamo luego.
> *Bye, love! I'll call you later.*

Igualmente.
You too. / Same to you.
The answer to any good wish: buen fin de semana, que aproveche, encantado…

> —¡Feliz Navidad! —¡Igualmente!
> *"Merry Christmas!" "You too!"*

Un beso. / Un abrazo. INFORMAL
Lots of love. / Big hug. / Take care.
To end messages and calls with friends and family. 'Besos' = xx.

> Hablamos mañana. ¡Un beso!
> *Talk tomorrow. Love you, bye! / xx*

Introductions

¿Cómo te llamas?
What's your name?
Answer: 'Me llamo…' or simply 'Soy…'. Formal: '¿Cómo se llama usted?'

> —¿Cómo te llamas? —Me llamo Tom. ¿Y tú?
> *"What's your name?" "I'm Tom. And you?"*

Soy…
I'm…
The quickest way to introduce yourself, also on the phone: 'Hola, soy Ana.'

> Hola, soy Sofía, la nueva compañera.
> *Hi, I'm Sofía, the new colleague.*

Encantado. / Encantada.
Nice to meet you. / Pleased to meet you.
The ending depends on YOU: a man says 'encantado', a woman 'encantada'.

> —Esta es Laura. —Encantado, Laura.
> *"This is Laura." "Nice to meet you, Laura."*

Mucho gusto.
Nice to meet you.
Same as 'encantado/a' but never changes. Very common in Latin America and in slightly formal situations.

> Mucho gusto, señor Pérez.
> *Pleased to meet you, Mr Pérez.*

Te presento a...

This is... / Let me introduce you to...

To introduce someone. Formal: 'Le presento a...'. Note the 'a' before the person.

> **Mamá, te presento a Marcos, mi compañero de piso.**
> *Mum, this is Marcos, my flatmate.*

Este es... / Esta es...

This is...

A simpler way to introduce someone: 'este' for a man, 'esta' for a woman.

> **Esta es mi hermana, Lucía.**
> *This is my sister, Lucía.*

¿A qué te dedicas?

What do you do (for a living)?

The natural way to ask about someone's job. Also '¿En qué trabajas?'

> **—¿A qué te dedicas? —Soy enfermera.**
> *"What do you do?" "I'm a nurse."*

¿Dónde vives? — Vivo en...

Where do you live? — I live in...

Basic personal question. Answer with 'en' + city or area.

> **—¿Dónde vives? —Vivo en Madrid, en el centro.**
> *"Where do you live?" "I live in Madrid, in the centre."*

¿Qué idiomas hablas?

What languages do you speak?

Great small-talk question in an international class.

> **—¿Qué idiomas hablas? —Inglés, francés y un poco de español.**
> *"What languages do you speak?" "English, French and a bit of Spanish."*

¿Cuál es tu móvil? / ¿Me das tu número? INFORMAL

What's your mobile number? / Can I have your number?

To swap contacts. For email: '¿Cuál es tu correo?'

> **¿Me das tu número? Te escribo por WhatsApp.**
> *Can I have your number? I'll message you on WhatsApp.*

TÚ OR USTED? THE A1 RULE

Use 'tú' with friends, family, classmates, colleagues and people your age: in Spain, that's most people. Use 'usted' with older people you don't know, in very formal situations, or when someone uses it with you. Usted takes the 'él/ella' form of the verb: '¿Cómo está usted?', '¿Usted habla inglés?'. In much of Latin America 'usted' is used more, and 'ustedes' replaces 'vosotros' everywhere.

Tú and usted in action

¿Puedo tutearte?

Can I call you 'tú'? / Shall we be less formal?

To move from usted to tú. 'Tutear' = to use tú with someone.

> **Somos compañeros... ¿puedo tutearte?**
> *We're colleagues... is it OK if I use 'tú' with you?*

Tutéame, por favor. / Puedes tutearme.

Please, call me 'tú'. / No need to be formal.

When someone uses usted with you and you prefer something friendlier.

> **—¿Usted es la profesora? —Sí, pero tutéame, por favor.**
> *"Are you the teacher?" "Yes, but please, no need to be formal."*

señor / señora FORMAL

Mr / Mrs, sir / madam

With a surname you need the article: 'el señor García'. Without it when you talk directly to the person: 'Buenos días, señor García.'

> **El señor García no está. ¿Quiere dejar un mensaje?**
> *Mr García isn't here. Would you like to leave a message?*

don / doña FORMAL

(respectful title, no English equivalent)

Used before the FIRST name of older people, to show respect: don Antonio, doña Carmen.

> **Buenos días, doña Carmen. ¿Qué tal está?**
> *Good morning, Carmen. How are you?*

Thanks

Gracias. / Muchas gracias.
Thanks. / Thank you very much.
'Muchas', never *'muchos'. For a favour: 'Gracias por tu ayuda.'

> Muchas gracias por la cena, estaba todo buenísimo.
> *Thanks so much for dinner, everything was delicious.*

Mil gracias. INFORMAL
Thanks a million. / Thanks so much.
Warm and enthusiastic.

> ¡Mil gracias por el regalo!
> *Thanks a million for the present!*

Gracias a ti. / Gracias a usted.
Thank YOU.
When someone thanks you and you're also grateful.

> —Gracias por venir. —¡Gracias a ti por invitarme!
> *"Thanks for coming." "Thank you for inviting me!"*

De nada.
You're welcome. / No problem.
The standard reply to 'gracias'.

> —Gracias. —De nada.
> *"Thanks." "You're welcome."*

No hay de qué.
Don't mention it. / Not at all.
A slightly more elegant 'de nada'.

> —Muchas gracias por todo. —No hay de qué.
> *"Thanks so much for everything." "Don't mention it."*

Apologies

Three different jobs: 'perdón' / 'perdona' to interrupt or for small accidents, 'disculpa' for the same in a slightly more polite way, and 'lo siento' when you are really sorry or giving bad news.

Perdón.
Sorry. / Excuse me. / Pardon.
Quick, for small things: bumping into someone, sneezing, passing. Never changes form.

> ¡Ay, perdón! No te he visto.
> *Oh, sorry! I didn't see you.*

Perdona. / Perdone.
Excuse me. / Sorry.
To get someone's attention or interrupt. 'Perdona' (tú), 'perdone' (usted).

> Perdone, ¿dónde está la estación?
> *Excuse me, where's the station?*

Disculpa. / Disculpe.
Excuse me. / I'm sorry.
Like 'perdona/perdone', a little more polite. Great with waiters, shop staff and in emails.

> Disculpe, ¿nos trae la carta?
> *Excuse me, could you bring us the menu?*

Lo siento.
I'm sorry.
Real regret, or when you can't help: 'Lo siento, no tengo cambio.' Don't use it to get attention.

> Lo siento, hoy no puedo quedar.
> *I'm sorry, I can't meet up today.*

Lo siento mucho.
I'm really sorry. / I'm so sorry.
Serious apologies and bad news (illness, a death).

> —Mi abuelo está en el hospital. —Lo siento mucho.
> *"My grandad is in hospital." "I'm so sorry."*

Perdona, llego tarde.
Sorry I'm late.
A chunk you'll need. Note: no 'por' and simple present.

> Perdona, llego tarde. Había mucho tráfico.
> *Sorry I'm late. There was a lot of traffic.*

No pasa nada. INFORMAL
No worries. / It's fine. / Don't worry about it.
The perfect reply to an apology.

> —Perdona, he roto un vaso. —No pasa nada.
> *"Sorry, I've broken a glass." "Don't worry about it."*

No te preocupes. / Tranquilo, tranquila.
Don't worry. / Relax, it's OK.
To reassure someone. 'Tranquilo' changes for a woman: 'tranquila'. Formal: 'No se preocupe.'

> Tranquila, tenemos tiempo.
> *Don't worry, we've got time.*

Asking for things

In Spanish, questions with '¿me...?' and the present tense are polite and normal. Very direct English-style requests are softened with tone, not with lots of 'could you possibly'.

Quería...

I'd like...

The polite magic word in shops and cafés. It's past tense but means 'I'd like' now. Softer than 'quiero'.

> **Hola, quería una barra de pan, por favor.**
> *Hi, I'd like a baguette, please.*

Para mí, un café con leche.

I'll have a white coffee.

Ordering in a group: 'para mí...', 'para ella...'.

> **—¿Qué os pongo? —Para mí, una caña.**
> *"What can I get you?" "I'll have a small beer."*

La cuenta, por favor.

The bill, please. / Check, please.

In restaurants and bars. Also '¿Me cobras?' (informal, Spain).

> **Perdona, la cuenta, por favor.**
> *Excuse me, can we have the bill, please?*

¿Me ayudas?

Can you help me? / Will you give me a hand?

Informal and friendly. Formal: '¿Me puede ayudar?'

> **¿Me ayudas con la maleta?**
> *Can you help me with my suitcase?*

¿Me dejas...?

Can I borrow...? / Will you let me...?

To borrow something or ask permission. 'Dejar' = to lend / to let.

> **¿Me dejas tu cargador un momento?**
> *Can I borrow your charger for a minute?*

¿Tienes un momento?

Have you got a minute?

Before asking for something at work or in class.

> **Oye, ¿tienes un momento? Tengo una pregunta.**
> *Hey, have you got a minute? I've got a question.*

¿Tienes hora?

Have you got the time? / Do you know what time it is?

Asking a stranger the time. Formal: '¿Tiene hora?'

> **Perdona, ¿tienes hora? —Sí, son las cinco.**
> *"Excuse me, do you know what time it is?" "Yes, it's five o'clock."*

¿Puedo...?

Can I...? / May I...?

Asking permission: + infinitive.

> **¿Puedo abrir la ventana?**
> *Can I open the window?*

Small talk basics

¿Qué tal el fin de semana?

How was your weekend?

Monday's classic question. No verb needed in Spanish.

> **—¿Qué tal el fin de semana? —Muy tranquilo.**
> *"How was your weekend?" "Very relaxing."*

¿Qué tal el trabajo / la familia?

How's work / the family?

'¿Qué tal + el/la + noun?' Use it with anything: las vacaciones, la clase, tu madre.

> **¿Qué tal tu nuevo trabajo?**
> *How's your new job going?*

¿Qué tal todo? INFORMAL

How's everything?

General catch-up with someone you haven't seen for a while.

> **¡Hola, Ana! ¿Qué tal todo?**
> *Hi, Ana! How's everything?*

¡Cuánto tiempo! INFORMAL

Long time no see!

When you meet someone after a long time.

> **¡Javi! ¡Cuánto tiempo! ¿Qué tal estás?**
> *Javi! Long time no see! How are you?*

¿Qué haces este fin de semana?

What are you doing this weekend?

Asking about plans. The present tense works for the near future.

> **¿Qué haces este fin de semana? ¿Tienes planes?**
> *What are you up to this weekend? Any plans?*

Nada especial. / Lo de siempre. INFORMAL

Nothing special. / Same old, same old.

Easy answers when there's not much news.

> **—¿Qué tal? ¿Qué cuentas? —Nada, lo de siempre.**
> *"How are things? What's new?" "Nothing much, same old."*

Mucho trabajo.
Lots of work. / Really busy.
Typical answer to '¿Qué tal?'. Also 'Mucho lío' (Spain, informal).

> —¿Qué tal la semana? —Uf, mucho trabajo.
> *"How's your week been?" "Ugh, really busy."*

¿Y tú qué tal?
And how about you?
Bounce the question back. Conversation is a ping-pong game.

> Yo bien, todo tranquilo. ¿Y tú qué tal?
> *I'm good, all quiet. How about you?*

In class and online

Phrases for your classes with The Speaky Club, in person or on video.

¿Me oyes? / ¿Me oís?
Can you hear me?
The first question of every online class. 'Oís' = you all (Spain).

> Hola, ¿me oyes bien?
> *Hi, can you hear me OK?*

Te oigo bien. / No te oigo.
I can hear you fine. / I can't hear you.
Use 'oír' for sound, not 'escuchar' (to listen).

> Perdona, no te oigo. ¿Tienes el micro apagado?
> *Sorry, I can't hear you. Is your mic off?*

Estás en silencio.
You're on mute.
Classic online-meeting phrase. 'Silenciar' = to mute.

> Laura, estás en silencio.
> *Laura, you're on mute.*

Se te congela la imagen.
Your video is freezing.
When the screen freezes. 'Se corta' = it keeps cutting out.

> Se te congela la imagen, ¿puedes repetir?
> *Your video's freezing, can you repeat that?*

Tengo problemas con la conexión.
I'm having connection problems.
Also: 'Internet va muy lento' (the internet is really slow).

> Perdón, tengo problemas con la conexión. Ya vuelvo.
> *Sorry, I'm having connection issues. I'll be right back.*

¿Puedes compartir pantalla?
Can you share your screen?
Online classes and meetings.

> ¿Puedes compartir pantalla? No veo el documento.
> *Can you share your screen? I can't see the document.*

Tengo una duda.
I've got a question.
In class, 'una duda' is a question about something you don't understand, not 'a doubt'.

> Profe, tengo una duda con este ejercicio.
> *Excuse me, I've got a question about this exercise.*

¿En qué página estamos?
What page are we on?
When you get lost in the book.

> Perdona, ¿en qué página estamos?
> *Sorry, what page are we on?*

Ya he terminado.
I've finished.
After an exercise. Even shorter: '¡Ya está!'

> Ya he terminado. ¿Lo corregimos?
> *I've finished. Shall we correct it?*

¿Hay deberes?
Is there any homework?
Deberes = homework (always plural in this meaning).

> ¿Hay deberes para el jueves?
> *Is there any homework for Thursday?*

Te mando el enlace.
I'll send you the link.
Before class or a meeting. 'Mandar' and 'enviar' both mean to send.

> Te mando el enlace por correo.
> *I'll email you the link.*

¿Lo puedes poner en el chat?
Can you put it in the chat?
To see a word written during a video class.

> ¿Lo puedes poner en el chat, por favor?
> *Could you type it in the chat, please?*

Simple reactions in conversation

Show that you're listening. Short reactions keep the conversation alive while you prepare your next sentence.

¿Ah, sí?

Oh really? / Is that right?

Mild interest or surprise. Invites the person to say more.

> —Tengo un gato nuevo. —¿Ah, sí? ¿Cómo se llama?
> *"I've got a new cat." "Oh really? What's its name?"*

¡Me alegro!

I'm glad! / Good to hear!

For good news. 'Me alegro mucho' = I'm really happy for you.

> —Ya estoy mejor. —¡Me alegro!
> *"I'm feeling better now." "Glad to hear it!"*

¡Qué suerte!

Lucky you! / How lucky!

When someone tells you about something nice.

> —Mañana me voy a la playa. —¡Qué suerte!
> *"Tomorrow I'm going to the beach." "Lucky you!"*

¡Qué interesante!

How interesting!

Real interest. Careful: with a flat tone it can sound ironic, as in English.

> ¿Trabajas en un museo? ¡Qué interesante!
> *You work in a museum? How interesting!*

Ya veo. / Entiendo.

I see. / I understand.

To show you're following.

> —No puedo ir porque trabajo. —Ya veo.
> *"I can't go because I'm working." "I see."*

¡Pobre! INFORMAL

Poor thing! / Oh no, poor you!

Sympathy for small problems. '¡Pobrecito!' / '¡Pobrecita!' is even warmer.

> —Me duele la cabeza. —¡Pobre!
> *"I've got a headache." "Oh, poor you!"*

¡Anda! COLLOQUIAL

Oh! / Wow! / Fancy that!

Surprise when you discover something.

Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain.

> ¡Anda! ¿Tú también eres de Bristol?
> *Oh wow! You're from Bristol too?*

¡Por supuesto! / ¡Cómo no!

Of course! / Absolutely! / Sure!

Enthusiastic yes to a request or invitation. '¡Cómo no!' is especially common in Latin America.

> —¿Me ayudas con la mudanza? —¡Por supuesto!
> *"Will you help me move?" "Of course!"*

TWO KISSES OR A HANDSHAKE?

In Spain, friends and new acquaintances usually greet with two kisses on the cheeks (right cheek first), except two men, who usually shake hands or hug. At work and in formal situations, a handshake is normal. In most of Latin America it's one kiss. If you're not sure, follow the other person's lead.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

09 · 22 sentence patterns that unlock thousands of sentences

Common constructions

A construction is a frame: learn it once, then drop in new words. Each card shows the pattern, what it means, real examples and the mistake English speakers usually make. Make your own sentence with every pattern before moving on.

Saying what exists, what you have and who you are

hay + noun

there is / there are

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN **hay + un/una/unos/unas/a number/no article + noun · ¿Hay...? · No hay...**

One form for singular and plural: 'hay' never changes. Use it to say that something exists or to ask if it's available. Never use 'el/la' after hay.

- Hay un supermercado cerca de mi casa.
  There's a supermarket near my house.
- ¿Hay wifi en el hotel?
  Is there wifi in the hotel?
- No hay leche.
  There's no milk. / We're out of milk.

NOTE Pronounced like 'eye'. Same sound as ¡ay! (ouch).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay el banco en la plaza~~ → ✓ Hay un banco en la plaza / El banco está en la plaza. ✗ ~~*Están muchas personas~~ → ✓ Hay muchas personas.

me llamo + name

my name is / I'm called

EXPRESSION · REFLEXIVE: ME LLAMO, TE LLAMAS, SE LLAMA… · A1

PATTERN **(yo) me llamo... · ¿Cómo te llamas? · ¿Cómo se llama (usted / él / ella)?**

Literally 'I call myself'. It's the standard way to say your name. 'Mi nombre es...' exists but sounds formal or stiff.

- Me llamo Emma y soy de Dublín.
  My name's Emma and I'm from Dublin.
- Mi perro se llama Toby.
  My dog's called Toby.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me llamo es Emma~~ / ✗ ~~*Mi llamo Emma~~ → ✓ Me llamo Emma. 'Me' is a pronoun, not 'mi' (my).

tener … años

to be … (years old)

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: TENGO, TIENES, TIENE… · A1

PATTERN **tener + number + años · ¿Cuántos años tienes?**

Spanish 'has' years, it doesn't 'be' them. Always use tener for age, and say 'años'.

› Tengo treinta y cuatro años.
I'm thirty-four.

› —¿Cuántos años tiene tu hija? —Tiene seis.
"How old is your daughter?" "She's six."

NOTE Careful: 'años' (years) needs the ñ. Without it the word means something rude.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy 34 / ✗ *Soy 34 años~~ → ✓ Tengo 34 años.

¿De dónde eres?

Where are you from?

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN **¿De dónde eres / es usted? → Soy de + place · Soy + nationality**

Ser de = to be from. The preposition 'de' goes at the START of the question in Spanish, never at the end.

› —¿De dónde eres? —Soy de Toronto. Soy canadiense.
"Where are you from?" "I'm from Toronto. I'm Canadian."

› Mi pareja es de Valencia.
My partner is from Valencia.

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Dónde vives? = Where do you live? (now) vs ¿De dónde eres? = Where are you from? (origin).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*¿Dónde eres de~~? → ✓ ¿De dónde eres? Spanish never ends a sentence with a preposition.

¿Tienes…?

Do you have…? / Have you got…?

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN **¿Tienes / Tiene + (un/una) + noun? · No tengo + noun**

To ask about possessions or availability in shops. In questions and negatives, Spanish often drops 'un/una' with things you normally have one of or count.

› ¿Tienes hermanos?
Do you have any brothers or sisters?

› ¿Tiene esta camiseta en azul?
Do you have this T-shirt in blue?

› No tengo coche.
I don't have a car.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*¿Tienes un hermanos~~? → ✓ ¿Tienes hermanos? ✗ ~~*No tengo un coche (sounds odd)~~ → ✓ No tengo coche.

Talking about plans, wishes and obligations

ir a + infinitive

to be going to (do)

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: VOY, VAS, VA, VAMOS, VAIS, VAN · A1

PATTERN **ir (present) + a + infinitive**

The easiest way to talk about the future and plans. Don't forget the little 'a'. 'Vamos a + infinitive' also means 'let's...'.

- Esta noche voy a cocinar paella.
  Tonight I'm going to cook paella.
- ¿Qué vas a hacer el sábado?
  What are you going to do on Saturday?
- ¡Vamos a empezar!
  Let's start!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Voy cocinar~~ → ✓ Voy a cocinar. ✗ ~~*Voy a cocino~~ → ✓ Voy a cocinar (the second verb stays in the infinitive).

tener que + infinitive

to have to (do)

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN **tener (present) + que + infinitive**

Obligation or necessity: what you must do. The 'que' is essential.

- Tengo que trabajar mañana.
  I have to work tomorrow.
- Tienes que probar este restaurante.
  You have to try this restaurant.

DON'T CONFUSE No tener que = not have to (it's not necessary): 'No tienes que venir' = You don't have to come.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo trabajar~~ / ✗ ~~*Tengo a trabajar~~ → ✓ Tengo que trabajar.

querer + infinitive

to want to (do)

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: QUIERO, QUIERES… · A1

PATTERN **querer + infinitive · querer + noun**

To say what you want to do. No preposition between the two verbs.

› Quiero aprender español para viajar.
I want to learn Spanish so I can travel.

› ¿Quieres tomar algo?
Do you want to get a drink?

NOTE '¿Quieres...?' is also a normal, friendly way to invite or offer: '¿Quieres un café?'

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quiero a aprender~~ → ✓ Quiero aprender. ✗ ~~*Yo quero~~ → ✓ Yo quiero (e→ie).

poder + infinitive

can / to be able to (do)

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: PUEDO, PUEDES… · A1

PATTERN **poder + infinitive · ¿Puedes + infinitive? (request) · ¿Puedo + infinitive? (permission)**

Ability or possibility, permission (¿Puedo...?) and requests (¿Puedes...?).

› Hoy no puedo salir, estoy cansada.
I can't go out today, I'm tired.

› ¿Puedes cerrar la puerta, por favor?
Can you close the door, please?

DON'T CONFUSE poder = can (possible/allowed) vs saber + inf = can (know how to): 'Sé conducir, pero hoy no puedo.'

COMMON MISTAKE For skills you have learned, use saber, not poder: ✗ ~~*Puedo nadar (meaning '~~;I know how to swim') → ✓ Sé nadar.

para + infinitive

(in order) to / so that I can

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN **... para + infinitive**

Explains the purpose of an action. Where English just says 'to', Spanish needs 'para'.

› Estudio español para hablar con mis suegros.
I'm studying Spanish to talk to my in-laws.

› Voy al súper para comprar fruta.
I'm going to the supermarket to buy some fruit.

NOTE After verbs of movement (ir, venir, salir), 'a + infinitive' is also very common: 'Vengo a ayudarte.'

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estudio español por hablar~~ → ✓ Estudio español para hablar. ✗ ~~*Voy al súper comprar (missing '~~;para' or 'a') → ✓ Voy al súper a comprar / para comprar.

antes de / después de + infinitive

before / after (doing)

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **antes de + infinitive · después de + infinitive**

Where English uses '-ing' after before/after, Spanish uses the infinitive. Never a gerund here.

› Siempre leo un poco antes de dormir.
I always read a bit before going to sleep.

› Después de comer, damos un paseo.
After lunch, we go for a walk.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*antes de durmiendo~~ → ✓ antes de dormir. ✗ ~~*después comer~~ → ✓ después de comer (don't drop the 'de').

Likes and preferences

me gusta / me gustan

I like

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **me/te/le/nos/os/les + gusta + singular noun or infinitive · gustan + plural noun**

Literally 'it pleases me'. The thing you like is the subject, so the verb agrees with THE THING, not with you. Singular thing or an activity → gusta. Plural things → gustan.

gusta + singular noun — *you like one thing*

› Me gusta el café.
I like coffee.

gusta + infinitive — *you like doing something*

› Nos gusta bailar.
We like dancing.

gustan + plural noun — *you like several things*

› Me gustan los perros.
I like dogs.

NOTE Same pattern: me encanta(n) = I love, me interesa(n) = I'm interested in. Negative: No me gusta.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo gusto el café~~ → ✓ Me gusta el café. ✗ ~~*Me gusta los perros~~ → ✓ Me gustan los perros. ✗ ~~*Me gusta café~~ → ✓ Me gusta el café (general likes need the article).

a mí me...

I (emphatic) / as for me

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **a mí me · a ti te · a él/ella/usted le · a nosotros nos · a vosotros os · a ellos les · a + name + le**

Adds emphasis or contrast, or makes clear who you're talking about. Typical with gustar-type verbs. Also used for short reactions: 'A mí también' (me too), 'A mí no' (I don't).

› A mí me gusta el té, pero a Marcos le gusta el café.
I like tea, but Marcos likes coffee.

› —Me encanta el jamón. —¡A mí también!
"I love ham." "Me too!"

DON'T CONFUSE Agreeing: me gusta → A mí también / A mí no. No me gusta → A mí tampoco / A mí sí.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo también (after '~~;me gusta') → ✓ A mí también. ✗ ~~*Marcos le gusta~~ → ✓ A Marcos le gusta (you need the 'a').

es + adjective + infinitive

it's + adjective + to (do)

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **es + importante / fácil / difícil / bueno / necesario... + infinitive**

General statements and opinions. Spanish uses no 'it' and no preposition: the infinitive follows the adjective directly.

› Es importante dormir bien.
It's important to sleep well.

› Es difícil aprender los números.
It's hard to learn the numbers.

› No es fácil encontrar piso en Madrid.
It isn't easy to find a flat in Madrid.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es difícil de aprender los números~~ → ✓ Es difícil aprender los números. ✗ ~~*Está importante~~ → ✓ Es importante.

Asking for things and information

¿Cuánto cuesta...? / ¿Cuánto es?

How much is...? / How much is it?

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **¿Cuánto cuesta + singular? · ¿Cuánto cuestan + plural? · ¿Cuánto es? (total)**

To ask the price. 'Cuesta' for one thing, 'cuestan' for several. '¿Cuánto es?' asks for the total when you pay.

› ¿Cuánto cuesta esta chaqueta?
How much is this jacket?

› ¿Cuánto cuestan los tomates?
How much are the tomatoes?

› —¿Cuánto es? —Son ocho euros con cincuenta.
"How much is it?" "That's eight fifty."

NOTE Stem-changing o→ue: costar → cuesta.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Cuánto cuesta los tomates~~? → ✓ ¿Cuánto cuestan los tomates? ✗ *~~¿Cuánto es el precio~~? (redundant) → ✓ ¿Cuánto cuesta? / ¿Qué precio tiene?

¿Dónde está...? / ¿Dónde están...?

Where is...? / Where are...?

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **¿Dónde está + el/la + noun? · ¿Dónde están + los/las + noun?**

To ask where something specific is. Location always takes estar, never ser.

› Perdone, ¿dónde está el baño?
Excuse me, where's the toilet?

› ¿Dónde están mis llaves?
Where are my keys?

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Dónde está el museo? (a specific one) vs ¿Hay un museo por aquí? (is there one?).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Dónde es el baño~~? → ✓ ¿Dónde está el baño? ✗ *~~¿Dónde está una farmacia~~? → ✓ ¿Hay una farmacia por aquí? (for 'any', use hay).

¿Qué es esto?

What's this?

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **¿Qué es esto / eso? · ¿Cómo se llama esto?**

To ask about an unknown object, dish or thing. 'Esto' (this) and 'eso' (that) are neutral: use them when you don't know the name or gender of the thing.

- ¿Qué es esto? ¿Es pescado?
  What's this? Is it fish?
- ¿Cómo se llama eso en español?
  What's that called in Spanish?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Qué es este~~? (for an unknown thing) → ✓ ¿Qué es esto? 'Este' needs a noun: este libro.

¿Me das...? / ¿Me pones...?

Can I have...? / Could you give me...?

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **¿Me das / Me da + noun? · ¿Me pones / Me pone + noun? (Spain, bars and shops)**

Spanish asks 'Do you give me...?' where English says 'Can I have...?'. It sounds normal and polite, not rude. '¿Me pones...?' is the typical way to order in Spanish bars and shops.

- ¿Me pones un café con leche, por favor?
  Can I have a white coffee, please?
- ¿Me da medio kilo de tomates?
  Could I have half a kilo of tomatoes?
- ¿Me das tu correo?
  Can I have your email address?

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA '¿Me pones...?' is typical of Spain. In Latin America: '¿Me da...?', '¿Me trae...?', '¿Me regala...?' (Colombia).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Puedo tener un café~~? (a translation of 'Can I have') → ✓ ¿Me pones un café? / Quería un café.

se puede + infinitive

you can / one can / is it allowed to...

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **(No) se puede + infinitive · ¿Se puede + infinitive?**

General permission or possibility, not about a specific person. Perfect for rules and signs.

› ¿Se puede pagar con tarjeta?
Can I pay by card? / Do you take cards?

› Aquí no se puede fumar.
You can't smoke here. / No smoking here.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Puedes pagar con tarjeta~~? (asks if the person can pay) → ✓ ¿Se puede pagar con tarjeta?

Describing the moment and the weather

estar + gerund

to be (doing) right now

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **estar + -ando (-ar verbs) / -iendo (-er, -ir verbs)**

For actions happening at this exact moment. Spanish uses it less than English: for habits and future plans, use the simple present.

› —¿Qué haces? —Estoy cocinando.
"What are you doing?" "I'm cooking."

› Está lloviendo mucho.
It's raining heavily.

NOTE Common irregular gerunds: leyendo (leer), durmiendo (dormir), diciendo (decir).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Estoy trabajando en un banco (permanent job)~~ → ✓ Trabajo en un banco. ✗ *~~Mañana estoy yendo a Roma~~ → ✓ Mañana voy a Roma.

hace + weather

it's (sunny / cold / hot…)

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **hace + calor / frío / sol / viento / buen tiempo / mal tiempo · hay + niebla / nubes · está + nublado · llueve / nieva**

Spanish 'makes' weather. 'Hace' + noun for most weather, and 'mucho' to intensify (because calor, frío… are nouns).

- Hoy hace mucho calor.
  It's really hot today.
- ¿Qué tiempo hace en Londres?
  What's the weather like in London?
- Hace buen tiempo, ¿vamos a la playa?
  The weather's nice, shall we go to the beach?

DON'T CONFUSE Hace frío (the weather) vs tengo frío (I feel cold) vs está frío (the soup is cold).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es frío~~ / ✗ ~~*Está frío (about the weather~~) → ✓ Hace frío. ✗ ~~*Hace muy calor~~ → ✓ Hace mucho calor.

no… nunca / nada / nadie

never / nothing, not anything / nobody, not anyone

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **no + verb + nunca / nada / nadie · OR nunca / nadie + verb (no 'no')**

Spanish double negatives are correct and normal. If the negative word comes after the verb, you need 'no' before the verb. If it comes first, no 'no'.

- No como nunca carne. / Nunca como carne.
  I never eat meat.
- No hay nada en la nevera.
  There's nothing in the fridge.
- No conozco a nadie aquí.
  I don't know anyone here.

NOTE Note the personal 'a' before 'nadie' with verbs like conocer and ver: 'No veo a nadie'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay nada~~ / ✗ ~~*Conozco nadie~~ → ✓ No hay nada / No conozco a nadie. ✗ ~~*Nadie no viene~~ → ✓ Nadie viene.

MAKE IT YOURS

For each construction, write two true sentences about your own life: 'Tengo que…', 'Voy a…', 'Me gustan…'. Personal sentences stick in your memory far better than textbook ones, and you can use them in your next class.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

10 · Days, dates, the clock and how often

Time & frequency

Everything you need to make plans and talk about your routine: days, months and seasons, parts of the day, telling the time, today/tomorrow/yesterday, and how often you do things. Small details matter here — el lunes (no 'on'), a las cinco (with 'a'), por la mañana vs de la mañana — so read the notes carefully.

Key time words

A few words with double meanings or tricky uses.

mañana *tomorrow / (la mañana) morning*

ADVERB A1

Without an article, mañana = tomorrow. With an article, la mañana = the morning. So 'tomorrow morning' is mañana por la mañana.

mañana — *tomorrow*

› Mañana tengo una reunión.
I have a meeting tomorrow.

la mañana — *the morning*

› Trabajo por la mañana.
I work in the morning.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mañana por la mañana** *tomorrow morning* · **pasado mañana** *the day after tomorrow* · **¡Hasta mañana!** *See you tomorrow!*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*mañana mañana / *la mañana de mañana~~ → ✓ mañana por la mañana.

tarde *late / (la tarde) afternoon, evening*

ADVERB A1

As an adverb, tarde = late. As a noun, la tarde = afternoon and early evening (in Spain, from lunch until about 8–9 pm).

tarde — *late*

› Perdón, llego tarde.
Sorry, I'm late.

la tarde — *afternoon / evening*

› ¿Qué haces esta tarde?
What are you doing this afternoon/evening?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llegar tarde** *to be late* · **más tarde** *later* · **¡Buenas tardes!** *Good afternoon! / Good evening!* · **es tarde** *it's late*

OPPOSITE **temprano / pronto** — early

NOTE Because Spanish days run late, la tarde often covers what English calls 'evening'. La noche starts around dinner time.

pronto *soon / early (Spain)*

ADVERB A1

Soon. In Spain it also means early — the same as temprano.

soon — *in a short time*

› Nos vemos pronto.
See you soon.

early (Spain) — = *temprano*

› Mañana me levanto pronto.
Tomorrow I'm getting up early.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Hasta pronto!** *See you soon!* · **lo antes posible** *as soon as possible*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: pronto = soon and early · Latin America: pronto = soon; for 'early' say temprano.

ahora *now*

ADVERB A1

Now. Ahora mismo = right now. In Spain, ahora alone can also mean 'in a minute' (Ahora voy = I'm coming / I'll be there in a sec).

› Ahora vivo en Valencia.
I live in Valencia now.

› Ahora mismo no puedo hablar.
I can't talk right now.

› —¿Vienes? —¡Ahora voy!
"Are you coming?" "Coming!"

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ahora mismo** *right now* · **hasta ahora** *so far / see you in a bit* · **por ahora** *for now*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: ahorita = right now / in a moment (in Mexico it can be quite vague!).

el fin de semana *weekend*

NOUN · MASCULINE · A1

PLURAL los fines de semana

The weekend. Like days of the week, it doesn't take 'on' or 'at': el fin de semana = at/on the weekend; los fines de semana = at weekends (habitually).

› ¿Qué haces el fin de semana?
What are you doing at the weekend?

› Los fines de semana duermo mucho.
At weekends I sleep a lot.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **este fin de semana** *this weekend* · **el fin de semana que viene** *next weekend* · **¡Buen fin de semana!** *Have a good weekend!* · **el finde** *the weekend (informal, Spain)*

DON'T CONFUSE entre semana = on weekdays, during the week.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*en el fin de semana~~ → ✓ el fin de semana (in Spain). ✗ ~~*el weekend~~ → ✓ el fin de semana / el finde.

siempre *always*

ADVERB · A1

Always. Can go before the verb (most common) or at the end.

› Siempre desayuno en casa.
I always have breakfast at home.

› Llegas tarde siempre.
You're always late.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **casi siempre** *almost always* · **como siempre** *as usual* · **para siempre** *forever*

OPPOSITE **nunca** — never

nunca *never*

ADVERB · A1

PATTERN **nunca + verb · no + verb + nunca**

Never. Before the verb it works alone; after the verb you need no before the verb (Spanish loves double negatives).

› Nunca como carne.
I never eat meat.

› No veo la tele nunca.
I never watch TV.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **casi nunca** *hardly ever* · **nunca más** *never again*

OPPOSITE **siempre** — always

DON'T CONFUSE jamás = never (stronger, more emphatic).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Veo nunca la tele~~ → ✓ No veo nunca la tele / Nunca veo la tele.

a veces *sometimes*

ADVERB A1

Sometimes. Literally 'at times'. Very flexible in position.

› A veces trabajo desde casa.
Sometimes I work from home.

› Voy al cine a veces, no mucho.
I go to the cinema sometimes, not often.

DON'T CONFUSE a veces = sometimes · de vez en cuando = from time to time (a bit less often).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*algunas veces is correct but less common~~; ✗ ~~*a vez~~ → ✓ a veces (always plural).

todos los días *every day*

EXPRESSION A1

PATTERN **todos los + plural masculine noun · todas las + plural feminine noun**

Every day. The pattern works with any time unit: todas las semanas, todos los meses, todos los lunes.

› Estudio español todos los días.
I study Spanish every day.

› Todas las mañanas tomo un café en el bar.
Every morning I have a coffee at the café.

DON'T CONFUSE todos los días = every day (habit, very common) · cada día = each day, every day (a bit more emphatic) · todo el día = all day (the whole day!).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*todo el día (meaning '~~;every day') → ✓ todos los días. Todo el día = all day long.

Days of the week

Days are masculine and written in lowercase. To say 'on Monday', just use el: el lunes. 'On Mondays' = los lunes.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el lunes	*Monday*	plural: los lunes (same form). El lunes empiezo un curso nuevo. *On Monday I'm starting a new course.*
el martes	*Tuesday*	Los martes tengo clase de yoga. *On Tuesdays I have a yoga class.*
el miércoles	*Wednesday*	Accent on the é.
el jueves	*Thursday*	¿Quedamos el jueves? *Shall we meet on Thursday?*
el viernes	*Friday*	Los viernes salgo con mis amigos. *On Fridays I go out with my friends.*
el sábado	*Saturday*	Accent on the first á. plural: los sábados.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el domingo	*Sunday*	plural: los domingos. El domingo comemos con mi familia. *On Sunday we're having lunch with my family.*

Months

Months are lowercase and usually go without an article: en enero = in January.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
enero	*January*	En enero hace mucho frío. *It's really cold in January.*
febrero	*February*	
marzo	*March*	
abril	*April*	
mayo	*May*	
junio	*June*	
julio	*July*	Mi cumpleaños es en julio. *My birthday's in July.*
agosto	*August*	Many Spanish businesses close or slow down in August.
septiembre	*September*	setiembre is also accepted.
octubre	*October*	
noviembre	*November*	
diciembre	*December*	Vuelvo a casa en diciembre. *I'm going back home in December.*

Calendar words & seasons

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la semana	*week*	Tengo clase dos veces a la semana. *I have class twice a week.*
el mes	*month*	plural: los meses. Pago el alquiler a principios de mes. *I pay the rent at the beginning of the month.*
el año	*year*	Careful with the ñ: año (year) vs ano (anus)! Vivo aquí desde hace un año. *I've lived here for a year.*
la fecha	*date (on the calendar)*	A romantic date is una cita. ¿Cuál es la fecha del examen? *What's the date of the exam?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la primavera	*spring*	Seasons take the article: en (la) primavera, en (el) verano. Both forms are fine. **En primavera hay muchas flores.** *In spring there are lots of flowers.*
el verano	*summer*	**En verano vamos a la playa.** *In summer we go to the beach.*
el otoño	*autumn, fall*	With ñ.
el invierno	*winter*	**No me gusta el invierno.** *I don't like winter.*
el día festivo / el festivo	*public holiday, bank holiday*	Also: un día de fiesta. El puente = long weekend (a holiday next to a weekend), very Spanish.
entre semana	*on weekdays, during the week*	**Entre semana me acuesto pronto.** *On weekdays I go to bed early.*

Parts of the day

Spanish days are long and late: lunch around 2–3 pm, dinner around 9–10 pm. That changes what 'afternoon' and 'night' mean.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la mañana	*morning*	From waking up until lunch (about 2 pm). ¡Buenos días! = Good morning! **Por la mañana voy a la oficina.** *In the morning I go to the office.*
el mediodía	*midday, noon / lunchtime*	In Spain often means lunchtime (around 2 pm). a mediodía = at lunchtime. **A mediodía como en el trabajo.** *At lunchtime I eat at work.*
la tarde	*afternoon / early evening*	From lunch until it gets dark or dinner time. ¡Buenas tardes! **Por la tarde estudio.** *In the afternoon I study.*
la noche	*night / evening*	From dinner time onwards. ¡Buenas noches! = Good evening! / Good night! **Por la noche veo una serie.** *In the evening I watch a series.*
la madrugada	*early hours (after midnight, before dawn)*	The time from about 1 am to 6 am. Las tres de la madrugada = 3 am. **Volvemos a casa de madrugada.** *We get home in the early hours.*
la medianoche	*midnight*	Also: las doce de la noche.

Today, tomorrow, yesterday

hoy
today
The h is silent. Hoy es lunes = Today is Monday.

> Hoy no trabajo.
> *I'm not working today.*

ayer
yesterday
For past events (you'll use it with past tenses at A2).

> Ayer fue mi cumpleaños.
> *Yesterday was my birthday.*

anteayer
the day before yesterday
Also: antes de ayer / antier (Latin America).

pasado mañana
the day after tomorrow
Literally 'past tomorrow'.

> Me voy de viaje pasado mañana.
> *I'm going away the day after tomorrow.*

esta mañana
this morning
For the morning of today. Este/esta + time word = this.

> Esta mañana tengo médico.
> *I've got a doctor's appointment this morning.*

esta tarde
this afternoon / this evening

> ¿Quedamos esta tarde?
> *Shall we meet this afternoon?*

esta noche
tonight / this evening

> Esta noche cenamos fuera.
> *We're eating out tonight.*

anoche
last night
One word. Not ~~*la noche pasada (possible but rare~~).

> Anoche dormí fatal.
> *I slept really badly last night.*

esta semana / este mes / este año
this week / this month / this year
este with masculine, esta with feminine nouns.

la semana que viene / la próxima semana
next week
Both are very common. Also: el mes que viene, el año que viene, el próximo lunes.

> La semana que viene estoy de vacaciones.
> *Next week I'm on holiday.*

el lunes que viene / el próximo lunes
next Monday
Works with every day of the week.

la semana pasada / el año pasado
last week / last year
pasado/a = last (in time). Agrees with the noun.

> El año pasado vivía en Dublín.
> *Last year I was living in Dublin.*

dentro de + time
in (... time)
For something that will happen after a period from now.

> Vuelvo dentro de una hora.
> *I'll be back in an hour.*

hace + time
... ago
The time period goes after hace.

> Llegué a España hace dos meses.
> *I arrived in Spain two months ago.*

Telling the time

Es la una (one o'clock is singular), son las dos, son las tres... Minutes after the hour use y, before the hour use menos.

¿Qué hora es?
What time is it?
The standard question. Politer with a stranger: Perdone, ¿tiene hora?

> —¿Qué hora es? —Son las cuatro.
> *"What time is it?" "It's four o'clock."*

Es la una.
It's one o'clock.
Singular because una is one. Also: Es la una y media.

Son las dos / las tres...
It's two / three... o'clock
Plural for all other hours. Always with las (horas is feminine).

... y cuarto
quarter past ...

> Son las seis y cuarto.
> *It's quarter past six.*

... y media
half past ...

> Es la una y media.
> *It's half past one.*

... menos cuarto
quarter to ...
Say the NEXT hour, then menos.

> Son las nueve menos cuarto.
> *It's quarter to nine.*

... y diez / ... menos veinte
ten past ... / twenty to ...
Minutes 1–30: y. Minutes 31–59: next hour + menos.

> Son las ocho menos veinte.
> *It's twenty to eight.*

... en punto
... o'clock sharp, exactly

> Empezamos a las diez en punto.
> *We start at ten o'clock sharp.*

¿A qué hora...?
What time...? / At what time...?
To ask when something happens. Answer with a la / a las.

> ¿A qué hora abre el museo?
> *What time does the museum open?*

a la una / a las ocho
at one / at eight
a + la/las + hour.

> Quedamos a las ocho.
> *Let's meet at eight.*

de la mañana / de la tarde / de la noche
a.m. / p.m. (in the morning, afternoon, at night)
Only after a specific clock time: a las siete de la tarde = at 7 pm.

> El vuelo sale a las seis de la mañana.
> *The flight leaves at 6 am.*

sobre las ... / a eso de las ...
around ... , about ...
For approximate times. Very common in Spain.

> Llego sobre las diez.
> *I'll arrive around ten.*

las 14:30 (las catorce treinta)
14:30 / 2:30 pm
The 24-hour clock is used in timetables, tickets and official times: las veinte horas = 8 pm.

Dates

¿Qué día es hoy?
What day is it today?
Answer with the day of the week or the date.

> —¿Qué día es hoy? —Martes, 3 de mayo.
> *"What's the date today?" "Tuesday, 3rd May."*

¿A qué estamos hoy? INFORMAL
What's the date today?
Common in Spain. Answer: Estamos a 3 de mayo.

el + number + de + month
the ... of ...
Dates use cardinal numbers (dos, tres), not 'second, third'. El 15 de agosto.

> Mi cumpleaños es el 21 de abril.
> *My birthday is on 21st April.*

el uno / el primero de ...
the first of ...
Both are correct; el primero is common in Latin America, el uno in Spain.

> El uno de enero es festivo.
> *The first of January is a holiday.*

en 2026 (en dos mil veintiséis)
in 2026
Years are read as a full number, not in pairs: mil novecientos noventa y nueve (1999).

a principios / a mediados / a finales de
at the beginning / in the middle / at the end of
With months and years.

> Me mudo a finales de mes.
> *I'm moving at the end of the month.*

How often? Frequency

From always to never. Most of these go at the beginning of the sentence or right before the verb.

casi siempre
almost always

> Casi siempre como en casa.
> *I almost always have lunch at home.*

normalmente
usually, normally
The most common way to talk about routines.

> Normalmente me levanto a las siete.
> *I usually get up at seven.*

generalmente / por lo general
generally, as a rule
Same as normalmente, a bit more formal.

a menudo
often
Neutral and useful. Muchas veces is more frequent in speech.

> Viajo a menudo por trabajo.
> *I often travel for work.*

muchas veces
often, many times

> Muchas veces trabajo hasta tarde.
> *I often work late.*

de vez en cuando
from time to time, now and then

> De vez en cuando vamos al teatro.
> *Now and then we go to the theatre.*

pocas veces
rarely, not often

> Veo la tele pocas veces.
> *I rarely watch TV.*

casi nunca
hardly ever
Before the verb, no 'no' needed.

> Casi nunca cocino entre semana.
> *I hardly ever cook on weekdays.*

cada día / cada semana
each day, every day / every week
cada never changes: cada día, cada semana, cada año.

> Cada día aprendo algo nuevo.
> *Every day I learn something new.*

cada dos días / cada tres horas
every other day / every three hours

> Voy al gimnasio cada dos días.
> *I go to the gym every other day.*

una vez a la semana
once a week
Pattern: number + vez/veces + a + la/el + time unit.

> Hablo con mis padres una vez a la semana.
> *I talk to my parents once a week.*

dos veces al mes
twice a month
al = a + el (el mes, el año, el día).

> Vamos al cine dos veces al mes.
> *We go to the cinema twice a month.*

tres veces al año
three times a year

los lunes / los fines de semana
on Mondays / at weekends
Plural article + day = habit.

> Los domingos no trabajo.
> *I don't work on Sundays.*

todo el día / toda la noche
all day / all night
Duration, not frequency! Compare: todos los días = every day.

> Hoy trabajo todo el día.
> *Today I'm working all day.*

When? Time adverbs

ahora mismo
right now

> Ahora mismo estoy en el tren.
> *I'm on the train right now.*

antes
before, earlier / used to (with past)
Antes vivía en Londres = I used to live in London. Antes de + infinitive = before doing.

> Antes trabajaba en un banco.
> *I used to work in a bank.*

más tarde
later
Same as luego (later).

> Te llamo más tarde.
> *I'll call you later.*

enseguida
right away, in a moment
Very common in shops and bars: Enseguida le atiendo (I'll be right with you). Also written en seguida.

> Enseguida vuelvo.
> *I'll be right back.*

temprano
early
Early in the day or earlier than usual. In Spain pronto is also very common.

> Los lunes empiezo temprano.
> *On Mondays I start early.*

de momento / por ahora
for the moment, for now

> De momento vivo con unos amigos.
> *For the moment I'm living with some friends.*

al principio
at first, at the beginning

> Al principio el español es difícil.
> *At first Spanish is difficult.*

a tiempo
on time, in time

> El tren llega a tiempo.
> *The train is arriving on time.*

Time traps

por la mañana vs de la mañana

✗ ~~*Trabajo de la mañana~~. ~~*A las ocho por la mañana~~.

✓ Trabajo por la mañana. A las ocho de la mañana.

Use por la mañana/tarde/noche for a general part of the day (in the morning). Use de la mañana/tarde/noche only after an exact clock time (8 am = las ocho de la mañana).

› Por la tarde estudio, normalmente a las seis de la tarde.
I study in the afternoon, usually at 6 pm.

REMEMBER Clock time → de. No clock time → por.

No 'on' with days

✗ ~~*en lunes / *en el lunes~~

✓ el lunes (on Monday) / los lunes (on Mondays)

Days of the week take just the article. Singular for one specific day, plural for a habit.

› El sábado voy a una boda.
On Saturday I'm going to a wedding.

› Los sábados juego al tenis.
On Saturdays I play tennis.

es la una / son las dos

✗ ~~*Es las dos~~. ~~*Son la una~~. ~~*Son dos horas~~.

✓ Es la una. Son las dos.

Only one o'clock is singular (es la una). Every other hour is plural with son las. Don't say horas when telling the time.

› Es la una y diez.
It's ten past one.

› Son las once menos cuarto.
It's quarter to eleven.

tiempo vs hora vs vez

✗ ~~*¿Qué tiempo es~~? · ~~*Tres tiempos a la semana~~

✓ ¿Qué hora es? · Tres veces a la semana

English 'time' has three Spanish words: la hora (clock time), el tiempo (time as a quantity, and also the weather), la vez (an occasion).

› No tengo tiempo. ¿Qué hora es? Es la primera vez.
I don't have time. What time is it? It's the first time.

REMEMBER Clock → hora. How much → tiempo. How many times → vez/veces.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

11 · How you feel, what you love, and how to say 'me too'

Feelings & opinions

This section gives you the basics to talk about your mood, say what you like (and how much), give a simple opinion and react to what people tell you. Pay special attention to the 'me too / me neither' group: yo también, a mí también, yo tampoco and a mí tampoco follow a simple rule that most learners get wrong for years. Learn the phrases as chunks and use them about your own life.

THINK 'RIGHT NOW'

Feelings and moods change, so Spanish uses estar: Estoy triste, Estoy nervioso, Estamos contentos. Remember to make the adjective agree with you: Laura está enfadada, Javi está enfadado, ellos están enfadados. A quick check: if you could add 'today' or 'right now' in English, use estar.

How do you feel?

The key mood words. Use them with estar, and add muy, un poco or bastante to sound natural.

triste *sad*

ADJECTIVE · A1

FORMS triste · tristes

Feeling sad or down. Same form for masculine and feminine. With estar it describes how you feel now; with ser it describes something that is sad by nature (a film, a story, a song).

estar triste — *to feel sad*

› Estoy un poco triste porque mi amiga se va a Londres.
I'm a bit sad because my friend is moving to London.

ser triste — *to be a sad thing*

› Es una película muy triste.
It's a really sad film.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una canción triste** *a sad song* · **¡Qué triste!** *How sad! / That's so sad!*

OPPOSITE **contento / feliz** — happy

feliz *happy*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS feliz · felices

Happy in a deeper, more lasting way: happy with your life, a happy day, a happy couple. For 'happy right now about something small', Spanish usually prefers contento. Both ser feliz and estar feliz are correct: ser feliz = to be a happy person / to be happy in life; estar feliz = to feel happy at the moment.

> **ser feliz** — *happy in life*
>
> › Sofía es muy feliz en Valencia.
> *Sofía is really happy in Valencia.*

> **estar feliz** — *happy right now*
>
> › Hoy estoy feliz: ¡empiezan mis vacaciones!
> *I'm happy today: my holidays start!*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Feliz cumpleaños!** *Happy birthday!* · **¡Feliz Navidad!** *Merry Christmas!* · **un final feliz** *a happy ending*

DON'T CONFUSE contento = happy/pleased about something now (Estoy contento con mi nuevo piso) · feliz = happy in a bigger, more emotional way.

NOTE Plural: felices (z → c). ✗ ~~*felizes~~ → ✓ felices.

nervioso *nervous / anxious / restless*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS nervioso · nerviosa · nerviosos · nerviosas

Nervous before something important (an exam, an interview, a first date), but also restless or wound up. Very common with estar.

› Estoy muy nerviosa: mañana tengo una entrevista.
I'm really nervous: I've got an interview tomorrow.

› Los niños están muy nerviosos hoy.
The kids are really restless today.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar nervioso por algo** *to be nervous about something*

OPPOSITE **tranquilo** — calm, relaxed

COMMON MISTAKE Don't use it for 'brave' or 'nerve' ideas — it only means nervous / restless.

enfadado *angry / annoyed / cross*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS enfadado · enfadada · enfadados · enfadadas

PATTERN **estar enfadado con alguien · estar enfadado por algo**

Angry or annoyed with someone. It covers everything from 'a bit cross' to 'really angry'. With a person, use con.

› ¿Estás enfadado conmigo?
Are you angry with me?

› Ana está enfadada porque el tren llega tarde otra vez.
Ana is annoyed because the train's late again.

OPPOSITE **contento** — happy

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: enfadado · Latin America: enojado

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy enfadado a ti~~ → ✓ Estoy enfadado contigo.

estresado *stressed*

ADJECTIVE A1

FORMS estresado · estresada · estresados · estresadas

Stressed, usually because of work, exams or too many things to do. Notice the e- at the start: Spanish words never begin with s + consonant.

› Estoy muy estresado con el trabajo.
I'm really stressed with work.

› Esta semana estoy estresada: tengo tres exámenes.
I'm stressed this week: I've got three exams.

OPPOSITE **relajado** — relaxed

NOTE Pronunciation: es-tre-SA-do. ✗ ~~*stresado~~.

More feelings

Use these with estar.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
relajado/a	*relaxed*	En vacaciones estoy muy relajada. *I'm really relaxed on holiday.*
sorprendido/a	*surprised*	Estoy sorprendido: ¡el examen es muy fácil! *I'm surprised: the exam is really easy!*
asustado/a	*scared, frightened*	For 'I'm scared of…' say tengo miedo de / a… El perro está asustado por los petardos. *The dog is scared of the fireworks.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
emocionado/a	*excited / moved (emotionally)*	Careful: it often means 'moved, touched' (close to tears). For everyday 'I'm excited about…' Spaniards often say tengo muchas ganas de… **Estoy muy emocionada con el viaje.** *I'm really excited about the trip.*
orgulloso/a (de)	*proud (of)*	**Estoy muy orgulloso de mi hija.** *I'm really proud of my daughter.*

Talking about your mood

¿Qué te pasa?
What's wrong? / What's the matter?
When someone looks sad, angry or worried. Kind and very common.

> —¿Qué te pasa? —Nada, estoy un poco cansada.
> *"What's wrong?" "Nothing, I'm just a bit tired."*

No me pasa nada.
Nothing's wrong. / I'm fine.
The answer when you don't want to explain (or really are fine).

Estoy un poco… / Estoy muy…
I'm a bit… / I'm really…
Un poco softens a negative feeling; muy makes it stronger. Learners often forget un poco and sound very dramatic.

> Estoy un poco nervioso, la verdad.
> *I'm a bit nervous, to be honest.*

Estoy de buen humor. / Estoy de mal humor.
I'm in a good mood. / I'm in a bad mood.
Note the preposition: de buen humor (not ~~*en buen humor~~).

> Mi jefe hoy está de mal humor.
> *My boss is in a bad mood today.*

Estoy genial. INFORMAL
I'm great. / I feel great.
A happy answer to ¿Qué tal? or ¿Cómo estás?

Likes in degrees: from 'love' to 'hate'

Remember the gustar structure: the thing you like is the subject. One thing or an infinitive → gusta / encanta; several things → gustan / encantan.

Me encanta… / Me encantan…
I love…
Strongest 'like' for things, food, places and activities. Don't add mucho: ✗ ~~*me encanta mucho~~.

> Me encanta bailar. Me encantan los conciertos.
> *I love dancing. I love concerts.*

Me gusta mucho…
I really like…
Very positive. Mucho goes after the verb.

> Me gusta mucho tu ciudad.
> *I really like your city.*

Me gusta bastante…
I quite like…
Positive, but not passionate.

> Me gusta bastante el té verde.
> *I quite like green tea.*

No me gusta mucho…
I don't really like… / I'm not keen on…
The polite way to say you don't like something. Very useful with food when you're a guest.

> No me gusta mucho el pescado.
> *I'm not very keen on fish.*

No me gusta nada…
I don't like … at all / I really don't like…
Strongly negative. Nada here means 'at all'.

> No me gustan nada los lunes.
> *I really don't like Mondays.*

Odio...

I hate...

Strong, like English 'hate'. Odiar is a normal verb (yo odio, tú odias), so there's no gustar structure here. Fine with friends; with people you don't know, no me gusta nada sounds softer.

> Odio madrugar.
> *I hate getting up early.*

Me interesa... / Me interesan...

I'm interested in...

Works like gustar: the thing is the subject. Use it for topics, hobbies and plans.

> Me interesa mucho la historia. Me interesan los idiomas.
> *I'm really interested in history. I'm interested in languages.*

No me interesa.

I'm not interested.

Clear and polite (e.g. to a salesperson). With a friend it can sound a bit cold.

> No, gracias, no me interesa.
> *No, thanks, I'm not interested.*

¿Te gusta...? —Sí, mucho. / No, no mucho.

Do you like...? — Yes, a lot. / No, not really.

Short answers: no need to repeat the whole sentence.

> —¿Te gusta el jazz? —Sí, mucho.
> *"Do you like jazz?" "Yes, I love it."*

Lo que más me gusta es...

What I like most is...

Great for talking about your city, job or hobbies.

> Lo que más me gusta de Madrid es la gente.
> *What I like most about Madrid is the people.*

Prefiero...

I prefer... / I'd rather...

To choose between two options. Preferir is stem-changing: prefiero, prefieres. Use + noun or + infinitive.

> Prefiero quedarme en casa esta noche.
> *I'd rather stay in tonight.*

¿Qué prefieres, ... o ...?

Which do you prefer, ... or ...?

A perfect conversation starter in class or on a first meeting.

> ¿Qué prefieres, la playa o la montaña?
> *Which do you prefer, the beach or the mountains?*

Me too, me neither: the golden rule

Spanish has two pairs. Choose the pair by the VERB: normal verbs (vivo, trabajo, quiero) → yo; gustar-type verbs (me gusta, me encanta, me interesa) → a mí. Then choose also/neither by the sentence: positive → también, negative → tampoco.

Yo también.

Me too. / So do I. / So am I.

EXPRESSION · A1

Agrees with a POSITIVE sentence that uses a normal verb (vivo, trabajo, tengo, soy, estoy...). The person says something positive, and it's true for you too.

- —Trabajo desde casa. —Yo también.
  "I work from home." "So do I."
- —Estoy cansadísima. —Yo también.
  "I'm exhausted." "Me too."

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ —Me gusta el café. —~~*Yo también~~. → ✓ A mí también. (Gustar needs a mí.)

Yo tampoco.

Me neither. / Neither do I. / Nor am I.

EXPRESSION A1

Agrees with a NEGATIVE sentence that uses a normal verb. The other person says 'no...', and it's 'no' for you too.

› —No tengo coche. —Yo tampoco.
"I don't have a car." "Neither do I."

› —No entiendo nada. —Yo tampoco.
"I don't understand a thing." "Me neither."

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo también no~~. / ✗ ~~*Yo no también~~. → ✓ Yo tampoco.

A mí también.

Me too. / So do I.

EXPRESSION A1

Agrees with a POSITIVE sentence that uses gustar or a similar verb (encantar, interesar, apetecer, doler...). Because the original sentence starts with me (me gusta), your answer starts with a mí.

› —Me encanta esta canción. —¡A mí también!
"I love this song." "Me too!"

› —Me interesa mucho la política. —A mí también.
"I'm really interested in politics." "So am I."

NOTE Mí has an accent here (it's a pronoun). Mi without an accent means 'my'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me también~~. → ✓ A mí también.

A mí tampoco.

Me neither. / Neither do I.

EXPRESSION A1

Agrees with a NEGATIVE sentence that uses gustar or a similar verb.

› —No me gusta el fútbol. —A mí tampoco.
"I don't like football." "Me neither."

› —No me apetece salir. —A mí tampoco.
"I don't feel like going out." "Neither do I."

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo tampoco (after no me gusta~~) → ✓ A mí tampoco.

Yo sí. / Yo no.

I do. / I don't. (I am. / I'm not.)

EXPRESSION A1

To DISAGREE politely with a normal verb. Positive sentence + you're different → Yo no. Negative sentence + you're different → Yo sí.

› —Yo hablo alemán. —Yo no.
"I speak German." "I don't."

› —No tengo hermanos. —Yo sí, tengo dos.
"I don't have any brothers or sisters." "I do, I've got two."

A mí sí. / A mí no.

I do. / I don't.

EXPRESSION A1

To DISAGREE with a gustar-type sentence. 'No me gusta…' → A mí sí. 'Me gusta…' → A mí no. Add a short reason to sound friendly.

› —Me encanta el picante. —A mí no, ¡es demasiado fuerte!
"I love spicy food." "I don't, it's too hot!"

› —No me gustan los gatos. —Pues a mí sí.
"I don't like cats." "Well, I do."

NOTE Pues at the start (Pues a mí sí) sounds very natural when you disagree.

Giving a simple opinion

Creo que…

I think (that)…

The most common way to give an opinion. Always keep que: ✗ ~~*Creo es caro~~ → ✓ Creo que es caro.

> Creo que es una buena idea.
> *I think it's a good idea.*

Creo que sí. / Creo que no.

I think so. / I don't think so.

Short answers. Don't translate 'so': ✗ ~~*Creo así~~.

> —¿Viene Diego a la cena? —Creo que sí.
> *"Is Diego coming to dinner?" "I think so."*

Pienso que…

I think (that)…

Same as creo que, slightly more 'thought-through'. Creo que is more frequent in conversation.

> Pienso que el español no es tan difícil.
> *I think Spanish isn't that hard.*

Para mí,…

For me,… / In my view,… / Personally,…

New meaning: at A1 you learnt it for ordering (Para mí, un café). Here it introduces your personal opinion or taste.

> Para mí, la mejor estación es el otoño.
> *For me, the best season is autumn.*

¿Y tú qué piensas?

And what do you think?

Bounce the question back. It keeps the conversation going.

> A mí me gusta mucho. ¿Y tú qué piensas?
> *I really like it. What do you think?*

Es bonito.

It's nice. / It's pretty.

For places, things and ideas you like. Bonito is the everyday 'nice' for things you can see.

> Tu barrio es muy bonito.
> *Your neighbourhood is really nice.*

Es interesante.
It's interesting.
Neutral-positive. Remember: interesante (the thing) vs me interesa (you).

> El libro es muy interesante.
> *The book is really interesting.*

Es aburrido.
It's boring.
With ser, aburrido = boring. With estar, it means bored (Estoy aburrido).

> La película es un poco aburrida.
> *The film is a bit boring.*

Es divertido.
It's fun.
For activities, plans, games and people who are fun to be with.

> Aprender idiomas es muy divertido.
> *Learning languages is really fun.*

Está bien.
It's fine. / It's OK. / It's not bad.
A neutral, approving opinion — not enthusiastic. Note: estar + bien, never ~~*es bien~~.

> —¿Qué tal el hotel? —Está bien, es limpio y céntrico.
> *"How's the hotel?" "It's fine — clean and central."*

No está mal.
It's not bad. / It's pretty good.
Very Spanish understatement: often means 'actually quite good'.

> La paella no está mal, ¿eh?
> *The paella's pretty good, isn't it?*

Es verdad.
That's true. / True.
To agree with a fact someone says.

> —Madrid es muy caro. —Es verdad.
> *"Madrid is really expensive." "That's true."*

Reacting: ¡Qué...!

¡Qué + adjective! / ¡Qué + noun!

How...! / What a...! / That's so...!

EXPRESSION · A1

PATTERN ¡Qué + adjective! (¡Qué bien!, ¡Qué bonito!) · ¡Qué + noun! (¡Qué pena!, ¡Qué alegría!)

The pattern behind the reactions you know from section 7 (¡Qué bien!, ¡Qué pena!). It's the fastest way to react to news. Put any adjective or feeling noun after qué and you have a natural reaction. Qué always has an accent in exclamations.

- —Tengo trabajo nuevo. —¡Qué bien! ¡Enhorabuena!
  "I've got a new job." "That's great! Congratulations!"
- —No puedo ir a la fiesta. —¡Qué pena!
  "I can't come to the party." "What a shame!"

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¡Qué un día~~! → ✓ ¡Qué día! (no un/una after qué). ✗ *~~¡Cómo bonito~~! → ✓ ¡Qué bonito!

More reactions

¡Qué mal!
Oh no! / That's awful!
Sympathy when something goes wrong.

> —He perdido el móvil. —¡Qué mal!
> *"I've lost my phone." "Oh no, that's awful!"*

¡Qué alegría!
How lovely! / I'm so happy!
Warm, emotional happiness — for good news or seeing someone you love.

> ¡Lucía! ¡Qué alegría verte!
> *Lucía! It's so lovely to see you!*

¡Qué triste!
That's so sad!
For sad stories or news.

> —El bar de la esquina cierra. —¡Qué triste!
> *"The bar on the corner is closing." "That's so sad!"*

¡Qué divertido!
What fun! / That sounds fun!
For plans and stories.

> —Vamos a hacer karaoke. —¡Qué divertido!
> *"We're going to do karaoke." "That sounds fun!"*

¡Qué sueño! INFORMAL
I'm so sleepy!
Literally 'what sleepiness!'. Very common at work or in class.

> Uf, ¡qué sueño! Necesito un café.
> *Ugh, I'm so sleepy! I need a coffee.*

Feelings & opinions: typical mistakes

'Me too' after gustar

✗ —Me gusta el cine. —~~*Yo también~~.

✓ —Me gusta el cine. —A mí también.

Gustar sentences start with me (me gusta), so the short answer starts with a mí. Yo también is for normal verbs (—Vivo en Sevilla. —Yo también).

› —Me encantan los perros. —A mí también.
"I love dogs." "Me too."

REMEMBER Listen for the first word: if it was me..., answer with a mí...

'Me neither', not 'me also not'

✗ —No me gusta el café. —~~*A mí también no~~.

✓ —No me gusta el café. —A mí tampoco.

Tampoco = también + no in one word. After a negative sentence, always use tampoco.

› —No tengo tiempo. —Yo tampoco.
"I don't have time." "Me neither."

Interested: me interesa, not estoy interesado

✗ ~~*Estoy interesado en el arte~~.

✓ Me interesa el arte.

Estoy interesado/a en exists, but it sounds formal (like in a business email). In conversation, use me interesa. And don't confuse interesado (interested) with interesante (interesting).

› Me interesan mucho las otras culturas.
I'm really interested in other cultures.

No 'mucho' with encantar

✗ *~~Me encanta mucho la playa~~.

✓ Me encanta la playa. / Me gusta mucho la playa.

Encantar already means 'like a lot'. Use either me encanta OR me gusta mucho.

› Me encanta tu chaqueta.
I love your jacket.

Opinions need que

✗ *~~Creo es una buena idea~~.

✓ Creo que es una buena idea.

English can drop 'that' (I think it's...). Spanish can't drop que after creo, pienso, me parece...

› Pienso que tienes razón.
I think you're right.

Bored or boring?

✗ *~~Soy aburrido~~. (meaning 'I'm bored right now')

✓ Estoy aburrido.

Soy aburrido means 'I'm a boring person'! For how you feel now, use estar.

› Estoy aburrida. ¿Vemos una peli?
I'm bored. Shall we watch a film?

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

12 · Numbers, question words and the little words that hold every sentence together

Everyday vocabulary

This is the toolbox you'll use in every single conversation: numbers for prices, phone numbers and ages; question words to get information; and the small words for 'this', 'my' and 'you'. Learn the tables, but pay special attention to the notes: that's where the traps are.

Numbers 0–20

From 16 to 19 the numbers are written as one word: dieci + number. Watch the accent on dieciséis.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
cero	*zero / nought / 'oh'*	**Mi número empieza por cero, cero, cuatro, cuatro.** *My number starts with double-oh, four, four.*
uno / un / una	*one*	Before a masculine noun: un (un café). Before a feminine noun: una (una cerveza). Counting: uno. **Un café y una tostada, por favor.** *A coffee and a piece of toast, please.*
dos	*two*	
tres	*three*	
cuatro	*four*	
cinco	*five*	
seis	*six*	
siete	*seven*	
ocho	*eight*	
nueve	*nine*	
diez	*ten*	
once	*eleven*	Not English 'once' (= una vez). **La clase es a las once.** *The class is at eleven.*
doce	*twelve*	
trece	*thirteen*	
catorce	*fourteen*	
quince	*fifteen*	'Quince días' = two weeks / a fortnight. **Me voy de vacaciones quince días.** *I'm going on holiday for two weeks.*
dieciséis	*sixteen*	One word, with an accent on the é.
diecisiete	*seventeen*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
dieciocho	*eighteen*	
diecinueve	*nineteen*	
veinte	*twenty*	

Numbers 21–100

21 to 29 are one word (veinti-). From 31, they're three words: treinta y uno, cuarenta y dos… The 'y' only goes between tens and units.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
veintiuno / veintiún / veintiuna	*twenty-one*	Like 'uno': veintiún años (m), veintiuna personas (f). Accent on veintiún. **Mi hermano tiene veintiún años.** *My brother is twenty-one.*
veintidós	*twenty-two*	Accent: veintidós, veintitrés, veintiséis.
veintitrés	*twenty-three*	
veinticuatro	*twenty-four*	**La farmacia abre veinticuatro horas.** *The chemist's is open 24 hours.*
veintiséis	*twenty-six*	
treinta	*thirty*	
treinta y uno	*thirty-one*	Three words from 31 onwards. Also: treinta y un euros, treinta y una horas.
cuarenta	*forty*	
cincuenta	*fifty*	
sesenta	*sixty*	Sesenta (60) vs setenta (70): s-s vs s-t. Say them slowly.
setenta	*seventy*	
ochenta	*eighty*	
noventa	*ninety*	
cien	*a hundred / one hundred (exactly)*	Exactly 100 = cien, also before nouns and mil: cien euros, cien mil. Never ~~*un cien~~. **Son cien euros.** *It's a hundred euros.*
ciento uno	*a hundred and one*	From 101 to 199, use ciento: ciento veinte, ciento cincuenta. No 'y' after ciento: ~~*ciento y veinte~~. **Vivo en el número ciento doce.** *I live at number 112.*

Big numbers

Hundreds agree with the noun: doscientos euros, doscientas personas. Watch the irregular ones.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
doscientos / doscientas	*two hundred*	Agrees in gender: doscientas libras. **El billete cuesta doscientos euros.** *The ticket costs two hundred euros.*
trescientos / trescientas	*three hundred*	
quinientos / quinientas	*five hundred*	Irregular: NOT ~~*cincocientos~~.
setecientos / setecientas	*seven hundred*	Irregular: siete → sete-.
novecientos / novecientas	*nine hundred*	Irregular: nueve → nove-.
mil	*a thousand / one thousand*	Never ~~*un mil~~. Plural: dos mil, tres mil (mil never changes). **El piso cuesta mil euros al mes.** *The flat costs a thousand euros a month.*
dos mil veintiséis	*two thousand and twenty-six (2026)*	Years are said as normal numbers: 2026 = dos mil veintiséis, 1998 = mil novecientos noventa y ocho.
un millón (de)	*a million*	Needs 'de' before a noun: un millón de personas, dos millones de euros. **Madrid tiene más de tres millones de habitantes.** *Madrid has more than three million inhabitants.*
1.500 / 2,5	*1,500 / 2.5*	Spain uses a point for thousands and a comma for decimals: the opposite of English. 2,5 = dos coma cinco.

Ordinal numbers

For floors, order, dates of events and lists. They agree like adjectives: el primer piso, la primera calle. In everyday Spanish, people normally stop using ordinals after 'décimo'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
primero / primer / primera	*first (1.º / 1.ª)*	Primer before a masculine singular noun: el primer día. Dates: el primero de mayo (or el uno de mayo). **Es la primera vez que vengo a España.** *It's the first time I've come to Spain.*
segundo/a	*second (2.º / 2.ª)*	**Vivo en el segundo piso.** *I live on the second floor.*
tercero / tercer / tercera	*third (3.º / 3.ª)*	Tercer before a masculine singular noun: el tercer piso.
cuarto/a	*fourth*	Also means 'quarter' (las dos y cuarto) and 'room' (el cuarto de baño).
quinto/a	*fifth*	
sexto/a	*sixth*	
séptimo/a	*seventh*	Accent on the é.
octavo/a	*eighth*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
noveno/a	*ninth*	
décimo/a	*tenth*	Accent on the é. **Mi oficina está en la décima planta.** *My office is on the tenth floor.*

Question words

All question words carry an accent, also in indirect questions ('No sé dónde está'). And every question opens with ¿.

¿qué? *what? / which?*

PRONOUN · A1

For definitions and general 'what' questions, and before a noun: ¿Qué libro...? (which book...?).

› ¿Qué haces esta tarde?
What are you doing this afternoon?

› ¿Qué música te gusta?
What kind of music do you like?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Qué hora es?** *What time is it?* · **¿Qué tal?** *How are you?*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Qué es tu número de teléfono~~? → ✓ ¿Cuál es tu número de teléfono? (see cuál).

¿cuál? / ¿cuáles? *which? / what?*

PRONOUN · A1

To choose between options, and with 'ser' when asking for specific information (name, number, address). Not used directly before a noun in standard Spain Spanish.

› ¿Cuál es tu dirección?
What's your address?

› Tengo dos camisetas. ¿Cuál prefieres?
I've got two T-shirts. Which one do you prefer?

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Qué es...? asks for a definition (¿Qué es un 'pincho'?). ¿Cuál es...? asks for a specific one (¿Cuál es tu plato favorito?).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Cuál es tu nombre~~? is understood but sounds translated → ✓ ¿Cómo te llamas?

¿quién? / ¿quiénes?

who?

PRONOUN A1

Asks about people. Plural 'quiénes' when you expect more than one person.

› ¿Quién es esa chica?
Who's that girl?

› ¿Quiénes vienen a la cena?
Who's coming to dinner?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿De quién es?** *Whose is it?* · **¿Con quién vives?** *Who do you live with?*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Quién vives con~~? → ✓ ¿Con quién vives? The preposition goes first.

¿dónde? / ¿adónde? / ¿de dónde?

where? / where (to)? / where from?

ADVERB A1

¿Dónde? = location (with estar, vivir, trabajar). ¿Adónde? = direction, with ir (also written ¿a dónde?). ¿De dónde? = origin.

› ¿Dónde trabajas?
Where do you work?

› ¿Adónde vas de vacaciones?
Where are you going on holiday?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Dónde vas~~? is common in speech, but the standard is ✓ ¿Adónde vas? / ¿A dónde vas?

¿cuándo?

when?

ADVERB A1

Asks about time. For clock time, '¿A qué hora...?' is more precise.

› ¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?
When's your birthday?

› ¿Cuándo vuelves de Londres?
When are you back from London?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Desde cuándo...?** *Since when...? / How long...?* · **¿A qué hora empieza?** *What time does it start?*

¿cómo? *how? / what... like?*

ADVERB A1

Asks about manner or description. '¿Cómo es...?' = What is... like? (description). '¿Cómo?' alone = Sorry? / Pardon?

› ¿Cómo vas al trabajo?
How do you get to work?

› ¿Cómo es tu ciudad?
What's your city like?

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Cómo es Ana? = What's Ana like? (personality, looks) vs ¿Cómo está Ana? = How's Ana? (health, mood).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Qué es tu ciudad como~~? → ✓ ¿Cómo es tu ciudad?

¿cuánto? / ¿cuánta? / ¿cuántos? / ¿cuántas? *how much? / how many?*

DETERMINER A1

Agrees with the noun that follows: ¿cuánto dinero?, ¿cuánta leche?, ¿cuántos años?, ¿cuántas personas? Alone, '¿Cuánto?' asks the price or quantity.

› ¿Cuántos hermanos tienes?
How many brothers and sisters have you got?

› ¿Cuánta gente viene?
How many people are coming?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Cuántos personas~~? → ✓ ¿Cuántas personas? (persona is feminine). ✗ *~~¿Cuánto gente~~? → ✓ ¿Cuánta gente?

¿por qué? vs porque *why? vs because*

ADVERB A1

Question: ¿por qué? (two words, accent). Answer: porque (one word, no accent). Same sound, different spelling.

› —¿Por qué estudias español? —Porque mi pareja es de Sevilla.
"Why are you studying Spanish?" "Because my partner is from Seville."

NOTE There's also 'el porqué' (the reason), but you won't need it yet.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Porque no vienes~~? → ✓ ¿Por qué no vienes? (= Why don't you come?, also a friendly invitation).

¿para qué?

what for? / why? (purpose)

ADVERB A1

Asks about the purpose or goal. Answer with 'para + infinitive'.

› —¿Para qué es esto? —Para abrir botellas.
"What's this for?" "For opening bottles."

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Por qué? = why (cause) vs ¿Para qué? = what for (purpose).

Classroom and learning words

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la goma (de borrar)	*rubber / eraser*	
la hoja	*sheet of paper / page / leaf*	¿Me das una hoja? *Can I have a sheet of paper?*
la página	*page*	Accent on the á. Estamos en la página veinte. *We're on page twenty.*
la pizarra	*board / whiteboard / blackboard*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el pizarrón.
el diccionario	*dictionary*	
los auriculares	*headphones / earphones*	**LatAm:** Latin America: los audífonos. Ponte los auriculares, se oye mejor. *Put your headphones on, it sounds better.*
el ejercicio	*exercise*	Also physical exercise: hacer ejercicio.
el nivel	*level*	Tengo un nivel A1 de español. *My Spanish is at A1 level.*
el/la profesor/a (el/la profe) PROFE = INFORMAL	*teacher*	Mi profe es de Málaga. *My teacher's from Málaga.*
el/la estudiante · el/la alumno/a	*student / pupil*	Estudiante: same form for m and f, the article shows gender.
el compañero / la compañera de clase	*classmate*	Mis compañeros de clase son muy simpáticos. *My classmates are really nice.*
el significado	*meaning*	¿Cuál es el significado de esta palabra? *What's the meaning of this word?*
la traducción	*translation*	Traducir = to translate (irregular: traduzco).
la pronunciación	*pronunciation*	Tu pronunciación es muy buena. *Your pronunciation is really good.*
el acento	*accent / written accent mark*	Two meanings: your way of speaking, and the mark ´ (also called 'tilde'). 'Café' lleva acento en la e. *'Café' has an accent on the e.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la gramática	*grammar*	
el vocabulario	*vocabulary*	
el verbo	*verb*	
el aula (f)	*classroom*	Feminine with 'el', like el agua: el aula pequeña, las aulas.
la unidad / el tema	*unit (in a textbook)*	El tema is masculine despite -a. **Hoy empezamos la unidad tres.** *Today we're starting unit three.*
el audio	*audio / recording*	**Escuchad el audio dos veces.** *Listen to the recording twice.*
la nota	*mark / grade / note*	In class, usually your mark. Tomar notas / apuntes = to take notes. **¡He sacado muy buena nota!** *I got a really good mark!*

This, that and that over there

Three distances: este (near me), ese (near you / a bit further), aquel (far from both of us). Neutral esto / eso / aquello refer to an unknown thing or an idea, and are never followed by a noun.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
este / esta	*this*	**Esta camiseta es muy bonita.** *This T-shirt is really nice.*
estos / estas	*these*	**¿Estos zapatos son tuyos?** *Are these shoes yours?*
ese / esa	*that (near you)*	**¿Me pasas ese libro?** *Can you pass me that book?*
esos / esas	*those (near you)*	
aquel / aquella	*that (over there)*	**Aquel edificio es el museo.** *That building over there is the museum.*
aquellos / aquellas	*those (over there)*	
esto	*this (thing)*	Neutral: no noun after it. ✗ ~~*esto libro~~ → ✓ este libro. **¿Qué es esto?** *What's this?*
eso	*that (thing / idea)*	Very common in conversation: '¡Eso es!' = That's it! / Exactly! **Eso no es verdad.** *That's not true.*
aquello	*that (thing over there)*	Less frequent in speech. **¿Qué es aquello?** *What's that over there?*

Possessives: my, your, his…

Possessives agree with the THING owned, not with the owner. 'Su' can mean his, her, its, your (usted) or their: context makes it clear.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
mi / mis	*my*	No accent (mí = me, after prepositions). **Mis padres viven en Escocia.** *My parents live in Scotland.*
tu / tus	*your (tú)*	No accent (tú = you). **¿Cuál es tu película favorita?** *What's your favourite film?*
su / sus	*his / her / its / your (usted) / their*	**Laura vive con su novio.** *Laura lives with her boyfriend.*
nuestro / nuestra / nuestros / nuestras	*our*	Four forms: agrees in gender and number. **Nuestra casa es pequeña.** *Our house is small.*
vuestro / vuestra / vuestros / vuestras	*your (vosotros, plural)*	**LatAm:** Spain only. Latin America uses 'su / sus' (de ustedes). **¿Cómo se llama vuestro perro?** *What's your dog called?*
su / sus (de ustedes)	*your (plural, formal / Latin America)*	**Aquí están sus llaves, señores.** *Here are your keys, gentlemen.*
mío / mía / míos / mías	*mine*	After the noun or after ser: Es mío. Un amigo mío = a friend of mine. **—¿De quién es este móvil? —Es mío.** *"Whose phone is this?" "It's mine."*
tuyo / tuya / tuyos / tuyas	*yours (tú)*	**¿Es tuya esta chaqueta?** *Is this jacket yours?*
suyo / suya / suyos / suyas	*his / hers / yours (usted) / theirs*	Can be ambiguous: people often say 'de él', 'de ella' instead. **Este bolso no es mío, es de ella.** *This bag isn't mine, it's hers.*

Subject pronouns: I, you, he…

Spanish usually drops these pronouns because the verb ending already tells you who: 'Hablo inglés' (not 'Yo hablo inglés'). Use them for emphasis or contrast.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
yo	*I*	No capital letter (unlike English 'I'). **Yo soy inglés, pero ella es española.** *I'm English, but she's Spanish.*
tú	*you (one person, informal)*	Accent! tu = your.
usted (Ud.)	*you (one person, formal)*	Uses the él/ella verb form: usted habla. **¿Usted es el señor Martín?** *Are you Mr Martín?*
él	*he*	Accent! el = the.
ella	*she*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
nosotros / nosotras	*we*	Nosotras only if the group is all female.
vosotros / vosotras	*you (plural, informal)*	**LatAm:** Spain only. Latin America uses ustedes for all plural 'you'. **¿Vosotros sois de aquí?** *Are you guys from here?*
ustedes (Uds.)	*you (plural; formal in Spain, all situations in Latin America)*	Uses the ellos/ellas verb form: ustedes hablan.
ellos / ellas	*they*	Ellos for a mixed group, even with just one man.

PRACTISE NUMBERS IN REAL LIFE

Read every number you see in Spanish: prices in the supermarket, bus numbers, the time on your phone. Then try saying your own phone number in pairs, the way Spanish speakers do: 'seis, cuarenta y cinco, treinta y dos...'.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

13 · You, your people, your home, your day, your plate, your wardrobe, the weather and your body

Topic vocabulary

Eight topics that cover your first real conversations: who you are, who you live with, what your home is like and what you do every day. Learn nouns with their article (el/la) from the start: it will save you hundreds of mistakes later. Then use the 'useful phrases' to talk about your own life.

Personal information

The words you need to fill in a form, introduce yourself or talk about where you're from. Note: nationalities and languages are written with a small letter in Spanish.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el nombre	*name / first name*	**Escribe tu nombre aquí.** *Write your name here.*
el apellido	*surname / last name*	Most Spanish speakers have two: the father's and the mother's (Laura García López). **¿Cuál es tu apellido?** *What's your surname?*
la edad	*age*	Ask '¿Cuántos años tienes?' rather than '¿Cuál es tu edad?' in conversation.
la fecha de nacimiento	*date of birth*	
la dirección	*address / direction*	In forms and conversation it usually means 'address'. **¿Me das tu dirección?** *Can I have your address?*
el código postal	*postcode / zip code*	
el número de teléfono	*phone number*	
el pasaporte	*passport*	
el DNI	*(Spanish) ID card*	Documento Nacional de Identidad. Foreign residents in Spain have a NIE. **LatAm:** Latin America: la cédula (de identidad), el INE (Mexico).
la nacionalidad	*nationality*	
inglés / inglesa	*English*	Small letter. Also the language: el inglés. **Soy inglesa, de Manchester.** *I'm English, from Manchester.*
británico/a	*British*	
escocés / escocesa	*Scottish*	
irlandés / irlandesa	*Irish*	
galés / galesa	*Welsh*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estadounidense	*American (from the US)*	'Americano/a' is also common, but in Latin America it can mean anyone from the Americas.
canadiense	*Canadian*	Same form for m and f.
australiano/a	*Australian*	
español / española	*Spanish*	The language: el español or el castellano (both correct).
mexicano/a	*Mexican*	Spelt with x, pronounced with a j sound: [mehicano].
francés / francesa	*French*	
alemán / alemana	*German*	
la profesión	*profession / occupation*	**¿Cuál es tu profesión?** *What's your profession?*
el/la médico/a	*doctor*	**Mi hermana es médica.** *My sister is a doctor.*
el enfermero / la enfermera	*nurse*	
el/la ingeniero/a	*engineer*	
el/la abogado/a	*lawyer*	
el/la programador/a	*programmer / developer*	
el/la dependiente/a	*shop assistant*	Both 'la dependiente' and 'la dependienta' are used.
jubilado/a	*retired*	**Mi padre está jubilado.** *My dad is retired.*
soltero/a	*single*	Both ser and estar are used with marital status. **Estoy soltero.** / **Soy soltero.** *I'm single.*
casado/a	*married*	Casado con (not *a): Está casada con un italiano.
divorciado/a	*divorced*	
el lugar de nacimiento	*place of birth*	
el estado civil	*marital status*	A form word: soltero/a, casado/a, divorciado/a.

Personal information — useful phrases

Soy profesora. / Trabajo de camarero.

I'm a teacher. / I work as a waiter.

No 'un/una' before a job after ser: ✗ ~~*Soy una profesora~~.

> Soy ingeniero y trabajo en Barcelona.
> *I'm an engineer and I work in Barcelona.*

Trabajo en...

I work at / in / for...

Place or company: en un hospital, en una oficina, en Google.

> Trabajo en una empresa de marketing.
> *I work for a marketing company.*

Vivo en... pero soy de...

I live in... but I'm from...

The perfect two-in-one introduction.

> Vivo en Madrid, pero soy de Liverpool.
> *I live in Madrid, but I'm from Liverpool.*

¿Me deletreas tu apellido?

Can you spell your surname for me?

At hotels, doctors', offices. Deletrear = to spell.

> Perdone, ¿me deletrea su apellido?
> *Sorry, could you spell your surname for me?*

Estoy aquí por trabajo / de vacaciones.
I'm here for work / on holiday.
When someone asks why you're in the country.

> Estoy aquí de vacaciones con mi familia.
> *I'm here on holiday with my family.*

Family

Masculine plural covers mixed groups: los padres = parents (mother and father), los hermanos = brothers and sisters, los hijos = children (sons and daughters).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la familia	*family*	Singular verb: Mi familia es grande. **Mi familia vive en Edimburgo.** *My family lives in Edinburgh.*
los padres	*parents*	Not 'relatives' (= los parientes, los familiares). **Mis padres están jubilados.** *My parents are retired.*
el padre	*father*	
la madre	*mother*	
el papá / la mamá INFORMAL	*dad / mum (mom)*	In Spain also 'mi padre / mi madre' in conversation; in Latin America 'mi papá / mi mamá' is very common among adults.
el hijo / la hija	*son / daughter*	**Tengo dos hijas.** *I've got two daughters.*
los hijos	*children (sons and daughters)*	**¿Tienes hijos?** *Have you got children?*
el hermano / la hermana	*brother / sister*	
los hermanos	*brothers and sisters / siblings*	Spanish has no everyday word for 'sibling'. **Somos tres hermanos.** *There are three of us (siblings).*
el hermano mayor / la hermana pequeña	*older brother / younger sister*	Mayor = older, pequeño/a or menor = younger. **Mi hermana pequeña estudia en Granada.** *My younger sister is studying in Granada.*
el abuelo / la abuela	*grandfather / grandmother*	Informal: el abuelito, la abuelita, el yayo, la yaya (Spain).
los abuelos	*grandparents*	
el nieto / la nieta	*grandson / granddaughter*	
los nietos	*grandchildren*	
el tío / la tía	*uncle / aunt*	In Spain, 'tío/tía' also means 'mate', 'guy' among friends (very colloquial).
el primo / la prima	*cousin*	
el sobrino / la sobrina	*nephew / niece*	**Mi sobrino tiene cinco años.** *My nephew is five.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el marido / la mujer	*husband / wife*	La mujer = woman and wife. Esposo/esposa is more formal in Spain, but standard in Latin America.
el esposo / la esposa	*husband / wife (more formal)*	
la pareja	*partner / couple*	Always feminine, even for a man: Mi pareja es Marcos. **Vivo con mi pareja.** *I live with my partner.*
el novio / la novia	*boyfriend / girlfriend*	Also 'bride / groom' at a wedding.
el suegro / la suegra	*father-in-law / mother-in-law*	
el cuñado / la cuñada	*brother-in-law / sister-in-law*	
los parientes / los familiares	*relatives*	**En Navidad vienen todos los familiares.** *At Christmas all the relatives come.*
el hijo único / la hija única	*only child*	**Soy hija única.** *I'm an only child.*
los gemelos / las gemelas	*twins (identical)*	Non-identical twins: los mellizos.
la mascota	*pet*	Always feminine. **¿Tienes mascota?** *Have you got a pet?*
el padrino / la madrina	*godfather / godmother*	
la familia numerosa	*large family*	In Spain, officially a family with three or more children.
el/la ex INFORMAL	*ex (former partner)*	Same form for m and f; plural los/las ex. **Me llevo bien con mi ex.** *I get on well with my ex.*

Family — useful phrases

Somos cuatro en casa.
There are four of us at home.
Spanish uses 'somos' + number, not 'there are'.

> Somos cuatro: mi marido, mis dos hijos y yo.
> *There are four of us: my husband, my two kids and me.*

Estoy casado/a. / Tengo pareja.
I'm married. / I've got a partner.
Talking about your relationship status.

> No estoy casada, pero tengo pareja.
> *I'm not married, but I have a partner.*

Mi hermano se llama...
My brother's name is...
Combine family words with 'se llama'.

> Mi hermano se llama Diego y vive en Lima.
> *My brother's called Diego and he lives in Lima.*

Me llevo muy bien con...
I get on really well with...
To describe your relationship with someone. Opposite: 'me llevo mal con...'.

> Me llevo muy bien con mi hermana.
> *I get on really well with my sister.*

Vivo solo/a.
I live on my own.
Solo/sola agrees with you.

> Vivo sola con mi gato.
> *I live on my own with my cat.*

Home

In Spain most people live in a 'piso' (flat). Floors are counted like in the UK: the ground floor is 'la planta baja' and the first floor is one floor up.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la casa	*house / home*	'En casa' (no article) = at home. 'A casa' = (to) home. **Hoy estoy en casa todo el día.** *I'm at home all day today.*
el piso	*flat / apartment / floor*	Two meanings: a flat, and a floor of a building (el tercer piso). **LatAm:** Latin America: el departamento (Argentina, Mexico, Chile), el apartamento. **Busco un piso en el centro.** *I'm looking for a flat in the centre.*
el apartamento	*(small) apartment / holiday flat*	In Spain, usually smaller than a piso, or a holiday apartment.
el estudio	*studio flat / study*	
el edificio	*building*	
la planta baja	*ground floor*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el primer piso (ground floor in many countries).
el ascensor	*lift / elevator*	**El edificio no tiene ascensor.** *The building doesn't have a lift.*
la escalera / las escaleras	*stairs / staircase*	
la puerta	*door*	
la ventana	*window*	**¿Abro la ventana?** *Shall I open the window?*
la habitación	*room / bedroom*	Often means 'bedroom': un piso de tres habitaciones = a three-bedroom flat. **Mi habitación es pequeña, pero tiene mucha luz.** *My bedroom is small, but it gets lots of light.*
el dormitorio	*bedroom*	Not 'dormitory'.
el salón	*living room / lounge*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la sala, el living (Southern Cone).
la cocina	*kitchen / cooker*	Also 'cooking': la cocina española.
el baño / el cuarto de baño	*bathroom / toilet*	In public places, '¿Dónde está el baño?' = where's the toilet?
el pasillo	*hall / corridor*	
la terraza	*terrace / large balcony*	Also the outdoor tables of a bar: tomar algo en una terraza.
el balcón	*balcony*	
el jardín	*garden*	
el garaje	*garage*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cama	*bed*	Me voy a la cama. *I'm off to bed.*
el sofá	*sofa / couch*	Plural: los sofás.
la mesa	*table / desk*	
la silla	*chair*	
el sillón	*armchair*	
el armario	*wardrobe / cupboard*	
la estantería	*shelves / bookcase*	
la lámpara	*lamp*	
la luz	*light / electricity*	Plural: las luces. 'Pagar la luz' = to pay the electricity bill. ¿Puedes apagar la luz? *Can you turn off the light?*
la nevera / el frigorífico	*fridge*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el refrigerador, la heladera (Argentina).
el horno	*oven*	
el microondas	*microwave*	Masculine, same form in plural.
la lavadora	*washing machine*	Voy a poner la lavadora. *I'm going to put a wash on.*
el lavavajillas	*dishwasher*	Also el lavaplatos.
la ducha	*shower*	
la bañera	*bath (tub)*	
el lavabo	*washbasin / sink (bathroom)*	In Spain also a polite word for the toilet in public places.
el váter	*toilet (the bowl)*	Also el inodoro (more formal).
el espejo	*mirror*	
la calefacción	*heating*	¿Pongo la calefacción? *Shall I put the heating on?*
el aire acondicionado	*air conditioning*	
el alquiler	*rent*	El alquiler es muy caro en Barcelona. *Rent is really expensive in Barcelona.*
el compañero / la compañera de piso	*flatmate / roommate*	

Home — useful phrases

Vivo en un piso de dos habitaciones.
I live in a two-bedroom flat.
Describe homes with 'de' + number + habitaciones.

> Vivo en un piso de dos habitaciones con terraza.
> *I live in a two-bedroom flat with a terrace.*

Vivo en un tercero.
I live on the third floor.
In Spain people often drop 'piso': un tercero, un quinto. Addresses: 3.º B = tercero B.

> —¿En qué piso vives? —En el cuarto, sin ascensor.
> *"What floor do you live on?" "The fourth, without a lift."*

Comparto piso.
I share a flat. / I live in a flatshare.
Very common among young people in Spanish cities.

> Comparto piso con dos chicas italianas.
> *I share a flat with two Italian girls.*

Es muy luminoso. / Es exterior.
It's very bright. / It faces the street.
Two key words for flat-hunting in Spain. 'Interior' = facing an inner courtyard.

> El piso es pequeño, pero es muy luminoso.
> *The flat is small, but it's very bright.*

Estás en tu casa.
Make yourself at home.
What a good host says when you arrive.

> Pasa, pasa. Estás en tu casa.
> *Come in, come in. Make yourself at home.*

Daily routine

Many routine verbs are reflexive (levantarse, ducharse): the pronoun changes with the person: me levanto, te levantas, se levanta... With body parts, use the article, not 'my': me lavo los dientes.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el despertador	*alarm clock*	No oigo el despertador. *I don't hear the alarm.*
bañarse	*to have a bath / to go for a swim*	Also to swim in the sea or a pool: bañarse en la playa.
lavarse los dientes	*to brush your teeth*	Spanish 'washes' teeth. Also 'cepillarse los dientes'. Me lavo los dientes después de comer. *I brush my teeth after lunch.*
lavarse las manos / la cara	*to wash your hands / your face*	
peinarse	*to comb / brush your hair*	
afeitarse	*to shave*	
maquillarse	*to put on make-up*	
vestirse	*to get dressed*	Stem-changing e→i: me visto. Me visto rápido y salgo. *I get dressed quickly and go out.*
el desayuno	*breakfast*	
salir de casa	*to leave the house*	Irregular: salgo. Salir DE a place. Salgo de casa a las ocho y media. *I leave the house at half past eight.*
ir al trabajo / a clase	*to go to work / to class*	a + el = al. Voy al trabajo en metro. *I go to work by metro.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
empezar a trabajar	*to start work*	Stem-changing e→ie: empiezo. Empezar a + infinitive. **Empiezo a trabajar a las nueve.** *I start work at nine.*
la comida	*lunch / food*	Two meanings: lunch (main meal in Spain) and food in general. **LatAm:** Mexico and other countries: la comida = lunch; in some places the evening meal is 'la cena'. Southern Cone: el almuerzo = lunch.
terminar / salir de trabajar	*to finish work*	**Termino de trabajar a las seis.** *I finish work at six.*
volver a casa	*to go back / come back home*	Stem-changing o→ue: vuelvo. **Vuelvo a casa en bici.** *I come home by bike.*
llegar a casa	*to get home*	Llegar A (not *en): llego a casa, llego al trabajo. **Llego a casa muy cansada.** *I get home really tired.*
merendar	*to have an afternoon snack*	Stem-changing e→ie: meriendo. Very Spanish: a snack around 5–6 pm. **Los niños meriendan un bocadillo.** *The kids have a sandwich as an afternoon snack.*
la merienda	*afternoon snack / tea*	
la cena	*dinner / supper*	
ver la tele / una serie	*to watch TV / a series*	**Después de cenar vemos una serie.** *After dinner we watch a series.*
echarse la siesta INFORMAL	*to have a nap*	Also 'dormir la siesta'. **Los domingos me echo la siesta.** *On Sundays I have a nap.*
la rutina	*routine*	
madrugar	*to get up early*	One verb for 'to get up early'. Very useful! **Odio madrugar.** *I hate getting up early.*
quedarse dormido/a	*to oversleep / to fall asleep*	**A veces me quedo dormida y llego tarde.** *Sometimes I oversleep and I'm late.*
arreglarse	*to get ready (to go out)*	**Me arreglo en diez minutos.** *I can get ready in ten minutes.*
irse	*to leave / to go (away)*	Irregular: me voy, te vas… 'Me voy' = I'm off. **Me voy a trabajar. ¡Hasta luego!** *I'm off to work. See you later!*
teletrabajar	*to work from home / to work remotely*	Also 'trabajar desde casa'. **Los viernes teletrabajo.** *I work from home on Fridays.*
el horario	*timetable / schedule / working hours*	**Tengo un horario muy flexible.** *My working hours are very flexible.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la hora punta	*rush hour*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la hora pico. **En hora punta el metro va lleno.** *At rush hour the metro is packed.*
el almuerzo	*mid-morning snack / lunch*	**LatAm:** In Spain often a mid-morning snack (11 am); in much of Latin America, lunch.

Daily routine — useful phrases

Normalmente me levanto a las...
I usually get up at...
The classic start to describing your day.

> **Normalmente me levanto a las siete menos cuarto.**
> *I usually get up at a quarter to seven.*

Primero..., luego..., después...
First..., then..., after that...
To put your routine in order.

> **Primero me ducho, luego desayuno y después salgo de casa.**
> *First I have a shower, then I have breakfast and after that I leave the house.*

Los fines de semana...
At weekends... / On weekends...
Contrast your routine: entre semana vs los fines de semana.

> **Los fines de semana no pongo el despertador.**
> *At weekends I don't set the alarm.*

No me da tiempo. INFORMAL
I don't have time (to do it).
For busy days. 'No me da tiempo a desayunar.'

> **Por la mañana no me da tiempo a desayunar.**
> *In the morning I don't have time to have breakfast.*

Food & drinks

Spanish meals are a big part of social life. Learn the basics here; restaurants and shopping come at A2. Remember: el agua is feminine (el agua fría).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la bebida	*drink*	
el café	*coffee / café*	Café solo = espresso; café con leche = white coffee; cortado = espresso with a dash of milk. **Tomo un café con leche cada mañana.** *I have a white coffee every morning.*
el té	*tea*	Accent: té (tea) vs te (you, pronoun).
la leche	*milk*	Feminine.
el zumo	*juice*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el jugo. **Un zumo de naranja natural.** *A freshly squeezed orange juice.*
la cerveza	*beer*	Una caña = a small draught beer (Spain).
el vino (tinto / blanco)	*(red / white) wine*	Red wine = vino tinto, never ~~*vino rojo~~. **¿Tomamos un vino tinto?** *Shall we have a glass of red?*
el refresco	*soft drink / fizzy drink*	
el pan	*bread*	Una barra de pan = a baguette-style loaf. **Voy a comprar pan.** *I'm going to buy some bread.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tostada	*(piece of) toast*	Classic Spanish breakfast: tostada con tomate y aceite.
el bocadillo	*sandwich (in a baguette)*	Made with crusty bread. A sandwich with sliced bread is 'un sándwich'. **LatAm:** Mexico: la torta. Many countries: el sándwich.
el huevo	*egg*	**Desayuno huevos fritos los domingos.** *I have fried eggs on Sundays.*
el queso	*cheese*	
el jamón	*ham*	Jamón serrano / ibérico = cured ham. Jamón York / jamón cocido = cooked ham.
la carne	*meat*	**No como carne.** *I don't eat meat.*
el pollo	*chicken*	
el cerdo	*pork / pig*	Same word for the animal and the meat.
la ternera	*beef / veal*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la carne de res (Mexico), la carne de vaca.
el pescado	*fish (to eat)*	Pescado = fish as food; pez = live fish in the water. **Comemos pescado dos veces por semana.** *We eat fish twice a week.*
el marisco	*seafood / shellfish*	Often plural: los mariscos.
el arroz	*rice*	Paella is a type of 'arroz'.
la pasta	*pasta*	
la patata	*potato*	**LatAm:** Latin America and Canary Islands: la papa. **La tortilla lleva patata, huevo y cebolla.** *Spanish omelette has potato, egg and onion.*
las patatas fritas	*chips / French fries / crisps*	Both chips and crisps (context tells you which).
la tortilla (de patatas)	*Spanish omelette*	**LatAm:** In Mexico and Central America, 'tortilla' = a corn or flour flatbread.
la verdura / las verduras	*vegetables / greens*	
el tomate	*tomato*	
la lechuga	*lettuce*	
la cebolla	*onion*	
el ajo	*garlic*	
la zanahoria	*carrot*	
la ensalada	*salad*	**Para mí, una ensalada mixta.** *I'll have a mixed salad.*
la fruta	*fruit*	Usually singular: Como mucha fruta.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la manzana	*apple*	In Spain, also a city block.
el plátano	*banana*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la banana (Southern Cone), el banano (Colombia, Central America), el guineo (Caribbean).
la fresa	*strawberry*	**LatAm:** Argentina, Uruguay, Chile: la frutilla.
el limón	*lemon*	
el aceite (de oliva)	*(olive) oil*	
la sal	*salt*	Feminine.
el azúcar	*sugar*	Usually masculine: el azúcar, but 'azúcar morena' (brown sugar) is also heard.
la mantequilla	*butter*	
el yogur	*yoghurt*	Plural: los yogures.
la galleta	*biscuit / cookie*	
el chocolate	*chocolate / hot chocolate*	Chocolate con churros: a classic Spanish treat.
el helado	*ice cream*	
el postre	*dessert / pudding*	**¿Qué hay de postre?** *What's for dessert?*
la botella	*bottle*	
la taza	*cup / mug*	Una taza de té = a cup of tea.
el plato	*plate / dish / course*	Primer plato = starter / first course; segundo plato = main course.
rico/a	*tasty / delicious*	With food, use estar: Está muy rico. (Ser rico = to be rich.) **¡Qué rica está la tortilla!** *This omelette is delicious!*

Food & drinks — useful phrases

¿Qué vas a tomar?

What are you having? / What would you like?

'Tomar' is the normal verb for ordering food and drinks. Formal: ¿Qué va a tomar?

> —¿Qué vas a tomar? —Un vino blanco.
> *"What are you having?" "A white wine."*

Soy vegetariano/a. / Soy vegano/a.

I'm vegetarian. / I'm vegan.

Use ser: it's part of who you are.

> Soy vegetariana. ¿Este plato lleva carne?
> *I'm vegetarian. Does this dish have meat in it?*

Soy alérgico/a a...

I'm allergic to...

Important! Alérgico A (not ~~*de~~).

> Soy alérgico a los frutos secos.
> *I'm allergic to nuts.*

¿Qué lleva?

What's in it?

Llevar = to contain, for dishes and recipes.

> ¿Qué lleva el gazpacho?
> *What's in gazpacho?*

¡Está buenísimo!
It's delicious! / It's amazing!
The best compliment for the cook. Use estar.

> **Esta paella está buenísima.**
> *This paella is amazing.*

No me gusta el picante.
I don't like spicy food.
Picante = spicy (hot). Spanish food is rarely spicy; Mexican food often is.

> **¿Pica mucho? No me gusta el picante.**
> *Is it very spicy? I don't like hot food.*

Clothes

In Spanish, many clothes are plural even when there's only one: los pantalones, los vaqueros. To talk about wearing something, use 'llevar'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la camiseta	*T-shirt*	**Hoy llevo una camiseta blanca.** *Today I'm wearing a white T-shirt.*
la camisa	*shirt*	Camisa = shirt with buttons; camiseta = T-shirt.
el jersey	*jumper / sweater*	Plural: los jerséis. **LatAm:** Latin America: el suéter, el buzo (some countries).
la sudadera	*sweatshirt / hoodie*	
la chaqueta	*jacket*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la chamarra (Mexico), la campera (Argentina).
el abrigo	*coat*	**Ponte el abrigo, hace frío.** *Put your coat on, it's cold.*
los pantalones	*trousers / pants*	Usually plural, but 'el pantalón' is also correct. **Estos pantalones son muy cómodos.** *These trousers are really comfortable.*
los vaqueros	*jeans*	**LatAm:** Latin America: los jeans.
los pantalones cortos	*shorts*	
la falda	*skirt*	**LatAm:** Argentina, Uruguay: la pollera.
el vestido	*dress*	Not 'vest' (= la camiseta interior / el chaleco).
el traje	*suit*	El traje de baño = swimsuit.
la corbata	*tie*	
el pijama	*pyjamas*	Singular in Spanish: un pijama. **LatAm:** Latin America: la piyama.
el bañador	*swimsuit / swimming trunks*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el traje de baño, la malla (Argentina).
la ropa interior	*underwear*	
los calcetines	*socks*	**LatAm:** Latin America: las medias (Colombia, Argentina), los calcetines (Mexico).
los zapatos	*shoes*	**Me quito los zapatos en casa.** *I take my shoes off at home.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las zapatillas (de deporte)	*trainers / sneakers*	'Zapatillas' alone can also mean slippers (zapatillas de casa). **LatAm:** Latin America: los tenis (Mexico), las zapatillas (Argentina).
las botas	*boots*	
las sandalias	*sandals*	
las chanclas	*flip-flops*	
el gorro	*(woolly) hat / beanie*	
la gorra	*cap*	Gorra (with a peak) vs gorro (no peak) vs sombrero (with a brim).
el sombrero	*hat (with a brim)*	
la bufanda	*scarf (for the cold)*	
los guantes	*gloves*	
el cinturón	*belt*	
el bolso	*handbag / bag*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la cartera (Argentina), la bolsa (Mexico).
la talla	*size (clothes)*	**¿Qué talla usas?** *What size are you?*
el número	*size (shoes)*	New meaning: shoe size. For clothes, use la talla. **Uso el número cuarenta.** *I'm a size 40 (EU) in shoes.*
el probador	*fitting room / changing room*	
ponerse	*to put on*	Irregular: me pongo. **Me pongo el jersey.** *I put my jumper on.*
quitarse	*to take off*	
probarse	*to try on*	Stem-changing o→ue: me pruebo. **¿Puedo probarme estos vaqueros?** *Can I try on these jeans?*
la cremallera	*zip / zipper*	
el botón	*button*	
el bolsillo	*pocket*	

Clothes — useful phrases

Me queda grande / pequeño.
It's too big / too small for me.
Quedar = to fit. Plural: Me quedan pequeños (los zapatos).

> Esta camisa me queda un poco grande.
> *This shirt is a bit big on me.*

Te queda muy bien.
It really suits you. / It looks great on you.
A compliment about clothes. Plural: Te quedan muy bien.

> Ese color te queda muy bien.
> *That colour really suits you.*

¿Tiene una talla más grande?
Do you have a bigger size?
In clothes shops. Also: ¿Lo tiene en negro? (in black?)

> ¿Tiene una talla más pequeña?
> *Do you have a smaller size?*

¿Dónde están los probadores?
Where are the fitting rooms?
Shopping essential.

> Perdona, ¿dónde están los probadores?
> *Excuse me, where are the changing rooms?*

¿Qué me pongo?
What shall I wear?
The eternal question before a party.

> Esta noche hay una cena y no sé qué ponerme.
> *There's a dinner tonight and I don't know what to wear.*

Weather

Three verbs for weather: hacer (hace sol), estar (está nublado) and haber (hay niebla). Rain and snow have their own verbs: llueve, nieva. (Seasons and months are in Time & frequency.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el clima	*climate*	Masculine despite -a. El clima de Canarias es muy suave. *The climate in the Canary Islands is very mild.*
el sol	*sun*	Hace sol pero hace frío. *It's sunny but it's cold.*
el calor	*heat*	Hace calor (weather), tengo calor (I feel hot). En agosto hace muchísimo calor en Sevilla. *In August it's incredibly hot in Seville.*
el frío	*cold*	Hace frío (weather), tengo frío (I feel cold).
el viento	*wind*	Hace mucho viento en la playa. *It's very windy on the beach.*
la lluvia	*rain*	
llover	*to rain*	Stem-changing o→ue: llueve. Only used in the 3rd person. En Galicia llueve mucho. *It rains a lot in Galicia.*
la nieve	*snow*	
nevar	*to snow*	Stem-changing e→ie: nieva. En la sierra nieva en invierno. *It snows in the mountains in winter.*
la nube	*cloud*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
nublado	*cloudy*	With estar: Está nublado. **Está nublado, pero no llueve.** *It's cloudy, but it isn't raining.*
soleado	*sunny*	Mostly in forecasts: un día soleado. In conversation, 'hace sol'.
despejado	*clear (sky)*	**El cielo está despejado.** *The sky is clear.*
el cielo	*sky*	
la niebla	*fog*	Hay niebla = it's foggy.
la tormenta	*storm / thunderstorm*	**Esta noche hay tormenta.** *There's going to be a storm tonight.*
el rayo / el trueno	*(flash of) lightning / thunder*	
la temperatura	*temperature*	
el grado	*degree*	Spain uses Celsius. 30 grados ≈ 86 °F. **Estamos a treinta grados.** *It's thirty degrees.*
bajo cero	*below zero / below freezing*	**Hoy estamos a dos bajo cero.** *It's minus two today.*
la previsión del tiempo	*weather forecast*	In conversation people say 'el tiempo': ¿Has visto el tiempo?
la ola de calor	*heatwave*	
húmedo/a	*humid / damp*	
seco/a	*dry*	**Madrid tiene un clima muy seco.** *Madrid has a very dry climate.*
fresco/a	*cool / fresh*	Hace fresco = it's chilly / cool. **Por la noche hace fresco.** *It gets chilly at night.*
templado/a	*mild / warm*	For climate and water.
el hielo	*ice*	**Un refresco con hielo, por favor.** *A soft drink with ice, please.*
el arcoíris	*rainbow*	One word; same form in plural (los arcoíris).
el chubasco	*shower (of rain)*	Typical forecast word.

Weather — useful phrases

¡Qué calor! / ¡Qué frío!
It's so hot! / It's freezing!
The most common small-talk opener in Spain.

> ¡Qué calor hace hoy!
> *It's so hot today!*

Hace un día precioso.
It's a beautiful day.
For a sunny, pleasant day.

> Hace un día precioso, ¿salimos a dar una vuelta?
> *It's a beautiful day, shall we go out for a stroll?*

Va a llover.
It's going to rain.
Forecasting with ir a + infinitive.

> Mira esas nubes. Va a llover.
> *Look at those clouds. It's going to rain.*

Está lloviendo a cántaros. INFORMAL
It's pouring down. / It's raining cats and dogs.
Heavy rain. Literally 'raining by the jugful'.

> No salgas ahora, está lloviendo a cántaros.
> *Don't go out now, it's pouring down.*

¿A cuántos grados estamos?
What's the temperature?
Asking about the temperature. Answer: Estamos a veinte grados.

> —¿A cuántos grados estamos? —A treinta y cinco.
> *"What's the temperature?" "Thirty-five."*

Body

With body parts, Spanish uses the article, not 'my': Me duele la cabeza (my head hurts), Me lavo las manos (I wash my hands).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el cuerpo	*body*	
la cabeza	*head*	Me duele la cabeza. *I've got a headache.*
la cara	*face*	
el pelo	*hair (on the head)*	Singular: Tengo el pelo largo = I have long hair. Tiene el pelo rizado. *She has curly hair.*
la frente	*forehead*	
el ojo	*eye*	Tiene los ojos verdes. *He has green eyes.*
la nariz	*nose*	Feminine. Plural: las narices.
la boca	*mouth*	
el labio	*lip*	
el diente	*tooth*	Las muelas = back teeth / molars. Dolor de muelas = toothache.
la oreja	*ear (outer)*	Oreja = the part you see; el oído = inner ear / hearing. Earache = dolor de oído.
el oído	*(inner) ear / hearing*	
el cuello	*neck*	
la garganta	*throat*	Me duele la garganta. *I've got a sore throat.*
el hombro	*shoulder*	The h is silent.
el brazo	*arm*	
el codo	*elbow*	
el dedo	*finger / toe*	Same word for fingers and toes. Toes: los dedos del pie.
la uña	*nail (finger / toe)*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el pecho	*chest / breast*	
la espalda	*back*	Not 'shoulder'. Me duele la espalda = my back hurts. **Trabajo con el ordenador y me duele la espalda.** *I work on the computer and my back hurts.*
el corazón	*heart*	
el estómago	*stomach*	Accent on the ó.
la barriga / la tripa INFORMAL	*tummy / belly*	**Me duele la tripa.** *I've got a tummy ache.*
la pierna	*leg*	
la rodilla	*knee*	
el tobillo	*ankle*	
el pie	*foot*	A pie = on foot. **Tengo los pies cansados.** *My feet are tired.*
la piel	*skin*	Also leather: un bolso de piel.
el hueso	*bone*	
doler	*to hurt / to ache*	Like gustar: me duele + singular, me duelen + plural. Stem-changing o→ue. **Me duelen los pies.** *My feet hurt.*
el dolor (de...)	*pain / ache*	Dolor de cabeza = headache; dolor de estómago = stomach ache. **Tengo dolor de muelas.** *I've got toothache.*
la muñeca	*wrist*	Also 'doll'.
la cadera	*hip*	
la sangre	*blood*	

Body — useful phrases

Me duele...

My ... hurts. / I've got a ... ache.

Me duele + singular body part, me duelen + plural. Use the article: me duele la espalda.

> **Me duele mucho el oído.**
> *My ear really hurts.*

Estoy malo/a. / Estoy enfermo/a. INFORMAL

I'm ill. / I'm not well.

'Estar malo' is the everyday way in Spain (colloquial). Careful: 'ser malo' = to be bad.

> **Hoy no voy a clase, estoy mala.**
> *I'm not coming to class today, I'm ill.*

No me encuentro bien.

I don't feel well.

A polite, neutral way to say you feel ill.

> **Lo siento, no me encuentro bien. Me voy a casa.**
> *Sorry, I don't feel well. I'm going home.*

Tengo fiebre / tos.

I've got a temperature / a cough.

Basic symptoms with tener.

> **Tengo fiebre y me duele la garganta.**
> *I've got a temperature and a sore throat.*

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

14 · The traps almost every English speaker falls into, and how to escape them

Common mistakes

These are the mistakes teachers hear every day from English speakers. They're completely normal: they come from translating English word for word. Read the right version out loud several times so that your ear gets used to it, and come back to this page before every speaking practice.

Ser, estar, tener, hay

ser vs estar: who you are vs how you are

✗ ~~*Soy cansado~~. / ~~*Soy bien~~.

✓ Estoy cansado. / Estoy bien.

Ser describes identity: name, nationality, job, personality, what something is. Estar describes states and conditions that can change: how you feel, how something is right now.

› Soy Javi, soy profesor y soy muy tranquilo.
I'm Javi, I'm a teacher and I'm a very calm person.

› Hoy estoy un poco nervioso.
I'm a bit nervous today.

REMEMBER How you feel and where you are? Use estar.

Location takes estar

✗ ~~*Madrid es en el centro de España~~. / ~~*¿Dónde es el hotel~~?

✓ Madrid está en el centro de España. / ¿Dónde está el hotel?

To say where a person, place or thing is located, always use estar, even for places that never move.

› Mi oficina está cerca de la estación.
My office is near the station.

REMEMBER Exception you'll learn at A2: events (a party, a concert) use ser for location: La fiesta es en mi casa.

Age uses tener

✗ ~~*Soy 30~~. / ~~*Soy 30 años~~.

✓ Tengo 30 años.

Spanish 'has' years. Use tener + number + años. You can drop 'años' only in a short answer: '—¿Cuántos años tienes? —Treinta.'

› Mi hija tiene ocho años.
My daughter is eight.

Hungry, thirsty, cold: tener + noun

✗ ~~*Estoy hambre~~. / ~~*Soy frío~~. / ~~*Estoy hambriento~~.

✓ Tengo hambre. / Tengo frío.

Many physical sensations that are 'to be + adjective' in English are 'tener + noun' in Spanish: tener hambre (hungry), sed (thirsty), frío (cold), calor (hot), sueño (sleepy), miedo (scared). Since they are nouns, intensify with 'mucho/mucha', not 'muy'.

› Tengo mucha sed. ¿Hay agua?
I'm really thirsty. Is there any water?

› ¿Tienes frío? Te dejo mi chaqueta.
Are you cold? I'll lend you my jacket.

REMEMBER Estoy frío means 'my body is cold to the touch' — not what you want to say!

hay vs está(n)

✗ ~~*Hay el supermercado en mi calle~~. / ~~*¿Dónde hay el baño~~?

✓ Hay un supermercado en mi calle. / ¿Dónde está el baño?

Hay introduces something new or unspecified (with un/una, numbers, or no article). Está(n) locates something specific and known (with el/la, my, this, names).

› Hay una farmacia en la esquina. La farmacia está abierta hasta las diez.
There's a chemist's on the corner. The chemist's is open until ten.

REMEMBER hay + un/una · el/la + está.

Likes and quantities

gustar doesn't work like 'like'

✗ ~~*Yo gusto el chocolate~~. / ~~*Gusto bailar~~.

✓ Me gusta el chocolate. / Me gusta bailar.

The structure is 'something pleases me'. The person goes in the pronoun (me, te, le, nos, os, les), and the thing you like is the subject.

› A mi novio le gusta mucho cocinar.
My boyfriend really likes cooking.

gusta or gustan?

✗ ~~*Me gusta los gatos~~. / ~~*Me gustan bailar y cantar~~.

✓ Me gustan los gatos. / Me gusta bailar y cantar.

The verb agrees with the thing you like: plural noun → gustan. Infinitives (activities) are always singular → gusta, even if there are several.

› Me gustan las películas de miedo.
I like horror films.

muy vs mucho

✗ ~~*Te quiero muy~~. / ~~*Está mucho bonito~~. / ~~*Hace muy calor~~.

✓ Te quiero mucho. / Está muy bonito. / Hace mucho calor.

Muy (very) goes before adjectives and adverbs: muy bonito, muy bien. Mucho (a lot / much / many) goes after verbs or before nouns: trabajo mucho, mucho calor, muchas gracias.

› Es muy simpática y habla mucho.
She's very friendly and she talks a lot.

REMEMBER Never say ~~*muy mucho~~. To reply alone, use 'mucho': —¿Te gusta? —¡Mucho!

bueno vs bien

✗ ~~*Hablas español muy bueno~~. / ~~*La película es bien~~.

✓ Hablas español muy bien. / La película es buena.

Bueno/a is an adjective: it describes a noun and agrees with it (un buen libro, una comida buena). Bien is an adverb: it describes how you do something or how you are (hablas bien, estoy bien).

› Es un buen restaurante y se come muy bien.
It's a good restaurant and the food is really good.

REMEMBER Careful: 'Estoy bueno/buena' means 'I'm hot / attractive' in Spain. To say you're well: 'Estoy bien'.

Articles and small words

Days of the week: el lunes, not 'on Monday'

✗ ~~*Tengo clase en lunes~~. / ~~*Nos vemos en el viernes~~.

✓ Tengo clase el lunes. / Nos vemos el viernes.

Spanish uses 'el' (one day) or 'los' (every week) with days, never 'en'. Los lunes = on Mondays (habit).

› Los martes voy al gimnasio.
I go to the gym on Tuesdays.

Titles: el señor García

✗ ~~*Señor García es mi jefe~~.

✓ El señor García es mi jefe.

When you talk ABOUT someone with a title (señor, señora, doctor/a, profesor/a), use the article. When you talk TO them, drop it: 'Buenos días, señor García.'

› La doctora López no está hoy.
Dr López isn't in today.

General likes and statements need the article

✗ ~~*Me gusta café~~. / ~~*Español es fácil~~.

✓ Me gusta el café. / El español es fácil.

When you talk about something in general (coffee in general, the Spanish language), Spanish uses el/la/los/las. Exception: after hablar, estudiar and aprender, languages usually go without an article: Hablo español.

› Me encantan los perros, pero no me gustan los gatos.
I love dogs, but I don't like cats.

el agua, but agua fría

✗ ~~*La agua está fría~~. / ~~*El agua está frío~~.

✓ El agua está fría.

Agua is feminine. But feminine nouns that start with a stressed a- take 'el' in the singular to avoid the sound 'la-a'. Adjectives stay feminine. In the plural it's normal again: las aguas.

› Hay un aula libre. Las aulas están en el primer piso.
There's a free classroom. The classrooms are on the first floor.

REMEMBER Same for el aula (classroom), el hambre (hunger: tengo mucha hambre), el área.

Personal 'a' before people

✗ ~~*Veo mi madre los domingos~~. / ~~*Conozco tu hermano~~.

✓ Veo a mi madre los domingos. / Conozco a tu hermano.

When the direct object is a specific person (or a pet you love), Spanish puts 'a' before it. It has no translation in English.

› Llamo a mi padre todos los días.
I call my dad every day.

› Busco un piso. / Busco a mi hijo.
I'm looking for a flat. / I'm looking for my son.

REMEMBER Not with tener: Tengo dos hermanos (no 'a').

a + el = al, de + el = del

✗ ~~*Voy a el cine~~. / ~~*Vengo de el trabajo~~.

✓ Voy al cine. / Vengo del trabajo.

These two contractions are obligatory. Only with 'el' (article), not with 'él' (he) or 'la'.

› Vamos al parque y después a la playa.
We're going to the park and then to the beach.

Going TO a place: a, not en

✗ ~~*Voy en Madrid mañana~~. / ~~*Llego en casa a las siete~~.

✓ Voy a Madrid mañana. / Llego a casa a las siete.

Verbs of movement (ir, venir, llegar, volver) use 'a' for the destination. 'En' is for where you are (estoy en Madrid) and for transport (voy en tren).

› Vivo en Bilbao, pero mañana voy a Valencia en tren.
I live in Bilbao, but tomorrow I'm going to Valencia by train.

Sentences and questions

Questions don't need 'do'

✗ *~~¿Haces tú hablar español~~? / *~~¿Haces trabajar mañana~~?

✓ ¿Hablas español?

Spanish has no auxiliary 'do/does/did'. Use the normal verb and a rising intonation. Negative: No hablo (not *~~no hago hablar~~).

› —¿Trabajas mañana? —No, no trabajo.
"Are you working tomorrow?" "No, I'm not."

Double negatives are correct

✗ *~~Hay nada~~. / *~~Conozco nadie~~.

✓ No hay nada. / No conozco a nadie.

When nada, nadie or nunca come after the verb, Spanish needs 'no' before the verb. It doesn't cancel out: it's the normal structure.

› No quiero nada, gracias.
I don't want anything, thanks.

Too many 'yo'

✗ *~~Yo me llamo Tom~~. Yo soy de Leeds. Yo trabajo en un hotel.

✓ Me llamo Tom. Soy de Leeds y trabajo en un hotel.

The verb ending already tells everyone who is speaking. Repeating 'yo' sounds heavy and a bit self-centred. Use it only for contrast: 'Yo soy de Leeds, pero ella es de Bristol.'

› —¿Qué haces? —Estudio Medicina.
"What do you do?" "I'm studying Medicine."

Adjectives go after the noun and agree with it

✗ ~~*un rojo coche / *una casa bonito / *las chicas simpáticos~~

✓ un coche rojo / una casa bonita / las chicas simpáticas

Most descriptive adjectives go after the noun, and they change for masculine/feminine and singular/plural to match it.

› Tengo un piso pequeño con una terraza grande.
I've got a small flat with a big terrace.

REMEMBER A few common adjectives can go before: buen, mal, gran (un buen amigo).

Tricky genders: el día, la mano

✗ ~~*la día / *el mano / *la problema / *el foto~~

✓ el día / la mano / el problema / la foto

Most -o words are masculine and most -a words feminine, but a few common ones break the rule. Learn them with their article.

› ¡Buenos días! Hoy es un día precioso.
Good morning! It's a beautiful day today.

› Mira esta foto de mis vacaciones.
Look at this photo from my holiday.

REMEMBER Masculine with -a: el día, el mapa, el problema, el idioma, el sofá. Feminine with -o: la mano, la foto (fotografía), la moto (motocicleta), la radio.

No capital letters for days, months, languages, nationalities

✗ ~~*El Lunes hablo con mi amiga Española en Inglés~~.

✓ El lunes hablo con mi amiga española en inglés.

In Spanish, days, months, languages and nationalities are written with a small letter. Only names of people, places and countries take capitals (España, Londres).

› Mi cumpleaños es en septiembre.
My birthday is in September.

Introducing yourself: me llamo

✗ ~~*Me llamo es Emma~~. / ~~*Mi llamo Emma~~. / ~~*Yo llamo Emma~~.

✓ Me llamo Emma. / Soy Emma.

Llamarse is reflexive: 'me' is part of the verb (I call myself). Don't mix it with 'mi nombre es' and don't confuse 'me' (myself) with 'mi' (my).

› Hola, me llamo Diego. ¿Y tú?
Hi, I'm Diego. And you?

CHOOSE YOUR TOP THREE

Don't try to fix everything at once. Pick the three mistakes on this page that you make most often, write the correct version on a sticky note, and ask your teacher to point them out whenever you make them. In two weeks they'll be gone.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

15 · Words that look English but mean something else

False friends

Spanish and English share thousands of words, which is great news. But some words look familiar and mean something completely different. These are the ones you'll meet in your first months of Spanish. Learn the real meaning, and also what to say instead.

Everyday false friends

largo ≠ English "large"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
long

ENGLISH "LARGE" MEANS
big

SAY INSTEAD For 'large' say: grande. (a large room = una habitación grande)

› Tiene el pelo muy largo.
She has very long hair.

› Es una película muy larga.
It's a really long film.

la carpeta ≠ English "carpet"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
folder / file (for papers or on a computer)

ENGLISH "CARPET" MEANS
a floor covering

SAY INSTEAD For 'carpet' say: la alfombra (rug, carpet) or la moqueta (fitted carpet, Spain).

› Guarda el documento en esta carpeta.
Save the document in this folder.

la librería ≠ English "library"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
bookshop / bookstore

ENGLISH "LIBRARY" MEANS
a place where you borrow books

SAY INSTEAD For 'library' say: la biblioteca.

› Compro libros en una librería pequeña del barrio.
I buy books in a small bookshop in my neighbourhood.

› Estudio en la biblioteca.
I study at the library.

el éxito ≠ English "exit"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
success / hit

ENGLISH "EXIT" MEANS
the way out

SAY INSTEAD For 'exit' say: la salida. ('Salida de emergencia' = emergency exit.)

› La fiesta fue un éxito.
The party was a success.

› ¿Dónde está la salida?
Where's the exit?

la ropa ≠ English "rope"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
clothes / clothing

ENGLISH "ROPE" MEANS
a thick cord

SAY INSTEAD For 'rope' say: la cuerda.

› Tengo que lavar la ropa.
I have to wash my clothes.

la sopa ≠ English "soap"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
soup

ENGLISH "SOAP" MEANS
what you wash with

SAY INSTEAD For 'soap' say: el jabón.

› En invierno ceno sopa casi todos los días.
In winter I have soup for dinner almost every day.

› No hay jabón en el baño.
There's no soap in the bathroom.

el vaso ≠ English "vase"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
(drinking) glass

ENGLISH "VASE" MEANS
a container for flowers

SAY INSTEAD For 'vase' say: el jarrón (or el florero). Note: a glass of wine is 'una copa' (with a stem).

› ¿Me das un vaso de agua?
Can I have a glass of water?

once ≠ English "once"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
eleven (11)

ENGLISH "ONCE" MEANS
one time

SAY INSTEAD For 'once' say: una vez. (once a week = una vez a la semana)

- La tienda abre a las once.
  The shop opens at eleven.
- Voy al gimnasio una vez a la semana.
  I go to the gym once a week.

el campo ≠ English "camp"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
countryside / field / (sports) pitch

ENGLISH "CAMP" MEANS
a place with tents

SAY INSTEAD For 'camp' say: el campamento (summer camp) or el camping (campsite).

- Los fines de semana vamos al campo.
  At weekends we go to the countryside.
- Mis hijos van a un campamento en julio.
  My kids go to a summer camp in July.

la moneda ≠ English "money"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
coin / currency

ENGLISH "MONEY" MEANS
money in general

SAY INSTEAD For 'money' say: el dinero (informal Spain: la pasta; Latin America: la plata).

- ¿Tienes una moneda de un euro?
  Have you got a one-euro coin?
- No tengo dinero.
  I haven't got any money.

la carta ≠ English "card"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
letter (that you post) / menu (in a restaurant)

ENGLISH "CARD" MEANS
a card (birthday card, bank card)

SAY INSTEAD For 'card' say: la tarjeta (tarjeta de crédito, tarjeta de cumpleaños). Playing cards are 'las cartas'.

- ¿Nos trae la carta, por favor?
  Could you bring us the menu, please?
- ¿Puedo pagar con tarjeta?
  Can I pay by card?

el pan ≠ English "pan"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
bread

ENGLISH "PAN" MEANS
a frying pan or saucepan

SAY INSTEAD For 'pan' say: la sartén (frying pan) or la olla / el cazo (saucepan).

› Compramos el pan en la panadería.
We buy our bread at the bakery.

› Calienta el aceite en la sartén.
Heat the oil in the frying pan.

la parada ≠ English "parade"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
stop (bus, tram, taxi)

ENGLISH "PARADE" MEANS
a procession in the street

SAY INSTEAD For 'parade' say: el desfile.

› La parada del autobús está enfrente.
The bus stop is opposite.

la cola ≠ English "cola (Coke)"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
queue / line (of people) / tail

ENGLISH "COLA (COKE)" MEANS
a fizzy drink

SAY INSTEAD The drink is also 'una cola' or 'una Coca-Cola', but in everyday Spanish 'la cola' is most often a queue: hacer cola = to queue.

› Hay mucha cola en el supermercado.
There's a long queue at the supermarket.

MAKE THEM FUNNY

False friends are easier to remember if you picture the mistake: someone washing their hands with soup (sopa), or putting flowers in a drinking glass (vaso). The sillier the image, the better it sticks.

A1 · ESSENTIAL SPANISH

16 · Words that love to go together

Useful collocations

A collocation is a natural word partnership: in Spanish you 'have' hunger (tener hambre) and you 'make' the bed (hacer la cama). Translating from English often gives you the wrong verb, so learn these as blocks. They're organised by verb: master one verb at a time.

tener + noun: how you feel

Where English says 'I am hungry, cold, sleepy…', Spanish says 'I have hunger, cold, sleep…'. These are nouns, so intensify with mucho/mucha: tengo mucha hambre, tengo mucho frío.

tener hambre
to be hungry
Hambre is feminine (el hambre, mucha hambre).

> Tengo mucha hambre. ¿Comemos ya?
> *I'm starving. Shall we eat now?*

tener sed
to be thirsty

> Hace calor y tengo sed.
> *It's hot and I'm thirsty.*

tener frío
to be / feel cold
About your body. For the weather: hace frío.

> ¿Tienes frío? Cierro la ventana.
> *Are you cold? I'll close the window.*

tener calor
to be / feel hot
About your body. For the weather: hace calor.

> Tengo mucho calor con este jersey.
> *I'm really hot in this jumper.*

tener sueño
to be sleepy / tired
When you want to sleep. Not 'to have a dream' (= tener un sueño, soñar).

> Tengo sueño, me voy a la cama.
> *I'm sleepy, I'm going to bed.*

tener prisa
to be in a hurry

> Perdona, tengo prisa. Hablamos luego.
> *Sorry, I'm in a hurry. Talk later.*

tener razón
to be right
About opinions. Opposite: no tener razón (to be wrong).

> Tienes razón, es muy tarde.
> *You're right, it's very late.*

tener miedo (de / a)
to be scared (of)

> Mi hija tiene miedo a los perros.
> *My daughter is scared of dogs.*

tener suerte
to be lucky

> ¡Qué suerte tienes!
> *You're so lucky!*

tener cuidado
to be careful
Often as advice: ¡Ten cuidado!

> Ten cuidado, el suelo está mojado.
> *Be careful, the floor is wet.*

tener ganas de + infinitive
to feel like / to look forward to
Very frequent: what you want to do.

> Tengo ganas de ver a mis amigos.
> *I'm looking forward to seeing my friends.*

tener tiempo
to have time

> Hoy no tengo tiempo para cocinar.
> *I don't have time to cook today.*

hacer: doing and making

hacer la compra
to do the (food) shopping

Food and household shopping. For clothes and fun shopping: ir de compras.

> Hago la compra los sábados por la mañana.
> *I do the food shopping on Saturday mornings.*

hacer la cama
to make the bed

> Nunca hago la cama entre semana.
> *I never make the bed during the week.*

hacer los deberes
to do (your) homework

> Hago los deberes de español en el tren.
> *I do my Spanish homework on the train.*

hacer deporte
to do sport / to exercise

No article. Also 'hacer ejercicio'.

> Intento hacer deporte tres veces por semana.
> *I try to exercise three times a week.*

hacer una pregunta
to ask a question

Not ~~*preguntar una pregunta~~.

> ¿Puedo hacerte una pregunta?
> *Can I ask you a question?*

hacer / sacar una foto
to take a photo

Both are correct and common in Spain. 'Tomar una foto' is understood everywhere, but sounds Latin American.

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: tomar una foto is very common.

> ¿Nos haces una foto, por favor?
> *Could you take a photo of us, please?*

hacer la maleta
to pack (your suitcase)

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: empacar, armar la valija (Argentina).

> Mañana me voy y tengo que hacer la maleta.
> *I'm leaving tomorrow and I have to pack.*

hacer la comida / la cena
to make lunch / dinner

> Hoy hago yo la cena.
> *I'm making dinner tonight.*

hacer una fiesta
to have / throw a party

> El sábado hacemos una fiesta en casa.
> *We're having a party at home on Saturday.*

tomar: having and taking

tomar un café
to have a coffee

'Tomar' is the everyday verb for having food and drink, especially in bars.

> ¿Tomamos un café después de clase?
> *Shall we have a coffee after class?*

tomar algo INFORMAL
to have a drink / to go for a drink

The classic social plan in Spain: it can be coffee, a beer, a soft drink...

> ¿Quedamos para tomar algo el viernes?
> *Shall we meet up for a drink on Friday?*

tomar el sol
to sunbathe

> En la playa solo quiero tomar el sol y leer.
> *At the beach I just want to sunbathe and read.*

tomar el autobús / el tren
to take / catch the bus / the train

'Coger' is more common in Spain, but avoid it in much of Latin America (vulgar meaning there). 'Tomar' is safe everywhere.

Spain & Latin America: Spain: coger el autobús. Latin America: tomar el colectivo (Argentina), el camión (Mexico), la guagua (Caribbean, Canaries).

> Tomo el autobús en la plaza.
> *I catch the bus in the square.*

tomar el aire
to get some fresh air

> Salgo un momento a tomar el aire.
> *I'm just going out to get some fresh air.*

ir: going places

ir de compras
to go shopping
For clothes and fun shopping. Food shopping: hacer la compra.

> Los sábados voy de compras con mi hermana.
> *On Saturdays I go shopping with my sister.*

ir de vacaciones
to go on holiday / vacation

> Este verano vamos de vacaciones a Portugal.
> *This summer we're going on holiday to Portugal.*

ir de viaje
to go on a trip / to go travelling

> La semana que viene voy de viaje a Roma.
> *Next week I'm going on a trip to Rome.*

ir a pie / andando
to walk / to go on foot
'Ir andando' is very common in Spain; 'caminando' in Latin America.

> Voy al trabajo a pie, está muy cerca.
> *I walk to work, it's really close.*

ir en tren / en coche / en bici
to go by train / by car / by bike
Transport takes 'en'. Exception: a pie, a caballo.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: en carro (many countries), en auto (Southern Cone).

> Vamos a Sevilla en tren.
> *We're going to Seville by train.*

ir de fiesta / salir de fiesta INFORMAL
to go out partying / to go clubbing

> Este sábado no salgo de fiesta, estoy cansado.
> *I'm not going out this Saturday, I'm tired.*

ir al médico
to go to the doctor's

> Mañana voy al médico.
> *I'm going to the doctor's tomorrow.*

dar: giving (and more)

dar un paseo
to go for a walk / stroll

> Después de comer damos un paseo por el parque.
> *After lunch we go for a walk in the park.*

dar una vuelta INFORMAL
to go for a wander / a short walk or drive

> ¿Damos una vuelta por el centro?
> *Shall we have a wander around the centre?*

dar las gracias
to say thank you / to thank

> Quiero darte las gracias por tu ayuda.
> *I want to thank you for your help.*

dar un beso / un abrazo
to give a kiss / a hug

> Dale un beso a tu madre de mi parte.
> *Give your mum a kiss from me.*

dar miedo
to be scary / to scare
Works like gustar: Me da miedo = It scares me.

> Me dan miedo las arañas.
> *Spiders scare me.*

poner and quitar: at home

poner la mesa
to lay / set the table

> ¿Pones la mesa, por favor? Ya está la cena.
> *Can you set the table, please? Dinner's ready.*

quitar la mesa
to clear the table
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: levantar la mesa.

> Yo cocino y tú quitas la mesa.
> *I cook and you clear the table.*

poner la tele / música
to put on the TV / music

> ¿Pongo un poco de música?
> *Shall I put some music on?*

poner el despertador
to set the alarm

> Pongo el despertador a las seis y media.
> *I set my alarm for half past six.*

poner la lavadora
to put a wash on / to run the washing machine

> Pongo la lavadora y salimos.
> *I'll put a wash on and then we'll go out.*

More everyday partners

sacar la basura
to take out the rubbish / trash

> Te toca sacar la basura.
> *It's your turn to take out the rubbish.*

sacar al perro
to take the dog out / walk the dog
Personal 'a' because it's a beloved pet. Also 'pasear al perro'.

> Saco al perro antes de desayunar.
> *I take the dog out before breakfast.*

sacar dinero
to take out / withdraw money

> Necesito sacar dinero del cajero.
> *I need to get some money out of the cashpoint.*

pasar la aspiradora
to hoover / vacuum

> Los domingos paso la aspiradora.
> *On Sundays I do the hoovering.*

fregar los platos
to wash up / do the dishes
Stem-changing e→ie: friego. Also 'lavar los platos' (Latin America).

> Si tú cocinas, yo friego los platos.
> *If you cook, I'll do the washing up.*

quedar con amigos
to meet up with friends
Quedar con + person = to arrange to meet. Very Spanish and very useful.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: verse con, juntarse con.

> Esta tarde quedo con Lucía.
> *I'm meeting up with Lucía this afternoon.*

jugar al fútbol / al tenis
to play football / tennis
Jugar + a + el = al. For instruments, use tocar: tocar la guitarra.

> Los jueves juego al pádel con mis compañeros.
> *On Thursdays I play padel with my colleagues.*

hablar por teléfono
to talk on the phone
'Por', not *~~en~~.

> Mi hija se pasa el día hablando por teléfono.
> *My daughter spends all day on the phone.*

llamar por teléfono
to phone / call

> Te llamo por teléfono esta noche.
> *I'll give you a call tonight.*

pedir un taxi / la cuenta
to order a taxi / ask for the bill
Pedir = to ask FOR something (not to ask a question).

> ¿Pedimos la cuenta?
> *Shall we ask for the bill?*

ONE VERB, ONE WEEK

Choose one verb (tener, hacer, tomar…) and focus on its collocations for a week. Every evening, say three true sentences with it about your day: 'Tomo un café con Ana, tengo sueño, tengo ganas de dormir.'

LEVEL A2

A2

Everyday Spanish

Getting by in real life

Vocabulary for everyday situations: shopping, travelling, making plans, going to the doctor, telling simple stories about the past and describing the world around you.

AT THIS LEVEL YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Make plans, accept and decline invitations
- Travel, eat out and shop with confidence
- Explain what happened yesterday or last summer
- Describe people, places and feelings simply

16 sections **1,331** words, phrases & structures

Small words, big confidence.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

01 · The verbs that turn simple sentences into real conversations

Verbs

At A2 you stop describing and start telling: what happened, what you lost, where you met your friends, what hurts. These verbs carry everyday life. Many of them have more than one meaning (quedar, dejar, pasar, llevar), and several work like gustar, so read the structure notes carefully and say the examples out loud.

Bring, take, leave & give

The verbs of moving things and people around. English speakers often mix up llevar and traer, so start here.

llevar *to take / to carry / to wear / to have been (time)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **llevar algo / a alguien a un sitio · llevar + clothes · llevar + time + gerund**

ALSO llevarse = to take away with you (and keep): Me llevo esta camiseta. = I'll take this T-shirt. · llevarse bien con = to get on well with

One of the most versatile verbs in Spanish. Its core idea is 'to take something or someone with you, away from here'. It also means 'to wear' and is used to say how long you've been doing something.

take (away from here) — *to take something or someone to another place*

› Te llevo al aeropuerto si quieres.
I'll take you to the airport if you like.

carry — *to have something with you*

› ¿Llevas paraguas? Va a llover.
Have you got an umbrella with you? It's going to rain.

wear — *clothes, glasses, hairstyles*

› Laura lleva gafas y el pelo corto.
Laura wears glasses and has short hair.

llevar + time (+ gerund) — *to have been (doing something) for a period of time*

› Llevo dos años viviendo en Madrid.
I've been living in Madrid for two years.

takeaway food — *para llevar = to take away / to go*

› Un café con leche para llevar, por favor.
A white coffee to take away, please.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llevar a los niños al colegio** *to take the kids to school* · **llevarse bien / mal con alguien** *to get on well / badly with someone* · **llevar razón** *to be right (Spain)*

DON'T CONFUSE llevar = take there (away from the speaker) vs traer = bring here (towards the speaker).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Voy a traer el vino a tu casa (when you're not there)~~ → ✓ Voy a llevar el vino a tu casa. Think of where YOU are now.

traer *to bring*

VERB · IRREGULAR: TRAIGO, TRAES… / TRAJE, TRAJISTE, TRAJO · A2

PATTERN **traer algo (a alguien) · traer algo a un sitio**

To bring something or someone towards the place where the speaker is (or where the listener and speaker will be). It's the opposite direction of llevar.

› ¿Me traes un vaso de agua, por favor?
Can you bring me a glass of water, please?

› Javi trajo una tarta a la oficina para su cumpleaños.
Javi brought a cake to the office for his birthday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **traer algo de vuelta** *to bring something back* · **¿Qué te trae por aquí?** *What brings you here?*

NOTE Irregular past: traje, trajiste, trajo, trajimos, trajisteis, trajeron (no 'i' in trajeron).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*trayeron / *traí~~ → ✓ trajeron / traje.

dejar *to leave / to let / to lend / to stop (doing)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **dejar algo en un sitio · dejar a alguien · dejar + infinitive · dejar de + infinitive · dejar algo a alguien**

A key A2 verb with several clear meanings. The preposition after it often tells you which meaning it has.

leave (something somewhere) — *to put and not take with you*

› He dejado las llaves en la mesa.
I've left the keys on the table.

leave (a person / a partner / a job) — *to abandon, to break up with, to quit*

› Sofía dejó a su novio en verano.
Sofía broke up with her boyfriend in the summer.

dejar + infinitive — *to let, to allow*

› Mis padres no me dejaban salir hasta tarde.
My parents didn't let me stay out late.

dejar de + infinitive — *to stop doing something*

› Marcos ha dejado de fumar.
Marcos has stopped smoking.

dejar algo a alguien — *to lend (informal)*

› ¿Me dejas tu cargador un momento?
Can I borrow your charger for a sec?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dejar un mensaje** *to leave a message* · **dejar el trabajo** *to quit your job* · **¡Déjalo!** *Forget it! / Leave it!*

DON'T CONFUSE dejar (leave something/someone) vs salir (go out of a place) vs irse (to leave, to go away).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Paré fumar~~ → ✓ Dejé de fumar. To stop a habit or activity = dejar de + infinitive.

olvidar / olvidarse de *to forget*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **olvidar algo · olvidarse de algo · olvidarse de + infinitive · se me ha olvidado...**

Both forms mean 'to forget'. Olvidar + noun is direct; olvidarse de is very common in speech. The most natural spoken version is 'se me olvidó', which makes the forgetting sound accidental.

olvidar algo — *direct, a bit more neutral/written*

› Nunca olvidaré ese viaje.
I'll never forget that trip.

olvidarse de — *very common in conversation*

› Me olvidé de llamarte, perdona.
I forgot to call you, sorry.

se me olvidó / se me ha olvidado — *'it slipped my mind'*

› Se me ha olvidado la contraseña.
I've forgotten my password.

NOTE With 'se me olvidó' the verb agrees with the thing forgotten: Se me olvidaron las llaves.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Olvidé de llamar~~ → ✓ Olvidé llamar / Me olvidé de llamar. Use 'de' only with the reflexive form.

devolver *to give back / to return (something)*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: DEVUELVO · PARTICIPLE: DEVUELTO · A2

PATTERN **devolver algo a alguien / a un sitio**

To return an object to its owner or to a shop. For people going back to a place, use volver.

› Te devuelvo el libro el lunes.
I'll give you the book back on Monday.

› Quiero devolver estos zapatos. Me quedan pequeños.
I'd like to return these shoes. They're too small for me.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **devolver el dinero** *to refund the money* · **devolver una llamada** *to call someone back*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Devuelvo a casa a las ocho~~ → ✓ Vuelvo a casa a las ocho. People vuelven; things se devuelven.

enviar / mandar *to send*

VERB · ENVIAR: REGULAR, BUT STRESS: ENVÍO, ENVÍAS, ENVÍA · MANDAR: REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **enviar / mandar algo a alguien**

Both mean 'to send'. Enviar sounds a little more formal (emails, parcels, official things); mandar is the everyday choice for messages, photos and audios.

› Te mando la dirección por WhatsApp.
I'll send you the address on WhatsApp.

› Le enviamos la factura por correo electrónico.
We'll send you the invoice by email.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mandar un audio** *to send a voice message* · **enviar un paquete** *to send a parcel* · **mandar recuerdos** *to send your regards*

NOTE Watch the accent: envío, envías, envía, envían (but enviamos). Mandar also means 'to order / to be the boss': Aquí mando yo. = I'm the boss here.

regalar *to give (as a present)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **regalar algo a alguien**

To give something as a gift. Spanish has one verb for this, so you don't need 'dar un regalo' every time.

› ¿Qué le regalas a tu hermana por su cumpleaños?
What are you getting your sister for her birthday?

› Me regalaron un curso de cocina.
They gave me a cooking course as a present.

DON'T CONFUSE regalar = give as a present vs dar = give (in general).

NOTE Related: el regalo = present, gift. 'Es un regalo' in a shop = 'It's a gift' (they may wrap it: ¿Se lo envuelvo para regalo?).

pedir *to ask for / to order*

VERB STEM-CHANGING E→I: PIDO, PIDES / PIDIÓ, PIDIERON A2

PATTERN **pedir algo (a alguien) · pedir a alguien que + subjunctive (B1)**

To ask for something you want (an object, a favour, help) or to order food and drink. To ask a question is preguntar, not pedir.

ask for — *a thing, a favour, help*

› Le pedí ayuda a mi vecino.
I asked my neighbour for help.

order — *in bars, restaurants, online*

› ¿Pedimos una pizza esta noche?
Shall we order a pizza tonight?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pedir un favor** *to ask a favour* · **pedir perdón** *to apologise / to say sorry* · **pedir la cuenta** *to ask for the bill* · **pedir cita** *to make an appointment*

DON'T CONFUSE pedir = ask FOR something vs preguntar = ask a question (preguntar la hora, preguntar por alguien).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pedí por la cuenta~~ → ✓ Pedí la cuenta. No 'por': pedir already contains 'for'.

Meeting, staying & making plans

Quedar and quedarse are two of the most useful (and confusing) verbs in Spain. Learn them in phrases.

quedar *to meet up / to arrange to meet / to be left / to be (located) / to suit*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **quedar con alguien · quedar en + place/time · quedar en + infinitive · me queda(n) + adjective · queda(n) + noun**

A real Swiss-army-knife verb. In Spain it's THE verb for meeting friends. It also means 'to be left' (like faltar/sobrar), 'to be located' and, with clothes, 'to fit or suit someone' (gustar structure).

quedar (con alguien) — *to meet up, to arrange to see someone*

› ¿Quedamos mañana para tomar algo?
Shall we meet up tomorrow for a drink?

quedar en + place / time — *to agree where/when to meet*

› Hemos quedado en la puerta del cine a las siete.
We've arranged to meet outside the cinema at seven.

quedar en + infinitive — *to agree to do something*

› Quedamos en hablar el lunes.
We agreed to talk on Monday.

me queda bien / mal (gustar structure) — *clothes: to suit / to fit*

› Esa chaqueta te queda genial.
That jacket really suits you.

me queda(n) grande / pequeño — *clothes: to be too big / too small*

› Los pantalones me quedan un poco largos.
The trousers are a bit long on me.

quedar (= to be left) — *remaining quantity or time*

› Solo quedan dos entradas. / Me quedan diez euros.
There are only two tickets left. / I've got ten euros left.

quedar (= to be located) — *informal, for places*

› ¿Dónde queda la estación?
Where's the station?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿A qué hora quedamos?** *What time shall we meet?* · **tener una cita / haber quedado** *to have arranged to meet someone* · **quedar bien / mal (con alguien)** *to make a good / bad impression*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA 'Quedar' for meeting friends is typical of Spain. In much of Latin America people say 'verse con alguien' or 'juntarse'; 'quedar' = 'to be located' is very common there.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me quedo con Ana a las 8 (to mean 'I'~~;m meeting Ana') → ✓ He quedado con Ana a las 8. 'Quedarse con' means 'to keep'.

quedarse *to stay / to remain / to keep (quedarse con)*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **quedarse en un sitio · quedarse + adjective · quedarse con algo**

With the reflexive pronoun it means 'to stay' in a place. It also describes ending up in a state, and 'quedarse con' means 'to keep' or 'to take'.

stay (in a place) — *not leave*

› Este fin de semana me quedo en casa.
I'm staying at home this weekend.

stay (as a guest) — *where you sleep on a trip*

› Nos quedamos en casa de unos amigos.
We stayed at some friends' place.

quedarse + adjective — *to end up / to be left (in a state)*

› Me quedé sorprendido. / Se quedó dormido en el sofá.
I was surprised. / He fell asleep on the sofa.

quedarse con — *to keep / to take (and keep)*

› Quédate con el cambio.
Keep the change.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **quedarse sin batería / sin dinero** *to run out of battery / money* · **quedarse en blanco** *to go blank*

DON'T CONFUSE quedar = to meet / to be left vs quedarse = to stay. 'He quedado con Lucía' = I've arranged to meet Lucía. 'Me he quedado en casa de Lucía' = I've stayed at Lucía's. One little 'me' changes everything.

conocer *to meet (for the first time) / to know (people, places)*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO: CONOZCO · A2

PATTERN **conocer a alguien · conocer un sitio**

At A1 you learned conocer = to know a person or place. New at A2: in the past (pretérito indefinido) it means 'to meet someone for the first time', and 'conocer un sitio' can mean 'to visit a place for the first time'.

meet for the first time (past) — *the moment you got to know someone*

› Conocí a Diego en una fiesta en Valencia.
I met Diego at a party in Valencia.

visit / get to know a place — *go somewhere new*

› Este verano queremos conocer el norte de Portugal.
This summer we want to see the north of Portugal.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **Encantado/a de conocerte.** *Nice to meet you.* · **conocer gente** *to meet people*

NOTE New meaning: 'to meet for the first time', mostly in the past tense.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Conocí Emma ayer~~ → ✓ Conocí a Emma ayer. People need the personal 'a'. And for meeting a friend you already know: quedar con, not conocer.

invitar *to invite / to treat (pay for someone)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **invitar a alguien a algo / a + infinitive**

To invite someone to an event, and — very important in Spain — to pay for someone's food or drink. 'Te invito' normally means 'it's on me'.

> **invite** — *to an event or place*
>
> › Ana nos ha invitado a su boda.
> *Ana has invited us to her wedding.*

> **treat / pay** — *I'll pay for you*
>
> › Hoy invito yo.
> *Today it's on me.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **invitar a cenar** *to invite someone to dinner / to take someone out for dinner* · **invitar a una copa** *to buy someone a drink*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Te invito para cenar~~ → ✓ Te invito a cenar.

celebrar *to celebrate*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **celebrar algo**

To celebrate an event or good news. Also used for holding an event: 'La reunión se celebra en Madrid' (formal).

› Vamos a celebrar el aniversario en un restaurante.
We're going to celebrate our anniversary at a restaurant.

› ¡Esto hay que celebrarlo!
This calls for a celebration!

NOTE Related: la celebración. In informal Spain you'll also hear 'montar una fiesta' = to throw a party.

cumplir (años)

to turn (an age) / to keep (a promise)

VERB REGULAR (-IR) A2

PATTERN **cumplir + number + años · cumplir una promesa**

Spanish doesn't say 'to become 30': you 'cumplir 30 años'. It also means to fulfil or keep (a promise, a dream, a rule).

cumplir años — *to have a birthday / to turn*

› Mañana cumplo treinta y cinco años.
I turn thirty-five tomorrow.

cumplir + promise / dream — *to keep / to fulfil*

› Siempre cumple sus promesas.
She always keeps her promises.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Que cumplas muchos más!** *Many happy returns!* · **cumplir un sueño** *to make a dream come true*

NOTE el cumpleaños = birthday (from cumplir + años). Same form in singular and plural: los cumpleaños.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo 30 años mañana~~ → ✓ Cumplo 30 años mañana.

alquilar *to rent / to hire / to rent out*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A2

PATTERN **alquilar algo (a alguien)**

To pay to use something (a flat, a car, a bike) — or to let someone else use it for money. Context tells you which.

› Alquilamos un coche para recorrer la isla.
We hired a car to drive around the island.

› Mis tíos alquilan su piso a estudiantes.
My aunt and uncle rent their flat out to students.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **piso de alquiler** *rented flat* · **Se alquila** *To let / For rent*

NOTE el alquiler = the rent / renting. 'Pagar el alquiler' = to pay the rent.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America also uses 'rentar' (Mexico, Central America) and 'arrendar' (Chile, Colombia).

mudarse *to move (house)*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **mudarse a + place / de casa**

To change the place where you live. For moving an object, use mover.

› Nos mudamos a Barcelona el mes que viene.
We're moving to Barcelona next month.

› Me he mudado tres veces en dos años.
I've moved three times in two years.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mudarse de casa / de piso** *to move house / flat* · **la mudanza** *the move (house move)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me movo a Sevilla~~ → ✓ Me mudo a Sevilla. Mover = to move an object (mover el sofá).

Verbs that work like gustar

In these verbs the thing is the subject and the person is the indirect object: me, te, le, nos, os, les. The verb agrees with the thing: me duele la cabeza / me duelen los pies.

encantar *to love (things, activities)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **me encanta + singular noun / infinitive · me encantan + plural noun**

A stronger 'gustar': you really love something. Use it for things, food, places and activities — not for romantic love (that's querer / amar).

› Me encanta cocinar los domingos.
I love cooking on Sundays.

› A Tom le encantan las series de misterio.
Tom loves mystery series.

› —¿Vienes a la playa? —¡Me encantaría!
"Are you coming to the beach?" "I'd love to!"

DON'T CONFUSE me gusta < me gusta mucho < me encanta.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me encanta mucho~~ → ✓ Me encanta. Encantar is already strong: don't add mucho or muy.

interesar *to be interested in / to interest*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **me interesa + singular / infinitive · me interesan + plural**

Spanish says 'something interests me' rather than 'I'm interested in something'.

› Me interesa mucho la historia de Latinoamérica.
I'm really interested in Latin American history.

› No nos interesan los deportes.
We're not interested in sports.

NOTE 'Estar interesado en' exists, but it's more formal (job applications, business).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy interesado en el arte (sounds stiff in speech)~~ → ✓ Me interesa el arte.

importar *to matter / to mind / to care*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **me importa(n) algo · ¿te importa + infinitive? · no me importa**

Means 'to matter to someone'. Very common in polite requests ('¿Te importa...?' = Do you mind...?) and in 'no me importa' (I don't mind / I don't care).

to matter / to care — *be important to someone*

› Me importa mucho tu opinión.
Your opinion really matters to me.

¿Te importa...? — *polite request: Do you mind...?*

› ¿Te importa cerrar la ventana?
Do you mind closing the window?

No me importa — *I don't mind (or, in a sharp tone, I don't care)*

› No me importa esperar.
I don't mind waiting.

NOTE Also means 'to import' (goods): importar productos. Context makes it clear.

doler *to hurt / to ache*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE · GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **me duele + singular · me duelen + plural**

To talk about pain. The body part is the subject, with the definite article (not 'my').

› Me duele la cabeza.
I've got a headache.

› Después de correr me duelen las piernas.
My legs ache after running.

› ¿Te duele mucho?
Does it hurt a lot?

DON'T CONFUSE doler (to hurt, you feel pain) vs hacer daño (to hurt someone/something): Me haces daño. = You're hurting me.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mi cabeza duele / *Me duele mi cabeza~~ → ✓ Me duele la cabeza. The 'me' already says whose head it is.

parecer *to seem / to think (opinion)*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO: PAREZCO · GUSTAR STRUCTURE FOR OPINIONS · A2

PATTERN **me parece + adjective / bien / mal · me parece que + indicative · parecer + adjective**

With an indirect pronoun it gives your opinion: 'me parece caro' = I think it's expensive. Without a pronoun it means 'to seem / to look'.

me parece + adjective — *I think it's...*

› Me parece una idea genial.
I think it's a great idea.

¿Qué te parece...? — *What do you think of...? / How about...?*

› ¿Qué te parece si vamos al cine?
How about going to the cinema?

parecer (no pronoun) — *to seem, to look*

› Pareces cansado.
You look tired.

NOTE See section 11 for more opinion phrases (me parece bien, me parece que...).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*¿Qué piensas de este restaurante~~? (not wrong, but less natural) → ✓ ¿Qué te parece este restaurante?

apetecer *to feel like / to fancy*

VERB · IRREGULAR: APETECE · GUSTAR STRUCTURE · INFORMAL · A2

PATTERN **me apetece + noun / infinitive · ¿te apetece...?**

To want something right now, as a desire or craving. Extremely common in Spain for food, drinks and plans.

› ¿Te apetece un café?
Do you fancy a coffee?

› Hoy no me apetece salir, estoy muy cansada.
I don't feel like going out today, I'm really tired.

› Me apetecen unas patatas bravas.
I fancy some patatas bravas.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Very typical of Spain. In Latin America people usually say 'tengo ganas de...' or 'se me antoja...' (Mexico).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo apetezco un helado~~ → ✓ Me apetece un helado.

faltar *to be missing / to be needed / to be left (to go)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · OFTEN GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **falta(n) + noun · me falta(n) + noun · faltan + time + para · faltar a (clase, trabajo)**

Expresses that something is missing or not there yet. With time it means 'to be left until'. 'Faltar a' = to miss / not attend.

be missing — *something isn't there*

› Falta sal en la sopa.
The soup needs more salt.

me falta(n) — *I'm missing / I need*

› Me faltan dos firmas para terminar.
I need two more signatures to finish.

faltan + time + para — *time left until*

› Faltan tres días para las vacaciones.
There are three days to go until the holidays.

faltar a — *to miss / skip*

› Hoy he faltado a clase.
I missed class today.

OPPOSITE **sobrar** — to be left over / to be too much

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Falto mi familia (to mean 'I miss my family')~~ → ✓ Echo de menos a mi familia.

sobrar *to be left over / to be too much, too many*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · OFTEN GUSTAR STRUCTURE · A2

PATTERN **sobra(n) + noun · me sobra(n) + noun**

The opposite of faltar: there's more than you need, or something is extra.

› Ha sobrado mucha comida de la fiesta.
There's lots of food left over from the party.

› Me sobra una entrada, ¿quieres venir?
I've got a spare ticket, do you want to come?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **las sobras** *leftovers* · **sobra decir que...** *needless to say...*

OPPOSITE **faltar** — to be missing

costar *to cost / to be hard (for someone)*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: CUESTA, CUESTAN · A2

PATTERN **algo cuesta + price · me cuesta + infinitive / noun**

You know '¿Cuánto cuesta?'. New at A2: with me/te/le it means something is difficult for you (gustar structure).

> **price** — *to cost*
>
> › ¿Cuánto cuestan estas gafas?
> *How much are these glasses?*

> **me cuesta + infinitive** — *I find it hard to...*
>
> › Me cuesta mucho levantarme temprano.
> *I find it really hard to get up early.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **costar un ojo de la cara** *to cost an arm and a leg (colloquial)* · **cueste lo que cueste** *whatever it takes*

NOTE New meaning: 'me cuesta' = I find it difficult.

Remembering & forgetting

recordar *to remember / to remind*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: RECUERDO · A2

PATTERN **recordar algo · recordar + infinitive · recordar a alguien algo / que…**

To remember (no preposition) and also to remind someone of something. Slightly more neutral than acordarse de.

remember — *no preposition*

› No recuerdo su nombre.
I can't remember her name.

remind — *recordar algo a alguien*

› ¿Me recuerdas la hora de la reunión?
Can you remind me what time the meeting is?

remind of (similarity) — *recordar a*

› Este pueblo me recuerda a Italia.
This village reminds me of Italy.

NOTE False friend: recordar does NOT mean 'to record' (that's grabar). el recuerdo = memory / souvenir.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Recuerdo de ese día~~ → ✓ Recuerdo ese día / Me acuerdo de ese día.

acordarse de *to remember*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING O→UE: ME ACUERDO · A2

PATTERN **acordarse de algo / de alguien / de + infinitive**

The most common way to say 'to remember' in conversation. Always reflexive and always with 'de'.

› ¿Te acuerdas de Lucía, la chica de Erasmus?
Do you remember Lucía, the Erasmus girl?

› Acuérdate de comprar pan.
Remember to buy bread.

› No me acuerdo de dónde aparqué.
I can't remember where I parked.

DON'T CONFUSE recordar algo = acordarse de algo. Same meaning, different structure. Never mix them: ✗ ~~*me recuerdo de~~.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Acuerdo el viaje / *Me acuerdo el viaje~~ → ✓ Me acuerdo del viaje.

Things that happen

Verbs to tell little stories: what happened, what you lost, what broke, how long it took.

pasar *to happen / to spend (time) / to pass / to go by / to come in*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **¿Qué pasa? · pasar + time · pasar por + place · pasar algo a alguien · pasarlo bien**

A top-frequency verb with many meanings. Learn it in fixed phrases and you'll understand most of them instantly.

happen — *¿Qué te pasa? = What's wrong (with you)?*

› ¿Qué ha pasado? ¿Estás bien?
What happened? Are you OK?

spend (time) — *pasar + time period*

› Pasamos el verano en Asturias.
We spent the summer in Asturias.

pasarlo bien / mal — *to have a good / bad time*

› ¡Lo pasamos genial en la fiesta!
We had a great time at the party!

pass by / drop in — *pasar por + place*

› Paso por tu casa a las seis.
I'll drop by your place at six.

come in — *invitation to enter*

› Pasa, pasa, estás en tu casa.
Come in, come in, make yourself at home.

pass / hand — *give something to someone*

› ¿Me pasas la sal?
Can you pass me the salt?

go by (time) — *time passing*

› ¡Cómo pasa el tiempo!
How time flies!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No pasa nada.** *No worries. / It's fine.* · **pasar de algo (colloquial)** *to not care about something / to skip it*

DON'T CONFUSE pasar = happen (everyday) vs ocurrir = happen (a bit more neutral/written).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gasté el fin de semana en la playa~~ → ✓ Pasé el fin de semana en la playa. Gastar is for money; pasar is for time.

ocurrir *to happen / to occur*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · A2

PATTERN **ocurrir (algo) · ocurrírsele algo a alguien**

Like pasar = 'to happen', but more common in news and written Spanish. 'Se me ocurre…' = an idea comes to my mind.

happen — *events, accidents*

› El accidente ocurrió a las tres de la mañana.
The accident happened at three in the morning.

se me ocurre — *an idea occurs to me*

› Se me ocurre una idea: ¿por qué no cenamos fuera?
I've just had an idea: why don't we eat out?

NOTE In conversation, '¿Qué ha pasado?' is much more natural than '¿Qué ha ocurrido?'.

perder *to lose / to miss (transport, events)*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: PIERDO · A2

PATTERN **perder algo · perderse (to get lost / to miss out on)**

To lose an object, a game or time — and also to miss a train, plane or bus. 'Perderse' = to get lost, or to miss out on something fun.

lose — *objects, games, weight*

› He perdido el móvil otra vez.
I've lost my phone again.

miss (transport) — *arrive too late*

› Perdimos el último tren.
We missed the last train.

perderse — *to get lost*

› Nos perdimos en el centro de Toledo.
We got lost in the centre of Toledo.

perderse algo — *to miss out on (an event)*

› ¡No te pierdas este concierto!
Don't miss this concert!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **perder el tiempo** *to waste time* · **perder peso** *to lose weight*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pierdo a mi familia (to mean 'I miss them')~~ → ✓ Echo de menos a mi familia. Perder = to lose.

ganar *to win / to earn*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **ganar algo · ganar a alguien · ganar dinero**

Means both 'to win' (a game, a prize) and 'to earn' (money). 'Ganar a alguien' = to beat someone.

win — *games, prizes*

› ¿Quién ganó el partido?
Who won the match?

beat — *ganar a alguien*

› Siempre me gana al ajedrez.
He always beats me at chess.

earn — *money*

› Gana bastante dinero, pero trabaja mucho.
She earns quite a lot of money, but she works a lot.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ganarse la vida** *to earn a living* · **tener ganas de** *to feel like / to look forward to (different word: las ganas)*

OPPOSITE **perder** — to lose

cambiar *to change / to exchange*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **cambiar algo · cambiar de + noun (no article) · cambiar algo por algo · cambiarse (de ropa)**

To change or to swap. Notice the structure 'cambiar de' when you replace one thing with another of the same kind.

cambiar algo — *to modify / to change*

› Has cambiado mucho, ¡estás genial!
You've changed a lot, you look great!

cambiar de + noun — *replace one for another*

› Quiero cambiar de trabajo.
I want to change jobs.

cambiar algo por — *to exchange*

› ¿Puedo cambiar esta talla por una más grande?
Can I exchange this for a bigger size?

cambiarse — *to get changed (clothes)*

› Espera, que me cambio y nos vamos.
Hang on, I'll get changed and we'll go.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cambiar de opinión** *to change your mind* · **cambiar dinero** *to change money* · **cambiarse de casa** *to move house*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Cambié mi opinión~~ → ✓ Cambié de opinión.

romper *to break*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) · IRREGULAR PARTICIPLE: ROTO · A2

PATTERN **romper algo · romperse algo (accident) · romper con alguien**

To break something. With 'se' it sounds accidental (se me ha roto = it broke on me). 'Romper con' = to break up with.

break (something) — *on purpose or not*

› El niño ha roto un vaso.
The kid has broken a glass.

se me rompió — *accidental breaking*

› Se me ha roto la pantalla del móvil.
My phone screen has cracked.

romperse + body part — *to break a bone*

› Javi se rompió la pierna esquiando.
Javi broke his leg skiing.

romper con — *to break up with*

› Rompió con su novia hace un mes.
He broke up with his girlfriend a month ago.

NOTE roto/a also works as an adjective: La lavadora está rota. = The washing machine is broken.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ha rompido~~ → ✓ Ha roto. Irregular participle.

caer / caerse *to fall / to fall over / to drop*

VERB · IRREGULAR: CAIGO / CAYÓ, CAYERON · A2

PATTERN **caerse (de / en) · se me cayó algo · caer bien / mal (gustar structure)**

Caerse = to fall over (people) or fall down. 'Se me cayó' = I dropped it (by accident). And a very useful A2 extra: 'me cae bien' = I like him/her (as a person).

caerse — *to fall over / fall down*

› Me caí en la calle y me hice daño en la rodilla.
I fell over in the street and hurt my knee.

se me cayó — *I dropped (accidentally)*

› Se me cayó el móvil al agua.
I dropped my phone in the water.

me cae bien / mal — *I like / don't like (a person)*

› Tu hermano me cae muy bien.
I really like your brother.

DON'T CONFUSE me cae bien (I like him as a person, general impression) vs me gusta (often romantic attraction when talking about a person).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Dejé caer el vaso (sounds intentional~~) → ✓ Se me cayó el vaso.

tardar *to take (time) / to be long*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **tardar + time + en + infinitive · ¿Cuánto tardas en...? · no tardar**

The verb for how long something takes someone to do. English uses 'take'; Spanish uses tardar.

- ¿Cuánto tardas en llegar al trabajo?
  How long does it take you to get to work?
- Tardo veinte minutos en bici.
  It takes me twenty minutes by bike.
- No tardes, que la cena está casi lista.
  Don't be long, dinner's nearly ready.

NOTE Related: tarde (late) — llegar tarde = to be late.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Me toma veinte minutos~~ → ✓ Tardo veinte minutos. ('Me toma' is heard in parts of Latin America, but tardar is standard everywhere.)

Getting around

Verbs for directions, transport and moving through the city.

conducir *to drive*

VERB · IRREGULAR: CONDUZCO / CONDUJE, CONDUJERON · A2

PATTERN **conducir (un coche) · conducir a / hasta un sitio**

To drive a vehicle. For 'to drive someone somewhere' Spanish normally uses llevar (en coche).

- No me gusta conducir de noche.
  I don't like driving at night.
- ¿Tienes carné de conducir?
  Have you got a driving licence?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el carné de conducir** *driving licence* · **aprender a conducir** *to learn to drive*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: conducir · Latin America: manejar (carné/licencia de conducir or de manejar).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Conducí a Ana a casa~~ → ✓ Llevé a Ana a casa (en coche). ✗ *~~conducí~~ → ✓ conduje.

coger *to take / to catch / to pick up / to grab*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER), SPELLING CHANGE: COJO · A2

PATTERN **coger algo · coger el autobús / el tren · coger el teléfono**

In Spain, an all-purpose verb: take a bus, pick up an object, answer the phone, catch a cold, grab a seat.

transport — *to take / to catch*

› Cojo el metro todos los días.
I take the metro every day.

pick up / grab — *objects*

› Coge una chaqueta, que hace frío.
Grab a jacket, it's cold.

answer the phone — *coger el teléfono*

› Te llamé, pero no lo cogiste.
I called you but you didn't pick up.

catch (an illness) — *coger un resfriado*

› He cogido un resfriado.
I've caught a cold.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: coger is completely normal. In much of Latin America (Mexico, Argentina, etc.) coger is a vulgar word for sex, so use tomar (el autobús), agarrar (an object) or contestar (the phone) there.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Yo cogo~~ → ✓ Yo cojo. The g becomes j before o and a: cojo, coja.

subir *to go up / to get on / to raise / to upload*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · A2

PATTERN **subir (a) + place · subir(se) a + vehicle · subir algo**

Movement upwards. Also: to get on a bus or train, to carry something up, to turn something up, and to upload.

go up — *stairs, floors*

› Subimos andando, el ascensor no funciona.
We walked up, the lift isn't working.

get on / in — *subir(se) a + vehicle*

› Súbete al coche, que llegamos tarde.
Get in the car, we're late.

raise / turn up — *prices, volume*

› ¿Puedes subir el volumen?
Can you turn up the volume?

upload / post — *photos, files*

› Subí las fotos a Instagram.
I posted the photos on Instagram.

OPPOSITE **bajar** — to go down / to get off

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Subo arriba (redundant in careful speech)~~ → ✓ Subo. Very common in speech, though.

bajar *to go down / to get off / to lower / to download*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **bajar (a) + place · bajar(se) de + vehicle · bajar algo**

The opposite of subir: go down, get off transport, turn down, lower prices, download.

go down — *stairs, to the street*

› Bajo a comprar pan, ahora vuelvo.
I'm popping down to buy bread, I'll be right back.

get off — *bajar(se) de + vehicle*

› Tienes que bajarte en la próxima parada.
You need to get off at the next stop.

lower / turn down — *prices, volume, temperature*

› Baja la música, por favor.
Turn the music down, please.

download — *informal for descargar*

› Bájate la app del museo.
Download the museum app.

OPPOSITE **subir** — to go up / to get on

cruzar *to cross*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: CRUCÉ · A2

PATTERN **cruzar algo (la calle, el puente)**

To go from one side to the other. No preposition needed.

› Cruza la plaza y la farmacia está a la izquierda.
Cross the square and the chemist's is on the left.

› Crucé la calle sin mirar. ¡Qué susto!
I crossed the street without looking. What a scare!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Cruzé~~ → ✓ Crucé. z becomes c before e.

girar *to turn*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **girar a la derecha / a la izquierda · girar en la primera calle**

The standard verb for giving directions: turn right, turn left.

› Gira a la derecha en el semáforo.
Turn right at the traffic lights.

› Tienes que girar en la segunda calle.
You need to take the second turning.

DON'T CONFUSE girar = turn (in a direction) vs torcer = turn (Spain, informal: tuerce a la izquierda) vs doblar = turn (Latin America: dobla a la derecha).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: girar / torcer · Latin America: doblar, voltear (Mexico).

seguir *to continue / to keep (doing) / to follow / to still be*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→I: SIGO, SIGUES / SIGUIÓ · A2

PATTERN **seguir + gerund · seguir + adjective / place · seguir recto · seguir a alguien**

Means to carry on, to follow, and — very useful — 'to still be / still do' something.

seguir + gerund — *to keep doing / still doing*

› Sigo trabajando en la misma empresa.
I'm still working at the same company.

seguir + adjective / place — *to still be*

› ¿Sigues en Londres?
Are you still in London?

seguir recto — *directions: go straight on*

› Sigue recto hasta la plaza.
Go straight on until the square.

follow — *people, social media, series*

› Te sigo en Instagram.
I follow you on Instagram.

NOTE Yo sigo (no u): sigo, sigues, sigue, seguimos, seguís, siguen.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sigo a trabajar~~ → ✓ Sigo trabajando. Seguir takes a gerund (-ando / -iendo), not an infinitive.

Money

gastar *to spend (money) / to use up*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **gastar dinero en algo · gastarse (+ amount) en**

To spend money, or to use up energy, battery, water. Not for time — that's pasar.

› Gasto demasiado en comida a domicilio.
I spend too much on food delivery.

› Me gasté cien euros en la cena. ¡Fatal!
I spent a hundred euros on dinner. Terrible!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **los gastos** *expenses* · **gastar bromas** *to play jokes*

OPPOSITE **ahorrar** — to save

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gasté el día en el museo~~ → ✓ Pasé el día en el museo. ✗ ~~*Gasto dinero para ropa~~ → ✓ Gasto dinero en ropa.

ahorrar *to save (money, time, energy)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **ahorrar (dinero) para algo · ahorrar tiempo**

To keep money instead of spending it, or to use less of something.

› Estamos ahorrando para un viaje a Japón.
We're saving for a trip to Japan.

› Si vas en metro, ahorras mucho tiempo.
If you go by metro, you save a lot of time.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **los ahorros** *savings*

NOTE Three 'saves': ahorrar (money), salvar (rescue), guardar (keep / save a file).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Salvar dinero~~ → ✓ Ahorrar dinero. Salvar = to save a life / rescue. For files on a computer: guardar.

Getting dressed & sitting down

Reflexive verbs for your body and clothes. Remember: with clothes and body parts, Spanish uses el/la, not 'my'.

ponerse *to put on (clothes) / to get, become (a state)*

VERB · IRREGULAR, REFLEXIVE: ME PONGO / ME PUSE · PARTICIPLE: PUESTO · A2

PATTERN **ponerse + clothes · ponerse + adjective**

With clothes: to put on. With adjectives: a sudden, temporary change of mood or state (ponerse nervioso, ponerse rojo).

> **put on (clothes)** — *the action of putting on*
>
> › Ponte el abrigo, hace mucho frío.
> *Put your coat on, it's really cold.*

> **ponerse + adjective** — *to get / to become (suddenly)*
>
> › Me pongo nerviosa antes de los exámenes.
> *I get nervous before exams.*

DON'T CONFUSE ponerse = the action of putting on vs llevar = to be wearing. 'Me pongo el vestido' (I put it on) → 'Llevo el vestido' (I'm wearing it).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me pongo mi chaqueta~~ → ✓ Me pongo la chaqueta.

quitarse *to take off (clothes)*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **quitarse + clothes · quitar algo (a alguien)**

The opposite of ponerse. Without 'se', quitar = to remove / take away something.

› En Japón te quitas los zapatos al entrar en casa.
In Japan you take your shoes off when you go into a house.

› ¿Puedes quitar tus cosas de la mesa?
Can you move your things off the table?

OPPOSITE **ponerse** — to put on

vestirse *to get dressed*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→I: ME VISTO · A2

PATTERN **vestirse · vestirse de + colour / costume**

To put your clothes on. 'Vestirse de' = to dress in a colour or as a character.

› Me visto en cinco minutos.
I get dressed in five minutes.

› En Carnaval me vestí de pirata.
I dressed up as a pirate for Carnival.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ir bien vestido** *to be well dressed* · **vestirse de negro** *to wear black*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Me vesto~~ → ✓ Me visto.

probar / probarse *to try / to taste / to try on*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: PRUEBO · A2

PATTERN **probar algo (food, things) · probarse algo (clothes) · probar a + infinitive**

Probar = to try something (food, an activity, a product) for the first time. Probarse = to try on clothes.

probar (food) — *to taste / try*

› ¿Has probado el pulpo a la gallega?
Have you tried Galician-style octopus?

probarse (clothes) — *to try on*

› ¿Puedo probarme estos vaqueros?
Can I try these jeans on?

probar a + infinitive — *to try doing something (as a test)*

› Prueba a reiniciar el ordenador.
Try restarting the computer.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el probador** *fitting room*

DON'T CONFUSE probar = try something out vs intentar = try (make an effort) to do something difficult.

sentarse *to sit down*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME SIENTO · A2

PATTERN **sentarse (en una silla / a la mesa)**

The action of sitting down. To describe the position (being seated) use estar sentado.

› Siéntate, por favor. ¿Quieres algo de beber?
Sit down, please. Would you like something to drink?

› Estuvimos sentados en la terraza toda la tarde.
We sat on the terrace all afternoon.

NOTE Careful: 'me siento' is both 'I sit down' (sentarse) and 'I feel' (sentirse). Context makes it clear.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me senté en la mesa (= I sat ON the table~~!) → ✓ Me senté a la mesa (= at the table).

Moods & reactions

Reflexive verbs to say how you feel or how you react. More feelings vocabulary in section 11.

sentirse *to feel*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME SIENTO / SE SINTIÓ · A2

PATTERN **sentirse + adjective / adverb**

To feel (physically or emotionally). Always reflexive when followed by an adjective or bien/mal.

› Hoy me siento mucho mejor, gracias.
I feel much better today, thanks.

› Emma se sentía un poco sola en la nueva ciudad.
Emma felt a bit lonely in the new city.

DON'T CONFUSE sentirse + adjective (how you feel) vs sentir + noun (to feel something; lo siento = I'm sorry).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Siento cansado~~ → ✓ Me siento cansado. Sentir (no se) + noun: Siento frío. / Lo siento. = I'm sorry.

divertirse *to have fun / to enjoy yourself*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME DIVIERTO / SE DIVIRTIÓ · A2

PATTERN **divertirse (+ gerund / con algo)**

To have a good time. Very common in wishes: ¡Que te diviertas! = Have fun!

› Nos divertimos mucho en el karaoke.
We had loads of fun at karaoke.

› ¡Que os divirtáis en el concierto!
Have fun at the concert!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **divertido/a** *fun / funny*

DON'T CONFUSE divertirse = lo pasé bien / lo pasé genial (all mean 'I had a great time').

aburrirse *to get bored / to be bored*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-IR) · A2

PATTERN **aburrirse (de / con algo)**

To get bored. Spanish often uses the verb where English uses 'to be bored'.

› Me aburro en las reuniones largas.
I get bored in long meetings.

› Los niños se aburrieron en el museo.
The kids got bored at the museum.

NOTE See section 03: estar aburrido (to be bored) vs ser aburrido (to be boring).

enfadarse *to get angry / to get annoyed*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **enfadarse con alguien · enfadarse por algo**

To become angry or upset with someone. 'Estar enfadado' = to be angry (state).

› No te enfades conmigo, no fue culpa mía.
Don't get angry with me, it wasn't my fault.

› Se enfadó porque llegamos tarde.
She got annoyed because we were late.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: enfadarse · Latin America: enojarse (estar enojado).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Se enfadó a mí~~ → ✓ Se enfadó conmigo.

preocuparse *to worry*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **preocuparse por algo / alguien · no te preocupes**

To worry about something or someone. The phrase 'No te preocupes' is one of the most useful things you can say.

› No te preocupes, todo va a salir bien.
Don't worry, everything's going to be fine.

› Mi madre se preocupa por todo.
My mum worries about everything.

DON'T CONFUSE preocuparse por (I worry about) = me preocupa (it worries me, gustar structure). See section 11.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me preocupo sobre el examen~~ → ✓ Me preocupo por el examen / Me preocupa el examen.

Life events

nacer *to be born*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO: NAZCO (RARE) · REGULAR PAST: NACÍ · A2

PATTERN **nacer en + place / year**

Spanish uses an active verb: 'I was born' = nací. No 'ser' or 'estar'.

› Nací en Manchester en 1994.
I was born in Manchester in 1994.

› ¿Cuándo nació tu sobrina?
When was your niece born?

OPPOSITE **morir** — to die

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Fui nacido en Londres / *Estaba nacido~~ → ✓ Nací en Londres.

casarse *to get married*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **casarse con alguien · estar casado/a**

To get married. You marry 'con' someone. To describe the state, use estar casado/a.

› Marcos se casa con Lucía en junio.
Marcos is marrying Lucía in June.

› Mis padres llevan cuarenta años casados.
My parents have been married for forty years.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la boda** *wedding* · **recién casados** *newlyweds*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Se casó a Lucía / *Se casó Lucía~~ → ✓ Se casó con Lucía.

Getting things done

Verbs to talk about starting, finishing, trying and explaining.

empezar a *to start (doing) / to begin*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: EMPIEZO · EMPECÉ · A2

PATTERN **empezar algo · empezar a + infinitive**

Before an infinitive you need 'a': empezar a trabajar, empezar a llover.

› Empecé a estudiar español el año pasado.
I started learning Spanish last year.

› Ha empezado a llover.
It's started raining.

DON'T CONFUSE empezar = comenzar (a bit more formal). Same pattern: comenzar a + infinitive.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Empecé estudiar~~ → ✓ Empecé a estudiar.

terminar / terminar de *to finish / to end*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A2

PATTERN **terminar algo · terminar de + infinitive · terminar en / con**

To finish something. Before an infinitive use 'de': terminar de comer = to finish eating.

› ¿A qué hora terminas de trabajar?
What time do you finish work?

› La película termina muy bien.
The film has a really good ending.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Terminé comer / *Terminé comiendo (= I ended up eating~~) → ✓ Terminé de comer.

acabar *to finish / to end / to have just (done)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A2

PATTERN **acabar algo · acabar de + infinitive · acabarse (to run out)**

A synonym of terminar, very common in Spain. Two extra uses: 'acabar de + infinitive' = to have just done something, and 'se ha acabado' = it's run out.

finish — = *terminar*

› ¿Has acabado el informe?
Have you finished the report?

acabar de + infinitive — *to have just done*

› Acabo de llegar a casa.
I've just got home.

acabarse — *to run out*

› Se ha acabado la leche.
We've run out of milk.

COMMON MISTAKE English 'I've just arrived' → ✗ ~~*He justo llegado~~ → ✓ Acabo de llegar.

intentar *to try (to do something)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) A2

PATTERN **intentar + infinitive · intentarlo**

To make an effort to do something, maybe without success. No preposition before the infinitive.

› Intento hablar español con mis compañeros.
I try to speak Spanish with my colleagues.

› No sé si puedo ir, pero lo intento.
I don't know if I can go, but I'll try.

DON'T CONFUSE intentar + infinitive = tratar de + infinitive (same meaning). probar = try something out (food, clothes).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Intento a llamar / *Trato a llamar~~ → ✓ Intento llamar / Trato de llamar.

decidir *to decide*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · A2

PATTERN **decidir algo · decidir + infinitive · decidirse (a)**

To make a decision. 'Decidirse' = to make up your mind after doubting.

› Hemos decidido quedarnos en casa este verano.
We've decided to stay at home this summer.

› ¿Ya te has decidido? ¿Pizza o pasta?
Have you made up your mind yet? Pizza or pasta?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar una decisión** *to make a decision*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hacer una decisión~~ → ✓ Tomar una decisión.

explicar *to explain*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING CHANGE: EXPLIQUÉ · A2

PATTERN **explicar algo a alguien**

To make something clear to someone. The person is an indirect object (le/les).

› ¿Me puedes explicar cómo funciona esto?
Can you explain to me how this works?

› Le expliqué el problema al técnico.
I explained the problem to the technician.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Explico a ti~~ → ✓ Te explico. The pronoun goes before the verb: te explico, le explico, nos explica.

contar *to tell (a story, news) / to count*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: CUENTO · A2

PATTERN **contar algo a alguien · contar con alguien (to count on)**

To tell a story, news or what happened. Also 'to count' (numbers) and 'contar con' = to rely on.

tell — *news, stories, secrets*

› ¡Cuéntame! ¿Qué tal el viaje?
Tell me everything! How was the trip?

count — *numbers*

› Cuenta hasta diez antes de contestar.
Count to ten before you reply.

contar con — *rely on*

› Puedes contar conmigo.
You can count on me.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Qué me cuentas?** *What's new? / What's up? (informal greeting)*

DON'T CONFUSE contar = tell a story / news vs decir = say / tell (words, information). Me contó su viaje. / Me dijo que estaba cansado.

mostrar *to show*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: MUESTRO · A2

PATTERN **mostrar algo a alguien**

To show something to someone. In everyday Spain people often say enseñar instead.

› Te muestro el piso, si quieres.
I'll show you round the flat, if you like.

› ¿Me enseñas las fotos del viaje?
Will you show me the photos from the trip?

DON'T CONFUSE mostrar = enseñar (show). Enseñar also means 'to teach': Me enseñó a cocinar.

arreglar *to fix / to repair / to tidy / to sort out*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **arreglar algo · arreglarse (to get ready / dressed up) · arreglárselas (to manage)**

To fix something broken, to sort out a problem, or — with 'se' — to get ready to go out.

fix / repair — *objects*

› Tengo que arreglar la bici.
I need to fix my bike.

sort out — *problems, papers*

› Ya he arreglado lo del seguro.
I've already sorted out the insurance thing.

arreglarse — *to get ready / dressed up*

› Me arreglo en diez minutos y salimos.
I'll get ready in ten minutes and we'll go.

DON'T CONFUSE arreglar (everyday) = reparar (more technical).

echar *to throw / to put in / to pour / to throw out*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **echar algo (a / en algo) · echar a alguien · echar de menos**

A very common verb in Spain with lots of everyday uses: add something, throw away, kick someone out, post a letter — and the essential 'echar de menos' (to miss someone).

put in / add — *food, drinks*

› ¿Le echas azúcar al café?
Do you put sugar in your coffee?

throw out — *people*

› Lo echaron del trabajo.
He got fired.

echar de menos — *to miss (someone / something)*

› Echo de menos a mis amigos de Londres.
I miss my friends in London.

echar una mano — *to give a hand*

› ¿Me echas una mano con la mudanza?
Can you give me a hand with the move?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **echar la basura** *to take out the rubbish (Spain: also 'tirar la basura')* · **echar una siesta** *to have a nap* · **echar un vistazo** *to have a look*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: extrañar = to miss (someone). Echar de menos is understood everywhere but is typical of Spain.

THINK 'IT DOES SOMETHING TO ME'

With encantar, interesar, importar, doler, apetecer, faltar, sobrar, quedar (bien/mal), caer (bien/mal) and costar (difficulty), the thing is the subject. Ask yourself: one thing or several? Me duele la espalda / Me duelen los pies. Me queda bien el vestido / Me quedan bien los vaqueros. Practise by saying three true sentences a day: 'Hoy me apetece..., me duele..., me falta...'.

More verbs for everyday life

Learn these with their example or note: they're all high-frequency at A2.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
reservar	*to book / to reserve*	reservar mesa / una habitación **He reservado mesa para cuatro a las nueve.** *I've booked a table for four at nine.*
lavarse	*to wash (yourself)*	lavarse las manos / el pelo / los dientes — with el/la, not 'my' **Lávate las manos antes de comer.** *Wash your hands before eating.*
descansar	*to rest / to have a break*	¡Que descanses! = Sleep well! / Get some rest! **Necesito descansar un poco.** *I need to rest for a bit.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
morir / morirse	*to die*	o→ue / murió, murieron · participle: muerto. Me muero de hambre = I'm starving **Su abuelo murió el año pasado.** *His grandfather died last year.*
crecer	*to grow (up)*	yo crezco **Crecí en un pueblo pequeño.** *I grew up in a small village.*
compartir	*to share*	**Comparto piso con dos chicas.** *I share a flat with two girls.*
elegir	*to choose*	e→i, yo elijo **Elige tú el restaurante.** *You choose the restaurant.*
avisar	*to let (someone) know / to warn*	avisar a alguien de algo **Avísame cuando llegues.** *Let me know when you get there.*
quejarse (de)	*to complain (about)*	**Siempre se queja del tiempo.** *He's always complaining about the weather.*
contestar / responder	*to answer / to reply*	contestar (a) un mensaje · responder is a bit more formal **No contesta al teléfono.** *She's not answering the phone.*
encender	*to turn on / to light*	e→ie: enciendo **¿Enciendes la luz?** *Can you turn on the light?*
apagar	*to turn off / to put out*	apagué **Apaga el móvil en el cine.** *Turn your phone off in the cinema.*
cargar	*to charge / to load*	cargar el móvil **Tengo que cargar el móvil.** *I need to charge my phone.*
guardar	*to keep / to put away / to save (a file)*	**Guarda el documento antes de cerrar.** *Save the document before closing it.*
tirar	*to throw / to throw away / to pull (doors)*	On doors in Spain: TIRAR = pull, EMPUJAR = push **No tires el pan, lo usamos mañana.** *Don't throw the bread away, we'll use it tomorrow.*
parar	*to stop*	parar de + infinitive (colloquial = dejar de) **¿Este autobús para en la plaza?** *Does this bus stop in the square?*
aparcar	*to park*	aparqué **LatAm:** Latin America: estacionar (parquear in some countries) **Es imposible aparcar en el centro.** *It's impossible to park in the centre.*
acompañar	*to go with / to accompany*	**¿Te acompaño a casa?** *Shall I walk you home?*
cuidar (de)	*to look after / to take care of*	**Mi hermana cuida de mi perro cuando viajo.** *My sister looks after my dog when I travel.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
despedirse (de)	*to say goodbye (to)*	e→i: me despido **Me fui sin despedirme.** *I left without saying goodbye.*
saludar	*to say hello / to greet*	**Saluda a tus padres de mi parte.** *Say hello to your parents from me.*
reírse (de)	*to laugh (at)*	me río, se rio, se rieron **Nos reímos mucho con ella.** *We laugh a lot with her.*
llorar	*to cry*	**Lloré con el final de la película.** *I cried at the end of the film.*
sonreír	*to smile*	sonrío, sonríes
mentir	*to lie (tell lies)*	e→ie: miento / mintió
soñar con	*to dream about / of*	o→ue **Sueño con vivir junto al mar.** *I dream of living by the sea.*
aprobar	*to pass (an exam)*	o→ue · opposite: suspender (Spain) / reprobar (Mexico) **¡He aprobado el examen de conducir!** *I've passed my driving test!*
suspender	*to fail (an exam) / to cancel*	Spain: suspender un examen **Suspendí matemáticas en el instituto.** *I failed maths at secondary school.*
prometer	*to promise*	**Te prometo que no llego tarde.** *I promise I won't be late.*
mover	*to move (an object)*	o→ue · for moving house: mudarse **¿Me ayudas a mover el sofá?** *Will you help me move the sofa?*

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

02 · The everyday words that fill your sentences

Nouns

These are general, high-frequency nouns you'll need in any conversation, whatever the topic: plans, messages, ideas, little objects, life events. Start with the cards: they're the words English speakers use wrongly most often (vez, rato, cita, razón…). Then work through the tables, always learning the noun with its article.

Key nouns to get right

Small words, big traps. Learn each one with its typical phrases.

la vez

time (occasion) / turn

NOUN · FEMININE · A2

PLURAL veces

'Time' when you count occasions: once, twice, the first time, sometimes. Not clock time (hora) and not time in general (tiempo).

› Es la primera vez que vengo a Granada.
It's the first time I've come to Granada.

› Voy al gimnasio dos veces por semana.
I go to the gym twice a week.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una vez / dos veces** *once / twice* · **a veces** *sometimes* · **otra vez** *again* · **muchas veces** *often / many times* · **de vez en cuando** *from time to time*

NOTE Spelling: vez → veces (z becomes c before e).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es la primera tiempo~~ → ✓ Es la primera vez. ✗ ~~*dos tiempos~~ → ✓ dos veces.

el rato

a while / a moment / some time

NOUN · MASCULINE · A2

A short, unspecified period of time. Super common in speech and almost impossible to translate word-for-word.

› Espera un rato, ahora vengo.
Wait a bit, I'll be right back.

› Estuvimos un buen rato hablando.
We were chatting for quite a while.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un rato** *a while* · **al rato** *a little later / after a while* · **pasar un buen rato** *to have a good time* · **en mis ratos libres** *in my free time*

DON'T CONFUSE tiempo = time in general · hora = hour / clock time · vez = occasion · rato = a while.

la cita *appointment / date / quote*

NOUN FEMININE A2

An arranged meeting: with the doctor, the hairdresser, an official office — or a romantic date. Also a quotation.

appointment — *doctor, bank, hairdresser*

› Tengo cita con el dentista el jueves.
I've got a dentist's appointment on Thursday.

date — *romantic*

› Esta noche tiene una cita con un chico que conoció en una app.
She's got a date tonight with a guy she met on an app.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pedir cita** *to make an appointment* · **cita previa** *appointment required / prior appointment (official offices in Spain)* · **una primera cita** *a first date*

COMMON MISTAKE English 'date' (day) → ✗ *~~¿Qué cita es hoy~~? → ✓ ¿Qué fecha es hoy? Cita = meeting; fecha = calendar date.

el plan *plan*

NOUN MASCULINE A2

PLURAL planes

Something you've decided or would like to do. In Spain 'un plan' is also very common for 'something to do' with friends.

› ¿Tienes plan para el sábado?
Have you got anything on on Saturday?

› ¡Qué buen plan! Me apunto.
Sounds like a great plan! Count me in.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer planes** *to make plans* · **cambiar de planes** *to change plans* · **un plan perfecto** *a perfect plan*

NOTE Plural: los planes (with -es). No accent on plan.

la razón *reason / right (being right)*

NOUN FEMININE A2

PLURAL razones

Means ‘reason’, and also appears in the key phrase ‘tener razón’ = to be right.

tener razón — *to be right*

› Tienes razón, es mejor ir mañana.
You're right, it's better to go tomorrow.

reason — *cause, motive*

› No entiendo la razón de su decisión.
I don't understand the reason for her decision.

NOTE Plural loses the accent: razón → razones.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Eres correcto / *Estás correcto (to a person)~~ → ✓ Tienes razón. ✗ ~~*Estás bien (for ‘you’re right’)~~ → ✓ Tienes razón.

la verdad *truth*

NOUN FEMININE A2

The truth. Also used constantly as a conversation filler: ‘la verdad (es que)…’ = to be honest… / actually…

the truth — *what's real*

› Dime la verdad.
Tell me the truth.

la verdad (es que)… — *to be honest… (filler)*

› La verdad es que no me apetece mucho.
To be honest, I don't really feel like it.

¿verdad? — *question tag: right? / isn't it?*

› Eres de Bristol, ¿verdad?
You're from Bristol, aren't you?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **decir la verdad** *to tell the truth* · **de verdad** *really / seriously* · **¿De verdad?** *Really?*

OPPOSITE **la mentira** — lie

la mentira *lie*

NOUN FEMININE A2

Something that isn't true. '¡Mentira!' on its own = 'No way! / That's not true!'

› Eso es mentira, yo no dije eso.
That's a lie, I didn't say that.

› Me contó una mentira para no venir.
He told me a lie so he didn't have to come.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **decir mentiras** *to tell lies* · **una mentira piadosa** *a white lie*

OPPOSITE **la verdad** — truth

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hacer una mentira~~ → ✓ Decir una mentira / mentir.

el cambio *change*

NOUN MASCULINE A2

A change or transformation — and also 'change' (coins you get back) and the exchange rate.

> **change** — *transformation*
> › Mudarme a Madrid fue un gran cambio.
> *Moving to Madrid was a big change.*

> **change (money)** — *coins back / small change*
> › ¿Tienes cambio de cincuenta?
> *Have you got change for a fifty?*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a cambio (de)** *in exchange (for)* · **hacer un cambio** *to make a change* · **cambio de planes** *change of plans*

la manera / la forma *way / manner*

NOUN FEMININE A2

Both mean 'way of doing something' and are interchangeable in most phrases. 'La forma' also means 'shape' and 'estar en forma' = to be fit.

› Es la mejor manera de aprender vocabulario.
It's the best way to learn vocabulary.

› Me encanta su forma de hablar.
I love the way she talks.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de esta manera / de esta forma** *this way / like this* · **estar en forma** *to be fit*

DON'T CONFUSE el modo = the same meaning, a little more formal.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*la vía de hacer algo~~ → ✓ la manera / la forma de hacer algo. ('Vía' = route / track.)

la ayuda *help*

NOUN FEMININE A2

Help or assistance. '¡Ayuda!' = Help! (emergency).

› Gracias por tu ayuda, de verdad.
Thanks for your help, really.

› ¿Necesitas ayuda con las maletas?
Do you need help with your suitcases?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pedir ayuda** *to ask for help* · **ofrecer ayuda** *to offer help*

NOTE Usually uncountable, like in English, but Spanish also says 'una ayuda': Fue una gran ayuda. = It was a great help.

el consejo *piece of advice / tip*

NOUN MASCULINE A2

PLURAL consejos

Unlike English 'advice', consejo is countable: un consejo = a piece of advice, consejos = advice.

› ¿Me das un consejo? No sé qué hacer.
Can you give me some advice? I don't know what to do.

› Te voy a dar tres consejos para el viaje.
I'm going to give you three tips for the trip.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar un consejo** *to give (a piece of) advice* · **pedir consejo** *to ask for advice* · **seguir un consejo** *to follow advice*

NOTE el consejo is also 'council / board' (el consejo de administración).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me dio un aviso (for advice)~~ → ✓ Me dio un consejo. Aviso = warning / notice.

la noticia *news (a piece of news)*

NOUN FEMININE A2

PLURAL noticias

Countable: una noticia = a piece of news. 'Las noticias' = the news (on TV, radio).

› ¡Tengo una noticia buenísima!
I've got some amazing news!

› ¿Has visto las noticias hoy?
Have you seen the news today?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una buena / mala noticia** *good / bad news* · **dar una noticia** *to break / give some news*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Las noticias es buena~~ → ✓ La noticia es buena / Las noticias son buenas. Agree singular with singular.

el recuerdo *memory / souvenir / regards*

NOUN · MASCULINE · A2

A memory of the past, a souvenir from a trip, and — in the plural — regards to someone.

memory — *of the past*

› Tengo muy buenos recuerdos de ese verano.
I have very good memories of that summer.

souvenir — *from a trip*

› Te he traído un recuerdo de Lisboa.
I've brought you a souvenir from Lisbon.

recuerdos — *regards*

› ¡Dale recuerdos a tu madre!
Say hi to your mum for me!

COMMON MISTAKE Memory as an ability ('I have a bad memory') is la memoria: ✗ ~~*Tengo mal recuerdo~~ → ✓ Tengo mala memoria.

el miedo *fear*

NOUN · MASCULINE · A2

Fear. Spanish usually expresses being afraid with 'tener miedo' or 'dar miedo', not with an adjective.

tener miedo de / a — *to be afraid of*

› Tengo miedo a volar.
I'm afraid of flying.

dar miedo (gustar structure) — *to scare*

› Me dan miedo las arañas.
Spiders scare me.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pasar miedo** *to be scared (during an experience)* · **¡Qué miedo!** *How scary!*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy miedo~~ / ~~*Soy asustado de~~ → ✓ Tengo miedo de... / Me da miedo...

las ganas *desire / wish / urge*

NOUN FEMININE A2

Almost always plural and in the phrase 'tener ganas de' = to feel like / to look forward to / to be dying to.

› Tengo ganas de verte.
I'm looking forward to seeing you. / I can't wait to see you.

› No tengo ganas de cocinar hoy.
I don't feel like cooking today.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué ganas!** *I can't wait!* · **con muchas ganas** *really keen / with lots of enthusiasm* · **quedarse con las ganas** *to miss out (on something you wanted)*

DON'T CONFUSE tener ganas de + infinitive ≈ me apetece + infinitive.

la culpa *fault / blame / guilt*

NOUN FEMININE A2

Responsibility for something bad. The key phrase: 'ser culpa de alguien' / 'tener la culpa'.

› Perdona, ha sido culpa mía.
Sorry, it was my fault.

› Nadie tiene la culpa, fue un accidente.
It's nobody's fault, it was an accident.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **echar la culpa a alguien** *to blame someone* · **por culpa de** *because of (something negative)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es mi falta~~ → ✓ Es culpa mía / Es mi culpa. (Falta = lack / foul in sport.)

el tema *topic / subject / issue / song (colloquial)*

NOUN MASCULINE A2

A topic of conversation or study. In informal Spain it's also 'the thing / the issue' (el tema del piso = the flat situation).

› Cambiemos de tema, ¿vale?
Let's change the subject, OK?

› ¿Qué tal el tema del trabajo?
How's the job thing going?

NOTE Masculine despite ending in -a (like el problema, el sistema, el programa).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*la tema~~ → ✓ el tema.

el lío *mess / muddle / trouble / fling*

NOUN MASCULINE COLLOQUIAL A2

A confusing or messy situation. Hugely common in Spain. 'Meterse en un lío' = to get into trouble.

› ¡Qué lío! No entiendo nada.
What a mess! I don't understand a thing.

› Si llegas tarde otra vez, te vas a meter en un lío.
If you're late again, you're going to get into trouble.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar hecho un lío** *to be really confused* · **armar un lío** *to make a fuss / cause a scene*

NOTE Related adjective: liado/a (busy, colloquial): Estoy muy liado esta semana = I'm really busy this week.

Life events & stages

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el nacimiento	*birth*	from nacer
la infancia	*childhood*	**Pasé mi infancia en Bilbao.** *I spent my childhood in Bilbao.*
la adolescencia	*adolescence / teenage years*	
la juventud	*youth*	also 'young people' collectively
la vejez	*old age*	
la muerte	*death*	from morir
el embarazo	*pregnancy*	Watch out: embarazada = pregnant, NOT embarrassed (that's 'me da vergüenza')
la jubilación	*retirement*	jubilarse = to retire **Mi padre está disfrutando de la jubilación.** *My dad is enjoying his retirement.*
la graduación	*graduation*	
el aniversario	*anniversary*	For a person's birthday use el cumpleaños
la etapa	*stage / phase / period*	**Fue una etapa muy feliz de mi vida.** *It was a very happy period of my life.*
el pasado	*the past*	**Eso es cosa del pasado.** *That's a thing of the past.*
el presente	*the present*	
el futuro	*the future*	**¿Qué planes tienes para el futuro?** *What plans do you have for the future?*
el sueño	*dream / sleepiness*	tener sueño = to be sleepy · cumplir un sueño = to make a dream come true

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el objetivo	*goal / aim*	Mi objetivo es hablar español con fluidez. *My goal is to speak Spanish fluently.*

Plans & arrangements

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la quedada COLLOQUIAL	*meet-up / get-together*	LatAm: Spain Organizamos una quedada de antiguos alumnos. *We're organising a get-together for former students.*
la invitación	*invitation*	
el evento	*event*	
la celebración	*celebration*	
la sorpresa	*surprise*	¡Qué sorpresa verte aquí! *What a surprise to see you here!*
el calendario	*calendar*	
el plazo	*deadline / period / instalment*	fuera de plazo = after the deadline · pagar a plazos = to pay in instalments
el retraso	*delay*	El vuelo tiene una hora de retraso. *The flight is an hour late.*
la prisa	*hurry / rush*	tener prisa = to be in a hurry · ¡Date prisa! = Hurry up! Perdona, tengo mucha prisa. *Sorry, I'm in a real hurry.*
la propuesta	*proposal / suggestion*	
la excusa	*excuse*	poner una excusa = to make an excuse Siempre pone excusas para no venir. *He always makes excuses not to come.*
el día libre	*day off*	Mañana tengo el día libre. *I've got the day off tomorrow.*
el turno	*turn / shift*	turno de noche = night shift
el permiso	*permission / leave / permit*	Con permiso = Excuse me (passing by)
el aviso	*notice / warning*	sin previo aviso = without warning

Communication

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el audio INFORMAL	*voice message*	Mándame un audio, es más rápido. *Send me a voice message, it's quicker.*
la llamada	*call*	hacer una llamada · una llamada perdida = a missed call
el paquete	*parcel / package / packet*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el sobre	*envelope*	also a preposition: sobre = on / about
el sello	*stamp*	
la contraseña	*password*	**¿Cuál es la contraseña del wifi?** *What's the wifi password?*
el contacto	*contact*	estar en contacto = to keep in touch
la conversación	*conversation*	
la explicación	*explanation*	
el comentario	*comment / remark*	
el chiste	*joke (with a punchline)*	contar un chiste **Javi cuenta unos chistes malísimos.** *Javi tells terrible jokes.*
la broma	*joke / prank*	en broma = jokingly · gastar una broma = to play a joke

Objects at hand

The things in your bag, your pockets and your drawers.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cartera	*wallet*	Also a school satchel or briefcase. A folder is una carpeta.
el monedero	*purse (for coins)*	
la caja	*box / till (shop)*	
el cargador	*charger*	**¿Alguien tiene un cargador de iPhone?** *Has anyone got an iPhone charger?*
el cable	*cable / lead*	
el enchufe	*plug / socket*	colloquial Spain: tener enchufe = to have connections
la pila	*battery (small, AA etc.)*	phone battery = la batería
el pañuelo	*tissue / handkerchief / scarf*	un pañuelo de papel = a tissue
el mechero	*lighter*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el encendedor
la linterna	*torch / flashlight*	
las tijeras	*scissors*	usually plural: unas tijeras
el documento	*document*	
el DNI / el carné de identidad	*ID card*	Spain: DNI (documento nacional de identidad) · Latin America: la cédula / el documento
el cepillo	*brush*	el cepillo de dientes = toothbrush

Abstract everyday nouns

Words you need to talk about situations, ideas and problems.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el asunto	*matter / issue / subject (email)*	**Es un asunto personal.** *It's a personal matter.*
la situación	*situation*	
el resto	*the rest*	**El resto del grupo llega mañana.** *The rest of the group arrive tomorrow.*
el lado	*side*	al lado de = next to · por un lado... por otro... = on the one hand... on the other...
el principio	*beginning / principle*	al principio = at first
el final	*end / ending*	al final = in the end / at the end
la mitad	*half*	**Solo vino la mitad de la clase.** *Only half the class came.*
la cantidad	*amount / quantity*	
el tipo	*type / kind / guy (colloquial)*	**¿Qué tipo de música te gusta?** *What kind of music do you like?*
la duda	*doubt / question (in class)*	tener una duda = to have a question · sin duda = no doubt **¿Alguna duda?** *Any questions?*
la solución	*solution*	
el motivo	*reason / motive*	≈ la razón: ¿Por qué motivo?
la causa	*cause*	a causa de = because of
el resultado	*result*	
la decisión	*decision*	tomar una decisión (✗ ~~*hacer~~)
el esfuerzo	*effort*	hacer un esfuerzo
la necesidad	*need / necessity*	
la posibilidad	*possibility / chance*	
la oportunidad	*opportunity / chance*	**Es una oportunidad única.** *It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.*
el peligro	*danger*	en peligro = in danger
la paz	*peace*	¡Déjame en paz! = Leave me alone!
el silencio	*silence*	
el ruido	*noise*	**Hay mucho ruido en este bar.** *It's really noisy in this bar.*
la tranquilidad	*peace and quiet / calm*	**Me encanta la tranquilidad del pueblo.** *I love the peace and quiet of the village.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el humor	*humour / mood*	estar de buen / mal humor = to be in a good / bad mood
la paciencia	*patience*	tener paciencia
la confianza	*trust / confidence*	tener confianza con alguien = to be close to someone
la costumbre	*habit / custom*	tener la costumbre de = to be in the habit of · como de costumbre = as usual
la prueba	*test / proof / try*	from probar
el secreto	*secret*	
el detalle	*detail / nice gesture*	¡Qué detalle! = How thoughtful! **Me trajo flores. ¡Qué detalle!** *He brought me flowers. How thoughtful!*
la queja	*complaint*	from quejarse **Quiero poner una queja.** *I'd like to make a complaint.*

People around you

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la vecino/a	*neighbour*	**Mis vecinos hacen mucho ruido.** *My neighbours are really noisy.*
el/la jefe/a	*boss*	
el/la dueño/a	*owner*	**El dueño del bar es muy simpático.** *The owner of the bar is really nice.*
el/la desconocido/a	*stranger*	
el/la invitado/a	*guest*	
el/la joven	*young person*	los jóvenes = young people (accent in plural)
el/la adulto/a	*adult*	
las personas mayores	*older people / the elderly*	more polite than 'los viejos'
el/la ganador/a	*winner*	
el/la voluntario/a	*volunteer*	
el/la protagonista	*main character / protagonist*	same form for m/f

ADVICE, NEWS AND LUGGAGE

Some English uncountable nouns are countable in Spanish: un consejo (a piece of advice), una noticia (a piece of news), una experiencia, unos muebles (some furniture). So you can say 'Te doy dos consejos' — and you should. When in doubt, try making the Spanish word plural: it usually works.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

03 · Describe places, things and situations — and pick ser or estar

Adjectives

These adjectives help you describe the world around you: busy or free, full or empty, safe or dangerous, normal or strange. Learn them in opposite pairs, and pay special attention to the cards marked ser/estar: with some adjectives, the verb completely changes the meaning (ser listo = to be clever, estar listo = to be ready).

Ser or estar? The meaning changes

With these adjectives, ser describes what something or someone is like; estar describes a state or condition right now. Different verb, different word in English.

listo *clever (ser) / ready (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS listo · lista · listos · listas

Ser listo = to be clever, smart (also: sharp, a bit crafty). Estar listo = to be ready.

ser listo — *clever, smart*

› Tu hija es muy lista.
Your daughter is very clever.

estar listo — *ready*

› ¿Estás lista? Nos vamos en cinco minutos.
Are you ready? We're leaving in five minutes.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Listo!** *Done! / All set! (very common in Latin America)*

OPPOSITE **tonto (ser)** — silly, stupid

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy listo para salir (= I';m clever to go out!)~~ → ✓ Estoy listo para salir.

aburrido *boring (ser) / bored (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS aburrido · aburrida · aburridos · aburridas

Ser aburrido = to be boring (a person, a film, a job). Estar aburrido = to feel bored right now.

ser aburrido — *boring*

› La película es un poco aburrida.
The film is a bit boring.

estar aburrido — *bored*

› Estoy aburrido, ¿hacemos algo?
I'm bored, shall we do something?

OPPOSITE **divertido / entretenido** — fun / entertaining

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy aburrido (when you mean 'I'~~;m bored') → ✓ Estoy aburrido. 'Soy aburrido' = I'm a boring person!

rico *rich (ser) / delicious, tasty (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS rico · rica · ricos · ricas

Ser rico = to be wealthy. Estar rico = to taste good (this specific dish, right now). New meaning at A2: the food one.

ser rico — *wealthy*

› Su familia es muy rica.
His family is very rich.

estar rico — *tasty*

› ¡Qué rica está esta paella!
This paella is delicious!

OPPOSITE **pobre (ser) / estar malo (food)** — poor / to taste bad

DON'T CONFUSE estar rico = estar bueno = to taste good. Careful: 'estar bueno' about a person = to be hot / attractive (colloquial)!

NOTE 'Es rico' with food is also used in some regions to say a food is tasty in general: El mango es muy rico.

malo *bad (ser) / ill, sick (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS malo · mala · malos · malas (mal before a masculine singular noun)

You know ser malo = to be bad. New meaning: estar malo = to be ill (very common in Spain), or for food, to taste bad / be off.

ser malo — *bad, evil, poor quality*

› Este café es bastante malo.
This coffee is pretty bad.

estar malo — *ill (Spain, informal)*

› Hoy no voy a clase, estoy malo.
I'm not going to class today, I'm ill.

estar malo (food) — *to taste bad / to have gone off*

› Este yogur está malo, no te lo comas.
This yogurt has gone off, don't eat it.

NOTE New meaning: estar malo = to be ill. Before a masculine singular noun: un mal día.

seguro *safe (ser) / sure (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS seguro · segura · seguros · seguras

Ser seguro = to be safe (a place, a car, a method). Estar seguro = to be sure.

ser seguro — *safe*

› Este barrio es muy seguro.
This neighbourhood is very safe.

estar seguro (de) — *sure, certain*

› ¿Estás seguro de que es aquí?
Are you sure it's here?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Seguro!** *Sure! / Definitely!* · **el seguro** *insurance (noun)*

OPPOSITE **peligroso** — dangerous

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy seguro que... is very common in speech~~, but the standard form is ✓ Estoy seguro de que...

despierto *awake (estar) / sharp, bright (ser)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS despierto · despierta · despiertos · despiertas

Estar despierto = to be awake. Ser despierto = to be quick, alert, bright (a person, especially a child).

> **estar despierto** — *awake*
> › ¿Estás despierta? Te llamo.
> *Are you awake? I'll call you.*

> **ser despierto** — *bright, quick*
> › Es un niño muy despierto.
> *He's a very bright kid.*

OPPOSITE **dormido (estar)** — asleep

vivo *alive (estar) / lively, vivid, sharp (ser)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS vivo · viva · vivos · vivas

Estar vivo = to be alive. Ser vivo = to be lively or quick-witted; colours can be vivos (bright).

> **estar vivo** — *alive*
> › La planta todavía está viva.
> *The plant is still alive.*

> **ser vivo / colores vivos** — *lively, bright*
> › Me gustan los colores vivos.
> *I like bright colours.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en vivo / en directo** *live (concert, TV)*

OPPOSITE **muerto (estar)** — dead

verde *green (ser) / unripe, inexperienced (estar)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS verde · verdes

Ser verde = to be green (colour). Estar verde = to be unripe (fruit) or not ready yet (a person in a subject).

> **ser verde** — *colour*
> › Su coche es verde.
> *Her car is green.*

> **estar verde** — *unripe / not ready*
> › Los plátanos están verdes todavía.
> *The bananas aren't ripe yet.*

NOTE Fun extra: un chiste verde = a dirty joke.

Everyday opposites

Learn them in pairs. Most go with estar when they describe a state (la tienda está cerrada) and with ser when they describe a characteristic (el sofá es cómodo).

ocupado *busy / taken, engaged*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS ocupado · ocupada · ocupados · ocupadas

With estar: busy (a person) or taken / occupied (a seat, a toilet, a phone line).

› Esta semana estoy muy ocupada.
I'm really busy this week.

› Perdona, ¿está ocupado este asiento?
Excuse me, is this seat taken?

OPPOSITE **libre** — free

DON'T CONFUSE Colloquial Spain: estar liado = to be busy (Estoy muy liado con el trabajo).

libre *free (available) / vacant*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS libre · libres

Free as in available, not busy, not taken. NOT free as in 'costs nothing' — that's gratis.

› ¿Estás libre el viernes por la tarde?
Are you free on Friday afternoon?

› ¿Hay alguna mesa libre?
Is there a free table?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el tiempo libre** *free time* · **al aire libre** *outdoors / in the open air*

OPPOSITE **ocupado** — busy / taken

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La entrada es libre (ambiguous)~~ → ✓ La entrada es gratis / gratuita (it costs nothing). 'Entrada libre' on a sign = free admission, though.

lleno *full*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS lleno · llena · llenos · llenas

PATTERN **estar lleno de algo**

Full of something or full of people. After a meal, 'estoy lleno' = I'm full.

› El metro estaba lleno de gente.
The metro was packed with people.

› No puedo más, estoy llena.
I can't eat any more, I'm full.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a tope (colloquial)** *packed / full to the brim*

OPPOSITE **vacío** — empty

vacío *empty*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS vacío · vacía · vacíos · vacías

With nothing or nobody inside.

› **La nevera está vacía, hay que ir a comprar.**
The fridge is empty, we need to go shopping.

› **En agosto la ciudad está vacía.**
In August the city is empty.

OPPOSITE **lleno** — full

NOTE Accent on the í in all forms: vacío, vacía.

limpio *clean*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS limpio · limpia · limpios · limpias

Estar limpio = clean right now; ser limpio = a clean, tidy person.

› **La cocina está limpia, por fin.**
The kitchen is clean, at last.

› **Mi compañero de piso es muy limpio.**
My flatmate is very clean.

OPPOSITE **sucio** — dirty

sucio *dirty*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS sucio · sucia · sucios · sucias

Not clean. Also used for dirty tricks: juego sucio.

› **Tengo la ropa sucia en la mochila.**
I've got my dirty clothes in my backpack.

› **Las calles estaban muy sucias después de la fiesta.**
The streets were really dirty after the festival.

OPPOSITE **limpio** — clean

abierto *open*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS abierto · abierta · abiertos · abiertas

With estar: open right now (a shop, a door). With ser: open-minded / sociable (a person).

› ¿La farmacia está abierta los domingos?
Is the chemist's open on Sundays?

› Mis padres son muy abiertos.
My parents are very open-minded.

OPPOSITE **cerrado** — closed

NOTE Comes from abrir (irregular participle).

cerrado *closed / shut*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS cerrado · cerrada · cerrados · cerradas

With estar: closed. With ser: reserved, narrow-minded (a person). Also 'thick' for an accent: un acento muy cerrado.

› El museo está cerrado los lunes.
The museum is closed on Mondays.

OPPOSITE **abierto** — open

cómodo *comfortable / convenient*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS cómodo · cómoda · cómodos · cómodas

Ser cómodo = a comfortable object or a convenient option. Estar cómodo = to feel comfortable.

ser cómodo — *comfortable / convenient*

› Estas zapatillas son muy cómodas.
These trainers are really comfortable.

estar cómodo — *to feel comfortable*

› ¿Estás cómodo? ¿Quieres otro cojín?
Are you comfortable? Do you want another cushion?

OPPOSITE **incómodo** — uncomfortable / awkward

NOTE 'Confortable' exists, but cómodo is the natural everyday word.

rápido *fast / quick*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS rápido · rápida · rápidos · rápidas

Fast. In speech it's often used as an adverb too: ¡Rápido! = Quick!

› **El AVE es muy rápido.**
The AVE (high-speed train) is very fast.

› **Comemos algo rápido y nos vamos.**
Let's grab something quick to eat and go.

OPPOSITE **lento** — slow

NOTE Adverb: rápido or rápidamente (see section 04).

lento *slow*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS lento · lenta · lentos · lentas

Slow (people, processes, internet…). The adverb is 'despacio' or 'lentamente'.

› **El wifi de casa es lentísimo.**
The wifi at home is super slow.

› **Es un proceso muy lento.**
It's a very slow process.

OPPOSITE **rápido** — fast

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Habla lento~~, por favor (heard, but less standard) → ✓ Habla despacio, por favor.

tranquilo *calm / quiet / relaxed*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS tranquilo · tranquila · tranquilos · tranquilas

Quiet (a place), calm (a person), relaxed (a day). '¡Tranquilo/a!' = Relax! / Don't worry!

› **Vivo en un barrio muy tranquilo.**
I live in a very quiet area.

› **Tranquila, tenemos tiempo de sobra.**
Relax, we've got loads of time.

OPPOSITE **ruidoso / nervioso** — noisy / nervous

ruidoso *noisy*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS ruidoso · ruidosa · ruidosos · ruidosas

Making a lot of noise. In speech people often say 'hay mucho ruido' instead.

› **Es un bar demasiado ruidoso para hablar.**
It's too noisy a bar to talk in.

OPPOSITE **tranquilo / silencioso** — quiet / silent

peligroso *dangerous*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS peligroso · peligrosa · peligrosos · peligrosas

Dangerous. From el peligro (danger).

› **Es peligroso nadar aquí, hay corrientes.**
It's dangerous to swim here, there are currents.

OPPOSITE **seguro** — safe

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es peligroso de nadar~~ → ✓ Es peligroso nadar. No 'de' after 'es + adjective' before an infinitive.

importante *important*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS importante · importantes
PATTERN **es importante + infinitive**

Important. Very common in the structure 'es importante + infinitive'.

› **Es importante beber mucha agua en verano.**
It's important to drink lots of water in summer.

› **Lo más importante es pasarlo bien.**
The most important thing is to have a good time.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es importante de estudiar~~ → ✓ Es importante estudiar.

necesario *necessary*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS necesario · necesaria · necesarios · necesarias
PATTERN **es necesario + infinitive · no es necesario**

Necessary. 'No es necesario' = there's no need.

› **No es necesario reservar, hay sitio.**
There's no need to book, there's room.

DON'T CONFUSE es necesario + infinitive ≈ hay que + infinitive (more common in speech).

posible *possible*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS posible · posibles

Possible. Useful phrases: lo antes posible (as soon as possible), si es posible (if possible).

› ¿Es posible cambiar la fecha?
Is it possible to change the date?

› Contéstame lo antes posible, por favor.
Please reply as soon as possible.

OPPOSITE **imposible** — impossible

increíble *incredible / amazing / unbelievable*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS increíble · increíbles

Something amazing (positive) or hard to believe (positive or negative). '¡Es increíble!' works for both.

› Las vistas desde el mirador son increíbles.
The views from the viewpoint are amazing.

› Es increíble que no haya nadie.
It's unbelievable that there's nobody here.

NOTE Accent on the í: increíble.

raro *strange / weird / odd / rare*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS raro · rara · raros · raras

In everyday Spanish, raro mostly means strange or weird — not just 'rare'.

› Qué raro, Marcos no contesta.
That's weird, Marcos isn't answering.

› Hoy estás un poco rara, ¿qué te pasa?
You're acting a bit strange today, what's up?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **es raro que...** *it's strange that...*

OPPOSITE **normal** — normal

DON'T CONFUSE raro (everyday) = extraño (a bit more formal). Rare steak = poco hecho.

normal *normal / usual / ordinary*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS normal · normales

Normal. 'Es normal' is also used to show understanding: 'that's understandable / of course'.

› **—Estoy nerviosa por la entrevista. —Es normal.**
"I'm nervous about the interview." "That's only natural."

› **Un día normal, me levanto a las siete.**
On a normal day, I get up at seven.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **normal y corriente** *ordinary / run-of-the-mill*

OPPOSITE **raro** — strange

preparado *ready / prepared / qualified*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS preparado · preparada · preparados · preparadas

PATTERN **estar preparado para algo / + infinitive**

Estar preparado = ready, prepared. Ser / estar muy preparado (a person) = well-qualified.

› **¿Estás preparado para el examen?**
Are you ready for the exam?

› **¿Preparados? ¡Ya!**
Ready? Go!

DON'T CONFUSE estar listo = estar preparado (ready). Listo is more colloquial.

enfermo *ill / sick*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS enfermo · enferma · enfermos · enfermas

Estar enfermo = to be ill. As a noun, el/la enfermo/a = patient, sick person.

› **Lucía no viene, está enferma.**
Lucía isn't coming, she's ill.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ponerse enfermo** *to get ill / fall ill*

OPPOSITE **sano** — healthy

DON'T CONFUSE estar enfermo (neutral) = estar malo (informal, Spain).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy enfermo (except for chronic illness)~~ → ✓ Estoy enfermo.

mismo *same / myself, yourself… (emphasis)*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS mismo · misma · mismos · mismas

PATTERN **el mismo / la misma + noun · lo mismo · yo mismo**

'The same' (before the noun) or emphasis like English 'myself / right' (after a pronoun or adverb).

the same — *el mismo + noun*

› Tenemos el mismo móvil.
We've got the same phone.

lo mismo — *the same thing*

› Para mí, lo mismo.
Same for me.

emphasis — *myself, right now*

› Lo hice yo misma. / Ahora mismo voy.
I did it myself. / I'm coming right now.

COMMON MISTAKE English 'It's the same' → ✗ ~~*Es mismo~~ → ✓ Es lo mismo / Es igual.

propio *own*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS propio · propia · propios · propias

'Own', always after a possessive: mi propio piso = my own flat.

› Quiero tener mi propio negocio.
I want to have my own business.

COMMON MISTAKE English 'my own' → ✗ ~~*mi own / *mi mismo coche~~ → ✓ mi propio coche.

Describing things & places

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
tradicional	*traditional*	
conocido/a	*well-known / familiar*	also noun: un conocido = an acquaintance
luminoso/a	*bright / full of light*	El piso es pequeño pero muy luminoso. *The flat is small but really bright.*
amplio/a	*spacious / roomy*	
estrecho/a	*narrow / tight*	Las calles del casco antiguo son muy estrechas. *The streets in the old town are very narrow.*
ancho/a	*wide / loose (clothes)*	
duro/a	*hard / tough*	Fue un año muy duro. *It was a really tough year.*
blando/a	*soft (to the touch)*	suave = soft / smooth (skin, voice, music)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
suave	*soft / smooth / gentle*	
mojado/a	*wet*	**Llegué a casa completamente mojado.** *I got home completely soaked.*
gratis / gratuito/a	*free (no cost)*	gratis is invariable: Las entradas son gratis **El museo es gratis los domingos.** *The museum is free on Sundays.*

Describing situations

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
complicado/a	*complicated / tricky*	**Es un poco complicado de explicar.** *It's a bit complicated to explain.*
sencillo/a	*simple / easy / modest*	
útil	*useful*	**Esta app es muy útil para viajar.** *This app is really useful for travelling.*
inútil	*useless / pointless*	
práctico/a	*practical / handy*	
obvio/a	*obvious*	
cierto/a	*true / certain*	Es cierto = It's true · before a noun: cierta gente = some people
falso/a	*false / fake*	
verdadero/a	*true / real*	
correcto/a	*correct / right (answer)*	for people being right: tener razón
exacto/a	*exact*	¡Exacto! = Exactly!
justo/a	*fair / tight (just enough)*	No es justo = It's not fair · Vamos muy justos de tiempo = We're cutting it fine
injusto/a	*unfair*	
grave	*serious (problem, illness)*	not 'grave' (tomb = la tumba) **No es nada grave.** *It's nothing serious.*
serio/a	*serious (person, attitude)*	¿En serio? = Seriously? / Really?
urgente	*urgent*	
especial	*special*	
diferente / distinto/a	*different*	diferente de / a
parecido/a	*similar*	parecido a **Tu piso es muy parecido al mío.** *Your flat is very similar to mine.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
principal	*main*	el plato principal = main course
único/a	*only / unique*	Es el único = He's the only one · Es único = It's unique **Eres la única persona que lo sabe.** *You're the only person who knows.*
común	*common / shared*	en común = in common
perfecto/a	*perfect*	¡Perfecto! = Great! / Perfect! (also to agree)
estupendo/a	*great / wonderful*	
fantástico/a	*fantastic*	
maravilloso/a	*wonderful / marvellous*	
emocionante	*exciting / moving*	Not 'excitado' (that has a sexual meaning) **¡Qué emocionante! Mañana empiezo el nuevo trabajo.** *How exciting! I start my new job tomorrow.*
horrible	*horrible / awful*	
terrible	*terrible*	
fatal COLLOQUIAL	*awful / terrible (colloquial)*	also adverb: Lo pasé fatal = I had an awful time **El examen me salió fatal.** *The exam went terribly.*

States with estar

These describe how someone or something is at a particular moment, so they go with estar.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
dormido/a	*asleep*	quedarse dormido = to fall asleep / to oversleep
sentado/a	*sitting / seated*	
de pie	*standing*	invariable **Estuve de pie todo el concierto.** *I was standing for the whole concert.*
tumbado/a	*lying down*	**LatAm:** Latin America also: acostado/a
muerto/a	*dead / exhausted (colloquial)*	Estoy muerta = I'm shattered
contento/a de	*happy about / glad to*	contento de + infinitive **Estoy muy contenta de estar aquí.** *I'm really glad to be here.*
equivocado/a	*wrong (mistaken)*	estar equivocado = to be wrong **Creo que estás equivocado.** *I think you're wrong.*
perdido/a	*lost*	**Estamos perdidos, ¿miramos el mapa?** *We're lost, shall we check the map?*

TEST THE VERB, NOT THE WORD

When you learn an adjective, ask: can I say it with ser AND estar? If yes, check if the meaning changes (listo, aburrido, rico, malo, seguro, despierto, vivo, verde). Write two mini-sentences, one with each verb. That small habit prevents the most embarrassing ser/estar mistakes.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

04 · Small words that add timing, degree and attitude

Adverbs

Adverbs make your Spanish sound alive: ya, todavía, enseguida, de repente, casi, incluso… They're short, but their position and nuance matter. Start with the cards, then learn how to build -mente adverbs (it's easy) and finish with the words for 'where'.

Already, still, not yet

Ya and todavía are among the most frequent words in Spanish. Notice what happens when you add 'no'.

ya *already / now / yet (in questions) / OK, I see*

ADVERB A2

Ya marks that something has happened or changed. In questions it means 'yet'. On its own it's a very common reaction: 'Ya' = I know / I see / right.

already — *affirmative sentences*

› Ya he terminado.
I've already finished.

yet — *questions*

› ¿Ya has comido?
Have you eaten yet?

now (change) — *from this moment*

› Ya es tarde, me voy a casa.
It's late now, I'm going home.

reaction — *I know / I see*

› —Hace mucho frío. —Ya, ya…
"It's really cold." "Yeah, I know…"

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Ya voy!** *Coming!* · **¡Ya está!** *Done! / That's it!* · **Ya lo sé.** *I know.*

NOTE Position: usually before the verb (Ya he comido), but '¿Has comido ya?' is also natural.

ya no *not any more / no longer*

ADVERB A2

PATTERN **ya no + verb**

Something was true before but has stopped being true.

› Ya no vivo en Sevilla, ahora vivo en Málaga.
I don't live in Seville any more, now I live in Málaga.

› Ya no fumo.
I've stopped smoking. / I don't smoke any more.

OPPOSITE **todavía / aún** — still

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No más vivo aquí (calque of 'no more')~~ → ✓ Ya no vivo aquí.

todavía / aún *still / yet*

ADVERB A2

Both mean 'still': something continues. Todavía is more common in speech; aún (with accent) is identical in meaning.

› ¿Todavía trabajas en el banco?
Do you still work at the bank?

› Son las once y aún está durmiendo.
It's eleven o'clock and he's still asleep.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **todavía más / aún más** *even more*

DON'T CONFUSE todavía = still (continues) vs seguir + gerund (same idea): Todavía vivo aquí = Sigo viviendo aquí.

NOTE Aún (with accent) = todavía. Aun (no accent) = incluso (even): Aun así, voy a ir. = Even so, I'm going to go.

todavía no / aún no *not yet*

ADVERB A2

Something hasn't happened, but you expect it to.

› —¿Has visto la última temporada? —Todavía no.
"Have you seen the latest season?" "Not yet."

› Aún no sé si puedo ir.
I don't know yet if I can go.

NOTE Remember: ya no = not any more · todavía no = not yet.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No todavía~~ → ✓ Todavía no. And ✗ ~~*No ya~~ → ✓ Ya no / Todavía no (different meanings).

Timing & manner

enseguida *right away / straight away / in a moment*

ADVERB A2

Very soon, immediately. Waiters and shop assistants say it constantly.

› **Enseguida le atiendo.**
I'll be with you in a moment.

› **Me llamó y enseguida salí de casa.**
She called me and I left home straight away.

DON'T CONFUSE enseguida ≈ ahora mismo ≈ ya (Spain: ¡Ya voy!).

NOTE Also written 'en seguida' (both correct, enseguida is more common).

de repente *suddenly / all of a sudden*

ADVERB A2

Something happens unexpectedly. Perfect for storytelling in the past.

› **Estábamos cenando y, de repente, se fue la luz.**
We were having dinner and suddenly the power went off.

DON'T CONFUSE de repente = de pronto (same meaning). In Latin America, 'de repente' can also mean 'maybe': De repente llueve.

despacio *slowly*

ADVERB A2

The everyday adverb for 'slowly'. Hugely useful for language learners!

› **¿Puedes hablar más despacio, por favor?**
Can you speak more slowly, please?

› **Conduce despacio, la carretera está mojada.**
Drive slowly, the road is wet.

OPPOSITE **deprisa / rápido** — quickly / fast

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Habla lentamente~~, por favor (correct but stiff) → ✓ Habla despacio, por favor.

solo *only / just*

ADVERB A2

As an adverb, solo = only, just (= solamente). As an adjective, solo/a = alone (and it agrees).

adverb: only / just — *invariable*

› Solo quiero un café, gracias.
I just want a coffee, thanks.

adjective: alone — *agrees with the noun*

› Mi abuela vive sola.
My grandmother lives alone.

DON'T CONFUSE solo = solamente = únicamente (more formal).

NOTE Modern spelling: solo, without accent, in both uses (the old 'sólo' is no longer needed).

juntos *together*

ADVERB A2

FORMS juntos · juntas

Actually an adjective, so it agrees: juntos (masc. or mixed group), juntas (all female).

› ¿Vamos juntos al concierto?
Shall we go to the concert together?

› Laura y Ana viven juntas.
Laura and Ana live together.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ellas trabajan juntos~~ → ✓ Ellas trabajan juntas.

Degree & focus

Words to make your statements stronger, softer or more precise.

bastante *quite / fairly / pretty / enough*

ADVERB A2

FORMS bastante · bastantes (when it goes with a noun)

Before an adjective or adverb: quite, pretty. With a noun: enough or quite a lot.

bastante + adjective — *quite, pretty*

› El hotel está bastante bien.
The hotel is pretty good.

bastante(s) + noun — *enough / quite a lot*

› Hay bastantes sillas para todos.
There are enough chairs for everyone.

DON'T CONFUSE un poco < bastante < muy.

NOTE Agrees in number only when it goes with a noun: bastante gente, bastantes personas.

casi *almost / nearly*

ADVERB A2

Nearly, but not completely. ‘Casi nunca’ = hardly ever.

› Casi pierdo el tren.
I nearly missed the train.

› Ya casi estamos, faltan cinco minutos.
We're nearly there, five minutes to go.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **casi siempre** *nearly always* · **casi nunca** *hardly ever* · **casi nada** *hardly anything*

NOTE With an action that didn't happen, Spanish often uses the present tense: Casi me caigo. = I nearly fell over.

apenas *hardly / barely / scarcely*

ADVERB A2

Very little, almost not at all. It already contains a negative idea, so you don't need ‘no’.

› Apenas he dormido esta noche.
I barely slept last night.

› Apenas hay gente en la playa.
There's hardly anyone on the beach.

DON'T CONFUSE apenas = casi no: Casi no he dormido.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No apenas duermo~~ → ✓ Apenas duermo. (‘No duermo apenas’ is also correct: no + verb + apenas.)

incluso *even*

ADVERB A2

Adds something surprising or extreme to what you said.

› Trabaja todos los días, incluso los domingos.
She works every day, even on Sundays.

› Incluso mi abuelo usa WhatsApp.
Even my grandad uses WhatsApp.

DON'T CONFUSE incluso (positive) vs ni siquiera (negative: not even).

COMMON MISTAKE English ‘even’ in negatives: ‘He didn't even call’ → ✓ Ni siquiera llamó (not ~~*incluso no llamó~~).

sobre todo

especially / above all / mainly

ADVERB A2

To highlight the most important item in a list or idea.

› **Me gusta mucho la comida mexicana, sobre todo los tacos.**
I really like Mexican food, especially tacos.

› **Sobre todo, no te olvides el pasaporte.**
Above all, don't forget your passport.

DON'T CONFUSE sobre todo ≈ especialmente.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*sobretodo (written as one word~~, = overcoat) → ✓ sobre todo.

más o menos

more or less / roughly / so-so

ADVERB A2

Approximately — or, as an answer about how you are or how something went, 'so-so'.

approximately — *roughly*

› **Somos más o menos veinte personas.**
There are roughly twenty of us.

so-so — *answer*

› **—¿Qué tal el examen? —Más o menos.**
"How did the exam go?" "So-so."

DON'T CONFUSE más o menos ≈ aproximadamente (formal) ≈ unos / unas + number (unas veinte personas).

tampoco

neither / not either / not really (softener)

ADVERB A2

You know 'yo tampoco' = me neither. New nuance: 'tampoco' also softens a negative statement, like 'it's not like…' or 'not that…'.

› **Tampoco es para tanto.**
It's not that big a deal.

› **Tampoco tengo mucha hambre, la verdad.**
I'm not really that hungry, to be honest.

NOTE New use: tampoco as a softener ('Tampoco es tan caro' = It's not that expensive).

THE -MENTE RULE

Take the feminine singular form of the adjective and add -mente: rápida → rápidamente, tranquila → tranquilamente. If the adjective has no feminine form, just add -mente: fácil → fácilmente, normal → normalmente. The accent stays where it was: rápidamente, fácilmente. In a list, only the last one takes -mente: lenta y claramente.

Useful -mente adverbs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
normalmente	*usually / normally*	Normalmente desayuno en casa. *I usually have breakfast at home.*
rápidamente	*quickly*	in speech, rápido is often used instead
tranquilamente	*calmly / at your leisure / easily (colloquial)*	Puedes llegar tranquilamente en veinte minutos. *You can easily get there in twenty minutes.*
completamente	*completely*	
simplemente	*simply / just*	
probablemente	*probably*	Probablemente llegaremos tarde. *We'll probably be late.*
seguramente	*probably / most likely*	trap: it means 'probably', not 'surely' Seguramente está en el gimnasio. *He's probably at the gym.*
directamente	*directly / straight*	
claramente	*clearly*	
últimamente	*lately / recently*	Últimamente duermo fatal. *I've been sleeping terribly lately.*
afortunadamente	*fortunately*	colloquial: por suerte
desgraciadamente	*unfortunately*	≈ por desgracia, lamentablemente
sinceramente	*honestly / sincerely*	

Manner

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
deprisa	*quickly / in a hurry*	also 'de prisa' Comí deprisa porque tenía prisa. *I ate quickly because I was in a hurry.*
en serio	*seriously*	¿En serio? = Really? / Seriously?
a propósito	*on purpose / by the way*	No lo hice a propósito, perdona. *I didn't do it on purpose, sorry.*
sin querer	*by accident / without meaning to*	Lo borré sin querer. *I deleted it by accident.*
por suerte	*luckily*	Por suerte, no nos pasó nada. *Luckily, nothing happened to us.*
de verdad	*really / truly*	Gracias, de verdad. = Thanks, really.
a gusto	*comfortable / at ease*	estar a gusto = to feel at ease Aquí estoy muy a gusto. *I feel really comfortable here.*

Where: place adverbs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
dentro	*inside*	dentro de + noun = inside (something) **LatAm:** Latin America also: adentro
fuera	*outside / away*	comer fuera = to eat out **LatAm:** Latin America also: afuera **Hoy cenamos fuera.** *We're eating out tonight.*
delante	*in front / ahead*	delante de = in front of
detrás	*behind / at the back*	detrás de = behind
enfrente	*opposite / across the street*	enfrente de = opposite **La panadería está justo enfrente.** *The bakery is just across the street.*
por aquí / por ahí	*around here / around there*	**¿Hay un cajero por aquí?** *Is there a cash machine around here?*
en todas partes	*everywhere*	also: por todas partes
en ningún sitio	*nowhere / anywhere (negative)*	No lo encuentro en ningún sitio = I can't find it anywhere
en otro sitio	*somewhere else*	

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

05 · Por or para? A or en? The little words that hold Spanish together

Prepositions

Prepositions rarely translate one-to-one, so learn them in chunks: 'en tren' but 'a pie', 'a las ocho', 'para el lunes', 'por la mañana'. This section gives you the A2 uses of por and para, the key meanings of a, de and en, and the most useful two- and three-word prepositions.

Por and para: the A2 essentials

A simple starting point: para looks forward to a goal, a destination or a deadline; por looks at the cause, the route or the time around which something happens.

para *for / to / in order to / by (deadline)*

PREPOSITION A2

Para points towards an objective: a purpose, a recipient, a destination, a deadline, or someone's point of view.

purpose: para + infinitive — *in order to*

› Estudio español para trabajar en México.
I'm studying Spanish to work in Mexico.

recipient — *for someone*

› Este regalo es para ti.
This present is for you.

destination — *towards a place*

› Salgo para Madrid mañana temprano.
I'm leaving for Madrid early tomorrow.

deadline — *by / for (a date)*

› Necesito el informe para el viernes.
I need the report by Friday.

opinion: para mí — *in my opinion / for me*

› Para mí, es la mejor serie del año.
For me, it's the best series of the year.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Para qué?** *What for?* · **para llevar** *to take away* · **para siempre** *forever*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estudio por aprender~~ → ✓ Estudio para aprender. Purpose = para.

por *because of / through / along / around / per / by*

PREPOSITION A2

Por looks at the cause or the route: why something happens, where you pass through, the approximate time or place, the means, and 'per'.

cause / reason — *because of*

› Cancelaron el vuelo por la niebla.
They cancelled the flight because of the fog.

through / along / around — *movement through a place*

› Dimos un paseo por el centro.
We went for a walk around the centre.

parts of the day — *por la mañana / tarde / noche*

› Por la tarde voy al gimnasio.
In the afternoon I go to the gym.

means — *by phone, email…*

› Te lo mando por correo.
I'll send it to you by email.

exchange / price — *for (an amount)*

› Lo compré por veinte euros.
I bought it for twenty euros.

frequency: per — *a / per*

› Voy a clase dos veces por semana.
I go to class twice a week.

approximate place — *somewhere around*

› ¿Hay una farmacia por aquí?
Is there a chemist's around here?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Por qué?** *Why?* · **por favor** *please* · **gracias por** + noun / infinitive *thanks for* · **por fin** *finally / at last*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gracias para la cena~~ → ✓ Gracias por la cena. You thank someone for the cause.

Por or para?

Purpose vs cause

✗ ~~*Lo hago por ganar dinero~~. (when you mean 'in order to')

✓ Lo hago para ganar dinero.

Para + infinitive = purpose (in order to). Por = the cause or motivation behind something. 'Lo hago por mis hijos' = I do it for (the sake of / because of) my kids.

› Trabajo para pagar el alquiler.
I work to pay the rent.

› Lo hago por ti.
I'm doing it for you (because of you / for your sake).

REMEMBER Can you say 'in order to' in English? Then use para.

Deadline vs approximate time

✗ *~~Tienes que terminarlo por el lunes~~.

✓ Tienes que terminarlo para el lunes.

Para + date = deadline (by). Por + part of the day = when something happens in general: por la mañana. 'Por el lunes' isn't used for deadlines.

› Los deberes son para mañana.
The homework is for tomorrow.

› Te llamo por la noche.
I'll call you in the evening.

Destination vs route

✗ *~~Paseamos para la playa~~. (to mean 'along the beach')

✓ Paseamos por la playa.

Para + place = towards, the destination. Por + place = through, along, around.

› Este tren va para Valencia.
This train is going to Valencia.

› El tren pasa por Cuenca.
The train goes through Cuenca.

A, de, en: new uses

a *to / at / away (distance)*

PREPOSITION A2

You know 'ir a' and personal 'a'. At A2, add: exact times, distance and time from a place, frequency, and fixed manner expressions.

clock time – *at*

› La clase empieza a las seis y media.
The class starts at half past six.

distance – *away (km / minutes)*

› La playa está a diez minutos andando.
The beach is a ten-minute walk away.

frequency / rate – *per / a*

› Comemos fuera una vez a la semana.
We eat out once a week.

manner – *a pie, a mano…*

› Voy al trabajo a pie.
I walk to work.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a pie** *on foot* · **a mano** *by hand* · **a tiempo** *on time* · **a la plancha** *grilled*

NOTE a + el = al: Voy al cine.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~La estación está diez minutos de aquí~~ → ✓ La estación está a diez minutos de aquí. Distance needs 'a'.

de *of / from / made of / about*

PREPOSITION A2

The most frequent preposition. At A2: origin, material, content, and 'de… a' for ranges.

origin — *from*

› Mi novio es de Lima.
My boyfriend is from Lima.

material — *made of*

› Es una mesa de madera.
It's a wooden table.

content — *a … of*

› Un vaso de agua, por favor.
A glass of water, please.

type / purpose of an object — *noun + de + noun*

› Necesito unas zapatillas de deporte.
I need some trainers.

de… a — *from… to (range)*

› Trabajo de nueve a cinco.
I work from nine to five.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de día / de noche** *during the day / at night* · **de vacaciones** *on holiday* · **de pie** *standing*

NOTE de + el = del: Vengo del trabajo.

COMMON MISTAKE English noun + noun becomes noun + de + noun: 'a cotton T-shirt' → ✗ ~~*una algodón camiseta~~ → ✓ una camiseta de algodón.

en *in / on / at / by (transport)*

PREPOSITION A2

Place, time periods, and means of transport. English uses in, on and at; Spanish often uses just 'en'.

transport — *by*

› Vamos en tren, es más cómodo.
Let's go by train, it's more comfortable.

place — *in / on / at*

› Te espero en la estación.
I'll wait for you at the station.

months, seasons, years — *in*

› Nos conocimos en 2019, en verano.
We met in 2019, in the summer.

time taken — *in (two hours)*

› Lo hice en dos horas.
I did it in two hours.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en coche / en bici / en avión** *by car / by bike / by plane* · **en casa** *at home* · **en Navidad** *at Christmas*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*en pie~~ → ✓ a pie. And ✗ ~~*por tren~~ → ✓ en tren. ✗ ~~*en el lunes~~ → ✓ el lunes (no preposition with days).

From, until, during, between

desde… hasta *from… until / from… to (as far as)*

PREPOSITION A2

Marks a starting point and an end point in time or space. Desde… hasta emphasises the whole period or route; de… a is lighter and very common for timetables.

› La tienda está abierta desde las diez hasta las ocho.
The shop is open from ten until eight.

› Fuimos andando desde el hotel hasta la catedral.
We walked all the way from the hotel to the cathedral.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Hasta luego! / ¡Hasta mañana!** *See you later! / See you tomorrow!* · **desde aquí** *from here*

NOTE For 'since' and 'for' with time (desde 2020, desde hace dos años) see section 10.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*desde las diez a las ocho (mixing)~~ → ✓ desde las diez hasta las ocho / de diez a ocho.

durante *during / for (a period)*

PREPOSITION A2

Throughout a period of time. Before a number of hours/days/years it means 'for' (finished periods).

› Viví en Irlanda durante tres años.
I lived in Ireland for three years.

› No se puede hablar durante la película.
You can't talk during the film.

DON'T CONFUSE durante = during / for (finished period) vs desde hace = for (still going on): Vivo aquí desde hace tres años.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Viví en Irlanda por tres años (common in Latin America~~, heard as an anglicism in Spain) → ✓ Viví en Irlanda (durante) tres años. Often you can just drop the preposition.

antes de / después de *before / after*

PREPOSITION A2

PATTERN **antes de / después de + noun or infinitive**

Before and after something. With a verb, use the infinitive (not the -ing form like in English).

› Lávate las manos antes de comer.
Wash your hands before eating.

› Después de la clase, tomamos algo.
After class, we're going for a drink.

NOTE Without 'de', antes and después are adverbs: Primero cenamos y después vamos al cine.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*antes de comiendo / *después comer~~ → ✓ antes de comer / después de comer.

entre *between / among*

PREPOSITION A2

Between two things or among several. Also 'together' when people share an effort.

between / among — *place, time, choice*

› La farmacia está entre el banco y el súper.
The chemist's is between the bank and the supermarket.

together (shared) — *entre todos*

› Lo pagamos entre todos.
We'll all chip in.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **entre semana** *during the week (weekdays)* · **entre tú y yo** *between you and me*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*entre mí y ti~~ → ✓ entre tú y yo. After entre, use subject pronouns.

sin *without*

PREPOSITION A2

PATTERN **sin + noun · sin + infinitive**

Without. Before a verb, use the infinitive.

› Un café sin azúcar, por favor.
A coffee without sugar, please.

› Se fue sin decir nada.
He left without saying anything.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sin embargo** *however (connector, section 06)* · **sin duda** *without a doubt*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*sin diciendo~~ → ✓ sin decir. And no article in general meaning: ✗ ~~*sin el azúcar~~ → ✓ sin azúcar.

según *according to / depending on*

PREPOSITION A2

To report someone's opinion or information, or to say that something depends on something else.

according to — *source*

› Según el pronóstico, mañana llueve.
According to the forecast, it's going to rain tomorrow.

depending on — *it depends*

› —¿Vienes? —Según. Depende del trabajo.
"Are you coming?" "Depends. It depends on work."

NOTE After según, use subject pronouns: según tú, según ella.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Según a mí / *según mí~~ → ✓ Para mí / En mi opinión. ('Según yo' is colloquial; 'según tú', 'según ella' are perfectly normal.)

hacia *towards / around (time)*

PREPOSITION A2

Direction towards something, or an approximate time.

› Caminamos hacia el puerto.
We walked towards the harbour.

› Llegaremos hacia las nueve.
We'll arrive around nine.

DON'T CONFUSE hacia (direction, not necessarily arriving) vs a (destination). For approximate time: hacia las nueve = sobre las nueve = a eso de las nueve.

sobre *on / about / around (time)*

PREPOSITION A2

On top of something, about a topic, or approximately (with times).

on (top of) — = *encima de*

› Las llaves están sobre la mesa.
The keys are on the table.

about (topic) — *subject*

› Es un documental sobre el cambio climático.
It's a documentary about climate change.

around (time) — *approximately*

› Quedamos sobre las ocho, ¿vale?
Let's meet around eight, OK?

NOTE el sobre (noun) = envelope.

Two- and three-word prepositions

Learn these as single blocks. Most end in 'de' or 'a' — and de + el = del, a + el = al.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
a través de	*through / across / via*	Lo conocí a través de unos amigos. *I met him through some friends.*
alrededor de	*around (place / approximately)*	Dimos una vuelta alrededor del lago. *We walked around the lake.*
frente a	*opposite / facing*	≈ enfrente de El hotel está frente al mar. *The hotel faces the sea.*
junto a	*next to / beside*	≈ al lado de
al otro lado de	*on the other side of*	Viven al otro lado del río. *They live on the other side of the river.*
en medio de	*in the middle of*	
a lo largo de	*along / throughout*	Hay bares a lo largo de toda la playa. *There are bars all along the beach.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
a partir de	*from… on / starting*	A partir del lunes, empiezo a las ocho. *From Monday on, I start at eight.*
en lugar de / en vez de	*instead of*	+ noun or infinitive ¿Por qué no vamos en bici en vez de en coche? *Why don't we go by bike instead of by car?*
además de	*as well as / besides*	+ noun or infinitive Además de inglés, habla alemán. *As well as English, she speaks German.*
gracias a	*thanks to*	for good results Gracias a ti, lo conseguí. *Thanks to you, I managed it.*
por culpa de	*because of (negative)*	for bad results Llegamos tarde por culpa del tráfico. *We were late because of the traffic.*
a causa de	*because of / due to*	a bit more formal than por
a favor de / en contra de	*in favour of / against*	Estoy a favor de trabajar desde casa. *I'm in favour of working from home.*
a principios de / a mediados de / a finales de	*at the beginning of / in the middle of / at the end of (periods)*	Nos mudamos a finales de mayo. *We're moving at the end of May.*

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

06 · Join your ideas and tell a story that flows

Connectors

At A2 you start linking sentences: giving reasons, adding information, contrasting, and telling stories in order. These connectors are organised by function. Learn one or two from each group really well, then use them every time you speak or write — even a simple 'así que' or 'es que' makes you sound much more natural.

Adding information

además *also / besides / what's more / in addition*

CONNECTOR A2

Adds an extra argument or piece of information, often a stronger one. Usually at the start of a sentence, followed by a comma.

- El piso es muy luminoso. Además, está cerca del metro.
  The flat is really bright. Plus, it's close to the metro.
- No me apetece salir; además, mañana trabajo temprano.
  I don't feel like going out; besides, I'm working early tomorrow.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **y además** *and what's more / and on top of that* · **además de + noun / infinitive** *as well as (see section 05)*

DON'T CONFUSE también = also (neutral, inside the sentence) vs además = besides, what's more (adds a new argument).

Adding: more ways

y además
and what's more / and on top of that
To add a second reason with extra force, in speech.

> Es barato y además la comida es buenísima.
> *It's cheap and on top of that the food is amazing.*

ni... ni...
neither... nor... / not... or...
To join two negative ideas. With ni... ni before the verb, you don't need 'no'.

> No tengo ni tiempo ni dinero.
> *I've got neither the time nor the money.*

Contrast

aunque *although / even though*

CONNECTOR A2

PATTERN **aunque + indicative (real fact) · (B1: aunque + subjunctive)**

Introduces a fact that contrasts with the main idea. At A2, use it with the indicative to talk about something you know is true.

› **Aunque estaba cansada, fui a la fiesta.**
Although I was tired, I went to the party.

› **Me gusta vivir aquí, aunque los inviernos son muy fríos.**
I like living here, even though the winters are really cold.

NOTE Coming at B1: aunque + subjunctive (aunque llueva = even if it rains).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Aunque estaba cansada~~, pero fui → ✓ Aunque estaba cansada, fui. Don't use aunque and pero together.

sin embargo *however / nevertheless*

CONNECTOR A2

A stronger, slightly more formal 'but'. Perfect for writing and careful speech. Usually at the start of a sentence, with a comma after it.

› **El hotel era caro. Sin embargo, mereció la pena.**
The hotel was expensive. However, it was worth it.

› **Estudié mucho; sin embargo, suspendí.**
I studied a lot; however, I failed.

DON'T CONFUSE pero (everyday, joins two parts of one sentence) vs sin embargo (more formal, often starts a new sentence).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sin embargo de la lluvia... (it doesn~~';t take 'de') → ✓ A pesar de la lluvia...

Contrast: more ways

en cambio
on the other hand / whereas / however

To contrast two people, places or situations.

> **Mi hermano odia madrugar; yo, en cambio, me levanto a las seis encantada.**
> *My brother hates getting up early; I, on the other hand, happily get up at six.*

de todas formas / de todas maneras INFORMAL
anyway / in any case

To say that something doesn't change your conclusion.

> **No sé si podré ir. De todas formas, te aviso.**
> *I don't know if I'll be able to go. I'll let you know anyway.*

Cause: why?

como *as / since (at the start of a sentence)*

CONNECTOR A2

PATTERN Como + cause, + consequence

Introduces a cause at the BEGINNING of the sentence. If the cause comes second, use porque.

› Como no tenía hambre, no cené.
As I wasn't hungry, I didn't have dinner.

› Como hace buen tiempo, ¿comemos en la terraza?
Since the weather's nice, shall we eat on the terrace?

NOTE No accent: como (as, like) vs cómo (how?).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Porque no tenía hambre~~, no cené (sounds odd at the start) → ✓ Como no tenía hambre, no cené. ✗ ~~*No cené como no tenía hambre~~ → ✓ No cené porque no tenía hambre.

es que *it's just that / the thing is / well, ...*

CONNECTOR INFORMAL A2

Super common in spoken Spanish to justify yourself or give an excuse — it softens what you say.

› —¿Por qué no viniste? —Es que tenía mucho trabajo.
"Why didn't you come?" "It's just that I had loads of work."

› Lo siento, es que no te he oído.
Sorry, I just didn't hear you.

DON'T CONFUSE porque (neutral reason) vs es que (explanation / excuse, softer and more personal).

NOTE Native speakers use 'es que...' constantly. Use it and you'll immediately sound more natural.

Cause: more ways

por + noun
because of
Short way to give a cause with a noun (see section 05).

> Llegué tarde por el tráfico.
> *I was late because of the traffic.*

Consequence: so…

por eso *that's why / so / for that reason*

CONNECTOR A2

Points back to a cause you just mentioned and introduces the result. Very frequent in speech and writing.

› Mi novia es de Chile; por eso voy tanto a Santiago.
My girlfriend is from Chile; that's why I go to Santiago so often.

› Había huelga de metro y por eso llegamos tarde.
There was a metro strike, so we were late.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Por esto es que… (calque)~~ → ✓ Por eso…

así que *so (result)*

CONNECTOR A2

Introduces a consequence, in the middle of the sentence. The everyday 'so' of spoken Spanish.

› Estaba lloviendo, así que nos quedamos en casa.
It was raining, so we stayed at home.

› No hay leche, así que voy al súper.
There's no milk, so I'm going to the supermarket.

DON'T CONFUSE así que (so, result) vs por eso (that's why, points back to the reason). Often interchangeable.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estaba cansado~~, tan me fui (calque of 'so') → ✓ Estaba cansado, así que me fui.

entonces *then / so / in that case*

CONNECTOR A2

Means 'at that time' in stories, or 'so / in that case' to draw a conclusion in conversation.

so / in that case — *conclusion*

› —No puedo el sábado. —Entonces, ¿quedamos el domingo?
"I can't on Saturday." "So shall we meet on Sunday then?"

then (at that time) — *in narratives*

› Entonces vivía en París.
At that time I was living in Paris.

NOTE In speech, 'entonces' is also a filler to start or continue a story: Entonces… ¿qué hacemos?

Time: when & while

cuando *when*

CONNECTOR A2

PATTERN **cuando + indicative (habits, past) · (B1: cuando + subjunctive for the future)**

Joins two actions in time. At A2, use it for habits and past events.

› Cuando llego a casa, me ducho.
When I get home, I have a shower.

› Cuando era pequeña, vivía en el campo.
When I was little, I lived in the countryside.

NOTE No accent as a connector (cuando). With accent only in questions: ¿Cuándo?

COMMON MISTAKE Future: ✗ *~~Cuando llegaré~~, te llamo → ✓ Cuando llegue, te llamo (subjunctive — you'll study this at B1, but learn this one phrase now).

mientras *while*

CONNECTOR A2

Two actions happening at the same time.

› Escucho pódcasts mientras cocino.
I listen to podcasts while I cook.

› Mientras tú comprabas las entradas, yo buscaba aparcamiento.
While you were buying the tickets, I was looking for parking.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mientras tanto** *meanwhile / in the meantime*

Telling a story in order

Sequencing words help the listener follow you. Use 3 or 4 of them in every story you tell.

finalmente
finally / eventually
Last event of a story or list; slightly more formal than al final.

> Finalmente, decidimos quedarnos una noche más.
> *Finally, we decided to stay one more night.*

Examples & conditions

por ejemplo *for example / for instance*

CONNECTOR A2

Introduces an example. In speech you can also use 'como' (like, such as) before a list.

› Hay muchas cosas que hacer aquí: por ejemplo, ir de rutas o visitar bodegas.
There's lots to do here: for example, go hiking or visit wineries.

› Me encantan las ciudades con mar, como Cádiz o Valencia.
I love cities by the sea, like Cádiz or Valencia.

NOTE Written abbreviation: p. ej.

si *if*

CONNECTOR A2

PATTERN **si + present, + present / future / imperative**

Introduces a real, possible condition. After 'si', use the present (never the future).

› Si quieres, te llevo a la estación.
If you like, I'll take you to the station.

› Si llueve mañana, vamos al cine.
If it rains tomorrow, we'll go to the cinema.

› Si tienes tiempo, llámame.
If you have time, call me.

NOTE Coming later: si + imperfect subjunctive for hypothetical situations (si tuviera dinero… = if I had money…).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Si lloverá mañana…~~ → ✓ Si llueve mañana… And no accent: si (if) vs sí (yes).

porque, por qué, como, cómo

One word or two? Accent or not?

✗ ~~*¿Porque no vienes~~? / ~~*No voy por qué estoy cansado~~.

✓ ¿Por qué no vienes? — No voy porque estoy cansado.

Por qué (two words, accent) = why, in questions. Porque (one word, no accent) = because, in answers. The same logic works for cómo (how?) and como (as/like), cuándo (when?) and cuando (when).

› ¿Por qué estudias español? —Porque me encanta viajar.
"Why are you learning Spanish?" "Because I love travelling."

› ¿Cómo estás? — Como siempre.
"How are you?" "Same as always."

REMEMBER Question word = accent. Connector = no accent.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

07 · The little phrases that make you sound like you actually live in Spanish

Useful expressions

At A1 you learnt the basic reactions (¡Qué bien!, ¡Qué pena!, ¡No me digas!) and survival wishes (¡Que aproveche!, ¡Que te mejores!). Now it's time to widen your range: stronger yeses and noes, relief, embarrassment, good wishes for every occasion and small polite phrases. Learn them as whole blocks — don't translate them word for word. Pick five, use them this week, then come back for five more.

Reacting to news

When someone tells you something, Spanish speakers almost always react with a short exclamation. Silence sounds cold — so react! Pattern: ¡Qué + noun/adjective!

¡Menos mal!

Thank goodness! / Phew! / Just as well!

Relief: something bad didn't happen, or something went OK in the end. Often followed by que + sentence.

> **Menos mal que has traído paraguas.**
> *Just as well you brought an umbrella.*

¡Qué alivio!

What a relief!

When a worry disappears. A little stronger and more emotional than '¡Menos mal!'.

> **—Han encontrado tu maleta. —¡Ay, qué alivio!**
> *"They've found your suitcase." "Oh, what a relief!"*

¡Qué susto!

What a fright! / You scared me!

After a scare: a loud noise, a near accident, someone appearing suddenly.

> **¡Ay, qué susto! No te he oído entrar.**
> *Oh, you scared me! I didn't hear you come in.*

¡Qué vergüenza!

How embarrassing! / I'm so embarrassed!

When you feel embarrassed — or ashamed of someone else's behaviour. 'Vergüenza' is embarrassment, not 'vengeance'.

> **Le llamé Pablo y se llama Pedro. ¡Qué vergüenza!**
> *I called him Pablo and his name is Pedro. How embarrassing!*

¡Qué ilusión!

How exciting! / I'm so excited! / How lovely!

Happy excitement about something you're looking forward to, or something that touches you. There's no perfect English word for 'ilusión'.

'Ilusión' here is positive — it does NOT mean 'illusion'.

> **¿Vienes a verme en verano? ¡Qué ilusión!**
> *You're coming to see me in summer? I'm so excited!*

¡Qué detalle!

How thoughtful! / What a lovely gesture!

When someone does something kind or gives you a small gift.

> **¿Me has traído un recuerdo de Roma? ¡Qué detalle!**
> *You brought me a souvenir from Rome? How thoughtful!*

¡Qué fuerte! COLLOQUIAL

That's crazy! / No way! / Wow!

Strong surprise or shock, often about gossip or something unfair.

Spain & Latin America: Very typical of Spain.

> **¿Te ha despedido por WhatsApp? ¡Qué fuerte!**
> *He fired you by WhatsApp? That's crazy!*

¡Qué pasada! COLLOQUIAL

That's amazing! / How awesome!

Enthusiasm for something impressive: a view, a concert, a trip.

Spain & Latin America: Spain. Mexico: ¡Qué padre! · Argentina: ¡Qué copado! · Colombia: ¡Qué chévere!

> **Las vistas desde la Alhambra son una pasada.**
> *The views from the Alhambra are amazing.*

¡Qué morro! COLLOQUIAL

What a cheek! / What nerve!

When someone is shameless: jumping the queue, never paying, always arriving late.

Spain & Latin America: Spain. Also: ¡Qué cara! (Spain and Latin America).

> **Se ha colado delante de todos. ¡Qué morro!**
> *He jumped the queue in front of everyone. What a cheek!*

¡Qué horror!

How awful! / That's terrible!

For something bad or unpleasant — often with humour for small things too.

> Cuatro horas en el aeropuerto... ¡qué horror!
> *Four hours at the airport... how awful!*

¡Qué mala pata! INFORMAL

What bad luck! / How unlucky!

For small misfortunes, a bit more colloquial than '¡Qué mala suerte!'.

> Se me ha roto el móvil el primer día de vacaciones. ¡Qué mala pata!
> *My phone broke on the first day of the holidays. How unlucky!*

¡Qué casualidad!

What a coincidence!

When you meet someone unexpectedly or two things happen by chance.

> ¡Qué casualidad! Yo también soy de Valencia.
> *What a coincidence! I'm from Valencia too.*

¡Qué raro!

That's weird! / How strange!

When something isn't normal or doesn't make sense.

> Laura no contesta. Qué raro, siempre lo coge.
> *Laura isn't answering. That's weird, she always picks up.*

¡O jalá!

I hope so! / If only!

Alone, as a reply, to say you really hope something happens. (With a full sentence it needs the subjunctive — that comes later.)

> —Seguro que te dan el trabajo. —¡O jalá!
> *"I'm sure you'll get the job." "I hope so!"*

A strong yes, a strong no

¡Qué va! INFORMAL

No way! / Not at all! / Of course not!

A friendly, emphatic 'no' to deny something.

Spain & Latin America: Mainly Spain.

> —¿Estás cansado? —¡Qué va! Estoy genial.
> *"Are you tired?" "Not at all! I feel great."*

¡Ni hablar! INFORMAL

No way! / Out of the question!

A firm refusal: you're not going to accept or do something.

> —¿Pago yo? —¡Ni hablar! Hoy invito yo.
> *"Shall I pay?" "No way! It's on me today."*

¡Ni de broma! / ¡Ni loco! COLLOQUIAL

No way! / Not a chance! / Not in a million years!

Very strong refusal, with humour. A woman says '¡Ni loca!'.

> ¿Saltar en paracaídas? ¡Ni loca!
> *Skydiving? Not in a million years!*

¡Para nada! INFORMAL

Not at all!

To deny strongly, often to reassure someone.

> —¿Te molesta la música? —¡Para nada!
> *"Does the music bother you?" "Not at all!"*

¡Pues claro! INFORMAL

Well, of course! / Obviously!

A yes that means 'how could you even ask?'. Warm among friends; can sound impatient in the wrong tone.

> —¿Vienes a mi cumple? —¡Pues claro!
> *"Are you coming to my birthday?" "Well, of course!"*

¡Ya lo creo!

You bet! / I'll say! / Absolutely!

Enthusiastic agreement.

> —¿Te gustó Lisboa? —¡Ya lo creo! Quiero volver.
> *"Did you like Lisbon?" "You bet! I want to go back."*

¡Desde luego!

Definitely! / You can say that again!

To agree strongly. In Spain also used to show annoyance: '¡Desde luego, qué gente!'

> —Hace un calor horrible. —¡Desde luego!
> *"It's horribly hot." "You can say that again!"*

¡Eso es!

That's it! / Exactly!

When someone finally says or does the right thing.

> —¿Se dice 'me queda grande'? —¡Eso es!
> *"Do you say 'me queda grande'?" "That's it!"*

¡Hecho! INFORMAL
Done! / Deal!
To accept a plan or an agreement immediately.

> —Tú traes el vino y yo hago la cena. —¡Hecho!
> *"You bring the wine and I'll make dinner." "Deal!"*

¡Ya ves! INFORMAL
I know! / Tell me about it!
To agree with a comment, often with a shrug — 'that's how it is'.

> —¡Qué caro está todo! —¡Ya ves!
> *"Everything's so expensive!" "Tell me about it!"*

Accepting things as they are

Me da lo mismo.
It's all the same to me. / I don't mind.
Same as 'me da igual' (A1), a little softer.

> Me da lo mismo ir hoy o mañana.
> *It's all the same to me whether we go today or tomorrow.*

No importa.
It doesn't matter. / Never mind.
To reassure someone or to say that a problem isn't important.

> —No tengo cambio. —No importa, me lo das mañana.
> *"I haven't got change." "Never mind, give it to me tomorrow."*

Es lo que hay. INFORMAL
It is what it is. / That's just how it is.
Accepting a situation you can't change.

> El piso es pequeño, pero es lo que hay.
> *The flat is small, but it is what it is.*

¡Qué le vamos a hacer!
Oh well, what can you do?
Resignation when something goes wrong and there's no solution.

> Ha empezado a llover justo hoy. ¡Qué le vamos a hacer!
> *It's started raining today of all days. Oh well, what can you do?*

Bueno, pues nada... INFORMAL
Oh well... / Right then...
To accept something a bit disappointing, or to start ending a conversation.

> —Está cerrado. —Bueno, pues nada, volvemos mañana.
> *"It's closed." "Oh well, we'll come back tomorrow."*

Cosas que pasan.
These things happen.
To make someone feel better after a small accident or mistake.

> —Perdona, he roto un vaso. —Tranquila, cosas que pasan.
> *"Sorry, I've broken a glass." "Don't worry, these things happen."*

Tampoco es para tanto. INFORMAL
It's not that big a deal.
To say someone is exaggerating, or to calm a situation.

> Solo has llegado diez minutos tarde. Tampoco es para tanto.
> *You were only ten minutes late. It's not that big a deal.*

Mejor así.
It's better that way. / All the better.
To accept a change and see the positive side.

> —Al final somos solo cuatro. —Mejor así, más tranquilos.
> *"In the end there are only four of us." "All the better, it'll be more relaxed."*

No te agobies. INFORMAL
Don't stress. / Don't get overwhelmed.
To someone who's stressed or anxious about too many things.
Spain & Latin America: Very common in Spain; in Latin America you'll also hear 'No te estreses'.

> No te agobies con el examen, lo vas a hacer bien.
> *Don't stress about the exam, you'll do well.*

Maybe, just in case & little by little

A lo mejor
Maybe / Perhaps
Very common in speech. Followed by a normal verb (indicative), not the subjunctive.
Spain & Latin America: Everywhere. In Argentina, Uruguay and Mexico you'll also hear 'capaz que'.

> A lo mejor voy al gimnasio esta tarde.
> *Maybe I'll go to the gym this afternoon.*

Puede (ser).
Maybe. / Could be.
As a short reply when you're not sure.

> —¿Vienes mañana? —Puede.
> *"Are you coming tomorrow?" "Maybe."*

Por si acaso
Just in case
When you do something to be prepared.

> **Llévate una chaqueta, por si acaso.**
> *Take a jacket, just in case.*

Vale la pena.
It's worth it.
To recommend something. With an infinitive: 'Vale la pena ir' (It's worth going). Negative: No vale la pena.
Also 'merece la pena' (Spain), same meaning.

> **El museo es caro, pero vale la pena.**
> *The museum is expensive, but it's worth it.*

¡Por fin!
At last! / Finally!
When something you've been waiting for finally happens.

> **¡Por fin es viernes!**
> *Finally, it's Friday!*

De momento
For now / For the moment / So far
Something is true now, but it might change. Also: por ahora.

> **De momento vivo con mi hermana.**
> *For now I'm living with my sister.*

Poco a poco
Little by little / Bit by bit
For slow, steady progress — perfect for talking about learning Spanish!

> **Poco a poco entiendo más a la gente.**
> *Bit by bit I understand people more.*

Good wishes (¡Que...!)

You already know ¡Que aproveche!, ¡Que te mejores! and ¡Que lo pases bien!. They all follow the same pattern: Que + a verb in the subjunctive. At A2 just learn them as complete blocks. For usted, change te → le and the verb ending: ¡Que tenga buen día!

¡Que tengas buen día!
Have a nice day!
When saying goodbye in the morning or early afternoon. Formal: ¡Que tenga buen día! Also: ¡Que tengas buena tarde / buena semana!

> **Gracias por todo. ¡Que tengas buen día!**
> *Thanks for everything. Have a nice day!*

¡Que te diviertas!
Have fun! / Enjoy yourself!
Before a party, a concert, a night out. Plural: ¡Que os divirtáis! (Spain) / ¡Que se diviertan!

> **¿Te vas al festival? ¡Que te diviertas!**
> *You're off to the festival? Have fun!*

¡Que disfrutes!
Enjoy! / Enjoy it!
Before a meal, a holiday, a concert... Also simply: ¡Disfruta!

> **Toma, tu café. ¡Que disfrutes!**
> *Here's your coffee. Enjoy!*

¡Que te vaya bien!
All the best! / Hope it goes well!
When someone leaves, starts something new, or goes to an interview.

> **Mucha suerte con el nuevo trabajo. ¡Que te vaya bien!**
> *Good luck with the new job. All the best!*

¡Que salga todo bien!
Hope it all goes well!
Before an exam, an operation, a move, an important meeting.

> **Mañana es la entrevista, ¿no? ¡Que salga todo bien!**
> *The interview's tomorrow, isn't it? Hope it all goes well!*

¡Que descanses!
Get some rest! / Sleep well!
To someone who is going to bed or is very tired.

> **Hasta mañana, ¡que descanses!**
> *See you tomorrow, get some rest!*

¡Que duermas bien!
Sleep well! / Sleep tight!
At night, to family, partners, close friends.

> **Buenas noches, cariño. Que duermas bien.**
> *Goodnight, love. Sleep tight.*

¡Que cumplas muchos más!
Many happy returns!
After '¡Feliz cumpleaños!' or '¡Felicidades!' on a birthday.

> **¡Felicidades, Diego! ¡Que cumplas muchos más!**
> *Happy birthday, Diego! Many happy returns!*

¡Que sea leve! INFORMAL

Hope it's nothing serious! / Hope it passes quickly!

To someone with a cold, a hangover or a small problem. Often humorous.

Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain.

> —Estoy con gripe. —¡Vaya! Que sea leve.
> *"I've got the flu." "Oh no! Hope it passes quickly."*

¡Ánimo!

Hang in there! / Keep going! / Chin up!

To encourage someone who's tired, sad or facing something hard. Also: ¡Mucho ánimo!

> Solo te queda un examen. ¡Ánimo!
> *You've only got one exam left. Keep going!*

Toasts, sneezes & special occasions

¡Chinchín! INFORMAL

Cheers!

A playful alternative to '¡Salud!' when clinking glasses.

> ¡Venga, chinchín, por el finde!
> *Come on, cheers, to the weekend!*

¡Jesús!

Bless you!

When someone sneezes. The person replies '¡Gracias!'. '¡Salud!' is also used for sneezes.

Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain, especially among older speakers. '¡Salud!' works everywhere.

> —¡Achís! —¡Jesús! —Gracias.
> *"Atchoo!" "Bless you!" "Thanks."*

¡Felices fiestas!

Happy holidays! / Season's greetings!

Around Christmas and New Year — neutral and inclusive. Also: ¡Feliz Navidad! and ¡Feliz Año Nuevo! / ¡Feliz año!

> Gracias por este año. ¡Felices fiestas!
> *Thanks for this year. Happy holidays!*

Mi más sentido pésame. FORMAL

My deepest condolences. / I'm so sorry for your loss.

When someone has died. Formal and respectful. Less formal: 'Lo siento muchísimo' or 'Te acompaño en el sentimiento' (Spain).

> Me he enterado de lo de tu abuelo. Mi más sentido pésame.
> *I heard about your grandfather. I'm so sorry for your loss.*

TWO WAYS TO SAY 'CONGRATULATIONS'

In Spain, ¡Felicidades! is for birthdays and celebrations (it just happens to you), while ¡Enhorabuena! is for achievements (you did something: passed an exam, got a job, had a baby). In much of Latin America, ¡Felicidades! or ¡Felicitaciones! cover both. If in doubt, ¡Felicidades! is never wrong.

Everyday politeness

Perdona que te moleste, pero...

Sorry to bother you, but...

To interrupt someone politely. Formal: Perdone que le moleste.

> Perdona que te moleste, ¿sabes dónde está la parada del 27?
> *Sorry to bother you, do you know where the number 27 stop is?*

Disculpe las molestias. FORMAL

Sorry for the inconvenience.

In shops, offices, on signs and in emails.

> Estamos de obras. Disculpen las molestias.
> *Building work in progress. Sorry for the inconvenience.*

Tú primero. / Usted primero.

After you.

To let someone go before you (door, lift, queue).

> —Perdón. —No, no, usted primero.
> *"Sorry." "No, no, after you."*

¡Qué amable! / Muy amable.

How kind! / That's very kind of you.

To thank someone for a nice gesture. 'Muy amable' is a polite thank-you to strangers.

> —Le ayudo con la maleta. —Muy amable, gracias.
> *"Let me help you with your suitcase." "That's very kind, thank you."*

Con mucho gusto.

With pleasure. / Happy to.

To say yes to a request, or to answer 'thank you'.

Spain & Latin America: In Colombia and Central America, 'Con gusto' is the standard reply to 'Gracias'.

> —¿Me enseña cómo funciona? —Con mucho gusto.
> *"Can you show me how it works?" "Happy to."*

No hay prisa.

There's no rush.

To tell someone they can take their time.

> Devuélveme el libro cuando lo termines, no hay prisa.
> *Give me the book back when you finish it, there's no rush.*

Cuando puedas.

Whenever you can. / When you get a chance.

A soft way to ask for something without pressure. Formal: Cuando pueda.

> Mándame las fotos cuando puedas.
> *Send me the photos when you get a chance.*

REACT LIKE A LOCAL

Choose three reactions from this section (for example ¡Menos mal!, ¡Qué vergüenza! and ¡Qué ilusión!) and force yourself to use them in your next class or WhatsApp chat. Expressions only stick when you say them out loud, with the right intonation — exaggerate it a little!

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

08 · Make plans, answer the phone, ask for favours and keep the chat going

Conversation vocabulary

At A2 your Spanish moves out of the classroom: you arrange to meet friends, send voice messages, ask a neighbour for a favour and chat about the weekend. This section gives you the real phrases people use in those moments. Read each mini-dialogue out loud, playing both parts.

Making plans & invitations

The key verb is 'quedar' = to arrange to meet / to meet up. 'Quedar con alguien' = to meet up with someone.

¿Quedamos? INFORMAL

Shall we meet up?

The most natural way to suggest meeting. Add a day or place: ¿Quedamos el sábado?

> Hace mucho que no nos vemos. ¿Quedamos esta semana?
> *We haven't seen each other for ages. Shall we meet up this week?*

¿Te apetece...?

Do you fancy...? / Do you feel like...?

With a noun or an infinitive: ¿Te apetece un café? / ¿Te apetece ir al cine?

Spain & Latin America: Very Spain. In Latin America: ¿Tienes ganas de...? / ¿Se te antoja...? (Mexico) / ¿Te provoca...? (Colombia, Venezuela).

> ¿Te apetece cenar en el italiano nuevo?
> *Do you fancy having dinner at the new Italian place?*

¿Estás libre el...?

Are you free on...?

To check someone's availability before suggesting a plan.

> ¿Estás libre el viernes por la tarde? Hay un concierto en el parque.
> *Are you free on Friday evening? There's a concert in the park.*

¿Tienes planes para el sábado?

Have you got any plans for Saturday?

To check if someone is free before inviting them.

> ¿Tienes planes para el sábado por la noche?
> *Have you got any plans for Saturday night?*

¿Te vienes? INFORMAL

Are you coming? / Do you want to come?

To invite someone to join a plan that already exists.

> Vamos a ver el partido a un bar. ¿Te vienes?
> *We're going to watch the match in a bar. Do you want to come?*

¿Te viene bien...?

Does ... suit you? / Is ... good for you?

To check if a day, time or place works for the other person. Formal: ¿Le viene bien...?

> ¿Te viene bien el jueves a las siete?
> *Is Thursday at seven good for you?*

¿A qué hora quedamos?

What time shall we meet?

To fix the time.

> —¿A qué hora quedamos? —¿A las ocho en la puerta del cine?
> *"What time shall we meet?" "Eight o'clock outside the cinema?"*

¿Dónde quedamos?

Where shall we meet?

To fix the place.

> ¿Dónde quedamos, en tu casa o en el centro?
> *Where shall we meet, at your place or in town?*

¿Hacemos algo esta tarde? INFORMAL

Shall we do something this afternoon/evening?

Open suggestion, with no fixed plan yet.

> Estoy libre. ¿Hacemos algo esta tarde?
> *I'm free. Shall we do something this evening?*

Te paso a buscar. / Te recojo.

I'll pick you up.

When you offer to collect someone (by car or on foot).

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: 'Te paso a buscar' (Southern Cone) / 'Paso por ti' (Mexico, Colombia).

> Te recojo a las nueve en tu casa.
> *I'll pick you up at nine at your place.*

Te invito.
It's on me. / My treat.
In Spanish culture, 'invitar' means you pay. If you say 'Te invito a un café', you're paying!

> No, no, guarda la cartera, hoy te invito yo.
> *No, no, put your wallet away, it's on me today.*

Saying yes

¡Me apunto! INFORMAL
Count me in! / I'm in!
To join a plan enthusiastically.

> —Vamos a hacer una barbacoa el domingo. —¡Me apunto!
> *"We're having a barbecue on Sunday." "Count me in!"*

¡Vale, genial! INFORMAL
OK, great!
A quick, happy acceptance.
Spain & Latin America: 'Vale' is very Spain. Latin America: ¡Dale! / ¡Listo! / ¡Okey!

> —¿A las ocho en la plaza? —¡Vale, genial!
> *"Eight o'clock in the square?" "OK, great!"*

Me viene genial / perfecto.
That works perfectly for me.
To say a day or time suits you very well.

> El viernes me viene perfecto.
> *Friday works perfectly for me.*

¡Me encantaría!
I'd love to!
A warm, polite yes to an invitation.

> —¿Quieres venir a cenar a casa? —¡Me encantaría!
> *"Would you like to come over for dinner?" "I'd love to!"*

¡Cuenta conmigo!
Count on me! / You can count on me!
To say you'll definitely be there or help.

> ¿Necesitas ayuda con la mudanza? Cuenta conmigo.
> *Do you need help with the move? You can count on me.*

Allí estaré.
I'll be there.
To confirm you're coming.

> —La fiesta empieza a las diez. —Perfecto, allí estaré.
> *"The party starts at ten." "Perfect, I'll be there."*

Saying no (nicely) & changing plans

Spanish speakers rarely say a flat 'no'. They apologise, give a reason with 'es que…' and suggest another day.

Me viene fatal. INFORMAL
That's really bad for me. / That doesn't work for me at all.
To say a day or time doesn't suit you. Softer: No me viene muy bien.

> El martes me viene fatal, tengo clase hasta las nueve.
> *Tuesday's really bad for me, I've got class until nine.*

Lo siento, no puedo.
Sorry, I can't.
The basic polite refusal. Always add a reason or an alternative.

> Lo siento, no puedo, trabajo ese día.
> *Sorry, I can't, I'm working that day.*

Ya he quedado.
I've already got plans. / I'm already meeting someone.
Polite and clear refusal.

> El sábado no puedo, ya he quedado con unos amigos.
> *I can't on Saturday, I'm already meeting some friends.*

Otro día, ¿vale? INFORMAL
Another time, OK?
To refuse now but keep the door open.

> Hoy estoy muerta. Otro día, ¿vale?
> *I'm exhausted today. Another time, OK?*

¿Lo dejamos para otro día?
Shall we leave it for another day? / Can we postpone?
To postpone a plan.

> Está lloviendo muchísimo. ¿Lo dejamos para otro día?
> *It's pouring down. Shall we leave it for another day?*

¿Podemos cambiarlo a…?
Can we change it to…? / Can we move it to…?
To change the day or time of a plan.

> ¿Podemos cambiarlo a las siete y media?
> *Can we move it to half past seven?*

Me ha surgido algo.
Something's come up.
To cancel at the last minute without giving details.

> Lo siento mucho, me ha surgido algo y no puedo ir.
> *I'm really sorry, something's come up and I can't go.*

Al final no puedo ir.
In the end I can't go. / I can't make it after all.
To cancel a plan you had accepted.

> Al final no puedo ir al concierto, estoy con fiebre.
> *I can't make it to the concert after all, I've got a temperature.*

Llego un poco tarde.
I'm running a bit late.
Send it before the meeting time! Also: Llego en diez minutos.

> Perdona, llego un poco tarde, hay mucho tráfico.
> *Sorry, I'm running a bit late, there's loads of traffic.*

On the phone

¿Diga? / ¿Dígame? / ¿Sí?
Hello? (answering the phone)
How people answer the phone in Spain. '¿Sí?' is the most common today.
Spain & Latin America: Mexico: ¿Bueno? · Many other countries: ¿Aló? · Argentina: ¿Hola? Everywhere: ¿Sí?

> —¿Sí? —Hola, ¿está Javi?
> *"Hello?" "Hi, is Javi there?"*

¿Está...?
Is ... there?
To ask for someone. Formal: ¿Podría hablar con...?

> Buenas tardes, ¿está la señora Ruiz?
> *Good afternoon, is Mrs Ruiz there?*

¿De parte de quién?
Who's calling?
What the person answering asks. Reply: 'De parte de Emma' or 'Soy Emma'.

> —¿Está Diego? —¿De parte de quién? —De Lucía, una compañera.
> *"Is Diego there?" "Who's calling?" "Lucía, a colleague."*

Un momento, ahora se pone.
Just a moment, I'll put him/her on.
When you pass the phone to someone else. 'Ponerse' = to come to the phone.

> Un momento, que ahora se pone mi madre.
> *Just a moment, I'll put my mum on.*

Ahora no está.
He/She's not here right now.
When the person isn't available. Often followed by: ¿Quiere dejar un mensaje?

> Lo siento, ahora no está. ¿Quiere dejarle un mensaje?
> *Sorry, she's not here right now. Would you like to leave her a message?*

Se ha equivocado (de número).
You've got the wrong number.
To someone who calls the wrong person. Informal: Te has equivocado.

> No, aquí no vive ningún Pablo. Se ha equivocado.
> *No, there's no Pablo here. You've got the wrong number.*

Se corta. / Te estás cortando.
You're breaking up. / The line's breaking up.
Bad line or bad signal. Then: 'Te llamo ahora' (I'll call you right back).

> Perdona, te estás cortando. Te llamo ahora.
> *Sorry, you're breaking up. I'll call you right back.*

Te llamo luego.
I'll call you later.
To end a call quickly or when you can't talk now.

> Estoy en el metro, te llamo luego.
> *I'm on the metro, I'll call you later.*

Te devuelvo la llamada.
I'll call you back.
'Devolver la llamada' = to return a call.

> Ahora estoy en una reunión. Te devuelvo la llamada en un rato.
> *I'm in a meeting now. I'll call you back in a bit.*

Tengo una llamada perdida tuya.
I've got a missed call from you.
When you call back after missing a call.

> Hola, tengo una llamada perdida tuya. ¿Qué pasa?
> *Hi, I've got a missed call from you. What's up?*

Messages, WhatsApp & voice notes

Te escribo.
I'll message you. / I'll text you.
In everyday speech 'escribir' covers texts, WhatsApps and emails.

> Ahora no puedo hablar. Luego te escribo, ¿vale?
> *I can't talk right now. I'll message you later, OK?*

Te mando un wasap / un mensaje. INFORMAL
I'll send you a WhatsApp / a message.
'Wasap' (also written 'whatsapp') is the everyday word. Verb: wasapear (colloquial).

> Te mando un wasap con la dirección.
> *I'll send you a WhatsApp with the address.*

Te mando un audio. INFORMAL
I'll send you a voice message.
Voice notes are hugely popular in Spain and Latin America. 'Audio' = voice message.

> Es largo de explicar, te mando un audio.
> *It's a long story, I'll send you a voice note.*

Mándame la ubicación.
Send me your location / the location.
To find a place or a person.

> No encuentro el restaurante. ¿Me mandas la ubicación?
> *I can't find the restaurant. Can you send me the location?*

Voy de camino. / Estoy llegando.
I'm on my way. / I'm nearly there.
Classic message before meeting. Careful: 'Estoy llegando' sometimes means 'I'm still 15 minutes away'!

> Voy de camino, llego en cinco minutos.
> *I'm on my way, I'll be there in five minutes.*

Ya estoy aquí.
I'm here.
When you arrive at the meeting point. Also: Ya he llegado.

> Ya estoy aquí, en la puerta.
> *I'm here, at the entrance.*

Avísame cuando llegues.
Let me know when you get there / get home.
A caring message to friends and family after they leave.

> Avísame cuando llegues a casa, ¿vale?
> *Let me know when you get home, OK?*

¿Has visto mi mensaje?
Did you see my message?
A gentle reminder when someone hasn't replied.

> ¿Has visto mi mensaje? Necesito saberlo hoy.
> *Did you see my message? I need to know today.*

Te dejo, que... INFORMAL
I'll let you go, ... / I've got to go, ...
To end a call or chat politely, followed by a reason.

> Bueno, te dejo, que tengo que hacer la cena.
> *Right, I've got to go, I need to make dinner.*

Hablamos. INFORMAL
Speak soon. / Talk later.
A short goodbye in calls and messages.

> Venga, hablamos. ¡Un beso!
> *OK, speak soon. Love!*

Asking for help & favours

¿Me haces un favor? INFORMAL
Can you do me a favour?
Informal and friendly. Formal: ¿Me podría hacer un favor?

> ¿Me haces un favor? ¿Me riegas las plantas este fin de semana?
> *Can you do me a favour? Can you water my plants this weekend?*

Necesito pedirte un favor.
I need to ask you a favour.
To introduce a bigger favour. 'Pedir un favor' = to ask a favour.

> Oye, necesito pedirte un favor: ¿puedes darle de comer al gato el sábado?
> *Hey, I need to ask you a favour: can you feed the cat on Saturday?*

¿Me prestas...?
Can I borrow...? / Can you lend me...?
'Prestar' = to lend. English 'Can I borrow your bike?' becomes 'Will you lend me your bike?' in Spanish.
Spain & Latin America: Used everywhere. In Spain, '¿Me dejas...?' is just as common.

> ¿Me prestas tu bici el domingo?
> *Can I borrow your bike on Sunday?*

¿Me pasas...?
Can you pass me...?
At the table or in the office.

> ¿Me pasas la sal, por favor?
> *Can you pass me the salt, please?*

¿Te importa si...?
Do you mind if...?
To ask permission politely. Formal: ¿Le importa si...? Answer 'No, no, claro' = 'No, go ahead'.
Careful with the answer: 'No' means 'I don't mind' = yes, you can.

> ¿Te importa si abro la ventana?
> *Do you mind if I open the window?*

¿Podría...? FORMAL
Could I...? / Could you...?
The polite conditional, perfect with strangers, in shops, at work.

> ¿Podría hablar con el responsable, por favor?
> *Could I speak to the manager, please?*

¡Claro, sin problema!
Sure, no problem!
To say yes to a favour.

> —¿Me guardas el sitio? —¡Claro, sin problema!
> *"Can you save my seat?" "Sure, no problem!"*

¡Faltaría más!
Of course! / Don't mention it! / It's the least I can do!
A warm, slightly formal yes, or a reply to 'thank you'.
Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain.

> —¿Puedo usar su baño? —¡Faltaría más!
> *"May I use your bathroom?" "Of course!"*

Te debo una. INFORMAL
I owe you one.
After someone does you a favour.

> Gracias por cubrirme hoy. Te debo una.
> *Thanks for covering for me today. I owe you one.*

Small talk

¿Qué has hecho este finde? INFORMAL
What did you get up to this weekend?
In Spain the present perfect is used for 'this weekend / today / this week'.
Spain & Latin America: In most of Latin America: ¿Qué hiciste el finde?

> ¿Qué has hecho este finde? ¿Has salido?
> *What did you get up to this weekend? Did you go out?*

¿Qué tal te va? INFORMAL
How's it going? / How are things?
A bit more personal than '¿Qué tal?'.

> ¡Cuánto tiempo! ¿Qué tal te va?
> *Long time no see! How's it going?*

¿Qué es de tu vida? INFORMAL
What have you been up to? / What's new with you?
To catch up with someone you haven't seen for a while.

> Bueno, cuéntame, ¿qué es de tu vida?
> *So, tell me, what have you been up to?*

¡Qué calor / frío hace hoy!
It's so hot / cold today!
The universal conversation starter — in lifts, queues, at work.

> ¡Qué calor hace hoy! No se puede ni salir a la calle.
> *It's so hot today! You can't even go outside.*

Parece que va a llover.
It looks like it's going to rain.
Small talk about the weather.

> Parece que va a llover. ¿Has traído paraguas?
> *It looks like it's going to rain. Have you brought an umbrella?*

¿Qué tal te fue...?
How did ... go?
To ask about a past event: an exam, an interview, a trip.

> ¿Qué tal te fue la entrevista?
> *How did the interview go?*

¿Qué tal por...?
How are things in...?
To ask someone about the place where they live or are staying.

> ¿Qué tal por Londres? ¿Sigue lloviendo?
> *How are things in London? Is it still raining?*

¿Algún plan para las vacaciones?
Any plans for the holidays?
Classic small talk before summer, Easter or Christmas.

> ¿Algún plan para las vacaciones? ¿Vas a salir de viaje?
> *Any plans for the holidays? Are you going away?*

¡Vaya semanita!, ¿eh? INFORMAL
What a week, eh?
To complain playfully and connect with someone — at work, at the gym, with neighbours.

> ¡Vaya semanita!, ¿eh? Menos mal que ya es viernes.
> *What a week, eh? Thank goodness it's Friday.*

Showing interest

Good listeners in Spanish react constantly. These little phrases keep the other person talking.

¡Qué me dices! INFORMAL

You don't say! / No way!

Surprise at news or gossip — a lively alternative to '¡No me digas!'.

> ¿Diego se ha mudado a Australia? ¡Qué me dices!
> *Diego's moved to Australia? You don't say!*

¡Cuéntame! INFORMAL

Tell me! / Tell me everything!

To invite someone to tell you more. Also: Cuéntame más.

> ¿Tienes novio nuevo? ¡Cuéntame!
> *You've got a new boyfriend? Tell me everything!*

¡Suena genial!

Sounds great!

To react to a plan or an idea.

> —Vamos a hacer una ruta por los Picos de Europa. —¡Suena genial!
> *"We're doing a hike in the Picos de Europa." "Sounds great!"*

¿Y qué tal?

And how was it? / And how did it go?

To ask for more details about an experience.

> —Ayer tuve la entrevista. —¿Y qué tal?
> *"I had the interview yesterday." "And how did it go?"*

¿Y qué pasó?

And what happened?

To encourage someone telling a story.

> ¿Y qué pasó después? ¡Cuéntamelo todo!
> *And what happened next? Tell me everything!*

¿Y entonces? INFORMAL

And then? / So what happened?

To push the story forward.

> —Y llegó el jefe... —¿Y entonces?
> *"And then the boss walked in..." "And then?"*

¡No me lo puedo creer!

I can't believe it!

Big surprise, good or bad.

> ¿Has ganado la rifa? ¡No me lo puedo creer!
> *You won the raffle? I can't believe it!*

Ya, ya. / Claro, claro. INFORMAL

Yeah, yeah. / Right, right. / I see.

Small sounds that show you're following the story (not impatience, if said softly).

> —Y entonces llamé al técnico... —Ya, ya.
> *"And then I called the technician..." "Right, right."*

Showing sympathy

¡Vaya, lo siento!

Oh, I'm sorry!

When someone tells you bad news.

> —Me han robado la bici. —¡Vaya, lo siento!
> *"My bike's been stolen." "Oh, I'm sorry!"*

¡Qué mala suerte!

What bad luck! / That's unlucky!

For small or medium misfortunes.

> ¿Se canceló tu vuelo otra vez? ¡Qué mala suerte!
> *Your flight was cancelled again? That's so unlucky!*

¡Qué faena! COLLOQUIAL

What a pain! / That's rotten luck!

When something annoying happens to someone: a cancelled flight, a broken boiler.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> ¿Te han cancelado el vuelo? ¡Qué faena!
> *They cancelled your flight? That's rotten luck!*

¿Estás bien?

Are you OK?

To check on someone who looks upset or after a problem.

> Te noto rara. ¿Estás bien?
> *You seem a bit off. Are you OK?*

Me imagino.

I can imagine.

To show you understand how someone feels.

> —Estoy agotado con la mudanza. —Me imagino.
> *"I'm exhausted with the move." "I can imagine."*

Seguro que todo sale bien.

I'm sure it'll all be fine.

To reassure someone who is worried.

> No te preocupes por la operación de tu padre. Seguro que todo sale bien.
> *Don't worry about your dad's operation. I'm sure it'll all be fine.*

Si necesitas algo, dímelo.
If you need anything, let me know.
A kind offer of help.

> Si necesitas algo, dímelo, ¿eh?
> *If you need anything, just let me know, OK?*

Shops, queues & services

¿Quién es el último? / ¿Quién da la vez?
Who's last in the queue?
In Spain, at markets, bakeries, the doctor's... there's often no visible queue. You ask who's last, and you go after that person.
Spain & Latin America: Very typical of Spain.

> Buenos días, ¿quién es el último? —Yo. —Vale, gracias.
> *"Good morning, who's last?" "Me." "OK, thanks."*

¿Le atienden? / ¿Te atienden?
Are you being served?
What shop staff ask. Answer: 'Sí, gracias' or 'No, todavía no'.

> —¿Le atienden? —No, todavía no.
> *"Are you being served?" "No, not yet."*

¿A quién le toca? / Me toca a mí.
Whose turn is it? / It's my turn.
'Tocar' = to be someone's turn.

> Perdone, creo que me toca a mí.
> *Excuse me, I think it's my turn.*

¿Algo más? / Nada más, gracias.
Anything else? / That's all, thanks.
The standard end of any purchase.

> —¿Algo más? —No, nada más. ¿Cuánto es?
> *"Anything else?" "No, that's all. How much is it?"*

¿A qué hora abren / cierran?
What time do you open / close?
Opening hours. Remember many Spanish shops close at lunchtime (around 2–5 pm).

> ¿A qué hora cierran los sábados?
> *What time do you close on Saturdays?*

¿Hay que pedir cita?
Do I need to make an appointment?
At the hairdresser's, the doctor's, public offices.

> ¿Hay que pedir cita o puedo venir directamente?
> *Do I need an appointment or can I just come in?*

Estoy buscando...
I'm looking for...
To ask staff for something in a shop or office. 'Buscar' takes no preposition.

> Hola, estoy buscando un cargador para este móvil.
> *Hi, I'm looking for a charger for this phone.*

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

09 · Small patterns, big results: the structures that build real sentences

Common constructions

A construction is a ready-made frame you can fill with your own words: 'acabo de + infinitive', 'llevo + time + -ando'. Native speakers use these frames constantly, and English often says the same thing in a completely different way. Learn the frame, then make three sentences about your own life with each one.

The phases of an action

Verb + preposition + infinitive: these tell you if an action is starting, repeating, stopping or has just happened.

acabar de + infinitive

to have just (done something)

EXPRESSION · A2

PATTERN acabar (present) + de + infinitive

Says that something happened a moment ago. Spanish uses the PRESENT of acabar where English uses 'have just' + past participle.

- Acabo de ver tu mensaje, perdona.
  I've just seen your message, sorry.
- ¿Has comido? —Sí, acabo de comer.
  "Have you eaten?" "Yes, I've just eaten."
- Acaban de abrir una panadería en mi calle.
  They've just opened a bakery on my street.

DON'T CONFUSE acabar + noun = to finish: 'Acabo el trabajo a las seis' (I finish work at six). Only 'acabar DE + infinitive' means 'have just'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~He justo llegado~~ → ✓ Acabo de llegar.

volver a + infinitive

to do something again

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN volver a + infinitive

The most natural way to say 'again' in Spanish. Instead of adding 'otra vez', you put 'volver a' in front of the verb.

- He vuelto a perder las llaves.
  I've lost my keys again.
- ¿Puedes volver a explicarlo, por favor?
  Can you explain it again, please?
- Nunca vuelvo a ir a ese restaurante.
  I'm never going to that restaurant again.

NOTE 'Otra vez' is also correct: 'He perdido las llaves otra vez.' Both are very common.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Volví llamar~~ → ✓ Volví a llamar. Don't forget the 'a'.

dejar de + infinitive

to stop (doing something)

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN dejar de + infinitive · no dejar de = to keep on / not stop

To stop a habit or an action. Very useful for talking about habits (smoking, coffee, social media).

- Dejé de fumar hace tres años.
  I stopped smoking three years ago.
- ¡Deja de mirar el móvil!
  Stop looking at your phone!
- No deja de llover.
  It won't stop raining.

NOTE 'Dejar' alone has other meanings: to leave (Dejé el abrigo aquí) and to let/lend (¿Me dejas tu boli?).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Paré de fumar~~ → ✓ Dejé de fumar. 'Parar' is for physical movement (the car stopped = el coche paró). For habits, use 'dejar de'.

seguir + gerund

to still (be doing) / to keep (doing)

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING E→I: SIGO, SIGUES… · A2

PATTERN **seguir + -ando / -iendo · seguir sin + infinitive = still not…**

Says that an action or situation continues. English often uses 'still' or 'keep -ing'.

- ¿Sigues viviendo en Barcelona?
  Are you still living in Barcelona?
- Sigue lloviendo.
  It's still raining.
- Sigo sin entender el problema.
  I still don't understand the problem.

DON'T CONFUSE todavía / aún = still: 'Todavía vivo en Barcelona' means the same as 'Sigo viviendo en Barcelona'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sigo a trabajar~~ → ✓ Sigo trabajando. 'Seguir' takes the gerund, never 'a + infinitive'.

estar a punto de + infinitive

to be about to (do something)

EXPRESSION · A2

PATTERN **estar a punto de + infinitive**

Something is going to happen in a moment.

- Date prisa, el tren está a punto de salir.
  Hurry up, the train is about to leave.
- Estaba a punto de llamarte.
  I was just about to call you.

NOTE Also: 'Estuve a punto de…' = I almost… ('Estuve a punto de perder el avión' = I almost missed the plane).

How long? Talking about duration

This is where English speakers make the most mistakes. English uses 'I have been doing... for...', Spanish usually uses the present tense.

llevar + time + gerund

to have been (doing something) for...

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **llevar + time + -ando/-iendo · llevar + time + en + place · llevar + time + sin + infinitive**

Spanish's favourite way to say how long you have been doing something that is still happening. Conjugate 'llevar', not the other verb.

llevar + time + gerund — *have been doing for...*

› Llevo dos años estudiando español.
I've been studying Spanish for two years.

llevar + time + en + place — *have been (living/staying) in... for...*

› Llevamos seis meses en Madrid.
We've been in Madrid for six months.

llevar + time + sin + infinitive — *haven't done ... for...*

› Llevo una semana sin dormir bien.
I haven't slept well for a week.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Used everywhere, but especially frequent in Spain.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*He estado estudiando español por dos años~~ → ✓ Llevo dos años estudiando español.

hace + time + que + present

for... (an ongoing situation)

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **hace + time + que + present tense**

Another way to say how long a situation has been going on. The verb is in the PRESENT because the situation is still true.

› Hace tres años que vivo aquí.
I've lived here for three years.

› Hace mucho que no veo a Tom.
I haven't seen Tom for ages.

DON'T CONFUSE Don't confuse it with 'hace' = ago: 'Llegué hace tres años' (I arrived three years ago) — past tense, no 'que'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hace tres años que he vivido aquí~~ → ✓ Hace tres años que vivo aquí.

desde hace + time

for... (until now)

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **present tense + desde hace + time**

Same idea as 'hace... que', but the time goes at the end of the sentence. Use 'desde' + a date or moment, 'desde hace' + an amount of time.

- Vivo aquí desde hace tres años.
  I've lived here for three years.
- Trabajo en esta empresa desde 2022.
  I've worked at this company since 2022.
- No como carne desde hace meses.
  I haven't eaten meat for months.

NOTE desde + point in time (desde enero, desde 2022, desde el lunes) · desde hace + period (desde hace un mes, desde hace dos semanas).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Vivo aquí por tres años~~ → ✓ Vivo aquí desde hace tres años. 'Por' doesn't work for an ongoing period.

¿Cuánto tiempo hace que...?

How long have you been...? / How long ago...?

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **¿Cuánto tiempo hace que + present? · ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas + gerund?**

The question form for duration. With the present tense, it asks about something still happening. With the past, it asks 'how long ago'.

- ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que estudias español?
  How long have you been studying Spanish?
- ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en España?
  How long have you been in Spain?
- ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que te mudaste?
  How long ago did you move?

NOTE In speech, people often drop 'tiempo': '¿Cuánto hace que...?'

Wishes, plans & habits

tener ganas de

to feel like / to look forward to / to be dying to

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **tener (muchas) ganas de + infinitive / + noun**

To want to do something, or to be excited about something in the future. 'Ganas' is always plural here.

- Tengo ganas de ir a la playa.
  I feel like going to the beach.
- ¡Tengo muchas ganas de verte!
  I'm really looking forward to seeing you!
- No tengo ganas de cocinar hoy.
  I don't feel like cooking today.

DON'T CONFUSE apetecer (Spain): 'Me apetece ir a la playa' = I fancy going to the beach. Same idea, gustar-type structure.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo mucho ganas~~ → ✓ Tengo muchas ganas. 'Ganas' is feminine plural.

me gustaría + infinitive

I'd like to...

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **(me/te/le/nos/os/les) gustaría + infinitive / + noun**

Conditional of 'gustar': a polite or dreamy way to talk about wishes. Softer than 'quiero'.

- Me gustaría viajar a México el año que viene.
  I'd like to travel to Mexico next year.
- ¿Te gustaría venir a cenar?
  Would you like to come for dinner?
- Nos gustaría reservar una mesa para cuatro.
  We'd like to book a table for four.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo gustaría~~ → ✓ Me gustaría. It works like 'me gusta'.

pensar + infinitive

to be planning to / to intend to

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: PIENSO, PIENSAS… · A2

PATTERN **pensar + infinitive · ¿Qué piensas hacer…?**

Without any preposition, 'pensar + infinitive' talks about plans and intentions. It's a little more personal and decided than 'ir a + infinitive'.

- Pienso cambiar de trabajo el año que viene.
  I'm planning to change jobs next year.
- ¿Qué piensas hacer en verano?
  What are you planning to do in the summer?
- No pienso volver a ese hotel.
  I have no intention of going back to that hotel.

DON'T CONFUSE pensar en = to think about (Pienso en ti) · pensar que = to think that (Pienso que tienes razón) · pensar + infinitive = to plan to.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pienso de ir a Perú~~ → ✓ Pienso ir a Perú. No preposition for plans.

soler + infinitive

to usually (do something)

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: SUELO, SUELES, SUELE… · A2

PATTERN **soler + infinitive**

Describes habits: what you normally do. Spanish puts the 'usually' in the verb itself.

- Suelo levantarme a las siete.
  I usually get up at seven.
- Los domingos solemos comer con mis padres.
  On Sundays we usually have lunch with my parents.
- ¿Qué sueles hacer los fines de semana?
  What do you usually do at weekends?

NOTE Mostly used in the present ('suelo') and the imperfect ('solía' = I used to).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Suelo a ir~~ → ✓ Suelo ir. No preposition.

Obligation, permission & suggestions

hay que + infinitive

you have to / one must / it's necessary to

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **hay que + infinitive (impersonal) · tener que + infinitive (personal)**

General obligation, not for a specific person: rules, instructions, general advice. 'Hay' never changes.

› En este museo hay que dejar la mochila en la entrada.
In this museum you have to leave your rucksack at the entrance.

› Para el pasaporte hay que pedir cita.
For a passport you need to make an appointment.

DON'T CONFUSE tener que = a specific person has to: 'Tengo que trabajar el sábado' (I have to work on Saturday). hay que = in general: 'Hay que trabajar para vivir' (You have to work to live).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay que yo trabajo / *Hay que tú vayas~~ → ✓ Tengo que trabajar / Tienes que ir. 'Hay que' never has a subject.

deber + infinitive

should / must

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **deber + infinitive · no deber + infinitive · debería + infinitive (softer advice)**

Expresses what is right or advisable: moral obligation and advice. The conditional 'debería' is softer and very common for giving advice.

› Debes descansar más.
You must rest more.

› No debemos llegar tarde a la reunión.
We mustn't be late for the meeting.

› Deberías llamar a tu madre.
You should call your mum.

DON'T CONFUSE tener que = an external obligation (Tengo que trabajar el sábado) · deber = what's right or advisable (Debo ser más paciente) · hay que = in general.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Debo de ir al médico (for obligation)~~ → ✓ Debo ir al médico. Keep it simple: no 'de'.

¿Te importa + infinitive?

Would you mind (doing something)?

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **¿Te/Le importa + infinitive? · Formal: ¿Le importaría + infinitive?**

A polite request: you ask the other person to do something. 'Importar' works like 'gustar'.

- ¿Te importa cerrar la puerta?
  Would you mind closing the door?
- ¿Le importaría repetir su nombre?
  Would you mind repeating your name?

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Te importa si + present? = Do you mind if I...? (asking permission for YOURSELF): '¿Te importa si me siento?'

NOTE Reply 'No, claro' or 'Para nada' = 'Not at all' (= yes, I'll do it).

¿Por qué no...?

Why don't you / we...?

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **¿Por qué no + present tense?**

A friendly way to suggest or advise something. The verb is in the present.

- ¿Por qué no vamos al cine esta noche?
  Why don't we go to the cinema tonight?
- ¿Por qué no le preguntas a tu profe?
  Why don't you ask your teacher?

NOTE Answer with '¡Buena idea!' or 'Vale, ¿por qué no?' (Sure, why not?).

¿Qué tal si...?

How about...? / What if we...?

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **¿Qué tal si + present tense? · ¿Qué te parece si + present tense?**

To make a suggestion in a soft, open way. Use the present tense after 'si'.

- ¿Qué tal si pedimos una pizza?
  How about we order a pizza?
- ¿Qué te parece si quedamos el viernes?
  What do you think about meeting on Friday?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Qué tal si pidamos...~~? → ✓ ¿Qué tal si pedimos...? No subjunctive after 'si' here.

Money, time & clothes with 'quedar'

me queda(n) + amount

I have … left

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **(me/te/le/nos…) queda + singular · quedan + plural**

Talks about what remains: money, time, food, days. Works like 'gustar': the thing that remains is the subject.

- Solo me quedan diez euros.
  I've only got ten euros left.
- ¿Cuánto tiempo nos queda?
  How much time have we got left?
- No queda leche.
  There's no milk left.

NOTE Without a person: 'Quedan dos días para las vacaciones' = There are two days to go until the holidays.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo diez euros dejados~~ → ✓ Me quedan diez euros.

quedar bien / mal (a alguien)

to suit / not suit (someone); to fit well / badly

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **algo + me/te/le + queda bien/mal/grande/pequeño**

Used for clothes, shoes, glasses, haircuts: how something looks on you or how it fits. Again, gustar-type structure.

- Ese vestido te queda genial.
  That dress really suits you.
- Estos pantalones me quedan pequeños.
  These trousers are too small for me.
- ¿Qué tal me queda?
  How does it look on me?

DON'T CONFUSE quedar con alguien = to meet up with someone. Same verb, different meaning — the structure tells you which one.

Pointing and describing with lo / el de / lo que

lo + adjective

the … thing / the … part

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **lo + masculine singular adjective (lo bueno, lo malo, lo mejor, lo peor, lo importante, lo difícil)**

'Lo' + adjective turns an adjective into an idea. Very common at the start of a sentence followed by 'es que…'.

› Lo bueno de vivir aquí es que hay mucha vida.
The good thing about living here is that there's lots going on.

› Lo mejor del viaje fue la comida.
The best part of the trip was the food.

› Lo importante es practicar un poco cada día.
The important thing is to practise a little every day.

NOTE Never 'el bueno' for an idea: 'el bueno' means 'the good one' (a person or thing).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La cosa buena es…~~ → ✓ Lo bueno es… (much more natural).

el / la / los / las de…

the one(s) with / from / of…

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **article + de + noun / place · article + que + verb**

Avoids repeating a noun. The article agrees with the thing you're talking about.

› ¿Quién es tu hermana? —La de rojo.
"Which one is your sister?" "The one in red."

› Me gustan más los zapatos de piel que los de tela.
I like the leather shoes more than the fabric ones.

› El chico de las gafas es mi compañero de piso.
The guy with the glasses is my flatmate.

NOTE Also: el/la que… = the one that/who…: 'La que lleva el pelo corto es Sofía' (The one with short hair is Sofía).

lo que *what (= the thing that)*

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **lo que + verb · todo lo que = everything (that)**

Used when English 'what' is NOT a question. If it's a question, use 'qué'.

- No entiendo lo que dices.
  I don't understand what you're saying.
- Lo que más me gusta de Sevilla es la luz.
  What I like most about Seville is the light.
- Haz lo que quieras.
  Do whatever you want.

DON'T CONFUSE ¿Qué quieres? (direct question) vs Dime lo que quieres (Tell me what you want).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Que más me gusta es la luz~~ → ✓ Lo que más me gusta es la luz. ✗ ~~*Todo que dices~~ → ✓ Todo lo que dices.

Comparing

más / menos … que *more / less … than*

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **más/menos + adjective/noun/adverb + que · verb + más/menos que · más de + number**

The basic comparison structure. With numbers and amounts, use 'de' instead of 'que'.

- Madrid es más grande que Valencia.
  Madrid is bigger than Valencia.
- Ahora trabajo menos que antes.
  I work less than before now.
- Había más de cien personas.
  There were more than a hundred people.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más grande de Valencia~~ → ✓ más grande que Valencia · ✗ ~~*más que cien personas~~ → ✓ más de cien personas.

tan … como / tanto … como

as … as / as much / as many … as

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **tan + adjective/adverb + como · tanto/a/os/as + noun + como · verb + tanto como**

To say two things are equal. 'Tan' before adjectives and adverbs; 'tanto' (which agrees) before nouns; 'tanto como' after verbs.

- Mi piso no es tan grande como el tuyo.
  My flat isn't as big as yours.
- No tengo tanto tiempo como tú.
  I don't have as much time as you.
- Hoy no hay tanta gente como ayer.
  There aren't as many people today as yesterday.
- Ya no salgo tanto como antes.
  I don't go out as much as I used to.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*tan grande que~~ → ✓ tan grande como · ✗ ~~*tanto gente~~ → ✓ tanta gente.

mejor / peor · mayor / menor

better / worse · older / younger (also bigger / smaller)

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **mejor/peor que · mayor/menor que**

Irregular comparatives. Never say ~~*más bueno or *más malo for quality~~. 'Mayor/menor' are used for age (and for importance or size in formal Spanish).

- Este café es mejor que el de la oficina.
  This coffee is better than the one at the office.
- El tráfico está peor que nunca.
  The traffic is worse than ever.
- Mi hermano es dos años mayor que yo.
  My brother is two years older than me.

NOTE 'Más grande / más pequeño' is used for physical size. 'Mi hermano mayor' = my older brother.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más mejor~~ → ✓ mejor · ✗ ~~*Es más viejo que yo (for siblings~~, sounds rude) → ✓ Es mayor que yo.

el / la más… (de)

the most… / the -est (in/of)

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **article + (noun) + más/menos + adjective + de · el mejor / el peor / el mayor / el menor**

The superlative: the article + más + adjective. 'In' / 'of' after a superlative = DE.

- Es el restaurante más caro de la ciudad.
  It's the most expensive restaurant in the city.
- Lucía es la mayor de tres hermanas.
  Lucía is the eldest of three sisters.
- Es la mejor película del año.
  It's the best film of the year.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el más caro en la ciudad~~ → ✓ el más caro de la ciudad.

-ísimo / -ísima

really… / extremely… / super…

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **adjective (without final vowel) + -ísimo/a/os/as · also adverbs: muchísimo, tardísimo**

Adds intensity, like 'very very'. Extremely common in spoken Spanish — it sounds natural and expressive.

- La paella estaba buenísima.
  The paella was absolutely delicious.
- Es un pueblo pequeñísimo.
  It's a tiny little village.
- Muchísimas gracias.
  Thank you so much.
- Ayer me acosté tardísimo.
  I went to bed really late last night.

NOTE Spelling changes: rico → riquísimo, largo → larguísimo, feliz → felicísimo. Don't combine with 'muy': ✗ ~~*muy buenísimo~~.

MAKE IT ABOUT YOU

For each construction, write one true sentence about your life: 'Llevo … años viviendo en…', 'Acabo de…', 'Lo mejor de mi trabajo es…'. Read them out loud before your next class. Personal sentences stick ten times better than textbook ones.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

10 · Tell stories, make plans and say how long and how often

Time & frequency

At A1 you learnt the clock, the calendar and the basic markers (ayer, mañana, hace, dentro de). Now you'll add the expressions that make your stories and plans sound natural: 'the other day', 'a while ago', 'the next day', 'in a bit', 'every other day', 'first thing in the morning'. The last group sorts out more English-speaker traps: 'for' with a finished period, 'it takes me…', 'last week' and 'in two hours'. Learn each expression with its example and use it in a true sentence about your week.

Key expressions

el otro día — *the other day*

EXPRESSION · A2

A day in the recent past that you don't want to (or can't) be precise about — exactly like English 'the other day'. Perfect for starting a story. Use it with the preterite (fui, vi, conocí).

- El otro día vi a Marcos en el supermercado.
  I saw Marcos at the supermarket the other day.
- El otro día probé un restaurante coreano buenísimo.
  I tried a brilliant Korean restaurant the other day.

DON'T CONFUSE el otro día = a few days ago (vague) · otro día = another day, some other time (¿Lo dejamos para otro día? = Shall we leave it for another day?)

COMMON MISTAKE Don't drop the article: ✗ ~~*Otro día vi a Marcos (= 'Another day I saw…')~~ → ✓ El otro día vi a Marcos.

hace poco — *recently / not long ago*

EXPRESSION · A2

Something happened a short time ago. It's built like hace + time (hace dos días), but with poco instead of an exact amount. Its opposite is hace mucho (tiempo).

- Hace poco me mudé a un piso más grande.
  I moved to a bigger flat recently.
- Conozco a Emma desde hace poco.
  I haven't known Emma for long.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hace muy poco** *very recently* · **hace mucho (tiempo)** *a long time ago / for a long time* · **hace un rato** *a little while ago*

OPPOSITE **hace mucho tiempo** — a long time ago

alguna vez

ever / at some point

EXPRESSION A2

In questions with the present perfect it means 'ever' — the classic way to ask about experiences. In statements it means 'at some point / once'.

question: ever — *¿Has + participle + alguna vez?*

› ¿Has estado alguna vez en México?
Have you ever been to Mexico?

statement: at some point — *once, some time*

› Alguna vez he pensado en vivir fuera.
I've sometimes thought about living abroad.

› —¿Has probado alguna vez el pulpo? —No, nunca.
"Have you ever tried octopus?" "No, never."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **nunca** *never (the 'no' answer: No, nunca.)* · **algunas veces** *sometimes, a few times*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Has estado ever en México~~? / ✗ *~~¿Has estado nunca en México~~? (sounds odd in Spain) → ✓ ¿Has estado alguna vez en México?

al día siguiente

the next day / the following day

EXPRESSION A2

The day after a moment in a story (in the past or a hypothetical future). Don't confuse it with mañana, which is always 'tomorrow' counting from today.

› Llegamos a Roma el viernes y al día siguiente fuimos al Vaticano.
We arrived in Rome on Friday and the next day we went to the Vatican.

› Me dolía la cabeza, pero al día siguiente estaba bien.
I had a headache, but the next day I was fine.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a la mañana siguiente** *the next morning* · **la semana siguiente** *the following week* · **el día anterior** *the day before*

COMMON MISTAKE In a story about the past: ✗ *~~Mañana fuimos al Vaticano~~ → ✓ Al día siguiente fuimos al Vaticano.

a la vez

at the same time / at once

EXPRESSION · A2

Two things happening simultaneously, or someone doing two things at once. Same meaning as al mismo tiempo.

› No puedo cocinar y hablar por teléfono a la vez.
I can't cook and talk on the phone at the same time.

› Llegaron todos a la vez.
They all arrived at once.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **al mismo tiempo** *at the same time* · **las dos cosas a la vez** *both things at once*

DON'T CONFUSE a la vez = at the same time · a veces = sometimes · otra vez = again. Three different meanings of vez!

cada vez más / cada vez menos

more and more / less and less

EXPRESSION · A2

PATTERN **cada vez más + adjective / noun / verb · cada vez menos + ...**

A change that keeps growing (or shrinking). Spanish doesn't repeat the word like English 'bigger and bigger': it uses cada vez más.

› Hablas cada vez mejor.
Your Spanish is getting better and better.

› Cada vez hay más turistas en mi barrio.
There are more and more tourists in my neighbourhood.

› Cada vez leo menos libros en papel.
I read fewer and fewer paper books.

DON'T CONFUSE cada vez que = every time (that): Cada vez que voy a Bilbao, llueve.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*más y más grande~~ → ✓ cada vez más grande. Note: cada vez mejor / peor (not ~~*cada vez más bueno~~).

quince días

two weeks / a fortnight

NOUN · MASCULINE · A2

Spaniards very often say quince días (literally 'fifteen days') for two weeks, and ocho días for one week. They count the first and last day, so it's not a mistake — it's just how people talk.

› Me voy de vacaciones quince días.
I'm going on holiday for two weeks.

› Nos vemos dentro de ocho días.
See you in a week.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cada quince días** *every two weeks / every other week* · **la quincena** *half of the month (la primera / segunda quincena de julio)*

NOTE You can also say dos semanas — it's perfectly correct.

Looking back: the past

hace un rato
a little while ago

Minutes ago, earlier today. Very common in conversation and messages.

> Te he llamado hace un rato.
> *I called you a little while ago.*

hace un momento
a moment ago / just now

Even more recent than hace un rato.

> Laura ha salido hace un momento.
> *Laura went out just a moment ago.*

el día anterior / la noche anterior
the day before / the night before

In stories, to go one step back from the moment you're telling. Not the same as ayer / anoche, which count from today.

> La noche anterior al examen no dormí nada.
> *I didn't sleep at all the night before the exam.*

aquel día / aquella noche / aquel verano
that day / that night / that summer

Aquel/aquella points to a moment far back in the past — very typical in storytelling.

> Aquel verano conocí a mi mejor amiga.
> *That summer I met my best friend.*

de pequeño/a · de niño/a
as a child / when I was little

A short way to say 'when I was a child'. Agrees with the person. Use the imperfect.

> De pequeña pasaba los veranos en el pueblo.
> *When I was little I spent my summers in the village.*

en los años noventa / en los noventa
in the nineties

Decades: en los (años) ochenta, noventa… No plural -s on the number and no apostrophe.

> Mis padres se conocieron en los años ochenta.
> *My parents met in the eighties.*

ayer por la tarde / ayer por la noche
yesterday afternoon / last night

Ayer + part of the day. Ayer por la noche = anoche.

> Ayer por la tarde fuimos al cine.
> *We went to the cinema yesterday afternoon.*

desde siempre
forever / for as long as I can remember

Something that has always been true.

> Somos amigos desde siempre.
> *We've been friends forever.*

Looking ahead: the future

dentro de poco
soon / shortly / before long

In a short time from now. Very natural alternative to pronto.

> Dentro de poco empiezan las rebajas.
> *The sales start soon.*

dentro de un rato
in a while / in a bit

Later today, in a few minutes or hours.

> Te llamo dentro de un rato, ¿vale?
> *I'll call you in a bit, OK?*

hoy mismo / mañana mismo
today / tomorrow (at the latest) — this very day

Mismo adds urgency: no later than today / tomorrow.

> Te mando el documento hoy mismo.
> *I'll send you the document today.*

esta misma semana
this very week / this week

Same idea as hoy mismo: soon, within this week.

> Lo arreglamos esta misma semana.
> *We'll fix it this week.*

de aquí a + time
between now and… / … from now

Counts the time from today. Often with a deadline feeling.

> De aquí a un mes tengo que entregar el proyecto.
> *I have to hand in the project a month from now.*

algún día
someday / one day

An uncertain moment in the future — dreams and plans.

> Algún día quiero vivir cerca del mar.
> *One day I want to live near the sea.*

How often? Nuance

You know siempre, a veces, nunca and de vez en cuando. These add precision and colour.

a diario

daily / every day

Same meaning as todos los días, but more compact. Very common in speech and writing.

> Uso el español a diario en el trabajo.
> *I use Spanish every day at work.*

día sí, día no

every other day

Alternate days. Very visual and natural. Also: cada dos días.

> Voy a correr día sí, día no.
> *I go running every other day.*

cada vez que...

every time (that)... / whenever...

Followed by a verb in the indicative for habits.

> Cada vez que voy a casa de mi abuela, como demasiado.
> *Every time I go to my grandma's, I eat too much.*

siempre que...

whenever...

For habits, with the indicative: siempre que puedo = whenever I can.

> Siempre que puedo, voy andando al trabajo.
> *Whenever I can, I walk to work.*

de lunes a viernes

Monday to Friday / on weekdays

Typical for timetables and work routines.

> Trabajo de lunes a viernes, de nueve a cinco.
> *I work Monday to Friday, nine to five.*

todo el rato / todo el tiempo INFORMAL

all the time / the whole time

Todo el rato is very common in Spain in informal speech.

> Mi hermano está con el móvil todo el rato.
> *My brother is on his phone all the time.*

a todas horas

at all hours / all the time

Constantly, at any time of day — often a complaint.

> Mis vecinos ponen música a todas horas.
> *My neighbours play music at all hours.*

¿Cada cuánto...?

How often...?

The everyday question. ¿Con qué frecuencia...? is more formal (surveys, doctors).

> —¿Cada cuánto vas al dentista? —Una vez al año.
> *"How often do you go to the dentist?" "Once a year."*

Times of day & the clock

a primera hora (de la mañana)

first thing (in the morning)

Very common at work: the earliest part of the day.

> Te lo envío mañana a primera hora.
> *I'll send it to you first thing tomorrow.*

a mediodía

at midday / at lunchtime

In Spain mediodía is roughly 1–3 pm (lunchtime), not exactly 12:00.

> ¿Comemos juntos a mediodía?
> *Shall we have lunch together at lunchtime?*

de día / de noche

during the day / at night (in daylight / in the dark)

Describes whether it's light or dark.

> En verano a las diez todavía es de día.
> *In summer it's still light at ten.*

al amanecer / al anochecer

at dawn / at dusk

Sunrise and nightfall.

> Salimos al amanecer para evitar el calor.
> *We set off at dawn to avoid the heat.*

a las ocho y pico INFORMAL

just after eight / eight-ish

Y pico = 'and a bit'. Very common in Spain for approximate times.

> Llegué a casa a las ocho y pico.
> *I got home just after eight.*

hasta las tantas COLLOQUIAL

until all hours / until really late

Very late at night. Also: a las tantas (at some crazy hour).

> Ayer estuvimos de fiesta hasta las tantas.
> *We were out partying until all hours last night.*

Time words

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la época	*time, period, era*	Es la mejor época del año para visitar Granada. *It's the best time of year to visit Granada.*
la temporada	*season (sport, TV, tourism, fruit)*	Not the four seasons (estaciones). Las fresas están de temporada. *Strawberries are in season.*
la década	*decade*	La última década ha sido muy intensa. *The last decade has been really intense.*
el siglo	*century*	Roman numerals: el siglo XXI (veintiuno). Es una iglesia del siglo XII. *It's a twelfth-century church.*
media hora	*half an hour*	No article: ✗ ~~*una media hora~~ → ✓ media hora. Tardo media hora en llegar. *It takes me half an hour to get there.*
hora y media	*an hour and a half*	No article before hora. La película dura hora y media. *The film lasts an hour and a half.*
un cuarto de hora	*a quarter of an hour*	Espérame un cuarto de hora. *Give me a quarter of an hour.*
un buen rato	*quite a while, a good while*	Estuvimos hablando un buen rato. *We were talking for quite a while.*
el cambio de hora	*the clocks changing*	Spain changes the clocks in March and October. Con el cambio de hora estoy muy cansado. *I'm really tired since the clocks changed.*
puntual	*punctual, on time*	Adjective, same for m/f. Noun: la puntualidad. Diego nunca es puntual. *Diego is never on time.*
ir adelantado/a · ir atrasado/a	*to be fast · to be slow (a clock)*	Mi reloj va cinco minutos adelantado. *My watch is five minutes fast.*
trasnochar	*to stay up late*	Opposite of madrugar (to get up early). Entre semana intento no trasnochar. *I try not to stay up late during the week.*

Managing your time

con tiempo

in good time / with time to spare

Doing something early so you're not rushed.

> Sal con tiempo, que hay mucho tráfico.
> *Leave in good time, there's a lot of traffic.*

ir con el tiempo justo

to be cutting it fine / to be pressed for time

You'll just make it — no extra minutes.

> Vamos con el tiempo justo para coger el tren.
> *We're cutting it fine to catch the train.*

tener tiempo de sobra
to have plenty of time
More time than you need.

> Tranquila, tenemos tiempo de sobra.
> *Relax, we've got plenty of time.*

Voy tarde.
I'm running late.
When you're still on your way. Llego tarde = I'll be late / I'm late (arriving).

> Lo siento, voy tarde, llego en diez minutos.
> *Sorry, I'm running late, I'll be there in ten minutes.*

Se me ha hecho tarde.
It's got late (without me noticing). / I lost track of time.
A gentle excuse for leaving or arriving late.

> Uy, se me ha hecho tarde, me tengo que ir.
> *Oops, I've lost track of time, I have to go.*

perder el tiempo
to waste time
Perder = lose, but here it means 'waste'.

> No quiero perder el tiempo en reuniones inútiles.
> *I don't want to waste time in pointless meetings.*

pasar el tiempo
to pass the time
Doing something while you wait or to avoid boredom.

> Leo en el metro para pasar el tiempo.
> *I read on the metro to pass the time.*

¡Cómo pasa el tiempo!
Time flies! / Where does the time go?
Classic reaction when you realise how much time has gone by.

> ¿Tu hija ya tiene diez años? ¡Cómo pasa el tiempo!
> *Your daughter's already ten? Time flies!*

More time traps: 'for', 'take', 'last' and 'in'

'For' with a finished period: durante (or nothing)

✗ ~~*Viví en Berlín por tres años~~.

✓ Viví en Berlín tres años. / Viví en Berlín durante tres años.

For a period that is over, use durante, or simply put the time after the verb with no preposition (the most natural option). Por + time exists, but it's much less common in Spain.

› Estudié inglés durante seis años en el colegio.
I studied English for six years at school.

'It takes me…' = tardo…

✗ ~~*Me toma veinte minutos ir al trabajo~~.

✓ Tardo veinte minutos en ir al trabajo.

For how long something takes a person, Spanish uses tardar + time + en + infinitive. The person is the subject (tardo, tardas). For 'how long does it take?' in general: ¿Cuánto se tarda en…?

› —¿Cuánto tardas en llegar? —Unos diez minutos.
"*How long will it take you to get here?*" "*About ten minutes.*"

REMEMBER Me toma… is used in parts of Latin America, but in Spain it sounds like a translation.

'Last week' vs 'the last week'

✗ *~~La última semana fui a Lisboa~~. (meaning 'last week')

✓ La semana pasada fui a Lisboa.

Pasado/a = the previous one (last week, last year). Último/a = the final one in a series (la última semana de agosto) or 'the latest'.

› La última semana de julio cierra la oficina.
The office closes the last week of July.

'In two hours': dentro de, not en

✗ *~~La reunión empieza en dos horas~~.

✓ La reunión empieza dentro de dos horas.

For a moment in the future counted from now, Spain uses dentro de. En + time usually means 'it takes that long': Lo hago en dos horas = I'll do it in (the space of) two hours.

› Hice el examen en una hora.
I did the exam in an hour (it took me an hour).

REMEMBER In Latin America, en dos horas is common for 'two hours from now' too.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

11 · Fed up, worried, embarrassed, thrilled: say it like a local

Feelings & opinions

At A1 you learnt the basic moods and how to say what you like. Now you'll talk about what bothers you, what worries you and what makes you nervous, using the very Spanish 'it does something to me' structures: me molesta, me preocupa, me da vergüenza, me pone nervioso. You'll also grade your likes more finely, react with more colour and give your opinion with parecer. Watch the prepositions (harto de, preocupado por, morirse de) — they're where English speakers slip.

Feelings with a preposition

Learn each adjective with its preposition as one block.

estar harto/a (de)

to be fed up (with) / to be sick (of)

EXPRESSION · INFORMAL · A2

FORMS harto · harta · hartos · hartas

PATTERN **estar harto de + noun / infinitive**

You've had enough of something or someone. Very frequent in everyday Spanish, and quite strong — fine with friends and family, a bit direct at work.

› Estoy harta de este calor.
I'm fed up with this heat.

› Estoy harto de trabajar los sábados.
I'm sick of working on Saturdays.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar un poco harto** *to be a bit fed up* · **¡Estoy harto!** *I've had enough!*

NOTE Harto can also mean 'full' after eating (Estoy harto, no puedo más), but that's less common in modern speech.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy harto con mi trabajo~~ → ✓ Estoy harto de mi trabajo. ✗ ~~*Estoy harto de trabajando~~ → ✓ harto de trabajar (infinitive after a preposition).

estar preocupado/a (por)

to be worried (about)

EXPRESSION A2

FORMS preocupado · preocupada · preocupados · preocupadas

PATTERN **estar preocupado por + noun / person · estar preocupado porque + reason**

The state of being worried. The verb preocuparse is the action (to worry); estar preocupado describes how you are. Use por for the thing or person you're worried about.

› Estoy un poco preocupada por mi padre: no se encuentra bien.
I'm a bit worried about my dad: he's not feeling well.

› Javi está preocupado por el examen.
Javi is worried about the exam.

OPPOSITE **tranquilo/a** — calm, not worried

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy preocupado sobre el examen~~ → ✓ Estoy preocupado por el examen.

sentirse solo/a

to feel lonely

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **sentirse solo · estar solo (= to be alone / on your own)**

Sentirse solo is the emotional state: lonely. Estar solo can simply mean 'to be alone, on your own', which may be perfectly happy. The difference is the verb: sentirse = how you feel.

› Al principio, en Dublín me sentía muy sola.
At first I felt really lonely in Dublin.

› Estoy solo en casa este fin de semana. ¡Qué tranquilidad!
I'm home alone this weekend. So peaceful!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la soledad** *loneliness / solitude* · **sentirse bien / mal / raro** *to feel good / bad / strange*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy solitario (meaning '~~;I feel lonely') → ✓ Me siento solo. (Solitario = a loner, someone who likes being alone.)

ponerse nervioso/a

to get nervous / to get worked up

EXPRESSION · A2

PATTERN **ponerse + adjective (nervioso, triste, rojo, contento, de mal humor)**

Ponerse + adjective = a sudden, temporary change of mood. Compare: estoy nervioso (state) vs me pongo nervioso (the moment it happens).

› Siempre me pongo nerviosa cuando hablo en público.
I always get nervous when I speak in public.

› No te pongas así, no es para tanto.
Don't get like that, it's not a big deal.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ponerse rojo/a** *to blush, to go red* · **ponerse triste** *to get sad* · **ponerse contento/a** *to be (become) happy* · **ponerse de mal humor** *to get into a bad mood*

DON'T CONFUSE me pongo nervioso (I get nervous) vs me pone nervioso (it makes me nervous) — see the next group.

morirse de + feeling

to be dying of... / to be so... (exaggeration)

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING O→UE, REFLEXIVE: ME MUERO, TE MUERES · INFORMAL · A2

PATTERN **morirse de vergüenza / risa / miedo / ganas de + infinitive / hambre / sueño**

New use of morirse: a very common exaggeration to say a feeling is really strong. Nobody is actually dying! Use the present (me muero de...) for now and the preterite (me morí de...) for a story.

> **morirse de vergüenza** — *to be so embarrassed*
>
> › Me caí delante de todo el mundo. ¡Me morí de vergüenza!
> *I fell over in front of everyone. I was so embarrassed!*

> **morirse de risa** — *to die laughing, to crack up*
>
> › Con Javi siempre nos morimos de risa.
> *We always crack up when we're with Javi.*

> **morirse de ganas de** — *to be dying to*
>
> › Me muero de ganas de verte.
> *I'm dying to see you.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **morirse de miedo** *to be scared to death* · **morirse de hambre / de sueño** *to be starving / dead tired*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy muriendo de hambre (sounds literal and dramatic)~~ → ✓ Me muero de hambre.

It does something to me: me molesta, me preocupa…

These verbs work like gustar: the thing that causes the feeling is the subject, and you are me/te/le… One thing or an infinitive → singular; several things → plural.

me molesta(n)

it bothers me / it annoys me / I don't like

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), GUSTAR-TYPE · A2

PATTERN **me molesta + singular / infinitive · me molestan + plural · ¿Te molesta si…? (Do you mind if…?)**

Something annoys you or bothers you physically (noise, light, a smell) or emotionally. In questions it's a polite 'Do you mind…?'. It never means 'molest' in the English sense.

annoy — *something irritates you*

› Me molesta mucho la gente que habla alto en el tren.
People who talk loudly on the train really annoy me.

bother physically — *discomfort*

› ¿Puedes bajar la persiana? Me molesta el sol.
Can you lower the blind? The sun is bothering me.

¿Te molesta si…? — *polite request*

› ¿Te molesta si abro la ventana?
Do you mind if I open the window?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **Perdona que te moleste…** *Sorry to bother you…* · **No me molesta.** *I don't mind. / It doesn't bother me.*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo molesto el ruido~~ → ✓ Me molesta el ruido. ✗ ~~*Me molesta los ruidos~~ → ✓ Me molestan los ruidos.

me preocupa(n)

I'm worried about / it worries me

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), GUSTAR-TYPE · A2

PATTERN **me preocupa + singular / infinitive · me preocupan + plural**

Focuses on the thing that worries you. Very common for general or long-term worries (health, money, the future). Equivalent in meaning to estoy preocupado por…

› Me preocupa un poco el precio de los alquileres.
I'm a bit worried about how expensive rents are.

› Me preocupan mis notas.
I'm worried about my grades.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **Lo que más me preocupa es…** *What worries me most is…* · **No me preocupa.** *I'm not worried about it.*

DON'T CONFUSE me preocupa el examen = estoy preocupado por el examen = me preocupo por el examen. Same idea, three structures.

me da + feeling noun

it makes me feel… / I find it…

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **me da miedo / vergüenza / pena / rabia / asco / igual + noun or infinitive**

One of the most Spanish ways to express feelings: literally 'it gives me fear / shame / pity'. The thing (or action) causing the feeling is the subject; me da stays singular with infinitives. You already know me da igual and dar miedo; here's the whole family.

me da miedo — *I'm scared of / it scares me*

› Me da miedo conducir de noche.
I'm scared of driving at night.

me da vergüenza — *I'm embarrassed / I feel shy about*

› Me da vergüenza hablar español delante de mis compañeros.
I feel embarrassed speaking Spanish in front of my classmates.

me da pena — *it makes me sad / I feel sorry*

› Me da pena tirar la comida.
I hate throwing food away (it makes me sad).

me da rabia — *it makes me so angry / it really annoys me*

› Me da mucha rabia perder el autobús por un minuto.
It really annoys me to miss the bus by a minute.

me da asco — *it disgusts me / I find it gross*

› Me dan asco las cucarachas.
Cockroaches disgust me.

NOTE In Latin America, vergüenza is often pena: Me da pena = I'm embarrassed (Mexico, Central America). In Spain me da pena = it makes me sad.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo vergüenza de hablar (possible~~, but much less natural) → ✓ Me da vergüenza hablar. And remember plural: me dan miedo las arañas.

me pone + adjective

it makes me (feel)...

EXPRESSION A2

PATTERN **me pone nervioso / triste / de mal humor / contento · me pone de los nervios (colloquial)**

Something CAUSES a change in your mood. Compare with ponerse: me pongo nervioso (I get nervous) / el tráfico me pone nervioso (traffic makes me nervous). The adjective agrees with the person, not the thing.

- Las entrevistas de trabajo me ponen muy nerviosa.
  Job interviews make me really nervous.
- Este tiempo me pone triste.
  This weather makes me sad.
- Me pone de los nervios que no contesten los mensajes.
  It drives me mad when people don't answer messages.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me pone de buen humor** *it puts me in a good mood* · **me pone de los nervios** *it gets on my nerves / it drives me mad (colloquial)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me hace triste / *Me hace nervioso~~ → ✓ Me pone triste / Me pone nervioso. (Hacer + adjective doesn't work for feelings.)

Feeling nouns

The nouns behind me da..., ¡Qué...! and many other expressions.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la alegría	*joy, happiness*	Saltaba de alegría. *She was jumping for joy.*
la tristeza	*sadness*	Hay mucha tristeza en esta canción. *There's a lot of sadness in this song.*
la vergüenza	*embarrassment, shame, shyness*	Covers 'embarrassed', 'ashamed' and 'shy'. Pronounce the ü: ver-GWEN-za. ¡Qué vergüenza! Me he equivocado de nombre. *How embarrassing! I got his name wrong.*
la rabia	*anger, frustration*	Mostly in me da rabia / ¡Qué rabia! Not the disease meaning in daily speech. Me da rabia no poder ir. *It's so frustrating that I can't go.*
la pena	*sadness, pity, shame (as in 'what a shame')*	Spain: pena = sadness/pity. Mexico & Central America: also embarrassment. Me da pena que te vayas. *I'm sad that you're leaving.*
los nervios	*nerves*	Usually plural: tener nervios, ¡Qué nervios! Antes del examen tenía muchos nervios. *I was really nervous before the exam.*
el aburrimiento	*boredom*	Me como las uñas de puro aburrimiento. *I bite my nails out of sheer boredom.*
el asco	*disgust*	¡Qué asco! = Gross! / Yuck! Me dan asco las arañas. *Spiders gross me out.*

Likes in degrees: the A2 upgrade

You know me encanta, me gusta mucho, no me gusta nada and odio. Add these to sound more natural and precise.

Me chifla... / Me chiflan... COLLOQUIAL

I'm crazy about... / I adore...

Like me encanta, but more playful. Very common in Spain among friends. Works like gustar.

> Me chiflan las series coreanas.
> *I'm crazy about Korean series.*

Me vuelve loco/a... INFORMAL

I'm mad about... / I'm obsessed with...

Strong enthusiasm. Plural: me vuelven loco los...

> Me vuelve loca el chocolate negro.
> *I'm mad about dark chocolate.*

Me apasiona...

I'm passionate about... / I absolutely love...

Strong but more serious than me chifla — good for hobbies, work and interviews.

> Me apasiona la fotografía.
> *I'm passionate about photography.*

Me gusta más... que...

I prefer... to... / I like ... more than...

Comparing likes. Más goes right after gusta.

> Me gusta más el campo que la ciudad.
> *I prefer the countryside to the city.*

No me gusta demasiado...

I'm not too keen on... / I'm not a big fan of...

A soft, polite 'no'. Great when you don't want to sound negative.

> No me gusta demasiado el cine de terror.
> *I'm not a big fan of horror films.*

Ni fu ni fa. COLLOQUIAL

So-so. / Meh. / Nothing special.

You neither like nor dislike something.

> —¿Qué tal la película? —Ni fu ni fa.
> *"How was the film?" "Meh, nothing special."*

No es lo mío.

It's not my thing. / It's not for me.

A friendly way to say you don't like or aren't good at something.

> Lo he intentado, pero el yoga no es lo mío.
> *I've tried, but yoga isn't my thing.*

No soporto...

I can't stand...

Strong dislike. Soportar = to put up with (not 'support'). Normal verb: no soporto + noun / infinitive.

> No soporto llegar tarde.
> *I can't stand being late.*

Lo que menos me gusta es...

What I like least is... / The thing I like least is...

The counterpart of lo que más me gusta. Useful in interviews and when describing a job or city.

> Lo que menos me gusta de mi trabajo son las reuniones.
> *What I like least about my job is the meetings.*

Me da igual. → Me da exactamente igual.

I don't mind. → I couldn't care less.

Adding exactamente (or completamente) turns 'I don't mind' into 'I really don't care' — careful with the tone.

> Me da exactamente igual lo que piensen.
> *I couldn't care less what they think.*

estar de buenas / estar de malas COLLOQUIAL

to be in a good mood / to be in a bad mood

A shorter, very Spanish version of estar de buen / mal humor. Often used to warn someone.

> Hoy no le pidas nada al jefe, que está de malas.
> *Don't ask the boss for anything today, he's in a bad mood.*

How was it? Opinions about past experiences

For a trip, a film or a party that's over, use the preterite: me gustó, me encantó, fue, estuvo.

Me encantó. / Me gustó mucho.

I loved it. / I really liked it.

Preterite of encantar / gustar for a finished experience. Plural: me encantaron los museos.

> —¿Qué tal Lisboa? —¡Me encantó!
> *"How was Lisbon?" "I loved it!"*

No me gustó nada.

I didn't like it at all.

Clear, strong negative opinion about something past.

> La comida del hotel no me gustó nada.
> *I didn't like the hotel food at all.*

Estuvo genial. / Estuvo muy bien.
It was great. / It was really good.
Estuvo (from estar) is very common with bien, genial, fatal for events: a party, a dinner, a concert.

> La cena estuvo genial, gracias por invitarme.
> *Dinner was great, thanks for inviting me.*

No estuvo mal.
It wasn't bad. / It was pretty good.
Spanish understatement for something that was actually OK or good.

> —¿Y el concierto? —No estuvo mal.
> *"And the concert?" "It wasn't bad."*

Fue un desastre.
It was a disaster.
For a plan or event that went really wrong. Fue + noun (fue un desastre, fue una experiencia increíble).

> La mudanza fue un desastre: llovió todo el día.
> *The move was a disaster: it rained all day.*

Reacting with colour

You already know ¡Qué guay!, ¡Qué rollo! (A1) and ¡Qué raro!, ¡Qué susto!, ¡Qué vergüenza! (A2 Useful expressions). Here are more ¡Qué + noun / adjective! reactions.

¡Qué rabia!
How annoying! / That's so frustrating!
Frustration at bad luck or something unfair.

> —Se han agotado las entradas. —¡Qué rabia!
> *"The tickets have sold out." "That's so annoying!"*

¡Qué nervios!
I'm so nervous! / How nerve-racking!
Before an exam, an interview, a match, results…

> Mañana es mi primer día de trabajo. ¡Qué nervios!
> *Tomorrow's my first day at work. I'm so nervous!*

¡Qué miedo!
How scary! / That's terrifying!
For something frightening — or jokingly, for something mildly scary.

> —Vi una serpiente en el jardín. —¡Qué miedo!
> *"I saw a snake in the garden." "How scary!"*

¡Qué gracia!
How funny! / That's so funny!
Something amusing or cute. Also ironic: ¡Qué gracia! = Very funny (not).

> ¡Qué gracia tu perro con el jersey!
> *Your dog in a jumper is so funny!*

¡Qué pesado/a! INFORMAL
What a pain! / How annoying (he/she is)!
For a person who insists or annoys you, or a tedious task. Agrees with the person.

> Mi vecino me pregunta lo mismo todos los días. ¡Qué pesado!
> *My neighbour asks me the same thing every day. What a pain!*

¡Qué aburrimiento!
How boring! / What a bore!
Stronger than ¡Qué aburrido!

> Tres horas de reunión. ¡Qué aburrimiento!
> *A three-hour meeting. What a bore!*

¡Qué emoción!
How exciting!
Happy excitement about news or something about to happen.

> —¡Nos casamos en mayo! —¡Qué emoción!
> *"We're getting married in May!" "How exciting!"*

¡Qué mal rollo! COLLOQUIAL
What a bad vibe! / That's creepy / That's awkward
New meaning of rollo: a bad atmosphere or an uncomfortable situation. Its opposite: ¡Qué buen rollo! (great vibe).

> Discutieron en la cena… ¡qué mal rollo!
> *They argued at dinner… how awkward!*

¡Qué guay! → ¡Qué guay que…! COLLOQUIAL
How cool that…!
Upgrade of ¡Qué guay! (Spain): add que + a verb to say what's cool. Latin America: ¡Qué chévere! (Caribbean, Colombia), ¡Qué padre! (Mexico), ¡Qué copado! (Argentina).

> ¡Qué guay que vengas a Madrid!
> *How cool that you're coming to Madrid!*

Giving your opinion

Me parece bien.
That's fine by me. / I think that's OK. / Sounds good.
Agreeing with a plan or idea. Very common answer to a proposal.

> —¿Quedamos a las ocho? —Me parece bien.
> *"Shall we meet at eight?" "Sounds good."*

Me parece mal.
I don't think that's right. / I don't like that.
You disapprove of something — morally or practically.

> Me parece mal que no le avisen.
> *I don't think it's right that they don't tell him.*

Me parece genial / fatal / fenomenal.
I think it's great / awful / brilliant.
Stronger versions. Genial and fatal are very frequent.

> Me parece genial tu idea.
> *I think your idea is great.*

Me parece + adjective / noun
I think it's... / I find it...
Opinion about something: me parece caro, me parece una buena idea. The adjective agrees with the thing.

> Estos zapatos me parecen un poco caros.
> *I think these shoes are a bit expensive.*

Me parece que...
I think (that)... / I have a feeling that...
A soft way to give an opinion or a guess. Followed by the indicative. Translate it as 'I think', not 'it seems to me'.

> Me parece que va a llover.
> *I think it's going to rain.*

A mí me parece que...
Personally, I think... / To me...
Adding a mí puts the focus on YOUR opinion, especially when it's different from someone else's.

> Tú dices que es caro, pero a mí me parece que vale la pena.
> *You say it's expensive, but personally I think it's worth it.*

En mi opinión,...
In my opinion,...
More formal and deliberate than creo que. Good for class debates, writing and work. Don't add creo que after it.

> En mi opinión, deberíamos reducir las reuniones.
> *In my opinion, we should cut down on meetings.*

La verdad es que...
To be honest... / The thing is...
Softens an honest opinion or admission. Extremely frequent in speech.

> La verdad es que no me gustó mucho el hotel.
> *To be honest, I didn't really like the hotel.*

Yo lo veo bien / mal. INFORMAL
I think it's fine / I don't think it's a good idea.
Very natural, slightly informal way to evaluate a plan.

> —¿Cambiamos la fecha? —Yo lo veo bien.
> *"Shall we change the date?" "I think that's fine."*

Pues yo creo que...
Well, I think...
Pues at the start introduces your view, often a different one. Very natural in conversation.

> Pues yo creo que es mejor ir en tren.
> *Well, I think it's better to go by train.*

Para mí que... COLLOQUIAL
I reckon... / I've got a feeling...
A personal hunch, very common in Spain. Different from Para mí,... (In my view).

> Para mí que Marcos está enamorado.
> *I reckon Marcos is in love.*

No sé qué decirte.
I don't know what to tell you. / I'm not sure.
When you don't have a clear opinion or don't want to give one.

> —¿Acepto el trabajo? —Uf, no sé qué decirte.
> *"Should I take the job?" "Hmm, I'm not sure what to tell you."*

Yo qué sé. COLLOQUIAL
How should I know? / No idea. / Dunno.
Informal, a bit dismissive. Fine with friends; avoid with your boss. Note the word order: yo qué sé.

> —¿Dónde está Diego? —Yo qué sé.
> *"Where's Diego?" "How should I know?"*

Feelings & opinions: typical mistakes

Feeling verbs agree with the thing, not with you

✗ ~~*Me molesta los ruidos~~. / ~~*Yo preocupo el examen~~.

✓ Me molestan los ruidos. / Me preocupa el examen.

Molestar, preocupar, dar (miedo), poner (nervioso) work like gustar: the cause is the subject. Plural cause → plural verb.

› Me preocupan las noticias.
The news worries me.

'It makes me sad' = me pone triste

✗ ~~*Esta canción me hace triste~~.

✓ Esta canción me pone triste.

English 'make + adjective' becomes poner + adjective for moods. Hacer is for 'make someone do something': me hace llorar (it makes me cry).

› Esta canción me pone triste; siempre me hace llorar.
This song makes me sad; it always makes me cry.

Me pongo vs me pone

✗ ~~*Los exámenes me pongo nervioso~~.

✓ Me pongo nervioso con los exámenes. / Los exámenes me ponen nervioso.

Me pongo = I get (you are the subject). Me pone(n) = it makes me (the thing is the subject). Choose one structure.

› Me pongo nerviosa cuando conduzco. / Conducir me pone nerviosa.
I get nervous when I drive. / Driving makes me nervous.

'I think it's good' = me parece bien, not ~~*me parece bueno~~

✗ ~~*Me parece que es bien~~.

✓ Me parece bien. / Me parece una buena idea.

For approving of a plan or idea, use bien / mal (adverbs) directly after parece. Bueno/a needs a noun: una buena idea.

› —Te mando el informe el lunes. —Vale, me parece bien.
"I'll send you the report on Monday." "OK, that's fine."

Lonely vs alone

✗ ~~*Estoy solitario~~. (meaning 'I feel lonely')

✓ Me siento solo/a.

Estar solo = to be alone (not necessarily sad). Sentirse solo = to feel lonely. Solitario/a describes a person who likes being alone (a loner) or an isolated place.

› Vivo sola, pero no me siento sola.
I live alone, but I don't feel lonely.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

12 · Chores, paperwork, phones, prices and packets: the vocabulary of real life

Everyday vocabulary

This is the vocabulary of ordinary days: doing the washing-up, booking an appointment, signing a form, charging your phone, sending a parcel, buying half a kilo of tomatoes. None of it is glamorous, but you need all of it to live in Spanish. Study it by theme, and test yourself in real situations — the next time you clean the kitchen, name everything you touch.

Household chores

Spanish calls them 'las tareas de casa' or 'las tareas domésticas'. For 'do the laundry', 'take out the rubbish' and 'hoover', see Useful collocations (poner, sacar, pasar).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las tareas de casa	*housework / household chores*	Also: las tareas domésticas. 'Hacer las tareas' can also mean 'to do homework' (Latin America). En mi piso nos repartimos las tareas de casa. *In my flat we share out the housework.*
fregar	*to wash up / to mop*	stem-changing e→ie: friego. Fregar los platos = to do the dishes · fregar el suelo = to mop the floor **LatAm:** Latin America: lavar los platos; trapear (el piso) = to mop. Si tú cocinas, yo friego. *If you cook, I'll wash up.*
barrer	*to sweep*	Barre la terraza, que está llena de hojas. *Sweep the terrace, it's full of leaves.*
la escoba	*broom*	
la fregona	*mop*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el trapeador (Mexico, Colombia), el lampazo, la mopa.
el trapo	*cloth / rag*	Pasa un trapo por la mesa, por favor. *Give the table a wipe, please.*
limpiar el polvo	*to dust*	el polvo = dust **LatAm:** Latin America: sacudir (el polvo). Odio limpiar el polvo de las estanterías. *I hate dusting the shelves.*
planchar	*to iron*	No plancho casi nunca, la verdad. *I hardly ever iron, to be honest.*
la plancha	*iron (for clothes)*	Also: a griddle — 'a la plancha' = grilled (on a hot plate).
tender la ropa	*to hang out the washing*	stem-changing e→ie: tiendo Hace sol, voy a tender la ropa fuera. *It's sunny, I'm going to hang the washing outside.*
el tendedero	*clothes horse / washing line*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el tendedero / el cordel / la soga.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la pinza	*clothes peg / clip*	Also: hair clip, tweezers. Plural: las pinzas
doblar	*to fold*	Also: to turn (a corner) — doblar a la derecha **Ayúdame a doblar las sábanas.** *Help me fold the sheets.*
la ropa sucia	*dirty washing / laundry*	la ropa limpia = clean laundry **Echa la ropa sucia al cesto.** *Put the dirty washing in the basket.*
ordenar	*to tidy (up)*	Also: to put in order. ordenado/a = tidy **Tengo que ordenar mi habitación: viene mi madre a comer.** *I have to tidy my room: my mum is coming for lunch.*
recoger	*to clear up / to pick up*	recojo (j before o). Recoger la mesa = to clear the table · recoger la cocina = to tidy up the kitchen **¿Me ayudas a recoger la mesa?** *Will you help me clear the table?*
el detergente	*washing powder / detergent*	el suavizante = fabric softener
la lejía	*bleach*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el cloro (also la lavandina in Argentina).
el cubo	*bucket*	el cubo de la basura = bin **LatAm:** Latin America: la cubeta (Mexico), el balde; bin = el bote / el tacho / la caneca.
reciclar	*to recycle*	el reciclaje = recycling **En casa reciclamos el plástico y el vidrio.** *At home we recycle plastic and glass.*
el contenedor	*(large) bin / recycling container (in the street)*	el contenedor amarillo (plastic), azul (paper), verde (glass) — in Spain

Appointments & paperwork

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cita	*appointment*	New meaning: also a date (romantic). pedir cita = to make an appointment · tener cita = to have an appointment **Tengo cita con el dentista el martes.** *I've got a dentist's appointment on Tuesday.*
la cita previa	*(prior) appointment*	Very common in Spanish public offices: you can't just turn up. **LatAm:** Spain especially. **Para renovar el pasaporte necesitas cita previa.** *You need an appointment to renew your passport.*
el trámite	*procedure / paperwork / formality*	Often plural: los trámites (the red tape) **Los trámites para alquilar un piso son lentísimos.** *The paperwork for renting a flat is so slow.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el formulario	*form*	**Rellene este formulario, por favor.** *Please fill in this form.*
rellenar	*to fill in / to fill out*	Also: to refill (a glass, a bottle) **LatAm:** Latin America: llenar (un formulario). **He rellenado el formulario online.** *I've filled in the form online.*
firmar	*to sign*	la firma = signature (false friend! see section 15) **Firme aquí, por favor.** *Sign here, please.*
los datos (personales)	*(personal) details / information*	Always plural in this meaning **Escriba sus datos personales en mayúsculas.** *Write your personal details in capital letters.*
el NIE	*foreigner's ID number (Spain)*	Número de Identidad de Extranjero — you'll need it for almost everything if you live in Spain.
el carné de conducir	*driving licence / driver's licence*	Also spelt 'carnet'. el carné = card/ID in general (el carné de estudiante) **LatAm:** Spain: carné de conducir · Mexico: licencia de manejo · Argentina: registro (de conducir) · conducir (Spain) = manejar (Latin America).
caducar	*to expire*	caducado/a = expired; also for food: 'Este yogur está caducado' (out of date) **LatAm:** Latin America: vencer / vencido. **¡Ojo, que tu DNI ha caducado!** *Careful, your ID has expired!*
renovar	*to renew*	stem-changing o→ue: renuevo **Tengo que renovar el carné de conducir.** *I need to renew my driving licence.*
la fotocopia	*photocopy*	hacer una fotocopia = to make a photocopy **Traiga el original y una fotocopia.** *Bring the original and a photocopy.*
el justificante	*proof / receipt / confirmation (document)*	e.g. el justificante de pago (proof of payment), el justificante médico (doctor's note) **Guarda el justificante, por si acaso.** *Keep the receipt, just in case.*
la ventanilla	*(service) window / counter*	Also: car or train window **Vaya a la ventanilla número 3.** *Go to window number 3.*
el número / el turno	*(queue) ticket / turn*	coger número / sacar número = to take a ticket **Coja número y espere, por favor.** *Take a ticket and wait, please.*

Phones & tech basics

The verb 'cargar' (to charge) and 'encender / apagar' (to switch on / off) are in the Verbs section.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la batería	*battery (of a phone, laptop, car)*	Also: drums (tocar la batería). la pila = small battery (AA) **Me queda un 5 % de batería.** *I've got 5% battery left.*
quedarse sin batería	*to run out of battery / for your phone to die*	Pattern: quedarse sin + noun = to run out of **Me quedé sin batería y no pude llamarte.** *My phone died and I couldn't call you.*
el wifi	*wifi*	Pronounced 'güifi' in Spain. Masculine in Spain, often feminine in Latin America (la wifi) **No va el wifi.** *The wifi isn't working.*
la cobertura	*signal / coverage*	No tengo cobertura = I've got no signal **LatAm:** Latin America: la señal (No tengo señal). **En el pueblo no hay cobertura.** *There's no signal in the village.*
los datos (móviles)	*(mobile) data*	**Me he quedado sin datos este mes.** *I've run out of data this month.*
descargar(se)	*to download*	Also: bajar(se) (informal) **Me he descargado un par de pódcasts para el viaje.** *I've downloaded a couple of podcasts for the trip.*
la pantalla	*screen*	**Se me ha roto la pantalla del móvil.** *I've cracked my phone screen.*
funcionar	*to work (machines)*	For machines use 'funcionar', never 'trabajar'. Informal Spain: ir ('No va') **La impresora no funciona.** *The printer isn't working.*
reiniciar	*to restart / to reboot*	**Prueba a reiniciar el router.** *Try restarting the router.*
actualizar	*to update*	la actualización = update. Careful: NOT 'actually' **Tengo que actualizar el móvil.** *I need to update my phone.*

Bank, post office & errands

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cuenta (bancaria)	*(bank) account*	Also 'la cuenta' = the bill in a restaurant. abrir una cuenta = to open an account **Quiero abrir una cuenta en este banco.** *I'd like to open an account at this bank.*
el cajero (automático)	*cash machine / ATM*	el cajero / la cajera = also the cashier in a shop **¿Hay un cajero por aquí cerca?** *Is there a cash machine near here?*
el PIN	*PIN (number)*	Also: el número secreto (Spain)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tarjeta (de crédito / de débito)	*(credit / debit) card*	pagar con tarjeta = to pay by card **¿Se puede pagar con tarjeta?** *Can I pay by card?*
el efectivo	*cash*	pagar en efectivo = to pay in cash. Informal Spain: en metálico **Solo aceptan efectivo.** *They only take cash.*
la transferencia	*(bank) transfer*	hacer una transferencia = to make a transfer **Te hago una transferencia esta noche.** *I'll send you a transfer tonight.*
la comisión	*fee / commission (bank charge)*	**Este cajero cobra dos euros de comisión.** *This cash machine charges a two-euro fee.*
cobrar	*to charge (money) / to get paid*	¿Me cobra? = Can I pay? (lit. Will you charge me?) · Cobro el día 1 = I get paid on the 1st **¿Cuánto te cobran por el gimnasio?** *How much do they charge you for the gym?*
el recibo	*receipt / (utility) bill*	Receipt in a shop = el tique / el ticket. Monthly bill = el recibo (de la luz) **Ha llegado el recibo de la luz.** *The electricity bill has arrived.*
la factura	*invoice / bill*	More formal than 'recibo'; for work, repairs, freelancers **¿Me puede hacer una factura, por favor?** *Could you give me an invoice, please?*
Correos	*the post office / the postal service*	In Spain, Correos is the name of the postal service: ir a Correos = to go to the post office **LatAm:** Latin America: el correo / la oficina de correos. **Tengo que pasar por Correos a recoger un paquete.** *I need to stop by the post office to pick up a parcel.*
el buzón	*letterbox / postbox / mailbox*	Also: voicemail (el buzón de voz) **Te he dejado las llaves en el buzón.** *I've left the keys in your letterbox.*
el/la repartidor/a	*delivery person / courier*	el/la cartero/a = postman / postwoman **El repartidor ha dejado el paquete en la portería.** *The delivery guy left the parcel with the doorman.*
la farmacia de guardia	*duty pharmacy (open at night / on holidays)*	estar de guardia = to be on call / on duty **Es domingo; busca una farmacia de guardia.** *It's Sunday; look for a duty pharmacy.*

Prices, money & amounts

You know the numbers from A1. Now use them with money and amounts.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el precio	*price*	**Los precios han subido muchísimo.** *Prices have gone up a lot.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el descuento	*discount*	un 20 % de descuento = 20% off **Con el carné de estudiante tienes descuento.** *You get a discount with a student card.*
por ciento (%)	*per cent*	Said with an article: un/el diez por ciento **Hay un treinta por ciento de descuento.** *There's thirty per cent off.*
el IVA	*VAT / sales tax*	Impuesto sobre el Valor Añadido. IVA incluido = VAT included **¿El precio lleva IVA?** *Does the price include VAT?*
el doble	*double / twice as much*	el doble de + noun. el triple = three times as much **Aquí cuesta el doble.** *It costs twice as much here.*
la moneda	*coin / currency*	**¿Tienes una moneda de un euro para el carrito?** *Have you got a one-euro coin for the trolley?*
el céntimo	*cent (of a euro)*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el centavo.
el cambio / la vuelta	*change (money given back)*	'El cambio' also = exchange (rate). 'Quédese con la vuelta' = keep the change **LatAm:** 'La vuelta' is Spain; 'el cambio' / 'el vuelto' (Argentina, Peru, Chile) in Latin America. **Perdone, me ha dado mal la vuelta.** *Excuse me, you've given me the wrong change.*
suelto / sencillo	*small change / coins*	¿Tienes suelto? = Have you got any change? **LatAm:** Spain: suelto · Latin America: sencillo, feria (Mexico).
miles de / millones de	*thousands of / millions of*	Both take 'de' before a noun: miles de personas, millones de euros **Había miles de personas en el concierto.** *There were thousands of people at the concert.*
unos / unas + number	*about / around + number*	unos veinte euros = about twenty euros **Tardamos unos cuarenta minutos.** *It took us about forty minutes.*
y pico INFORMAL	*-odd / and a bit*	veinte y pico = twenty-odd · las tres y pico = just after three **Tiene treinta y pico años.** *He's thirty-something.*
el total	*the total*	en total = in total **En total son 45 euros.** *That's 45 euros in total.*

Weights & measures

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el kilo	*kilo*	un kilo de + noun (no article): un kilo de tomates **Póngame un kilo de naranjas.** *A kilo of oranges, please.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
medio kilo	*half a kilo*	No 'un' before medio: ✗ ~~*un medio kilo~~ **Medio kilo de fresas, por favor.** *Half a kilo of strawberries, please.*
un cuarto (de kilo)	*a quarter (of a kilo)*	tres cuartos de kilo = three quarters of a kilo **Un cuarto de jamón, por favor.** *A quarter-kilo of ham, please.*
el gramo	*gram*	cien gramos de + noun **Doscientos gramos de queso, por favor.** *Two hundred grams of cheese, please.*
el litro	*litre*	medio litro = half a litre **Bebo dos litros de agua al día.** *I drink two litres of water a day.*
el metro	*metre*	Also: the metro / underground. metro cuadrado (m²) = square metre **El piso tiene setenta metros cuadrados.** *The flat is seventy square metres.*
el centímetro	*centimetre*	**Mide un metro ochenta.** *He's one metre eighty (tall).*
el kilómetro	*kilometre*	Often shortened: 'Está a 10 km' (diez kilómetros) **La playa está a dos kilómetros.** *The beach is two kilometres away.*
pesar	*to weigh*	el peso = weight **¿Cuánto pesa la maleta?** *How much does the suitcase weigh?*
medir	*to measure / to be (… tall, … long)*	stem-changing e→i: mido, mides, mide. For height Spanish says 'medir', not 'ser alto' **—¿Cuánto mides? —Mido 1,65.** *"How tall are you?" "I'm 1.65 (metres)."*
el tamaño	*size (of objects)*	For clothes: la talla; for shoes: el número **¿Lo tiene en un tamaño más pequeño?** *Do you have it in a smaller size?*

Containers & quantities

All of these work the same way: container + de + noun, with no article. Una botella de agua, not ~~*una botella del agua~~.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
una botella de	*a bottle of*	**Compra una botella de vino para la cena.** *Buy a bottle of wine for dinner.*
una lata de	*a can / tin of*	**¿Quieres una lata de cerveza?** *Do you want a can of beer?*
un paquete de	*a packet / pack of*	**Un paquete de arroz y dos de pasta.** *A packet of rice and two of pasta.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
una barra de pan	*a loaf of bread / a baguette*	In Spain 'una barra' is a long baguette-style loaf. un pan de molde = sliced bread **Baja a por una barra de pan, porfa.** *Pop down and get a baguette, please.*
una docena de	*a dozen*	media docena = half a dozen **Una docena de huevos, por favor.** *A dozen eggs, please.*
un bote de	*a jar / pot / tub of*	For jars and tubs with lids **LatAm:** Latin America: un frasco de. **Queda medio bote de mermelada.** *There's half a jar of jam left.*
un tarro de	*a (glass) jar of*	Spain. Often used for honey, jam, olives
una caja de	*a box of*	**Le llevamos una caja de bombones.** *We're taking her a box of chocolates.*
una bolsa de	*a bag of*	**Una bolsa de patatas fritas, por favor.** *A bag of crisps, please.*
un cartón / un brik de	*a carton of*	**LatAm:** Spain: brik / cartón · Latin America: cartón / caja. **Compra dos briks de leche.** *Buy two cartons of milk.*
una tableta de chocolate	*a bar of chocolate*	**LatAm:** Latin America: una barra / una tableta.
un trozo de	*a piece / slice of*	For cake, pizza, cheese, bread **LatAm:** Latin America: un pedazo de. **¿Quieres otro trozo de tarta?** *Do you want another piece of cake?*
una rebanada de	*a slice of (bread)*	Only for bread
una loncha de	*a slice of (ham, cheese)*	For thin slices of cold meat and cheese **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: una rebanada / una feta (Argentina) / una tajada.
una pizca de	*a pinch of*	**Añade una pizca de sal.** *Add a pinch of salt.*
un puñado de	*a handful of*	**Un puñado de almendras es un buen tentempié.** *A handful of almonds is a good snack.*

LABEL YOUR LIFE

Write the Spanish words on sticky notes and put them where you use them: 'el enchufe', 'la fregona', 'el cargador', 'el tendedero'. Every time you touch the object, say the word — and a short sentence: 'Necesito el cargador'. In two weeks they'll be yours.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

13 · Eat out, shop, travel and get around — eleven topics for real life in Spanish

Topic vocabulary

Each topic gives you the words you need for one area of life, plus a set of ready-to-use phrases for the key situations: ordering in a restaurant, trying clothes on, checking into a hotel and explaining what hurts at the doctor's. Spain is the base, but look out for the region notes: Latin America often uses different everyday words.

Restaurants

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la carta	*menu (the full list of dishes)*	Also: letter. 'La carta' = the whole menu; 'el menú' = a fixed menu **¿Nos trae la carta, por favor?** *Could we have the menu, please?*
el menú del día	*set lunch menu / daily special*	In Spain: starter + main + dessert or coffee + drink, at a fixed price, weekday lunchtimes **El menú del día cuesta 14 euros con bebida.** *The set lunch is 14 euros including a drink.*
el primer plato	*first course / starter*	de primero = as a starter **De primero, una ensalada mixta.** *A mixed salad to start.*
el segundo (plato)	*main course*	de segundo = for the main course
el plato	*dish / course*	New meaning: also 'dish' (food), not only 'plate'. el plato típico = the typical dish **¿Cuál es el plato típico de la zona?** *What's the typical dish of the area?*
el plato combinado	*combo plate (meat/egg + chips + salad on one plate)*	A classic cheap meal in Spanish cafés
la ración	*portion / sharing plate*	media ración = half portion. In Spain, raciones are shared **Pedimos dos raciones para compartir.** *We ordered two sharing plates.*
la tapa	*tapa / small snack*	ir de tapas = to go out for tapas. In some cities a tapa comes free with your drink **En Granada te ponen una tapa con cada caña.** *In Granada they give you a tapa with every beer.*
el pincho	*pintxo / small snack (often on bread)*	Spelt 'pintxo' in the Basque Country. un pincho de tortilla = a slice of Spanish omelette
el aperitivo	*pre-lunch drink and snack / appetiser*	ir de aperitivo = to go for a drink before lunch (weekends, Spain)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la camarero/a	*waiter / waitress*	**LatAm:** Spain: camarero · Mexico, Colombia: mesero · Argentina, Uruguay: mozo · Chile: garzón. Perdone, ¿nos puede atender? —¡Camarero! *Excuse me, could you serve us?*
la terraza	*outdoor seating / terrace*	¿Nos sentamos en la terraza? *Shall we sit outside?*
la barra	*bar (counter)*	comer en la barra = to eat at the bar (often cheaper) Tomamos algo en la barra mientras esperamos mesa. *We'll have something at the bar while we wait for a table.*
la propina	*tip*	dejar propina = to leave a tip. In Spain tipping is small and optional (round up, 5–10 %) Dejamos un par de euros de propina. *We left a couple of euros as a tip.*
los cubiertos	*cutlery*	el cubierto = place setting / cover charge
la servilleta	*napkin / serviette*	
el mantel	*tablecloth*	
la jarra de agua	*jug of water*	In Spain, tap water in a jug is usually free if you ask
el agua del grifo	*tap water*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el agua de la llave (Mexico, Colombia) / de la canilla (Argentina).
el agua con gas / sin gas	*sparkling / still water*	Una botella de agua sin gas, por favor. *A bottle of still water, please.*
el vino de la casa	*house wine*	tinto = red · blanco = white · rosado = rosé
la caña	*small draught beer*	Spain. un tercio = a 33cl bottle · una jarra = a pint-sized beer **LatAm:** Spain only. Latin America: una cerveza (de barril), un chop (Chile, Argentina). ¿Vamos a tomar unas cañas después del trabajo? *Shall we go for a few beers after work?*
el zumo natural	*freshly squeezed juice*	**LatAm:** Spain: zumo · Latin America: jugo.
a la plancha	*grilled (on a hot plate)*	Quería el pescado a la plancha, por favor. *I'd like the grilled fish, please.*
frito/a	*fried*	
al horno	*baked / roast*	El cordero al horno está buenísimo aquí. *The roast lamb is delicious here.*
a la brasa	*chargrilled / barbecued*	
poco hecho / al punto / muy hecho	*rare / medium / well done*	For meat. ¿Cómo quiere la carne? = How would you like your meat? **LatAm:** Latin America: jugoso / término medio / bien cocido. El filete, al punto, por favor. *The steak, medium, please.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
picante	*spicy (hot)*	Spanish food is rarely spicy; Mexican food often is **¿Esta salsa pica mucho?** *Is this sauce very spicy?*
soso/a	*bland / under-seasoned*	Also for people: dull, boring **La sopa está un poco sosa.** *The soup is a bit bland.*
salado/a	*salty · savoury*	dulce o salado = sweet or savoury **El jamón está muy salado.** *The ham is very salty.*
rico/a	*tasty / delicious*	New meaning: with food, 'rico' means tasty, not rich. estar rico = to taste good **¡Qué rica está la tortilla!** *The omelette is so tasty!*
vegetariano/a · vegano/a	*vegetarian · vegan*	**¿Tienen algún plato vegano?** *Do you have any vegan dishes?*
sin gluten	*gluten-free*	sin lactosa = lactose-free
la ronda	*round (of drinks)*	Esta ronda la pago yo = This round's on me **La siguiente ronda es mía.** *The next round's on me.*
el chupito INFORMAL	*shot (of alcohol)*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el shot / el trago (Chile) / el caballito (Mexico, tequila).

Restaurants — useful phrases

¿Tienen mesa para dos?

Have you got a table for two?

When you arrive without a booking.

> Hola, buenas noches. ¿Tienen mesa para dos?
> *Hi, good evening. Have you got a table for two?*

Quería reservar una mesa para...

I'd like to book a table for...

On the phone or in person. 'Quería' (imperfect) sounds polite.

> Quería reservar una mesa para cuatro el sábado a las nueve.
> *I'd like to book a table for four on Saturday at nine.*

Tenemos una reserva a nombre de...

We've got a booking under the name...

When you arrive.

> Tenemos una reserva a nombre de Sofía Gómez.
> *We've got a booking under the name Sofía Gómez.*

¿Qué nos recomienda?

What do you recommend?

To ask the waiter for advice. Informal: ¿Qué nos recomiendas?

> Es la primera vez que venimos. ¿Qué nos recomienda?
> *It's our first time here. What do you recommend?*

De primero, ... y de segundo, ...

For the starter, ... and for the main, ...

To order a set menu.

> De primero, gazpacho, y de segundo, merluza.
> *Gazpacho to start, and hake for the main.*

Yo voy a tomar...

I'll have...

A natural way to order. Also: Para mí... (A1).

> Yo voy a tomar el pollo con patatas.
> *I'll have the chicken with potatoes.*

Sin..., por favor.

Without..., please. / Hold the...

To remove an ingredient.

> Una hamburguesa sin cebolla, por favor.
> *A burger without onion, please.*

¿Nos trae otra caña / un poco más de pan?

Could we have another beer / a bit more bread?

To ask for more. '¿Me/Nos trae...?' is the polite standard.

> Perdone, ¿nos trae un poco más de pan?
> *Excuse me, could we have a bit more bread?*

Perdone, esto no es lo que he pedido.
Excuse me, this isn't what I ordered.
Polite complaint.

> Perdone, esto no es lo que he pedido. Yo quería la merluza.
> *Excuse me, this isn't what I ordered. I wanted the hake.*

¿Nos trae la cuenta, por favor?
Could we have the bill, please?
In Spain the waiter won't bring the bill until you ask — it's not rude, it's so you can stay as long as you like.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: la cuenta / la adición (Argentina, Uruguay).

> Cuando pueda, ¿nos trae la cuenta?
> *When you have a moment, could we have the bill?*

¿Se puede pagar por separado?
Can we pay separately?
Splitting the bill. In Spain friends often just divide it equally: 'Pagamos a medias' / 'Hacemos bote'.

> ¿Se puede pagar por separado o tiene que ser todo junto?
> *Can we pay separately or does it have to be all together?*

¿Está incluido el servicio?
Is service included?
Mostly in tourist areas; in Spain service is usually included in the price.

> ¿Está incluido el servicio en el precio?
> *Is service included in the price?*

Shopping

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ir de compras / ir de tiendas	*to go shopping*	For food shopping: hacer la compra (see Collocations) El sábado vamos de tiendas por el centro. *On Saturday we're going shopping in town.*
el centro comercial	*shopping centre / mall*	**LatAm:** Latin America also: el mall, la plaza (Mexico).
la frutería	*greengrocer's / fruit shop*	Spanish shops end in -ería: frutería, panadería, carnicería, pescadería, zapatería...
la carnicería	*butcher's*	
la pescadería	*fishmonger's*	
la zapatería	*shoe shop*	
la tienda de ropa	*clothes shop*	
el escaparate	*shop window*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la vidriera (Argentina), la vitrina. ¿Me enseña la chaqueta del escaparate? *Can you show me the jacket in the window?*
el número	*shoe size*	calzar = to take (a shoe size): Calzo un 40 ¿Tiene estas botas en un 39? *Have you got these boots in a 39?*
estrecho/a · ancho/a	*tight / narrow · loose / wide*	Este pantalón me queda un poco estrecho. *These trousers are a bit tight on me.*
la caja	*checkout / till*	Pague en caja = Pay at the till ¿Dónde está la caja? *Where's the checkout?*
el carro / el carrito	*(shopping) trolley / cart*	la cesta = basket **LatAm:** Latin America: el carrito / el changuito (Argentina).
el tique / el ticket	*receipt (in a shop)*	Keep it to return things: Sin tique no se puede devolver ¿Quiere el tique? *Would you like the receipt?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las rebajas	*the sales*	Always plural. estar rebajado/a = to be reduced. In Spain: January and July **Me lo compré en las rebajas.** *I bought it in the sales.*
la oferta	*special offer*	estar de oferta = to be on offer. 2x1 = dos por uno **El aceite está de oferta esta semana.** *Olive oil is on offer this week.*
la devolución	*return / refund*	devolver = to return (an item). el reembolso = refund (formal) **Tienen 30 días para hacer una devolución.** *You have 30 days to return items.*
la marca	*brand*	Also: mark **Es de marca, por eso es tan cara.** *It's designer, that's why it's so expensive.*
la calidad	*quality*	de buena calidad = good quality · calidad-precio = value for money **Tiene muy buena relación calidad-precio.** *It's very good value for money.*
de segunda mano	*second-hand*	**Me he comprado una bici de segunda mano.** *I've bought a second-hand bike.*
estar de moda	*to be in fashion*	pasado de moda = out of fashion **Este año están de moda los colores claros.** *Light colours are in fashion this year.*
pegar (con) INFORMAL	*to go (with) / to match*	No pega = It doesn't go. Also: combinar con **¿Este bolso pega con los zapatos?** *Does this bag go with the shoes?*
comprar por internet	*to shop online*	Also: comprar online **Casi todo lo compro por internet.** *I buy almost everything online.*
el pedido	*order (online, in a shop)*	hacer un pedido = to place an order **Mi pedido todavía no ha llegado.** *My order still hasn't arrived.*
el envío	*delivery / shipping*	gastos de envío = delivery charges · envío gratis = free delivery **El envío tarda tres días.** *Delivery takes three days.*
la etiqueta	*label / price tag*	**No tiene etiqueta, ¿cuánto cuesta?** *It hasn't got a price tag — how much is it?*
la garantía	*guarantee / warranty*	**Tiene dos años de garantía.** *It has a two-year guarantee.*

Shopping — useful phrases

Solo estoy mirando, gracias.
I'm just looking, thanks.
When a shop assistant offers help and you don't need it.

> —¿Le puedo ayudar? —No, gracias, solo estoy mirando.
> *"Can I help you?" "No thanks, I'm just looking."*

¿Me lo puedo probar?
Can I try it on?
Use 'lo' for masculine things (el jersey), 'la' for feminine (la falda), 'los/las' for plural.

> ¿Me la puedo probar? —Sí, claro, los probadores están ahí.
> *"Can I try it on?" "Yes, of course, the fitting rooms are over there."*

¿Lo tiene en una talla más grande / pequeña?
Have you got it in a bigger / smaller size?
Also: ¿Tiene una talla más? / ¿Tiene una talla menos?

> Me queda pequeño. ¿Lo tiene en una talla más grande?
> *It's too small. Have you got it in a bigger size?*

¿Lo tiene en otro color?
Have you got it in another colour?
To ask for other options.

> ¿Lo tiene en negro?
> *Have you got it in black?*

Me lo llevo.
I'll take it.
When you decide to buy.

> Vale, me lo llevo.
> *OK, I'll take it.*

Me lo voy a pensar.
I'll think about it.
A polite way to leave without buying.

> Es un poco caro. Me lo voy a pensar, gracias.
> *It's a bit expensive. I'll think about it, thanks.*

¿Está rebajado?
Is it reduced? / Is it on sale?
In the sales.

> ¿Este abrigo está rebajado?
> *Is this coat reduced?*

¿Me lo envuelve para regalo?
Could you gift-wrap it?
Many Spanish shops gift-wrap for free.

> Es para mi hermana. ¿Me lo envuelve para regalo?
> *It's for my sister. Could you gift-wrap it?*

¿Lo puedo cambiar o devolver?
Can I exchange it or return it?
Ask before you pay.

> Si no le queda bien, ¿lo puedo cambiar?
> *If it doesn't fit him, can I exchange it?*

¿Necesita bolsa?
Do you need a bag?
What the cashier asks. Bags usually cost a few cents in Spain.

> —¿Necesita bolsa? —No, gracias, traigo la mía.
> *"Do you need a bag?" "No thanks, I've brought my own."*

¿A cuánto está...?
How much is/are... (per kilo)?
At the market, for prices that change.

> ¿A cuánto están las cerezas?
> *How much are the cherries?*

Póngame...
I'll have... / Can I have...?
At the market or deli counter. Very normal and polite in Spain, though it's an imperative.
Spain & Latin America: Spain. Latin America: Deme... / ¿Me da...?

> Póngame medio kilo de tomates y un pimiento.
> *Can I have half a kilo of tomatoes and a pepper?*

¿Me cobra?
Can I pay? (lit. Will you charge me?)
To ask to pay, at the counter or the bar.

> Perdone, ¿me cobra cuando pueda?
> *Excuse me, can I pay when you have a moment?*

Travel

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la viajero/a	*traveller*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el equipaje	*luggage / baggage*	Uncountable: always singular. el equipaje de mano = hand luggage **Solo llevo equipaje de mano.** *I've only got hand luggage.*
el vuelo	*flight*	volar = to fly (o→ue: vuelo) **El vuelo sale a las seis de la mañana.** *The flight leaves at six in the morning.*
facturar	*to check in (luggage)*	la facturación = check-in desk **LatAm:** Latin America: despachar / documentar (Mexico). **¿Vas a facturar la maleta?** *Are you going to check your suitcase in?*
la tarjeta de embarque	*boarding pass*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el pase de abordar. **Tengo la tarjeta de embarque en el móvil.** *I've got my boarding pass on my phone.*
la puerta de embarque	*(boarding) gate*	embarcar = to board
el control de seguridad	*security (check)*	**Había una cola enorme en el control de seguridad.** *There was a huge queue at security.*
cancelado/a	*cancelled*	**Han cancelado nuestro vuelo por la huelga.** *They've cancelled our flight because of the strike.*
la escala	*stopover / layover*	hacer escala en = to stop over in. un vuelo directo = a direct flight **Hacemos escala en Bogotá.** *We've got a stopover in Bogotá.*
el destino	*destination*	Also: fate, destiny. con destino a = bound for **Es un destino perfecto para ir con niños.** *It's a perfect destination for going with children.*
el pasillo	*aisle (seat) / corridor*	¿Ventanilla o pasillo? = Window or aisle?
el alojamiento	*accommodation*	Uncountable **El alojamiento es lo más caro del viaje.** *Accommodation is the most expensive part of the trip.*
el hostal	*small budget hotel / guesthouse*	Not a youth hostel! Youth hostel = el albergue
el albergue	*(youth) hostel*	**Dormimos en albergues durante el Camino de Santiago.** *We slept in hostels on the Camino de Santiago.*
el apartamento turístico	*holiday flat / holiday rental*	
la habitación doble / individual	*double / single room*	con cama de matrimonio = with a double bed · con dos camas = twin **Quería una habitación doble con dos camas.** *I'd like a twin room.*
la recepción	*reception*	el/la recepcionista = receptionist

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
media pensión / pensión completa	*half board / full board*	solo alojamiento = room only · alojamiento y desayuno = B&B
el/la guía · la guía	*tour guide (person) · guidebook*	Gender changes the meaning: el guía / la guía (person) vs la guía (book) La guía nos explicó la historia del barrio. *The (female) guide told us the history of the neighbourhood.*
la oficina de turismo	*tourist information office*	
la visita guiada	*guided tour*	Hay visitas guiadas en inglés a las once. *There are guided tours in English at eleven.*
hacer turismo	*to go sightseeing*	Hoy no trabajo: voy a hacer turismo por la ciudad. *I'm not working today: I'm going to see the sights.*
el recuerdo	*souvenir*	Also: memory Te he traído un recuerdo de Cuba. *I've brought you a souvenir from Cuba.*
el extranjero	*abroad*	ir al extranjero = to go abroad. Also el/la extranjero/a = foreigner Nunca he vivido en el extranjero. *I've never lived abroad.*
la frontera	*border*	
la aduana	*customs*	
el seguro de viaje	*travel insurance*	¿Has contratado un seguro de viaje? *Have you taken out travel insurance?*
el/la mochilero/a INFORMAL	*backpacker*	

Travel — useful phrases

Tengo una reserva a nombre de...
I have a booking under the name...

At the hotel reception.

> Buenas tardes. Tengo una reserva a nombre de Tom Walker.
> *Good afternoon. I have a booking under the name Tom Walker.*

¿Está incluido el desayuno?
Is breakfast included?

When booking or checking in.

> ¿Está incluido el desayuno? ¿A qué hora es?
> *Is breakfast included? What time is it?*

¿A qué hora hay que dejar la habitación?
What time is check-out?

Spanish rarely says 'check-out' in this question.

> ¿A qué hora hay que dejar la habitación el domingo?
> *What time do we have to check out on Sunday?*

¿Me puede guardar las maletas?
Can you keep my bags for me?

Before check-in or after check-out.

> Nuestro vuelo sale por la noche. ¿Nos puede guardar las maletas?
> *Our flight is in the evening. Could you keep our bags for us?*

No funciona el aire acondicionado.
The air conditioning isn't working.

To report a problem. Also: No hay agua caliente.

> Perdone, en la habitación 204 no funciona el aire acondicionado.
> *Excuse me, the air conditioning in room 204 isn't working.*

Mi vuelo se ha retrasado.
My flight has been delayed.

To explain why you're late.

> Llegaré tarde, mi vuelo se ha retrasado dos horas.
> *I'll be late, my flight has been delayed by two hours.*

Han perdido mi maleta.
They've lost my suitcase.
At the airport baggage desk.

> Han perdido mi maleta. ¿Dónde tengo que ir?
> *They've lost my suitcase. Where do I need to go?*

¿Qué me recomienda visitar?
What do you recommend I visit?
To hotel staff or locals.

> Solo tengo un día. ¿Qué me recomienda visitar?
> *I've only got one day. What would you recommend seeing?*

¿Se puede ir andando?
Can you walk there? / Is it walking distance?
To ask about distances.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: ¿Se puede ir caminando / a pie?

> ¿El casco antiguo está lejos? ¿Se puede ir andando?
> *Is the old town far? Can you walk there?*

¿Nos puede hacer una foto?
Could you take a photo of us?
To a stranger. Hand over your phone and smile.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: ¿Nos puede tomar una foto?

> Perdone, ¿nos puede hacer una foto con la catedral detrás?
> *Excuse me, could you take a photo of us with the cathedral behind?*

Estoy de paso.
I'm just passing through.
When you're only staying a short time.

> No vivo aquí, estoy de paso.
> *I don't live here, I'm just passing through.*

Transport

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el transporte público	*public transport*	En Madrid el transporte público funciona muy bien. *Public transport works really well in Madrid.*
la boca de metro	*metro / underground entrance*	el metro = the metro / underground / subway **LatAm:** Buenos Aires: el subte.
el andén	*platform*	la vía = track / platform number in some stations El tren para Sevilla sale del andén 5. *The train to Seville leaves from platform 5.*
de ida y vuelta	*return (ticket) / round trip*	solo de ida / sencillo = one-way, single Un billete de ida y vuelta a Valencia, por favor. *A return ticket to Valencia, please.*
el abono (de transporte)	*travel pass / season ticket*	Spain. Also: la tarjeta de transporte Con el abono mensual ahorro mucho dinero. *I save a lot of money with the monthly pass.*
validar el billete	*to validate / stamp your ticket*	Spain colloquial: picar el billete No olvides validar el billete al subir. *Don't forget to validate your ticket when you get on.*
el/la revisor/a	*ticket inspector*	
la línea	*line (metro, bus)*	Coge la línea 3 hasta Sol. *Take line 3 to Sol.*
hacer transbordo	*to change (trains / lines)*	el transbordo = change, connection Tienes que hacer transbordo en Atocha. *You have to change at Atocha.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el trayecto	*journey / trip / route*	For a single journey from A to B **El trayecto dura unos veinte minutos.** *The journey takes about twenty minutes.*
el horario	*timetable*	Same word as 'opening hours'
el tren de cercanías	*commuter / suburban train*	Spain. The AVE = Spanish high-speed train **LatAm:** Latin America: tren suburbano / metro regional.
el barco · el ferri	*boat · ferry*	el puerto = port, harbour. ir en barco = to go by boat
ir a pie / ir andando	*to walk / to go on foot*	With transport use 'en': en coche, en tren, en bici — but 'a pie' **LatAm:** Latin America: ir caminando. **Voy al trabajo a pie, está cerca.** *I walk to work, it's close.*
el carril bici	*cycle lane*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la ciclovía / la bicisenda. **Hay carril bici hasta la playa.** *There's a cycle lane all the way to the beach.*
el patinete (eléctrico)	*(electric) scooter*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el monopatín / el scooter.
el casco	*helmet*	Also: el casco antiguo = the old town
el coche de alquiler	*hire car / rental car*	**LatAm:** Spain: coche · Latin America: carro (auto in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay). **Recogemos el coche de alquiler en el aeropuerto.** *We're picking up the hire car at the airport.*
el tráfico	*traffic*	
el atasco	*traffic jam*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el trancón (Colombia), el embotellamiento, el taco (Chile). **Había un atasco enorme a la salida de la ciudad.** *There was a huge traffic jam on the way out of the city.*
la carretera	*road (between towns)*	Street in a town = la calle. la autopista / la autovía = motorway, highway
el peaje	*toll*	una autopista de peaje = toll motorway
la gasolinera	*petrol station / gas station*	la gasolina = petrol / gas · el diésel / el gasóleo = diesel **LatAm:** Argentina: la estación de servicio / la nafta (petrol).
el aparcamiento	*car park / parking space*	aparcar = to park (see Verbs) **LatAm:** Spain: aparcamiento, parking · Latin America: estacionamiento, parqueadero (Colombia); estacionar / parquear = to park. **Es imposible encontrar aparcamiento en el centro.** *It's impossible to find parking in the centre.*
el/la peatón/peatona	*pedestrian*	
el asiento	*seat*	¿Está libre este asiento? = Is this seat free? **Perdone, este es mi asiento.** *Excuse me, this is my seat.*

Holidays

Spanish holidays, festivals and summer life. Notice the fixed phrases: estar de vacaciones, ponerse moreno, hacer un crucero.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la Semana Santa	*Easter (Holy Week)*	Capital letters. 'En Semana Santa' = at Easter **En Semana Santa siempre vamos a Sevilla a ver las procesiones.** *At Easter we always go to Seville to see the processions.*
la Navidad / las Navidades	*Christmas*	Both singular and plural are used: en Navidad, en Navidades. ¡Feliz Navidad! **¿Dónde pasas las Navidades este año?** *Where are you spending Christmas this year?*
la Nochebuena	*Christmas Eve*	In Spain the big family dinner is on the 24th, not the 25th
la Nochevieja	*New Year's Eve*	Tradition: twelve grapes at midnight (las doce uvas), one per chime **En Nochevieja nos comemos las uvas en la Puerta del Sol.** *On New Year's Eve we eat the grapes in Puerta del Sol.*
el Año Nuevo	*New Year / New Year's Day*	¡Feliz Año Nuevo! or simply ¡Feliz año!
los Reyes (Magos)	*the Three Kings / Epiphany (6 January)*	In Spain many children get their main presents on 6 January, not at Christmas **¿Qué te han traído los Reyes?** *What did the Three Kings bring you?*
la cabalgata (de Reyes)	*the Three Kings parade (5 January)*	
las fiestas (del pueblo)	*local festival, the town's festivities*	Every town and neighbourhood has its fiestas, usually in summer: concerts, fairground, late nights **En agosto son las fiestas de mi pueblo y no me las pierdo.** *My town's festival is in August and I never miss it.*
la feria	*fair (with rides, food stalls…) / trade fair*	La Feria de Abril in Seville is the most famous **Por la noche fuimos a la feria con los niños.** *In the evening we went to the fair with the kids.*
los fuegos artificiales	*fireworks*	Usually plural
el desfile	*parade*	
la escapada	*short break / getaway*	**Nos hicimos una escapada de dos días a Toledo.** *We had a two-day getaway in Toledo.*
la temporada alta / baja	*high / low season*	**En temporada alta los hoteles cuestan el doble.** *In high season hotels cost twice as much.*
la agencia de viajes	*travel agency*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el viaje organizado	*package tour / organised trip*	
el crucero	*cruise*	hacer un crucero = to go on a cruise
el viaje de novios / la luna de miel	*honeymoon*	'Viaje de novios' is the everyday term in Spain **Se fueron de viaje de novios a Japón.** *They went to Japan on their honeymoon.*
la casa rural	*holiday cottage (in the countryside)*	Very popular in Spain for weekends with friends
el camping	*campsite*	Not 'camping' the activity: ir de camping = to go camping **Este verano vamos de camping a los Pirineos.** *This summer we're going camping in the Pyrenees.*
la tienda de campaña	*tent*	Just 'la tienda' = shop, so add 'de campaña' **LatAm:** Latin America: also la carpa
acampar	*to camp*	regular -ar
la arena	*sand*	
la sombrilla	*beach umbrella / parasol*	For the rain: el paraguas
la toalla (de playa)	*(beach) towel*	
la crema solar / el protector solar	*sun cream / sunscreen*	**¿Me pones crema en la espalda?** *Can you put some sun cream on my back?*
el chiringuito INFORMAL	*beach bar*	Spain. A simple bar on or next to the beach
veranear	*to spend the summer (holidays) somewhere*	el veraneo = summer holiday; el/la veraneante = holidaymaker **Mis abuelos veranean en Galicia.** *My grandparents spend their summers in Galicia.*
ponerse moreno/a	*to get a tan*	Moreno = tanned (and dark-haired). More formal: broncearse **Has vuelto muy moreno, ¿eh?** *You've come back really tanned!*
quemarse	*to get sunburnt*	**Me quemé el primer día y no pude ir a la playa.** *I got sunburnt on the first day and couldn't go to the beach.*
disfrutar (de)	*to enjoy*	disfrutar las vacaciones / disfrutar de las vacaciones: both correct. Never ~~*disfrutarse~~. 'Enjoy!' = ¡Que disfrutes! **Estamos disfrutando mucho del viaje.** *We're really enjoying the trip.*
desconectar	*to switch off / unwind*	**Necesito una semana sin móvil para desconectar.** *I need a week without my phone to switch off.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estar de vacaciones	*to be on holiday*	ir(se) de vacaciones = to go on holiday; estar de vacaciones = to be on holiday. Never ~~*en vacaciones in Spain~~ **Mi jefa está de vacaciones hasta el lunes.** *My boss is on holiday until Monday.*
la vuelta (de vacaciones)	*the return / getting back (after the holidays)*	la vuelta al trabajo / al cole = back to work / back to school **La vuelta al trabajo en septiembre siempre es dura.** *Going back to work in September is always tough.*
el parque de atracciones	*amusement park / theme park*	
el parque acuático	*water park*	

City

Places, street furniture and the words you need to describe a city. The directions phrases come right after.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ayuntamiento	*town hall / city council*	**Para empadronarte tienes que ir al ayuntamiento.** *To register as a resident you have to go to the town hall.*
la catedral	*cathedral*	
el castillo	*castle*	
el palacio	*palace*	
el monumento	*monument / historic building*	
el casco antiguo / el casco histórico	*old town / historic centre*	**Nos alojamos en pleno casco antiguo.** *We stayed right in the old town.*
las afueras	*outskirts*	Always plural: en las afueras **Viven en las afueras, a veinte minutos del centro.** *They live on the outskirts, twenty minutes from the centre.*
la avenida	*avenue*	
el paseo	*promenade / boulevard*	New meaning: at A1, dar un paseo = to go for a walk. Paseo marítimo = seafront promenade **Cenamos en un restaurante del paseo marítimo.** *We had dinner at a restaurant on the seafront.*
el puente	*bridge*	Also: long weekend (see Time & frequency: hacer puente)
la acera	*pavement / sidewalk*	**LatAm:** Spain: la acera · Mexico: la banqueta · Argentina, Peru: la vereda
el paso de peatones / el paso de cebra	*pedestrian crossing / zebra crossing*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el semáforo	*traffic lights*	Singular in Spanish: one semáforo = one set of lights **En el segundo semáforo, gira a la izquierda.** *At the second set of lights, turn left.*
el cruce	*crossroads / junction*	
la rotonda	*roundabout*	**LatAm:** Mexico: la glorieta
la manzana	*block (of buildings)*	New meaning (also 'apple') **LatAm:** Latin America: la cuadra **El museo está a dos manzanas de aquí.** *The museum is two blocks from here.*
la zona peatonal / la calle peatonal	*pedestrian area / pedestrian street*	
el rascacielos	*skyscraper*	Masculine, same form in the plural: los rascacielos
la fuente	*fountain / drinking fountain*	Also: source
la estatua	*statue*	
el banco	*bench*	New meaning (also 'bank') **Nos sentamos en un banco del parque a comer.** *We sat on a park bench to eat.*
la papelera	*litter bin / wastepaper basket*	Small bin in the street or office. Big rubbish bins: el contenedor
la farola	*streetlight / lamppost*	
la comisaría	*police station*	**Me robaron la cartera y fui a la comisaría a denunciarlo.** *My wallet was stolen and I went to the police station to report it.*
el estanco	*tobacconist's*	Spain. Also sells stamps and sometimes transport cards
el quiosco	*newsstand / kiosk*	
el centro cultural	*arts centre / cultural centre*	
el mirador	*viewpoint / lookout*	**Desde el mirador hay unas vistas increíbles de la ciudad.** *There are amazing views of the city from the viewpoint.*
el puerto	*port / harbour*	
el plano	*(street) map*	Plano = map of a city or building; mapa = map of a country or region **¿Me da un plano de la ciudad?** *Could I have a map of the city?*
el/la habitante	*inhabitant / resident*	**Es un pueblo de dos mil habitantes.** *It's a village of two thousand people.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ambiente	*atmosphere / vibe*	Careful: el medio ambiente = the environment Me encanta este barrio, tiene muy buen ambiente. *I love this neighbourhood, it's got a great vibe.*
animado/a	*lively*	Por la noche el centro está muy animado. *The centre is really lively at night.*
bien comunicado/a	*well connected (by public transport)*	El piso está muy bien comunicado: tiene metro al lado. *The flat is really well connected: there's a metro station right next to it.*
histórico/a	*historic / historical*	
callejear INFORMAL	*to wander around the streets*	Lo mejor de Lisboa es callejear sin mapa. *The best thing about Lisbon is wandering the streets without a map.*

City — useful phrases

Asking for and understanding directions. With strangers in the street, usted (perdone, siga, gire) is safe; with young people, tú (perdona, sigue, gira) is fine.

Perdone, ¿para ir a...?
Excuse me, how do I get to...?
The most natural way to ask for directions. Informal: Perdona, ¿para ir a...?

> Perdone, ¿para ir a la estación de tren?
> *Excuse me, how do I get to the train station?*

¿Hay una farmacia por aquí cerca?
Is there a chemist's near here?
Use hay + un/una when you don't know if one exists.

¿Sabe dónde está...?
Do you know where ... is?
Use está for a specific, known place.

> ¿Sabe dónde está el Museo del Prado?
> *Do you know where the Prado Museum is?*

Siga todo recto.
Go straight on.
Tú form: Sigue todo recto.

Gire a la derecha / a la izquierda.
Turn right / left.
Tú form: Gira a la derecha.

Coja la segunda calle a la izquierda.
Take the second street on the left.
Tú form: Coge la segunda...
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: Tome la segunda calle...

Cruce la plaza.
Go across the square.
Also: cruce el puente / la calle.

Al final de la calle, a mano derecha.
At the end of the street, on the right-hand side.
a mano derecha / izquierda = on the right / left-hand side.

Está justo enfrente de...
It's right opposite...
Combine with al lado de, detrás de, en la esquina.

> Está justo enfrente del ayuntamiento.
> *It's right opposite the town hall.*

Está a unos cinco minutos andando.
It's about a five-minute walk.
estar a + distance/time. Also: a diez minutos en metro.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: a cinco minutos caminando

Está un poco lejos; mejor coja el metro.
It's a bit far; you'd better take the metro.
Useful when someone gives you advice too.

Me he perdido. ¿Me puede ayudar?
I'm lost. Can you help me?
Note the perfect tense: me he perdido = I've got lost (I'm lost now).

¿Me lo puede indicar en el mapa?
Could you show me on the map?
When the explanation is too fast. Show your phone and say it.

Lo siento, no soy de aquí.
Sorry, I'm not from around here.
When YOU are asked and don't know the way.

Nature

Landscapes, plants and animals. Watch out for pez vs pescado: same animal, different word on your plate.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la naturaleza	*nature*	Spanish uses the article: Me encanta la naturaleza **Los fines de semana necesito estar en contacto con la naturaleza.** *At weekends I need to be out in nature.*
el paisaje	*landscape / scenery*	Masculine despite -aje (all -aje words are masculine) **El paisaje de Asturias es precioso.** *The scenery in Asturias is beautiful.*
el bosque	*forest / woods*	
la selva	*jungle / rainforest*	
el río	*river*	**Nos bañamos en el río porque hacía muchísimo calor.** *We swam in the river because it was really hot.*
el lago	*lake*	
el mar	*sea*	Masculine in everyday use. 'Ir al mar' is less common in Spain than 'ir a la playa'
el océano	*ocean*	
la costa	*coast*	**Tienen un apartamento en la costa.** *They've got a flat on the coast.*
la orilla	*shore / bank (of a river)*	a la orilla del mar = by the sea
la ola	*wave*	
la isla	*island*	
la cueva	*cave*	
el valle	*valley*	
la colina	*hill*	
la sierra	*mountain range / the mountains*	In Spain 'ir a la sierra' = to go to the mountains near the city **En invierno subimos a la sierra a ver la nieve.** *In winter we go up to the mountains to see the snow.*
la cima	*summit / top (of a mountain)*	
el volcán	*volcano*	Plural without accent: volcanes
la cascada	*waterfall*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el desierto	*desert*	
la piedra / la roca	*stone / rock*	Piedra = a stone you can pick up; roca = a big rock
la tierra	*earth / soil / land*	la Tierra (capital) = the planet Earth
la hierba / el césped	*grass / lawn*	Hierba = grass growing anywhere; césped = a lawn
la hoja	*leaf*	New meaning (also a sheet of paper) **En otoño se caen las hojas.** *Leaves fall in autumn.*
la rama	*branch*	
el amanecer	*sunrise / dawn*	
la puesta de sol / el atardecer	*sunset*	**Fuimos al mirador para ver la puesta de sol.** *We went to the viewpoint to watch the sunset.*
la luna	*moon*	
la estrella	*star*	
el pájaro	*bird*	More formal: el ave (f): las aves
el pez	*fish (alive)*	Trap! Alive in the water: el pez (peces). On your plate: el pescado **En el lago hay muchos peces.** *There are lots of fish in the lake.*
el insecto	*insect*	
el mosquito	*mosquito*	picar = to bite/sting: me ha picado un mosquito
la abeja	*bee*	
la araña	*spider*	
la vaca	*cow*	
el caballo	*horse*	montar a caballo = to ride a horse
la oveja	*sheep*	
la gallina	*hen / chicken (alive)*	Like pez/pescado: alive = gallina; on your plate = pollo
el oso	*bear*	
la serpiente	*snake*	
el parque natural / el parque nacional	*nature reserve / national park*	
la ruta / el sendero	*route, trail / footpath*	**Hicimos una ruta de diez kilómetros por el bosque.** *We did a ten-kilometre trail through the forest.*
al aire libre	*outdoors / in the open air*	**Prefiero hacer deporte al aire libre.** *I prefer exercising outdoors.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
salvaje	*wild*	Same form for masculine and feminine: animales salvajes, playa salvaje

Free time

Hobbies, going out and staying in. Many of these work with the verbs you already know: ir de, jugar a, apuntarse a.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el tiempo libre	*free time*	**¿Qué haces en tu tiempo libre?** *What do you do in your free time?*
el ocio	*leisure / entertainment*	Common in written Spanish: la oferta de ocio de una ciudad
la afición / el hobby	*hobby*	Hobby is pronounced with a Spanish j sound: /jobi/. Plural: hobbies **Mi gran afición es la fotografía.** *My big hobby is photography.*
aficionado/a a	*keen on / a fan of*	Also a noun: un aficionado = a fan, an amateur **Mi padre es muy aficionado al fútbol.** *My dad's really into football.*
el finde INFORMAL	*weekend*	Short for el fin de semana. Very common in Spain
ir de cañas / ir de tapas INFORMAL	*to go out for a few beers / to go for tapas*	Spain. A typical plan: several bars, a drink and a tapa in each **¿Vamos de tapas por La Latina el sábado?** *Shall we go for tapas in La Latina on Saturday?*
la copa	*drink (usually a spirit or cocktail, at night)*	salir de copas / tomar una copa. Also: wine glass, cup (trophy) **Después de cenar fuimos a tomar una copa.** *After dinner we went for a drink.*
la discoteca	*club / nightclub*	Informal: la disco
el espectáculo	*show / performance*	
la exposición	*exhibition*	**Hay una exposición de Frida Kahlo en el centro cultural.** *There's a Frida Kahlo exhibition at the arts centre.*
la obra de teatro	*play*	una obra = a play / a work (of art)
el musical	*musical*	
el festival	*festival*	un festival de música / de cine
la cartelera	*listings (what's on at the cinema / theatre)*	**Mira la cartelera a ver qué ponen esta noche.** *Look at the listings and see what's on tonight.*
el estreno	*premiere / new release*	estrenar = to release / to wear something for the first time
el videojuego	*video game*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la consola	*games console*	
los juegos de mesa	*board games*	Los domingos jugamos a juegos de mesa con mis sobrinos. *On Sundays we play board games with my nephews.*
las cartas	*(playing) cards*	jugar a las cartas. Also: letters **LatAm:** Spain: also los naipes, la baraja (the deck)
el ajedrez	*chess*	jugar al ajedrez
la novela	*novel*	Not 'new': a novel is always una novela Estoy leyendo una novela de misterio buenísima. *I'm reading a brilliant mystery novel.*
el cómic	*comic / graphic novel*	
pintar	*to paint*	la pintura = painting / paint
dibujar	*to draw*	el dibujo = drawing
la fotografía	*photography*	la foto = a photo; la fotografía = the hobby or art
hacer punto	*to knit*	**LatAm:** Latin America: tejer Mi abuela me enseñó a hacer punto. *My grandmother taught me to knit.*
las manualidades	*crafts / DIY crafts*	
la jardinería	*gardening*	
el instrumento	*(musical) instrument*	tocar un instrumento (not jugar!) ¿Tocas algún instrumento? *Do you play an instrument?*
la guitarra	*guitar*	
el piano	*piano*	
el karaoke	*karaoke*	
el taller	*workshop*	un taller de cerámica / de escritura. Also: car repair garage
apuntarse (a)	*to sign up (for) / to join*	Me he apuntado a un curso de cocina. *I've signed up for a cooking course.*
el club de lectura	*book club*	
el voluntariado	*volunteering*	hacer voluntariado; el/la voluntario/a = volunteer
el plan de sofá y manta INFORMAL	*a cosy night in (on the sofa)*	Spain. Literally 'a sofa and blanket plan' Hoy no salgo: plan de sofá y manta. *I'm not going out tonight: it's a cosy night in on the sofa.*

Exercise

Sport and fitness. Remember: jugar a + sport with a ball or game, hacer + most other activities (hacer yoga, hacer pilates).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el polideportivo	*sports centre*	Usually public, run by the town hall **Juego al baloncesto en el polideportivo del barrio.** *I play basketball at the local sports centre.*
la piscina	*swimming pool*	**LatAm:** Mexico: la alberca · Argentina, Uruguay: la pileta
la pista	*court / track*	pista de tenis, de pádel, de atletismo; pista de esquí = ski slope
el campo (de fútbol)	*(football) pitch*	New meaning (also 'the countryside')
el balón / la pelota	*ball*	Balón = a large ball (football, basketball); pelota = any ball, especially small ones (tennis)
el equipo	*team / equipment*	**¿De qué equipo eres?** *Which team do you support?*
el/la jugador/a	*player*	
el/la entrenador/a	*coach / trainer*	el/la entrenador/a personal = personal trainer
entrenar	*to train*	el entrenamiento = training (session) **Entreno tres veces por semana.** *I train three times a week.*
empatar	*to draw (a match)*	el empate = draw; ganar/perder you know already **Empatamos dos a dos.** *We drew two-all.*
marcar un gol	*to score a goal*	Never ~~*hacer un punto~~: marcar un gol / ganar un punto
el/la árbitro/a	*referee / umpire*	
la carrera	*race / run*	Also: university degree (B1) **El domingo corro una carrera de diez kilómetros.** *On Sunday I'm running a 10K.*
el maratón	*marathon*	Usually masculine (la maratón is also correct)
salir a correr	*to go for a run / to go running*	**Salgo a correr antes de trabajar.** *I go for a run before work.*
montar en bici	*to ride a bike / to cycle*	**LatAm:** Latin America: andar en bici
el ciclismo	*cycling*	
la natación	*swimming (the sport)*	The activity: nadar. 'I do swimming' = hago natación / voy a natación
el baloncesto	*basketball*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el básquet / el básquetbol
el pádel	*padel (tennis)*	Hugely popular in Spain: jugar al pádel **Jugamos al pádel todos los jueves después del trabajo.** *We play padel every Thursday after work.*
el yoga / el pilates	*yoga / Pilates*	hacer yoga, hacer pilates (no 'jugar')

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
esquiar	*to ski*	el esquí = skiing; esquío, esquías (accent on the í)
la escalada	*climbing*	escalar = to climb; el rocódromo = climbing wall
el senderismo	*hiking*	hacer senderismo **En verano hacemos senderismo por los Picos de Europa.** *In summer we go hiking in the Picos de Europa.*
estar en forma	*to be fit / in shape*	**Mi madre tiene setenta años y está en plena forma.** *My mum is seventy and she's really fit.*
ponerse en forma	*to get fit*	
la cuota (del gimnasio)	*(gym) membership fee*	el/la socio/a = member
las pesas	*weights*	hacer pesas = to lift weights
la cinta (de correr)	*treadmill*	
la bici estática	*exercise bike*	
el vestuario	*changing room / locker room*	
calentar	*to warm up*	stem-changing e→ie: caliento. el calentamiento = warm-up
estirar	*to stretch*	los estiramientos = stretches
sudar	*to sweat*	
las agujetas	*muscle stiffness (after exercise)*	Spain. Tener agujetas = to be stiff/sore **LatAm:** Latin America: estar adolorido/a **Hoy tengo agujetas en las piernas.** *My legs are really stiff today.*
el músculo	*muscle*	
lesionarse	*to get injured*	la lesión = injury (sports). For a cut: la herida **Se lesionó la rodilla jugando al fútbol.** *He injured his knee playing football.*

Health

Illnesses, medicines and the health system. At A1 you learned the body and 'me duele'; now you can explain your symptoms and get what you need.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la salud	*health*	¡Salud! = Cheers! / Bless you! **Lo más importante es la salud.** *Health is the most important thing.*
la enfermedad	*illness / disease*	
el síntoma	*symptom*	Masculine despite -a (like el problema)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el resfriado	*cold*	estar resfriado/a = to have a cold. Careful: constipado also means 'having a cold', not constipated **LatAm:** Latin America: also el resfrío (Chile, Argentina) **Tengo un resfriado horrible.** *I've got a horrible cold.*
la gripe	*flu*	**LatAm:** Mexico, Colombia: la gripa
la fiebre	*fever / temperature*	tener fiebre = to have a temperature
la tos	*cough*	toser = to cough
estornudar	*to sneeze*	When someone sneezes: ¡Jesús! or ¡Salud!
mareado/a	*dizzy / sick (travel sickness)*	marearse = to get dizzy / to feel sick **Me mareo en el barco.** *I get seasick on boats.*
vomitar	*to vomit / be sick*	
la alergia	*allergy*	tener alergia a... = ser alérgico/a a... **En primavera tengo alergia al polen.** *In spring I get hay fever.*
la herida	*wound / cut*	
la quemadura	*burn*	
la tirita	*plaster / Band-Aid*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la curita
la venda	*bandage*	
la escayola	*plaster cast*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el yeso **Llevo la pierna escayolada tres semanas.** *I've had my leg in a cast for three weeks.*
el termómetro	*thermometer*	
el medicamento / la medicina	*medicine / medication*	la medicina also means 'medicine' the science
la pastilla	*pill / tablet*	tomar una pastilla **Tómate una pastilla cada ocho horas.** *Take one pill every eight hours.*
el jarabe	*(cough) syrup / medicine*	
la pomada / la crema	*ointment / cream*	
la receta	*prescription*	Also: recipe. Context makes it clear **Para este antibiótico necesitas receta.** *You need a prescription for this antibiotic.*
la vacuna	*vaccine*	vacunarse = to get vaccinated
el análisis (de sangre)	*(blood) test*	Same form in the plural: los análisis
la radiografía	*X-ray*	
el centro de salud	*health centre / GP surgery*	Spain: your local public doctor's

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la consulta	*doctor's office / appointment (with the doctor)*	**La consulta del médico está en la segunda planta.** *The doctor's office is on the second floor.*
el/la médico/a de cabecera	*GP / family doctor*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el/la médico/a de familia (also used in Spain)
el/la especialista	*specialist*	
el/la dentista	*dentist*	Same form for men and women: el dentista / la dentista
el/la paciente	*patient*	
urgencias	*A&E / emergency room*	Usually without article: ir a urgencias **Anoche tuvimos que ir a urgencias.** *We had to go to A&E last night.*
la ambulancia	*ambulance*	
la tarjeta sanitaria	*health card*	Spain. Your public health system card
el seguro médico	*health insurance*	
estar de baja	*to be on sick leave / off sick*	**Lucía está de baja esta semana.** *Lucía is off sick this week.*
curarse	*to get better / to heal*	curar = to cure; curarse = to recover
recuperarse	*to recover*	**Ya me he recuperado de la gripe.** *I've got over the flu now.*
sano/a	*healthy*	sano = in good health / good for you: comida sana. Saludable is also common for food and habits

Health — useful phrases

What to say at the doctor's and the chemist's. Doctors in Spain usually say usted at first, but many switch to tú quickly.

Me duele la garganta desde ayer.
I've had a sore throat since yesterday.
doler works like gustar: me duele + singular. Add desde to say since when.

Me duelen mucho los pies.
My feet really hurt.
Plural thing = duelen. Note: los pies, not ~~*mis pies (Spanish uses the article with body parts~~).

Tengo 38 de fiebre.
I've got a temperature of 38.
The natural way to give your temperature: tengo + number + de fiebre.

Me encuentro fatal.
I feel awful.
Also: me encuentro un poco mejor = I feel a bit better.

Estoy resfriado/a.
I've got a cold.
In Spain also: estoy constipado/a (false friend: it does NOT mean constipated).

Me he hecho daño en la rodilla.
I've hurt my knee.
hacerse daño en + body part. Herirse sounds dramatic (a wound); for everyday knocks use hacerse daño.

Me he cortado.
I've cut myself.
Also: me he quemado (I've burnt myself), me he caído (I've fallen over).

Estoy mareado/a.
I feel dizzy.
Also for feeling sick in a car or boat.

Quería pedir cita con el médico.
I'd like to make an appointment with the doctor.
On the phone or at reception. In Spain you also book online or through an app.

¿Tiene algo para el dolor de cabeza?
Have you got anything for a headache?
At the chemist's. Also: algo para la tos, para la alergia, para el estómago.

¿Necesito receta?
Do I need a prescription?
Many medicines in Spain need a prescription.

¿Cada cuántas horas lo tengo que tomar?
How often do I have to take it?
Typical answer: cada ocho horas, después de las comidas.

¿Es grave?
Is it serious?
Hopefully the answer is: No, no es nada grave.

¡Llamen a una ambulancia!
Call an ambulance!
Emergency number in Spain and the EU: 112.

Friends & relationships

Friendship, dating and love. Note the new meanings: salir con alguien (to go out with), los novios at a wedding (the bride and groom).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la amistad	*friendship*	Nuestra amistad empezó en el colegio. *Our friendship started at school.*
el/la mejor amigo/a	*best friend*	
el/la amigo/a íntimo/a	*close friend*	'Íntimo' here is just 'close', nothing romantic
el/la conocido/a	*acquaintance*	Someone you know, but not really a friend No es mi amigo, es solo un conocido del trabajo. *He's not my friend, just someone I know from work.*
el/la colega COLLOQUIAL	*mate / buddy*	Spain. In formal Spanish it means colleague
el/la compi INFORMAL	*mate (classmate, flatmate, workmate)*	Short for compañero/a
la pandilla / el grupo de amigos	*group of friends / gang*	**LatAm:** Spain: also la peña (colloquial) · Mexico: la banda · Argentina: la barra Va toda la pandilla a la boda de Marcos. *The whole gang is going to Marcos's wedding.*
la relación	*relationship*	Llevamos una relación a distancia. *We're in a long-distance relationship.*
el amor	*love*	el amor de mi vida = the love of my life
enamorarse (de)	*to fall in love (with)*	Preposition de, not con: Me enamoré de él Se enamoraron en un viaje a Italia. *They fell in love on a trip to Italy.*
estar enamorado/a (de)	*to be in love (with)*	estar, because it's a state
el flechazo INFORMAL	*love at first sight*	Fue un flechazo: nos vimos y ya está. *It was love at first sight: we saw each other and that was it.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ligar (con) COLLOQUIAL	*to flirt (with) / to pull*	Spain. ligar = to chat someone up / to get off with someone
salir con alguien	*to go out with someone / to date*	New meaning: salir con = to be in a relationship with **Diego sale con una chica de Valencia.** *Diego's going out with a girl from Valencia.*
besar / el beso	*to kiss / kiss*	
abrazar / el abrazo	*to hug / hug*	Un abrazo = a common way to sign off messages to friends
el cariño	*affection / love*	Also a term of endearment: cariño = darling, love **Le tengo mucho cariño a mi profe de español.** *I'm very fond of my Spanish teacher.*
cariñoso/a	*affectionate*	
los celos	*jealousy*	Plural: tener celos de alguien. celoso/a = jealous
fiel / infiel	*faithful / unfaithful*	
confiar en	*to trust*	Preposition en: Confío en ti **Confío en ella al cien por cien.** *I trust her a hundred percent.*
el/la prometido/a	*fiancé / fiancée*	
la boda	*wedding*	**Estamos invitados a tres bodas este verano.** *We're invited to three weddings this summer.*
los novios	*the bride and groom / the couple*	New meaning: at a wedding, el novio / la novia = groom / bride
la despedida de soltero/a	*stag do / hen party (bachelor / bachelorette party)*	
pelearse (con)	*to fall out / to argue (with)*	For couples and friends: to have a fight or argument, not necessarily physical
hacer las paces	*to make up (after an argument)*	**Se pelearon, pero ya han hecho las paces.** *They fell out, but they've made up now.*
separarse	*to separate / split up*	
divorciarse	*to get divorced*	el divorcio = divorce
la vida social	*social life*	**Desde que tengo un bebé, mi vida social ha desaparecido.** *Since I had a baby, my social life has vanished.*
el/la amigo/a de toda la vida	*lifelong friend / old friend*	
el/la amigo/a con derecho a roce COLLOQUIAL	*friend with benefits*	

Friends & relationships — useful phrases

Telling the story of a friendship or a relationship, and catching up.

¿Cómo os conocisteis?
How did you meet?
To a couple or two friends. Note the past: conocer in the past = to meet for the first time.
Spain & Latin America: Latin America: ¿Cómo se conocieron?

Nos conocimos en la universidad.
We met at university.
Also: por una app, en el trabajo, a través de unos amigos.

Somos amigos desde el colegio.
We've been friends since school.
Present tense + desde, where English uses 'have been'.

Somos uña y carne. INFORMAL
We're inseparable. / We're joined at the hip.
Literally 'nail and flesh'. For very close friends.

Tenemos mucho en común.
We have a lot in common.
Opposite: no tenemos nada en común.

Es un amigo de un amigo.
He's a friend of a friend.
Handy when introducing or explaining who someone is.

Estoy saliendo con alguien.
I'm seeing someone.
A relaxed way to say you're in a new relationship.

Llevamos dos años juntos.
We've been together for two years.
llevar + time + juntos/as. Very natural.

Te quiero.
I love you.
In Spain, te quiero is used with partners, family and close friends. Te amo sounds very intense or poetic in Spain.
Spain & Latin America: In much of Latin America te amo is common between partners; te quiero is a bit lighter.

Lo hemos dejado.
We've broken up.
Also: hemos roto. To say who ended it: me ha dejado = he/she has left me.

Me ha dejado plantado/a. INFORMAL
He / She stood me up.
When someone doesn't turn up to a date or plan.

¡Hace siglos que no nos vemos!
We haven't seen each other for ages!
When you meet an old friend. Also: ¡Cuánto tiempo!

Hemos perdido el contacto.
We've lost touch.
Opposite: seguimos en contacto = we're still in touch.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

14 · One English verb, two Spanish verbs: the pairs that trip everyone up

Common mistakes

At A2 most mistakes come from English verbs that split into two (or four!) Spanish verbs: know, ask, take, look, listen, play. Read each pair, then make your own sentence with both words. The goal isn't to never make these mistakes again, but to notice them when you do.

Verb pairs English speakers mix up

saber vs conocer: know a fact or know someone

✗ ~~*¿Conoces dónde está la estación~~? / ~~*Sé a tu hermano~~.

✓ ¿Sabes dónde está la estación? / Conozco a tu hermano.

Saber = to know information, facts, or how to do something (saber + infinitive). Conocer = to know (be familiar with) a person, a place, a book, a restaurant. If you can replace 'know' with 'be familiar with', use conocer.

- ¿Sabes a qué hora empieza la película?
  Do you know what time the film starts?
- Sé nadar, pero no muy bien.
  I can swim, but not very well.
- ¿Conoces algún bar bueno por aquí?
  Do you know a good bar around here?

REMEMBER saber + question word / que / infinitive · conocer + person (with a) / place / thing.

pedir vs preguntar: ask for vs ask a question

✗ ~~*Le pregunté un favor~~. / ~~*Le pedí dónde vivía~~.

✓ Le pedí un favor. / Le pregunté dónde vivía.

Pedir = to ask FOR something (an object, help, a favour, food in a restaurant). Preguntar = to ask a QUESTION, to ask for information. 'Ask about' = preguntar por.

- Voy a pedir la cuenta.
  I'm going to ask for the bill.
- Te quiero preguntar una cosa.
  I want to ask you something.
- Tu madre me ha preguntado por ti.
  Your mum asked about you.

REMEMBER Hacer una pregunta = to ask a question. Never ~~*pedir una pregunta~~.

llevar vs traer: take there vs bring here

✗ *~~Mañana te traigo el libro a tu casa (said on the phone from your own home~~).

✓ Mañana te llevo el libro a tu casa.

Spanish looks at where the speaker is right now. Traer = to bring towards here (where I am). Llevar = to take away from here, to another place. English 'bring' is more flexible, so you can't translate it automatically.

- ¿Traes tú el postre? (we're at my place)
  Are you bringing dessert?
- Llevo a los niños al colegio a las nueve.
  I take the kids to school at nine.
- ¿Qué llevo a la cena de Ana?
  What should I bring to Ana's dinner?

REMEMBER Here → traer. There → llevar.

ir vs venir: I'm coming!

✗ *~~¡Ya vengo~~! (when someone calls you to the kitchen)

✓ ¡Ya voy!

Venir = to come to where the speaker IS. Ir = to go anywhere else. In English you say 'I'm coming' when you move towards the other person; in Spanish you're going away from where you are, so you say voy.

- —¡Laura, la cena está lista! —¡Voy!
  "Laura, dinner's ready!" "Coming!"
- ¿Vienes a mi fiesta el sábado?
  Are you coming to my party on Saturday?
- Mañana voy a tu oficina a las diez.
  I'll come to your office at ten tomorrow.

REMEMBER Venir only when the speaker is (or will be) at the destination.

mirar vs ver: look vs see / watch

✗ *~~Anoche miré una película muy buena~~.

✓ Anoche vi una película muy buena.

Mirar = to look at, to direct your eyes on purpose. Ver = to see, and also to watch films, series, TV and matches. 'Watch TV / a film' is almost always ver in Spanish.

- ¡Mira! Está nevando.
  Look! It's snowing.
- No veo bien sin gafas.
  I can't see well without my glasses.
- ¿Vemos una serie esta noche?
  Shall we watch a series tonight?

REMEMBER In shops, 'just looking' = Solo estoy mirando.

escuchar vs oír: listen vs hear

✗ ~~*No te escucho~~, hay mucho ruido.

✓ No te oigo, hay mucho ruido.

Escuchar = to listen (you pay attention on purpose). Oír = to hear (sound reaches your ears). On the phone or in a video call, the technical problem is with oír. You'll hear Spanish speakers use escuchar for 'hear' too, but oír is the safe choice.

- ¿Me oyes bien? Se corta un poco.
  Can you hear me OK? It's cutting out a bit.
- Escucho pódcasts cuando voy al trabajo.
  I listen to podcasts on my way to work.
- He oído que te mudas.
  I've heard you're moving.

REMEMBER Oír is irregular: oigo, oyes, oye, oímos, oís, oyen.

decir vs hablar: say / tell vs speak / talk

✗ ~~*Me habló que estaba cansado~~. / ~~*Dice español muy bien~~.

✓ Me dijo que estaba cansado. / Habla español muy bien.

Decir = to say or tell something specific (decir algo, decir que…). Hablar = to speak or talk (a language, with someone, about something). If there's a 'what' or 'que', use decir.

- ¿Qué te ha dicho el médico?
  What did the doctor say?
- Tenemos que hablar de las vacaciones.
  We need to talk about the holidays.
- Hablé con Javi y me dijo que no viene.
  I talked to Javi and he told me he isn't coming.

REMEMBER 'Tell a story / a joke' = contar: contar un chiste.

tocar vs jugar: play an instrument vs play a game

✗ ~~*Juego la guitarra~~. / ~~*Juego tenis~~.

✓ Toco la guitarra. / Juego al tenis.

Tocar = to play an instrument (and also to touch). Jugar = to play a game or sport, and in Spain it takes a + article: jugar al fútbol, a las cartas.

- Mi hermana toca el piano desde pequeña.
  My sister has played the piano since she was little.
- Los viernes jugamos al pádel.
  On Fridays we play padel.

REMEMBER In much of Latin America people also say jugar fútbol (without al). Both are fine.

One English word, several Spanish ones

take: hacer, tomar, sacar, darse

✗ ~~*Tomé muchas fotos~~. / ~~*Tomé una ducha~~. (both sound translated in Spain)

✓ Hice / Saqué muchas fotos. / Me duché. / Me di una ducha.

English 'take' has no single Spanish equivalent. Learn each combination as a block: hacer or sacar una foto, tomar una decisión, tomar algo (a drink), tomar una pastilla, tomar el autobús, darse una ducha (or simply ducharse), llevar (take someone somewhere), tardar (it takes ten minutes).

- ¿Nos sacas una foto, por favor?
  Could you take a photo of us, please?
- Tengo que tomar una decisión pronto.
  I have to make a decision soon.
- Tardo veinte minutos en llegar al trabajo.
  It takes me twenty minutes to get to work.

REMEMBER 'Take time' is almost always tardar: ¿Cuánto tardas? = How long does it take you?

time: a good time, three times, a while

✗ ~~*Tuvimos un buen tiempo en la fiesta~~. / ~~*Te espero un tiempito~~.

✓ Lo pasamos muy bien en la fiesta. / Te espero un rato.

Tiempo = time in general (and weather!), so 'un buen tiempo' sounds like good weather. 'Have a good time' = pasarlo bien. Vez = an occasion (la última vez, tres veces). Hora = clock time. Rato = a while, a short period of time: un rato, un buen rato.

- ¿Lo pasaste bien en Lisboa?
  Did you have a good time in Lisbon?
- La última vez que la vi fue en verano.
  The last time I saw her was in summer.
- Estuvimos charlando un buen rato.
  We were chatting for quite a while.

REMEMBER 'Time' + number = vez: una vez, dos veces, a veces.

coger vs tomar: careful where you are

✗ In Mexico or Argentina: ~~*Voy a coger el autobús~~.

✓ Voy a tomar el autobús. (works everywhere)

In Spain coger is completely normal: coger el tren, coger el teléfono, coger frío. In much of Latin America (Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela and others) coger is a vulgar word for sex. There, use tomar (transport), agarrar (an object) or contestar (the phone).

- Spain: Cojo el metro todos los días.
  I take the metro every day.
- Latin America: Agarra tu chaqueta, que nos vamos.
  Grab your jacket, we're leaving.

REMEMBER When in doubt, tomar for transport is understood everywhere.

esperar: wait, hope and expect

✗ ~~*Estoy esperando por el autobús~~. / ~~*Espero para tu respuesta~~.

✓ Estoy esperando el autobús. / Espero tu respuesta.

Esperar already contains 'for', so no preposition (except personal a with people: espero a Ana). It also means 'to hope' (espero que…) and 'to expect'. Context tells you which one.

- Te espero en la puerta.
  I'll wait for you at the door.
- Espero verte pronto.
  I hope to see you soon.
- No esperaba tanta gente.
  I wasn't expecting so many people.

Grammar traps

gente is singular

✗ ~~*La gente son muy simpáticos aquí~~.

✓ La gente es muy simpática aquí.

In English 'people' is plural. In Spanish la gente is a feminine singular noun, so the verb and the adjective are singular and feminine. If you want a plural, use las personas.

- En verano hay mucha gente en la playa.
  There are lots of people on the beach in summer.
- La gente de mi barrio es muy maja.
  The people in my neighbourhood are really nice.

REMEMBER Think 'the crowd': la gente, like el público.

Events take ser for location

✗ ~~*La fiesta está en casa de Sofía~~.

✓ La fiesta es en casa de Sofía.

You learned that location takes estar. The exception: EVENTS (a party, a concert, a meeting, a class, a wedding) use ser to say where and when they take place, because ser here means 'to happen, to be held'.

- La reunión es en la sala 3.
  The meeting is in room 3.
- ¿Dónde es el concierto?
  Where's the concert?
- La boda fue en un pueblo de Granada.
  The wedding was in a village in Granada.

REMEMBER Can you replace 'is' with 'is taking place'? Then use ser.

Body parts and clothes: the, not my

✗ ~~*Me duele mi cabeza~~. / ~~*Me quito mi abrigo~~.

✓ Me duele la cabeza. / Me quito el abrigo.

With body parts and clothes Spanish normally uses the article (el, la, los, las), because the pronoun (me, te, se) already shows whose it is.

- Lávate las manos antes de comer.
  Wash your hands before you eat.
- Se ha roto el brazo esquiando.
  He broke his arm skiing.

ago = hace + time

✗ ~~*Llegué a España dos años atrás~~. / ~~*Dos años hace~~.

✓ Llegué a España hace dos años.

'Ago' is hace + time, and it goes BEFORE the time: hace dos años, hace un rato, hace mucho.

- Nos conocimos hace cinco años.
  We met five years ago.
- Ha llamado tu madre hace un rato.
  Your mum called a little while ago.

for + time: desde hace / llevar, not por

✗ ~~*Estudio español por dos años~~. / ~~*Vivo aquí para tres meses~~.

✓ Estudio español desde hace dos años. / Llevo tres meses viviendo aquí.

English uses the present perfect + for ('I've been studying for two years'). Spanish uses the present + desde hace, or llevar + time + gerund. Por or durante + time is for actions that are finished or have a clear limit.

- Trabajo en esta empresa desde hace un año.
  I've been working at this company for a year.
- Llevo una hora esperándote.
  I've been waiting for you for an hour.
- Viví en Dublín durante dos años.
  I lived in Dublin for two years. (finished)

I've just… = acabo de…

✗ ~~*Justo he llegado~~. / ~~*He justo comido~~.

✓ Acabo de llegar. / Acabo de comer.

To say something happened a moment ago, Spanish uses acabar de + infinitive. 'Justo' exists, but not in this position.

- Acabo de ver tu mensaje, perdona.
  I've just seen your message, sorry.
- Marcos acaba de salir.
  Marcos has just left.

ir vs irse: going vs leaving

✗ *~~Bueno~~, voy. Hasta mañana. (to say goodbye)

✓ Bueno, me voy. Hasta mañana.

Ir = to go somewhere (you need a destination: voy al gimnasio). Irse = to leave, to go away from where you are now. When you're saying goodbye, use me voy.

› **Me voy, que es tardísimo.**
I'm off, it's really late.

› **¿A qué hora os vais mañana?**
What time are you leaving tomorrow?

REMEMBER Me voy = I'm off. ¡Vámonos! = Let's go!

MAKE YOUR OWN PAIR CARDS

Write each pair on a card with one personal sentence for each verb: 'Conozco a Emma. Sé su número.' Your own sentences stick much better than the book's. Read them aloud before your next conversation class.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

15 · Pregnant, not embarrassed: the false friends that cause real red faces

False friends

These words look like English words but mean something different, and some of them can lead to very funny (or very awkward) moments. For each one, learn what it really means and what to say instead when you need the English meaning.

People, life and feelings

embarazada ≠ English "embarrassed"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
pregnant

ENGLISH "EMBARRASSED" MEANS
feeling awkward or ashamed

SAY INSTEAD For 'embarrassed' say: me da vergüenza, tengo vergüenza or estoy avergonzado/a. (I'm so embarrassed! = ¡Qué vergüenza!)

- Mi hermana está embarazada de cinco meses.
  My sister is five months pregnant.
- Me da mucha vergüenza hablar en público.
  I get really embarrassed speaking in public.

constipado/a ≠ English "constipated"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
having a cold (Spain)

ENGLISH "CONSTIPATED" MEANS
unable to go to the toilet easily

SAY INSTEAD For 'constipated' say: estreñido/a. (estar constipado = to have a cold)

- No voy a clase, estoy constipada.
  I'm not coming to class, I've got a cold.
- Hoy no puedo ir al gimnasio, estoy fatal del constipado.
  I can't go to the gym today, my cold is really bad.

el pariente ≠ English "parent"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
relative, family member

ENGLISH "PARENT" MEANS
mother or father

SAY INSTEAD For 'parents' say: los padres. (my parents = mis padres)

- En la boda había muchos parientes que no conocía.
  There were lots of relatives I didn't know at the wedding.
- Mis padres viven en Málaga.
  My parents live in Málaga.

la decepción ≠ English “deception”

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
disappointment

ENGLISH “DECEPTION” MEANS
tricking or lying to someone

SAY INSTEAD For 'deception' say: el engaño. (decepcionado/a = disappointed)

› La película fue una decepción.
The film was a disappointment.

› Estoy un poco decepcionado con el hotel.
I'm a bit disappointed with the hotel.

recordar ≠ English “to record”

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to remember / to remind

ENGLISH “TO RECORD” MEANS
to save sound or video

SAY INSTEAD For 'to record' say: grabar. (a record = un disco; a world record = un récord)

› No recuerdo su nombre.
I can't remember her name.

› ¿Puedes grabar la clase?
Can you record the class?

contestar ≠ English “to contest”

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to answer, to reply

ENGLISH “TO CONTEST” MEANS
to compete for something / to challenge a decision

SAY INSTEAD For 'contest' (a competition) say: el concurso. For 'to compete' say: competir. For 'to challenge' a decision say: recurrir or impugnar (formal).

› No contesta al teléfono.
She isn't answering the phone.

› Ganó un concurso de fotografía.
He won a photography contest.

Work, school and money

la fábrica ≠ English "fabric"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
factory

ENGLISH "FABRIC" MEANS
cloth, material

SAY INSTEAD For 'fabric' say: la tela. (What fabric is it? = ¿De qué tela es?)

› Mi abuelo trabajó cuarenta años en una fábrica de coches.
My grandfather worked in a car factory for forty years.

› Esta tela es muy suave.
This fabric is really soft.

el colegio ≠ English "college"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
school (for children)

ENGLISH "COLLEGE" MEANS
university, or a place for further education

SAY INSTEAD For 'college' (university) say: la universidad. A UK sixth-form college ≈ el instituto (secondary school).

› Los niños entran al colegio a las nueve.
The kids start school at nine.

› Estudié Económicas en la universidad.
I studied Economics at college.

la lectura ≠ English "lecture"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
reading (the activity, or a text you read)

ENGLISH "LECTURE" MEANS
a talk at university or a conference

SAY INSTEAD For 'lecture' say: la clase (at university) or la conferencia (a public talk).

› La lectura es mi forma favorita de desconectar.
Reading is my favourite way to switch off.

› Mañana tengo clase a las ocho de la mañana.
I've got a lecture at eight tomorrow morning.

el billón ≠ English "billion"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a million million (a trillion: 1,000,000,000,000)

ENGLISH "BILLION" MEANS
a thousand million (1,000,000,000)

SAY INSTEAD For 'billion' say: mil millones. (3 billion euros = tres mil millones de euros)

› La empresa vale dos mil millones de euros.
The company is worth two billion euros.

› Un billón tiene doce ceros.
A Spanish 'billón' has twelve zeros.

la firma ≠ English "firm"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
signature (also: a company or law firm)

ENGLISH "FIRM" MEANS
solid, strict (adjective)

SAY INSTEAD For 'firm' (adjective) say: firme (a firm decision = una decisión firme). For a business, empresa is the everyday word.

- Falta tu firma en la última página.
  Your signature is missing on the last page.
- Trabaja en una empresa de diseño.
  She works at a design firm.

la ganga ≠ English "gang"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
bargain

ENGLISH "GANG" MEANS
a group of criminals / a group of friends

SAY INSTEAD For 'gang' say: la banda (criminals) or la pandilla (friends).

- ¡Este abrigo a 20 euros es una ganga!
  This coat for 20 euros is a bargain!
- Detuvieron a toda la banda.
  They arrested the whole gang.

Food and everyday things

la mermelada ≠ English "marmalade"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
jam (made of any fruit)

ENGLISH "MARMALADE" MEANS
jam made from oranges

SAY INSTEAD For 'marmalade' say: mermelada de naranja (amarga).

- Desayuno tostadas con mantequilla y mermelada de fresa.
  I have toast with butter and strawberry jam for breakfast.

el bizcocho ≠ English "biscuit"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
sponge cake

ENGLISH "BISCUIT" MEANS
a small, dry, sweet snack (US: cookie)

SAY INSTEAD For 'biscuit' / 'cookie' say: la galleta.

- Mi madre hace un bizcocho de limón buenísimo.
  My mum makes an amazing lemon sponge cake.
- ¿Quieres una galleta con el café?
  Do you want a biscuit with your coffee?

el esmoquin ≠ English “smoking”

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
dinner jacket / tuxedo

ENGLISH “SMOKING” MEANS
the act of smoking cigarettes

SAY INSTEAD For 'smoking' say: fumar. (No smoking = Prohibido fumar)

- El novio llevaba esmoquin.
  The groom was wearing a tuxedo.
- Dejé de fumar hace dos años.
  I gave up smoking two years ago.

TURN THEM INTO A STORY

Make one silly sentence with several false friends: 'Embarazada y constipada, salí del colegio con un bizcocho que era una ganga.' Absurd stories are much easier to remember than lists.

A2 · EVERYDAY SPANISH

16 · Ten small verbs, sixty natural phrases

Useful collocations

Spanish builds a huge number of everyday phrases with a few short verbs: hacer, tomar, sacar, dar, echar, pasar, perder, poner, llevar and coger. The verb often isn't the one English would use, so learn each phrase as a block. Pick one verb a week and try to use all its phrases in real conversations.

hacer

Do, make… and a lot more.

hacer cola
to queue / to wait in line
Also: hacer fila (more common in Latin America).

> Hicimos cola una hora para entrar al museo.
> *We queued for an hour to get into the museum.*

hacer una reserva
to make a booking / reservation
Hotels, restaurants, flights. Also simply reservar.

> He hecho una reserva para las nueve a nombre de Ana.
> *I've made a booking for nine under the name Ana.*

hacer un favor
to do (someone) a favour
With an indirect pronoun: hacerle un favor a alguien.

> ¿Me haces un favor? Riega las plantas este fin de semana.
> *Can you do me a favour? Water the plants this weekend.*

hacer ejercicio
to exercise / to work out
No article: hacer ejercicio, not ~~*hacer el ejercicio~~.

> Intento hacer ejercicio tres veces por semana.
> *I try to exercise three times a week.*

hacer amigos
to make friends
Also: hacer amigos nuevos.

> En el curso de cerámica he hecho muchos amigos.
> *I've made lots of friends on the pottery course.*

hacer ruido
to make noise

> Los vecinos de arriba hacen mucho ruido por la noche.
> *The upstairs neighbours make a lot of noise at night.*

hacer caso (a alguien)
to pay attention to / to listen to (someone's advice)
Often negative: no me haces caso = you don't listen to me.

> Hazle caso al médico y descansa.
> *Listen to the doctor and rest.*

hacer falta
to be needed / necessary
Works like gustar: me hace falta = I need. No hace falta = there's no need.

> No hace falta traer nada, tenemos de todo.
> *There's no need to bring anything, we've got everything.*

hacerse daño
to hurt yourself
hacerse daño en + body part.

> ¿Te has hecho daño?
> *Have you hurt yourself?*

tomar

Take, have (food, drink, medicine) and a few surprises.

tomar una decisión

to make a decision

Make a decision = tomar, not ~~*hacer una decisión~~.

> Todavía no he tomado una decisión sobre el piso.
> *I still haven't made a decision about the flat.*

tomar nota (de algo)

to make a note (of something) / to take note

Also used by waiters: ¿Les tomo nota? = Can I take your order?

> Tomo nota de tus comentarios, gracias.
> *I've made a note of your comments, thanks.*

tomar apuntes

to take notes (in class, at a talk)

los apuntes = class notes.

> Siempre tomo apuntes en un cuaderno, no en el portátil.
> *I always take notes in a notebook, not on my laptop.*

tomar una pastilla

to take a pill

Also: tomar un medicamento, tomar antibióticos.

> Tómate una pastilla y acuéstate un rato.
> *Take a pill and lie down for a while.*

tomar el pelo (a alguien) INFORMAL

to pull someone's leg / to wind someone up

Literally 'to take someone's hair'.

> ¿Me estás tomando el pelo?
> *Are you pulling my leg?*

tomárselo con calma

to take it easy

Also: tómatelo con calma = take it easy / don't stress.

> Este fin de semana me lo voy a tomar con calma.
> *I'm going to take it easy this weekend.*

sacar

Take out, get (tickets, marks, a licence).

sacar entradas / billetes

to get tickets

Very common in Spain for buying tickets: concerts, trains, cinema.

> Ya he sacado las entradas para el concierto.
> *I've already got the tickets for the concert.*

sacar buena nota

to get a good mark / grade

Also: sacar un 8, sacar mala nota.

> Lucía sacó un nueve en el examen de español.
> *Lucía got a nine in her Spanish exam.*

sacarse el carné (de conducir)

to get your driving licence

With se in Spain: me saqué el carné a los 18.

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: sacar la licencia (de manejar)

> Me estoy sacando el carné de conducir.
> *I'm learning to drive (to get my licence).*

sacar tiempo (para algo)

to find / make time (for something)

> Intento sacar tiempo para leer todos los días.
> *I try to make time to read every day.*

sacar un tema

to bring up a subject

> No saques el tema de la política en la cena.
> *Don't bring up politics at dinner.*

dar

Give, and also cause a feeling: dar pena, dar vergüenza work like gustar.

dar pena

to make (someone) sad / to feel sorry

Gustar structure: me da pena = it makes me sad / I feel sorry.

> Me da pena irme de Barcelona.
> *I'm sad to be leaving Barcelona.*

dar vergüenza

to be embarrassed

Gustar structure: me da vergüenza + infinitive.

> Me da vergüenza hablar español delante de mis compañeros.
> *I'm embarrassed to speak Spanish in front of my colleagues.*

dar un consejo

to give (a piece of) advice

One piece of advice = un consejo (countable in Spanish).

> ¿Me das un consejo? No sé qué hacer.
> *Can you give me some advice? I don't know what to do.*

dar la razón (a alguien)

to agree that someone is right

> Al final mi jefe me dio la razón.
> *In the end my boss admitted I was right.*

dar la mano

to shake hands

In Spain men usually shake hands; women and mixed pairs often kiss on both cheeks.

> Se dieron la mano y empezó la reunión.
> *They shook hands and the meeting started.*

dar una sorpresa

to give (someone) a surprise

> Le vamos a dar una sorpresa a Diego por su cumpleaños.
> *We're going to surprise Diego for his birthday.*

dar clase(s)

to teach (classes)

The teacher da clase; the student tiene / recibe clase.

> Doy clases de inglés por las tardes.
> *I teach English in the evenings.*

echar

A favourite in Spain: literally 'throw', but used everywhere.

echar una mano

to give / lend a hand

echarle una mano a alguien.

> ¿Me echas una mano con la mudanza?
> *Can you give me a hand with the move?*

echar un vistazo

to have a (quick) look

echar un vistazo a algo.

> ¿Puedes echarle un vistazo a mi currículum?
> *Can you have a quick look at my CV?*

echar una cabezada / una siesta INFORMAL

to have a nap / take a quick nap

Una cabezada is a very short nap (even sitting down). Also: echarse la siesta.

> Eché una cabezada en el tren.
> *I had a little nap on the train.*

echar gasolina

to fill up (with petrol / gas)

> Tenemos que parar a echar gasolina.
> *We need to stop to get petrol.*

echar la culpa (a alguien)

to blame (someone)

> Siempre me echa la culpa a mí.
> *He always blames me.*

echar sal / azúcar

to add / put in salt / sugar

In the kitchen echar = to add, to put in.

> ¿Le echas azúcar al café?
> *Do you take sugar in your coffee?*

pasar

Spend (time), go through (a feeling or situation).

pasar tiempo (con alguien)
to spend time (with someone)
Time = pasar; money = gastar.

> Quiero pasar más tiempo con mis hijos.
> *I want to spend more time with my kids.*

pasar frío / calor
to be (really) cold / hot
For a period of time, often unpleasant: pasamos mucho frío.

> Pasamos un frío horrible en el concierto.
> *We were freezing at the concert.*

pasar un buen rato
to have a good time

> Pasamos un buen rato charlando en la terraza.
> *We had a great time chatting on the terrace.*

pasar miedo
to be scared

> Pasé mucho miedo en el avión con las turbulencias.
> *I was really scared on the plane during the turbulence.*

pasar la noche
to spend the night

> Pasamos la noche en un hotelito en la montaña.
> *We spent the night in a little hotel in the mountains.*

pasar por (un sitio)
to drop by / pop into (a place)

> Paso por la farmacia y voy.
> *I'll pop into the chemist's and then I'll come.*

perder

Lose… and miss.

perder el tren / el autobús / el vuelo
to miss the train / bus / flight
Miss transport = perder. Miss a person = echar de menos.

> Perdí el último metro y volví en taxi.
> *I missed the last metro and went home by taxi.*

perder el hilo
to lose the thread / lose track (of a conversation)
Very useful in class: Perdona, he perdido el hilo.

> Hablaban tan rápido que perdí el hilo.
> *They were talking so fast that I lost the thread.*

perder la paciencia
to lose your patience

> Con tanto ruido, al final perdí la paciencia.
> *With all that noise, I lost my patience in the end.*

perder peso
to lose weight
Also: adelgazar. Opposite: engordar / ganar peso.

> Ha perdido peso desde que corre.
> *He's lost weight since he started running.*

perder una oportunidad
to miss / waste an opportunity

> No pierdas esta oportunidad de vivir en el extranjero.
> *Don't miss this chance to live abroad.*

poner

Put, set, give (a fine, a mark), and make someone feel something.

poner una multa
to give (someone) a fine / a ticket
The police pone una multa; you get one: me han puesto una multa.

> Me han puesto una multa por aparcar mal.
> *I got a parking ticket.*

poner la alarma
to set the alarm (on your phone / at home)
Same idea as poner el despertador (the alarm clock).

> Pon la alarma a las seis, que el vuelo sale a las ocho.
> *Set the alarm for six, the flight leaves at eight.*

poner una excusa
to make an excuse

> Siempre pone alguna excusa para no venir.
> *He always makes some excuse not to come.*

poner nervioso/a (a alguien)
to make (someone) nervous / to get on someone's nerves

Me pone nervioso = it makes me nervous / it annoys me.

> Me pone nerviosa la gente que llega tarde.
> *People who arrive late get on my nerves.*

poner la calefacción / el aire
to put the heating / the air conditioning on

Opposite: quitar or apagar.

> ¿Pongo la calefacción? Hace un frío...
> *Shall I put the heating on? It's freezing.*

llevar

Wear and have (on your body), and give someone a lift.

llevar gafas / lentillas
to wear glasses / contact lenses

Spain & Latin America: Lentillas is Spain; Latin America: lentes de contacto (and lentes = glasses)

> Llevo gafas desde los diez años.
> *I've worn glasses since I was ten.*

llevar barba / bigote
to have a beard / moustache

English 'have', Spanish llevar (or tener).

> Marcos lleva barba ahora, casi no lo reconozco.
> *Marcos has a beard now, I almost didn't recognise him.*

llevar el pelo largo / corto
to have long / short hair

Also: llevar el pelo suelto / recogido (down / up).

> Antes llevaba el pelo muy corto.
> *I used to have really short hair.*

llevar uniforme
to wear a uniform

> En mi colegio llevábamos uniforme.
> *We wore a uniform at my school.*

llevar a alguien (en coche)
to give someone a lift

¿Te llevo? = Do you want a lift?

> Si quieres, te llevo a casa.
> *If you want, I'll give you a lift home.*

coger

In Spain, coger is everywhere. In much of Latin America it's vulgar, so use the alternatives in the region notes.

coger frío
to catch a chill / get cold

Also: coger un resfriado = to catch a cold.

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: resfriarse, agarrar un resfriado

> Abrígate, que vas a coger frío.
> *Wrap up, or you'll catch a chill.*

coger el teléfono
to answer / pick up the phone

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: contestar el teléfono

> Te he llamado tres veces y no lo coges.
> *I've called you three times and you don't pick up.*

coger un taxi
to take / get a taxi

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: tomar un taxi

> Es tarde, mejor cogemos un taxi.
> *It's late, we'd better get a taxi.*

coger vacaciones
to take (time off as) holiday

Also: cogerse unos días = to take a few days off.

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: tomar vacaciones

> Voy a coger las vacaciones en septiembre.
> *I'm going to take my holiday in September.*

coger sitio INFORMAL

to save / grab a seat (or a spot)

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: agarrar lugar / apartar lugar

> Llega pronto y coge sitio, que se llena.
> *Get there early and grab a spot, it fills up.*

COLLECT THEM BY VERB

Keep one page per verb in your notebook and add every new combination you hear in series, podcasts or classes. In a month your 'echar' page will surprise you, and you'll start sounding much more Spanish.

LEVEL B1

B1

Independent Spanish

Saying what you really think

Vocabulary for longer conversations: giving opinions, telling stories, talking about work, studies, money, technology and emotions — and doing it in your own words.

AT THIS LEVEL YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Give and justify your opinion
- Tell a story with a beginning, middle and end
- Talk about work, studies, money and relationships
- Handle most situations while travelling or living in Spain

16 sections **1,241** words, phrases & structures

This is where Spanish starts to feel like yours.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

01 · The verbs that let you talk about goals, relationships, decisions and change

Verbs

At B1 you stop describing your day and start telling stories, giving advice and talking about how things change. These verbs make that possible. Pay special attention to the prepositions (darse cuenta de, confiar en, enamorarse de) and to the verbs that work like gustar (caer bien, hacer falta, preocupar): that is where English speakers slip most often. Learn every verb with its pattern, not alone.

Achieving, trying & failing

Verbs for goals, effort and results. Perfect for job interviews, plans and talking about your progress in Spanish.

aprovechar *to make the most of / to take advantage of*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **aprovechar algo · aprovechar para + infinitive · aprovecharse de**

ALSO aprovecharse de alguien/algo = to take (unfair) advantage of someone or something

A very Spanish verb: it means using a moment, a resource or a situation well, so it doesn't go to waste. Without 'se' it is positive; with 'se' (aprovecharse de) it usually means exploiting someone.

aprovechar + noun — *to make good use of something*

› Tenemos que aprovechar el buen tiempo y salir a la terraza.
We have to make the most of the good weather and go out on the terrace.

aprovechar para + infinitive — *to take the opportunity to do something*

› Estaba en Madrid por trabajo y aproveché para ver a mi prima.
I was in Madrid for work and took the opportunity to see my cousin.

aprovecharse de — *to take unfair advantage of*

› Su jefe se aprovecha de que nunca dice que no.
Her boss takes advantage of the fact that she never says no.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aprovechar la ocasión** *to seize the opportunity* · **aprovechar el tiempo** *to make good use of your time* · **¡Que aproveche!** *Enjoy your meal! (said to people eating)*

NOTE ¡Que aproveche! is what Spaniards say when they walk past someone who is eating — like 'Enjoy!'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Aproveché de la oferta~~ → ✓ Aproveché la oferta. Only use 'de' with the pronominal form: me aproveché de su generosidad (negative!).

conseguir *to get / to achieve / to manage to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→I: CONSIGO, CONSIGUES… / CONSIGUIÓ (SPELLING: GU→G BEFORE O/A) · B1

PATTERN **conseguir algo · conseguir + infinitive · conseguir que + subjunctive**

The everyday verb for obtaining something (often with some effort) or managing to do something. Much more common in speech than lograr.

conseguir + noun — *to get, to obtain*

› Al final conseguí entradas para el concierto.
In the end I managed to get tickets for the concert.

conseguir + infinitive — *to manage to do something*

› No consigo dormir con este calor.
I can't get to sleep in this heat.

conseguir que + subjunctive — *to get someone to do something*

› Ana consiguió que su hijo comiera verdura.
Ana got her son to eat vegetables.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **conseguir un trabajo** *to get a job* · **conseguir un objetivo** *to achieve a goal* · **conseguir una beca** *to get a scholarship*

DON'T CONFUSE conseguir (everyday, very common) · lograr (a bit more formal, emphasises the achievement) · alcanzar (reach a level, goal or person).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Conseguí a hacerlo~~ → ✓ Conseguí hacerlo. No preposition before the infinitive.

lograr *to achieve / to succeed in*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **lograr algo · lograr + infinitive · lograr que + subjunctive**

Very close to conseguir, but it sounds slightly more formal and stresses that the result was difficult. Common in news, CVs and speeches.

› Después de tres años, Diego logró terminar la carrera.
After three years, Diego finally managed to finish his degree.

› El equipo logró su mejor resultado de la historia.
The team achieved its best result ever.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **lograr un acuerdo** *to reach an agreement* · **lograr el éxito** *to achieve success*

NOTE Noun: el logro = achievement. 'Mi mayor logro' = my greatest achievement.

alcanzar *to reach / to catch up with*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING Z→C: ALCANCÉ · B1

PATTERN **alcanzar algo / a alguien · alcanzar para (be enough for)**

To reach a goal, a level or a place, or to catch up with someone ahead of you. 'No me alcanza' (especially in Latin America) means 'it isn't enough for me'.

a goal or level — *to reach*

› Quiero alcanzar un nivel B2 antes del verano.
I want to reach a B2 level before the summer.

a person — *to catch up with*

› Id delante, ahora os alcanzo.
Go ahead, I'll catch up with you.

a physical object — *to reach (with your hand)*

› ¿Me alcanzas la sal? No llego.
Can you pass me the salt? I can't reach.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **alcanzar un objetivo / una meta** *to reach a goal* · **alcanzar un acuerdo** *to reach an agreement*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: 'No me alcanza el dinero' = I haven't got enough money. In Spain you'd more often say 'No me llega el dinero'.

superar *to overcome / to get over / to exceed*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **superar algo · superar a alguien (en algo)**

ALSO superarse = to improve yourself, to outdo yourself

Three key uses: to overcome a difficulty, to get over something painful (a breakup, a loss), and to be more than a number or a person.

a difficulty / fear — *to overcome*

› Lucía superó su miedo a hablar en público.
Lucía overcame her fear of public speaking.

an emotional loss — *to get over*

› Todavía no ha superado la ruptura.
He still hasn't got over the breakup.

a number / a person — *to exceed, to beat*

› Las ventas superaron nuestras expectativas.
Sales exceeded our expectations.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **superar un examen / una prueba** *to pass an exam / a test* · **superar una crisis** *to get through a crisis*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't translate 'get over it' with 'pasar': ✗ ~~*Tienes que pasar sobre eso~~ → ✓ Tienes que superarlo.

fracasar *to fail*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **fracasar (en algo)**

To fail in a project, plan, relationship or attempt. It is a strong word: for exams Spaniards say suspender, and for machines 'fallar'.

› El proyecto fracasó por falta de dinero.
The project failed due to lack of money.

› Tenía miedo de fracasar, pero lo intenté.
I was afraid of failing, but I gave it a try.

DON'T CONFUSE fracasar (a plan, a person's attempt) · suspender (an exam, Spain; LatAm: reprobar) · fallar (a machine, a system, or 'to let someone down': no me falles).

NOTE Noun: el fracaso = failure. 'Fue un fracaso total' = it was a complete failure.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Fracasé el examen~~ → ✓ Suspendí el examen. Fracasar has no direct object.

cumplir *to keep (a promise) / to fulfil / to turn (an age)*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) B1

PATTERN **cumplir + años · cumplir (con) + promise / obligation / rule**

One verb, several English equivalents. The idea is always 'completing' something: a number of years, a promise, a rule, a dream or a deadline.

cumplir + años — *to turn (an age), to have a birthday*

› Mañana Javi cumple treinta años.
Javi turns thirty tomorrow.

cumplir una promesa — *to keep a promise*

› Me dijiste que vendrías y has cumplido tu promesa.
You said you'd come and you've kept your promise.

cumplir un objetivo / un sueño — *to achieve a goal / to fulfil a dream*

› Este año he cumplido mi sueño de vivir en Barcelona.
This year I've fulfilled my dream of living in Barcelona.

cumplir (con) las normas — *to comply with the rules*

› Todos tenemos que cumplir las normas del edificio.
We all have to follow the building's rules.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cumplir un plazo** *to meet a deadline* · **cumplir con tu palabra** *to keep your word* · **el cumpleaños** *birthday (literally 'completes years')*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo 30 años mañana~~ → ✓ Mañana cumplo 30 años. For birthdays, use cumplir.

tratar de / tratarse de

to try to / to be about, to be a matter of

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **tratar de + infinitive · tratar de/sobre + topic · se trata de + noun/infinitive (no subject!)**

Tratar de + infinitive = intentar (to try to). Tratar de/sobre = to be about (a book, a film). Se trata de = 'it's about / it's a question of', always impersonal, with no subject.

tratar de + infinitive — *to try to*

› Trato de hablar español todos los días.
I try to speak Spanish every day.

tratar de / sobre — *to be about (books, films, talks)*

› La película trata de una familia que se muda a Galicia.
The film is about a family who move to Galicia.

se trata de — *it's about / it's a matter of*

› No se trata de dinero, se trata de respeto.
It's not about money, it's about respect.

tratar a alguien — *to treat someone*

› En esa tienda te tratan muy bien.
They treat you really well in that shop.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El libro se trata de la guerra~~ → ✓ El libro trata de la guerra. 'Se trata de' never has a subject: ✓ Se trata de un libro sobre la guerra.

mejorar / empeorar

to improve, to get better / to get worse

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **mejorar algo · mejorar (intransitive) · mejorarse (Get well!)**

Both work with an object (improve/worsen something) or alone (get better/worse). '¡Que te mejores!' is the standard way to say 'Get well soon!'.

› Tu español ha mejorado muchísimo.
Your Spanish has improved loads.

› Si no descansas, la situación va a empeorar.
If you don't rest, things are going to get worse.

› —Estoy con gripe. —¡Vaya! Que te mejores.
"I've got the flu." "Oh no! Get well soon."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mejorar la calidad de vida** *to improve quality of life* · **ir a mejor / ir a peor** *to get better / to get worse (colloquial)*

Realising, noticing & finding out

Your 'mental' verbs. Several are false friends or need a preposition, so read the mistakes carefully.

darse cuenta (de) *to realise / to notice*

VERB · IRREGULAR: ME DOY CUENTA / ME DI CUENTA (REFLEXIVE) · B1

PATTERN **darse cuenta de algo · darse cuenta de que + clause**

THE verb for 'to realise'. It is reflexive and always keeps 'de' before a noun or a 'que' clause.

› Me di cuenta de que había dejado las llaves dentro.
I realised I'd left the keys inside.

› ¿Te has dado cuenta de lo tarde que es?
Have you noticed how late it is?

› Perdona, no me di cuenta.
Sorry, I didn't realise.

DON'T CONFUSE darse cuenta = to realise (understand suddenly) · notar = to notice (perceive with the senses or feel).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Realicé que era tarde~~ → ✓ Me di cuenta de que era tarde. 'Realizar' means to carry out (realizar un proyecto). Also, in careful Spanish keep the 'de': me di cuenta DE que...

notar *to notice / to feel / to tell*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **notar algo · notar a alguien + adjective · se nota (que)**

ALSO notarse = to show, to be noticeable · se nota que... = you can tell that...

To perceive something with your senses or intuition. 'Se nota' is extremely common: it's how you say 'you can tell' or 'it shows'.

notar algo — *to notice, to feel*

› ¿Notas el frío? Han apagado la calefacción.
Can you feel the cold? They've turned the heating off.

notar a alguien + adj — *to find someone looking / seeming...*

› Te noto cansada. ¿Estás bien?
You seem tired. Are you OK?

se nota (que) — *you can tell, it shows*

› Se nota que has practicado mucho.
You can tell you've practised a lot.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **notar la diferencia** *to notice the difference* · **No se nota nada.** *You can't tell at all.*

NOTE Not 'to take notes': that's tomar apuntes / tomar nota.

fijarse (en)

to notice / to pay attention to / to look closely

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **fijarse en algo/alguien · ¡Fíjate! · fíjate que...**

To look at something carefully or notice a detail. '¡Fíjate!' is a common way to draw attention: 'Look!', 'Just think!', 'Imagine!'.

- ¿Te has fijado en el chico de la camiseta roja?
  Have you noticed the guy in the red T-shirt?
- Fíjate bien en la pronunciación.
  Pay close attention to the pronunciation.
- Fíjate, llevamos diez años sin vernos.
  Just think, we haven't seen each other for ten years.

NOTE Fijar (without se) = to fix, to set: fijar una fecha = to set a date.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me fijé el error~~ → ✓ Me fijé en el error. Always 'en'.

enterarse (de)

to find out / to hear about / to understand

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **enterarse de algo · enterarse de que + clause**

To get information about something, often by chance or from others. In informal Spain Spanish, 'no me entero' also means 'I don't get it / I'm lost'.

- Me enteré de la noticia por la radio.
  I heard about the news on the radio.
- ¿Te has enterado de que Marcos se casa?
  Have you heard that Marcos is getting married?
- Hablan tan rápido que no me entero de nada.
  They speak so fast I can't follow anything.

DON'T CONFUSE enterarse = to find out (information comes to you) · averiguar = to find out (you investigate actively).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me enteré la noticia~~ → ✓ Me enteré de la noticia.

averiguar

to find out / to work out

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: AVERIGÜÉ (WITH Ü) · B1

PATTERN **averiguar algo · averiguar si / qué / cómo...**

To discover something by asking, searching or investigating. It implies effort, unlike enterarse.

- Voy a averiguar a qué hora sale el tren.
  I'm going to find out what time the train leaves.
- La policía todavía no ha averiguado quién fue.
  The police still haven't found out who did it.

NOTE Watch the spelling in the preterite and subjunctive: averigüé, averigüe — the ü keeps the 'u' sound.

comprobar *to check / to verify*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: COMPRUEBO · B1

PATTERN **comprobar algo · comprobar que / si + clause**

To make sure that something is true or correct. Perfect for emails, travel and work.

› Comprueba que llevas el pasaporte antes de salir.
Check you've got your passport before you leave.

› He comprobado los datos y están bien.
I've checked the data and it's fine.

DON'T CONFUSE comprobar (verify a fact) · revisar (go over, review, service: revisar el coche) · mirar (informal 'have a look': mira si hay leche).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*chequear is used in Latin America but sounds anglicised in Spain~~. Prefer comprobar or revisar.

suponer *to suppose / to assume / to imagine*

VERB · IRREGULAR (LIKE PONER): SUPONGO / SUPUSE / SUPUESTO · B1

PATTERN **suponer que + indicative · supongo que sí/no · suponer + noun (= to mean, involve)**

To think something is probably true. At B1, master 'supongo que…' and 'supongo que sí'. It can also mean 'to involve, to mean' (supone mucho trabajo).

> **supongo que + indicative** — *I suppose / I guess*
> › Supongo que llegarán tarde, como siempre.
> *I guess they'll be late, as usual.*

> **supongo que sí / no** — *I suppose so / not*
> › —¿Vendrá Tom? —Supongo que sí.
> *"Is Tom coming?" "I suppose so."*

> **suponer + noun** — *to mean, to involve*
> › Mudarse a otro país supone muchos cambios.
> *Moving to another country involves a lot of changes.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Por supuesto!** *Of course!* · **Se supone que…** *We're supposed to… / Supposedly…*

NOTE 'Se supone que empezamos a las nueve' = We're supposed to start at nine (but probably won't).

imaginar(se) *to imagine / to picture / to guess*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), OFTEN REFLEXIVE · B1

PATTERN **imaginar(se) algo · imaginarse que + indicative · ¡Imagínate!**

Imaginar and imaginarse are both correct; the reflexive form is more common in speech when you picture something or guess.

› Me imagino que estarás cansado después del viaje.
I imagine you must be tired after the trip.

› No me imaginaba que fuera tan grande.
I didn't imagine it was so big.

› ¡Imagínate! Le tocó la lotería.
Imagine that! He won the lottery.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **Ya me imagino.** *I can imagine.* · **¿Te imaginas...?** *Can you imagine...?*

dudar *to doubt / to hesitate*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **dudar que + subjunctive · dudar de alguien/algo · dudar entre A y B · no dudar en + infinitive**

To doubt something, or to hesitate between options. Because it expresses uncertainty, 'dudo que' takes the subjunctive.

dudo que + subjunctive — *I doubt (that)*

› Dudo que terminen la obra este mes.
I doubt they'll finish the building work this month.

dudar entre — *to be torn between*

› Dudo entre estudiar Medicina o Enfermería.
I'm torn between studying Medicine or Nursing.

no dudar en — *not to hesitate to*

› Si necesitas algo, no dudes en llamarme.
If you need anything, don't hesitate to call me.

NOTE Noun: la duda. 'Sin duda' = undoubtedly; '¿Tienes alguna duda?' = Do you have any questions? (teachers say this constantly).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Dudo que viene~~ → ✓ Dudo que venga. But: No dudo que viene (no doubt = certainty, indicative is fine).

sospechar *to suspect*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **sospechar que + indicative · sospechar de alguien**

To believe something (often negative) without being sure, or to think someone is guilty. Unlike dudar, it takes the indicative.

› Sospecho que no nos ha dicho toda la verdad.
I suspect he hasn't told us the whole truth.

› La policía sospecha del vecino.
The police suspect the neighbour.

NOTE Adjective: sospechoso/a = suspicious; also 'el sospechoso' = the suspect.

Missing, needing & being worth it

Four expressions you'll use every week — and none of them translate word for word.

echar de menos *to miss (someone or something)*

EXPRESSION · REGULAR (-AR): ECHO DE MENOS · B1

PATTERN **echar de menos a alguien / algo**

The way to say you miss a person, a place or a thing because it's not with you. Remember the personal 'a' with people.

› Echo de menos a mi familia.
I miss my family.

› Lo que más echo de menos de Londres son los parques.
What I miss most about London is the parks.

› Te echamos de menos en la cena.
We missed you at dinner.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: echar de menos · Latin America: extrañar (also understood in Spain).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Pierdo a mi familia~~ → ✓ Echo de menos a mi familia. 'Perder' is 'miss' only for transport or chances: perdí el tren, perdí la oportunidad.

hacer falta

to need / to be necessary

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR (HACER); WORKS LIKE GUSTAR: ME HACE FALTA(N) · B1

PATTERN **(me) hace falta + noun/infinitive · (no) hace falta que + subjunctive**

A very natural alternative to necesitar. The thing needed is the subject, so the verb agrees with it, just like gustar.

me hace(n) falta + noun — *I need*

› Me hacen falta unas botas nuevas.
I need some new boots.

hace falta + infinitive — *you need to / it's necessary to*

› Para este trabajo hace falta hablar inglés.
For this job you need to speak English.

no hace falta que + subjunctive — *there's no need for (someone) to*

› No hace falta que vengas a buscarme.
There's no need for you to come and pick me up.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No hace falta.** *No need. / It's not necessary.* · **Si hace falta...** *If necessary...*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me hace falta dos sillas~~ → ✓ Me hacen falta dos sillas. Plural thing = plural verb.

merecer la pena / valer la pena

to be worth it

EXPRESSION · MERECER: MEREZCO · VALER: VALGO (IRREGULAR YO) · B1

PATTERN **(no) merece/vale la pena + infinitive · merece la pena que + subjunctive**

To say that something is worth the effort, time or money. In Spain both are common; in Latin America 'vale la pena' is the norm.

› Merece la pena visitar Granada en primavera.
Granada is worth visiting in spring.

› No vale la pena discutir por eso.
It's not worth arguing about that.

› Fue caro, pero valió la pena.
It was expensive, but it was worth it.

NOTE Merecer alone = to deserve: Te mereces unas vacaciones (You deserve a holiday).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: merece la pena and vale la pena · Latin America: vale la pena.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es valor la pena / *Es digno~~ → ✓ Vale la pena. And no 'de': ✗ ~~*Merece la pena de ir~~ → ✓ Merece la pena ir.

soler *to usually (do) / to tend to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: SUELO, SUELES… (USED ALMOST ONLY IN PRESENT AND IMPERFECT) · B1

PATTERN soler + infinitive

Spanish turns 'usually' into a verb. It's the most natural way to talk about habits. In the past (imperfect) it means 'used to'.

› Suelo desayunar en una cafetería cerca del trabajo.
I usually have breakfast at a café near work.

› ¿Qué sueles hacer los domingos?
What do you usually do on Sundays?

› De pequeña solía pasar los veranos en el pueblo.
As a child I used to spend the summers in the village.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Suelo a ir~~ → ✓ Suelo ir. And never alone: ✗ ~~*Sí~~, suelo → ✓ Sí, suelo hacerlo / Sí, normalmente.

People & relationships

How you get on with people, trust them, argue with them and fall in love with them. Watch the prepositions.

llevarse bien / mal *to get on well / badly*

EXPRESSION · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN llevarse bien/mal con alguien · llevarse genial/fatal

Describes the relationship between people (mutual). For your personal impression of someone, use caer bien/mal.

› Me llevo muy bien con mis compañeros de piso.
I get on really well with my flatmates.

› Mi hermano y yo nos llevamos fatal.
My brother and I don't get on at all.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llevarse genial** *to get on brilliantly* · **llevarse X años** *to be X years apart (in age): Nos llevamos dos años.*

DON'T CONFUSE llevarse bien = the relationship works (both ways) · caer bien = you like the person (your impression).

caer bien / mal

to like / not to like (a person)

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: CAIGO / CAYÓ — WORKS LIKE GUSTAR: ME CAE(N) BIEN · B1

PATTERN **(a mí) me cae bien/mal + person**

The everyday way to say you like or dislike someone as a person. It works like gustar: the person is the subject. Using 'gustar' for people often sounds romantic or physical.

- Tu novio me cae muy bien.
  I really like your boyfriend.
- No sé por qué, pero me caen mal sus amigos.
  I don't know why, but I don't like her friends.
- ¿Qué tal te cae la nueva jefa?
  What do you think of the new boss?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **caer genial / fatal** *to really like / to really dislike* · **caer gordo** *to find someone unbearable (colloquial)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me gusta tu hermano (if you just mean he~~';s nice) → ✓ Me cae bien tu hermano. 'Me gusta' with people usually implies attraction.

enamorarse (de)

to fall in love (with)

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **enamorarse de alguien/algo · estar enamorado/a de**

To fall in love. Enamorarse is the change (the moment), estar enamorado/a is the state.

- Se enamoró de una chica que conoció en Erasmus.
  He fell in love with a girl he met on Erasmus.
- Me enamoré de Lisboa nada más llegar.
  I fell in love with Lisbon as soon as I arrived.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **enamorarse a primera vista** *to fall in love at first sight* · **estar loco/a por alguien** *to be crazy about someone*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me enamoré con él~~ → ✓ Me enamoré de él. In Spanish you fall in love OF someone.

romper (con)

to break / to break up (with)

VERB · REGULAR (-ER), IRREGULAR PARTICIPLE: ROTO · B1

PATTERN **romper algo · romper con alguien · romperse (to break by itself)**

To break an object, or to end a relationship. For accidents, Spanish prefers the 'se' construction: se me ha roto (it broke on me).

romper con alguien — *to break up with*

› Laura rompió con su novio el mes pasado.
Laura broke up with her boyfriend last month.

romper algo — *to break something*

› ¿Quién ha roto la ventana?
Who broke the window?

se me ha roto — *accident, not on purpose*

› Se me ha roto el móvil.
My phone has broken.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **romper el hielo** *to break the ice* · **dejarlo (con alguien)** *to split up (colloquial): Lo hemos dejado.*

NOTE Participle is irregular: roto, not ~~*rompido~~. Noun: la ruptura = breakup.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Colloquial Spain: cortar con alguien = to break up with someone.

confiar (en)

to trust / to rely on

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) WITH ACCENT: CONFÍO, CONFÍAS, CONFÍA, CONFÍAN · B1

PATTERN **confiar en alguien/algo · confiar en que + subjunctive (hope)**

To trust someone or have faith in something. 'Confío en que…' + subjunctive means 'I trust/hope that…'.

› Puedes confiar en mí.
You can trust me.

› No confío en las apps de bancos que no conozco.
I don't trust banking apps I don't know.

› Confío en que todo salga bien.
I trust everything will go well.

NOTE Nouns: la confianza (trust); 'tener confianza con alguien' = to be close to / at ease with someone. Adjective: de confianza = trustworthy (un mecánico de confianza).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Confío a ti / *Te confío~~ → ✓ Confío en ti.

apoyar *to support / to lean*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **apoyar a alguien · apoyar una idea · apoyarse en algo/alguien**
ALSO apoyarse en = to lean on (physically or emotionally)

To support someone emotionally or an idea, plan or team. Physically, to lean or rest something on something.

› Mis padres siempre me han apoyado.
My parents have always supported me.

› Apoyo tu propuesta al cien por cien.
I support your proposal one hundred per cent.

› No apoyes la bici en la pared, que la mancha.
Don't lean the bike against the wall, it marks it.

NOTE Noun: el apoyo = support.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mis padres me soportan~~ → ✓ Mis padres me apoyan. 'Soportar' = to put up with (very different!).

compartir *to share*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) B1

PATTERN **compartir algo (con alguien)**

To share things, space, opinions or content.

› Comparto piso con dos chicas italianas.
I share a flat with two Italian girls.

› No comparto tu opinión, pero la respeto.
I don't share your opinion, but I respect it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **compartir piso** *to share a flat, to flatshare* · **compartir coche** *to car-share* · **¿Lo compartimos?** *Shall we share it? (food, at a restaurant)*

quejarse (de)

to complain (about)

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **quejarse de algo/alguien · quejarse de que + indicative · quejarse a alguien**

To complain about something or someone. Always reflexive.

› Mi vecino siempre se queja del ruido.
My neighbour always complains about the noise.

› Se quejó al encargado de que la comida estaba fría.
She complained to the manager that the food was cold.

› ¡Deja de quejarte!
Stop complaining!

NOTE Noun: la queja = complaint. 'Poner una queja' / 'presentar una reclamación' = to make a formal complaint.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quejo del ruido / *Me quejo sobre~~ → ✓ Me quejo del ruido.

aguantar

to put up with / to stand / to hold (on)

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **aguantar algo/a alguien · no aguantar + infinitive / que + subjunctive · aguantarse**

The everyday verb for tolerating something hard or annoying. It also means 'to hold' (aguanta la puerta) and 'to last, to hang on'.

to tolerate — *to put up with, to stand*

› No aguanto a la gente que habla en el cine.
I can't stand people who talk in the cinema.

to hold — *to hold something*

› ¿Me aguantas la puerta un momento?
Can you hold the door for me a sec?

to last, hang on — *to resist, to keep going*

› Aguanta un poco más, ya casi llegamos.
Hang on a bit longer, we're nearly there.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No aguanto más.** *I can't take it any more.* · **aguantar la risa** *to hold back a laugh* · **¡Pues te aguantas!** *Well, tough! / You'll just have to put up with it. (colloquial)*

DON'T CONFUSE aguantar is more colloquial and common in speech; soportar is a little stronger and more formal.

soportar *to bear / to stand / to tolerate*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **(no) soportar algo/a alguien · no soportar + infinitive / que + subjunctive**

A false friend: it does NOT mean 'to support'. It means to tolerate something unpleasant, and it's mostly used in the negative: no soporto...

› No soporto el calor de agosto.
I can't stand the August heat.

› No soporta que le digan lo que tiene que hacer.
He can't stand being told what to do.

› El puente soporta mucho peso.
The bridge bears a lot of weight.

DON'T CONFUSE soportar = tolerate · apoyar = support (help, back) · aguantar = put up with (more colloquial).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soporto al Real Madrid~~ → ✓ Soy del Real Madrid / Apoyo al Real Madrid. 'Support' a team = ser de / ser hincha de.

discutir *to argue / to discuss*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) B1

PATTERN **discutir con alguien (por/sobre algo) · discutir algo**

In everyday Spanish, discutir usually means to ARGUE (with raised voices). It can also mean to discuss a topic, especially at work, but for a friendly conversation use 'hablar de' or 'comentar'.

discutir con alguien — *to argue*

› Discutí con mi pareja por una tontería.
I argued with my partner over something silly.

discutir algo — *to discuss (formal, work)*

› En la reunión discutiremos el presupuesto.
At the meeting we'll discuss the budget.

NOTE Noun: la discusión = argument (or discussion). 'Tuvimos una discusión' = We had an argument.

COMMON MISTAKE 'Let's discuss the film' → ✓ Hablemos de la peli / Comentemos la peli. 'Discutamos la peli' can sound like you're going to fight about it!

convencer *to convince / to persuade*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER), SPELLING C→Z: CONVENZO · B1

PATTERN **convencer a alguien de algo / de que + indicative · convencer a alguien para que + subjunctive · no me convence**

To make someone believe or do something. 'No me convence' is a very useful, polite way to say you're not sure about something.

convencer de — *to convince of*

› Me convenció de que era buena idea.
She convinced me that it was a good idea.

convencer para que + subj — *to persuade to do*

› Lo convencimos para que viniera a la fiesta.
We persuaded him to come to the party.

(no) me convence — *I'm (not) sold on it*

› El piso es bonito, pero el barrio no me convence.
The flat's nice, but I'm not sold on the area.

NOTE Yo form: convenzo (not ~~*convenco~~).

Advice, proposals & agreements

Many of these verbs trigger the subjunctive when you tell someone else what to do: te recomiendo que vayas. Learn them as a family.

proponer *to propose / to suggest*

VERB · IRREGULAR (LIKE PONER): PROPONGO / PROPUSE / PROPUESTO · B1

PATTERN **proponer algo · proponer + infinitive · proponer que + subjunctive · proponerse + infinitive (to set yourself the goal of)**

To put forward an idea or plan. 'Proponerse algo' is a great B1 verb for resolutions: to set your mind on something.

proponer + infinitive — *to suggest doing*

› Sofía propuso ir a la playa el sábado.
Sofía suggested going to the beach on Saturday.

proponer que + subjunctive — *to propose that someone does*

› Propongo que votemos ahora.
I propose we vote now.

proponerse — *to set yourself a goal*

› Este año me he propuesto correr una media maratón.
This year I've set myself the goal of running a half marathon.

NOTE Noun: la propuesta = proposal. 'Proposal of marriage' is la pedida de mano, and 'to propose' is pedirle matrimonio a alguien.

sugerir *to suggest*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE / E→I: SUGIERO / SUGIRIÓ · B1

PATTERN **sugerir algo · sugerir + infinitive · sugerir (a alguien) que + subjunctive**

To suggest an idea, softer than proponer. When you suggest that someone else does something, use the subjunctive.

› Te sugiero que reserves con antelación.
I suggest you book in advance.

› ¿Qué me sugieres para cenar?
What do you suggest for dinner?

› El médico sugirió cambiar de dieta.
The doctor suggested changing my diet.

NOTE Noun: la sugerencia. 'Buzón de sugerencias' = suggestions box.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Te sugiero que reservas~~ → ✓ Te sugiero que reserves.

recomendar *to recommend*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: RECOMIENDO · B1

PATTERN **recomendar algo (a alguien) · recomendar + infinitive · recomendar que + subjunctive**

To recommend something (a place, a book) or that someone does something.

› ¿Me recomiendas algún restaurante por aquí?
Can you recommend a restaurant around here?

› Os recomiendo que probéis el pulpo.
I recommend you try the octopus.

› No se recomienda bañarse con bandera roja.
Swimming is not recommended when the red flag is up.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Te recomiendo de ir~~ → ✓ Te recomiendo ir / que vayas.

aconsejar *to advise*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **aconsejar a alguien que + subjunctive · aconsejar + infinitive**

To give advice. Note that 'advice' in Spanish is countable: un consejo (a piece of advice), unos consejos.

› Mi profesora me aconsejó que leyera más en español.
My teacher advised me to read more in Spanish.

› Te aconsejo no decir nada todavía.
I'd advise you not to say anything yet.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar un consejo** *to give (a piece of) advice* · **pedir consejo** *to ask for advice*

DON'T CONFUSE aconsejar is more personal and caring; recomendar is more neutral and also for products and places.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me dio un advice / *unas consejas~~ → ✓ Me dio un consejo / unos consejos (masculine).

ponerse de acuerdo

to agree / to come to an agreement

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR (PONER): NOS PUSIMOS DE ACUERDO · B1

PATTERN **ponerse de acuerdo (con alguien) en/sobre algo · ponerse de acuerdo para + infinitive**

The process of reaching an agreement. 'Estar de acuerdo' is the state (to agree, to have the same opinion).

› No nos ponemos de acuerdo sobre dónde ir de vacaciones.
We can't agree on where to go on holiday.

› Al final se pusieron de acuerdo en el precio.
In the end they agreed on the price.

DON'T CONFUSE ponerse de acuerdo = reach agreement (process) · estar de acuerdo = agree (opinion): Estoy de acuerdo contigo.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy acuerdo / *Soy de acuerdo~~ → ✓ Estoy de acuerdo.

quedar en

to agree to / to arrange to

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **quedar en + infinitive · quedar en que + indicative · quedar en + place (meet)**

New meaning: you know 'quedar' (to meet up). 'Quedar en + infinitive' means you agreed to do something together.

› Quedamos en vernos a las ocho en la plaza.
We agreed to meet at eight in the square.

› ¿En qué quedamos? ¿Vienes o no?
So what's it going to be? Are you coming or not?

› Quedaron en que él pagaría la cena.
They agreed that he would pay for dinner.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿En qué quedamos?** *So what are we doing? / Make up your mind!*

NOTE Compare: quedar con alguien = to meet someone · quedar en algo = to agree on something · quedarse = to stay.

negarse a *to refuse to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME NIEGO (REFLEXIVE) · B1

PATTERN **negarse a + infinitive · negarse a que + subjunctive**

To refuse to do something. Negar without 'se' means to deny.

› Se negó a pagar la multa.
He refused to pay the fine.

› Me niego a trabajar otra vez el fin de semana.
I refuse to work at the weekend again.

DON'T CONFUSE negarse a = refuse to · negar = deny: Negó haberlo visto (He denied having seen it) · rechazar = reject, turn down (una oferta).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me negué de ir~~ → ✓ Me negué a ir.

ofrecer(se) *to offer / to volunteer*

VERB · IRREGULAR YO: OFREZCO · B1

PATTERN **ofrecer algo a alguien · ofrecerse a + infinitive (volunteer) · ofrecerse para + noun**

Ofrecer = to offer something. Ofrecerse = to offer yourself, to volunteer to do something.

› Me ofrecieron un puesto en Valencia.
They offered me a job in Valencia.

› Emma se ofreció a llevarnos al aeropuerto.
Emma offered to take us to the airport.

› ¿Te puedo ofrecer algo de beber?
Can I offer you something to drink?

NOTE Noun: la oferta = offer, deal (also 'special offer' in shops). 'Estar de oferta' = to be on offer.

avisar *to let (someone) know / to warn / to tell*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **avisar a alguien (de algo) · avisar de que + indicative · avisar a alguien para que + subjunctive**

A super-useful everyday verb: to inform someone in advance, to warn them, or to call someone (a doctor, a waiter).

to let someone know — *inform*

› Avísame cuando llegues a casa.
Let me know when you get home.

to warn — *warn in advance*

› Te aviso: el jefe está de mal humor.
I'm warning you: the boss is in a bad mood.

to call someone — *call for help or service*

› Avisa al camarero, que queremos pedir.
Call the waiter over, we want to order.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sin avisar** *without warning, unannounced* · **un aviso** *a notice / a warning* · **hasta nuevo aviso** *until further notice*

COMMON MISTAKE English 'advise' is aconsejar, not avisar.

evitar *to avoid / to prevent*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **evitar algo · evitar + infinitive · evitar que + subjunctive**

To avoid something or someone, or to stop something from happening.

› Intento evitar el centro en hora punta.
I try to avoid the city centre at rush hour.

› Evita comer tarde si quieres dormir bien.
Avoid eating late if you want to sleep well.

› Cerré la ventana para evitar que entraran mosquitos.
I closed the window to stop mosquitoes getting in.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No lo puedo evitar.** *I can't help it.*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Evitar de comer / *evitar comiendo~~ → ✓ Evitar comer. Spanish uses the infinitive, never the -ing form.

Becoming: five ways to say 'get' or 'become'

English uses 'become', 'get', 'go' and 'turn'. Spanish chooses the verb depending on HOW the change happens: sudden, gradual, through effort, or as a result. This is one of the big B1 steps.

ponerse + adjective

to get / to go / to become (quick, temporary change)

VERB · IRREGULAR (PONER): ME PONGO / ME PUSE · B1

PATTERN **ponerse + adjective (nervioso, rojo, triste, enfermo...) · ponerse de buen/mal humor**

For sudden, usually temporary changes of mood, colour, health or physical state.

- Me pongo nerviosa cuando hablo en público.
  I get nervous when I speak in public.
- Javi se puso rojo cuando le preguntaron por Lucía.
  Javi went red when they asked him about Lucía.
- Se puso muy contento con la noticia.
  He got really happy at the news.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ponerse enfermo/a** *to get ill* · **ponerse pesado/a** *to get annoying (insistent)* · **ponerse moreno/a** *to get a tan*

NOTE Ponerse a + infinitive = to start doing: Se puso a llover (It started raining).

volverse + adjective

to become / to go / to turn (deep, lasting change)

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: ME VUELVO · PARTICIPLE: VUELTO · B1

PATTERN **volverse + adjective (loco, más tranquilo, egoísta...) · volverse + un/una + noun**

For a lasting change in someone's character or nature, often unexpected and not chosen.

- Desde que es famoso se ha vuelto muy arrogante.
  Since he got famous he's become very arrogant.
- Con los años me he vuelto más paciente.
  Over the years I've become more patient.
- ¡Me voy a volver loca con tanto ruido!
  I'm going to go mad with all this noise!

DON'T CONFUSE ponerse triste (for a moment) vs volverse triste (it's now part of who you are).

hacerse + adjective / noun

to become (through effort, choice or time)

VERB · IRREGULAR (HACER): ME HAGO / ME HICE · B1

PATTERN **hacerse + profession / ideology / religion / rico / famoso / mayor**

For changes you work towards or choose, or that happen gradually: professions, beliefs, money, fame, getting older.

- Marcos se hizo abogado después de muchos años de estudio.
  Marcos became a lawyer after many years of study.
- Me hice vegetariana hace dos años.
  I became vegetarian two years ago.
- Nos estamos haciendo mayores.
  We're getting old.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacerse rico/a** *to get rich* · **hacerse famoso/a** *to become famous* · **hacerse amigo/a de alguien** *to become friends with someone* · **hacerse tarde** *to get late: Se está haciendo tarde.*

convertirse en

to turn into / to become

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE / E→I: ME CONVIERTO / SE CONVIRTIÓ · B1

PATTERN **convertirse en + noun (or noun phrase)**

For a complete transformation into something different. It goes with nouns, not adjectives.

- El antiguo mercado se ha convertido en un centro cultural.
  The old market has been turned into a cultural centre.
- En pocos años se convirtió en una de las mejores cocineras del país.
  In just a few years she became one of the best chefs in the country.
- La afición se convirtió en su trabajo.
  Her hobby turned into her job.

NOTE Llegar a ser + noun = to (eventually) become, after a long process: Llegó a ser directora del hospital.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Se convirtió famoso~~ → ✓ Se hizo famoso / Se convirtió en una persona famosa.
Convertirse needs 'en' + noun.

quedarse + adjective

to be left / to end up / to go (result of something)

VERB REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **quedarse + adjective (sorprendido, ciego, sordo, calvo, embarazada, solo...) · quedarse sin + noun**

For the final state after an event, often a loss or a surprise. Think 'end up' or 'be left'.

› Me quedé sin palabras cuando me lo contó.
I was left speechless when she told me.

› Se quedó sin trabajo en plena crisis.
He lost his job right in the middle of the crisis.

› Nos quedamos dormidos y perdimos el vuelo.
We overslept and missed the flight.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **quedarse embarazada** *to get pregnant* · **quedarse calvo/a** *to go bald* · **quedarse sin batería** *to run out of battery* · **quedarse helado/a** *to be stunned (lit. frozen)*

NOTE Quedarse also means 'to stay' (A2). Context makes it clear: Me quedé en casa vs Me quedé sorprendido.

Habits, courage, regret & getting it right

acostumbrarse (a)

to get used to

VERB REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **acostumbrarse a algo / a + infinitive · estar acostumbrado/a a**

To adapt to something new. Acostumbrarse = the process (get used to); estar acostumbrado/a = the state (be used to).

› Todavía no me he acostumbrado a cenar a las diez.
I still haven't got used to having dinner at ten.

› No estoy acostumbrada a este frío.
I'm not used to this cold.

NOTE Noun: la costumbre = custom, habit. 'Como de costumbre' = as usual.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me acostumbré a cenando~~ → ✓ Me acostumbré a cenar. After a preposition, always the infinitive.

atreverse (a)

to dare (to)

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-ER) · B1

PATTERN **atreverse a + infinitive · atreverse con algo**

To have the courage to do something. Very common in the negative: no me atrevo.

- No me atrevo a decirle la verdad.
  I don't dare tell him the truth.
- ¿Te atreves con la paella? Es difícil.
  Do you dare to try making paella? It's tricky.
- ¡Atrévete a hablar, aunque te equivoques!
  Dare to speak, even if you make mistakes!

NOTE Adjective: atrevido/a = daring, bold (sometimes cheeky).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No atrevo a...~~ → ✓ No me atrevo a... (always reflexive).

arrepentirse (de)

to regret / to be sorry about

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE / E→I: ME ARREPIENTO / SE ARREPINTIÓ (REFLEXIVE) · B1

PATTERN **arrepentirse de algo / de + infinitive (often perfect infinitive: de haber...)**

To feel regret for something you did (or didn't do). Spanish has no single simple verb for 'regret' in daily speech, so this is the one.

- Me arrepiento de no haber estudiado idiomas antes.
  I regret not having studied languages earlier.
- No me arrepiento de nada.
  I don't regret anything.
- Te vas a arrepentir.
  You'll regret it.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Regreto... (~~'regresar' = to return!) → ✓ Me arrepiento de...

equivocarse *to be wrong / to make a mistake*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING C→QU: ME EQUIVOQUÉ · B1

PATTERN **equivocarse (en algo) · equivocarse de + noun (the wrong…)**

To make a mistake or be wrong. 'Equivocarse de + noun' is how Spanish says 'the wrong X'.

> **equivocarse** — *to be wrong, to make a mistake*
>
> › Perdona, me he equivocado.
> *Sorry, I've made a mistake.*

> **equivocarse de + noun** — *to get the wrong…*
>
> › Me equivoqué de número.
> *I dialled the wrong number.*

> **estar equivocado/a** — *to be mistaken*
>
> › Creo que estás equivocado.
> *I think you're wrong.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **equivocarse de tren / de calle / de día** *to take the wrong train / street / get the day wrong*

NOTE Noun: la equivocación = mistake. Also el error.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tomé el tren equivocado is possible but less natural~~ → ✓ Me equivoqué de tren. And ✗ ~~*Soy equivocado~~ → ✓ Estoy equivocado / Me equivoco.

acertar *to get it right / to guess right / to hit*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ACIERTO · B1

PATTERN **acertar (algo) · acertar con algo/alguien · acertar al + infinitive**

The opposite of equivocarse: to be right, guess correctly, or make a good choice. No single English verb covers it.

› ¡Has acertado! Soy de Sevilla.
You guessed right! I'm from Seville.

› Acertaste con el regalo: le encantó.
You chose the right present: she loved it.

› Creo que acertamos al cambiar de piso.
I think we were right to move flats.

NOTE Noun: el acierto = good decision, good call. '¡Qué acierto!' = What a good call!

Responsibility, influence & worry

encargarse (de)

to be in charge of / to take care of / to handle

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING G→GU: ME ENCARGUÉ · B1

PATTERN **encargarse de algo / de + infinitive**

To take responsibility for a task. Perfect for work and for organising plans with friends.

› Yo me encargo de las bebidas y tú de la música.
I'll take care of the drinks and you do the music.

› Diego se encarga de atender a los clientes.
Diego is in charge of dealing with customers.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **Yo me encargo.** *I'll handle it. / Leave it to me.* · **el encargado / la encargada** *the manager, the person in charge (shop, restaurant)*

NOTE Encargar (without se) = to order something specially: He encargado una tarta.

ocuparse (de)

to deal with / to look after

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **ocuparse de algo/alguien**

Very similar to encargarse de: to deal with a matter or look after someone. It can sound a bit more formal.

› ¿Quién se ocupa de los niños cuando trabajáis?
Who looks after the kids when you're working?

› No te preocupes, yo me ocupo del papeleo.
Don't worry, I'll deal with the paperwork.

NOTE Ocupado/a = busy (people) or taken/engaged (a seat, a toilet, a phone line).

cuidar (de)

to look after / to take care of

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **cuidar a alguien / algo · cuidar de alguien · cuidarse**

ALSO cuidarse = to look after yourself · ¡Cuídate! = Take care!

To look after people, animals, plants or things. 'Cuidar a' and 'cuidar de' are both correct with people.

› Los fines de semana cuido a mi sobrina.
At weekends I look after my niece.

› Cuida mucho sus plantas.
She takes great care of her plants.

› ¡Cuídate mucho y escríbeme!
Take good care of yourself and write to me!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cuidar la salud / la línea** *to look after your health / your figure* · **con cuidado** *carefully* · *¡Cuidado! = Careful! / Watch out!*

depender (de) *to depend (on)*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) · B1

PATTERN **depender de algo/alguien · depende de si... · (eso) depende**

To depend on something or someone. Always 'de', never 'en'.

› —¿Vas a ir? —Depende del tiempo.
"Are you going?" "It depends on the weather."

› Todavía depende económicamente de sus padres.
He still depends on his parents financially.

› Depende de si me dan vacaciones.
It depends on whether I get time off.

NOTE Adjective: independiente; noun: el/la dependiente = shop assistant (a different meaning).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Depende en el tiempo / *Depende sobre~~ → ✓ Depende del tiempo.

afectar (a) *to affect*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **afectar a algo/alguien · estar afectado/a**

To have an effect on something or someone, often negative. Spanish usually adds 'a' before the object.

› La huelga afecta a miles de viajeros.
The strike is affecting thousands of travellers.

› Le afectó mucho la muerte de su abuelo.
Her grandfather's death affected her deeply.

DON'T CONFUSE afectar (to have an effect) vs efecto (noun: an effect). Spanish has no verb 'efectuar' in this sense.

influir (en) *to influence / to have an influence on*

VERB · IRREGULAR -UIR VERB: INFLUYO, INFLUYES / INFLUYÓ · B1

PATTERN **influir en algo/alguien**

To have an influence on something. Note the 'y' in many forms (like construir).

› El clima influye mucho en el carácter de la gente.
The weather has a big influence on people's character.

› Mis padres no influyeron en mi decisión.
My parents didn't influence my decision.

NOTE Noun: la influencia. 'Influencer' is used as-is in Spanish (el/la influencer).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Influye a la gente / *influencia la gente~~ → ✓ Influye en la gente.

preocupar / preocuparse (por)

to worry (someone) / to worry (about)

VERB REGULAR (-AR); PREOCUPAR WORKS LIKE GUSTAR B1

PATTERN **me preocupa(n) + noun / infinitive / que + subjunctive · preocuparse por/de algo/alguien**

Two structures: 'me preocupa algo' (something worries me — like gustar) and 'me preocupo por algo' (I worry about something). Both are correct.

me preocupa(n) — *something worries me*

› Me preocupa que no haya llamado.
It worries me that he hasn't called.

preocuparse por — *to worry about*

› Mi madre se preocupa por todo.
My mum worries about everything.

estar preocupado/a — *to be worried*

› Estoy preocupada por el examen.
I'm worried about the exam.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No te preocupes.** *Don't worry.* · **No te preocupes por eso.** *Don't worry about that.*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me preocupo que...~~ → ✓ Me preocupa que... + subjunctive. ✗ ~~*Preocupo por ti~~ → ✓ Me preocupo por ti.

deber

should / must / to owe

VERB REGULAR (-ER) B1

PATTERN **deber + infinitive (obligation) · deber algo a alguien (owe) · debería + infinitive (advice)**

Deber + infinitive expresses moral obligation (must, should). Debería is the softer, advice form. With a noun, deber means to owe.

deber + infinitive — *must, should (duty)*

› Debes respetar las normas.
You must respect the rules.

debería + infinitive — *should (advice)*

› Deberías descansar un poco.
You should get some rest.

deber + noun — *to owe*

› Te debo veinte euros.
I owe you twenty euros.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¿Qué le debo?** *How much do I owe you? (formal, in shops and bars)* · **los deberes** *homework*

DON'T CONFUSE deber (moral obligation, rules) · tener que (practical necessity, more common in speech) · hay que (impersonal: one has to).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Debo de ir al médico (meaning '~~;I must') → ✓ Debo ir al médico. 'Deber de' expresses probability (C1 topic).

Multi-purpose verbs: sacar, meter, tirar, echar, colgar

These short verbs do a lot of work in everyday Spanish. Don't learn one translation — learn the combinations.

sacar *to take out / to get (grades, tickets) / to bring up*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING C→QU: SAQUÉ · B1

PATTERN **sacar algo (de un sitio) · sacar + nota/entradas/dinero/tiempo**

Basic idea: to take something out. From there come many everyday uses: getting grades, withdrawing money, buying tickets, finding time.

take out — *remove from inside*

› Saca la ropa de la lavadora, por favor.
Take the clothes out of the washing machine, please.

sacar dinero — *to withdraw money*

› Tengo que sacar dinero del cajero.
I need to get money out of the cashpoint.

sacar una nota — *to get a grade*

› Saqué un nueve en el examen oral.
I got a nine in the oral exam.

sacar entradas / billetes — *to get tickets (Spain)*

› Ya he sacado las entradas para el teatro.
I've already got the theatre tickets.

sacar tiempo — *to find time*

› No sé cómo sacas tiempo para todo.
I don't know how you find time for everything.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sacar un tema** *to bring up a subject* · **sacar a pasear al perro** *to take the dog for a walk* · **sacar de quicio** *to drive someone up the wall (colloquial)* · **sacarse el carné de conducir** *to get your driving licence*

meter *to put (in) / to insert*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) · B1

PATTERN **meter algo en algo · meterse en algo · meterse con alguien (to pick on someone)**
ALSO meterse en = to get into, to interfere in · ¡No te metas! = Stay out of it!

To put something INSIDE something else. Poner is for placing on a surface; meter is for inside. Pronominal uses are very colloquial and frequent.

› Mete la leche en la nevera.
Put the milk in the fridge.

› No te metas en mi vida.
Stay out of my life. / Mind your own business.

› En el colegio se metían con él por sus gafas.
At school they used to pick on him because of his glasses.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **meter la pata** *to put your foot in it, to mess up (colloquial)* · **meter prisa a alguien** *to rush someone* · **meter un gol** *to score a goal*

DON'T CONFUSE meter = put inside (the bag, the drawer) · poner = put, place (on the table).

tirar *to throw / to throw away / to pull / to knock over*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **tirar algo (a la basura) · tirar de algo (pull) · tirar algo al suelo**

Main uses: to throw, to throw away, to knock down/over, and — on doors — to PULL. The door sign 'TIRAR' (or TIRE/TIRA) means pull, 'EMPUJAR' means push.

to throw away — *get rid of*

› No tires el pan, podemos hacer torrijas.
Don't throw the bread away, we can make French toast.

to throw — *throw an object*

› Tírame las llaves por la ventana.
Throw me the keys out of the window.

tirar de — *to pull*

› Para abrir, tira de la puerta.
To open it, pull the door.

to knock over — *make something fall*

› El gato ha tirado el vaso.
The cat has knocked the glass over.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tirar a la basura** *to throw in the bin* · **—¿Qué tal? —Tirando.** *"How's it going?" "Getting by." (colloquial)* · **tirar la toalla** *to throw in the towel*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: botar is common for 'throw away' (bota la basura). 'Jalar' is used for 'pull' in several countries.

echar *to throw / to put in / to add / to kick out (many uses)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B1

PATTERN **echar algo (a/en algo) · echar a alguien (de un sitio) · echarse a + infinitive**

One of the most versatile verbs in Spanish. Basic idea: to throw or send something somewhere. It forms dozens of everyday expressions.

add (food, petrol) — *to put in, to add*

› ¿Le echas azúcar al café?
Do you put sugar in your coffee?

kick out / fire — *to throw someone out*

› Lo echaron del bar por gritar.
They threw him out of the bar for shouting.

echarse a + infinitive — *to suddenly start*

› Cuando lo vio, se echó a llorar.
When she saw him, she burst into tears.

post (Spain) — *to post a letter*

› ¿Puedes echar esta carta al buzón?
Can you post this letter?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **echar una mano** *to give a hand* · **echar un vistazo** *to have a look, take a quick look* · **echar la siesta** *to have a nap* · **echar la culpa a alguien** *to blame someone* · **echar gasolina** *to put petrol in* · **echar una peli (en la tele)** *to show a film (on TV): ¿Qué echan hoy?*

NOTE Echar de menos (to miss) has its own card above.

colgar *to hang (up) / to post online*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: CUELGO · SPELLING G→GU: COLGUÉ · B1

PATTERN **colgar algo (en algún sitio) · colgar (el teléfono) · colgar algo en redes**

To hang something (clothes, a picture), to hang up the phone, and — very commonly — to post or upload something online.

> **hang** — *hang clothes, pictures*
>
> › Cuelga la chaqueta en el perchero.
> *Hang your jacket on the coat rack.*

> **hang up** — *end a phone call*
>
> › No me cuelgues, que no he terminado.
> *Don't hang up on me, I haven't finished.*

> **post online** — *upload*
>
> › Ana ha colgado las fotos del viaje en Instagram.
> *Ana has posted the photos from the trip on Instagram.*

NOTE Colgado/a (colloquial) = left in the lurch: Me dejó colgada (He left me in the lurch). Also 'spaced out'.

Work, money & life changes

solicitar *to apply for / to request*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · B1

PATTERN **solicitar algo (un trabajo, una beca, un visado)**

The correct verb for applying for a job, grant or document, and for requesting something formally. In speech, 'pedir' is common too.

› He solicitado una beca para estudiar en Salamanca.
I've applied for a scholarship to study in Salamanca.

› Para solicitar el visado necesitas estos documentos.
To apply for the visa you need these documents.

NOTE Noun: la solicitud = application (form). 'Rellenar una solicitud' = to fill in an application.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Apliqué para el trabajo~~ → ✓ Solicité el trabajo / Eché el currículum (colloq.) / Me presenté al puesto. 'Aplicar' = to apply (a cream, a rule).

contratar *to hire / to take on / to sign up for (a service)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **contratar a alguien · contratar un servicio**

To hire a person, or to sign up for a service (internet, insurance, a package holiday).

› La empresa va a contratar a diez personas más.
The company is going to hire ten more people.

› Hemos contratado un seguro de viaje.
We've taken out travel insurance.

NOTE Noun: el contrato = contract. 'Un contrato indefinido / temporal' = a permanent / temporary contract.

despedir / despedirse (de)

to fire, to see off / to say goodbye

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→I: DESPIDO / DESPIDIÓ · B1

PATTERN **despedir a alguien (fire / see off) · despedirse de alguien (say goodbye)**

Careful! Without 'se', despedir a alguien usually means to FIRE someone (or to see someone off). With 'se', despedirse de alguien means to say goodbye.

despedir a alguien — *to fire, to dismiss*

› Despidieron a Tom por llegar tarde siempre.
They fired Tom for always being late.

despedir a alguien — *to see someone off*

› Fuimos al aeropuerto a despedir a Lucía.
We went to the airport to see Lucía off.

despedirse de alguien — *to say goodbye*

› Se fue sin despedirse de nadie.
He left without saying goodbye to anyone.

NOTE Nouns: el despido = dismissal, firing · la despedida = goodbye, farewell (party). 'Despedida de soltero/a' = stag / hen party.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quiero despedir a mis compañeros (if you mean say goodbye — it sounds like you'~~;ll fire them!) → ✓ Quiero despedirme de mis compañeros.

jubilarse *to retire*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **jubilarse (a los X años)**

To stop working because of age. Retirarse exists too, but it's more for sport or for withdrawing from something.

› Mi padre se jubiló el año pasado y ahora viaja muchísimo.
My dad retired last year and now he travels loads.

› En España la gente se jubila a los 65 o 67 años.
In Spain people retire at 65 or 67.

NOTE el/la jubilado/a = pensioner, retired person · la jubilación = retirement, pension.

prestar / pedir prestado

to lend / to borrow

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **prestar algo a alguien (lend) · pedir prestado algo a alguien (borrow)**

Spanish thinks from the lender's side. To 'borrow' you usually ask someone to lend you: ¿Me prestas...? In Spain, 'dejar' is the everyday alternative: ¿Me dejas tu boli?

- ¿Me prestas tu cargador un momento?
  Can I borrow your charger for a sec?
- Le pedí prestado el coche a mi hermano.
  I borrowed my brother's car.
- No me gusta prestar libros: nunca vuelven.
  I don't like lending books: they never come back.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **prestar atención** *to pay attention* · **un préstamo** *a loan*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: ¿Me dejas...? is extremely common · Latin America: ¿Me prestas...? is the norm.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Puedo prestar tu boli~~? → ✓ ¿Me prestas tu boli? / ¿Me dejas tu boli?

More B1 verbs to recognise and use

A wider list for reading and writing. Check the patterns in the notes — they are half of the meaning.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
resolver	*to solve, to resolve, to sort out*	o→ue: resuelvo · participle: resuelto **Ya hemos resuelto el problema.** *We've already sorted the problem out.*
solucionar	*to solve, to fix*	regular; very common with 'problema' **Llamé al técnico para solucionarlo.** *I called the technician to fix it.*
aumentar	*to increase, to go up*	transitive and intransitive **Los precios han aumentado un 5 %.** *Prices have gone up by 5%.*
disminuir	*to decrease, to go down*	-uir verb: disminuye **El paro ha disminuido este año.** *Unemployment has gone down this year.*
reducir	*to reduce, to cut*	irregular: reduzco / reduje **Quiero reducir el tiempo que paso con el móvil.** *I want to cut down the time I spend on my phone.*
desarrollar	*to develop*	desarrollarse = to develop, to take place **La empresa desarrolla aplicaciones educativas.** *The company develops educational apps.*
crear	*to create*	creé, creó (accents in preterite) **Han creado un grupo de conversación los jueves.** *They've set up a conversation group on Thursdays.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
organizar	*to organise*	z→c: organicé · organizarse = to get organised **Tienes que organizarte mejor.** *You need to get yourself better organised.*
mantener	*to keep, to maintain, to support (financially)*	irregular like tener: mantengo / mantuve **Mantenemos el contacto por WhatsApp.** *We keep in touch on WhatsApp.*
obtener	*to obtain, to get*	formal; irregular like tener **Obtuvo el título con matrícula de honor.** *She got her degree with top honours.*
permitir	*to allow, to let*	permitir + inf / que + subj; ¿Me permite? = May I? (formal) **Mis padres no me permitían salir entre semana.** *My parents didn't let me go out on weekdays.*
prohibir	*to forbid, to ban*	accent: prohíbo, prohíbe · Prohibido fumar **Está prohibido aparcar aquí.** *Parking is not allowed here.*
impedir	*to prevent, to stop*	e→i: impido · impedir que + subj **La lluvia nos impidió salir.** *The rain stopped us from going out.*
exigir	*to demand, to require*	g→j: exijo **El puesto exige mucha experiencia.** *The job requires a lot of experience.*
insistir (en)	*to insist (on)*	always 'en': insistir en + inf / en que **Insistió en pagar la cena.** *He insisted on paying for dinner.*
reconocer	*to recognise, to admit*	reconozco **Reconozco que me equivoqué.** *I admit I was wrong.*
admitir	*to admit, to accept*	also 'to let in': No admiten perros **No admiten tarjetas, solo efectivo.** *They don't accept cards, only cash.*
negar	*to deny*	e→ie: niego · see negarse a (refuse) **Negó saber nada del asunto.** *He denied knowing anything about it.*
rechazar	*to reject, to turn down*	z→c: rechacé **Rechazó la oferta porque el sueldo era bajo.** *She turned down the offer because the salary was low.*
aceptar	*to accept, to agree to*	**Acepto tus disculpas.** *I accept your apology.*
agradecer	*to thank, to be grateful for*	agradezco · thing is the object: Te agradezco la ayuda **Te agradezco mucho que hayas venido.** *I'm really grateful you came.*
disculparse	*to apologise*	disculparse por algo / con alguien **Se disculpó por el retraso.** *He apologised for the delay.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
perdonar	*to forgive*	perdonar algo a alguien · Perdona / Perdone = sorry, excuse me Nunca le perdonó aquella mentira. *She never forgave him for that lie.*
participar (en)	*to take part (in)*	always 'en' Participé en un intercambio de idiomas. *I took part in a language exchange.*
pertenecer (a)	*to belong (to)*	pertenezco Este cuadro pertenece a una colección privada. *This painting belongs to a private collection.*
contar con	*to count on, to rely on; to have*	o→ue: cuento con Cuenta conmigo para la mudanza. *Count me in for the move.*
tener en cuenta	*to bear in mind, to take into account*	Ten en cuenta que los domingos cierran. *Bear in mind they're closed on Sundays.*
hacer caso (a)	*to pay attention to, to listen to (advice)*	colloquial-neutral: ¡Hazme caso! Nunca me haces caso. *You never listen to me.*
reunirse	*to meet (formally), to get together*	accent: me reúno El equipo se reúne todos los lunes. *The team meets every Monday.*
aplazar	*to postpone, to put off*	z→c: aplacé Han aplazado la reunión al jueves. *They've postponed the meeting until Thursday.*
retrasar(se)	*to delay / to be late, to be delayed*	El vuelo se ha retrasado dos horas. *The flight has been delayed two hours.*
adelantar	*to bring forward; to overtake*	adelantar una cita · adelantar un coche ¿Podemos adelantar la clase a las cinco? *Can we bring the class forward to five?*
cancelar	*to cancel*	also 'anular' (formal) Cancelaron el concierto por la lluvia. *They cancelled the concert because of the rain.*
destacar	*to stand out; to highlight*	destacar en algo · c→qu: destaqué Destaca por su sentido del humor. *She stands out for her sense of humour.*
mencionar	*to mention*	No mencionó nada de la fiesta. *He didn't mention anything about the party.*
comparar	*to compare*	comparar algo con algo No compares tu vida con la de los demás. *Don't compare your life with other people's.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
reclamar	*to claim, to complain formally*	hoja de reclamaciones = official complaint form (Spain) **Fui a reclamar porque me cobraron de más.** *I went to complain because they overcharged me.*
ganarse la vida	*to earn a living*	**Se gana la vida dando clases de yoga.** *She earns a living teaching yoga.*
comprometerse (a)	*to commit (to), to promise to*	comprometerse a + inf · also 'to get engaged' **Se comprometió a ayudarnos con la mudanza.** *He promised to help us with the move.*
arriesgarse (a)	*to take a risk, to risk*	g→gu: me arriesgué · arriesgarse a + inf **No quiero arriesgarme a perder el vuelo.** *I don't want to risk missing the flight.*
llevar a cabo FORMAL	*to carry out*	= realizar **Llevaron a cabo una encuesta entre los alumnos.** *They carried out a survey among the students.*

LEARN THE 'CHUNK', NOT THE VERB

Your brain remembers 'me di cuenta de que', 'confío en ti' and 'me cae bien' far better than darse cuenta, confiar or caer on their own. Write each new verb in a short sentence about YOUR life, and say it out loud three times. Next time you need it, the whole chunk — preposition included — will come out on its own.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

02 · The abstract words that turn simple sentences into real opinions

Nouns

At B1 you start talking about ideas, not just things: advantages, goals, reasons, results, changes. These general nouns appear in every conversation, email and article. The cards cover the tricky ones (tema vs asunto vs cuestión, recuerdo vs memoria); the tables give you wide coverage. Learn each noun with its article and, whenever you can, with its verb: tomar una decisión, cometer un error, hacer un esfuerzo.

Goals, chances & results

The vocabulary of plans and progress — perfect for job interviews, motivation letters and talking about your Spanish journey.

la experiencia *experience*

NOUN · FEMININE · B1

PLURAL experiencias

Like English, it means both the knowledge you gain over time (uncountable) and something that happens to you (countable: an experience).

knowledge, practice — *uncountable*

› Busco trabajo, pero no tengo experiencia.
I'm looking for a job, but I haven't got any experience.

something you live — *countable*

› Vivir en Sevilla fue una experiencia increíble.
Living in Seville was an amazing experience.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener experiencia en algo** *to have experience in something* · **por experiencia** *from experience* · **una experiencia inolvidable** *an unforgettable experience*

NOTE Experimentar = to experience (feel) or to experiment. 'An experiment' = un experimento.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo experiencia de trabajar con niños~~ → ✓ Tengo experiencia trabajando con niños / en el trabajo con niños.

la oportunidad

opportunity / chance

NOUN · FEMININE · B1

PLURAL oportunidades

PATTERN **la oportunidad de + infinitive**

A favourable moment to do something. For 'chance' meaning probability, use 'posibilidad'.

› Tuve la oportunidad de trabajar en Argentina.
I had the chance to work in Argentina.

› No pierdas esta oportunidad.
Don't miss this opportunity.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aprovechar una oportunidad** *to take an opportunity* · **perder una oportunidad** *to miss an opportunity* · **dar una segunda oportunidad** *to give a second chance*

NOTE In shops, 'oportunidades' or 'gangas' = bargains.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*la oportunidad para conocerte~~ → ✓ la oportunidad de conocerte (de + infinitive is the natural choice).

la ventaja / el inconveniente

advantage / disadvantage, drawback

NOUN · F / M · B1

PLURAL ventajas / inconvenientes

The pair you need to compare options. 'La desventaja' also exists, but in speech Spaniards often prefer 'el inconveniente' or 'lo malo'.

› La ventaja de vivir en el centro es que vas andando a todas partes.
The advantage of living in the centre is that you can walk everywhere.

› El único inconveniente es el ruido.
The only drawback is the noise.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ventajas e inconvenientes** *pros and cons* · **tener ventaja** *to have an advantage, to be ahead* · **Si no es inconveniente...** *If it's no trouble... (polite)*

DON'T CONFUSE In speech you'll often hear 'lo bueno / lo malo es que...' = the good / bad thing is that...

NOTE 'No tengo inconveniente' = I don't mind / I have no objection.

el objetivo / la meta

objective, aim / goal

NOUN · M / F · B1

PLURAL objetivos / metas

Both mean 'goal'. Objetivo is more common and practical (work, projects); meta sounds more personal or ambitious, and is also the finish line in a race.

› Mi objetivo es hablar con fluidez en un año.
My goal is to speak fluently within a year.

› Tiene una meta clara: abrir su propio restaurante.
She has a clear goal: to open her own restaurant.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cumplir / alcanzar un objetivo** *to achieve a goal* · **ponerse una meta** *to set yourself a goal* · **llegar a la meta** *to reach the finish line*

NOTE Objetivo/a is also an adjective: objective, impartial.

el reto

challenge

NOUN · MASCULINE · B1

PLURAL retos

A difficult task that tests you, usually seen positively. 'El desafío' is a synonym, slightly more formal or dramatic.

› Aprender un idioma de adulto es un reto, pero merece la pena.
Learning a language as an adult is a challenge, but it's worth it.

› Me encantan los retos.
I love a challenge.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un gran reto** *a big challenge* · **afrontar un reto** *to face a challenge* · **un reto personal** *a personal challenge*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*una challenge / *un desafió (that~~';s a verb form!) → ✓ un reto, un desafío.

la costumbre *custom / habit*

NOUN FEMININE B1

PLURAL costumbres

PATTERN **tener la costumbre de + infinitive**

Something you or a culture usually do. 'El hábito' is more about routines (healthy or not); 'la costumbre' covers both personal habits and cultural customs.

› En España es costumbre dar dos besos.
In Spain it's customary to give two kisses.

› Tengo la costumbre de leer antes de dormir.
I'm in the habit of reading before bed.

› Llegó tarde, como de costumbre.
He was late, as usual.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por costumbre** *out of habit* · **perder la costumbre** *to get out of the habit* · **hábitos saludables** *healthy habits*

NOTE Feminine, even though it ends in -e. Verb: acostumbrarse a (to get used to).

la decisión *decision*

NOUN FEMININE B1

PLURAL decisiones

A choice you make. The key point for English speakers is the verb: in Spanish you 'take' decisions.

› Fue la mejor decisión de mi vida.
It was the best decision of my life.

› Todavía no he tomado una decisión.
I still haven't made a decision.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar una decisión** *to make a decision* · **una decisión difícil** *a tough decision*

DON'T CONFUSE la decisión = decision · la elección = choice (also elections: las elecciones).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*hacer una decisión~~ → ✓ tomar una decisión.

el éxito *success / hit*

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL éxitos

Success. Remember: it never means 'exit' (that's la salida).

› La fiesta fue todo un éxito.
The party was a real success.

› ¡Mucho éxito en la entrevista!
Good luck with the interview!

› Es uno de los grandes éxitos de los noventa.
It's one of the big hits of the nineties.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener éxito** *to be successful* · **con éxito** *successfully* · **el éxito profesional** *professional success*

NOTE Opposite: el fracaso (failure).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Fue muy exitoso (about a person~~, sounds stiff in everyday talk) → ✓ Tuvo mucho éxito. Use 'tener éxito' rather than the adjective exitoso/a.

el error *mistake / error*

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL errores

The standard word for mistake. In speech you'll also hear 'la equivocación' and, colloquially, 'la metedura de pata' (blunder).

› Todos cometemos errores.
We all make mistakes.

› Ha sido un error no reservar.
Not booking was a mistake.

› Lo borré por error.
I deleted it by mistake.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cometer un error** *to make a mistake* · **por error** *by mistake* · **un error garrafal** *a huge blunder*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*hacer un error~~ → ✓ cometer un error (or simply: equivocarse).

el esfuerzo *effort*

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL esfuerzos

The energy you put into something. Verb: esforzarse (o→ue) = to make an effort, to try hard.

› Con esfuerzo, todo se consigue.
With effort, you can achieve anything.

› Se nota el esfuerzo que has hecho.
You can tell how much effort you've put in.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer un esfuerzo** *to make an effort* · **sin esfuerzo** *effortlessly* · **esforzarse por / en + infinitive** *to try hard to*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*poner esfuerzo is understood but less natural~~ → ✓ hacer un esfuerzo / esforzarse.

Topics, reasons & causes

The words you need to say what something is about and why it happens. Several have no exact English match.

el tema *topic / subject / theme / issue*

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL temas

What you talk or write about. In colloquial Spain Spanish, 'el tema' is also used for almost any 'matter' or 'thing': el tema del piso (the flat situation).

› Cambiemos de tema.
Let's change the subject.

› ¿Cuál es el tema de tu presentación?
What's the topic of your presentation?

› ¿Cómo va el tema del trabajo?
How's the job thing going?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cambiar de tema** *to change the subject* · **sacar un tema** *to bring up a subject* · **un tema delicado** *a sensitive issue*

NOTE Masculine despite ending in -a (like el problema, el sistema, el idioma). Also 'a song': Este tema me encanta.

el asunto

matter / issue / affair

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL asuntos

A matter to be dealt with, often private or practical. In emails, 'Asunto' is the subject line.

› Tengo que resolver unos asuntos en el banco.
I have to sort out a few things at the bank.

› No es asunto tuyo.
It's none of your business.

› Asunto: Solicitud de información
Subject: Request for information

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **asuntos personales** *personal matters* · **el asunto es que…** *the thing is that…*

DON'T CONFUSE tema = topic of conversation · asunto = matter to deal with · cuestión = question or issue in debate.

la cuestión vs la pregunta

issue, matter / question (you ask)

NOUN FEMININE B1

PLURAL cuestiones / preguntas

La pregunta is a question you ask and someone answers. La cuestión is a matter, issue or point to think about. Don't use cuestión for questions in class!

la pregunta — *a question (asked)*

› ¿Puedo hacerte una pregunta?
Can I ask you a question?

la cuestión — *an issue, a matter*

› Es una cuestión de tiempo.
It's a matter of time.

la cuestión es que… — *the point is that…*

› La cuestión es que no tenemos presupuesto.
The point is that we haven't got a budget.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo una cuestión~~ → ✓ Tengo una pregunta. And ✗ ~~*preguntar una pregunta~~ → ✓ hacer una pregunta.

la razón *reason / being right*

NOUN FEMININE B1

PLURAL razones

PATTERN **tener razón · la razón por la que… · dar la razón a alguien**

Two main uses: a reason (why), and — in 'tener razón' — being right.

> **tener razón** — *to be right*
>
> › Tienes razón, es mejor salir pronto.
> *You're right, it's better to leave early.*

> **la razón (de / por la que)** — *the reason (for / why)*
>
> › La razón por la que me mudé fue el trabajo.
> *The reason why I moved was work.*

> **dar la razón** — *to admit someone is right*
>
> › Al final me dio la razón.
> *In the end he admitted I was right.*

NOTE 'Correcto' is for answers and data: La respuesta es correcta.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estás correcto / *Eres razón~~ → ✓ Tienes razón. ✗ ~~*la razón porque~~ → ✓ la razón por la que.

el motivo / la causa *reason, motive / cause*

NOUN M / F B1

PLURAL motivos / causas

El motivo = the reason why someone does something (personal, intentional). La causa = what makes something happen (often events, problems).

› ¿Por qué motivo quieres dejar el trabajo?
Why do you want to leave your job?

› La causa del accidente fue la niebla.
The cause of the accident was the fog.

› Cerrado por motivos personales.
Closed for personal reasons.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **con motivo de** *on the occasion of (formal)* · **sin motivo** *for no reason* · **por causas naturales** *from natural causes*

NOTE For 'because of' see a causa de / debido a in Prepositions.

el sentido

sense / meaning / direction

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL sentidos

Several uses: meaning, sense (logic, humour, the five senses), and direction (of traffic).

tener sentido — *to make sense*

› Lo que dices no tiene sentido.
What you're saying doesn't make sense.

sense of… — *a sense of*

› Tiene un sentido del humor muy británico.
He has a very British sense of humour.

direction — *way, direction*

› Es una calle de sentido único.
It's a one-way street.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en cierto sentido** *in a way, in a sense* · **el sentido común** *common sense* · **perder el sentido** *to lose consciousness*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hace sentido~~ → ✓ Tiene sentido. (Calque from 'makes sense'.)

la manera / la forma / el modo

way / manner

NOUN F / F / M B1

PLURAL maneras / formas / modos

Three near-synonyms for 'way of doing something'. Manera and forma are the most common in speech; modo is a little more formal. They appear in many connectors.

› Me encanta su manera de hablar.
I love the way she talks.

› Es la forma más barata de viajar.
It's the cheapest way to travel.

› Hazlo a tu manera.
Do it your way.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de esta manera / forma** *this way, like this* · **de ninguna manera** *no way, by no means* · **estar en forma** *to be fit (forma = shape)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*la manera cómo lo hace~~ → ✓ la manera en que lo hace / cómo lo hace. And 'way' as a route = el camino: ¿Cuál es el camino?

Memory, change & atmosphere

el recuerdo vs la memoria

a memory (something remembered) / memory (the ability)

NOUN · M / F · B1

PLURAL recuerdos / memorias

Key difference: la memoria is your ability to remember (and computer memory). El recuerdo is one specific thing you remember. Recuerdos also means souvenirs and 'regards'.

la memoria — *the ability*

› Tengo muy mala memoria para los nombres.
I've got a terrible memory for names.

el recuerdo — *a specific memory*

› Tengo muy buenos recuerdos de aquel verano.
I have really good memories of that summer.

recuerdos — *regards / souvenirs*

› Dale recuerdos a tu madre.
Give my regards to your mum.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de memoria** *by heart* · **una tienda de recuerdos** *a souvenir shop*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo buenas memorias de mi infancia~~ → ✓ Tengo buenos recuerdos de mi infancia. (Las memorias = memoirs, a book.)

el cambio

change

NOUN · MASCULINE · B1

PLURAL cambios

A change or transformation. Also small change (coins) and exchange rate. In cars, it's the gearbox.

transformation — *change*

› Mudarme aquí ha sido un cambio enorme.
Moving here has been a huge change.

money — *change (coins / money back)*

› ¿Tienes cambio de cincuenta?
Have you got change for a fifty?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a cambio de** *in exchange for* · **en cambio** *on the other hand (see Connectors)* · **un cambio de planes** *a change of plans* · **el cambio climático** *climate change*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*hacer un cambio de idea~~ → ✓ cambiar de idea / de opinión (cambiar de + noun when you swap one for another).

el ambiente

atmosphere / vibe / environment

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL ambientes

The atmosphere of a place or event. 'Hay buen ambiente' is a classic Spanish compliment for a bar, a party or an office. 'El medio ambiente' = the environment (nature).

› En este bar siempre hay muy buen ambiente.
There's always a great atmosphere in this bar.

› El ambiente en la oficina está un poco tenso.
The atmosphere in the office is a bit tense.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **buen / mal ambiente** *good / bad atmosphere* · **el ambiente de trabajo** *the work environment* · **el medio ambiente** *the environment (nature)*

NOTE Ambientador = air freshener.

el nivel

level / standard

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL niveles

A level or degree of something. Very useful for talking about your Spanish!

› Tengo un nivel intermedio de español.
I have an intermediate level of Spanish.

› El nivel de vida aquí es muy alto.
The standard of living here is very high.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el nivel de vida** *standard of living* · **subir / bajar de nivel** *to go up / down a level* · **a nivel del mar** *at sea level*

COMMON MISTAKE Avoid overusing 'a nivel de' (= regarding): ✗ ~~*A nivel de trabajo~~, todo bien → ✓ En el trabajo, todo bien.

la parte / el lado

part, share / side

NOUN F / M B1

PLURAL partes / lados

La parte = a portion of something, or a place (en alguna parte = somewhere). El lado = a side (physical or of an argument).

› La mejor parte de la película es el final.
The best part of the film is the ending.

› Siéntate a mi lado.
Sit next to me.

› He dejado las gafas en alguna parte.
I've left my glasses somewhere.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por mi parte** *as for me, for my part* · **en todas partes** *everywhere* · **al lado de** *next to* · **por un lado... por otro (lado)** *on the one hand... on the other* · **de parte de** *on behalf of: ¿De parte de quién? = Who's calling?*

la mayoría

majority / most (of)

NOUN FEMININE B1

PATTERN **la mayoría de + plural noun (+ singular or plural verb)**

The everyday way to say 'most (people / things)'. Spanish needs the article: la mayoría de.

› La mayoría de mis amigos vive fuera.
Most of my friends live abroad.

› La mayoría de la gente prefiere el verano.
Most people prefer summer.

› En su mayoría son estudiantes.
They're mostly students.

NOTE Both 'la mayoría de mis amigos vive' and 'viven' are correct. Opposite: la minoría.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mayoría de personas / *Más de la gente~~ → ✓ La mayoría de la gente. (English 'most people' needs 'la mayoría de'.)

el resto *the rest / the remainder*

NOUN MASCULINE B1

PLURAL restos (= remains, leftovers)

The part that is left, or the other people/things. Plural 'restos' = leftovers or remains.

› Yo me quedo aquí; el resto puede irse.
I'll stay here; the rest of you can go.

› Pasé el resto del día en el sofá.
I spent the rest of the day on the sofa.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el resto de la gente** *everyone else* · **los restos de la cena** *the leftovers from dinner* · **los restos romanos** *Roman remains*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Los restos de la gente~~ → ✓ El resto de la gente (singular when it means 'the others'). Plural 'restos' only for leftovers or remains.

Ideas, plans & processes

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la opinión	*opinion*	cambiar de opinión = to change your mind **He cambiado de opinión.** *I've changed my mind.*
el punto de vista	*point of view*	**Respeto tu punto de vista.** *I respect your point of view.*
la elección	*choice*	las elecciones = elections **Fue una elección difícil.** *It was a difficult choice.*
la desventaja	*disadvantage*	more formal than 'el inconveniente'
el desafío	*challenge*	a bit more formal than 'el reto'
el hábito	*habit*	m; often with 'saludable', 'malo' **Fumar es un mal hábito.** *Smoking is a bad habit.*
el proyecto	*project; plan*	**Estoy con un proyecto nuevo.** *I'm working on a new project.*
la intención	*intention*	tener intención de + inf **No tengo intención de mudarme.** *I have no intention of moving.*
el propósito	*purpose; resolution*	propósitos de Año Nuevo = New Year's resolutions
el proceso	*process*	**Es un proceso lento.** *It's a slow process.*
el paso	*step; pass*	paso a paso = step by step **El primer paso es apuntarse.** *The first step is to sign up.*
la fase	*phase*	more technical than 'etapa'

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la consecuencia	*consequence*	como consecuencia = as a result Tus actos tienen consecuencias. *Your actions have consequences.*
el efecto	*effect*	≠ afectar (verb) El café no me hace efecto. *Coffee doesn't have any effect on me.*
el fracaso	*failure*	La cena fue un fracaso. *The dinner was a flop.*
el logro	*achievement*	Es mi mayor logro. *It's my greatest achievement.*
el origen	*origin*	m despite looking feminine; pl. orígenes (accent!)
el aspecto	*aspect; appearance, look*	Tienes buen aspecto. *You look well.*
la característica	*feature, characteristic*	
el método	*method*	
el sistema	*system*	m despite -a
la dificultad	*difficulty*	tener dificultades para + inf
el obstáculo	*obstacle*	
la falta	*lack; mistake (spelling); foul*	falta de tiempo = lack of time · falta de ortografía = spelling mistake Lo dejé por falta de tiempo. *I gave it up for lack of time.*
el riesgo	*risk*	correr un riesgo = to take a risk
la seguridad	*safety; security; confidence*	con seguridad = confidently
el azar	*chance, randomness*	al azar = at random; ≠ el azahar (orange blossom)

Rules, rights & relationships

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la libertad	*freedom, liberty*	Aquí tengo más libertad. *I have more freedom here.*
la responsabilidad	*responsibility*	Es tu responsabilidad. *It's your responsibility.*
la obligación	*obligation, duty*	
el deber	*duty*	los deberes = homework
el derecho	*right; law (subject)*	tener derecho a = to be entitled to Tienes derecho a una explicación. *You're entitled to an explanation.*
la norma	*rule, norm*	las normas de la casa
la regla	*rule; ruler; period (colloq.)*	por regla general = as a general rule
la prohibición	*ban, prohibition*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el requisito	*requirement*	**El requisito es tener un B1.** *The requirement is to have a B1.*
la condición	*condition*	con la condición de que + subj
la promesa	*promise*	cumplir una promesa = to keep a promise
la realidad	*reality*	
el acuerdo	*agreement*	llegar a un acuerdo = to reach an agreement
el desacuerdo	*disagreement*	
el conflicto	*conflict*	
el debate	*debate*	
el respeto	*respect*	faltar al respeto = to be disrespectful
el apoyo	*support*	**Gracias por tu apoyo.** *Thanks for your support.*
el comportamiento	*behaviour*	verb: comportarse
la actitud	*attitude*	tener buena actitud **Tiene muy buena actitud.** *She's got a really good attitude.*
la capacidad	*ability, capacity*	capacidad de + noun/inf
la importancia	*importance*	No tiene importancia = It doesn't matter
el valor	*value; courage*	two meanings: tener valor = to be brave
el interés	*interest*	pl. intereses (no accent)
la atención	*attention*	prestar atención · llamar la atención = to stand out / to tell off
el parecido	*resemblance, similarity*	verb: parecerse a

Time, life & people

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el presente	*present (time); gift (formal)*	
la generación	*generation*	
el ser humano	*human being*	
el individuo	*individual; guy (pejorative)*	
el público	*audience, the public*	
el acontecimiento	*event (important)*	
la ocasión	*occasion; chance*	en ocasiones = sometimes
el encuentro	*meeting, encounter*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la visita	*visit; visitor(s)*	tener visita = to have guests
la llegada	*arrival*	
la salida	*exit; departure; way out*	≠ el éxito
la vuelta	*return; turn; change (money); walk*	dar una vuelta = to go for a walk / a spin **¿Damos una vuelta?** *Shall we go for a walk?*
el regreso	*return*	more formal than 'la vuelta'

Space, quantity & qualities

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cualidad	*quality (of a person), trait*	
la minoría	*minority*	
el porcentaje	*percentage*	
la cifra	*figure, number*	
la media	*average; half (hour)*	de media = on average
el grupo	*group; band*	
el conjunto	*set, whole; outfit*	en conjunto = as a whole
la lista	*list*	lista de espera = waiting list
el orden	*order (sequence, tidiness)*	m; la orden = an order (command)
el desorden	*mess, untidiness*	
el peso	*weight*	
la altura	*height*	a la altura de = level with / up to the standard of
la distancia	*distance*	a distancia = remote, online (clases a distancia)
la velocidad	*speed*	
el ritmo	*rhythm, pace*	a su ritmo = at his/her own pace
el espacio	*space; room*	No hay espacio = There's no room
la zona	*area, zone*	
el fondo	*bottom; back; background; fund*	al fondo = at the back · en el fondo = deep down **Los baños están al fondo.** *The toilets are at the back.*
el borde	*edge*	
el centro	*centre; city centre*	
el interior	*inside; inland*	
el exterior	*outside; abroad*	en el exterior = abroad (formal)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la sombra	*shade; shadow*	a la sombra = in the shade
el olor	*smell*	oler: huelo (irregular!)
el sabor	*taste, flavour*	saber a = to taste of
el sonido	*sound*	
la vista	*view; sight*	con vistas al mar · hasta la vista
la imagen	*image, picture*	f; pl. imágenes (accent!)
el uso	*use*	de uso diario = for everyday use
el medio	*means; middle*	los medios = the media · en medio de
la herramienta	*tool*	
el objeto	*object, item*	objetos perdidos = lost property

Mind & knowledge

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la mente	*mind*	tener en mente = to have in mind
el pensamiento	*thought*	
la imaginación	*imagination*	
el conocimiento	*knowledge; consciousness*	often plural: conocimientos de inglés
la curiosidad	*curiosity*	por curiosidad = out of curiosity
la concentración	*concentration*	
los datos	*data; details*	datos personales = personal details
la impresión	*impression*	tengo la impresión de que = I get the feeling that
la sensación	*feeling, sensation*	tengo la sensación de que…

PAIR EVERY NOUN WITH A VERB

Abstract nouns are only useful if you can put them in a sentence. Build mini-collocations as you learn: tomar una decisión, cometer un error, hacer un esfuerzo, tener razón, cumplir un objetivo. Five chunks like these will make your Spanish sound more natural than fifty isolated words.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

03 · Say what you really think — and put the adjective in the right place

Adjectives

At B1 'bueno', 'malo' and 'bonito' are no longer enough. This section gives you adjectives to evaluate experiences, people and ideas with precision. You'll also discover something English doesn't do: some Spanish adjectives change meaning depending on whether they go before or after the noun, or with ser or estar. Study those groups slowly, with the examples.

Evaluating experiences

Many of these end in -ante / -ente and describe the effect something has on you (emocionante = it excites you). For how YOU feel, Spanish uses a different form: emocionado, sorprendido, decepcionado (see Feelings & opinions).

agradable *pleasant / nice / enjoyable*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS agradable · agradables

Pleasant, for places, weather, experiences and people's manner. Slightly more elegant than 'bonito' or 'bueno'.

› **Hace una temperatura muy agradable.**
The temperature is really pleasant.

› **Fue una cena muy agradable.**
It was a really nice dinner.

OPPOSITE **desagradable** — unpleasant; rude (person)

NOTE 'Una persona desagradable' = an unpleasant, rude person. Verb: agradecer (to thank) — same family.

útil *useful*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS útil · útiles

Useful. Note the accent on the first syllable: Ú-til.

› **Esta aplicación es muy útil para aprender vocabulario.**
This app is really useful for learning vocabulary.

› **Gracias, tus consejos me han sido muy útiles.**
Thanks, your advice has been really useful.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ser útil para + noun / inf** *to be useful for* · **Es inútil + inf** *It's pointless to...*: *Es inútil discutir con él.*

OPPOSITE **inútil** — useless; (person) hopeless

NOTE Calling a person 'inútil' is quite insulting (useless, hopeless).

emocionante *exciting / moving*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS emocionante · emocionantes

Exciting (a match, a trip) or emotionally moving (a speech, a reunion). It's the safe word for 'exciting'.

› **El final del partido fue muy emocionante.**
The end of the match was really exciting.

› **Ver a mi abuela después de tanto tiempo fue muy emocionante.**
Seeing my gran after so long was really moving.

DON'T CONFUSE emocionante (it excites/moves you) vs emocionado/a (you feel excited/moved).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El viaje es muy excitante~~ → ✓ El viaje es muy emocionante. 'Excitante' usually has a sexual meaning or refers to stimulants (el café es excitante).

impresionante *impressive / stunning / amazing*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS impresionante · impresionantes

Something that makes a strong impression: views, buildings, talent, also shocking things. Very common in enthusiastic speech.

› **Las vistas desde el mirador son impresionantes.**
The views from the viewpoint are stunning.

› **Habla cinco idiomas. ¡Impresionante!**
She speaks five languages. Amazing!

NOTE Verb: impresionar. 'Me impresionó' = It really struck me / impressed me.

sorprendente *surprising / remarkable*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS sorprendente · sorprendentes
PATTERN **es sorprendente que + subjunctive**

Something that surprises you. For your own reaction, use 'estar sorprendido/a'.

› **Es sorprendente lo bien que habla después de un año.**
It's surprising how well he speaks after just a year.

› **Es sorprendente que no haya nadie.**
It's surprising that there's nobody here.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy sorprendente~~ → ✓ Estoy sorprendido/a. The -ente form describes the cause, not your feeling.

decepcionante *disappointing*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS decepcionante · decepcionantes

Something that doesn't meet your expectations. Remember: decepción = disappointment, NOT deception (that's 'engaño').

› La segunda temporada fue bastante decepcionante.
The second season was pretty disappointing.

› El hotel no estaba mal, pero el desayuno fue decepcionante.
The hotel wasn't bad, but the breakfast was disappointing.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es muy decepcivo~~ → ✓ Es muy decepcionante. And 'deceptive' = engañoso/a.

preocupante *worrying / alarming*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS preocupante · preocupantes

PATTERN **es preocupante que + subjunctive**

Something that causes concern. Very frequent in the news and in serious conversations.

› La situación es preocupante.
The situation is worrying.

› Es preocupante que los jóvenes lean tan poco.
It's worrying that young people read so little.

DON'T CONFUSE preocupante (the situation) vs preocupado/a (the person).

divertido vs gracioso *fun / funny*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS divertido · divertida · divertidos · divertidas / gracioso · graciosa · graciosos · graciosas

Divertido = fun, entertaining (you have a good time). Gracioso = funny, makes you laugh. A party is divertida; a joke is graciosa. A person can be both: divertido (fun to be with) or gracioso (funny, witty).

› La excursión fue muy divertida.
The trip was great fun.

› ¡Qué chiste tan gracioso!
What a funny joke!

› Marcos es muy gracioso, siempre nos hace reír.
Marcos is really funny, he always makes us laugh.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **No tiene gracia.** *It's not funny.* · **Me hace gracia...** *I find it funny...* *(see Feelings & opinions)*

NOTE In Spain, 'gracioso' can also be sarcastic: ¡Qué gracioso! = Very funny... (not).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La fiesta fue muy graciosa (sounds odd)~~ → ✓ La fiesta fue muy divertida. 'Funny' in the sense of 'strange' = raro / curioso.

pesado *heavy / annoying / boring / tedious*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS pesado · pesada · pesados · pesadas

Literally 'heavy'. With people (ser/ponerse pesado) it means annoying, insistent; with tasks, films or food it means tedious or heavy (hard to digest).

objects — *heavy*

› Esta maleta es pesadísima.
This suitcase is really heavy.

people — *annoying, a pain*

› No seas pesado, ya te he dicho que no.
Don't be a pain, I've already said no.

activities, food — *tedious / heavy*

› La reunión fue muy pesada.
The meeting was really tedious.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué pesado/a!** *What a pain! / How annoying!* · **ponerse pesado/a** *to go on and on, to get annoying* · **una comida pesada** *a heavy meal*

OPPOSITE **ligero/a** — light

complicado *complicated / tricky / difficult*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS complicado · complicada · complicados · complicadas

Very common in Spain, often to soften 'difficult' or to say 'no' indirectly: 'Está complicado' = It's going to be difficult (probably no).

› El sistema de transporte es un poco complicado al principio.
The transport system is a bit tricky at first.

› —¿Puedes venir el sábado? —Uf, lo veo complicado.
"Can you come on Saturday?" "Hmm, it's looking difficult."

OPPOSITE **sencillo/a** — simple, easy

NOTE 'Una persona complicada' = a difficult person to understand or deal with.

sencillo *simple / easy / modest*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS sencillo · sencilla · sencillos · sencillas

Simple, easy, uncomplicated. With people, it means modest, down-to-earth (a compliment).

› La receta es muy sencilla.
The recipe is really simple.

› A pesar de su éxito, es una persona muy sencilla.
Despite her success, she's very down-to-earth.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un billete sencillo** *a single ticket (Spain)* · **una habitación sencilla** *a single room (hotel)*

DON'T CONFUSE sencillo (simple, easy, plain) vs fácil (easy to do). 'Simple' before a noun means 'mere' (see position group).

impresciendible *essential / indispensable / a must*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS impresciendible · impresciendibles

PATTERN **es impresciendible + infinitive / que + subjunctive**

Absolutely necessary — you can't do without it. Stronger than 'necesario'. Great for travel tips and recommendations.

› El protector solar es impresciendible en verano.
Sun cream is a must in summer.

› Es impresciendible que traigas el pasaporte.
It's essential that you bring your passport.

DON'T CONFUSE necesario < fundamental / esencial < impresciendible (strongest).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es impresciendible de llevar...~~ → ✓ Es impresciendible llevar...

adecuado *suitable / appropriate / right*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS adecuado · adecuada · adecuados · adecuadas

PATTERN **adecuado para + noun / infinitive**

Right for a purpose or situation. Not 'adequate' in the sense of 'just OK' (that's 'suficiente' or 'aceptable').

› No es el momento adecuado para hablar de eso.
It's not the right time to talk about that.

› Busco un piso adecuado para una familia.
I'm looking for a flat suitable for a family.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la palabra adecuada** *the right word* · **la persona adecuada** *the right person*

OPPOSITE **inadecuado/a** — inappropriate, unsuitable

suficiente *enough / sufficient*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS suficiente · suficientes

Enough. It agrees in number with the noun and usually goes before it. In speech, 'bastante' is often used too.

› No tengo suficiente tiempo para todo.
I don't have enough time for everything.

› ¿Hay suficientes sillas para todos?
Are there enough chairs for everyone?

› Ya es suficiente, gracias.
That's enough, thanks.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **lo suficiente** *enough (as adverb): No he dormido lo suficiente.* · **lo suficientemente + adj + como para** *... enough to: No es lo suficientemente grande como para...*

NOTE In Spanish school grades, 'Suficiente' = a pass (5/10).

justo *fair / just / tight / exact*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS justo · justa · justos · justas

Main meaning: fair. But it also means tight (clothes, money, time) and exact. As an adverb, 'justo' = just, exactly.

> **fair** — *just, fair*
>
> › No es justo que siempre limpie yo.
> *It's not fair that I'm always the one who cleans.*

> **tight** — *tight, barely enough*
>
> › Vamos muy justos de tiempo.
> *We're really short of time.*

> **adverb** — *just, exactly*
>
> › Llegué justo a tiempo.
> *I arrived just in time.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ir justo/a de dinero** *to be short of money* · **lo justo** *just enough, the bare minimum* · **¡Justo!** *Exactly! / That's it!*

OPPOSITE **injusto/a** — unfair

NOTE Noun: la justicia (justice).

actual *current / present-day*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS actual · actuales

A classic false friend: actual means current, present, up to date. It does NOT mean 'actual' (real).

› La situación actual del mercado es complicada.
The current market situation is complicated.

› Mi trabajo actual está muy cerca de casa.
My current job is very close to home.

NOTE Related: actualmente = currently (see Adverbs) · actualizar = to update.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El precio actual es 50 euros (meaning '~~;the real price') → ✓ El precio real es 50 euros. For 'actual' say real or verdadero: the actual problem = el verdadero problema.

propio *own / typical of / very*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS propio · propia · propios · propias

Before the noun with a possessive: (my/your...) own. After ser: typical of. 'El propio + person' = the person himself/herself.

su/mi propio + noun — *own*

› Quiero tener mi propio negocio.
I want to have my own business.

propio de — *typical of*

› Ese comportamiento no es propio de ti.
That behaviour isn't like you.

el propio + noun — *himself, herself (emphasis)*

› Me lo dijo el propio director.
The director himself told me.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por tu propia cuenta** *on your own, by yourself* · **en defensa propia** *in self-defence* · **un nombre propio** *a proper noun*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Tengo un coche propio mío~~ → ✓ Tengo mi propio coche / un coche propio.

mismo *same / -self / very / right*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS mismo · misma · mismos · mismas

Before the noun: same. After a noun or pronoun: -self (emphasis). After adverbs: right, very.

el mismo + noun — *the same*

› Tenemos el mismo móvil.
We've got the same phone.

pronoun + mismo — *myself, yourself... (emphasis)*

› Lo hice yo misma.
I did it myself.

adverb + mismo — *right (now/here)*

› Ven ahora mismo.
Come right now.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **lo mismo** *the same (thing): Para mí, lo mismo.* · **aquí mismo** *right here* · **Me da lo mismo.** *I don't mind. / It's all the same to me.* · **hoy mismo** *today (at the latest), this very day*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el mismo como tú~~ → ✓ el mismo que tú: Tengo el mismo coche que tú (I've got the same car as you).

Before or after the noun? Adjectives that change meaning

Most Spanish adjectives go after the noun. A few change meaning when they go before it: usually the 'before' meaning is more subjective or figurative, the 'after' meaning more literal. These are the ones you'll meet most.

cierto *certain, some (before) / true, sure (after)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS cierto · cierta · ciertos · ciertas

Before the noun: a certain, some (vague). After the noun or with ser: true, sure.

cierto + noun — *a certain, some*

› Ciertas personas no saben escuchar.
Some people don't know how to listen.

noun + cierto / es cierto — *true, definite*

› Es cierto que el piso es caro, pero merece la pena.
It's true the flat is expensive, but it's worth it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hasta cierto punto** *up to a point* · **por cierto** *by the way* · **en cierto modo** *in a way*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*un cierto día~~ → ✓ cierto día. No 'un' before cierto in careful Spanish.

único *only (before) / unique (after)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS único · única · únicos · únicas

Before the noun: the only one. After the noun: unique, one of a kind.

el único + noun — *the only*

› Es el único restaurante abierto a esta hora.
It's the only restaurant open at this time.

noun + único — *unique*

› Es una oportunidad única.
It's a unique opportunity.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **lo único** *the only thing: Lo único que quiero es dormir.* · **hijo/a único/a** *only child*

NOTE Note the difference: hijo único = only child (here 'único' comes after the noun but means 'only').

pobre *poor, unfortunate (before) / poor, not rich (after)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS pobre · pobres

Before the noun: pitiable, unlucky (emotional). After the noun: without money.

pobre + noun — *poor (unlucky)*

› ¡El pobre chico ha perdido el tren otra vez!
The poor guy has missed the train again!

noun + pobre — *poor (no money)*

› Creció en un barrio pobre.
He grew up in a poor neighbourhood.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Pobrecito/a!** *Poor thing!*

antiguo *former, old (before) / ancient, antique (after)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS antiguo · antigua · antiguos · antiguas

Before the noun: former, ex-. After the noun: old, ancient, antique, old-fashioned.

antiguo + noun — *former, ex-*

› Ayer vi a mi antiguo jefe.
Yesterday I saw my old (former) boss.

noun + antiguo — *ancient, antique*

› Vive en un edificio muy antiguo.
She lives in a very old building.

DON'T CONFUSE viejo (old, for people and worn-out things) vs antiguo (old, from long ago, with value or history).

NOTE Antiguamente = in the old days (see Time & frequency).

nuevo *another, different (before) / brand new (after)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS nuevo · nueva · nuevos · nuevas

Before the noun: new to you, different, another. After the noun: brand new, just made.

nuevo + noun — *new (to me), different*

› Me he comprado un nuevo coche, pero es de segunda mano.
I've got a new car, but it's second-hand.

noun + nuevo — *brand new*

› Es un coche nuevo: solo tiene 100 kilómetros.
It's a brand-new car: it's only done 100 km.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de nuevo** *again* · **como nuevo/a** *as good as new*

gran / grande

great (before) / big, large (after)

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS gran (before singular noun) · grande · grandes

Before a singular noun it becomes 'gran' and means great, important. After the noun, 'grande' means big in size.

gran + noun — *great*

› Es un gran amigo.
He's a great friend.

noun + grande — *big*

› Viven en una casa grande.
They live in a big house.

NOTE Plural before the noun: grandes (unos grandes amigos).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*un grande problema~~ → ✓ un gran problema. Shortened to 'gran' before both masculine and feminine singular nouns: una gran idea.

simple

mere, just (before) / simple, plain (after)

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS simple · simples

Before the noun: mere, just a. After the noun: simple, uncomplicated (sometimes 'simple-minded' for people).

simple + noun — *mere, just*

› Fue un simple error, no te preocupes.
It was just a mistake, don't worry.

noun + simple — *simple*

› Prefiero un diseño simple.
I prefer a simple design.

NOTE Calling someone 'simple' can sound like 'not very bright'. For 'down-to-earth', use 'sencillo/a'.

viejo

long-standing (before) / old, elderly (after)

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS viejo · vieja · viejos · viejas

Before the noun: someone you've known for a long time. After the noun: old in age.

viejo + noun — *long-standing*

› Javi es un viejo amigo de la universidad.
Javi is an old friend from university.

noun + viejo — *old (in age)*

› Tengo un perro muy viejo.
I've got a really old dog.

NOTE For people, 'mayor' is more polite than 'viejo': una señora mayor = an elderly lady.

diferente / distinto

various (before, plural) / different (after)

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS diferente · diferentes / distinto · distinta · distintos · distintas

Before a plural noun: various, several. After the noun: different, not the same.

diferentes + noun — *various*

› He vivido en diferentes ciudades.
I've lived in various cities.

noun + diferente — *different*

› Quiero probar algo diferente.
I want to try something different.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*diferente que~~ → ✓ diferente de / distinto de (also 'diferente a' is common): Es muy diferente de su hermano.

Ser or estar? Adjectives that change meaning

With these adjectives, ser and estar give completely different meanings. Get them wrong and you might say something funny — or rude.

listo

clever (ser) / ready (estar)

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS listo · lista · listos · listas

Ser listo = to be clever, smart. Estar listo = to be ready.

ser listo/a — *clever*

› Tu hija es muy lista.
Your daughter is really clever.

estar listo/a — *ready*

› ¿Estás lista? Nos vamos ya.
Are you ready? We're leaving now.

NOTE Sarcastic: ¡Qué listo! = Very clever... (not).

rico *rich (ser) / tasty (estar)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS rico · rica · ricos · ricas

Ser rico = to be rich, wealthy. Estar rico = to be tasty, delicious (food).

ser rico/a — *wealthy*

› Su familia es muy rica.
Her family is very rich.

estar rico/a — *delicious*

› ¡Qué rica está la tortilla!
This tortilla is delicious!

NOTE Also: 'rico' is an affectionate word for babies and people (¡Qué rico!) in Spain.

malo *bad (ser) / ill, unwell (estar)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS malo · mala · malos · malas (mal before masculine singular noun)

Ser malo = to be bad (quality, character). Estar malo = to be ill (Spain, colloquial) or to taste bad.

ser malo/a — *bad, evil, poor quality*

› Esta película es malísima.
This film is awful.

estar malo/a — *ill; gone off*

› Hoy no voy a clase, estoy malo.
I'm not going to class today, I'm ill.

interesado *selfish (ser) / interested (estar)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS interesado · interesada · interesados · interesadas

Estar interesado/a en = to be interested in. Ser interesado/a = to be self-interested, only out for yourself (negative!).

estar interesado/a en — *interested in*

› Estoy interesada en el puesto.
I'm interested in the position.

ser interesado/a — *self-interested*

› No me fío de él, es muy interesado.
I don't trust him, he's only out for himself.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy interesado en la historia (sounds like '~~;I'm selfish...') → ✓ Me interesa la historia / Estoy interesado en la historia.

More adjectives for opinions and descriptions

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
fundamental	*fundamental, essential*	Es fundamental practicar a diario. *Practising every day is essential.*
esencial	*essential*	
básico/a	*basic*	lo básico = the basics
clave	*key*	invariable after a noun: los puntos clave Es un momento clave. *It's a key moment.*
obligatorio/a	*compulsory, mandatory*	
opcional	*optional*	
posible / imposible	*possible / impossible*	es posible que + subj
probable	*likely, probable*	es probable que + subj Es probable que llueva. *It'll probably rain.*
evidente	*obvious, evident*	es evidente que + indicative
real	*real; royal*	two meanings: el Palacio Real
auténtico/a	*authentic, genuine; real (colloq.)*	Es un auténtico desastre. *It's a real disaster.*
habitual	*usual, regular*	un cliente habitual = a regular
frecuente	*frequent, common*	
extraño/a	*strange, odd*	a bit more formal than 'raro'
curioso/a	*curious; odd, interesting*	es curioso que + subj = it's funny/odd that
genial INFORMAL	*brilliant, great*	¡Genial! Nos vemos allí. *Great! See you there.*
insoportable	*unbearable*	El calor es insoportable. *The heat is unbearable.*
entretenido/a	*entertaining*	also: busy (estar entretenido)
ameno/a	*enjoyable, engaging (a talk, a book)*	
apasionante	*fascinating, gripping*	
fascinante	*fascinating*	
inolvidable	*unforgettable*	
agotador/a	*exhausting*	Ha sido un día agotador. *It's been an exhausting day.*
relajante	*relaxing*	
eficaz	*effective*	pl. eficaces
eficiente	*efficient*	
positivo/a / negativo/a	*positive / negative*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
completo/a	*complete; full (hotel, bus)*	Completo = No vacancies
entero/a	*whole, entire*	el día entero
complejo/a	*complex*	
profundo/a	*deep, profound*	
superficial	*superficial, shallow*	
general	*general*	en general (adverb)
concreto/a	*specific, particular*	en concreto = specifically; also 'concrete' **¿Buscas algo en concreto?** *Are you looking for anything in particular?*
específico/a	*specific*	
personal	*personal*	
privado/a	*private*	
público/a	*public; state (school, hospital)*	
corriente	*ordinary, normal*	estar al corriente = to be up to date
ajeno/a	*someone else's; outside*	la vida ajena = other people's lives
similar	*similar*	similar a
contrario/a	*opposite, contrary*	al contrario = on the contrary
anterior	*previous, before*	el día anterior = the day before
reciente	*recent*	
temporal	*temporary*	un trabajo temporal = a temporary job · also 'storm' as a noun: el temporal
permanente	*permanent*	
fijo/a	*fixed, permanent, steady*	un trabajo fijo = a permanent job
disponible	*available*	**¿Estás disponible el lunes?** *Are you available on Monday?*
gratuito/a	*free (of charge)*	more formal than 'gratis'
imprevisto/a	*unexpected, unforeseen*	un imprevisto = something unexpected came up

-ANTE VS -ADO: THE CAUSE AND THE FEELING

When you learn an adjective of emotion, learn the pair: emocionante / emocionado, sorprendente / sorprendido, preocupante / preocupado, decepcionante / decepcionado. The -ante / -ente form describes the thing that causes the feeling (the film is exciting); the -ado / -ido form describes how you feel (I'm excited). It's exactly like English 'boring / bored' — but now you know it in Spanish.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

04 · Small words that add certainty, doubt, emphasis and surprise

Adverbs

Adverbs are what make your Spanish sound like YOU: sure or doubtful, surprised, emphatic, honest. In this section you'll learn how to express probability (and which mood each word needs), how to say 'even', 'hardly' and 'still', and the many faces of 'ya'. Watch out for the false friends actualmente and seguramente.

Reality, truth & emphasis

actualmente *currently / nowadays / at present*

ADVERB B1

A false friend: actualmente means 'at the moment, currently'. It never means 'actually'. For 'actually', use en realidad or de hecho.

- **Actualmente vivo en Valencia, pero soy de Burgos.**
  I currently live in Valencia, but I'm from Burgos.
- **Actualmente, la mayoría de la gente trabaja con ordenador.**
  Nowadays most people work on a computer.

DON'T CONFUSE actualmente = currently · en realidad = actually (correcting) · de hecho = in fact (adding proof). See also hoy en día in Time & frequency.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Actualmente~~, no me gusta el café (meaning 'Actually, I don't like coffee') → ✓ En realidad, no me gusta el café.

en realidad *actually / in reality / really*

ADVERB B1

The best translation of English 'actually' when you correct an idea or reveal the truth behind appearances.

- **Parece serio, pero en realidad es muy divertido.**
  He seems serious, but actually he's great fun.
- **En realidad no sé por qué lo hice.**
  Actually, I don't know why I did it.

DON'T CONFUSE en realidad (contrast: what seems vs what is) · de hecho (adds evidence: in fact).

de hecho *in fact / actually / as a matter of fact*

ADVERB B1

Introduces information that confirms or reinforces what you've just said, often with a little surprise.

› **Me encanta Lisboa. De hecho, este año he ido tres veces.**
I love Lisbon. In fact, I've been three times this year.

› **—¿Conoces a Lucía? —Sí, de hecho, trabajamos juntas.**
"Do you know Lucía?" "Yes, actually, we work together."

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*En hecho~~ → ✓ De hecho.

realmente *really / truly*

ADVERB B1

Really, in the sense of 'truly' or 'very'. In speech, 'de verdad' or 'muy' is often more natural.

› **Es una película realmente buena.**
It's a really good film.

› **¿Realmente crees que es buena idea?**
Do you really think it's a good idea?

DON'T CONFUSE realmente (a bit more formal) · de verdad (conversational): ¿De verdad? = Really?

sobre todo *above all / especially / mainly*

ADVERB B1

Highlights the most important element. Extremely common and natural in speech.

› **Me gusta viajar, sobre todo por Latinoamérica.**
I love travelling, especially around Latin America.

› **Y sobre todo, no te olvides del pasaporte.**
And above all, don't forget your passport.

DON'T CONFUSE sobre todo (conversational, very frequent) · especialmente (a bit more formal) · principalmente (mainly).

COMMON MISTAKE Not 'over everything' in a physical sense — that would be 'encima de todo'.

solo / solamente *only / just*

ADVERB B1

Only, just. Solamente is a bit more emphatic. The old accent 'sólo' is no longer required by the RAE.

› Solo quiero un café, gracias.
I just want a coffee, thanks.

› Solamente faltan dos días.
There are only two days to go.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **no solo... sino también** *not only... but also*

NOTE Solo can also be an adjective: alone. 'Estoy solo' = I'm alone; 'Solo estoy' would be odd. Context usually makes it clear.

más bien *rather / more like*

ADVERB B1

Corrects or nuances what's been said: 'not exactly X, more like Y'.

› No es tímido, más bien reservado.
He's not shy, more reserved.

› —¿Estás enfadada? —Más bien cansada.
"Are you angry?" "Tired, more like."

Probability & doubt: which mood?

Spanish gives you several ways to say 'maybe' and 'probably' — and each one has its own rule about indicative or subjunctive. Learn the rule with the word.

quizás / quizá / tal vez *perhaps / maybe*

ADVERB B1

PATTERN **quizás / tal vez + indicative (more sure) or subjunctive (less sure)**

Quizás and quizá are identical. Tal vez is the same, slightly more formal. They can take both moods: subjunctive sounds more doubtful.

› Quizás vamos al cine esta noche.
Maybe we'll go to the cinema tonight. (fairly likely)

› Tal vez tenga razón, no lo sé.
Perhaps she's right, I don't know. (more doubtful)

› —¿Vienes? —Quizás.
"Are you coming?" "Maybe."

COMMON MISTAKE If 'quizás' comes AFTER the verb, use indicative: ✓ Vendrá mañana, quizás. ✗ ~~*Venga mañana~~, quizás.

a lo mejor *maybe / perhaps*

ADVERB INFORMAL B1

PATTERN **a lo mejor + indicative (ALWAYS)**

Very common in spoken Spanish. Unlike quizás, it is always followed by the indicative.

› A lo mejor llueve mañana.
Maybe it'll rain tomorrow.

› A lo mejor no te ha llegado el mensaje.
Maybe you haven't got the message.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Widely used in Spain and Mexico. In some areas 'capaz que' (Southern Cone) or 'de pronto' (Colombia) are also heard.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*A lo mejor llueva~~ → ✓ A lo mejor llueve. And it doesn't mean 'at best' — that's 'en el mejor de los casos'.

probablemente / posiblemente *probably / possibly*

ADVERB B1

PATTERN **+ indicative or subjunctive (before the verb)**

Probablemente = high probability; posiblemente = a little lower. Both accept indicative and subjunctive when they come before the verb.

› Probablemente llegaremos tarde.
We'll probably be late.

› Posiblemente sea la mejor paella que he comido.
It's possibly the best paella I've ever had.

DON'T CONFUSE Es probable que / Es posible que + ALWAYS subjunctive: Es probable que llueva.

seguramente *probably / most likely*

ADVERB B1

PATTERN **seguramente + indicative (usually)**

A false friend: seguramente does NOT mean 'surely, definitely'. It means 'probably'. For 'definitely' say seguro, sin duda, or con toda seguridad.

› Seguramente está en el metro y no tiene cobertura.
He's probably on the underground and has no signal.

› Seguramente nos veremos en verano.
We'll most likely see each other in the summer.

COMMON MISTAKE If you want to be 100% sure: ✗ ~~*Seguramente vendré (= I'~~ll probably come) → ✓ Seguro que vengo / Vendré sin falta.

Even, hardly & still

incluso *even / including*

ADVERB B1

Introduces something surprising or extreme: 'even'. It goes before the word it affects.

› **Trabaja todos los días, incluso los domingos.**
She works every day, even on Sundays.

› **Incluso mi abuela usa WhatsApp.**
Even my gran uses WhatsApp.

DON'T CONFUSE incluso (neutral, most common) · hasta (more colloquial, same meaning) · aun (written, formal).

COMMON MISTAKE Negative 'not even' is NOT 'incluso no' → ✓ ni siquiera.

hasta (even) *even*

ADVERB INFORMAL B1

New meaning: you know hasta = until. In conversation, hasta also means 'even', like incluso.

› **Es tan fácil que hasta un niño puede hacerlo.**
It's so easy that even a child could do it.

› **Hasta mi jefe se rió.**
Even my boss laughed.

NOTE Context tells you which meaning: Hasta el lunes (until Monday) vs Hasta él lo sabe (even he knows).

ni siquiera *not even*

ADVERB B1

PATTERN **ni siquiera + verb · no + verb + ni siquiera**

The negative 'even'. Before the verb it needs no 'no'; after the verb, you add 'no' in front.

› **Ni siquiera me dijo adiós.**
He didn't even say goodbye to me.

› **No tuve tiempo ni siquiera de comer.**
I didn't even have time to eat.

› **Ni siquiera lo pienses.**
Don't even think about it.

NOTE In colloquial speech, just 'ni' is common: Ni me miró = He didn't even look at me.

apenas *hardly / barely / scarcely*

ADVERB B1

Almost not. It's negative in meaning, so you don't need 'no' before the verb.

› Apenas dormí anoche.
I hardly slept last night.

› Apenas hay gente en la playa.
There's hardly anyone on the beach.

› Hace apenas un mes que vivo aquí.
I've been living here for barely a month.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*No apenas dormí~~ → ✓ Apenas dormí / No dormí apenas (with 'no' only if apenas goes after the verb).

todavía / aún (vs aun) *still / yet / even (aun)*

ADVERB B1

Todavía and aún (with accent) are synonyms: still, yet (in negatives). Aun (no accent) = incluso, even. 'Aun así' = even so.

todavía / aún — *still*

› Todavía vivo con mis padres.
I still live with my parents.

todavía no / aún no — *not yet*

› Aún no he terminado.
I haven't finished yet.

aun (no accent) — *even*

› Aun así, no pienso rendirme.
Even so, I'm not going to give up.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **todavía más / aún más** *even more* · **aun así** *even so* · **aun cuando** *even when / even if (formal)*

COMMON MISTAKE English 'yet' in questions: ¿Ya has comido? (Have you eaten yet?) — use YA, not todavía, in positive questions.

ya *already / now / any more / I know*

ADVERB B1

A tiny word with many jobs. It changes meaning with tense and context, and it's everywhere in conversation.

already — *something has happened*

› Ya he comido, gracias.
I've already eaten, thanks.

now, right away — *immediacy*

› ¡Ya voy!
I'm coming!

ya no — *not any more*

› Ya no trabajo allí.
I don't work there any more.

in the future — *eventually, later*

› Ya hablaremos.
We'll talk about it later.

agreement / understanding — *I see, I know*

› —Hace frío. —Ya, ya.
"It's cold." "Yeah, I know."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ya está** *that's it, done* · **ya que** *since, as (see Connectors)* · **¡Ya era hora!** *About time!* · **desde ya** *right now, from now on (esp. Latin America)*

How things happen: manner & surprise

de todas formas / de todas maneras *anyway / in any case / still*

ADVERB B1

Means 'regardless of what was just said'. Also used to wrap up or change direction in conversation. 'De todos modos' is a synonym.

› No sé si podré ir, pero de todas formas te aviso.
I don't know if I'll be able to go, but I'll let you know anyway.

› Gracias de todas maneras.
Thanks anyway.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~De todas las formas~~ → ✓ De todas formas (no article).

de repente

suddenly / all of a sudden

ADVERB B1

Introduces an unexpected event — the classic word for telling stories in the past.

› **Estábamos cenando y, de repente, se fue la luz.**
We were having dinner and suddenly the power went off.

› **De repente me acordé de que tenía cita.**
All of a sudden I remembered I had an appointment.

DON'T CONFUSE de repente = de pronto (same meaning) · de golpe (all at once, abruptly).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In parts of Latin America, 'de repente' also means 'maybe': De repente llueve.

poco a poco

little by little / gradually / bit by bit

ADVERB B1

Describes a slow, gradual process. Very encouraging when you learn a language!

› **Poco a poco me voy acostumbrando al horario español.**
Little by little I'm getting used to Spanish hours.

› **Tranquila, poco a poco.**
Take it easy, one step at a time.

a propósito

on purpose / by the way

ADVERB B1

Two meanings. After a verb: on purpose, deliberately. At the start of a sentence: by the way (to introduce a related topic).

on purpose — *deliberately*

› **Perdona, no lo he hecho a propósito.**
Sorry, I didn't do it on purpose.

by the way — *introduces a related topic*

› **A propósito, ¿qué tal tu madre?**
By the way, how's your mum?

DON'T CONFUSE a propósito (by the way, related topic) · por cierto (by the way, any topic — more common).

NOTE 'A propósito de' = regarding, speaking of: A propósito de viajes, ¿has estado en Perú?

por casualidad

by chance / by any chance

ADVERB B1

By chance, accidentally. In questions, 'by any chance' — a polite way to ask. Remember: casualidad = coincidence, not 'casualty'.

› **Nos conocimos por casualidad en un tren.**
We met by chance on a train.

› **¿Tienes, por casualidad, un cargador?**
Do you have a charger, by any chance?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué casualidad!** *What a coincidence!*

al revés

the other way round / upside down / inside out / backwards

ADVERB B1

Anything in the wrong or opposite position or order. One expression for four English ones.

› **Llevas la camiseta al revés.**
Your T-shirt is inside out / on back to front.

› **No, es al revés: yo pago la cena y tú las copas.**
No, it's the other way round: I pay for dinner and you get the drinks.

NOTE For precision: boca abajo = upside down / face down · del revés = inside out.

a solas

alone / in private / on your own

ADVERB B1

Without anyone else present, often with the idea of privacy.

› **¿Podemos hablar a solas un momento?**
Can we talk in private for a moment?

› **Me gusta pasear a solas por la mañana.**
I like walking on my own in the morning.

DON'T CONFUSE a solas (in private, without company) · solo/a (adjective: alone, lonely).

a escondidas

secretly / behind someone's back / on the sly

ADVERB B1

Doing something hidden, so others don't see. Verb: esconder (to hide).

› De pequeño comía chocolate a escondidas.
As a child I used to eat chocolate on the sly.

› Se ven a escondidas porque sus familias no se llevan bien.
They see each other secretly because their families don't get on.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a escondidas de alguien** *behind someone's back*

More useful adverbs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
absolutamente	*absolutely*	absolutamente nada = absolutely nothing
principalmente	*mainly*	
en general	*in general, on the whole*	En general, estoy contenta con el curso. *On the whole, I'm happy with the course.*
generalmente	*generally, usually*	= normalmente, por lo general
por lo general	*as a rule, usually*	
sin duda	*undoubtedly, definitely*	Es, sin duda, el mejor restaurante del barrio. *It's definitely the best restaurant in the area.*
desde luego	*of course; certainly*	also expresses annoyance: ¡Desde luego...! = Honestly...! Desde luego, ¡qué mala suerte! *Honestly, what bad luck!*
sinceramente	*honestly, frankly*	
por desgracia	*unfortunately*	= desafortunadamente, lamentablemente (formal)
aproximadamente	*approximately, roughly*	colloq: más o menos, unos/unas + number
únicamente	*only, solely*	formal; = solo
de pronto	*suddenly*	= de repente
de golpe	*all at once, suddenly*	
a la fuerza	*by force; against your will*	colloq: 'of course, inevitably'
en voz alta / baja	*out loud / quietly*	Lee el texto en voz alta. *Read the text out loud.*
a tope COLLOQUIAL	*flat out, to the max*	Spain: trabajar a tope
fatal INFORMAL	*terribly, really badly*	Dormí fatal. *I slept terribly.*
igualmente	*likewise, equally; you too*	reply to good wishes: —¡Buen finde! —Igualmente.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

05 · Por or para — finally explained, one use at a time

Prepositions

English 'for' splits into two Spanish words, por and para, and that's where most mistakes happen. Here each card covers one family of uses, with a simple idea to hold on to: POR looks back at the cause or the route; PARA looks forward to the goal or destination. In the second part you'll find the prepositional phrases (a pesar de, en vez de, a partir de…) that make your sentences more precise.

POR — cause, route, time, exchange, means

Think of POR as 'because of', 'through' and 'in exchange for'. It points back to the reason or the way.

por (cause & motive)

because of / for / out of

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **por + noun / infinitive / pronoun**

Expresses the reason or motive behind something: why it happened, what moved you to act.

- Cancelaron el vuelo por la niebla.
  They cancelled the flight because of the fog.
- Lo hice por ti.
  I did it for you (for your sake).
- Me multaron por aparcar mal.
  I got fined for parking badly.
- Gracias por todo.
  Thanks for everything.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por eso** *that's why* · **por culpa de** *because of (blame)* · **por curiosidad / por amor / por miedo** *out of curiosity / for love / out of fear*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gracias para tu ayuda~~ → ✓ Gracias por tu ayuda. Thanks always go with POR.

por (movement & place)

through / along / around / by

PREPOSITION B1

Movement through or along a place, or an approximate location ('somewhere around').

- Me gusta pasear por el parque.
  I like walking in (around) the park.
- Entramos por la puerta de atrás.
  We came in through the back door.
- ¿Hay una farmacia por aquí?
  Is there a chemist's around here?
- Pasaremos por Toledo de camino a Madrid.
  We'll go through Toledo on the way to Madrid.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por aquí / por allí** *around here / over there* · **viajar por Europa** *to travel around Europe* · **pasar por casa de alguien** *to drop by someone's place*

DON'T CONFUSE Viajar por España = travel around Spain · Viajar a España / para España = travel to Spain.

por (time)

in (the morning...) / for / around

PREPOSITION B1

Parts of the day (por la mañana), approximate time (por Navidad), and frequency (una vez por semana). In Spain, 'for + duration' is usually expressed with nothing or 'durante', not por.

- Trabajo por las tardes.
  I work in the afternoons.
- Nos vemos por Semana Santa.
  We'll see each other around Easter.
- Voy al gimnasio tres veces por semana.
  I go to the gym three times a week.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America 'por dos años' for duration is more common.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Viví en Roma por dos años (sounds foreign in Spain)~~ → ✓ Viví en Roma dos años / durante dos años.

por (exchange, price & 'per')

for (price) / in exchange for / per

PREPOSITION B1

What you give or get in exchange, the price paid, and rates (per hour, per person). Also substitution: in place of someone.

› Compré la bici por 200 euros.
I bought the bike for 200 euros.

› ¿Me cambias el sitio por el tuyo?
Will you swap seats with me?

› Cobran 15 euros por persona.
They charge 15 euros per person.

› Hoy doy yo la clase por Ana, que está mala.
Today I'm teaching the class for Ana (instead of her), she's ill.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por hora / por día / por cabeza** *per hour / per day / per head* · **el 20 por ciento** *20 per cent* · **dos por dos son cuatro** *two times two is four*

por (means & agent)

by / via / over (the phone)

PREPOSITION B1

The means of communication or transport, and the agent in passive sentences ('written by').

› Te lo mando por correo electrónico.
I'll send it to you by email.

› Hablamos por teléfono cada domingo.
We talk on the phone every Sunday.

› Es un cuadro pintado por Sorolla.
It's a painting by Sorolla.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por WhatsApp / por Zoom** *on WhatsApp / on Zoom* · **por correo** *by post / by email*

NOTE For transport, Spanish usually prefers 'en': en tren, en avión (but 'por avión' = airmail).

PARA — purpose, destination, deadline, opinion

Think of PARA as an arrow pointing forward: to a goal, a place, a person, a date.

para (purpose)

(in order) to / for

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **para + infinitive (same subject) · para que + subjunctive (different subject) · para + noun**

The goal or purpose of an action, or what something is used for.

- Estudio español para trabajar en México.
  I'm studying Spanish to work in Mexico.
- Te lo explico para que lo entiendas.
  I'm explaining it so that you understand.
- ¿Para qué sirve este botón?
  What's this button for?

NOTE ¿Por qué? = why (cause) · ¿Para qué? = what for (purpose).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estudio español por trabajar en México~~ → ✓ para trabajar. Purpose = PARA. ✗ ~~*para + 'to' twice: *para a trabajar~~ → ✓ para trabajar.

para (destination & recipient)

to / for (someone) / towards

PREPOSITION B1

Where something is heading, and who something is intended for.

- Mañana salgo para Lisboa.
  Tomorrow I'm leaving for Lisbon.
- Este regalo es para ti.
  This present is for you.
- Trabaja para una empresa alemana.
  She works for a German company.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el tren para Sevilla** *the train to Seville* · **ir para casa** *to head home (colloquial)*

DON'T CONFUSE Lo hice para ti (it's a gift FOR you, you receive it) vs Lo hice por ti (I did it because of you / on your behalf).

para (deadline)

by / for (a date)

PREPOSITION B1

A deadline or a point in the future by which something must happen.

- Necesito el informe para el viernes.
  I need the report by Friday.
- ¿Para cuándo lo quieres?
  When do you need it by?
- Quedan diez días para las vacaciones.
  There are ten days left until the holidays.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **para entonces** *by then* · **para siempre** *forever*

para (opinion & comparison)

for / in my opinion / considering

PREPOSITION B1

'Para mí' introduces a personal opinion. 'Para + noun' can also mean 'considering' (for someone of that age, for a beginner...).

- Para mí, es la mejor ciudad de España.
  For me, it's the best city in Spain.
- Habla muy bien para llevar solo un año aquí.
  He speaks really well considering he's only been here a year.
- Hace calor para ser octubre.
  It's hot for October.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Por mí~~, es la mejor (= as far as I'm concerned, I don't mind) → ✓ Para mí, es la mejor. 'Por mí' means 'I'm fine with it': Por mí, vale.

Fixed expressions with por and para

por cierto
by the way
To introduce a new topic casually.

> Por cierto, ¿sabes algo de Javi?
> *By the way, have you heard from Javi?*

por lo menos / al menos
at least
Minimum quantity or a small consolation.

> Por lo menos no llueve.
> *At least it's not raining.*

por lo visto
apparently
To report something you've heard.

> Por lo visto, se van a vivir a Chile.
> *Apparently they're moving to Chile.*

por ahí INFORMAL
out, around; something like that
Ir por ahí = to go out; also approximate answers.

> —¿Tiene 40 años? —Por ahí.
> *"Is he 40?" "Something like that."*

por mí INFORMAL
as far as I'm concerned; I don't mind
Giving permission or showing indifference.

> Por mí, podemos ir mañana.
> *I don't mind, we can go tomorrow.*

por otra parte
on the other hand; besides
To add or contrast a point (see Connectors for more).

estar por + infinitive
to be still to be done; to be tempted to
La cocina está por limpiar = the kitchen still needs cleaning.

> Estoy por llamarla.
> *I'm tempted to call her.*

no ser para tanto INFORMAL
to be not that bad / not a big deal
To downplay a reaction.

> Venga, no es para tanto.
> *Come on, it's not that bad.*

estar para + infinitive
to be about to; to be in the mood for
No estoy para bromas = I'm not in the mood for jokes.

> El tren está para salir.
> *The train is about to leave.*

para colmo
to top it all
Adds the final bad thing in a list of problems.

> Perdí el bus y, para colmo, empezó a llover.
> *I missed the bus and, to top it all, it started raining.*

Prepositional phrases: cause, contrast & alternatives

These phrases are followed by a noun, a pronoun or an infinitive. To add a full clause, you'll need the connector version (a pesar de que, debido a que…) — see Connectors.

a causa de / debido a *because of / due to / owing to*

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **a causa de + noun · debido a + noun**

Introduce the cause. Both are more formal than 'por'; debido a is common in announcements and written Spanish.

- La carretera está cortada a causa de la nieve.
  The road is closed because of the snow.
- Debido a obras, la estación permanecerá cerrada.
  Due to engineering works, the station will remain closed.

DON'T CONFUSE por (everyday) · a causa de (neutral) · debido a (formal) · por culpa de (cause + blame, negative).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*debido de la lluvia~~ → ✓ debido a la lluvia.

gracias a *thanks to*

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **gracias a + noun / pronoun / infinitive**

A cause with a positive result. For a negative cause, use 'por culpa de'.

› Conseguí el trabajo gracias a ti.
I got the job thanks to you.

› Gracias a la app, no me pierdo nunca.
Thanks to the app, I never get lost.

OPPOSITE **por culpa de** — because of (it's someone's fault)

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gracias a la lluvia~~, no fuimos a la playa (unless you're happy!) → ✓ Por culpa de la lluvia...

a pesar de *despite / in spite of*

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **a pesar de + noun / infinitive · a pesar de todo**

Introduces an obstacle that doesn't stop the main action.

› Salimos a pesar de la lluvia.
We went out despite the rain.

› A pesar de vivir lejos, viene a verme a menudo.
Despite living far away, he comes to see me often.

› A pesar de todo, fue un buen año.
In spite of everything, it was a good year.

NOTE With a full clause: a pesar de que + verb (see Connectors).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*A pesar la lluvia~~ → ✓ A pesar de la lluvia. ✗ ~~*A pesar de viviendo~~ → ✓ A pesar de vivir.

en vez de / en lugar de *instead of*

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **en vez de / en lugar de + noun / infinitive**

Two synonyms for 'instead of'. En vez de is a touch more colloquial.

› ¿Por qué no vamos andando en vez de coger el coche?
Why don't we walk instead of taking the car?

› En lugar de quejarte, haz algo.
Instead of complaining, do something.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*En vez de cogiendo~~ → ✓ En vez de coger (infinitive after prepositions).

a favor de / en contra de

in favour of / against

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **estar a favor de / en contra de + noun / infinitive**

To express your position on an issue. Very useful in debates and B1 exams.

› Estoy a favor de trabajar desde casa.
I'm in favour of working from home.

› Mucha gente está en contra de la nueva ley.
Lots of people are against the new law.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer un favor** *to do a favour* · **votar a favor / en contra** *to vote for / against*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy contra de...~~ → ✓ Estoy en contra de... (or simply 'contra' + noun in short phrases: luchar contra el cambio climático).

Prepositional phrases: topic, time & place

en cuanto a / respecto a / acerca de

as for / regarding / about

PREPOSITION B1

En cuanto a and respecto a introduce a new aspect of the topic ('as for...'). Acerca de = about (a book about, to talk about) — a bit more formal than 'sobre'.

› En cuanto al precio, ya lo hablaremos.
As for the price, we'll discuss it later.

› Respecto a tu pregunta, te contesto mañana.
Regarding your question, I'll answer tomorrow.

› Quería información acerca del curso.
I wanted some information about the course.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **con respecto a** *with regard to (formal)*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse 'en cuanto a + noun' (as for) with 'en cuanto + verb' (as soon as): En cuanto llegue, te llamo.

a partir de

from / starting from / as of / based on

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **a partir de + time / place / noun**

Marks a starting point in time, place or quantity. It also means 'based on' or 'from' (material, information).

› A partir del lunes, la oficina abre a las ocho.
From Monday, the office opens at eight.

› A partir de ahora, hablamos solo en español.
From now on, we speak only Spanish.

› La película está hecha a partir de una historia real.
The film is based on a true story.

DON'T CONFUSE desde (from a point, often with hasta: desde las 9 hasta las 5) vs a partir de (from this point onwards, a change starts).

a lo largo de

throughout / along / over (time)

PREPOSITION B1

Along a line (a street, a river) or throughout a period of time.

› Hay terrazas a lo largo de todo el paseo marítimo.
There are terraces all along the seafront.

› A lo largo de su vida, vivió en seis países.
Throughout her life, she lived in six countries.

en medio de

in the middle of / amid

PREPOSITION B1

Physically in the centre of something, or during something (often a problem or chaos).

› Había un coche parado en medio de la calle.
There was a car stopped in the middle of the street.

› Me llamó en medio de la reunión.
She called me in the middle of the meeting.

NOTE 'En mitad de' is a synonym: en mitad de la noche = in the middle of the night.

al cabo de

after (a period of time) / later

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **al cabo de + period of time**

After a certain amount of time had passed, in narratives. Mostly used in the past.

› Al cabo de una hora, por fin llegó el técnico.
After an hour, the technician finally arrived.

› Se conocieron en enero y, al cabo de un año, se casaron.
They met in January and a year later they got married.

DON'T CONFUSE al cabo de (past narrative) vs dentro de (future, from now).

dentro de (time)

in (time from now) / within

PREPOSITION B1

PATTERN **dentro de + period of time (future)**

New meaning: you know dentro de = inside. With time, it means 'in X time from now'.

› La película empieza dentro de diez minutos.
The film starts in ten minutes.

› Dentro de un año quiero hablar español con fluidez.
In a year's time I want to speak fluent Spanish.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*En diez minutos (understood~~, but less natural in Spain for 'from now') → ✓ Dentro de diez minutos. ✗ ~~*Hace diez minutos (that~~'s 'ten minutes AGO').

a través de

through / via / across

PREPOSITION B1

Physically through something, or 'by means of' (through a person, a website).

› Se ve el mar a través de la ventana.
You can see the sea through the window.

› Encontré el piso a través de una amiga.
I found the flat through a friend.

según *according to / depending on*

PREPOSITION B1

According to a source, or depending on circumstances. With pronouns it uses the subject form: según tú, según yo (not ~~*según ti~~).

- Según el pronóstico, mañana va a llover.
  According to the forecast, it's going to rain tomorrow.
- Según tú, ¿qué deberíamos hacer?
  In your opinion, what should we do?
- —¿Vas a ir? —Según.
  "Are you going?" "It depends."

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **según + verb** *depending on: según cómo me encuentre*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Según a la profesora~~ → ✓ Según la profesora. ✗ ~~*según mí~~ → ✓ según yo.

More prepositional phrases

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
por culpa de	*because of (it's the fault of)*	**Llegué tarde por culpa del tráfico.** *I was late because of the traffic.*
a cambio de	*in exchange for*	**Te ayudo a cambio de una cena.** *I'll help you in exchange for dinner.*
aparte de	*apart from, besides*	
excepto / menos / salvo	*except*	salvo = more formal · todos menos yo
en lugar de	*instead of*	see en vez de
a punto de	*about to*	estar a punto de + inf **Estaba a punto de llamarte.** *I was just about to call you.*
a la hora de	*when it comes to*	**A la hora de pagar, nadie tiene dinero.** *When it comes to paying, nobody has any money.*
de acuerdo con FORMAL	*in accordance with, according to*	
en relación con FORMAL	*in relation to, regarding*	
a lo lejos	*in the distance*	
en el fondo de	*at the bottom/back of*	
por encima de	*above, over; more than*	por encima de todo = above all
por debajo de	*below, under; less than*	

THE ARROW TEST

When you hesitate between por and para, ask yourself: am I looking back at a reason or the way something happened (POR: because of, through, in exchange for), or forward to a goal, a person, a place or a deadline (PARA: in order to, for someone, towards, by)? Then check your sentence against one example from these cards that you know by heart.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

06 · From 'and... but... so...' to sounding like a real speaker

Connectors

At A2 you linked ideas with y, pero, porque and así que. At B1 you start building longer, more convincing sentences, in speech and in writing. The connectors here are organised by what they do: add, contrast, explain causes and results, set conditions, place things in time, rephrase and wrap up. Watch the register labels and the '+ subjunctive' markers: many B1 connectors force you to choose the right mood.

Mood changes the meaning

Three connectors you already half-know. With the subjunctive, they say something different. This is one of the big steps of B1.

aunque *although / even though (+ indicative) · even if (+ subjunctive)*

CONNECTOR B1

PATTERN **aunque + indicative (a fact) · aunque + subjunctive (a possibility, or a fact you don't care about)**

New use: you know aunque + indicative for real facts. With the subjunctive it means 'even if': the situation isn't confirmed, or it doesn't matter to you. The choice changes the message, not just the grammar.

aunque + indicative — *even though: you state it as a fact*

› Aunque llueve, vamos a salir.
Even though it's raining, we're going out.

aunque + subjunctive — *even if: it may or may not happen*

› Aunque llueva, vamos a salir.
Even if it rains, we're going out.

aunque + subjunctive (known fact) — *even though, but that's not the point*

› Aunque sea tu jefe, no tiene derecho a hablarte así.
He may be your boss, but he has no right to speak to you like that.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aunque sea un poco** *even if it's just a little* · **aunque no lo parezca** *even if it doesn't look like it*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Aunque llueva mañana~~, pero iremos → ✓ Aunque llueva mañana, iremos. Never aunque + pero in the same sentence.

de modo que / de manera que

so (+ indicative) · so that (+ subjunctive)

CONNECTOR B1

PATTERN **de modo que + indicative = result · de modo que + subjunctive = purpose**

Two meanings. With the indicative they introduce a consequence, like así que but a bit more careful (good for emails and essays). With the subjunctive they express purpose, like para que.

+ indicative: result — *so, therefore*

› El tren se retrasó, de modo que llegamos tarde a la reunión.
The train was delayed, so we were late for the meeting.

+ subjunctive: purpose — *so that, in a way that*

› Habla más alto, de manera que todos te oigan.
Speak up so that everyone can hear you.

DON'T CONFUSE así que = so (more conversational) · de modo que = so (a bit more formal) · para que = so that (always + subjunctive).

NOTE De modo que and de manera que are interchangeable. In speech, '¿De modo que te vas?' = 'So you're leaving, then?'

en cuanto

as soon as

CONNECTOR B1

PATTERN **en cuanto + indicative (habits, past) · en cuanto + subjunctive (future)**

Like cuando, but faster: the second action happens immediately. Same rule as cuando: if you are talking about the future, use the subjunctive.

habit / past → indicative — *every time, as soon as*

› En cuanto llego a casa, me quito los zapatos.
As soon as I get home, I take my shoes off.

future → subjunctive — *as soon as (it hasn't happened yet)*

› Te llamo en cuanto salga del trabajo.
I'll call you as soon as I leave work.

DON'T CONFUSE tan pronto como = as soon as (more formal, same rules).

NOTE Don't confuse it with 'en cuanto a' = as for / regarding: En cuanto al precio, nos parece bien.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~En cuanto llegaré~~, te escribo → ✓ En cuanto llegue, te escribo. Never the future tense after en cuanto.

Addition: and there's more

es más

what's more / in fact

Adds a stronger argument on top of the first one. Usually after a full stop or a comma. Very common in speech and in opinion texts.

No me apetece salir. Es más, creo que me voy a acostar ya.
I don't feel like going out. In fact, I think I'm going to bed now.

encima COLLOQUIAL

on top of that / to make matters worse

New meaning: you know encima = on top (place). As a connector, it adds something that makes a bad situation worse. Often 'y encima'. Typical when complaining.

Llegó tarde y encima no pidió perdón.
He turned up late, and on top of that he didn't apologise.

no solo... sino (también)...

not only... but also...

Adds two points and stresses the second. Note: sino, not pero. Before a verb, use sino que.

> No solo habla inglés, sino también chino.
> *She not only speaks English, but also Chinese.*

asimismo FORMAL

likewise / also / in addition

Written and formal speech: reports, formal emails, presentations. In conversation just say también or además.

> Asimismo, le informamos de que la oficina cerrará en agosto.
> *We would also like to inform you that the office will be closed in August.*

y eso que... INFORMAL

and that's despite... / even though...

Adds a surprising fact that makes the first statement more striking. Very natural in conversation.

> Aprobó el examen, y eso que no estudió nada.
> *She passed the exam, even though she didn't study at all.*

Contrast: but, although, whereas

a pesar de que

despite the fact that / even though

Same rules as aunque: + indicative for facts, + subjunctive for 'even if'. Slightly more formal than aunque. Remember: a pesar de + noun / infinitive, a pesar de que + verb.

> A pesar de que trabaja mucho, siempre tiene tiempo para sus amigos.
> *Even though he works a lot, he always has time for his friends.*

mientras que

whereas / while

Contrasts two people or things side by side. Not about time: for 'while (during)' use mientras alone.

> Yo soy muy madrugadora, mientras que mi pareja odia levantarse temprano.
> *I'm a real early bird, whereas my partner hates getting up early.*

por un lado... por otro (lado)...

on the one hand... on the other (hand)...

Presents two sides of an idea. Perfect for opinion essays and for weighing up a decision. Also: por una parte... por otra...

> Por un lado, el piso es precioso; por otro, está muy lejos del centro.
> *On the one hand, the flat is lovely; on the other, it's a long way from the centre.*

aun así

even so / still

After admitting a problem, you say the result doesn't change. Note: aun without an accent here.

> El hotel era caro. Aun así, mereció la pena.
> *The hotel was expensive. Even so, it was worth it.*

no obstante FORMAL

however / nevertheless

A formal sin embargo. Use it in reports, formal emails and essays, not with friends.

> El proyecto va bien. No obstante, necesitamos más tiempo.
> *The project is going well. However, we need more time.*

sino

but (rather) / instead

After a negative, to correct: not A but B. Pero adds information; sino replaces it. Before a conjugated verb: sino que.

> No es inglés, sino irlandés.
> *He isn't English, he's Irish.*

Cause: giving reasons beyond 'porque'

Ya que and puesto que can go first or in the middle of the sentence; como only goes first.

ya que

since / as

Gives a reason that is known or easy to accept. Neutral, good in speech and writing.

> Ya que estás en la cocina, ¿me traes un vaso de agua?
> *Since you're in the kitchen, can you bring me a glass of water?*

puesto que FORMAL

since / given that

Like ya que, a bit more formal. Typical in emails, reports and arguments.

> Puesto que nadie ha presentado objeciones, aprobamos la propuesta.
> *Since nobody has raised any objections, we'll approve the proposal.*

dado que FORMAL

given that

Formal reasoning. Very common in written Spanish and the news.

> Dado que los precios han subido, tendremos que revisar el presupuesto.
> *Given that prices have gone up, we'll have to review the budget.*

debido a que FORMAL

due to the fact that / because

Debido a + noun, debido a que + verb. Official announcements and written explanations.

> El vuelo se ha cancelado debido a que hay niebla.
> *The flight has been cancelled because of fog.*

por culpa de que / gracias a que

because of (bad) / thanks to (good)

These add your feeling about the cause: blame or gratitude. + noun without que, + verb with que.

> Llegamos a tiempo gracias a que Ana conocía un atajo.
> *We got there on time thanks to Ana knowing a shortcut.*

Consequence: so, therefore

por lo tanto / por tanto

therefore / so

The logical result. Neutral to formal: good for work emails, presentations and essays.

> No tenemos suficientes datos; por lo tanto, no podemos sacar conclusiones.
> *We don't have enough data, so we can't draw any conclusions.*

por consiguiente FORMAL

consequently

Very formal written Spanish: reports, academic texts, official letters.

> La demanda ha bajado y, por consiguiente, los precios también.
> *Demand has fallen and, consequently, so have prices.*

con lo cual

which means / so

Very common in conversation to link a fact with what follows from it.

> Perdí el último metro, con lo cual tuve que coger un taxi.
> *I missed the last metro, which meant I had to get a taxi.*

¿Así que...? INFORMAL

So...? / So you're telling me...?

New use: at the start of a question, así que checks or reacts to a conclusion you've just drawn.

> ¿Así que os mudáis a Valencia? ¡Qué bien!
> *So you're moving to Valencia? That's great!*

Purpose: so that

para que (+ subjunctive)

so that / for someone to

Always + subjunctive. If the subject is the same, use para + infinitive instead. Full explanation in Common constructions.

> Te lo explico otra vez para que lo entiendas.
> *I'll explain it again so that you understand.*

con el fin de / con el fin de que (+ subjunctive)

FORMAL

in order to / so that

Formal version of para / para que. Notices, reports, formal emails. Also: a fin de (que).

> Les enviamos el documento con el fin de que lo revisen antes de la reunión.
> *We are sending you the document so that you can review it before the meeting.*

no vaya a ser que (+ subjunctive)

INFORMAL

just in case / in case... (we don't want that)

A precaution against something you don't want. Very natural in conversation.

> Llévate el paraguas, no vaya a ser que llueva.
> *Take your umbrella, just in case it rains.*

Condition: in case, as long as, unless

Apart from si and por si, all of these take the subjunctive.

en caso de que (+ subjunctive)

in case / if

A possible situation and what to do then. Neutral to formal: very common in instructions and work emails. Short form: en caso de + noun/infinitive.

> En caso de que no puedas venir, avísame.
> *If you can't come, let me know.*

por si (+ indicative)

(just) in case

A precaution. Unlike en caso de que, it takes the indicative. You know 'por si acaso'; here it introduces a whole clause.

> Te dejo mi número por si necesitas algo.
> *I'll leave you my number in case you need anything.*

siempre que / siempre y cuando (+ subjunctive)

as long as / provided that

A condition you insist on. Siempre y cuando is stronger. Careful: siempre que + indicative = whenever.

> Puedes usar mi coche, siempre y cuando me lo devuelvas con gasolina.
> *You can use my car, as long as you bring it back with fuel.*

a no ser que / a menos que (+ subjunctive)

unless

The only thing that would change the plan. Also: salvo que (more formal).

> Iremos a la playa, a no ser que haga mal tiempo.
> *We'll go to the beach, unless the weather's bad.*

con tal de que (+ subjunctive)

as long as / provided that

You'll accept almost anything if this happens. Con tal de + infinitive when the subject is the same.

> Hago lo que sea con tal de que dejes de quejarte.
> *I'll do anything as long as you stop complaining.*

Time: before, after, until, since

Golden rule: when the action is still in the future, these connectors take the subjunctive. Antes de que always does.

antes de que (+ subjunctive)

before

Always + subjunctive, even in the past. If the subject is the same, use antes de + infinitive.

> Quiero terminar esto antes de que llegue el jefe.
> *I want to finish this before the boss arrives.*

después de que

after

+ subjunctive for the future, + indicative for the past. Same subject: después de + infinitive.

> Hablaremos después de que termine la reunión.
> *We'll talk after the meeting finishes.*

hasta que

until / till

+ subjunctive for the future, + indicative for the past and habits. Hasta que no + subjunctive is also very common and means the same.

> No me voy hasta que me lo expliques.
> *I'm not leaving until you explain it to me.*

desde que

since / ever since

From a moment in the past until now. + indicative.

> Desde que vivo en Madrid, salgo mucho más.
> *Since I've been living in Madrid, I go out much more.*

tan pronto como FORMAL

as soon as

A more formal en cuanto. Same mood rules.

> Le responderemos tan pronto como sea posible.
> *We will reply as soon as possible.*

Reformulation: in other words

es decir

that is / in other words / i.e.

Explains or clarifies what you've just said. Neutral: fine in speech and in writing.

> Llegaré pasado mañana, es decir, el jueves.
> *I'll arrive the day after tomorrow, that is, on Thursday.*

o sea INFORMAL

I mean / so

New use: beyond 'that is', o sea draws a conclusion ('o sea, que…' = so you mean…) or corrects yourself. Avoid it in formal writing; use es decir.

> —Mañana trabajo hasta las diez. —O sea, que no vienes a cenar.
> *"I'm working till ten tomorrow." "So you're not coming to dinner, then."*

mejor dicho

or rather / I mean

Corrects yourself immediately with a more accurate word.

> Nos vemos el martes, mejor dicho, el miércoles.
> *See you on Tuesday, or rather, Wednesday.*

en otras palabras

in other words

Says the same idea more simply or more directly.

> Han reducido el presupuesto. En otras palabras, no hay dinero para el viaje.
> *They've cut the budget. In other words, there's no money for the trip.*

Introducing your opinion (in writing)

In conversation you'll mostly use creo que or para mí (see the Speaking Toolkit). These connectors open a paragraph in an email, essay or presentation.

desde mi punto de vista

from my point of view

Slightly more careful than en mi opinión. Note: desde, not ~~*en mi punto de vista~~.

> Desde mi punto de vista, deberíamos esperar.
> *From my point of view, we should wait.*

por lo que a mí respecta

as far as I'm concerned

Gives your personal position, sometimes in contrast with others'. Informal version: por mí.

> Por lo que a mí respecta, podemos empezar mañana.
> *As far as I'm concerned, we can start tomorrow.*

a mi juicio FORMAL

in my view / in my judgement

Formal, confident. Good for essays and reports.

> A mi juicio, la propuesta no es realista.
> *In my view, the proposal isn't realistic.*

Sequencing & concluding

Ideal for presentations, emails and the writing part of exams. You already know primero, luego and por último.

para empezar

to begin with / first of all

Opens a list of points or arguments. Neutral, also in speech.

> Para empezar, me gustaría presentarme.
> *To begin with, I'd like to introduce myself.*

en primer lugar... en segundo lugar...

firstly... secondly...

Orders arguments clearly. A bit more formal: perfect for essays and presentations.

> En primer lugar, es más barato; en segundo lugar, es más rápido.
> *Firstly, it's cheaper; secondly, it's faster.*

a continuación

next / below / now

Introduces the next step or what comes after in a text or presentation.

> A continuación, les explicaré cómo funciona la aplicación.
> *Next, I'll explain how the app works.*

para terminar / para acabar

finally / to finish

Introduces your last point. Para acabar is slightly more conversational.

> Para terminar, quiero daros las gracias a todos.
> *Finally, I want to thank you all.*

en resumen

in short / to sum up

Summarises what you've said. Neutral, used everywhere.

> En resumen, fue un viaje caro pero inolvidable.
> *In short, it was an expensive trip but an unforgettable one.*

en definitiva

all in all / in the end / basically

Gives the final conclusion or the bottom line. Very common in Spain, in speech and writing.

> En definitiva, lo importante es que estamos todos bien.
> *All in all, what matters is that we're all OK.*

en conclusión FORMAL

in conclusion

Closes an essay or formal presentation. In conversation, it can sound stiff: try en definitiva or total, que.

> En conclusión, la ciudad necesita más zonas verdes.
> *In conclusion, the city needs more green spaces.*

Connector traps

Future after time connectors

✗ *~~Cuando tendré tiempo~~, te llamaré. / *~~Hasta que vendrás~~.

✓ Cuando tenga tiempo, te llamaré. / Hasta que vengas.

After cuando, en cuanto, hasta que, después de que and similar, Spanish never uses the future tense. If the action hasn't happened yet, use the present subjunctive.

› **En cuanto termine el curso, buscaré trabajo.**
As soon as I finish the course, I'll look for a job.

REMEMBER English does the same: you say 'when I have time', not 'when I will have time'. Spanish just adds the subjunctive.

en caso de que vs por si

✗ *~~Llévate dinero por si lo necesites~~.

✓ Llévate dinero por si lo necesitas. / ...en caso de que lo necesites.

Both mean 'in case', but por si takes the indicative and en caso de que takes the subjunctive.

› **Te mando la dirección por si te pierdes.**
I'll send you the address in case you get lost.

a pesar de vs a pesar de que

✗ *~~A pesar de llovía~~, salimos.

✓ A pesar de que llovía, salimos. / A pesar de la lluvia, salimos.

A pesar de goes with a noun or an infinitive. With a conjugated verb you need que.

› **A pesar de estar cansada, fue al gimnasio.**
Despite being tired, she went to the gym.

antes de que + same subject

✗ *~~Antes de que salgo~~, cierro las ventanas.

✓ Antes de salir, cierro las ventanas.

When both actions have the same subject, use antes de + infinitive. Antes de que (+ subjunctive) is for a different subject: Antes de que salgas, cierra las ventanas.

› **Llámame antes de venir.**
Call me before you come.

'so' + adjective is not así

✗ *~~Es así bonito~~. / *~~Estoy así que cansado~~.

✓ Es tan bonito. / Estoy tan cansado.

Así que means 'so' only as a connector (= therefore). 'So' before an adjective or adverb is tan.

› **Estaba tan cansado que me dormí en el sofá.**
I was so tired that I fell asleep on the sofa.

WHICH CONNECTORS TAKE THE SUBJUNCTIVE?

Always: para que, antes de que, en caso de que, a no ser que, con tal de que, siempre y cuando, no vaya a ser que. Depends on meaning (subjunctive for future or 'even if'): aunque, a pesar de que, cuando, en cuanto, hasta que, después de que, de modo que. Never: porque, ya que, puesto que, como, así que, por si. Write this list on a card and test yourself with one sentence per connector.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

07 · The idioms that make you sound like you actually live in Spanish

Useful expressions

At B1 you start to understand people when they speak naturally, and that means idioms. These are the high-frequency ones Spanish speakers use every day, grouped by theme. We give you the natural English equivalent, a literal hint when it helps you remember, and the register. Start with two or three per theme and use them this week: idioms only stick when you say them out loud.

People & personality

Expressions to describe how people are and how they behave. Most are informal: great with friends, careful at work.

estar en las nubes INFORMAL

to have your head in the clouds / to be miles away

Literally 'to be in the clouds'. For someone distracted or daydreaming, right now or in general.

> Perdona, ¿qué has dicho? Estaba en las nubes.
> *Sorry, what did you say? I was miles away.*

no tener pelos en la lengua INFORMAL

to not mince your words / to say it like it is

Literally 'to have no hairs on your tongue'. For very direct people. Can be a compliment or a warning.

> Mi abuela no tiene pelos en la lengua: si no le gusta tu novio, te lo dice.
> *My grandma doesn't mince her words: if she doesn't like your boyfriend, she tells you.*

hablar por los codos INFORMAL

to talk nonstop / to talk the hind legs off a donkey

Literally 'to talk through your elbows'. For someone who never stops talking.

> Javi habla por los codos, pero es muy divertido.
> *Javi never stops talking, but he's really funny.*

estar como una cabra COLLOQUIAL

to be completely mad / to be nuts

Literally 'to be like a goat'. Affectionate, for someone crazy in a fun way. Not for real mental health issues.

> Mi hermana está como una cabra: se ha ido a vivir a Islandia sin conocer a nadie.
> *My sister's totally nuts: she's moved to Iceland without knowing anyone.*

dar la lata INFORMAL

to pester / to bug / to go on at someone

Literally 'to give the tin can'. When someone keeps annoying you or asking for something.

> Los niños me están dando la lata para ir a la piscina.
> *The kids keep pestering me to go to the pool.*

hacer la pelota (a alguien) COLLOQUIAL

to suck up to someone / to butter someone up

To flatter someone, usually a boss or teacher, to get something. A person who does it is 'un/una pelota'.

Spain & Latin America: Mainly Spain. Latin America: lambiscón, chupamedias (Southern Cone), barbero (Mexico).

> Marcos siempre le hace la pelota al jefe.
> *Marcos is always sucking up to the boss.*

tener mala leche COLLOQUIAL

to have a nasty temper / to be mean

Literally 'to have bad milk'. Also 'estar de mala leche' = to be in a foul mood, and '¡Qué mala leche!' = how nasty! / what rotten luck!

Spain & Latin America: Mainly Spain.

> Cuidado con el vecino del tercero, que tiene muy mala leche.
> *Watch out for the neighbour on the third floor, he's got a nasty temper.*

ser uña y carne INFORMAL

to be inseparable / to be joined at the hip

Literally 'to be nail and flesh'. For two people who are always together.

> Lucía y Emma son uña y carne desde el colegio.
> *Lucía and Emma have been inseparable since school.*

tener los pies en la tierra

to have your feet on the ground / to be down-to-earth

For realistic, sensible people. The opposite of 'estar en las nubes'.

> Me gusta trabajar con Ana porque tiene los pies en la tierra.
> *I like working with Ana because she's very down-to-earth.*

ser un cero a la izquierda INFORMAL

to be a nobody / to count for nothing

Literally 'to be a zero on the left' (it adds no value to a number). When someone is ignored or useless in a group.

> En esa empresa me sentía un cero a la izquierda.
> *In that company I felt like I didn't count at all.*

ser un rollo COLLOQUIAL

to be a drag / to be boring

For boring things or people. '¡Qué rollo!' = What a drag! 'Tener buen rollo' = to have good vibes / get on well.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> La reunión fue un rollo: dos horas para nada.
> *The meeting was a drag: two hours for nothing.*

Effort, work & tiredness

ponerse las pilas INFORMAL

to get your act together / to get cracking

Literally 'to put your batteries in'. To start working seriously, especially when time is running out.

> El examen es el lunes. ¡Tengo que ponerme las pilas!
> *The exam's on Monday. I need to get my act together!*

estar hecho polvo INFORMAL

to be shattered / to be exhausted

Literally 'to be made into dust'. Physical or emotional exhaustion. Agrees: 'estoy hecha polvo' (a woman).

> Después de la mudanza estábamos hechos polvo.
> *After the move we were absolutely shattered.*

ser pan comido INFORMAL

to be a piece of cake / to be a walk in the park

Literally 'to be eaten bread'. For something very easy.

> Tranquilo, el examen oral es pan comido.
> *Don't worry, the oral exam is a piece of cake.*

ir al grano

to get to the point / to cut to the chase

Literally 'to go to the grain'. Also as a request: '¡Ve al grano!' = Get to the point!

> No tengo mucho tiempo, así que voy al grano.
> *I don't have much time, so I'll get straight to the point.*

no dar abasto

to be unable to cope / to be swamped

When there's too much work, too many customers, too many things to do.

> Desde que abrimos la tienda online no damos abasto con los pedidos.
> *Since we opened the online shop we can't keep up with the orders.*

estar hasta arriba (de trabajo) INFORMAL

to be up to your eyes in work / to be snowed under

Literally 'to be up to the top'. Also 'estar a tope' (Spain, informal).

> Esta semana no puedo quedar, estoy hasta arriba.
> *I can't meet up this week, I'm snowed under.*

sudar la gota gorda COLLOQUIAL

to sweat blood / to work your socks off

Literally 'to sweat the fat drop'. To make a huge effort (or to sweat a lot in the heat).

> Sudé la gota gorda para terminar el proyecto a tiempo.
> *I sweated blood to finish the project on time.*

tirar la toalla

to throw in the towel / to give up

Same image as in English, from boxing. Often negative: 'No tires la toalla' = Don't give up.

> Estuve a punto de tirar la toalla, pero al final aprobé.
> *I almost threw in the towel, but in the end I passed.*

matar dos pájaros de un tiro

to kill two birds with one stone

Same image as in English: one action, two results.

> Voy a Madrid por trabajo y veo a mi hermano: así mato dos pájaros de un tiro.
> *I'm going to Madrid for work and I'll see my brother: that way I kill two birds with one stone.*

¡Manos a la obra! INFORMAL

Let's get to work! / Let's get started!

Literally 'hands to the work'. To start a task together, with energy.

> Bueno, ya tenemos todo. ¡Manos a la obra!
> *Right, we've got everything. Let's get started!*

Money

costar un ojo de la cara INFORMAL

to cost an arm and a leg / to cost a fortune

Literally 'to cost an eye from your face'. Also 'costar un riñón' (a kidney).

> Los pisos en el centro cuestan un ojo de la cara.
> *Flats in the centre cost an arm and a leg.*

estar sin blanca COLLOQUIAL

to be broke / to be skint

'Blanca' was an old coin. Also 'estar sin un duro' (Spain) or 'estar pelado' (Latin America).

Spain & Latin America: Spain. Latin America: estar pelado, no tener un peso, estar quebrado.

> No puedo ir al concierto, estoy sin blanca hasta fin de mes.
> *I can't go to the concert, I'm broke until the end of the month.*

llegar a fin de mes

to make ends meet

Literally 'to reach the end of the month'. Usually negative: 'No llego a fin de mes'.

> Con este sueldo, muchas familias no llegan a fin de mes.
> *With this salary, a lot of families can't make ends meet.*

tirar la casa por la ventana INFORMAL

to splash out / to go all out

Literally 'to throw the house out of the window'. To spend a lot on a celebration or special occasion.

> Para su boda tiraron la casa por la ventana.
> *They really splashed out on their wedding.*

pagar a medias INFORMAL

to go halves / to split the bill

When two people share a cost. In Spain, colloquially, 'pagar a pachas'.

> ¿Pagamos la cena a medias?
> *Shall we go halves on dinner?*

estar forrado/a VERY COLLOQUIAL

to be loaded / to be rolling in it

Literally 'to be lined' (like a coat lined with money). For very rich people.

> Su familia está forrada, tienen tres casas.
> *Her family's loaded, they've got three houses.*

salir caro / salir barato

to end up being expensive / cheap

Talks about the final cost, often unexpected. 'Lo barato sale caro' = Buy cheap, buy twice.

> Al final, el viaje nos salió bastante barato.
> *In the end, the trip worked out quite cheap.*

Mistakes & tricky situations

meter la pata INFORMAL

to put your foot in it / to mess up

Literally 'to put the paw in'. A social blunder or a mistake. The noun is 'una metedura de pata'.

> Le pregunté por su novio y ya no estaban juntos. ¡Metí la pata!
> *I asked her about her boyfriend and they'd split up. I really put my foot in it!*

cagarla VERY COLLOQUIAL

to screw up / to blow it

Stronger and ruder version of 'meter la pata'. Very common among friends, never at work.

> La he cagado: he borrado el archivo sin guardar.
> *I've screwed up: I deleted the file without saving it.*

quedarse en blanco

your mind goes blank

When you suddenly can't remember anything, typically in an exam or while speaking.

> En la entrevista me quedé en blanco y no supe qué decir.
> *In the interview my mind went blank and I didn't know what to say.*

meterse en un lío INFORMAL

to get into a mess / to get into trouble

'Un lío' = a mess, a problem, a complicated situation. '¡Menudo lío!' = What a mess!

> No firmes nada sin leerlo o te vas a meter en un lío.
> *Don't sign anything without reading it or you'll get yourself into trouble.*

pillar a alguien con las manos en la masa INFORMAL

to catch someone red-handed

Literally 'with their hands in the dough'. 'Pillar' (Spain, informal) = to catch.

> Pillé a mi compañero de piso con las manos en la masa, comiéndose mi tarta.
> *I caught my flatmate red-handed, eating my cake.*

salir el tiro por la culata

to backfire

Literally 'the shot comes out of the butt of the gun'. When a plan has the opposite effect.

> Quería darle una sorpresa, pero me salió el tiro por la culata: estaba de viaje.
> *I wanted to surprise her, but it backfired: she was away.*

estar entre la espada y la pared

to be between a rock and a hard place

Literally 'between the sword and the wall'. When every option is bad.

> Si acepto, pierdo tiempo con mi familia; si no, pierdo el trabajo. Estoy entre la espada y la pared.
> *If I accept, I lose time with my family; if not, I lose the job. I'm between a rock and a hard place.*

no tener ni pies ni cabeza

to make no sense at all

Literally 'to have neither feet nor head'. For ideas, plans, stories or arguments.

> Esta propuesta no tiene ni pies ni cabeza.
> *This proposal makes no sense whatsoever.*

ser la gota que colma el vaso

to be the last straw

Literally 'the drop that fills the glass to overflowing'.

> Llegó tarde otra vez, y eso fue la gota que colmó el vaso.
> *He was late again, and that was the last straw.*

Situations, places & weather

tener buena / mala pinta INFORMAL

to look good / bad

'Pinta' = look, appearance. For food, plans, situations, people. 'Esto tiene mala pinta' = This doesn't look good.

> Esa paella tiene una pinta increíble.
> *That paella looks amazing.*

llover a cántaros

to pour down / to rain cats and dogs

Literally 'to rain by the jugful'.

> No salgas ahora, está lloviendo a cántaros.
> *Don't go out now, it's pouring down.*

hacer un frío que pela COLLOQUIAL

to be freezing cold / to be bitterly cold

Literally 'a cold that peels'. Only for weather.

> Abrígate, que hace un frío que pela.
> *Wrap up warm, it's absolutely freezing.*

a la vuelta de la esquina

just around the corner

For places (very close) and for time (very soon).

> Las vacaciones están a la vuelta de la esquina.
> *The holidays are just around the corner.*

estar en el quinto pino COLLOQUIAL

to be miles away / in the middle of nowhere

Literally 'to be at the fifth pine tree'. For places that are very far.

Spain & Latin America: Spain. Latin America: en el quinto infierno; donde el diablo perdió el poncho (Southern Cone).

> El nuevo estadio está en el quinto pino.
> *The new stadium is miles away from anywhere.*

estar en su salsa

to be in your element

Literally 'to be in your sauce'. When someone is comfortable and happy doing something.

> Con un micrófono en la mano, Diego está en su salsa.
> *With a microphone in his hand, Diego's in his element.*

ponerse como un tomate INFORMAL

to go as red as a beetroot

When someone blushes from embarrassment.

> Cuando le dijeron que cantara, se puso como un tomate.
> *When they asked him to sing, he went as red as a beetroot.*

Attitude, plans & decisions

dar igual

to not matter / I don't mind

Works like 'gustar': 'me da igual' = I don't mind / it's all the same to me. Also 'me da lo mismo'. Careful: tone can sound indifferent or rude.

> —¿Pizza o sushi? —Me da igual, elige tú.
> *"Pizza or sushi?" "I don't mind, you choose."*

importar un pimiento / un pepino COLLOQUIAL

to not give a damn / to not care less

Literally 'to matter a pepper / a cucumber'. Stronger than 'me da igual'.

> Lo que piensen los demás me importa un pimiento.
> *I couldn't care less what other people think.*

consultarlo con la almohada

to sleep on it

Literally 'to consult it with the pillow'. To wait until tomorrow to decide.

> Es una buena oferta, pero déjame consultarlo con la almohada.
> *It's a good offer, but let me sleep on it.*

de una vez (por todas) INFORMAL

once and for all

With impatience: to finally do or finish something. '¡Decídete de una vez!' = Make up your mind already!

> Vamos a arreglar el grifo de una vez por todas.
> *Let's fix the tap once and for all.*

más vale tarde que nunca

better late than never

Same proverb as in English. Also 'más vale prevenir que curar' = better safe than sorry.

> ¿Has empezado a estudiar japonés a los sesenta? ¡Más vale tarde que nunca!
> *You've started learning Japanese at sixty? Better late than never!*

Ya veremos.

We'll see.

When you don't want to commit, or you're not sure about the future. Can sound like a polite 'probably not'.

> —¿Vas a venir a la cena? —Ya veremos, depende del trabajo.
> *"Are you coming to the dinner?" "We'll see, it depends on work."*

Lo que tú digas. INFORMAL

Whatever you say.

Can be sincere (you decide) or ironic (I don't believe you, but fine). Tone is everything.

> —Mañana empiezo la dieta, en serio. —Ya, lo que tú digas.
> *"I'm starting the diet tomorrow, seriously." "Yeah, whatever you say."*

Al pan, pan y al vino, vino.

to call a spade a spade

Literally 'bread is bread and wine is wine'. To say things clearly, without hiding the truth.

> Al pan, pan y al vino, vino: el proyecto ha sido un fracaso.
> *Let's call a spade a spade: the project has been a failure.*

Love & relationships (with food)

Spanish loves food idioms. These three come up constantly when people talk about relationships.

la media naranja INFORMAL

your other half / your soulmate

Literally 'the half orange'. Romantic, sometimes a bit ironic.

> Creo que por fin he encontrado a mi media naranja.
> *I think I've finally found my other half.*

dar calabazas (a alguien) INFORMAL

to turn someone down / to dump someone

Literally 'to give pumpkins'. Also used for failing someone in an exam (old-fashioned).

> Le pidió salir a Sofía y le dio calabazas.
> *He asked Sofía out and she turned him down.*

pedir peras al olmo

to ask for the impossible / to expect too much

Literally 'to ask the elm tree for pears'. When you expect something someone simply can't give.

> Esperar que llegue puntual es pedir peras al olmo.
> *Expecting him to arrive on time is asking for the impossible.*

Quick reactions

Short words and exclamations you'll hear all day. Tone of voice changes the meaning, so listen to how people say them.

¡Qué corte! COLLOQUIAL

How embarrassing! / Awkward!

Embarrassment. 'Me da corte' = I feel awkward / embarrassed.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Saludé a una chica pensando que era Laura y no era ella. ¡Qué corte!
> *I said hi to a girl thinking she was Laura and it wasn't her. So embarrassing!*

¡Venga ya! COLLOQUIAL

Come off it! / No way! / You're kidding!

Disbelief. Different from 'venga' alone, which means 'come on' or 'OK'.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> —Me ha tocado la lotería. —¡Venga ya!
> *"I've won the lottery." "Come off it!"*

¡Toma ya! COLLOQUIAL

Yes! / Get in! / Take that!

Celebration when something goes well (or showing off a bit).

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> ¡Toma ya! He aprobado el examen de conducir.
> *Yes! I've passed my driving test.*

DON'T TRANSLATE IDIOMS WORD FOR WORD

If you say *"Llueve gatos y perros", people will look at you strangely. Learn each idiom as a block, with one personal example: 'Esta semana estoy hasta arriba' is easier to remember than a definition. And use the colloquial ones with friends first, not with your boss.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

08 · Tell stories, react, advise and keep a real conversation going

Conversation vocabulary

At B1 your conversations get longer: you tell anecdotes, listen to other people's problems, give advice, apologise properly and know how to leave a chat politely. These are the little phrases that hold all of that together. Learn them in pairs (a story opener + a reaction) and try to use one in every conversation you have this week.

Telling a story

Spanish speakers love to tell anecdotes, and they use a set of small 'story engines' to start, move on and finish. Use them and you'll sound instantly more fluent.

Resulta que... INFORMAL

So, it turns out that... / So basically...

The classic way to start an anecdote or explain the background of a situation.

> **Resulta que llegué al aeropuerto y mi vuelo había salido el día antes.**
> *So, I got to the airport and it turned out my flight had left the day before.*

Te cuento. INFORMAL

Let me tell you. / Here's what happened.

To start explaining something. 'Te tengo que contar una cosa' = I've got to tell you something.

> **¿Que qué tal la cita? Te cuento...**
> *How was the date? Let me tell you...*

No te lo vas a creer, pero... INFORMAL

You're not going to believe this, but...

To build suspense before a surprising story.

> **No te lo vas a creer, pero me he encontrado a mi exjefe en el gimnasio.**
> *You're not going to believe this, but I bumped into my old boss at the gym.*

El caso es que... INFORMAL

The thing is... / Anyway, the point is...

To get to the important part, or back to it after a detail.

> **El caso es que no me llamó y yo no sabía qué hacer.**
> *The thing is, he didn't call me and I didn't know what to do.*

Pues nada, que... COLLOQUIAL

So anyway... / Well, basically...

To move the story on, often summarising. Very typical of spoken Spain Spanish.

> **Pues nada, que al final nos quedamos en casa viendo una peli.**
> *So anyway, in the end we stayed at home watching a film.*

Y va y me dice... COLLOQUIAL

And he goes... / And she turns round and says...

Lively way to report what someone said in a story. 'Ir' here doesn't mean go: it adds drama.

> **Le pido el informe y va y me dice que no sabía nada.**
> *I ask him for the report and he turns round and says he didn't know anything about it.*

Lo mejor / Lo peor de todo es que...

The best / worst part is that...

To highlight the key detail of the story.

> **Lo peor de todo es que el móvil era nuevo.**
> *The worst part is that the phone was brand new.*

Total, que... INFORMAL

So, long story short... / So in the end...

To jump to the result of a long story.

> **Total, que perdimos el tren y tuvimos que dormir en Burgos.**
> *So, long story short, we missed the train and had to sleep in Burgos.*

...y colorín colorado. INFORMAL

...and that's that. / ...and that's the end of the story.

From fairy tales ('y colorín colorado, este cuento se ha acabado'). Used jokingly to close a story.

> **Nos casamos, nos fuimos a vivir a Valencia y colorín colorado.**
> *We got married, moved to Valencia, and that was that.*

Reacting to someone's story

A good listener reacts. Short reactions show you're following and invite the other person to continue.

¿Y luego? / ¿Y entonces? INFORMAL

And then? / And then what?

To ask for the next part of the story.

> —Abrí la puerta y no había nadie. —¿Y entonces?
> *"I opened the door and there was nobody there." "And then what?"*

¡No me digas!

No way! / You're kidding! / Really?

Surprise at news. Literally 'Don't tell me!' but it doesn't mean stop talking.

> —Marta está embarazada. —¡No me digas! ¡Qué ilusión!
> *"Marta's pregnant." "No way! How exciting!"*

¡Qué fuerte! COLLOQUIAL

That's crazy! / Oh my God! / Unbelievable!

Strong surprise or shock, for good or bad news. Extremely common among young people in Spain.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> ¿Te ha dejado por WhatsApp? ¡Qué fuerte!
> *He dumped you on WhatsApp? That's unbelievable!*

¡Qué mal! INFORMAL

That's awful! / Oh, that's bad!

Sympathy for bad news. Also '¡Qué faena!' (Spain) = What a pain!

> —Me han robado la bici. —¡Qué mal!
> *"My bike's been stolen." "Oh, that's awful!"*

¡Pobre! / ¡Pobrecito/a! INFORMAL

Poor thing! / Poor you!

Affectionate sympathy.

> —Lleva una semana con fiebre. —¡Pobrecita!
> *"She's had a fever for a week." "Poor thing!"*

¡Cuánto me alegro!

I'm so happy for you! / That's great news!

Warm reaction to good news. Also 'Me alegro mucho por ti'.

> ¿Te han dado el trabajo? ¡Cuánto me alegro!
> *You got the job? I'm so happy for you!*

Me lo imagino.

I can imagine.

Empathy: you understand how the other person felt.

> —Fue un día horrible. —Me lo imagino.
> *"It was a horrible day." "I can imagine."*

No me extraña.

I'm not surprised. / No wonder.

When something was predictable. 'No me extraña que estés cansado' (+ subjunctive).

> —Ana ha dejado el trabajo. —No me extraña, la trataban fatal.
> *"Ana's quit her job." "I'm not surprised, they treated her terribly."*

¡Vaya tela! COLLOQUIAL

Unbelievable! / What a carry-on!

Ironic surprise, often at someone's bad behaviour or a messy situation.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Se fue de la reunión sin despedirse. ¡Vaya tela!
> *He left the meeting without saying goodbye. Unbelievable!*

Giving advice

Several of these need the subjunctive ('te recomiendo que vayas'). If that still feels hard, use the infinitive options first.

Yo que tú... INFORMAL

If I were you...

+ conditional. The most natural way to give advice among friends.

> Yo que tú, hablaría con ella cuanto antes.
> *If I were you, I'd talk to her as soon as possible.*

Yo en tu lugar...

In your place... / If I were in your shoes...

+ conditional. Slightly more neutral than 'yo que tú'.

> Yo en tu lugar, no aceptaría esa oferta.
> *If I were in your shoes, I wouldn't accept that offer.*

Deberías...

You should...

+ infinitive. Conditional of 'deber': softer than 'debes'.

> Deberías ir al médico, esa tos no es normal.
> *You should go to the doctor, that cough isn't normal.*

¿Has probado a...?

Have you tried...?

+ infinitive. Careful with the 'a'.

> ¿Has probado a reiniciar el ordenador?
> *Have you tried restarting the computer?*

Te recomiendo que...
I recommend you... / I'd recommend...
+ subjunctive. Also 'Te recomiendo + noun / infinitive'.

> Te recomiendo que reserves con tiempo, se llena enseguida.
> *I'd recommend booking early, it fills up fast.*

Te aconsejo que...
My advice is to... / I'd advise you to...
+ subjunctive. A bit more serious than 'te recomiendo'.

> Te aconsejo que no firmes nada todavía.
> *My advice is not to sign anything yet.*

Lo mejor es que...
The best thing is to... / Your best bet is...
+ subjunctive. Or 'Lo mejor es + infinitive' (general).

> Lo mejor es que se lo digas tú directamente.
> *The best thing is for you to tell him yourself.*

Si quieres mi consejo...
If you want my advice...
To introduce advice politely, giving the other person the option.

> Si quieres mi consejo, no te compres el modelo más caro.
> *If you want my advice, don't buy the most expensive model.*

Apologies & complaints

Siento mucho...
I'm really sorry about... / I'm so sorry for...
+ noun, or + infinitive (same subject), or 'Siento mucho que' + subjunctive. Also for condolences: 'Siento mucho lo de tu padre'.

> Siento mucho llegar tarde, había un atasco enorme.
> *I'm really sorry I'm late, there was a huge traffic jam.*

Lo siento muchísimo, de verdad.
I'm really, really sorry.
A sincere, emphatic apology.

> Lo siento muchísimo, de verdad. No volverá a pasar.
> *I'm really, really sorry. It won't happen again.*

No era mi intención.
I didn't mean to. / It wasn't my intention.
When you hurt or upset someone by accident. Also 'No lo he hecho a propósito'.

> Perdona si te molestó lo que dije, no era mi intención.
> *Sorry if what I said upset you, I didn't mean to.*

Ha sido culpa mía.
It was my fault.
Taking responsibility.

> No te preocupes, ha sido culpa mía por no avisar.
> *Don't worry, it was my fault for not letting you know.*

Quería quejarme de...
I'd like to complain about...
Polite way to start a complaint. The imperfect 'quería' softens it.

> Quería quejarme del ruido de las obras.
> *I'd like to complain about the noise from the building work.*

Esto no puede ser. INFORMAL
This isn't on. / This can't go on.
Firm complaint about something unacceptable.

> Es la tercera vez que se retrasa el pedido. Esto no puede ser.
> *It's the third time the order has been delayed. This isn't on.*

¡No hay derecho!
It's not fair! / That's outrageous!
Indignation at something unjust.

> Han subido el alquiler un veinte por ciento. ¡No hay derecho!
> *They've put the rent up by twenty per cent. It's outrageous!*

No pasa nada, de verdad.
It's really fine. / Honestly, don't worry about it.
Accepting an apology warmly. Also 'Tranquilo/a, no te preocupes'.

> —Perdona por lo de ayer. —No pasa nada, de verdad.
> *"Sorry about yesterday." "Honestly, don't worry about it."*

Interrupting & taking turns

Perdona que te interrumpa, pero...
Sorry to interrupt, but...
Polite interruption. Formal: 'Perdone que le interrumpa'.

> Perdona que te interrumpa, pero tenemos que salir ya.
> *Sorry to interrupt, but we need to leave now.*

Antes de que se me olvide...
Before I forget...
To add something you suddenly remember.

> Antes de que se me olvide: el viernes cerramos a las tres.
> *Before I forget: on Friday we close at three.*

Espera, espera... INFORMAL
Hang on, hang on... / Wait a second...
To stop someone because you're confused or surprised.

> Espera, espera... ¿me estás diciendo que te vas mañana?
> *Hang on, hang on... are you telling me you're leaving tomorrow?*

Déjame terminar.
Let me finish.
When someone interrupts you. Add 'por favor' to sound less sharp.

> Déjame terminar, por favor, que es importante.
> *Please let me finish, it's important.*

Perdona, sigue. INFORMAL
Sorry, go on.
When you interrupted by mistake (you both started speaking). Also 'Sigue, sigue'.

> —Yo creo que... —Ah, perdona, sigue.
> *"I think that..." "Oh, sorry, go on."*

¿Por dónde iba?
Where was I?
When you lose the thread after an interruption.

> Bueno, ¿por dónde iba? Ah, sí, el viaje.
> *Right, where was I? Oh yes, the trip.*

Checking the other person understands

¿Me explico?
Do you see what I mean? / Am I making sense?
After explaining something a bit complicated.

> No es que no quiera ir, es que no me apetece ahora. ¿Me explico?
> *It's not that I don't want to go, I just don't feel like it right now. Do you see what I mean?*

¿Me sigues? INFORMAL
Are you with me? / Are you following?
In the middle of a long explanation.

> Primero se rellena el formulario, luego se paga la tasa... ¿me sigues?
> *First you fill in the form, then you pay the fee... are you with me?*

¿Sabes lo que te digo? INFORMAL
Know what I mean? / You know what I'm saying?
To check agreement or emphasise. Also a way to introduce a decision: '¿Sabes lo que te digo? Que me voy.'

> Hay que disfrutar más, ¿sabes lo que te digo?
> *We need to enjoy life more, know what I mean?*

¿Vale? / ¿Sí? INFORMAL
OK? / Right?
Short tag at the end of a sentence to check. '¿Vale?' is very Spain.
Spain & Latin America: ¿Vale? is typical of Spain. Latin America: ¿Sí?, ¿Ok?, ¿Dale? (Southern Cone).

> Nos vemos en la puerta a las ocho, ¿vale?
> *See you at the door at eight, OK?*

¿Lo pillas? COLLOQUIAL
Get it? / You get it?
After a joke or a quick explanation.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Es un juego de palabras, ¿lo pillas?
> *It's a pun, get it?*

No te sigo.
I'm not following you. / You've lost me.
When you're lost in someone's explanation.

> Perdona, no te sigo. ¿Puedes empezar otra vez?
> *Sorry, you've lost me. Can you start again?*

Ya veo. / Ah, vale, ya entiendo.
I see. / Oh, OK, I get it now.
To show that something is now clear.

> Ah, vale, ya entiendo. Entonces tengo que pedir cita antes.
> *Oh, OK, I get it now. So I need to make an appointment first.*

Small talk at work

¿Qué tal el finde? INFORMAL
How was your weekend?
Monday morning classic. 'Finde' = fin de semana (informal).

> ¡Buenos días! ¿Qué tal el finde?
> *Morning! How was your weekend?*

¿Cómo lo llevas? INFORMAL
How are you getting on? / How's it going?
About a project, a difficult situation or a busy period.

> ¿Cómo llevas el informe? ¿Necesitas ayuda?
> *How are you getting on with the report? Do you need any help?*

¿Mucho lío hoy? INFORMAL
Busy day? / Lots on today?
'Lío' = mess, but here 'a lot of work'.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> —¿Mucho lío hoy? —Uf, no paro.
> *"Busy day?" "Ugh, I haven't stopped."*

Hoy voy a tope. COLLOQUIAL
I'm flat out today. / I'm crazy busy today.
When you have no time at all.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Hoy voy a tope, ¿lo vemos mañana?
> *I'm flat out today, can we look at it tomorrow?*

Lo hablamos en la reunión.
Let's discuss it in the meeting.
To postpone a topic politely.

> Buena idea. Lo hablamos en la reunión del jueves.
> *Good idea. Let's discuss it at Thursday's meeting.*

¿Qué tal en el nuevo trabajo?
How's the new job going?
Friendly interest. Answer: 'Muy bien, estoy muy contento/a' or 'Me estoy adaptando'.

> ¿Qué tal en el nuevo trabajo? ¿Te gusta el equipo?
> *How's the new job going? Do you like the team?*

¡Buen finde! / ¡Buen fin de semana! INFORMAL
Have a good weekend!
Friday goodbye. Answer: '¡Igualmente!' = You too!

> Me voy ya. ¡Buen finde a todos!
> *I'm off. Have a good weekend, everyone!*

Ending a conversation

Leaving a conversation gracefully is a real skill. Spanish speakers often take two or three 'goodbyes' before actually going, so don't be surprised.

Bueno, te dejo. INFORMAL
Right, I'll let you go. / Anyway, I'd better go.
The most natural way to start ending a chat or call. Literally 'I leave you'.

> Bueno, te dejo, que tendrás mucho que hacer.
> *Right, I'll let you go, you must have loads to do.*

Te tengo que dejar, que... INFORMAL
I've got to go, because...
When you need to end the conversation, with a reason. 'Que' = because (informal).

> Te tengo que dejar, que me está llamando mi jefa.
> *I've got to go, my boss is calling me.*

Venga, nos vemos. INFORMAL
OK then, see you. / Right, see you.
'Venga' here signals the end. Very Spain.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Venga, nos vemos el jueves.
> *OK then, see you on Thursday.*

Ya me contarás. INFORMAL
Let me know how it goes. / Keep me posted.
Showing interest in the result of something.

> Mucha suerte en la entrevista. ¡Ya me contarás!
> *Good luck in the interview. Let me know how it goes!*

Quedamos en eso.
That's settled, then. / Let's leave it at that.
To confirm a plan or agreement before leaving.

> Entonces, el sábado a las diez. Quedamos en eso.
> *So, Saturday at ten. That's settled, then.*

Dale recuerdos a...
Say hi to... / Give my regards to...
Sending greetings to someone. Also 'Saludos a...' / 'Un beso a...'.

> Dale recuerdos a tus padres de mi parte.
> *Say hi to your parents from me.*

Cuídate. INFORMAL
Take care.
Warm goodbye, especially if the person is ill or going through a hard time.

> Venga, cuídate mucho. Ya hablamos.
> *Right, take good care of yourself. Speak soon.*

Seguimos en contacto.
Let's keep in touch.
At the end of an email or a professional conversation. Also 'Estamos en contacto'.

> Gracias por todo. Seguimos en contacto.
> *Thanks for everything. Let's keep in touch.*

LISTEN LIKE A SPANISH SPEAKER

In Spanish, silence while someone tells a story can feel cold. Throw in a '¿Y qué pasó?', a '¡No me digas!' or a simple 'ya, ya' every few sentences. It's not interrupting: it's showing you care.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

09 · The sentence patterns that turn words into real Spanish

Common constructions

Vocabulary only works inside structures. This section gives you the B1 patterns Spanish speakers use constantly: verb + infinitive/gerund combinations that express habits, beginnings, endings and progress; ways to add emphasis; and your first everyday subjunctive triggers. Learn each one with its example, then make three sentences about your own life.

Habits, beginnings & endings

These 'verbal periphrases' (verb + infinitive or gerund) are everywhere in spoken Spanish. Each one does a job that English often does with an adverb.

soler + infinitive

to usually do / to tend to do

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: SUELO, SUELES… · B1

PATTERN soler + infinitive

Expresses a habit. It's the most natural way to say 'usually' in Spanish. Only used in present ('suelo') and imperfect ('solía' = I used to).

present — *what you usually do now*

› Suelo desayunar en el trabajo.
I usually have breakfast at work.

imperfect — *used to*

› De pequeña, solía pasar los veranos en el pueblo.
As a child, I used to spend the summers in the village.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Suelo a ir al gimnasio~~ → ✓ Suelo ir al gimnasio. No preposition. And never ~~*soleré (no future~~).

acabar de + infinitive

to have just done something

EXPRESSION · B1

PATTERN acabar de + infinitive

Something happened a moment ago. Spanish uses the PRESENT tense here, where English uses 'have just'.

› Acabo de llegar a casa.
I've just got home.

› Acababa de salir cuando empezó a llover.
I had just left when it started to rain.

DON'T CONFUSE acabar + gerund = to end up doing (see next card). acabar de + inf = have just done.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*He acabado de llegar (for '~~;I've just arrived') → ✓ Acabo de llegar.

acabar + gerund

to end up doing something

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **acabar + gerund · acabar + adjective/noun**

The final result of a process, often not planned. Same as 'terminar + gerund'.

› Al final acabamos cenando en un bar de tapas.
In the end we ended up having dinner in a tapas bar.

› Si sigues así, vas a acabar agotado.
If you carry on like this, you'll end up exhausted.

DON'T CONFUSE Compare: 'Acabo de comer' (I've just eaten) vs 'Acabé comiendo sola' (I ended up eating alone).

llevar + time + gerund

to have been doing something for (time)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **llevar + time + gerund · llevar + time + en/sin…**

How long an action has been going on up to now. It's the natural Spanish answer to 'How long have you been…?' and much more common than 'hace… que'.

› Llevo tres años viviendo en Barcelona.
I've been living in Barcelona for three years.

› ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando español?
How long have you been studying Spanish?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llevar un mes sin fumar** *to have not smoked for a month* · **llevar dos horas esperando** *to have been waiting for two hours*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*He estado viviendo aquí por tres años~~ → ✓ Llevo tres años viviendo aquí. (Or: Vivo aquí desde hace tres años.)

seguir / continuar + gerund

to still be doing / to keep on doing

EXPRESSION SEGUIR: STEM-CHANGING E→I: SIGO, SIGUES… B1

PATTERN **seguir + gerund · seguir sin + infinitive**

An action that continues. Often the best translation of 'still'. 'Seguir sin + inf' = still not to have done something.

› ¿Sigues trabajando en el banco?
Are you still working at the bank?

› Sigo sin entender por qué se enfadó.
I still don't understand why he got angry.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sigo a trabajar / *Continúo a estudiar~~ → ✓ Sigo trabajando / Continúo estudiando. Gerund, not infinitive.

ir + gerund

to gradually do / to be (slowly) doing

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **ir + gerund**

A gradual, progressive action, step by step. Very common and hard to translate: English uses 'gradually', 'little by little' or just a continuous tense.

› Poco a poco voy entendiendo mejor a los nativos.
Little by little I'm understanding native speakers better.

› Id entrando, que ahora voy yo.
Start going in, I'll be there in a minute.

dejar de + infinitive

to stop doing / to quit doing

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **dejar de + infinitive · no dejar de + infinitive**

To stop an activity or habit. 'No dejar de' = to keep doing / not to stop, and in imperative 'No dejes de...' = make sure you...

› Dejé de fumar hace dos años.
I quit smoking two years ago.

› No dejes de visitar el Albaicín si vas a Granada.
Make sure you visit the Albaicín if you go to Granada.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Paré de fumar / *Dejé fumar~~ → ✓ Dejé de fumar. 'Parar de' exists but is mainly for physical, continuous actions: 'No para de llover'.

volver a + infinitive

to do something again

EXPRESSION STEM-CHANGING O→UE: VUELVO, VUELVES… B1

PATTERN **volver a + infinitive**

The most natural way to say 'again' in Spanish. Often better than adding 'otra vez'.

› ¿Puedes volver a explicarlo?
Can you explain it again?

› No vuelvo a comprar nada en esa tienda.
I'm never buying anything from that shop again.

ponerse a + infinitive

to start doing (suddenly) / to get down to doing

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: ME PONGO / ME PUSE · B1

PATTERN **ponerse a + infinitive**

To begin an action, often suddenly or with decision. Also 'echarse a' + llorar/reír/correr (to burst out...).

› Llegó a casa y se puso a estudiar.
She got home and got down to studying.

› De repente el bebé se puso a llorar.
Suddenly the baby started crying.

DON'T CONFUSE empezar a = to start (neutral) · ponerse a = to start (suddenly / getting down to it) · echarse a = to burst out (llorar, reír).

estar a punto de + infinitive

to be about to do

EXPRESSION · B1

PATTERN **estar a punto de + infinitive**

Something will happen very soon. In past: 'Estuve a punto de...' = I nearly / I almost...

› Estoy a punto de salir, te llamo luego.
I'm about to leave, I'll call you later.

› Estuve a punto de perder el avión.
I almost missed the plane.

tener que · deber · hay que

to have to · should/must · you have to (general)

EXPRESSION · B1

PATTERN **tener que + inf · deber + inf · hay que + inf**

Three ways to express obligation. 'Tener que' = a concrete obligation (personal). 'Deber' = moral duty or advice (deberías = you should). 'Hay que' = impersonal: what needs to be done, with no specific subject.

tener que — *personal obligation*

› Tengo que renovar el pasaporte.
I have to renew my passport.

deber — *duty / advice*

› Debes respetar las normas. · Deberías descansar.
You must respect the rules. · You should rest.

hay que — *impersonal necessity*

› Hay que reservar con antelación.
You have to book in advance.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay que yo trabajo~~ → ✓ Tengo que trabajar. 'Hay que' never has a subject.

Emphasis & focus

cuanto más... más / menos

the more... the more / the less

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **cuanto más + verb, más/menos + verb**

Two things that grow (or shrink) together. 'Cuanto' agrees with a noun: 'cuantos más amigos...', 'cuanta más gente...'.

- Cuanto más practicas, más fácil es.
  The more you practise, the easier it gets.
- Cuanto menos duermo, peor trabajo.
  The less I sleep, the worse I work.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~El más practicas~~, el más aprendes → ✓ Cuanto más practicas, más aprendes.

cada vez más / menos

more and more / less and less

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **cada vez más/menos + adjective/noun · verb + cada vez más**

Progressive change. English repeats the adjective ('bigger and bigger'); Spanish uses 'cada vez más grande'.

- Hay cada vez más gente que teletrabaja.
  More and more people work from home.
- Mi hijo está cada vez más alto.
  My son's getting taller and taller.
- Me cuesta cada vez menos hablar en público.
  I find it easier and easier to speak in public.

lo que más me gusta es...

what I like most is... / the thing I like best is...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **lo que más/menos me gusta (molesta, preocupa...) es + noun/inf/que...**

'Lo que' = 'what' / 'the thing that'. It lets you put the focus on one idea. Works with many verbs.

- Lo que más me gusta de mi trabajo es la gente.
  What I like most about my job is the people.
- Lo que no entiendo es por qué no me llamaste.
  What I don't understand is why you didn't call me.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Qué más me gusta es...~~ → ✓ Lo que más me gusta es... 'Qué' is only for questions and exclamations.

lo + adjective + es que...

the (good/bad/strange) thing is that...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **lo bueno / lo malo / lo raro / lo mejor / lo importante + es que...**

'Lo' + adjective turns it into an abstract idea: 'lo bueno' = the good thing. Perfect for giving opinions and highlighting.

› Lo bueno de vivir aquí es que todo está cerca.
The good thing about living here is that everything's close by.

› Lo importante es que estás bien.
The important thing is that you're OK.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **lo malo es que...** *the bad thing is that...* · **lo raro es que...** *the strange thing is that...* · **lo curioso es que...** *the funny thing is that...*

es que...

it's just that... / the thing is...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **es que + indicative**

The magic phrase for giving excuses and explanations. Starts a sentence that justifies something. Spanish speakers use it all the time.

› —¿No vienes? —Es que estoy muy cansada.
"Aren't you coming?" "It's just that I'm really tired."

› Perdona, es que no te he oído.
Sorry, I just didn't hear you.

NOTE Don't overuse it in formal writing: in an email, 'Le escribo porque...' sounds better.

COMMON MISTAKE Not 'it is that'! Don't translate it literally into English either: it's closer to 'well, the thing is...'.

Wishes, wants & purpose (+ subjunctive)

B1 is where the present subjunctive enters daily life. The golden rule: when one person wants, hopes or does something so that ANOTHER person does something, the second verb goes into the subjunctive.

ojalá + subjunctive

I hope... / If only... / Let's hope...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **ojalá (que) + present subjunctive**

A wish. It comes from Arabic ('if God wills'), but today it's not religious at all. Always followed by subjunctive. Alone, '¡Ojalá!' = I hope so!

› Ojalá haga buen tiempo el sábado.
I hope the weather's nice on Saturday.

› —¿Crees que te darán el puesto? —¡Ojalá!
"Do you think they'll give you the job?" "I hope so!"

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ojalá hace sol~~ → ✓ Ojalá haga sol.

espero que + subjunctive

I hope (that)...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **esperar + infinitive (same subject) · esperar que + subjunctive (different subject)**

To express a hope about someone or something else. Same subject? Use infinitive: 'Espero aprobar' (I hope I pass).

› Espero que te guste el regalo.
I hope you like the present.

› Espero verte pronto.
I hope to see you soon.

NOTE Very common at the end of emails: 'Espero que estés bien' = I hope you're well.

quiero que + subjunctive

I want you/him/her to...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **querer + infinitive (same subject) · querer que + subjunctive (different subject)**

English says 'I want YOU TO come'. Spanish can't: it needs 'quiero que vengas'. This is one of the most typical B1 mistakes.

› Quiero que vengas a mi cumpleaños.
I want you to come to my birthday.

› Mis padres quieren que estudie Medicina.
My parents want me to study Medicine.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **necesito que...** *I need you to...* · **te pido que...** *I'm asking you to...* · **prefiero que...** *I'd rather you...*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quiero tú venir / *Quiero que vienes~~ → ✓ Quiero que vengas.

para que + subjunctive

so that... / for someone to...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **para + infinitive (same subject) · para que + subjunctive (different subject)**

Purpose. If the person who acts and the person who benefits are different, use 'para que' + subjunctive.

› Te lo explico otra vez para que lo entiendas.
I'll explain it again so that you understand.

› Ahorro para comprarme un coche.
I'm saving to buy myself a car.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Lo digo para que lo sabes~~ → ✓ Lo digo para que lo sepas.

cuando + subjunctive (future)

when... (in the future)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **cuando + present subjunctive, + future / imperative**

When 'cuando' refers to the future, the verb after it goes into the subjunctive. When it refers to habits or the past, use the indicative.

future — *subjunctive*

› Cuando llegue a casa, te llamo.
When I get home, I'll call you.

habit — *indicative*

› Cuando llego a casa, siempre me ducho.
When I get home, I always have a shower.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Cuando llegaré~~, te llamo → ✓ Cuando llegue, te llamo. Never future after 'cuando' in statements.

me gustaría que + imperfect subjunctive

I'd like you to... / I wish you would...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **me gustaría + infinitive (same subject) · me gustaría que + imperfect subjunctive (different subject)**

A polite wish or request about someone else. The conditional 'gustaría' takes the imperfect subjunctive (-ra forms: vinieras, hablaras, pudieras).

› Me gustaría que vinieras a la cena.
I'd like you to come to the dinner.

› Me gustaría que me ayudaras con esto.
I'd like you to help me with this.

NOTE Same subject: 'Me gustaría ir' (I'd like to go). Different subject: 'Me gustaría que fueras' (I'd like you to go).

If...

si + present, ... present / future / imperative

if... (real, possible conditions)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **si + present indicative, + present / future / imperative**

Real or likely conditions. Exactly like English, but NEVER future or present subjunctive after 'si'.

› Si llueve, nos quedamos en casa.
If it rains, we'll stay at home.

› Si tienes tiempo, llámame.
If you have time, call me.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Si lloverá... / *Si llueva...~~ → ✓ Si llueve...

si + imperfect subjunctive, … conditional

if… would (hypothetical)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **si + imperfect subjunctive (-ra), + conditional (-ría)**

Imaginary or unlikely situations: 'If I had…, I would…'. Your first step into hypotheses. Learn a few as fixed chunks.

- Si tuviera más tiempo, aprendería a tocar la guitarra.
  If I had more time, I'd learn to play the guitar.
- Si fuera tú, no se lo diría.
  If I were you, I wouldn't tell him.
- ¿Qué harías si te tocara la lotería?
  What would you do if you won the lottery?

NOTE You'll also hear the -se form (tuviese, fuese). It means exactly the same; -ra is more common in speech.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Si tendría dinero…~~ → ✓ Si tuviera dinero… The conditional never goes right after 'si'.

Accidents, causing & letting

se me ha olvidado / se me ha roto

I forgot / it broke (on me) — the 'accidental se'

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **se + me/te/le/nos/os/les + verb (3rd person) + thing**

Spanish presents accidents as things that 'happen to you', not things you do. The verb agrees with the THING, not the person. It sounds natural and less guilty.

- Se me ha olvidado tu cumpleaños, lo siento.
  I forgot your birthday, I'm sorry.
- Se nos rompió la lavadora.
  Our washing machine broke.
- Se le cayeron las llaves al río.
  He dropped his keys in the river.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **se me ha perdido…** *I've lost…* · **se me ha caído…** *I've dropped…* · **se me ha ocurrido…** *I've had an idea / it occurred to me…* · **se me ha acabado…** *I've run out of…*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Se me ha roto las gafas~~ → ✓ Se me han roto las gafas. The verb agrees with 'las gafas'.

hacer + infinitive

to make someone do / to get something done

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **hacer + infinitive · hacer que + subjunctive**

To cause an action or feeling. 'Me hace reír' = he makes me laugh. With 'hacerse': to have something done by someone else.

- Ese humorista siempre me hace reír.
  That comedian always makes me laugh.
- Me hicieron esperar una hora.
  They made me wait an hour.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me hace a reír / *Me hace que río~~ → ✓ Me hace reír. No preposition. And English 'make me feel' = 'me hace sentir': Me hace sentir en casa (It makes me feel at home).

dejar + infinitive

to let someone do / to allow

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **dejar a alguien + infinitive · dejar que + subjunctive**

Permission. Careful: 'dejar' has many meanings (leave, lend, let, quit with 'de').

- Mis padres no me dejaban salir hasta tarde.
  My parents didn't let me stay out late.
- Déjame ver.
  Let me see.
- ¿Me dejas tu cargador?
  Can I borrow your charger? (Will you lend me...)

DON'T CONFUSE dejar + inf = let · dejar de + inf = stop · dejar algo = leave / lend.

ponerse · volverse · hacerse

to become / to get / to go

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **ponerse + adjective (temporary) · volverse + adjective (deep change) · hacerse + noun/adjective (by effort or choice)**

Spanish has no single verb for 'become'. Quick guide: ponerse = sudden, temporary change (ponerse nervioso); volverse = deep change in character (volverse loco); hacerse = change through effort or choice (hacerse médico, hacerse vegano). See the full explanation in Common mistakes.

- Me pongo nerviosa antes de hablar en público.
  I get nervous before speaking in public.
- Se ha vuelto muy desconfiado.
  He's become very distrustful.
- Mi hermano se hizo abogado.
  My brother became a lawyer.

estar + participle vs ser + participle

result/state vs action (passive)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **estar + participle (state) · ser + participle + por… (passive action)**

'Estar' + participle describes the resulting state: 'La puerta está abierta' (it's open). 'Ser' + participle is the passive action, more formal and written: 'La puerta fue abierta por el guardia'. In speech, Spanish prefers active or 'se': 'Se abrió la puerta'.

estar + participle — *state / result*

› La tienda está cerrada los domingos.
The shop is closed on Sundays.

ser + participle — *passive action (formal)*

› El museo fue construido en 1920.
The museum was built in 1920.

NOTE The participle agrees in gender and number: 'Las ventanas están rotas'.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La tienda es cerrada~~ → ✓ La tienda está cerrada.

ONE PATTERN A DAY

Pick one structure each morning and use it three times that day, even just in your head: 'Llevo dos horas trabajando', 'Llevo un mes sin comer azúcar'… Patterns stick through repetition, not through reading the rule.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

10 · Then and now, sooner or later, just in time

Time & frequency

You can already say when and how often. At B1 you need to tell stories, compare the past with today and talk about plans and deadlines. This section gives you the time expressions that make that sound natural, plus a few pairs English speakers mix up all the time: al final, por fin and finalmente, or a tiempo and a la hora. Learn each expression inside its example sentence.

Key pairs and patterns

al final · por fin · finalmente

in the end · at last · finally / lastly

EXPRESSION B1

New nuance: you know all three, but they're not interchangeable. Al final = in the end, after everything (often a change of plan). Por fin = at last, with relief or impatience. Finalmente = the last step, mostly in writing or formal speech.

al final — *in the end / eventually: the outcome*

› Íbamos a ir a la playa, pero al final nos quedamos en casa.
We were going to go to the beach, but in the end we stayed at home.

por fin — *at last: you were waiting for this*

› ¡Por fin es viernes!
It's Friday at last!

finalmente — *finally: last in a sequence (formal)*

› Finalmente, el Gobierno aprobó la ley.
Finally, the government passed the law.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **al final del día / de la calle** *at the end of the day / the street* · **al final de todo** *after all that / in the very end*

NOTE English 'eventually' = al final or tarde o temprano, never ~~*eventualmente (that means 'possibly, occasionally')~~.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Por fin~~, nos quedamos en casa (when it wasn't a relief) → ✓ Al final, nos quedamos en casa. Use por fin only for something you were looking forward to.

a tiempo · a la hora · puntual

in time · on time · punctual

EXPRESSION B1

New nuance: a tiempo = early enough, before it's too late. A la hora = exactly at the agreed time. Puntual = the adjective for a punctual person, train or payment.

a tiempo — *in time (not too late)*

› Llegamos a tiempo para coger el último tren.
We got there in time to catch the last train.

a la hora — *on time (at the agreed hour)*

› Aquí los autobuses nunca llegan a la hora.
The buses here never arrive on time.

ser puntual — *to be punctual*

› Sofía es muy puntual: siempre llega cinco minutos antes.
Sofía is very punctual: she always arrives five minutes early.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **justo a tiempo** *just in time* · **a su hora** *at the usual / right time*

NOTE Don't confuse a la hora with a la hora de + infinitive = when it comes to: A la hora de pagar, nadie tenía dinero.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El tren llegó en tiempo~~ → ✓ El tren llegó a la hora / puntual. 'On time' is never ~~*en tiempo~~.

hasta ahora

so far / up to now

EXPRESSION B1

New meaning: you know '¡Hasta ahora!' = see you in a minute. In a sentence it means 'until now, so far', usually with the present perfect.

› Hasta ahora todo ha ido bien.
So far everything has gone well.

› Hasta ahora no me había dado cuenta.
I hadn't realised until now.

DON'T CONFUSE hasta ahora = so far · hasta entonces = until then · hasta el momento = so far (more formal, news).

nada más + infinitive

as soon as / right after (doing something)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **nada más + infinitive (+ subject)**

New meaning: you know '¿Algo más? Nada más'. With an infinitive it means 'the moment that', like en cuanto. Very common in conversation in Spain.

› Nada más llegar al hotel, nos fuimos a la playa.
As soon as we got to the hotel, we went to the beach.

› Nada más salir yo, empezó a llover.
The moment I left, it started raining.

NOTE If you need a subject, put it after the infinitive: nada más salir yo, nada más llegar Javi.

al + infinitive

when / on (doing something)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN al + infinitive (+ subject)

A short, elegant way to say 'when + verb' for two things happening at the same time. It replaces a full cuando clause.

› Al salir del cine, nos encontramos con Marcos.
When we came out of the cinema, we ran into Marcos.

› Ten cuidado al cruzar la calle.
Be careful when you cross the road.

NOTE Al + infinitive can also give a cause: Al no tener coche, voy en bici = As I don't have a car, I cycle.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Al salimos del cine...~~ → ✓ Al salir del cine... Always the infinitive after al.

Then and now

hoy en día
nowadays / these days

Talks about how things are now, often contrasting with the past. Very common in opinions.

> Hoy en día casi todo el mundo trabaja con el ordenador.
> *Nowadays almost everyone works on a computer.*

en la actualidad FORMAL
at present / currently

A formal hoy en día or actualmente: news, reports, CVs.

> En la actualidad, la empresa tiene más de 200 empleados.
> *The company currently has over 200 employees.*

antiguamente
in the old days / in the past

Talks about a time long ago, usually with the imperfect.

> Antiguamente la gente se casaba muy joven.
> *In the old days people got married very young.*

en aquella época
back then / at that time

Refers to a period you've already mentioned. Goes with the imperfect.

> En aquella época vivía en Londres y trabajaba en un bar.
> *Back then I was living in London and working in a bar.*

por aquel entonces
at that time / back then

Same as en aquella época, a bit more storytelling. Also: en aquel entonces.

> Por aquel entonces no había móviles.
> *There were no mobile phones back then.*

desde entonces
since then / ever since

From that moment in the past until now.

> Nos conocimos en 2019 y desde entonces somos inseparables.
> *We met in 2019 and we've been inseparable ever since.*

hasta entonces
until then

Until a moment in the past or the future. Also as a goodbye: '¡Hasta entonces!' = See you then!

> La reunión es el lunes. Hasta entonces, no podemos hacer nada.
> *The meeting is on Monday. Until then, there's nothing we can do.*

a partir de ahora
from now on

Announces a change or a new rule. Also a partir de mañana / del lunes.

> A partir de ahora, las reuniones serán online.
> *From now on, meetings will be online.*

de ahora en adelante
from now on / from here on

Same as a partir de ahora, slightly more emphatic. Often for promises.

> De ahora en adelante, voy a ahorrar todos los meses.
> *From now on, I'm going to save every month.*

hace poco / hace nada

recently / not long ago / just now

Hace poco = recently. Hace nada (informal) = only a moment or a few days ago.

> Hace poco empecé a hacer yoga.
> *I started doing yoga recently.*

hace siglos / hace un montón (de tiempo) INFORMAL

ages ago / for ages

Exaggerating how long ago something happened or how long since you did something.

> ¡Hace siglos que no te veo!
> *I haven't seen you for ages!*

Meanwhile and at the same time

mientras tanto

meanwhile / in the meantime

Another action happening during the same period. Stands alone (unlike mientras + verb).

> Yo preparo la cena. Mientras tanto, tú pon la mesa.
> *I'll make dinner. Meanwhile, you set the table.*

a la vez / al mismo tiempo

at the same time / at once

Two actions happening together. Also for two qualities: Es divertido y, a la vez, útil.

> No puedo hablar por teléfono y conducir a la vez.
> *I can't talk on the phone and drive at the same time.*

en ese momento / en aquel momento

at that moment / just then / at that time

Marks the exact moment in a story. Aquel = further back in time.

> En ese momento sonó el teléfono.
> *Just then the phone rang.*

al rato / al poco rato

a while later / shortly after

A short time after the previous event in a story.

> Se fue a dormir y al rato volvió a levantarse.
> *He went to bed and a little while later he got up again.*

poco después

shortly afterwards / soon after

Neutral, good in speech and writing. Opposite: poco antes = shortly before.

> Terminó la carrera y poco después se fue a vivir a Berlín.
> *She finished her degree and soon afterwards moved to Berlin.*

de un momento a otro

any minute now / at any moment

Something is about to happen very soon, but you don't know exactly when.

> Están a punto de llegar, de un momento a otro.
> *They're about to arrive, any minute now.*

How often: beyond 'a veces'

rara vez

rarely / seldom

Goes before the verb and needs no 'no'. Slightly more formal than casi nunca.

> Rara vez come carne.
> *He rarely eats meat.*

en contadas ocasiones FORMAL

on very few occasions / hardly ever

Emphasises how rare something is. Written or careful speech.

> Solo en contadas ocasiones hemos tenido problemas con el proveedor.
> *We've only had problems with the supplier on very few occasions.*

cada dos por tres COLLOQUIAL

all the time / every five minutes

Something happens too often, usually annoying.

> Mi vecino me llama cada dos por tres para pedirme cosas.
> *My neighbour calls me every five minutes to ask for things.*

una y otra vez

again and again / over and over

Repetition, often with frustration.

> Te lo he dicho una y otra vez.
> *I've told you over and over again.*

de cuando en cuando

from time to time / now and then

Same as de vez en cuando, a little more literary.

> De cuando en cuando nos escribimos.
> *We write to each other now and then.*

todo el rato INFORMAL

all the time / the whole time

Continuously, during a period. Very common in Spain.

> El niño estuvo llorando todo el rato.
> *The child was crying the whole time.*

cada vez que puedo

whenever I can

Natural way to talk about things you love doing. Also: siempre que puedo.

> Cada vez que puedo, me escapo a la montaña.
> *Whenever I can, I escape to the mountains.*

Sooner or later: deadlines and plans

tarde o temprano

sooner or later

Something will definitely happen eventually.

> Tarde o temprano se va a enterar.
> *Sooner or later he's going to find out.*

cuanto antes / lo antes posible

as soon as possible / ASAP

Cuanto antes is natural in speech; lo antes posible is neutral and common in work emails.

> Necesito el informe lo antes posible.
> *I need the report as soon as possible.*

a última hora

at the last minute / late in the day

Last-minute changes and plans. Also 'a última hora de la tarde' = late in the afternoon.

> Cancelaron la cena a última hora.
> *They cancelled the dinner at the last minute.*

en el último momento

at the last moment

Very close to a última hora; stresses the exact moment.

> Cambió de opinión en el último momento.
> *She changed her mind at the last moment.*

a más tardar / como muy tarde

at the latest

A deadline. A más tardar is more formal; como muy tarde is everyday.

> Mándamelo el viernes como muy tarde.
> *Send it to me by Friday at the latest.*

con antelación

in advance / ahead of time

Booking, planning, giving notice. Formal synonym: de antemano.

> Hay que reservar con dos semanas de antelación.
> *You have to book two weeks in advance.*

de antemano

in advance / beforehand

Typical in 'Gracias de antemano' at the end of an email.

> Gracias de antemano por tu ayuda.
> *Thanks in advance for your help.*

a corto / medio / largo plazo

in the short / medium / long term

Plans, goals, investments, consequences.

> A largo plazo, me gustaría tener mi propio negocio.
> *In the long term, I'd like to have my own business.*

a la larga

in the long run

What happens eventually, after some time. Informal-neutral.

> A la larga, sale más barato comprar que alquilar.
> *In the long run, buying works out cheaper than renting.*

Time traps

'for + time' up to now

✗ English idea: 'I've lived here for three years' → ~~*He vivido aquí por tres años~~.

✓ Vivo aquí desde hace tres años. / Llevo tres años viviendo aquí. / Hace tres años que vivo aquí.

If the situation is still true now, Spanish uses the present tense with desde hace, llevar or hace… que. Por + time is rarely right here.

› **Estudio español desde hace un año.**
I've been studying Spanish for a year.

REMEMBER Still true now? Present tense. Finished? Past: Viví allí tres años.

'eventually' is not eventualmente

✗ ~~*Eventualmente encontró trabajo~~.

✓ Al final encontró trabajo. / Tarde o temprano encontrará trabajo.

Eventualmente means 'possibly' or 'temporarily'. For English 'eventually', use al final (past) or tarde o temprano (future).

› **Al final todo salió bien.**
Eventually everything turned out fine.

the next day in a story

✗ ~~*Llegamos el sábado y mañana fuimos al museo~~.

✓ Llegamos el sábado y al día siguiente fuimos al museo.

Mañana, ayer and hoy are relative to now. In a story about the past, use al día siguiente, el día anterior, ese día.

› **El día anterior había llovido mucho.**
It had rained a lot the day before.

THEN VS NOW IN 5 SENTENCES

Write five sentences comparing your life ten years ago with today: 'En aquella época… pero hoy en día…', 'Antiguamente… mientras que ahora…', 'Desde entonces…'. Read them aloud. You'll practise the imperfect, the present and these time expressions in one go.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

11 · Say how you really feel, and what you really think

Feelings & opinions

At B1 you stop saying only 'estoy bien' or 'estoy triste'. This section gives you precise adjectives for your mood, the gustar-type verbs Spanish uses for feelings (me agobia, me hace gracia, me da rabia), everyday mood expressions, and the key grammar step of the level: when an opinion or a feeling needs the subjunctive. Start with ilusión, the word English doesn't have.

Ilusión: the word English doesn't have

Ilusión mixes excitement, hope and joyful anticipation. Spanish speakers use it all the time, so it's worth learning really well.

la ilusión

excitement / hope / enthusiasm (and sometimes: illusion)

NOUN · FEMININE · B1

PLURAL ilusiones

The happy, hopeful feeling you have about something good that's coming, or the enthusiasm you put into something. Only rarely does it mean 'illusion' (a false idea), mostly in 'hacerse ilusiones'.

excitement / hope — *positive anticipation*

› Tengo mucha ilusión por este viaje.
I'm really excited about this trip.

enthusiasm — *energy and motivation*

› Empezó el proyecto con mucha ilusión.
She started the project full of enthusiasm.

hacerse ilusiones — *to get your hopes up*

› No te hagas ilusiones, no creo que te llamen.
Don't get your hopes up, I don't think they'll call you.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **con ilusión** *eagerly / with enthusiasm* · **perder la ilusión** *to lose your enthusiasm / to stop caring* · **la ilusión de mi vida** *my dream / what I've always longed for*

NOTE For 'an illusion' in the sense of a trick of the eye or a false belief, Spanish also says una ilusión óptica or un espejismo.

hacerle ilusión (algo a alguien)

to be excited about / to really look forward to / to be thrilled

EXPRESSION · WORKS LIKE GUSTAR: ME HACE ILUSIÓN, ME HACEN ILUSIÓN · B1

PATTERN **me hace ilusión + noun / infinitive · me hace ilusión que + subjunctive**

The most natural way to say you're excited or thrilled about something. Like gustar, the thing that excites you is the subject.

+ noun — *I'm excited about...*

› Me hace mucha ilusión la boda de mi hermana.
I'm so excited about my sister's wedding.

+ infinitive — *I'd love to / I'm looking forward to*

› Me hace ilusión volver a ver a mis amigos de la universidad.
I'm really looking forward to seeing my uni friends again.

+ que + subjunctive — *I'm thrilled that someone else...*

› Me hace mucha ilusión que vengas a mi cumpleaños.
I'm so happy you're coming to my birthday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué ilusión!** *How exciting! / How lovely!* · **No me hace ninguna ilusión.** *I'm not exactly looking forward to it.*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy excitado por el viaje~~ → ✓ Me hace mucha ilusión el viaje / Estoy ilusionado con el viaje. 'Excitado' usually has a sexual meaning.

ilusionado *excited / hopeful / looking forward*

ADJECTIVE · B1

FORMS ilusionado · ilusionada · ilusionados · ilusionadas

PATTERN **estar ilusionado/a con / por algo**

How you feel when something makes you ilusión: excited and hopeful. Always with estar.

› Los niños están muy ilusionados con la llegada de los Reyes Magos.
The kids are really excited about the Three Kings coming.

› Estoy ilusionada con mi nuevo trabajo.
I'm excited about my new job.

OPPOSITE **desilusionado** — disappointed / disillusioned

DON'T CONFUSE ilusionado = excited and hopeful about the future · emocionado = moved, or excited in the moment.

emocionado *moved / touched · excited*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS emocionado · emocionada · emocionados · emocionadas
PATTERN **estar emocionado/a (con / por algo)**

Two meanings: moved or touched (often close to tears), and excited in the moment. Context tells you which.

> **moved** — *touched emotionally*
>
> › Estaba tan emocionado en la boda que no pudo terminar el discurso.
> *He was so moved at the wedding that he couldn't finish his speech.*

> **excited** — *thrilled, full of energy*
>
> › Estamos muy emocionados: ¡mañana nos vamos a Japón!
> *We're so excited: we're off to Japan tomorrow!*

NOTE Verb: emocionarse = to get emotional. Adjective for things: emocionante = exciting.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy muy excitado por el concierto~~ → ✓ Estoy muy emocionado con el concierto.
Excitado = aroused (or, of a crowd, worked up).

How are you feeling? Key adjectives

All of these describe a state, so they go with estar (or sentirse).

agobiado *overwhelmed / stressed out / swamped*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS agobiado · agobiada · agobiados · agobiadas
PATTERN **estar agobiado/a con / por algo**

One of the most used feeling words in Spain: you have too much to do, too much pressure, or a place is too crowded or hot. There's no single English equivalent.

› Estoy agobiadísima con tanto trabajo.
I'm completely swamped with all this work.

› Había tanta gente en el metro que me sentí agobiado.
There were so many people on the metro that I felt claustrophobic.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar agobiado de trabajo** *to be snowed under with work* · **¡No te agobies!** *Don't stress! / Take it easy!*

DON'T CONFUSE agobiado = overwhelmed by too much · estresado = stressed (more general, more 'medical').

orgulloso *proud*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS orgulloso · orgullosa · orgullosos · orgullosas

PATTERN **estar orgulloso/a de alguien / algo / de + infinitive · ser orgulloso/a**

Estar orgulloso de = to be proud of (a positive feeling). Ser orgulloso = to be a proud person, often meaning too proud to admit a mistake.

estar orgulloso de — *to feel proud of*

› Estoy muy orgullosa de ti.
I'm so proud of you.

ser orgulloso — *to be (too) proud*

› Es tan orgulloso que nunca pide perdón.
He's so proud he never says sorry.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy orgulloso por ti~~ → ✓ Estoy orgulloso de ti. Proud of = orgulloso de.

avergonzado *ashamed · embarrassed*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS avergonzado · avergonzada · avergonzados · avergonzadas

PATTERN **estar avergonzado/a (de / por algo)**

You feel shame or embarrassment. In everyday speech, Spanish prefers 'me da vergüenza' or 'qué vergüenza'; avergonzado sounds a bit stronger, closer to 'ashamed'.

› Estaba avergonzado por lo que había dicho.
He was ashamed of what he'd said.

› Me da vergüenza hablar en público.
I get embarrassed speaking in public.

NOTE Verb: avergonzarse de = to be ashamed of. Colloquial Spain: 'qué corte' = how embarrassing.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy embarazada (meaning embarrassed~~) → ✓ Me da vergüenza / Qué vergüenza. Embarazada = pregnant!

decepcionado *disappointed*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS decepcionado · decepcionada · decepcionados · decepcionadas
PATTERN **estar decepcionado/a con alguien / algo · decepcionar a alguien**

When something or someone wasn't as good as you expected. The verb is decepcionar; the noun, la decepción (= disappointment, not deception).

› Estoy un poco decepcionado con el final de la serie.
I'm a bit disappointed with how the series ended.

› Me has decepcionado.
You've let me down.

DON'T CONFUSE decepcionado = disappointed · desilusionado = disillusioned, you've lost your hope or enthusiasm.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy decepcionado de la película~~ → ✓ Estoy decepcionado con la película (con is the most common preposition).

harto *fed up / sick and tired*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS harto · harta · hartos · hartas
PATTERN **estar harto/a de algo / de alguien / de + infinitive · estar harto/a de que + subjunctive**

You've had enough of something. Very common in conversation.

› Estoy harta de este calor.
I'm sick of this heat.

› Estoy harto de que siempre llegues tarde.
I'm fed up with you always being late.

NOTE Hartarse de = to get fed up with; also to eat your fill: Me harté de paella.

More feelings: quick list

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estresado/a	*stressed*	estar estresado/a · el estrés **Últimamente estoy muy estresada.** *I've been really stressed lately.*
frustrado/a	*frustrated*	estar frustrado/a con / por **Me siento frustrado porque no avanzo con el español.** *I feel frustrated because I'm not making progress with my Spanish.*
aliviado/a	*relieved*	¡Qué alivio! = What a relief! **Me quedé muy aliviada cuando me dieron los resultados.** *I was really relieved when they gave me the results.*
entusiasmado/a	*thrilled / really excited*	estar entusiasmado/a con **Está entusiasmado con su nuevo grupo de música.** *He's thrilled about his new band.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
desanimado/a	*discouraged / down / disheartened*	opposite: animado/a · animar a alguien = to cheer someone up
motivado/a	*motivated*	estar motivado/a para + infinitive **Este año estoy muy motivada para aprender.** *This year I'm really motivated to learn.*
preocupado/a	*worried*	estar preocupado/a por (not ~~*de~~) **Estoy preocupada por mi padre.** *I'm worried about my dad.*
inquieto/a	*restless / uneasy*	estar inquieto/a = uneasy; ser inquieto/a = restless, curious person
confundido/a	*confused*	also confuso/a; estar hecho/a un lío (informal) = to be all mixed up
dolido/a	*hurt (emotionally)*	estar dolido/a con alguien **Está dolida porque no la invitaste.** *She's hurt because you didn't invite her.*
indignado/a	*outraged / indignant*	for injustice or bad treatment **Los vecinos están indignados con la subida del alquiler.** *The residents are outraged at the rent increase.*
cabreado/a COLLOQUIAL	*pissed off / really annoyed*	cabrearse = to get angry. Very common in Spain; avoid at work. **Javi está cabreado conmigo.** *Javi's annoyed with me.*
agradecido/a	*grateful*	estar agradecido/a por algo **Te estoy muy agradecido por todo.** *I'm really grateful to you for everything.*
satisfecho/a	*satisfied / pleased*	irregular participle of satisfacer; estar satisfecho/a con **Estamos muy satisfechos con el resultado.** *We're very pleased with the result.*
deprimido/a	*depressed*	strong in Spanish too; for 'a bit down' say 'estoy de bajón'
encantado/a (de la vida)	*delighted / over the moon*	New use: beyond 'nice to meet you', estar encantado = to be really happy **Está encantada de la vida con su nueva casa.** *She's over the moon with her new house.*
de los nervios INFORMAL	*really nervous / on edge*	estar de los nervios **Mañana tengo la entrevista y estoy de los nervios.** *I've got the interview tomorrow and I'm a nervous wreck.*
ofendido/a	*offended*	estar ofendido/a con alguien · ofenderse = to take offence **No te ofendas, pero no me gusta tu idea.** *No offence, but I don't like your idea.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
arrepentido/a	*sorry / regretful*	arrepentirse de + infinitive = to regret (doing) **Estoy arrepentida de no haber estudiado más.** *I regret not studying more.*
angustiado/a	*anxious / distressed*	stronger than preocupado/a · la angustia = anguish, anxiety
nostálgico/a	*nostalgic / wistful*	la nostalgia; also: echar de menos **En Navidad siempre me pongo nostálgico.** *I always get nostalgic at Christmas.*
enamorado/a	*in love*	estar enamorado/a de (not ~~*con~~) **Está enamorado de su compañera de piso.** *He's in love with his flatmate.*
tenso/a	*tense / on edge*	also for situations: un ambiente tenso = a tense atmosphere
dar envidia (sana)	*to make (you) jealous / envious (in a nice way)*	like gustar: me da envidia · 'envidia sana' = friendly envy, no bad feeling **¡Qué envidia (sana) me das con esas vacaciones!** *I'm so jealous of your holiday!*

Verbs that work like gustar

In Spanish, many feelings 'happen to you': the thing that causes the feeling is the subject, and you are the indirect object (me, te, le…).

fastidiar *to annoy / to bug · to ruin*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR); LIKE GUSTAR: ME FASTIDIA(N) · INFORMAL · B1

PATTERN **me fastidia + noun / infinitive · me fastidia que + subjunctive**

Something annoys or bothers you. It can also mean to spoil a plan, or (Spain, informal) to be a real pain.

me fastidia — *it annoys me*

› Me fastidia mucho que la gente hable en el cine.
It really annoys me when people talk in the cinema.

fastidiar algo — *to ruin / mess up*

› La lluvia nos fastidió el plan.
The rain ruined our plans.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡No fastidies!** *No way! / You're kidding!* · **¡Fastídiate!** *Tough! / Serves you right!*

DON'T CONFUSE me fastidia = it annoys me (informal) · me molesta = it bothers me (neutral) · me pone de los nervios = it drives me mad.

agobiar *to overwhelm / to stress out / to suffocate*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR); LIKE GUSTAR: ME AGOBIA(N) · B1

PATTERN **me agobia + noun / infinitive · me agobia que + subjunctive**
ALSO agobiarse = to get stressed / overwhelmed

Something makes you feel overwhelmed, stressed or claustrophobic: crowds, deadlines, pushy people, heat.

› Me agobian las tiendas en rebajas.
Shops during the sales stress me out.

› Me agobia que me pregunten todo el rato cuándo me caso.
It gets to me when people keep asking when I'm getting married.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo agobio el trabajo~~ → ✓ Me agobia el trabajo. The thing that stresses you is the subject.

sentar bien / mal *to agree / disagree with you · to suit · to upset*

EXPRESSION · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME SIENTA, ME SIENTAN · B1

PATTERN **algo me sienta bien / mal · me sentó fatal que + subjunctive**

Three uses: food or drink that agrees or disagrees with you; clothes or colours that suit you; and what people say or do that upsets you (or pleases you).

food & drink — *to agree / disagree with you*

› El café por la noche me sienta fatal.
Coffee at night really doesn't agree with me.

clothes — *to suit you*

› Ese color te sienta genial.
That colour really suits you.

feelings — *to upset / hurt / annoy you*

› Me sentó mal que no me llamara en mi cumpleaños.
I was upset that he didn't call me on my birthday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sentar como un tiro** *to really upset / annoy (colloquial)* · **Te sentará bien descansar.** *A rest will do you good.*

NOTE Don't confuse with sentarse = to sit down. Same verb, different structure.

hacer gracia

to find funny / to amuse

EXPRESSION · LIKE GUSTAR: ME HACE GRACIA, ME HACEN GRACIA · B1

PATTERN **me hace gracia + noun / infinitive · me hace gracia que + subjunctive**

Something amuses you. 'No me hace gracia' is very common and means 'I'm not happy about it / I don't like it'.

amuse — *to find funny*

› Me hace mucha gracia cómo habla tu abuela.
I find the way your grandma talks really funny.

no me hace gracia — *I'm not keen / I don't like it*

› No me hace ninguna gracia que vuelvas tan tarde.
I'm not at all happy about you coming home so late.

DON'T CONFUSE hacer gracia = to amuse (a reaction) · ser gracioso = to be funny (a quality).

dar pena / rabia / miedo / vergüenza / asco

to make you sad / angry / scared / embarrassed / disgusted

EXPRESSION · LIKE GUSTAR: ME DA PENA, ME DAN PENA · B1

PATTERN **me da + feeling + noun / infinitive · me da + feeling + que + subjunctive**

A very productive pattern: dar + a feeling noun. It's often more natural than an adjective: 'me da miedo' instead of 'tengo miedo de'.

dar pena — *to make you sad / to feel sorry*

› Me da pena tirar comida.
I hate throwing food away.

dar rabia — *to make you angry / annoyed*

› Me da rabia que no me hayan avisado.
It makes me mad that they didn't tell me.

dar miedo — *to scare*

› Me dan miedo las alturas.
I'm scared of heights.

dar vergüenza — *to embarrass*

› Le da vergüenza cantar en público.
She's embarrassed to sing in public.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me da mucha pena (que...)** *it's such a shame (that...) / I'm so sorry (that...)* · **me da igual** *I don't mind / I don't care*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America often uses dar pena = to embarrass (Mexico especially): Me da pena hablar = I'm shy about speaking.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo doy miedo las alturas~~ → ✓ Me dan miedo las alturas. The verb agrees with what causes the feeling (plural here), and you are me / te / le.

poner + adjective / poner de buen o mal humor

to make (you) + adjective · to put (you) in a good / bad mood

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: PONGO / PUSE; LIKE GUSTAR: ME PONE(N) · B1

PATTERN **algo me pone + nervioso / triste / contento... · algo me pone de buen / mal humor**

What causes a change in your mood. Very common for everyday reactions.

- El tráfico me pone de muy mal humor.
  Traffic puts me in a really bad mood.
- Me pone nerviosa hablar por teléfono en español.
  Talking on the phone in Spanish makes me nervous.
- Esta canción me pone de buen humor.
  This song puts me in a good mood.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me pone de los nervios** *it drives me mad / gets on my nerves* · **me pone triste** *it makes me sad*

NOTE Reflexive ponerse = to become (for quick changes): Se puso rojo = He went red.

alegrarse de

to be glad / happy (about)

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **alegrarse de + infinitive (same subject) · alegrarse de que + subjunctive · me alegra que + subjunctive**

You know 'me alegro'. At B1, use it with que + subjunctive when someone else is involved. Two structures: me alegro de que... (reflexive) or me alegra que... (like gustar).

- Me alegro de verte.
  Good to see you.
- Me alegro mucho de que te haya ido bien la entrevista.
  I'm really glad the interview went well.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me alegro que estás bien~~ → ✓ Me alegro de que estés bien. Keep the de and use the subjunctive.

Moods: good days and bad days

estar de buen humor

to be in a good mood

Note: de, not ~~*en~~. Also: estar de buenas (informal).

> Hoy el jefe está de buen humor.
> *The boss is in a good mood today.*

estar de mal humor

to be in a bad mood

Also: estar de malas (informal), estar de mala uva (colloquial, Spain).

> No le hables ahora, está de mal humor.
> *Don't talk to him now, he's in a bad mood.*

levantarse con el pie izquierdo · INFORMAL

to get out of bed on the wrong side

When everything goes wrong from the start of the day.

> Hoy me he levantado con el pie izquierdo.
> *I got out of bed on the wrong side today.*

estar hasta las narices (de) · COLLOQUIAL

to be sick to death (of) / to have had it up to here

A stronger, very Spanish way of saying estar harto. Fine with friends, not in formal emails.

> Estoy hasta las narices de tanta burocracia.
> *I've had it up to here with all this red tape.*

estar hasta el gorro (de) COLLOQUIAL

to be fed up (to the back teeth) (with)

Same as hasta las narices, a bit softer and more playful.

> Estoy hasta el gorro de obras en mi calle.
> *I'm fed up to the back teeth with the roadworks in my street.*

no estar para bromas

to be in no mood for jokes

Warns that someone is serious or irritable right now.

> Hoy no estoy para bromas.
> *I'm in no mood for jokes today.*

estar como unas castañuelas COLLOQUIAL

to be as happy as Larry / over the moon

Very happy and lively. Castañuelas = castanets.

> Desde que tiene novio está como unas castañuelas.
> *Since she got a boyfriend she's been over the moon.*

estar que no cabe en sí de alegría

to be beside yourself with joy

Huge happiness. Also: no caber en sí de orgullo.

> Cuando nació su nieta, estaba que no cabía en sí de alegría.
> *When his granddaughter was born, he was beside himself with joy.*

estar con el ánimo por los suelos

to be really down / at rock bottom

Very low mood. Also: tener la moral por los suelos.

> Después del despido, estaba con el ánimo por los suelos.
> *After being laid off, he was really down.*

estar de mala leche VERY COLLOQUIAL

to be in a foul mood

New use: tener mala leche = to have a nasty streak (personality); estar de mala leche = to be in a foul mood right now. Only with friends.

> ¿Qué le pasa a Diego? Está de una mala leche...
> *What's up with Diego? He's in a foul mood.*

Opinions: indicative or subjunctive?

The key rule: when you affirm something as true, use the indicative. When you deny it, doubt it, or give a value judgement about it, use the subjunctive.

creo que / no creo que

I think (that) / I don't think (that)

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN creo que + indicative · no creo que + subjunctive

The same verb, two moods. Affirmative: you present it as true, so indicative. Negative: you deny it, so subjunctive. The same goes for pienso que, me parece que, estoy seguro de que, supongo que.

> **creo que + indicative** — *I think it is true*
>
> › Creo que Laura tiene razón.
> *I think Laura's right.*

> **no creo que + subjunctive** — *I don't think it is true*
>
> › No creo que Laura tenga razón.
> *I don't think Laura's right.*

> **no me parece que + subjunctive** — *it doesn't seem to me*
>
> › No me parece que sea buena idea.
> *I don't think it's a good idea.*

NOTE In questions, both are possible: ¿Crees que vendrá? / ¿Crees que venga? (the subjunctive adds more doubt and is more common in Latin America).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Creo que sea verdad~~ → ✓ Creo que es verdad. ✗ ~~*No creo que es verdad~~ → ✓ No creo que sea verdad.

me parece + adjective + que

I think it's + adjective + that...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **me parece bien / mal / normal / increíble / fatal + que + subjunctive · me parece + adjective + infinitive**

A value judgement about a fact: always the subjunctive, even when the fact is true. With no new subject, use the infinitive.

+ que + subjunctive — *different subject*

› Me parece fatal que no paguen las horas extra.
I think it's terrible that they don't pay overtime.

+ infinitive — *general statement*

› Me parece importante aprender idiomas.
I think learning languages is important.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **me parece bien que...** *I'm fine with... / I think it's good that...* · **me parece increíble que...** *I can't believe that...* · **me parece normal que...** *it's understandable that...*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me parece bueno que vengas~~ → ✓ Me parece bien que vengas. With parecer, use the adverbs bien / mal, not bueno / malo.

es + adjective + que

it's + adjective + that...

EXPRESSION B1

PATTERN **es importante / necesario / normal / lógico / mejor / raro + que + subjunctive · es + adjective + infinitive**

Impersonal value judgements take the subjunctive. But expressions of certainty (es verdad que, está claro que, es evidente que) take the indicative, because they affirm a fact.

value → subjunctive — *importance, necessity, opinion*

› Es importante que todos lleguen puntuales.
It's important that everyone arrives on time.

general → infinitive — *no specific person*

› Es normal estar nervioso antes de un examen.
It's normal to be nervous before an exam.

certainty → indicative — *you affirm it's true*

› Está claro que necesitamos más tiempo.
It's clear that we need more time.

NOTE Negative certainty changes the mood: No es verdad que sea tan caro.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es importante de practicar~~ → ✓ Es importante practicar. No 'de' before the infinitive.

Reacting & valuing: + subjunctive

When you react emotionally to what someone else does or what happens, the verb after que goes in the subjunctive.

Es una pena que... / Es una lástima que...
It's a shame / pity that...
+ subjunctive. Regret about something. Also: ¡Qué pena que...!

> Es una pena que no puedas venir a la cena.
> *It's a shame you can't come to dinner.*

¡Qué bien que...!
How great that... / I'm so glad that...
+ subjunctive. Warm, happy reaction to someone's news.

> ¡Qué bien que hayas encontrado piso!
> *That's great you've found a flat!*

¡Qué raro que...!
How strange that... / It's odd that...
+ subjunctive. Surprise, sometimes worry.

> ¡Qué raro que Tom no conteste! Siempre lo hace.
> *It's odd that Tom isn't answering. He always does.*

Me encanta que... / Odio que...
I love it when... / I hate it when...
+ subjunctive when someone else does the action. Same subject: + infinitive (Me encanta cocinar).

> Odio que me interrumpan cuando hablo.
> *I hate it when people interrupt me.*

Me molesta que...
It bothers me that... / I don't like it when...
+ subjunctive. Neutral, fine at work too.

> Me molesta que no me digan las cosas a la cara.
> *It bothers me when people don't say things to my face.*

Me sorprende que...
I'm surprised that...
+ subjunctive. Even if the fact is true, the reaction triggers the subjunctive.

> Me sorprende que todavía no lo sepas.
> *I'm surprised you don't know yet.*

Siento que... / Siento mucho que...
I'm sorry that...
+ subjunctive. Sympathy. (Siento + infinitive = I'm sorry for (doing): Siento llegar tarde.)

> Siento mucho que te hayas puesto enfermo justo en vacaciones.
> *I'm so sorry you got ill right on holiday.*

No soporto que...
I can't stand it when...
+ subjunctive. Strong dislike of what other people do.

> No soporto que la gente tire basura al suelo.
> *I can't stand people throwing litter on the ground.*

Menos mal que...
Thank goodness... / Luckily...
Trap: + indicative! It states a real fact you're relieved about.

> Menos mal que llevaba paraguas.
> *Thank goodness I had my umbrella.*

Me preocupa que...
I'm worried that...
+ subjunctive. Concern about a situation.

> Me preocupa que los niños pasen tanto tiempo con el móvil.
> *I'm worried the kids spend so much time on their phones.*

Feelings traps

excited ≠ excitado

✗ ~~*Estoy muy excitada por las vacaciones~~.

✓ Estoy muy ilusionada con las vacaciones. / Me hacen mucha ilusión las vacaciones.

Excitado almost always has a sexual meaning. For 'excited' use ilusionado, emocionado, con muchas ganas, or hacer ilusión.

› ¡Tengo muchas ganas de verte!
I'm so excited to see you!

embarrassed ≠ embarazada

✗ ~~*Estoy muy embarazada~~.

✓ Me da mucha vergüenza. / ¡Qué vergüenza!

Embarazada means pregnant. For embarrassment, Spanish usually uses dar vergüenza or the exclamation ¡Qué vergüenza! (Spain, informal: ¡Qué corte!).

› Me dio mucha vergüenza equivocarme de nombre.
I was so embarrassed when I got his name wrong.

Feelings with ser instead of estar

✗ ~~*Soy agobiado~~. / ~~*Soy preocupada~~.

✓ Estoy agobiado. / Estoy preocupada.

Feelings and moods are temporary states, so they take estar. Ser + some of these adjectives describes personality and changes the meaning: es orgulloso = he's a proud person.

› Estoy aburrido.
I'm bored.

› Soy aburrido.
I'm boring.

Value judgements with the indicative

✗ ~~*Es una pena que no puedes venir~~. / ~~*Me alegro de que estás bien~~.

✓ Es una pena que no puedas venir. / Me alegro de que estés bien.

After a reaction or judgement + que, Spanish uses the subjunctive, even when the fact is real.

› Qué bien que te guste.
I'm so glad you like it.

REMEMBER Feeling + que + different person = subjunctive. Every time.

'It makes me happy' — careful with hacer

✗ ~~*Me hace triste~~. / ~~*Me hace nervioso~~.

✓ Me pone triste. / Me pone nervioso.

For changes of mood, Spanish uses poner + adjective, not hacer. 'Me hace feliz' does exist, but only with feliz.

› Me pone de los nervios esperar.
Waiting gets on my nerves.

YOUR FEELINGS DIARY

For one week, end each day with two lines in Spanish: one thing that 'me ha hecho ilusión' or 'me ha puesto de buen humor', and one that 'me ha agobiado' or 'me ha dado rabia'. Add a reason with que + subjunctive when someone else is involved. In seven days these structures will feel like yours.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

12 · Paperwork, repairs, bills and parcels: the Spanish of real adult life

Everyday vocabulary

Living in Spanish means dealing with forms, appointments, plumbers, landlords and deliveries. This section gives you the vocabulary for those everyday 'adulting' moments. Many of these words appear on official websites and in emails, so learn to recognise them in writing as well as to say them.

Bureaucracy & admin

Spanish bureaucracy has its own vocabulary. You'll need these words for visas, registrations, banks and any public office.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la burocracia	*bureaucracy / red tape*	La burocracia aquí es lentísima. *The red tape here is incredibly slow.*
el empadronamiento	*registration on the local census (as a resident)*	**LatAm:** Spain. The certificate is 'el certificado de empadronamiento'. Verb: empadronarse. Para pedir la tarjeta sanitaria necesitas el empadronamiento. *To apply for a health card you need to be registered on the census.*
empadronarse	*to register as a resident (at the town hall)*	reflexive **LatAm:** Spain. Me empadroné en cuanto encontré piso. *I registered as a resident as soon as I found a flat.*
la ventanilla	*counter / window (at an office or bank)*	Pase a la ventanilla número tres, por favor. *Please go to window number three.*
la solicitud	*application / request*	'Presentar una solicitud' = to submit an application. Verb: solicitar. He presentado la solicitud de beca. *I've submitted the grant application.*
el certificado	*certificate*	Necesito un certificado de nacimiento. *I need a birth certificate.*
el DNI / el NIE	*national ID card / foreigner's ID number*	**LatAm:** Spain. DNI = Documento Nacional de Identidad; NIE = Número de Identidad de Extranjero. Latin America: la cédula, el DNI (Argentina, Peru), el INE (Mexico, voter ID). ¿Me deja su DNI, por favor? *Can I see your ID card, please?*
la fecha límite	*deadline (specific date)*	La fecha límite es el 30 de junio. *The deadline is 30 June.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el justificante	*proof / receipt / doctor's note*	Official proof that you did something: paid, attended, went to the doctor. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el comprobante, la constancia. **Pide un justificante del médico para el trabajo.** *Ask the doctor for a note for work.*
la firma	*signature*	Verb: firmar. Not 'firm' (= la empresa). **Falta tu firma en la última página.** *Your signature is missing on the last page.*
el sello	*stamp (official or postal)*	**El documento necesita el sello de la embajada.** *The document needs the embassy stamp.*
la tasa	*fee (official) / rate*	'Pagar la tasa' = to pay the (administrative) fee. 'La tasa de paro' = unemployment rate. **La tasa del pasaporte se paga en el banco.** *The passport fee is paid at the bank.*
la oficina de correos	*post office*	Often just 'Correos' in Spain. **Tengo que pasar por Correos a recoger una carta certificada.** *I need to stop by the post office to pick up a registered letter.*
la carta certificada	*registered letter*	**Te han enviado una carta certificada de Hacienda.** *You've been sent a registered letter from the tax office.*
Hacienda	*the tax office / the taxman*	'La declaración de la renta' = income tax return. **LatAm:** Spain (Agencia Tributaria). Mexico: el SAT; Argentina: la AFIP / ARCA. **Hacienda me tiene que devolver dinero este año.** *The taxman owes me a refund this year.*
el número de la Seguridad Social	*social security number*	**LatAm:** Spain. **La empresa me pidió el número de la Seguridad Social.** *The company asked me for my social security number.*

Bills, payments & receipts

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ticket / el tique	*till receipt*	The small paper receipt in a shop. Both spellings accepted. **¿Quiere el ticket?** *Do you want the receipt?*
domiciliar	*to set up a direct debit*	'Tener los recibos domiciliados' = to pay bills by direct debit. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: débito automático. **He domiciliado la factura del móvil en mi cuenta.** *I've set up a direct debit for my phone bill.*
la domiciliación	*direct debit*	**LatAm:** Spain. **Prefiero pagar por domiciliación bancaria.** *I prefer to pay by direct debit.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el cargo	*charge (on your account)*	Tengo un cargo en la tarjeta que no reconozco. *There's a charge on my card I don't recognise.*
el seguro	*insurance*	Also 'safe / sure' (adjective). 'El seguro del coche / de hogar / médico'. 'Estar asegurado' = to be insured. ¿El seguro de hogar cubre las goteras? *Does the home insurance cover leaks?*
la póliza FORMAL	*(insurance) policy*	Lea bien las condiciones de la póliza. *Read the policy conditions carefully.*
el impuesto	*tax*	El IVA = VAT (Spain). 'Impuestos incluidos' = tax included. El precio no incluye impuestos. *The price doesn't include tax.*
la multa	*fine / ticket*	'Poner una multa' = to give a fine. 'Me han puesto una multa' = I got a ticket. Me pusieron una multa por aparcar mal. *I got a fine for parking badly.*
estar al día	*to be up to date (with payments)*	¿Estás al día con el alquiler? *Are you up to date with the rent?*

Services & repairs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la fontanero/a	*plumber*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el/la plomero/a. Hay que llamar al fontanero, el baño pierde agua. *We need to call the plumber, the bathroom's leaking.*
el/la electricista	*electrician*	Same form for men and women. El electricista viene mañana a las nueve. *The electrician is coming tomorrow at nine.*
el/la técnico/a	*technician / engineer (repairs)*	El técnico de la compañía de internet no ha venido. *The internet company's technician didn't turn up.*
el/la cerrajero/a	*locksmith*	Me dejé las llaves dentro y tuve que llamar a un cerrajero. *I locked myself out and had to call a locksmith.*
el/la pintor/a	*painter (decorator)*	Vamos a contratar a un pintor para el salón. *We're going to hire a decorator for the living room.*
la avería	*breakdown / fault*	For machines, cars, systems. 'Tener una avería' = to break down. El coche tiene una avería en el motor. *The car has an engine fault.*
averiado/a	*broken down / out of order*	Official signs say 'Averiado'. Colloquial: 'no funciona'. El ascensor está averiado. *The lift is out of order.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estropearse	*to break / to stop working / to go off*	reflexive. For machines and also food. 'Se me ha estropeado el móvil'. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: descomponerse, dañarse, romperse. **Se ha estropeado la lavadora otra vez.** *The washing machine's broken again.*
reparar	*to repair*	More formal / technical than 'arreglar'. **Reparamos todo tipo de electrodomésticos.** *We repair all kinds of household appliances.*
la reparación	*repair*	**La reparación cuesta más que una lavadora nueva.** *The repair costs more than a new washing machine.*
el presupuesto	*quote / estimate · budget*	Two meanings! A quote from a professional ('pedir presupuesto') and a budget for spending ('tenemos poco presupuesto'). **Antes de empezar, pídele un presupuesto por escrito.** *Before he starts, ask him for a written quote.*
la gotera	*leak (from the ceiling)*	**Cuando llueve, tenemos una gotera en la cocina.** *When it rains, we get a leak in the kitchen.*
el grifo	*tap / faucet*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: la llave (del agua), la canilla (Argentina, Uruguay). **El grifo del baño gotea.** *The bathroom tap is dripping.*
atascado/a	*blocked / stuck / jammed*	'El fregadero está atascado' = the sink is blocked. Also traffic: 'un atasco'. **La puerta está atascada, no se abre.** *The door's stuck, it won't open.*
el servicio técnico	*repair service / technical support*	**Llama al servicio técnico, a ver si lo pueden arreglar.** *Call the repair service and see if they can fix it.*
la mano de obra	*labour (cost)*	On a quote: materials + 'mano de obra'. **La pieza es barata, lo caro es la mano de obra.** *The part is cheap, the labour is what's expensive.*

Running a household

The admin side of living in a flat. (Words for describing a home are in Topic vocabulary: Housing.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la casero/a INFORMAL	*landlord / landlady*	Formal / legal: el arrendador. Latin America also: el/la dueño/a. **La casera no quiere arreglar la caldera.** *The landlady won't fix the boiler.*
el/la inquilino/a	*tenant*	**Los inquilinos anteriores dejaron el piso muy sucio.** *The previous tenants left the flat really dirty.*
el contrato de alquiler	*rental agreement / lease*	**El contrato de alquiler es de un año.** *The lease is for one year.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la fianza	*deposit (on a rental)*	Usually one or two months' rent. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el depósito, la garantía. **Cuando me fui, no me devolvieron la fianza.** *When I left, they didn't give me my deposit back.*
la comunidad (de vecinos)	*residents' association / building management*	In Spain, flat owners share costs for the building. 'Gastos de comunidad' = service charges. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: las expensas (Argentina), el mantenimiento (Mexico), la administración (Colombia). **El alquiler incluye los gastos de comunidad.** *The rent includes the service charges.*
la reunión de vecinos	*residents' meeting*	**En la reunión de vecinos decidieron pintar la fachada.** *At the residents' meeting they decided to paint the front of the building.*
el/la portero/a	*concierge / doorman / caretaker*	Also 'el portero automático' = entryphone. **Deja el paquete al portero si no estoy.** *Leave the parcel with the concierge if I'm not in.*
los suministros FORMAL	*utilities (water, electricity, gas)*	Everyday: 'la luz, el agua y el gas'. **Los suministros no están incluidos en el alquiler.** *Utilities aren't included in the rent.*
dar de alta / dar de baja	*to sign up for / to cancel (a service)*	'Dar de alta la luz' = to set up the electricity account. 'Darse de baja del gimnasio' = to cancel your gym membership. **Tengo que dar de baja la línea fija.** *I have to cancel the landline.*
el contador	*meter (gas, electricity, water)*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America also: el medidor. **Viene un técnico a leer el contador.** *A technician is coming to read the meter.*
la caldera	*boiler*	**Se ha estropeado la caldera y no hay agua caliente.** *The boiler's broken and there's no hot water.*
la mudanza	*(house) move / removal*	'Hacer la mudanza' = to move house. 'La empresa de mudanzas' = removal company. **La mudanza nos llevó todo el fin de semana.** *The move took us the whole weekend.*

Parcels & deliveries

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el pedido	*order*	'Hacer un pedido' = to place an order. From 'pedir'. **Mi pedido todavía no ha llegado.** *My order still hasn't arrived.*
repartir	*to deliver / to distribute*	Also 'to share out': repartir la cuenta. **Reparten de lunes a sábado.** *They deliver Monday to Saturday.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la entrega	*delivery / handover*	'Plazo de entrega' = delivery time. Verb: entregar. **La entrega está prevista para mañana.** *Delivery is scheduled for tomorrow.*
el número de seguimiento	*tracking number*	'Hacer el seguimiento' = to track. **¿Me pasas el número de seguimiento?** *Can you send me the tracking number?*
el punto de recogida	*pick-up point / collection point*	**Lo puedes recoger en el punto de recogida de la esquina.** *You can pick it up at the collection point on the corner.*
el reembolso	*refund / reimbursement*	'Contra reembolso' = cash on delivery. **Me han hecho el reembolso en la tarjeta.** *They've refunded the money to my card.*
llegar roto/a / en mal estado	*to arrive broken / damaged*	**El jarrón llegó roto, voy a poner una reclamación.** *The vase arrived broken, I'm going to make a complaint.*
la reclamación	*complaint (formal)*	'Poner una reclamación' = to make a formal complaint. 'La hoja de reclamaciones' = official complaints form (Spain). **Pedí la hoja de reclamaciones.** *I asked for the official complaints form.*

News in daily life

The words you need to comment on what's in the news over coffee. (Media and journalism vocabulary comes at B2.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las noticias	*the news*	Plural in Spanish. 'Una noticia' = a piece of news. 'Ver las noticias' = to watch the news. **¿Has visto las noticias hoy?** *Have you seen the news today?*
el titular	*headline*	**Solo leo los titulares por la mañana.** *I only read the headlines in the morning.*
el telediario	*TV news (bulletin)*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el noticiero, el noticiario. **Lo dijeron en el telediario de las tres.** *They said it on the three o'clock news.*
la encuesta	*survey / opinion poll*	'Según las encuestas...' = According to the polls... **Según la última encuesta, la mayoría quiere más transporte público.** *According to the latest poll, most people want more public transport.*
la huelga	*strike*	'Estar en huelga' / 'hacer huelga' = to be on / go on strike. **Mañana hay huelga de metro.** *There's a metro strike tomorrow.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la manifestación	*demonstration / protest march*	Colloquial: 'la mani' (Spain). Hubo una manifestación enorme por la vivienda. *There was a huge demonstration about housing.*
las elecciones	*elections*	Plural. 'Votar' = to vote. Las elecciones son en mayo. *The elections are in May.*
subir / bajar los precios	*to raise / lower prices · prices go up / down*	Han vuelto a subir los precios de la gasolina. *Petrol prices have gone up again.*
estar al tanto (de) INFORMAL	*to keep up with / to be in the loop*	Intento estar al tanto de lo que pasa en el mundo. *I try to keep up with what's going on in the world.*

Useful phrases at the office counter & on the phone

Quería pedir cita para...
I'd like to make an appointment for...

Polite opening on the phone or online.

> Hola, quería pedir cita para renovar el pasaporte.
> *Hello, I'd like to make an appointment to renew my passport.*

¿Qué documentación tengo que traer?
What documents do I need to bring?

The question that saves you a second trip.

> ¿Qué documentación tengo que traer para empadronarme?
> *What documents do I need to bring to register as a resident?*

¿Dónde tengo que firmar?
Where do I need to sign?

At any counter.

> Perfecto. ¿Dónde tengo que firmar?
> *Great. Where do I need to sign?*

Vengo a recoger...
I've come to pick up...

At an office, post office or collection point.

> Vengo a recoger un paquete. Tengo el aviso aquí.
> *I've come to pick up a parcel. I've got the notice here.*

Llamo por...
I'm calling about...

To explain the reason for a call quickly.

> Llamo por la avería de la calefacción.
> *I'm calling about the heating fault.*

¿Para cuándo estaría?
When would it be ready?

Asking about timing for a repair or an order.

> ¿Y para cuándo estaría arreglado?
> *And when would it be fixed by?*

¿Me lo puede mandar por correo electrónico?
FORMAL

Could you email it to me?

To get documents or quotes in writing.

> ¿Me puede mandar el presupuesto por correo electrónico?
> *Could you email me the quote?*

Me falta un papel. INFORMAL
I'm missing a document.

'Papel' = any document, informally. 'Me faltan papeles' = I'm missing some paperwork.

> Al final no pude hacerlo porque me faltaba un papel.
> *In the end I couldn't do it because I was missing a document.*

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

13 · Work, studies, tech, emotions, money, home and more: talk about your real life

Topic vocabulary

These are the ten big topics of B1 conversation: the things people actually talk about once small talk is over. Each topic has a wide vocabulary table and, for some, a set of ready-to-use phrases. Don't try to learn everything at once: start with the topic closest to your life right now and make the words yours.

Work

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el puesto (de trabajo)	*position / post / job*	More formal than 'el trabajo'. 'Un puesto de responsabilidad' = a senior position. **Han ofrecido el puesto a una chica de Valencia.** *They've offered the position to a woman from Valencia.*
la empresa	*company / firm*	Not 'enterprise' in the sense of initiative. **Trabajo en una empresa de software.** *I work for a software company.*
la plantilla	*staff / workforce*	Also 'template'. 'Estar en plantilla' = to be on the permanent staff. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el personal. **La empresa tiene una plantilla de doscientas personas.** *The company has a workforce of two hundred people.*
el/la compañero/a (de trabajo)	*colleague / co-worker*	Colloquial Spain: el/la compi. **Hoy como con unos compañeros de trabajo.** *I'm having lunch with some colleagues today.*
el/la empleado/a	*employee*	**Los empleados tienen dos días de teletrabajo.** *Employees get two days working from home.*
el/la empresario/a	*businessman / businesswoman / employer*	Not 'impresario'. **Su padre es empresario, tiene tres restaurantes.** *Her father's a businessman, he owns three restaurants.*
el/la autónomo/a	*self-employed person / freelancer*	'Ser autónomo' / 'trabajar como autónomo'. Latin America also: independiente, freelance. **Desde que soy autónoma, trabajo más pero estoy más contenta.** *Since I went freelance, I work more but I'm happier.*
el sueldo	*salary / pay / wages*	Everyday word. 'Cobrar el sueldo' = to get paid. 'Sueldo bruto / neto' = gross / net salary. **Con este sueldo no puedo ahorrar nada.** *On this salary I can't save anything.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el salario	*salary / wage*	More formal / official than 'sueldo'. 'El salario mínimo' = minimum wage. **LatAm:** Very common in Latin America for everyday use too.
la nómina	*payslip / payroll*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el recibo de sueldo, el talón de pago. Para alquilar el piso me pidieron las tres últimas nóminas. *To rent the flat they asked me for my last three payslips.*
el contrato indefinido / temporal	*permanent / temporary contract*	Por fin me han hecho un contrato indefinido. *They've finally given me a permanent contract.*
la jornada (completa / parcial)	*working day · full-time / part-time*	'Trabajar a jornada completa / a media jornada'. 'La jornada intensiva' (Spain) = working straight through, usually 8 to 3. Trabajo a media jornada y por las tardes estudio. *I work part-time and study in the afternoons.*
las horas extra	*overtime*	Este mes he hecho muchas horas extra. *I've done a lot of overtime this month.*
el teletrabajo	*remote work / working from home*	Verb: teletrabajar. Also 'trabajar en remoto' / 'trabajar desde casa'. Hago teletrabajo tres días a la semana. *I work from home three days a week.*
la tarea	*task*	At school: homework (Latin America especially). Mi tarea principal es atender a los clientes. *My main task is dealing with customers.*
el informe	*report*	Tengo que entregar el informe el lunes. *I have to hand in the report on Monday.*
la carga de trabajo	*workload*	Este mes la carga de trabajo es enorme. *The workload is huge this month.*
el ambiente de trabajo	*working atmosphere / work environment*	Lo mejor de la empresa es el ambiente de trabajo. *The best thing about the company is the atmosphere.*
el departamento	*department*	'Recursos Humanos' = Human Resources (HR). Habla con el departamento de Recursos Humanos. *Talk to the HR department.*
la oferta de trabajo / de empleo	*job offer / job advert*	Both 'an offer' and 'a vacancy advert'. He visto una oferta de trabajo que te interesa. *I've seen a job ad you'd be interested in.*
el currículum (vítae) / el CV	*CV / résumé*	Plural: los currículums. Latin America also: la hoja de vida (Colombia). He enviado mi currículum a diez empresas. *I've sent my CV to ten companies.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la carta de presentación	*cover letter*	Adjunto mi currículum y una carta de presentación. *Please find attached my CV and a cover letter.*
presentarse a (un puesto)	*to apply for (a job)*	Also 'optar a un puesto' (formal). Not ~~*aplicar a~~. Me voy a presentar al puesto de coordinadora. *I'm going to apply for the coordinator job.*
la entrevista (de trabajo)	*(job) interview*	Mañana tengo una entrevista de trabajo. *I've got a job interview tomorrow.*
el/la candidato/a	*candidate / applicant*	Hay más de cien candidatos para el puesto. *There are over a hundred applicants for the job.*
despedir	*to fire / to dismiss / to lay off*	stem-changing e→i: despido. Also 'despedirse' = to say goodbye! 'El despido' = dismissal. Han despedido a la mitad de la plantilla. *They've laid off half the staff.*
dimitir	*to resign / to quit*	Formal or for important positions. Everyday: 'dejar el trabajo'. Latin America: renunciar. El director dimitió tras el escándalo. *The director resigned after the scandal.*
estar en el paro	*to be unemployed / to be on the dole*	'Cobrar el paro' = to get unemployment benefit. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: estar desempleado/a, estar sin trabajo, estar cesante (Chile). Lleva seis meses en el paro. *He's been unemployed for six months.*
el ascenso	*promotion*	Verb: ascender (e→ie). 'Me han ascendido' = I've been promoted. Le han dado un ascenso y una subida de sueldo. *She's got a promotion and a pay rise.*
la subida de sueldo	*pay rise / raise*	Voy a pedir una subida de sueldo. *I'm going to ask for a pay rise.*
las prácticas	*internship / work placement*	Plural. 'Hacer prácticas en una empresa'. The person: el/la becario/a. Hice las prácticas en una agencia de publicidad. *I did my internship at an advertising agency.*
el/la becario/a	*intern / trainee*	Also 'scholarship holder'. El becario nuevo aprende muy rápido. *The new intern learns really fast.*
trabajar de / como	*to work as*	No article: 'Trabajo de camarero' (not ~~*de un camarero~~). Durante la carrera trabajé de camarera. *While I was at uni, I worked as a waitress.*
el negocio	*business (one you own)*	'Montar un negocio' = to set up a business. 'Los negocios' = business (in general). Quiero montar mi propio negocio. *I want to set up my own business.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la cliente/a	*client / customer*	Also 'la clienta' for women, very common. **Tenemos una reunión con un cliente importante.** *We've got a meeting with an important client.*

Work — job interview phrases

Háblenos un poco de usted. FORMAL

Tell us a bit about yourself.

The classic first question. Interviews in Spain often use 'tú', but be ready for 'usted'.

> **—Háblenos un poco de usted. —Pues soy ingeniera y llevo cinco años en el sector.**
> *"Tell us a bit about yourself." "Well, I'm an engineer and I've been in the sector for five years."*

Tengo experiencia en...

I have experience in...

'en' + area or + gerund idea: 'en atención al cliente', 'en gestión de equipos'.

> **Tengo experiencia en gestión de proyectos.**
> *I have experience in project management.*

Me considero una persona...

I'd describe myself as...

To describe your qualities without sounding arrogant.

> **Me considero una persona organizada y muy resolutiva.**
> *I'd describe myself as organised and very good at solving problems.*

Mi punto fuerte es... / Mi punto débil es...

My strength is... / My weakness is...

Typical interview question: '¿Cuáles son sus puntos fuertes y débiles?'

> **Mi punto débil es que a veces me cuesta delegar.**
> *My weakness is that sometimes I find it hard to delegate.*

Me interesa este puesto porque...

I'm interested in this position because...

Explaining your motivation.

> **Me interesa este puesto porque me permite trabajar con clientes internacionales.**
> *I'm interested in this position because it lets me work with international clients.*

Me veo capaz de...

I feel I'm able to... / I'm confident I can...

Showing confidence.

> **Me veo capaz de asumir más responsabilidad.**
> *I'm confident I can take on more responsibility.*

Estoy acostumbrado/a a trabajar bajo presión.

I'm used to working under pressure.

Classic interview strength. 'Estar acostumbrado a' + infinitive.

> **En mi último trabajo estaba acostumbrada a trabajar bajo presión.**
> *In my last job I was used to working under pressure.*

¿Cuál sería la incorporación? FORMAL

When would the start date be?

'La incorporación' = start date / joining. 'Incorporación inmediata' = immediate start.

> **Una última pregunta: ¿cuál sería la fecha de incorporación?**
> *One last question: when would the start date be?*

¿Qué condiciones ofrecen? FORMAL

What are the terms and conditions? / What's the package?

Polite way to ask about salary, hours and contract.

> **¿Qué condiciones ofrecen en cuanto a horario y salario?**
> *What are the conditions in terms of hours and salary?*

Quedo a la espera de sus noticias. FORMAL

I look forward to hearing from you.

End of a formal email after an interview.

> **Muchas gracias por su tiempo. Quedo a la espera de sus noticias.**
> *Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.*

Studies

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la carrera	*(university) degree / course*	'Estudiar una carrera' = to do a degree. Also 'career' and 'race'. 'Hacer la carrera de Derecho' = to study Law. **¿Qué carrera estudiaste?** *What did you study at university?*
el máster	*master's (degree)*	Plural: los másteres. **Estoy haciendo un máster en Marketing Digital.** *I'm doing a master's in Digital Marketing.*
el doctorado	*PhD / doctorate*	**Está haciendo el doctorado en Biología.** *She's doing a PhD in Biology.*
la tesis	*thesis*	Same in plural: las tesis. **Defendió la tesis el mes pasado.** *He defended his thesis last month.*
el TFG / el TFM	*final-year dissertation / master's dissertation*	**LatAm:** Spain. TFG = Trabajo de Fin de Grado; TFM = Trabajo de Fin de Máster. **Estoy con el TFG y no tengo tiempo para nada.** *I'm working on my dissertation and I've got no time for anything.*
la facultad	*faculty / school (of a university)*	'La Facultad de Medicina' = the Medical School. **Nos vemos en la puerta de la facultad.** *See you outside the faculty building.*
la asignatura	*subject / module / course*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: la materia. **Este cuatrimestre tengo seis asignaturas.** *I've got six modules this semester.*
el cuatrimestre / el semestre	*semester / term*	Spain uses 'cuatrimestre' (four months); Latin America mostly 'semestre'. **Los exámenes del primer cuatrimestre son en enero.** *First-semester exams are in January.*
matricularse	*to enrol / to register (for a course)*	'La matrícula' = enrolment / tuition fees. **Me he matriculado en un curso de fotografía.** *I've enrolled on a photography course.*
la beca	*grant / scholarship*	'Pedir una beca' / 'conseguir una beca'. 'La beca Erasmus'. **Gracias a la beca pude estudiar en Berlín.** *Thanks to the grant I was able to study in Berlin.*
el/la tutor/a	*tutor / supervisor*	**Mi tutora del TFG me ayuda muchísimo.** *My dissertation supervisor helps me loads.*
tomar apuntes	*to take notes (in class)*	'Los apuntes' = notes (always plural in this sense). Latin America also: tomar notas. **¿Me pasas los apuntes de ayer?** *Can you send me yesterday's notes?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
repasar	*to revise / to review*	Esta noche voy a repasar el tema cinco. *Tonight I'm going to revise unit five.*
empollar COLLOQUIAL	*to cram / to swot*	**LatAm:** Spain. 'Un/a empollón/a' = a swot / nerd. Latin America: matarse estudiando, ser un traga / nerd. Me pasé el fin de semana empollando. *I spent the weekend cramming.*
aprenderse de memoria	*to learn by heart*	Me aprendí el discurso de memoria. *I learnt the speech by heart.*
sacar buena / mala nota	*to get a good / bad mark*	'La nota media' = average mark / GPA. In Spain marks go from 0 to 10. Saqué un nueve en el examen final. *I got a nine in the final exam.*
aprobar / suspender	*to pass / to fail (an exam)*	'Suspender' = fail (not suspend a student). Latin America: reprobar, desaprobar. Aprobé todo menos Estadística. *I passed everything except Statistics.*
recuperar	*to retake / to resit (an exam)*	'La recuperación' = resit. Also 'to recover'. Tengo que recuperar Química en septiembre. *I have to resit Chemistry in September.*
la convocatoria	*exam session / call (for applications)*	'Convocatoria ordinaria / extraordinaria' = first sitting / resit sitting. Lo aprobé en la segunda convocatoria. *I passed it at the second attempt.*
copiar (en un examen)	*to cheat (in an exam)*	'La chuleta' (Spain) = crib sheet / cheat sheet. Le pillaron copiando con una chuleta. *He was caught cheating with a crib sheet.*
la selectividad	*university entrance exam*	**LatAm:** Spain (official name changes: PAU, EBAU, PAU again). Latin America: el examen de admisión, la PSU / PAES (Chile), el ICFES (Colombia). Estoy muy nerviosa por la selectividad. *I'm really nervous about the university entrance exams.*
la oposición / opositar	*competitive public-sector exam / to sit one*	**LatAm:** Spain. Needed for jobs like teacher, judge or civil servant. 'Preparar oposiciones' can take years. Lleva dos años preparando oposiciones de profesor. *He's been studying for the teaching exams for two years.*
la Formación Profesional (FP)	*vocational training*	**LatAm:** Spain. Hice una FP de cocina y ahora tengo mi restaurante. *I did vocational training in cooking and now I have my own restaurant.*
la residencia (de estudiantes)	*hall of residence / dorm*	Spain also: el colegio mayor. El primer año viví en una residencia. *In my first year I lived in halls.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el intercambio	*exchange (programme)*	Also 'intercambio de idiomas' = language exchange. **Me fui de intercambio a Montreal.** *I went on an exchange to Montreal.*
el título	*qualification / degree certificate / title*	**Todavía no me han dado el título.** *They still haven't given me my degree certificate.*
graduarse	*to graduate*	Older Spain: licenciarse. **Me gradué en 2019.** *I graduated in 2019.*
la asistencia	*attendance*	'La asistencia es obligatoria' = attendance is compulsory. Related: asistir a (see False friends). **La asistencia cuenta un diez por ciento de la nota.** *Attendance counts for ten per cent of the mark.*
faltar a clase	*to miss class / to skip class*	Colloquial: 'hacer novillos' / 'hacer pellas' (Spain), 'irse de pinta' (Mexico), 'hacerse la rata' (Argentina). **Ayer falté a clase porque estaba enferma.** *I missed class yesterday because I was ill.*
la formación	*training / education*	'Formación continua' = lifelong learning. 'Tener buena formación' = to be well educated / trained. **La empresa ofrece mucha formación a sus empleados.** *The company offers its employees a lot of training.*
el aprendizaje	*learning*	**El aprendizaje de un idioma requiere constancia.** *Learning a language requires consistency.*
el/la estudiante universitario/a	*university student*	Spain colloquial: 'un universitario'. **El barrio está lleno de estudiantes universitarios.** *The neighbourhood is full of university students.*

Technology

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tableta / la tablet	*tablet*	**Los niños ven dibujos en la tablet.** *The kids watch cartoons on the tablet.*
el dispositivo	*device*	**Puedes usar la app en todos tus dispositivos.** *You can use the app on all your devices.*
el teclado	*keyboard*	'La tecla' = key (on a keyboard). **Este teclado no tiene la ñ.** *This keyboard doesn't have the ñ.*
el ratón	*mouse*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: el mouse.
cargar (el móvil)	*to charge (your phone)*	Also 'to load' and 'to carry'. **Tengo que cargar el móvil, estoy al cinco por ciento.** *I need to charge my phone, I'm on five per cent.*
el usuario / el nombre de usuario	*user / username*	**Introduce tu usuario y contraseña.** *Enter your username and password.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
iniciar sesión / cerrar sesión	*to log in / to log out*	Everyday: 'entrar' / 'salir'. **No puedo iniciar sesión en mi cuenta.** *I can't log in to my account.*
subir (un archivo)	*to upload (a file)*	**He subido las fotos a la nube.** *I've uploaded the photos to the cloud.*
instalar	*to install*	**Tienes que instalar la última versión.** *You need to install the latest version.*
el archivo	*file*	Spain also: el fichero (more technical). **No encuentro el archivo que me mandaste.** *I can't find the file you sent me.*
borrar	*to delete / to erase*	**Borré la foto sin querer.** *I deleted the photo by accident.*
adjuntar	*to attach (to an email)*	'El archivo adjunto' = the attachment. 'Te adjunto...' = Please find attached... **Te adjunto el contrato firmado.** *Please find the signed contract attached.*
reenviar	*to forward (an email or message)*	**Te reenvío el correo de la jefa.** *I'll forward you the boss's email.*
el enlace	*link*	Also 'el link' (very common). **Te mando el enlace de la reunión.** *I'll send you the meeting link.*
pinchar / hacer clic	*to click*	**LatAm:** 'Pinchar' is Spain, informal. 'Hacer clic' / 'cliquear' everywhere. **Pincha aquí para descargar el billete.** *Click here to download your ticket.*
la copia de seguridad	*backup*	'Hacer una copia de seguridad'. **Haz una copia de seguridad antes de actualizar.** *Make a backup before you update.*
colgarse / bloquearse	*to freeze / to crash*	'Se me ha colgado el portátil' = My laptop has frozen. **La aplicación se bloquea cada dos por tres.** *The app keeps crashing.*
la conexión	*connection*	'Hay mala conexión' = The connection's bad. **Perdona, la conexión va fatal hoy.** *Sorry, the connection is terrible today.*
el navegador	*(web) browser*	**Prueba con otro navegador.** *Try another browser.*
el buscador	*search engine*	'Buscar en Google' / 'googlear' (informal). **Lo busqué en el buscador y no salía nada.** *I searched for it and nothing came up.*
la impresora	*printer*	Verb: imprimir (participle: impreso). **La impresora se ha quedado sin tinta.** *The printer has run out of ink.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
escanear	*to scan*	¿Puedes escanear el DNI y mandármelo? *Can you scan your ID and send it to me?*
el código de verificación	*verification code*	No me llega el código de verificación. *I'm not getting the verification code.*
la inteligencia artificial (IA)	*artificial intelligence (AI)*	Uso la IA para organizar mi agenda. *I use AI to organise my schedule.*
el virus	*virus*	Same in plural: los virus. Creo que el ordenador tiene un virus. *I think the computer's got a virus.*

Social media

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las redes sociales	*social media / social networks*	Colloquial: 'las redes'. Paso demasiado tiempo en las redes. *I spend too much time on social media.*
el perfil	*profile*	'La foto de perfil' = profile picture. 'Un perfil privado / público'. Tiene el perfil privado. *Her profile is private.*
seguir (a alguien)	*to follow (someone)*	stem-changing e→i. 'Dejar de seguir' = to unfollow. ¿Me sigues en Instagram? *Do you follow me on Instagram?*
el/la seguidor/a	*follower*	Tiene más de un millón de seguidores. *She has over a million followers.*
la publicación	*post*	Also 'el post' (informal). Su última publicación tiene miles de comentarios. *Her latest post has thousands of comments.*
publicar / subir (una foto)	*to post (a photo)*	Subió una foto de la playa a las historias. *He posted a beach photo to his stories.*
dar (a) me gusta / dar like	*to like (a post)*	'Un me gusta' / 'un like' = a like. Le dio like a todas mis fotos antiguas. *He liked all my old photos.*
comentar	*to comment (on)*	'El comentario' = comment. No leas los comentarios, son horribles. *Don't read the comments, they're awful.*
las historias / los stories	*stories (Instagram, etc.)*	Lo vi en sus historias. *I saw it on her stories.*
el directo	*livestream / live*	'Hacer un directo' = to go live. Esta noche hace un directo con sus seguidores. *Tonight she's going live with her followers.*
etiquetar	*to tag*	No me etiquetes en esa foto, salgo fatal. *Don't tag me in that photo, I look awful.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la etiqueta / el hashtag	*hashtag / tag*	'Etiqueta' also = label (on clothes). **Usa la etiqueta del concurso para participar.** *Use the competition hashtag to take part.*
hacerse viral	*to go viral*	Also 'volverse viral' / 'viralizarse'. **Su vídeo del perro se hizo viral en un día.** *His dog video went viral in one day.*
el mensaje privado / el MD	*private message / DM*	MD = mensaje directo. **Mándame un MD y te paso la info.** *Send me a DM and I'll give you the info.*
bloquear	*to block*	**Lo bloqueé porque no paraba de escribirme.** *I blocked him because he wouldn't stop messaging me.*
silenciar	*to mute*	**He silenciado el grupo de la familia.** *I've muted the family group.*
el contenido	*content*	'El/la creador/a de contenido' = content creator. **Crea contenido sobre viajes sostenibles.** *She creates content about sustainable travel.*
el/la influencer	*influencer*	Pronounced the Spanish way. Plural: los/las influencers. **Esa marca trabaja con muchos influencers.** *That brand works with a lot of influencers.*
el algoritmo	*algorithm*	**El algoritmo solo me enseña vídeos de gatos.** *The algorithm only shows me cat videos.*
el filtro	*filter*	**En esa foto lleva muchos filtros.** *She's using loads of filters in that photo.*
el selfi	*selfie*	Also spelt 'selfie'. Plural: los selfis. **Nos hicimos un selfi delante de la Alhambra.** *We took a selfie in front of the Alhambra.*
las notificaciones	*notifications*	'Desactivar las notificaciones' = to turn off notifications. **Por la noche desactivo las notificaciones.** *At night I turn off notifications.*
estar enganchado/a (a) INFORMAL	*to be hooked (on) / addicted (to)*	**Estoy enganchada al móvil, lo reconozco.** *I'm hooked on my phone, I admit it.*
el bulo	*hoax / fake news*	**LatAm:** Spain. Everywhere: la noticia falsa, las fake news. **Eso es un bulo, no lo compartas.** *That's a hoax, don't share it.*
la privacidad	*privacy*	**Revisa la configuración de privacidad.** *Check your privacy settings.*
el meme	*meme*	**Mi grupo de amigos se comunica solo con memes.** *My group of friends only communicates in memes.*
el grupo (de WhatsApp)	*(WhatsApp) group chat*	**Lo he puesto en el grupo de la clase.** *I've put it in the class group chat.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
mandar un audio	*to send a voice note*	Spanish speakers send a lot of these. Te mando un audio, que es más rápido. *I'll send you a voice note, it's quicker.*
el emoticono / el emoji	*emoji*	Me contestó solo con un emoji. *He just replied with an emoji.*
cotillear INFORMAL	*to gossip / to snoop (on someone's profile)*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: chismear, chusmear (Argentina). Young people also say 'stalkear'. Estuve cotilleando el perfil de su nueva novia. *I was snooping on his new girlfriend's profile.*
el canal	*channel*	'Suscribirse a un canal' = to subscribe to a channel. Tiene un canal de YouTube sobre cocina. *He has a YouTube cooking channel.*
en línea / conectado/a	*online*	'Estar en línea' = to be online. 'La última conexión' = last seen. Está en línea pero no me contesta. *He's online but he's not answering me.*

Emotions

This topic focuses on emotional states, processes and how we deal with them. (Basic feeling adjectives and opinion verbs are in section 11, Feelings & opinions.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el estado de ánimo	*mood / state of mind*	El tiempo influye mucho en mi estado de ánimo. *The weather really affects my mood.*
el sentimiento	*feeling*	'Sentimiento' = emotional feeling. 'Sensación' = physical feeling or impression ('tengo la sensación de que...'). No sabe expresar sus sentimientos. *He doesn't know how to express his feelings.*
el estrés	*stress*	El estrés del trabajo me está afectando. *Work stress is starting to affect me.*
el agobio INFORMAL	*feeling of being overwhelmed / stress*	Very common in Spain. 'Qué agobio' = This is so stressful. Verb: agobiarse. Con tantas cosas pendientes, siento un agobio enorme. *With so many things to do, I feel completely overwhelmed.*
la ansiedad	*anxiety*	Antes de los exámenes tengo mucha ansiedad. *I get really anxious before exams.*
la autoestima	*self-esteem*	'Tener la autoestima baja / alta'. Hacer deporte me ha subido la autoestima. *Doing sport has boosted my self-esteem.*
la frustración	*frustration*	Es normal sentir frustración cuando aprendes un idioma. *It's normal to feel frustrated when you learn a language.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el bajón COLLOQUIAL	*slump / low / down moment*	'Estar de bajón' / 'Me ha dado el bajón' = I'm feeling down. **LatAm:** Spain. **Los domingos por la tarde me da el bajón.** *On Sunday afternoons I get a bit down.*
la soledad	*loneliness / solitude*	Both negative (loneliness) and positive (solitude). **Al principio, la soledad en una ciudad nueva es dura.** *At first, loneliness in a new city is hard.*
la nostalgia	*nostalgia / homesickness*	Spain also: 'la morriña' (from Galician) = homesickness. **En Navidad siento mucha nostalgia de mi país.** *At Christmas I feel very homesick for my country.*
el orgullo	*pride*	'Sentir orgullo' / 'estar orgulloso/a de'. **Lo dijo con mucho orgullo.** *She said it with a lot of pride.*
el alivio	*relief*	'¡Qué alivio!' = What a relief! **Fue un alivio saber que todos estaban bien.** *It was a relief to know everyone was OK.*
el susto	*fright / scare*	'Dar un susto' = to give someone a fright. 'Llevarse un susto' = to get a fright. **¡Qué susto me has dado!** *You gave me such a fright!*
la preocupación	*worry / concern*	Verb: preocuparse por / de. **Mi mayor preocupación es el alquiler.** *My biggest worry is the rent.*
el enfado	*anger / annoyance*	**LatAm:** Latin America also: el enojo. **Se le pasó el enfado enseguida.** *He got over his anger straight away.*
mosquearse COLLOQUIAL	*to get annoyed / to get in a huff*	**LatAm:** Spain. **Se mosqueó porque no la invitamos.** *She got in a huff because we didn't invite her.*
perder los nervios	*to lose your temper / to lose it*	Also 'perder la paciencia'. **Perdí los nervios y le grité.** *I lost my temper and shouted at him.*
calmarse / tranquilizarse	*to calm down*	'¡Cálmate!' can sound aggressive; 'Tranquilo/a' is gentler. **Respira hondo e intenta tranquilizarte.** *Take a deep breath and try to calm down.*
emocionarse	*to be moved / to get emotional*	Not 'to get excited' in general! It often means close to tears. 'Emocionante' = exciting / moving. **Me emocioné mucho en la boda de mi hermana.** *I got really emotional at my sister's wedding.*
desahogarse	*to let off steam / to get it off your chest*	**Necesito desahogarme, ¿te puedo llamar?** *I need to get something off my chest, can I call you?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
expresar	*to express*	Escribir me ayuda a expresar lo que siento. *Writing helps me express what I feel.*
animar	*to cheer up / to encourage*	'Animarse' = to cheer up / to decide to do something ('¿Te animas?' = Fancy it?). Fuimos a verla para animarla un poco. *We went to see her to cheer her up a bit.*
consolar	*to console / to comfort*	stem-changing o→ue: consuelo. No sabía cómo consolarlo. *I didn't know how to comfort him.*
ponerse en el lugar de alguien	*to put yourself in someone's shoes*	'La empatía' = empathy. Intenta ponerte en su lugar. *Try to put yourself in her shoes.*
deprimirse	*to get depressed*	'La depresión' = depression. Use carefully: for real depression, not just a bad day. Después de perder el trabajo, se deprimió. *After losing his job, he became depressed.*
la salud mental	*mental health*	Hay que hablar más de salud mental. *We need to talk more about mental health.*
ir a terapia	*to go to therapy*	'El/la psicólogo/a' = psychologist / therapist. Voy a terapia una vez por semana y me ayuda mucho. *I go to therapy once a week and it really helps.*
tener el corazón roto	*to be heartbroken*	Desde que la dejó su novio, tiene el corazón roto. *Since her boyfriend left her, she's been heartbroken.*
cambiar de humor	*to have mood swings / to change mood*	'Tener cambios de humor'. Cambia de humor de un momento a otro. *Her mood changes from one moment to the next.*
estar a flor de piel	*to be raw / close to the surface*	Literally 'at skin-flower level'. For emotions that are very intense and easy to trigger. Hoy tengo las emociones a flor de piel. *My emotions are all over the place today.*

Emotions — talking about how you feel

No estoy muy allá. INFORMAL
I'm not great. / I'm not feeling too good.
Honest but soft answer to '¿Qué tal?'.

> —¿Qué tal estás? —Pues no estoy muy allá, la verdad.
> *"How are you?" "Not great, to be honest."*

Estoy de bajón. COLLOQUIAL
I'm feeling down.
A low mood, not too serious.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Estoy un poco de bajón por lo del trabajo.
> *I'm a bit down about the work thing.*

Me siento un poco perdido/a.
I feel a bit lost.
When you don't know what to do with your life or a situation.

> Desde que terminé la carrera me siento un poco perdida.
> *Since I finished my degree I've felt a bit lost.*

No puedo más.
I can't take any more. / I'm at the end of my rope.
Exhaustion or reaching your limit.

> Llevo tres semanas sin dormir bien. No puedo más.
> *I haven't slept properly for three weeks. I can't take any more.*

Estoy que no me lo creo. INFORMAL
I can't believe it! (I'm so happy)
Joy and disbelief after good news.

> ¡Me han cogido en el máster! Estoy que no me lo creo.
> *I've got into the master's! I can't believe it.*

Me hace mucha falta hablar con alguien.
I really need to talk to someone.
Asking for emotional support.

> ¿Tienes un rato? Me hace falta hablar con alguien.
> *Have you got a moment? I really need to talk to someone.*

Ya se me pasará.
I'll get over it. / It'll pass.
Minimising a bad feeling.

> No te preocupes, es solo un mal día. Ya se me pasará.
> *Don't worry, it's just a bad day. It'll pass.*

Estoy en una nube. INFORMAL
I'm on cloud nine.
Great happiness, often in love. (Different from 'estar en las nubes' = to be distracted.)

> Desde que la conocí, estoy en una nube.
> *Since I met her, I've been on cloud nine.*

Personality

Remember: personality traits usually go with 'ser' (Es muy abierta). With 'estar', many describe how someone is behaving right now (Hoy está muy borde = He's being really rude today).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
abierto/a	*open / open-minded / outgoing*	Es muy abierta, habla con todo el mundo. *She's very outgoing, she talks to everyone.*
cerrado/a	*closed / reserved / narrow-minded*	Context decides: 'cerrado de mente' = narrow-minded. Es un poco cerrado con la gente que no conoce. *He's a bit reserved with people he doesn't know.*
extrovertido/a	*extrovert / outgoing*	Mi hermano es el más extrovertido de la familia. *My brother is the most outgoing one in the family.*
introvertido/a	*introvert / introverted*	Soy introvertida, pero me encanta conocer gente. *I'm an introvert, but I love meeting people.*
sociable	*sociable*	Es muy sociable, siempre organiza planes. *He's very sociable, he's always organising things.*
encantador/a	*charming / delightful*	Los vecinos nuevos son encantadores. *The new neighbours are delightful.*
generoso/a	*generous*	Es muy generosa con su tiempo. *She's very generous with her time.*
tacaño/a INFORMAL	*stingy / tight / mean (with money)*	'Mean' in British English can mean 'tacaño'; in US English 'mean' = cruel (= malo/a, cruel). No seas tacaño y deja propina. *Don't be so stingy, leave a tip.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
vago/a INFORMAL	*lazy*	Latin America also: flojo/a. Not 'vague' (= impreciso). **Mi compañero de piso es un vago, nunca limpia.** *My flatmate is so lazy, he never cleans.*
responsable	*responsible / reliable*	**Necesitamos a alguien responsable para el puesto.** *We need someone reliable for the job.*
despistado/a	*absent-minded / scatterbrained*	**Soy tan despistada que siempre pierdo las llaves.** *I'm so absent-minded I'm always losing my keys.*
ordenado/a / desordenado/a	*tidy / messy*	**Es muy ordenado con su trabajo, pero su casa es un caos.** *He's very organised in his work, but his house is chaos.*
testarudo/a / cabezota	*stubborn / pig-headed*	'Cabezota' is informal and the same for men and women. **Es muy cabezota: cuando dice que no, es que no.** *She's really stubborn: when she says no, she means no.*
terco/a	*stubborn / obstinate*	Very common in Latin America. **No seas terco y pide ayuda.** *Don't be stubborn, ask for help.*
pesado/a INFORMAL	*annoying / tiresome / a pain*	Literally 'heavy'. 'Ponerse pesado' = to get annoying. '¡Qué pesado eres!' = You're such a pain! **No seas pesado, ya te he dicho que no.** *Stop being a pain, I've already said no.*
borde COLLOQUIAL	*rude / unfriendly / stroppy*	Same form for men and women. **LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: pesado/a, antipático/a, mala onda. **El camarero fue muy borde con nosotros.** *The waiter was really rude to us.*
antipático/a	*unfriendly / unpleasant*	**Al principio me pareció antipática, pero es un sol.** *At first I thought she was unfriendly, but she's a sweetheart.*
creído/a INFORMAL	*full of yourself / big-headed / stuck-up*	**Desde que es famoso se ha vuelto un creído.** *Since he got famous he's become really full of himself.*
presumido/a	*vain / show-off*	**Es un poco presumida, siempre se está mirando al espejo.** *She's a bit vain, she's always looking in the mirror.*
humilde	*humble / modest*	Also 'of humble origins'. **A pesar del éxito, sigue siendo muy humilde.** *Despite his success, he's still very humble.*
maleducado/a	*rude / bad-mannered*	Opposite: educado/a = polite (not 'educated'!). **Es de maleducados mirar el móvil mientras alguien te habla.** *It's rude to look at your phone while someone's talking to you.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
grosero/a	*rude / crude / vulgar*	Stronger than maleducado: rude words or behaviour. **No seas grosero con tu madre.** *Don't be rude to your mother.*
sincero/a	*honest / sincere*	'Para serte sincero/a...' = To be honest... **Prefiero a la gente sincera, aunque duela.** *I prefer honest people, even if it hurts.*
honrado/a	*honest (with money, rules) / decent*	**Es un hombre honrado: devolvió la cartera con todo el dinero.** *He's an honest man: he returned the wallet with all the money.*
mentiroso/a	*liar / dishonest*	**No le creas, es un mentiroso.** *Don't believe him, he's a liar.*
celoso/a	*jealous (in relationships)*	'Ser celoso' (by nature) vs 'estar celoso' (now). **Mi ex era muy celoso.** *My ex was very jealous.*
envidioso/a	*envious / jealous (of what others have)*	**No seas envidiosa, a ti también te irá bien.** *Don't be jealous, things will go well for you too.*
egoísta	*selfish*	Same form for men and women. **Fue muy egoísta no ayudarte.** *It was very selfish of him not to help you.*
comprensivo/a	*understanding*	Not 'comprehensive' (= completo, exhaustivo). **Mi jefa fue muy comprensiva cuando estuve enferma.** *My boss was very understanding when I was ill.*
paciente / impaciente	*patient / impatient*	**Hay que ser paciente con los niños.** *You have to be patient with children.*
seguro/a de sí mismo/a	*self-confident / sure of yourself*	**Es muy segura de sí misma en las reuniones.** *She's very self-confident in meetings.*
inseguro/a	*insecure*	**Con su físico siempre se ha sentido inseguro.** *He's always felt insecure about his looks.*
optimista / pesimista	*optimistic / pessimistic*	Same form for men and women. **Intento ser optimista, pero es difícil.** *I try to be optimistic, but it's hard.*
aburrido/a	*boring (ser) / bored (estar)*	Ser aburrido = boring. Estar aburrido = bored. A classic trap! **La película era aburrida y yo estaba aburridísimo.** *The film was boring and I was incredibly bored.*
maniático/a	*fussy / obsessive / set in your ways*	**Es muy maniático con el orden de sus libros.** *He's very obsessive about the order of his books.*
cotilla INFORMAL	*nosy / gossip*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: chismoso/a, chusma (Argentina). **La vecina es una cotilla, lo sabe todo de todos.** *The neighbour's a real gossip, she knows everything about everyone.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
tranquilo/a	*calm / laid-back / easy-going*	Es muy tranquilo, nunca se enfada. *He's very laid-back, he never gets angry.*
nervioso/a	*nervous / restless / highly strung*	'Ser nervioso' = to be a restless, anxious person. 'Estar nervioso' = to be nervous now. Es un niño muy nervioso, no para quieto. *He's a very restless kid, he never sits still.*

Personality — describing people

Es un sol / un cielo. INFORMAL
He's / She's an angel. / a sweetheart.
Warm praise for a kind person. Same for men and women.

> Mi suegra es un sol, siempre nos ayuda.
> *My mother-in-law is an angel, she always helps us.*

Tiene muy buen fondo.
He's / She's a good person at heart.
When someone seems difficult but is good inside.

> Es un poco borde, pero tiene muy buen fondo.
> *He's a bit blunt, but he's a good person at heart.*

Es buena gente. INFORMAL
He's / She's a good sort. / a nice person.
Very common, friendly praise.

> Habla con Diego, es muy buena gente.
> *Talk to Diego, he's a really nice guy.*

Tiene mucho carácter.
He's / She's got a strong personality.
Can be positive (determined) or a warning (difficult).

> Mi abuela tiene mucho carácter.
> *My grandmother has a very strong personality.*

Tiene mucha paciencia / mucho sentido del humor.
He's / She's very patient / got a great sense of humour.
'Tener' + noun is often more natural than 'ser' + adjective.

> Me encanta porque tiene mucho sentido del humor.
> *I love her because she's got a great sense of humour.*

Se lleva bien con todo el mundo.
He / She gets on with everyone.
Describing a sociable person.

> Lucía se lleva bien con todo el mundo en la oficina.
> *Lucía gets on with everyone at the office.*

Es de los que...
He's the type who... / She's one of those people who...
+ verb in 3rd person plural (or singular in Latin America). Great for describing habits.

> Es de los que nunca se rinden.
> *He's the type who never gives up.*

No es mala persona, pero...
He's / She's not a bad person, but...
Softening a criticism.

> No es mala persona, pero a veces es un poco egoísta.
> *She's not a bad person, but sometimes she's a bit selfish.*

Appearance

Physical descriptions mix 'ser' (permanent features), 'tener' (hair, eyes, features) and 'llevar' (what someone is wearing or has: glasses, a beard, hair a certain way).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el físico	*looks / physique*	No me importa el físico, me importa la personalidad. *Looks don't matter to me, personality does.*
parecer / parecerse a	*to look / to look like (resemble)*	'Parece cansado' = He looks tired. 'Se parece a su padre' = He looks like his father. Te pareces muchísimo a tu madre. *You look so much like your mother.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
guapo/a	*good-looking / attractive / pretty*	For men and women. Latin America also: lindo/a, bonito/a. ¡Qué guapa estás hoy! *You look gorgeous today!*
atractivo/a	*attractive*	Es un hombre muy atractivo. *He's a very attractive man.*
feo/a	*ugly / unattractive*	Softer: 'no es muy agraciado/a'. El edificio es bastante feo. *The building is pretty ugly.*
de complexión fuerte / atlética	*well-built / athletic build*	Es alto y de complexión atlética. *He's tall with an athletic build.*
rellenito/a INFORMAL	*a bit chubby / plump*	Kind way to say 'gordo/a', which can be rude. De pequeño era rellenito. *As a kid he was a bit chubby.*
de estatura media	*of average height*	Es de estatura media, morena, con el pelo corto. *She's of average height, dark-haired, with short hair.*
castaño/a	*brown (hair) / chestnut*	Tengo el pelo castaño claro. *I've got light brown hair.*
canoso/a / las canas	*grey-haired / grey hairs*	Ya me están saliendo canas. *I'm already getting grey hairs.*
calvo/a	*bald*	'Quedarse calvo' = to go bald. Mi padre se quedó calvo a los treinta. *My dad went bald at thirty.*
rizado/a / liso/a / ondulado/a	*curly / straight / wavy*	**LatAm:** Latin America: crespo/a, chino/a (Mexico) = curly; lacio/a = straight. Tiene el pelo rizado y muy largo. *She has very long curly hair.*
la melena	*long hair / mane*	Se ha cortado la melena. *She's cut off her long hair.*
la coleta / el moño	*ponytail / bun*	Para hacer deporte me hago una coleta. *I put my hair in a ponytail for sport.*
el flequillo	*fringe / bangs*	**LatAm:** Latin America: el fleco (Mexico), el cerquillo (Peru), la chasquilla (Chile). Me queda mejor sin flequillo. *I look better without a fringe.*
la barba / el bigote	*beard / moustache*	'Llevar barba' = to have a beard. 'Afeitarse' = to shave. Lleva barba desde la universidad. *He's had a beard since uni.*
las pecas	*freckles*	En verano me salen muchas pecas. *I get loads of freckles in summer.*
las arrugas	*wrinkles*	Also on clothes: 'la camisa tiene arrugas'. Las arrugas de la risa son las más bonitas. *Laughter lines are the most beautiful ones.*
el lunar	*mole / beauty spot*	'De lunares' = polka-dot. Tiene un lunar encima del labio. *She has a beauty spot above her lip.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cicatriz	*scar*	Plural: las cicatrices. **Tiene una cicatriz en la frente.** *He's got a scar on his forehead.*
el tatuaje	*tattoo*	'Hacerse un tatuaje' = to get a tattoo. **Se hizo un tatuaje en el brazo.** *She got a tattoo on her arm.*
el piercing / el pendiente	*piercing / earring*	**LatAm:** Spain: el pendiente · Latin America: el arete (Mexico, Peru), el aro (Argentina), el zarcillo (Venezuela). **Lleva un pendiente en la oreja izquierda.** *He wears an earring in his left ear.*
la cara redonda / alargada	*round / long face*	**Tiene la cara redonda y los ojos grandes.** *She has a round face and big eyes.*
los rasgos	*features (of the face)*	'Rasgos finos / marcados' = delicate / strong features. **Tiene rasgos muy marcados.** *He has very strong features.*
aparentar (+ edad)	*to look (an age)*	'No aparenta la edad que tiene' = She doesn't look her age. **Tiene cincuenta, pero aparenta cuarenta.** *He's fifty, but he looks forty.*
ir bien vestido/a / ir arreglado/a	*to be well dressed / dressed up*	'Arreglarse' = to get ready / dress up. 'Ir hecho un desastre' = to look a mess. **Siempre va muy arreglada al trabajo.** *She always dresses up for work.*
engordar / adelgazar	*to put on weight / to lose weight*	**En Navidad siempre engordo un par de kilos.** *I always put on a couple of kilos at Christmas.*
el estilo	*style*	'Tener estilo' = to be stylish. **Tiene un estilo muy personal para vestir.** *She has a very personal style of dressing.*

Money

Bills, receipts and direct debits are in Everyday vocabulary. Here: earning, spending, saving and talking about money.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la pasta COLLOQUIAL	*dough / cash*	**LatAm:** Spain. Latin America: la plata, la lana (Mexico). **Ese coche cuesta una pasta.** *That car costs a lot of dough.*
el suelto / el cambio	*change (coins)*	**¿Tienes cambio de cincuenta?** *Have you got change for a fifty?*
el cajero (automático)	*cashpoint / ATM*	**Voy al cajero a sacar dinero.** *I'm going to the cashpoint to get some money out.*
sacar / ingresar dinero	*to withdraw / to pay in money*	**LatAm:** Latin America: retirar / depositar dinero. **Tengo que ingresar este cheque.** *I need to pay this cheque in.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tarjeta de crédito / débito	*credit / debit card*	¿Aceptan tarjeta de crédito? *Do you take credit cards?*
pagar con el móvil / con Bizum	*to pay by phone / with Bizum*	**LatAm:** Bizum is the Spanish instant-payment app. Latin America uses others (Mercado Pago, Nequi, Yape…). Te hago un Bizum por lo de la cena. *I'll send you the money for dinner by Bizum.*
los gastos	*expenses / costs*	'Gastos fijos' = fixed costs. 'Repartir los gastos' = to split the costs. Compartimos los gastos de la casa. *We share the household expenses.*
derrochar	*to waste / to squander*	No derroches el dinero en tonterías. *Don't waste your money on rubbish.*
invertir	*to invest*	stem-changing e→ie: invierto. 'La inversión' = investment. Quiero invertir en mi formación. *I want to invest in my education.*
deber (dinero)	*to owe (money)*	'¿Cuánto te debo?' = How much do I owe you? Te debo una cena. *I owe you a dinner.*
la deuda	*debt*	'Tener deudas' / 'estar endeudado/a'. Por fin he pagado todas mis deudas. *I've finally paid off all my debts.*
el préstamo	*loan*	'Pedir un préstamo' = to take out / ask for a loan. Pidieron un préstamo para el coche. *They took out a loan for the car.*
la hipoteca	*mortgage*	Pagamos ochocientos euros de hipoteca. *We pay eight hundred euros a month on the mortgage.*
los ingresos	*income / earnings*	Mis ingresos dependen de los clientes. *My income depends on my clients.*
el presupuesto (personal)	*budget*	Also 'quote' (see Everyday vocabulary). 'Ajustarse al presupuesto' = to stick to the budget. Este mes me he pasado del presupuesto. *This month I've gone over budget.*
barato/a / caro/a	*cheap / expensive*	Stronger: 'tirado/a de precio' (dirt cheap, informal), 'carísimo/a'. En las rebajas estaba tirado de precio. *In the sales it was dirt cheap.*
la ganga	*bargain*	Este abrigo fue una ganga. *This coat was a real bargain.*
permitirse	*to afford*	'No me lo puedo permitir' = I can't afford it. Ahora mismo no me puedo permitir un coche. *I can't afford a car right now.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ahorro	*saving(s)*	'Los ahorros' = savings (money saved). He gastado todos mis ahorros en el viaje. *I've spent all my savings on the trip.*
el precio / la tarifa	*price / rate, fare*	'La tarifa' = rate for services (phone, electricity, transport). He cambiado de tarifa de móvil y pago menos. *I've changed my phone plan and I'm paying less.*
el billete	*(bank)note / ticket*	Solo tengo un billete de cincuenta. *I've only got a fifty-euro note.*
cambiar dinero / el tipo de cambio	*to change money / exchange rate*	El tipo de cambio es mejor en el banco. *The exchange rate is better at the bank.*
rico/a / pobre	*rich / poor*	'Rico' with food = tasty! No hace falta ser rico para viajar. *You don't need to be rich to travel.*
estar ahorrado/a / tener un colchón INFORMAL	*to have savings / to have a financial cushion*	Antes de dejar el trabajo, quiero tener un colchón. *Before I leave my job, I want to have a financial cushion.*
la paga / la paga extra	*pocket money / extra salary payment*	**LatAm:** Spain: many workers get two 'pagas extra' a year (summer and Christmas). Latin America: el aguinaldo. Con la paga extra de verano me voy de vacaciones. *I'm going on holiday with my summer bonus payment.*

Money — talking about money

Ando un poco justo/a de dinero. INFORMAL

I'm a bit short of money. / Money's a bit tight.

A gentle, common way to say you're low on money.

> Este mes ando un poco justa, mejor cenamos en casa.
> *Money's a bit tight this month, let's have dinner at home.*

No me llega para...

I can't stretch to... / I haven't got enough for...

'Llegar' = to be enough.

> Con lo que gano no me llega para vivir solo.
> *What I earn isn't enough to live on my own.*

¿Cuánto te debo?

How much do I owe you?

After someone pays for you.

> Gracias por pagar las entradas. ¿Cuánto te debo?
> *Thanks for paying for the tickets. How much do I owe you?*

Invito yo. / Hoy pago yo.

It's on me. / My treat.

Offering to pay. 'Invitar' = to pay for someone, not just to invite.

> No, no, guarda la cartera, hoy invito yo.
> *No, no, put your wallet away, it's on me today.*

¿Lo pagamos a medias? INFORMAL

Shall we split it?

Proposing to share the cost.

> La cena ha salido a sesenta. ¿La pagamos a medias?
> *Dinner came to sixty. Shall we split it?*

Me ha salido por un pico. COLLOQUIAL

It cost me a fortune.

'Un pico' = a lot of money.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Arreglar el coche me ha salido por un pico.
> *Fixing the car cost me a fortune.*

Está muy bien de precio.

It's very reasonably priced. / It's good value.

Positive opinion about a price.

> El menú del día está muy bien de precio.
> *The set lunch is really good value.*

Es un robo. INFORMAL
It's a rip-off. / It's daylight robbery.
Complaining about prices.

> ¿Seis euros por un café? ¡Es un robo!
> *Six euros for a coffee? It's a rip-off!*

Housing

Landlords, deposits, bills and moving house are in Everyday vocabulary. Here: types of home, rooms, features and the housing market.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ático	*penthouse / top-floor flat*	Not 'attic' in the sense of a storage space (= el desván). **Viven en un ático con una terraza enorme.** *They live in a top-floor flat with a huge terrace.*
el bajo	*ground-floor flat*	**LatAm:** Spain. **Los bajos suelen ser más oscuros.** *Ground-floor flats are usually darker.*
el chalé / la casa adosada	*detached house / semi-detached or terraced house*	Also spelt 'chalet'. **Se han comprado un adosado en las afueras.** *They've bought a terraced house on the outskirts.*
el bloque de pisos	*block of flats*	**Vivo en un bloque de pisos de los años setenta.** *I live in a block of flats from the seventies.*
la vivienda FORMAL	*housing / home / dwelling*	'El problema de la vivienda' = the housing problem. **El precio de la vivienda no para de subir.** *Housing prices keep going up.*
compartir piso	*to share a flat / to have flatmates*	'El/la compañero/a de piso' = flatmate / roommate. **Compartir piso a los treinta es muy normal en Madrid.** *Sharing a flat in your thirties is very normal in Madrid.*
independizarse	*to move out (of your parents' home) / to become independent*	**Me independicé a los veintiocho.** *I moved out of my parents' place at twenty-eight.*
el/la propietario/a	*owner*	**El propietario vive en el piso de arriba.** *The owner lives in the flat upstairs.*
la inmobiliaria	*estate agent's / real-estate agency*	**Buscamos piso a través de una inmobiliaria.** *We looked for a flat through an estate agent.*
el anuncio	*advert / listing*	**El piso del anuncio era mucho más pequeño en realidad.** *The flat in the listing was much smaller in real life.*
amueblado/a / sin amueblar	*furnished / unfurnished*	**Busco un piso amueblado cerca del centro.** *I'm looking for a furnished flat near the centre.*
los metros cuadrados	*square metres*	'¿Cuántos metros tiene?' = How big is it? **Tiene setenta metros cuadrados y dos habitaciones.** *It's seventy square metres with two bedrooms.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
exterior / interior	*facing the street / facing the inside of the block*	'Un piso interior' gets less light. **LatAm:** Spain. **Prefiero un piso exterior aunque haya ruido.** *I prefer a flat facing the street, even if it's noisy.*
reformado/a / para reformar	*renovated / in need of renovation*	'La reforma' = renovation (Spain). Latin America: remodelado/a, la remodelación. **Es barato porque está para reformar.** *It's cheap because it needs doing up.*
las vistas	*the view(s)*	**Desde la terraza hay unas vistas preciosas.** *There's a beautiful view from the terrace.*
el salón / la sala de estar	*living room / lounge*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la sala, el living (Southern Cone). **El salón da a un parque.** *The living room looks out onto a park.*
el dormitorio / la habitación	*bedroom / room*	**LatAm:** Latin America also: la recámara (Mexico), la pieza (Chile, Argentina). **Es un piso de tres dormitorios.** *It's a three-bedroom flat.*
el trastero	*storage room / box room*	**Tenemos las bicis en el trastero.** *We keep the bikes in the storage room.*
el balcón / la terraza	*balcony / terrace*	**Desayunamos en la terraza en verano.** *In summer we have breakfast on the terrace.*
la calefacción / el aire acondicionado	*heating / air conditioning*	'Calefacción central' = central heating. **El piso no tiene calefacción y en invierno se pasa frío.** *The flat has no heating and it gets cold in winter.*
los electrodomésticos	*household appliances*	**La cocina viene con todos los electrodomésticos.** *The kitchen comes with all the appliances.*
la lavadora / el lavavajillas	*washing machine / dishwasher*	'Poner una lavadora' = to put a wash on. 'Poner el lavavajillas' = to run the dishwasher. **¿Puedes poner una lavadora antes de irte?** *Can you put a wash on before you go?*
las tareas domésticas / de la casa	*housework / chores*	Spain also: 'las tareas del hogar'. **En casa nos repartimos las tareas domésticas.** *At home we split the housework.*
la humedad	*damp / humidity*	'Hay humedad en el baño' = There's damp in the bathroom. **El piso es bonito, pero tiene humedad.** *The flat's nice, but it's got damp.*
comprarse un piso	*to buy a flat*	'Pagar la entrada' = to pay the deposit (down payment). **Estamos ahorrando para la entrada de un piso.** *We're saving for the deposit on a flat.*
el alquiler turístico / vacacional	*holiday let / short-term rental*	**Hay demasiados alquileres turísticos en el centro.** *There are too many holiday lets in the city centre.*

Culture

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la cultura	*culture*	'Ser una persona culta' = to be cultured / well-read. **Me interesa mucho la cultura latinoamericana.** *I'm really interested in Latin American culture.*
las costumbres	*customs / habits*	'Tener la costumbre de' = to be in the habit of. **Cada país tiene sus costumbres.** *Every country has its own customs.*
la tradición	*tradition*	Adjective: tradicional. **Comer doce uvas en Nochevieja es una tradición española.** *Eating twelve grapes on New Year's Eve is a Spanish tradition.*
la fiesta (popular)	*festival / (local) celebration*	'Las fiestas del pueblo' = the town festival. **En agosto son las fiestas de mi pueblo.** *My village's festival is in August.*
el festival	*(music / film) festival*	**Vamos a un festival de música en julio.** *We're going to a music festival in July.*
la obra (de arte / de teatro)	*work (of art) / play*	'La obra' alone can also mean building works. **Es una de las obras más famosas de Velázquez.** *It's one of Velázquez's most famous works.*
el cuadro	*painting / picture*	**Este cuadro me transmite mucha paz.** *This painting makes me feel really calm.*
el/la pintor/a / el/la escultor/a	*painter / sculptor*	**Goya fue un pintor revolucionario.** *Goya was a revolutionary painter.*
agotado/a	*sold out*	Also 'exhausted' (for people). **Las entradas se agotaron en diez minutos.** *The tickets sold out in ten minutes.*
la obra de teatro / la función	*play / performance, show*	**La función empieza a las ocho y media.** *The show starts at half past eight.*
el escenario	*stage*	Not 'scenery' in general. Also 'scenario'. **Salió al escenario y el público se volvió loco.** *He came out on stage and the audience went wild.*
el/la artista	*artist / performer*	Same form for men and women. **Es una artista muy completa: canta, baila y actúa.** *She's a real all-rounder: she sings, dances and acts.*
el/la cantante / el grupo	*singer / band*	**LatAm:** Latin America also: la banda. **¿Cuál es tu grupo favorito?** *What's your favourite band?*
la canción / la letra	*song / lyrics*	'La letra' = lyrics (and also 'letter of the alphabet', 'handwriting'). **Me encanta la letra de esta canción.** *I love the lyrics of this song.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la escritor/a / el/la autor/a	*writer / author*	Es mi escritora favorita. *She's my favourite writer.*
el patrimonio	*heritage*	'Patrimonio de la Humanidad' = World Heritage Site. El casco antiguo es Patrimonio de la Humanidad. *The old town is a World Heritage Site.*
el casco antiguo / histórico	*old town / historic centre*	Dimos un paseo por el casco antiguo. *We went for a walk round the old town.*
el monumento	*monument / landmark*	La catedral es el monumento más visitado. *The cathedral is the most visited landmark.*
la agenda cultural	*what's-on guide / cultural calendar*	Mira la agenda cultural del fin de semana. *Check what's on this weekend.*
la oferta cultural	*cultural scene / what's on offer culturally*	Madrid tiene una oferta cultural increíble. *Madrid has an incredible cultural scene.*
el/la aficionado/a	*fan / amateur / enthusiast*	'Ser aficionado/a a' = to be into / keen on. 'La afición' = hobby / passion. Soy muy aficionada al flamenco. *I'm really into flamenco.*
la versión original (V.O.)	*original version (with subtitles)*	'En V.O. subtitulada' = in the original language with subtitles. 'Doblada' = dubbed. Prefiero ver las series en versión original. *I prefer to watch series in the original language.*
los subtítulos	*subtitles*	Pon los subtítulos en español, que así aprendo. *Put the Spanish subtitles on, it helps me learn.*
el género	*genre / gender*	'¿Qué género de música te gusta?' La comedia es mi género favorito. *Comedy is my favourite genre.*
la gastronomía	*food culture / cuisine*	La gastronomía peruana es una de las mejores del mundo. *Peruvian cuisine is one of the best in the world.*
el folclore	*folklore / folk traditions*	Also spelt 'folklore'. El folclore gallego tiene mucha influencia celta. *Galician folk traditions have a strong Celtic influence.*
la herencia cultural	*cultural heritage / legacy*	La herencia árabe se nota en la arquitectura andaluza. *The Arab legacy is visible in Andalusian architecture.*
el choque cultural	*culture shock*	El horario de las comidas fue mi mayor choque cultural. *Meal times were my biggest culture shock.*
la lengua materna	*mother tongue / native language*	'La lengua cooficial' = co-official language (Catalan, Basque, Galician in Spain). Mi lengua materna es el inglés, pero sueño en español. *My native language is English, but I dream in Spanish.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el acento	*accent*	'Tener acento' = to have an accent. Also the written accent mark (la tilde). Me encanta el acento argentino. *I love the Argentinian accent.*

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

14 · The verb pairs that trip up almost every English speaker at B1

Common mistakes

At B1 you can say a lot, so your mistakes move from grammar to word choice: one English verb (leave, miss, become, remember) splits into two or three Spanish verbs, and some Spanish verbs look like English ones but mean something else. Each card shows the wrong idea, the right version and why. Read the examples out loud and pay attention to the little words (de, a, por, para, se): that's where most of the trouble lives.

Remembering, noticing and attending

recordar vs acordarse de

✗ ~~*Me recuerdo de tu cumpleaños~~. / ~~*No acuerdo su nombre~~.

✓ Recuerdo tu cumpleaños. / Me acuerdo de tu cumpleaños. · No me acuerdo de su nombre.

Both mean 'to remember', but the structures are different. 'Recordar' takes a direct object, with no 'me' and no 'de'. 'Acordarse' is reflexive and always needs 'de'. Don't mix the two: either 'recuerdo algo' or 'me acuerdo de algo'.

- ¿Recuerdas dónde aparcamos?
  Do you remember where we parked?
- ¿Te acuerdas de dónde aparcamos?
  Do you remember where we parked?
- Recuérdame que llame a Javi, porque seguro que se me olvida.
  Remind me to call Javi, because I'm sure I'll forget.

REMEMBER Think of the 'se' and the 'de' as a pair: me acuerdo DE. No 'se', no 'de': recuerdo. Bonus: 'recordar a alguien algo' = to remind someone of something.

darse cuenta (de) vs realizar

✗ English idea: 'I realised I'd lost my keys' → ~~*Realicé que había perdido las llaves~~.

✓ Me di cuenta de que había perdido las llaves.

'Realizar' means 'to carry out, to do, to make happen' (realizar un proyecto, realizar un sueño). It never means 'to realise' in the sense of understanding something. For that, use 'darse cuenta de (que)'.

- No me di cuenta de la hora y llegué tarde.
  I didn't realise what time it was and I was late.
- ¿Te has dado cuenta de que Ana está muy callada hoy?
  Have you noticed that Ana is really quiet today?
- La empresa realizó una encuesta entre sus clientes.
  The company carried out a survey among its customers.

REMEMBER Don't forget the 'de' before 'que': me di cuenta DE QUE…

asistir vs atender

✗ English idea: 'I attended the meeting' → ~~*Atendí la reunión~~.

✓ Asistí a la reunión. / Fui a la reunión.

To be present at an event (class, meeting, wedding, conference) is 'asistir a'. 'Atender' means to look after, deal with or serve someone (a customer, a patient, a phone call), or to pay attention. Note the 'a' after asistir.

- Más de doscientas personas asistieron al congreso.
  More than two hundred people attended the conference.
- Perdona, ahora no te puedo atender, estoy con un cliente.
  Sorry, I can't deal with you right now, I'm with a customer.
- ¿Ya la atienden?
  Are you being served?

REMEMBER In everyday speech, 'ir a' is often more natural than 'asistir a': ¿Vas a ir a la boda?

Coming, going, staying and meeting

quedar vs quedarse

✗ ~~*Esta noche me quedo con Laura para cenar~~. / ~~*El sábado quedé en casa todo el día~~.

✓ Esta noche quedo con Laura para cenar. / El sábado me quedé en casa todo el día.

'Quedar (con alguien)' = to arrange to meet someone. 'Quedarse' = to stay (in a place) or to remain in a state. One little 'se' completely changes the meaning: 'quedo con Laura' is a plan; 'me quedo con Laura' means you stay with her (or keep her!).

- ¿Quedamos mañana a las siete en la plaza?
  Shall we meet tomorrow at seven in the square?
- Estoy agotada, hoy me quedo en casa.
  I'm exhausted, I'm staying in tonight.
- Me quedé sin batería en mitad del viaje.
  My battery died halfway through the journey.

REMEMBER More 'quedar' you'll hear: quedar bien/mal (to make a good/bad impression), quedar en algo (to agree on something), ¿Queda leche? (Is there any milk left?).

volver vs devolver

✗ ~~*Tengo que volver el libro a la biblioteca~~.

✓ Tengo que devolver el libro a la biblioteca.

'Volver' = to come/go back (you move). 'Devolver' = to give back, return something (an object moves). If you can say 'give back' or 'take back' in English, you need devolver.

- Vuelvo a casa sobre las ocho.
  I'll be back home around eight.
- ¿Me devuelves el cargador cuando termines?
  Can you give me back the charger when you're done?
- Quiero devolver estos pantalones. ¿Me devuelven el dinero?
  I'd like to return these trousers. Do I get a refund?

REMEMBER 'Volver a + infinitive' = to do something again: Ha vuelto a llover (It's raining again).

'to leave': salir, irse, marcharse, dejar

✗ ~~*Dejé la oficina a las seis~~. (when you mean 'I left work at six') / ~~*Salí mi móvil en el taxi~~.

✓ Salí de la oficina a las seis. / Me fui de la oficina a las seis. · Me dejé el móvil en el taxi.

Spanish splits 'leave' in two. Leaving a PLACE: 'salir (de)' = to go out of; 'irse / marcharse (de)' = to go away, to leave for good or for now. Leaving a THING or PERSON somewhere: 'dejar'. 'Dejar' with a place or a person can also mean to abandon or quit: dejar el trabajo (to quit your job), dejar a tu pareja (to leave your partner).

- Bueno, me voy, que es tarde.
  Right, I'm off, it's late.
- Lucía se marchó a Berlín hace dos años.
  Lucía moved away to Berlin two years ago.
- Deja las llaves en la mesa, por favor.
  Leave the keys on the table, please.
- Diego dejó el trabajo para viajar.
  Diego quit his job to go travelling.

REMEMBER Ask yourself: am I leaving a place (salir / irse) or leaving something behind (dejar)? 'Marcharse' is a slightly more formal or emphatic 'irse', very common in Spain.

'to meet': conocer, quedar, encontrarse con, reunirse

✗ ~~*Ayer conocí a Marcos en el bar~~, como siempre. / ~~*Te conozco a las cinco~~.

✓ Ayer quedé con Marcos en el bar, como siempre. / Quedamos a las cinco.

'Conocer a alguien' = to meet someone for the FIRST time. Arranged meet-ups with people you already know = 'quedar (con)'. Bumping into someone by chance = 'encontrarse con'. A work meeting = 'reunirse (con)'.

- Conocí a mi pareja en una clase de salsa.
  I met my partner at a salsa class.
- Me encontré con Emma en el súper.
  I bumped into Emma at the supermarket.
- Mañana nos reunimos con el cliente.
  We're meeting the client tomorrow.

Winning, losing and missing

ganar: to earn AND to win (and to beat)

✗ *~~Gané la lotería~~. / English idea: 'I make 2,000 a month' → *~~Hago 2~~.000 euros al mes.

✓ Me tocó la lotería. / Gano 2.000 euros al mes.

'Ganar' covers to win (a match, a prize), to earn (money: never 'hacer dinero' for your salary) and to beat someone (ganar a alguien, with personal 'a'). But for the lottery or a raffle, Spain uses 'tocar': the prize 'touches' you ('ganar la lotería' is understood, but 'me tocó' is what people actually say). And to earn a living = 'ganarse la vida'.

- ¿Cuánto gana un profesor en tu país?
  How much does a teacher earn in your country?
- Siempre me gana al ajedrez.
  He always beats me at chess.
- Le tocaron cien euros en el sorteo.
  She won a hundred euros in the raffle.

REMEMBER Also: ganar tiempo (to buy time), ganar peso (to put on weight; more natural: engordar).

'to miss' a person: echar de menos, not perder

✗ *~~Pierdo a mi familia~~. / *~~Te pierdo mucho~~.

✓ Echo de menos a mi familia. / Te echo mucho de menos.

'Perder' means to lose (or to miss a train, a flight, a chance). Missing someone you love is 'echar de menos' in Spain, with personal 'a' before people. 'Te pierdo' sounds like you're losing the person forever!

- Echo de menos el sol de Valencia.
  I miss the Valencian sunshine.
- Corre, que perdemos el tren.
  Hurry up, we're going to miss the train.
- No pierdas esta oportunidad.
  Don't miss this opportunity.

REMEMBER In Latin America you'll hear 'extrañar': Te extraño mucho. It's correct, just less common in Spain.

'to miss' a class or an event: faltar a, perderse

✗ *~~Perdí la clase de ayer porque estaba enfermo~~. (sounds like you lost it)

✓ Falté a clase ayer porque estaba enfermo. / Me perdí la clase de ayer.

Not going to something you should attend = 'faltar a' (faltar a clase, faltar al trabajo). Missing something good or interesting, often with regret = 'perderse algo' (reflexive).

- Este mes no ha faltado ni un día al trabajo.
  He hasn't missed a single day of work this month.
- ¡No te pierdas la exposición, es increíble!
  Don't miss the exhibition, it's amazing!
- Me perdí el final de la película.
  I missed the end of the film.

'to succeed' = tener éxito (not *suceder)

✗ ~~*Quiero suceder en mi carrera~~. / ~~*Su negocio sucedió~~.

✓ Quiero tener éxito en mi carrera. / Su negocio tuvo éxito. / Le fue muy bien con su negocio.

'Suceder' means 'to happen' (= pasar, ocurrir). 'Success' is 'el éxito', and 'to succeed' is usually 'tener éxito', 'salir bien' or 'conseguir/lograr + something'. And remember: 'exit' is 'la salida', not 'el éxito'.

- ¿Qué sucedió anoche?
  What happened last night?
- El restaurante tuvo mucho éxito desde el primer día.
  The restaurant was a big success from day one.
- Al final conseguí aprobar el examen.
  In the end I managed to pass the exam.

por and para: the key uses

There are many rules, but these two cards cover the mistakes English speakers make most at B1.

para = goal, por = cause

✗ ~~*Estudio español por trabajar en México~~. / ~~*Gracias para tu ayuda~~.

✓ Estudio español para trabajar en México. / Gracias por tu ayuda.

'Para' looks forward: purpose, goal, destination, recipient (para + infinitive = in order to). 'Por' looks back: the cause or reason, what motivates something (because of, thanks to). That's why it's 'gracias por' and 'lo hice por ti' (because of you / for your sake) but 'esto es para ti' (it's for you, a gift).

- Ahorro para un viaje a Japón.
  I'm saving for a trip to Japan.
- Cancelaron el concierto por la lluvia.
  They cancelled the concert because of the rain.
- Lo hago por mis hijos.
  I do it for my children (for their sake).
- Este regalo es para mis hijos.
  This present is for my children.

REMEMBER Quick test: if you can say 'in order to' or 'intended for', use para. If you can say 'because of', use por.

por vs para with time, places and opinions

✗ *~~Necesito el informe por el lunes~~. / *~~Por mí~~, es una buena idea. (meaning 'in my opinion')

✓ Necesito el informe para el lunes. / Para mí, es una buena idea.

Deadlines and target dates take 'para' (para el lunes = by Monday). Approximate time and duration take 'por' (por la mañana, por unos días). 'Para mí' = in my opinion. 'Por mí' = as far as I'm concerned / I don't mind (Por mí, vale). With places: 'para' = towards a destination, 'por' = through or around.

- Salgo para Sevilla mañana.
  I'm leaving for Seville tomorrow.
- Me encanta pasear por el centro.
  I love walking around the centre.
- —¿Pedimos pizza? —Por mí, perfecto.
  "Shall we order pizza?" "Fine by me."
- Para mí, la película es demasiado larga.
  In my opinion, the film is too long.

Feelings, change and appearance

sentir vs sentirse

✗ *~~Siento cansado~~. / *~~Me siento un dolor en la espalda~~.

✓ Me siento cansado. / Siento un dolor en la espalda.

'Sentirse + adjective/adverb' = to feel (a state): me siento bien, mal, solo, feliz. 'Sentir + noun' = to feel something (pain, cold, love, fear) or to be sorry: lo siento (I'm sorry). Rule of thumb: adjective → sentirse; noun → sentir.

- Hoy me siento mucho mejor, gracias.
  I feel much better today, thanks.
- Sentí un poco de miedo cuando se fue la luz.
  I felt a bit scared when the power went out.
- Siento mucho lo de tu abuela.
  I'm so sorry about your grandmother.

'to become' (1): ponerse vs volverse

✗ *~~Me volví rojo cuando me habló~~. / *~~Se puso loco con tanto trabajo~~.

✓ Me puse rojo cuando me habló. / Se volvió loco con tanto trabajo.

Spanish has no single 'become'. 'Ponerse + adjective' = a sudden, temporary change in mood, health or appearance (ponerse nervioso, triste, rojo, enfermo). 'Volverse + adjective' = a deeper, longer-lasting change in personality or character, often unexpected (volverse loco, egoísta, desconfiado).

- Javi se pone muy nervioso antes de hablar en público.
  Javi gets really nervous before speaking in public.
- Desde que es famosa, se ha vuelto muy arrogante.
  Since she became famous, she's become really arrogant.

REMEMBER Ask: will it pass soon? → ponerse. Has the person changed? → volverse.

'to become' (2): hacerse, convertirse en, llegar a ser

✗ ~~*Quiero volverme médico~~. / ~~*Se puso un problema serio~~.

✓ Quiero hacerme médico. / Se convirtió en un problema serio.

'Hacerse' = a change through your own effort or a gradual process: profession, religion, ideology, and also 'hacerse mayor / tarde / rico'. 'Convertirse en + noun' = to turn into something different (a transformation). 'Llegar a ser' = to become something after a long road, an achievement.

- Sofía se hizo vegetariana el año pasado.
  Sofía became a vegetarian last year.
- La casa de mis abuelos se ha convertido en un hotel rural.
  My grandparents' house has been turned into a country hotel.
- Empezó de camarero y llegó a ser director del hotel.
  He started as a waiter and eventually became the hotel manager.
- Se está haciendo tarde, ¿nos vamos?
  It's getting late, shall we go?

REMEMBER Professions in everyday speech are very often just 'ser' + time phrase: 'Ahora es abogada' (She's a lawyer now).

parecer vs parecerse a

✗ ~~*Pareces a tu madre~~. / ~~*Te pareces cansado~~.

✓ Te pareces a tu madre. / Pareces cansado.

'Parecer + adjective' = to seem / to look (an impression): pareces cansado. 'Parecerse a alguien' = to look like or be similar to someone (physical resemblance or character). And remember 'me parece que...' = I think that..., and '¿Qué te parece...?' = What do you think of...?

- Lucía se parece mucho a su hermano, sobre todo en los ojos.
  Lucía looks a lot like her brother, especially her eyes.
- El piso parece más grande en las fotos.
  The flat looks bigger in the photos.
- ¿Qué te parece la idea?
  What do you think of the idea?

Wearing and suiting

'to wear' = llevar (puesto)

✗ ~~*Hoy visto una camisa azul~~. / ~~*¿Usas gafas~~? (in Spain)

✓ Hoy llevo una camisa azul. / ¿Llevas gafas?

In Spain the everyday verb for wearing clothes, glasses, jewellery or a hairstyle is 'llevar'. Add 'puesto/a/os/as' when you want to stress that you have it on right now: 'Llevaba puesto el abrigo' (She had her coat on). 'Vestir' is formal or literary ('Vestía un traje negro'); 'vestirse' = to get dressed. 'Ponerse' is the action of putting something on.

- Marcos siempre lleva vaqueros, hasta en las bodas.
  Marcos always wears jeans, even at weddings.
- No me di cuenta de que todavía llevaba puestas las zapatillas de casa.
  I didn't realise I still had my slippers on.
- Ponte la chaqueta, que hace frío.
  Put your jacket on, it's cold.

'to suit / to fit' = quedar bien / mal

✗ English idea: 'That dress really suits you' → ~~*Ese vestido te conviene mucho~~. / ~~*La camisa me encaja pequeña~~.

✓ Ese vestido te queda muy bien. / Ese color te sienta genial. / La camisa te queda pequeña.

To talk about how clothes look or fit on someone, Spanish uses 'quedar' (+ bien / mal / grande / pequeño / ancho / estrecho) with an indirect object pronoun, like gustar: te queda, me quedan. 'Sentar bien/mal' is also very common for suiting (and for food: 'La cena me sentó mal' = Dinner didn't agree with me).

- Estos pantalones me quedan un poco largos.
  These trousers are a bit long on me.
- ¡Qué bien te queda el pelo corto!
  Short hair really suits you!
- El café por la noche me sienta fatal.
  Coffee at night really doesn't agree with me.

Verbs that look like English

aplicar vs solicitar

✗ English idea: 'I applied for the job' → ~~*Apliqué para el trabajo~~.

✓ Solicité el puesto. / Me presenté al puesto. / Envié mi candidatura.

To apply FOR something (a job, a grant, a visa, a loan) is 'solicitar' (no preposition), or more informally 'echar el currículum' / 'presentarse a'. 'Aplicar' means to apply something TO something: a cream, a rule, a discount, a method. You'll hear 'aplicar a un trabajo' in some Latin American countries, but it is considered an anglicism.

- He solicitado una beca para estudiar en Madrid.
  I've applied for a grant to study in Madrid.
- Aplica la crema dos veces al día.
  Apply the cream twice a day.
- Nos aplicaron un descuento del diez por ciento.
  They gave us a ten percent discount.

REMEMBER The application itself is 'la solicitud' (the form) or 'la candidatura' (for a job). 'La aplicación' = an app.

soportar vs apoyar

✗ English idea: 'My family supports me' → ~~*Mi familia me soporta~~.

✓ Mi familia me apoya.

'Soportar' = to put up with, to tolerate (something unpleasant): No soporto el ruido. 'Apoyar' = to support someone or an idea, to back. So '~~*Mi familia me soporta~~'; means 'My family puts up with me': funny, but probably not what you meant! For fans supporting a team, use 'ser de' or 'animar': Soy del Betis.

- No soporto a la gente que habla alto en el tren.
  I can't stand people who talk loudly on the train.
- Mis amigos me apoyaron mucho cuando perdí el trabajo.
  My friends were really supportive when I lost my job.
- ¿De qué equipo eres?
  Which team do you support?

'to try': intentar vs probar

✗ ~~*¿Puedo intentar el vestido~~? / ~~*Intenta esta tarta~~, está buenísima.

✓ ¿Puedo probarme el vestido? / Prueba esta tarta, está buenísima.

'Intentar (+ infinitive)' = to try to do something, to make an effort. 'Probar' = to try something to see what it's like: food, a new activity, a product. 'Probarse' = to try on clothes. 'Probar a + infinitive' = to try doing something (as an experiment).

- Intenté llamarte, pero no lo cogías.
  I tried to call you, but you didn't pick up.
- ¿Has probado el yoga? Te va a encantar.
  Have you tried yoga? You're going to love it.
- Prueba a reiniciar el ordenador.
  Try restarting the computer.

Prepositions after feelings: enamorarse de, casarse con, soñar con

✗ ~~*Estoy enamorado con ella~~. / ~~*Se casó a un italiano~~. / ~~*Anoche soñé de ti~~.

✓ Estoy enamorado de ella. / Se casó con un italiano. / Anoche soñé contigo.

These verbs take different prepositions from English: in love WITH → enamorado DE; married TO → casado CON; dream OF/ABOUT → soñar CON. Learn them as blocks, the verb never travels without its preposition.

- Se enamoró de Valencia en su primer viaje.
  She fell in love with Valencia on her first trip.
- Ana está casada con un chico de Lisboa.
  Ana is married to a guy from Lisbon.
- Sueño con vivir cerca del mar.
  I dream of living near the sea.

MAKE A 'ONE ENGLISH VERB, MANY SPANISH VERBS' PAGE

In your notebook, write an English verb at the top of a page (leave, miss, become, meet, try) and below it every Spanish option with one personal example each. Seeing them side by side is what finally makes the difference stick. Review the page before every class for two weeks.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

15 · Words that look English and quietly change the meaning of your sentence

False friends

These false friends are dangerous precisely because they sound so sensible (and 'sensible' is one of them). Some just cause confusion; a couple can be properly embarrassing. For each word, learn what it really means in Spanish and, just as important, what to say when you mean the English word.

Describing people

sensible ≠ English "sensible"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
sensitive (emotionally or physically)

ENGLISH "SENSIBLE" MEANS
practical, reasonable, showing good judgement

SAY INSTEAD For English 'sensible' say: sensato/a, razonable, con sentido común. ('a sensible decision' = una decisión sensata)

- Marcos es muy sensible, no le hables así.
  Marcos is very sensitive, don't talk to him like that.
- Tengo la piel muy sensible al sol.
  My skin is really sensitive to the sun.
- Ana es muy sensata: siempre piensa antes de actuar.
  Ana is very sensible: she always thinks before she acts.

simpático/a ≠ English "sympathetic"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
nice, friendly, likeable, easy to get on with

ENGLISH "SYMPATHETIC" MEANS
understanding, showing compassion for someone's problems

SAY INSTEAD For English 'sympathetic' say: comprensivo/a. To show sympathy: Lo siento mucho / Te entiendo. ('She was very sympathetic' = Fue muy comprensiva.)

- Los vecinos nuevos son muy simpáticos.
  The new neighbours are really nice.
- Mi jefa fue muy comprensiva cuando le conté lo de mi padre.
  My boss was very sympathetic when I told her about my dad.

educado/a ≠ English "educated"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
polite, well-mannered

ENGLISH "EDUCATED" MEANS
having a good level of education or schooling

SAY INSTEAD For English 'educated' say: culto/a (well-read, cultured), con estudios, con formación. ('a highly educated woman' = una mujer muy culta / con mucha formación)

- Tu hijo es muy educado: siempre da las gracias.
  Your son is very polite: he always says thank you.
- Es una persona muy culta, ha leído de todo.
  He's a very educated person, he's read everything.
- ¡Qué maleducado! Ni siquiera ha saludado.
  How rude! He didn't even say hello.

fastidioso/a ≠ English "fastidious"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
annoying, irritating, tiresome

ENGLISH "FASTIDIOUS" MEANS
very fussy about details, hard to please

SAY INSTEAD For English 'fastidious' say: quisquilloso/a, maniático/a, exigente. ('He's fastidious about cleanliness' = Es un maniático de la limpieza.)

- Es muy fastidioso tener que repetir la misma cosa diez veces.
  It's really annoying having to repeat the same thing ten times.
- Mi compañero de piso es un maniático del orden.
  My flatmate is really fastidious about tidiness.

actual ≠ English "actual"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
current, present-day

ENGLISH "ACTUAL" MEANS
real, genuine (as opposed to imagined or estimated)

SAY INSTEAD For English 'actual' say: real, verdadero/a, mismo/a. ('the actual problem' = el verdadero problema; 'the actual cost' = el coste real)

- La situación actual del mercado es complicada.
  The current situation in the market is complicated.
- ¿Cuál es tu dirección actual?
  What's your current address?
- El verdadero problema es que no tenemos tiempo.
  The actual problem is that we don't have time.

Life, work and study

la carrera ≠ English "career"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a university degree (also: a race, a run)

ENGLISH "CAREER" MEANS
your professional path over many years

SAY INSTEAD For English 'career' you can say: la trayectoria profesional, la vida profesional. 'Carrera profesional' also exists, but on its own 'la carrera' usually means your degree. ('What did you study?' = ¿Qué carrera hiciste?)

- Javi está en tercero de carrera.
  Javi is in the third year of his degree.
- Hice la carrera de Derecho en Salamanca.
  I did a law degree in Salamanca.
- Tiene una trayectoria profesional impresionante.
  She has an impressive career.
- Fuimos en taxi para no perder el tren: ¡fue una carrera!
  We took a taxi so as not to miss the train: it was a real race!

el oficio ≠ English "office"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a trade, a craft, a skilled manual job

ENGLISH "OFFICE" MEANS
the place where you work at a desk

SAY INSTEAD For English 'office' say: la oficina (the place), el despacho (a private office or study). ('I'm still at the office' = Sigo en la oficina.)

- Mi abuelo era carpintero y me enseñó el oficio.
  My grandfather was a carpenter and he taught me the trade.
- La directora te espera en su despacho.
  The director is waiting for you in her office.

el compromiso ≠ English "compromise"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
commitment, obligation; an engagement (to marry); a prior engagement or appointment

ENGLISH "COMPROMISE" MEANS
an agreement where both sides give something up

SAY INSTEAD For English 'compromise' say: un acuerdo, un punto intermedio, ceder (to compromise). ('We reached a compromise' = Llegamos a un acuerdo.)

- Lo siento, no puedo ir, tengo un compromiso.
  Sorry, I can't come, I've got something on.
- Anunciaron su compromiso en Navidad.
  They announced their engagement at Christmas.
- Los dos tuvimos que ceder un poco.
  We both had to compromise a bit.

el argumento ≠ English "argument"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
the plot (of a film, book or series); also a line of reasoning, an argument in a debate

ENGLISH "ARGUMENT" MEANS
a row, a heated disagreement

SAY INSTEAD For an argument meaning a row say: una discusión, una pelea, una bronca (informal). ('We had an argument' = Discutimos / Tuvimos una discusión.)

- La serie tiene un argumento muy original.
  The series has a really original plot.
- Anoche tuve una discusión con mi hermana.
  I had an argument with my sister last night.
- Es un buen argumento, pero no me convence.
  It's a good point, but I'm not convinced.

el idioma ≠ English "idiom"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a language (español, inglés, chino...)

ENGLISH "IDIOM" MEANS
a fixed expression whose meaning isn't literal

SAY INSTEAD For English 'idiom' say: una expresión (idiomática), una frase hecha, un modismo. ('Spanish idioms' = expresiones en español)

- ¿Cuántos idiomas hablas?
  How many languages do you speak?
- 'Estar en las nubes' es una expresión muy útil.
  'Estar en las nubes' is a really useful idiom.

la estancia ≠ English "stance"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a stay (in a hotel, a city, a country, a hospital)

ENGLISH "STANCE" MEANS
an attitude or position on an issue

SAY INSTEAD For English 'stance' say: la postura, la posición. ('What's your stance on this?' = ¿Cuál es tu postura sobre esto?)

- ¡Que disfrutes de tu estancia en Granada!
  Enjoy your stay in Granada!
- Hice una estancia de seis meses en Dublín.
  I spent six months in Dublin.
- El gobierno no ha cambiado de postura.
  The government hasn't changed its stance.

el/la conductor/a ≠ English "conductor"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a driver (of a car, bus, taxi…)

ENGLISH "CONDUCTOR" MEANS
a person who conducts an orchestra; a ticket inspector on a train

SAY INSTEAD For an orchestra conductor say: el/la director/a de orquesta. For a ticket inspector: el/la revisor/a.

NOTE In Latin America 'chofer / chófer' is also very common for a professional driver.

- El conductor del autobús fue muy amable.
  The bus driver was really kind.
- El revisor nos pidió los billetes.
  The ticket inspector asked for our tickets.
- Es directora de orquesta en Viena.
  She's a conductor in Vienna.

Events, problems and feelings

el suceso ≠ English "success"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
an event, an incident (often a crime or accident in the news)

ENGLISH "SUCCESS" MEANS
achieving what you wanted

SAY INSTEAD For English 'success' say: el éxito. ('The party was a success' = La fiesta fue un éxito.)

- El periódico dedica una página a los sucesos.
  The paper has a page for crime and accident reports.
- La policía investiga el suceso.
  The police are investigating the incident.
- ¡El concierto fue un éxito!
  The concert was a success!

el delito ≠ English "delight"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a crime, an offence

ENGLISH "DELIGHT" MEANS
great pleasure

SAY INSTEAD For English 'delight' say: el placer, la alegría, una delicia. ('It's a delight' = Es una delicia / Es un placer.)

- Conducir sin carné es un delito.
  Driving without a licence is an offence.
- Este pastel es una delicia.
  This cake is a delight.
- Es un placer trabajar contigo.
  It's a delight working with you.

el disgusto ≠ English "disgust"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
an upset, a shock, something that makes you sad or annoyed

ENGLISH "DISGUST" MEANS
a strong feeling of revulsion

SAY INSTEAD For English 'disgust' say: el asco, la repugnancia. ('It disgusts me' = Me da asco.)

NOTE Typical collocation: llevarse un disgusto (to get upset, to have a nasty shock).

› Se llevó un disgusto enorme cuando suspendió.
She was really upset when she failed.

› No le des ese disgusto a tu madre.
Don't upset your mother like that.

› Las cucarachas me dan asco.
Cockroaches disgust me.

la lujuria ≠ English "luxury"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
lust

ENGLISH "LUXURY" MEANS
great comfort and expensive things

SAY INSTEAD For English 'luxury' say: el lujo, lujoso/a. ('a luxury hotel' = un hotel de lujo)

NOTE You'll rarely need 'lujuria' (it's one of the seven deadly sins), but mixing it up with 'lujo' is a classic, and very funny, mistake.

› Nos alojamos en un hotel de lujo.
We stayed in a luxury hotel.

› Un fin de semana sin móvil es un lujo.
A weekend without my phone is a real luxury.

el preservativo ≠ English "preservative"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
a condom

ENGLISH "PRESERVATIVE" MEANS
a chemical added to food to make it last longer

SAY INSTEAD For English 'preservative' say: el conservante. ('no preservatives' = sin conservantes)

NOTE One of the most embarrassing false friends: asking for food 'sin preservativos' gets you some very strange looks.

› Esta mermelada no lleva conservantes.
This jam has no preservatives.

› Comprueba los ingredientes: ¿lleva conservantes o colorantes?
Check the ingredients: does it have any preservatives or colourings?

discutir ≠ English "to discuss"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to argue, to have a row (also: to debate, to discuss a point with disagreement)

ENGLISH "TO DISCUSS" MEANS
to talk about something calmly

SAY INSTEAD For a calm 'discuss' say: hablar de, comentar, tratar (formal). ('Let's discuss it tomorrow' = Lo hablamos mañana.)

- Mis vecinos discuten todas las noches.
  My neighbours argue every night.
- Tenemos que hablar del presupuesto.
  We need to discuss the budget.
- En la reunión trataremos tres temas.
  We'll discuss three points in the meeting.

LEARN THE 'SAY INSTEAD' WORD FIRST

The real danger is not understanding these words: it's using them when you mean the English one. So when you review, cover the Spanish meaning and practise producing the right word: sensible → sensato, career → trayectoria, preservative → conservante. Say a full sentence with each one out loud.

B1 · INDEPENDENT SPANISH

16 · The word partnerships that make your Spanish sound natural, not translated

Useful collocations

At B1 the difference between 'correct' and 'natural' Spanish is often just the verb you choose: in Spanish you 'commit' an error, 'run' a risk and 'give' someone a pep talk. These collocations are organised by verb, with a final group of adjective + noun partners. Learn each one as a single block, with its example, and try to use two or three new ones every week in your conversations or messages.

tomar: taking measures, taking things seriously

tomar medidas
to take measures / to take action
For governments, companies or anyone who decides to act on a problem.

> El ayuntamiento va a tomar medidas contra el ruido.
> *The council is going to take action against noise.*

tomar(se) algo en serio
to take something seriously
Very common with 'tomarse' for personal attitudes.

> Este año me estoy tomando el español muy en serio.
> *This year I'm taking my Spanish really seriously.*

tomarse algo a mal / a broma
to take something the wrong way / as a joke
To talk about how someone reacts to what you say.

> No te lo tomes a mal, pero creo que te equivocas.
> *Don't take this the wrong way, but I think you're wrong.*

tomar partido (por)
to take sides
In arguments between friends, family or colleagues.

> Prefiero no tomar partido en las peleas de mis hermanos.
> *I'd rather not take sides when my brothers fight.*

tomar conciencia (de)
to become aware (of) / to realise the importance of
Slightly formal; common with social issues.

> Cada vez más gente toma conciencia del cambio climático.
> *More and more people are becoming aware of climate change.*

tomarse unos días (libres)
to take a few days off
Also 'tomarse un descanso' (to take a break).

> Me voy a tomar unos días para desconectar.
> *I'm going to take a few days off to switch off.*

hacer: feelings, effort and relationships

hacer daño (a alguien)
to hurt (someone), physically or emotionally
With an indirect pronoun: me hace daño. 'Hacerse daño' = to hurt yourself.

> Me hice daño en la rodilla jugando al pádel.
> *I hurt my knee playing padel.*

hacer ilusión (a alguien)
to be really looking forward to / to be excited about
Works like 'gustar'. A warm, very Spanish way to show excitement.

> Me hace mucha ilusión ir a tu boda.
> *I'm so excited about going to your wedding.*

hacer el ridículo INFORMAL
to make a fool of yourself / to embarrass yourself
Informal and very common.

> Hice el ridículo cantando en el karaoke.
> *I made a fool of myself singing karaoke.*

hacer un esfuerzo
to make an effort
Also 'hacer un esfuerzo por + infinitive'.

> Haz un esfuerzo por hablar solo en español en clase.
> *Make an effort to speak only Spanish in class.*

hacer realidad (un sueño)
to make (a dream) come true
Also 'hacerse realidad' = to come true.

> Por fin hizo realidad su sueño de abrir una librería.
> *She finally made her dream of opening a bookshop come true.*

hacer frente a
to face / to deal with / to tackle
Problems, difficulties, costs.

> Tuvimos que hacer frente a muchos gastos inesperados.
> *We had to deal with a lot of unexpected expenses.*

dar: how things make you feel

These work like 'gustar': the thing is the subject and the person goes in the pronoun. Me da pena = It makes me sad.

dar rabia (a alguien) INFORMAL
to make someone angry / to really annoy someone

> Me da mucha rabia perder el autobús por un minuto.
> *It really annoys me when I miss the bus by a minute.*

dar asco (a alguien) INFORMAL
to disgust someone / to find something gross

> Me da asco el olor del pescado crudo.
> *The smell of raw fish makes me feel sick.*

dar ánimos (a alguien)
to encourage someone / to cheer someone on
When someone is having a hard time or facing a challenge.

> Mis amigos me dieron muchos ánimos antes del examen.
> *My friends were really encouraging before the exam.*

dar la enhorabuena (a alguien)
to congratulate someone
For achievements: a new job, a degree, a baby. More common in Spain than 'felicitar' for achievements.

> Quería darte la enhorabuena por el ascenso.
> *I wanted to congratulate you on your promotion.*

dar por sentado / dar por hecho
to take for granted / to assume

> Di por hecho que venías a la cena.
> *I assumed you were coming to dinner.*

echar: blaming, telling off and glancing

echar una bronca (a alguien) INFORMAL
to tell someone off

> Mi madre me echó una bronca por llegar tan tarde.
> *My mum told me off for getting home so late.*

echar a perder
to ruin / to spoil
Plans, food, a surprise, an opportunity.

> La lluvia echó a perder la barbacoa.
> *The rain ruined the barbecue.*

echar en cara (algo a alguien) INFORMAL
to throw something back in someone's face / to reproach

> No me eches en cara que te ayudé una vez.
> *Don't throw it in my face that I helped you once.*

echar cuentas INFORMAL
to do the maths / to work out the numbers

> Echa cuentas y verás que no nos llega el dinero.
> *Do the maths and you'll see we haven't got enough money.*

tener: success, meaning and responsibility

tener éxito
to be successful / to succeed
Never '~~*suceder~~', which means 'to happen'.

> Su podcast ha tenido mucho éxito.
> *Her podcast has been really successful.*

tener lugar
to take place
Neutral to formal; in conversation 'ser' is also common (La fiesta es en…).

> La ceremonia tendrá lugar en el ayuntamiento.
> *The ceremony will take place at the town hall.*

tener sentido
to make sense
Not '~~*hacer sentido~~'; (an anglicism).

> No tiene sentido discutir por eso.
> *There's no point arguing about that.*

tener la culpa (de)
to be to blame (for) / to be someone's fault

> Tú no tienes la culpa de nada.
> *None of this is your fault.*

tener que ver con
to have to do with / to be related to
'No tiene nada que ver' = it has nothing to do with it / it's completely different.

> Mi trabajo no tiene nada que ver con lo que estudié.
> *My job has nothing to do with what I studied.*

tener la sensación de que
to have the feeling that

> Tengo la sensación de que se me olvida algo.
> *I've got a feeling I'm forgetting something.*

tener (algo) claro
to be clear about / to be sure about something

> Tengo muy claro que quiero vivir en España.
> *I'm absolutely sure I want to live in Spain.*

tener paciencia
to be patient

> Ten paciencia, el español no se aprende en un día.
> *Be patient, you don't learn Spanish in a day.*

poner: starting, objecting and getting in touch

poner en marcha
to launch / to set up / to get (something) going
Projects, plans, a business, a machine.

> Han puesto en marcha un programa de mentores.
> *They've launched a mentoring programme.*

poner pegas (a algo) INFORMAL
to find fault / to raise objections

> Mi jefe le pone pegas a todo.
> *My boss finds fault with everything.*

ponerse en contacto (con)
to get in touch (with) / to contact
Perfect for emails and formal messages.

> Nos pondremos en contacto con usted lo antes posible.
> *We will get in touch with you as soon as possible.*

poner a prueba
to put to the test

> Este viaje puso a prueba nuestra relación.
> *This trip put our relationship to the test.*

poner de los nervios (a alguien) INFORMAL
to drive someone mad / to get on someone's nerves

> Ese ruido me pone de los nervios.
> *That noise drives me mad.*

ponerse al día
to catch up / to get up to date
With news, work or friends.

> Tenemos que quedar para ponernos al día.
> *We need to meet up and catch up.*

poner en práctica
to put into practice

> Por fin pude poner en práctica mi español en Madrid.
> *I was finally able to put my Spanish into practice in Madrid.*

More verbs with fixed partners

Here English and Spanish often choose different verbs: these are the ones to watch.

prestar atención (a)
to pay attention (to)
Never '~~*pagar atención~~';.

> Presta atención, que esto sale en el examen.
> *Pay attention, this will be in the exam.*

cometer un error
to make a mistake
Neutral to formal. In conversation, 'equivocarse' is very common too.

> Cometí el error de no guardar el archivo.
> *I made the mistake of not saving the file.*

sacar adelante
to keep (something) going / to make (something) work / to bring up (a family)
A project, a business, a family, usually with effort.

> Sacó adelante a sus tres hijos ella sola.
> *She brought up her three children on her own.*

cumplir una promesa / romper una promesa
to keep a promise / to break a promise

> Te prometí que vendría y he cumplido mi promesa.
> *I promised you I'd come and I've kept my promise.*

cumplir un sueño / un objetivo
to fulfil a dream / to reach a goal

> Viajar a México era un sueño y por fin lo he cumplido.
> *Going to Mexico was a dream and I've finally made it happen.*

correr un riesgo
to run a risk / to take a risk
'No quiero correr riesgos' = I don't want to take any chances.

> Si no reservas ya, corres el riesgo de quedarte sin entrada.
> *If you don't book now, you run the risk of not getting a ticket.*

pedir perdón / pedir disculpas
to apologise / to say sorry
'Pedir disculpas' sounds a little more formal.

> Te pido perdón, no quería hacerte daño.
> *I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you.*

ganar tiempo
to save time / to buy time

> Si cocinamos el domingo, ganamos tiempo durante la semana.
> *If we cook on Sunday, we save time during the week.*

llegar a un acuerdo
to reach an agreement / to come to an arrangement

> Después de dos horas llegamos a un acuerdo.
> *After two hours we reached an agreement.*

guardar un secreto
to keep a secret

> ¿Sabes guardar un secreto?
> *Can you keep a secret?*

mantener el contacto
to keep in touch / to stay in touch

> Seguimos manteniendo el contacto después de tantos años.
> *We still keep in touch after all these years.*

Adjective + noun partners

Some adjectives and nouns just belong together. Translating from English often gives you the wrong adjective ('strong coffee' is usually 'café cargado' in Spain, not 'café fuerte').

una idea brillante
a brilliant idea

> ¡Qué idea tan brillante! ¿Cómo no se me ocurrió?
> *What a brilliant idea! How didn't I think of that?*

un éxito rotundo
a resounding success / a huge hit

> La obra de teatro fue un éxito rotundo.
> *The play was a huge success.*

un fuerte dolor (de cabeza)
a bad headache / a sharp pain
'Fuerte' often goes before the noun here. Also 'un dolor terrible'.

> Me desperté con un fuerte dolor de cabeza.
> *I woke up with a terrible headache.*

lluvia intensa / fuertes lluvias
heavy rain
Weather forecasts love these. Not '~~*lluvia pesada~~'.

> Mañana se esperan fuertes lluvias en el norte.
> *Heavy rain is expected in the north tomorrow.*

un café cargado / flojo
a strong / weak coffee
For coffee and tea, the natural word is 'cargado' (literally 'loaded'); 'fuerte' is understood but less idiomatic.

> Ponme un café bien cargado, que hoy lo necesito.
> *Make me a really strong coffee, I need it today.*

un amigo íntimo / una amiga íntima
a close friend
Also 'muy amigo/a de alguien'. Not '~~*amigo cerrado~~'.

> Solo invitamos a la familia y a los amigos íntimos.
> *We only invited family and close friends.*

una relación estrecha
a close relationship

> Tengo una relación muy estrecha con mi abuela.
> *I have a really close relationship with my grandmother.*

una oportunidad única
a unique opportunity / a once-in-a-lifetime chance

> Trabajar en Buenos Aires es una oportunidad única.
> *Working in Buenos Aires is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.*

una razón de peso
a good reason / a compelling reason

> Tiene razones de peso para cambiar de trabajo.
> *He has good reasons for changing jobs.*

una mayoría aplastante
an overwhelming majority / a landslide

> Ganó las elecciones por mayoría aplastante.
> *She won the election by a landslide.*

un sueño profundo
a deep sleep

> Estaba en un sueño profundo y no oí el despertador.
> *I was in a deep sleep and didn't hear the alarm.*

un precio razonable
a reasonable / fair price

> Es un restaurante bueno a un precio razonable.
> *It's a good restaurant at a reasonable price.*

un fumador empedernido / una fumadora empedernida
a heavy smoker / a chain smoker
Also 'un lector empedernido' (an avid reader).

> Mi tío era un fumador empedernido, pero lo dejó.
> *My uncle was a heavy smoker, but he quit.*

STEAL COLLOCATIONS, DON'T BUILD THEM

When you're not sure which verb or adjective goes with a noun, don't translate from English: search the whole phrase in quotes online or in a Spanish corpus and see which version real people use. You'll quickly see, for example, that Spaniards order 'un café cargado' far more often than 'un café fuerte'. Then write the winner in your notebook with a sentence about your own life.

LEVEL B2

B2

Confident & Natural Spanish

Precise, natural, convincing

More precise, abstract and natural vocabulary: debating social issues, talking about the news, culture and the media, using idioms like a native and choosing the exact word instead of the approximate one.

AT THIS LEVEL YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Debate, argue and defend a position
- Talk about society, the environment, culture and the media
- Use idioms and colloquial Spanish naturally
- Sound natural, not translated

16 sections **1,285** words, phrases & structures

From correct to natural.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

01 · The precise verbs that make you sound confident, not just correct

Verbs

At B2 you stop saying 'hacer' and 'decir' for everything. These verbs let you argue, explain consequences, run projects and talk about how you cope, with the exact word a native speaker would choose. Learn each one with its pattern and its typical partners, and watch out for the false friends: asumir, suponer and advertir don't always mean what you think.

Arguing & debating

The verbs of discussions, meetings, essays and good dinner-table arguments. Many of them are a bit more formal: perfect for work emails and opinion texts.

asumir *to take on / to accept (a responsibility, a fact)*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · B2

PATTERN **asumir algo · asumir que + indicative (= accept that)**

To accept a responsibility, a role, a cost or an unpleasant reality. In standard Spanish it does NOT mainly mean 'to assume = to suppose'. For that, use suponer or dar por hecho.

> **take on** — *to accept a responsibility or role*
>
> › Marcos asumió la dirección del proyecto en enero.
> *Marcos took over as head of the project in January.*

> **accept a reality** — *to come to terms with something*
>
> › Tienes que asumir que no puedes hacerlo todo tú sola.
> *You have to accept that you can't do everything on your own.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **asumir la responsabilidad** *to take responsibility* · **asumir un riesgo** *to take a risk* · **asumir los costes** *to bear the costs* · **asumir las consecuencias** *to face the consequences*

DON'T CONFUSE asumir = accept, take on · suponer = suppose · dar por hecho / dar por sentado = take for granted.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Asumo que vienes a la cena (meaning '~~;I suppose') → ✓ Supongo que vienes a la cena / Doy por hecho que vienes. You'll hear 'asumir' = suppose in some places (English influence), but it's not standard.

plantear *to raise / to put forward / to pose*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B2

PATTERN **plantear algo (a alguien) · plantear una pregunta / un problema / una propuesta**

To bring up an issue, a question or an idea so that it can be discussed. It can also mean 'to cause, to pose' (a problem, a challenge).

> **raise an issue** — *to put a topic on the table*
>
> › En la reunión planteé la posibilidad de trabajar desde casa los viernes.
> *In the meeting I raised the possibility of working from home on Fridays.*

> **pose a problem** — *to create a difficulty*
>
> › El cambio de horario nos plantea un problema serio.
> *The change of schedule poses a serious problem for us.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **plantear una duda** *to raise a question / doubt* · **plantear un reto** *to pose a challenge* · **plantear una alternativa** *to propose an alternative*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Planteé la pregunta a la mesa~~ → ✓ Planteé la pregunta en la reunión / al grupo. And don't confuse it with 'plantar' (to plant).

plantearse *to consider / to think about (doing)*

VERB REFLEXIVE (-AR) B2

PATTERN **plantearse algo · plantearse + infinitive · plantearse si...**

To seriously consider an option or question something for yourself. Extremely common when talking about life decisions.

› Me estoy planteando dejar el trabajo y montar algo propio.
I'm thinking about quitting my job and starting something of my own.

› Nunca me lo había planteado así.
I'd never thought about it like that.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **plantearse un cambio** *to consider a change* · **replantearse algo** *to rethink / reconsider something*

DON'T CONFUSE plantear (to others) = raise · plantearse (to yourself) = consider. 'Replantearse' = to rethink from scratch.

abordar *to tackle / to deal with / to address*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · B2

PATTERN **abordar un tema / un problema / una cuestión**

To start dealing with a topic or problem in a structured way. Typical of meetings, reports, articles and essays. It can also mean 'to approach someone' (often insistently) or 'to board' a ship or plane.

› En el próximo capítulo abordaremos el tema de la vivienda.
In the next chapter we'll address the issue of housing.

› Un desconocido me abordó en la calle para pedirme dinero.
A stranger came up to me in the street to ask me for money.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **abordar una cuestión** *to address an issue* · **abordar un problema de raíz** *to tackle a problem at its root*

DON'T CONFUSE abordar = start dealing with a topic (intellectual) · afrontar / enfrentarse a = face something difficult (emotional, practical).

afrontar *to face / to confront*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **afrontar algo (no preposition)**

To face a difficult situation with courage and take responsibility for it. Direct object, no 'a'.

› La empresa tiene que afrontar una crisis importante.
The company has to face a major crisis.

› Afrontó la enfermedad con una fuerza increíble.
She faced the illness with incredible strength.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **afrontar un reto** *to face a challenge* · **afrontar la realidad** *to face reality* · **afrontar los gastos** *to meet the costs*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Afrontar a un problema~~ → ✓ Afrontar un problema · ✓ Enfrentarse a un problema.

enfrentarse a *to face / to confront / to come up against*

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **enfrentarse a algo / a alguien · enfrentar a dos personas (to set against each other)**

To face a problem, a rival or a fear. Slightly more dramatic than afrontar, and also used for sports matches and conflicts.

› Nos enfrentamos a un reto enorme.
We're facing an enormous challenge.

› El Betis se enfrenta mañana al Sevilla.
Betis play Sevilla tomorrow.

› Por fin me enfrenté a mi jefe.
I finally stood up to my boss.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **enfrentarse a un miedo** *to face a fear* · **enfrentarse a una multa** *to face a fine*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America 'enfrentar algo' (no se, no a) is very common: enfrentar un problema.

cuestionar *to question / to challenge*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **cuestionar algo · cuestionarse algo (to ask yourself, to doubt)**

To express doubt about something's truth, value or legitimacy. It does not mean 'to ask a question': for that, use preguntar or hacer una pregunta.

› Nadie cuestiona su talento, pero sí su actitud.
Nobody questions his talent, but they do question his attitude.

› Últimamente me cuestiono si vale la pena vivir en Madrid.
Lately I've been asking myself whether living in Madrid is worth it.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El profesor me cuestionó sobre el examen~~ → ✓ El profesor me hizo preguntas sobre el examen. 'Cuestionar' to a person = to question their judgement.

argumentar *to argue (a point) / to give reasons*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **argumentar que + indicative · argumentar algo**

To support an idea with reasons. It never means 'to argue' in the sense of quarrelling: that's discutir or pelearse.

› Ana argumentó que el proyecto no era rentable.
Ana argued that the project wasn't profitable.

› Tienes que argumentar mejor tu postura.
You need to back up your position better.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mis padres argumentan mucho~~ → ✓ Mis padres discuten mucho (argue = quarrel).

justificar *to justify*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: JUSTIFIQUÉ · B2

PATTERN **justificar algo · justificarse (to make excuses) · nada justifica que + subjunctive**

To give reasons that make something acceptable. 'Justificarse' often means to make excuses or defend yourself.

› Nada justifica que nos hablen así.
Nothing justifies them talking to us like that.

› No hace falta que te justifiques, lo entiendo.
You don't have to explain yourself, I understand.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **justificar una ausencia** *to provide a reason for an absence* · **justificar un gasto** *to justify an expense*

matizar *to qualify / to clarify / to add nuance*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: MATICÉ · B2

PATTERN **matizar algo · matizar que...**

To refine or clarify a statement so it's more precise or less absolute. Very elegant in debates: you agree, but with a small correction.

› Me gustaría matizar lo que he dicho antes.
I'd like to clarify what I said earlier.

› Estoy de acuerdo, pero habría que matizarlo.
I agree, but it needs some nuance.

NOTE Comes from 'el matiz' (nuance, shade). A great word to sound sophisticated in meetings.

insistir en *to insist on*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · B2

PATTERN **insistir en algo · insistir en + infinitive · insistir en que + indicative (state) / + subjunctive (demand)**

To keep saying or demanding something. Note the mood change: insisting that something is true → indicative; insisting that someone does something → subjunctive.

+ indicative — *insist that something is true*

› Diego insiste en que él no sabía nada.
Diego insists that he didn't know anything.

+ subjunctive — *insist that someone does something*

› Mi madre insiste en que vaya a verla este fin de semana.
My mum insists that I go and see her this weekend.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Insistió de pagar / *insistió sobre pagar~~ → ✓ Insistió en pagar.

advertir *to warn / to notice*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE (ADVIERTO) · E→I (ADVIRTIÓ) · B2

PATTERN **advertir a alguien de algo · advertir (a alguien) que... · advertir algo (= notice, formal)**

Two meanings. Most common: to warn. In formal or written Spanish it also means 'to notice, to realise'. Never 'to advertise' (that's anunciar / hacer publicidad).

warn — *to tell someone about a danger*

› Ya te advertí que la carretera estaba cortada.
I did warn you the road was closed.

notice (formal) — *to become aware of something*

› Nadie advirtió el error hasta que fue demasiado tarde.
Nobody noticed the mistake until it was too late.

NOTE Warning someone NOT to do something takes subjunctive: Te advierto que no lo toques.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La empresa advierte sus productos en la tele~~ → ✓ La empresa anuncia sus productos en la tele.

reconocer *to recognise / to admit / to acknowledge*

VERB · IRREGULAR: RECONOZCO · B2

PATTERN **reconocer a alguien · reconocer que + indicative · reconocer algo**

Three main meanings: to recognise someone or something; to admit (often reluctantly); to acknowledge or give credit for something.

recognise — *identify*

› No te había reconocido con el pelo corto.
I hadn't recognised you with short hair.

admit — *accept something is true*

› Reconozco que me equivoqué.
I admit I was wrong.

acknowledge, give credit — *value publicly*

› La empresa reconoció su esfuerzo con un ascenso.
The company acknowledged her effort with a promotion.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hay que reconocer que...** *you have to admit that...* · **reconocer un error** *to admit a mistake* · **un artista reconocido** *a renowned artist*

admitir *to admit / to accept / to allow*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · B2

PATTERN **admitir que + indicative · no admitir algo (= not allow)**

To accept that something is true; also to let someone in (a school, a club) or to allow something.

› Admito que no lo había pensado.
I admit I hadn't thought of that.

› Este restaurante no admite reservas.
This restaurant doesn't take bookings.

› La han admitido en un máster en Barcelona.
She's been accepted onto a master's in Barcelona.

DON'T CONFUSE reconocer que = admit (more personal, often a confession) · admitir que = admit/accept (also used for rules: 'no se admiten perros').

negar / negarse a *to deny / to refuse to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: NIEGO · NEGUÉ · B2

PATTERN **negar algo · negar que + subjunctive · negarse a + infinitive**

Negar = to deny (say something is not true). Negarse a = to refuse to do something. Mixing them up is a classic mistake.

> **negar** — *to deny*
>
> › El ministro niega que haya habido irregularidades.
> *The minister denies there have been any irregularities.*

> **negarse a** — *to refuse to do*
>
> › Javi se negó a firmar el contrato.
> *Javi refused to sign the contract.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **negarse en redondo** *to flatly refuse*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Negó firmar~~ → ✓ Se negó a firmar. 'Negar que' takes subjunctive: Niego que sea verdad.

rechazar *to reject / to turn down*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: RECHACÉ · B2

PATTERN **rechazar algo / a alguien**

To say no to an offer, a proposal or an idea. Also used for strongly condemning something.

› Rechazó una oferta de trabajo en Londres para quedarse aquí.
She turned down a job offer in London to stay here.

› El sindicato rechaza la propuesta de la empresa.
The union rejects the company's proposal.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **rechazar una invitación** *to decline an invitation* · **rechazar de plano** *to reject outright*

defender *to defend / to stand up for / to argue for*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE: DEFIENDO · B2

PATTERN **defender algo / a alguien · defender que + indicative · defenderse (to get by)**

To protect or support someone or an idea. 'Defender que' = to maintain, argue that. Colloquially, 'me defiendo en inglés' = I get by in English.

› Siempre ha defendido la educación pública.
She has always stood up for state education.

› No hablo alemán perfecto, pero me defiendo.
My German isn't perfect, but I get by.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **defender una postura** *to defend a position* · **defender una tesis** *to defend a thesis*

criticar *to criticise / to gossip about*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: CRITIQUÉ · B2

PATTERN **criticar algo / a alguien · criticar que + subjunctive**

To express disapproval. In everyday speech it also means to talk badly about someone behind their back.

› Muchos critican que la medida llegue tan tarde.
Many people criticise the fact that the measure has come so late.

› No me gusta criticar a la gente cuando no está.
I don't like badmouthing people when they're not around.

NOTE 'Criticar que' + subjunctive: you criticise a fact, not report it.

exigir *to demand / to require*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: EXIJO · B2

PATTERN **exigir algo (a alguien) · exigir que + subjunctive**

To demand something firmly, as a right or a requirement. Also: a job or task 'exige' a lot = it's very demanding.

› Los vecinos exigen que el ayuntamiento arregle la calle.
The residents are demanding that the council fix the street.

› Este trabajo exige mucha paciencia.
This job requires a lot of patience.

DON'T CONFUSE exigir = demand firmly · pedir = ask for · reclamar = claim, complain (see below).

NOTE Spelling: exijo, exija (g→j before o/a).

reclamar *to claim / to complain / to demand*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **reclamar algo · reclamar (a una empresa) · reclamar que + subjunctive**

To demand something you believe you have a right to, or to make a formal complaint, often to a company. 'Hacer una reclamación' = to file a complaint.

› Reclamé a la aerolínea porque perdieron mi maleta.
I made a complaint to the airline because they lost my suitcase.

› Los trabajadores reclaman mejores condiciones.
The workers are demanding better conditions.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **reclamar una indemnización** *to claim compensation* · **la hoja de reclamaciones** *official complaint form (Spain)*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Reclamar las maletas en el aeropuerto~~: understood, but in Spain baggage claim is 'recogida de equipajes'.

reivindicar *to campaign for / to stand up for / to claim (as a right)*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: REIVINDIQUÉ · B2

PATTERN **reivindicar algo**

To publicly demand something as a right, or to defend the value of something that was forgotten or undervalued. Very common in social and cultural contexts.

› La manifestación reivindica el derecho a una vivienda digna.
The demonstration is calling for the right to decent housing.

› Su último libro reivindica la cocina de los abuelos.
Her latest book champions our grandparents' cooking.

NOTE Also: 'reivindicar un atentado' = to claim responsibility for an attack.

denunciar *to report (to the police) / to condemn publicly*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **denunciar algo / a alguien (a la policía) · denunciar que + indicative**

To report a crime to the police, or to publicly expose something unfair. It doesn't mean 'to denounce someone' as often as in English: it's an everyday verb for police reports.

› Me robaron el móvil y fui a denunciarlo a comisaría.
My phone was stolen and I went to report it at the police station.

› La ONG denuncia que muchas familias no tienen calefacción.
The NGO is speaking out about the fact that many families have no heating.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **poner una denuncia** *to file a police report*

destacar *to highlight / to stand out*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: DESTAQUÉ · B2

PATTERN **destacar algo (= highlight) · destacar en / por algo (= stand out) · cabe destacar que...**

Transitive: to point out something important. Intransitive: to be outstanding, to stand out.

highlight — *point out*

› Quiero destacar el trabajo de todo el equipo.
I want to highlight the work of the whole team.

stand out — *be outstanding*

› Lucía siempre destacó en matemáticas.
Lucía always excelled at maths.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **destacar por su calidad** *to stand out for its quality*

resaltar *to emphasise / to bring out*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **resaltar algo · resaltar que...**

To make something more noticeable, either in speech (emphasise) or visually (bring out a colour, a feature).

› El informe resalta la necesidad de invertir en formación.
The report stresses the need to invest in training.

› Ese color te resalta los ojos.
That colour really brings out your eyes.

DON'T CONFUSE destacar and resaltar are often interchangeable for 'highlight'. 'Subrayar' (underline) is also used figuratively.

señalar *to point out / to point at / to indicate*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **señalar algo / a alguien · señalar que + indicative**

Literally to point (with a finger); figuratively to point out or indicate. Very common in news: 'según señala el informe...'.

› Como señalaba Tom, el plazo es demasiado corto.
As Tom was pointing out, the deadline is too tight.

› No señales a la gente, que es de mala educación.
Don't point at people, it's rude.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **señalar con el dedo** *to point the finger (also: to blame)*

Change, cause & impact

Verbs to explain what something leads to, what it helps or harms, and what it involves. Essential for opinion essays and serious conversations.

implicar *to involve / to imply / to mean*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: IMPLIQUÉ · B2

PATTERN **implicar algo · implicar + infinitive · implicar que + indicative · implicar a alguien en algo**

To have something as a necessary consequence (= entail, mean), or to involve a person in a situation (often a bad one).

> **entail** — *have as a consequence*
>
> › Aceptar el puesto implica mudarse a Valencia.
> *Taking the job means moving to Valencia.*

> **involve someone** — *drag someone into something*
>
> › No me impliques en tus problemas.
> *Don't drag me into your problems.*

DON'T CONFUSE implicar = entail (neutral) · conllevar = bring with it (often costs, risks) · suponer = mean, represent.

conllevar *to entail / to carry / to bring with it*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · B2

PATTERN **conllevar algo (riesgos, costes, responsabilidades...)**

To bring something as a natural consequence. Usually with nouns like riesgo, coste, cambio, responsabilidad. Typical of written and professional Spanish.

› Todo cambio conlleva cierto riesgo.
Every change carries a certain risk.

› Ser autónomo conlleva muchas responsabilidades.
Being self-employed comes with a lot of responsibilities.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*conllevar con~~ → ✓ conllevar algo (direct object). Written as one word.

suponer *to mean / to involve / to represent (also: to suppose)*

VERB · IRREGULAR LIKE PONER: SUPONGO · SUPUSE · SUPUESTO · B2

PATTERN **suponer algo (= mean, entail) · suponer que + indicative (= suppose)**

New meaning at B2: 'suponer + noun' = to mean, to represent, to involve. You already know 'supongo que...' = I suppose.

mean / represent – *entail*

› La mudanza supuso un gasto enorme.
The move meant a huge expense.

be (for someone) – *represent emotionally*

› Para mí supone mucho que hayas venido.
It means a lot to me that you came.

suppose – *assume, guess*

› Supongo que llegarán tarde, como siempre.
I suppose they'll be late, as usual.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **suponer un reto** *to be a challenge* · **suponer un antes y un después** *to be a turning point* · **suponer un esfuerzo** *to take a lot of effort*

NOTE Use 'suponer' (not 'asumir') for 'I assume / I guess'.

aportar *to contribute / to bring (to)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **aportar algo (a algo / a alguien)**

To add something valuable: ideas, money, experience, energy. A key verb in job interviews and teamwork.

› ¿Qué crees que puedes aportar a nuestra empresa?
What do you think you can bring to our company?

› Ese libro no me aportó nada nuevo.
That book didn't give me anything new.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aportar ideas** *to contribute ideas* · **aportar valor** *to add value* · **aportar datos** *to provide data*

DON'T CONFUSE aportar algo (you bring a thing) · contribuir a algo (you help achieve a result).

contribuir a

to contribute to / to help to

VERB · IRREGULAR: CONTRIBUYO · CONTRIBUYÓ · B2

PATTERN **contribuir a algo · contribuir a + infinitive · contribuir con (dinero, tiempo)**

To help cause a result, or to give money or effort to a common cause.

› El deporte contribuye a reducir el estrés.
Sport helps to reduce stress.

› Cada uno contribuyó con veinte euros para el regalo.
Everyone chipped in twenty euros for the present.

NOTE Like construir and huir: contribuyo, contribuyes, contribuyó, contribuyeron.

fomentar

to encourage / to promote / to foster

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **fomentar algo (no 'a' + person)**

To encourage the development of a habit, value or activity. The object is the thing, not the person.

› Hay que fomentar la lectura desde pequeños.
Reading should be encouraged from an early age.

› Este tipo de políticas fomenta la desigualdad.
This kind of policy fosters inequality.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **fomentar el diálogo** *to encourage dialogue* · **fomentar el empleo** *to promote employment*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Fomentar a los niños a leer~~ → ✓ Animar a los niños a leer / Fomentar la lectura entre los niños.

promover

to promote / to encourage / to organise

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: PROMUEVO · B2

PATTERN **promover algo**

To push for something (an initiative, a law, a value) or to organise it. More institutional than fomentar. Not used for job promotions (that's ascender).

› El ayuntamiento promueve el uso de la bici.
The city council is promoting cycling.

› Un grupo de vecinos promovió la recogida de firmas.
A group of residents organised the petition.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me han promovido a jefa~~ → ✓ Me han ascendido a jefa. Promoting a product = promocionar.

impulsar *to drive / to boost / to push forward*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **impulsar algo · impulsar a alguien a + infinitive**

To give energy or momentum to a project, a change or the economy; also to drive someone to do something.

› El nuevo director quiere impulsar la digitalización.
The new director wants to drive digitalisation.

› ¿Qué te impulsó a aprender español?
What made you want to learn Spanish?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **impulsar la economía** *to boost the economy* · **impulsar un proyecto** *to push a project forward*

potenciar *to boost / to enhance / to make the most of*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **potenciar algo**

To increase the power or value of something that already exists: a strength, a talent, a flavour.

› Un buen profesor potencia tus puntos fuertes.
A good teacher brings out your strengths.

› La sal potencia el sabor del tomate.
Salt enhances the flavour of tomatoes.

DON'T CONFUSE impulsar = start moving, push forward · potenciar = make something stronger · fomentar = encourage a habit.

favorecer *to favour / to help / to suit*

VERB · IRREGULAR: FAVOREZCO · B2

PATTERN **favorecer algo / a alguien**

To help something happen, to benefit someone (sometimes unfairly), or to look good on someone (clothes, haircut).

help happen — *make easier*

› El buen tiempo favoreció la llegada de turistas.
The good weather helped bring in tourists.

benefit unfairly — *be biased*

› El árbitro favoreció claramente al equipo local.
The referee clearly favoured the home team.

suit — *look good on*

› Ese corte de pelo te favorece mucho.
That haircut really suits you.

OPPOSITE **perjudicar** — to harm

perjudicar *to harm / to damage / to hurt (interests)*

VERB SPELLING CHANGE: PERJUDIQUÉ B2

PATTERN **perjudicar algo / a alguien · perjudicial para (adj.)**

To have a negative effect on someone's health, interests or situation.

› La huelga perjudica sobre todo a los usuarios.
The strike mostly hurts the passengers.

› Dormir poco perjudica la memoria.
Not getting enough sleep is bad for your memory.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **perjudicar la salud** *to damage your health* · **salir perjudicado** *to lose out*

DON'T CONFUSE dañar = damage (physically) · perjudicar = harm interests, health, someone's position.

amenazar *to threaten*

VERB SPELLING CHANGE: AMENACÉ B2

PATTERN **amenazar a alguien con algo / con + infinitive · amenazar con + infinitive (= look likely)**

To threaten someone. With weather or problems, 'amenazar con' = to threaten to, to look likely to.

› Le amenazaron con despedirlo si hablaba.
They threatened to fire him if he talked.

› El cielo amenaza lluvia, coge el paraguas.
It looks like rain, take your umbrella.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Amenazó de irse~~ → ✓ Amenazó con irse.

garantizar *to guarantee / to ensure*

VERB SPELLING CHANGE: GARANTICÉ B2

PATTERN **garantizar algo · garantizar que + subjunctive (to ensure) / + indicative (to promise)**

To make sure that something happens or to promise it with certainty.

› Te garantizo que no te vas a arrepentir.
I guarantee you won't regret it.

› Las nuevas medidas deben garantizar que nadie se quede fuera.
The new measures must ensure that nobody is left out.

NOTE 'Te garantizo que' (I promise you that) + indicative; 'garantizar que' (make sure that) + subjunctive.

asegurar / asegurarse de

to assure / to insure / to secure · to make sure

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B2

PATTERN **asegurar que + indicative · asegurar algo (insure, secure) · asegurarse de algo / de que + subjunctive / indicative**

Asegurar = to state firmly, to insure, or to secure. Asegurarse de = to make sure, to check.

assure — *state firmly*

› Me aseguró que lo tendría el lunes.
He assured me he'd have it by Monday.

asegurarse de — *make sure*

› Asegúrate de cerrar la puerta con llave.
Make sure you lock the door.

insure — *take out insurance*

› ¿Has asegurado el coche?
Have you insured the car?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Asegúrate que... is very common in speech~~, but the standard form is ✓ Asegúrate de que... (see dequeísmo/queísmo).

prever

to foresee / to expect / to plan for

VERB IRREGULAR LIKE VER: PREVEO · PREVIÓ · PREVISTO B2

PATTERN **prever algo · prever que + indicative · estar previsto (= be scheduled)**

To anticipate what will happen, or to plan in advance. 'Está previsto' = it's planned / scheduled.

› Se prevén lluvias para el fin de semana.
Rain is expected over the weekend.

› La reunión está prevista para las diez.
The meeting is scheduled for ten o'clock.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **como estaba previsto** *as planned* · **algo imprevisto** *something unexpected*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*preveer / *preveyó~~ → ✓ prever / previó. It's conjugated like ver, not like leer.

prevenir

to prevent / to warn

VERB IRREGULAR LIKE VENIR: PREVENGO · PREVINE B2

PATTERN **prevenir algo · prevenir a alguien de / contra algo**

To take measures so something bad doesn't happen (prevent), or to warn someone in advance.

› Lavarse las manos ayuda a prevenir infecciones.
Washing your hands helps prevent infections.

› Más vale prevenir que curar.
Prevention is better than cure.

DON'T CONFUSE prever = foresee (ver) · prevenir = prevent (venir). Also 'evitar' = avoid / prevent in everyday speech: evitar un accidente.

Work, projects & getting things done

The vocabulary of managing, organising and committing. Use these in job interviews, CVs, meetings and to describe what you actually do at work.

llevar a cabo

to carry out

EXPRESSION · LLEVAR: REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **llevar a cabo algo / llevar algo a cabo**

To carry out a plan, a study, a reform or a task. A natural, slightly formal alternative to 'hacer' or the overused 'realizar'.

- El estudio se llevó a cabo en cinco países.
  The study was carried out in five countries.
- Llevar a cabo una reforma así lleva años.
  Carrying out a reform like that takes years.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llevar a cabo un proyecto** *to carry out a project* · **llevar a cabo una investigación** *to conduct research*

poner en marcha

to launch / to set up / to start

EXPRESSION · B2

PATTERN **poner en marcha algo · ponerse en marcha (to get going)**

To start a project, a service, a machine or a car. 'Ponerse en marcha' = to set off, to get going.

- El banco ha puesto en marcha una nueva app.
  The bank has launched a new app.
- Venga, nos ponemos en marcha a las ocho.
  Come on, we're setting off at eight.

DON'T CONFUSE poner en marcha = start up · llevar a cabo = carry through · lanzar = launch (a product).

tener en cuenta *to take into account / to bear in mind*

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **tener en cuenta algo · tener en cuenta que + indicative**

To consider something when deciding or judging. You'll hear it constantly in advice and instructions.

› Ten en cuenta que en agosto muchas tiendas cierran.
Bear in mind that a lot of shops close in August.

› Gracias por tenerme en cuenta para el puesto.
Thanks for considering me for the job.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: tomar en cuenta is very common.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*tomar en cuenta~~: understood and normal in Latin America, but in Spain say ✓ tener en cuenta.

desempeñar *to perform / to carry out (a role, a function)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL B2

PATTERN **desempeñar un cargo / un papel / una función**

To carry out a role, job or function. Very common on CVs and in formal descriptions.

› Desempeñó el cargo de directora durante diez años.
She held the post of director for ten years.

› Las redes sociales desempeñan un papel clave en la campaña.
Social media plays a key role in the campaign.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desempeñar un papel importante** *to play an important role*

NOTE In everyday speech: 'trabajar como', 'hacer de', 'jugar un papel' (also correct).

gestionar *to manage / to handle / to deal with (paperwork)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) B2

PATTERN **gestionar algo**

To manage resources, a team, time or emotions, and to handle bureaucratic procedures.

› No sé gestionar bien mi tiempo.
I'm not good at managing my time.

› Estoy gestionando el permiso de residencia.
I'm sorting out my residence permit.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **gestionar las emociones** *to manage your emotions* · **gestionar un equipo** *to manage a team* · **gestionar una crisis** *to handle a crisis*

DON'T CONFUSE gestionar = manage (resources, procedures) · dirigir = run, direct · arreglárselas = manage (cope).

invertir *to invest / to reverse*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE, E→I: INVIERTO · INVIRTIÓ · B2

PATTERN **invertir algo en algo**

To put money, time or effort into something hoping for a return. Also, technically, to reverse an order.

› Invirtió todos sus ahorros en el restaurante.
He invested all his savings in the restaurant.

› He invertido mucho tiempo en este proyecto.
I've put a lot of time into this project.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*invertir dentro de~~ → ✓ invertir en.

financiar *to finance / to fund*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **financiar algo · financiarse (to fund oneself)**

To provide the money for something. Also used for paying in instalments: 'financiar un coche'.

› El proyecto está financiado por la Unión Europea.
The project is funded by the European Union.

› Al final financiamos el coche a cinco años.
In the end we bought the car on a five-year finance plan.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **financiación** *funding / finance (n.)* · **pedir financiación** *to apply for funding*

emprender *to start (a business, a journey) / to undertake*

VERB · REGULAR (-ER) · B2

PATTERN **emprender algo · emprender (= be an entrepreneur)**

To begin something ambitious or risky. Used alone, it means to start your own business. 'El/la emprendedor/a' = entrepreneur.

› Emprender en España no es fácil por la burocracia.
Starting a business in Spain isn't easy because of the red tape.

› Emprendieron el viaje de vuelta al amanecer.
They began the journey home at dawn.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **emprender un negocio** *to start a business* · **espíritu emprendedor** *entrepreneurial spirit*

negociar *to negotiate*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **negociar algo (con alguien)**

To discuss in order to reach an agreement: salary, prices, conditions.

› Intenta negociar el sueldo antes de firmar.
Try to negotiate your salary before you sign.

› Con mi hijo de cinco años todo se negocia.
With my five-year-old, everything is up for negotiation.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **negociar las condiciones** *to negotiate the terms* · **no negociable** *non-negotiable*

delegar *to delegate*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: DELEGUÉ · B2

PATTERN **delegar algo en alguien**

To give part of your work or responsibility to someone else.

› Tienes que aprender a delegar.
You need to learn to delegate.

› Delegué la parte técnica en Emma.
I delegated the technical side to Emma.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*delegar algo a alguien is common~~, but the standard pattern is ✓ delegar algo en alguien.

priorizar *to prioritise*

VERB · SPELLING CHANGE: PRIORICÉ · B2

PATTERN **priorizar algo (sobre algo)**

To put something first because it's more important or urgent.

› Este año he decidido priorizar mi salud.
This year I've decided to prioritise my health.

› Hay que priorizar las tareas urgentes.
We need to prioritise the urgent tasks.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar prioridad a algo** *to give priority to something*

comprometerse a

to commit (oneself) to / to promise to / to get engaged

VERB REFLEXIVE (-ER) B2

PATTERN **comprometerse a + infinitive · comprometerse con algo / alguien · comprometerse (= get engaged)**

To formally promise or commit to doing something; to be committed to a cause; and also to get engaged to be married.

a + infinitive — *promise to do*

› El casero se comprometió a arreglar la caldera.
The landlord promised to fix the boiler.

con algo — *be committed to*

› Es una empresa muy comprometida con el medio ambiente.
It's a company that's very committed to the environment.

get engaged — *agree to marry*

› Sofía y Marcos se han comprometido.
Sofía and Marcos have got engaged.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me comprometo de terminar~~ → ✓ Me comprometo a terminar.

involucrarse / implicarse en

to get involved in

VERB REFLEXIVE (-AR) · SPELLING CHANGE: ME INVOLUCRÉ / ME IMPLIQUÉ B2

PATTERN **involucrarse en algo · implicarse en algo · estar implicado/a en**

To actively take part in something and care about it. 'Implicarse' often suggests personal commitment; 'estar implicado' can also mean being involved in something bad (a scandal, a crime).

› Me gustaría involucrarme más en la vida del barrio.
I'd like to get more involved in the neighbourhood.

› Es una profesora que se implica muchísimo con sus alumnos.
She's a teacher who really goes the extra mile for her students.

› Varios directivos están implicados en el caso.
Several executives are implicated in the case.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA involucrarse is especially common in Latin America; implicarse is very common in Spain.

adaptarse a

to adapt to / to adjust to

VERB REFLEXIVE (-AR) B2

PATTERN **adaptarse a algo / a alguien · adaptar algo a algo**

To change in order to fit a new situation. Without 'se', you adapt something else (a text, a plan).

› Me costó adaptarme al horario español.
It took me a while to get used to Spanish hours.

› Hemos adaptado el curso a tu nivel.
We've adapted the course to your level.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **capacidad de adaptación** *adaptability*

DON'T CONFUSE adaptarse a = adapt (effort) · acostumbrarse a = get used to (time) · amoldarse a = fit in, adjust (informal).

aprovecharse de

to take advantage of (someone) / to exploit

VERB REFLEXIVE (-AR) B2

PATTERN **aprovecharse de alguien / de algo**

New use: with 'se' + 'de', aprovechar becomes negative: to take unfair advantage of a person or a situation. Without 'se' it's positive (aprovechar el tiempo).

› Se aprovechan de que eres nuevo para darte todo el trabajo.
They're taking advantage of the fact that you're new to give you all the work.

› No dejes que nadie se aproveche de ti.
Don't let anyone take advantage of you.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me aproveché de las vacaciones para descansar (sounds like abuse!)~~ → ✓ Aproveché las vacaciones para descansar.

beneficiarse de

to benefit from

VERB REFLEXIVE (-AR) B2

PATTERN **beneficiarse de algo · beneficiar a alguien**

To get an advantage from something. 'Beneficiar a' = to benefit someone.

› Más de mil familias se beneficiarán de las ayudas.
More than a thousand families will benefit from the grants.

› Este acuerdo nos beneficia a todos.
This agreement benefits all of us.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*beneficiar de (without se)~~ → ✓ beneficiarse de.

sacar partido de

to make the most of / to get the best out of

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **sacar (el máximo) partido de / a algo**

To get the maximum benefit or value from something. Very natural in everyday and professional Spanish.

› Quiero sacarle partido al curso.
I want to make the most of the course.

› Este piso es pequeño, pero le has sacado mucho partido.
This flat is small, but you've really made the most of it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sacar el máximo partido** *to get the most out of*

DON'T CONFUSE sacar partido = make the most of (positive) · aprovecharse de = exploit (negative) · aprovechar = use well.

Emotions, effort & coping

How people push on, give up, take risks and let off steam. Many of these are pronominal: the 'se' is part of the meaning.

ceder

to give in / to give way / to hand over

VERB REGULAR (-ER) B2

PATTERN **ceder (ante algo / alguien) · ceder algo a alguien · ceder el paso**

To stop resisting and accept what someone else wants; to give something to someone (a seat, a turn, a right); or for a structure to give way.

› Al final el gobierno cedió ante las protestas.
In the end the government gave in to the protests.

› Siempre cedo el asiento en el metro a la gente mayor.
I always give up my seat on the metro to older people.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ceder el paso** *to give way (traffic)* · **no ceder ni un milímetro** *not to budge an inch*

renunciar a

to give up / to resign (from) / to renounce

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **renunciar a algo · renunciar a + infinitive**

To voluntarily give up something you have or want: a job, a right, a dream, sugar... Always with 'a'.

› Renunció a su puesto por motivos personales.
She resigned from her post for personal reasons.

› No pienso renunciar a mis vacaciones por este proyecto.
I'm not giving up my holiday for this project.

DON'T CONFUSE renunciar a = give up something you could have · rendirse = surrender, stop trying · dejar de + inf = stop doing.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Renuncié mi trabajo~~ → ✓ Renuncié a mi trabajo. For quitting a job, everyday Spanish usually says 'dejar el trabajo' or 'irse de la empresa'. Careful: 'despedirse' means to say goodbye, not to quit.

rendirse

to give up / to surrender

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→I: ME RINDO · B2

PATTERN **rendirse (ante algo / alguien) · no rendirse nunca**

To stop trying or fighting. Also, positively, 'rendirse ante' = to be won over by something.

› No te rindas, ya casi lo tienes.
Don't give up, you're nearly there.

› Me rindo, ¿cuál es la respuesta?
I give up, what's the answer?

› El público se rindió ante su talento.
The audience was completely won over by her talent.

NOTE Without 'se', 'rendir' = to perform (at work, at school): 'Rindo más por la mañana' = I work better in the morning.

darse por vencido

to give up / to throw in the towel

EXPRESSION · DAR (IRREGULAR): ME DOY, ME DI · B2

PATTERN **darse por vencido/a**

To accept defeat and stop trying. 'Vencido' agrees with the subject.

› Después de tres intentos, me di por vencida.
After three attempts, I gave up.

› Diego no se da por vencido tan fácilmente.
Diego doesn't give up that easily.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tirar la toalla** *to throw in the towel (colloquial)*

arriesgarse *to risk / to take the risk of*

a

VERB · REFLEXIVE, SPELLING CHANGE: ME ARRIESGUÉ · B2

PATTERN **arriesgarse (a + infinitive) · arriesgar algo (to risk something)**

To expose yourself to a possible danger or loss. 'Arriesgar algo' = to put something at risk (your money, your life).

› No quiero arriesgarme a perder el vuelo.
I don't want to risk missing the flight.

› Arriesgó todo su dinero en el negocio.
He risked all his money on the business.

› Venga, arriésgate, ¿qué puedes perder?
Come on, take a chance, what have you got to lose?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me arriesgo perder~~ → ✓ Me arriesgo a perder.

animarse *to decide to / to get round to / to be up for*

a

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR) · INFORMAL · B2

PATTERN **animarse a + infinitive · ¿Te animas? · animar a alguien a + infinitive**

To finally find the motivation or courage to do something. '¿Te animas?' = are you up for it? Super common in Spain for invitations.

› Vamos a hacer una ruta el sábado, ¿te animas?
We're going hiking on Saturday, are you up for it?

› Por fin me animé a apuntarme al gimnasio.
I finally got round to joining the gym.

› Mi profe me animó a presentarme al examen.
My teacher encouraged me to take the exam.

NOTE 'Animar' alone = to cheer up or cheer on: '¡Anímate!' = Cheer up! / Go on!

agobiarse *to get stressed / to feel overwhelmed*

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR) · INFORMAL · B2

PATTERN **agobiarse (con / por algo) · agobiar a alguien · estar agobiado/a**

To feel overwhelmed, stressed or suffocated by work, people, heat or crowds. Extremely common in Spain.

› No te agobies, lo hacemos entre los dos.
Don't stress, we'll do it together.

› Me agobian los sitios con tanta gente.
Really crowded places make me feel claustrophobic.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué agobio!** *What a nightmare! / How stressful!* · **estar agobiado de trabajo** *to be snowed under with work*

desahogarse *to let off steam / to get it off your chest*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, SPELLING CHANGE: ME DESAHOGUÉ · B2

PATTERN **desahogarse (con alguien)**

To release built-up emotions by talking, crying or doing something physical.

› Necesitaba desahogarme con alguien y te llamé.
I needed to get it off my chest, so I called you.

› Salir a correr me ayuda a desahogarme.
Going for a run helps me let off steam.

NOTE Pronunciation: the h is silent: des-a-o-GAR-se.

recuperarse *to recover / to get over*

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **recuperarse de algo · recuperar algo (to get back)**

To get better after an illness, a shock or a crisis. Without 'se': to get something back (time, money, a lost object).

› Todavía se está recuperando de la operación.
He's still recovering from the operation.

› Quiero recuperar el tiempo perdido.
I want to make up for lost time.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **recuperarse de un golpe** *to get over a blow* · **recuperar fuerzas** *to get your strength back*

DON'T CONFUSE recuperarse = recover · superar = get over (B1) · reponerse = recover (a bit more formal).

echar en cara *to throw something back in someone's face*

EXPRESSION · ECHAR: REGULAR (-AR) · INFORMAL · B2

PATTERN **echar algo en cara a alguien · echarle en cara que + indicative**

To reproach someone for something, often something you did for them or a past mistake.

› Siempre me echa en cara que llegué tarde a su boda.
He's always throwing it in my face that I was late for his wedding.

› No te lo echo en cara, pero me dolió.
I'm not holding it against you, but it hurt.

tomarse a mal

to take (something) the wrong way / to be offended by

EXPRESSION · TOMAR: REGULAR (-AR) · B2

PATTERN **tomarse algo a mal · no te lo tomes a mal, pero... · tomarse algo bien / a broma / en serio**

To be offended by something or interpret it negatively. 'No te lo tomes a mal' is the perfect softener before criticism.

› No te lo tomes a mal, pero creo que te equivocas.
Don't take this the wrong way, but I think you're wrong.

› Se tomó fatal que no la invitáramos.
She took it really badly that we didn't invite her.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomarse algo a broma** *to treat something as a joke* · **tomarse algo a pecho** *to take something to heart*

apañárselas / arreglárselas

to manage / to get by / to cope

EXPRESSION · REFLEXIVE + LAS (-AR) · INFORMAL · B2

PATTERN **apañárselas (para + infinitive) · arreglárselas (sin algo / alguien)**

To manage to do something with limited resources or by improvising. The 'las' is fixed and doesn't refer to anything.

› No sé cómo te las apañas con tres niños y dos trabajos.
I don't know how you manage with three kids and two jobs.

› Tranquila, ya me las arreglaré.
Don't worry, I'll manage somehow.

NOTE Word order: me las apaño, te las arreglas, se las apañó. Infinitive: apañárselas (with accent).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA apañárselas is very typical of Spain; arreglárselas is used everywhere.

Colloquial Spanish you'll hear (Spain)

You don't need to use these straight away, but you'll hear them every day in Spain: in bars, on series, on WhatsApp. Use them with friends, never in a formal email.

liarse *to get muddled / to get caught up / to get together (romantically)*

VERB · REFLEXIVE (-AR): ME LÍO, TE LÍAS · COLLOQUIAL · B2

PATTERN **liarse (con algo) · liarse a + infinitive · liarse con alguien · liar a alguien**

A very flexible verb in Spain: to get confused, to get stuck doing something for ages, or to hook up with someone. 'Liar a alguien' = to talk someone into something.

get confused — *get muddled*

› Perdona, me he liado con las fechas.
Sorry, I got the dates muddled up.

get caught up — *spend ages on something*

› Me lie a hablar con Ana y se me pasó el tren.
I got chatting with Ana and missed my train.

hook up — *get together romantically*

› ¿Sabías que Javi y Laura se liaron en la boda?
Did you know Javi and Laura got together at the wedding?

liar a alguien — *talk someone into*

› Me liaron para organizar la cena de Navidad.
I got roped into organising the Christmas dinner.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Qué lío!** *What a mess!* · **estar liado/a** *to be really busy*

NOTE Spelling: 'lie' and 'lio' have no accent (one syllable by RAE rules).

pillar *to catch / to get / to grab*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) COLLOQUIAL B2

PATTERN **pillar algo / a alguien · pillar (= understand) · pillar cerca / lejos**

The colloquial Spain all-rounder: to catch someone (red-handed), catch a cold, get a joke, grab something quickly, or be located near/far.

catch — *catch someone or an illness*

› Le pillaron copiando en el examen.
He got caught cheating in the exam.

understand — *get it*

› No he pillado el chiste.
I didn't get the joke.

grab, buy — *get quickly*

› Pillo unas cervezas de camino.
I'll grab some beers on the way.

be located — *be near / far*

› Tu casa me pilla de camino.
Your place is on my way.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pillar un resfriado** *to catch a cold* · **pillar a alguien con las manos en la masa** *to catch someone red-handed*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Mainly Spain. Latin America: agarrar, cachar (Chile, Mexico: 'understand').

currar *to work*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) COLLOQUIAL B2

PATTERN **currar (en algo) · currarse algo (to put real effort into something)**

Colloquial for 'trabajar'. 'El curro' = job / work. 'Currarse algo' = to really put effort into something, and people praise it with '¡Te lo has currado!'

› Mañana no puedo, curro hasta las nueve.
I can't tomorrow, I'm working till nine.

› ¡Qué tarta! Te lo has currado.
What a cake! You've really gone to town on it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **buscar curro** *to look for a job* · **un currazo** *a huge amount of work*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain only. Latin America: chambear (Mexico, Peru), laburar (Argentina, Uruguay).

flipar *to be amazed / to be blown away / to not believe it*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · VERY COLLOQUIAL · B2

PATTERN **flipar (con algo) · ¡Tú flipas! · ¡Es que flipo!**

To be shocked or amazed, positively or negatively. '¡Tú flipas!' = are you crazy? / you're dreaming!

› Flipé con las vistas desde la terraza.
I was blown away by the view from the terrace.

› ¿Que te paguen tú el viaje? ¡Tú flipas!
You expect them to pay for your trip? You're dreaming!

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Flipante!** *Amazing! / Unbelievable!* · **flipar en colores** *to be totally gobsmacked*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain, mainly among younger and middle-aged speakers.

molar *to be cool / to like (a lot)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), WORKS LIKE GUSTAR · VERY COLLOQUIAL · B2

PATTERN **me mola algo · me molan algo(s) · ¡Mola!**

Colloquial 'gustar' in Spain, with extra enthusiasm. Same structure as gustar.

› Me mola mucho tu chaqueta.
I love your jacket.

› —Vamos al concierto el viernes. —¡Mola!
"We're going to the gig on Friday." "Cool!"

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **¡Cómo mola!** *How cool is that!* · **molón / molona** *cool (adj.)*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain only. Mexico: me late; Argentina: me copa; widely understood: me encanta.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Yo molo la música~~ → ✓ Me mola la música (like gustar).

More B2 verbs at a glance

Precise verbs to replace hacer, tener, poner and decir. Learn them with the preposition in the note.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
abarcar	*to cover / to include / to take on*	abarqué · 'Quien mucho abarca, poco aprieta' = Jack of all trades, master of none **El curso abarca todos los tiempos verbales.** *The course covers all the verb tenses.*
acudir a	*to go to / to turn to*	slightly formal; acudir a una cita, acudir a alguien (for help) **Si tienes dudas, puedes acudir a mí.** *If you have any questions, you can come to me.*
agravar	*to make worse / to aggravate*	agravarse = to get worse **La lluvia agravó los atascos.** *The rain made the traffic jams worse.*
aliviar	*to relieve / to ease*	**Esta crema alivia el picor.** *This cream relieves the itching.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ampliar	*to extend / to expand / to enlarge*	amplío, amplías (accent on the i) **Quieren ampliar el horario de la biblioteca.** *They want to extend the library's opening hours.*
atribuir	*to attribute*	atribuyo · atribuir algo a algo/alguien **Atribuyen el éxito a la buena organización.** *They attribute the success to good organisation.*
carecer de	*to lack*	formal; carezco · = no tener **El informe carece de datos fiables.** *The report lacks reliable data.*
concienciar	*to raise awareness*	concienciar a alguien de / sobre algo; Latin America: concientizar **LatAm:** Spain: concienciar · Latin America: concientizar **La campaña quiere concienciar a los jóvenes sobre el acoso.** *The campaign aims to raise young people's awareness of bullying.*
consolidar	*to consolidate / to strengthen*	**Este año queremos consolidar el equipo.** *This year we want to consolidate the team.*
constar de	*to consist of*	constar = to be recorded: 'que conste que...' = just for the record... **El examen consta de cuatro partes.** *The exam consists of four parts.*
contar con	*to count on / to have*	New use: 'contar con' = to have (resources): El hotel cuenta con piscina. **Puedes contar conmigo para lo que sea.** *You can count on me for anything.*
dar con INFORMAL	*to find / to come across*	informal; after searching **Por fin he dado con la solución.** *I've finally found the solution.*
dar por hecho / dar por sentado	*to take for granted / to assume*	the right translation of 'assume = suppose' **Di por hecho que venías.** *I assumed you were coming.*
deducir	*to deduce / to work out*	deduzco · deduje **Por su cara, deduje que no había aprobado.** *From her face, I worked out that she hadn't passed.*
desconfiar de	*to distrust / to be suspicious of*	**Desconfío de las ofertas demasiado buenas.** *I'm wary of offers that are too good.*
desencadenar	*to trigger / to unleash*	**Un simple comentario desencadenó la discusión.** *A simple comment triggered the argument.*
destinar	*to allocate / to post (someone)*	destinar algo a algo; 'me han destinado a Bilbao' = I've been posted to Bilbao **Destinan el 10 % del presupuesto a formación.** *They allocate 10% of the budget to training.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
detectar	*to detect / to spot*	Hemos detectado un error en tu factura. *We've spotted a mistake in your invoice.*
difundir	*to spread / to share / to broadcast*	Por favor, no difundas este audio. *Please don't share this voice message.*
discrepar (de) FORMAL	*to disagree (with)*	formal and polite; = no estar de acuerdo Discrepo de esa opinión. *I disagree with that view.*
coincidir (con / en)	*to agree / to coincide / to bump into*	coincidir con alguien en algo = agree; coincidir con alguien en un sitio = bump into Coincido contigo en lo fundamental. *I agree with you on the essentials.*
echarse atrás INFORMAL	*to back out / to have second thoughts*	Iba a firmar, pero se echó atrás. *He was going to sign, but he backed out.*
elaborar	*to draw up / to produce / to make*	elaborar un informe, un plan, un producto Estamos elaborando un plan de formación. *We're drawing up a training plan.*
eludir FORMAL	*to avoid / to evade*	formal; eludir una pregunta, eludir responsabilidades El ministro eludió la pregunta. *The minister dodged the question.*
encargarse de	*to be in charge of / to take care of*	Yo me encargo de las bebidas. *I'll take care of the drinks.*
ejercer	*to practise (a profession) / to exercise (a right)*	ejerzo · not 'do exercise' (= hacer ejercicio) Es abogada, pero no ejerce. *She's a lawyer, but she doesn't practise.*
evaluar	*to assess / to evaluate*	evalúo (accent) Hay que evaluar los pros y los contras. *We need to weigh up the pros and cons.*
fortalecer	*to strengthen*	fortalezco Los viajes juntos fortalecen la relación. *Travelling together strengthens a relationship.*
hacer frente a	*to face / to deal with / to cope with*	No pudieron hacer frente a los pagos. *They couldn't keep up with the payments.*
hacerse cargo de	*to take charge of / to take responsibility for*	also: 'me hago cargo' = I understand (your situation) Mi hermana se hizo cargo del negocio familiar. *My sister took over the family business.*
intervenir	*to intervene / to speak (in a debate) / to operate on*	like venir: intervengo, intervine Me gustaría intervenir un momento. *I'd like to say something for a moment.*
mitigar FORMAL	*to mitigate / to ease*	formal; mitigué Las medidas buscan mitigar el impacto de la crisis. *The measures aim to ease the impact of the crisis.*
optar por	*to opt for / to choose*	Al final optamos por alquilar. *In the end we opted to rent.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
padecer	*to suffer from*	padezco · formal/medical: padecer una enfermedad **Padece migrañas desde niña.** *She's suffered from migraines since she was a child.*
persuadir	*to persuade*	persuadir a alguien de / para que + subjunctive **Lo persuadimos para que se quedara.** *We persuaded him to stay.*
plasmar	*to capture / to express / to put into words*	plasmar una idea en papel **Intenté plasmar mis ideas en un esquema.** *I tried to put my ideas into a diagram.*
ponerse al día	*to catch up*	ponerse al día con el trabajo / con alguien **Tenemos que quedar para ponernos al día.** *We need to meet up and catch up.*
predominar	*to predominate / to prevail*	**En la zona predominan los pisos antiguos.** *Old flats are the norm in the area.*
prescindir de	*to do without / to dispense with*	also: to let someone go (job) **No puedo prescindir del café por las mañanas.** *I can't do without coffee in the morning.*
recurrir a	*to turn to / to resort to*	**Tuvieron que recurrir a un préstamo.** *They had to resort to a loan.*
reforzar	*to reinforce / to strengthen*	o→ue: refuerzo · reforcé **Han reforzado la seguridad en el aeropuerto.** *They've stepped up security at the airport.*
replantearse	*to rethink / to reconsider*	**Después de aquello, me replanteé muchas cosas.** *After that, I rethought a lot of things.*
restringir	*to restrict / to limit*	restrinjo **Han restringido el acceso al centro en coche.** *They've restricted car access to the city centre.*
solventar	*to resolve / to sort out*	slightly formal; solventar un problema, una duda **Lo solventamos en una llamada.** *We sorted it out in one call.*
someter a	*to subject to / to put to*	someter algo a votación = put to a vote; someterse a una operación **La propuesta se someterá a votación.** *The proposal will be put to a vote.*
sostener	*to hold / to maintain (an opinion) / to support*	like tener: sostengo **Sostiene que la culpa fue de la empresa.** *She maintains the company was to blame.*
subrayar	*to underline / to stress*	**El médico subrayó la importancia de descansar.** *The doctor stressed the importance of resting.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
sustituir	*to replace / to stand in for*	sustituyo · sustituir A por B = replace A with B **Hoy sustituyo a Marta en clase.** *Today I'm covering for Marta in class.*
tender a	*to tend to*	e→ie: tiendo a + infinitive **Tiendo a exagerar cuando estoy nerviosa.** *I tend to exaggerate when I'm nervous.*
toparse con	*to run into / to come up against*	for people or obstacles, by surprise **Nos topamos con un montón de burocracia.** *We came up against a mountain of red tape.*
transmitir	*to convey / to pass on / to broadcast*	**Su forma de hablar transmite mucha tranquilidad.** *The way she talks comes across as very calm.*
valorar	*to value / to appreciate / to assess*	valorar algo positivamente; 'lo valoro mucho' = I really appreciate it **Valoro mucho que seas sincera conmigo.** *I really appreciate you being honest with me.*
vincular	*to link / to connect*	estar vinculado/a a = to be linked to **Su nombre está vinculado al cine español.** *Her name is linked to Spanish cinema.*

UPGRADE YOUR VERBS

Pick one tired verb you overuse (hacer, tener, decir) and replace it for a week. Instead of 'hacer un proyecto', try 'llevar a cabo'; instead of 'decir que', try 'señalar', 'plantear' or 'matizar'. Say each new verb out loud in a sentence about your own life: it sticks ten times faster.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

02 · Abstract, precise nouns for thinking, arguing and explaining

Nouns

At B2 the nouns change: fewer objects, more ideas. These are the words of meetings, articles, podcasts and serious conversations: approach, scope, nuance, trade-off, commitment. Learn them with their article and a typical verb (plantear un enfoque, tomar medidas, asumir un riesgo), and pay special attention to the false friends: argumento, tópico, compromiso.

Ideas, approaches & points of view

The nouns you need to talk about how people think and frame things.

el planteamiento

approach / way of framing something / proposal

NOUN · MASCULINE · B2

PLURAL planteamientos

The way an issue, a problem or a project is set out or conceived. It's what you 'plantear'. Also the opening of a story (planteamiento, nudo y desenlace).

- El planteamiento del proyecto es bueno, pero falta dinero.
  The idea behind the project is good, but there isn't enough money.
- No comparto tu planteamiento.
  I don't share your way of seeing it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un cambio de planteamiento** *a change of approach* · **un planteamiento erróneo** *a flawed approach*

el enfoque

approach / focus / angle

NOUN · MASCULINE · B2

PLURAL enfoques

The angle or method you use to look at or deal with something. From 'enfocar' (to focus).

- Este libro tiene un enfoque muy práctico.
  This book takes a very practical approach.
- Hay que darle otro enfoque a la campaña.
  We need to approach the campaign from a different angle.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un enfoque innovador** *an innovative approach* · **cambiar de enfoque** *to change approach*

DON'T CONFUSE el enfoque = angle, method · el planteamiento = how something is set out · el punto de vista = point of view.

el matiz *nuance / shade / subtlety*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL matices

A small difference in meaning, colour, tone or opinion. Speakers love 'con matices' = with some reservations.

› Estoy de acuerdo, pero con matices.
I agree, with some reservations.

› En la traducción se pierden muchos matices.
A lot of nuances get lost in translation.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un matiz importante** *an important nuance* · **sin matices** *black and white, with no nuance*

NOTE Plural: matices (z → c). Verb: matizar.

el criterio *judgement / criterion / standard*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL criterios

Two meanings: a rule or standard for deciding (criteria), and the ability to judge well. 'Tener criterio' = to have good judgement.

› ¿Con qué criterio eligieron a los candidatos?
What criteria did they use to choose the candidates?

› Confío en tu criterio.
I trust your judgement.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener buen criterio** *to have good judgement* · **a mi criterio** *in my judgement* · **criterios de selección** *selection criteria*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*los criterias / *la criteria~~ → ✓ el criterio, los criterios.

la postura *position / stance / posture*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL posturas

Your position or attitude on an issue; also your body posture.

› ¿Cuál es tu postura sobre el teletrabajo?
What's your position on working from home?

› Paso tantas horas sentada que tengo mala postura.
I spend so many hours sitting that I have bad posture.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **adoptar una postura** *to take a stance* · **cambiar de postura** *to change your position* · **acercar posturas** *to bring positions closer together*

el argumento

argument (reason) / plot

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL argumentos

A reason you give to support an idea, or the plot of a film or novel. It never means a quarrel: that's una discusión or una pelea.

› **Tus argumentos no me convencen.**
Your arguments don't convince me.

› **La peli tiene un argumento muy flojo.**
The film has a really weak plot.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Tuve un argumento con mi novio~~ → ✓ Tuve una discusión con mi novio / Discutí con mi novio.

el tópico

cliché / stereotype / commonplace

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL tópicos

A false friend: a tópico is an overused idea or a stereotype, not a 'topic'. For 'topic' say el tema.

› **Es un tópico que los españoles duermen la siesta todos los días.**
It's a cliché that Spaniards have a siesta every day.

› **El discurso estuvo lleno de tópicos.**
The speech was full of clichés.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **caer en el tópico** *to fall back on clichés* · **romper tópicos** *to break stereotypes*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Cuál es el tópico de la reunión~~? → ✓ ¿Cuál es el tema de la reunión?

el compromiso

commitment / obligation / engagement / compromise

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL compromisos

New meanings at B2: dedication to a cause; a prior engagement; a formal promise; an engagement to be married. Only sometimes 'compromise' (better: un acuerdo, una solución intermedia, ceder).

commitment — *dedication*

› Valoramos mucho tu compromiso con el equipo.
We really value your commitment to the team.

prior engagement — *obligation, plan*

› Lo siento, el sábado tengo un compromiso.
Sorry, I've got something on on Saturday.

engagement — *promise to marry*

› Anunciaron su compromiso en Navidad.
They announced their engagement at Christmas.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sin compromiso** *with no obligation* · **llegar a un acuerdo** *to reach a compromise*

COMMON MISTAKE For 'let's find a compromise' say ✓ Busquemos un punto intermedio / una solución intermedia, not ~~*hagamos un compromiso~~.

el ámbito

field / sphere / area / scope

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL ámbitos

The area or field in which something happens. Very frequent in formal and work Spanish.

› Tiene mucha experiencia en el ámbito sanitario.
She has a lot of experience in the healthcare sector.

› Prefiero separar el ámbito laboral del personal.
I prefer to keep my work life and my personal life separate.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en el ámbito de** *in the field of* · **de ámbito nacional** *nationwide*

NOTE Stress on the first syllable: Á-mbi-to.

el alcance *scope / reach / range / extent*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL alcances

How far something goes or how big its effect is. 'Al alcance de' = within reach of.

› Todavía no sabemos el alcance real del problema.
We still don't know the true extent of the problem.

› Mantener fuera del alcance de los niños.
Keep out of the reach of children.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de gran alcance** *far-reaching* · **al alcance de todos** *within everyone's reach / affordable*

la repercusión *repercussion / impact / effect*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL repercusiones

The effect or impact something has, often indirect, and often in the plural. 'Tener repercusión' can also mean to get a lot of attention.

› La decisión tendrá repercusiones en toda la empresa.
The decision will have repercussions across the whole company.

› Su vídeo tuvo mucha repercusión en redes.
Her video got a lot of attention on social media.

DON'T CONFUSE el impacto = impact (direct, strong) · la repercusión = knock-on effect · la consecuencia = consequence.

el inconveniente *drawback / downside / problem*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL inconvenientes

A disadvantage or difficulty. 'No tener inconveniente en' = not to mind doing something. It's a noun, not the English adjective 'inconvenient' (= poco práctico, mal momento).

› El único inconveniente es que está lejos del centro.
The only drawback is that it's a long way from the centre.

› No tengo ningún inconveniente en cambiar la fecha.
I don't mind changing the date at all.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ventajas e inconvenientes** *pros and cons* · **perdón por las molestias** *sorry for the inconvenience*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es muy inconveniente para mí~~ → ✓ No me viene bien / Me va fatal.

la eficacia / la eficiencia

effectiveness / efficiency

NOUN FEMININE B2

Eficacia = achieving the result you want (it works). Eficiencia = achieving it with the minimum resources, time or effort. A medicine is 'eficaz'; a process or worker is 'eficiente'.

› Se ha demostrado la eficacia de la vacuna.
The effectiveness of the vaccine has been proven.

› Con el nuevo sistema hemos ganado eficiencia.
We've become more efficient with the new system.

NOTE Adjectives: eficaz (plural eficaces) · eficiente.

Challenges, actions & results

Nouns for problems, decisions and what you achieve. Each one comes with its favourite verbs.

el reto

challenge

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL retos

A difficult goal that motivates you. More common than 'el desafío' in everyday Spain Spanish.

› Vivir en otro país es todo un reto.
Living in another country is a real challenge.

› Me he puesto el reto de leer un libro al mes en español.
I've set myself the challenge of reading a book a month in Spanish.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **afrontar un reto** *to face a challenge* · **suponer un reto** *to be a challenge* · **ponerse un reto** *to set yourself a challenge*

DON'T CONFUSE el reto = challenge (positive, motivating) · el desafío = challenge (also defiance) · la dificultad = difficulty.

la carencia / la escasez

lack / deficiency · shortage / scarcity

NOUN FEMININE B2

La carencia = something important that is missing (often personal: emotional, nutritional, educational). La escasez = not enough of a resource (water, housing, staff).

› Tiene carencias afectivas desde la infancia.
He has had emotional deficiencies since childhood.

› Hay escasez de vivienda en las grandes ciudades.
There's a housing shortage in the big cities.

OPPOSITE **la abundancia / el exceso** — abundance / excess

NOTE Verb: carecer de (to lack). Adjective: escaso/a (scarce, limited). Plural: escaseces (rare).

la medida *measure / step / measurement*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL medidas

An action taken to solve a problem (very common in the news), a measurement, or a degree. Also: 'a medida que' = as (time).

› El gobierno ha anunciado nuevas medidas contra la inflación.
The government has announced new measures against inflation.

› ¿En qué medida es responsable?
To what extent is he responsible?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar medidas** *to take measures / steps* · **hecho a medida** *made to measure / tailor-made* · **en gran medida** *to a great extent*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~¿Hasta qué medida...~~? → ✓ ¿En qué medida...? / ¿Hasta qué punto...? (to what extent). ✗ *~~hacer medidas~~ → ✓ tomar medidas.

la gestión *management / handling / procedure, errand*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL gestiones

The management of something (a company, time, a crisis); in the plural, the procedures or errands you need to do.

› La gestión de la crisis fue un desastre.
The handling of the crisis was a disaster.

› Esta mañana tengo que hacer unas gestiones en el banco.
This morning I've got some things to sort out at the bank.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la gestión del tiempo** *time management* · **hacer gestiones** *to run errands, deal with paperwork* · **la gestoría** *agency that does paperwork for you (Spain)*

el rendimiento *performance / output / yield*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL rendimientos

How well something or someone performs: a student, an athlete, a machine, an investment.

› Dormir mal afecta a tu rendimiento.
Sleeping badly affects your performance.

› El rendimiento del motor es excelente.
The engine's performance is excellent.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **rendimiento académico** *academic performance* · **alto rendimiento** *high performance* · **sacar rendimiento a algo** *to get the most out of something*

DON'T CONFUSE el rendimiento = measurable performance · el desempeño = how you carry out a role (formal, HR language).

la trayectoria *career / track record / trajectory*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL trayectorias

Someone's professional path or track record; also the physical path of something moving.

› Tiene una larga trayectoria en el sector turístico.
She has a long track record in the tourism sector.

› Le dieron un premio a toda su trayectoria.
They gave him a lifetime achievement award.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **trayectoria profesional** *career path*

COMMON MISTAKE For a university degree use 'la carrera', for the general path of your working life 'la trayectoria'.

el logro *achievement / accomplishment*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL logros

Something you've achieved thanks to effort. From 'lograr'.

› Aprobar el DELE fue un gran logro para mí.
Passing the DELE was a big achievement for me.

› Habla de sus logros sin presumir.
She talks about her achievements without showing off.

DON'T CONFUSE el logro = achievement · el éxito = success (A1) · la hazaña = feat, heroic deed.

la polémica *controversy / row*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL polémicas

A public debate or controversy where people strongly disagree. Adjective: polémico/a.

› Sus declaraciones han generado mucha polémica.
Her statements have caused a lot of controversy.

› No quiero entrar en polémicas.
I don't want to get into arguments about it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desatar / generar polémica** *to spark controversy* · **estar en el centro de la polémica** *to be at the centre of the controversy*

el malentendido *misunderstanding*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL malentendidos

A situation where people understand something differently. Written as one word.

› Creo que ha habido un malentendido.
I think there's been a misunderstanding.

› Lo aclaramos y ya está, fue un malentendido.
We cleared it up, it was just a misunderstanding.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aclarar un malentendido** *to clear up a misunderstanding* · **evitar malentendidos** *to avoid misunderstandings*

el prejuicio *prejudice / preconception*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL prejuicios

An opinion formed in advance without real knowledge, usually negative.

› Hay que dejar los prejuicios a un lado.
You have to set your prejudices aside.

› Tenía prejuicios contra la comida picante, pero ahora me encanta.
I had preconceptions about spicy food, but now I love it.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener prejuicios** *to be prejudiced* · **romper prejuicios** *to break down prejudices*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'el perjuicio' (damage, harm): 'sin perjuicio de' = without prejudice to (legal).

la implicación *involvement / commitment / implication*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL implicaciones

Personal involvement and commitment (very common in Spain at work), or the consequences something has (often plural).

› **Su implicación en el proyecto ha sido total.**
She's been completely committed to the project.

› **No había pensado en las implicaciones legales.**
I hadn't thought about the legal implications.

DON'T CONFUSE la implicación = personal involvement · la participación = taking part · el compromiso = commitment.

la sospecha *suspicion*

NOUN FEMININE B2

PLURAL sospechas

A feeling that something is true or that someone has done something wrong, without proof. Verb: sospechar (de).

› **Tengo la sospecha de que no nos está contando todo.**
I have a suspicion he isn't telling us everything.

› **Está bajo sospecha.**
He's under suspicion.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **despertar sospechas** *to arouse suspicion* · **el/la sospechoso/a** *the suspect*

el equilibrio *balance*

NOUN MASCULINE B2

PLURAL equilibrios

A state of balance, physical or between different needs.

› **Me cuesta encontrar el equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida personal.**
I find it hard to strike a balance between work and my personal life.

› **Perdí el equilibrio y me caí.**
I lost my balance and fell over.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mantener el equilibrio** *to keep your balance* · **hacer equilibrios** *to juggle, do a balancing act*

NOTE Stress: e-qui-LI-brio. 'Balance' in Spanish = (financial) balance, a review or assessment: hacer balance.

Thinking, arguing & knowing

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el razonamiento	*reasoning / line of argument*	Tu razonamiento tiene un fallo. *There's a flaw in your reasoning.*
la hipótesis	*hypothesis*	same form in plural: las hipótesis Es solo una hipótesis, no está demostrado. *It's just a hypothesis, it hasn't been proven.*
la premisa	*premise*	Partimos de una premisa equivocada. *We started from a false premise.*
el punto de partida	*starting point*	Esto puede ser un buen punto de partida. *This could be a good starting point.*
el fondo de la cuestión	*the heart of the matter*	Vamos al fondo de la cuestión. *Let's get to the heart of the matter.*
la cuestión	*issue / matter / question*	'issue' rather than 'question': una cuestión de tiempo = a matter of time Es una cuestión de prioridades. *It's a matter of priorities.*
el factor	*factor*	El precio es un factor clave. *Price is a key factor.*
el indicio	*sign / indication / clue*	often plural: hay indicios de que… Todo son indicios, no hay pruebas. *It's all circumstantial, there's no proof.*
la evidencia	*obviousness / clear proof*	trap: 'evidence' in a court = pruebas Ante la evidencia, tuvo que admitirlo. *Faced with the obvious, he had to admit it.*
la certeza	*certainty*	con certeza = for certain No lo sé con certeza. *I don't know for sure.*
la incertidumbre	*uncertainty*	Lo peor es la incertidumbre. *The worst thing is the uncertainty.*
el dilema	*dilemma*	m. despite -a Estoy ante un dilema: ¿me quedo o me voy? *I'm facing a dilemma: do I stay or go?*
la contradicción	*contradiction*	Hay una contradicción en lo que dices. *There's a contradiction in what you're saying.*
la coherencia	*consistency / coherence*	Le falta coherencia entre lo que dice y lo que hace. *There's no consistency between what he says and what he does.*
el sentido común	*common sense*	Es cuestión de sentido común. *It's a matter of common sense.*
la intuición	*intuition / gut feeling*	Me dejé llevar por la intuición. *I went with my gut.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la perspectiva	*perspective / outlook / prospect*	en perspectiva = in perspective; perspectivas = prospects **Con perspectiva, todo se ve distinto.** *With hindsight, everything looks different.*
el juicio	*judgement / trial*	a mi juicio = in my opinion (formal) **No emitas juicios sin conocer los hechos.** *Don't pass judgement without knowing the facts.*
la conclusión	*conclusion*	llegar a una conclusión **Llegamos a la conclusión de que no merecía la pena.** *We came to the conclusion that it wasn't worth it.*
la objeción	*objection*	poner objeciones **¿Alguien tiene alguna objeción?** *Does anyone have any objections?*
la réplica	*reply / retort / replica*	**Su réplica fue brillante.** *Her comeback was brilliant.*
el consenso	*consensus*	**Al final llegamos a un consenso.** *In the end we reached a consensus.*

Change, cause & effect

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tendencia	*trend / tendency*	tener tendencia a + inf = to tend to **La tendencia es trabajar en remoto.** *The trend is towards remote working.*
el impacto	*impact*	**La noticia tuvo un gran impacto en mí.** *The news had a big impact on me.*
el detonante	*trigger*	**La subida del precio fue el detonante de las protestas.** *The price rise was the trigger for the protests.*
el cambio de rumbo	*change of direction*	**Mi vida dio un cambio de rumbo a los treinta.** *My life changed direction when I was thirty.*
el giro	*turn / twist / turnaround*	dar un giro de 180 grados = do a U-turn **La historia da un giro inesperado.** *The story takes an unexpected twist.*
la evolución	*development / progress / evolution*	used for any change over time, not only biology **Estamos contentos con la evolución del paciente.** *We're happy with the patient's progress.*
el avance	*advance / progress / breakthrough*	**Es un gran avance para la medicina.** *It's a huge breakthrough for medicine.*
el retroceso	*step backwards / setback*	**Esta ley supone un retroceso.** *This law is a step backwards.*
el auge	*boom / rise / peak*	estar en auge = to be booming **El turismo rural está en auge.** *Rural tourism is booming.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el declive	*decline*	El pueblo entró en declive en los años setenta. *The village went into decline in the seventies.*
el aumento	*increase / rise*	Ha habido un aumento de los precios. *There's been an increase in prices.*
la disminución	*decrease / drop*	Se nota una disminución del paro. *There's a noticeable drop in unemployment.*
el descenso	*fall / drop / descent*	El descenso de las temperaturas será brusco. *Temperatures will drop sharply.*
la transición	*transition*	Es una etapa de transición. *It's a period of transition.*
el balance	*assessment / overall result / balance (accounts)*	false friend-ish: 'balance (equilibrium)' = equilibrio El balance del año es positivo. *Overall, it's been a good year.*

Problems, risks & solutions

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la amenaza	*threat*	La IA no es solo una amenaza, también es una oportunidad. *AI isn't just a threat, it's also an opportunity.*
el contratiempo	*setback / hitch / mishap*	Hemos tenido un pequeño contratiempo. *We've had a small hitch.*
el imprevisto	*something unexpected / unforeseen event*	Me ha surgido un imprevisto y no puedo ir. *Something's come up and I can't make it.*
el fallo	*fault / failure / mistake*	also: un fallo técnico Fue un fallo mío, lo siento. *My mistake, sorry.*
la falta	*lack / absence / foul (sport)*	por falta de = for lack of; hacer falta = to be needed Lo dejamos por falta de tiempo. *We dropped it for lack of time.*
el exceso	*excess / too much*	en exceso = excessively El exceso de información también confunde. *Too much information is confusing too.*
el déficit	*deficit / shortfall*	plural: los déficits Hay déficit de profesores de matemáticas. *There's a shortage of maths teachers.*
la crisis	*crisis*	same in plural: las crisis Pasó una crisis personal a los cuarenta. *He went through a personal crisis at forty.*
el parche INFORMAL	*patch / temporary fix*	Eso no es una solución, es un parche. *That's not a solution, it's a sticking plaster.*
la alternativa	*alternative / option*	No nos queda otra alternativa. *We have no other option.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el margen	*margin / room / leeway*	margen de maniobra = room for manoeuvre; margen de error No tenemos mucho margen. *We don't have much leeway.*
la prioridad	*priority*	Tu salud es lo primero, es la prioridad. *Your health comes first, it's the priority.*
la precaución	*precaution / caution*	con precaución = carefully Conduce con precaución, hay niebla. *Drive carefully, it's foggy.*
la prevención	*prevention*	La prevención es más barata que el tratamiento. *Prevention is cheaper than treatment.*
el remedio	*remedy / solution / choice*	no tener más remedio que = to have no choice but No tuve más remedio que aceptar. *I had no choice but to accept.*
el apaño COLLOQUIAL	*makeshift fix / arrangement*	Spain Hemos hecho un apaño con cinta adhesiva. *We've rigged up a fix with sticky tape.*

Action, initiative & results

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la iniciativa	*initiative*	tomar la iniciativa = to take the initiative Me gusta la gente con iniciativa. *I like people who show initiative.*
la meta	*goal / finish line*	more personal or emotional than objetivo Cada uno tiene sus propias metas. *Everyone has their own goals.*
la estrategia	*strategy*	Hay que cambiar de estrategia. *We need to change strategy.*
el procedimiento	*procedure*	Es el procedimiento habitual. *It's the usual procedure.*
el recurso	*resource / means / appeal (legal)*	recursos humanos = HR Tenemos pocos recursos. *We have very few resources.*
el desempeño FORMAL	*performance (in a role)*	HR language: evaluación del desempeño Su desempeño ha sido excelente este año. *Her performance has been excellent this year.*
el mérito	*merit / credit*	tener mérito = to be impressive / deserve credit Tiene mucho mérito lo que has hecho. *What you've done really deserves credit.*
la constancia	*perseverance / consistency / record*	Con constancia, se aprende cualquier idioma. *With consistency, you can learn any language.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el progreso	*progress*	usually singular; hacer progresos **Has hecho muchos progresos con el español.** *You've made a lot of progress with your Spanish.*
el acierto	*good decision / right choice / hit*	¡Qué acierto! = What a good call! **Venir aquí ha sido un acierto.** *Coming here was a great decision.*
el error de cálculo	*miscalculation*	**Fue un error de cálculo, no de mala fe.** *It was a miscalculation, not bad faith.*
el beneficio	*benefit / profit*	en beneficio de = for the benefit of **Los beneficios del deporte son evidentes.** *The benefits of exercise are obvious.*
la ventaja	*advantage*	sacar ventaja = to gain an advantage **Hablar idiomas es una gran ventaja.** *Speaking languages is a big advantage.*

People, values & behaviour

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la ética	*ethics*	f. singular in Spanish; ética profesional **Es una cuestión de ética.** *It's a question of ethics.*
la desconfianza	*distrust / mistrust*	**Hay mucha desconfianza hacia los bancos.** *There's a lot of mistrust of the banks.*
la integridad	*integrity*	**Es una persona de una gran integridad.** *He's a person of great integrity.*
la honestidad	*honesty*	**Valoro la honestidad por encima de todo.** *I value honesty above everything.*
la sinceridad	*sincerity / frankness*	**Te lo digo con toda sinceridad.** *I'm telling you in all honesty.*
la lealtad	*loyalty*	**La lealtad es importante en un equipo.** *Loyalty matters in a team.*
la aptitud	*aptitude / ability*	**Tiene aptitudes para la música.** *He has a gift for music.*
la conducta	*behaviour / conduct*	more formal than el comportamiento **Su conducta fue inaceptable.** *His behaviour was unacceptable.*
el estereotipo	*stereotype*	**Es un estereotipo que todos los ingleses sean fríos.** *It's a stereotype that all English people are cold.*
la imagen	*image / reputation*	**La empresa quiere cambiar su imagen.** *The company wants to change its image.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la reputación	*reputation*	tener buena / mala fama is more colloquial **Tiene muy buena reputación como médico.** *He has a very good reputation as a doctor.*
la humildad	*humility*	**Lo dijo con mucha humildad.** *She said it very humbly.*
la empatía	*empathy*	**Le falta empatía con sus empleados.** *He lacks empathy with his employees.*
la voluntad	*will / willpower / willingness*	buena voluntad = goodwill; fuerza de voluntad **Para dejar de fumar hace falta voluntad.** *Quitting smoking takes willpower.*
la disposición	*willingness / availability / layout*	estar a tu disposición = be at your disposal **Estoy a tu disposición para lo que necesites.** *I'm available for whatever you need.*
la complicidad	*close bond / understanding / complicity*	positive in everyday use: a special connection **Hay mucha complicidad entre las dos hermanas.** *The two sisters have a really close bond.*
el rencor	*resentment / grudge*	guardar rencor = to bear a grudge **No le guardo rencor.** *I don't bear him a grudge.*
la envidia	*envy / jealousy*	envidia sana = good-natured envy **¡Qué envidia me das!** *I'm so jealous!*

Useful abstract nouns

General words that turn up in any serious conversation.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el entorno	*surroundings / environment / circle (of people)*	not the 'natural environment' (= medio ambiente) **En mi entorno nadie habla inglés.** *Nobody around me speaks English.*
el contexto	*context*	**Hay que ponerlo en contexto.** *You have to put it in context.*
el marco	*framework / frame*	en el marco de = within the framework of **El proyecto se desarrolla en el marco de un acuerdo europeo.** *The project is carried out within the framework of a European agreement.*
el grado	*degree / extent / grade*	also: university degree in Spain (el grado en Derecho) **Depende del grado de dificultad.** *It depends on the level of difficulty.*
la magnitud	*magnitude / scale*	**Nadie esperaba un problema de esta magnitud.** *Nobody expected a problem on this scale.*
la dimensión	*dimension / size / scale*	**El proyecto ha cobrado otra dimensión.** *The project has taken on a whole new scale.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la escala	*scale / stopover*	a gran escala = on a large scale **Es un fenómeno a escala mundial.** *It's a worldwide phenomenon.*
el fenómeno	*phenomenon*	colloquial: ¡Eres un fenómeno! = You're amazing! **Es un fenómeno relativamente nuevo.** *It's a fairly new phenomenon.*
el hecho	*fact / event*	el hecho de que + subjunctive **El hecho de que no llame me preocupa.** *The fact that he doesn't call worries me.*
el rasgo	*feature / trait*	a grandes rasgos = broadly speaking **Es un rasgo típico de su carácter.** *It's a typical trait of hers.*
la pauta	*guideline / pattern*	seguir unas pautas **El médico me dio unas pautas para dormir mejor.** *The doctor gave me some guidelines for sleeping better.*
el patrón	*pattern / boss (old-fashioned)*	**Siempre repite el mismo patrón en sus relaciones.** *She always repeats the same pattern in her relationships.*
la excepción	*exception*	con excepción de / a excepción de **Hoy haré una excepción.** *I'll make an exception today.*
la probabilidad	*probability / likelihood*	**Hay pocas probabilidades de que llueva.** *It's unlikely to rain.*
el núcleo	*core / nucleus*	**Ese es el núcleo del problema.** *That's the core of the problem.*
la esencia	*essence*	en esencia = essentially **En esencia, estamos de acuerdo.** *Essentially, we agree.*

LEARN NOUNS WITH THEIR VERB

Abstract nouns only become useful when you know which verb goes with them. Don't learn 'el riesgo', learn 'correr un riesgo'; not 'la medida' but 'tomar medidas'; not 'la polémica' but 'generar polémica'. Write the pair on your flashcard.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

03 · Say exactly what you think: precise words for judging ideas, tasks and people

Adjectives

'Interesante', 'bueno' and 'difícil' won't take you far at B2. Here you'll find adjectives to evaluate arguments and plans, describe how an experience feels, and paint people's characters with nuance, plus the adjectives that change meaning with ser and estar. Learn them in pairs and with a noun: una respuesta contundente, un trabajo gratificante.

Evaluating ideas, plans & arguments

eficaz / eficiente *effective / efficient*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS eficaz · eficaces · eficiente · eficientes

Eficaz = it works, it achieves the goal. Eficiente = it achieves the goal without wasting time, money or energy. A remedy is eficaz; a worker or a system is eficiente.

› **Es un tratamiento muy eficaz contra la alergia.**
It's a very effective treatment for allergies.

› **Necesitamos un sistema más eficiente para las reservas.**
We need a more efficient booking system.

OPPOSITE **ineficaz / ineficiente** — ineffective / inefficient

NOTE Plural of eficaz: eficaces (z → c).

coherente *consistent / coherent / logical*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS coherente · coherentes

PATTERN **ser coherente con algo**

Logical and well connected (a text, an argument), or acting in line with what you say and believe (a person).

› **Si dices que te importa el planeta, sé coherente y deja el coche.**
If you say you care about the planet, be consistent and stop using the car.

› **Tu redacción es clara y coherente.**
Your essay is clear and well structured.

OPPOSITE **incoherente** — inconsistent / incoherent

contundente *forceful / convincing / emphatic / filling (food)*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS contundente · contundentes

Clear, strong and impossible to ignore: an argument, an answer, a victory. With food: heavy, very filling.

› Su respuesta fue contundente: no.
Her answer was emphatic: no.

› Un cocido es un plato muy contundente.
Cocido is a really hearty dish.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un argumento contundente** *a compelling argument* · **una victoria contundente** *a resounding victory* · **pruebas contundentes** *conclusive evidence*

sólido *solid / sound / strong*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS sólido · sólida · sólidos · sólidas

Figuratively: well founded and reliable (arguments, knowledge, relationships, finances).

› Tiene una formación sólida en economía.
She has a solid background in economics.

› No es un argumento lo bastante sólido.
It isn't a strong enough argument.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una relación sólida** *a strong relationship* · **bases sólidas** *solid foundations*

polémico / controvertido *controversial*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS polémico/a · controvertido/a

Both mean controversial. Polémico is more common in everyday speech and suggests heated debate; controvertido is a bit more formal and neutral.

› Es un tema muy polémico, mejor no hablar de él en la cena.
It's a very controversial topic, better not to bring it up at dinner.

› Se trata de una decisión controvertida.
It's a controversial decision.

NOTE Noun: la polémica. 'Controversial' (with an a) exists but sounds like an anglicism; prefer these two.

imprescindible *essential / indispensable*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS imprescindible · imprescindibles

PATTERN **es imprescindible + infinitive · es imprescindible que + subjunctive**

Absolutely necessary: you can't do without it. Stronger than necesario.

› Es imprescindible llevar el pasaporte.
You absolutely must bring your passport.

› Es imprescindible que todos estén de acuerdo.
It's essential that everyone agrees.

OPPOSITE **prescindible** — expendable / non-essential

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es imprescindible de llevar...~~ → ✓ Es imprescindible llevar... (no 'de').

viable *viable / feasible*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS viable · viables

Possible to carry out successfully, especially in practical or economic terms.

› La idea es buena, pero ¿es viable económicamente?
The idea is good, but is it financially viable?

› No es viable terminarlo antes del viernes.
It's not feasible to finish it before Friday.

DON'T CONFUSE viable = feasible (practical) · factible = feasible (formal) · posible = possible (general).

complejo vs complicado *complex vs complicated / difficult*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS complejo/a · complicado/a

Complejo = made of many connected parts (neutral, often intellectual). Complicado = difficult, problematic, a hassle (often negative and everyday). A person can be complicado (difficult to deal with).

› Es un problema complejo con muchas causas.
It's a complex problem with many causes.

› Hoy es complicado aparcar en el centro.
It's tricky to park in the centre today.

› Este mes lo tengo complicado.
This month is a tough one for me.

NOTE 'Lo tengo complicado' / 'está complicado' = it's going to be hard (polite way to say probably not).

relevante *relevant / significant, important*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS relevante · relevantes

Like English 'relevant', but in Spanish it very often means important or significant, too. 'Un personaje relevante' = an important figure.

› **Eso no es relevante para la discusión.**
That's not relevant to the discussion.

› **Fue una de las escritoras más relevantes del siglo XX.**
She was one of the most important writers of the 20th century.

DON'T CONFUSE For 'relevant' (connected), 'pertinente' and 'que viene al caso' are also very natural: Eso no viene al caso = That's beside the point.

llamativo *striking / eye-catching / flashy*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS llamativo · llamativa · llamativos · llamativas

Something that attracts attention: a colour, a detail, a fact. Can be positive or slightly negative (too loud).

› **Llevaba un abrigo rojo muy llamativo.**
She was wearing a really eye-catching red coat.

› **Es llamativo que nadie se haya quejado.**
It's striking that nobody has complained.

NOTE 'Es llamativo que' + subjunctive.

impactante *shocking / striking / powerful*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS impactante · impactantes

Something that makes a strong emotional impression: images, news, a film.

› **Las imágenes del incendio son impactantes.**
The images of the fire are shocking.

› **Fue una experiencia impactante.**
It was a powerful experience.

DON'T CONFUSE impactante = strong impression · chocante = surprising, strange · escandaloso = outrageous.

How things feel: tasks & experiences

gratificante *rewarding / fulfilling*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS gratificante · gratificantes

Something that gives you satisfaction, not necessarily money.

› Enseñar es muy gratificante.
Teaching is very rewarding.

› Es gratificante ver cómo mejoran tus alumnos.
It's rewarding to see your students improve.

OPPOSITE **frustrante** — frustrating

exigente *demanding / strict / fussy*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS exigente · exigentes
PATTERN **ser exigente con alguien / con algo**

A person who expects a lot from others or themselves, or a task that requires a lot of effort.

› Es una jefa exigente, pero justa.
She's a demanding boss, but fair.

› Soy muy exigente conmigo misma.
I'm very hard on myself.

› Es un trabajo físicamente exigente.
It's a physically demanding job.

desafiante *challenging / defiant*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS desafiante · desafiantes

Careful: for a person or a look, desafiante means defiant. For a task, it's 'challenging', but in everyday Spain 'es todo un reto' or 'es exigente' sound more natural.

› Me miró con una actitud desafiante.
He looked at me defiantly.

› Es un proyecto desafiante, pero muy interesante.
It's a challenging project, but really interesting.

COMMON MISTAKE To describe a hard but motivating job, ✓ 'Es un reto' often sounds more natural than 'Es desafiante'.

agotador *exhausting*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS agotador · agotadora · agotadores · agotadoras

So tiring that it drains all your energy. Stronger than cansado/cansador. Also for people: 'Mi vecino es agotador'.

› **Ha sido una semana agotadora.**
It's been an exhausting week.

› **Viajar con niños pequeños es agotador.**
Travelling with small children is exhausting.

NOTE Estar agotado/a = to be exhausted (state). Ser agotador = to be exhausting (cause).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America also says 'cansador' (tiring); Spain prefers 'cansado' for both: un viaje muy cansado.

Character with nuance

Adjectives to describe people precisely, from sensible to stubborn. The last three are colloquial and very Spain.

sensato *sensible / level-headed*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS sensato · sensata · sensatos · sensatas

Showing good judgement. Remember: 'sensible' in Spanish means sensitive!

› **Lo más sensato sería esperar a mañana.**
The most sensible thing would be to wait until tomorrow.

› **Marcos es muy sensato, pídele consejo.**
Marcos is very level-headed, ask him for advice.

OPPOSITE **insensato** — reckless, foolish

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Es una decisión sensible~~ → ✓ Es una decisión sensata. (sensible = sensitive)

ingenuo *naive*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS ingenuo · ingenua · ingenuos · ingenuas

Too trusting, without malice, easily deceived. Not 'ingenious' (= ingenioso).

› **Fui un poco ingenua al creerle.**
I was a bit naive to believe him.

› **No seas ingenuo, eso es una estafa.**
Don't be naive, it's a scam.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*una solución ingenua (meaning clever~~) → ✓ una solución ingeniosa.

terco *stubborn / pig-headed*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS terco · terca · tercos · tercas

Someone who won't change their mind even when they're wrong.

› **Es más terco que una mula.**
He's as stubborn as a mule.

› **No seas terca y pide ayuda.**
Don't be stubborn, ask for help.

DON'T CONFUSE terco = stubborn (negative) · cabezota = stubborn (colloquial, Spain) · tenaz = tenacious (positive) · obstinado = obstinate (formal).

cauteloso / prudente *cautious / careful, prudent*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS cauteloso/a · prudente

Cauteloso = careful to avoid risks, sometimes suspicious. Prudente = sensible and careful, avoiding unnecessary danger. Prudente is far more common in everyday speech.

› **Sé prudente con la carretera, que está mojada.**
Be careful on the road, it's wet.

› **Los inversores se muestran cautelosos.**
Investors are being cautious.

OPPOSITE **imprudente** — reckless

minucioso *thorough / meticulous*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS minucioso · minuciosa · minuciosos · minuciosas

Paying attention to every small detail. For people and for work (un análisis minucioso).

› **Es muy minuciosa revisando los contratos.**
She's very thorough when she checks contracts.

› **Hicieron un estudio minucioso del terreno.**
They carried out a detailed survey of the land.

DON'T CONFUSE minucioso = thorough · detallista = detail-oriented (also: thoughtful with gifts) · meticuloso = meticulous.

despistado *absent-minded / scatterbrained / lost*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS despistado · despistada · despistados · despistadas

Ser despistado = to be absent-minded by nature. Estar despistado = to be distracted or a bit lost at the moment.

› **Soy tan despistada que siempre pierdo las llaves.**
I'm so scatterbrained I always lose my keys.

› **Perdona, estaba despistado, ¿qué decías?**
Sorry, I was miles away, what were you saying?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un despiste** *a slip, an oversight* · **despistarse** *to get distracted*

entrañable *endearing / heartwarming / dear*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS entrañable · entrañables

Something or someone that inspires warm affection: a memory, a person, a scene, a family celebration.

› **Guardo un recuerdo entrañable de aquel verano.**
I have fond memories of that summer.

› **El abuelo de la peli es un personaje entrañable.**
The grandfather in the film is a lovable character.

NOTE Very typical at Christmas: 'estas fechas tan entrañables' = this special time of year.

majo *nice / friendly / lovely*

ADJECTIVE INFORMAL B2

FORMS majo · maja · majos · majas

Spain: a nice, friendly person. Also used to soften requests: 'Maja, ¿me pasas la sal?'. Can mean 'pretty' too.

› **El novio de Ana es muy majo.**
Ana's boyfriend is really nice.

› **Venga, majo, que llegamos tarde.**
Come on, mate, we're going to be late.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Mainly Spain. Elsewhere: simpático, buena onda (Mexico, Argentina), chévere (Caribbean).

chulo *cool / nice (things) · cocky (people)*

ADJECTIVE COLLOQUIAL B2

FORMS chulo · chula · chulos · chulas

Spain: for things, cool or pretty. For people, careful: 'ser un chulo' / 'ponerse chulo' = to be cocky, arrogant.

> **things** — *cool, nice*
>
> › ¡Qué piso más chulo!
> *What a cool flat!*

> **people** — *cocky, cheeky*
>
> › No te pongas chulo conmigo.
> *Don't get cocky with me.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **chulear(se)** *to show off (Spain)*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Mexico 'chulo' = cute, pretty (for people too). In Spain 'chulo/a' for a person is usually negative.

cutre *tacky / shabby / cheap and nasty*

ADJECTIVE COLLOQUIAL B2

FORMS cutre · cutres

Spain: low quality, dingy, tacky or stingy. Very common and very useful.

› El hotel era bastante cutre, pero estaba en el centro.
The hotel was pretty grotty, but it was in the centre.

› Qué regalo más cutre.
What a cheap, tacky present.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la cutrez** *tackiness (noun)*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain only. Latin America: corriente, de mala calidad, chafa (Mexico), berreta (Argentina).

Ser or estar? Adjectives that change meaning

You know 'ser aburrido' (boring) vs 'estar aburrido' (bored). These are the next level: same adjective, a completely different message depending on the verb.

ser listo / estar listo

to be clever / to be ready

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS listo · lista · listos · listas

Ser listo = clever, smart (sometimes too smart: sly). Estar listo = ready. Colloquially, '¡Estás listo!' = you've got another thing coming!

ser listo — *clever*

› Tu hija es muy lista.
Your daughter is very clever.

estar listo — *ready*

› ¿Estás lista? Nos vamos.
Are you ready? We're off.

¡Estás listo! — *ironic: no chance*

› ¿Que te deje el coche? ¡Estás listo!
Lend you my car? You've got another think coming!

ser despierto / estar despierto

to be sharp, quick-witted / to be awake

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS despierto · despierta · despiertos · despiertas

Ser despierto = mentally alert, bright. Estar despierto = not asleep.

ser despierto — *sharp*

› Es un chaval muy despierto para su edad.
He's a very bright kid for his age.

estar despierto — *awake*

› ¿Sigues despierta? Son las tres.
Are you still awake? It's three o'clock.

ser atento / estar atento

to be considerate, thoughtful / to be paying attention

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS atento · atenta · atentos · atentas

Ser atento = kind, thoughtful, attentive to others' needs. Estar atento = paying attention, alert. In formal emails: 'Atentamente' = Yours sincerely.

ser atento — *thoughtful*

› El camarero fue muy atento con nosotros.
The waiter was very attentive to us.

estar atento — *pay attention*

› Estad atentos, que esto entra en el examen.
Pay attention, this is going to be in the exam.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar atento a algo** *to keep an eye on something* · **un detalle muy atento** *a very thoughtful gesture*

ser rico / estar rico

to be rich / to be delicious

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS rico · rica · ricos · ricas

Ser rico = wealthy (or rich in something). Estar rico = tasty, delicious. Colloquially, a person 'está rico/a' = is hot, attractive (careful!).

ser rico — *wealthy*

› Su familia es muy rica.
Her family is very wealthy.

estar rico — *tasty*

› ¡Qué rica está la tortilla!
This tortilla is delicious!

NOTE 'Ser rico en' = to be rich in: Las lentejas son ricas en hierro.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La paella es muy rica (sounds odd unless you mean in general)~~ → ✓ La paella está muy rica (this one, now).

ser interesado / estar interesado

to be selfish, mercenary / to be interested

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS interesado · interesada · interesados · interesadas

Ser interesado = someone who only acts for personal gain. Estar interesado (en) = interested in.

ser interesado — *self-serving*

› Solo te llama cuando necesita algo, es muy interesado.
He only calls you when he needs something, he's very self-serving.

estar interesado en — *interested in*

› Estoy interesada en el puesto de coordinadora.
I'm interested in the coordinator position.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy interesado en la historia~~ → ✓ Me interesa la historia / Estoy interesado en la historia.

ser molesto / estar molesto

to be annoying / to be upset, annoyed

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS molesto · molesta · molestos · molestas

Ser molesto = irritating, causing discomfort (a noise, a situation). Estar molesto = annoyed or upset (a person), or in physical discomfort.

ser molesto — *annoying*

› Ese ruido es muy molesto.
That noise is really annoying.

estar molesto — *upset, annoyed*

› Creo que Lucía está molesta conmigo.
I think Lucía is upset with me.

ser orgulloso / estar orgulloso

to be proud, arrogant / to be proud of

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS orgulloso · orgullosa · orgullosos · orgullosas

Ser orgulloso = a proud personality, often negative: too proud to apologise. Estar orgulloso de = proud of someone or something (positive).

ser orgulloso — *too proud*

› Es demasiado orgulloso para pedir perdón.
He's too proud to apologise.

estar orgulloso de — *proud of*

› Estoy muy orgullosa de ti.
I'm really proud of you.

ser vivo / estar vivo

to be sharp, lively / to be alive

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS vivo · viva · vivos · vivas

Ser vivo = quick, sharp, lively (sometimes crafty). Estar vivo = alive. Note: colours can be 'vivos' (bright).

ser vivo — *sharp, crafty*

› Ojo con él, que es muy vivo.
Watch out for him, he's very crafty.

estar vivo — *alive*

› La planta todavía está viva.
The plant is still alive.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America 'vivo' (and 'vivaracho') for a person often means sly, someone who takes advantage.

ser grave / estar grave

to be serious / to be seriously ill

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS grave · graves

Ser grave = a serious matter or problem. Estar grave = a person who is seriously ill.

ser grave — *serious matter*

› No te preocupes, no es grave.
Don't worry, it's nothing serious.

estar grave — *seriously ill*

› Su abuelo está grave en el hospital.
Her grandfather is seriously ill in hospital.

ser negro / estar negro

to be black / to be fed up, furious

ADJECTIVE COLLOQUIAL B2

FORMS negro · negra · negros · negras

Ser negro = the colour. Colloquially in Spain, estar negro = to be fed up or furious; 'verlo negro' / 'estar negro el asunto' = to look bleak; 'estar negro' can also mean very tanned.

estar negro (con algo) — *fed up, angry*

› Estoy negra con los vecinos, no paran de hacer obras.
I'm sick to death of the neighbours, they never stop doing building work.

verlo negro — *see it as bleak*

› Lo veo negro para el viernes.
Friday's not looking good.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **pasarlas negras** *to go through a really tough time* · **tenerlo negro** *to have a hard time of it*

More adjectives for evaluating

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
prescindible	*expendable / non-essential*	Esa parte del informe es prescindible. *That part of the report could go.*
primordial FORMAL	*paramount / of prime importance*	La seguridad es primordial. *Safety is paramount.*
decisivo/a	*decisive / crucial*	Su ayuda fue decisiva. *Her help was crucial.*
factible FORMAL	*feasible*	¿Es factible hacerlo en un mes? *Is it feasible to do it in a month?*
sostenible	*sustainable*	beyond ecology: un ritmo sostenible, una deuda sostenible Trabajar doce horas al día no es sostenible. *Working twelve hours a day isn't sustainable.*
rentable	*profitable / worth it*	colloquial: 'no me sale rentable' = it's not worth my while No es rentable abrir los domingos. *It doesn't pay to open on Sundays.*
razonable	*reasonable*	Me parece un precio razonable. *It seems a reasonable price.*
lógico/a	*logical / natural, understandable*	es lógico que + subjunctive Es lógico que estés nervioso. *It's natural that you're nervous.*
riguroso/a	*rigorous / strict / thorough*	Es un estudio muy riguroso. *It's a very rigorous study.*
fiable	*reliable / trustworthy*	for sources, machines, data; for people also 'de fiar' No es una fuente fiable. *It's not a reliable source.*
verosímil	*plausible / believable*	La historia no es muy verosímil. *The story isn't very believable.*
discutible	*debatable / questionable*	Eso es muy discutible. *That's highly debatable.*
cuestionable	*questionable / dubious*	Sus métodos son cuestionables. *Her methods are questionable.*
dudoso/a	*doubtful / dubious*	Es dudoso que lleguen a tiempo. *It's doubtful they'll make it in time.*
inadmisible	*unacceptable*	strong; es inadmisible que + subjunctive Es inadmisible que nos traten así. *It's unacceptable for them to treat us like this.*
absurdo/a	*absurd / ridiculous*	Es absurdo discutir por eso. *It's ridiculous to argue about that.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ridículo/a	*ridiculous / tiny (amount)*	un sueldo ridículo = a pitiful salary Le ofrecieron un sueldo ridículo. *They offered him a pitiful salary.*
vistoso/a	*colourful / showy / eye-catching*	always positive, unlike llamativo (which can be 'too loud') Fue un espectáculo muy vistoso. *It was a very colourful show.*
novedoso/a	*novel / innovative / new*	Es un enfoque bastante novedoso. *It's quite a novel approach.*
pionero/a	*pioneering*	Fue un proyecto pionero en Europa. *It was a pioneering project in Europe.*
obsoleto/a	*obsolete / outdated*	Este sistema está obsoleto. *This system is obsolete.*
vigente	*in force / current / valid*	for laws, documents, prices La ley sigue vigente. *The law is still in force.*
notable	*remarkable / considerable*	also a school mark in Spain (7–8 out of 10) Ha habido una mejora notable. *There's been a considerable improvement.*
considerable	*considerable / substantial*	Supone un ahorro considerable. *It means a substantial saving.*
escaso/a	*scarce / limited / very little*	before a noun: escaso interés = little interest Tenemos escaso margen de maniobra. *We have very little room for manoeuvre.*
excesivo/a	*excessive*	El precio me parece excesivo. *The price seems excessive to me.*
equilibrado/a	*balanced*	Intento llevar una dieta equilibrada. *I try to have a balanced diet.*

Tasks, experiences & situations

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
frustrante	*frustrating*	Es frustrante no poder expresarte bien. *It's frustrating not being able to express yourself well.*
estresante	*stressful*	Mudarse es muy estresante. *Moving house is really stressful.*
llevadero/a	*bearable / manageable*	Con buena compañía, el viaje fue llevadero. *With good company, the journey was bearable.*
enriquecedor/a	*enriching / rewarding*	Vivir fuera fue muy enriquecedor. *Living abroad was very enriching.*
estimulante	*stimulating / inspiring*	Es un ambiente de trabajo muy estimulante. *It's a very stimulating work environment.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
monótono/a	*monotonous / repetitive*	**Mi trabajo es un poco monótono.** *My job is a bit monotonous.*
rutinario/a	*routine / humdrum*	**Es una revisión rutinaria.** *It's a routine check-up.*
tedioso/a	*tedious*	**Rellenar formularios es tedioso.** *Filling in forms is tedious.*
engorroso/a	*fiddly / cumbersome / a hassle*	**El trámite es bastante engorroso.** *The procedure is a real hassle.*
arriesgado/a	*risky*	**Es arriesgado invertir todo en una sola cosa.** *It's risky to invest everything in just one thing.*
delicado/a	*delicate / sensitive / tricky*	estar delicado de salud = to be in poor health **Es un tema delicado.** *It's a sensitive subject.*
surrealista INFORMAL	*surreal / bizarre*	very common in Spain for weird situations **Fue una situación surrealista.** *It was a totally surreal situation.*
alucinante INFORMAL	*amazing / mind-blowing*	**Las vistas son alucinantes.** *The views are amazing.*

More character adjectives

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ambicioso/a	*ambitious*	neutral or slightly negative depending on context **Es un plan muy ambicioso.** *It's a very ambitious plan.*
comprometido/a	*committed / engaged (to marry) / awkward*	una situación comprometida = an awkward situation **Es una persona muy comprometida con su trabajo.** *She's very committed to her work.*
flexible	*flexible / adaptable*	**Tengo un horario flexible.** *I have flexible hours.*
constante	*consistent / persevering*	**Para aprender idiomas hay que ser constante.** *To learn languages you need to be consistent.*
tenaz	*tenacious / persistent*	plural: tenaces **Es tenaz: no para hasta conseguirlo.** *She's tenacious: she doesn't stop till she gets it.*
perseverante	*persevering*	**Sé perseverante y verás resultados.** *Keep at it and you'll see results.*
cabezota COLLOQUIAL	*stubborn / pig-headed*	same form for m/f: es muy cabezota **Mi padre es un cabezota.** *My dad is so stubborn.*
testarudo/a	*stubborn / headstrong*	**No seas testarudo, escúchame.** *Don't be so headstrong, listen to me.*
intransigente	*intransigent / unwilling to compromise*	**Fue intransigente en la negociación.** *He refused to budge in the negotiation.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
tolerante	*tolerant / open-minded*	**Es una ciudad muy tolerante.** *It's a very tolerant city.*
sensible	*sensitive*	false friend: 'sensible' = sensato **Es muy sensible a las críticas.** *He's very sensitive to criticism.*
susceptible	*touchy / easily offended*	**Está muy susceptible últimamente.** *She's been really touchy lately.*
rencoroso/a	*resentful / someone who holds grudges*	**No soy nada rencorosa.** *I don't hold grudges at all.*
mezquino/a	*mean / petty*	**Fue un comentario mezquino.** *It was a petty comment.*
hipócrita	*hypocritical / hypocrite*	same form m/f **No seas hipócrita, tú también lo haces.** *Don't be a hypocrite, you do it too.*
prepotente	*arrogant / overbearing*	**Me molesta su tono prepotente.** *His arrogant tone annoys me.*
engreído/a	*conceited / big-headed*	**Desde que lo ascendieron está muy engreído.** *Since his promotion he's become really big-headed.*
discreto/a	*discreet / understated*	**Puedes contárselo, es muy discreta.** *You can tell her, she's very discreet.*
cotilla COLLOQUIAL	*gossipy / a gossip*	Spain; same form m/f; verb: cotillear **Mi vecina es muy cotilla.** *My neighbour is a real gossip.*
quisquilloso/a	*fussy / nitpicking / touchy*	**No seas tan quisquilloso con los detalles.** *Don't be so nitpicky about the details.*
despreocupado/a	*carefree / easy-going*	**Tiene un carácter muy despreocupado.** *She has a very carefree nature.*
previsor/a	*far-sighted / someone who plans ahead*	**Fui previsora y llevé un paraguas.** *I planned ahead and took an umbrella.*
resolutivo/a	*decisive / good at getting things done*	very common in job interviews in Spain **Buscamos a alguien resolutivo.** *We're looking for someone who gets things done.*
polifacético/a	*multi-talented / versatile*	**Es un artista polifacético.** *He's a multi-talented artist.*
emprendedor/a	*enterprising / entrepreneurial*	**Tiene un espíritu muy emprendedor.** *She has a real entrepreneurial spirit.*
ingenioso/a	*witty / ingenious*	**Fue una respuesta muy ingeniosa.** *It was a very witty answer.*
sagaz	*shrewd / astute*	plural: sagaces **Es una negociadora muy sagaz.** *She's a very shrewd negotiator.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
torpe	*clumsy / slow (to understand)*	¡Qué torpe soy! Se me ha caído otra vez. *I'm so clumsy! I've dropped it again.*
pelota COLLOQUIAL	*sycophantic / a crawler*	Spain; same form m/f; hacer la pelota = to suck up to No seas pelota con el jefe. *Stop sucking up to the boss.*
rata / agarrado/a COLLOQUIAL	*stingy / tight-fisted*	Spain; rata has the same form m/f No seas rata y paga una ronda. *Don't be so tight, buy a round.*

COLLECT PAIRS, NOT WORDS

Adjectives live with nouns. Make a list of real pairs you hear: un argumento contundente, un trabajo gratificante, un hotel cutre, un tema delicado. When you speak, the whole pair comes out together, and you sound far more natural than with 'muy bueno' or 'muy malo'.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

04 · Small words that show your attitude, certainty and style

Adverbs

Adverbs are how you show what you think about what you're saying: obviously, supposedly, deep down, reluctantly. At B2 they make your Spanish sound mature and nuanced. Watch the false friends (efectivamente, eventualmente), and remember a style rule: when you use two -mente adverbs in a row, only the last one keeps -mente: clara y sencillamente.

Key adverbs with a twist

efectivamente *indeed / exactly / that's right*

ADVERB B2

False friend: it mostly means 'indeed, that's right', confirming what someone has just said. It rarely means 'effectively' (= de forma eficaz, con eficacia).

- —¿Entonces la reunión es el jueves? —Efectivamente.
  "So the meeting's on Thursday?" "That's right."
- Dijeron que llovería y, efectivamente, llovió todo el día.
  They said it would rain and, sure enough, it rained all day.

DON'T CONFUSE efectivamente = indeed (confirms) · en efecto = indeed (formal) · de hecho = in fact (adds new information).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Gestiona el equipo efectivamente~~ → ✓ Gestiona el equipo con eficacia / de forma eficaz.

precisamente *precisely / exactly / of all things*

ADVERB B2

Besides 'precisely', it's used to highlight a coincidence or irony: 'precisamente hoy' = today of all days. Also to agree: '¡Precisamente!' = Exactly!

- Precisamente hoy, que tengo prisa, no funciona el metro.
  Today of all days, when I'm in a hurry, the metro isn't working.
- Precisamente de eso quería hablarte.
  That's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **no es precisamente barato** *it's not exactly cheap (ironic)*

prácticamente *practically / virtually / almost*

ADVERB B2

Almost completely. Not 'in a practical way' (= de forma práctica).

› **Ya está prácticamente terminado.**
It's practically finished.

› **Prácticamente no he dormido.**
I've hardly slept at all.

DON'T CONFUSE prácticamente = virtually · casi = almost · apenas = hardly.

supuestamente *supposedly / allegedly*

ADVERB B2

Used when you report something you're not sure is true, or that you doubt. Very common in the news (alleged) and with irony in conversation.

› **Supuestamente el paquete llegaba ayer.**
The parcel was supposed to arrive yesterday.

› **El detenido supuestamente robó varios coches.**
The man arrested allegedly stole several cars.

DON'T CONFUSE supuestamente = supposedly (doubt) · aparentemente = apparently, on the surface · al parecer = apparently (from what people say).

aparentemente *apparently / seemingly / on the surface*

ADVERB B2

Based on how things look, which may not be the reality. For 'apparently' meaning 'I've heard that', Spanish prefers 'al parecer' or 'por lo visto'.

› **Aparentemente está bien, pero creo que lo está pasando mal.**
On the surface he seems fine, but I think he's having a hard time.

› **Por lo visto, cierran el bar de la esquina.**
Apparently the bar on the corner is closing.

COMMON MISTAKE English 'Apparently, they're getting married' (gossip) → more natural: ✓ Por lo visto / Al parecer, se casan.

necesariamente *necessarily*

ADVERB B2

Most common in the negative: 'no necesariamente' = not necessarily, a great way to disagree softly.

› **Más caro no significa necesariamente mejor.**
More expensive doesn't necessarily mean better.

› **—Entonces tienes que dejar el trabajo. —No necesariamente.**
"So you'll have to quit your job." "Not necessarily."

sumamente *extremely / highly*

ADVERB FORMAL B2

A formal, elegant intensifier, typical of writing and polite speech. Goes before adjectives.

› Le estamos sumamente agradecidos.
We are extremely grateful to you.

› Es un tema sumamente delicado.
It's an extremely sensitive matter.

DON'T CONFUSE muy (neutral) · sumamente / enormemente (formal) · súper / superbién (colloquial).

paulatinamente *gradually / little by little*

ADVERB FORMAL B2

Slowly and progressively. A formal alternative to 'poco a poco' or 'gradualmente'.

› La situación ha ido mejorando paulatinamente.
The situation has been gradually improving.

DON'T CONFUSE poco a poco (everyday) · gradualmente / progresivamente (neutral) · paulatinamente (formal, written).

a regañadientes *reluctantly / grudgingly*

ADVERB B2

Doing something you don't want to do, while showing it. Literally 'grumbling through your teeth'.

› Al final aceptó, pero a regañadientes.
In the end he agreed, but grudgingly.

› Los niños recogieron la habitación a regañadientes.
The kids tidied their room reluctantly.

a la ligera *lightly / without thinking / hastily*

ADVERB B2

Without enough thought or seriousness. Usually with 'tomarse' or 'hablar'.

› No te lo tomes a la ligera, es importante.
Don't take it lightly, it's important.

› Habla muy a la ligera de cosas que no conoce.
He talks very casually about things he knows nothing about.

OPPOSITE **en serio / a fondo** — seriously / thoroughly

de sobra

more than enough / perfectly well

ADVERB B2

In abundance, more than needed. 'Saber de sobra' = to know perfectly well. 'Estar de sobra' = to be in the way, unwanted.

› **Tenemos tiempo de sobra, no corras.**
We've got plenty of time, don't rush.

› **Sabes de sobra que no me gusta.**
You know perfectly well I don't like it.

› **Me sentí de sobra en la cena.**
I felt like a spare part at the dinner.

en el fondo

deep down / at heart / basically

ADVERB B2

About someone's true feelings, or the essence of a matter beyond appearances.

› **Parece duro, pero en el fondo es muy buena persona.**
He seems tough, but deep down he's a really good person.

› **En el fondo, tienes razón.**
Basically, you're right.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'al fondo' = at the back / at the end: El baño está al fondo a la derecha.

en principio

in principle / in theory / for now

ADVERB B2

Very common in Spain to say what's planned, while leaving room for changes. 'En principio voy' = I'm planning to go (unless something changes).

› **En principio quedamos el sábado, pero ya te confirmo.**
We're meeting on Saturday for now, but I'll confirm.

› **En principio no hay problema.**
In principle there's no problem.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*al principio (= at the beginning)~~ ≠ ✓ en principio (= in principle). Al principio no entendía nada = At first I didn't understand anything.

a propósito / sin querer

on purpose · by accident, without meaning to

ADVERB B2

A propósito = deliberately. Sin querer = accidentally, unintentionally. 'A propósito' also means 'by the way', to change topic.

a propósito — *deliberately*

› No lo hice a propósito, te lo prometo.
I didn't do it on purpose, I promise.

sin querer — *accidentally*

› Perdona, te he pisado sin querer.
Sorry, I stepped on your foot by accident.

a propósito (topic) — *by the way*

› A propósito, ¿qué tal tu hermana?
By the way, how's your sister?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **adrede** *on purpose (more colloquial in Spain)* · **aposta** *on purpose (colloquial, Spain)*

a toda costa

at all costs / no matter what

ADVERB B2

Whatever it takes, regardless of the price or effort.

› Quiere ganar a toda costa.
She wants to win at all costs.

› Hay que evitar a toda costa que se entere.
We must avoid him finding out at all costs.

DON'T CONFUSE a toda costa = at all costs · cueste lo que cueste = whatever it takes · como sea = somehow, no matter how (colloquial).

-mente adverbs of stance & degree

Use these to show how sure you are, how strongly you mean something, or how something happens.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
evidentemente	*obviously / clearly*	Evidentemente, no pienso pagarlo yo. *Obviously, I'm not going to pay for it.*
obviamente	*obviously*	slightly more colloquial than evidentemente Obviamente, te invito yo. *Obviously, it's on me.*
indudablemente FORMAL	*undoubtedly / without a doubt*	Es, indudablemente, su mejor novela. *It is undoubtedly her best novel.*
posiblemente	*possibly / probably*	often + subjunctive Posiblemente sea la mejor opción. *It's possibly the best option.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
presuntamente FORMAL	*allegedly*	legal and news language El acusado presuntamente falsificó los documentos. *The defendant allegedly forged the documents.*
verdaderamente	*truly / genuinely*	Fue una experiencia verdaderamente única. *It was a truly unique experience.*
profundamente	*deeply / profoundly*	Lo siento profundamente. *I'm deeply sorry.*
plenamente	*fully / completely*	Estoy plenamente convencida. *I'm fully convinced.*
enormemente	*enormously / hugely*	Te lo agradezco enormemente. *I'm hugely grateful.*
ligeramente	*slightly*	El precio ha subido ligeramente. *The price has gone up slightly.*
relativamente	*relatively / fairly*	Es relativamente fácil. *It's fairly easy.*
meramente FORMAL	*merely / purely*	Es un trámite meramente administrativo. *It's a purely administrative formality.*
exclusivamente	*exclusively / solely*	Se dedica exclusivamente a la traducción. *She works exclusively as a translator.*
progresivamente	*progressively / gradually*	Iremos aumentando el nivel progresivamente. *We'll raise the level gradually.*
previamente	*beforehand / previously*	Hay que reservar previamente. *You have to book beforehand.*
posteriormente FORMAL	*subsequently / later*	Posteriormente se mudó a Bilbao. *She later moved to Bilbao.*
francamente	*frankly / honestly*	Francamente, no me lo esperaba. *Frankly, I didn't expect it.*
personalmente	*personally*	Personalmente, prefiero el tren. *Personally, I prefer the train.*

Adverbial phrases you'll hear every day

a fondo
thoroughly / in depth

With conocer, limpiar, estudiar, analizar.

> Hemos limpiado la casa a fondo.
> *We've given the house a thorough clean.*

en teoría / en la práctica
in theory / in practice

To contrast how things should be with how they really are.

> En teoría salgo a las cinco; en la práctica, nunca antes de las siete.
> *In theory I finish at five; in practice, never before seven.*

a grandes rasgos
broadly speaking / in broad terms

To summarise something without details.

> A grandes rasgos, el plan es este.
> *Broadly speaking, this is the plan.*

por completo
completely / entirely

Usually after the verb.

> Se me olvidó por completo.
> *I completely forgot.*

a ciegas
blindly / without knowing

Doing something without information.

> No quiero firmar a ciegas.
> *I don't want to sign without knowing what I'm signing.*

a medias
halfway / half-done / fifty-fifty

Unfinished things, or sharing costs.

> No me gusta dejar las cosas a medias.
> *I don't like leaving things half done.*

a ratos
at times / on and off

Something that happens intermittently.

> A ratos me apetece volver a Londres.
> *At times I feel like going back to London.*

a duras penas
barely / with great difficulty

Something you just managed to do.

> Llegamos a duras penas a fin de mes.
> *We barely make it to the end of the month.*

a conciencia
conscientiously / properly

Doing something thoroughly and carefully.

> Lo ha preparado a conciencia.
> *She's prepared it really carefully.*

de lleno
fully / completely / head-on

Total involvement or impact.

> Me he metido de lleno en el proyecto.
> *I've thrown myself into the project.*

a la perfección
perfectly

Emphatic alternative to perfectamente.

> Te entiendo a la perfección.
> *I understand you perfectly.*

sin más
just like that / without further ado

Something done abruptly or without explanation.

> Se levantó y se fue, sin más.
> *He got up and left, just like that.*

ni más ni menos
no more, no less / exactly

Emphasising an exact or surprising amount.

> Me costó mil euros, ni más ni menos.
> *It cost me a thousand euros, no less.*

TWO -MENTE ADVERBS TOGETHER

When you join two -mente adverbs with y, o or pero, drop -mente from the first one: 'Habló clara y tranquilamente', 'lenta pero seguramente'. The first adjective keeps the feminine form and its accent: rápida y eficazmente.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

05 · The prepositional phrases that hold a serious sentence together

Prepositions

At B2 you'll meet prepositions made of several words: en cuanto a, a raíz de, de cara a. They're everywhere in emails, news and meetings, and they make your Spanish sound organised. Learn each one with a full example, and notice which ones are formal and which ones are overused (we'll tell you about 'a nivel de').

Key prepositional phrases

a raíz de

as a result of / following / after

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **a raíz de + noun / infinitive**

Introduces an event that triggered something that came later. Literally 'from the root of'.

- **A raíz de aquel viaje, empecé a estudiar español.**
  After that trip, I started learning Spanish.
- **La ley se cambió a raíz de las protestas.**
  The law was changed as a result of the protests.

DON'T CONFUSE a raíz de = triggered by (time + cause) · debido a = due to (cause) · tras = after (time).

debido a / a causa de

due to / because of

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **debido a + noun · a causa de + noun**

Both introduce a cause before a noun. Debido a is slightly more formal and very common in announcements; a causa de is neutral. Por is the everyday option.

- **El vuelo se ha retrasado debido al mal tiempo.**
  The flight has been delayed due to bad weather.
- **Cerraron la carretera a causa de la nieve.**
  They closed the road because of the snow.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*debido a que la lluvia~~ → ✓ debido a la lluvia (noun) / debido a que llovía (verb, see Connectors). Remember: a + el = al (debido al tráfico).

a pesar de / pese a

despite / in spite of

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **a pesar de + noun / infinitive · pese a + noun / infinitive**

Introduce an obstacle that doesn't prevent something. Pese a is more formal and written. With a full clause, add 'que' (see Connectors).

› A pesar del frío, fuimos a la playa.
Despite the cold, we went to the beach.

› Pese a estar cansada, terminó el informe.
Despite being tired, she finished the report.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*A pesar de que el frío~~ → ✓ A pesar del frío. ✗ ~~*Pese de~~ → ✓ Pese a.

de cara a

with a view to / ahead of / for

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **de cara a + noun / infinitive**

Spain: with an upcoming event or goal in mind. Extremely common at work.

› De cara al verano, vamos a contratar a más gente.
Ahead of the summer, we're going to hire more people.

› Estoy ahorrando de cara a la boda.
I'm saving up for the wedding.

NOTE Also literal: 'de cara a la pared' = facing the wall.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Very typical of Spain. Elsewhere: con miras a, pensando en, para.

en función de

depending on / according to / based on

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **en función de + noun / de si...**

Something varies according to something else. A more precise alternative to 'depende de'.

› El precio cambia en función de la temporada.
The price changes depending on the season.

› Decidiremos en función de si llueve o no.
We'll decide depending on whether it rains or not.

a nivel de

at the level of / (overused) regarding

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **a nivel de + noun (literal level only)**

Correct when there's a real level: 'a nivel del mar', 'a nivel nacional', 'a nivel europeo'. But many speakers overuse it to mean 'regarding' ('a nivel de precios…'): it sounds like jargon. Use en cuanto a, en lo que se refiere a, or rephrase.

› Madrid está a 650 metros sobre el nivel del mar.
Madrid is 650 metres above sea level.

› La campaña se lanzará a nivel nacional.
The campaign will be launched nationwide.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ A nivel de comida, el hotel es muy bueno (sloppy) → ✓ En cuanto a la comida, el hotel es muy bueno. ✓ La comida del hotel es muy buena.

ante vs antes de

before, in front of, faced with vs before (time)

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **ante + noun (presence, situation) · antes de + noun / infinitive (time)**

Ante = in the presence of, or faced with a situation. Antes de = before in time. English 'before' covers both, Spanish doesn't.

ante — *faced with / in front of*

› Ante la duda, pregunta.
If in doubt, ask.

ante — *in the presence of (formal)*

› Tuvo que declarar ante el juez.
She had to testify before the judge.

antes de — *before (time)*

› Llámame antes de salir.
Call me before you leave.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ante de comer~~ → ✓ Antes de comer. ✗ ~~*Antes el problema~~, no hicieron nada → ✓ Ante el problema, no hicieron nada.

tras *after / behind*

PREPOSITION FORMAL B2

PATTERN **tras + noun / infinitive**

After (time) or behind (place). Very frequent in news headlines and written Spanish; in conversation use después de / detrás de.

› Tras la reunión, se fue a casa.
After the meeting, he went home.

› Tras años de esfuerzo, abrió su propia clínica.
After years of hard work, she opened her own clinic.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **día tras día** *day after day* · **uno tras otro** *one after another*

frente a *opposite / facing / compared with / against*

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **frente a + noun**

Physically opposite; facing a problem; or comparing two things (vs). Very useful in essays and with data.

place — *opposite*

› Vivo frente al parque.
I live opposite the park.

comparison — *compared with*

› Un 60 % prefiere el tren frente a un 40 % que prefiere el avión.
60% prefer the train, compared with 40% who prefer the plane.

situation — *facing*

› Frente a la crisis, hay que actuar rápido.
In the face of the crisis, we need to act fast.

mediante *by means of / through / using*

PREPOSITION FORMAL B2

PATTERN **mediante + noun**

The method or tool used to do something. Typical of instructions and formal texts. In speech: con, a través de, por medio de.

› Puede pagar mediante transferencia bancaria.
You can pay by bank transfer.

› Se seleccionó a los candidatos mediante una entrevista.
The candidates were selected through an interview.

según *according to / depending on / as*

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **según + noun / pronoun (según tú, según yo) · según + verb**

New uses at B2: 'depending on' ('Según.' alone = It depends) and 'as' (according to the way something happens). Unusually, it takes subject pronouns: según tú, NOT ~~*según ti~~.

according to — *source*

› Según los expertos, el precio seguirá subiendo.
According to the experts, prices will keep rising.

depending on — *it depends*

› —¿Vienes mañana? —Según. Depende del trabajo.
"Are you coming tomorrow?" "It depends on work."

as — *as things happen*

› Te lo explico según vayamos avanzando.
I'll explain as we go along.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*según a los expertos / *según ti~~ → ✓ según los expertos / según tú.

en cuanto a *as for / regarding / as far as ... is concerned*

PREPOSITION B2

PATTERN **en cuanto a + noun / infinitive**

Introduces a new topic or aspect. Excellent for organising emails and presentations.

› En cuanto al precio, lo hablamos mañana.
As for the price, we'll talk about it tomorrow.

› En cuanto a mí, no tengo inconveniente.
As far as I'm concerned, I don't mind.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'en cuanto' (no a) = as soon as: En cuanto llegue, te llamo.

More prepositional phrases

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
con respecto a / respecto a FORMAL	*regarding / with regard to*	Con respecto a su consulta, le informamos de que... *With regard to your enquiry, we would like to inform you that...*
en relación con / en relación a	*in relation to / regarding*	both are used; 'en relación con' is preferred in careful style Le escribo en relación con la oferta de empleo. *I'm writing regarding the job offer.*
en lo que respecta a / en lo que se refiere a	*as far as ... is concerned*	En lo que se refiere al horario, somos flexibles. *As far as hours are concerned, we're flexible.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
con vistas a / con miras a FORMAL	*with a view to*	Ahorra con vistas a comprarse un piso. *He's saving with a view to buying a flat.*
a fin de FORMAL	*in order to*	+ infinitive; with a clause: a fin de que + subjunctive Le rogamos que llegue temprano a fin de agilizar el proceso. *Please arrive early in order to speed up the process.*
por parte de	*on the part of / from / by*	No hubo respuesta por parte de la empresa. *There was no response from the company.*
en contra de	*against*	estar en contra de algo Estoy en contra de esa decisión. *I'm against that decision.*
a favor de	*in favour of*	La mayoría votó a favor de la propuesta. *Most people voted in favour of the proposal.*
salvo / excepto	*except (for) / apart from*	take subject pronouns: todos salvo yo Abrimos todos los días salvo los lunes. *We're open every day except Mondays.*
bajo	*under / below*	figurative uses: bajo presión, bajo control, bajo cero Trabaja muy bien bajo presión. *She works really well under pressure.*
en torno a	*around / about / centred on*	approximate numbers and topics Asistieron en torno a doscientas personas. *Around two hundred people attended.*
por medio de	*by means of / through*	Lo resolvimos por medio de un acuerdo. *We resolved it by means of an agreement.*
a falta de	*for lack of / in the absence of*	A falta de pan, buenas son tortas. *Beggars can't be choosers. (lit. 'without bread, cakes will do')*
al margen de	*apart from / regardless of / left out of*	Al margen de lo que opines, la decisión está tomada. *Regardless of what you think, the decision has been made.*
a juzgar por	*judging by*	A juzgar por su cara, no le ha gustado. *Judging by her face, she didn't like it.*
a excepción de FORMAL	*with the exception of*	Todos aprobaron, a excepción de dos alumnos. *Everyone passed, with the exception of two students.*

Watch out

Preposition + noun vs connector + clause

✗ *~~A pesar de que el tráfico~~, llegamos a tiempo.

✓ A pesar del tráfico, llegamos a tiempo. / A pesar de que había tráfico, llegamos a tiempo.

These phrases are prepositions: they're followed by a noun or an infinitive. If you want a full clause with a conjugated verb, add 'que' (a pesar de que, debido a que, a fin de que).

- **Debido a la huelga, no hay trenes.**
  Due to the strike, there are no trains.
- **Debido a que hay huelga, no hay trenes.**
  Because there's a strike, there are no trains.

Don't overuse 'a nivel de'

✗ *~~A nivel de trabajo~~, estoy contento. A nivel personal, también.

✓ En el trabajo estoy contento, y en lo personal, también.

'A nivel de' is fine for real levels (a nivel del mar, a nivel nacional), but using it to mean 'regarding' sounds like corporate jargon. Use en cuanto a, en lo que respecta a, or just rephrase.

- **En cuanto a la ubicación, el piso es perfecto.**
  As for the location, the flat is perfect.

REMEMBER If you can remove 'a nivel de' and the sentence still works, remove it.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

06 · The links that turn good sentences into a convincing argument

Connectors

At B2 you build on the B1 connectors (no obstante, ya que, por lo tanto) and start sounding truly organised: de ahí que, si bien, habida cuenta de que. They're grouped here by what they do, with the register marked, because many of them belong in emails, essays and meetings rather than in a bar. Pay special attention to the ones marked '+ subjunctive': the connector decides the mood, not you.

Adding information

Use these to add a second point to the first. (Asimismo, es más, encima and no solo… sino también are at B1.)

igualmente

equally / likewise / also

New use: besides '¡Igualmente!' (= You too!), it works as a connector meaning 'equally, in the same way' to add a parallel point.

> Es importante descansar. Igualmente, conviene comer bien antes del examen.
> *It's important to rest. Equally, it's a good idea to eat well before the exam.*

del mismo modo / de la misma manera FORMAL

in the same way / similarly

To show that a second idea is parallel to the first. Good for comparing cases in an essay.

> Los jóvenes usan cada vez más el móvil para informarse. Del mismo modo, sus padres han dejado de comprar el periódico.
> *Young people use their phones more and more to keep informed. Similarly, their parents have stopped buying the newspaper.*

aparte de eso INFORMAL

apart from that / besides that

Natural in conversation to add one more thing. In writing, prefer 'además' or 'asimismo'.

> La comida estaba fría. Aparte de eso, el camarero fue bastante borde.
> *The food was cold. Apart from that, the waiter was pretty rude.*

por si fuera poco

as if that weren't enough / to top it all

Adds a final point that makes a situation even better or (more often) worse. Very expressive in stories.

> Perdimos el vuelo y, por si fuera poco, nos cancelaron el hotel.
> *We missed the flight and, as if that weren't enough, they cancelled our hotel booking.*

a esto se suma que… / a ello hay que añadir que… FORMAL

added to this… / we should also add that…

Typical of essays, reports and the news to pile up arguments.

> Los alquileres han subido un 10 %. A esto se suma que los sueldos siguen congelados.
> *Rents have gone up by 10%. Added to this, salaries are still frozen.*

a su vez FORMAL

in turn / at the same time

Adds a second action or fact that follows from or runs parallel to the first. Very common in formal writing.

> El proyecto creará empleo y, a su vez, atraerá inversión a la zona.
> *The project will create jobs and, in turn, attract investment to the area.*

Contrast & concession

Concession means 'I accept this, but…'. Some of these connectors need the subjunctive when the fact is hypothetical or not important to the speaker.

ahora bien

however / that said / mind you

Accepts what's been said and then adds an important condition or objection. Common in debates and opinion articles.

> **Puedes trabajar desde casa. Ahora bien, tienes que estar conectado de nueve a cinco.**
> *You can work from home. That said, you have to be online from nine to five.*

si bien FORMAL

although / while

A formal 'aunque' for facts, followed by the indicative. It has nothing to do with conditions, despite the 'si'.

> **Si bien es cierto que la ciudad es cara, la calidad de vida es excelente.**
> *While it's true that the city is expensive, the quality of life is excellent.*

pese a que + indicative / subjunctive FORMAL

despite the fact that / even though

Like 'a pesar de que'. Indicative for a fact you're informing about; subjunctive for something known or hypothetical.

> **Pese a que llovía, el concierto se celebró al aire libre.**
> *Even though it was raining, the concert was held outdoors.*

por mucho que + subjunctive

no matter how much / however much

Says that an effort won't change the result. With the subjunctive almost always. Por más que is a synonym. (More in Common constructions.)

> **Por mucho que insistas, no voy a cambiar de opinión.**
> *No matter how much you insist, I'm not going to change my mind.*

con todo / aun con todo FORMAL

all the same / even so

Sums up the difficulties just mentioned and says the conclusion stands. Typical of written Spanish.

> **Hubo retrasos y problemas técnicos. Con todo, el congreso fue un éxito.**
> *There were delays and technical problems. All the same, the conference was a success.*

por el contrario

on the contrary / by contrast

Introduces the opposite of what was just said, or a clear contrast between two things.

> **Mi hermano es muy ordenado. Yo, por el contrario, lo pierdo todo.**
> *My brother is very tidy. I, on the other hand, lose everything.*

eso sí INFORMAL

mind you / that said / but

Adds a small but important reservation to something positive. Very common in speech.

> **El piso es precioso. Eso sí, no tiene ascensor.**
> *The flat is lovely. Mind you, there's no lift.*

aun cuando + subjunctive / indicative FORMAL

even if / even though

Formal. With the subjunctive = even if (hypothetical); with the indicative = even though (a fact).

> **Mantendremos el precio aun cuando suban los costes.**
> *We'll keep the price the same even if costs go up.*

así y todo INFORMAL

even so / all the same

A more conversational alternative to 'aun así' and 'con todo'.

> **El viaje fue carísimo. Así y todo, volvería mañana mismo.**
> *The trip was really expensive. All the same, I'd go back tomorrow.*

sea como sea / sea como fuere

be that as it may / whatever the case

Closes a discussion and moves on to what really matters. 'Sea como fuere' is formal.

> **No sé quién tuvo la culpa. Sea como sea, hay que solucionarlo hoy.**
> *I don't know whose fault it was. Be that as it may, we need to fix it today.*

Cause

You already know ya que, puesto que, dado que and debido a que (B1). These are the next step. Remember: they're followed by a full clause.

a raíz de que

as a result of (the fact that) / ever since

The clause version of 'a raíz de'. Introduces an event that triggered a change.

> **A raíz de que cerraron la fábrica, mucha gente se fue del pueblo.**
> *After the factory was closed, a lot of people left the village.*

en vista de que

in view of the fact that / seeing that

Gives a cause based on something you've observed, usually to justify a decision.

> **En vista de que no llegaba nadie, empezamos sin ellos.**
> *Seeing that nobody was arriving, we started without them.*

habida cuenta de que FORMAL

bearing in mind that / given that

Very formal: presents a cause the reader must take into account. Typical of reports and official letters.

> **Habida cuenta de que el plazo vence mañana, le rogamos una respuesta urgente.**
> *Given that the deadline is tomorrow, we kindly request an urgent reply.*

visto que

seeing that / since

Gives a cause based on evidence everyone can see. Neutral, very natural.

> **Visto que no hay acuerdo, votaremos la propuesta.**
> *Seeing that there's no agreement, we'll put the proposal to a vote.*

por el hecho de que + indicative / subjunctive

because of the fact that / just because

Indicative for a real cause; subjunctive when you reject it as a cause (no por el hecho de que...).

> **No vas a ser mejor profesor por el hecho de que tengas más títulos.**
> *You won't be a better teacher just because you have more qualifications.*

de tanto + infinitive

from so much... / from... so much

Explains a result caused by doing something too much. Very common in speech.

> **De tanto mirar la pantalla, me duelen los ojos.**
> *My eyes hurt from looking at the screen so much.*

Consequence

Por lo tanto, por consiguiente, de modo que and con lo cual are at B1. Here's how to go further.

en consecuencia FORMAL

as a result / consequently

Like 'por consiguiente'. Also means 'accordingly' (actuar en consecuencia = to act accordingly).

> **El cliente no pagó a tiempo y, en consecuencia, se canceló el pedido.**
> *The client didn't pay on time and, as a result, the order was cancelled.*

de ahí que + subjunctive

hence / that's why

Introduces a consequence of something already explained. Always followed by the subjunctive, even though the result is a fact. A favourite in B2 exams.

> **Lleva diez años en Sevilla; de ahí que hable con acento andaluz.**
> *He's been living in Seville for ten years; hence his Andalusian accent.*

así pues FORMAL

so / thus

Introduces a conclusion drawn from what has just been said. Often at the start of a paragraph.

> **Así pues, la propuesta queda aprobada por mayoría.**
> *So the proposal is approved by a majority.*

por lo que

which is why / so

Links a fact and its consequence in one sentence. Extremely useful in writing.

> **El vuelo se canceló, por lo que tuvimos que dormir en el aeropuerto.**
> *The flight was cancelled, which is why we had to sleep at the airport.*

tanto es así que
so much so that

Emphasises how extreme a situation is by giving its consequence.

> Le encantó Lisboa; tanto es así que se ha comprado un piso allí.
> *She loved Lisbon; so much so that she's bought a flat there.*

conque COLLOQUIAL
so (then)

Colloquial 'so', often to draw a conclusion or give a warning. One word, no accent.

> Ya son las nueve, conque date prisa.
> *It's already nine, so hurry up.*

por ende FORMAL
therefore / hence

Very formal and literary. Recognise it in academic texts; don't overuse it in speech.

> La demanda ha caído y, por ende, los precios también.
> *Demand has fallen and, therefore, so have prices.*

Condition

Siempre que, siempre y cuando, a no ser que, con tal de que and en caso de que are covered at B1. These add formal options and one very Spanish colloquial structure.

salvo que + subjunctive FORMAL
unless / except if

Formal 'unless'. Typical of rules, contracts and official information.

> La entrada no se reembolsa, salvo que se cancele el evento.
> *Tickets are non-refundable unless the event is cancelled.*

en el supuesto de que + subjunctive FORMAL
in the event that / supposing

Formal, common in contracts, rules and instructions.

> En el supuesto de que el producto llegue dañado, contacte con nosotros.
> *In the event that the product arrives damaged, please contact us.*

a condición de que + subjunctive
on condition that

A strict condition, often in agreements and negotiations.

> Te lo presto a condición de que me lo devuelvas el lunes.
> *I'll lend it to you on condition that you give it back on Monday.*

como + subjunctive INFORMAL
if (as a warning or threat)

Very common in spoken Spain Spanish: 'como' + subjunctive introduces a condition with a warning. Not to be confused with 'como' = because.

> Como no me llames, me enfado.
> *If you don't call me, I'll be annoyed.*

excepto si / salvo si + indicative
except if / unless

Unlike 'salvo que', these take the INDICATIVE, because 'si' never takes the present subjunctive.

> Vamos andando, salvo si llueve.
> *We'll walk, unless it rains.*

Purpose

con el objetivo de + infinitive
with the aim of / in order to

Presents a goal. Very common in work contexts, projects and presentations.

> Creamos la plataforma con el objetivo de conectar a estudiantes de todo el mundo.
> *We created the platform with the aim of connecting students from all over the world.*

a fin de que + subjunctive FORMAL
so that / in order that

The clause version of 'a fin de'. Formal 'para que'. Always with the subjunctive.

> Le enviamos el documento a fin de que pueda revisarlo antes de la reunión.
> *We're sending you the document so that you can review it before the meeting.*

con la intención de + infinitive

with the intention of / intending to

Stresses what someone wanted to do, often when the result was different.

> **Fue a Berlín con la intención de quedarse un mes y se quedó cinco años.**
> *He went to Berlin intending to stay a month and stayed five years.*

con el propósito de / con la finalidad de + infinitive

FORMAL

with the purpose of / in order to

Formal 'para'. Typical of reports, official documents and presentations. (Con el fin de is at B1.)

> **Se ha creado una comisión con la finalidad de revisar las ayudas.**
> *A committee has been set up in order to review the grants.*

Reformulating, giving examples & emphasising

o lo que es lo mismo

or, to put it another way / which is the same as

Rephrases an idea, often to reveal what it really means.

> **Ha bajado el sueldo un 10 %, o lo que es lo mismo, cien euros menos al mes.**
> *Pay has gone down 10%, in other words, a hundred euros less a month.*

a saber

FORMAL

namely / that is

Formal: introduces a list that specifies what you've just mentioned. Also colloquial '¡A saber!' = who knows!

> **Hay tres requisitos, a saber: experiencia, inglés y carné de conducir.**
> *There are three requirements, namely: experience, English and a driving licence.*

dicho de otro modo

to put it another way / in other words

Same as 'en otras palabras', slightly more elaborate. Good in presentations.

> **El 80 % de los usuarios no lee las condiciones. Dicho de otro modo, aceptamos sin saber qué.**
> *80% of users don't read the terms. To put it another way, we accept without knowing what.*

esto es

FORMAL

that is / i.e.

A formal 'es decir', mainly in writing, to clarify or specify.

> **El plazo termina a final de mes, esto es, el día 31.**
> *The deadline is the end of the month, that is, the 31st.*

pongamos por caso

let's say / for instance

Introduces an imaginary or sample example to illustrate your point.

> **Pongamos por caso que pierdes el trabajo: ¿tienes ahorros para seis meses?**
> *Let's say you lose your job: do you have six months' savings?*

tal como / tal y como

just as / as / exactly as

Refers back to something already said or known, or presents something exactly as it is.

> **Tal y como os dije ayer, la clase empieza a las seis.**
> *As I told you yesterday, the class starts at six.*

sin ir más lejos

to take a recent example / only (yesterday, last week...)

Gives a very close, obvious example, often from your own life.

> **Los trenes siempre van con retraso. Sin ir más lejos, ayer llegué una hora tarde.**
> *The trains are always late. Only yesterday I was an hour late.*

en efecto

FORMAL

indeed / that's right

Confirms what has just been said or expected. In conversation it can also mean 'exactly'.

> **Se esperaba un aumento de turistas y, en efecto, este verano ha batido récords.**
> *An increase in tourists was expected and, indeed, this summer has broken records.*

cabe destacar que

FORMAL

it's worth noting that / it should be pointed out that

Highlights an important point. Very typical in reports, presentations and essays.

> **Cabe destacar que el 60 % de los participantes eran mujeres.**
> *It's worth noting that 60% of the participants were women.*

conviene recordar que

FORMAL

it's worth remembering that

Reminds the reader of a key fact before you draw a conclusion.

> **Conviene recordar que la oferta solo es válida hasta el viernes.**
> *It's worth remembering that the offer is only valid until Friday.*

lo cierto es que

the truth is that / the fact is that

Introduces the real situation, often contrasting with what people think or what was planned.

> **Dicen que es fácil, pero lo cierto es que nadie ha aprobado a la primera.**
> *They say it's easy, but the fact is nobody has passed first time.*

Concluding

En conclusión, en resumen and en definitiva are at B1. These give you more variety.

para concluir FORMAL

to conclude / to finish

Announces your final paragraph or the end of a talk.

> **Para concluir, me gustaría dar las gracias a todo el equipo.**
> *To conclude, I'd like to thank the whole team.*

en suma FORMAL

in short / all in all

Sums up several points in one idea. Mostly written.

> **En suma, se trata de un proyecto viable y rentable.**
> *In short, it's a viable and profitable project.*

al fin y al cabo

after all / at the end of the day

Gives the basic truth that puts everything into perspective. Very natural in conversation.

> **No te preocupes tanto por el examen; al fin y al cabo, es solo un examen.**
> *Don't worry so much about the exam; after all, it's just an exam.*

a fin de cuentas

when all's said and done / after all

A synonym of 'al fin y al cabo'. Don't confuse it with 'a fin de' (= in order to).

> **A fin de cuentas, lo importante es que estamos todos bien.**
> *When all's said and done, what matters is that we're all OK.*

en resumidas cuentas

in short / to cut a long story short

Sums up a long explanation in one sentence. Works in speech and writing.

> **En resumidas cuentas: nos quedamos sin vacaciones.**
> *To cut a long story short: no holiday for us.*

dicho esto

that said / having said that

Closes one idea and opens the next or the final point. Very useful in presentations.

> **El informe es muy completo. Dicho esto, creo que podríamos simplificarlo.**
> *The report is very thorough. That said, I think we could simplify it.*

Watch out

No calques for 'in addition' and 'in order to'

✗ ~~*En adición~~, el curso incluye materiales. / ~~*En orden a mejorar...~~

✓ Además / Asimismo, el curso incluye materiales. / Con el fin de mejorar... / Para mejorar...

'En adición' and 'en orden a' are direct translations from English and sound wrong in modern Spanish. Use además or asimismo to add, and para, con el fin de or a fin de for purpose.

› **Asimismo, el curso incluye clases de conversación.**
In addition, the course includes conversation classes.

de ahí que always takes the subjunctive

✗ *~~Trabaja de noche~~; de ahí que está siempre cansado.

✓ Trabaja de noche; de ahí que esté siempre cansado.

Even though the consequence is a real fact, 'de ahí que' is one of those connectors that always triggers the subjunctive. Learn it as a block: de ahí que + subjunctive.

› **El tren salió tarde; de ahí que llegáramos a las once.**
The train left late; that's why we arrived at eleven.

siempre que: condition or 'whenever'?

✗ *~~Te ayudo siempre que me invitas a comer~~. (meaning 'as long as')

✓ Te ayudo siempre que me invites a comer. (= as long as) / Siempre que me invitas, lo paso bien. (= whenever)

Siempre que + subjunctive = as long as (a condition). Siempre que + indicative = every time / whenever (a habit). The mood changes the meaning.

› **Siempre que viajo, pierdo algo.**
Whenever I travel, I lose something.

REMEMBER Swap in 'con tal de que': if it still works, you need the subjunctive.

si bien is not a condition

✗ *~~Si bien tengo tiempo~~, te ayudo. (meaning 'if')

✓ Si tengo tiempo, te ayudo. / Si bien no tengo mucho tiempo, te ayudo.

'Si bien' means 'although', not 'if'. It introduces a fact you concede before the main idea.

› **Si bien el hotel era caro, mereció la pena.**
Although the hotel was expensive, it was worth it.

WRITE A THREE-LINE ARGUMENT

Pick a topic you care about (rent, remote work, social media) and write three sentences linked by one connector of addition, one of contrast and one of conclusion. Next day, swap them for their formal equivalents. In a week you'll be using no obstante and en definitiva without thinking.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

07 · The idioms that make Spanish speakers smile and think "this person really speaks Spanish"

Useful expressions

At B2 you stop translating and start sounding natural, and idioms are the fastest shortcut. Each expression below comes with its closest English equivalent (idiom for idiom when one exists), its register and a real-life example. Don't try to learn them all at once: pick five a week, use them in a message or a conversation, and they'll stick.

Stress, overload & being fed up

For those weeks when everything piles up. Most of these are informal: perfect with friends and colleagues you trust, not for a formal email.

estar con el agua al cuello INFORMAL

to be up to your neck (in debt / in work)

Serious pressure, very often money or deadlines.

> Con la hipoteca y el coche nuevo, están con el agua al cuello.
> *With the mortgage and the new car, they're up to their necks in debt.*

no pegar ojo INFORMAL

not to sleep a wink

When you didn't sleep at all. Almost always in the past or with 'en toda la noche'.

> Con el calor que hacía, no pegué ojo en toda la noche.
> *It was so hot I didn't sleep a wink all night.*

sacar de quicio (a alguien) INFORMAL

to drive someone up the wall

Something or someone that really gets on your nerves. Subject = the annoying thing.

> Me saca de quicio que la gente hable por el móvil en el cine.
> *It drives me up the wall when people talk on their phones at the cinema.*

Talking, explaining & getting to the point

Expressions about how people talk: clearly, endlessly, or without making any sense at all.

dar en el clavo

to hit the nail on the head

When someone describes a problem or finds a solution exactly right.

> Con ese comentario has dado en el clavo: el problema es la comunicación.
> *You've hit the nail on the head with that comment: the problem is communication.*

irse por las ramas INFORMAL

to go off on a tangent / to beat around the bush

When someone talks about side issues instead of the main point.

> Perdona, me estoy yendo por las ramas. Lo importante es la fecha.
> *Sorry, I'm going off on a tangent. The important thing is the date.*

andarse con rodeos

to beat around the bush

Avoiding saying something directly. Very common in the negative: 'sin rodeos', 'no te andes con rodeos'.

> No te andes con rodeos y dime qué ha pasado.
> *Stop beating around the bush and tell me what happened.*

buscarle tres pies al gato INFORMAL

to overcomplicate things / to split hairs

When someone looks for problems or hidden meanings where there aren't any.

> No le busques tres pies al gato: te ha dicho que sí y punto.
> *Don't overcomplicate it: she said yes, end of story.*

morderse la lengua

to bite your tongue

To stop yourself from saying something.

> Tuve que morderme la lengua para no contestarle mal.
> *I had to bite my tongue so I wouldn't snap at him.*

sin ton ni son INFORMAL

for no rhyme or reason / out of the blue

When something happens with no logic or explanation.

> Empezó a gritar sin ton ni son.
> *He started shouting for no rhyme or reason.*

no venir a cuento INFORMAL

to be beside the point / to be uncalled for

A comment that is irrelevant or inappropriate in that moment.

> Ese comentario sobre su edad no venía a cuento.
> *That comment about her age was uncalled for.*

ser harina de otro costal

to be a different kettle of fish / a whole other story

To say that something is a separate, different matter.

> Hablar inglés en el trabajo, vale; dar una charla en inglés ya es harina de otro costal.
> *Speaking English at work, fine; giving a talk in English is a different kettle of fish.*

al pie de la letra

to the letter / word for word

Following instructions exactly, or repeating something exactly.

> Seguí la receta al pie de la letra y aun así me salió mal.
> *I followed the recipe to the letter and it still went wrong.*

Control, power & getting your way

Who's in charge, who wins, who pays the price.

tener la sartén por el mango

to call the shots / to hold all the cards

The person who has the power to decide in a situation.

> En esta negociación, el cliente tiene la sartén por el mango.
> *In this negotiation, the client holds all the cards.*

cortar el bacalao COLLOQUIAL

to rule the roost / to be the one who calls the shots

Who really makes the decisions in a group, family or company.

> Aquí el director firma, pero quien corta el bacalao es su secretaria.
> *The director signs things here, but the one who really calls the shots is his assistant.*

salirse con la suya

to get your own way

Often slightly negative: someone gets what they want despite others.

> Al final mi hermano se salió con la suya y fuimos a la playa.
> *In the end my brother got his own way and we went to the beach.*

dar la vuelta a la tortilla INFORMAL

to turn the tables / to turn things around

When a situation changes completely, especially in sport or competition.

> Íbamos perdiendo 2-0, pero en la segunda parte le dimos la vuelta a la tortilla.
> *We were losing 2-0, but in the second half we turned things around.*

pagar el pato INFORMAL

to take the rap / to carry the can

To be blamed or punished for something that isn't (only) your fault.

> Los jefes se equivocaron y al final pagamos el pato los de siempre.
> *The bosses got it wrong and, as usual, we were the ones who took the rap.*

hacer su agosto

to make a killing / to cash in

To make a lot of money quickly thanks to a situation.

> Con la ola de calor, las tiendas de ventiladores están haciendo su agosto.
> *With the heatwave, shops selling fans are making a killing.*

dar gato por liebre INFORMAL

to rip someone off / to sell someone a pup

To trick someone by giving them something worse than what they paid for.

> Ojo con esa web, que te pueden dar gato por liebre.
> *Careful with that website, they might rip you off.*

llevarse la palma INFORMAL

to take the biscuit / to take the cake

Ironic: the most extreme example of something (usually bad).

> He tenido jefes difíciles, pero este se lleva la palma.
> *I've had difficult bosses, but this one takes the biscuit.*

echar balones fuera INFORMAL

to pass the buck / to dodge the question

To avoid responsibility or avoid answering directly. Very common with politicians.

> Cuando le preguntaron por los retrasos, el ministro echó balones fuera.
> *When asked about the delays, the minister dodged the question.*

tener mano izquierda

to be tactful / to have a light touch

The skill of handling people and delicate situations diplomatically.

> Para ser buena jefa hay que tener mano izquierda.
> *To be a good boss you need to be tactful.*

tener enchufe COLLOQUIAL

to have friends in high places / to have connections

Getting a job or advantage thanks to contacts, not merit. 'Enchufado/a' = someone who got in that way.

Spain & Latin America: Spain. In much of Latin America: 'tener palanca' or 'tener cuña'.

> No sé cómo consiguió el puesto; dicen que tiene enchufe.
> *I don't know how he got the job; people say he has connections.*

estar en el ajo COLLOQUIAL

to be in on it / to be in the know

To be involved in something, often secret or a bit shady.

> No te hagas el sorprendido, que tú también estabas en el ajo.
> *Don't act surprised, you were in on it too.*

Reactions, shock & emotions

Vivid ways to say how something made you feel.

quedarse de piedra INFORMAL

to be stunned / to be speechless

Total surprise, usually after hearing news.

> Cuando me dijo que se iba a vivir a Australia, me quedé de piedra.
> *When she told me she was moving to Australia, I was stunned.*

quedarse a cuadros COLLOQUIAL

to be gobsmacked / to be completely thrown

Same idea as 'de piedra', more colloquial and a bit humorous.

Spain & Latin America: Mainly Spain.

> Me quedé a cuadros con el precio del alquiler.
> *I was gobsmacked by the price of the rent.*

poner los pelos de punta

to make your hair stand on end / to give you goosebumps

From fear, but also from emotion (a song, a speech).

> Esa canción me pone los pelos de punta cada vez que la oigo.
> *That song gives me goosebumps every time I hear it.*

poner el grito en el cielo

to kick up a fuss / to hit the roof

To protest loudly and angrily about something.

> Los vecinos pusieron el grito en el cielo cuando subieron la cuota.
> *The neighbours hit the roof when they raised the fees.*

caérsele a alguien el alma a los pies

your heart sinks

Sudden disappointment or sadness. Works like 'gustar': 'se me cayó el alma a los pies'.

> Cuando vi la nota del examen, se me cayó el alma a los pies.
> *When I saw my exam mark, my heart sank.*

estar en el séptimo cielo

to be on cloud nine

Extreme happiness, often in love or after great news.

> Desde que conoció a Diego, está en el séptimo cielo.
> *Since she met Diego, she's been on cloud nine.*

tener la mosca detrás de la oreja INFORMAL

to smell a rat / to have a nagging suspicion

When you suspect something is wrong.

> Tanta amabilidad me tiene con la mosca detrás de la oreja.
> *All this kindness makes me smell a rat.*

hacer la vista gorda

to turn a blind eye

To pretend not to see something wrong, deliberately.

> El profesor hizo la vista gorda cuando vio el móvil.
> *The teacher turned a blind eye when he saw the phone.*

no caber en sí de alegría

to be over the moon / to be beside yourself with joy

Overflowing happiness.

> Cuando la aceptaron en la universidad, no cabía en sí de alegría.
> *When she got into university, she was over the moon.*

People & relationships

How people get on, what they're like and how they treat each other.

llevarse como el perro y el gato

to fight like cat and dog

Note the order: in Spanish it's dog first.

> Mis hermanos se llevan como el perro y el gato.
> *My brothers fight like cat and dog.*

caer gordo / caer fatal (a alguien) COLLOQUIAL

to not be able to stand someone

Works like 'gustar': 'Me cae gordo' = I can't stand him. Opposite: 'me cae genial'.

> No sé por qué, pero el novio de Laura me cae gordo.
> *I don't know why, but I can't stand Laura's boyfriend.*

dar plantón (a alguien) INFORMAL

to stand someone up

Not turning up to a date or appointment.

> Quedamos a las ocho y me dio plantón.
> *We arranged to meet at eight and he stood me up.*

poner verde (a alguien) COLLOQUIAL

to slag someone off / to badmouth someone

To criticise someone harshly, usually behind their back.

> En cuanto se fue, lo pusieron verde.
> *As soon as he left, they started badmouthing him.*

ser un/a pelota COLLOQUIAL

to be a creep / a brown-noser / a teacher's pet

Someone who flatters the boss or teacher to get advantages. 'Hacer la pelota' = to suck up.

> Siempre le está haciendo la pelota al jefe.
> *He's always sucking up to the boss.*

ser la oveja negra

to be the black sheep

The member of a family or group who is different or causes problems.

> Soy la oveja negra de la familia: todos son médicos menos yo.
> *I'm the black sheep of the family: they're all doctors except me.*

ir de punta en blanco

to be dressed to the nines / dressed up to the nines

Very elegantly dressed.

> Fue a la boda de punta en blanco.
> *He went to the wedding dressed to the nines.*

estar al loro VERY COLLOQUIAL

to be on the ball / to keep your eyes peeled

Alert, paying attention, up to date. 'Al loro' alone = watch out!

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Está siempre al loro de las ofertas de vuelos.
> *He always keeps his eyes peeled for flight deals.*

tener buena / mala pata INFORMAL

to be lucky / unlucky

Luck in general. '¡Qué mala pata!' = what bad luck!

> Qué mala pata: se me rompió el móvil el primer día de vacaciones.
> *What bad luck: my phone broke on the first day of the holiday.*

Speed, timing & manner

How, how fast and when something happens. Many of these work like adverbs, so they're easy to drop into any sentence.

en un abrir y cerrar de ojos

in the blink of an eye / in a flash

Something that happens extremely fast.

> Las entradas se agotaron en un abrir y cerrar de ojos.
> *The tickets sold out in the blink of an eye.*

por los pelos INFORMAL

by the skin of your teeth / just in time

Barely, at the last moment. 'Me salvé por los pelos' = I had a narrow escape.

> Cogí el tren por los pelos.
> *I caught the train by the skin of my teeth.*

de mala gana

reluctantly / grudgingly

Doing something without wanting to. Opposite: 'de buena gana'.

> Me ayudó, pero de muy mala gana.
> *He helped me, but very grudgingly.*

a la desesperada

as a last resort / in desperation

A last attempt when nothing else has worked.

> A la desesperada, llamé a todos los hoteles de la zona.
> *In desperation, I rang every hotel in the area.*

a lo loco INFORMAL

without thinking / willy-nilly

Acting impulsively, without a plan.

> No compres a lo loco; compara precios primero.
> *Don't buy without thinking; compare prices first.*

de buenas a primeras

all of a sudden / out of the blue

Something unexpected, with no warning.

> De buenas a primeras, decidió dejar el trabajo y viajar.
> *All of a sudden, he decided to quit his job and travel.*

a la primera de cambio

at the first opportunity / at the drop of a hat

Usually critical: someone who gives up or leaves very easily.

> Si no le gusta algo, lo deja a la primera de cambio.
> *If she doesn't like something, she drops it at the drop of a hat.*

de higos a brevas INFORMAL

once in a blue moon

Very rarely. ('Breva' = early fig.)

> Nos vemos de higos a brevas, pero cuando quedamos es genial.
> *We see each other once in a blue moon, but when we do it's great.*

a trancas y barrancas INFORMAL

in fits and starts / with great difficulty

Progress that is slow, bumpy and full of obstacles.

> Terminé la carrera a trancas y barrancas, pero la terminé.
> *I finished my degree in fits and starts, but I finished it.*

a buenas horas (mangas verdes) INFORMAL

a bit late for that now / too little, too late

Ironic reply when help or an idea arrives too late. The full version is jokey and old-fashioned.

> —¿Quieres que te ayude con la mudanza? —¡A buenas horas! Ya está todo hecho.
> *"Do you want me to help with the move?" "Bit late for that now! It's all done."*

venir al pelo / venir de perlas INFORMAL

to come in handy / to be just what you needed

Something that arrives at exactly the right moment.

> Este dinero extra me viene al pelo para las vacaciones.
> *This extra money is just what I needed for the holidays.*

salir a pedir de boca

to go perfectly / to go like a dream

When everything goes exactly as you wanted.

> La presentación salió a pedir de boca.
> *The presentation went like a dream.*

en el quinto pino COLLOQUIAL

in the middle of nowhere / miles away

A place that is very far away or hard to get to.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> El piso es bonito, pero está en el quinto pino.
> *The flat is nice, but it's miles from anywhere.*

Money, effort & dreams

From being broke to building castles in the air.

apretarse el cinturón

to tighten your belt

To spend less because money is short.

> Este año toca apretarse el cinturón.
> *This year we'll have to tighten our belts.*

ser un chollo COLLOQUIAL

to be a steal / a real bargain

Something surprisingly cheap or a great deal. Also an easy, well-paid job.

Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Encontré un vuelo a Roma por 30 euros, ¡un chollo!
> *I found a flight to Rome for 30 euros, a real steal!*

dormirse en los laureles

to rest on your laurels

To stop making an effort after a success.

> Hemos ganado el cliente, pero no podemos dormirnos en los laureles.
> *We've won the client, but we can't rest on our laurels.*

hacer castillos en el aire

to build castles in the air / to daydream

Making plans or dreams that are not realistic.

> Deja de hacer castillos en el aire y busca trabajo.
> *Stop building castles in the air and look for a job.*

ser pan de cada día

to be an everyday occurrence / par for the course

Something (often negative) that happens regularly.

> Los atascos en esta ciudad son el pan de cada día.
> *Traffic jams in this city are an everyday occurrence.*

ir sobre ruedas INFORMAL

to go smoothly / to run like clockwork

When a project or process is going very well.

> De momento, el nuevo sistema va sobre ruedas.
> *So far, the new system is running like clockwork.*

no tener ni pizca de... INFORMAL

to not have an ounce of... / not a shred of...

Total absence of something: 'ni pizca de gracia', 'ni pizca de sueño'.

> Esa broma no tiene ni pizca de gracia.
> *That joke isn't the least bit funny.*

estar en pañales

to be in its infancy

A project, technology or skill that is only just beginning.

> Mi chino todavía está en pañales.
> *My Chinese is still in its infancy.*

a lo hecho, pecho INFORMAL

what's done is done / you have to face the music

Accepting the consequences of your decisions.

> Me equivoqué al firmar, pero a lo hecho, pecho.
> *I made a mistake signing it, but what's done is done.*

DON'T OVERDO IT

One well-placed idiom per conversation sounds brilliant; five in a row sounds like a textbook. Choose a handful that fit your personality, learn exactly how they're conjugated ('se me cayó el alma a los pies', 'me cae gordo'), and use them where a native would. Watch out for register: 'estar hasta las narices' is great with friends, odd in a job interview.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

08 · Soften, insist, react, empathise: the small words that carry a real conversation

Conversation vocabulary

At B2 the challenge isn't saying what you think, it's saying it the way a native would: softening a criticism, insisting without sounding rude, reacting with the right amount of emotion. These phrases are the glue of real conversation in Spain. Listen for them in series and podcasts, then steal them one by one.

Making yourself clear

For when the conversation gets a bit tangled and you need to explain what you really meant.

Lo que quiero decir es que...

What I mean is... / What I'm trying to say is...

To rephrase your idea more clearly, especially after a misunderstanding.

> No critico tu trabajo. Lo que quiero decir es que necesitamos más tiempo.
> *I'm not criticising your work. What I mean is that we need more time.*

No es eso. INFORMAL

That's not it. / That's not what I mean.

When someone has misunderstood you. Often followed by 'Es que...'.

> —¿No te gusta el regalo? —No es eso, es que ya lo tengo.
> *"Don't you like the present?" "It's not that, it's just that I already have it."*

No me malinterpretes.

Don't get me wrong.

Before saying something that could sound negative.

> No me malinterpretes, me encanta Madrid, pero no podría vivir allí.
> *Don't get me wrong, I love Madrid, but I couldn't live there.*

Vamos a ver... INFORMAL

Right, let's see... / OK, hang on...

To start organising an explanation, or to calm things down when people are confused or arguing.

> Vamos a ver, ¿quién ha dicho que la reunión era hoy?
> *OK, hang on, who said the meeting was today?*

A ver si me explico. INFORMAL

Let me put it this way. / Let me see if I can explain.

Before trying again to explain something complicated.

> A ver si me explico: no es que no quiera ir, es que no puedo.
> *Let me put it this way: it's not that I don't want to go, it's that I can't.*

Te lo digo en serio.

I'm being serious. / I really mean it.

When you think the other person might take your words as a joke.

> Te lo digo en serio, deberías ir al médico.
> *I really mean it, you should go to the doctor.*

Me refiero a...

I mean... / I'm talking about...

To specify what you're talking about.

> No me refiero a ti, me refiero a la empresa en general.
> *I don't mean you, I mean the company in general.*

Hablando de...

Speaking of... / Talking of...

To jump from something just mentioned to a related topic.

> Hablando de viajes, ¿al final fuiste a Lisboa?
> *Speaking of trips, did you end up going to Lisbon?*

Ya que estamos... INFORMAL

While we're at it... / While we're on the subject...

To add a related request or topic, taking advantage of the moment.

> Ya que estamos, ¿revisamos también el presupuesto?
> *While we're at it, shall we go over the budget too?*

A todo esto... INFORMAL

By the way... / Come to think of it...

Very Spanish way to bring up something that has just come to mind.

> A todo esto, ¿sabes algo de Marcos?
> *By the way, have you heard anything from Marcos?*

Hedging & softening

Spanish speakers can be direct, but softening is a social skill. These phrases make your opinions sound open and polite rather than absolute.

Igual me equivoco, pero... INFORMAL
I might be wrong, but...
To present an opinion humbly. 'Igual' here = maybe (very common in Spain).

> Igual me equivoco, pero creo que Ana está molesta con nosotros.
> *I might be wrong, but I think Ana is upset with us.*

No sé, a lo mejor... INFORMAL
I don't know, maybe... / Perhaps...
A soft suggestion. Note: 'a lo mejor' takes the indicative.

> No sé, a lo mejor podríamos salir un poco antes.
> *I don't know, maybe we could leave a bit earlier.*

Por así decirlo
So to speak / as it were
When you use a word that isn't quite accurate or is a bit metaphorical.

> Es el cerebro del equipo, por así decirlo.
> *He's the brains of the team, so to speak.*

Digamos que...
Let's just say... / Let's put it this way...
To say something diplomatically or with a hint of irony.

> Digamos que no es el mejor cocinero del mundo.
> *Let's just say he's not the best cook in the world.*

Si no me equivoco...
If I'm not mistaken...
To give information you're fairly, but not totally, sure about.

> Si no me equivoco, el plazo termina el viernes.
> *If I'm not mistaken, the deadline is Friday.*

No lo tengo muy claro.
I'm not too sure about it. / I'm not convinced.
A polite way to express doubt or disagreement.

> La idea suena bien, pero no lo tengo muy claro.
> *The idea sounds good, but I'm not totally convinced.*

Tampoco es que... INFORMAL
It's not as if... / It's not like...
To play something down. Takes the subjunctive.

> Tampoco es que sea un drama; solo llegamos un poco tarde.
> *It's not as if it's a disaster; we're just a bit late.*

No digo que no, pero...
I'm not saying no, but... / I'm not saying you're wrong, but...
To partly accept an idea before adding an objection.

> No digo que no sea buena idea, pero es muy cara.
> *I'm not saying it's not a good idea, but it's very expensive.*

Un poco sí, la verdad. INFORMAL
A bit, to be honest. / Kind of, yeah.
A gentle way to admit something negative.

> —¿Te molestó lo que dije? —Un poco sí, la verdad.
> *"Did what I said bother you?" "A bit, to be honest."*

Hasta cierto punto
Up to a point / to some extent
Partial agreement or partial truth.

> Tienes razón hasta cierto punto.
> *You're right up to a point.*

Emphasising & insisting

For strong yeses, strong noes and everything in between. Tone matters: say them with conviction.

Te lo juro. INFORMAL
I swear. / Honestly.
Very common in casual speech to stress that something is true. Not as dramatic as English 'I swear to God'.

> Te lo juro, no he sido yo.
> *I swear, it wasn't me.*

¡Ni de broma! INFORMAL
No way! / Not a chance!
A firm, informal no. Also 'Ni en broma'.

> —¿Vas a dejar el trabajo? —¡Ni de broma!
> *"Are you going to quit your job?" "No way!"*

¡Ni loco/a! COLLOQUIAL
Not on your life! / You couldn't pay me to!
Refusing something you find crazy. Agree in gender with the speaker.

> ¿Saltar en paracaídas? ¡Ni loca!
> *Skydiving? Not on your life!*

¡Y tanto! INFORMAL
And how! / You bet! / Too right!
Enthusiastic agreement, very Spanish.

> —¿Te gustó el concierto? —¡Y tanto!
> *"Did you like the concert?" "You bet!"*

¡Ya te digo! COLLOQUIAL
Tell me about it! / You can say that again!
Strong agreement, especially with a complaint.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> —Qué caro está todo. —¡Ya te digo!
> *"Everything's so expensive." "Tell me about it!"*

Lo que oyes. INFORMAL
You heard me right. / You heard.
To confirm surprising news when the other person reacts with disbelief.

> —¿Que se casa en Las Vegas? —Lo que oyes.
> *"He's getting married in Las Vegas?" "You heard me right."*

Ni que decir tiene que... FORMAL
Needless to say...
To introduce something obvious. Slightly formal.

> Ni que decir tiene que estás invitada.
> *Needless to say, you're invited.*

Colloquial fillers & reactions (Spain)

You'll hear these every few seconds in Spain. Use them with friends and they'll make you sound relaxed and natural; avoid most of them in formal situations.

en plan VERY COLLOQUIAL
like / sort of
Young people's 'like': to describe, quote or approximate. Very colloquial.

> Y me miró en plan '¿qué haces aquí?'.
> *And she looked at me like, 'what are you doing here?'*

tío / tía VERY COLLOQUIAL
mate / dude / man / girl
To address friends. Not about family here! Avoid with people you don't know well.
Spain & Latin America: Spain. Latin America has its own: 'güey' (Mexico), 'che' (Argentina), 'parce' (Colombia)...

> Tía, no te lo vas a creer.
> *Girl, you're not going to believe this.*

¿sabes? INFORMAL
you know?
Tag to check the listener is following or to seek sympathy.

> Es que necesito un cambio, ¿sabes?
> *I just need a change, you know?*

¡Qué fuerte! COLLOQUIAL
No way! / That's crazy! / Oh my God!
Reaction to shocking gossip or news.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> —Lo han despedido por un tuit. —¡Qué fuerte!
> *"He got fired over a tweet." "That's crazy!"*

¡Hala! INFORMAL
Wow! / Whoa!
Amazement or exaggeration. Also 'Hala, me voy' = right, I'm off.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> ¡Hala, qué vistas tan bonitas!
> *Wow, what a beautiful view!*

Pues nada... INFORMAL
Oh well... / So, anyway...
To accept something or to wrap up a conversation.

> Pues nada, si no puedes, quedamos otro día.
> *Oh well, if you can't make it, we'll meet another day.*

Being diplomatic at work

Disagreeing, suggesting and saying 'not now' without upsetting anyone. Perfect for meetings, video calls and team chats.

Entiendo tu punto, pero...
I see your point, but...
To acknowledge someone before disagreeing. Also 'Entiendo lo que dices, pero...'.

> Entiendo tu punto, pero creo que el cliente no lo aceptará.
> *I see your point, but I don't think the client will accept it.*

Quizá podríamos...
Perhaps we could...
A soft suggestion. The conditional makes it polite.

> Quizá podríamos dividir el proyecto en dos fases.
> *Perhaps we could split the project into two phases.*

¿Qué te parece si...?
How about if...? / What do you think if we...?
Proposing an idea and inviting the other person's opinion. With present indicative.

> ¿Qué te parece si lo hablamos el lunes con calma?
> *How about we talk it over properly on Monday?*

¿Y si probamos...?
What if we try...?
Suggesting an alternative in a relaxed way.

> ¿Y si probamos con otro proveedor?
> *What if we try a different supplier?*

Lo veo un poco complicado.
I think it might be a bit tricky.
A diplomatic way to say 'I don't think this will work'.

> Terminarlo para el viernes lo veo un poco complicado.
> *I think finishing it by Friday might be a bit tricky.*

Le doy una vuelta y te digo. INFORMAL
I'll give it some thought and get back to you.
Buying time before deciding. 'Darle una vuelta a algo' = to think something over.

> Interesante propuesta. Le doy una vuelta y te digo algo mañana.
> *Interesting proposal. I'll give it some thought and get back to you tomorrow.*

Me lo apunto. INFORMAL
I'll make a note of it. / Noted.
To show you've taken a comment or task on board.

> Buena idea, me lo apunto para la próxima reunión.
> *Good idea, I'll make a note of it for the next meeting.*

Coincido en parte.
I partly agree.
Partial agreement in a professional discussion.

> Coincido en parte, pero el presupuesto también importa.
> *I partly agree, but the budget matters too.*

Si te parece bien...
If that's OK with you... / If you're happy with that...
To propose something while leaving the final word to the other person.

> Si te parece bien, te mando el borrador esta tarde.
> *If that's OK with you, I'll send you the draft this afternoon.*

Lo tendré en cuenta.
I'll bear that in mind. / I'll take that into account.
To accept feedback politely (sometimes without committing to anything).

> Gracias por el comentario, lo tendré en cuenta.
> *Thanks for the feedback, I'll bear it in mind.*

No sé si me explico.
I don't know if I'm making myself clear. / Does that make sense?
To check understanding without making the other person feel slow.

> Necesitamos menos texto y más datos, no sé si me explico.
> *We need less text and more data, if that makes sense.*

Te lo comento. INFORMAL
I'll let you know. / I'll fill you in.
Very common at work: you'll pass on information later.

> Hablo con el cliente y te lo comento.
> *I'll talk to the client and fill you in.*

Complaining politely

In shops, restaurants, with your landlord or a service provider: firm but polite gets results.

Siento tener que decírtelo, pero...
I'm sorry to have to say this, but...
To introduce a complaint with a gentle start. With usted: 'decírselo'.

> Siento tener que decírselo, pero la habitación no está limpia.
> *I'm sorry to have to say this, but the room isn't clean.*

No es por quejarme, pero... INFORMAL
I don't mean to complain, but...
Classic softener before (yes) a complaint.

> No es por quejarme, pero llevamos media hora esperando.
> *I don't mean to complain, but we've been waiting half an hour.*

Perdone que insista, pero... FORMAL
Sorry to insist, but... / Sorry to keep on, but...
When you need to repeat a request that hasn't been dealt with.

> Perdone que insista, pero necesito una respuesta hoy.
> *Sorry to keep on, but I need an answer today.*

Creo que ha habido un error.
I think there's been a mistake.
Neutral, non-aggressive way to point out a problem.

> Creo que ha habido un error en la factura.
> *I think there's been a mistake on the bill.*

Esto no es lo que pedí.
This isn't what I ordered.
In restaurants and online orders.

> Perdone, esto no es lo que pedí; yo pedí el menú vegetariano.
> *Excuse me, this isn't what I ordered; I ordered the vegetarian set menu.*

¿Sería posible...? FORMAL
Would it be possible to...?
Very polite request for a solution. With infinitive or 'que' + subjunctive.

> ¿Sería posible cambiarme a otra habitación?
> *Would it be possible to move me to another room?*

Entiendo que no es culpa suya, pero... FORMAL
I understand it's not your fault, but...
To show empathy with the person serving you while still complaining.

> Entiendo que no es culpa suya, pero es la tercera vez que pasa.
> *I understand it's not your fault, but it's the third time this has happened.*

No me parece normal que...
I don't think it's acceptable that...
A firmer complaint. Followed by subjunctive.

> No me parece normal que tarden un mes en contestar.
> *I don't think it's acceptable that it takes you a month to reply.*

Me gustaría hablar con el/la responsable. FORMAL
I'd like to speak to the manager / the person in charge.
When the problem isn't being solved.

> Lo siento, pero me gustaría hablar con la responsable.
> *I'm sorry, but I'd like to speak to the person in charge.*

¿Qué solución me pueden dar?
What can you do to sort this out?
To move the conversation from the problem to a solution.

> El paquete llegó roto. ¿Qué solución me pueden dar?
> *The parcel arrived broken. What can you do to sort this out?*

Showing empathy & support

When someone shares a problem, these phrases show you're really listening.

Te entiendo perfectamente.
I completely understand.
To show you identify with the other person's situation.

> Te entiendo perfectamente; a mí me pasó lo mismo.
> *I completely understand; the same thing happened to me.*

Me hago cargo.
I can imagine. / I understand.
Slightly more formal empathy: 'I realise how hard this is'.

> Me hago cargo de la situación; haremos lo posible.
> *I understand the situation; we'll do everything we can.*

Tiene que ser duro.
That must be hard.
Acknowledging a difficult situation. Also 'Debe de ser duro'.

> Cuidar de tu padre y trabajar a la vez tiene que ser muy duro.
> *Looking after your dad and working at the same time must be really hard.*

Normal que estés así. INFORMAL
No wonder you feel like that. / It's only natural.
Validating someone's emotions. With subjunctive.

> Después de todo lo que ha pasado, normal que estés agotada.
> *After everything that's happened, no wonder you're exhausted.*

Ya verás como todo se arregla. INFORMAL
You'll see, everything will work out.
Optimistic reassurance.

> Ya verás como todo se arregla con tu hermana.
> *You'll see, things will work out with your sister.*

Estoy aquí para lo que necesites.
I'm here for whatever you need.
Warm support for a friend going through something tough.

> Ya sabes que estoy aquí para lo que necesites.
> *You know I'm here for whatever you need.*

¡Vaya faena! COLLOQUIAL
What a pain! / What a nuisance!
Sympathy for an annoying setback.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> ¿Te han cancelado el vuelo? ¡Vaya faena!
> *Your flight's been cancelled? What a pain!*

Desahógate. INFORMAL

Get it off your chest. / Let it all out.

Inviting someone to vent.

> Venga, cuéntamelo todo y desahógate.
> *Come on, tell me everything and get it off your chest.*

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

09 · The sentence patterns that turn correct Spanish into fluent Spanish

Common constructions

These are reusable frames: learn the pattern once and you can pour any content into it. Many of them involve the subjunctive, so this is also the place where your grammar becomes real speech. For each one, read the pattern, study the examples, then write two sentences of your own about your life.

Hypotheses, conditions & 'as if'

Talking about what could have been, what would happen and what only seems to be.

si + pluscuamperfecto de subjuntivo + condicional compuesto

if I had... I would have... (third conditional)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **Si hubiera/hubiese + participle, habría + participle**

For imaginary situations in the past: things that didn't happen and their imaginary results. In everyday speech you'll also hear 'hubiera' in both halves: 'Si lo hubiera sabido, no hubiera venido'.

past condition → past result — *classic third conditional*

› Si hubiera salido antes, no habría perdido el tren.
If I'd left earlier, I wouldn't have missed the train.

past condition → present result (mixed) — *a past cause with a consequence now*

› Si hubiera estudiado Medicina, ahora sería pediatra.
If I'd studied medicine, I'd be a paediatrician now.

NOTE 'Hubiera' and 'hubiese' are interchangeable; 'hubiera' is more common in speech.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Si habría sabido...~~ → ✓ Si hubiera sabido... Never use the conditional after 'si'.

de + infinitivo (condición)

if... / had I... (condition with an infinitive)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **De + infinitive (simple or compound), + main clause**

A compact, slightly elegant way to express a condition. With the compound infinitive ('de haber sabido') it replaces a third conditional.

› De haberlo sabido, te habría llamado.
Had I known, I'd have called you.

› De seguir así, vamos a tener problemas.
If things carry on like this, we're going to have problems.

NOTE Very common in writing and in careful speech; 'De haberlo sabido...' is a fixed favourite.

con + infinitivo

just by... / as long as you... / all you need to do is...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **Con + infinitive, + result · Con lo que + verb**

Means 'it's enough to do X for Y to happen'. Also used to express contrast: 'with all that..., still...'.

sufficient condition — *doing X is enough*

› Con estudiar media hora al día, aprobarás.
Just by studying half an hour a day, you'll pass.

contrast — *despite doing X*

› Con lo que ha estudiado, y no ha aprobado.
After all that studying, and she still didn't pass.

como si + imperfecto / pluscuamperfecto de subjuntivo

as if... / as though...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **como si + imperfect subjunctive (same time) · como si + pluperfect subjunctive (earlier)**

For unreal comparisons. 'Como si' ALWAYS takes the imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive, never the present.

› Me habla como si fuera su hijo.
He talks to me as if I were his son.

› Actúa como si no hubiera pasado nada.
She's acting as though nothing had happened.

› ¡Como si no tuviera bastante trabajo!
As if I didn't have enough work already!

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*como si es fácil~~ → ✓ como si fuera fácil.

por más que / por mucho que + subjuntivo

no matter how much… / however much…

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **por más que + verb · por mucho/a/os/as + noun + que · por muy + adjective + que**

Expresses that an effort or quality doesn't change the result. Subjunctive for hypothetical or general cases; indicative for real past facts.

por más que + verb — *however much you do it*

› Por más que se lo expliques, no lo va a entender.
No matter how much you explain it to him, he won't understand.

por mucho + noun + que — *however much / many*

› Por mucho dinero que gane, nunca está contento.
However much money he earns, he's never happy.

por muy + adjective + que — *however + adjective*

› Por muy cansada que estés, tienes que terminarlo.
However tired you are, you have to finish it.

NOTE Real fact, indicative: 'Por más que lo intenté, no pude abrir la puerta' (I tried and failed).

aunque + indicativo / subjuntivo

although / even though / even if

CONNECTOR B2

PATTERN **aunque + indicative = a fact · aunque + subjunctive = hypothesis or fact you don't care about**

The mood changes the meaning. Indicative: you present something as true and new information. Subjunctive: it's a possibility ('even if') or you treat the fact as irrelevant.

aunque + indicative — *although (a fact)*

› Aunque llueve, vamos a salir.
Although it's raining, we're going out.

aunque + present subjunctive — *even if (possible)*

› Aunque llueva, vamos a salir.
Even if it rains, we're going out.

aunque + imperfect subjunctive — *even if (unlikely/unreal)*

› Aunque me pagaran el doble, no volvería a ese trabajo.
Even if they paid me double, I wouldn't go back to that job.

DON'T CONFUSE a pesar de que follows the same rule: 'A pesar de que es caro, lo compro'.

Contrast, correction & emphasis

no es que + subjuntivo (, es que…)

it's not that… (it's that…)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **No es que + subjunctive, (sino que / es que) + indicative**

To reject a possible interpretation and give the real reason. The rejected idea goes in the subjunctive; the real one in the indicative.

- No es que no quiera ir, es que estoy agotado.
  It's not that I don't want to go, it's that I'm exhausted.
- No es que sea caro, es que no lo necesito.
  It's not that it's expensive, it's that I don't need it.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~No es que no quiero~~ → ✓ No es que no quiera.

no solo… sino (también / que)

not only… but (also)…

CONNECTOR B2

PATTERN **no solo + X + sino (también) + Y · no solo + verb + sino que (además) + verb**

To add a second, often stronger, element. Use 'sino que' when the second part has a conjugated verb.

- No solo habla inglés, sino también alemán y chino.
  She speaks not only English, but also German and Chinese.
- No solo llegó tarde, sino que además se olvidó los documentos.
  Not only was he late, but he also forgot the documents.

NOTE 'Solo' is written without an accent according to current RAE rules.

no… sino…

not… but (rather)…

CONNECTOR B2

PATTERN **no + X + sino + Y (nouns, adjectives, phrases) · no + verb + sino que + verb**

To correct: the first element is false, the second is true. 'Pero' doesn't work here.

- No es mi hermana, sino mi prima.
  She's not my sister, she's my cousin.
- No lo dijo para ofenderte, sino que intentaba ayudar.
  He didn't say it to offend you; he was trying to help.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~No es caro~~, pero barato → ✓ No es caro, sino barato. Use 'pero' to add, 'sino' to replace.

lo + adjetivo / adverbio + que

how (adjective)... / just how...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **lo + adjective (agreeing with the noun) + que + verb**

Emphasises the degree of a quality. The adjective agrees with the noun it describes, even though 'lo' is neuter.

- No te imaginas lo difícil que es encontrar piso.
  You can't imagine how hard it is to find a flat.
- Me sorprendió lo simpáticas que eran sus amigas.
  I was surprised at how nice her friends were.
- Mira lo bien que habla ya español.
  Look how well he speaks Spanish now.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*lo simpático que eran ellas~~ → ✓ lo simpáticas que eran.

el hecho de que + subjuntivo

the fact that...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **El hecho de que + subjunctive (usually) + verb**

Turns a whole idea into the subject of a comment or judgement. When it's the subject at the start of a sentence, it normally takes the subjunctive.

- El hecho de que no haya llamado me preocupa.
  The fact that she hasn't called worries me.
- El hecho de que trabajes desde casa no significa que estés siempre disponible.
  The fact that you work from home doesn't mean you're always available.

cuanto más... más / menos

the more... the more / the less...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **cuanto/a/os/as + más/menos (+ noun) + verb, más/menos + ...**

Two things that increase or decrease together. 'Cuanto' agrees when followed by a noun. Future meaning → subjunctive.

- Cuanto más practico, más fácil me resulta.
  The more I practise, the easier it gets.
- Cuantas menos excusas pongas, mejor.
  The fewer excuses you make, the better.
- Cuanto antes lo sepamos, mejor.
  The sooner we know, the better.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Lo más practico~~, lo más... → ✓ Cuanto más practico, más... (no article in the second half either).

Time & progression

a medida que

as (gradually) / as... goes on

CONNECTOR B2

PATTERN **a medida que + indicative (present/past) · + subjunctive (future)**

Two processes that develop at the same time and in proportion.

› A medida que pasaban los meses, se sentía más integrada.
As the months went by, she felt more at home.

› Os daré más información a medida que la reciba.
I'll give you more information as I receive it.

DON'T CONFUSE conforme = same meaning, slightly more formal.

al + infinitivo

when... / on (doing) / as...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **al + infinitive (+ subject after the verb)**

Expresses something that happens at the same moment as something else. Sometimes also cause.

› Al llegar a casa, me di cuenta de que no tenía las llaves.
When I got home, I realised I didn't have my keys.

› Al salir Ana, todos empezaron a hablar de ella.
As soon as Ana left, everyone started talking about her.

NOTE If the subject is different, put it after the infinitive: 'al salir Ana'.

estar por + infinitivo

to be tempted to / to be still to be done

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **estar por + infinitive · quedar por + infinitive**

Two uses: (1) with a person, you're thinking of doing something; (2) with a thing, it hasn't been done yet.

person: to be tempted — *I'm half thinking of...*

› Estoy por llamarla y decirle todo.
I'm tempted to call her and tell her everything.

thing: still pending — *yet to be done*

› La cocina está por limpiar.
The kitchen is still to be cleaned.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America 'estar por' also means 'to be about to': 'El tren está por salir' (Spain: 'está a punto de salir').

llegar a + infinitivo

to actually (do) / to go as far as / to get to (do)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN llegar a + infinitive

Emphasises that something reached an extreme or finally happened (or never did).

› Llegué a pensar que no volverías.
I even started to think you wouldn't come back.

› Nunca llegué a conocer a su padre.
I never actually got to meet his father.

DON'T CONFUSE 'llegar a ser' = to become (after effort): 'Llegó a ser directora'.

venir + gerundio

to have been (doing) for some time / increasingly

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN venir + gerund

An action that has been developing gradually up to now, often repeated. Common in news and professional language.

› Vengo diciéndolo desde hace meses.
I've been saying it for months.

› Los precios vienen subiendo desde el año pasado.
Prices have been rising steadily since last year.

andar + gerundio

to go around (doing) / to be (doing) lately

EXPRESSION INFORMAL B2

PATTERN andar + gerund

An ongoing activity done here and there, often with a slightly negative or casual tone.

› Anda diciendo por ahí que lo van a ascender.
He's going around saying he's going to be promoted.

› Ando buscando piso por el centro.
I'm on the lookout for a flat in the centre.

Results, assumptions & what you know

tener + participio

to have (something done / planned)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **tener + participle (agreeing with the object)**

Stresses the result or the state of something already done or decided. The participle agrees with the noun.

› Tengo pensado mudarme en primavera.
I'm planning to move in the spring.

› Ya tengo hechas las maletas.
I've already got my bags packed.

› Te tengo dicho que no toques mi ordenador.
I've told you (again and again) not to touch my computer.

NOTE Fixed favourites: tener pensado, tener previsto, tener entendido (to understand/believe), tener claro.

dar por + participio

to take (something) as... / to consider (something) as...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **dar algo por + participle (agrees with the object)**

To consider something as already done, true or finished.

› No des por hecho que te van a contratar.
Don't take it for granted that they'll hire you.

› Damos por terminada la reunión.
Let's call the meeting closed.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar por sentado** *to take for granted* · **dar por hecho** *to assume / to take as read* · **dar por perdido** *to give up for lost* · **darse por vencido** *to give up / to admit defeat*

ser de + infinitivo

to be... (expected / to be appreciated)

EXPRESSION FORMAL B2

PATTERN **Es de + infinitive (+ que + subjunctive)**

A compact, slightly formal way to give a judgement: something deserves or is likely to be done.

› Es de esperar que los precios bajen en otoño.
Prices are expected to fall in the autumn.

› Es de agradecer que te hayas quedado a ayudar.
It's very kind of you to have stayed to help.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **es de esperar** *it's to be expected* · **es de agradecer** *it's much appreciated* · **es de suponer** *presumably*

que yo sepa / por lo que sé

as far as I know

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **que yo sepa (subjunctive, fixed) · por lo que sé · que yo recuerde**

To limit what you say to your own knowledge. 'Que yo sepa' is always in the subjunctive.

› Que yo sepa, la reunión sigue en pie.
As far as I know, the meeting's still on.

› Por lo que sé, se mudaron a Sevilla.
From what I know, they moved to Seville.

› Que yo recuerde, nunca hemos estado allí.
As far as I remember, we've never been there.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Que yo sé~~ → ✓ Que yo sepa.

resulta que...

it turns out that... / the thing is...

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **Resulta que + indicative**

Introduces a surprising fact or the start of a story. Everywhere in spoken Spanish.

› Resulta que el vecino es primo de mi jefe.
It turns out the neighbour is my boss's cousin.

› Pues resulta que ayer me llamaron de la empresa...
So, the thing is, the company called me yesterday...

se ve que...

apparently... / it seems that... / I guess...

EXPRESSION INFORMAL B2

PATTERN **Se ve que + indicative**

A conclusion you draw from evidence. Very natural in conversation in Spain.

› Se ve que ha llovido mucho: está todo mojado.
It must have rained a lot: everything's wet.

› Se ve que no le gustó la idea.
Apparently he didn't like the idea.

People in general: impersonal patterns

hay quien… / hay gente que…

some people… / there are those who…

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **hay quien + indicative (singular) · hay gente que + indicative**

To refer to some people without naming them. 'Hay quien' takes a singular verb.

› Hay quien prefiere trabajar de noche.
Some people prefer working at night.

› Hay gente que no soporta el calor.
There are people who can't stand the heat.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hay quien prefieren~~ → ✓ Hay quien prefiere.

quien más quien menos

everyone, to a greater or lesser extent

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **Quien más quien menos + verb (singular)**

Means 'everybody, some more, some less'. Great for sounding natural when generalising.

› Quien más quien menos ha tenido alguna vez un jefe difícil.
Pretty much everyone has had a difficult boss at some point.

se impersonal

you / one / people (in general)

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **se + 3rd person singular verb (no specific subject)**

For general statements about what people do. Often with 'vivir, trabajar, comer, estar' or with a person after 'a'.

› En España se cena muy tarde.
In Spain people have dinner very late.

› Aquí se trabaja muy bien.
It's a really good place to work.

› Se ayudó a los afectados.
The people affected were helped.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*En España la gente cenan tarde~~ → ✓ En España la gente cena tarde / se cena tarde. 'La gente' is singular; 'se' avoids the problem altogether.

se pasiva (pasiva refleja)

is / are (done) — passive

EXPRESSION B2

PATTERN **se + verb agreeing with the noun (singular or plural)**

The everyday Spanish passive. The verb agrees with the thing: 'se vende piso' / 'se venden pisos'. Far more common than 'ser + participle'.

- Se alquilan habitaciones para estudiantes.
  Rooms to let for students.
- Se han cancelado todos los vuelos.
  All the flights have been cancelled.

NOTE 'Ser + participle' (fueron cancelados) is correct but sounds like a news report or formal writing. In conversation, use 'se': 'Ayer se cancelaron todos los vuelos'.

ONE PATTERN, FIVE SENTENCES

Choose one construction a day and write five true sentences about your own life with it: 'Cuanto más trabajo, menos…', 'Llevo X años sin…'. Personal sentences stick far better than textbook ones, and by the end of the week you'll catch yourself using them without planning.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

10 · Say exactly when, how soon and how often, like a fluent speaker

Time & frequency

You already know a menudo, de vez en cuando and dentro de. At B2 you need more precise and more formal ways to place things in time: hasta la fecha, a estas alturas, a la mayor brevedad. Many of these appear in work emails and the news, so notice the register labels. Watch the time clauses too: when they point to the future, they take the subjunctive.

Up to now, nowadays & back then

a estas alturas

at this stage / by now / this late in the day

EXPRESSION B2

Refers to a moment that is quite advanced in a process. Often carries a tone of surprise or criticism: it's too late (or too early) for something.

› A estas alturas ya deberías saber cómo funciona la empresa.
By now you should know how the company works.

› ¿Cambiar de plan a estas alturas? Imposible.
Change the plan at this stage? No way.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a estas alturas del año / de la película** *this late in the year / at this point (colloquial)*

NOTE 'A estas alturas de la película' is a fun colloquial version: 'at this point in the game'.

de un tiempo a esta parte

for some time now / lately

EXPRESSION B2

Describes a situation that started some time ago and continues now. Goes with the present or present perfect, never with a finished past.

› De un tiempo a esta parte, Diego está muy raro.
Diego has been acting very strangely for a while now.

› De un tiempo a esta parte han abierto muchos cafés de especialidad en el barrio.
Lately a lot of speciality coffee shops have opened in the neighbourhood.

DON'T CONFUSE de un tiempo a esta parte = lately, for a while (slightly literary) · últimamente = lately (everyday).

puntualmente *occasionally / on a one-off basis (Spain) · punctually*

ADVERB B2

Two meanings! In Spain, especially at work, it very often means 'occasionally, at specific moments, not regularly'. It can also mean 'punctually, on time', but for that Spanish speakers more often say 'puntual' or 'a la hora'.

= occasionally, on specific occasions — *very common in Spain, especially in work contexts*

› Teletrabajo puntualmente, cuando tengo que concentrarme.
I work from home occasionally, when I need to concentrate.

= punctually — *on time*

› El alquiler se paga puntualmente el día uno.
The rent is paid promptly on the first of the month.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un problema puntual** *a one-off problem* · **de forma puntual** *on a one-off basis*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA The 'occasional / one-off' meaning is especially widespread in Spain; in much of Latin America 'puntualmente' is mainly 'punctually'.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't assume it means 'on time'. 'Colaboro puntualmente con la revista' = I contribute to the magazine now and then, NOT 'punctually'.

Situating things in time

Hoy en día, en la actualidad, por aquel entonces and desde entonces are at B1. These are more precise, and several are formal.

hasta la fecha FORMAL

to date / so far / up to now

Very common in reports, news and work emails. Goes well with the present perfect.

Hasta la fecha no hemos recibido ninguna queja.
To date, we haven't received any complaints.

a día de hoy

as of today / at the moment

Stresses that something is true now, but may change.

A día de hoy, no sabemos cuándo abrirá la nueva oficina.
As of today, we don't know when the new office will open.

en los últimos años / meses

in recent years / months / over the last few years

Describes a recent trend. Usually with the present perfect in Spain.

En los últimos años, el precio de la vivienda se ha disparado.
In recent years, house prices have soared.

en su día

at the time / back then

Refers to a moment in the past that both speakers know about. Very frequent and natural.

En su día no me pareció buena idea, pero ahora lo entiendo.
At the time it didn't seem like a good idea to me, but now I understand.

en un futuro próximo FORMAL

in the near future

For plans or predictions that aren't fixed yet. In conversation, 'dentro de poco' is more natural.

La empresa prevé abrir una sede en México en un futuro próximo.
The company plans to open an office in Mexico in the near future.

el día de mañana

in the future / one day

The future in general, often when talking about life plans or children.

El día de mañana te alegrarás de haber aprendido idiomas.
One day you'll be glad you learnt languages.

en lo sucesivo FORMAL

from now on / henceforth

Formal 'de ahora en adelante', typical of official notices and work emails.

> En lo sucesivo, las solicitudes se tramitarán en línea.
> *From now on, applications will be processed online.*

en vísperas de

on the eve of / in the run-up to

The time just before an important event.

> En vísperas de las elecciones, todos los partidos prometen bajar impuestos.
> *In the run-up to the elections, every party promises tax cuts.*

en pleno + noun

in the middle of / at the height of

Stresses that something happens right in the middle of a period or activity, often when it's inconvenient.

> Se fue la luz en pleno partido.
> *The power went off right in the middle of the match.*

en el transcurso de FORMAL

in the course of / during

Formal 'durante', common in news and reports.

> En el transcurso de la reunión se aprobaron tres propuestas.
> *Three proposals were approved during the meeting.*

llegado el momento

when the time comes

Postpones a decision until it's really necessary.

> No te preocupes ahora; llegado el momento, ya veremos qué hacemos.
> *Don't worry about it now; when the time comes, we'll see what to do.*

a su debido tiempo

in due course / at the right time

Something will happen when it should, not before.

> Recibirás toda la información a su debido tiempo.
> *You'll receive all the information in due course.*

Speed & timing

From the most formal email to an everyday chat. (Cuanto antes and lo antes posible are at A2–B1.)

a la mayor brevedad (posible) FORMAL

as soon as possible / at your earliest convenience

Only for formal emails and official letters. Sounds stiff in conversation.

> Le rogamos que nos envíe la documentación a la mayor brevedad.
> *Please send us the documents as soon as possible.*

en breve

shortly / soon

Something will happen in a short time. Very common in announcements and customer service.

> En breve le atenderá uno de nuestros agentes.
> *One of our agents will be with you shortly.*

de inmediato / inmediatamente

immediately / straight away

Something happens with no delay at all. Neutral, works everywhere.

> Cuando vio el mensaje, me llamó de inmediato.
> *When she saw the message, she called me straight away.*

en el acto

on the spot / instantly

At the very same moment and place. Typical with reactions, decisions or accidents.

> Le ofrecieron el puesto en la entrevista y aceptó en el acto.
> *They offered her the job in the interview and she accepted on the spot.*

con el tiempo

over time / in time / eventually

A gradual change after a long period. Also 'con el paso del tiempo / de los años'. A great way to say 'eventually'.

> Al principio me costaba, pero con el tiempo me acostumbré.
> *At first it was hard, but in time I got used to it.*

de la noche a la mañana

overnight / all of a sudden

A big change that happens suddenly, with no warning.

> De la noche a la mañana, se quedó sin trabajo.
> *He lost his job overnight.*

a contrarreloj
against the clock
Working under heavy time pressure to finish something.

> **Estamos trabajando a contrarreloj para entregar el proyecto el viernes.**
> *We're working against the clock to deliver the project on Friday.*

sobre la marcha
as you go along / on the fly
Deciding or improvising while something is already happening.

> **No tenemos un plan fijo; lo iremos decidiendo sobre la marcha.**
> *We don't have a fixed plan; we'll decide as we go along.*

a destiempo
at the wrong moment / too late (or too early)
Something happens when it's no longer (or not yet) appropriate.

> **Su disculpa llegó a destiempo; el daño ya estaba hecho.**
> *His apology came too late; the damage was already done.*

en tiempo récord
in record time
Something done much faster than expected.

> **Montaron el escenario en tiempo récord.**
> *They set up the stage in record time.*

Time clauses & connectors

En cuanto, hasta que, antes de que and desde que are in the B1 Connectors. These are the B2 additions. Remember: when they refer to the future, they take the subjunctive.

una vez que + indicative / subjunctive
once
Something happens only after another action is complete. Subjunctive for the future.

> **Una vez que firmes el contrato, te daremos las llaves.**
> *Once you sign the contract, we'll give you the keys.*

conforme + indicative / subjunctive
as (gradually) / as and when
Two things develop in parallel. A synonym of 'a medida que'. Subjunctive for the future.

> **Conforme vayan llegando los invitados, os aviso.**
> *I'll let you know as the guests arrive.*

una vez + participle
once (something is done)
A compact, slightly formal structure. The participle agrees with the noun.

> **Una vez terminadas las obras, el museo reabrirá sus puertas.**
> *Once the building work is finished, the museum will reopen.*

apenas + verb FORMAL
as soon as / no sooner... than
New meaning: besides 'hardly' (B1), 'apenas' can mean 'as soon as' at the start of a clause. Formal in Spain, more common in Latin America.

> **Apenas llegó a casa, se puso a llorar.**
> *No sooner had she got home than she started crying.*

entretanto FORMAL
meanwhile / in the meantime
The formal, written alternative to 'mientras tanto'.

> **La obra empezará en marzo. Entretanto, la oficina funcionará en otro edificio.**
> *Work will start in March. In the meantime, the office will operate from another building.*

How often

A diario, rara vez, una y otra vez and día sí, día no are at A2–B1. These are more precise or more formal.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
con frecuencia	*frequently / often*	slightly more formal than 'a menudo' **Con frecuencia los clientes preguntan por el envío.** *Customers frequently ask about delivery.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
constantemente	*constantly / all the time*	often with a tone of complaint Me interrumpe constantemente. *He interrupts me all the time.*
sin parar	*non-stop / without stopping*	Ha estado lloviendo sin parar toda la semana. *It's been raining non-stop all week.*
reiteradamente FORMAL	*repeatedly*	typical in complaints and news Hemos solicitado reiteradamente una reunión. *We have repeatedly requested a meeting.*
de forma habitual / habitualmente	*regularly / usually*	Viaja de forma habitual a Bruselas por trabajo. *She regularly travels to Brussels for work.*
por norma (general)	*as a rule*	Por norma general, no contesto correos el fin de semana. *As a rule, I don't answer emails at the weekend.*
periódicamente	*periodically / at regular intervals*	Conviene cambiar la contraseña periódicamente. *It's a good idea to change your password regularly.*
ocasionalmente	*occasionally*	neutral-formal; in speech 'de vez en cuando' is more common Ocasionalmente colabora con otras escuelas. *She occasionally works with other schools.*
esporádicamente	*sporadically / now and then*	irregular and infrequent Nos vemos esporádicamente, cuando viene a Madrid. *We see each other now and then, when he comes to Madrid.*
cada equis tiempo INFORMAL	*every so often*	Latin America also: cada tanto Cada equis tiempo me da por cambiar los muebles de sitio. *Every so often I get the urge to move the furniture around.*
por temporadas	*on and off / in phases*	Trabajo en la costa por temporadas. *I work on the coast seasonally, on and off.*
a rachas	*in fits and starts / on and off*	good and bad periods alternate La conexión funciona a rachas. *The connection works on and off.*

Watch out

'In the near future' word order

✗ ~~*en el próximo futuro / *en el cercano futuro~~

✓ en un futuro próximo / en un futuro cercano

In this expression the adjective goes after 'futuro', and Spanish normally uses 'un', not 'el'. 'Próximo' before the noun means 'next' (el próximo lunes).

› No tenemos previsto mudarnos en un futuro cercano.
We're not planning to move in the near future.

de un tiempo a esta parte needs a 'still true' tense

✗ ~~*De un tiempo a esta parte fui mucho al cine~~.

✓ De un tiempo a esta parte voy / he ido mucho al cine.

This expression describes something that started in the past and continues now, so it goes with the present or the present perfect, never with a finished past like the preterite.

› De un tiempo a esta parte, duermo fatal.
I haven't been sleeping well for a while now.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

11 · Beyond 'bien' and 'mal': name exactly how you feel, and say what you think with nuance

Feelings & opinions

At B2 you can describe precise emotional states (overwhelmed, burnt out, moved, resigned) and react with the idioms Spanish speakers actually use. In the second half you'll find nuanced ways to give and evaluate opinions, many of which trigger the subjunctive. Learn the adjectives with estar or sentirse, and the opinion phrases as complete chunks.

Key states of mind

Very frequent in conversations about work, stress and life changes.

desbordado/a *overwhelmed / swamped*

ADJECTIVE · B2

FORMS desbordado · desbordada · desbordados · desbordadas

PATTERN **estar desbordado/a (de trabajo / por algo)**

You have more work, problems or emotions than you can handle. Literally 'overflowing', like a river. Very common at work.

- Este mes estoy desbordada: tengo tres proyectos a la vez.
  I'm swamped this month: I've got three projects on at once.
- Los servicios de urgencias están desbordados.
  A&E departments are overwhelmed.

DON'T CONFUSE desbordado = too much to do · abrumado = overwhelmed, often emotionally · agobiado = stressed and anxious (more colloquial).

quemado/a *burnt out / fed up*

ADJECTIVE · INFORMAL · B2

FORMS quemado · quemada · quemados · quemadas

PATTERN **estar quemado/a (con / de algo)**

Exhausted and demotivated after a long period of stress, especially at work. Also used more lightly for 'totally fed up with something'.

- Después de cinco años en el mismo puesto, estoy quemadísimo.
  After five years in the same job, I'm completely burnt out.
- Estoy quemada con este tema; no quiero hablar más de ello.
  I'm fed up with this subject; I don't want to talk about it any more.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el síndrome de estar quemado / el burnout** *burnout syndrome*

COMMON MISTAKE Use estar, not ser: ✗ ~~*Soy quemado~~ → ✓ Estoy quemado. 'Ser un quemado' doesn't exist with this meaning.

abrumado/a *overwhelmed*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS abrumado · abrumada · abrumados · abrumadas
PATTERN **estar / sentirse abrumado/a (por algo)**

So much of something (work, information, kindness, emotion) that you can't process it. Can be negative or positive.

› Me sentí abrumado por tantas muestras de cariño.
I was overwhelmed by so many signs of affection.

› Con tanta información, es normal sentirse abrumado.
With so much information, it's normal to feel overwhelmed.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una mayoría abrumadora** *an overwhelming majority*

desconcertado/a *puzzled / disconcerted / thrown*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS desconcertado · desconcertada · desconcertados · desconcertadas
PATTERN **estar / quedarse desconcertado/a · desconcertar a alguien (stem-changing e→ie: me desconcierta)**

You don't understand what's happening or how to react, because something was unexpected or contradictory.

› Su respuesta me dejó completamente desconcertada.
Her answer left me completely thrown.

› Me desconcierta que no conteste a mis mensajes.
It puzzles me that he doesn't answer my messages.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una actitud desconcertante** *a puzzling attitude*

tocado/a *shaken / affected / hit hard*

ADJECTIVE INFORMAL B2

FORMS tocado · tocada · tocados · tocadas
PATTERN **estar (muy) tocado/a (por algo)**

Emotionally affected by a blow (a loss, a break-up, bad news), or physically not at 100% after an injury. Literally 'touched'.

› Desde que murió su perro, Marcos está muy tocado.
Since his dog died, Marcos has been really shaken.

› Tengo la rodilla un poco tocada.
My knee's not quite right.

DON'T CONFUSE tocado = affected by a blow · conmovido = moved by something beautiful or sad.

conmovido/a *moved / touched*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS conmovido · conmovida · conmovidos · conmovidas

PATTERN **estar conmovido/a · conmover a alguien (stem-changing o→ue: me conmueve)**

Emotionally touched by something sad or beautiful. A slightly more formal and deeper version of 'emocionado'.

› Su discurso nos dejó a todos muy conmovidos.
His speech left us all deeply moved.

› Me conmueve la generosidad de la gente.
People's generosity really touches me.

DON'T CONFUSE conmovido = moved, touched · emocionado = moved OR excited (context!).

resignado/a *resigned*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS resignado · resignada · resignados · resignadas

PATTERN **estar resignado/a · resignarse a + noun / infinitive**

You accept a situation you don't like because you can't change it. Nothing to do with quitting a job (that's 'dimitir').

› Ya está resignada: sabe que este año no habrá subida de sueldo.
She's resigned to it: she knows there won't be a pay rise this year.

› Me niego a resignarme a vivir así.
I refuse to resign myself to living like this.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Resigné de mi trabajo~~ → ✓ Dimití / Dejé mi trabajo. 'Resignarse' is only emotional acceptance.

esperanzado/a *hopeful*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS esperanzado · esperanzada · esperanzados · esperanzadas

PATTERN **estar esperanzado/a (con algo)**

Feeling hope about the future. The adjective for things that GIVE hope is 'esperanzador' (unos resultados esperanzadores).

› Después de la entrevista, salí bastante esperanzado.
After the interview, I came out feeling quite hopeful.

OPPOSITE **desesperanzado/a** — hopeless, without hope

More ways to say how you feel

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
desmotivado/a	*demotivated / unmotivated*	estar desmotivado/a **El equipo está desmotivado desde los despidos.** *The team has been demotivated since the redundancies.*
saturado/a	*overloaded / saturated*	with work, information, people **Estoy saturado de reuniones.** *I've had way too many meetings.*
decaído/a	*down / low*	low energy and mood, often after illness or bad news **Te noto un poco decaída. ¿Estás bien?** *You seem a bit down. Are you OK?*
apático/a	*apathetic / listless*	
desilusionado/a	*disillusioned / disappointed*	your hopes have been broken **Está muy desilusionado con la política.** *He's very disillusioned with politics.*
resentido/a	*resentful / bitter*	estar resentido/a con alguien
impotente	*powerless / helpless*	sentirse impotente = to feel helpless; in a medical context it also means 'impotent' **Me sentí impotente al no poder ayudarla.** *I felt helpless not being able to help her.*
culpable	*guilty*	sentirse culpable (de / por algo) **Me siento culpable por no haberte llamado.** *I feel guilty for not calling you.*
furioso/a	*furious*	
realizado/a	*fulfilled*	sentirse realizado/a (personal or professional fulfilment) **Por fin me siento realizada en mi trabajo.** *At last I feel fulfilled in my job.*
pletórico/a	*on top of the world / bursting with energy*	
sereno/a	*calm / serene*	calm in a difficult situation
en paz (consigo mismo/a)	*at peace (with oneself)*	**Hablé con él y ahora estoy en paz.** *I talked to him and now I'm at peace.*
desolado/a	*devastated / desolate*	**Se quedó desolado tras la ruptura.** *He was devastated after the break-up.*
destrozado/a	*devastated / shattered*	emotionally or physically; very common in speech **Estoy destrozada, llevo diez horas de pie.** *I'm shattered, I've been on my feet for ten hours.*
hundido/a	*crushed / in a very low state*	**Después del despido estaba hundido.** *After being fired he was completely crushed.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
amargado/a	*bitter / embittered*	estar amargado = going through it; ser un amargado = a bitter person
eufórico/a	*euphoric / elated*	
atónito/a	*astonished / dumbfounded*	Nos quedamos atónitos al ver el precio. *We were dumbfounded when we saw the price.*
perplejo/a	*perplexed / baffled*	
picado/a COLLOQUIAL	*miffed / put out*	mildly offended, often from rivalry or jealousy
sobrepasado/a	*overwhelmed / out of your depth*	the situation is bigger than you
a la defensiva	*on the defensive*	estar / ponerse a la defensiva No te pongas a la defensiva, solo era una pregunta. *Don't get defensive, it was just a question.*

Feelings in action: idioms & reactions

This is how Spanish speakers really talk about emotions: with the body, with 'ponerse' and with 'echarse a'.

tener el corazón en un puño

to have your heart in your mouth / to be worried sick

Intense worry while waiting for news.

> Tuvimos el corazón en un puño hasta que aterrizó el avión.
> *Our hearts were in our mouths until the plane landed.*

tener un nudo en la garganta / en el estómago

to have a lump in your throat / a knot in your stomach

Throat = about to cry. Stomach = nerves.

> Al despedirme de mis padres, tenía un nudo en la garganta.
> *When I said goodbye to my parents, I had a lump in my throat.*

echarse a llorar

to burst into tears

'Echarse a + infinitive' = to suddenly start doing something. Mostly with llorar, reír, correr, temblar.

> Cuando le dieron la noticia, se echó a llorar.
> *When they gave her the news, she burst into tears.*

saltársele las lágrimas (a alguien)

to have tears come to your eyes

Like gustar: se me saltaron las lágrimas, se le saltan las lágrimas.

> Se me saltaron las lágrimas al leer su carta.
> *Tears came to my eyes when I read his letter.*

echarse a reír

to burst out laughing

> Nos miramos y nos echamos a reír.
> *We looked at each other and burst out laughing.*

partirse de risa / mondarse de risa COLLOQUIAL

to crack up / to split your sides laughing

> Con su monólogo nos partimos de risa.
> *We were in stitches at his stand-up routine.*

sentirse fuera de lugar

to feel out of place

When you don't fit in a group or situation.

> En la boda me sentí un poco fuera de lugar; no conocía a nadie.
> *I felt a bit out of place at the wedding; I didn't know anyone.*

morirse de ganas / de vergüenza / de miedo

INFORMAL

to be dying to / to die of embarrassment / to be scared to death

> Me muero de ganas de verte.
> *I'm dying to see you.*

llevarse un disgusto / una alegría
to get upset / to be delighted (by some news)

Reaction to news or an event. 'Disgusto' = upset, not disgust.

> Mi abuela se llevó un disgusto enorme cuando se enteró.
> *My grandmother was really upset when she found out.*

venirse abajo
to fall apart / to break down

To lose your strength or morale after holding on for a long time.

> Aguantó todo el funeral, pero al llegar a casa se vino abajo.
> *She held it together through the funeral, but when she got home she broke down.*

verlo todo negro
to see only the bad side / to be very pessimistic

> Estás cansado y por eso lo ves todo negro.
> *You're tired, that's why everything looks so bleak.*

tocar la fibra (sensible)
to tug at your heartstrings / to strike a chord

> Esa canción me toca la fibra.
> *That song really gets to me.*

dar un vuelco el corazón
your heart skips a beat

Sudden shock or surprise: me dio un vuelco el corazón.

> Cuando vi su nombre en la pantalla, me dio un vuelco el corazón.
> *When I saw his name on the screen, my heart skipped a beat.*

estar que trina / estar que echa chispas COLLOQUIAL
to be fuming / to be livid

> El jefe está que trina con el retraso.
> *The boss is fuming about the delay.*

quitarse un peso de encima
to take a weight off your shoulders

When a problem or worry finally disappears.

> Al aprobar el examen, me quité un peso de encima.
> *Passing the exam was a weight off my shoulders.*

tener el alma en vilo / estar en vilo
to be on tenterhooks

Anxious uncertainty while you wait for something.

> Toda la familia estaba en vilo esperando los resultados.
> *The whole family was on tenterhooks waiting for the results.*

llevarse un chasco INFORMAL
to be let down / disappointed

A small disappointment when something isn't as good as you expected.

> Me llevé un chasco con el restaurante; las fotos engañaban.
> *The restaurant was a real letdown; the photos were misleading.*

Giving opinions with nuance

The basic opinion phrases are in the Speaking Toolkit. These are the B2 upgrades. Remember: when you deny or doubt an opinion, the subjunctive follows.

Opino que...
I think / My view is that...

A clear, slightly formal 'creo que'. Followed by the indicative. In the negative it's rare: use 'No creo que + subjunctive' instead.

> Opino que deberíamos invertir más en formación.
> *My view is that we should invest more in training.*

Considero + adjective + que + subjunctive FORMAL
I consider it + adjective + that...

An elegant step up from 'considero que'. Perfect for formal emails and essays.

> Considero fundamental que todos participen en la decisión.
> *I consider it essential that everyone takes part in the decision.*

A mi entender,... FORMAL
As I understand it / In my opinion,...

> A mi entender, el problema no es el precio sino la calidad.
> *As I see it, the problem isn't the price but the quality.*

Me da la impresión de que...
I get the impression that...

A soft opinion based on what you've observed. Indicative after it.

> Me da la impresión de que no está muy contento con el cambio.
> *I get the impression he's not very happy with the change.*

No me cabe duda de que...

I have no doubt that...

Strong certainty, followed by the indicative. 'No me cabe la menor duda' is even stronger.

> No me cabe duda de que vas a hacerlo genial.
> *I have no doubt you're going to do brilliantly.*

Me temo que...

I'm afraid (that)...

Softens bad news or disagreement. Followed by the indicative.

> Me temo que no vamos a llegar a tiempo.
> *I'm afraid we're not going to make it in time.*

Dudo mucho que + subjunctive

I very much doubt that...

Doubt always takes the subjunctive. But 'No dudo que' (= I'm sure) can take the indicative.

> Dudo mucho que terminen la obra antes de verano.
> *I very much doubt they'll finish the building work before the summer.*

No me parece bien que + subjunctive

I don't think it's right that...

Builds on the B1 pattern 'me parece + adjective + que': here to disapprove of someone else's behaviour.

> No me parece bien que decidan sin consultarnos.
> *I don't think it's right that they decide without consulting us.*

Lo que me preocupa es...

What worries me is...

Puts the focus on your main concern. With a noun, infinitive or 'que + subjunctive'.

> Lo que me preocupa es que no tengamos tiempo suficiente.
> *What worries me is that we might not have enough time.*

Me cuesta creer que + subjunctive

I find it hard to believe that...

> Me cuesta creer que no supiera nada.
> *I find it hard to believe he didn't know anything.*

Me consta que... FORMAL

I know for a fact that...

You have reliable information. Indicative after it.

> Me consta que han recibido el correo.
> *I know for a fact they've received the email.*

Para serte sincero/a,... / Si te digo la verdad,...

To be honest (with you),...

Prepares the listener for a frank, maybe uncomfortable opinion. 'Para serle sincero/a' with usted.

> Para serte sincera, la película me decepcionó un poco.
> *To be honest, I was a bit disappointed by the film.*

Evaluating situations

You know the B1 pattern es + adjective + que + subjunctive. Here are the B2 adjectives that make your judgement more precise. Only facts and certainty (es evidente que, es verdad que) take the indicative.

Es lógico que + subjunctive

It makes sense that... / It's only natural that...

> Es lógico que estés nerviosa; es tu primer día.
> *It's only natural you're nervous; it's your first day.*

Es comprensible que + subjunctive

It's understandable that...

> Es comprensible que los clientes se quejen.
> *It's understandable that customers are complaining.*

Es inadmisible que + subjunctive FORMAL

It's unacceptable that...

Strong disapproval, typical of complaints and formal debates.

> Es inadmisible que tengamos que esperar tres meses para una cita.
> *It's unacceptable that we have to wait three months for an appointment.*

Es indignante que + subjunctive

It's outrageous that...

> Es indignante que suban los precios y bajen los sueldos.
> *It's outrageous that prices are going up while salaries are going down.*

Es preocupante que + subjunctive

It's worrying that...

> Es preocupante que tantos jóvenes no encuentren trabajo.
> *It's worrying that so many young people can't find work.*

Es una vergüenza que + subjunctive

It's a disgrace that...

> Es una vergüenza que el edificio siga sin ascensor.
> *It's a disgrace that the building still has no lift.*

Es de agradecer que + subjunctive

It's good / nice that... (we appreciate that...)

Shows appreciation for a gesture.

> Es de agradecer que te hayan avisado con tiempo.
> *It's good that they let you know in advance.*

Está bien que + subjunctive

It's good that...

> Está bien que la gente se implique en el barrio.
> *It's good that people get involved in the neighbourhood.*

Es inevitable que + subjunctive

It's inevitable that...

> Es inevitable que haya algún retraso con tantas obras.
> *With so much building work, some delays are inevitable.*

Es de esperar que + subjunctive

It's to be expected that... / Hopefully...

Can express a logical expectation or a hope.

> Es de esperar que el tiempo mejore el fin de semana.
> *Hopefully the weather will improve at the weekend.*

Es evidente que + indicative

It's obvious that...

Certainty = indicative. But in the negative (No es evidente que...) you switch to the subjunctive.

> Es evidente que necesitamos más personal.
> *It's obvious that we need more staff.*

Watch out

Opino que has no natural negative

✗ ~~*No opino que sea una buena idea~~.

✓ No creo que sea una buena idea. / Opino que no es una buena idea.

'Opino que' is used in the affirmative. To give a negative opinion, either use 'No creo que + subjunctive' or keep 'opino que' and put the 'no' in the second part.

› Opino que no deberíamos firmar todavía.
My view is that we shouldn't sign yet.

Impressions and feelings take the indicative

✗ ~~*Tengo la impresión de que esté enfadado~~. / ~~*Me da la impresión de que no le guste~~.

✓ Tengo la impresión de que está enfadado. / Me da la impresión de que no le gusta.

Learners often overuse the subjunctive after 'feeling' words. But 'me da la impresión de que', 'tengo la sensación de que' and 'me temo que' present something you believe is true, so they take the indicative, just like 'creo que'.

› Me temo que tienes razón.
I'm afraid you're right.

REMEMBER Could you replace it with 'creo que'? Then use the indicative.

moved: conmovido, mudado or movido?

✗ ~~*Estoy muy movido por su historia~~. / ~~*Me he conmovido a Valencia~~.

✓ Estoy muy conmovido por su historia. / Me he mudado a Valencia.

English 'moved' has three Spanish equivalents: conmovido (emotionally), mudarse (to change house), moverse / mover (physically).

› Me conmovió que viniera desde tan lejos.
I was moved that she came from so far away.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

12 · Adult life admin in Spanish: contracts, taxes, doctors, landlords and the cloud

Everyday vocabulary

This is the vocabulary of actually living in a Spanish-speaking country: signing a contract, registering as self-employed, calling the doctor, complaining to your internet provider. Many of these words are specific to Spain's systems, and we tell you when. Learn them in their combinations ('darse de alta en…', 'pedir cita con…'): that's how you'll need them at the counter.

Contracts & paperwork

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el contrato	*contract*	firmar / rescindir / renovar un contrato **Antes de firmar el contrato, léelo con calma.** *Before signing the contract, read it carefully.*
la cláusula	*clause*	**Hay una cláusula de permanencia de doce meses.** *There's a twelve-month minimum-term clause.*
la letra pequeña	*the small print*	**El problema siempre está en la letra pequeña.** *The problem is always in the small print.*
la renovación	*renewal*	renovar = to renew **La renovación del contrato es automática.** *The contract renews automatically.*
la gestión	*(admin) task / errand / management*	**Puedes hacer casi todas las gestiones por internet.** *You can do almost all the admin online.*
el formulario / el impreso	*form*	rellenar un formulario = to fill in a form **Rellene el impreso con letra mayúscula.** *Fill in the form in capital letters.*
empadronarse	*to register your address (with the town hall)*	Spain: compulsory when you move; you get 'el padrón' certificate. **Lo primero que hice al llegar fue empadronarme.** *The first thing I did when I arrived was register at the town hall.*
pedir cita (previa)	*to make an appointment*	'cita previa' = prior appointment, needed for almost all public offices in Spain. **Para renovar el DNI hay que pedir cita previa.** *To renew your ID card you need to book an appointment.*
la fotocopia compulsada FORMAL	*certified copy*	
la firma digital / el certificado digital	*digital signature / digital certificate*	Essential in Spain for online admin with public bodies.

Work, tax & social security

Words you'll meet on your payslip and in any conversation about jobs in Spain.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el sueldo bruto / neto	*gross / net salary*	Son 30.000 brutos al año. *It's 30,000 gross a year.*
darse de alta (en)	*to register (with) / to sign up (for)*	Also for services: darse de alta en el gimnasio. Tienes que darte de alta en Hacienda antes de facturar. *You have to register with the tax office before you invoice anyone.*
darse de baja (de)	*to cancel / to unsubscribe / to deregister*	Me he dado de baja de la plataforma: no la usaba. *I've cancelled my subscription to the platform: I never used it.*
la declaración de la renta	*income tax return*	'hacer la declaración (de la renta)' = to do your tax return ¿Ya has hecho la declaración de la renta? *Have you done your tax return yet?*
los impuestos	*taxes*	pagar impuestos · el IVA = VAT · el IRPF = income tax withholding (Spain)
desgravar	*to be tax-deductible*	Los gastos del despacho desgravan. *Office expenses are tax-deductible.*
la Seguridad Social	*Social Security (national insurance & public health system)*	Spain. 'El número de la Seguridad Social' = your social security / NI number. La empresa cotiza a la Seguridad Social por ti. *The company pays social security contributions for you.*
cotizar	*to pay (social security) contributions*	Llevo quince años cotizando. *I've been paying contributions for fifteen years.*
el paro	*unemployment / unemployment benefit*	Spain. 'estar en el paro' = to be unemployed; 'cobrar el paro' = to be on the dole. Latin America: 'el desempleo', 'estar desempleado'. Estuvo seis meses en el paro antes de encontrar algo. *He was out of work for six months before finding something.*
la pensión / jubilarse	*pension / to retire*	Mi madre se jubila el año que viene. *My mum retires next year.*
el despido / despedir	*dismissal / to fire, to lay off*	'el finiquito' = final settlement when you leave a job (Spain)
las vacaciones pagadas	*paid holiday*	En España tenemos treinta días naturales de vacaciones pagadas. *In Spain we get thirty calendar days of paid holiday.*

Housing & moving

Renting, buying and moving house: the vocabulary behind every flat-hunting drama.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la propietario/a / el/la casero/a	*owner / landlord, landlady*	'casero/a' is the informal word for landlord.
la fianza	*deposit*	Usually one or two months' rent in Spain. **Todavía no me han devuelto la fianza.** *They still haven't given me my deposit back.*
los gastos de comunidad	*service charges / building fees*	Spain: shared costs for the building (lift, cleaning…).
los suministros	*utilities*	agua, luz, gas, internet · '¿Los suministros están incluidos?' **El alquiler es de 800 euros, suministros aparte.** *The rent is 800 euros, utilities not included.*
el/la fontanero/a / el/la electricista	*plumber / electrician*	**LatAm:** Plumber: Spain 'fontanero', Latin America 'plomero'.
amueblado/a	*furnished*	sin amueblar = unfurnished

Customer service & consumer rights

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el servicio de atención al cliente	*customer service*	**Llevo una hora esperando al teléfono del servicio de atención al cliente.** *I've been on hold with customer service for an hour.*
atender	*to serve / to deal with / to see (a customer, patient)*	False friend: not 'to attend' (= asistir). '¿Le atienden?' = Are you being served? **Enseguida le atiende mi compañera.** *My colleague will be with you in a moment.*
la reclamación	*complaint / claim*	poner / presentar una reclamación = to make a formal complaint **Puse una reclamación por el retraso del vuelo.** *I made a complaint about the flight delay.*
la hoja de reclamaciones	*official complaint form*	Spain: every business must have one. Asking for it is a powerful move. **Si no me lo solucionan, pediré la hoja de reclamaciones.** *If they don't fix it, I'll ask for the official complaint form.*
el tique / el recibo	*receipt*	'el tique (de compra)' in shops; 'el recibo' for bills and payments. Also spelled 'ticket'.
la permanencia	*minimum contract term / lock-in period*	Very common with phone and internet contracts in Spain. **Es una tarifa sin permanencia, puedes darte de baja cuando quieras.** *It's a no-contract plan; you can cancel whenever you like.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tarifa	*rate / plan / fare*	He cambiado de tarifa y pago la mitad. *I've switched plans and I'm paying half.*
la incidencia	*issue / incident (technical or service problem)*	Customer-service jargon: 'abrir una incidencia' = to open a ticket Hemos abierto una incidencia y le llamará un técnico. *We've opened a ticket and a technician will call you.*
el número de referencia / de pedido	*reference number / order number*	
el plazo de devolución	*returns period*	Tienes un plazo de devolución de 30 días. *You have 30 days to return it.*
estar defectuoso/a	*to be faulty*	La cafetera vino defectuosa. *The coffee machine arrived faulty.*

The health system

How to get seen by a doctor in Spain, and the words you'll hear once you're there.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la médico/a de cabecera / de familia	*GP / family doctor*	Pide cita con tu médico de cabecera. *Make an appointment with your GP.*
la sanidad pública / privada	*public / private healthcare*	'la sanidad' = the health system (not 'sanity'). Tengo seguro privado, pero uso mucho la sanidad pública. *I've got private insurance, but I use public healthcare a lot.*
la consulta	*consultation / doctor's surgery (room)*	'pasar consulta' = to see patients; 'estar en la consulta' = to be at the doctor's La doctora está pasando consulta hasta las tres. *The doctor is seeing patients until three.*
derivar	*to refer (a patient)*	Me han derivado al dermatólogo. *I've been referred to the dermatologist.*
la lista de espera	*waiting list*	Hay seis meses de lista de espera para el traumatólogo. *There's a six-month waiting list for the orthopaedic specialist.*
el parte de baja / de alta	*sick note / fit note (signed off / back to work)*	Spain: 'dar el alta' = to sign someone as fit to return to work, or discharge them from hospital.
el/la enfermero/a	*nurse*	

Digital life admin

Passwords, updates, backups: the tech chores of modern life.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
iniciar / cerrar sesión	*to log in / to log out*	No olvides cerrar sesión en el ordenador del trabajo. *Don't forget to log out on the work computer.*
la verificación en dos pasos	*two-step verification / two-factor authentication*	
la suscripción	*subscription*	cancelar la suscripción / darse de baja = to unsubscribe
el almacenamiento	*storage*	Me he quedado sin almacenamiento en el móvil. *I've run out of storage on my phone.*
la conexión / la cobertura	*connection / (phone) signal*	'No tengo cobertura' = I've got no signal Aquí no hay cobertura, te llamo luego. *There's no signal here, I'll call you later.*
el correo no deseado	*spam / junk mail*	Also 'el spam'. Mira en la carpeta de correo no deseado. *Check your junk folder.*
la estafa (por internet)	*(online) scam*	el phishing is also used Ese mensaje del banco es una estafa, no hagas clic. *That message from the 'bank' is a scam, don't click on it.*
bloquearse / colgarse INFORMAL	*to freeze / to crash*	'Se me ha colgado el ordenador' = my computer has frozen

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

13 · The words you need to discuss the news, debate society and talk seriously about films and books

Topic vocabulary

B2 is the level where you can hold a real discussion about the world. Each topic below gives you the key words (with articles and traps) plus a set of ready-made phrases for talking or debating about it. Don't just memorise lists: pick a news story, a film or a social issue you care about and try to explain your view in Spanish using ten words from the topic.

Environment

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el medio ambiente	*the environment*	Two words. Adjective: medioambiental / ambiental. **Tenemos que proteger el medio ambiente.** *We have to protect the environment.*
el cambio climático	*climate change*	**El cambio climático ya está afectando a la agricultura.** *Climate change is already affecting farming.*
el calentamiento global	*global warming*	
la crisis climática	*climate crisis*	'la emergencia climática' is also very common in the media.
las emisiones (de CO_2)	*(CO_2) emissions*	reducir las emisiones **La empresa se ha comprometido a reducir sus emisiones a la mitad.** *The company has committed to halving its emissions.*
los gases de efecto invernadero	*greenhouse gases*	
la huella de carbono	*carbon footprint*	**Viajar en tren reduce mucho tu huella de carbono.** *Travelling by train greatly reduces your carbon footprint.*
los combustibles fósiles	*fossil fuels*	
las energías renovables	*renewable energy*	energía solar, eólica (wind), hidráulica (hydro) **España produce casi la mitad de su electricidad con renovables.** *Spain generates almost half its electricity from renewables.*
el parque eólico / la placa solar	*wind farm / solar panel*	
la contaminación	*pollution*	contaminar = to pollute; contaminante = pollutant / polluting **Los niveles de contaminación en el centro son preocupantes.** *Pollution levels in the centre are worrying.*
la calidad del aire	*air quality*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la sequía	*drought*	**Llevamos tres años de sequía en el sur.** *The south has had three years of drought.*
las inundaciones	*floods*	Spain: 'la DANA' = severe storm system causing flash floods (news term).
el incendio forestal	*forest fire / wildfire*	**El incendio forestal arrasó miles de hectáreas.** *The wildfire destroyed thousands of hectares.*
la deforestación	*deforestation*	
la biodiversidad	*biodiversity*	
las especies en peligro de extinción	*endangered species*	**El lince ibérico estuvo a punto de desaparecer.** *The Iberian lynx almost became extinct.*
el ecosistema	*ecosystem*	m. despite -a
los residuos	*waste*	More formal than 'la basura'. residuos plásticos / orgánicos **Generamos demasiados residuos plásticos.** *We produce too much plastic waste.*
el reciclaje / reciclar	*recycling / to recycle*	el contenedor amarillo (plastic), azul (paper), verde (glass) in Spain
los plásticos de un solo uso	*single-use plastics*	
el desperdicio de alimentos	*food waste*	**Un tercio de los alimentos acaba en la basura: es un desperdicio enorme.** *A third of food ends up in the bin: it's a huge waste.*
sostenible / la sostenibilidad	*sustainable / sustainability*	**Buscamos un modelo de turismo más sostenible.** *We're looking for a more sustainable model of tourism.*
ecológico/a	*organic / eco-friendly*	'productos ecológicos' = organic produce. Also 'eco' informally.
el consumo responsable	*responsible consumption*	
ahorrar energía / agua	*to save energy / water*	
el/la activista / el activismo	*activist / activism*	
la transición energética	*energy transition*	
concienciar (a alguien) / la concienciación	*to raise awareness (among) / awareness*	Spain. Latin America: 'concientizar'. **Hay que concienciar a la gente desde pequeña.** *We need to raise people's awareness from an early age.*
el ecologismo / el/la ecologista	*environmentalism / environmentalist*	'ecólogo' = ecologist (scientist)

Environment — useful phrases

Cada gesto cuenta.
Every little helps. / Every action counts.
Defending small individual actions.

> Puede parecer poco, pero cada gesto cuenta.
> *It might not seem like much, but every little helps.*

No hay planeta B.
There is no planet B.
A slogan used in debates and protests.

Tomar conciencia de…
to become aware of…
Realising the importance of a problem.

> La gente está tomando conciencia del problema del agua.
> *People are becoming aware of the water problem.*

La responsabilidad es de todos.
We're all responsible. / It's everyone's responsibility.
To argue that individuals, companies and governments must act.

Las grandes empresas son las que más contaminan.
Big companies are the biggest polluters.
A common counter-argument to 'individual responsibility'.

Ya no hay vuelta atrás.
There's no going back now.
About irreversible changes.

Society

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la sociedad / social	*society / social*	
la desigualdad	*inequality*	La desigualdad entre ricos y pobres no deja de crecer. *The gap between rich and poor keeps on growing.*
la pobreza	*poverty*	en riesgo de pobreza = at risk of poverty
la brecha (salarial / digital / generacional)	*(pay / digital / generation) gap*	La brecha salarial entre hombres y mujeres sigue existiendo. *The gender pay gap still exists.*
la igualdad de oportunidades	*equal opportunities*	
la discriminación / discriminar	*discrimination / to discriminate (against)*	discriminar a alguien por su origen = to discriminate against someone because of their origin
el racismo / la xenofobia	*racism / xenophobia*	
el machismo / el feminismo	*sexism, male chauvinism / feminism*	'machista' = sexist (adj. & noun) Ese anuncio me parece muy machista. *I find that advert really sexist.*
la violencia de género	*gender-based violence*	
los derechos humanos	*human rights*	defender / vulnerar los derechos
la libertad de expresión	*freedom of speech*	
la inmigración / el/la inmigrante	*immigration / immigrant*	la emigración = emigration; el/la refugiado/a = refugee
la integración	*integration*	El idioma es clave para la integración. *Language is key to integration.*
la diversidad	*diversity*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la exclusión social	*social exclusion*	
las personas sin hogar	*homeless people*	More respectful than 'los sin techo' or 'los vagabundos'.
la vivienda (digna)	*(decent) housing*	el acceso a la vivienda = access to housing, a huge debate in Spain Los jóvenes no pueden acceder a una vivienda digna. *Young people can't get access to decent housing.*
el envejecimiento de la población	*the ageing population*	El envejecimiento de la población pone en riesgo las pensiones. *The ageing population is putting pensions at risk.*
la natalidad	*birth rate*	'la tasa de natalidad'
la conciliación (laboral y familiar)	*work-life balance*	Very common in Spain. Literally 'reconciling work and family'. Sin horarios flexibles, la conciliación es imposible. *Without flexible hours, work-life balance is impossible.*
la precariedad	*job insecurity / precariousness*	un trabajo precario = an insecure, badly paid job
la clase media / trabajadora	*middle / working class*	
la solidaridad / solidario/a	*solidarity / caring, supportive*	una ONG = an NGO; el voluntariado = volunteering
la ONG	*NGO / charity*	Pronounced 'oenegé'. f. Colabora con una ONG de ayuda a refugiados. *She volunteers with a charity that helps refugees.*
reivindicar / la reivindicación	*to demand, to stand up for / demand, claim*	Reivindican mejores condiciones laborales. *They're demanding better working conditions.*
el colectivo	*group (of people) / community*	Very common: 'el colectivo LGTBI', 'colectivos vulnerables'.
la polarización	*polarisation*	
el estereotipo / el prejuicio	*stereotype / prejudice*	'prejuicio' = prejudice, not 'prejudice' in a legal sense
el tabú	*taboo*	un tema tabú
la tolerancia / la convivencia	*tolerance / coexistence, living together*	

Debating social issues — useful phrases

For giving a balanced, nuanced view on a controversial topic.

Es un tema muy delicado.
It's a very sensitive issue.
To open a discussion carefully.

Hay que tener en cuenta que...
You have to bear in mind that...
To introduce an important factor.

> Hay que tener en cuenta que los salarios no han subido.
> *You have to bear in mind that salaries haven't gone up.*

Es un arma de doble filo.
It's a double-edged sword.
Something with both clear benefits and dangers.

> El turismo es un arma de doble filo para muchas ciudades.
> *Tourism is a double-edged sword for many cities.*

No se puede generalizar.
You can't generalise.
To challenge stereotypes or sweeping statements.

Depende de cómo se mire.
It depends how you look at it.
To show a question has several sides.

Es un problema estructural.
It's a structural / systemic problem.
To argue that individual solutions aren't enough.

Queda mucho por hacer.
There's still a long way to go.
Acknowledging progress while insisting on more.

Se ha avanzado mucho, pero...
A lot of progress has been made, but...
A balanced view of social change.

News

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la noticia	*piece of news / news story*	Countable: 'una noticia' = a piece of news; 'las noticias' = the news **Tengo una buena noticia.** *I've got some good news.*
la actualidad	*current affairs / the latest news*	Not 'actuality'. 'temas de actualidad' = current affairs **Es un programa de actualidad política.** *It's a political current affairs programme.*
la portada	*front page*	'salir en portada' = to make the front page
el artículo / el artículo de opinión	*article / opinion piece*	
el editorial	*editorial*	m. 'La editorial' (f) = publishing house!
el reportaje	*report / feature*	Longer, in-depth story.
la crónica	*report / account (of an event)*	la crónica deportiva = sports report
la rueda de prensa	*press conference*	**La ministra dará una rueda de prensa a las doce.** *The minister will give a press conference at twelve.*
el comunicado	*statement / press release*	**La empresa ha emitido un comunicado.** *The company has issued a statement.*
la fuente	*source*	fuentes fiables = reliable sources; según fuentes oficiales = according to official sources
el/la corresponsal	*correspondent*	el/la enviado/a especial = special correspondent
el/la periodista / el periodismo	*journalist / journalism*	'el periódico' = newspaper (not 'periodical')
la última hora	*breaking news*	'Última hora:' as a label; 'de última hora' = last-minute **Última hora: se suspende el partido por la lluvia.** *Breaking news: the match has been called off because of rain.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el suceso / la sección de sucesos	*incident, event / crime & accidents section*	False friend: 'suceso' ≠ success.
el bulo	*hoax / fake news story*	Spain. Also 'las noticias falsas', 'las fake news'. **Ese audio de WhatsApp es un bulo.** *That WhatsApp voice note is a hoax.*
la desinformación	*disinformation / misinformation*	
contrastar / verificar la información	*to cross-check / fact-check the information*	**Antes de compartir algo, contrasta la información.** *Before you share something, cross-check it.*
el sensacionalismo / sensacionalista	*sensationalism / sensationalist*	la prensa amarilla = the tabloid press
informar de / sobre	*to report (on)*	**El diario informó del accidente en primera página.** *The paper reported the accident on the front page.*
según	*according to*	**Según el último informe, el paro ha bajado.** *According to the latest report, unemployment has fallen.*
presuntamente / el/la presunto/a	*allegedly / alleged*	Typical news language **El presunto autor del robo ha sido detenido.** *The alleged thief has been arrested.*
la exclusiva	*exclusive (story)*	'en exclusiva'
la entrevista / entrevistar	*interview / to interview*	
la cobertura (informativa)	*(news) coverage*	**La cobertura del juicio fue excesiva.** *The coverage of the trial was excessive.*
la agencia de noticias	*news agency*	
el/la portavoz	*spokesperson*	**La portavoz del Gobierno no quiso hacer declaraciones.** *The government spokeswoman declined to comment.*
hacer declaraciones	*to make a statement / to comment*	'no hacer declaraciones' = no comment
el/la lector/a / el/la oyente / el/la espectador/a	*reader / listener / viewer*	

Talking about the news — useful phrases

¿Has visto lo de...? INFORMAL
Did you see the thing about...?
Very natural way to bring up a news story. 'Lo de' = the matter of.

> ¿Has visto lo del incendio en Valencia?
> *Did you see the news about the fire in Valencia?*

Lo leí en un artículo.
I read it in an article.
Citing your source casually.

Ha salido en las noticias.
It was on the news.
'Salir' = to appear (on TV, in the paper).

> Mi pueblo ha salido en las noticias.
> *My village was on the news.*

Dicen que...
They say... / Apparently...
Passing on information without confirming it.

No me creo nada de lo que dicen. INFORMAL
I don't believe a word they say.
Expressing distrust of the media or politicians.

Habrá que ver cómo evoluciona.
We'll have to see how it develops.
Careful comment on an ongoing story.

Media

TV, radio, press and the media industry. (Basic social media vocabulary is at B1.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
los medios (de comunicación)	*the media*	Plural in Spanish: 'los medios dicen...' **Los medios han exagerado la noticia.** *The media have exaggerated the story.*
la prensa (escrita)	*the press / print media*	
la cadena (de televisión)	*(TV) channel / network*	la cadena pública / privada
la emisora (de radio)	*radio station*	
emitir / la emisión	*to broadcast / broadcast*	**El programa se emite los jueves a las diez.** *The programme is broadcast on Thursdays at ten.*
en directo / en diferido	*live / pre-recorded (delayed)*	**La entrevista se emitió en directo.** *The interview was broadcast live.*
la audiencia	*audience / ratings*	'los datos de audiencia' = viewing figures **El debate tuvo una audiencia récord.** *The debate had record viewing figures.*
el/la presentador/a	*presenter / host*	**La presentadora del telediario es muy conocida.** *The news presenter is very well known.*
el telediario / el informativo	*TV news bulletin*	Spain: 'el telediario'. Latin America: 'el noticiero', 'el noticiario'.
el programa de tertulia / el/la tertuliano/a	*panel/talk show / pundit, panellist*	Very Spanish format: a group of commentators debating the news.
el reality (show)	*reality show*	
el concurso	*game show / competition*	
la telebasura INFORMAL	*trash TV*	
la plataforma (de streaming)	*streaming platform*	**Ya casi nadie ve la tele en directo: todo es por plataformas.** *Hardly anyone watches live TV anymore: it's all streaming.*
el pódcast	*podcast*	Plural: los pódcast or los pódcasts
el/la creador/a de contenido	*content creator*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
viral / hacerse viral	*viral / to go viral*	**Su vídeo se hizo viral en un día.** *Her video went viral in a day.*
la burbuja (informativa)	*(filter) bubble / echo chamber*	
la libertad de prensa	*press freedom*	
la censura / censurar	*censorship / to censor*	
la imparcialidad / imparcial	*impartiality / impartial*	objetivo/a, neutral; opposite: tendencioso/a = biased
tendencioso/a / sesgado/a	*biased / slanted*	**Esa cadena da una información muy sesgada.** *That channel's coverage is very biased.*
la manipulación (informativa)	*(media) manipulation*	
la línea editorial	*editorial line / stance*	
la tirada	*print run / circulation*	
el/la suscriptor/a	*subscriber*	
el muro de pago	*paywall*	
la polémica / polémico/a	*controversy / controversial*	Very frequent in media language **El anuncio ha generado mucha polémica.** *The advert has caused a lot of controversy.*
el plató	*(TV) set / studio*	**Hubo un momento de tensión en el plató.** *There was a tense moment in the studio.*
la parrilla (de programación)	*TV schedule / programming line-up*	
el horario de máxima audiencia	*prime time*	Also 'el prime time'. **Lo emiten en horario de máxima audiencia.** *They show it in prime time.*
el/la locutor/a	*(radio) presenter / announcer*	
retransmitir / la retransmisión	*to broadcast (an event) live / live coverage*	Used for sport and events **Retransmitirán el partido en abierto.** *They'll show the match live on free-to-air TV.*
hacer zapping INFORMAL	*to channel-hop*	**Estaba haciendo zapping y me quedé viendo un documental.** *I was channel-hopping and ended up watching a documentary.*

Cinema

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el largometraje / el cortometraje	*feature film / short film*	Informal: 'el corto'

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la director/a	*director*	dirigir una película
el guion / el/la guionista	*script, screenplay / screenwriter*	No accent on 'guion' (RAE 2010). **El guion es lo mejor de la película.** *The script is the best thing about the film.*
el reparto	*cast*	**Tiene un reparto de lujo.** *It has an all-star cast.*
el papel / interpretar un papel	*role / to play a role*	**Interpreta el papel de una madre soltera.** *She plays a single mother.*
la interpretación	*performance / acting*	**Su interpretación es brutal.** *Her performance is incredible.*
el/la actor / la actriz secundario/a	*supporting actor / actress*	
la trama / el argumento	*plot / storyline*	'argumento' here = plot, not argument
el giro (argumental)	*plot twist*	**No me esperaba ese giro final.** *I didn't see that final twist coming.*
el desenlace / el final	*ending / outcome*	un final abierto = an open ending
la banda sonora	*soundtrack / score*	
la fotografía	*cinematography*	**La fotografía es preciosa.** *The cinematography is beautiful.*
los efectos especiales	*special effects*	
el rodaje / rodar	*filming, shoot / to shoot (a film)*	**La rodaron en Almería.** *They shot it in Almería.*
el estreno / estrenar	*premiere, release / to release*	**Se estrena en cines el viernes.** *It's released in cinemas on Friday.*
la taquilla	*box office*	un éxito de taquilla = a box-office hit
la versión original (VO) / subtitulada (VOSE)	*original version / with Spanish subtitles*	Spain: most films are dubbed (doblada) unless they say VO/VOSE. **Prefiero verla en versión original.** *I prefer to watch it in the original language.*
el doblaje / doblado/a	*dubbing / dubbed*	
la secuela / la precuela	*sequel / prequel*	
la adaptación (de una novela)	*adaptation*	estar basada en = to be based on
la crítica / el/la crítico/a	*review, criticism / critic*	**Ha tenido muy buenas críticas.** *It's had very good reviews.*
el festival / el premio	*festival / award*	Spain's film awards: los Goya. 'Llevarse un premio'
el tráiler	*trailer*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el spoiler / hacer spoiler INFORMAL	*spoiler / to give away the ending*	¡No me hagas spoiler! *Don't spoil it for me!*

Talking about a film

Va de... INFORMAL
It's about...
The most natural way to explain what a film or book is about.

> Va de una chica que se muda a Tokio para estudiar.
> *It's about a girl who moves to Tokyo to study.*

Trata de... / Trata sobre...
It deals with... / It's about...
A bit more neutral than 'va de'.

> Trata sobre la soledad en las grandes ciudades.
> *It deals with loneliness in big cities.*

Está basada en hechos reales.
It's based on a true story.
Describing the origin of a film.

Me enganchó desde el principio. INFORMAL
I was hooked from the start.
Praising a gripping film or series.

Se me hizo larguísima.
It felt like it went on forever.
When a film drags. 'Se me hizo corta' = it flew by.

No está a la altura del libro.
It doesn't live up to the book.
Comparing an adaptation with the original.

Está sobrevalorada.
It's overrated.
When everyone loves it but you don't.

Me dejó mal cuerpo. INFORMAL
It left me feeling uneasy / upset.
After a disturbing or very sad film.

Te la recomiendo.
I recommend it.
Note: 'la' refers to 'la película'; 'te lo recomiendo' for a book/documental.

Literature

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la literatura / literario/a	*literature / literary*	
el/la autor/a / el/la escritor/a	*author / writer*	
la novela (negra / histórica / gráfica)	*(crime / historical / graphic) novel*	'novela negra' = crime fiction
el/la novelista	*novelist*	
el relato / el cuento	*short story / (short) tale*	'cuento' is also a children's story
el ensayo	*essay / non-fiction*	Also 'rehearsal' in theatre: 'el ensayo general' = dress rehearsal. ensayar = to rehearse. **Prefiero el ensayo a la novela.** *I prefer non-fiction to novels.*
la poesía / el poema / el/la poeta	*poetry / poem / poet*	'el poema' (m. despite -a); 'la poeta' or 'la poetisa'
el verso / la estrofa / la rima	*line (of poetry) / stanza / rhyme*	
la biografía / las memorias	*biography / memoirs*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la narrador/a	*narrator*	en primera / tercera persona
el personaje	*character*	Always masculine, even for a woman: 'Ana es un personaje fascinante'. **El personaje de la abuela es lo mejor del libro.** *The grandmother is the best character in the book.*
el capítulo	*chapter*	
el estilo / la prosa	*style / prose*	**Tiene una prosa muy cuidada.** *Her prose is very polished.*
el ambiente / la ambientación	*atmosphere / setting*	'está ambientada en...' = it's set in... **La novela está ambientada en la Barcelona de posguerra.** *The novel is set in post-war Barcelona.*
el/la editor/a / la editorial	*editor (or publisher) / publishing house*	'la editorial' = publisher (company)
publicar / la publicación	*to publish / publication*	
la traducción / el/la traductor/a	*translation / translator*	**La leí en traducción, pero quiero leerla en español.** *I read it in translation, but I want to read it in Spanish.*
el libro electrónico / el lector electrónico	*e-book / e-reader*	
el audiolibro	*audiobook*	
el/la lector/a voraz	*avid reader / bookworm*	Informal: 'ratón de biblioteca'
el superventas / el best seller	*bestseller*	
el premio literario	*literary prize*	Spain: Premio Cervantes, Premio Planeta, Premio Nadal
la saga / la trilogía	*saga, series / trilogy*	
la metáfora / el símbolo	*metaphor / symbol*	
la cubierta / la contraportada	*(book) cover / back cover*	'la portada' also works for a book cover; 'la sinopsis' = blurb/synopsis
el Siglo de Oro	*the (Spanish) Golden Age*	16th–17th c.: Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Quevedo
engancharse a un libro INFORMAL	*to get hooked on a book*	

Talking about a book

Me lo leí de un tirón. INFORMAL
I read it in one go / one sitting.
A page-turner you couldn't put down.

Me costó entrar en la historia.
It took me a while to get into it.
A slow start.

No podía dejar de leer.
I couldn't put it down.
Praising a gripping book.

Lo dejé a medias.
I gave up halfway through.
An unfinished book (or anything).

Está muy bien escrito.
It's beautifully written.
Praising style rather than plot.

Es de esos libros que te cambian la forma de ver las cosas.
It's one of those books that changes the way you see things.
A deep recommendation.

Engancha muchísimo. INFORMAL
It's really addictive / gripping.
For books and series.

Arts

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las artes plásticas / escénicas	*visual arts / performing arts*	
las bellas artes	*fine arts*	'estudiar Bellas Artes' = to study fine art at university
la obra de arte	*work of art*	
el cuadro / la pintura	*painting*	'cuadro' = a framed painting; 'pintura' = painting as art form, or paint
el lienzo	*canvas*	
el óleo / la acuarela	*oil painting / watercolour*	
el retrato / el autorretrato	*portrait / self-portrait*	
el paisaje / el bodegón	*landscape / still life*	
la escultura / el/la escultor/a	*sculpture / sculptor*	
el mural / el grafiti / el arte urbano	*mural / graffiti / street art*	
la galería (de arte)	*(art) gallery*	
la inauguración	*opening (night)*	
el/la comisario/a (de una exposición)	*curator*	Same word as 'police inspector'!
la vanguardia / vanguardista	*avant-garde*	
el movimiento artístico	*artistic movement*	el cubismo, el surrealismo, el impresionismo...
el arte abstracto / figurativo	*abstract / figurative art*	
el arte contemporáneo	*contemporary art*	El arte contemporáneo no siempre lo entiendo. *I don't always get contemporary art.*
la instalación	*(art) installation*	
el escenario / el telón	*stage / curtain*	
la danza / el ballet	*dance / ballet*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la ópera / la zarzuela	*opera / zarzuela (Spanish light opera)*	
el/la mecenas / el mecenazgo	*patron / patronage*	'el/la mecenas' is the same in singular and plural
la entrada	*ticket*	agotar las entradas = to sell out; 'entradas agotadas' = sold out
la restauración	*restoration*	Also 'restaurant industry' in Spain!
la belleza / estético/a	*beauty / aesthetic*	
la sensibilidad (artística)	*(artistic) sensitivity / feeling*	Not 'sensibility' in the sense of good judgement

Talking about art

Me transmite mucho.
It really speaks to me. / It moves me.
'Transmitir' = to convey emotion; very common when talking about art and music.

No le veo la gracia. INFORMAL
I don't see what's so special about it.
Honest scepticism.

Eso lo hace hasta mi sobrino. INFORMAL
My nephew could do that.
The classic joke about abstract art.

Hay que verlo en directo.
You have to see it in person.
Art, concerts, theatre.

Me llama mucho la atención.
It really catches my eye. / It really strikes me.
Something that grabs your attention.

Está abierto a interpretaciones.
It's open to interpretation.
For ambiguous works.

Education

The education system and debates about learning. (Basic study vocabulary is at B1.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el sistema educativo	*education system*	
la enseñanza pública / privada / concertada	*state / private / state-funded private education*	Spain: 'concertada' = private (often religious) schools partly funded by the state.
la educación infantil / primaria / secundaria	*pre-school / primary / secondary education*	Spain: la ESO = compulsory secondary education (12–16)
el bachillerato	*sixth form / last two years of high school (16–18)*	Spain. Not a university degree!
la selectividad / la PAU	*university entrance exams*	Spain (official names change: EBAU, PAU…). Everyone still says 'la selectividad'.
la carrera (universitaria) / el grado	*(university) degree*	'hacer la carrera de Derecho' = to do a law degree
el máster / el doctorado	*master's degree / PhD*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la matrícula / matricularse	*enrolment, tuition fee / to enrol*	'matrícula de honor' = top grade with distinction
el plan de estudios / el temario	*curriculum / syllabus*	
la asignatura (obligatoria / optativa)	*(compulsory / optional) subject*	
la evaluación / evaluar	*assessment / to assess*	
la nota media	*grade point average / average mark*	
suspender / aprobar (con nota)	*to fail / to pass (with a good mark)*	'sacar buena nota' = to get a good mark
repetir curso	*to repeat a year*	**Repitió segundo de la ESO.** *He had to repeat Year 9.*
el fracaso escolar	*school failure / underachievement*	Big debate in Spain
el abandono escolar	*school dropout (rate)*	**El abandono escolar temprano ha bajado.** *Early school dropout rates have fallen.*
el acoso escolar	*bullying*	Also 'el bullying'.
el/la docente / el profesorado	*teacher / teaching staff*	
el alumnado	*students (collectively) / student body*	
la tutoría / el/la tutor/a	*tutorial, office hours / form tutor*	
la formación continua	*lifelong learning / continuing education*	
la educación a distancia / en línea	*distance / online learning*	
la memorización / memorizar	*rote learning / to memorise*	'aprender de memoria' = to learn by heart
el pensamiento crítico	*critical thinking*	
las competencias	*skills, competences*	las competencias digitales = digital skills
la universidad pública / el campus	*public university / campus*	
el intercambio / el Erasmus	*exchange / Erasmus (exchange programme)*	'Estar de Erasmus' = to be on an Erasmus year **Conocí a mi pareja cuando estaba de Erasmus.** *I met my partner when I was on Erasmus.*
la titulación / el título	*qualification / degree certificate*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las oposiciones / opositar	*competitive state exams / to study for them*	Spain: exams to become a civil servant, state teacher, judge... 'Estar opositando' can take years. **Lleva dos años opositando para profesora.** *She's been studying for the state teaching exams for two years.*

Debating education

Se debería fomentar...
We should encourage...
Proposing educational change.

Los deberes no sirven para nada. INFORMAL
Homework is pointless.
A classic debate opener.

Se aprende más haciendo que memorizando.
You learn more by doing than by memorising.
Arguing for practical learning.

La educación es la base de todo.
Education is the foundation of everything.
A strong statement in debates.

No todo el mundo vale para estudiar. INFORMAL
Not everyone is cut out for academic study.
A frequent (and debatable) opinion. 'Valer para' = to be good at / suited to.

Relationships (deeper)

Love, commitment, trust and break-ups. (Basic friendship vocabulary is at A2.)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estar colado/a por alguien COLLOQUIAL	*to have a crush on someone / to be head over heels*	LatAm: Spain.
la media naranja INFORMAL	*other half / soulmate*	
comprometerse / prometerse	*to get engaged / to commit*	'prometido/a' = fiancé(e)
los celos / tener celos / ser celoso/a	*jealousy / to be jealous*	Plural in Spanish. 'Tener celos de alguien' = to be jealous of someone (romantic). For envy: 'envidia'. **Tiene celos de tu amistad con Javi.** *He's jealous of your friendship with Javi.*
la complicidad	*rapport / closeness / connection*	Positive in this context: the special understanding between two people **Hay mucha complicidad entre ellas.** *There's a real connection between them.*
convivir / la convivencia	*to live together / living together*	**La convivencia es la prueba de fuego de cualquier pareja.** *Living together is the real test of any couple.*
irse a vivir juntos	*to move in together*	
la pareja de hecho	*civil partnership / common-law partner*	Spain: legally registered unmarried couple
casarse (con) / la boda	*to marry, get married (to) / wedding*	'casarse con', not 'casarse a'

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la bronca INFORMAL	*row, big argument / telling-off*	'echar la bronca' = to tell someone off
tener roces	*to have friction / clashes*	'el roce' = friction; also 'el roce hace el cariño' = familiarity breeds affection **Al principio de convivir tuvimos algunos roces.** *When we first moved in together we had a bit of friction.*
la crisis (de pareja)	*rough patch / relationship crisis*	**Están pasando por una crisis.** *They're going through a rough patch.*
la infidelidad / ser infiel / poner los cuernos	*infidelity / to be unfaithful / to cheat on someone*	'poner los cuernos' is colloquial
la ruptura	*break-up*	**Lo pasó fatal después de la ruptura.** *She had a really hard time after the break-up.*
romper (con alguien) / cortar (con alguien)	*to break up (with someone)*	'cortar' is more colloquial **Ha cortado con su novio.** *She's broken up with her boyfriend.*
dejar a alguien	*to leave / dump someone*	**La dejó por mensaje. ¡Qué poca clase!** *He dumped her by text. How classless!*
el/la ex	*ex*	Invariable: mi ex (m/f), mis ex
superar (una ruptura)	*to get over (a break-up)*	**Todavía no ha superado lo de su ex.** *She still hasn't got over her ex.*
separarse / el divorcio / divorciarse	*to separate / divorce / to get divorced*	
la custodia compartida	*joint custody*	
la relación a distancia	*long-distance relationship*	
la relación tóxica	*toxic relationship*	
el espacio (personal)	*(personal) space*	'necesitar espacio' = to need space
echarse novio/a INFORMAL	*to get a boyfriend / girlfriend*	**¿Sabes que Lucía se ha echado novio?** *Did you know Lucía's got a boyfriend?*
la estabilidad (emocional)	*(emotional) stability*	**Después de años de altibajos, buscaba algo de estabilidad.** *After years of ups and downs, I was looking for some stability.*

Relationships — useful phrases

Estamos en una buena etapa.
We're in a good place.
Describing a healthy moment in the relationship.

Lo nuestro no funciona.
Things between us aren't working.
'Lo nuestro' = our relationship / what we have.

Necesito tiempo para pensar.
I need some time to think.
Before a big relationship decision.

No eres tú, soy yo.
It's not you, it's me.
The universal break-up cliché. Often used ironically.

Hay que poner de las dos partes. INFORMAL
It takes two. / Both sides have to make an effort.
On shared responsibility in a relationship.

Me ha dejado tirado/a. COLLOQUIAL
He/she let me down / left me in the lurch.
When someone abandons you when you need them.

Hay que saber pasar página.
You have to know how to move on.
Advice after a break-up.

Marketing

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el marketing / la mercadotecnia	*marketing*	'marketing' is far more common; 'mercadotecnia' is formal/Latin America
el logotipo / el logo	*logo*	
el eslogan	*slogan / tagline*	
la publicidad	*advertising*	Not 'publicity'. la agencia de publicidad = ad agency
el anuncio	*advert / ad / commercial*	**Ese anuncio de Navidad me hizo llorar.** *That Christmas advert made me cry.*
la campaña (publicitaria)	*(advertising) campaign*	lanzar una campaña = to launch a campaign
el público objetivo	*target audience*	**Nuestro público objetivo son jóvenes de 18 a 30 años.** *Our target audience is 18-to-30-year-olds.*
el/la consumidor/a	*consumer*	
el/la cliente/a potencial	*potential customer / lead*	
la fidelización / fidelizar	*customer loyalty / to build loyalty*	el programa de fidelización = loyalty scheme
el estudio de mercado	*market research*	
la competencia	*competition / competitors*	Also 'competence' **La competencia ha bajado los precios.** *Our competitors have lowered their prices.*
el posicionamiento	*positioning*	posicionamiento web / SEO = search engine optimisation
el lanzamiento	*launch*	**El lanzamiento del producto será en marzo.** *The product launch will be in March.*
la promoción / la oferta	*promotion / offer, deal*	
el patrocinio / patrocinar	*sponsorship / to sponsor*	
el contenido de marca	*branded content*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la interacción	*engagement*	Also 'el engagement' Las publicaciones con vídeo tienen más interacción. *Video posts get more engagement.*
el alcance	*reach*	
la tasa de conversión	*conversion rate*	
el boletín (de noticias) / la newsletter	*newsletter*	
el embudo de ventas	*sales funnel*	
la llamada a la acción	*call to action* (CTA)	
el boca a boca / el boca a oreja	*word of mouth*	Casi todos nuestros clientes vienen por el boca a boca. *Almost all our customers come through word of mouth.*
la reseña / la valoración	*review / rating*	Las reseñas negativas hacen mucho daño. *Negative reviews do a lot of damage.*
el embajador / la embajadora de marca	*brand ambassador*	
la publicidad engañosa	*misleading advertising*	
el consumismo	*consumerism*	
el valor añadido	*added value*	Nuestro valor añadido es el trato personalizado. *Our added value is the personal touch.*

Marketing — useful phrases

Llegar a más gente
to reach more people
The goal of almost any campaign.

> Queremos llegar a más gente en Latinoamérica.
> *We want to reach more people in Latin America.*

Darse a conocer
to make a name for yourself / to get known
For new brands or professionals.

> Las redes nos ayudaron a darnos a conocer.
> *Social media helped us get our name out there.*

Diferenciarse de la competencia
to stand out from the competition
Talking about positioning.

Captar la atención
to grab attention
Ads, posts, headlines.

Ser tendencia
to be trending
On social media.

> El hashtag de la campaña fue tendencia todo el día.
> *The campaign hashtag was trending all day.*

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

14 · The errors that give away an English speaker, even at a good level

Common mistakes

At B2 your mistakes are no longer about basic grammar: they're about words that look like English, small prepositions and the subjunctive appearing (or not) where it should. These are exactly the errors that examiners and native speakers notice. Read the 'why', then say the correct version out loud a few times to overwrite the old habit.

Words that trick English speakers

actualmente ≠ actually

✗ English idea: 'Actually, I don't agree' → ~~*Actualmente~~, no estoy de acuerdo.

✓ En realidad / La verdad es que no estoy de acuerdo.

'Actualmente' means 'currently, nowadays'. To correct or contradict ('actually…'), use 'en realidad', 'la verdad es que' or 'de hecho' (in fact).

- **Actualmente trabajo en una start-up.**
  I currently work at a start-up.
- **Parece fácil, pero en realidad es bastante complicado.**
  It looks easy, but actually it's quite complicated.

REMEMBER Swap mentally: actualmente = nowadays. If 'nowadays' doesn't fit, you need 'en realidad'.

asumir vs suponer

✗ English idea: 'I assume you're coming' → ~~*Asumo que vienes~~.

✓ Supongo que vienes.

'Asumir' mainly means to take on (a responsibility, a role, a cost) or to accept a difficult fact. To guess or take something for granted, say 'suponer' or 'dar por hecho'. In modern Spanish 'asumir que' is spreading under English influence, but 'suponer' still sounds much more natural.

- **Supongo que ya lo sabes.**
  I assume you already know.
- **La empresa asumirá los gastos del viaje.**
  The company will cover the travel costs.
- **Le costó asumir que la relación había terminado.**
  It was hard for her to accept that the relationship was over.

discutir = to argue (more often than 'to discuss')

✗ ~~*Ayer discutimos el proyecto con el cliente y fue muy agradable~~.

✓ Ayer hablamos del proyecto con el cliente / comentamos el proyecto…

'Discutir' can mean 'to discuss' in formal contexts ('discutir una propuesta'), but in everyday Spanish it usually means 'to argue, to have a row'. For a calm conversation, use 'hablar de', 'comentar', 'tratar' or 'debatir'.

- Mis padres discuten por cualquier tontería.
  My parents argue about any silly little thing.
- En la reunión trataremos el nuevo horario.
  In the meeting we'll discuss the new schedule.

notar vs darse cuenta de

✗ ~~*Noté que había olvidado las llaves~~.

✓ Me di cuenta de que había olvidado las llaves.

'Notar' is perceiving something with your senses or noticing a change ('noto frío', 'te noto cansado'). 'Darse cuenta de (que)' is realising something mentally. 'Notice' covers both in English; Spanish separates them.

- Te noto preocupada, ¿pasa algo?
  You seem worried, is something wrong?
- No me di cuenta de la hora.
  I didn't realise what time it was.

Overusing 'realizar'

✗ ~~*Voy a realizar la compra y luego realizo la cena~~.

✓ Voy a hacer la compra y luego hago la cena.

'Realizar' (to carry out) is correct but formal and bureaucratic. Learners overuse it because it looks sophisticated. In everyday speech use 'hacer'; in professional writing use it sparingly. And remember: 'realizar' never means 'to realise' (darse cuenta).

- Se realizarán obras en la estación durante el verano.
  Works will be carried out at the station over the summer.

conocer vs saber: the nuances

✗ ~~*Conozco hablar alemán~~. / ~~*Sé a tu hermano~~.

✓ Sé hablar alemán. / Conozco a tu hermano.

'Saber' = facts, information and skills (saber + infinitive). 'Conocer' = people, places and familiarity through experience. Nuances at B2: 'saber de algo' = to know about a field ('sabe mucho de vinos'); 'conocer' + a work/ author = to be familiar with; 'saber' in the preterite = to find out ('Supe la noticia ayer'); 'conocer' in the preterite = to meet for the first time ('La conocí en Lisboa').

- Sabe muchísimo de cine iraní.
  He knows loads about Iranian cinema.
- ¿Conoces la obra de Almodóvar?
  Are you familiar with Almodóvar's work?
- Me enteré / Supe que se casaba por Instagram.
  I found out he was getting married on Instagram.

Prepositions & 'que'

es importante + infinitive (no 'de')

✗ ~~*Es importante de dormir bien~~. / ~~*Es difícil de decir~~.

✓ Es importante dormir bien. / Es difícil decirlo.

After 'es + adjective', the infinitive is the subject, so no preposition. ('Es difícil de entender' is possible only when a noun is the subject: 'Este texto es difícil de entender'.)

- Es fundamental leer el contrato antes de firmar.
  It's essential to read the contract before signing.
- Su letra es difícil de leer.
  His handwriting is hard to read.

Dequeísmo: an extra 'de'

✗ ~~*Pienso de que tienes razón~~. / ~~*Me dijo de que vendría~~.

✓ Pienso que tienes razón. / Me dijo que vendría.

Verbs of thinking and saying (pensar, creer, decir, opinar, parecer…) take 'que' directly. Adding 'de' is a common error, even among some native speakers, and sounds uneducated.

- Creo que deberíamos irnos.
  I think we should go.

REMEMBER Test with 'eso': 'Pienso eso' (no 'de') → 'Pienso que…'. 'Me acuerdo de eso' → 'Me acuerdo de que…'.

Queísmo: a missing 'de'

✗ ~~*Me alegro que estés bien~~. / ~~*Estoy seguro que vendrá~~.

✓ Me alegro de que estés bien. / Estoy seguro de que vendrá.

The opposite error: verbs and expressions that take 'de' keep it before 'que': alegrarse de, acordarse de, darse cuenta de, estar seguro de, tener ganas de, a pesar de… ('Me alegro que' is very common in speech, but 'de que' is the standard).

- No me di cuenta de que era tan tarde.
  I didn't realise it was so late.
- Tengo ganas de que llegue el verano.
  I can't wait for summer to come.

pensar en / pensar de / pensar que

✗ ~~*Estoy pensando de ti~~. / ~~*¿Qué piensas en la película~~?

✓ Estoy pensando en ti. / ¿Qué piensas de la película?

'Pensar en' = to think about (have in your mind). 'Pensar de' = to think of (opinion), mostly in questions. 'Pensar que' = to think that. Also 'pensar + infinitive' = to plan to.

- No dejo de pensar en la entrevista.
  I can't stop thinking about the interview.
- ¿Qué piensas de mi propuesta?
  What do you think of my proposal?
- Pienso pedir un aumento.
  I'm planning to ask for a raise.

más de vs más que

✗ ~~*Gana más que 3~~.000 euros. / ~~*Trabaja más de mí~~.

✓ Gana más de 3.000 euros. / Trabaja más que yo.

'Más de' before numbers and quantities; 'más que' for comparisons. Note: after 'que' use subject pronouns: 'más que yo', not *'más que mí'. Exception: 'No tengo más que 10 euros' = I only have 10 euros.

- Había más de cien personas.
  There were more than a hundred people.
- Mi hermana cocina mejor que yo.
  My sister cooks better than me.

hace / desde / desde hace

✗ ~~*Vivo aquí desde tres años~~. / ~~*Vivo aquí por tres años~~.

✓ Vivo aquí desde hace tres años. / Llevo tres años viviendo aquí.

'Desde' + a point in time (desde 2020, desde el lunes). 'Desde hace' + a period that continues now (desde hace tres años). 'Hace' + period = ago (hace tres años = three years ago). 'Por' is not used for ongoing duration.

- Estudio español desde enero.
  I've been studying Spanish since January.
- No la veo desde hace meses.
  I haven't seen her for months.

Subjunctive slips

ojalá + subjunctive

✗ *~~Ojalá vienes mañana~~. / *~~Ojalá que hace sol~~.

✓ Ojalá vengas mañana. / Ojalá (que) haga sol.

'Ojalá' always takes the subjunctive. Present subjunctive for possible wishes; imperfect subjunctive for unlikely or impossible ones; pluperfect for past regrets.

- Ojalá tuviera más tiempo.
  I wish I had more time.
- Ojalá lo hubiera sabido antes.
  I wish I'd known before.

cuando + future → cuando + subjunctive

✗ *~~Cuando llegaré a casa~~, te llamaré.

✓ Cuando llegue a casa, te llamo / te llamaré.

For future events, time connectors (cuando, en cuanto, hasta que, antes de que, después de que…) take the present subjunctive, never the future. This is one of the most frequent B2 errors.

- En cuanto sepa algo, te aviso.
  As soon as I hear anything, I'll let you know.
- Hasta que no termines, no sales.
  You're not going out until you finish.

esperar que + subjunctive

✗ *~~Espero que estás bien~~.

✓ Espero que estés bien.

When 'esperar que' means 'to hope', it takes the subjunctive. It's the classic opening of emails and messages, so get it right!

- Espero que os guste el regalo.
  I hope you like the present.

Same subject → infinitive; different subject → que + subjunctive

✗ *~~Quiero que yo apruebe~~. / *~~Quiero tú vienes~~.

✓ Quiero aprobar. / Quiero que vengas.

With verbs of wishing, needing and emotion, use the infinitive when the subject is the same, and 'que + subjunctive' when it changes. English 'I want you to come' has no 'que', which causes the error.

- Necesito que me ayudes.
  I need you to help me.
- Me molesta que no contesten.
  It bothers me that they don't answer.

Value judgements + subjunctive

✗ ~~*Es normal que estás cansado~~. / ~~*Me parece bien que vienes~~.

✓ Es normal que estés cansado. / Me parece bien que vengas.

Expressions that give an opinion or evaluation (es normal/lógico/increíble/una pena que..., me parece bien/mal que...) take the subjunctive, even if the fact is true. Only expressions of certainty (es verdad/obvio/evidente que...) take the indicative.

- Es una pena que no puedas venir.
  It's a shame you can't come.
- Es evidente que no quiere ayudar.
  It's obvious he doesn't want to help.

Structure & spelling

Infinitive as a noun, not the gerund

✗ English idea: 'Swimming is good for you' → ~~*Nadando es bueno~~.

✓ Nadar es bueno para la salud.

When the English -ing form works as a noun (subject, object, after prepositions), Spanish uses the infinitive. The gerund (-ando, -iendo) describes how or while you do something.

- Me encanta viajar sola.
  I love travelling alone.
- Antes de salir, cierra las ventanas.
  Before going out, close the windows.

lo que vs que

✗ English idea: 'What I need is a holiday' → ~~*Que necesito es unas vacaciones~~.

✓ Lo que necesito son unas vacaciones.

English 'what' meaning 'the thing that' is 'lo que' in Spanish. Note also that the verb 'ser' tends to agree with the plural noun: 'Lo que necesito son...'.

- No entiendo lo que dices.
  I don't understand what you're saying.
- Lo que más me gusta de Sevilla es la luz.
  What I like most about Seville is the light.

como / cómo (and other question words)

✗ ~~*No sé como se hace~~. / ~~*¿Como estás~~?

✓ No sé cómo se hace. / ¿Cómo estás?

Question words carry an accent in direct AND indirect questions: qué, cómo, dónde, cuándo, quién, cuánto. Without an accent, 'como' means 'like/as/since' and 'que' is the conjunction 'that'.

- Me preguntó dónde vivía.
  She asked me where I lived.
- Como no llegabas, empecé sin ti.
  Since you weren't here, I started without you.

porque / por qué / el porqué / por que

✗ ~~*¿Porque no vienes~~? / ~~*No sé porque se enfadó~~.

✓ ¿Por qué no vienes? / No sé por qué se enfadó.

'Por qué' (two words, accent) = why, in direct and indirect questions. 'Porque' = because. 'El porqué' = the reason (a noun). 'Por que' (rare) = for which.

- No entiendo el porqué de su decisión.
  I don't understand the reason for his decision.
- Me fui porque estaba cansada.
  I left because I was tired.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

15 · They look like English. They're not. And some of them can be really embarrassing.

False friends

At B2 you're confident enough to guess words from English, which is great 90% of the time and a disaster the other 10%. These false friends cause misunderstandings in meetings, at the doctor's and on dates. For each one, learn what it really means AND what to say instead.

False friends at work and in discussions

pretender ≠ English "to pretend"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to intend / to aim to / to expect (sometimes unrealistically)

ENGLISH "TO PRETEND" MEANS
to act as if something is true when it isn't

SAY INSTEAD For 'to pretend' say: fingir, hacer como que, hacerse el/la (dormido, tonto...). ('He pretended not to see me' = Hizo como que no me veía.)

- ¿Qué pretendes con esa actitud?
  What are you trying to achieve with that attitude?
- No pretendo ofender a nadie.
  I don't mean to offend anyone.
- Fingió estar enferma para no ir.
  She pretended to be ill so she wouldn't have to go.

eventualmente ≠ English "eventually"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
possibly / if the occasion arises / occasionally

ENGLISH "EVENTUALLY" MEANS
in the end, finally

SAY INSTEAD For 'eventually' say: al final, finalmente, con el tiempo, tarde o temprano.

- Eventualmente, podríamos necesitar más personal.
  We might possibly need more staff.
- Al final conseguí el trabajo.
  Eventually I got the job.

ignorar ≠ English "to ignore"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
not to know (formal) / to ignore

ENGLISH "TO IGNORE" MEANS
to pay no attention to

SAY INSTEAD 'Ignorar' can mean 'to ignore' (especially a person), but its traditional meaning is 'not to know': 'Ignoro por qué lo hizo' = I don't know why he did it. For ignoring advice or a problem, 'no hacer caso (a/de)' is more natural.

- Ignoraba que estuvieras embarazada.
  I didn't know you were pregnant.
- No me hizo caso y ahora tiene problemas.
  He ignored my advice and now he's in trouble.

introducir ≠ English "to introduce (a person)"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to insert / to put in / to bring in (changes, products)

ENGLISH "TO INTRODUCE (A PERSON)" MEANS
to present someone to someone else

SAY INSTEAD To introduce a person, say 'presentar': 'Te presento a mi jefa'. 'Introducir' is for inserting things or introducing changes.

- Introduzca la tarjeta y marque el PIN.
  Insert your card and enter your PIN.
- Quiero presentarte a Marcos.
  I'd like to introduce you to Marcos.

en absoluto ≠ English "absolutely"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
not at all / absolutely not

ENGLISH "ABSOLUTELY" MEANS
completely, totally (yes!)

SAY INSTEAD 'En absoluto' is NEGATIVE. For an enthusiastic 'absolutely!', say 'por supuesto', 'desde luego', 'totalmente' or 'claro que sí'.

- —¿Te molesta que abra la ventana? —En absoluto.
  "Do you mind if I open the window?" "Not at all."
- No estoy en absoluto de acuerdo.
  I don't agree at all.
- —¿Vienes? —¡Por supuesto!
  "Are you coming?" "Absolutely!"

la agenda ≠ English "agenda"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
diary / planner / address book / schedule

ENGLISH "AGENDA" MEANS
list of items for a meeting

SAY INSTEAD For a meeting agenda say 'el orden del día' (formal) or 'los puntos a tratar'. 'La agenda política' = political agenda does exist.

› Déjame mirar la agenda y te digo.
Let me check my diary and get back to you.

› Primer punto del orden del día: el presupuesto.
First item on the agenda: the budget.

procesar ≠ English "to process"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to prosecute / put on trial (legal) · to process (data, food)

ENGLISH "TO PROCESS" MEANS
to deal with (an application, emotions...)

SAY INSTEAD 'Procesar datos' is fine, but for applications say 'tramitar' ('están tramitando mi solicitud'), and for emotions 'asimilar' or 'digerir'. In the news, 'procesado' = charged / on trial.

› El exalcalde ha sido procesado por corrupción.
The former mayor has been charged with corruption.

› Todavía estoy asimilando la noticia.
I'm still processing the news.

comprensivo/a ≠ English "comprehensive"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
understanding / sympathetic (person)

ENGLISH "COMPREHENSIVE" MEANS
complete, covering everything

SAY INSTEAD For 'comprehensive' say: completo, exhaustivo, global. ('A comprehensive guide' = una guía completa.)

› Mi jefa fue muy comprensiva cuando me puse enfermo.
My boss was very understanding when I got ill.

› Hicieron un análisis exhaustivo del mercado.
They did a comprehensive market analysis.

resumir ≠ English "to resume"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to summarise

ENGLISH "TO RESUME" MEANS
to start again after a pause

SAY INSTEAD For 'to resume' say: reanudar, retomar. ('Let's resume the meeting' = Retomemos la reunión.) And a CV in Spain is 'el currículum', not 'el resumen'.

- ¿Puedes resumirme el informe en dos frases?
  Can you summarise the report for me in two sentences?
- Las clases se reanudan el lunes.
  Classes resume on Monday.

la renta ≠ English "rent"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
income (especially for tax)

ENGLISH "RENT" MEANS
money paid to live in a property

SAY INSTEAD For 'rent' say 'el alquiler'. 'La renta' is income: 'la declaración de la renta' = income tax return. (In some Latin American countries 'renta' is also used for rent.)

- Los impuestos dependen de tu renta anual.
  Taxes depend on your annual income.
- El alquiler sube cada año.
  The rent goes up every year.

False friends in everyday life

molestar ≠ English "to molest"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to bother / to annoy / to disturb

ENGLISH "TO MOLEST" MEANS
to sexually assault or abuse

SAY INSTEAD 'Molestar' is totally innocent: '¿Te molesta la música?'. For the English crime, Spanish uses 'abusar de' or 'agredir sexualmente'.

- Perdona que te moleste, ¿tienes un momento?
  Sorry to bother you, have you got a minute?
- Me molesta mucho que lleguen tarde.
  It really annoys me when they're late.

excitado/a ≠ English "excited"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
sexually aroused (also 'agitated' in formal contexts)

ENGLISH "EXCITED" MEANS
enthusiastic, looking forward to something

SAY INSTEAD For 'excited' say: emocionado/a, ilusionado/a, con muchas ganas. ('I'm so excited about the trip' = Tengo muchísimas ganas de hacer el viaje / Estoy muy ilusionada con el viaje.)

- Estoy muy ilusionado con el nuevo trabajo.
  I'm really excited about the new job.
- Los niños están emocionadísimos con la Navidad.
  The kids are so excited about Christmas.

intoxicado/a ≠ English "intoxicated"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
poisoned (by food, gas, chemicals)

ENGLISH "INTOXICATED" MEANS
drunk

SAY INSTEAD For 'intoxicated/drunk' say: borracho/a, ebrio/a (formal), bebido/a. 'Una intoxicación alimentaria' = food poisoning.

- Varios clientes acabaron intoxicados por el marisco.
  Several customers got food poisoning from the seafood.
- Iba un poco bebido.
  He was a bit drunk.

la grosería ≠ English "grocery"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
rude remark / vulgarity / rudeness

ENGLISH "GROCERY" MEANS
food shop / food items

SAY INSTEAD For 'groceries' say: la compra, los comestibles; a grocery shop is 'la tienda de alimentación' or 'el ultramarinos' (old-fashioned). 'Grosero/a' = rude.

- No digas groserías delante de los niños.
  Don't say rude things in front of the children.
- Voy a hacer la compra.
  I'm going to get the groceries.

la casualidad ≠ English "casualty / casualness"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
coincidence / chance

ENGLISH "CASUALTY / CASUALNESS" MEANS
victim of an accident / relaxed attitude

SAY INSTEAD For 'casualty' say: la víctima, el herido; 'casual' (clothes) = informal, de sport. 'Por casualidad' = by chance; '¡Qué casualidad!' = What a coincidence!

- ¡Qué casualidad verte aquí!
  What a coincidence seeing you here!
- El accidente causó tres víctimas.
  The accident caused three casualties.

mayor ≠ English "mayor"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
older / elderly / bigger, main

ENGLISH "MAYOR" MEANS
head of a town council

SAY INSTEAD For 'mayor' say: el alcalde / la alcaldesa. 'Mayor' = older ('mi hermano mayor'), elderly ('las personas mayores') or main ('la plaza mayor').

- Mi abuela ya es muy mayor.
  My grandmother is very old now.
- La alcaldesa inauguró la biblioteca.
  The mayor opened the library.

el crimen ≠ English "crime"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
murder / serious violent crime

ENGLISH "CRIME" MEANS
any illegal act

SAY INSTEAD For crime in general say 'el delito' (B1) or 'la delincuencia' (crime as a social phenomenon). 'Crimen' suggests killing.

- La policía investiga el crimen del hotel.
  The police are investigating the murder at the hotel.
- La delincuencia ha bajado en el barrio.
  Crime has fallen in the neighbourhood.

remover ≠ English "to remove"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to stir / to turn over, stir up (the past)

ENGLISH "TO REMOVE" MEANS
to take away

SAY INSTEAD For 'to remove' say: quitar, eliminar, retirar, sacar. ('Remove the stain' = Quita la mancha.)

- Remueve la salsa para que no se pegue.
  Stir the sauce so it doesn't stick.
- No quiero remover el pasado.
  I don't want to rake up the past.
- Han retirado el producto del mercado.
  They've removed the product from the market.

B2 · CONFIDENT & NATURAL SPANISH

16 · The word partnerships that make your Spanish sound native, not translated

Useful collocations

A collocation is a combination that Spanish speakers simply use together: you 'llevas a cabo' a study, you 'alcanzas' an agreement, a change is 'radical', not 'big'. Getting these right is one of the clearest signs of a B2 speaker. Learn each one as a block, and notice where English uses a different verb or adjective.

Verb + noun: getting things done

Work, projects and problem-solving. B1 already covered tomar medidas, poner en marcha, hacer frente a and cumplir un sueño; here are the next-level partners.

llevar a cabo un proyecto / un estudio / una reforma
to carry out a project / a study / a reform
The standard 'carry out' in formal and work contexts. More precise than 'hacer'.

> La universidad llevó a cabo un estudio con más de mil estudiantes.
> *The university carried out a study with over a thousand students.*

plantear un problema / una duda / una pregunta
to raise a problem / a doubt / a question
To bring something up for discussion. 'Plantear' is very frequent in meetings.

> Sofía planteó una duda muy interesante en la reunión.
> *Sofía raised a very interesting question in the meeting.*

abordar un tema / un problema
to tackle / to address an issue
To deal with a subject seriously. Typical in debates, articles and presentations.

> En la charla abordaremos el tema de la salud mental en el trabajo.
> *In the talk we'll address the issue of mental health at work.*

alcanzar un acuerdo / un consenso
to reach an agreement / a consensus
The formal upgrade of 'llegar a un acuerdo' (B1). Typical of news, politics and business.

> Tras horas de negociación, alcanzaron un acuerdo.
> *After hours of negotiation, they reached an agreement.*

cumplir un plazo
to meet a deadline
Note the verb: cumplir, not 'encontrar'. The opposite: no cumplir / incumplir el plazo.

> Si no cumplimos el plazo, perderemos al cliente.
> *If we don't meet the deadline, we'll lose the client.*

fijar / marcarse un objetivo
to set a goal / to set yourself a target
'Marcarse' is reflexive: the goal is for yourself.

> Este año me he marcado el objetivo de leer veinte libros.
> *This year I've set myself the goal of reading twenty books.*

desempeñar un papel / una función
to play a role / to perform a function
Formal. In conversation, 'tener un papel' is also fine.

> Las redes sociales desempeñan un papel clave en las elecciones.
> *Social media play a key role in elections.*

sacar conclusiones
to draw conclusions
Note the verb: sacar (not 'dibujar'!).

> No saques conclusiones antes de tiempo.
> *Don't jump to conclusions.*

correr peligro
to be in danger / at risk
Builds on B1 'correr un riesgo'. Here the subject is the thing or person in danger.

> Si no se invierte, muchos puestos de trabajo corren peligro.
> *If there's no investment, many jobs are at risk.*

presentar una queja / una reclamación
to make / file a complaint
The formal way to complain to a company or institution.

> Presenté una reclamación porque me cobraron dos veces.
> *I filed a complaint because they charged me twice.*

asumir la responsabilidad / las consecuencias
to take responsibility / to accept the consequences

> El director asumió toda la responsabilidad del error.
> *The director took full responsibility for the mistake.*

dar prioridad a algo
to prioritise something / to give priority to

> Hay que dar prioridad a los pedidos urgentes.
> *We need to prioritise urgent orders.*

dar un paso (adelante / atrás)
to take a step (forward / back)

> Mudarse sola fue un gran paso para ella.
> *Moving out on her own was a big step for her.*

ejercer presión / influencia
to put pressure on / to exert influence

> Los vecinos ejercieron presión para que no cerraran el colegio.
> *Residents put pressure on them not to close the school.*

poner fin a algo
to put an end to something

> El acuerdo puso fin a la huelga.
> *The agreement put an end to the strike.*

adoptar medidas / una postura FORMAL
to adopt measures / to take a stance
The formal upgrade of 'tomar medidas'. Very common in the news.

> El Gobierno adoptará nuevas medidas para frenar los precios.
> *The government will adopt new measures to curb prices.*

superar las expectativas
to exceed expectations

> El curso ha superado con creces mis expectativas.
> *The course has far exceeded my expectations.*

cubrir una vacante / las necesidades
to fill a vacancy / to meet needs

> Necesitamos cubrir la vacante antes de septiembre.
> *We need to fill the vacancy before September.*

dar respuesta a FORMAL
to respond to / to address (a need, a demand)
Formal: to provide a solution.

> El nuevo centro da respuesta a una demanda histórica del barrio.
> *The new centre responds to a long-standing demand from the neighbourhood.*

suscitar interés / polémica / dudas
to arouse interest / to spark controversy / to raise doubts

> La propuesta ha suscitado mucha polémica en redes.
> *The proposal has sparked a lot of controversy on social media.*

Verb + noun: communication & relationships

hacer hincapié en algo
to stress / to emphasise something

> La profesora hizo hincapié en la importancia de practicar a diario.
> *The teacher stressed the importance of practising every day.*

poner de manifiesto FORMAL
to reveal / to highlight / to make clear

> El informe pone de manifiesto la falta de inversión.
> *The report highlights the lack of investment.*

poner en duda / poner en tela de juicio
to call into question / to question
'En tela de juicio' is more formal and stronger.

> Nadie pone en duda su talento.
> *Nobody questions her talent.*

entablar una conversación / una amistad
to strike up a conversation / a friendship

> En el tren entablé conversación con una chica de Lima.
> *On the train I struck up a conversation with a girl from Lima.*

mantener una conversación (con)
to have / hold a conversation (with)

> Mantuve una conversación muy sincera con mi jefa.
> *I had a very honest conversation with my boss.*

causar (una) buena / mala impresión
to make a good / bad impression

> Javi causó muy buena impresión en la entrevista.
> *Javi made a very good impression in the interview.*

guardar silencio FORMAL
to remain silent / to keep quiet

> El acusado decidió guardar silencio.
> *The defendant chose to remain silent.*

romper el silencio
to break the silence / to speak out

> Tras años de silencio, la actriz decidió romper su silencio.
> *After years of silence, the actress decided to speak out.*

dar el visto bueno
to give the go-ahead / to approve
Very common at work: the boss gives you the 'OK'.

> Estamos esperando a que el cliente dé el visto bueno al diseño.
> *We're waiting for the client to approve the design.*

dar lugar a algo
to give rise to / to lead to

> Su comentario dio lugar a un debate muy intenso.
> *His comment led to a very heated debate.*

contraer matrimonio / una deuda FORMAL
to get married / to incur a debt
Official language. In everyday speech: casarse, endeudarse.

> Contrajeron matrimonio en una pequeña iglesia de Asturias.
> *They were married in a small church in Asturias.*

depositar la confianza en alguien FORMAL
to place your trust in someone

> Gracias por depositar vuestra confianza en nosotros.
> *Thank you for placing your trust in us.*

Adjective + noun

English often says 'big' or 'very'. Spanish prefers a precise adjective. Many of these adjectives can go before the noun for emphasis.

un papel fundamental
a key / vital role

> Los abuelos tienen un papel fundamental en muchas familias.
> *Grandparents play a vital role in many families.*

un cambio radical
a radical / drastic change

> Dejar la ciudad supuso un cambio radical en mi vida.
> *Leaving the city meant a drastic change in my life.*

una diferencia notable
a noticeable / marked difference

> Hay una diferencia notable entre las dos versiones.
> *There's a marked difference between the two versions.*

una mejora considerable
a considerable improvement

> Hemos notado una mejora considerable en su pronunciación.
> *We've noticed a considerable improvement in his pronunciation.*

un fuerte impacto
a strong / major impact
Fuerte before the noun is the natural position here.

> La noticia tuvo un fuerte impacto en la opinión pública.
> *The news had a major impact on public opinion.*

una amplia gama (de)
a wide range (of)

> Ofrecemos una amplia gama de cursos en línea.
> *We offer a wide range of online courses.*

un amplio abanico de posibilidades
a wide range of possibilities

> Hablar idiomas abre un amplio abanico de posibilidades.
> *Speaking languages opens up a wide range of opportunities.*

un grave error / un error garrafal
a serious mistake / a huge blunder
'Garrafal' is more colloquial and only goes with errors and mistakes.

> Fue un error garrafal no leer el contrato.
> *It was a huge blunder not to read the contract.*

un tema candente
a hot topic / a burning issue

> La vivienda es un tema candente en toda Europa.
> *Housing is a hot topic all over Europe.*

una postura firme
a firm stance

> La empresa mantuvo una postura firme durante la negociación.
> *The company held a firm stance during the negotiation.*

un argumento de peso
a compelling / strong argument

> El precio es un argumento de peso para elegir esta opción.
> *The price is a strong argument for choosing this option.*

un claro ejemplo (de)
a clear example (of)

> Este barrio es un claro ejemplo de gentrificación.
> *This neighbourhood is a clear example of gentrification.*

un fracaso estrepitoso
a spectacular failure / a total flop

> La campaña fue un fracaso estrepitoso.
> *The campaign was a total flop.*

una ligera mejoría
a slight improvement
'Mejoría' is especially used for health and the economy.

> El paciente ha experimentado una ligera mejoría.
> *The patient has shown a slight improvement.*

una subida / bajada brusca
a sharp rise / fall

> Ha habido una subida brusca de las temperaturas.
> *There's been a sharp rise in temperatures.*

una opinión generalizada
a widely held view / a common opinion

> Es una opinión generalizada que el transporte público ha empeorado.
> *It's a widely held view that public transport has got worse.*

un alto porcentaje (de)
a high percentage (of)

> Un alto porcentaje de los encuestados prefiere el teletrabajo.
> *A high percentage of those surveyed prefer remote working.*

Adverb + adjective

Replace 'muy' with a precise adverb and your Spanish instantly sounds more sophisticated.

profundamente arrepentido/a
deeply sorry / full of regret

> Estoy profundamente arrepentido de lo que dije.
> *I deeply regret what I said.*

plenamente convencido/a
fully convinced

> Estoy plenamente convencida de que es la decisión correcta.
> *I'm fully convinced it's the right decision.*

altamente cualificado/a
highly qualified / highly skilled
Typical of job ads and CVs.

> Buscamos personal altamente cualificado.
> *We're looking for highly skilled staff.*

sumamente importante FORMAL
extremely important

> Es sumamente importante que respeten el horario.
> *It's extremely important that you stick to the schedule.*

ampliamente conocido/a
widely known

> Es un fenómeno ampliamente conocido entre los psicólogos.
> *It's a phenomenon widely known among psychologists.*

estrechamente relacionado/a (con)
closely related (to / with)

> El estrés está estrechamente relacionado con la falta de sueño.
> *Stress is closely related to lack of sleep.*

perfectamente consciente (de)
fully aware (of)

> Soy perfectamente consciente de los riesgos.
> *I'm fully aware of the risks.*

firmemente convencido/a
firmly convinced

> Está firmemente convencido de que lo van a ascender.
> *He's firmly convinced they're going to promote him.*

seriamente preocupado/a
seriously worried

> Los médicos están seriamente preocupados por la ola de calor.
> *Doctors are seriously worried about the heatwave.*

gravemente herido/a
seriously injured
News language. Note: 'gravemente', not 'seriamente', for injuries and illness.

> Dos personas resultaron gravemente heridas en el accidente.
> *Two people were seriously injured in the accident.*

rotundamente falso
completely untrue / flatly false

> Lo que dicen de nosotros es rotundamente falso.
> *What they're saying about us is completely untrue.*

claramente insuficiente
clearly insufficient / nowhere near enough

> El presupuesto es claramente insuficiente.
> *The budget is nowhere near enough.*

bien merecido/a
well-deserved

> ¡Disfruta de tus bien merecidas vacaciones!
> *Enjoy your well-deserved holiday!*

Noun + de + noun

Spanish joins two nouns with 'de' where English just puts them side by side: 'time pressure', 'decision-making'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la falta de tiempo	*lack of time*	Por falta de tiempo, no pudimos ver el museo. *Due to lack of time, we couldn't see the museum.*
la toma de decisiones	*decision-making*	La toma de decisiones es más lenta en las grandes empresas. *Decision-making is slower in large companies.*
la puesta en marcha	*the launch / setting up / start-up*	La puesta en marcha del proyecto será en enero. *The project will be launched in January.*
el punto de inflexión	*turning point*	Aquel viaje fue un punto de inflexión en mi vida. *That trip was a turning point in my life.*
la calidad de vida	*quality of life*	Nos mudamos al pueblo para ganar calidad de vida. *We moved to the village for a better quality of life.*
el nivel de vida	*standard of living*	≠ calidad de vida: money vs well-being
el ritmo de vida	*pace of life*	El ritmo de vida en Madrid es frenético. *The pace of life in Madrid is hectic.*
el estilo de vida	*lifestyle*	
la fuente de información	*source of information*	Contrasta siempre la fuente de información. *Always check your source of information.*
la falta de respeto	*lack of respect / rudeness*	Me parece una falta de respeto no contestar. *I think it's rude not to reply.*
la tasa de paro / de desempleo	*unemployment rate*	
la lluvia de ideas	*brainstorming / brainstorm*	Empecemos con una lluvia de ideas. *Let's start with a brainstorm.*
la puesta en común	*pooling of ideas / group feedback session*	very common in classes and meetings Después del trabajo en grupos haremos una puesta en común. *After the group work we'll share our ideas.*
la fuerza de voluntad	*willpower*	Dejar de fumar requiere mucha fuerza de voluntad. *Giving up smoking takes a lot of willpower.*
el golpe de suerte	*stroke of luck*	
el cambio de opinión	*change of mind / of opinion*	
el margen de error	*margin of error*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
las medidas de seguridad	*security / safety measures*	
el orden del día	*agenda (of a meeting)*	for a meeting's agenda; 'la agenda' is your diary **¿Qué puntos hay en el orden del día?** *What's on the agenda?*

Watch out

English verbs that don't translate in collocations

✗ ~~*tomar lugar · *hacer una decisión · *dibujar conclusiones · *encontrar un plazo~~

✓ tener lugar · tomar una decisión · sacar conclusiones · cumplir un plazo

Collocations are fixed. Translating the English verb word for word produces combinations that Spanish speakers instantly notice as foreign.

› **La reunión tendrá lugar el lunes y allí tomaremos una decisión.**
The meeting will take place on Monday and we'll make a decision there.

Don't say 'muy' or 'grande' for everything

✗ ~~*un cambio muy grande · *una diferencia grande · *muy de acuerdo~~

✓ un cambio radical · una diferencia notable · totalmente de acuerdo

'Muy' and 'grande' aren't wrong, but at B2 they make your Spanish sound flat. Choose the adjective or adverb that naturally goes with the noun.

› **Ha sido una mejora considerable.**
It's been a considerable improvement.

COLLECT, DON'T TRANSLATE

When you read a news article in Spanish, underline three verb + noun combinations and copy them into a notebook with the example sentence. Never write the noun alone: write 'cumplir un plazo', not 'plazo'. That's how you build the chunks native speakers use.

LEVEL C1

C1

Advanced Spanish

Professional, academic, expressive

Advanced, professional, academic and expressive vocabulary: formal writing, meetings and negotiations, politics, business, science, abstract ideas and the subtle shades of meaning that make your Spanish sound sophisticated.

AT THIS LEVEL YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- Write formal emails, reports and essays
- Lead meetings, presentations and negotiations
- Discuss politics, business, science and abstract ideas
- Express nuance, irony and subtle emotion

16 sections **1,454** words, phrases & structures

Fluency is choosing the right word, every time.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

01 · Precise verbs for arguing, analysing and expressing attitude

Verbs

At C1 you already have a verb for everything; now you need the exact one. These verbs are the backbone of reports, opinion columns, debates and meetings. Learn each one with its preposition and its typical partners (esgrimir argumentos, entrañar un riesgo, acatar una sentencia), and notice the register: most are formal, a few are wonderfully colloquial.

Arguing & academic writing

sostener *to argue / to maintain (that)*

VERB · IRREGULAR LIKE TENER: SOSTENGO, SOSTUVE, SOSTENDRÉ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **sostener que + indicative · sostener una postura / una tesis**

New meaning at C1: to defend a position or claim. Much more elegant than 'decir' or 'pensar' in essays and debates. It also keeps its basic meaning 'to hold / to support physically'.

- Algunos expertos sostienen que la semana de cuatro días aumenta la productividad.
  Some experts argue that a four-day week increases productivity.
- Sostuvo su versión hasta el final del juicio.
  He stuck to his version right up to the end of the trial.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sostener una tesis** *to defend a thesis* · **sostener una postura** *to hold a position* · **insostenible** *untenable*

DON'T CONFUSE sostener = to argue a position consistently · afirmar = to state · defender = to defend (more combative).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Sostengo que sea verdad~~ → ✓ Sostengo que es verdad. Statements of belief take the indicative (subjunctive only when negated: No sostengo que sea…).

esgrimir *to put forward / to wield (an argument)*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **esgrimir un argumento / razones / motivos**

To use an argument, reason or piece of evidence as a weapon in a discussion. Literally 'to wield' a sword — the image is combative. Typical of journalism and political debate.

- El Gobierno esgrimió razones de seguridad para justificar el cierre.
  The government cited security reasons to justify the closure.
- Los argumentos que esgrime la oposición no se sostienen.
  The arguments the opposition is putting forward don't hold up.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **esgrimir argumentos** *to put forward arguments* · **esgrimir como excusa** *to use as an excuse*

NOTE Almost always with argumentos, razones, motivos, pretextos. Don't use it with physical objects except in literature (esgrimir un sable).

aducir *to cite / to put forward (as a reason)*

VERB · IRREGULAR LIKE CONDUCIR: ADUZCO, ADUJE, ADUJO, ADUJERON · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **aducir algo (como motivo) · aducir que + indicative**

To offer a reason, proof or excuse in support of a position, often to justify yourself. Frequent in official reports and news.

› La empresa adujo problemas técnicos para explicar el retraso.
The company cited technical problems to explain the delay.

› Adujeron falta de presupuesto, pero nadie se lo creyó.
They put it down to a lack of budget, but nobody believed them.

DON'T CONFUSE aducir = to present reasons · alegar = same, but especially in legal contexts or to justify yourself.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*aducieron / *adució~~ → ✓ adujeron / adujo. Same irregular preterite as conducir, traducir, producir.

alegar *to claim / to plead (as a reason)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: ALEGUÉ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **alegar que + indicative · alegar algo (en su defensa)**

To give a reason to justify something, especially in legal, administrative or defensive contexts. Often suggests the reason may not be fully convincing.

› Alegó que no había recibido la notificación.
She claimed she hadn't received the notification.

› El trabajador alegó motivos personales para no asistir.
The employee gave personal reasons for not attending.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **alegar en su defensa** *to plead in one's defence* · **el alegato** *plea / impassioned defence*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela...) alegar also means 'to argue / quarrel' colloquially: ¡No me alegues! = Don't argue with me!

refutar *to refute / to disprove*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To prove with arguments or evidence that a statement or theory is false. Stronger than just disagreeing: you show it's wrong.

› Los datos refutan por completo la hipótesis inicial.
The data completely disprove the initial hypothesis.

› Nadie ha conseguido refutar su teoría.
No one has managed to refute her theory.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **refutar una tesis / una teoría** *to refute a thesis / a theory* · **irrefutable** *irrefutable*

DON'T CONFUSE refutar = to prove false (with evidence) · rebatir = to argue against (not necessarily proving) · desmentir = to deny that a statement or rumour is true.

rebatir *to counter / to rebut*

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · FORMAL · C1

To answer an argument with counter-arguments, typically in a debate or written reply. It describes the act of arguing back, whether or not you win.

› Rebatió uno por uno todos los puntos del informe.
He rebutted every single point in the report.

› Es fácil rebatir una opinión que no se basa en datos.
It's easy to counter an opinion that isn't based on data.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **rebatir un argumento** *to counter an argument* · **difícil de rebatir** *hard to argue with*

desmentir *to deny / to refute (a claim, a rumour)*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING E→IE, E→I: DESMIENTO, DESMINTIÓ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **desmentir algo · desmentir a alguien**

To state officially that news, a rumour or a statement is false. Typical in the press: governments and companies 'desmienten' rumours.

› El club desmintió los rumores sobre la venta del jugador.
The club denied the rumours about the player being sold.

› Los hechos desmienten sus palabras.
The facts contradict what he said.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desmentir un rumor / una noticia** *to deny a rumour / a news report* · **el desmentido** *denial (official)*

DON'T CONFUSE negar = to deny (general, also 'to refuse') · desmentir = to deny that something reported is true.

corroborar *to corroborate / to confirm*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To confirm a statement, a suspicion or a result with new data or testimony.

› Varios testigos corroboraron su versión de los hechos.
Several witnesses corroborated her version of events.

› El segundo estudio corrobora lo que ya sospechábamos.
The second study confirms what we already suspected.

DON'T CONFUSE corroborar = confirm with extra evidence · confirmar = general · ratificar = confirm officially (an agreement, a decision).

constatar *to note / to verify / to establish (a fact)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **constatar algo · constatar que + indicative · se constata que**

To check and record that something is true; very common in reports and academic texts: 'Se constata que…' = 'It is clear / It has been established that…'.

- En el informe se constata un aumento del absentismo escolar.
  The report notes an increase in school absenteeism.
- Pudimos constatar que el sistema no funcionaba.
  We were able to verify that the system wasn't working.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **constatar un hecho** *to establish a fact* · **la constatación** *verification / confirmation*

recalcar *to stress / to emphasise*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: RECALQUÉ · C1

PATTERN **recalcar algo · recalcar que + indicative**

To say something again or very clearly so that nobody misses it. Very common in meetings and in reported speech in the news.

- La directora recalcó que el plazo es improrrogable.
  The director stressed that the deadline cannot be extended.
- Quiero recalcar una cosa: nadie ha perdido su empleo.
  I want to make one thing clear: nobody has lost their job.

DON'T CONFUSE recalcar ≈ subrayar ≈ enfatizar ≈ hacer hincapié en. Recalcar suggests repetition; enfatizar is more about tone.

hacer hincapié en *to emphasise / to lay stress on*

VERB · IRREGULAR (HACER): HICE, HIZO · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **hacer (especial) hincapié en algo / en que + indicative**

To give special importance to a point in a speech or text. A fixed expression — learn it as a whole.

- El ponente hizo especial hincapié en la necesidad de invertir en formación.
  The speaker placed special emphasis on the need to invest in training.
- Hay que hacer hincapié en la prevención.
  We need to put the emphasis on prevention.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*hacer hincapié sobre / *a~~ → ✓ hacer hincapié en. Spelling: hincapié (one word, accent on é).

aludir *to allude to / to refer to*
a

VERB REGULAR (-IR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **aludir a algo / a alguien**

To mention or refer to something, often indirectly or briefly. In the press it also means 'to refer to someone' (without naming them).

› En su discurso aludió a la crisis sin mencionarla directamente.
In his speech he alluded to the crisis without mentioning it directly.

› El texto alude a un episodio de la Guerra Civil.
The text refers to an episode from the Civil War.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sentirse aludido** *to feel it's about you / to take it personally* · **la alusión** *allusion, reference*

NOTE 'Darse por aludido' = to take a hint (or a comment) personally: No te des por aludido, no lo decía por ti.

dar pie *to give rise to / to give grounds for*
a

VERB IRREGULAR (DAR): DI, DIO C1

PATTERN **dar pie a algo / a que + subjunctive**

To create the opportunity or excuse for something to happen, especially comments, rumours, misunderstandings or debate.

› Sus declaraciones dieron pie a todo tipo de especulaciones.
His statements gave rise to all kinds of speculation.

› No quiero dar pie a malentendidos.
I don't want to leave room for misunderstandings.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dar pie a confusión** *to cause confusion* · **dar pie a que la gente hable** *to give people something to talk about*

plasmar *to capture / to set down / to express*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **plasmar algo en (un texto, un cuadro…) · plasmarse en**

To give concrete form to an idea, a feeling or a plan — in writing, art, a document or a law.

› El acuerdo quedó plasmado en un documento firmado por ambas partes.
The agreement was set down in a document signed by both parties.

› Supo plasmar en la novela la angustia de toda una generación.
She managed to capture in the novel the anguish of an entire generation.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **plasmar por escrito** *to put in writing* · **plasmar una idea** *to give shape to an idea*

More verbs for argument, debate & writing

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
enfatizar FORMAL	*to emphasise*	spelling: enfaticé · ≈ recalcar, subrayar **El informe enfatiza la urgencia de actuar.** *The report emphasises the urgency of acting.*
aseverar FORMAL	*to assert / to affirm*	stronger than afirmar **El acusado aseveró que era inocente.** *The defendant asserted that he was innocent.*
argüir FORMAL	*to argue / to contend*	diaeresis in argüir, argüimos; but arguyo, arguyó (no ü) **Arguyó que no tenía otra opción.** *He argued that he had no other choice.*
objetar FORMAL	*to object*	objetar algo a alguien · objeción de conciencia **No tengo nada que objetar.** *I have no objection.*
cuestionar	*to question / to call into question*	≈ poner en tela de juicio **Nadie cuestiona su profesionalidad.** *Nobody questions her professionalism.*
tergiversar	*to distort / to twist (words, facts)*	**Los medios tergiversaron sus palabras.** *The media twisted his words.*
desvirtuar FORMAL	*to distort / to undermine the essence of*	the original meaning or purpose is lost **Tantas enmiendas desvirtúan la ley.** *So many amendments undermine the spirit of the law.*
puntualizar FORMAL	*to clarify / to specify (a detail)*	used to add a precise correction **Quisiera puntualizar una cosa.** *I'd like to make one point clear.*
apostillar FORMAL	*to add (a comment) / to remark*	a short final comment, often witty **«Y sin cobrar», apostilló.** *"And without being paid," she added.*
divagar	*to digress / to ramble*	spelling: divagué **Deja de divagar y ve al grano.** *Stop rambling and get to the point.*
hilvanar	*to string together (ideas, arguments)*	literally 'to tack' (sewing) **Le costaba hilvanar dos frases seguidas.** *He struggled to string two sentences together.*
ensalzar FORMAL	*to praise / to extol*	spelling: ensalcé
encomiar FORMAL	*to commend / to praise highly*	very formal · encomiable = commendable **Es una labor encomiable.** *It's a commendable piece of work.*
denostar FORMAL	*to revile / to disparage*	stem-changing o→ue: denuesta · often in passive: denostado **Un género muy denostado por la crítica.** *A genre much disparaged by critics.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
menospreciar	*to underestimate / to look down on*	No menosprecies a tus rivales. *Don't underestimate your rivals.*
ningunear COLLOQUIAL	*to ignore / to treat as a nobody*	from 'ninguno' En la reunión la ningunearon por completo. *In the meeting they completely ignored her.*
despotricar contra COLLOQUIAL	*to rant / to rail against*	spelling: despotriqué Se pasó la cena despotricando contra su jefe. *He spent the whole dinner ranting about his boss.*
arremeter contra	*to lash out at / to attack (verbally)*	La oposición arremetió contra el presupuesto. *The opposition lashed out at the budget.*
recriminar	*to reproach / to criticise*	recriminar algo a alguien Le recriminó su falta de compromiso. *She reproached him for his lack of commitment.*
vaticinar FORMAL	*to predict / to forecast*	≈ pronosticar, augurar Los analistas vaticinan una recesión. *Analysts are predicting a recession.*
augurar	*to augur / to bode / to predict*	augurar algo bueno / nada bueno Este silencio no augura nada bueno. *This silence doesn't bode well.*
conjeturar FORMAL	*to conjecture / to speculate*	la conjetura

Cause & effect

acarrear *to bring about / to entail (usually something negative)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **acarrear consecuencias / problemas / gastos**

To cause consequences, generally problems or costs. Literally 'to cart / to haul'.

› La decisión podría acarrear graves consecuencias para la empresa.
The decision could have serious consequences for the company.

› Saltarse las normas acarrea sanciones.
Breaking the rules carries penalties.

DON'T CONFUSE acarrear ≈ conllevar ≈ traer consigo. Acarrear sounds heavier and is usually negative.

desencadenar *to trigger / to unleash*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **desencadenar algo · desencadenarse (to break out)**

ALSO desencadenarse = to break out (a storm, a crisis): Se desencadenó una tormenta.

To start a process, usually a strong or negative one: a crisis, a war, a reaction, a debate. Literally 'to unchain'.

› El anuncio desencadenó una oleada de protestas.
The announcement triggered a wave of protests.

› Un comentario sin importancia desencadenó la discusión.
A trivial remark set off the argument.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desencadenar una crisis** *to trigger a crisis* · **desencadenar una reacción en cadena** *to set off a chain reaction*

propiciar *to foster / to favour / to bring about*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **propiciar algo · propiciar que + subjunctive**

To create favourable conditions for something to happen. Neutral or positive, unlike acarrear.

› El buen clima propicia el turismo durante todo el año.
The good climate encourages tourism all year round.

› La crisis propició un cambio de liderazgo.
The crisis paved the way for a change of leadership.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **propiciar el diálogo** *to foster dialogue* · **propicio/a** *favourable, suitable: el momento propicio*

suscitar *to arouse / to give rise to (interest, doubts, debate)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **suscitar interés / polémica / dudas / críticas**

To provoke a reaction in people: interest, controversy, doubts, criticism, admiration.

› La propuesta suscitó un intenso debate en el Parlamento.
The proposal sparked an intense debate in Parliament.

› Su nombramiento ha suscitado muchas dudas.
His appointment has raised a lot of doubts.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'resucitar' (to resurrect). Suscitar: s-u-s-c-i-t-a-r.

entrañar *to involve / to entail (a risk, a difficulty)*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **entrañar un riesgo / un peligro / una dificultad**

To carry something inside as an inherent part — almost always riesgos, peligros or dificultades.

› Toda inversión entraña un cierto riesgo.
Every investment involves a certain amount of risk.

› El proyecto entraña más dificultades de lo previsto.
The project involves more difficulties than expected.

NOTE From 'las entrañas' (the guts): the risk is in the very core of the thing.

incidir en *to have an impact on / to dwell on*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **incidir en algo**

Two meanings: (1) to affect or influence something; (2) to insist on or emphasise a point.

incidir en algo (affect) — *to have an effect on*

› El precio de la energía incide directamente en la inflación.
Energy prices have a direct impact on inflation.

incidir en un tema (insist) — *to stress, to dwell on*

› La ministra incidió en la importancia de la prevención.
The minister stressed the importance of prevention.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la incidencia** *impact / incidence / (technical) issue, incident*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'incidir' / 'indicar'. And it's not 'incidentar'. Incidir en = influir en / insistir en.

repercutir en *to have repercussions on / to affect*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **repercutir (positiva / negativamente) en algo**

When an event or decision has an effect on something else, especially indirectly or later.

› La subida de los tipos de interés repercute en las hipotecas.
The rise in interest rates has an impact on mortgages.

› El estrés repercute negativamente en el rendimiento.
Stress has a negative effect on performance.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la repercusión** *repercussion, impact* · **tener repercusión mediática** *to get media coverage*

redundar en

to result in / to be to the benefit (or detriment) of

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **redundar en beneficio / perjuicio de alguien · redundar en algo**

To end up having an effect on something — classically in 'redundar en beneficio de'. Typical of formal speeches and reports.

› Estas medidas redundarán en beneficio de todos los ciudadanos.
These measures will benefit all citizens.

› Una mejor formación redunda en una mayor productividad.
Better training results in greater productivity.

COMMON MISTAKE Not related to English 'redundant'. ✗ ~~*Este puesto es redundado~~ → for 'redundant job' say: este puesto es innecesario / prescindible.

desembocar en

to lead to / to end in

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: DESEMBOCÓ · C1

PATTERN **desembocar en algo**

Literally a river flowing into the sea; figuratively, a process that ends in a (often unwanted) result.

› Las tensiones acabaron desembocando en una huelga general.
The tensions eventually led to a general strike.

› El río desemboca en el Mediterráneo.
The river flows into the Mediterranean.

DON'T CONFUSE desembocar en ≈ derivar en ≈ acabar en. Desembocar suggests a gradual build-up towards the end.

derivar en

to turn into / to result in

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **derivar en algo · derivar de (to come from) · derivar a alguien (to refer)**

When a situation evolves and ends up becoming something else, usually worse.

> **derivar de** — *to derive from, to stem from*
>
> › Muchos problemas derivan de una mala comunicación.
> *Many problems stem from poor communication.*

> **derivar a alguien a** — *to refer someone (to a specialist)*
>
> › El médico la derivó al cardiólogo.
> *The doctor referred her to the cardiologist.*

› Lo que empezó como una discusión derivó en una pelea.
What started as an argument turned into a fight.

› Una gripe mal curada puede derivar en neumonía.
Flu that isn't properly treated can lead to pneumonia.

radicar en

to lie in / to stem from

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: RADIQUÉ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **radicar en algo / en que + indicative**

To have its root or essence in something. Typical in 'el problema / la clave / la diferencia radica en…'.

› La clave del éxito radica en la constancia.
The key to success lies in consistency.

› El problema radica en que nadie asume la responsabilidad.
The problem is that nobody takes responsibility.

DON'T CONFUSE radicar en ≈ residir en ≈ estribar en: three elegant ways to say 'lie in'. Estribar en is the most formal and is almost only used with 'la clave / la dificultad / la diferencia'.

estribar en

to lie in / to be based on

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **estribar en algo / en + infinitive / en que + indicative**

To have its basis or explanation in something. Very formal and almost always with nouns like la dificultad, la diferencia, el secreto.

› La dificultad estriba en encontrar personal cualificado.
The difficulty lies in finding qualified staff.

› Su éxito estriba en una gestión muy prudente.
Their success is based on very careful management.

atañer

to concern / to be the business of

VERB · DEFECTIVE, 3RD PERSON ONLY: ATAÑE, ATAÑEN, ATAÑÍA, ATAÑÓ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **atañer a alguien / a algo · en lo que atañe a**

To affect or concern someone, or to be their responsibility. Used only in third person, mainly in 'en lo que atañe a' and 'esto no te atañe'.

› Es una decisión que atañe a todos los vecinos.
It's a decision that concerns all the residents.

› En lo que atañe a la financiación, no hay novedades.
As far as funding is concerned, there's no news.

DON'T CONFUSE atañer ≈ concernir ≈ incumbir. Incumbir also implies obligation: Eso no te incumbe = That's none of your business.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*atañió~~ → ✓ atañó (like tañer, gruñir: no i after ñ).

concernir *to concern / to relate to*

VERB DEFECTIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: CONCIERNE, CONCIERNEN FORMAL C1

PATTERN **concernir a alguien · en lo que concierne a · por lo que a mí concierne**

To affect or relate to someone or something; used almost only in third person and in the set phrase 'en lo que concierne a' (as regards).

› Esta normativa concierne sobre todo a los autónomos.
These regulations mainly concern the self-employed.

› Por lo que a mí concierne, el asunto está cerrado.
As far as I'm concerned, the matter is closed.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy concernido por... (English '~~;I'm concerned about') → ✓ Me preocupa... In Spanish concernir never means 'to worry'.

More verbs for causes, processes & change

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
residir en FORMAL	*to lie in / to reside in*	≈ radicar en, estribar en **Su atractivo reside en su sencillez.** *Its appeal lies in its simplicity.*
subyacer FORMAL	*to underlie*	mostly 3rd person: subyace, subyacen · subyacente = underlying **El problema que subyace es la desigualdad.** *The underlying problem is inequality.*
atenuar FORMAL	*to attenuate / to soften / to tone down*	atenúo · circunstancia atenuante = mitigating circumstance **Atenuó sus críticas tras la reunión.** *She toned down her criticism after the meeting.*
acentuar	*to accentuate / to heighten*	acentúo · acentuarse = to become more marked **La crisis acentuó las desigualdades.** *The crisis heightened inequalities.*
agudizar(se)	*to sharpen / to worsen*	spelling: agudicé **El conflicto se agudizó en verano.** *The conflict worsened in the summer.*
avivar	*to fan / to stir up*	avivar el debate, el fuego, las tensiones **Sus palabras avivaron la polémica.** *His words fuelled the controversy.*
apaciguar	*to appease / to calm*	apacigüé, apacigüe (diaeresis) **Intentó apaciguar los ánimos.** *He tried to calm things down.*
proliferar	*to proliferate / to spread*	**Proliferan los pisos turísticos en el centro.** *Tourist flats are springing up all over the centre.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
imperar FORMAL	*to prevail / to reign*	used for atmospheres, laws, attitudes **En la oficina impera un clima de desconfianza.** *An atmosphere of mistrust prevails in the office.*
primar FORMAL	*to take priority / to prioritise*	primar sobre algo · primar algo **Debe primar la seguridad sobre la rapidez.** *Safety must take priority over speed.*
gestarse	*to be brewing / to take shape*	from gestación (pregnancy) **Se está gestando un cambio importante.** *An important change is brewing.*
fraguar	*to forge / to hatch (a plan)*	fragüé (diaeresis) · fraguarse = to be hatched **Fraguaron un plan para salvar la empresa.** *They hatched a plan to save the company.*
precipitar(se)	*to hasten / to rush (into)*	precipitarse = to act too hastily **No te precipites; piénsalo bien.** *Don't rush into it; think it through.*
entorpecer FORMAL	*to hinder / to obstruct*	-zc-: entorpezco **La burocracia entorpece la inversión.** *Red tape hinders investment.*
obstaculizar FORMAL	*to obstruct / to hamper*	spelling: obstaculicé
allanar el camino	*to pave the way*	allanar = to level, flatten (also 'to raid' a house) **El acuerdo allana el camino para la paz.** *The agreement paves the way for peace.*
encauzar	*to channel / to steer (in the right direction)*	spelling: encaucé **Hay que encauzar bien esa energía.** *That energy needs to be properly channelled.*
agilizar	*to speed up / to streamline*	agilizar trámites **Queremos agilizar los trámites.** *We want to speed up the paperwork.*
dilatar FORMAL	*to drag out / to prolong*	dilatar un proceso · also 'to dilate' **No conviene dilatar más la decisión.** *We shouldn't drag the decision out any longer.*
zanjar	*to settle / to put an end to*	zanjar una polémica, un asunto, una discusión **Zanjó la discusión con un «se acabó».** *He brought the argument to an end with a "That's it".*
dirimir FORMAL	*to settle / to resolve (a dispute)*	very formal, legal and sports press **El partido dirimirá quién se lleva el título.** *The match will decide who takes the title.*
remitir	*to subside / to send / to refer*	fiebre, lluvias, crisis remiten = subside **La fiebre ha remitido.** *The fever has gone down.*

Problems & solutions

subsanar *to rectify / to put right*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **subsanar un error / un defecto / una deficiencia**

To correct an error, a defect or an omission. Classic in administrative language: 'subsanar los errores en un plazo de diez días'.

› Tiene diez días hábiles para subsanar los defectos de la solicitud.
You have ten working days to correct the errors in your application.

› Intentamos subsanar el error lo antes posible.
We tried to put the mistake right as soon as possible.

NOTE You'll see it in official letters from universities, banks and public administration. Recognise it — it means 'fix it'.

paliar *to alleviate / to ease*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR): PALIO OR PALÍO (BOTH ACCEPTED) · FORMAL · C1

To reduce the effects of a problem without solving it completely: hunger, a crisis, pain, the consequences of something.

› Las ayudas pretenden paliar los efectos de la sequía.
The aid is intended to ease the effects of the drought.

› Nada puede paliar el dolor de una pérdida así.
Nothing can ease the pain of a loss like that.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cuidados paliativos** *palliative care* · **sin paliativos** *absolute, unmitigated (adverb section)*

DON'T CONFUSE paliar / mitigar / atenuar all reduce something bad. Paliar: effects of a problem; mitigar: risks, impact; atenuar: intensity (light, pain, a sentence).

mitigar *to mitigate / to lessen*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: MITIGUÉ · FORMAL · C1

To make something negative less serious or intense: risks, impact, pain, heat.

› Se han adoptado medidas para mitigar el impacto del cambio climático.
Measures have been adopted to mitigate the impact of climate change.

› Un buen plan de comunicación puede mitigar la crisis.
A good communication plan can soften the crisis.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mitigar los riesgos** *to mitigate the risks* · **mitigar el dolor** *to ease the pain*

agravar *to aggravate / to make worse*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

ALSO agravarse = to get worse, to deteriorate

To make a problem, situation or illness more serious. Agravarse = to get worse.

› La falta de lluvias ha agravado la crisis agrícola.
The lack of rain has made the agricultural crisis worse.

› Su estado de salud se agravó durante la noche.
Her condition worsened during the night.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **agravar la situación** *to make the situation worse* · **circunstancia agravante** *aggravating circumstance*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me agrava cuando... (English '~~;it aggravates me' = it annoys me) → ✓ Me molesta / me saca de quicio cuando...

recrudecerse *to intensify / to flare up again*

VERB · REFLEXIVE; -ZC-: SE RECRUDECE · FORMAL · C1

When something bad (violence, a conflict, the cold, an illness) becomes worse again after a calmer period.

› Los combates se han recrudecido en las últimas horas.
The fighting has intensified again in the last few hours.

› El frío se recrudecerá a partir del jueves.
The cold will get worse from Thursday.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el recrudecimiento** *resurgence, intensification*

NOTE Journalistic verb: you'll hear it in news about wars, epidemics, weather and conflicts.

menoscabar *to undermine / to diminish / to damage*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To reduce the value, prestige, rights or authority of something or someone.

› Estas declaraciones menoscaban la credibilidad de la institución.
These statements undermine the institution's credibility.

› Ninguna medida debe menoscabar los derechos de los trabajadores.
No measure should impair workers' rights.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sin menoscabo de** *without prejudice to*

NOTE 'Sin menoscabo de' is a fixed formula in legal and institutional texts.

socavar *to undermine / to erode*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

Literally to dig under something; figuratively, to weaken the foundations of trust, authority, democracy, etc., often gradually.

› La corrupción socava la confianza en las instituciones.
Corruption undermines confidence in institutions.

› Sus continuas críticas socavaron la autoridad del director.
Her constant criticism eroded the director's authority.

DON'T CONFUSE socavar (gradual, from below) vs menoscabar (reduce value or rights) vs minar (very similar to socavar, slightly less formal).

mermar *to reduce / to diminish / to dwindle*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To reduce the quantity, quality or strength of something. Can be transitive (mermar algo) or intransitive (algo merma).

› La lesión mermó sus posibilidades de ganar el torneo.
The injury reduced his chances of winning the tournament.

› Las reservas de agua han mermado considerablemente.
Water reserves have dwindled considerably.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **mermar la calidad** *to reduce quality* · **la merma** *decrease, loss*

erradicar *to eradicate / to stamp out*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: ERRADIQUÉ · FORMAL · C1

To eliminate something completely and permanently: a disease, poverty, violence, a practice.

› El objetivo es erradicar la pobreza extrema antes de 2030.
The aim is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030.

› Hay que erradicar el acoso en el entorno laboral.
Harassment in the workplace must be stamped out.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **erradicar una enfermedad** *to eradicate a disease* · **la erradicación** *eradication*

solventar *to resolve / to sort out / to settle*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To solve a problem or difficulty efficiently; also to pay off a debt. Slightly more formal than 'resolver'.

› Logramos solventar el problema técnico antes de la presentación.
We managed to sort out the technical problem before the presentation.

› La empresa no pudo solventar sus deudas.
The company couldn't settle its debts.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **solventar una duda** *to clear up a question* · **solvente** *solvent, reliable (adj)*

sortear *to get round / to dodge / to draw lots*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

Two meanings: (1) to avoid or get past an obstacle skilfully; (2) to decide something by lottery or draw.

sortear obstáculos — *to get round, to navigate*

› Tuvimos que sortear muchos obstáculos burocráticos.
We had to get round a lot of bureaucratic obstacles.

sortear algo — *to raffle, to draw lots for*

› Vamos a sortear dos entradas entre nuestros seguidores.
We're going to give away two tickets to our followers in a draw.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el sorteo** *draw, raffle* · **sortear las dificultades** *to overcome / get past the difficulties*

eludir *to evade / to avoid / to dodge*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) FORMAL C1

To avoid something unpleasant (a question, a responsibility, a commitment) through skill or trickery.

› El ministro eludió responder a las preguntas de los periodistas.
The minister avoided answering the journalists' questions.

› No puedes eludir tus responsabilidades eternamente.
You can't dodge your responsibilities for ever.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **eludir impuestos** *to evade taxes* · **eludir la pregunta** *to sidestep the question* · **ineludible** *unavoidable*

DON'T CONFUSE eludir (deliberately, cleverly) vs evitar (general 'avoid') vs evadir (escape, also 'evadir impuestos').

acatar *to comply with / to abide by*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

To accept and obey a rule, decision, order or ruling, even if you don't agree with it.

› Acatamos la decisión del tribunal, aunque no la compartimos.
We will abide by the court's decision, although we don't agree with it.

› Todos deben acatar las normas de seguridad.
Everyone must comply with the safety rules.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **acatar una sentencia** *to abide by a ruling* · **acatar órdenes** *to obey orders*

NOTE Typical line after a controversial ruling: 'Acatamos, pero no compartimos' = We comply, but we don't agree.

incumplir *to break / to fail to comply with*

VERB REGULAR (-IR) FORMAL C1

To not fulfil a promise, a contract, a rule, a deadline or an obligation.

› La constructora incumplió los plazos de entrega.
The construction company missed the delivery deadlines.

› Incumplir el contrato puede salir muy caro.
Breaching the contract can turn out to be very expensive.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **incumplir una promesa** *to break a promise* · **el incumplimiento** *breach, non-compliance*

OPPOSITE **cumplir** — to fulfil, to comply with

vulnerar *to violate / to infringe*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

To break a law or violate a right or principle. Mainly legal and journalistic.

› La medida vulnera el derecho a la intimidad.
The measure violates the right to privacy.

› Se ha demostrado que la empresa vulneró la normativa vigente.
It has been shown that the company infringed the regulations in force.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **vulnerar un derecho** *to violate a right* · **vulnerable** *vulnerable*

DON'T CONFUSE vulnerar (rights, laws) vs infringir (rules, laws: infringir una norma) vs violar (laws, but also 'to rape' — use with care).

Deciding & preferring

sopesar *to weigh up*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

To think carefully about the pros and cons before deciding. Very natural in work and life decisions.

› Antes de aceptar la oferta, quiero sopesar bien los pros y los contras.
Before accepting the offer, I want to weigh up the pros and cons properly.

› Sopesaron todas las opciones y decidieron esperar.
They weighed up all the options and decided to wait.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sopesar los pros y los contras** *to weigh up the pros and cons* · **sopesar las consecuencias** *to consider the consequences*

DON'T CONFUSE sopesar = weigh up (practical) · ponderar = weigh up (more formal) and also 'to praise' (literary).

ponderar *to weigh / to consider carefully / to weight*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To assess carefully the relative importance of different factors. In statistics and education: to weight (media ponderada = weighted average).

› El tribunal debe ponderar los derechos en conflicto.
The court must weigh up the conflicting rights.

› La nota final se pondera: el examen vale un 60 %.
The final grade is weighted: the exam counts for 60%.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **media ponderada** *weighted average* · **ponderación** *careful consideration / weighting*

NOTE In literary Spanish 'ponderar' can also mean 'to praise highly' (ponderar las virtudes de alguien) — rare today.

abogar por *to advocate / to argue for*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING: ABOGUÉ · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **abogar por algo / por que + subjunctive**

To defend or promote an idea, a policy or a cause publicly. From 'el abogado'.

› La ONG aboga por una regulación más estricta del sector.
The NGO is calling for stricter regulation of the sector.

› Siempre ha abogado por el diálogo.
She has always advocated dialogue.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*abogar para~~ → ✓ abogar por. Note spelling: 'abogar por que se cambie la ley' (separate: por + que).

apostar por *to bet on / to opt for / to back*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: APUESTO · C1

PATTERN **apostar por algo / por alguien**

At C1, the figurative meaning: to choose and invest in an option with confidence. Extremely frequent in business and political language.

› La empresa ha apostado por las energías renovables.
The company has bet on renewable energy.

› Apostamos por un modelo de enseñanza más práctico.
We're committed to a more practical teaching model.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **apostar fuerte por** *to bet heavily on* · **una apuesta segura** *a safe bet*

NOTE Very common in marketing and institutional speech: 'Apostamos por la calidad'.

decantarse por

to come down on the side of / to opt for

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · C1

PATTERN decantarse por algo / por + infinitive

To finally choose one option after hesitating between several. Common in journalism (los votantes se decantaron por...).

› Al final me decanté por la oferta de Barcelona.
In the end I went for the Barcelona offer.

› La mayoría se decantó por la segunda propuesta.
The majority came down in favour of the second proposal.

DON'T CONFUSE decantarse por (after hesitation) vs inclinarse por (to lean towards, not yet final) vs optar por (neutral, to choose).

prescindir de

to do without / to dispense with

VERB · REGULAR (-IR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN prescindir de algo / de alguien

To decide not to use or count on something or someone. In business also: to let someone go (euphemism).

› No podemos prescindir de su experiencia en este proyecto.
We can't do without her experience on this project.

› La empresa prescindió de veinte trabajadores.
The company let twenty employees go.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **imprescindible** *essential, indispensable* · **prescindible** *expendable, dispensable*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*prescindir algo~~ → ✓ prescindir de algo. Always with 'de'.

carecer de

to lack

VERB · -ZC-: CAREZCO · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN carecer de algo

To not have something that would be necessary or desirable. More formal than 'no tener' or 'faltar'.

› El informe carece de rigor científico.
The report lacks scientific rigour.

› Muchos pueblos carecen de servicios básicos.
Many villages lack basic services.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **carecer de sentido** *to make no sense* · **carecer de fundamento** *to be unfounded* · **la carencia** *lack, deficiency*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Carezco tiempo~~ → ✓ Carezco de tiempo (or simply: No tengo tiempo).

adolecer de

to suffer from (a defect, a shortcoming)

VERB -ZC-: ADOLEZCO FORMAL C1

PATTERN **adolecer de + defect (falta de, exceso de, deficiencias...)**

Careful: it means to HAVE a defect or weakness, not to lack something. 'El plan adolece de falta de previsión' = the plan suffers from a lack of foresight.

› El sistema adolece de graves deficiencias.
The system suffers from serious shortcomings.

› La película adolece de un guion poco trabajado.
The film is let down by a poorly developed script.

DON'T CONFUSE carecer de = to lack (+ positive thing) · adolecer de = to suffer from (+ negative thing).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El informe adolece de rigor (= has rigour as a defect!)~~ → ✓ El informe adolece de falta de rigor / carece de rigor. Use adolecer only with negative nouns.

More verbs for decisions, work & research

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
inclinarse por	*to lean towards / to favour*	not yet a final decision **Me inclino por la segunda opción.** *I'm leaning towards the second option.*
barajar	*to consider / to weigh up (options)*	literally 'to shuffle cards' **Se barajan varias fechas para el congreso.** *Several dates are being considered for the conference.*
tantear	*to sound out / to test the waters*	tantear el terreno = to test the waters **Primero voy a tantear al jefe.** *First I'm going to sound out the boss.*
sondear	*to sound out / to poll*	el sondeo = poll, survey **Sondearon la opinión de los clientes.** *They sounded out the customers' opinions.*
postergar	*to postpone / to put off / to sideline*	spelling: postergué · esp. Latin America for 'posponer' **No postergues más esa conversación.** *Don't put that conversation off any longer.*
supeditar a FORMAL	*to make conditional on / to subordinate to*	supeditado/a a = subject to **El proyecto está supeditado a la financiación.** *The project is subject to funding.*
estipular FORMAL	*to stipulate*	estipular que + indicative **El contrato estipula un periodo de prueba.** *The contract stipulates a probation period.*
consensuar	*to reach a consensus on / to agree*	consensúo **Las medidas se consensuaron con los sindicatos.** *The measures were agreed with the unions.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
secundar	*to support / to back / to second*	secundar una huelga, una propuesta **La huelga fue secundada por el 80 % de la plantilla.** *The strike was backed by 80% of the staff.*
avalar	*to endorse / to back / to guarantee*	el aval = guarantee **Su trayectoria avala su candidatura.** *Her track record supports her candidacy.*
auspiciar FORMAL	*to sponsor / to promote*	≈ patrocinar, propiciar
relegar	*to relegate / to sideline*	spelling: relegué **Lo relegaron a un puesto secundario.** *They sidelined him into a minor role.*
desbancar	*to oust / to displace*	desbancar a alguien del primer puesto **El móvil ha desbancado a la cámara compacta.** *The mobile phone has displaced the compact camera.*
sobresalir	*to stand out / to excel*	irregular like salir **Sobresale por su creatividad.** *She stands out for her creativity.*
profundizar en	*to go deeper into*	≈ ahondar en **Vamos a profundizar en este punto.** *Let's go into this point in more depth.*
indagar	*to investigate / to inquire into*	spelling: indagué **La periodista indagó en el pasado del alcalde.** *The journalist dug into the mayor's past.*
desglosar	*to break down (figures, a budget)*	el desglose = breakdown **¿Puedes desglosar los gastos por mes?** *Can you break down the costs by month?*
acotar FORMAL	*to narrow down / to delimit*	acotar el tema de una tesis **Conviene acotar el objeto de estudio.** *It's a good idea to narrow down the subject of study.*
extrapolar FORMAL	*to extrapolate*	extrapolar algo a otro contexto
inferir FORMAL	*to infer*	stem-changing e→ie/i: infiero, infirió **De los datos se infiere que…** *It can be inferred from the data that…*
achacar	*to attribute / to put down to (blame)*	spelling: achaqué · achacar algo a algo **Achacan el fracaso a la mala suerte.** *They put the failure down to bad luck.*

Power, leadership & approximate figures

ostentar *to hold (a title, a post, a record) / to flaunt*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

Two meanings: (1) to hold an official position, title or record (formal, neutral); (2) to show off something ostentatiously (negative).

ostentar un cargo / un título — *to hold*

› Ostenta el récord mundial desde 2019.
She has held the world record since 2019.

ostentar riqueza — *to flaunt, to show off*

› Le gusta ostentar su riqueza en las redes.
He likes to flaunt his wealth on social media.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ostentoso/a** *ostentatious, flashy* · **la ostentación** *ostentation, showing off*

DON'T CONFUSE ostentar un cargo = to hold it legitimately · detentar = to hold power illegitimately (see Common mistakes).

ejercer *to exercise / to practise / to work as*

VERB · SPELLING: EJERZO, EJERZA · FORMAL · C1

To carry out a profession, to exercise a right, power or influence. Not 'to do exercise' (that's hacer ejercicio).

ejercer de / como + profession — *to work as, to practise as*

› Es médica, pero ya no ejerce.
She's a doctor, but she no longer practises.

ejercer + noun — *to exercise, to exert*

› Las redes sociales ejercen una enorme influencia en los jóvenes.
Social media exerts enormous influence on young people.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ejercer presión** *to put pressure on* · **ejercer un derecho** *to exercise a right* · **ejercer el poder** *to wield power*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Ejerzo en el gimnasio~~ → ✓ Hago ejercicio en el gimnasio.

encabezar *to head / to lead / to top*

VERB · SPELLING: ENCABECÉ · C1

To be at the front: of a list, a ranking, a demonstration, a team, an investigation, a letter.

› La ciudad encabeza el ranking de calidad de vida.
The city tops the quality-of-life ranking.

› Ella encabeza el equipo de investigación.
She heads the research team.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **encabezar una lista** *to top a list* · **encabezar una manifestación** *to lead a demonstration* · **el encabezado** *heading, header*

acaparar *to monopolise / to hog / to hoard*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · C1

To take or keep all of something for yourself: attention, the conversation, the market, products in a shop.

› Como siempre, acaparó toda la atención en la reunión.
As always, he hogged all the attention in the meeting.

› Durante la pandemia la gente acaparaba papel higiénico.
During the pandemic people were stockpiling toilet paper.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **acaparar titulares** *to grab the headlines* · **acaparar el protagonismo** *to steal the limelight*

aglutinar *to bring together / to unite*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To join different people, groups or ideas into one whole. Very common in politics and events.

› La feria aglutina a más de trescientas empresas del sector.
The fair brings together more than three hundred companies from the sector.

› El movimiento consiguió aglutinar el descontento social.
The movement managed to channel social discontent.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **aglutinar apoyos** *to rally support*

rozar *to border on / to brush / to be close to*

VERB · SPELLING: ROCÉ · C1

Literally to touch lightly; figuratively, to come very close to a figure or a quality (often negative).

rozar + figure — *to be close to*

› La temperatura rozó los cuarenta grados.
The temperature reached almost forty degrees.

rozar lo + adjective — *to border on*

› Su actitud roza lo ridículo.
His attitude borders on the ridiculous.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **rozar la perfección** *to be close to perfection* · **el roce** *friction, rubbing*

rondar *to be around (a figure) / to hang around*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · C1

With numbers: to be approximately. With ideas: to keep coming back to your mind.

rondar + figure — *to be about / around*

› El presupuesto ronda los dos millones de euros.
The budget is around two million euros.

rondar la cabeza — *to be on your mind*

› Hace tiempo que me ronda la idea de cambiar de trabajo.
The idea of changing jobs has been on my mind for a while.

DON'T CONFUSE rondar (approximately, either side) vs rozar (very close to, usually just under a high figure).

oscilar entre *to range / to fluctuate between*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

PATTERN **oscilar entre X y Y**

To vary between two limits. Very frequent with prices, temperatures, ages and percentages.

› Los precios oscilan entre los 50 y los 80 euros.
Prices range from 50 to 80 euros.

› La edad de los participantes oscila entre los 25 y los 40 años.
The participants' ages range between 25 and 40.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la oscilación** *fluctuation*

Research & analysis

vislumbrar *to glimpse / to make out / to foresee*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

To see something faintly (in the distance or in the future). Figuratively: to begin to see a solution or an outcome.

› Por fin se vislumbra una salida a la crisis.
At last a way out of the crisis is starting to appear.

› A lo lejos se vislumbraba la costa.
In the distance the coast could just be made out.

DON'T CONFUSE vislumbrar (see faintly / foresee) vs atisbar (catch a glimpse, often a first sign). Both very often used with 'se'.

atisbar *to glimpse / to catch sight of / to discern*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

To see or perceive something only slightly; a first sign of something (often hope or change).

› No se atisba ninguna mejora a corto plazo.
There's no sign of any improvement in the short term.

› Atisbé su sonrisa entre la multitud.
I caught a glimpse of her smile in the crowd.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un atisbo de esperanza** *a glimmer of hope*

dilucidar *to elucidate / to clarify / to determine*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To clarify a question that is unclear or disputed, after analysis. Typical in research, investigations and law.

› La investigación intentará dilucidar las causas del accidente.
The investigation will try to establish the causes of the accident.

› Queda por dilucidar quién tomó la decisión.
It remains to be determined who took the decision.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **queda por dilucidar** *it remains to be clarified*

esclarecer *to clear up / to shed light on*

VERB · -ZC-: ESCLAREZCO · FORMAL · C1

To make something clear, especially facts, crimes or confusing situations. Very common in news about police investigations.

› La policía todavía no ha esclarecido los hechos.
The police have not yet cleared up what happened.

› Sus declaraciones no esclarecen nada.
His statements don't shed any light on anything.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **esclarecer un crimen** *to solve a crime* · **el esclarecimiento** *clarification*

DON'T CONFUSE esclarecer (facts, events) vs dilucidar (questions, doubts) vs aclarar (neutral, everyday).

ahondar en *to delve into / to go deeper into*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **ahondar en un tema / una cuestión**

To study or discuss something in depth. Also: to make a problem deeper (ahondar la crisis).

› En el segundo capítulo, la autora ahonda en sus recuerdos de infancia.
In the second chapter, the author delves into her childhood memories.

› No quiero ahondar en la herida.
I don't want to rub salt in the wound.

DON'T CONFUSE ahondar en ≈ profundizar en. Ahondar is a little more literary.

recabar *to gather / to collect (information, support)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

To obtain information, data, opinions or support by asking or researching. Typical of reports and investigations.

› Estamos recabando datos para el informe anual.
We're gathering data for the annual report.

› El partido intenta recabar apoyos para su propuesta.
The party is trying to drum up support for its proposal.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **recabar información** *to gather information* · **recabar opiniones** *to collect opinions*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'recaudar' (to collect money: recaudar fondos, recaudar impuestos).

cotejar *to compare / to check against*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **cotejar algo con algo**

To compare two or more things (documents, data, signatures) carefully to check if they match.

› Hay que cotejar las cifras con las del año anterior.
The figures need to be checked against last year's.

› El funcionario cotejó la copia con el original.
The official checked the copy against the original.

NOTE In Spain, 'copia cotejada' = a copy officially certified as matching the original.

esbozar *to outline / to sketch / to hint at*

VERB · SPELLING: ESBOCÉ · FORMAL · C1

To present the basic lines of a plan, an idea or a drawing, without details. Also: esbozar una sonrisa = to give a faint smile.

› En la reunión esbozó las líneas generales del nuevo proyecto.
In the meeting she outlined the general lines of the new project.

› Esbozó una sonrisa, pero no dijo nada.
He gave a faint smile but said nothing.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el esbozo** *sketch, outline, draft*

DON'T CONFUSE esbozar (first rough lines) → perfilar (add the details, refine) → plasmar (set down in final form).

perfilar *to refine / to fine-tune / to shape*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · C1

ALSO perfilarse como = to be shaping up as, to emerge as

To work out the details of a plan or project that already exists in broad outline. Perfilarse = to take shape.

› **Estamos perfilando los últimos detalles del acuerdo.**
We're finalising the last details of the agreement.

› **Se perfila como la favorita para ganar las elecciones.**
She is emerging as the favourite to win the elections.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **perfilar una estrategia** *to fine-tune a strategy* · **el perfil** *profile*

sintetizar *to summarise / to synthesise*

VERB · SPELLING: SINTETICÉ · FORMAL · C1

To reduce a long text or complex idea to its essential points; also to combine elements into a whole (chemistry, music).

› **¿Podrías sintetizar el informe en un par de párrafos?**
Could you summarise the report in a couple of paragraphs?

› **Su obra sintetiza tradición y vanguardia.**
Her work combines tradition and the avant-garde.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **capacidad de síntesis** *ability to summarise* · **en síntesis** *in short* (see Connectors)

cerciorarse de *to make sure of / to ascertain*

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **cerciorarse de algo / de que + indicative**

To check carefully that something is true or correct, to remove any doubt. More formal than 'asegurarse de'.

› **Antes de firmar, cerciórese de que todos los datos son correctos.**
Before signing, make sure all the details are correct.

› **Me cercioré de que la puerta estaba cerrada.**
I made sure the door was locked.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*cerciorarse que~~ → ✓ cerciorarse de que (avoid 'queísmo').

Expressive verbs of attitude

salir airoso/a

to come through with flying colours / to pull it off

VERB · IRREGULAR (SALIR): SALGO, SALÍ · C1

PATTERN salir airoso/a de algo

To come out of a difficult situation successfully and with your dignity intact. The adjective agrees with the subject.

- Salió airosa de una entrevista muy complicada.
  She handled a very difficult interview with great success.
- Ningún candidato salió airoso del debate.
  No candidate came out of the debate looking good.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Ella salió airoso~~ → ✓ Ella salió airosa. Agreement!

desvivirse por

to bend over backwards for / to go out of your way for

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-IR) · C1

PATTERN desvivirse por alguien / por + infinitive / por que + subjunctive

To do everything possible for someone or something, with great dedication and affection.

- Mi abuela se desvivía por sus nietos.
  My grandmother would do anything for her grandchildren.
- Los dueños del hotel se desviven por que estés cómodo.
  The hotel owners go out of their way to make you comfortable.

empeñarse en

to insist on / to be set on

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · C1

PATTERN empeñarse en algo / en + infinitive / en que + subjunctive

To insist stubbornly on doing something or on something being a certain way. Can be positive (determination) or negative (stubbornness).

- Se empeñó en pagar la cena y no hubo manera de convencerla.
  She insisted on paying for dinner and there was no way to talk her out of it.
- ¿Por qué te empeñas en complicarlo todo?
  Why do you insist on making everything complicated?

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el empeño** *determination, effort* · **poner empeño en** *to put effort into*

NOTE empeñar (non-reflexive) = to pawn: empeñar un reloj. Empeñarse also means 'to get into debt'.

obstinarse en

to persist obstinately in

VERB REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **obstinarse en + infinitive / en algo**

Like empeñarse en, but more negative and formal: to persist in something against reason or advice.

› Se obstina en negar la evidencia.
He stubbornly persists in denying the evidence.

› El Gobierno se obstinó en mantener una política fracasada.
The government stubbornly clung to a failed policy.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **obstinado/a** *obstinate, stubborn* · **la obstinación** *obstinacy*

ensañarse con

to take it out on / to be needlessly cruel to

VERB REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) FORMAL C1

PATTERN **ensañarse con alguien**

To attack or hurt someone with excessive, unnecessary cruelty, often someone who is already defenceless. Also used figuratively for harsh criticism.

› La prensa se ensañó con el entrenador tras la derrota.
The press laid into the coach mercilessly after the defeat.

› No hace falta ensañarse con él; ya sabe que se equivocó.
There's no need to be so hard on him; he knows he got it wrong.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el ensañamiento** *cruelty, viciousness (also legal term)*

regodearse en / con

to gloat over / to wallow in / to relish

VERB REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) C1

PATTERN **regodearse en / con algo**

To take great (often malicious or excessive) pleasure in something: someone else's misfortune, your own sadness, details.

› Se regodeaba en el fracaso de su rival.
He was gloating over his rival's failure.

› No te regodees en el dolor; pasa página.
Don't wallow in the pain; turn the page.

escatimar *to skimp on / to spare*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

To give or spend as little as possible. Mostly used negatively: 'no escatimar esfuerzos / gastos' = to spare no effort / expense.

› No escatimaron gastos en la boda.
They spared no expense on the wedding.

› La organización no escatimó esfuerzos para ayudar a los afectados.
The organisation spared no effort to help those affected.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **no escatimar esfuerzos** *to spare no effort* · **no escatimar elogios** *to be lavish in one's praise*

despilfarrar *to squander / to waste*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

To waste money or resources carelessly. Stronger than malgastar, which is more neutral.

› Despilfarró la herencia en apenas dos años.
He squandered his inheritance in barely two years.

› Se despilfarra mucha comida en los hogares.
A lot of food is wasted in households.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el despilfarro** *waste, extravagance*

DON'T CONFUSE malgastar = to waste (money, time, energy — neutral) · despilfarrar = to squander (money, resources — more dramatic) · derrochar = to squander, but also to overflow with (derrochar simpatía).

sobrellevar *to bear / to cope with*

VERB REGULAR (-AR) C1

To endure a difficult situation (an illness, a loss, a burden) with patience.

› Sobrellevó la enfermedad con una entereza admirable.
She bore the illness with admirable strength.

› No es fácil sobrellevar tanta presión.
It's not easy to cope with so much pressure.

DON'T CONFUSE sobrellevar (endure over time, with patience) vs sobreponerse a (recover from, overcome).

sobreponerse a

to overcome / to get over

VERB · REFLEXIVE, IRREGULAR LIKE PONER: ME SOBREPUSE · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN sobreponerse a algo

To recover emotionally from a blow or to master a feeling (fear, sadness) in order to carry on.

› Le costó mucho sobreponerse a la muerte de su padre.
It was very hard for him to get over his father's death.

› Se sobrepuso al miedo y salió al escenario.
She overcame her fear and went out on stage.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Se sobreponió~~ → ✓ Se sobrepuso (preterite like poner).

desentenderse de

to wash your hands of / to ignore

VERB · REFLEXIVE, STEM-CHANGING E→IE: ME DESENTIENDO · C1

PATTERN desentenderse de algo / de alguien

To deliberately stop taking responsibility for or interest in something.

› No puedes desentenderte de tus hijos.
You can't just wash your hands of your children.

› La empresa se desentendió del problema.
The company turned its back on the problem.

toparse con

to bump into / to come across / to run up against

VERB · REFLEXIVE, REGULAR (-AR) · C1

PATTERN toparse con alguien / algo

To meet someone or find something by chance, often an obstacle.

› Me topé con mi ex en el supermercado.
I bumped into my ex at the supermarket.

› Nos topamos con un muro de burocracia.
We ran up against a wall of bureaucracy.

DON'T CONFUSE toparse con ≈ encontrarse con (neutral) ≈ tropezar con (also literally 'to trip over').

More expressive verbs of attitude

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
malgastar	*to waste (money, time, energy)*	≈ derrochar, despilfarrar (stronger) No malgastes tu tiempo con él. *Don't waste your time on him.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
aferrarse a	*to cling to*	**Se aferra a la idea de que todo volverá a ser como antes.** *He clings to the idea that everything will go back to how it was.*
claudicar FORMAL	*to give in / to capitulate*	spelling: claudiqué **No pensamos claudicar ante las presiones.** *We have no intention of giving in to pressure.*
transigir	*to compromise / to give way*	transigir con algo · intransigente **En eso no pienso transigir.** *On that point I'm not going to compromise.*
doblegarse FORMAL	*to bow / to yield*	doblegarse ante alguien
amilanarse	*to be daunted / to lose heart*	usually negative: no amilanarse **No se amilanó ante las críticas.** *She wasn't daunted by the criticism.*
envalentonarse	*to get bolder / to become emboldened*	**Con el apoyo del público se envalentonó.** *With the crowd behind him he got bolder.*
jactarse de	*to boast about / to pride oneself on*	≈ presumir de (less formal) **Se jacta de no haber estado nunca enfermo.** *He boasts that he has never been ill.*
vanagloriarse de FORMAL	*to boast of / to brag about*	very formal, negative
escarmentar	*to learn one's lesson / to teach someone a lesson*	stem-changing e→ie: escarmiento **Ya he escarmentado: no vuelvo a prestarle dinero.** *I've learned my lesson: I'm not lending him money again.*
escudarse en	*to hide behind (an excuse)*	**Se escuda en la crisis para no subir sueldos.** *He hides behind the crisis so as not to raise salaries.*
esquivar	*to dodge / to avoid*	physical and figurative **Esquivó la pregunta con una sonrisa.** *She dodged the question with a smile.*
ensimismarse	*to become lost in thought / absorbed*	ensimismado/a = absorbed
rebuscar	*to rummage / to search thoroughly*	rebuscado/a = far-fetched, over-elaborate **Es una explicación un poco rebuscada.** *It's a rather far-fetched explanation.*
rehuir FORMAL	*to shun / to avoid*	rehúyo, rehúye (accent on ú) **Rehúye cualquier tipo de conflicto.** *He shies away from any kind of conflict.*
encararse con	*to confront / to stand up to*	encarar un problema = to face a problem **Se encaró con el árbitro.** *He squared up to the referee.*
chafar COLLOQUIAL	*to ruin / to spoil (plans) / to crush*	chafar los planes, la sorpresa · Spain **LatAm:** Mainly Spain. **La lluvia nos chafó el plan.** *The rain ruined our plans.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
currarse algo VERY COLLOQUIAL	*to put real effort into something*	Spain · ¡Te lo has currado! = You've really gone to town on this! **LatAm:** Spain only. **Se curró muchísimo la presentación.** *He put a huge amount of work into the presentation.*

STUDY TIP

At C1, the leap is not knowing more verbs but choosing the precise one. When you write 'causar', stop and ask: is it desencadenar (sudden, strong), propiciar (favourable conditions), acarrear (heavy consequences) or suscitar (a reaction in people)? Rewrite one paragraph of your own a week this way.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

02 · The abstract nouns that make your Spanish sound sophisticated

Nouns

These are the nouns of good journalism, reports and serious conversation: words for trends, causes, dilemmas, competence and attitude. Start with the key cards, then use the tables to widen your range. Learn every noun with its article and its usual verb (tomar un cariz, salvar un escollo, hacer balance) — that's how they appear in real texts.

Key abstract nouns

el auge

boom / rise / peak

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

A period of strong growth, popularity or splendour. Very frequent in journalism: 'en auge' = booming, on the rise.

› El teletrabajo está en pleno auge.
Remote working is booming.

› El auge del turismo ha transformado la ciudad.
The tourism boom has transformed the city.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar en auge** *to be on the rise / booming* · **en pleno auge** *at its height* · **el auge económico** *economic boom*

OPPOSITE **el declive** — decline

el declive

decline

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

A gradual loss of strength, importance or quality.

› El sector textil lleva años en declive.
The textile sector has been in decline for years.

› Muchos atribuyen el declive del imperio a la corrupción.
Many attribute the decline of the empire to corruption.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **entrar en declive** *to go into decline* · **un declive imparable** *an unstoppable decline*

DON'T CONFUSE el declive (gradual) vs la decadencia (moral or cultural decay) vs el ocaso (the twilight, final phase — literary).

el apogeo *peak / height / heyday*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

The moment of greatest intensity, splendour or power of something.

› La banda estaba en su apogeo a finales de los noventa.
The band was at its peak in the late nineties.

› En pleno apogeo de la crisis, cerraron cientos de comercios.
At the height of the crisis, hundreds of shops closed.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en pleno apogeo** *in full swing / at its height* · **alcanzar su apogeo** *to reach its peak*

el detonante *trigger / catalyst*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

The immediate event that sets off a reaction, a crisis or a conflict (like the detonator of a bomb).

› La subida del precio del pan fue el detonante de las protestas.
The rise in the price of bread was the trigger for the protests.

› ¿Cuál fue el detonante de la discusión?
What sparked the argument?

DON'T CONFUSE el detonante (immediate spark) vs la causa (deeper reason) vs el desencadenante (≈ detonante, also medical: a trigger for an allergy, a migraine).

el trasfondo *background / underlying meaning*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

What lies behind something: the hidden context, intentions or meaning.

› Detrás del conflicto hay un trasfondo económico.
There's an economic background to the conflict.

› La película tiene un trasfondo social muy marcado.
The film has a strong social subtext.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de trasfondo** *in the background* · **un trasfondo político** *a political dimension*

NOTE Also written 'transfondo' informally, but the RAE prefers 'trasfondo'.

la índole

nature / kind

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

The nature or type of something. Formal, mainly in 'de esta índole', 'de toda índole', 'de índole + adj'.

› Recibimos quejas de toda índole.
We receive complaints of all kinds.

› Se trata de un problema de índole técnica.
It's a problem of a technical nature.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de esta índole** *of this kind* · **de índole personal** *of a personal nature*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*el índole~~ → ✓ la índole. It's feminine.

el cariz

turn / complexion (of events)

NOUN MASCULINE C1

PATTERN **tomar un cariz + adjective**

The aspect or direction that a situation takes, especially when it's getting worse.

› La situación está tomando un cariz preocupante.
The situation is taking a worrying turn.

› Cuando la conversación tomó otro cariz, me fui.
When the conversation took a different turn, I left.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar mal cariz** *to take a turn for the worse*

el talante

disposition / attitude / mood

NOUN MASCULINE C1

Someone's general attitude or temperament, especially their willingness (or not) to cooperate. Common in politics: talante dialogante.

› Destaca por su talante dialogante.
He stands out for his willingness to talk things through.

› Llegó a la reunión de muy mal talante.
She arrived at the meeting in a very bad mood.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **buen / mal talante** *good / bad disposition* · **talante conciliador** *conciliatory attitude*

la pauta *guideline / pattern*

NOUN FEMININE C1

(1) A rule or instruction that guides how to do something; (2) a pattern of behaviour that repeats.

pauta = guideline — *rule, instruction*

› Seguimos las pautas de la Organización Mundial de la Salud.
We follow the World Health Organization's guidelines.

pauta = pattern — *repeated behaviour*

› Su comportamiento sigue una pauta muy clara.
His behaviour follows a very clear pattern.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **marcar la pauta** *to set the tone / lead the way* · **pautas de conducta** *patterns of behaviour*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America 'pauta' is also advertising space/airtime (pauta publicitaria).

la premisa *premise*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

PATTERN **partir de la premisa de que + indicative**

A statement or idea taken as the basis for an argument or plan.

› Partimos de la premisa de que todos los alumnos pueden aprender.
We start from the premise that all students can learn.

› Si la premisa es falsa, la conclusión también lo es.
If the premise is false, so is the conclusion.

la salvedad *exception / reservation / proviso*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

An exception or limitation you add to a general statement.

› Con alguna salvedad, el informe es excelente.
With a few reservations, the report is excellent.

› Hay que hacer una salvedad: los menores no pagan.
One exception must be made: minors don't pay.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer una salvedad** *to make an exception / a reservation* · **con la salvedad de** *with the exception of*

la disyuntiva *dilemma / choice between two options*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

PATTERN **estar ante la disyuntiva de + infinitive**

A situation in which you must choose between two (usually difficult) alternatives.

› Me encuentro ante la disyuntiva de aceptar el traslado o dejar la empresa.
I'm faced with the choice of accepting the transfer or leaving the company.

› Es una falsa disyuntiva: hay otras opciones.
It's a false dilemma: there are other options.

DON'T CONFUSE la disyuntiva (choice between exactly two options) vs el dilema (a hard choice, moral or practical).

la encrucijada *crossroads*

NOUN FEMININE C1

Literally a crossroads; figuratively, a decisive moment when you must choose a direction.

› El país se encuentra en una encrucijada histórica.
The country is at a historic crossroads.

› Estaba en una encrucijada vital y no sabía qué hacer.
I was at a crossroads in my life and didn't know what to do.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **estar en una encrucijada** *to be at a crossroads*

la tesitura *situation / predicament*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

A specific (often difficult) situation in which you have to act or decide.

› En esta tesitura, lo más sensato es esperar.
In this situation, the most sensible thing is to wait.

› Nos vimos en la tesitura de tener que despedir a alguien.
We found ourselves in the position of having to dismiss someone.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **verse en la tesitura de** *to find oneself in the position of*

el atolladero *impasse / tight spot / dead end*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

A difficult situation from which it's hard to get out. Literally a muddy place where you get stuck.

› Las negociaciones están en un atolladero.
The negotiations have reached an impasse.

› Nos sacó del atolladero con una idea brillante.
She got us out of a tight spot with a brilliant idea.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **salir del atolladero** *to get out of a fix* · **meterse en un atolladero** *to get into a mess*

el escollo *obstacle / stumbling block*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

A hidden difficulty or obstacle (literally a reef at sea). Very common in news about negotiations.

› La financiación es el principal escollo del proyecto.
Funding is the main stumbling block for the project.

› Superaron el último escollo y firmaron el acuerdo.
They overcame the last hurdle and signed the agreement.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **salvar un escollo** *to overcome an obstacle*

el desfase *gap / lag / mismatch*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

A lack of correspondence between two things that should match: time, figures, expectations.

› Hay un desfase entre lo que enseñan las universidades y lo que piden las empresas.
There's a mismatch between what universities teach and what companies want.

› Con el desfase horario, no hay quien duerma.
With the jet lag, it's impossible to sleep.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **desfase horario** *time difference / jet lag* · **desfase presupuestario** *budget shortfall*

NOTE In Spain, 'estar desfasado' = to be outdated; 'un desfase' (colloq) can also mean a wild night out.

la brecha

gap / divide / breach

NOUN FEMININE C1

A gap or division between groups, or an opening in a wall or defence.

› La brecha salarial entre hombres y mujeres sigue existiendo.
The gender pay gap still exists.

› La brecha digital afecta sobre todo a las personas mayores.
The digital divide mainly affects older people.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la brecha digital** *the digital divide* · **la brecha generacional** *the generation gap* · **una brecha de seguridad** *a security breach*

DON'T CONFUSE la brecha (social/economic gap) vs el hueco (physical space) vs la laguna (gap in knowledge/law).

el vaivén

swing / ups and downs / to and fro

NOUN MASCULINE C1

PLURAL vaivenes

A repeated movement back and forth; figuratively, changes and instability. Often plural: los vaivenes.

› Los vaivenes del mercado preocupan a los inversores.
Market swings worry investors.

› El vaivén del barco me mareó.
The rocking of the boat made me feel sick.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **los vaivenes de la vida** *life's ups and downs*

DON'T CONFUSE los vaivenes (instability, swings) ≈ los altibajos (ups and downs — more everyday).

el desenlace

outcome / ending / denouement

NOUN MASCULINE C1

How a story, a situation or a process ends.

› La novela tiene un desenlace inesperado.
The novel has an unexpected ending.

› Todos esperamos el desenlace de las negociaciones.
We're all waiting for the outcome of the negotiations.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un desenlace fatal** *a fatal outcome* · **un final feliz** *a happy ending (more everyday)*

el balance

assessment / appraisal / overview / balance sheet

NOUN MASCULINE C1

An overall evaluation of results, positive and negative. 'Hacer balance' = to take stock.

› El balance del año es muy positivo.
Overall, the year has been very positive.

› Es hora de hacer balance.
It's time to take stock.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **hacer balance de** *to take stock of* · **el balance de víctimas** *the death toll / casualty figures*

COMMON MISTAKE Not 'balance' as in physical balance (that's el equilibrio) or work-life balance (la conciliación).

el cometido

task / assignment / role

NOUN MASCULINE FORMAL C1

The specific job or mission that someone has been given.

› Mi cometido es coordinar a los equipos de las distintas sedes.
My job is to coordinate the teams from the different offices.

› Cumplió su cometido con creces.
She more than fulfilled her task.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **cumplir su cometido** *to fulfil one's task*

DON'T CONFUSE el cometido (task assigned) vs la incumbencia (area of responsibility: 'no es de mi incumbencia' = it's none of my business).

la solvencia

solvency / reliability / competence

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

(1) The ability to pay debts; (2) reliability and professional competence.

› El banco analiza la solvencia de cada cliente.
The bank analyses the solvency of each customer.

› Es una profesional de una solvencia contrastada.
She is a professional of proven competence.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **solvencia económica** *financial solvency* · **solvente** *solvent / reliable, competent*

la idoneidad *suitability*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

The quality of being the right person or thing for a particular role or purpose. Very common in job and public procurement contexts.

› El comité evaluará la idoneidad de cada candidato.
The committee will assess the suitability of each candidate.

› Dudo de la idoneidad de esta medida.
I doubt whether this measure is appropriate.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **idóneo/a** *ideal, suitable (see Adjectives)*

la pericia *skill / expertise*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

Practical skill gained through experience, especially in a technical activity.

› Aterrizó el avión con gran pericia.
He landed the plane with great skill.

› Se necesita pericia para restaurar estas obras.
Restoring these works requires expertise.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el/la perito/a** *expert witness, assessor* · **el peritaje** *expert report*

DON'T CONFUSE la pericia (practical expertise) · la destreza (manual or physical skill) · la soltura (ease, fluency: hablar con soltura).

el afán *eagerness / zeal / drive*

NOUN MASCULINE C1

PLURAL afanes

A strong desire to achieve something, sometimes excessive.

› Su afán de superación es admirable.
Her drive to improve is admirable.

› Lo hizo sin afán de lucro.
He did it on a non-profit basis.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sin afán de lucro** *non-profit* · **afán de protagonismo** *desire to be the centre of attention* · **afán de superación** *drive to better oneself*

NOTE Plural without accent: afanes.

la desidia *negligence / apathy / slackness*

NOUN FEMININE C1

Lack of care, interest or effort in doing what you should. Stronger and more critical than 'pereza'.

› La desidia de las autoridades provocó el deterioro del edificio.
The authorities' neglect led to the deterioration of the building.

› El estado del parque demuestra la desidia del ayuntamiento.
The state of the park shows the council's neglect.

DON'T CONFUSE la desidia (negligence, neglect of duty) vs la pereza (laziness) vs la apatía (lack of emotion or motivation).

la reticencia *reluctance / reticence*

NOUN FEMININE C1

PATTERN **reticencia a + infinitive / a algo**

Reluctance or reservations about doing or accepting something. Careful: in Spanish it's above all 'reluctance', not just 'not talking much'.

› Hay cierta reticencia a aplicar los cambios.
There's some reluctance to implement the changes.

› Aceptó, aunque con reticencias.
She accepted, though with reservations.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **reticente** *reluctant*

la falacia *fallacy*

NOUN FEMININE FORMAL C1

A false argument that seems logical; also, in everyday use, a lie or deception.

› Decir que todos los políticos son iguales es una falacia.
Saying all politicians are the same is a fallacy.

› Su discurso está lleno de falacias.
His speech is full of fallacies.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una falacia argumentativa** *a logical fallacy*

el quid

the crux / the heart of the matter

NOUN MASCULINE C1

The essential point or key of a question. Mostly in 'el quid de la cuestión'.

› **Ahí está el quid de la cuestión.**
That's the crux of the matter.

› **El quid está en saber cuándo parar.**
The key is knowing when to stop.

NOTE From Latin 'quid' (what). Pronounced 'kid'. Colloquial equivalent: el meollo.

Change, trends & turning points

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el ocaso FORMAL	*twilight / decline / end*	literary: el ocaso de una carrera **Fue el ocaso de su carrera política.** *It was the twilight of his political career.*
el resurgimiento	*revival / resurgence*	≈ el resurgir **Vivimos un resurgimiento del vinilo.** *We're seeing a vinyl revival.*
el repunte	*upturn / rebound / spike*	repuntar = to pick up **Se espera un repunte del consumo en Navidad.** *An upturn in spending is expected at Christmas.*
el estancamiento	*stagnation / deadlock*	estancarse = to stagnate **El estancamiento de los salarios preocupa.** *Wage stagnation is a concern.*
los altibajos	*ups and downs*	usually plural **Toda relación tiene sus altibajos.** *Every relationship has its ups and downs.*
el viraje	*shift / U-turn / change of direction*	dar un viraje **El partido ha dado un viraje hacia el centro.** *The party has shifted towards the centre.*
el vuelco	*complete turnaround / overturning*	dar un vuelco · me dio un vuelco el corazón = my heart skipped a beat **Su vida dio un vuelco tras el accidente.** *His life was turned upside down after the accident.*
el hito	*milestone / landmark*	marcar un hito = to mark a milestone **La vacuna marcó un hito en la medicina.** *The vaccine was a milestone in medicine.*
el umbral	*threshold*	en el umbral de = on the threshold of **El umbral de la pobreza** *The poverty line*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la deriva	*drift / course (often negative)*	ir a la deriva = to be adrift **Preocupa la deriva autoritaria del Gobierno.** *There's concern about the government's authoritarian drift.*
la escalada	*escalation / surge*	also 'climbing' **Una escalada de tensión en la frontera** *An escalation of tension on the border*
la eclosión FORMAL	*emergence / blossoming / boom*	sudden appearance of something new **La eclosión de las plataformas de streaming** *The boom in streaming platforms*
el despegue	*take-off*	figurative: el despegue económico **El despegue de la startup fue rapidísimo.** *The startup took off incredibly fast.*
el colapso	*collapse / gridlock*	also traffic: colapso circulatorio **El colapso del sistema sanitario** *The collapse of the health system*
la decadencia	*decadence / decay / decline*	moral or cultural
el resurgir FORMAL	*revival / resurgence*	infinitive used as noun **El resurgir del barrio tras la crisis** *The revival of the neighbourhood after the crisis*
la oscilación	*fluctuation / swing*	oscilaciones de precio
la pervivencia FORMAL	*survival / persistence (of a tradition)*	pervivir = to live on **La pervivencia de viejas costumbres** *The survival of old customs*
el devenir FORMAL	*course of events / evolution*	infinitive used as noun · el devenir histórico **El devenir de los acontecimientos nos dio la razón.** *The course of events proved us right.*

Causes, scope & consequences

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el desencadenante	*trigger*	≈ el detonante · also medical (triggers of a migraine) **El estrés es un desencadenante habitual de las migrañas.** *Stress is a common trigger for migraines.*
el germen	*seed / origin / germ*	el germen de una idea **Ahí estuvo el germen del proyecto.** *That was where the project began.*
el móvil	*motive*	in crime: el móvil del crimen (also 'mobile phone' in Spain!) **La policía desconoce el móvil del crimen.** *The police don't know the motive for the crime.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la envergadura	*scale / magnitude / wingspan*	de gran envergadura = large-scale **Un proyecto de esta envergadura requiere tiempo.** *A project of this scale takes time.*
el calado FORMAL	*importance / depth / draught (ship)*	de gran calado = far-reaching, profound **Reformas de gran calado** *Far-reaching reforms*
la secuela	*after-effect / sequel*	often plural: las secuelas de un accidente **Todavía sufre secuelas del covid.** *She still suffers after-effects from covid.*
el corolario FORMAL	*corollary / natural consequence*	**Como corolario, los precios subieron.** *As a natural consequence, prices went up.*
el efecto dominó	*domino effect*	**La quiebra provocó un efecto dominó.** *The bankruptcy caused a domino effect.*
el efecto rebote	*rebound effect*	e.g. after a diet
el saldo	*balance / outcome / sale item*	el saldo de víctimas = death toll · saldos = clearance sale **El temporal se saldó con tres heridos.** *The storm left three people injured.*
la contrapartida	*trade-off / compensation / quid pro quo*	como contrapartida = in return / on the other hand **Ganas libertad, pero como contrapartida pierdes estabilidad.** *You gain freedom, but the trade-off is less stability.*
el lastre	*burden / drag / ballast*	ser un lastre para = to be a drag on **La deuda es un lastre para el crecimiento.** *Debt is a drag on growth.*
el rédito FORMAL	*return / profit / benefit*	sacar rédito de = to profit from (also political gain) **Intentan sacar rédito político de la tragedia.** *They're trying to make political capital out of the tragedy.*
el aliciente	*incentive / attraction*	≈ el incentivo, el atractivo **El sueldo no es el único aliciente del puesto.** *The salary isn't the only attraction of the job.*
el acicate FORMAL	*spur / stimulus*	**La competencia es un acicate para mejorar.** *Competition is a spur to improve.*
el revulsivo	*wake-up call / shot in the arm*	something that provokes a positive reaction **La derrota fue un revulsivo para el equipo.** *The defeat was a wake-up call for the team.*

Nature, aspects & details

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la idiosincrasia FORMAL	*idiosyncrasy / distinctive character*	of a people, a culture, a person **La idiosincrasia de cada región** *The distinctive character of each region*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tónica	*the norm / the general tone*	la tónica general / habitual = the norm **La tónica general ha sido la moderación.** *Moderation has been the general trend.*
el tenor FORMAL	*tenor / gist / content*	a tenor de (see Prepositions) **El tenor de la carta era amenazante.** *The tone of the letter was threatening.*
la vertiente	*aspect / side / slope*	la vertiente social del proyecto **Hay que considerar la vertiente ética.** *The ethical aspect must be considered.*
la faceta	*facet / side*	una faceta desconocida de alguien **Descubrí su faceta de escritora.** *I discovered her side as a writer.*
la esfera	*sphere*	la esfera pública / privada
el entramado	*network / framework / web*	un entramado de empresas **Un complejo entramado de sociedades pantalla** *A complex web of shell companies*
el engranaje	*machinery / gears / mechanism*	figurative: el engranaje del sistema
los entresijos	*ins and outs / inner workings*	usually plural **Conoce todos los entresijos del sector.** *He knows all the ins and outs of the sector.*
el meollo COLLOQUIAL	*the heart / the crux*	el meollo de la cuestión **Vayamos al meollo del asunto.** *Let's get to the heart of the matter.*
el pormenor FORMAL	*detail*	usually plural: con todo pormenor = in full detail **Nos explicó los pormenores del plan.** *She explained the details of the plan to us.*
el resquicio	*chink / loophole / glimmer*	un resquicio legal = a legal loophole · un resquicio de esperanza **Buscan un resquicio en la ley.** *They're looking for a loophole in the law.*
la impronta FORMAL	*stamp / imprint / mark*	dejar su impronta en = to leave one's mark on **El director dejó su impronta en la empresa.** *The director left his mark on the company.*
el talón de Aquiles	*Achilles heel*	**La defensa es su talón de Aquiles.** *Defence is their Achilles heel.*
el baremo	*scale / criteria / benchmark*	Spain: baremo de méritos = points-based scoring system **Según el baremo, tengo 12 puntos.** *According to the scoring system, I have 12 points.*
el parámetro	*parameter*	**Dentro de unos parámetros razonables** *Within reasonable parameters*

Reasoning, argument & rhetoric

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el supuesto	*assumption / hypothetical case*	en el supuesto de que (see Connectors) · supuesto práctico = case study **Partimos de un supuesto erróneo.** *We started from a mistaken assumption.*
el postulado FORMAL	*postulate / tenet*	los postulados de un partido = its core principles
el axioma FORMAL	*axiom*	
la antítesis	*antithesis / exact opposite*	ser la antítesis de **Es la antítesis del político tradicional.** *He's the exact opposite of a traditional politician.*
el contraargumento	*counterargument*	
la refutación FORMAL	*refutation*	
el sofisma FORMAL	*sophism / specious argument*	≈ falacia, deliberately deceptive
la paradoja	*paradox*	resulta paradójico que + subjunctive **La gran paradoja es que trabajamos más y producimos menos.** *The great paradox is that we work more and produce less.*
la incoherencia	*inconsistency / incoherence*	**Señaló varias incoherencias en su discurso.** *She pointed out several inconsistencies in his speech.*
la ambigüedad	*ambiguity*	note the diaeresis: ambigüedad **Hay cierta ambigüedad en la redacción de la norma.** *There's some ambiguity in the wording of the rule.*
la ironía	*irony*	con ironía **Lo dijo con cierta ironía.** *She said it with a touch of irony.*
el sarcasmo	*sarcasm*	**No hace falta tanto sarcasmo.** *There's no need for so much sarcasm.*
el eufemismo	*euphemism*	**«Reajuste de plantilla» es un eufemismo de despido.** *"Staff readjustment" is a euphemism for redundancies.*
la hipérbole FORMAL	*hyperbole / exaggeration*	
el lugar común	*commonplace / cliché*	≈ el tópico (careful: false friend!), el cliché **El discurso estaba lleno de lugares comunes.** *The speech was full of clichés.*
el cliché	*cliché / stereotype*	
la digresión FORMAL	*digression*	perdón por la digresión
el inciso	*aside / interjection / parenthesis*	hacer un inciso = to make an aside **Permíteme hacer un inciso.** *Let me make a brief aside.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la acepción	*sense / meaning (of a word)*	en la primera acepción del diccionario **Esta palabra tiene varias acepciones.** *This word has several meanings.*
la connotación	*connotation*	**Tiene una connotación negativa.** *It has a negative connotation.*
el doble sentido	*double meaning / innuendo*	**Fue un comentario con doble sentido.** *It was a comment with a double meaning.*
la insinuación	*insinuation / hint*	
la indirecta	*dig / hint*	lanzar / soltar una indirecta = to drop a hint, to make a dig **¿Eso era una indirecta?** *Was that a dig at me?*
el rodeo	*detour / beating about the bush*	andarse con rodeos / sin rodeos **Dímelo sin rodeos.** *Tell me straight.*
la verborrea COLLOQUIAL	*verbiage / verbal diarrhoea*	negative: talking too much
la perorata COLLOQUIAL	*lecture / long boring speech*	soltar una perorata **Nos soltó una perorata sobre puntualidad.** *He gave us a lecture about punctuality.*
el alegato	*plea / impassioned defence*	un alegato a favor de / contra **La película es un alegato contra la guerra.** *The film is a powerful statement against war.*
el sesgo	*bias*	sesgo de confirmación = confirmation bias **El estudio tiene un sesgo evidente.** *The study is clearly biased.*
la conjetura	*conjecture / speculation*	hacer conjeturas
el atisbo	*glimmer / hint / sign*	un atisbo de esperanza **Sin el menor atisbo de duda** *Without the slightest hint of doubt*

Difficulties, dilemmas & setbacks

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la traba	*obstacle / hindrance*	poner trabas = to put obstacles in the way **Nos pusieron todo tipo de trabas.** *They put all kinds of obstacles in our way.*
el impedimento	*impediment / obstacle*	no hay impedimento para… **No veo ningún impedimento para firmar.** *I don't see any obstacle to signing.*
la cortapisa FORMAL	*restriction / limitation*	sin cortapisas = without restrictions **Hablaron sin cortapisas.** *They spoke freely, without restrictions.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el revés	*setback / reverse / backhand*	sufrir un revés El partido sufrió un duro revés electoral. *The party suffered a heavy electoral setback.*
el percance	*mishap / accident (minor)*	Tuvimos un pequeño percance con el coche. *We had a little mishap with the car.*
el tropiezo	*stumble / slip-up*	from tropezar
el callejón sin salida	*dead end / blind alley*	estar en un callejón sin salida Las negociaciones están en un callejón sin salida. *The negotiations have reached a dead end.*
el embrollo COLLOQUIAL	*muddle / mess / tangle*	¡Menudo embrollo has montado! *What a mess you've made!*
el berenjenal COLLOQUIAL	*mess / tight spot*	meterse en un berenjenal = to get into a mess (literally 'aubergine patch') **LatAm:** Very typical in Spain. No te metas en ese berenjenal. *Don't get yourself into that mess.*
el entuerto FORMAL	*wrong / mess*	deshacer entuertos = to right wrongs (Don Quixote)
el quebradero de cabeza COLLOQUIAL	*headache / worry*	dar quebraderos de cabeza Esta reforma me está dando muchos quebraderos de cabeza. *This renovation is giving me a lot of headaches.*
la pega COLLOQUIAL	*snag / catch*	poner pegas = to raise objections · Spain **LatAm:** Spain. In Chile 'la pega' = job. La única pega es el precio. *The only snag is the price.*
el punto débil	*weak point*	
el desbarajuste COLLOQUIAL	*chaos / mess / disorder*	Hay un desbarajuste total en la oficina. *The office is in total chaos.*

Roles, competence & skills

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la incumbencia FORMAL	*responsibility / business*	no es de mi incumbencia = it's none of my business Eso no es de tu incumbencia. *That's none of your business.*
la potestad FORMAL	*authority / power*	tener potestad para + infinitive El director tiene potestad para vetar la decisión. *The director has the authority to veto the decision.*
la atribución FORMAL	*power / function / attribution*	las atribuciones de un cargo

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la competencia	*competence / remit / competition*	es competencia del Estado = it's the State's responsibility **Este asunto no es de nuestra competencia.** *This matter isn't within our remit.*
el rigor	*rigour / strictness*	con rigor · en rigor = strictly speaking **Un análisis hecho con rigor** *A rigorous analysis*
la destreza	*skill / dexterity*	manual or physical **Maneja el pincel con gran destreza.** *She handles the brush with great dexterity.*
la soltura	*fluency / ease*	hablar con soltura = to speak fluently **Se desenvuelve con soltura en inglés.** *She gets by with ease in English.*
la desenvoltura	*self-assurance / poise*	moverse con desenvoltura
la valía	*worth / ability*	una persona de gran valía **Ha demostrado su valía.** *She has proved her worth.*
el bagaje FORMAL	*background / store of knowledge or experience*	bagaje cultural, profesional **Llega con un amplio bagaje internacional.** *He comes with extensive international experience.*
la diligencia FORMAL	*diligence / care*	con la debida diligencia = with due diligence
el tino	*good judgement / knack*	tener tino · con tino **Eligió con mucho tino.** *She chose very wisely.*
el olfato	*nose / instinct*	olfato para los negocios **Tiene olfato para detectar talento.** *He has a nose for spotting talent.*
la versatilidad	*versatility*	
la eficacia	*effectiveness*	eficacia = does it work? · eficiencia = with what resources?
la eficiencia	*efficiency*	
el desempeño	*performance (at work)*	evaluación del desempeño = performance review

Drive, attitude & character

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el anhelo FORMAL	*longing / yearning / aspiration*	anhelar = to long for **Su gran anhelo era volver a su tierra.** *Her great longing was to return to her homeland.*
el ímpetu	*impetus / energy / drive*	con ímpetu **Empezó el proyecto con mucho ímpetu.** *She started the project with great energy.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el empeño	*determination / effort*	poner empeño en **Pone mucho empeño en todo lo que hace.** *He puts a lot of effort into everything he does.*
el tesón	*tenacity / persistence*	**Lo consiguió a base de tesón.** *She achieved it through sheer persistence.*
la tenacidad	*tenacity*	
el ahínco FORMAL	*eagerness / effort*	trabajar con ahínco = to work hard **Estudió con ahínco para las oposiciones.** *He studied hard for the civil service exams.*
el brío	*spirit / verve / energy*	con brío
la apatía	*apathy*	**Hay mucha apatía entre los votantes jóvenes.** *There's a lot of apathy among young voters.*
la indolencia FORMAL	*indolence / idleness*	
la dejadez	*neglect / slovenliness*	≈ desidia, less formal **Su dejadez con el piso es increíble.** *The way he neglects the flat is incredible.*
el desdén	*disdain / scorn*	con desdén **Nos miró con desdén.** *She looked at us with disdain.*
el menosprecio	*contempt / underestimation*	
el escepticismo	*scepticism*	**La propuesta fue recibida con escepticismo.** *The proposal was received with scepticism.*
la suspicacia	*suspicion / distrust*	suspicaz = suspicious (person) **Su silencio despertó suspicacias.** *His silence aroused suspicion.*
la condescendencia	*condescension*	careful: also 'compliance' in older usage **Me habló con condescendencia.** *He spoke to me condescendingly.*
la prepotencia	*arrogance / high-handedness*	prepotente
la altanería	*haughtiness*	
la sensatez	*good sense / sensibleness*	sensato/a = sensible (≠ sensible = sensitive) **Actuó con sensatez.** *She acted sensibly.*
la cordura	*sanity / good sense*	**En medio del caos, alguien tenía que mantener la cordura.** *In the middle of the chaos, someone had to keep a cool head.*
la mesura FORMAL	*moderation / restraint*	con mesura **Hay que actuar con mesura.** *We must act with restraint.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la osadía	*daring / audacity / nerve*	positive or negative ¡Qué osadía, presentarse sin invitación! *What a nerve, turning up without an invitation!*
la audacia	*boldness / audacity*	
la temeridad	*recklessness*	Conducir así es una temeridad. *Driving like that is reckless.*
la sutileza	*subtlety*	
la franqueza	*frankness / candour*	con franqueza Te lo digo con toda franqueza. *I'm telling you this in all honesty.*

Quantity, scale & degree

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el cúmulo	*accumulation / series*	un cúmulo de circunstancias / errores Fue un cúmulo de errores. *It was a series of mistakes.*
el sinfín	*endless number*	un sinfín de = countless Hay un sinfín de opciones. *There are countless options.*
la infinidad	*huge number / infinity*	infinidad de veces Te lo he dicho infinidad de veces. *I've told you countless times.*
la plétora FORMAL	*plethora*	
el sinnúmero FORMAL	*countless number*	un sinnúmero de
el puñado	*handful*	un puñado de Solo un puñado de personas lo sabía. *Only a handful of people knew.*
la pizca COLLOQUIAL	*pinch / tiny bit*	ni pizca = not one bit No tiene ni pizca de gracia. *It's not the least bit funny.*
el ápice	*iota / tiny bit / apex*	ni un ápice = not one iota No cedió ni un ápice. *He didn't give an inch.*
la escasez	*shortage / scarcity*	La escasez de vivienda asequible *The shortage of affordable housing*
la carencia	*lack / deficiency*	carencias afectivas, vitamínicas
el grueso	*the bulk / the main body*	el grueso de = most of El grueso de la plantilla apoya la huelga. *Most of the staff support the strike.*
el remanente FORMAL	*remainder / surplus*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el sinsentido	*nonsense / absurdity*	un sinsentido Es un sinsentido gastar tanto en eso. *It makes no sense to spend so much on that.*
el despropósito	*absurdity / outrageous thing*	Lo que dijo fue un despropósito. *What he said was utterly absurd.*

STUDY TIP

Abstract nouns live in fixed partnerships: tomar un cariz, hacer balance, salvar un escollo, en pleno auge. When you note a new noun, always write it with its verb or preposition — that's the chunk you'll actually reuse in an essay or a meeting.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

03 · Precise adjectives for judging, describing and persuading

Adjectives

At this level, adjectives do the heavy lifting in reports, reviews and debates: they tell your reader exactly how reliable, urgent, fair or important something is. Study the cards first, paying attention to prepositions (inherente a, reacio a, susceptible de) and register, then mine the tables for nuance.

Key adjectives

inminente *imminent*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS inminente · inminentes

About to happen very soon, usually something important or threatening.

› **Se espera la inminente llegada del huracán a la costa.**
The hurricane is expected to reach the coast imminently.

› **El anuncio es inminente.**
The announcement is imminent.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un peligro inminente** *imminent danger* · **de forma inminente** *imminently*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse with 'eminente' (eminent, distinguished): un eminente científico.

ineludible *unavoidable / inescapable*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS ineludible · ineludibles

Something you cannot avoid: a duty, a commitment, a question, a responsibility.

› **Tengo un compromiso ineludible a esa hora.**
I have a commitment I can't get out of at that time.

› **Es una responsabilidad ineludible de los gobiernos.**
It's an inescapable responsibility of governments.

NOTE From eludir (to evade). A polite, professional way to decline: 'Lo siento, tengo un compromiso ineludible.'

inherente *inherent*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS inherente · inherentes
PATTERN **inherente a algo**

Belonging naturally and permanently to something, so it can't be separated from it.

› El riesgo es inherente a cualquier inversión.
Risk is inherent in any investment.

› Son problemas inherentes al sistema.
They are problems inherent in the system.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~inherente en~~ → ✓ inherente a.

intrínseco *intrinsic*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS intrínseco · intrínseca · intrínsecos · intrínsecas

Belonging to the essential nature of something, not to external circumstances.

› El valor intrínseco de una obra de arte no depende de su precio.
The intrinsic value of a work of art doesn't depend on its price.

› La motivación intrínseca es más duradera.
Intrinsic motivation lasts longer.

OPPOSITE **extrínseco** — extrinsic

DON'T CONFUSE inherente (inseparable from something else: inherente a) vs intrínseco (part of its very essence; no preposition needed).

exhaustivo *exhaustive / thorough*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS exhaustivo · exhaustiva · exhaustivos · exhaustivas

Covering every detail or possibility. Positive: thorough and complete.

› Han realizado un análisis exhaustivo de los datos.
They have carried out an exhaustive analysis of the data.

› La lista no es exhaustiva.
The list isn't exhaustive.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **de forma exhaustiva** *thoroughly* · **una revisión exhaustiva** *a thorough review*

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Estoy exhaustivo (I~~'m exhausted) → ✓ Estoy agotado / exhausto. 'Exhaustivo' never means tired!

fehaciente *irrefutable / reliable / conclusive*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS fehaciente · fehacientes

Of evidence or proof: that reliably demonstrates something. Typical of legal and official language.

› No hay pruebas fehacientes de su implicación.
There is no conclusive evidence of his involvement.

› Debe acreditar de forma fehaciente su residencia.
You must provide reliable proof of your residence.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **prueba fehaciente** *conclusive proof* · **fehacientemente** *conclusively* (see Adverbs)

tajante *categorical / emphatic / blunt*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS tajante · tajantes

Expressed in a firm, final way that allows no discussion. From 'tajar' (to cut).

› Su respuesta fue un no tajante.
His answer was a flat no.

› Fue muy tajante: no habrá más prórrogas.
She was very clear: there will be no more extensions.

DON'T CONFUSE tajante (firm, cutting, can sound harsh) vs rotundo (complete, absolute: un éxito rotundo, un no rotundo) vs categórico (allows no exceptions).

rotundo *categorical / resounding / emphatic*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS rotundo · rotunda · rotundos · rotundas

Complete and clear, with no doubt: a rotund no, a resounding success.

› La obra fue un éxito rotundo.
The play was a resounding success.

› Recibió un rechazo rotundo.
It was flatly rejected.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un no rotundo** *a flat no* · **un éxito rotundo** *a resounding success* · **rotundamente** *flatly, categorically*

escueto *brief / concise / terse*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS escueto · escueta · escuetos · escuetas

Short and with only the essential, sometimes too short (it can sound cold).

› **Recibimos un comunicado muy escueto de la empresa.**
We received a very brief statement from the company.

› **Sé escueto en el correo: van a leerlo en el móvil.**
Keep the email short: they're going to read it on their phones.

DON'T CONFUSE escueto (short, maybe a bit dry) vs sucinto (short and precise, positive) vs conciso (concise, neutral).

sucinto *succinct / concise*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS sucinto · sucinta · sucintos · sucintas

Brief but containing all the essential information. Positive and formal.

› **Haga una exposición sucinta de los hechos.**
Give a succinct account of the facts.

› **Nos dio una explicación sucinta pero muy clara.**
She gave us a brief but very clear explanation.

OPPOSITE **prolijo** — long-winded

prolijo *long-winded / overly detailed*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS prolijo · prolija · prolijos · prolijas

Too long and detailed, to the point of being tedious. In Latin America it often means 'neat, tidy, meticulous' (positive!).

› **El informe es demasiado prolijo; hay que recortarlo.**
The report is too long-winded; it needs cutting.

› **Una explicación prolija y confusa**
A long-winded and confusing explanation

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Argentina, Uruguay, Chile: prolijo = neat, careful, well done (un trabajo muy prolijo = a very neat piece of work). In Spain it's mostly negative.

farragoso *convoluted / heavy-going / muddled*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS farragoso · farragosa · farragosos · farragosas

Of a text or speech: confused, disorganised and full of unnecessary things, so it's hard to read.

› **El contrato está redactado de forma farragosa.**
The contract is written in a convoluted way.

› **Un libro farragoso que no hay quien termine**
A heavy-going book that nobody can finish

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el fárrago** *jumble, muddle*

ambivalente *ambivalent*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS ambivalente · ambivalentes

Having two opposite values or feelings at the same time.

› **Tengo sentimientos ambivalentes hacia mi ciudad natal.**
I have mixed feelings about my home town.

› **Su actitud es ambivalente: apoya la medida, pero la critica.**
His attitude is ambivalent: he supports the measure but criticises it.

DON'T CONFUSE ambiguo (can be interpreted in more than one way: una respuesta ambigua) vs ambivalente (has two opposite sides at once: sentimientos ambivalentes).

arbitrario *arbitrary*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS arbitrario · arbitraria · arbitrarios · arbitrarias

Based on personal whim rather than reason or rules; often unfair.

› **Fue una decisión totalmente arbitraria.**
It was a completely arbitrary decision.

› **El reparto de tareas parece arbitrario.**
The distribution of tasks seems arbitrary.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la arbitrariedad** *arbitrariness* · **de forma arbitraria** *arbitrarily*

COMMON MISTAKE Not related to the referee (el árbitro) in meaning, although same root.

ecuánime *even-handed / fair / level-headed*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS ecuánime · ecuánimes

Fair and balanced in judgement; also calm and composed in difficult moments.

› **Es un juez muy ecuánime.**
He's a very fair-minded judge.

› **Mantuvo una actitud ecuánime durante toda la crisis.**
She remained level-headed throughout the crisis.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la ecuanimidad** *even-handedness, equanimity*

DON'T CONFUSE ecuánime (balanced judgement and temper) vs imparcial (doesn't take sides) vs objetivo (based on facts, not feelings).

sesgado *biased / skewed*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS sesgado · sesgada · sesgados · sesgadas

Showing a bias in a particular direction, often not deliberately (data, samples, information).

› **La muestra está sesgada: solo incluye a jóvenes urbanos.**
The sample is skewed: it only includes young urban people.

› **Ofrecen una visión sesgada de la realidad.**
They offer a biased view of reality.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **el sesgo** *bias*

DON'T CONFUSE sesgado (biased, possibly unintentionally) vs tendencioso (deliberately biased to push an agenda).

tendencioso *tendentious / slanted*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS tendencioso · tendenciosa · tendenciosos · tendenciosas

Deliberately presented to support a particular opinion or interest. Very negative in media criticism.

› **Fue un titular claramente tendencioso.**
It was a clearly slanted headline.

› **Me parece una pregunta tendenciosa.**
That seems like a loaded question to me.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una pregunta tendenciosa** *a loaded question*

ingente *huge / enormous / vast*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS ingente · ingentes

Extremely large, especially in quantity (effort, sums of money, amounts of information). Formal.

› **Han invertido una ingente cantidad de dinero.**
They have invested a huge amount of money.

› **Fue un esfuerzo ingente.**
It was a tremendous effort.

OPPOSITE **exiguo** — meagre

exiguo *meagre / scant / paltry*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS exiguo · exigua · exiguos · exiguas

Very small or insufficient.

› **Con un presupuesto tan exiguo es imposible hacer milagros.**
With such a meagre budget it's impossible to work miracles.

› **Ganaron por un exiguo margen.**
They won by a narrow margin.

NOTE Pronunciation: e-xi-guo (the u is pronounced: /'gwo/).

nimio *trivial / insignificant*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS nimio · nimia · nimios · nimias

Of very little importance; often in 'detalles nimios'.

› **Discutieron por un detalle nimio.**
They argued over a trivial detail.

› **No te agobies por cosas tan nimias.**
Don't stress about such trivial things.

DON'T CONFUSE nimio ≈ baladí ≈ insignificante ≈ irrelevante. Baladí is the most literary.

irrisorio *ridiculously low / derisory*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS irrisorio · irrisoria · irrisorios · irrisorias

So small that it's laughable — typically a price, a salary or a sum.

› **Le ofrecieron un sueldo irrisorio.**
They offered him a derisory salary.

› **Compré el piso a un precio irrisorio.**
I bought the flat for next to nothing.

OPPOSITE **desorbitado** — exorbitant

desorbitado *exorbitant / sky-high*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS desorbitado · desorbitada · desorbitados · desorbitadas

Far beyond what is reasonable, especially prices. Also: con los ojos desorbitados = with eyes popping out.

› Los alquileres en el centro son desorbitados.
Rents in the centre are sky-high.

› Pidieron una cantidad desorbitada.
They asked for an exorbitant amount.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **precios desorbitados** *exorbitant prices*

vertiginoso *dizzying / breakneck*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS vertiginoso · vertiginosa · vertiginosos · vertiginosas

Extremely fast (change, growth, speed); literally 'that causes vertigo'.

› La tecnología avanza a un ritmo vertiginoso.
Technology is advancing at a dizzying pace.

› Un crecimiento vertiginoso de los precios
A breakneck rise in prices

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a un ritmo vertiginoso** *at a dizzying pace*

OPPOSITE **paulatino** — gradual

paulatino *gradual*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS paulatino · paulatina · paulatinos · paulatinas

Happening slowly and step by step. More formal than 'gradual'.

› Se prevé una recuperación paulatina de la economía.
A gradual recovery of the economy is expected.

› La reapertura será paulatina.
The reopening will be phased in gradually.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **paulatinamente** *gradually*

incipiente *incipient / emerging / budding*

ADJECTIVE · FORMAL · C1

FORMS incipiente · incipientes

In its early stages; just beginning.

› Detectaron el problema en una fase incipiente.
They detected the problem at an early stage.

› Tiene una incipiente carrera como actriz.
She has a budding career as an actress.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **una calvicie incipiente** *a receding hairline*

latente *latent / underlying / simmering*

ADJECTIVE · C1

FORMS latente · latentes

Present but hidden or not yet active; it may appear at any moment.

› Sigue latente un profundo malestar social.
Deep social unrest is still simmering.

› La amenaza sigue latente.
The threat is still there, beneath the surface.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en estado latente** *in a latent state*

efímero *ephemeral / short-lived*

ADJECTIVE · C1

FORMS efímero · efímera · efímeros · efímeras

Lasting a very short time.

› La fama en redes sociales suele ser efímera.
Fame on social media is usually short-lived.

› Fue un éxito efímero.
It was a short-lived success.

OPPOSITE **perdurable / duradero** — lasting, enduring

vigente *in force / current / valid*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS vigente · vigentes

Currently valid or applicable (laws, contracts, prices, documents); also still relevant (ideas, works).

› **Según la normativa vigente, no está permitido.**
According to the regulations in force, it's not allowed.

› **Su obra sigue plenamente vigente.**
His work is still completely relevant.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la vigencia** *validity, relevance* · **estar en vigor** *to be in force*

OPPOSITE **obsoleto / derogado** — obsolete / repealed

reacio *reluctant / averse*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS reacio · reacia · reacios · reacias

PATTERN **ser / mostrarse reacio a + infinitive / a algo**

Unwilling to do or accept something.

› **Es reacio a delegar.**
He's reluctant to delegate.

› **Muchos vecinos se mostraron reacios al cambio.**
Many residents were reluctant to accept the change.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*reacio de~~ → ✓ reacio a.

propenso *prone / inclined*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS propenso · propensa · propensos · propensas

PATTERN **propenso a algo / a + infinitive**

Having a natural tendency to something, usually negative (illness, errors, accidents).

› **Es propensa a las migrañas.**
She's prone to migraines.

› **Soy propenso a exagerar cuando estoy nervioso.**
I tend to exaggerate when I'm nervous.

DON'T CONFUSE propenso a (physical or behavioural tendency) ≈ proclive a (tendency or sympathy towards, more formal: proclive al diálogo).

susceptible *touchy / liable to / open to*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS susceptible · susceptibles

Two uses, and a trap. (1) Of a person: touchy, easily offended. (2) susceptible de + noun/infinitive: capable of / open to (something happening to it).

> **persona susceptible** — *touchy, oversensitive*
>
> › No le digas nada, que es muy susceptible.
> *Don't say anything to him, he's very touchy.*

> **susceptible de + noun** — *liable to, open to*
>
> › El plan es susceptible de mejora.
> *The plan could be improved.*

COMMON MISTAKE English 'susceptible to (illness)' → usually propenso a / vulnerable a: Es propenso a los resfriados. And use 'susceptible de' (not 'a') for 'open to': ✓ susceptible de interpretación.

idóneo *ideal / suitable*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS idóneo · idónea · idóneos · idóneas

Exactly right for a purpose. More formal than 'ideal' or 'adecuado'.

› Es el candidato idóneo para el puesto.
He's the ideal candidate for the job.

› No es el momento idóneo para hablar de dinero.
It isn't the right moment to talk about money.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la idoneidad** *suitability*

pertinente *relevant / appropriate / pertinent*

ADJECTIVE FORMAL C1

FORMS pertinente · pertinentes

Relevant to the matter in hand, or appropriate in the circumstances. Better than 'relevante' (a false friend) in many contexts.

› Me parece una pregunta muy pertinente.
I think that's a very relevant question.

› Se tomarán las medidas pertinentes.
The appropriate measures will be taken.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **las medidas pertinentes** *the appropriate measures* · **si lo considera pertinente** *if you see fit*

OPPOSITE **impertinente** — irrelevant / impertinent (rude)

mordaz *biting / scathing / caustic*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS mordaz · mordaces

Of humour or criticism: sharp, ironic and hurtful. From 'morder' (to bite).

› **Es conocido por su humor mordaz.**
He's known for his biting humour.

› **Escribió una crítica mordaz de la película.**
She wrote a scathing review of the film.

DON'T CONFUSE mordaz (witty and cruel) vs punzante (sharp, stinging — comments or pain) vs sarcástico (ironic and mocking).

NOTE Plural: mordaces (z → c).

entrañable *endearing / dear / heartwarming*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS entrañable · entrañables

Deeply affectionate, warm and close to your heart. A very Spanish word with no exact English equivalent.

› **Guardo un recuerdo entrañable de aquel verano.**
I have very fond memories of that summer.

› **Es una persona entrañable.**
He's a lovely, endearing person.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un amigo entrañable** *a very dear friend* · **fechas entrañables** *festive season (Christmas, in ads)*

sagaz *shrewd / astute*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS sagaz · sagaces

Quick to understand situations and foresee things; clever in a practical way.

› **Una periodista sagaz que siempre encuentra la noticia**
A shrewd journalist who always finds the story

› **Fue una jugada muy sagaz.**
It was a very astute move.

DON'T CONFUSE sagaz (shrewd, foresees) ≈ perspicaz (perceptive, notices what others miss) ≈ avispado (colloquial: sharp, quick-witted).

parco *sparing / reserved / frugal*

ADJECTIVE C1

FORMS parco · parca · parcos · parcas

PATTERN **parco en algo**

Using very little of something: words, praise, food. 'Parco en palabras' = a man/woman of few words.

› Es muy parco en palabras.
He's a man of few words.

› Fue parco en elogios.
He was sparing in his praise.

OPPOSITE **locuaz** — talkative

Judging information, arguments & texts

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ambiguo/a	*ambiguous*	≠ ambivalente (see card) Su respuesta fue deliberadamente ambigua. *His answer was deliberately ambiguous.*
imparcial	*impartial*	Un arbitraje imparcial *Impartial refereeing*
parcial	*biased / partial*	New meaning: biased, not only 'partial' El árbitro fue muy parcial. *The referee was very biased.*
demagógico/a	*demagogic / populist*	la demagogia Un discurso demagógico *A populist speech*
inapelable FORMAL	*unappealable / indisputable*	fallo inapelable; also sport: una victoria inapelable Ganaron con un 4-0 inapelable. *They won with an indisputable 4-0.*
categórico/a	*categorical*	Lo negó de forma categórica. *He categorically denied it.*
taxativo/a FORMAL	*strict / categorical (rules, wording)*	allows no other interpretation La norma es taxativa al respecto. *The rule is very clear on this.*
conciso/a	*concise*	
lacónico/a	*laconic / terse*	Un mensaje lacónico: «Llego tarde». *A terse message: "Running late."*
ampuloso/a FORMAL	*bombastic / pompous (style)*	Un lenguaje ampuloso y vacío *Pompous, empty language*
grandilocuente FORMAL	*grandiloquent / high-flown*	
rimbombante COLLOQUIAL	*grandiose / showy*	rimbombante title, name, speech Un cargo con un nombre muy rimbombante *A job with a very grand-sounding title*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
somero/a FORMAL	*brief / superficial / cursory*	una revisión somera = a quick look **Tras una lectura somera, parece correcto.** *After a quick read, it seems correct.*
fidedigno/a FORMAL	*reliable / trustworthy (sources)*	fuentes fidedignas **Según fuentes fidedignas...** *According to reliable sources...*
verosímil	*plausible / credible / realistic*	verosímil ≈ creíble **Una historia poco verosímil** *A rather implausible story*
inverosímil	*implausible / far-fetched*	**Dio una excusa inverosímil.** *She gave a far-fetched excuse.*
plausible FORMAL	*plausible / commendable*	Spain: also 'praiseworthy' (un esfuerzo plausible)
palpable	*palpable / tangible*	**La tensión era palpable.** *The tension was palpable.*
patente	*evident / clear*	dejar patente = to make clear **Quedó patente su falta de preparación.** *His lack of preparation was evident.*
manifiesto/a FORMAL	*obvious / manifest*	poner de manifiesto = to reveal, highlight **El estudio pone de manifiesto la brecha digital.** *The study highlights the digital divide.*
flagrante	*flagrant / blatant*	en flagrante delito = red-handed **Una contradicción flagrante** *A blatant contradiction*
ostensible FORMAL	*obvious / noticeable*	≠ English 'ostensible' (= aparente) **Hubo una mejora ostensible.** *There was a noticeable improvement.*
controvertido/a	*controversial*	≈ polémico
espinoso/a	*thorny / tricky*	un asunto espinoso **Es un tema espinoso.** *It's a thorny issue.*
peliagudo/a COLLOQUIAL	*tricky / ticklish*	**Me hizo una pregunta peliaguda.** *She asked me a tricky question.*
arduo/a FORMAL	*arduous / hard*	una ardua tarea **Una tarea ardua pero gratificante** *A hard but rewarding task*

Time, duration & relevance

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
perdurable FORMAL	*lasting / enduring*	≈ duradero, more literary **Un legado perdurable** *A lasting legacy*
caduco/a	*outdated / expired*	ideas caducas · also deciduous (leaves) **Una mentalidad caduca** *An outdated mentality*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
desfasado/a	*outdated / out of step*	estar desfasado
acuciante FORMAL	*pressing / urgent*	una necesidad acuciante El problema más acuciante es la vivienda. *The most pressing problem is housing.*
apremiante FORMAL	*urgent / pressing*	
candente	*burning / red-hot (issue)*	un tema candente La inmigración es un tema candente. *Immigration is a burning issue.*
trascendental	*momentous / far-reaching*	Una decisión trascendental *A momentous decision*
inexorable FORMAL	*inexorable / relentless*	El paso inexorable del tiempo *The relentless passing of time*
irrevocable FORMAL	*irrevocable*	
inamovible	*fixed / unchangeable*	una fecha inamovible La fecha de entrega es inamovible. *The deadline is set in stone.*
transitorio/a	*transitional / temporary*	disposición transitoria (law)
fugaz	*fleeting*	plural: fugaces · estrella fugaz = shooting star Un encuentro fugaz *A fleeting encounter*
venidero/a FORMAL	*coming / future*	en los años venideros Las generaciones venideras *Future generations*

Size, quantity & importance

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
baladí FORMAL	*trivial / insignificant*	plural: baladíes · literary No es una cuestión baladí. *It's no trivial matter.*
insignificante	*insignificant*	
ínfimo/a	*minimal / lowest / tiny*	Una cantidad ínfima *A tiny amount*
cuantioso/a FORMAL	*substantial / considerable (sums)*	pérdidas cuantiosas Cuantiosos daños materiales *Considerable material damage*
descomunal	*enormous / colossal*	Un esfuerzo descomunal *A colossal effort*
mayúsculo/a	*huge / tremendous (figurative)*	un error mayúsculo, un enfado mayúsculo Se llevó un susto mayúsculo. *He got a tremendous fright.*
desmesurado/a	*excessive / disproportionate*	Una reacción desmesurada *An over-the-top reaction*
desproporcionado/a	*disproportionate*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ínclito/a FORMAL	*illustrious*	very literary, often ironic

Attitudes, loyalty & tendencies

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
acérrimo/a	*staunch / die-hard*	un defensor acérrimo, un fan acérrimo **Es un acérrimo defensor de la escuela pública.** *He's a staunch defender of state schools.*
incondicional	*unconditional / devoted (fan)*	noun too: los incondicionales = loyal fans **Cuenta con el apoyo incondicional de su familia.** *She has her family's unconditional support.*
proclive FORMAL	*inclined / prone*	proclive a **Un público proclive a la nostalgia** *An audience prone to nostalgia*
afín	*related / like-minded / akin*	plural: afines · afín a **Partidos afines al Gobierno** *Parties close to the government*
adepto/a	*follower / supporter (also noun)*	ganar adeptos **La idea gana adeptos cada día.** *The idea is gaining supporters every day.*
receloso/a	*wary / distrustful*	receloso de **Se mostró receloso de la oferta.** *He was wary of the offer.*
suspicaz	*suspicious / distrustful (person)*	plural: suspicaces
crédulo/a	*gullible / credulous*	**No seas tan crédulo.** *Don't be so gullible.*
cándido/a	*naive / innocent*	
intransigente	*intransigent / unyielding*	
inflexible	*inflexible / unbending*	
conciliador/a	*conciliatory*	un tono conciliador **Adoptó un tono conciliador.** *She adopted a conciliatory tone.*
beligerante	*belligerent / combative*	**Una actitud beligerante** *A combative attitude*
indulgente	*lenient / indulgent*	indulgente con alguien
implacable	*relentless / implacable*	**Un crítico implacable** *A relentless critic*
displicente FORMAL	*dismissive / offhand*	**Contestó con tono displicente.** *He answered in an offhand tone.*
condescendiente	*condescending*	

Character & personal style

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
escrupuloso/a	*scrupulous / squeamish*	Spain: also 'fussy about hygiene' Es muy escrupuloso con los datos. *He's very scrupulous with data.*
meticuloso/a	*meticulous*	
punzante	*sharp / stinging / biting*	comentario punzante, dolor punzante Un comentario punzante *A cutting remark*
elocuente	*eloquent / telling*	also 'telling': un silencio elocuente Su silencio fue muy elocuente. *His silence spoke volumes.*
locuaz FORMAL	*talkative / loquacious*	plural: locuaces
altivo/a	*haughty / proud*	Una mirada altiva *A haughty look*
soberbio/a	*arrogant / superb*	two meanings: arrogant (person) · superb, magnificent (thing) Una actuación soberbia *A superb performance*
ruin	*despicable / mean / vile*	Una venganza ruin *A despicable act of revenge*
magnánimo/a FORMAL	*magnanimous / generous*	
perspicaz	*perceptive / sharp*	plural: perspicaces Una observación muy perspicaz *A very perceptive observation*
avispado/a COLLOQUIAL	*sharp / quick-witted*	Es un chaval muy avispado. *He's a very sharp kid.*
cabal	*upright / sound / complete*	una persona cabal = a person of integrity
íntegro/a	*honest / of integrity / whole*	Un juez íntegro *An honest judge*
abnegado/a	*self-sacrificing / selfless*	
pusilánime FORMAL	*faint-hearted / spineless*	
timorato/a	*timid / prudish*	
osado/a	*daring / bold*	Una propuesta osada *A bold proposal*
temerario/a	*reckless*	conducción temeraria = reckless driving
juicioso/a	*sensible / judicious*	
petulante	*smug / arrogant*	
pedante	*pedantic / pretentious*	also noun: un pedante
ufano/a	*proud / smug / pleased with oneself*	Iba muy ufano con su coche nuevo. *He was very pleased with himself in his new car.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
avezado/a FORMAL	*experienced / seasoned*	avezado en algo **Un viajero avezado** *A seasoned traveller*
curtido/a	*hardened / seasoned / weather-beaten*	**Un periodista curtido en mil batallas** *A battle-hardened journalist*
bisoño/a FORMAL	*inexperienced / green / rookie*	
versado/a en FORMAL	*versed in / knowledgeable about*	**Está muy versada en derecho europeo.** *She's very knowledgeable about European law.*
ducho/a en	*expert at / skilled in*	**No soy muy ducho en informática.** *I'm not very good with computers.*
lego/a	*layperson / uninformed*	lego en la materia **Soy lego en la materia.** *I'm no expert in the subject.*
erudito/a FORMAL	*erudite / scholarly*	also noun
ineficaz	*ineffective*	≠ ineficiente (inefficient) **Una medida ineficaz** *An ineffective measure*

STUDY TIP

Collect adjectives in pairs of opposites and near-synonyms: ingente / exiguo, sucinto / prolijo, efímero / perdurable, sesgado / ecuánime. Then use one pair in a short opinion paragraph about something you read today — it's the fastest way to make them yours.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

04 · Say exactly how, how much and how sure

Adverbs

C1 Spanish is full of adverbial phrases that compress a whole idea into two or three words: a todas luces, a duras penas, sin paliativos. Here you'll find them grouped by function, plus the Latin expressions that appear in serious Spanish (with the correct RAE form). Pay attention to register: some are for reports, others for a drink with friends.

Certainty, evidence & degree

a todas luces

clearly / by any standards

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Used to say something is obvious to everyone. Often with adjectives like insuficiente, injusto, excesivo.

› La medida es, a todas luces, insuficiente.
The measure is clearly insufficient.

› Fue un error a todas luces evitable.
It was a mistake that could quite obviously have been avoided.

a ciencia cierta

for certain / for sure

ADVERB C1

Know something with complete certainty. Almost always with 'saber' and very often in negative sentences.

› Nadie sabe a ciencia cierta qué pasó aquella noche.
Nobody knows for sure what happened that night.

› No lo puedo afirmar a ciencia cierta.
I can't say for certain.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~a ciencia exacta~~ → ✓ a ciencia cierta.

en gran medida *to a large extent / largely*

ADVERB C1

Says that something is mostly true or mostly responsible. Partner phrases: en cierta medida (to some extent), en buena medida (to a great extent), en la medida de lo posible (as far as possible).

› El éxito se debe en gran medida al trabajo en equipo.
The success is largely down to teamwork.

› En cierta medida, todos somos responsables.
To some extent, we are all responsible.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en cierta medida** *to some extent* · **en la medida de lo posible** *as far as possible* · **en la medida en que** *insofar as*

hasta cierto punto *up to a point / to a certain extent*

ADVERB C1

Limits your agreement or a statement: true, but not completely.

› Tienes razón hasta cierto punto.
You're right up to a point.

› Es comprensible hasta cierto punto, pero no justificable.
It's understandable to a certain extent, but not justifiable.

sobremanera *exceedingly / greatly*

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Very much, extremely. Elegant and formal; goes after the verb (me preocupa sobremanera) or adjective.

› Su actitud me preocupa sobremanera.
His attitude worries me greatly.

› Es un asunto sobremanera delicado.
It's an exceedingly delicate matter.

NOTE One word. ✗ *~~sobre manera~~.

indefectiblemente *inevitably / without fail*

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Something that always happens, unfailingly. Formal and slightly literary.

› Cada vez que llueve, indefectiblemente, se inunda el garaje.
Every time it rains, without fail, the garage floods.

› La subida de precios conduce indefectiblemente a la pérdida de poder adquisitivo.
Rising prices inevitably lead to a loss of purchasing power.

DON'T CONFUSE indefectiblemente (always, without fail) ≈ ineludiblemente (unavoidably) ≈ inevitablemente (neutral).

fehacientemente *conclusively / reliably*

ADVERB FORMAL C1

In a way that proves something beyond doubt. Legal and administrative register.

› Debe quedar acreditado fehacientemente.
It must be conclusively proved.

› No se ha demostrado fehacientemente su culpabilidad.
Her guilt has not been conclusively proven.

cabalmente *fully / properly / exactly*

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Completely and correctly; also 'honestly, in an upright way'. Often in 'comprender / entender cabalmente'.

› Nadie comprende cabalmente el alcance de la reforma.
Nobody fully understands the scope of the reform.

› Actuó cabalmente en todo momento.
He acted with integrity at all times.

Manner & attitude

a duras penas *barely / only just / with great difficulty*

ADVERB C1

You manage something, but only just and with a lot of effort.

› A duras penas llegamos a fin de mes.
We barely make ends meet.

› Terminó la maratón a duras penas.
She only just managed to finish the marathon.

a ultranza *to the death / at all costs / out-and-out*

ADVERB C1

Defending something radically, without compromise. Goes after the verb or noun: defender a ultranza, un ecologista a ultranza.

› Defiende a ultranza la sanidad pública.
She defends the public health system to the hilt.

› Es un pacifista a ultranza.
He's a die-hard pacifist.

a rajatabla

strictly / to the letter

ADVERB COLLOQUIAL C1

Following rules or instructions rigorously, with no exceptions.

› En esta casa las normas se cumplen a rajatabla.
In this house the rules are followed to the letter.

› Sigue la dieta a rajatabla.
She sticks to the diet religiously.

sin ambages

without beating about the bush / plainly

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Saying something directly, without hesitation or euphemism. 'Ambages' = roundabout ways of speaking.

› Nos dijo sin ambages que el proyecto se cancelaba.
He told us plainly that the project was being cancelled.

› Hablemos sin ambages.
Let's speak frankly.

DON'T CONFUSE sin ambages (formal) ≈ sin rodeos (neutral) ≈ al grano (colloquial: ir al grano).

sin paliativos

unmitigated / outright / in no uncertain terms

ADVERB FORMAL C1

With no softening or excuses. 'Un fracaso sin paliativos' = an absolute failure. 'Condenar sin paliativos' = to condemn outright.

› Fue un fracaso sin paliativos.
It was an unmitigated failure.

› El Gobierno condenó el ataque sin paliativos.
The government condemned the attack outright.

de soslayo

sideways / out of the corner of your eye / in passing

ADVERB FORMAL C1

(1) looking sideways, discreetly; (2) dealing with a topic only superficially, avoiding it.

mirar de soslayo — *to look out of the corner of your eye*

› Me miró de soslayo mientras hablaba con el jefe.
She glanced at me sideways while she was talking to the boss.

tratar de soslayo — *to touch on in passing, to sidestep*

› El informe trata de soslayo el problema de la vivienda.
The report only touches on the housing problem in passing.

en balde

in vain / for nothing

ADVERB C1

Without achieving any result. Synonym of 'en vano'. Also 'no en balde' = not for nothing (with good reason).

› Todo nuestro esfuerzo fue en balde.
All our effort was in vain.

› No en balde la llaman la ciudad de la luz.
It's not for nothing they call it the city of light.

de buenas a primeras

all of a sudden / out of the blue / straight off

ADVERB COLLOQUIAL C1

Suddenly, without warning or preparation.

› De buenas a primeras, decidió dejarlo todo y mudarse a Lisboa.
Out of the blue, she decided to drop everything and move to Lisbon.

› No puedo darte una respuesta así, de buenas a primeras.
I can't give you an answer just like that.

a bote pronto *off the top of my head / offhand*

ADVERB COLLOQUIAL C1

Without having time to think, as a spontaneous first reaction.

› **A bote pronto, diría que unas doscientas personas.**
Off the top of my head, I'd say about two hundred people.

› **Así, a bote pronto, no se me ocurre nada.**
Right now, offhand, I can't think of anything.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Mainly Spain. Latin America: así de improviso, de buenas a primeras, sin pensarlo mucho.

deliberadamente *deliberately*

ADVERB C1

On purpose, consciously. More formal than 'a propósito' or 'adrede'.

› **Omitió deliberadamente los datos más negativos.**
He deliberately left out the most negative data.

DON'T CONFUSE deliberadamente (formal) ≈ a propósito (neutral) ≈ adrede (colloquial, Spain) ≈ a sabiendas (knowingly).

Latin expressions used in Spanish

a priori *a priori / in principle / beforehand*

ADVERB C1

Before examining the facts; in principle. Very common in speech and writing.

› **A priori, la propuesta parece razonable.**
On the face of it, the proposal seems reasonable.

› **No hay que descartar nada a priori.**
We shouldn't rule anything out beforehand.

NOTE RAE recommends writing Latin expressions in italics in print and without accent marks: a priori, a posteriori.

a posteriori *after the event / with hindsight*

ADVERB C1

After the fact, once you know the result.

› **A posteriori es muy fácil criticar las decisiones.**
With hindsight, it's very easy to criticise the decisions.

grosso modo

roughly / broadly speaking

ADVERB C1

In broad terms, approximately.

› Grosso modo, el proyecto costará unos dos millones.
Roughly speaking, the project will cost about two million.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*a grosso modo~~ → ✓ grosso modo. The RAE considers 'a grosso modo' incorrect (there's no 'a' in Latin). Alternative: a grandes rasgos.

de facto

de facto / in practice

ADVERB FORMAL C1

In reality, even if not officially. Opposite: de iure (by law).

› Es, de facto, quien dirige la empresa.
She's the one who actually runs the company.

› Una prohibición de facto
A de facto ban

per se

per se / in itself

ADVERB FORMAL C1

By itself, intrinsically.

› El dinero no da la felicidad per se.
Money doesn't bring happiness in itself.

› No es un problema per se, pero puede serlo.
It's not a problem as such, but it could become one.

motu proprio

of one's own accord / voluntarily

ADVERB C1

Voluntarily, on your own initiative.

› Dimitió motu proprio.
He resigned of his own accord.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*de motu propio~~ → ✓ motu proprio (no 'de', and 'proprio' with two r's). Alternative: por iniciativa propia.

ipso facto

immediately / there and then

ADVERB C1

At once, as an automatic consequence.

› **Si incumples el contrato, quedas despedido ipso facto.**
If you breach the contract, you're fired immediately.

in situ

on site / on the spot

ADVERB C1

In the place itself.

› **Los técnicos evaluaron los daños in situ.**
The technicians assessed the damage on site.

More advanced adverbs & adverbial phrases

por antonomasia FORMAL

par excellence / the quintessential

To say something is THE example of its category. Goes after the noun.

> **Sevilla es la ciudad andaluza por antonomasia.**
> *Seville is the Andalusian city par excellence.*

valga la redundancia

if you'll pardon the repetition

Apology when you repeat a word (often humorous).

> **El problema es que hay un problema, valga la redundancia.**
> *The problem is that there's a problem — if you'll excuse the repetition.*

acaso FORMAL

perhaps / by any chance

Literary 'perhaps'; in questions, it adds a challenging tone: ¿Acaso...? = Is it that...?

> **¿Acaso crees que no me he dado cuenta?**
> *Do you really think I haven't noticed?*

a sabiendas

knowingly / fully aware

Doing something while knowing it's wrong or risky. 'a sabiendas de que'.

> **Lo hizo a sabiendas de que estaba prohibido.**
> *He did it knowing full well it was forbidden.*

a hurtadillas

on the sly / stealthily

Secretly, so no one sees.

> **Salió de casa a hurtadillas.**
> *She sneaked out of the house.*

a trompicones COLLOQUIAL

in fits and starts

With interruptions and difficulties.

> **El proyecto avanza a trompicones.**
> *The project is moving forward in fits and starts.*

de plano

flatly / outright

Rechazar / negar de plano = to reject / deny flatly.

> **Rechazó de plano la oferta.**
> *She flatly rejected the offer.*

con creces

more than / amply / with interest

Exceeding what was expected: superar / cumplir / compensar con creces.

> **Superó con creces nuestras expectativas.**
> *It far exceeded our expectations.*

sobradamente

more than enough / amply

Sobradamente conocido / demostrado / preparado.

> **Está sobradamente preparada para el puesto.**
> *She is more than qualified for the job.*

cuando menos FORMAL
at the very least
Introduces a minimum or a mild judgement: 'cuando menos curioso' = curious, to say the least.

> Su reacción fue, cuando menos, sorprendente.
> *His reaction was surprising, to say the least.*

a lo sumo
at most
The maximum possible.

> Tardaremos, a lo sumo, una hora.
> *It'll take us an hour at most.*

en el mejor de los casos
at best
The most optimistic scenario.

> En el mejor de los casos, terminaremos en marzo.
> *At best, we'll finish in March.*

presumiblemente FORMAL
presumably
What can reasonably be assumed. Common in news.

> El incendio fue presumiblemente intencionado.
> *The fire was presumably started deliberately.*

previsiblemente FORMAL
foreseeably / in all likelihood
What is expected to happen.

> Previsiblemente, el tribunal fallará a finales de mes.
> *The court is expected to rule at the end of the month.*

ostensiblemente FORMAL
noticeably / markedly
In a clearly visible way. Careful: NOT English 'ostensibly' (= aparentemente).

> Su salud ha mejorado ostensiblemente.
> *Her health has improved noticeably.*

sustancialmente FORMAL
substantially
To a significant degree.

> Las condiciones han cambiado sustancialmente.
> *Conditions have changed substantially.*

rotundamente
flatly / categorically
Negar / rechazar rotundamente.

> Se negó rotundamente a firmar.
> *He flatly refused to sign.*

tajantemente
categorically / emphatically
Very firm, with no room for discussion.

> La empresa desmintió tajantemente la noticia.
> *The company categorically denied the report.*

ineludiblemente FORMAL
unavoidably / inescapably
With no way to avoid it.

> Ineludiblemente, habrá que recortar gastos.
> *Inevitably, we'll have to cut costs.*

stricto sensu FORMAL
strictly speaking
In the narrow sense. Opposite: lato sensu (in a broad sense).

> No es, stricto sensu, un contrato.
> *It's not, strictly speaking, a contract.*

ex profeso FORMAL
on purpose / specifically
Deliberately, for a specific purpose. Not 'ex profesor'!

> Vine ex profeso para verte.
> *I came specially to see you.*

por doquier FORMAL
everywhere
Literary or humorous: everywhere you look.

> Había turistas por doquier.
> *There were tourists everywhere.*

a raudales
in abundance / in torrents
Abundantly: entrar luz a raudales, dinero a raudales.

> La luz entra a raudales por el ventanal.
> *Light floods in through the big window.*

a espuertas COLLOQUIAL
by the bucketload
In great quantities, especially money.
Spain & Latin America: Spain.

> Ganan dinero a espuertas.
> *They're making money hand over fist.*

a mansalva COLLOQUIAL
loads of / in huge amounts
Very colloquial: plenty of.

> Había comida a mansalva.
> *There was loads of food.*

a destajo COLLOQUIAL
flat out / like mad / piecework
Working nonstop; originally paid by the piece.

> Llevamos toda la semana trabajando a destajo.
> *We've been working flat out all week.*

STUDY TIP

Adverbial phrases are where native Spanish sounds most native. Choose five from this section (a duras penas, a rajatabla, con creces, a bote pronto, sin ambages) and use one in every message you write this week, in English-free contexts — work chats, voice notes, a comment on a post.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

05 · The formal locutions of contracts, reports, newspapers and good prose

Prepositions

At C1, simple prepositions are no longer the challenge: what you need now are the long prepositional phrases that give legal texts, reports, journalism and literature their tone. Most of them are formal, so learn each one with its register label and its typical partner noun (en aras de la transparencia, a tenor de lo dispuesto, a merced del viento). Two are frankly literary (so, allende): recognise them, use them sparingly.

Key formal locutions

These are the ones you will meet every week in the press, in official letters and in academic writing. Learn them with their collocations.

en aras de

for the sake of / in the interest of

PREPOSITION · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **en aras de + noun (la transparencia, la paz, la eficiencia…)**

Introduces the noble goal or value something is done for, often when something else is sacrificed. Very common in political and journalistic Spanish, frequently with a slightly solemn or ironic tone.

› En aras de la transparencia, publicaremos todas las cuentas del proyecto.
In the interest of transparency, we will publish all the project's accounts.

› Renunció a parte de sus exigencias en aras de un acuerdo.
He gave up some of his demands for the sake of reaching an agreement.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en aras de la paz / la convivencia** *for the sake of peace / of living together* · **en aras de la brevedad** *in the interest of brevity* · **en aras de la eficiencia** *in the name of efficiency*

NOTE 'Aras' is an old word for altars: you sacrifice something 'on the altars of' a higher value.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*en aras a la transparencia~~ → ✓ en aras de la transparencia. The standard form is with 'de'.

so pena de

on pain of / or else / at the risk of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **so pena de + noun / infinitive · so pena de que + subjunctive**

Originally legal ('under penalty of'). Today it also introduces the negative consequence you'll suffer if you don't do something: 'unless you want to...'.

legal — *under penalty of*

› Los testigos deben comparecer, so pena de multa.
Witnesses must appear, on pain of a fine.

general — *at the risk of / unless you want to*

› Hay que reservar con meses de antelación, so pena de quedarse sin entradas.
You have to book months in advance or you'll end up without tickets.

NOTE 'So' is an old preposition meaning 'under' (see its own card below).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*so pena que te multen~~ → ✓ so pena de que te multen. Don't drop the 'de'.

a tenor de

in accordance with / under · judging by, in light of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **a tenor de + noun / lo que...**

Two uses. In legal and administrative texts it means 'in accordance with' a rule. In general formal prose it means 'judging by / in light of' some data. You already know the set phrase 'a tenor de lo expuesto'; here is the preposition on its own.

legal — *in accordance with*

› A tenor de lo dispuesto en el artículo 12, la solicitud queda desestimada.
Under the provisions of Article 12, the application is rejected.

general — *judging by*

› A tenor de las encuestas, la participación será baja.
Judging by the polls, turnout will be low.

DON'T CONFUSE a tenor de = based on what a text or data says · a juzgar por = judging by (neutral, any evidence) · conforme a = in accordance with (rules).

en virtud de

under / by virtue of / pursuant to

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **en virtud de + noun (ley, acuerdo, contrato, cargo…)**

Introduces the law, agreement or power that makes something possible or legitimate. Typical of legal, administrative and journalistic language.

› En virtud del acuerdo firmado, ambas empresas compartirán la tecnología.
Under the agreement signed, both companies will share the technology.

› Actuó en virtud de las competencias que le otorga su cargo.
She acted by virtue of the powers her position gives her.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **en virtud de la ley / del contrato** *under the law / the contract* · **en virtud de la cual…** *under which…*

NOTE Very handy in relative clauses: 'la normativa en virtud de la cual se concedió la ayuda' (the regulations under which the grant was awarded).

con arreglo a

in accordance with / according to / under

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **con arreglo a + noun (la ley, las normas, lo acordado, lo previsto…)**

Says that something is done following a rule, plan or criterion. Slightly more formal than 'según' or 'de acuerdo con'.

› Las plazas se asignarán con arreglo a la nota media.
Places will be allocated according to students' average marks.

› Todo se hizo con arreglo a lo previsto.
Everything was done as planned.

DON'T CONFUSE con arreglo a ≈ conforme a ≈ de acuerdo con (all 'in accordance with'); 'según' is the everyday option.

a efectos de

for the purposes of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **a efectos de + noun / infinitive · a efectos + adjective (fiscales, legales, prácticos)**

Limits a statement to a particular purpose or area: 'as far as X is concerned'. Very frequent in forms, contracts and HR or tax documents.

› A efectos de cálculo, se considerará un año de 360 días.
For calculation purposes, a year will be taken as 360 days.

› A efectos prácticos, da igual que firmes hoy o mañana.
For all practical purposes, it makes no difference whether you sign today or tomorrow.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **a efectos fiscales / legales** *for tax / legal purposes* · **a todos los efectos** *to all intents and purposes / in every respect* · **a efectos de notificaciones** *for the purpose of (receiving) notifications*

en detrimento de

to the detriment of / at the expense of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **en detrimento de + noun**

Says that one thing gains while another loses or is damaged. Very common in opinion articles and essays when you criticise priorities.

› **Se ha apostado por la cantidad en detrimento de la calidad.**
They've gone for quantity at the expense of quality.

› **El turismo masivo crece en detrimento de los vecinos del centro.**
Mass tourism is growing to the detriment of people who live in the city centre.

OPPOSITE **en beneficio de** — for the benefit of

DON'T CONFUSE en detrimento de = something is harmed · a costa de = something is paid for / sacrificed (also neutral register) · en perjuicio de = legal 'to the prejudice of'.

a expensas de

at the expense of / living off

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **a expensas de + person / noun**

Originally: someone else pays your costs ('vivir a expensas de alguien' = to live off someone). By extension, a gain obtained by sacrificing something else.

› **Con treinta años seguía viviendo a expensas de sus padres.**
At thirty he was still living off his parents.

› **La empresa creció a expensas de sus proveedores más pequeños.**
The company grew at the expense of its smaller suppliers.

DON'T CONFUSE a expensas de (formal) ≈ a costa de (neutral, more common: 'a costa de su salud', 'reírse a costa de alguien').

a merced de

at the mercy of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **estar / quedar(se) / dejar a merced de + noun**

Being completely in the power of someone or something you can't control: the weather, the market, an abusive boss. Literary and journalistic.

› **Los pequeños agricultores están a merced de las grandes distribuidoras.**
Small farmers are at the mercy of the big distributors.

› **El velero quedó a merced del viento.**
The sailing boat was left at the mercy of the wind.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't confuse it with 'merced a' (formal = thanks to): 'Se salvó merced a su sangre fría' = He survived thanks to his composure.

al amparo de

under the protection of / under (a law) / under cover of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **al amparo de + noun (la ley, la noche, una institución...)**

Something happens sheltered or legitimised by something else: a law, an institution, the darkness. Often slightly critical in the press ('al amparo de un vacío legal').

› Muchos pisos turísticos operan al amparo de un vacío legal.
Many holiday flats operate thanks to a legal loophole.

› Salieron del pueblo al amparo de la noche.
They left the village under cover of darkness.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **al amparo de la ley / de la normativa** *under the law / the regulations* · **al amparo de la oscuridad / de la noche** *under cover of darkness / of night*

a la luz de

in (the) light of

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **a la luz de + noun (los datos, los hechos, lo ocurrido...)**

Introduces new information that makes you see or judge something differently. A perfect academic and journalistic phrase; the English equivalent is almost identical.

› A la luz de los nuevos datos, conviene revisar la hipótesis inicial.
In light of the new data, the initial hypothesis should be revised.

› A la luz de lo ocurrido, la dirección ha pedido disculpas.
In light of what happened, the management has apologised.

NOTE 'Sacar a la luz' is different: to bring to light, to reveal.

en el marco de

as part of / within the framework of / during

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **en el marco de + noun (un proyecto, un acuerdo, unas jornadas, un festival...)**

Places an action inside a bigger programme, agreement or event. Extremely frequent in institutional and press language; in English you often just say 'as part of' or 'at'.

› La conferencia se celebró en el marco del Festival de Cine de San Sebastián.
The talk took place as part of the San Sebastián Film Festival.

› Estas becas se conceden en el marco de un acuerdo con varias universidades europeas.
These grants are awarded within the framework of an agreement with several European universities.

COMMON MISTAKE Don't overuse it in normal conversation: 'Lo hablamos en la reunión', not *'Lo hablamos en el marco de la reunión' (sounds like a press release).

so *under (old preposition)*

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **so pena de · so pretexto de · so capa de**

Literary and archaic preposition meaning 'under'. Today it survives only in a few fixed phrases (so pena de, so pretexto de, so capa de), which are still used in formal and journalistic Spanish. Don't use it on its own.

› So capa de modernidad, se esconden ideas muy antiguas.
Under a veneer of modernity, very old ideas are hiding.

› Lo despidieron so pretexto de una reestructuración.
They fired him on the pretext of a restructuring.

NOTE Literary. ✗ ~~*so la mesa~~ → ✓ bajo la mesa.

allende *beyond / across*

PREPOSITION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **allende + noun (los mares, las fronteras, los Pirineos…)**

Literary preposition meaning 'on the other side of / beyond'. You'll find it in literature, poetry and in journalism with a slightly ironic or elevated tone.

› Su fama llegó allende los mares.
His fame spread across the seas.

› El escritor es más leído allende nuestras fronteras que en su propio país.
The writer is more widely read beyond our borders than in his own country.

OPPOSITE **aquende (very rare)** — on this side of

NOTE Literary. In normal speech say 'al otro lado de' or 'fuera de'.

More formal prepositional phrases

Wide coverage: recognise them all, and pick five or six to start using in your own emails and essays.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
en pos de FORMAL	*in pursuit of / after*	literary nuance; also 'behind' in old texts Dejó un trabajo estable en pos de su sueño. *She left a stable job in pursuit of her dream.*
en lo tocante a FORMAL	*as regards / with regard to*	slightly literary; ≈ en lo que respecta a En lo tocante a la financiación, aún no hay nada decidido. *As regards funding, nothing has been decided yet.*
en lo concerniente a FORMAL	*concerning / as far as … is concerned*	administrative and legal style En lo concerniente a los plazos, le remitimos a la convocatoria. *Concerning deadlines, please refer to the official call.*
en lo relativo a FORMAL	*with regard to / in relation to*	Hay dudas en lo relativo a la protección de datos. *There are doubts with regard to data protection.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
en materia de FORMAL	*in the field of / when it comes to*	very common in politics and the press España ha avanzado mucho **en materia de** energías renovables. *Spain has made great progress in renewable energy.*
a instancia(s) de FORMAL	*at the request of / at the urging of*	both 'a instancia de' and 'a instancias de' are correct La reunión se convocó **a instancias del** comité de empresa. *The meeting was called at the request of the works council.*
por mediación de FORMAL	*through (the mediation of) / thanks to the intervention of*	Consiguió el contacto **por mediación de** un antiguo profesor. *She got the contact through a former teacher.*
con motivo de FORMAL	*on the occasion of / to mark · because of*	typical in invitations and official notices **Con motivo de** las fiestas, la oficina permanecerá cerrada. *Owing to the holidays, the office will remain closed.*
en calidad de FORMAL	*as / in one's capacity as*	Asistió a la reunión **en calidad de** asesora externa. *She attended the meeting as an external adviser.*
a título de FORMAL	*as / by way of*	fixed: a título personal (in a personal capacity), a título informativo (for information only), a título póstumo Hablo **a título personal**, no en nombre de la empresa. *I'm speaking in a personal capacity, not on behalf of the company.*
en concepto de FORMAL	*as / for / by way of (payments)*	invoices, payslips, bank statements Recibirá 300 euros **en concepto de** dietas. *You will receive 300 euros for expenses.*
con cargo a FORMAL	*charged to / funded by*	El viaje se pagará **con cargo al** presupuesto del departamento. *The trip will be charged to the department's budget.*
en señal de FORMAL	*as a sign / token of*	Guardaron un minuto de silencio **en señal de** duelo. *They observed a minute's silence as a sign of mourning.*
a resultas de FORMAL	*as a result of*	rather literary; ≈ como consecuencia de Murió **a resultas de** las heridas sufridas en el accidente. *He died as a result of the injuries he suffered in the accident.*
merced a FORMAL	*thanks to*	literary; ≠ a merced de (at the mercy of) El proyecto salió adelante **merced a** la tenacidad de su directora. *The project went ahead thanks to its director's tenacity.*
conforme a FORMAL	*in accordance with*	Actuamos **conforme a** la normativa vigente. *We acted in accordance with current regulations.*
en consonancia con FORMAL	*in line with / in keeping with*	Los sueldos no han subido **en consonancia con** la inflación. *Salaries haven't risen in line with inflation.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
a costa de	*at the expense of / at the cost of*	neutral register; also 'reírse a costa de alguien' = to laugh at someone's expense **Terminó el máster a costa de muchas horas de sueño.** *He finished his master's at the cost of a lot of sleep.*
a la vista de FORMAL	*in view of / given*	**A la vista de los resultados, se cancelará el programa.** *In view of the results, the programme will be cancelled.*
en contraposición a / con FORMAL	*as opposed to / in contrast to*	**Defiende un turismo lento, en contraposición al modelo de masas.** *She champions slow tourism, as opposed to the mass model.*
al hilo de FORMAL	*following on from / in connection with*	great for picking up on what someone said: 'al hilo de lo que comentaba Ana...' **Al hilo de lo que decía Javier, me gustaría añadir un dato.** *Following on from what Javier was saying, I'd like to add a figure.*
en pro de FORMAL	*for / in favour of / on behalf of (a cause)*	**Lleva años trabajando en pro de los derechos de los migrantes.** *She has been working for migrants' rights for years.*
por espacio de FORMAL	*for (a period of)*	only with durations **Estuvo hablando por espacio de dos horas.** *He spoke for two hours.*

Watch out

a merced de vs merced a

✗ ~~*El rescate fue posible a merced de los voluntarios~~.

✓ El rescate fue posible merced a los voluntarios.

Same word, opposite feelings. 'A merced de' = at the mercy of (helpless). 'Merced a' = thanks to (positive, literary). The order of the words changes everything.

- Los refugiados quedaron a merced de las mafias.
  The refugees were left at the mercy of the trafficking gangs.
- Merced a su intervención, se evitó el conflicto.
  Thanks to her intervention, the conflict was avoided.

Don't drop the final 'de'

✗ ~~*en aras a la paz · *so pena que nos multen · *en detrimento la calidad~~

✓ en aras de la paz · so pena de que nos multen · en detrimento de la calidad

Almost all these locutions end in a preposition, and that preposition is not optional. When a clause follows, keep the 'de' before 'que' (so pena de que...).

- Hay que entregarlo hoy, so pena de que nos penalicen.
  It has to be handed in today, or else we'll be penalised.

REMEMBER Learn each one as a block with its noun: 'en aras de la transparencia', not just 'en aras'.

DOSE THEM CAREFULLY

One or two of these phrases make a formal email or essay sound polished; five in one paragraph sound like a legal notice. Read a quality newspaper opinion page (El País, El Mundo, La Vanguardia) and underline every one you find: you'll see how sparingly good writers use them.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

06 · The joints of a sophisticated argument, from 'amén de' to 'a modo de conclusión'

Connectors

At C1, connectors are what separate a clear writer from a brilliant one. This section is organised by function (adding, conceding, explaining causes, drawing conclusions…), and each phrase carries its register: many are for essays, reports and formal emails, a few belong to relaxed conversation. Basic and intermediate connectors (sin embargo, por lo tanto, ya que, no obstante…) are assumed. Learn a handful per function and rotate them in your writing so you never repeat 'además' three times in a paragraph.

Adding information

Going beyond 'además' and 'también'. Most of these add an extra argument with a little more weight.

amén de FORMAL

besides / apart from / in addition to

Before a noun or infinitive, to add one more element, often a negative one. Elegant and slightly literary.

> Amén de caro, el nuevo sistema es lentísimo.
> *Besides being expensive, the new system is incredibly slow.*

por añadidura FORMAL

what's more / on top of that / in addition

Adds a further point, often the one that makes the situation even better or worse. Written and formal speech.

> El piso es pequeño y oscuro; por añadidura, no tiene ascensor.
> *The flat is small and dark; on top of that, there's no lift.*

a ello se suma (que)… / a esto hay que añadir (que)… FORMAL

added to this… / to this we must add…

Typical of reports and journalism to pile up factors. Agree the verb with the subject: 'a ello se suman los problemas de…'.

> La sequía ha reducido las cosechas. A ello se suma la subida del precio de la energía.
> *The drought has reduced harvests. Added to this is the rise in energy prices.*

y lo que es más

and what's more

Introduces the strongest argument in a list, in speech or writing.

> Es barato, rápido y, lo que es más, se puede usar sin conexión.
> *It's cheap, fast and, what's more, you can use it offline.*

otro tanto cabe decir de… FORMAL

the same can be said of…

To extend what you've just said to a second case without repeating the whole argument. Perfect for essays.

> La sanidad pública está saturada; otro tanto cabe decir de la educación.
> *Public healthcare is overstretched; the same can be said of education.*

más aún FORMAL

even more (so) / what's more

Raises the intensity of the previous statement, or adds a stronger argument.

> La reforma era necesaria; más aún, llegaba con años de retraso.
> *The reform was necessary; what's more, it was years overdue.*

aunado a FORMAL

combined with / together with

Formal addition before a noun, very common in Latin American press and reports.

Spain & Latin America: Mainly Latin America (especially Mexico). In Spain you'd say 'sumado a' or 'unido a'.

> La inflación, aunada a la falta de empleo, ha provocado un fuerte malestar social.
> *Inflation, combined with the lack of jobs, has caused widespread social discontent.*

Contrast & concession

Concession (admitting a point before moving on) is the heart of a mature argument. These are the C1 tools to do it with nuance.

con todo FORMAL

even so / nevertheless / all the same

After admitting difficulties, introduces the opposite conclusion. Short, elegant, mostly written. Usually at the start of a sentence, followed by a comma.

> El proyecto tuvo muchos problemas. Con todo, el balance final es positivo.
> *The project had lots of problems. Even so, the overall outcome is positive.*

antes bien FORMAL

on the contrary / rather

After a negative sentence, corrects it with the opposite idea. Literary and formal; in everyday speech you'd use 'al contrario' or 'más bien'. Close to 'por el contrario', but stronger.

> La crítica no lo hundió; antes bien, lo animó a seguir escribiendo.
> *The criticism didn't crush him; on the contrary, it encouraged him to keep writing.*

aun cuando FORMAL

even if / even though

Formal 'aunque'. With subjunctive it's hypothetical ('even if'); with indicative it states a fact ('even though').

> Aun cuando aprueben la ley, su aplicación llevará años.
> *Even if they pass the law, implementing it will take years.*

mal que le pese (a alguien)

whether he/she likes it or not / much as it may pain him/her

Concedes something that someone finds hard to accept. Conjugate it: mal que me pese, mal que te pese, mal que les pese.

> Mal que les pese a algunos, el español es una lengua de dos continentes.
> *Whether some people like it or not, Spanish is a language of two continents.*

cuando no FORMAL

if not / not to say

Adds a stronger, more extreme degree to what you've just said: 'difficult, if not impossible'.

> La negociación será difícil, cuando no imposible.
> *The negotiation will be difficult, if not impossible.*

con independencia de que + subjunctive FORMAL

regardless of whether

Says that a factor doesn't change your conclusion. Also 'con independencia de + noun' and 'independientemente de'.

> Con independencia de que tengas razón, las formas no han sido correctas.
> *Regardless of whether you're right, the way you went about it wasn't appropriate.*

aun a riesgo de + infinitive FORMAL

even at the risk of

Announces that you'll say or do something despite a possible negative effect. Very common to apologise in advance: 'aun a riesgo de repetirme'.

> Aun a riesgo de parecer pesada, insisto en que revisemos el contrato.
> *Even at the risk of being a pain, I insist we go over the contract again.*

por más que

however much / no matter how much

With subjunctive for hypothesis or generalisation, with indicative for a real fact you've experienced.

> Por más que lo intento, no consigo entender su postura.
> *No matter how hard I try, I can't understand his position.*

en contrapartida FORMAL

in return / on the other hand / to compensate

Introduces the compensation or counterbalance to something: what you get in exchange.

> El sueldo no es muy alto; en contrapartida, tienes mucha flexibilidad.
> *The salary isn't very high; on the other hand, you get a lot of flexibility.*

a la inversa FORMAL

conversely / the other way round

Presents the reverse relationship of what you've just said.

> Un buen jefe motiva al equipo y, a la inversa, uno malo puede hundirlo.
> *A good boss motivates the team and, conversely, a bad one can sink it.*

bien es verdad que... FORMAL

admittedly / it is true that...

Formal concession, usually followed by 'pero' or 'sin embargo'. Note the word order: 'bien es verdad', not 'es bien verdad'.

> Bien es verdad que el plan tiene lagunas, pero es el único que tenemos.
> *Admittedly, the plan has gaps, but it's the only one we have.*

siquiera sea FORMAL

if only / even if only

Literary concession: the minimum acceptable reason or amount.

> Hay que intentarlo, siquiera sea por dignidad.
> *We have to try, if only for the sake of our dignity.*

Cause

Formal alternatives to 'porque', 'ya que' and 'como'. Most are typical of written argument.

habida cuenta de (que) FORMAL

given (that) / bearing in mind (that)

Introduces a known fact that justifies a decision. Very formal: reports, legal texts, serious journalism.

> Habida cuenta de que el plazo vence mañana, no podemos esperar más.
> *Given that the deadline is tomorrow, we can't wait any longer.*

en vista de (que) FORMAL

in view of (the fact that) / seeing that

Cause based on something that has become evident. Formal but also used in careful speech.

> En vista de que nadie se ofrecía, lo hice yo.
> *Seeing that nobody was volunteering, I did it myself.*

toda vez que FORMAL

since / given that

Formal causal connector of legal and administrative texts. It does NOT mean 'every time' (that's 'cada vez que').

> La solicitud se desestima, toda vez que no se presentó en plazo.
> *The application is rejected, since it was not submitted on time.*

por cuanto FORMAL

inasmuch as / since

Explains the reason that makes a statement valid. Formal, frequent in essays and legal writing.

> La medida es injusta por cuanto afecta sobre todo a quienes menos tienen.
> *The measure is unfair inasmuch as it mainly affects those who have least.*

en la medida en que FORMAL

insofar as / to the extent that

Cause with a nuance of degree: something is true only to the extent that another thing is.

> La tecnología es útil en la medida en que nos ahorra tiempo.
> *Technology is useful insofar as it saves us time.*

comoquiera que FORMAL

since / given that

Literary, sentence-initial cause, like a very formal 'como'. Written in one word.

> Comoquiera que no hubo acuerdo, la votación se aplazó.
> *Since no agreement was reached, the vote was postponed.*

no en vano FORMAL

not for nothing / it's no coincidence that / after all

Introduces a fact that explains or justifies what you've just said. Very common in journalism.

> Lucía conoce bien el sector; no en vano lleva veinte años en él.
> *Lucía knows the sector well; after all, she's been in it for twenty years.*

por mor de FORMAL

for the sake of / because of

Literary and slightly archaic; used today with some irony ('por mor de la eficiencia').

> Por mor de la rentabilidad, se cerraron oficinas en toda la comarca.
> *For the sake of profitability, offices were closed all over the area.*

Consequence

From the very formal 'por ende' to the very conversational 'conque'.

de suerte que FORMAL

so that / with the result that

Formal or literary consequence, followed by the indicative. (With subjunctive it can express purpose, but that's rare today.)

> Llovió toda la noche, de suerte que el partido se suspendió.
> *It rained all night, with the result that the match was called off.*

así las cosas FORMAL

this being the case / with things as they stand

After describing a situation, introduces what follows from it. Very journalistic.

> El Gobierno no tiene mayoría. Así las cosas, todo apunta a elecciones anticipadas.
> *The government has no majority. With things as they stand, everything points to an early election.*

razón por la cual / motivo por el cual FORMAL

which is why / for which reason

Relative connector that links cause and consequence in one sentence. Great for avoiding a new 'por eso'.

> El tren llegó con retraso, razón por la cual perdimos la conexión.
> *The train was late, which is why we missed our connection.*

Condition

Beyond 'si': formal ways to set conditions in contracts, emails and arguments. All of the 'que' ones take the subjunctive.

caso de que + subjunctive / caso de + infinitive FORMAL

in the event that / should...

A very formal version of 'en caso de que', without 'en'. Legal and administrative style.

> Caso de no poder asistir, rogamos nos lo comunique con antelación.
> *Should you be unable to attend, please let us know in advance.*

en tanto (que) + subjunctive FORMAL

as long as / until

Formal condition or time limit. Careful: 'en tanto que' + noun = 'as' (en tanto que ciudadana = as a citizen).

> En tanto no se apruebe el presupuesto, no habrá nuevas contrataciones.
> *As long as the budget isn't approved, there will be no new hiring.*

de lo contrario

otherwise / if not

Introduces the consequence if a condition is not met.

> Confirma tu plaza antes del viernes; de lo contrario, se la daremos a otra persona.
> *Confirm your place before Friday; otherwise, we'll give it to someone else.*

Purpose

Formal alternatives to 'para (que)'.

con (el) objeto de + infinitive / de que + subjunctive FORMAL

with the aim of / in order to

Formal purpose in reports, official letters and academic texts.

> Se ha creado una comisión con el objeto de analizar el problema.
> *A committee has been set up in order to analyse the problem.*

al objeto de + infinitive FORMAL

in order to / for the purpose of

Very administrative variant. You'll see it in official notices and regulations.

> Le rogamos aporte su DNI al objeto de verificar su identidad.
> *Please provide your ID card so that we can verify your identity.*

a tal fin / a tal efecto / con tal fin FORMAL

to this end / for this purpose

Refers back to a goal you've just mentioned and introduces the means to achieve it. A star essay connector.

> Queremos reducir el consumo de papel. A tal fin, todos los documentos serán digitales.
> *We want to reduce paper use. To this end, all documents will be digital.*

con la mira puesta en

with an eye on / with one's sights set on

Purpose with a strategic, long-term flavour. Very common in political and business journalism.

> El partido moderó su discurso con la mira puesta en las elecciones.
> *The party toned down its message with its sights set on the elections.*

Reformulating & summarising

To clarify, specify or condense what you've said.

a saber FORMAL

namely / that is

New meaning: before a list that specifies what you've just announced. (In conversation 'A saber' alone means 'Who knows'.)

> El informe señala tres problemas, a saber: la vivienda, el empleo y la sanidad.
> *The report highlights three problems, namely housing, employment and healthcare.*

en síntesis FORMAL

in short / in summary

Academic way to condense an argument, often at the end of a section.

> En síntesis, el estudio confirma la hipótesis inicial.
> *In short, the study confirms the initial hypothesis.*

recapitulando

to recap / to sum up

Signals a summary of the main points, especially in presentations and long texts.

> Recapitulando: tenemos el presupuesto, falta el equipo.
> *To recap: we have the budget, but we still need the team.*

dicho en plata COLLOQUIAL

to put it bluntly / in plain English

Reformulates in simple, direct, sometimes crude terms.

> La empresa 'optimiza recursos'; dicho en plata, despide gente.
> *The company is 'optimising resources'; to put it bluntly, it's firing people.*

Emphasising

To highlight a point or raise the intensity without shouting.

conviene subrayar que… FORMAL

it is worth stressing that…

Highlights a key point in a report or essay. Also 'conviene recordar / señalar que'.

> Conviene subrayar que los datos son provisionales.
> *It is worth stressing that the figures are provisional.*

máxime (cuando / si / + noun) FORMAL

especially (since) / all the more so (when)

Adds a reason that makes the previous statement even more valid.

> La decisión es incomprensible, máxime cuando había alternativas más baratas.
> *The decision is baffling, all the more so since there were cheaper alternatives.*

si cabe FORMAL

if anything / even (more), if that's possible

After a comparative, reinforces it: 'even more, if that's possible'.

> La segunda temporada es, si cabe, mejor que la primera.
> *The second season is, if anything, better than the first.*

por no decir

not to say / if not

Adds a stronger word you only half dare to say.

> Fue una reunión poco productiva, por no decir inútil.
> *It was an unproductive meeting, not to say a useless one.*

Structuring an essay or a talk

Signposts that guide the reader from introduction to conclusion.

en primer término FORMAL

first and foremost / in the first place

A formal 'en primer lugar'. Also means 'in the foreground' (of an image).

> En primer término, analizaremos las causas del problema.
> *First and foremost, we will analyse the causes of the problem.*

acto seguido FORMAL

immediately afterwards / straight after that

Narrative sequencing: the next action follows without a pause.

> El ministro leyó el comunicado y, acto seguido, abandonó la sala.
> *The minister read the statement and immediately afterwards left the room.*

llegados a este punto FORMAL

at this point / having got this far

Marks a turning point in an argument or presentation, before a key question or conclusion.

> Llegados a este punto, cabe preguntarse quién se beneficia realmente.
> *At this point, we must ask who really benefits.*

como se ha señalado (anteriormente) FORMAL

as noted above / as mentioned earlier

Refers back to a point already made in the text, without repeating it.

> Como se ha señalado, la muestra es demasiado pequeña.
> *As noted above, the sample is too small.*

dicho esto / dicho lo cual

having said that / that said

Closes one point and opens a nuance or a new idea, often a contrasting one.

> El hotel no era barato. Dicho esto, mereció la pena.
> *The hotel wasn't cheap. That said, it was worth it.*

en otro orden de cosas FORMAL

on another note / turning to other matters

Changes topic in a formal text, very typical of news bulletins and newsletters.

> En otro orden de cosas, la biblioteca ampliará su horario en verano.
> *On another note, the library will extend its opening hours in summer.*

por lo demás

apart from that / otherwise / for the rest

After mentioning a specific point (often a negative one), says how everything else is.

> Hubo un pequeño retraso; por lo demás, todo salió según lo previsto.
> *There was a slight delay; apart from that, everything went as planned.*

en último término FORMAL

ultimately / as a last resort

Points to the deepest cause or final responsibility, or to the last option available.

> En último término, la decisión corresponde a los ciudadanos.
> *Ultimately, the decision lies with the citizens.*

en última instancia FORMAL

ultimately / in the final analysis / as a last resort

Very close to 'en último término'. Originally legal (the last court of appeal).

> En última instancia, todo depende de la financiación.
> *In the final analysis, everything depends on funding.*

a modo de conclusión FORMAL

by way of conclusion / to conclude

Introduces the final paragraph of an essay or the closing words of a talk.

> A modo de conclusión, propongo tres medidas concretas.
> *By way of conclusion, I would like to propose three specific measures.*

Watch out

toda vez que ≠ every time

✗ *~~Toda vez que viene a Madrid~~, me llama.

✓ Cada vez que viene a Madrid, me llama.

'Toda vez que' is a formal causal connector (= since, given that). For 'every time' use 'cada vez que' or 'siempre que'.

› **No procede el reembolso, toda vez que el servicio se prestó correctamente.**
No refund is due, since the service was provided correctly.

conque · con que · con qué

✗ *~~Ya es tarde~~, con que vámonos.

✓ Ya es tarde, conque vámonos.

'Conque' (one word) = so (consequence). 'Con que' = with which / as long as ('Basta con que me avises'). 'Con qué' = with what (question).

› **Basta con que me mandes un mensaje.**
All you need to do is send me a message.

› **¿Con qué lo has pagado?**
What did you pay for it with?

REMEMBER If you can swap it for 'así que', write it as one word.

si bien takes the indicative

✗ *~~Si bien sea caro~~, merece la pena.

✓ Si bien es caro, merece la pena.

'Si bien' introduces a fact you concede, so it always takes the indicative. If you need a hypothetical 'even if', use 'aun cuando' or 'aunque' + subjunctive.

› **Si bien los datos son preliminares, la tendencia es clara.**
Although the data are preliminary, the trend is clear.

ONE CONNECTOR PER FUNCTION, PER PARAGRAPH

When you revise an essay, highlight every connector in a different colour by function. If you see the same colour three times in one paragraph, swap one for an alternative from this section. And match the register: 'por ende' in a formal report, 'conque' with friends, never the other way round.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

07 · The idioms and sayings that make educated Spanish sound alive

Useful expressions

At C1 the challenge is no longer understanding idioms but using them with the right timing and register. These expressions appear constantly in newspaper columns, meetings, political debates and long dinners with friends. Learn each one with its situation and its tone: some are elegant enough for a report, others belong only in the bar.

Facing problems head-on

Courage, determination and tough decisions: the language of people who get things done.

coger el toro por los cuernos

to take the bull by the horns

To face a difficult problem directly instead of avoiding it.

Spain & Latin America: Latin America: agarrar el toro por los cuernos (coger is avoided in many countries).

> Llevábamos meses aplazando la reestructuración, así que la nueva directora cogió el toro por los cuernos.
> *We'd been putting off the restructuring for months, so the new director took the bull by the horns.*

cortar por lo sano

to take drastic action / to cut your losses

To end a problem decisively and radically, even at a cost, before it gets worse.

> El proyecto no dejaba de perder dinero y decidimos cortar por lo sano.
> *The project kept losing money, so we decided to cut our losses.*

hacer de tripas corazón

to steel yourself / to pluck up the courage / to grin and bear it

To force yourself to do something unpleasant or painful. Literally 'to make a heart out of your guts'.

> Hice de tripas corazón y le conté a mi jefe que me había equivocado.
> *I steeled myself and told my boss I'd made a mistake.*

estar al pie del cañón

to be always at your post / to keep at it

For someone who keeps working, loyal and available, especially in hard times. Very positive.

> Con setenta años, mi padre sigue al pie del cañón en la farmacia.
> *At seventy, my father is still hard at work in the pharmacy every day.*

plantar cara a algo / a alguien

to stand up to something / someone

To resist or confront a person, a problem or an injustice.

> Fue la única que se atrevió a plantar cara al consejo de administración.
> *She was the only one who dared to stand up to the board.*

no dar su brazo a torcer

to refuse to back down / to stand your ground

To stay firm and not give in. Can be admiring or critical (stubborn).

> Le explicamos que estaba equivocado, pero no dio su brazo a torcer.
> *We explained he was wrong, but he wouldn't back down.*

contra viento y marea

against all odds / come hell or high water

Doing something despite every obstacle and opposition.

> Sacaron adelante la editorial contra viento y marea.
> *They kept the publishing house going against all odds.*

poner toda la carne en el asador

to go all out / to pull out all the stops

To use every resource and all your effort for one goal.

> Para la campaña de Navidad vamos a poner toda la carne en el asador.
> *We're going all out for the Christmas campaign.*

echar el resto INFORMAL

to give it everything you've got

To make a final, maximum effort.

> Queda una semana para la entrega: hay que echar el resto.
> *There's one week left until the deadline: we have to give it everything.*

sacarle a alguien las castañas del fuego

to get someone out of a mess / to bail someone out

To solve a problem that someone else created, often with a hint of complaint.

> **Siempre soy yo la que le saca las castañas del fuego a mi hermano.**
> *I'm always the one who gets my brother out of trouble.*

Evasion, caution & strategy

Meetings and politics are full of these. Knowing them helps you read between the lines.

nadar entre dos aguas

to sit on the fence / to play both sides

To avoid taking sides so as to keep everyone happy. Usually critical.

> **El partido lleva meses nadando entre dos aguas con el tema de la reforma.**
> *The party has been sitting on the fence about the reform for months.*

curarse en salud

to cover yourself / to play it safe

To take precautions in advance, especially to avoid being blamed later.

> **Me curé en salud y lo puse todo por escrito.**
> *I covered myself and put everything in writing.*

ponerse la venda antes de la herida

to worry about a problem before it exists / to cross that bridge before you come to it

To defend yourself or make excuses before anything has happened. Often said as advice: 'No te pongas la venda antes de la herida.'

> **Aún no has hecho la entrevista; no te pongas la venda antes de la herida.**
> *You haven't even had the interview yet; don't start worrying about failing.*

marear la perdiz INFORMAL

to beat around the bush / to drag things out

To waste time going round in circles without getting to the point or making a decision.

> **Deja de marear la perdiz y dime si aceptas o no.**
> *Stop beating around the bush and tell me whether you accept or not.*

rizar el rizo

to overcomplicate things / to go one better

Two uses: making something unnecessarily complicated, or (admiring) taking a difficult thing even further.

> **No rices el rizo: la solución más sencilla es la mejor. / Y para rizar el rizo, presentó el informe en tres idiomas.**
> *Don't overcomplicate it: the simplest solution is the best. / And to top it all, she presented the report in three languages.*

dar palos de ciego

to grope in the dark / to take shots in the dark

To act without information or method, trying things at random.

> **Sin datos fiables, el equipo de marketing está dando palos de ciego.**
> *Without reliable data, the marketing team is shooting in the dark.*

ver los toros desde la barrera

to watch from the sidelines

To observe a conflict or risky situation without getting involved — and often criticising.

> **Es muy fácil opinar viendo los toros desde la barrera.**
> *It's very easy to have opinions when you're watching from the sidelines.*

echar leña al fuego

to add fuel to the fire

To make a conflict or tense situation worse.

> **Su comentario en redes solo sirvió para echar leña al fuego.**
> *His comment on social media only added fuel to the fire.*

llevar el agua a su molino

to turn things to your own advantage / to steer things your way

To use any argument or situation for your own interest. Also 'arrimar el ascua a su sardina'.

> **Hable de lo que hable, siempre acaba llevando el agua a su molino.**
> *Whatever she's talking about, she always ends up steering it towards her own interests.*

hacerse el sueco INFORMAL

to play dumb / to pretend not to hear

To pretend you don't understand to avoid something.

> Le pedí que pagara su parte, pero se hizo el sueco.
> *I asked him to pay his share, but he played dumb.*

dorar la píldora

to sugar-coat something / to butter someone up

To present bad news nicely, or to flatter someone to get something.

> No me dores la píldora: ¿me vais a renovar el contrato o no?
> *Don't sugar-coat it: are you renewing my contract or not?*

andarse con pies de plomo

to tread carefully

To act with great caution in a delicate situation.

> Con este cliente hay que andarse con pies de plomo.
> *We need to tread very carefully with this client.*

tantear el terreno

to test the waters / to sound things out

To find out discreetly how people will react before acting.

> Antes de proponer la subida de precios, tanteamos el terreno con algunos clientes.
> *Before proposing the price rise, we tested the waters with a few clients.*

guardarse un as en la manga

to have an ace up your sleeve

To keep a hidden resource or argument for the right moment.

> Tranquila, todavía me guardo un as en la manga para la negociación.
> *Don't worry, I've still got an ace up my sleeve for the negotiation.*

salirse por la tangente

to sidestep the question / to change the subject

To avoid an awkward question by answering something else.

> Le pregunté por su sueldo y se salió por la tangente.
> *I asked about his salary and he sidestepped the question.*

tirar la piedra y esconder la mano

to stir up trouble and then act innocent

For people who cause damage secretly and then avoid responsibility.

> Es de los que tiran la piedra y esconden la mano: critica en privado y sonríe en las reuniones.
> *He's the type who stirs up trouble and then acts innocent: he criticises in private and smiles in meetings.*

Describing people & power

Sharp, vivid ways of describing character, influence and status.

ser de armas tomar

to be a force to be reckoned with / not someone to mess with

For a person with a strong, determined, sometimes intimidating character. Often admiring.

> Mi abuela era de armas tomar: nadie le llevaba la contraria.
> *My grandmother was a force to be reckoned with: nobody contradicted her.*

no casarse con nadie

to stay independent / to not take sides

To keep your own judgement, not bowing to any group or person.

> Es un periodista que no se casa con nadie; critica a todos por igual.
> *He's a journalist who doesn't take sides; he criticises everyone equally.*

llevar la voz cantante

to call the tune / to be the one in charge

To lead or dominate in a group, conversation or project.

> En las reuniones siempre lleva la voz cantante Diego.
> *Diego always does most of the talking and leading in meetings.*

tener don de gentes

to be a people person / to have a way with people

A natural talent for dealing with and charming people.

> Lucía tiene don de gentes; en una hora conoce a todo el mundo.
> *Lucía is a real people person; within an hour she knows everybody.*

bailarle el agua a alguien INFORMAL

to suck up to someone / to toady to someone

To flatter a powerful person, always agreeing with them.

> Se pasa el día bailándole el agua al director.
> *He spends all day sucking up to the director.*

ser una mosquita muerta COLLOQUIAL

to look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth

Someone who seems innocent and harmless but is actually cunning.

> Parece una mosquita muerta, pero cuidado con ella.
> *She looks like butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, but be careful with her.*

tener las espaldas cubiertas

to have your back covered / to be well protected

To have support, contacts or money that protect you from risk.

> Puede arriesgarse porque tiene las espaldas bien cubiertas.
> *He can take risks because he's well protected.*

How things are done

Adverbial phrases that add precision and colour to how you tell a story.

a pie juntillas

implicitly / blindly / to the letter

Almost always with 'creer(se)' or 'seguir': to believe or follow something without question.

> No te creas a pie juntillas todo lo que dicen los titulares.
> *Don't blindly believe everything the headlines say.*

de cabo a rabo

from start to finish / from cover to cover

Completely, from the first to the last detail.

> Me leí el contrato de cabo a rabo antes de firmar.
> *I read the contract from start to finish before signing.*

ni corto ni perezoso

without a second thought / without further ado

In stories, to say someone acted immediately and boldly.

> Le dijeron que no había entradas y, ni corto ni perezoso, llamó al director del teatro.
> *They told him there were no tickets and, without a second thought, he called the theatre director.*

a la chita callando INFORMAL

on the quiet / quietly, without anyone noticing

Doing something discreetly, often achieving more than expected.

> A la chita callando, ha montado una empresa con veinte empleados.
> *Quietly, without fuss, she's built a company with twenty employees.*

a bombo y platillo

with great fanfare

Announcing something with a lot of publicity — often ironic when the result disappoints.

> Anunciaron el plan a bombo y platillo, pero nunca se puso en marcha.
> *They announced the plan with great fanfare, but it never got off the ground.*

a marchas forzadas

against the clock / at breakneck speed

Working very fast under pressure to meet a deadline.

> Estamos terminando la obra a marchas forzadas.
> *We're finishing the building work against the clock.*

a quemarropa

point-blank

Literally for gunshots; figuratively for a direct, unexpected question.

> Me preguntó a quemarropa si pensaba dimitir.
> *She asked me point-blank whether I was going to resign.*

por activa y por pasiva

in every possible way / time and time again

When you've said or tried something in every way imaginable.

> Se lo he explicado por activa y por pasiva, y sigue sin entenderlo.
> *I've explained it to him every way I can, and he still doesn't get it.*

Images & metaphors for ideas

Ready-made noun phrases that columnists and speakers love. They make abstract arguments vivid.

el quid de la cuestión

the crux of the matter / the heart of the issue

The essential point of a problem. Elegant in speech and writing.

> El quid de la cuestión no es el precio, sino la confianza.
> *The crux of the matter isn't the price, it's trust.*

la otra cara de la moneda

the other side of the coin

To introduce the negative or opposite aspect of something.

> El turismo trae riqueza; la otra cara de la moneda es la subida de los alquileres.
> *Tourism brings wealth; the other side of the coin is rising rents.*

un arma de doble filo
a double-edged sword

Something that can help but also harm. Note: 'arma' is feminine but takes 'el/un': un arma, las armas.

> La fama es un arma de doble filo.
> *Fame is a double-edged sword.*

la punta del iceberg
the tip of the iceberg

A small visible part of a much bigger problem.

> Estos casos de fraude son solo la punta del iceberg.
> *These cases of fraud are just the tip of the iceberg.*

ser agua pasada
to be water under the bridge

A past problem or conflict that no longer matters.

> Discutimos hace años, pero eso ya es agua pasada.
> *We argued years ago, but that's water under the bridge now.*

poner algo en tela de juicio FORMAL
to call something into question / to cast doubt on something

Formal and very frequent in the press. Also 'estar en tela de juicio' = to be in question / under scrutiny.

> El informe pone en tela de juicio la eficacia del programa. / Su credibilidad está en tela de juicio.
> *The report calls the programme's effectiveness into question. / Her credibility is under scrutiny.*

el chivo expiatorio
the scapegoat

The person blamed for others' failures.

> Han convertido al becario en el chivo expiatorio.
> *They've made the intern the scapegoat.*

la pescadilla que se muerde la cola INFORMAL
a vicious circle / a chicken-and-egg situation

A situation where cause and effect feed each other endlessly.

> Sin experiencia no te contratan y sin contrato no tienes experiencia: es la pescadilla que se muerde la cola.
> *Without experience they won't hire you, and without a job you can't get experience: it's a vicious circle.*

la manzana de la discordia
the bone of contention

The issue that causes a dispute.

> La herencia fue la manzana de la discordia entre los hermanos.
> *The inheritance was the bone of contention between the siblings.*

el caballo de batalla
the main battle / someone's hobby horse

The central issue someone keeps fighting for, or the main sticking point.

> La vivienda se ha convertido en el caballo de batalla de la oposición.
> *Housing has become the opposition's main battleground.*

el pan nuestro de cada día
an everyday occurrence / par for the course

Something (usually negative) that happens all the time.

> Los retrasos en esta línea de tren son el pan nuestro de cada día.
> *Delays on this train line are an everyday occurrence.*

abrir la caja de Pandora
to open Pandora's box / to open a can of worms

To start something that will unleash many unforeseen problems.

> Revisar todos los contratos antiguos sería abrir la caja de Pandora.
> *Reviewing all the old contracts would be opening a can of worms.*

ser papel mojado
to be not worth the paper it's written on

An agreement or law that nobody respects or applies.

> Si nadie lo controla, el acuerdo será papel mojado.
> *If nobody monitors it, the agreement won't be worth the paper it's written on.*

borrón y cuenta nueva
a clean slate / let bygones be bygones

To forget past problems and start again.

> Lo hablamos y decidimos hacer borrón y cuenta nueva.
> *We talked it over and decided to wipe the slate clean.*

Polished set phrases

Small formulas that give your speech and writing an educated, articulate touch.

a tenor de lo expuesto FORMAL

in light of the above / given what has been said

Very formal: reports, legal texts, conclusions of academic papers.

> A tenor de lo expuesto, se recomienda revisar el presupuesto.
> *In light of the above, a review of the budget is recommended.*

huelga decir que... FORMAL

needless to say...

Formal and elegant; 'ni que decir tiene que' is the more conversational version.

> Huelga decir que la información es confidencial.
> *Needless to say, the information is confidential.*

dicho sea de paso

incidentally / by the way

To slip in a side comment, often a slightly critical one.

> La reunión, dicho sea de paso, empezó cuarenta minutos tarde.
> *The meeting, incidentally, started forty minutes late.*

salvando las distancias

allowing for the differences / to make a loose comparison

When comparing things of very different scale.

> Salvando las distancias, nuestra academia funciona como una pequeña universidad.
> *Allowing for the differences, our school works like a small university.*

como no podía ser de otra manera

as was only to be expected / naturally

For something logical or inevitable, sometimes ironic.

> Como no podía ser de otra manera, la fiesta terminó con paella.
> *Naturally, the party ended with paella.*

Sayings worth knowing

Refranes are still very alive, often just half-quoted: Spaniards say 'Dime con quién andas...' and let you finish it.

A buen entendedor, pocas palabras bastan.

A word to the wise (is enough).

To hint that you don't need to spell things out. Often shortened to 'A buen entendedor...'.

> Dijo que «revisaría su futuro en la empresa». A buen entendedor...
> *He said he'd 'review his future at the company'. A word to the wise...*

No hay mal que por bien no venga.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

Something bad led to something good.

> Perdí el vuelo y conocí a mi socia en el aeropuerto. No hay mal que por bien no venga.
> *I missed my flight and met my business partner at the airport. Every cloud has a silver lining.*

Más vale prevenir que curar.

Better safe than sorry. / Prevention is better than cure.

To justify a precaution.

> Haz una copia de seguridad; más vale prevenir que curar.
> *Make a backup; better safe than sorry.*

Quien mucho abarca, poco aprieta.

Jack of all trades, master of none. / Don't bite off more than you can chew.

When someone takes on too much and does nothing well.

> Quieres hacer tres másteres a la vez... Quien mucho abarca, poco aprieta.
> *You want to do three master's degrees at once... Don't bite off more than you can chew.*

Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres.

You are known by the company you keep. / Birds of a feather flock together.

People are judged by the friends they choose.

> Tantos amigos polémicos... ya sabes: dime con quién andas...
> *So many controversial friends... you know what they say about the company you keep.*

Del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho.

Easier said than done.

There's a long way between promising and doing.

> Prometen bajar los impuestos, pero del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho.
> *They promise to cut taxes, but that's easier said than done.*

Cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos.
Bite the hand that feeds you.
When someone you helped turns against you.

> Le enseñé todo lo que sabe y ahora me hace la competencia. Cría cuervos...
> *I taught him everything he knows and now he's competing with me. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you...*

En casa del herrero, cuchillo de palo.
The shoemaker's children go barefoot.
When an expert neglects their own speciality at home.

> Es diseñadora web y su propia web está fatal. En casa del herrero...
> *She's a web designer and her own website is a mess. The shoemaker's children go barefoot.*

A río revuelto, ganancia de pescadores.
Some people profit from chaos.
Opportunists take advantage of confusion and crisis.

> Con la crisis, han aparecido muchos especuladores: a río revuelto...
> *With the crisis, lots of speculators have appeared: chaos is always good for someone.*

Quien calla, otorga.
Silence implies consent.
If you don't object, it's understood you agree.

> Nadie dijo nada en la reunión, así que lo aprobamos. Quien calla, otorga.
> *Nobody said anything in the meeting, so we approved it. Silence implies consent.*

Hecha la ley, hecha la trampa.
Every law has its loophole.
As soon as a rule exists, someone finds a way round it.

> Ya hay empresas que esquivan la nueva normativa. Hecha la ley, hecha la trampa.
> *Some companies are already getting round the new rules. Every law has its loophole.*

Cada maestrillo tiene su librillo.
Everyone has their own way of doing things.
To accept that different people use different methods.

> Yo planifico las clases de otra manera, pero cada maestrillo tiene su librillo.
> *I plan my lessons differently, but everyone has their own way of doing things.*

No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano.
You can't hurry nature. / Things take the time they take.
Rushing or starting early won't speed up what has its own timing.

> Tranquilo con los resultados; no por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano.
> *Relax about the results; some things simply can't be rushed.*

Obras son amores, y no buenas razones.
Actions speak louder than words.
What counts is what people do, not what they say.

> Mucho hablar de igualdad, pero obras son amores...
> *Lots of talk about equality, but actions speak louder than words...*

USE THEM LIKE SALT

One well-placed idiom per conversation sounds brilliant; five sounds like a textbook. Pick ten from this section that match your personality and the situations you're really in, and use them until they feel like yours. Pay special attention to register: 'poner en tela de juicio' works in a report, 'marear la perdiz' doesn't.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

08 · From the boardroom to the bar: speaking like someone who belongs there

Conversation vocabulary

At C1 you need two very different voices: the polished, diplomatic Spanish of meetings, negotiations and presentations, and the relaxed, ironic Spanish of native conversation. This section gives you both. Notice how much of advanced Spanish is about softening, implying and understating rather than saying things directly.

Meetings: taking the floor

In formal meetings Spaniards often use 'usted/ustedes' with external partners and 'tú' internally. These phrases work with both — just adjust the verb.

Si me permiten... FORMAL

If I may... / If you'll allow me...

To take the floor politely in a formal meeting. With one person: 'Si me permite...'.

> Si me permiten, me gustaría aportar un dato que puede ser relevante.
> *If I may, I'd like to add a piece of information that might be relevant.*

Si me permite un inciso... FORMAL

If I could just add something here... / Just a quick aside...

To briefly interrupt with a side comment, then hand the floor back.

> Si me permite un inciso, esas cifras son del año pasado.
> *If I could just add something here, those figures are from last year.*

Quisiera hacer una puntualización. FORMAL

I'd like to clarify one point. / I'd like to make a small correction.

To correct or qualify something precisely and politely. Very common in formal debate.

> Quisiera hacer una puntualización: el contrato no vence en marzo, sino en abril.
> *I'd like to clarify one point: the contract doesn't expire in March, but in April.*

Disculpe que le interrumpa, pero...

Sorry to interrupt, but...

Polite interruption. With 'tú': 'Perdona que te interrumpa'. Note the subjunctive.

> Disculpe que le interrumpa, pero tenemos que terminar en diez minutos.
> *Sorry to interrupt, but we need to finish in ten minutes.*

Permítame terminar, por favor. FORMAL

Please let me finish.

Firm but polite when you're being interrupted.

> Permítame terminar, por favor, y luego le escucho con mucho gusto.
> *Please let me finish, and then I'll be happy to hear what you have to say.*

Por alusiones...

Since I've been mentioned... / If I may respond, since my name came up...

From parliamentary language: to ask for the floor because someone has referred to you. Also used jokingly among friends.

> Por alusiones: no fui yo quien perdió el informe.
> *Since my name came up: I wasn't the one who lost the report.*

Volviendo al tema que nos ocupa... FORMAL

Getting back to the matter at hand...

To bring a meeting back on track after a digression.

> Volviendo al tema que nos ocupa, ¿qué presupuesto tenemos?
> *Getting back to the matter at hand, what budget do we have?*

Que conste que...

Let it be noted that... / Just for the record...

To make sure a statement is remembered or recorded. Formal version: 'Que conste en acta que...' (for the minutes).

> Que conste que yo ya avisé de este riesgo en junio.
> *Just for the record, I warned about this risk back in June.*

Pasemos al siguiente punto. FORMAL

Let's move on to the next item.

Chairing a meeting.

> Si no hay más comentarios, pasemos al siguiente punto.
> *If there are no further comments, let's move on to the next item.*

Me gustaría que constara mi desacuerdo. FORMAL
I'd like my disagreement to be noted.
To formally register an objection without blocking a decision.

> Acepto la decisión de la mayoría, pero me gustaría que constara mi desacuerdo.
> *I accept the majority decision, but I'd like my disagreement to be noted.*

Negotiating & disagreeing diplomatically

Spanish professional culture values warmth, but disagreement is softened with conditionals, 'me temo que' and recognising the other side first.

Con todos mis respetos, ...
With all due respect, ...
Introduces a strong disagreement. As in English, it often signals that criticism is coming.

> Con todos mis respetos, creo que esa cifra no es realista.
> *With all due respect, I don't think that figure is realistic.*

Entiendo su postura; no obstante... FORMAL
I understand your position; however...
Classic diplomatic structure: acknowledge, then counter.

> Entiendo su postura; no obstante, no podemos asumir ese coste.
> *I understand your position; however, we can't take on that cost.*

Lamento discrepar. FORMAL
I'm afraid I have to disagree.
Very polite, formal disagreement. 'Discrepar' is more elegant than 'no estar de acuerdo'.

> Lamento discrepar, pero los datos apuntan en otra dirección.
> *I'm afraid I have to disagree, but the data point in a different direction.*

Yo no lo plantearía en esos términos.
I wouldn't put it quite like that.
A soft way to reject someone's framing of a problem.

> Yo no lo plantearía en esos términos; no es un fracaso, es un retraso.
> *I wouldn't put it quite like that; it's not a failure, it's a delay.*

No acabo de ver...
I'm not quite convinced by... / I don't quite see...
A subtle way of expressing doubt: 'no acabo de + infinitive' = not quite.

> No acabo de ver claro cómo vamos a financiarlo.
> *I'm not quite sure how we're going to fund it.*

Sería conveniente + infinitivo / que + subjuntivo FORMAL
It would be advisable to... / It might be a good idea to...
A soft, formal recommendation.

> Sería conveniente que revisáramos las cláusulas antes de firmar.
> *It would be advisable for us to review the clauses before signing.*

Propongo que + subjuntivo
I propose that... / I suggest we...
A clear, constructive proposal. Remember the subjunctive.

> Propongo que dividamos el proyecto en dos fases.
> *I suggest we split the project into two phases.*

¿Podríamos llegar a un punto intermedio?
Could we meet halfway? / Could we find a middle ground?
To open the door to compromise.

> Ustedes piden un 20 % y nosotros ofrecemos un 10 %. ¿Podríamos llegar a un punto intermedio?
> *You're asking for 20% and we're offering 10%. Could we meet halfway?*

Estamos dispuestos a ceder en..., siempre que...
We're willing to give ground on..., provided that...
A conditional concession — the basis of any negotiation.

> Estamos dispuestos a ceder en el plazo, siempre que se mantenga el precio.
> *We're willing to be flexible on the deadline, provided the price stays the same.*

Eso no es negociable.
That's non-negotiable.
To mark a red line clearly.

> Podemos hablar de todo, pero la calidad no es negociable.
> *We can discuss anything, but quality is non-negotiable.*

Lo que está sobre la mesa es...
What's on the table is...
To summarise the current offer or issue.

> Lo que está sobre la mesa es una prórroga de seis meses.
> *What's on the table is a six-month extension.*

Dejemos esto por escrito.
Let's put this in writing.
To formalise an agreement and avoid misunderstandings.

> Me parece bien. Dejemos esto por escrito y lo firmamos el lunes.
> *That works for me. Let's put it in writing and sign it on Monday.*

Habría que darle una vuelta. INFORMAL
We'd need to give it some more thought.
Polite way to delay a decision — often a soft 'no' for now.

> La idea es interesante, pero habría que darle una vuelta.
> *The idea is interesting, but we'd need to give it some more thought.*

Lo consulto con mi equipo y le digo algo.
I'll check with my team and get back to you.
To avoid committing on the spot.

> Lo consulto con mi equipo y le digo algo antes del viernes.
> *I'll check with my team and get back to you before Friday.*

No descartamos... FORMAL
We're not ruling out...
Leaves an option open without promising it. Very common in official statements.

> No descartamos abrir una oficina en México el año que viene.
> *We're not ruling out opening an office in Mexico next year.*

En principio, nos parece razonable.
In principle, it seems reasonable to us.
Cautious acceptance: 'en principio' leaves room to change your mind.

> En principio, nos parece razonable, pero tenemos que ver la letra pequeña.
> *In principle it seems reasonable, but we need to look at the small print.*

¿Cómo lo ve usted?
How do you see it? / What's your view?
To invite the other side's opinion and build rapport.

> Nosotros proponemos empezar en enero. ¿Cómo lo ve usted?
> *We suggest starting in January. How do you see it?*

Presentations & public speaking

Signposting phrases that guide your audience through a talk, a webinar or a conference paper.

Gracias a todos por estar aquí.
Thank you all for being here.
Standard opening. More formal: 'Agradezco su presencia'.

> Buenos días y gracias a todos por estar aquí hoy.
> *Good morning, and thank you all for being here today.*

Mi intervención se divide en tres partes.
My talk is divided into three parts.
To outline structure. 'Intervención' = talk, contribution, speech.

> Mi intervención se divide en tres partes: contexto, resultados y propuestas.
> *My talk is divided into three parts: background, results and proposals.*

Como verán a continuación... FORMAL
As you'll see next...
To announce what's coming. 'A continuación' = next, below.

> Como verán a continuación, las ventas se han duplicado.
> *As you'll see in a moment, sales have doubled.*

Me gustaría detenerme en...
I'd like to dwell on... / I'd like to focus for a moment on...
To spend time on an important point.

> Me gustaría detenerme en este dato, porque es clave.
> *I'd like to dwell on this figure for a moment, because it's key.*

Para ilustrar este punto...
To illustrate this point...
To introduce an example or anecdote.

> Para ilustrar este punto, les voy a contar un caso real.
> *To illustrate this point, I'm going to tell you about a real case.*

Si se fijan en este gráfico...
If you look at this chart...
To direct attention to a visual.

> Si se fijan en este gráfico, verán una caída clara en 2023.
> *If you look at this chart, you'll see a clear drop in 2023.*

Esto nos lleva a...
This brings us to...
Smooth transition between parts.

> Esto nos lleva a la segunda cuestión: la financiación.
> *This brings us to the second question: funding.*

Como decía hace un momento...
As I was saying a moment ago...
To refer back and reinforce a point.

> Como decía hace un momento, el problema no es técnico.
> *As I was saying a moment ago, the problem isn't technical.*

Antes de cerrar...
Before I finish... / Before closing...
Signals the end is near and recovers attention.

> Antes de cerrar, quisiera agradecer el trabajo de todo el equipo.
> *Before I finish, I'd like to thank the whole team for their work.*

Para ir terminando...
To start wrapping up...
Less formal than 'para concluir'; very natural in talks and classes.

> Para ir terminando, les dejo tres ideas clave.
> *To start wrapping up, I'll leave you with three key ideas.*

Quedo a su disposición para cualquier pregunta.
FORMAL
I'm happy to take any questions.
Formal closing, also used at the end of emails.

> Muchas gracias por su atención. Quedo a su disposición para cualquier pregunta.
> *Thank you very much for your attention. I'm happy to take any questions.*

Es una muy buena pregunta.
That's a very good question.
To buy a second to think — exactly as in English.

> Es una muy buena pregunta, y la respuesta corta es que todavía no lo sabemos.
> *That's a very good question, and the short answer is that we don't know yet.*

Si les parece, lo dejamos para el turno de preguntas.
If that's all right, let's leave that for the Q&A.
To postpone an interruption politely. 'Turno de preguntas' = question time.

> Interesante. Si les parece, lo dejamos para el turno de preguntas.
> *Interesting. If that's all right, we'll come back to it in the Q&A.*

Softening & hedging

Native speakers constantly cushion what they say. These small phrases make you sound more nuanced and less blunt.

Tampoco es que + subjuntivo
It's not as if... / It's not exactly that...
To downplay something. Note the subjunctive.

> Tampoco es que sea un drama; solo es un retraso.
> *It's not as if it's a disaster; it's just a delay.*

No es nada personal.
It's nothing personal.
To soften criticism or rejection.

> No es nada personal, pero buscamos otro perfil.
> *It's nothing personal, but we're looking for a different profile.*

Te lo digo con la mejor intención.
I mean this in the nicest possible way.
Before honest feedback a friend might not like.

> Te lo digo con la mejor intención: ese correo suena un poco agresivo.
> *I mean this in the nicest possible way: that email sounds a bit aggressive.*

Me da la sensación de que...
I get the feeling that...
Opinion based on impression, less direct than 'creo que'.

> Me da la sensación de que nadie ha leído el documento.
> *I get the feeling nobody has read the document.*

Rhetorical questions & persuasive tricks

Native conversation is full of questions that aren't really questions. Recognising them is half of understanding Spaniards.

¿Y qué me dices de...? INFORMAL

And what about...? / And how about...?

To bring up a counterexample or new point, often challenging.

> Vale, el piso es caro. ¿Y qué me dices de la ubicación?
> *OK, the flat's expensive. But what about the location?*

No es por nada, pero... INFORMAL

I'm just saying, but... / Not to be funny, but...

Introduces a criticism or a boast while pretending it's innocent.

> No es por nada, pero yo ya te dije que no era buena idea.
> *I'm just saying, but I did tell you it wasn't a good idea.*

Ya me dirás. INFORMAL

Let me know what you think. / You tell me! / Go figure.

Two uses: inviting feedback ('ya me dirás qué te parece'), or ironically, 'well, you can imagine!'

> Cuarenta grados y sin aire acondicionado... ya me dirás.
> *Forty degrees and no air conditioning... you can imagine.*

¿A que sí? / ¿A que no...? INFORMAL

Isn't it? / Right? / I bet you...

Seeks agreement ('¿A que es precioso?') or makes a challenge ('¿A que no te atreves?').

> Está buenísimo, ¿a que sí? / ¿A que no sabes a quién he visto?
> *It's delicious, isn't it? / Guess who I saw!*

¿Qué quieres que te diga? INFORMAL

What can I say? / What do you want me to say?

Resignation or frankness before an uncomfortable truth.

> ¿Qué quieres que te diga? A mí no me convence.
> *What can I say? I'm not convinced.*

¿Quién lo iba a decir?

Who would have thought it?

Surprise at an unexpected outcome.

> Javi, dirigiendo una empresa de cuarenta personas. ¿Quién lo iba a decir?
> *Javi, running a company of forty people. Who would have thought it?*

¡Anda que no...! COLLOQUIAL

Boy, did we...! / You bet...!

Emphatic: means the opposite of its negative form. '¡Anda que no nos reímos!' = We laughed so much!

> ¡Anda que no ha cambiado el barrio!
> *Boy, has the neighbourhood changed!*

Como lo oyes. INFORMAL

You heard me. / Believe it or not.

To confirm surprising news.

> —¿Que se ha ido a vivir a Islandia? —Como lo oyes.
> *"She's moved to Iceland?" "You heard me."*

¿Tú te crees? COLLOQUIAL

Can you believe it?

Indignation or amazement when telling a story.

> Me cobraron cinco euros por un café. ¿Tú te crees?
> *They charged me five euros for a coffee. Can you believe it?*

Irony & understatement

Spanish irony is often in the tone. These phrases say less (or the opposite) of what they mean.

No está nada mal.

It's not bad at all. / It's actually really good.

Understatement for genuine praise.

> Tu español no está nada mal, ¿eh?
> *Your Spanish is actually really good, you know.*

No es precisamente barato.

It's not exactly cheap.

'No... precisamente' = polite way of saying 'quite the opposite'.

> El restaurante es excelente, pero no es precisamente barato.
> *The restaurant is excellent, but it's not exactly cheap.*

No es que sea un genio, pero...

He's no genius, but...

Mild criticism followed by a positive point.

> No es que sea un genio, pero es muy trabajador.
> *He's no genius, but he's very hard-working.*

¡Pues sí que empezamos bien! INFORMAL

Well, that's a great start! (ironic)

When something goes wrong right at the beginning.

> Se ha ido la luz a los cinco minutos. ¡Pues sí que empezamos bien!
> *The power went off after five minutes. Well, that's a great start!*

¡Lo que faltaba! INFORMAL
That's all we needed! / Just what I needed!
Ironic reaction to the last straw.

> ¿Ahora llueve? ¡Lo que faltaba!
> *Now it's raining? That's all we needed!*

¡Menudo/a + sustantivo! INFORMAL
What a...! / Some...!
Can be positive or (very often) ironic. '¡Menudo día!' = What a day!

> ¡Menuda reunión! Tres horas para no decidir nada.
> *Some meeting that was! Three hours to decide nothing.*

Tiene su aquel. COLLOQUIAL
It has a certain something. / It has its tricky side.
Vague, playful: something has a special charm or difficulty.

> Hacer una buena tortilla tiene su aquel.
> *Making a good tortilla is trickier than it looks.*

Native fillers & reactions

The glue of real conversation. Overuse them and you'll sound odd; use none and you'll sound like a textbook.

pues eso COLLOQUIAL
so yeah / anyway, that's it
To close a story or bring it back to the main point.

> Y nada, que al final no vino. Pues eso.
> *So anyway, in the end he didn't come. So yeah.*

a ver cómo te lo explico INFORMAL
how can I put this
Buying time before explaining something tricky or delicate.

> A ver cómo te lo explico... no es que no me guste, es que no me convence.
> *How can I put this... it's not that I don't like it, it just doesn't convince me.*

lo que viene siendo VERY COLLOQUIAL
what you'd call / basically
Trendy, slightly humorous filler before a noun. Don't use it in formal settings.

> Esto es lo que viene siendo una chapuza.
> *This is what you'd call a botch job.*

en fin
anyway / oh well
Resignation, or to change the subject after a complaint.

> En fin, ¿qué le vamos a hacer?
> *Oh well, what can we do?*

vamos, que... COLLOQUIAL
in other words... / basically...
To sum up bluntly what you really mean.

> Dice que está muy ocupado. Vamos, que no quiere venir.
> *He says he's very busy. In other words, he doesn't want to come.*

y tal VERY COLLOQUIAL
and stuff / and all that
Vague ending to a list.

> Fuimos a la playa, comimos y tal.
> *We went to the beach, had lunch and all that.*

¡Manda narices! COLLOQUIAL
Would you believe it! / Unbelievable!
Indignation. Milder than the vulgar versions.

> ¡Manda narices! Me han vuelto a cobrar la misma factura.
> *Unbelievable! They've charged me for the same bill again.*

¡Hasta ahí podíamos llegar! COLLOQUIAL
That's going too far! / That's the limit!
To firmly reject something unacceptable.

> ¿Que trabaje gratis los sábados? ¡Hasta ahí podíamos llegar!
> *Work Saturdays for free? That's going too far!*

¡Lo que hay que oír! COLLOQUIAL
The things you hear! / I can't believe what I'm hearing!
Disbelief at something absurd someone has said.

> ¿Que el cambio climático es un invento? ¡Lo que hay que oír!
> *Climate change is made up? The things you hear!*

¡No te digo más! COLLOQUIAL
Need I say more? / Say no more!
When the detail you've just given says everything.

> Llegó con tres horas de retraso y sin disculparse. ¡No te digo más!
> *He arrived three hours late without apologising. Need I say more?*

Ni tanto ni tan calvo. COLLOQUIAL

Let's not go to extremes. / There's a happy medium.

To reject an exaggeration in either direction.

> —Es un desastre total. —Hombre, ni tanto ni tan calvo.
> *"It's a total disaster." "Come on, let's not exaggerate."*

TWO REGISTERS, ONE SPEAKER

Real C1 fluency is switching registers without effort. Practise the same idea twice: 'Sería conveniente revisar el plazo' in a meeting, 'Habría que darle una vuelta al plazo, ¿no?' with a colleague over coffee. Record yourself doing both and listen for the change in rhythm and tone.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

09 · The structures that separate fluent from truly advanced

Common constructions

These are the patterns that native speakers use without thinking and learners almost never produce: compact conditions, concessions with reduplicated subjunctives, emphatic structures and the impersonal formulas of formal writing. Learn each one as a frame, then fill it with your own content until it comes out naturally.

Conditions, compact and elegant

Alternatives to 'si' that sound natural and sophisticated.

de + infinitivo (simple o compuesto)

if... / had I...

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **De + infinitive (present/future condition) · De + haber + participle (past, unreal condition)**

A compact condition that replaces a 'si' clause. The compound infinitive is the elegant way to talk about unreal past conditions — like English 'Had I known...'.

de + infinitivo compuesto — *unreal past condition (= si hubiera...)*

› De haberlo sabido, no habría venido.
Had I known, I wouldn't have come.

de + infinitivo simple — *possible or hypothetical condition (= si...)*

› De seguir así, cerraremos el año con pérdidas.
If things carry on like this, we'll end the year at a loss.

NOTE Very common in both speech and writing; it sounds natural, not stiff.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*De haber sabido lo~~ → ✓ De haberlo sabido. Pronouns attach to 'haber', not to the participle.

como + subjuntivo

if... (warning or threat)

EXPRESSION INFORMAL C1

PATTERN **Como + present subjunctive, + future / imperative**

A condition with a tone of warning, threat or fear. Much more expressive than 'si'. Don't confuse it with 'como' + indicative (= since/because).

› Como no me llames esta noche, me enfado.
If you don't call me tonight, I'll be cross.

› Como sigan subiendo los precios, no vamos a poder irnos de vacaciones.
If prices keep going up, we won't be able to go on holiday.

DON'T CONFUSE Como llegó tarde, no entró (indicative = cause: 'since he arrived late'). Como llegue tarde, no entra (subjunctive = condition: 'if he arrives late').

a poco que + subjuntivo

if you just… / with the slightest…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **A poco que + subjunctive, + result**

A minimal condition: the result follows with very little effort. Implies 'it's easy'.

› A poco que estudies, aprobarás sin problema.
If you put in even a little study, you'll pass easily.

› A poco que te fijes, verás que el texto está lleno de errores.
If you look even slightly closely, you'll see the text is full of mistakes.

siempre que / siempre y cuando + subjuntivo

provided that / as long as

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **siempre que + subjunctive (condition) · siempre que + indicative (= every time)**

With the subjunctive it's a restrictive condition ('only if'). 'Siempre y cuando' is more emphatic and only conditional. With indicative, 'siempre que' means 'whenever'.

+ subjuntivo = condition — *provided that*

› Puedes trabajar desde casa siempre que cumplas los plazos.
You can work from home as long as you meet the deadlines.

+ indicativo = time — *whenever*

› Siempre que viene a Madrid, cenamos juntos.
Whenever he comes to Madrid, we have dinner together.

COMMON MISTAKE The mood changes the meaning completely. ✗ ~~*Te ayudo siempre y cuando me lo pides~~ → ✓ siempre y cuando me lo pidas.

de no ser por…

if it weren't for… / if it hadn't been for…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **De no ser por + noun / pronoun · De no haber sido por… (past)**

Expresses that something or someone was decisive in preventing or allowing a result.

› De no ser por mi hermana, nunca habría estudiado en el extranjero.
If it hadn't been for my sister, I'd never have studied abroad.

› De no ser por el tráfico, llegaríamos en veinte minutos.
If it weren't for the traffic, we'd get there in twenty minutes.

DON'T CONFUSE Spoken alternative: 'Si no llega a ser por…' (very common): Si no llega a ser por ti, me pierdo.

en caso de + infinitivo / en caso de que + subjuntivo

in case of / in the event that / should…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **En caso de + noun / infinitive · En caso de que + subjunctive**

A formal condition, typical of instructions, contracts and official notices. Spanish 'en caso de' is conditional (if it happens), not precautionary like English 'just in case' (= por si).

› En caso de no poder asistir, le rogamos que nos avise.
Should you be unable to attend, please let us know.

› En caso de que el vuelo se cancele, se le reembolsará el importe.
In the event that the flight is cancelled, you will be refunded.

COMMON MISTAKE English 'Take an umbrella in case it rains' → ✓ Llévate un paraguas por si llueve (not ~~*en caso de que llueva in casual speech~~).

dado el caso

if it came to that / should the need arise

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **dado el caso, + conditional / future**

Refers back to a hypothetical situation just mentioned. Also 'llegado el caso'.

› No creo que haga falta, pero, dado el caso, podríamos contratar a alguien.
I don't think it'll be necessary, but if it came to that, we could hire someone.

Concession: whatever, however, no matter what

Spanish expresses 'no matter what' with repeated subjunctives and intensifying structures. Very idiomatic and very C1.

por + adjetivo/adverbio + que + subjuntivo

however (+ adj/adv)... / no matter how...

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **Por (muy) + adj/adv + que + subjunctive · Por mucho/más que + subjunctive · Por mucho/a + noun + que...**

Strong concession: whatever the degree, the result doesn't change. Use the subjunctive for hypothetical or general cases; indicative only for facts you stress as real.

- Por muy inteligente que sea, no puede hacerlo todo solo.
  However clever he is, he can't do everything on his own.
- Por mucho que insistas, no voy a cambiar de opinión.
  No matter how much you insist, I'm not going to change my mind.
- Por más vueltas que le doy, no lo entiendo.
  However much I think about it, I just don't get it.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Por mucho que insistes (when it'~~s general/hypothetical) → ✓ Por mucho que insistas.

digan lo que digan · pase lo que pase · fuera lo que fuera

whatever they say · whatever happens · whatever it was

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **Subjunctive + lo que / donde / como / cuando + same subjunctive**

The reduplicated subjunctive: 'no matter what/where/how'. Present subjunctive for present/future, imperfect subjunctive for the past.

- Pase lo que pase, te apoyaré.
  Whatever happens, I'll support you.
- Digan lo que digan, fue la decisión correcta.
  Whatever people say, it was the right decision.
- Fuera lo que fuera lo que vio, le cambió la cara.
  Whatever it was she saw, her face changed.
- Vayas donde vayas, llévate el pasaporte.
  Wherever you go, take your passport.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sea como sea** *be that as it may / one way or another* · **cueste lo que cueste** *whatever it takes / at any cost* · **hagas lo que hagas** *whatever you do*

quieras o no

like it or not / whether you like it or not

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **subjunctive + o no**

Concession between two options: the result is the same either way.

› Quieras o no, la reunión es obligatoria.
Like it or not, the meeting is compulsory.

› Lo sepa o no, está incumpliendo la normativa.
Whether he knows it or not, he's breaking the rules.

sea… sea / ya sea… ya sea / ya sea… o…

whether… or… / be it… or…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **(ya) sea + noun / adj… (ya) sea / o + noun / adj**

Presents alternatives that make no difference to the main statement. Elegant in writing.

› Puede pagar con cualquier método, ya sea en efectivo o con tarjeta.
You can pay any way you like, whether in cash or by card.

› Cualquier cambio, sea grande o pequeño, debe comunicarse por escrito.
Any change, whether big or small, must be communicated in writing.

con lo + adj/adv + que + verbo

considering how… / for all that…

EXPRESSION INFORMAL C1

PATTERN **Con lo + adj/adv + que + indicative · Con lo que + verb · Con todo lo que…**

Expressive concession or surprise: 'given how X someone/something is'. The result often contrasts with what you'd expect, or the sentence is left hanging.

› Con lo listo que es, no entiendo cómo ha suspendido.
Considering how smart he is, I don't understand how he failed.

› ¡Con lo que me costó convencerla, y ahora cambia de idea!
After all the effort it took me to convince her, and now she changes her mind!

› Con lo bien que estábamos aquí…
And we were having such a good time here…

NOTE Agreement: 'Con lo lista que es' — 'lo' is invariable, but the adjective agrees.

no por ello…

that doesn't mean… / it is not for that reason that…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **no por ello / no por eso + verb · no por + infinitive + verb**

Denies a logical consequence: X is true, but Y doesn't automatically follow.

› Es un proyecto arriesgado, pero no por ello debemos renunciar.
It's a risky project, but that's no reason to give up.

› No por repetirlo más veces vas a tener más razón.
Saying it more times won't make you any more right.

Emphasis, purpose & attitude

Structures that add emotion, precision or a personal stance to what you say.

ni que + imperfecto de subjuntivo

as if… / anyone would think…

EXPRESSION INFORMAL C1

PATTERN **¡Ni que + imperfect (or pluperfect) subjunctive!**

An exclamation of irritated or ironic disbelief at someone's attitude.

› ¡Ni que fuera el dueño de la empresa!
Anyone would think he owned the company!

› ¡Qué cara de cansado! Ni que hubieras corrido una maratón.
You look so tired! Anyone would think you'd run a marathon.

no sea que / no vaya a ser que + subjuntivo

in case… / so that… doesn't…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **main clause, no sea que / no vaya a ser que + present or imperfect subjunctive**

Precaution: you do something to avoid a possible negative outcome. Very natural in speech.

› Sal antes, no vaya a ser que haya atasco.
Leave earlier, in case there's a traffic jam.

› Lo guardé en la nube, no fuera que se perdiera.
I saved it in the cloud, in case it got lost.

lejos de + infinitivo

far from…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **Lejos de + infinitive, + opposite result**

The opposite of what was expected happened. Formal and very common in journalism.

› Lejos de solucionar el problema, la medida lo ha agravado.
Far from solving the problem, the measure has made it worse.

so pretexto de / con el pretexto de

under the pretext of / on the pretext of

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **so pretexto de + noun / infinitive · so pretexto de que + verb**

'So' (= bajo) survives only in a few fixed formal expressions: so pretexto de, so pena de. 'Con el pretexto de' is the everyday version.

› So pretexto de modernizar la empresa, despidieron a la mitad de la plantilla.
Under the pretext of modernising the company, they laid off half the staff.

› Me llamó con el pretexto de pedirme un libro.
He called me on the pretext of borrowing a book.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **so pena de** *on pain of / under penalty of*

a fuerza de + infinitivo

by dint of / through sheer…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **a fuerza de + infinitive / noun**

Result achieved through constant repetition or effort.

› A fuerza de practicar cada día, perdió el miedo a hablar en público.
Through practising every single day, she lost her fear of public speaking.

mira que + verbo

I really did… / how many times…

EXPRESSION COLLOQUIAL C1

PATTERN **¡Mira que + indicative! · Mira que es + adj**

Emphatic reproach or exclamation, very colloquial.

› ¡Mira que te lo dije!
I told you so many times!

› Mira que es testarudo tu hermano.
Your brother really is stubborn.

no hay quien + subjuntivo

nobody can… / it's impossible to…

EXPRESSION INFORMAL C1

PATTERN **No hay quien + present subjunctive (+ pronoun)**

Strong, slightly exasperated statement that something or someone is impossible to deal with.

› Con este ruido no hay quien duerma.
Nobody could sleep with this noise.

› No hay quien te entienda.
You're impossible to understand.

cuál no sería mi sorpresa cuando…

imagine my surprise when…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **Cuál no sería mi/su sorpresa cuando / al + infinitive**

A literary, slightly humorous storytelling formula for a big surprise. The negative is rhetorical: it means 'how great my surprise was'.

› Cuál no sería mi sorpresa cuando vi que la nueva jefa era mi compañera de piso de la universidad.
Imagine my surprise when I saw that the new boss was my university flatmate.

lo que se dice…

really / what you'd call…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **lo que se dice + noun / adj / verb**

Intensifier that insists something is fully and truly what you say — often used with negatives.

› No es lo que se dice un experto, pero se defiende.
He's not exactly what you'd call an expert, but he gets by.

› Ese día no hizo lo que se dice nada.
That day he did absolutely nothing.

que yo recuerde / que yo sepa

as far as I remember / as far as I know

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **que yo + subjunctive (recuerde, sepa, vea…)**

Limits your statement to your own knowledge. Subjunctive is obligatory.

› Que yo recuerde, nunca hemos tenido una queja de ese cliente.
As far as I remember, we've never had a complaint from that client.

› Que yo sepa, la oficina sigue abierta en agosto.
As far as I know, the office is still open in August.

DON'T CONFUSE Also: 'por lo que sé' (indicative) = from what I know.

Degree & consequence

Ways to say how far something went and what followed.

tanto es así que…

so much so that…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **Statement. Tanto es así que + indicative**

Reinforces a previous statement with a striking consequence or proof.

› El libro tuvo un éxito enorme; tanto es así que ya se ha traducido a veinte idiomas.
The book was a huge success, so much so that it's already been translated into twenty languages.

hasta el punto de + infinitivo / de que + indicativo

to the point of / to the extent that

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **hasta el punto de + infinitive (same subject) · hasta el punto de que + indicative**

Expresses an extreme degree reached.

› Se implicó tanto que llegó hasta el punto de enfermar.
She got so involved that it reached the point where she fell ill.

› La situación empeoró hasta el punto de que tuvieron que cerrar.
The situation got worse, to the point that they had to close.

NOTE Also 'a tal punto que' (more frequent in Latin America).

no ya... sino...

not just... but... / not only... but even...

EXPRESSION · FORMAL · C1

PATTERN **no ya X, sino (incluso) Y**

Formal escalation: the second element is stronger than the first.

› La reforma afecta no ya a los trabajadores, sino a toda la sociedad.
The reform affects not just workers, but society as a whole.

› Ya no es que llegue tarde, sino que ni siquiera avisa.
It's not just that he's late; he doesn't even let you know.

The grammar of formal texts

Reports, academic papers and official documents rely on a handful of impersonal and nominal structures. Mastering them changes how your writing sounds.

la nominalización

nominalisation (turning verbs into nouns)

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

PATTERN **verb → noun: decidir → la toma de decisiones · aumentar → el aumento · reducir → la reducción**

Formal Spanish prefers nouns where conversation uses verbs. It makes texts dense, objective and impersonal. Use it in reports and essays, not in chats.

› Hablado: Hay que reducir los costes y mejorar cómo decidimos. → Escrito: Es necesaria la reducción de costes y la mejora en la toma de decisiones.
Spoken: We need to cut costs and improve how we decide. → Written: A reduction in costs and an improvement in decision-making are required.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **la puesta en marcha** *the launch / implementation* · **la toma de conciencia** *the raising of awareness* · **la entrada en vigor** *the coming into force* · **la rendición de cuentas** *accountability*

COMMON MISTAKE Don't overdo it: a text with only nouns becomes unreadable. Mix in verbs.

el hecho de que + subjuntivo

the fact that…

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **El hecho de que + subjunctive (usually) + verb**

Turns a whole clause into a subject. Contrary to logic, Spanish usually puts the subjunctive here, because the fact is evaluated rather than stated.

› El hecho de que no haya respondido no significa que no esté interesado.
The fact that he hasn't replied doesn't mean he isn't interested.

› El hecho de que trabaje desde casa le permite conciliar.
Working from home lets her balance work and family life.

NOTE Indicative is possible when the fact is presented as new information, but subjunctive is the safe choice in subject position.

la pasiva con ser

the passive with 'ser'

EXPRESSION C1

PATTERN **ser + participle (agreeing) + por + agent**

Common in journalism, history, law and academic writing, especially when the agent matters. In everyday Spanish, prefer the 'se' passive or an active sentence.

› El edificio fue diseñado por un arquitecto japonés.
The building was designed by a Japanese architect.

› La ley fue aprobada por amplia mayoría.
The law was passed by a large majority.

DON'T CONFUSE Spoken / neutral: Se aprobó la ley (no agent). Active: El Congreso aprobó la ley.

COMMON MISTAKE Overusing it is a typical anglicism. ✗ ~~*Fue dicho que…~~ → ✓ Se dijo que…

cabe + infinitivo · conviene + infinitivo · procede + infinitivo

it is worth / it is advisable / it is appropriate to…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **Cabe + infinitive · Conviene + infinitive / que + subjunctive · Procede + infinitive**

Impersonal formulas of formal writing. 'Cabe' = it is possible / worth (cabe destacar, cabe señalar, cabe la posibilidad de que…). 'Conviene' = it is advisable. 'Procede' = it is appropriate / the next step is (administrative).

cabe — *it's worth / it is possible*

› Cabe destacar que la participación fue la más alta de la década.
It is worth noting that turnout was the highest of the decade.

conviene — *it is advisable*

› Conviene revisar los datos antes de publicarlos.
It's advisable to check the data before publishing it.

procede — *it is appropriate / the next step is*

› Una vez recibida la documentación, procede abrir el expediente.
Once the documents have been received, the next step is to open the file.

se considera / se estima / se prevé que…

it is considered / estimated / expected that…

EXPRESSION FORMAL C1

PATTERN **se + 3rd person verb + que + indicative · se + verb + noun/infinitive**

Impersonal 'se' to present information objectively, without saying who thinks it.

› Se estima que el proyecto creará unos 300 empleos.
It is estimated that the project will create around 300 jobs.

› Se prevé que las obras terminen en otoño.
The building work is expected to finish in autumn.

NOTE With 'se prevé que', the subjunctive is also common because it refers to the future.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

10 · From 'a la sazón' to 'día sí, día también': time with style

Time & frequency

You can already say when, how often and for how long. At C1 the challenge is precision and tone: the formal 'en lo sucesivo' of a company notice, the literary 'otrora' of a novel, the journalistic 'a día de hoy', the ironic 'día sí, día también'. Several of these have tricky meanings for English speakers (en su día, a la sazón, a la postre), so read the notes carefully.

The key C1 time expressions

The ones you'll meet constantly in the press, in books and in formal communication.

a la sazón

at that time / then (and, by then, already)

ADVERB · FORMAL · C1

Means 'at that time' and is used above all to give someone's position or situation at the moment of a past event. Very journalistic and literary.

› **El acuerdo lo firmó Elena Ruiz, a la sazón ministra de Economía.**
The agreement was signed by Elena Ruiz, who was Minister for the Economy at the time.

› **Marcos, a la sazón un joven becario, fue quien descubrió el error.**
Marcos, then a young intern, was the one who spotted the mistake.

NOTE Usually placed between commas right after a person's name.

COMMON MISTAKE It has nothing to do with seasons or seasoning. 'Sazón' alone = ripeness or flavour, but 'a la sazón' = at that time.

en su día

at the time / back then · in due course

ADVERB · C1

Mostly refers to a specific moment in the past ('when it happened'). In formal texts it can also refer to an appropriate moment in the future ('in due course'). Context tells you which.

past — *at the time / back then*

› **En su día no le di importancia, pero ahora lo entiendo.**
At the time I didn't think much of it, but now I understand.

future (formal) — *in due course*

› **Los resultados se publicarán en su día.**
The results will be published in due course.

COMMON MISTAKE It doesn't mean 'one day' (= algún día) or 'on his/her day'. ✗ ~~*En su día seré médico~~ → ✓ Algún día seré médico.

a la postre

in the end / ultimately / eventually

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Introduces the final outcome of a process, often a surprising or decisive one. Very common in sports journalism and narration.

› Diego marcó en el minuto 89 el gol que, a la postre, daría el título a su equipo.
In the 89th minute, Diego scored the goal that would ultimately win his team the title.

› Aquella decisión, que parecía menor, resultó a la postre decisiva.
That decision, which seemed minor, turned out in the end to be crucial.

DON'T CONFUSE a la postre (formal, outcome) ≈ al final (neutral) ≈ a la larga (over time, gradually).

antaño / otrora

in the past / formerly / once

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Both mean 'in times gone by', with a literary or nostalgic tone. 'Antaño' can also work as a noun complement (las costumbres de antaño). 'Otrora' often goes right before an adjective or noun: 'la otrora próspera ciudad'.

› Antaño, este barrio estaba lleno de talleres y pequeños comercios.
In the past, this neighbourhood was full of workshops and small shops.

› La otrora poderosa compañía hoy apenas tiene clientes.
The once-powerful company now has hardly any customers.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **las costumbres de antaño** *the customs of old / old-time customs* · **la otrora + adjective + noun** *the once-+ adjective + noun*

OPPOSITE **hogaño (very rare)** — nowadays (archaic)

NOTE In speech, people normally say 'antes' or 'hace años'.

hoy por hoy / a día de hoy

at present / as things stand / to date

ADVERB C1

Both mean 'at the moment', with the idea that things might change. 'A día de hoy' is extremely common in the media and at work (some purists criticise it, but it's fully standard now). 'Hoy por hoy' sounds a little more natural in speech.

› Hoy por hoy, no tenemos previsto ampliar la plantilla.
At present, we have no plans to take on more staff.

› A día de hoy, el caso sigue sin resolverse.
To date, the case remains unsolved.

DON'T CONFUSE actualmente / en la actualidad = currently (neutral, no idea of change).

en lo sucesivo

from now on / henceforth / in future

ADVERB FORMAL C1

A formal 'de ahora en adelante', typical of rules, notices, contracts and serious warnings.

› **En lo sucesivo, todas las solicitudes deberán presentarse por vía telemática.**
From now on, all applications must be submitted online.

› **Le ruego que, en lo sucesivo, me informe antes de tomar decisiones así.**
In future, please let me know before making decisions like that.

DON'T CONFUSE de ahora en adelante / a partir de ahora (neutral) · en adelante (formal; also 'hereinafter' in contracts: 'la Empresa, en adelante «el Proveedor»').

en el ínterin / entretanto

in the meantime / meanwhile

ADVERB FORMAL C1

Both refer to the period between two moments. 'En el ínterin' is very formal (from Latin 'interim'); 'entretanto' is formal-neutral and very frequent in writing.

› **El nuevo director llega en enero; en el ínterin, Ana asumirá sus funciones.**
The new director arrives in January; in the interim, Ana will take over his duties.

› **La reforma tardará meses. Entretanto, los vecinos seguirán sin ascensor.**
The renovation will take months. Meanwhile, the residents will still have no lift.

NOTE Also written 'entre tanto' (two words), both correct; 'entretanto' is preferred. 'Ínterin' has an accent: ÍN-te-rin.

a la par

at the same time / alike / on a par

ADVERB C1

PATTERN **a la par (que / de)**

Expresses simultaneity ('at the same time as') or equality ('as much as, on a par with').

> **simultaneity** — *at the same time (as)*
>
> › Trabaja y estudia a la par.
> *She works and studies at the same time.*

> **equality** — *both… and / equally*
>
> › Es un libro divertido a la par que profundo.
> *It's a book that's both funny and profound.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ir a la par** *to go hand in hand / to keep pace* · **a la par que + adjective** *as well as / and at the same time*

con antelación

in advance / beforehand

ADVERB C1

PATTERN **con + quantity + de antelación · con antelación a algo**

Very common in practical and formal contexts: bookings, cancellations, deadlines. Often with the amount of time.

› Hay que cancelar la clase con 24 horas de antelación.
Classes must be cancelled 24 hours in advance.

› Les avisaremos con suficiente antelación.
We'll let you know well in advance.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **con la debida antelación** *with due notice* · **con una semana de antelación** *a week in advance*

DON'T CONFUSE de antemano = beforehand (often with 'saber' or 'agradecer') · con antelación = in advance (with notice periods and bookings).

día sí, día también

day in, day out / every single day

EXPRESSION INFORMAL C1

An ironic or exasperated way to say something happens every day, usually something annoying.

› Día sí, día también, el vecino pone la música a todo volumen.
Day in, day out, my neighbour plays his music at full blast.

DON'T CONFUSE cada dos por tres = every five minutes (constantly) · un día sí y otro también (variant).

Looking back

hasta la fecha FORMAL
to date / so far / up to now
Common in reports and the news.

> Hasta la fecha no se ha registrado ningún incidente.
> *To date, no incidents have been recorded.*

con anterioridad (a) FORMAL
previously / prior to
Formal 'antes (de)'.

> Los candidatos deben haber trabajado con anterioridad en el sector.
> *Candidates must have previously worked in the sector.*

con posterioridad (a) FORMAL
subsequently / after
Formal 'después (de)'.

> Cualquier cambio realizado con posterioridad a la firma deberá notificarse.
> *Any change made after signing must be notified.*

en un primer momento
at first / initially
Introduces an initial reaction or phase that later changed.

> En un primer momento pensé que era una broma.
> *At first I thought it was a joke.*

Now, soon & from now on

en lo que va de año / mes / semana
so far this year / month / week
Very frequent in news and statistics.

> En lo que va de año, las ventas han subido un 8 %.
> *So far this year, sales have risen by 8%.*

hasta nuevo aviso FORMAL
until further notice
Notices, announcements, signs.

> La biblioteca permanecerá cerrada hasta nuevo aviso.
> *The library will remain closed until further notice.*

Sequence & timing

a renglón seguido FORMAL
immediately afterwards / in the next breath
Often to point out a contradiction: someone says one thing and then the opposite.

> Dijo que no subiría los impuestos y, a renglón seguido, anunció una nueva tasa.
> *He said he wouldn't raise taxes and, in the next breath, announced a new levy.*

al unísono
in unison / all at the same time
Several people do or say the same thing at once.

> Los alumnos respondieron al unísono.
> *The students answered in unison.*

a deshoras
at odd hours / at all hours
At unusual or inconvenient times, typically eating or calling.

> Trabaja de noche y come siempre a deshoras.
> *He works nights and always eats at odd hours.*

de por vida
for life
Something lasts your whole life: a ban, a friendship, a consequence.

> Lo inhabilitaron de por vida.
> *He was banned for life.*

a perpetuidad FORMAL
in perpetuity / forever
Legal and formal.

> Los derechos se cedieron a perpetuidad.
> *The rights were assigned in perpetuity.*

con carácter retroactivo FORMAL
retroactively / backdated
Laws, pay rises, payments that apply from an earlier date.

> La subida salarial se aplicará con carácter retroactivo desde enero.
> *The pay rise will be backdated to January.*

Frequency with nuance

con asiduidad FORMAL
regularly / frequently
Formal; implies a habit. Also the adjective 'asiduo/a' (un cliente asiduo = a regular).

> Colabora con asiduidad en varios medios digitales.
> *She regularly contributes to several online publications.*

de tarde en tarde
every now and again / once in a blue moon
Rarely and at long intervals.

> De tarde en tarde me escribe para contarme cómo le va.
> *Every now and again he writes to tell me how he's getting on.*

por enésima vez INFORMAL
for the umpteenth time
Exasperation at repetition.

> Te lo digo por enésima vez: cierra la puerta con llave.
> *I'm telling you for the umpteenth time: lock the door.*

sin tregua
relentlessly / without respite
Something continues without stopping, often something hard.

> Llovió sin tregua durante tres días.
> *It rained relentlessly for three days.*

Time traps

en su día ≠ one day

✗ *~~En su día me gustaría vivir en Chile~~.

✓ Algún día me gustaría vivir en Chile.

'En su día' almost always looks back ('at the time') or, in formal texts, means 'in due course'. For a vague future dream use 'algún día'.

› **En su día fue un escándalo; hoy nadie se acuerda.**
At the time it was a scandal; today nobody remembers it.

a la larga vs a la postre

✗ *~~El gol fue~~, a la larga, el de la victoria.

✓ El gol fue, a la postre, el de la victoria.

'A la larga' = in the long run (a gradual effect over time). 'A la postre' = in the end (the final outcome of a specific sequence of events).

› **A la larga, invertir en formación siempre compensa.**
In the long run, investing in training always pays off.

READ THE NEWS WITH A TIME FILTER

Spanish news is packed with these expressions: 'a la sazón', 'en lo que va de año', 'hasta la fecha', 'a día de hoy'. Pick one article a day and underline only the time expressions; after a week you'll notice you start using them yourself.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

11 · The fine shades of what you feel, and the elegant ways to say what you think

Feelings & opinions

At B1 you were 'triste', 'nervioso' or 'enfadado'. At C1 you can be filled with 'desasosiego', overcome with 'congoja' or watch something with 'recelo'. This section gives you the nuanced nouns of literature and journalism, the vivid idioms of everyday Spain, and a set of sophisticated opinion phrases for essays and debates. Pay attention to the 'similar' notes: the difference between 'inquietud', 'desasosiego' and 'zozobra' is exactly the kind of precision that makes a C1 speaker sound native.

Unease, anxiety & anguish

A whole scale of 'worry', from a vague discomfort to anguish that tightens your chest.

la inquietud

unease / concern · (plural) interests, intellectual curiosity

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

PLURAL inquietudes

In the singular: worry or restlessness about something specific. In the plural, a very positive meaning: intellectual or creative interests, the drive to learn.

> **singular** — *concern, unease*
>
> › La noticia ha causado inquietud entre los trabajadores.
> *The news has caused concern among the workers.*

> **plural** — *interests, curiosity*
>
> › Es una chica con muchas inquietudes: pinta, escribe y aprende japonés.
> *She's a girl with lots of interests: she paints, writes and is learning Japanese.*

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **causar / generar inquietud** *to cause concern* · **inquietudes culturales / artísticas** *cultural / artistic interests*

NOTE New meaning: if you know 'inquieto' (restless, fidgety), the plural 'inquietudes' is the C1 discovery.

el desasosiego

disquiet / restlessness / deep unease

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

A persistent inner unease, often without a clear cause: you can't feel calm. More literary and more existential than 'inquietud'.

› **Desde que dejó el trabajo vive con un desasosiego que no sabe explicar.**
Since she left her job she's been living with a sense of unease she can't explain.

› **La falta de noticias aumentaba el desasosiego de la familia.**
The lack of news made the family's anxiety worse.

DON'T CONFUSE inquietud = concern about something specific · desasosiego = deep, lasting lack of inner peace · zozobra = anguish caused by uncertainty.

NOTE Fernando Pessoa's 'The Book of Disquiet' is 'Libro del desasosiego' in Spanish.

la congoja

anguish / grief / distress

NOUN · FEMININE · FORMAL · C1

Intense sorrow or anguish that you almost feel physically, as a weight on your chest or a lump in your throat. Literary and emotional.

› **Leyó la carta con una congoja que apenas le dejaba respirar.**
She read the letter with an anguish that barely let her breathe.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **sentir congoja** *to feel anguish* · **con congoja** *in anguish / distressed*

la desazón

unease / disquiet / a nagging feeling

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

A vague, uncomfortable feeling that something isn't right, often after a conversation or event. It can also mean slight physical discomfort.

› **Salí de la reunión con cierta desazón: algo no encajaba.**
I left the meeting with a nagging feeling: something didn't add up.

› **Su respuesta me dejó una desazón difícil de explicar.**
His answer left me with an unease that was hard to explain.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **dejar (a alguien) una desazón** *to leave someone feeling uneasy* · **cierta desazón** *a certain unease*

la zozobra

anxiety / anguish (from uncertainty)

NOUN · FEMININE · FORMAL · C1

The anxiety of not knowing what will happen: waiting for test results, for news of a missing person, for a political crisis to end. The verb 'zozobrar' means 'to capsize' (a boat) or 'to founder' (a plan).

› Pasaron la noche en vela, en un estado de zozobra constante.
They spent a sleepless night in a state of constant anxiety.

› La crisis mantiene a los mercados en plena zozobra.
The crisis is keeping the markets in turmoil.

Longing & joy

la añoranza

longing / yearning / nostalgia

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

Missing someone or something that is absent or lost: a person, a place, a time. More emotional and personal than 'nostalgia'. Verb: añorar (to long for, to miss).

› Habla de su infancia en Buenos Aires con una mezcla de cariño y añoranza.
He talks about his childhood in Buenos Aires with a mixture of affection and longing.

› Añoro las tardes de verano en el pueblo.
I miss those summer evenings in the village.

DON'T CONFUSE añorar (to long for, slightly literary) · echar de menos (to miss, everyday Spain) · extrañar (to miss, Latin America and also used in Spain).

la morriña

homesickness / the blues (for home)

NOUN · FEMININE · INFORMAL · C1

A gentle, melancholic homesickness, especially for your homeland. The word comes from Galicia, where it's part of the cultural identity, but it's used all over Spain.

› Después de seis meses en Berlín, empiezo a tener morriña.
After six months in Berlin, I'm starting to feel homesick.

› Cuando me entra la morriña, pongo música gallega y cocino pulpo.
When I get homesick, I put on Galician music and cook octopus.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tener / sentir morriña** *to feel homesick* · **entrarle a alguien la morriña** *to get homesick*

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Typically Spanish (especially Galicia and Asturias). In Latin America people say 'nostalgia' or 'extrañar mi tierra'.

el regocijo

delight / joy / glee

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

Visible, often shared joy. In 'para regocijo de alguien' it can carry a touch of malice: someone enjoys another's misfortune.

› Para regocijo de los niños, empezó a nevar.
To the children's delight, it began to snow.

› La dimisión del director fue recibida con regocijo por sus rivales.
The director's resignation was greeted with glee by his rivals.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **para regocijo de** *to the delight of* · **con regocijo** *gleefully / joyfully*

el júbilo

jubilation / elation

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

Intense, exultant, usually collective joy: victories, celebrations, good news. Journalistic and literary.

› La afición celebró con júbilo el ascenso del equipo.
The fans celebrated the team's promotion with jubilation.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **gritos de júbilo** *cries of joy* · **con gran júbilo** *with great jubilation*

NOTE Related: jubiloso/a (jubilant). Don't confuse with 'jubilación' (retirement), although both share the same Latin root.

Shock & bewilderment

la consternación

dismay / shock / deep distress

NOUN · FEMININE · FORMAL · C1

Shock mixed with grief, typically after a tragedy or very bad news. Very common in the press: 'la noticia ha causado consternación'.

› La muerte del actor ha causado una profunda consternación en el mundo de la cultura.
The actor's death has caused deep shock across the cultural world.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **causar / provocar consternación** *to cause dismay* · **estar consternado/a** *to be devastated / dismayed*

el estupor

astonishment / stupefaction

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

Such great surprise that you can't react, often in the face of something outrageous. Mostly written.

› Los vecinos asistieron con estupor al derribo del edificio histórico.
Residents watched in astonishment as the historic building was demolished.

DON'T CONFUSE sorpresa (neutral) < asombro (amazement) < estupor (shock that leaves you frozen).

la perplejidad

perplexity / bewilderment

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

Confusion when something doesn't make sense or you don't know how to react. Adjective: perplejo/a.

› Su respuesta me dejó perplejo.
His answer left me baffled.

› Observé con perplejidad cómo cambiaba de opinión en dos minutos.
I watched in bewilderment as he changed his mind in two minutes.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy perplejo de su reacción~~ → ✓ Estoy perplejo ante su reacción / Su reacción me deja perplejo.

el desconcierto

confusion / bewilderment / disarray

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

Not knowing what's going on or what to do, either in a person or in a group (an organisation in disarray). Verb: desconcertar (to disconcert, to throw).

› El cambio de horario generó desconcierto entre los pasajeros.
The timetable change caused confusion among passengers.

› Me desconcertó que no dijera nada.
It threw me that she didn't say anything.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **generar / sembrar desconcierto** *to cause / spread confusion* · **una cara de desconcierto** *a puzzled look*

Boredom, disillusion & resentment

el hastío

weariness / deep boredom / being fed up

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

Profound tiredness and disgust with something repetitive or overwhelming. Stronger than 'aburrimiento'; often used about politics, routine or life itself.

› **Muchos ciudadanos expresan hastío ante la crispación política.**
Many citizens are expressing weariness with the political tension.

› **Lo dejó por hastío, no por falta de talento.**
He gave it up because he was sick of it, not for lack of talent.

DON'T CONFUSE aburrimiento (boredom) · tedio (tedium of something monotonous) · hastío (fed up to the point of disgust) · hartazgo (being fed up, more colloquial).

el tedio

tedium / boredom

NOUN · MASCULINE · FORMAL · C1

The boredom produced by something monotonous and slow. Adjective: tedioso/a (tedious).

› **Para combatir el tedio del viaje, escuchaba pódcasts en español.**
To beat the tedium of the journey, she listened to Spanish podcasts.

el desengaño

disillusionment / (bitter) disappointment

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

The disappointment of discovering that something or someone was not what you believed. Typically in love and politics. Verb: desengañarse (to become disillusioned, to stop fooling yourself).

› **Después de aquel desengaño amoroso tardó años en volver a confiar en alguien.**
After that heartbreak it took her years to trust anyone again.

› **Desengáñate: no va a cambiar.**
Face it: he's not going to change.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **llevarse un desengaño** *to be disillusioned / let down* · **un desengaño amoroso** *a heartbreak / an unhappy love affair*

DON'T CONFUSE decepción = disappointment (expectations not met) · desengaño = the illusion breaks (you see the truth).

el despecho

spite / resentment (after rejection)

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

The angry resentment you feel when you're rejected, humiliated or betrayed, which pushes you to act to hurt the other person. Very common in 'por despecho'.

› **Lo hizo por despecho, porque ella lo había dejado.**
He did it out of spite, because she had left him.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **por despecho** *out of spite* · **despechado/a** *spurned / bitter*

DON'T CONFUSE rencor = long-lasting resentment, a grudge · despecho = hurt pride after rejection · resquemor = lingering, quieter resentment.

el recelo

suspicion / wariness / mistrust

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

A mild distrust: you suspect something or someone might harm you. Very frequent in politics and business news.

› **Los vecinos miran el nuevo proyecto con recelo.**
Local residents are viewing the new project with suspicion.

› **La propuesta despertó recelos entre los socios.**
The proposal aroused misgivings among the partners.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **ver / mirar con recelo** *to view with suspicion* · **despertar / suscitar recelos** *to arouse misgivings*

el resquemor

lingering resentment / a sore point

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

A quiet, lasting resentment or bitterness after an offence that has never been fully resolved.

› **Aunque hicieron las paces, quedó cierto resquemor entre los dos hermanos.**
Although they made up, a certain resentment lingered between the two brothers.

Composure, modesty & embarrassment

la entereza

fortitude / composure / strength of character

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

The strength to face pain or adversity calmly and with dignity. A very admiring word.

› **Afrontó la enfermedad con una entereza admirable.**
She faced the illness with admirable fortitude.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **con entereza** *with composure / bravely* · **mostrar entereza** *to show strength*

DON'T CONFUSE valentía = courage (facing danger) · entereza = staying whole and calm when facing suffering.

el pudor

modesty / reserve / a sense of decency

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

The reluctance to show your body, your feelings or private matters. Can be physical or emotional modesty. Adjectives: pudoroso/a; 'impúdico/a' (shameless).

› **Habla de su vida privada sin ningún pudor.**
He talks about his private life without any reserve.

› **Por pudor, prefirió no contar los detalles.**
Out of a sense of decency, she preferred not to give the details.

DON'T CONFUSE vergüenza = shame or embarrassment (general) · pudor = modesty, discretion · bochorno = acute embarrassment.

el bochorno

embarrassment / shame · sultry, muggy heat

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

Two meanings. Feelings: intense, public embarrassment ('¡Qué bochorno!'). Weather: hot, heavy, humid air. Adjective: bochornoso/a (shameful; muggy).

feeling — *acute embarrassment*

› **¡Qué bochorno! Me equivoqué de nombre delante de todo el equipo.**
How embarrassing! I got her name wrong in front of the whole team.

weather — *muggy heat*

› **En agosto el bochorno en Madrid es insoportable.**
In August the muggy heat in Madrid is unbearable.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **un espectáculo bochornoso** *a disgraceful spectacle*

More nuanced feelings

Wide coverage: recognise these in your reading and pick the ones that describe you.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la pesadumbre FORMAL	*sorrow / heaviness of heart*	**Lo dijo con pesadumbre, mirando al suelo.** *He said it sorrowfully, looking at the ground.*
el abatimiento	*dejection / low spirits*	adj. abatido/a **Tras la derrota, el abatimiento era evidente en el vestuario.** *After the defeat, the dejection in the changing room was obvious.*
la desolación	*desolation / devastation*	**La desolación de la familia era absoluta.** *The family was utterly devastated.*
el desconsuelo	*grief / inconsolable sorrow*	llorar con desconsuelo = to cry inconsolably **La niña lloraba con desconsuelo.** *The little girl was crying inconsolably.*
la amargura	*bitterness*	**Recuerda aquellos años sin amargura.** *He remembers those years without bitterness.*
el desaliento	*discouragement / despondency*	**No hay que caer en el desaliento.** *We mustn't lose heart.*
el desamparo	*helplessness / abandonment*	also legal: lack of protection **Sintió un enorme desamparo al llegar sola a la ciudad.** *She felt utterly alone and unprotected when she arrived in the city.*
el remordimiento	*remorse / pangs of conscience*	often plural: tener remordimientos (de conciencia) **Tengo remordimientos por no haberla llamado.** *I feel guilty for not having called her.*
el sosiego	*calm / tranquillity / peace of mind*	opposite of desasosiego **Busca el sosiego del campo después de una semana intensa.** *He seeks the peace of the countryside after an intense week.*
la indignación	*indignation / outrage*	**La subida del precio del metro ha provocado indignación.** *The rise in metro fares has caused outrage.*
la cólera FORMAL	*rage / wrath*	f.; 'el cólera' (m.) = cholera, the disease **Montó en cólera al enterarse.** *He flew into a rage when he found out.*
la aversión	*aversion / strong dislike*	aversión a / hacia algo **Siente aversión a hablar en público.** *She has an aversion to public speaking.*
el embeleso FORMAL	*rapture / enchantment*	adj. embelesado/a **Escuchaba a la cantante con embeleso.** *He listened to the singer, enraptured.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el sobresalto	*fright / sudden start / scare*	sin sobresaltos = uneventful, smooth El viaje transcurrió sin sobresaltos. *The journey passed without incident.*
el pavor	*dread / terror*	Le tengo pavor a volar. *I'm terrified of flying.*
el hartazgo	*being fed up / weariness*	≈ hastío, a bit more colloquial Hay un hartazgo general con tanta reunión inútil. *Everybody's fed up with so many pointless meetings.*
el azoramiento	*embarrassment / flustered awkwardness*	verb: azorarse (to get flustered) Respondió con cierto azoramiento. *He answered, slightly flustered.*
la impotencia	*helplessness / powerlessness*	in emotional contexts = powerlessness, frustration at not being able to act Sentí una impotencia enorme al no poder ayudarla. *I felt so helpless not being able to help her.*
la vergüenza ajena	*secondhand embarrassment / cringe*	dar vergüenza ajena = to make you cringe Su discurso me dio vergüenza ajena. *His speech made me cringe.*

Describing emotional states: adjectives & verbs

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
compungido/a	*remorseful / contrite / sorrowful*	Pidió perdón, muy compungido. *He apologised, looking very contrite.*
cabizbajo/a	*crestfallen / with head bowed*	Salió del despacho cabizbajo. *He left the office crestfallen.*
exultante	*exultant / overjoyed*	La ganadora estaba exultante. *The winner was overjoyed.*
desolado/a	*devastated / heartbroken*	Estoy desolada por la noticia. *I'm devastated by the news.*
atribulado/a FORMAL	*troubled / distressed*	Una madre atribulada pedía ayuda en las redes. *A distressed mother was asking for help on social media.*
crispado/a	*tense / on edge / irritated*	la crispación = (political) tension El ambiente estaba muy crispado. *The atmosphere was very tense.*
taciturno/a	*taciturn / silent and gloomy*	Desde la ruptura está taciturno. *He's been withdrawn since the break-up.*
conmover	*to move (emotionally) / to touch*	stem-changing o→ue: me conmueve Me conmovió su historia. *His story moved me.*
sobrecoger	*to overwhelm / to awe / to startle*	sobrecogedor/a = awe-inspiring, chilling El silencio de la catedral sobrecoge. *The silence of the cathedral is awe-inspiring.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
exasperar	*to exasperate*	Me exaspera su lentitud. *His slowness exasperates me.*
enternecer	*to move / to touch (with tenderness)*	irregular: me enternece Nos enterneció ver a los abuelos bailando. *It was so touching to see the grandparents dancing.*
reconcomerse	*to be eaten up (by envy, guilt, curiosity)*	reconcomerse de envidia / por dentro Se reconcome de envidia cada vez que ascienden a alguien. *He's eaten up with envy every time someone gets promoted.*

Idioms for strong emotions

Everyday, vivid and very Spanish. Most are informal: use them with friends, colleagues you know well, or in storytelling.

estar en vilo

to be on tenterhooks / to be in suspense

When you're anxiously waiting for news. Also 'tener a alguien en vilo' and 'con el alma en vilo'.

> Toda la familia estuvo en vilo hasta que llamó el médico.
> *The whole family was on tenterhooks until the doctor called.*

quedarse de una pieza INFORMAL

to be stunned / to be dumbfounded

Total surprise that leaves you unable to react.

> Cuando me dijo que se casaba, me quedé de una pieza.
> *When she told me she was getting married, I was stunned.*

estar que trina COLLOQUIAL

to be fuming / to be livid

Furious, usually about something specific. Conjugate it: estoy que trino, está que trina.

> Javi está que trina porque le han cancelado el vuelo otra vez.
> *Javi is fuming because they've cancelled his flight again.*

hacérsele a alguien un nudo en la garganta

to get a lump in one's throat

When emotion almost makes you cry.

> Al despedirme de mis alumnos se me hizo un nudo en la garganta.
> *When I said goodbye to my students, I got a lump in my throat.*

partírsele a alguien el alma

to break one's heart

Feeling deep pity or sorrow for someone. Also 'partir el alma': 'Me parte el alma verlo así'.

> Se me parte el alma cuando veo a gente durmiendo en la calle.
> *It breaks my heart when I see people sleeping on the street.*

darle a alguien un vuelco el corazón

one's heart skips a beat / leaps

A sudden emotion: shock, fear or joy.

> Cuando vi su nombre en la pantalla, me dio un vuelco el corazón.
> *When I saw his name on the screen, my heart skipped a beat.*

estar de capa caída INFORMAL

to be down / to be in decline

A person who's low, or a business or trend that's losing strength.

> Desde que perdió el trabajo está un poco de capa caída.
> *He's been a bit down since he lost his job.*

no levantar cabeza INFORMAL

to be unable to get back on one's feet / to go from bad to worse

A long run of bad luck or a slow recovery.

> Desde la crisis, el sector no levanta cabeza.
> *Since the crisis, the sector hasn't been able to recover.*

echar chispas COLLOQUIAL

to be fuming / to see red

Visibly furious.

> La jefa salió de la reunión echando chispas.
> *The boss came out of the meeting fuming.*

subirse por las paredes COLLOQUIAL

to hit the roof / to go up the wall

Losing your temper completely.

> Si se entera de que lo has contado, se sube por las paredes.
> *If he finds out you told people, he'll hit the roof.*

dar grima COLLOQUIAL

to give someone the creeps / to set one's teeth on edge

A physical disgust or uneasiness (sounds, textures, behaviour).

> **Me da grima el ruido de las uñas en la pizarra.**
> *The sound of nails on a blackboard sets my teeth on edge.*

dar coraje COLLOQUIAL

to make someone mad / to get on one's nerves

Frustration and anger at something unfair. Careful: 'coraje' also means 'courage'.

Spain & Latin America: Common in Spain (especially the south) and Mexico.

> **Me da mucho coraje que nadie reconozca su trabajo.**
> *It really makes me mad that nobody recognises her work.*

estar en la gloria INFORMAL

to be in heaven / to be in seventh heaven

Total wellbeing and pleasure.

> **Con una manta, un libro y un café, estoy en la gloria.**
> *With a blanket, a book and a coffee, I'm in heaven.*

Sophisticated opinions

The basic opinion phrases are in the Speaking Toolkit. These are the C1 upgrade for essays, debates and serious conversations. Watch which ones need the subjunctive.

Tengo para mí que... FORMAL

I have a feeling that... / I'm inclined to believe that...

A personal conviction stated with some modesty. Elegant, slightly literary.

> **Tengo para mí que nunca le gustó de verdad aquel trabajo.**
> *I have a feeling he never really liked that job.*

En mi fuero interno,...

Deep down,... / In my heart of hearts,...

What you really think or feel inside, even if you don't say it.

> **En mi fuero interno sabía que tenía razón.**
> *Deep down, I knew she was right.*

Me resisto a creer que + subjunctive FORMAL

I refuse to believe that... / I find it hard to believe that...

Strong disbelief, often with moral disapproval.

> **Me resisto a creer que nadie se diera cuenta del error.**
> *I refuse to believe that nobody noticed the mistake.*

Disiento (profundamente) de... FORMAL

I (strongly) disagree with...

A formal, very cultured way to disagree, typical of academic debate. Verb: disentir (e→ie / i).

> **Disiento profundamente de la interpretación que se ha hecho de los datos.**
> *I strongly disagree with the way the data have been interpreted.*

Cabe preguntarse si... FORMAL

One may well ask whether... / It is worth asking whether...

Raises a critical question in an essay, without answering it directly.

> **Cabe preguntarse si estas medidas llegan a quienes más las necesitan.**
> *One may well ask whether these measures reach those who need them most.*

Resulta paradójico que + subjunctive FORMAL

It is ironic / paradoxical that...

Points out a contradiction, usually with a critical tone.

> **Resulta paradójico que la ciudad más turística tenga tan pocos hoteles asequibles.**
> *It's ironic that the most touristy city has so few affordable hotels.*

No deja de ser + adjective + que + subjunctive

It is (rather) + adjective + that...

A subtle, ironic way to highlight something: 'no deja de ser curioso / llamativo / triste que...'.

> **No deja de ser curioso que los que más critican sean los que menos hacen.**
> *It's rather curious that those who criticise most are the ones who do least.*

No me parece descabellado + infinitive / que + subjunctive

It doesn't seem far-fetched (to me) to... / that...

Cautiously supports an idea that others might find extreme.

> **No me parece descabellado que se reduzca la jornada a cuatro días.**
> *I don't think it's far-fetched to cut the working week to four days.*

Es innegable que... FORMAL

It is undeniable that...

Concedes an obvious fact, often before a 'pero'. Takes the indicative.

> Es innegable que ha habido avances, pero queda mucho por hacer.
> *It's undeniable that there has been progress, but there's still a lot to do.*

Es de justicia reconocer que... FORMAL

In fairness, it must be acknowledged that...

Gives credit, even to someone you're criticising.

> Es de justicia reconocer que el alcalde cumplió su promesa.
> *In fairness, it must be acknowledged that the mayor kept his promise.*

Lamento profundamente que + subjunctive FORMAL

I deeply regret that...

Formal regret or criticism.

> Lamento profundamente que no se haya contado con los vecinos.
> *I deeply regret that local residents weren't consulted.*

Celebro que + subjunctive FORMAL

I'm delighted that... / I welcome the fact that...

Formal approval; 'celebrar' here doesn't mean 'to have a party'.

> Celebro que por fin se haya tomado una decisión.
> *I'm glad a decision has finally been made.*

Me reafirmo en lo dicho. FORMAL

I stand by what I said.

You maintain your opinion after criticism.

> Entiendo las críticas, pero me reafirmo en lo dicho.
> *I understand the criticism, but I stand by what I said.*

Prefiero no pronunciarme. FORMAL

I'd rather not comment. / I prefer not to take a position.

Diplomatically avoiding giving an opinion.

> Sobre ese asunto, prefiero no pronunciarme.
> *I'd rather not comment on that matter.*

mojarse COLLOQUIAL

to commit oneself / to stick one's neck out

To take a clear position on a controversial question. 'No se moja' = he won't commit.

> Venga, mójate: ¿quién crees que tiene razón?
> *Come on, commit: who do you think is right?*

Si me apuras,... COLLOQUIAL

If you push me,... / If I'm honest,...

Before a stronger opinion you only give when pressed.

> Es un buen libro; si me apuras, el mejor que he leído este año.
> *It's a good book; if you push me, the best I've read this year.*

BUILD YOUR EMOTIONAL PALETTE

Choose one basic feeling (sad, worried, angry, happy) and write a ladder from mild to extreme with the words in this section: for 'worried', inquietud → desazón → desasosiego → zozobra → congoja. Then write one sentence about your own life for each step. Precision, not quantity, is what makes your Spanish sound mature.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

12 · The written Spanish of offices, institutions and universities

Everyday vocabulary

At C1, 'everyday' means the language you need to function professionally: writing formal emails, reading official letters, sitting in meetings, dealing with paperwork and writing academic texts. Spanish formal writing has its own fixed formulas, and using them correctly instantly makes you sound competent and credible.

Formal emails & letters: opening

In Spain, formal emails start with a greeting followed by a colon, not a comma: 'Estimada Sra. López:'.

Estimado/a + nombre / título: FORMAL

Dear...

The standard formal opening. 'Estimado señor García:', 'Estimada Laura:' (semi-formal with first name). Use a colon.

> Estimada Sra. Martín:
> *Dear Ms Martín,*

Estimados/as señores/as: FORMAL

Dear Sir or Madam,

When you don't know who will read it. 'Muy señores míos' is old-fashioned.

Querido/a...

Dear... (warm)

Only for people you know personally. Never in a first formal contact.

> Querida Ana: ¡Qué alegría recibir tu mensaje!
> *Dear Ana, It was lovely to get your message!*

A la atención de... FORMAL

For the attention of... / Attn:

To direct a letter or email to a specific person or department. Abbreviation: A/A.

> A la atención del Departamento de Recursos Humanos.
> *For the attention of the Human Resources Department.*

Por la presente... FORMAL

I hereby... / I am writing to...

Very formal, typical of official letters, certificates and legal notices.

> Por la presente le comunicamos que su solicitud ha sido aceptada.
> *We hereby inform you that your application has been accepted.*

Me dirijo a usted para / con el fin de... FORMAL

I am writing to you in order to...

Standard way of stating the purpose of a formal letter.

> Me dirijo a usted con el fin de solicitar información sobre el máster.
> *I am writing to request information about the master's programme.*

En relación con / Con relación a... FORMAL

With regard to... / Regarding...

To refer to a previous email, call or matter. ('En relación a' is very common but less recommended.)

> En relación con su correo del día 5, le confirmo la fecha.
> *With regard to your email of the 5th, I can confirm the date.*

Tal y como le comenté...

As I mentioned...

To refer back to a conversation. With 'tú': 'tal y como te comenté'.

> Tal y como le comenté por teléfono, el envío saldrá el lunes.
> *As I mentioned on the phone, the shipment will go out on Monday.*

Según lo acordado... FORMAL

As agreed...

To confirm what was decided earlier.

> Según lo acordado en la reunión, le envío el presupuesto.
> *As agreed in the meeting, I'm sending you the quote.*

Nos complace informarle de que... FORMAL

We are pleased to inform you that...

Good news in formal communication. Note 'informar de que'.

> Nos complace informarle de que ha sido seleccionada para la segunda fase.
> *We are pleased to inform you that you have been selected for the second stage.*

Lamentamos comunicarle que... FORMAL
We regret to inform you that...
Bad news, formally.

> Lamentamos comunicarle que el curso ha sido cancelado.
> *We regret to inform you that the course has been cancelled.*

Formal emails & letters: body and closing

Closings are fixed formulas. Choose them by how formal the relationship is.

Adjunto le remito... FORMAL
Please find attached...
Very formal. Simpler and very common: 'Le adjunto...' / 'Te adjunto...'. 'Adjunto' here is a verb (yo adjunto).

> Adjunto le remito la factura correspondiente al mes de mayo.
> *Please find attached the invoice for May.*

Le ruego que + subjuntivo FORMAL
Please... / I would ask you to...
Polite, formal request.

> Le ruego que confirme su asistencia antes del día 15.
> *Please confirm your attendance before the 15th.*

Le agradecería que + imperfecto de subjuntivo FORMAL
I would be grateful if you could...
Softer formal request.

> Le agradecería que me enviara el contrato firmado.
> *I would be grateful if you could send me the signed contract.*

Quedo a la espera de su respuesta. FORMAL
I look forward to hearing from you.
Standard closing line when you expect a reply.

> Quedo a la espera de su respuesta. Un cordial saludo.
> *I look forward to hearing from you. Kind regards.*

Quedo a su disposición para cualquier consulta. FORMAL
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.
Offers further help. Also 'Quedo a su entera disposición'.

Agradeciéndole de antemano su atención... FORMAL
Thank you in advance for your attention...
Formal closing before the sign-off. Simpler: 'Gracias de antemano'.

Sin otro particular, ... FORMAL
Without further ado / That is all for now...
Traditional formula before the final greeting in formal letters. Slightly old-fashioned but still used.

> Sin otro particular, reciba un cordial saludo.
> *That is all for now. Kind regards.*

Atentamente, FORMAL
Yours faithfully / Yours sincerely
The most formal sign-off: official letters, complaints, institutions.

Un cordial saludo, / Reciba un cordial saludo, FORMAL
Kind regards,
The all-purpose professional sign-off. Polite but warm.

Saludos, / Un saludo,
Regards, / Best,
Neutral and short: colleagues, quick replies. 'Saludos' alone can feel a bit dry in a first contact.

Un abrazo, INFORMAL
All the best, / Warm wishes,
Colleagues and contacts you know well. Very common in Spanish professional life, not intimate.

Meetings & documents

The paperwork of organisations. Watch out for 'la memoria', 'el acta' and 'la convocatoria' — classic traps.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el punto	*item (on the agenda)*	New meaning: 'punto del orden del día'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
ruegos y preguntas	*any other business* (AOB)	Always the last point of a formal meeting. **Y por último, ruegos y preguntas.** *And finally, any other business.*
el acta (f)	*minutes (of a meeting)*	Feminine but 'el acta', 'las actas'. 'Levantar acta' = to take the minutes officially. **La secretaria levantó acta de la reunión.** *The secretary took the minutes of the meeting.*
convocar	*to call (a meeting, strike, exam)*	**Han convocado una reunión urgente para mañana.** *They've called an urgent meeting for tomorrow.*
el quórum	*quorum*	**No hay quórum, así que no se puede votar.** *There's no quorum, so we can't vote.*
el borrador	*draft*	Also 'board eraser'. 'Hacer un borrador' = to draft. **Te mando el borrador para que lo revises.** *I'm sending you the draft for you to review.*
la memoria	*report (annual or project report)*	New meaning: 'la memoria anual' = annual report; 'memoria de un proyecto' = project report. Also memory. **La memoria anual de la fundación ya está publicada.** *The foundation's annual report has now been published.*
el resumen ejecutivo	*executive summary*	
el anexo	*appendix / annex / attachment*	**Los datos completos figuran en el anexo II.** *The full data appear in Appendix II.*
el plazo de entrega	*deadline / delivery period*	'Plazo' alone = period, deadline. 'Dentro del plazo' = within the deadline; 'fuera de plazo' = late. **El plazo de entrega vence el día 30.** *The deadline is the 30th.*
la prórroga	*extension (of a deadline, contract); extra time (sport)*	**Hemos pedido una prórroga de quince días.** *We've asked for a two-week extension.*
el expediente	*file / case file / record*	'Expediente académico' = academic transcript; 'expediente disciplinario' = disciplinary proceedings. **Su expediente está en trámite.** *Your file is being processed.*
el impreso / el formulario	*form*	'Impreso' = printed form; 'formulario' = any form, including online.
la instancia FORMAL	*formal written request (to an authority)*	Also 'en última instancia' = ultimately, as a last resort.
la copia compulsada	*certified copy*	Now often 'copia auténtica' or 'cotejada'.
el registro	*registry office / official entry / register*	'Registro de entrada' = official receipt stamp on documents you submit.
el/la remitente	*sender*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la destinatario/a	*recipient / addressee*	
con copia (CC) / con copia oculta (CCO)	*CC / BCC*	
la circular	*circular / internal memo*	Han enviado una circular sobre el nuevo horario. *They've sent round a memo about the new timetable.*
el comunicado	*statement / official announcement*	'Comunicado de prensa' = press release.
la ponencia	*paper / talk (at a conference)*	'El/la ponente' = speaker.

Formal administrative verbs

These verbs rarely appear in conversation but are everywhere in official documents and professional emails.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
cumplimentar FORMAL	*to fill in / complete (a form)*	Formal for 'rellenar'. Cumplimente todos los campos obligatorios. *Complete all mandatory fields.*
tramitar	*to process / to handle (paperwork)*	Estamos tramitando su solicitud. *We are processing your application.*
constar	*to be recorded / to appear (in a document); to be certain*	'Que conste' = for the record; 'me consta que…' = I know for a fact that… Me consta que ha hecho todo lo posible. *I know for a fact that she's done everything possible.*
figurar	*to appear / to be listed*	Su nombre no figura en la lista de admitidos. *Your name doesn't appear on the list of accepted candidates.*
rubricar FORMAL	*to sign / to initial; to endorse*	Literally to add your 'rúbrica' (flourish). Figuratively: to seal, confirm ('rubricó su victoria').
notificar	*to notify (officially)*	La resolución se le notificará por escrito. *You will be notified of the decision in writing.*
acreditar	*to prove / to certify / to accredit*	Debe acreditar un nivel C1 de inglés. *You must provide proof of a C1 level of English.*
expedir	*to issue (a document)*	El título se expide en un plazo de seis meses. *The degree certificate is issued within six months.*
formalizar	*to formalise / to finalise (a contract, enrolment)*	Mañana formalizamos la matrícula. *Tomorrow we're finalising the enrolment.*
prorrogar	*to extend (a deadline, contract)*	Han prorrogado el plazo hasta el lunes. *They've extended the deadline to Monday.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
estimar / desestimar FORMAL	*to uphold / to reject (a claim, appeal)*	In administrative language. 'Estimar' also = to estimate, to esteem. **Han desestimado nuestra reclamación.** *Our complaint has been rejected.*
dar el visto bueno	*to give the go-ahead / to approve*	'El visto bueno' (Vº Bº on documents) = approval. **Falta que el director dé el visto bueno.** *We're still waiting for the director to give the go-ahead.*
dar curso a FORMAL	*to process / to deal with (a request)*	
hacer constar FORMAL	*to state / to put on record*	**Quisiera hacer constar mi disconformidad.** *I would like to put my disagreement on record.*

Academic writing

The vocabulary of university essays, dissertations and research papers. Essential if you study or teach in Spanish.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la tesis (doctoral)	*(doctoral) thesis / PhD thesis*	Invariable plural: las tesis. Also 'thesis' meaning a central argument. **Defendió la tesis doctoral en junio.** *She defended her PhD thesis in June.*
el trabajo de fin de grado (TFG)	*undergraduate dissertation / final-year project*	Spoken as 'el te-efe-ge'. **Estoy terminando el TFG sobre migración.** *I'm finishing my undergraduate dissertation on migration.*
el trabajo de fin de máster (TFM)	*master's dissertation / thesis*	
el/la tutor/a	*supervisor (of a thesis)*	Also 'el/la director/a de tesis'. **LatAm:** Latin America also: el/la asesor/a de tesis.
el tribunal	*examining panel / committee*	Also 'court' in law. **El tribunal le dio un sobresaliente.** *The panel awarded her a distinction.*
defender (la tesis)	*to defend (a thesis)*	Stem-changing e→ie: defiendo.
el resumen	*abstract / summary*	In papers, also 'el abstract'.
las palabras clave	*keywords*	
el índice	*table of contents / index*	
el apartado	*section (of a text)*	**Como se explica en el apartado 3.2…** *As explained in section 3.2…*
el marco teórico	*theoretical framework*	**El marco teórico se basa en la sociolingüística.** *The theoretical framework is based on sociolinguistics.*
el estado de la cuestión	*literature review / state of the art*	Also 'el estado del arte' (calque, increasingly common).

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la metodología	*methodology*	
la muestra	*sample*	La muestra está formada por 200 estudiantes. *The sample consists of 200 students.*
la variable	*variable*	
el hallazgo	*finding / discovery*	El hallazgo más llamativo es la diferencia por edades. *The most striking finding is the difference between age groups.*
los resultados	*results / findings*	
la cita	*quotation / citation*	New meaning: also appointment/date (A2). La cita textual va entre comillas. *A direct quotation goes in quotation marks.*
citar	*to quote / to cite*	Como cita Pérez (2019)... *As cited in Pérez (2019)...*
la nota a pie de página	*footnote*	
la bibliografía	*bibliography / reference list*	'Las referencias bibliográficas' = references.
el plagio	*plagiarism*	El programa detecta el plagio automáticamente. *The software detects plagiarism automatically.*
la revisión por pares	*peer review*	
el artículo científico	*research paper / academic article*	

STEAL THE FORMULAS

Formal Spanish rewards copying, not creativity. Save three real formal emails you receive in Spanish and build your own template from them: opening, purpose, request, closing. Then you only change the middle. Remember the colon after the greeting — it's one of the quickest signs of a writer who knows the conventions.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

13 · Politics, business, money, law, science and the big questions of life

Topic vocabulary

These are the topics of serious conversation and quality journalism. Each group gives you the precise terms that educated speakers use, plus notes on traps and differences between Spain and Latin America. Read a news article on one topic, then come back here and tick off every word you met in context.

Politics

Based on the Spanish system (parliamentary monarchy, autonomous communities). Where Latin American systems differ, you'll find a region note.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el poder ejecutivo / legislativo / judicial	*the executive / legislative / judicial branch*	La separación de poderes es la base del sistema. *The separation of powers is the foundation of the system.*
el/la presidente/a del Gobierno	*prime minister (Spain)*	In Spain, the head of government. 'Jefe del Estado' = the King. **LatAm:** In most of Latin America, 'presidente/a' is head of state and government (presidential systems).
el/la jefe/a de Estado	*head of state*	
el/la mandatario/a	*leader / head of state or government*	Journalistic word for top leaders. Los mandatarios europeos se reunieron en Bruselas. *European leaders met in Brussels.*
la monarquía parlamentaria	*parliamentary monarchy*	
el Congreso de los Diputados	*the Congress of Deputies (lower house)*	Often just 'el Congreso'.
el Senado	*the Senate (upper house)*	
el/la diputado/a	*member of parliament / deputy*	**LatAm:** Latin America: also 'legislador/a', 'congresista'.
el escaño	*seat (in parliament)*	El partido ha perdido diez escaños. *The party has lost ten seats.*
la cartera	*ministerial portfolio*	New meaning (also wallet, briefcase). 'Ministro sin cartera'. Ocupará la cartera de Hacienda. *She will hold the finance portfolio.*
la legislatura	*parliamentary term*	Es la tercera reforma en lo que va de legislatura. *It's the third reform so far this parliamentary term.*
el mandato	*term of office; mandate*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la investidura	*investiture (vote to elect the prime minister)*	'Sesión de investidura' in Spanish parliament.
la moción de censura	*motion of no confidence*	**La oposición ha presentado una moción de censura.** *The opposition has tabled a motion of no confidence.*
la cuestión de confianza	*vote of confidence (requested by the government)*	
la coalición	*coalition*	**Gobiernan en coalición desde 2020.** *They have governed in coalition since 2020.*
el pacto	*pact / deal / agreement*	'Pacto de gobierno', 'pacto de Estado' (cross-party agreement).
la oposición	*the opposition*	Plural 'las oposiciones' = competitive state exams in Spain!
gobernar en minoría	*to govern as a minority government*	
el bipartidismo	*two-party system*	
las elecciones generales / autonómicas / municipales	*general / regional / local elections*	
los comicios FORMAL	*elections*	Journalistic synonym, always plural.
las urnas	*ballot boxes; the polls*	'Acudir a las urnas' = to go to the polls. **Millones de ciudadanos acudirán a las urnas el domingo.** *Millions of citizens will go to the polls on Sunday.*
el sufragio	*suffrage / vote*	'Sufragio universal'.
el escrutinio	*vote count*	**Con el 90 % escrutado, el resultado está claro.** *With 90% of the votes counted, the result is clear.*
la abstención	*abstention / turnout of non-voters*	**La abstención superó el 40 %.** *Abstention exceeded 40%.*
el voto en blanco / nulo	*blank vote / spoilt ballot*	
el sondeo	*poll / opinion survey*	'Encuesta' also common; 'sondeo a pie de urna' = exit poll.
el mitin	*political rally*	Plural: los mítines. False friend: not 'meeting' (= reunión). **Cerró la campaña con un mitin multitudinario.** *He closed the campaign with a huge rally.*
el programa electoral	*election manifesto / platform*	
el/la militante	*party member / activist*	'La militancia' = party membership.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la izquierda / la derecha / el centro	*the left / the right / the centre*	'Ser de izquierdas / de derechas' (plural in Spain).
el populismo	*populism*	
la crispación	*tension / heated atmosphere*	Very typical in Spanish political commentary: 'clima de crispación'.
la corrupción	*corruption*	
el tráfico de influencias	*influence peddling*	
destituir / cesar	*to dismiss / remove from office*	'El cese' = dismissal (official).
el decreto	*decree*	'Real decreto', 'decreto ley'.
el proyecto de ley / la proposición de ley	*government bill / private member's (or party) bill*	
el referéndum	*referendum*	Plural: los referendos or referéndums.
la comunidad autónoma	*autonomous community (Spanish region)*	'Las autonomías', 'autonómico/a'.
la soberanía	*sovereignty*	
la cumbre	*summit*	**La cumbre del clima terminó sin acuerdo.** *The climate summit ended without agreement.*
la geopolítica	*geopolitics*	
las sanciones	*sanctions*	'Imponer sanciones'.

Business

Company structures, management and corporate life. Money flows are in the next group.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la sociedad anónima (S.A.)	*public limited company (plc) / corporation*	'Sociedad' = company in legal terms.
la sociedad limitada (S.L.)	*private limited company (Ltd) / LLC*	
la pyme	*SME (small and medium-sized enterprise)*	From PYME = pequeña y mediana empresa. **Las pymes son el 99 % del tejido empresarial.** *SMEs make up 99% of the business landscape.*
el tejido empresarial	*business community / business landscape*	
la empresa emergente	*startup*	'Startup' is used constantly in speech.
el/la emprendedor/a	*entrepreneur*	'Emprender' = to start a business.
el consejo de administración	*board of directors*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la consejero/a delegado/a	*CEO / managing director*	Spain. In Latin America: 'director/a ejecutivo/a', 'gerente general'; 'CEO' everywhere in speech.
la junta general de accionistas	*general shareholders' meeting*	
el organigrama	*organisation chart*	
la sede	*headquarters / head office*	'Sede central', 'sede social'.
la filial	*subsidiary*	
la sucursal	*branch (of a bank, shop)*	
la matriz	*parent company*	'Empresa matriz'.
la fusión	*merger*	**La fusión de los dos bancos creará el mayor grupo del país.** *The merger of the two banks will create the country's largest group.*
la adquisición	*acquisition / takeover*	'OPA' (oferta pública de adquisición) = takeover bid.
la facturación	*turnover / revenue*	'Facturar' = to invoice, to turn over: 'facturamos dos millones al año'. **La facturación ha crecido un 15 %.** *Turnover has grown by 15%.*
los beneficios / las pérdidas	*profits / losses*	'Beneficio' also = benefit. 'Dar beneficios' = to be profitable.
el margen	*margin*	'Margen de beneficio'.
la cuenta de resultados	*income statement / profit and loss account*	
la cuota de mercado	*market share*	
el/la proveedor/a	*supplier / provider*	
la cartera de clientes	*client portfolio / customer base*	
el plan de negocio	*business plan*	
la cadena de suministro	*supply chain*	
la deslocalización	*offshoring / relocation of production*	
la externalización	*outsourcing*	Also 'subcontratación'.
la reestructuración	*restructuring*	
el ERE	*collective redundancy procedure (Spain)*	Expediente de regulación de empleo. 'ERTE' = temporary layoff scheme. **La empresa ha anunciado un ERE que afecta a 300 personas.** *The company has announced collective redundancies affecting 300 people.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el concurso de acreedores	*insolvency proceedings / bankruptcy*	'Declararse en concurso'. Informal: 'quebrar', 'la quiebra'.
la licitación	*public tender*	'Licitar', 'concurso público'.
el pliego de condiciones	*tender specifications / terms of reference*	
cerrar un trato	*to close a deal*	**Cerramos el trato en la segunda reunión.** *We closed the deal at the second meeting.*
la responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC)	*corporate social responsibility (CSR)*	
el retorno de la inversión	*return on investment (ROI)*	
el/la socio/a	*business partner / member (of a club)*	'Socio fundador' = founding partner.
la sinergia	*synergy*	
la marca personal	*personal brand*	
el modelo de negocio	*business model*	

Economy & finance

Macroeconomics, taxes, banks and markets — the vocabulary of the economy section of any newspaper.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el PIB (producto interior bruto)	*GDP*	**LatAm:** Latin America: producto interno bruto. **El PIB creció un 2 % el año pasado.** *GDP grew by 2% last year.*
el IPC (índice de precios de consumo)	*CPI (consumer price index)*	
la inflación	*inflation*	**La inflación se ha moderado en los últimos meses.** *Inflation has eased in recent months.*
la recesión	*recession*	'Entrar en recesión'.
el crecimiento económico	*economic growth*	
el déficit / el superávit	*deficit / surplus*	
la deuda pública	*public / national debt*	
la prima de riesgo	*risk premium (bond spread)*	Very present in Spanish news since the 2010 crisis.
el tipo de interés	*interest rate*	**LatAm:** Latin America: la tasa de interés. **El BCE ha vuelto a subir los tipos de interés.** *The ECB has raised interest rates again.*
la política monetaria / fiscal	*monetary / fiscal policy*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la recaudación	*tax revenue / collection*	'Recaudar' = to collect, to raise (funds).
el IVA	VAT	Impuesto sobre el valor añadido. Region: Latin America 'valor agregado'.
el IRPF	*personal income tax (Spain)*	
el fraude fiscal / la evasión fiscal	*tax fraud / tax evasion*	
el paraíso fiscal	*tax haven*	False friend: not 'paradise' in English.
la economía sumergida	*black / underground economy*	'Cobrar en negro' = to be paid cash in hand.
la bolsa	*stock market / stock exchange*	'La Bolsa de Madrid'; 'cotizar en bolsa' = to be listed.
las acciones	*shares / stock*	
el/la accionista	*shareholder*	
el dividendo	*dividend*	
la cotización	*share price; social security contribution*	Two meanings! 'Cotizar a la Seguridad Social' = to pay national insurance. **La cotización de la empresa se desplomó tras el anuncio.** *The company's share price plummeted after the announcement.*
el índice bursátil	*stock market index*	In Spain: el Ibex 35.
la inversión	*investment*	
la rentabilidad	*profitability / return (yield)*	'Rentable' = profitable. Not related to rent.
el activo / el pasivo	*assets / liabilities*	
el patrimonio	*personal wealth / assets / heritage*	'Patrimonio cultural' = cultural heritage.
la liquidez	*liquidity / cash flow*	
el préstamo / el crédito	*loan / credit (line)*	
el aval	*guarantee / guarantor*	'Avalar' = to guarantee, to endorse.
la morosidad	*loan default / late payment*	'Moroso/a' = defaulter, late payer.
la tasa de paro	*unemployment rate*	Spain: 'paro'; Latin America: 'desempleo', 'desocupación'.
la población activa	*working population / labour force*	
el poder adquisitivo	*purchasing power*	**Los pensionistas han perdido poder adquisitivo.** *Pensioners have lost purchasing power.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el salario mínimo interprofesional (SMI)	*national minimum wage (Spain)*	
la balanza comercial	*trade balance*	
los aranceles	*tariffs*	La subida de aranceles ha afectado a las exportaciones. *The increase in tariffs has hit exports.*
la burbuja inmobiliaria	*housing bubble*	'Estallar la burbuja' = the bubble bursts.
la especulación	*speculation*	
el tipo de cambio	*exchange rate*	
la divisa	*foreign currency*	'Moneda' = currency (and coin).
la criptomoneda	*cryptocurrency*	
el rescate	*bailout; rescue*	El rescate bancario costó miles de millones. *The bank bailout cost billions.*
los recortes	*cuts (spending cuts)*	'Recortes en sanidad'.
la austeridad	*austerity*	
la subvención	*subsidy / grant*	'Subvencionar'.
el Estado del bienestar	*the welfare state*	

Law & justice

Legal vocabulary appears constantly in the news. Careful: 'denunciar' and 'la prueba' don't mean what you might think.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el juzgado	*court (the court building / first-instance court)*	'El tribunal' = court in a broader sense; 'el Tribunal Supremo' = Supreme Court. Mañana tiene que declarar en el juzgado. *He has to give evidence in court tomorrow.*
el/la juez/a	*judge*	'La jueza' and 'la juez' are both used.
el/la fiscal	*public prosecutor*	'La Fiscalía' = Public Prosecutor's Office.
el/la abogado/a defensor/a	*defence lawyer*	
el/la letrado/a FORMAL	*lawyer / counsel (formal)*	
el bufete	*law firm*	Trabaja en un bufete especializado en derecho laboral. *She works at a law firm specialising in employment law.*
el/la notario/a	*notary*	Much more important in Spain than in the UK/US: property sales, wills and companies go through the notary.
el/la acusado/a	*the accused / defendant (criminal)*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la investigado/a	*suspect under investigation*	Formerly 'imputado/a', still heard everywhere.
el/la demandante / el/la demandado/a	*plaintiff (claimant) / defendant (civil case)*	
la demanda	*lawsuit / claim (civil)*	'Poner una demanda' = to sue.
la denuncia	*report (to the police) / complaint*	Trap: 'denunciar' = to report a crime, not just to denounce. 'Poner una denuncia'. **Fui a comisaría a poner una denuncia por el robo.** *I went to the police station to report the theft.*
la querella	*criminal complaint / lawsuit (formal accusation)*	
la vista (oral)	*hearing*	
el/la testigo	*witness*	'Testigo' is m/f: el/la testigo.
declarar	*to testify / give evidence; to declare*	'Prestar declaración'.
la prueba	*piece of evidence*	New meaning (also test, proof). 'Las pruebas' = evidence; 'pruebas concluyentes'. 'Evidencia' is often a false friend (= obviousness). **No hay pruebas suficientes para condenarlo.** *There isn't enough evidence to convict him.*
la sentencia	*ruling / judgement*	Not just 'sentence' (punishment = la pena / la condena).
el fallo	*verdict / ruling*	Also 'fault, failure, mistake'.
el veredicto	*verdict (of a jury)*	
el jurado	*jury; panel of judges (competition)*	
absolver	*to acquit*	Participle: absuelto. 'La absolución'.
condenar	*to sentence / to convict; to condemn*	**Lo condenaron a tres años de prisión.** *He was sentenced to three years in prison.*
la condena / la pena	*sentence / penalty*	'Cumplir condena' = to serve a sentence.
la fianza	*bail; deposit (rent)*	Two meanings: 'salir bajo fianza' / 'la fianza del piso'.
la prisión preventiva	*remand in custody / pre-trial detention*	
la libertad condicional	*parole / probation*	
recurrir / el recurso	*to appeal / appeal*	'Recurrir una sentencia' (also 'apelar').
la jurisprudencia	*case law*	
el Código Penal / Civil	*the Criminal / Civil Code*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el delito leve / grave	*minor / serious offence*	
el/la reo/a FORMAL	*convict / prisoner*	
la presunción de inocencia	*presumption of innocence*	
el Estado de derecho	*the rule of law*	Sin jueces independientes no hay Estado de derecho. *Without independent judges there is no rule of law.*
la normativa	*regulations / rules*	Collective noun: 'según la normativa vigente'.
derogar	*to repeal*	El Parlamento derogó la ley en 2022. *Parliament repealed the law in 2022.*
el vacío legal	*legal loophole / legal vacuum*	
la custodia	*custody*	'Custodia compartida' = joint custody.
el/la procurador/a	*court representative (Spain)*	A Spanish legal profession with no exact English equivalent.
la indemnización	*compensation / damages*	Le concedieron una indemnización de 20.000 euros. *She was awarded 20,000 euros in compensation.*

Science & research

Research methods vocabulary (sample, bias, findings…) is in section 12, Academic writing. Here: the world of science itself.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el/la investigador/a	*researcher*	Es investigadora en el CSIC. *She's a researcher at the CSIC (Spain's national research council).*
la comunidad científica	*the scientific community*	
el método científico	*the scientific method*	
el experimento	*experiment*	'Realizar / llevar a cabo un experimento'.
el ensayo clínico	*clinical trial*	'Ensayo' also = essay, rehearsal.
el grupo de control	*control group*	
el placebo	*placebo*	
la evidencia científica	*scientific evidence*	Accepted in science, but 'pruebas' / 'datos' is often better. 'Evidencia' traditionally = something obvious.
demostrar	*to prove / to demonstrate*	El estudio demuestra que el ejercicio mejora la memoria. *The study proves that exercise improves memory.*
la teoría	*theory*	
el modelo	*model*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la simulación	*simulation*	
el descubrimiento	*discovery*	
la patente	*patent*	'Patentar'.
la I+D / la I+D+i	*R&D / R&D and innovation*	Read 'i más de (más i)'. Investigación, desarrollo e innovación.
la financiación	*funding*	**El laboratorio se ha quedado sin financiación.** *The lab has run out of funding.*
la fuga de cerebros	*brain drain*	**La fuga de cerebros preocupa a las universidades.** *Brain drain worries universities.*
la divulgación científica	*science communication / popular science*	'El/la divulgador/a' = science communicator.
la replicabilidad	*replicability*	
la revista científica	*scientific journal*	'Publicar en una revista de impacto'.
el genoma	*genome*	
la edición genética	*gene editing*	
la célula madre	*stem cell*	
la biotecnología	*biotechnology*	
la clonación	*cloning*	
la bioética	*bioethics*	
el aprendizaje automático	*machine learning*	
la física cuántica	*quantum physics*	
el acelerador de partículas	*particle accelerator*	
la nanotecnología	*nanotechnology*	
el/la astrofísico/a	*astrophysicist*	
la disciplina	*discipline (field of study)*	
interdisciplinar	*interdisciplinary*	**LatAm:** Latin America: interdisciplinario/a.

Life goals

Talking about ambitions, life choices and the direction of your life.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el propósito	*purpose; resolution*	'Propósitos de Año Nuevo' = New Year's resolutions. 'A propósito' = on purpose / by the way.
la aspiración	*aspiration*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la vocación	*vocation / calling*	Descubrió su vocación docente a los cuarenta. *She discovered her calling as a teacher at forty.*
la realización personal	*personal fulfilment*	'Sentirse realizado/a' = to feel fulfilled.
la plenitud	*fullness / fulfilment / prime*	'En la plenitud de su carrera' = at the height of her career.
el proyecto de vida	*life plan / what you want from life*	
el rumbo	*direction / course*	'Cambiar de rumbo', 'sin rumbo' = aimlessly. Después del despido, mi vida cambió de rumbo. *After being made redundant, my life changed direction.*
la ambición	*ambition*	Can be positive or negative in Spanish, as in English.
el sacrificio	*sacrifice*	
la renuncia	*sacrifice / giving something up; resignation*	'Renunciar a algo' = to give something up.
la estabilidad	*stability / security*	
la independencia económica	*financial independence*	
el legado	*legacy*	
fijarse / marcarse un objetivo	*to set yourself a goal*	Este año me he marcado un objetivo: correr una maratón. *This year I've set myself a goal: to run a marathon.*
perseguir un sueño	*to chase / pursue a dream*	
cumplir un sueño	*to fulfil a dream / make a dream come true*	
labrarse un futuro	*to carve out a future (for yourself)*	Emigró para labrarse un futuro mejor. *He emigrated to carve out a better future.*
abrirse camino	*to make your way / to break through*	No es fácil abrirse camino en el mundo del cine. *It isn't easy to make your way in the film industry.*
trazar un plan	*to draw up a plan*	
dejar huella	*to leave a mark / make a lasting impression*	
echar raíces	*to put down roots / to settle*	Después de tantos años viajando, quiero echar raíces. *After so many years of travelling, I want to put down roots.*
sentar la cabeza INFORMAL	*to settle down (become more responsible)*	Also 'sentar cabeza'.
formar una familia	*to start a family*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
dar un giro a su vida	*to turn your life around / make a big change*	A los cincuenta dio un giro a su vida y se fue a vivir al campo. *At fifty he turned his life around and moved to the countryside.*
empezar de cero	*to start from scratch*	
el año sabático	*sabbatical / gap year*	'Tomarse un año sabático'.
la jubilación anticipada	*early retirement*	
la crisis de los cuarenta	*midlife crisis*	
a largo plazo / a corto plazo	*in the long term / in the short term*	
llegar lejos	*to go far*	Con esa actitud, vas a llegar lejos. *With that attitude, you'll go far.*
estar en la cima	*to be at the top (of your career)*	
tocar techo	*to hit the ceiling / to peak*	'Techo de cristal' = glass ceiling.
la encrucijada	*crossroads (in life)*	Estoy en una encrucijada: o acepto el traslado o cambio de empresa. *I'm at a crossroads: either I accept the transfer or I change company.*
la satisfacción vital	*life satisfaction*	

Personal development

The language of coaching, self-improvement and soft skills — everywhere in workshops, podcasts and LinkedIn.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el crecimiento personal	*personal growth*	
el autoconocimiento	*self-knowledge / self-awareness*	
la confianza en uno mismo	*self-confidence*	'Confianza en sí mismo/a'. Hablar en público le ha dado más confianza en sí misma. *Speaking in public has given her more self-confidence.*
la resiliencia	*resilience*	La resiliencia se puede entrenar. *Resilience can be trained.*
la inteligencia emocional	*emotional intelligence*	
la gestión del tiempo	*time management*	
la perseverancia	*perseverance*	
la zona de confort	*comfort zone*	'Salir de la zona de confort'. Also 'zona de comodidad'.
la mentalidad de crecimiento	*growth mindset*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
adquirir / romper un hábito	*to form / break a habit*	**Cuesta unas semanas adquirir un hábito nuevo.** *It takes a few weeks to form a new habit.*
procrastinar	*to procrastinate*	'La procrastinación'. Everyday Spanish: 'dejarlo todo para mañana / para última hora'.
la asertividad	*assertiveness*	'Ser asertivo/a'.
poner límites	*to set boundaries*	**He aprendido a poner límites en el trabajo.** *I've learned to set boundaries at work.*
la escucha activa	*active listening*	
la retroalimentación	*feedback*	In practice, 'el feedback' is very common at work. **Agradezco cualquier retroalimentación sobre mi presentación.** *I'd welcome any feedback on my presentation.*
el/la mentor/a	*mentor*	'La mentoría' = mentoring.
la superación personal	*self-improvement / overcoming your limits*	'Afán de superación' = drive to improve.
superarse	*to improve yourself / to surpass yourself*	**Cada año intenta superarse un poco más.** *Every year she tries to push herself a little further.*
la introspección	*introspection*	
la autocrítica	*self-criticism*	Often positive in Spanish: 'hacer autocrítica' = to reflect honestly on your own mistakes.
la gratitud	*gratitude*	
la atención plena	*mindfulness*	'Mindfulness' is also widely used.
la proactividad	*proactiveness*	'Ser proactivo/a'.
el liderazgo	*leadership*	
la tolerancia a la frustración	*tolerance of frustration / frustration tolerance*	
aprender de los errores	*to learn from your mistakes*	
la motivación intrínseca / extrínseca	*intrinsic / extrinsic motivation*	
las habilidades blandas	*soft skills*	Also 'competencias transversales'.
el potencial	*potential*	'Desarrollar todo su potencial'.
la autodisciplina	*self-discipline*	
la versión de uno mismo INFORMAL	*version of yourself*	Coaching cliché: 'la mejor versión de ti mismo'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el bienestar	*well-being*	**Las empresas invierten cada vez más en el bienestar de sus empleados.** *Companies are investing more and more in employee well-being.*
salir reforzado/a	*to come out stronger*	**Salió reforzada de la crisis.** *She came out of the crisis stronger.*

Psychology & the mind

Mental health is discussed much more openly in Spain today. These terms will help you talk about it precisely and respectfully.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la psique	*psyche*	
el inconsciente / el subconsciente	*the unconscious / the subconscious*	
el trastorno	*disorder*	'Trastorno de ansiedad', 'trastorno alimentario', 'trastorno bipolar'.
la depresión	*depression*	
el estrés postraumático	*post-traumatic stress (PTSD)*	
el TDAH	*ADHD*	Trastorno por déficit de atención e hiperactividad.
el TOC	*OCD*	Trastorno obsesivo-compulsivo.
la fobia	*phobia*	
el trauma	*trauma*	'Traumático/a'. Colloquially 'estar traumatizado' is used jokingly.
el duelo	*grief / mourning*	'Hacer el duelo' = to go through the grieving process. Also 'duel'. **Cada persona vive el duelo a su manera.** *Everyone experiences grief in their own way.*
el apego	*attachment*	'Estilo de apego', 'apego seguro / ansioso'.
el/la psicólogo/a	*psychologist / therapist*	In Spain people usually say 'ir al psicólogo'.
el/la psiquiatra	*psychiatrist*	Medical doctor who can prescribe medication.
el/la terapeuta	*therapist*	
el diagnóstico	*diagnosis*	
el mecanismo de defensa	*defence mechanism*	
la negación	*denial*	'Estar en fase de negación'.
la proyección	*projection*	
reprimir	*to repress / suppress*	'Reprimir las emociones'.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la disonancia cognitiva	*cognitive dissonance*	
la cognición	*cognition*	'Cognitivo/a'.
la neurociencia	*neuroscience*	
el rasgo de personalidad	*personality trait*	
el temperamento	*temperament*	
somatizar	*to somatise (experience stress as physical symptoms)*	Very common in everyday Spain: 'Lo somatizo todo en el estómago'.
estar quemado/a INFORMAL	*to be burnt out*	'El síndrome de desgaste profesional' / 'burnout'.
el agotamiento	*exhaustion*	
el impulso	*impulse; drive*	
la autoayuda	*self-help*	'Libros de autoayuda'.
el sentimiento de culpa	*guilt / feelings of guilt*	
la rumiación	*rumination*	Everyday: 'darle vueltas a algo' = to keep going over something.
el sesgo de confirmación	*confirmation bias*	See also 'el sesgo' in section 12.

Abstract concepts: words that need care

These pairs and groups cause real confusion. Read the distinctions carefully.

la conciencia / la consciencia

conscience; awareness / consciousness

NOUN FEMININE C1

'Conciencia' covers both moral conscience and awareness ('tener conciencia de algo'). 'Consciencia' is used mainly for physical or psychological consciousness (being awake and aware). The RAE accepts 'conciencia' for both, so when in doubt, use 'conciencia'.

conciencia (moral) — *conscience*

› Tengo la conciencia tranquila.
My conscience is clear.

conciencia (awareness) — *awareness*

› Hay cada vez más conciencia ecológica.
There's growing environmental awareness.

consciencia — *consciousness*

› Perdió la consciencia durante unos segundos.
He lost consciousness for a few seconds.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **tomar conciencia de** *to become aware of* · **remorderle a alguien la conciencia** *to have a guilty conscience* · **a conciencia** *thoroughly*

la ética / la moral

ethics / morality (morals)

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

'La ética' is the reflection on what is right — often professional or philosophical ('código ético'). 'La moral' is the set of values a person or society actually lives by. As adjectives: 'ético' = ethical; 'moral' = moral. Careful: 'la moral' also means morale!

› Es una cuestión de ética profesional.
It's a question of professional ethics.

› Tras la derrota, el equipo tenía la moral por los suelos.
After the defeat, the team's morale was at rock bottom.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La moral del equipo (morality)~~ — in context of motivation it means morale. 'Morality' in a society = la moral / los valores morales.

el azar / la suerte / el destino

chance / luck / fate (destiny)

NOUN · M & F (DIFFERENT MEANING) · C1

'El azar' = pure chance, randomness, with no good or bad charge. 'La suerte' = luck, good or bad. 'El destino' = fate, as if things were meant to be (also destination).

› Nos conocimos por azar, en una estación de tren.
We met by chance at a train station.

› Creo que no fue el destino, sino pura casualidad.
I don't think it was fate, just pure coincidence.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **al azar** *at random* · **los juegos de azar** *games of chance / gambling* · **tentar a la suerte** *to push your luck*

el sentido

meaning; sense; direction

NOUN · MASCULINE · C1

At C1, key for abstract discussion: 'el sentido de la vida' = the meaning of life; 'tener sentido' = to make sense; 'en cierto sentido' = in a sense. Also the five senses and the direction of traffic.

› Muchos buscan dar sentido a su trabajo.
Many people seek to give meaning to their work.

› En cierto sentido, tienes razón.
In a sense, you're right.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **carecer de sentido** *to be meaningless / pointless* · **en sentido figurado** *figuratively* · **sentido común** *common sense*

la esencia

essence; the heart of something

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

What makes something what it is. 'En esencia' = essentially, in essence. Also 'perfume essence'.

› La esencia del proyecto sigue siendo la misma.
The essence of the project remains the same.

› En esencia, lo que propone es trabajar menos horas.
In essence, what she's proposing is working fewer hours.

USEFUL COMBINATIONS **esencial** *essential* · **lo esencial** *the essentials / what really matters*

la ambigüedad

ambiguity

NOUN · FEMININE · C1

Something that can be understood in more than one way. Note the diaeresis (ü): the 'u' is pronounced. Adjective: 'ambiguo/a'.

› La ambigüedad del contrato ha generado conflictos.
The ambiguity of the contract has caused disputes.

NOTE Spelling: ambigüedad, ambiguo (no diaeresis in 'ambiguo', because u is followed by o).

Abstract concepts

The vocabulary of philosophy, essays and deep conversations at 2 am.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la trascendencia	*significance; transcendence*	Usually = importance, far-reaching consequences: 'una decisión de gran trascendencia'. 'Trascendental' = momentous. Fue un acuerdo de enorme trascendencia histórica. *It was an agreement of enormous historical significance.*
la identidad	*identity*	La lengua es parte de nuestra identidad. *Language is part of our identity.*
el libre albedrío	*free will*	
el determinismo	*determinism*	
la apariencia	*appearance (what seems)*	'Las apariencias engañan' = appearances can be deceptive.
la percepción	*perception*	La percepción del riesgo cambia con la edad. *The perception of risk changes with age.*
la existencia	*existence*	
la condición humana	*the human condition*	
la dignidad	*dignity*	

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la igualdad / la equidad	*equality / equity (fairness)*	'Equidad' = fairness adjusted to needs, not identical treatment.
la virtud / el vicio	*virtue / vice*	
el bien y el mal	*good and evil*	
la utopía	*utopia*	'Utópico/a'.
el vacío	*emptiness / void*	'Sentir un vacío' = to feel empty.
lo efímero	*the ephemeral / what is fleeting*	'Lo' + adjective makes an abstract noun: lo absurdo, lo cotidiano, lo sagrado.
lo absurdo	*the absurd / absurdity*	
la finitud FORMAL	*finitude (being finite)*	
la eternidad	*eternity*	
la subjetividad / la objetividad	*subjectivity / objectivity*	
el relativismo	*relativism*	
la autenticidad	*authenticity*	
los valores	*values*	**Compartimos los mismos valores.** *We share the same values.*
el dogma	*dogma*	'Dogmático/a'.
la fe	*faith*	'Tener fe en algo / alguien'; 'de buena fe' = in good faith.
la intuición	*intuition*	
la belleza	*beauty*	
la naturaleza humana	*human nature*	
el absoluto	*the absolute*	
la causalidad	*causality*	Don't confuse with 'casualidad' (coincidence).

THINK IN TOPICS, NOT LISTS

Choose one topic a week and 'live' in it: read two articles in El País or a Latin American paper, listen to one podcast episode, and write five sentences giving your own opinion using at least ten words from the list. Abstract vocabulary only sticks when you use it to say something you actually think.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

14 · The fine print of advanced Spanish

Common mistakes

At C1 nobody misunderstands you any more. The mistakes that remain are subtle: a word with three meanings you only use one way, a preposition that sounds 'almost' right, a business anglicism that slipped in from your working life in English. These are the details that separate a very good speaker from a polished one. Read each 'why', then rewrite the correct version in a sentence about your own life.

Words with more than one face

Verbs you already know, but used with less range or precision than a native speaker would.

suponer: suppose, entail, be supposed to

✗ ~~*Este proyecto significa mucho trabajo~~. / ~~*Estoy supuesto a llamarla~~.

✓ Este proyecto supone mucho trabajo. / Se supone que tengo que llamarla.

Suponer has three key uses. 1) suponer que + indicative = to suppose, assume (Supongo que vendrá). 2) suponer + noun = to mean, entail, represent (Supone un gran esfuerzo): much more natural than 'significar' for costs, efforts and changes. 3) se supone que = to be supposed to (expectation or duty). English 'be supposed to' never becomes ~~*estar supuesto a~~.

- Supongo que ya te habrán contestado.
  I assume they'll have got back to you by now.
- Mudarnos a Lisboa supuso un cambio enorme para los niños.
  Moving to Lisbon meant a huge change for the kids.
- Se supone que el informe estaba listo ayer, pero no hay ni rastro de él.
  The report was supposed to be ready yesterday, but there's no sign of it.

REMEMBER Also note 'por supuesto' (of course) and 'supuestamente' (allegedly), very common in the news.

plantear vs plantearse

✗ ~~*Planteo cambiar de trabajo~~. / ~~*Me planteé el problema a mi jefa~~.

✓ Me planteo cambiar de trabajo. / Le planteé el problema a mi jefa.

Plantear (non-reflexive) = to raise, put forward or pose something to others: a question, a problem, a proposal, a challenge. Plantearse (reflexive) = to consider something yourself, to ask yourself, to think about doing it. Outward vs inward.

- La nueva ley plantea serias dudas sobre la privacidad.
  The new law raises serious questions about privacy.
- Lucía se está planteando volver a estudiar.
  Lucía is thinking about going back to university.
- Nunca me lo había planteado desde ese punto de vista.
  I'd never looked at it from that angle.

REMEMBER plantear un reto, una propuesta, una pregunta (to others) · plantearse un objetivo, una pregunta, dejarlo todo (to yourself).

deber (obligation) vs deber de (probability)

✗ ~~*Debes de entregar el informe el viernes~~.

✓ Debes entregar el informe el viernes.

In careful Spanish, deber + infinitive = must, should (obligation or advice), and deber de + infinitive = must (supposition: 'I suppose that…'). In casual speech many natives use deber without 'de' for both, and the RAE accepts it. But using 'deber de' for obligation is considered a mistake, especially in writing. Safe rule: obligation = never 'de'.

- Los candidatos deben presentar la solicitud antes del día 15.
  Candidates must submit their application before the 15th.
- Debe de haber un error en la factura: nos han cobrado dos veces.
  There must be a mistake on the invoice: they've charged us twice.
- No contesta. Debe de estar en una reunión.
  She's not answering. She must be in a meeting.

REMEMBER If you can say 'probablemente' instead, you need 'deber de'.

adolecer de ≠ to suffer pain

✗ ~~*Mi abuela adolece de dolores de espalda~~.

✓ Mi abuela sufre / padece dolores de espalda. · El informe adolece de falta de rigor.

Adolecer de looks like 'dolor', so learners use it for pain or illness. In modern formal Spanish it means to have a defect or flaw, to suffer from a shortcoming: a plan, a text or a system adolece de something. And careful writers avoid '~~*adolecer de~~'; meaning 'to lack' on its own: it's 'adolece de falta de…' or simply 'carece de…'.

- El proyecto adolece de una planificación realista.
  The project suffers from a lack of realistic planning.
- La película adolece de los defectos típicos de una ópera prima.
  The film has the typical flaws of a first feature.

REMEMBER People padecen / sufren; plans, texts and institutions adolecen.

el mar or la mar?

✗ ~~*La mar Mediterránea · *Vamos a la mar este verano~~.

✓ El mar Mediterráneo · Vamos a la playa / al mar este verano.

Mar is normally masculine: el mar, el mar Caribe, un mar en calma. The feminine 'la mar' belongs to sailors, fishermen and poetry (hacerse a la mar, la mar está picada, alta mar), and to the intensifier 'la mar de' = really, very (colloquial). Don't use the feminine with names of seas.

- Desde el hotel se ve el mar.
  You can see the sea from the hotel.
- Los pescadores no salieron porque la mar estaba muy picada.
  The fishermen didn't go out because the sea was very rough.
- La cena estuvo la mar de bien.
  Dinner was really lovely.

sendos ≠ both

✗ *~~Sendos candidatos dijeron lo mismo~~.

✓ Ambos candidatos dijeron lo mismo. · Los dos candidatos llegaron con sendos asesores.

Sendos/sendas is a formal distributive word: 'one each'. 'Los ministros firmaron sendos acuerdos' = each minister signed one agreement. It does NOT mean 'both' (= ambos, los dos) and never means 'big' or 'huge', another common misuse among natives.

- Ana y Diego llegaron con sendas maletas.
  Ana and Diego each arrived with a suitcase.
- Los dos países publicaron sendos comunicados.
  The two countries each issued a statement.

REMEMBER Test: if you can add 'one each', sendos works. If you mean 'the two of them', say ambos.

detentar vs ostentar

✗ *~~La atleta detenta el récord del mundo desde 2022~~.

✓ La atleta ostenta / tiene el récord del mundo desde 2022.

Ostentar = to hold (a title, a post, a record) legitimately, and also 'to show off'. Detentar strictly means to hold power or a position illegitimately, without the right to it. In journalism the two are often confused, but if you want to sound precise and neutral, use ostentar (or simply ocupar, tener).

- Ostenta el cargo de presidenta desde hace seis años.
  She has held the post of president for six years.
- La junta militar detentó el poder durante una década.
  The military junta held power (illegitimately) for a decade.

álgido = the peak, not the cold

✗ *~~Fue el momento más álgido~~: hacía un frío terrible.

✓ El momento álgido del concierto fue el bis final.

Álgido originally meant 'icy', but today it's used almost only for the critical or climactic moment of something: el momento / punto álgido = the peak, the height. Don't use it to talk about the weather.

- En el momento más álgido de la crisis, la empresa despidió a doscientas personas.
  At the height of the crisis, the company laid off two hundred people.
- La negociación está en su punto álgido.
  Negotiations are at a critical stage.

Look-alikes and prepositions

Small differences in spelling or prepositions that even natives get wrong. Getting them right makes your writing look effortlessly educated.

prever (*preveer) vs proveer

✗ ~~*No preveímos tantos problemas~~. / ~~*Se preveé lluvia~~.

✓ No previmos tantos problemas. / Se prevé lluvia.

Prever = to foresee, anticipate; it's 'pre + ver' and conjugates exactly like ver: preveo, prevés, prevé, previmos, previsto. The form ~~*preveer doesn~~';t exist; it's a mix with proveer = to provide, supply (proveer a alguien de algo), which conjugates like leer: proveyó, provisto / proveído.

- Nadie previó el impacto que tendría la noticia.
  Nobody foresaw the impact the news would have.
- La ONG proveyó de alimentos a las familias afectadas.
  The NGO supplied the affected families with food.

REMEMBER If you can split it into pre + ver ('see before'), conjugate it like ver.

infligir vs infringir

✗ ~~*Infligió las normas de tráfico~~. / ~~*Les infringieron una dura derrota~~.

✓ Infringió las normas de tráfico. / Les infligieron una dura derrota.

Infringir = to break or violate a law, rule or contract (infringe). Infligir = to inflict damage, a punishment or a defeat on someone. The English words help: infringe = infringir, inflict = infligir.

- La empresa fue multada por infringir la normativa de protección de datos.
  The company was fined for breaching data protection regulations.
- El temporal infligió daños graves en la costa.
  The storm inflicted serious damage on the coast.

'en base a' → con base en, a partir de, según

✗ ~~*En base a los datos~~, hemos decidido cerrar la tienda.

✓ A partir de los datos / Con base en los datos / Según los datos, hemos decidido cerrar la tienda.

'En base a' is everywhere in offices and the media, and the RAE now tolerates it, but style guides still recommend avoiding it in careful writing. Better options: con base en, sobre la base de, a partir de, según, basándonos en, de acuerdo con.

- Sobre la base de este estudio, proponemos tres medidas.
  On the basis of this study, we propose three measures.
- Basándonos en su experiencia, le ofrecemos el puesto de coordinadora.
  Based on your experience, we're offering you the coordinator position.

REMEMBER In a CV, report or formal email, 'en base a' is a small red flag. Swap it for 'a partir de' and you're safe.

bajo mi punto de vista → desde mi punto de vista

✗ ~~*Bajo mi punto de vista~~, la reforma llega tarde.

✓ Desde mi punto de vista / A mi modo de ver / En mi opinión, la reforma llega tarde.

A point of view is a place you look from, so Spanish style guides prefer 'desde'. 'Bajo mi punto de vista' is very common in speech and not a disaster, but in formal writing or exams 'desde mi punto de vista' is the polished choice. ('Bajo' does work with 'bajo mi responsabilidad', 'bajo ningún concepto'.)

› **Desde un punto de vista económico, la propuesta no se sostiene.**
From an economic point of view, the proposal doesn't hold up.

'a nivel' in formal writing: use en el plano, en el ámbito

✗ ~~*A nivel político y a nivel de comunicación~~, la campaña ha fallado.

✓ En el plano político y en el de la comunicación, la campaña ha fallado.

You already know not to use 'a nivel de' for 'regarding'. At C1, the next step is having elegant alternatives ready for essays and reports: en el plano + adjective, en el ámbito de, en materia de, en lo que respecta a, desde el punto de vista + adjective. Keep 'a nivel' for real levels: a nivel nacional, a nivel del mar, a nivel usuario (informal tech).

› **En materia de vivienda, el Gobierno no ha cumplido sus promesas.**
On housing, the government hasn't kept its promises.

› **En el ámbito sanitario, los cambios han sido notables.**
In healthcare, the changes have been significant.

The 'gerund of afterwards'

✗ ~~*El ladrón huyó~~, siendo detenido dos horas después.

✓ El ladrón huyó y fue detenido dos horas después.

In Spanish the gerund (-ando, -iendo) expresses something simultaneous with, or prior to, the main verb, never something that happens later or as a result. English '..., resulting in...' or '..., being arrested later' must become y + verb, lo que + verb, or a new sentence. This is one of the most-corrected errors in formal Spanish writing.

› **Subieron los precios, lo que provocó una caída de las ventas.**
Prices went up, which led to a drop in sales.

› **Se graduó en 2015 y empezó a trabajar en Berlín un año después.**
She graduated in 2015, going on to work in Berlin a year later.

REMEMBER Before writing a gerund, ask: is this happening at the same time? If it's 'afterwards' or 'as a result', use y or lo que.

Business Spanish with an English accent

If you work in English, these calques slip in without you noticing. Many natives in multinationals use them too, but they sound like translated English to most ears. Here's the natural Spanish.

~~*aplicar a un puesto~~ → solicitar un puesto / postularse

✗ ~~*He aplicado a tres puestos esta semana~~.

✓ He solicitado tres puestos esta semana. / Me he presentado a tres ofertas esta semana.

Aplicar means to apply something (a cream, a rule, a discount, a technique). For jobs, grants and courses say solicitar, presentarse a, enviar la candidatura or optar a. In Latin America 'postularse a / para un puesto' is the standard choice.

- Javi ha solicitado una beca para hacer el máster en Edimburgo.
  Javi has applied for a grant to do his master's in Edinburgh.
- Se aplicará un descuento del 10 % a los socios.
  Members will get a 10% discount.

~~*hacer sentido~~ → tener sentido

✗ ~~*Eso no hace sentido~~.

✓ Eso no tiene sentido. / Eso no tiene ni pies ni cabeza.

Literal calque of 'it makes sense'. In Spanish things tienen sentido. Related phrases: cobrar sentido (to start to make sense), carecer de sentido (formal), no tener ni pies ni cabeza (to make no sense at all).

- Ahora que conozco a su familia, todo cobra sentido.
  Now that I've met her family, it all makes sense.
- ¿Tiene sentido seguir invirtiendo en este proyecto?
  Does it make sense to keep investing in this project?

~~*en una base diaria~~ → a diario

✗ ~~*Revisamos los datos en una base diaria / semanal~~.

✓ Revisamos los datos a diario / cada día / semanalmente / una vez por semana.

'On a daily basis' is a typical business-English structure, but Spanish says it much more simply: a diario, diariamente, todos los días, semanalmente, mensualmente, de forma periódica.

- Trato con clientes internacionales a diario.
  I deal with international clients on a daily basis.
- El equipo se reúne una vez al mes.
  The team meets on a monthly basis.

~~*remarcar~~ → destacar, subrayar, recalcar

✗ ~~*Quiero remarcar la importancia de este punto~~.

✓ Quiero destacar / subrayar / recalcar / hacer hincapié en la importancia de este punto.

Remarcar exists, but it mostly means 'to mark again'. For 'to point out, to stress' Spanish prefers destacar, subrayar, recalcar, hacer hincapié en, poner de relieve or señalar. A 'remark' (comment) is un comentario or una observación.

- La directora recalcó que el plazo no se puede ampliar.
  The director stressed that the deadline can't be extended.
- Me gustaría hacer una observación sobre el presupuesto.
  I'd like to make a remark about the budget.

~~*ser consistente~~ → ser coherente / constante

✗ ~~*Tienes que ser consistente con lo que dices~~. / ~~*Sus resultados son muy consistentes~~.

✓ Tienes que ser coherente con lo que dices. / Sus resultados son muy constantes / regulares.

Consistente in Spanish means solid, firm, thick or well-founded (una salsa consistente, un argumento consistente). English 'consistent' is usually coherente (in line with your words or principles) or constante / regular (always at the same level).

- Para aprender un idioma, más que talento hace falta constancia.
  To learn a language, you need consistency more than talent.
- Sus decisiones no son coherentes con los valores de la empresa.
  Her decisions aren't consistent with the company's values.

~~*jugar un rol~~ → desempeñar un papel

✗ ~~*Las redes sociales juegan un rol clave en la campaña~~.

✓ Las redes sociales desempeñan un papel clave en la campaña.

'Jugar un papel / un rol' is a calque of 'to play a role' and is very widespread, but careful Spanish prefers desempeñar, tener, cumplir or ejercer un papel / una función. 'Rol' itself is fine (los roles de género, un juego de rol), it's the verb 'jugar' that gives you away.

- La educación desempeña un papel fundamental en la igualdad de oportunidades.
  Education plays a fundamental role in equal opportunities.
- Su abuela tuvo un papel decisivo en su vocación.
  His grandmother played a decisive role in his career choice.

*~~tomar lugar~~ → tener lugar

✗ *~~La conferencia tomará lugar en Valencia~~.

✓ La conferencia tendrá lugar en Valencia. / Se celebrará en Valencia.

'To take place' = tener lugar, celebrarse (events, meetings, weddings), producirse (incidents, changes). *~~Tomar lugar is a direct translation from English and doesn~~';t exist.

- La firma del acuerdo se celebrará el próximo lunes.
  The signing of the agreement will take place next Monday.
- El accidente se produjo a primera hora de la mañana.
  The accident took place early in the morning.

*~~en orden a~~ → para, con el fin de

✗ *~~En orden a mejorar el servicio~~, hemos cambiado el horario.

✓ Con el fin de / Para / Con objeto de mejorar el servicio, hemos cambiado el horario.

'In order to' is para, or in formal texts con el fin de, con objeto de, a fin de. 'En orden a' sounds like a calque and old-fashioned legal jargon.

- A fin de agilizar el proceso, le rogamos que adjunte toda la documentación.
  In order to speed up the process, please attach all the documents.

The formal email: register from start to finish

✗ *~~Querido Sr~~. López: … ¿Puedes mandarme el contrato? … Saludos,

✓ Estimado Sr. López: … ¿Podría enviarme el contrato? … Un cordial saludo,

Three classic slips. 1) 'Querido/a' is for people you know; with strangers or in professional contexts use Estimado/a + name, or Buenos días if the tone is lighter. 2) Spanish uses a colon after the greeting, not a comma. 3) Choose tú or usted and keep it consistent throughout: mixing 'puedes' with 'le agradecería' is the most common error. Close with Un cordial saludo, Atentamente (very formal) or Un saludo (neutral).

- Estimada Sra. Ruiz: Le escribo en relación con la factura n.º 245.
  Dear Ms Ruiz, I am writing regarding invoice no. 245.
- Quedo a la espera de su respuesta. Un cordial saludo,
  I look forward to hearing from you. Kind regards,

REMEMBER Mirror the other person: if they write to you with tú and 'Un abrazo', you can relax your register too.

BUILD YOUR OWN ERROR LIST

At this level, your mistakes are personal: everyone has three or four that keep coming back. Keep a short list of yours, and before sending any important email in Spanish, scan it for those words only. Five minutes of targeted checking beats rereading everything.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

15 · The sophisticated traps

False friends

These are the false friends that survive into advanced level, because they live in formal, legal, academic and media Spanish. Many of them are 'half' false friends: they share one meaning with English but have another, more frequent one that catches you out. For each, learn what it really means, and what to say when you need the English idea.

Formal, legal and public life

The words you meet in the news, in contracts and at work.

advertir ≠ English "to advertise"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to warn · (formal) to notice, to observe

ENGLISH "TO ADVERTISE" MEANS
to promote a product or service publicly

SAY INSTEAD For 'to advertise' say: anunciar, hacer publicidad de, promocionar. ('They advertise on TV' = Se anuncian en la tele.) At C1, also notice the formal meaning 'to notice': se advierte una mejora = an improvement can be seen.

- Te lo advierto: si llegas tarde otra vez, no te espero.
  I'm warning you: if you're late again, I won't wait for you.
- En el último trimestre se advierte un ligero aumento del consumo.
  A slight rise in consumption can be observed in the last quarter.
- Anuncian el nuevo modelo en todas las marquesinas de la ciudad.
  They're advertising the new model at every bus stop in the city.

contemplar ≠ English "to contemplate"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to gaze at, to look at calmly · to provide for, to include (laws, plans) · to consider

ENGLISH "TO CONTEMPLATE" MEANS
to think deeply about; to consider doing something

SAY INSTEAD Partly shared, but notice the legal use: 'la ley contempla…' = the law provides for / covers. For 'I'm contemplating moving abroad', plantearse is more natural: Me estoy planteando irme al extranjero.

- El convenio contempla dos días más de vacaciones.
  The agreement provides for two more days of holiday.
- Nos quedamos un buen rato contemplando el atardecer.
  We stayed for a while gazing at the sunset.
- No contemplamos la posibilidad de cancelar el evento.
  We're not considering the possibility of cancelling the event.

notorio ≠ English "notorious"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
well known, evident, obvious (neutral or positive)

ENGLISH "NOTORIOUS" MEANS
famous for something bad

SAY INSTEAD For 'notorious' say: tristemente célebre, de mala fama, conocido por (algo negativo). ('a notorious criminal' = un delincuente tristemente célebre.) Hecho notorio = a well-known fact.

- Es notorio que la empresa atraviesa dificultades.
  It's common knowledge that the company is going through difficulties.
- Hubo una mejora notoria en sus resultados.
  There was a marked improvement in his results.
- Ese barrio era tristemente célebre por los robos.
  That neighbourhood was notorious for break-ins.

particular ≠ English "particular"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
private (not public or professional) · specific · peculiar, unusual

ENGLISH "PARTICULAR" MEANS
specific; also fussy, hard to please

SAY INSTEAD For 'fussy / particular' (about food, details) say: exigente, quisquilloso/a, maniático/a. ('He's very particular about his coffee' = Es muy maniático con el café.) And note: clases particulares = private lessons, un particular = a private individual.

- Doy clases particulares de inglés por las tardes.
  I give private English lessons in the afternoons.
- Vendo el piso de particular a particular, sin agencia.
  I'm selling the flat privately, without an agency.
- Tiene un sentido del humor muy particular.
  He has a rather peculiar sense of humour.

la audiencia ≠ English "audience"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
TV/radio audience, ratings · formal hearing or meeting · (law) a court

ENGLISH "AUDIENCE" MEANS
the people watching a show, concert or talk

SAY INSTEAD For the people in a theatre, cinema, concert or talk, say el público. ('The audience applauded' = El público aplaudió.) Audiencia is for TV/radio (índice de audiencia), formal meetings (una audiencia con el Papa) and courts (la Audiencia Nacional, la Audiencia Provincial).

- El debate tuvo una audiencia de cuatro millones de espectadores.
  The debate had a TV audience of four million viewers.
- El caso se juzgará en la Audiencia Provincial de Sevilla.
  The case will be tried at the Provincial Court of Seville.
- Al final de la charla, el público hizo muchas preguntas.
  At the end of the talk, the audience asked lots of questions.

la injuria ≠ English "injury"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
insult, offensive statement (legal: defamation, slander)

ENGLISH "INJURY" MEANS
physical harm to the body

SAY INSTEAD For 'injury' say: la lesión (sport, accidents), la herida (a wound). ('a knee injury' = una lesión de rodilla.) Injurias y calumnias = insults and slander, a legal phrase you'll see in the news.

- El político lo denunció por injurias.
  The politician sued him for defamation.
- Marcos no jugará el domingo por una lesión en el tobillo.
  Marcos won't play on Sunday because of an ankle injury.

la sanidad ≠ English "sanity"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
healthcare, the health system · public health

ENGLISH "SANITY" MEANS
being mentally healthy, of sound mind

SAY INSTEAD For 'sanity' say: la cordura, el juicio, la salud mental. ('to lose your sanity' = perder la cabeza / el juicio.) La sanidad pública = public healthcare; el Ministerio de Sanidad = Ministry of Health.

- La sanidad pública española es universal.
  Spanish public healthcare is universal.
- Con tres niños pequeños en casa, mantener la cordura es todo un reto.
  With three small children at home, keeping your sanity is quite a challenge.

el oficio ≠ English "office"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
trade, craft, profession (especially manual) · experience, know-how · official letter

ENGLISH "OFFICE" MEANS
a place where people work at desks; a public post

SAY INSTEAD For 'office' (place) say la oficina, el despacho (your own room); for a political post, el cargo. ('to take office' = tomar posesión del cargo.) Tener oficio = to have experience; abogado de oficio = court-appointed lawyer.

- Mi abuelo era carpintero y aprendió el oficio de su padre.
  My grandfather was a carpenter and learnt the trade from his father.
- Se nota que tiene oficio: lo resolvió en diez minutos.
  You can tell she's experienced: she sorted it out in ten minutes.
- El nuevo alcalde tomará posesión del cargo en junio.
  The new mayor will take office in June.

la facultad ≠ English "faculty"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
university faculty/school (and its building) · ability, faculty (mental, physical) · power, authority

ENGLISH "FACULTY" MEANS
(especially US) the teaching staff of a university

SAY INSTEAD For 'faculty' meaning teaching staff, say el profesorado, el personal docente, el claustro. La facultad is the school or the building: Nos vemos en la cafetería de la facultad.

- Estudió en la Facultad de Derecho de Salamanca.
  She studied at the Law School in Salamanca.
- A sus noventa años conserva todas sus facultades.
  At ninety, he's still in full possession of his faculties.
- El profesorado votó en contra de la reforma.
  The faculty voted against the reform.

el/la editor/a ≠ English "editor"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
publisher (person) · editor in a broad sense (of a text, a collection, software)

ENGLISH "EDITOR" MEANS
the person who corrects texts or runs a newspaper or magazine

SAY INSTEAD Depends on the job: newspaper editor = el/la director/a; editor-in-chief = el/la redactor/a jefe; copy editor = el/la corrector/a; film editor = el/la montador/a. The publishing company is la editorial.

- Su editora le ha pedido otra novela para el año que viene.
  Her publisher has asked her for another novel next year.
- La directora del periódico firmó el editorial.
  The newspaper's editor wrote the editorial.
- Trabaja como correctora para varias editoriales.
  She works as a copy editor for several publishing houses.

Feelings, character and everyday life

Words that look harmless but change the tone of what you say.

la desgracia ≠ English "disgrace"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
misfortune, tragedy, bad luck

ENGLISH "DISGRACE" MEANS
shame, loss of respect

SAY INSTEAD For 'disgrace' say: la vergüenza, la deshonra, el escándalo. ('It's a disgrace!' = ¡Es una vergüenza!) Por desgracia = unfortunately; caer en desgracia = to fall from grace (here the meanings meet).

- La familia sufrió una desgracia tras otra.
  The family suffered one misfortune after another.
- Es una vergüenza que nadie haya dimitido.
  It's a disgrace that nobody has resigned.

la agonía ≠ English "agony"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
the last moments before death, death throes · (figurative) anguish, long torment

ENGLISH "AGONY" MEANS
extreme physical or mental pain

SAY INSTEAD For physical 'agony' say: un dolor insoportable / atroz, estar muerto de dolor. ('I was in agony' = Me moría de dolor.) Agonía is linked to dying; agonizar = to be dying. Colloquially, 'ser un agonías' (Spain) = to be a worrier, a drama queen.

- La agonía del enfermo duró varios días.
  The patient's final hours lasted several days.
- Con la muela así, anoche me moría de dolor.
  With my tooth like this, I was in agony last night.
- La espera de los resultados fue una auténtica agonía.
  Waiting for the results was absolute torture.

el coraje ≠ English "courage"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
courage, guts · (especially southern Spain and Mexico) anger, rage

ENGLISH "COURAGE" MEANS
bravery

SAY INSTEAD Coraje does mean courage, but it suggests fierce, determined bravery. For everyday 'courage' Spanish often prefers valor or valentía. Watch out for the anger meaning: ¡Qué coraje! = How infuriating!, me da coraje = it makes me mad.

- Hace falta mucho coraje para denunciar a tu propia empresa.
  It takes a lot of guts to report your own company.
- ¡Qué coraje me da que me hablen así!
  It really makes me mad when people talk to me like that!
- Tuvo el valor de decir la verdad.
  She had the courage to tell the truth.

crudo ≠ English "crude"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
raw, undercooked · harsh, brutal (reality, winter, images) · (colloquial) difficult, unlikely

ENGLISH "CRUDE" MEANS
rough, unrefined; vulgar, rude

SAY INSTEAD For 'crude' (rough, basic) say: burdo, tosco, rudimentario; for 'crude' (vulgar) say: grosero, ordinario, basto. ('a crude joke' = un chiste grosero.) El crudo = crude oil: here the two words coincide.

- El documental muestra la cruda realidad de los refugiados.
  The documentary shows the harsh reality refugees face.
- Lo tienes crudo si quieres encontrar piso en agosto.
  You're going to struggle if you want to find a flat in August.
- Era un plan bastante burdo y se notó enseguida.
  It was a pretty crude plan and it showed straight away.

exprimir ≠ English "to express"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
to squeeze (fruit) · to make the most of · to exploit, squeeze dry

ENGLISH "TO EXPRESS" MEANS
to put feelings or ideas into words

SAY INSTEAD For 'to express' say: expresar, manifestar. ('She expressed her concern' = Expresó / Manifestó su preocupación.) Exprimir is all about squeezing: zumo exprimido = freshly squeezed juice.

- Exprime medio limón y añádelo a la salsa.
  Squeeze half a lemon and add it to the sauce.
- Quiero exprimir al máximo mis últimos días en Roma.
  I want to make the most of my last days in Rome.
- Esa empresa exprime a sus becarios.
  That company squeezes its interns dry.

la trampa ≠ English "tramp"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
trap, snare · trick, cheating

ENGLISH "TRAMP" MEANS
a homeless person who wanders from place to place

SAY INSTEAD For 'tramp' say: el/la vagabundo/a, el/la sin techo, la persona sin hogar. Remember: hacer trampa(s) = to cheat (in games, exams); caer en la trampa = to fall into the trap; tener trampa = to have a catch.

- Esta oferta es demasiado buena: seguro que tiene trampa.
  This offer is too good to be true: there must be a catch.
- Mi sobrino siempre hace trampas al Monopoly.
  My nephew always cheats at Monopoly.

fastidioso ≠ English "fastidious"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
annoying, irritating, tiresome

ENGLISH "FASTIDIOUS" MEANS
very careful about detail, cleanliness or accuracy

SAY INSTEAD For 'fastidious' say: meticuloso/a, minucioso/a, escrupuloso/a, maniático/a (with order or cleanliness). Fastidioso comes from fastidiar = to annoy, to ruin (¡No fastidies! = You're kidding!).

- Es fastidioso tener que repetir lo mismo en cada reunión.
  It's annoying having to repeat the same thing at every meeting.
- Emma es muy meticulosa con las traducciones.
  Emma is very fastidious about her translations.

bizarro ≠ English "bizarre"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
(traditional) brave, gallant · (recent, from English) weird, outlandish

ENGLISH "BIZARRE" MEANS
very strange, odd

SAY INSTEAD The traditional meaning is 'brave, gallant' (un bizarro capitán). Under English influence many people now use it for 'weird', and dictionaries have started to record it, but in careful Spanish 'bizarre' is better as extraño, raro, estrambótico, surrealista, rocambolesco.

- Fue una situación surrealista: el jefe apareció disfrazado de pirata.
  It was a bizarre situation: the boss turned up dressed as a pirate.
- La novela narra las hazañas de un bizarro militar del siglo XVII.
  The novel tells of the exploits of a gallant 17th-century soldier.

la aplicación ≠ English "application"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
app · application of a rule, a product, a technique · diligence, hard work (at school)

ENGLISH "APPLICATION" MEANS
a formal request, especially for a job, a course or a grant

SAY INSTEAD For a job or grant 'application' say: la solicitud, la candidatura. ('I've sent my application' = He enviado mi solicitud / candidatura.) An application form = un formulario de solicitud. Note: un alumno aplicado = a hard-working student.

- La aplicación de la nueva normativa empieza en enero.
  The new regulations will be applied from January.
- El plazo de presentación de solicitudes termina el día 30.
  The deadline for applications is the 30th.
- Sofía es una alumna muy aplicada.
  Sofía is a very hard-working student.

sofisticado ≠ English "sophisticated"

IN SPANISH IT MEANS
sophisticated, refined · technically advanced · (sometimes) affected, artificial

ENGLISH "SOPHISTICATED" MEANS
refined, cultured; complex and advanced

SAY INSTEAD Mostly a true friend, but with a nuance: about people, sofisticado can sound a bit artificial or over-polished, not always a compliment. For a cultured, worldly person, Spanish often prefers refinado/a, culto/a, con mundo or elegante.

- Utilizan un sistema de seguridad muy sofisticado.
  They use a very sophisticated security system.
- Es una mujer culta y con mucho mundo.
  She's a cultured, very sophisticated woman.

HALF FALSE FRIENDS ARE THE DANGEROUS ONES

When a Spanish word shares one meaning with English, you stop checking it. Next time you read a 'familiar' word in a Spanish article, ask yourself: is this the meaning I expect? Words like audiencia, contemplar or coraje will surprise you more often than you think.

C1 · ADVANCED SPANISH

16 · The word partnerships that make you sound educated

Useful collocations

At C1, the difference between 'correct' and 'impressive' is often the verb or adjective you choose. Natives don't 'make' a judgement or 'give' consequences: they emiten un juicio and acarrean consecuencias. These high-register collocations appear constantly in the press, in reports and in formal speech. Learn them as blocks, notice them when you read, and pick five a week to use in your own writing.

Power, roles and influence

For politics, business and any text about who does what.

ejercer influencia (sobre) FORMAL
to exert / have influence (on)
Formal; also ejercer un derecho, ejercer una profesión.

> Las redes sociales ejercen una enorme influencia sobre los adolescentes.
> *Social media has an enormous influence on teenagers.*

desempeñar un cargo / una función FORMAL
to hold a post / perform a role
Standard in CVs and biographies.

> Desempeñó el cargo de directora financiera durante ocho años.
> *She held the post of finance director for eight years.*

ostentar el poder / un título FORMAL
to hold power / a title
Formal, for legitimately held power, titles and records.

> El partido ostenta el poder desde hace más de una década.
> *The party has held power for over a decade.*

ocupar un puesto
to hold / fill a position
More neutral than desempeñar.

> Ocupa un puesto de responsabilidad en una consultora.
> *He holds a senior position at a consultancy.*

tomar posesión del cargo FORMAL
to take office
Politics, public administration.

> La nueva ministra tomará posesión del cargo el lunes.
> *The new minister will take office on Monday.*

presentar la dimisión
to hand in your resignation / to resign
Dimitir is the verb; presentar la dimisión is the formal act.

> El presidente del club presentó su dimisión tras el escándalo.
> *The club chairman resigned after the scandal.*

asumir una responsabilidad
to take on / accept responsibility
Also asumir las riendas (to take the reins).

> Nadie quiso asumir la responsabilidad del error.
> *Nobody wanted to take responsibility for the mistake.*

tomar las riendas
to take control / take the reins
Of a company, a project, your life.

> Después del divorcio, decidió tomar las riendas de su vida.
> *After the divorce, she decided to take control of her life.*

Speaking, judging and arguing

Verbs for meetings, debates, essays and the news.

emitir un juicio FORMAL
to pass / make a judgement
Often in the negative: no quiero emitir un juicio precipitado.

> Prefiero no emitir ningún juicio sin conocer todos los datos.
> *I'd rather not pass judgement without knowing all the facts.*

emitir un comunicado FORMAL
to issue a statement
Companies, governments, clubs. Also emitir un informe, una factura.

> La empresa emitió un comunicado para pedir disculpas a sus clientes.
> *The company issued a statement apologising to its customers.*

formular una hipótesis / una pregunta FORMAL
to put forward a hypothesis / to ask a question
Academic and formal registers.

> Los investigadores formularon una hipótesis que luego resultó falsa.
> *The researchers put forward a hypothesis that later proved false.*

entablar una conversación / amistad
to strike up a conversation / a friendship
Also entablar negociaciones, entablar una demanda (law).

> En el tren entablé conversación con una señora encantadora.
> *On the train I struck up a conversation with a lovely lady.*

pronunciar un discurso
to give / deliver a speech
More polished than dar un discurso, which is common in speech.

> La rectora pronunció un discurso muy emotivo.
> *The vice-chancellor gave a very moving speech.*

esgrimir un argumento FORMAL
to put forward / wield an argument
Literally 'to brandish', as with a sword. Journalistic.

> La oposición esgrimió argumentos económicos para rechazar la ley.
> *The opposition put forward economic arguments to reject the law.*

rebatir un argumento
to refute / counter an argument

> Supo rebatir todos los argumentos de su rival.
> *She managed to counter every one of her opponent's arguments.*

desmentir un rumor / una noticia
to deny a rumour / a report

> El Ministerio desmintió la noticia pocas horas después.
> *The Ministry denied the report a few hours later.*

poner de manifiesto / de relieve FORMAL
to show, reveal / to highlight

> El informe pone de manifiesto la falta de inversión en I+D.
> *The report reveals the lack of investment in R&D.*

plantear una objeción
to raise an objection

> ¿Alguien quiere plantear alguna objeción antes de votar?
> *Does anyone want to raise an objection before we vote?*

prestar declaración FORMAL
to give evidence / make a statement (to police or court)

> El testigo prestó declaración durante tres horas.
> *The witness gave evidence for three hours.*

Starting, solving and ending

For projects, negotiations and conflicts.

sentar las bases (de / para)
to lay the foundations (for)

> Este acuerdo sienta las bases para una futura colaboración.
> *This agreement lays the foundations for future collaboration.*

sentar (un) precedente
to set a precedent

> La sentencia podría sentar un precedente para casos similares.
> *The ruling could set a precedent for similar cases.*

zanjar una polémica / un asunto
to settle a controversy / a matter
Means to close it definitively.

> La directora zanjó la polémica con un breve comunicado.
> *The director put an end to the controversy with a short statement.*

salvar un obstáculo
to overcome an obstacle
Also salvar una dificultad, un desnivel.

> Hemos salvado el último obstáculo: el banco ha aprobado el préstamo.
> *We've overcome the last hurdle: the bank has approved the loan.*

sortear una dificultad
to get round a difficulty
Suggests skill or cleverness: dodging rather than facing.

> Supieron sortear la crisis sin despedir a nadie.
> *They managed to get through the crisis without laying anyone off.*

subsanar un error FORMAL
to rectify / correct an error
Very common in administration: subsanar la documentación.

> Tiene diez días para subsanar los errores de la solicitud.
> *You have ten days to correct the errors in your application.*

acometer una reforma / un proyecto FORMAL
to undertake a reform / a project

> El ayuntamiento acometerá la reforma de la plaza en primavera.
> *The council will undertake the renovation of the square in spring.*

tomar cartas en el asunto
to step in, to take action

> Si la situación no mejora, Recursos Humanos tendrá que tomar cartas en el asunto.
> *If things don't improve, HR will have to step in.*

dar luz verde (a)
to give the green light (to)

> La junta dio luz verde al nuevo presupuesto.
> *The board gave the green light to the new budget.*

agotar todas las vías
to exhaust all avenues

> Antes de ir a juicio, queremos agotar todas las vías de diálogo.
> *Before going to court, we want to exhaust every avenue for dialogue.*

poner fin a
to put an end to

> El acuerdo puso fin a veinte años de conflicto.
> *The agreement put an end to twenty years of conflict.*

Causes, effects and change

Precise verbs to say what something causes, so you stop repeating causar and provocar.

suscitar polémica / interés / dudas FORMAL
to spark controversy / to arouse interest / to raise doubts

> Las declaraciones del entrenador suscitaron una gran polémica.
> *The coach's comments sparked huge controversy.*

acarrear consecuencias
to have / bring consequences
Usually negative consequences.

> Saltarse el protocolo puede acarrear graves consecuencias.
> *Ignoring the protocol can have serious consequences.*

cobrar sentido
to start to make sense

> Con los años, muchas cosas que me decía mi padre han cobrado sentido.
> *Over the years, lots of things my father told me have started to make sense.*

cobrar fuerza / importancia
to gain strength / importance

> La idea de la semana laboral de cuatro días está cobrando fuerza.
> *The idea of a four-day working week is gaining ground.*

surtir efecto
to take effect, to work
Medicines, measures, threats.

> Las medidas empiezan a surtir efecto.
> *The measures are starting to take effect.*

desencadenar una crisis / una reacción
to trigger a crisis / a reaction

> Una simple publicación desencadenó una ola de críticas.
> *A single post triggered a wave of criticism.*

sembrar la duda / el pánico
to sow doubt / spread panic

> Los bulos en redes siembran el pánico entre la población.
> *Fake news on social media spreads panic among people.*

arrojar luz sobre FORMAL
to shed light on

> El nuevo estudio arroja luz sobre las causas de la enfermedad.
> *The new study sheds light on the causes of the disease.*

cosechar éxitos / críticas
to achieve success / to draw criticism
Literally 'to harvest'.

> La serie ha cosechado excelentes críticas en todo el mundo.
> *The series has received excellent reviews all over the world.*

granjearse enemigos / la confianza de alguien FORMAL
to make enemies / to earn someone's trust

> Con su franqueza se granjeó muchos enemigos en la empresa.
> *Her frankness made her a lot of enemies at the company.*

experimentar un cambio / un crecimiento
to undergo a change / see growth
Formal replacement for tener / sufrir.

> El sector turístico ha experimentado un crecimiento sin precedentes.
> *The tourism sector has seen unprecedented growth.*

Life, commitments and feelings

Formal collocations from personal, legal and emotional life.

conciliar el sueño
to get to sleep
Typical with no poder: no podía conciliar el sueño.

> Con tantas preocupaciones, no consigo conciliar el sueño.
> *With so many worries, I can't get to sleep.*

conciliar la vida laboral y familiar
to balance work and family life
A key phrase in Spanish debates about work. The noun: la conciliación.

> Trabajar en remoto me permite conciliar la vida laboral y familiar.
> *Working remotely lets me balance work and family life.*

contraer matrimonio FORMAL
to marry, to get married
Official and legal register; in conversation say casarse.

> Los novios contrajeron matrimonio en el ayuntamiento.
> *The couple were married at the town hall.*

contraer deudas / una enfermedad FORMAL
to run up debts / to catch a disease

> La empresa contrajo deudas que nunca pudo pagar.
> *The company ran up debts it was never able to pay.*

saldar una deuda / una cuenta
to pay off a debt / settle an account
Also figurative: saldar cuentas con el pasado.

> Por fin he saldado la deuda con el banco.
> *I've finally paid off my debt to the bank.*

librar una batalla
to fight / wage a battle
Often figurative: against an illness, a company, the system.

> Lleva años librando una batalla legal contra la constructora.
> *She's been fighting a legal battle with the developer for years.*

dar rienda suelta a
to give free rein to
Imagination, emotions, creativity.

> En el taller los niños dan rienda suelta a su imaginación.
> *In the workshop the children give free rein to their imagination.*

albergar esperanzas / dudas FORMAL
to harbour hopes / doubts

> Todavía albergo la esperanza de que cambie de opinión.
> *I still harbour the hope that he'll change his mind.*

cursar estudios FORMAL
to study, to be enrolled (on a course)
Formal: cursar un máster, cursar cuarto de Medicina.

> Cursó estudios de Arquitectura en Barcelona.
> *He studied Architecture in Barcelona.*

rendir homenaje (a)
to pay tribute (to)

> El festival rindió homenaje a la actriz fallecida.
> *The festival paid tribute to the late actress.*

depositar la confianza en FORMAL
to place your trust in

> Gracias por depositar su confianza en nuestro equipo.
> *Thank you for placing your trust in our team.*

Adjective + noun

In formal Spanish, many of these adjectives go BEFORE the noun, which adds emphasis or a literary tone. Keep the word order as you see it.

una ardua tarea FORMAL
an arduous / uphill task

> Convencer a todos los socios fue una ardua tarea.
> *Convincing all the partners was an uphill task.*

un férreo control
tight / iron control
Also una férrea disciplina, una férrea defensa.

> El régimen mantenía un férreo control sobre la prensa.
> *The regime kept tight control over the press.*

un acérrimo defensor / una acérrima defensora
a staunch supporter / defender
Also un enemigo acérrimo (a bitter enemy).

> Es una acérrima defensora de la escuela pública.
> *She's a staunch defender of state schools.*

una aplastante mayoría
an overwhelming majority
Also una victoria aplastante.

> La propuesta se aprobó por una aplastante mayoría.
> *The proposal was passed by an overwhelming majority.*

un claro exponente (de)
a prime example (of)
For people, works or things that represent a movement or trend.

> Almodóvar es un claro exponente del cine español contemporáneo.
> *Almodóvar is a prime example of contemporary Spanish cinema.*

una apuesta firme (por)
a firm commitment (to)
Apostar por = to back, to bet on.

> El plan supone una apuesta firme por las energías renovables.
> *The plan represents a firm commitment to renewable energy.*

una negativa rotunda
a flat refusal
Also un no rotundo.

> Le pidió un aumento y recibió una negativa rotunda.
> *He asked for a raise and got a flat refusal.*

un estrepitoso fracaso
a resounding failure / a flop

> La campaña fue un estrepitoso fracaso.
> *The campaign was a resounding failure.*

una flagrante contradicción FORMAL
a glaring contradiction
Also una flagrante violación de los derechos.

> Hay una flagrante contradicción entre lo que dice y lo que hace.
> *There's a glaring contradiction between what he says and what he does.*

un amplio consenso
a broad consensus

> Existe un amplio consenso sobre la necesidad de reformar el sistema.
> *There is broad consensus on the need to reform the system.*

un duro revés
a serious setback / a heavy blow

> La sentencia supone un duro revés para el Gobierno.
> *The ruling is a serious setback for the government.*

un profundo malestar
deep discontent / unease

> La decisión ha causado un profundo malestar entre la plantilla.
> *The decision has caused deep discontent among the staff.*

un acalorado debate
a heated debate

> La propuesta abrió un acalorado debate en el claustro.
> *The proposal sparked a heated debate among the teaching staff.*

una voz autorizada
an authoritative voice, an expert

> Es una de las voces más autorizadas en cambio climático.
> *She is one of the leading authorities on climate change.*

una prueba fehaciente FORMAL
conclusive / reliable proof
Legal and formal: se requiere prueba fehaciente.

> No hay pruebas fehacientes de que el acusado estuviera allí.
> *There's no conclusive proof that the defendant was there.*

la tónica general
the general trend / the norm

> La subida de precios ha sido la tónica general este año.
> *Rising prices have been the general trend this year.*

Adverb + adjective

Replace 'muy' with a precise adverb and your Spanish instantly sounds more mature. Each adverb has its favourite partners.

sumamente delicado/a FORMAL
extremely delicate / sensitive

> Es un asunto sumamente delicado; hablémoslo en privado.
> *It's an extremely sensitive matter; let's discuss it in private.*

plenamente consciente (de)
fully aware (of)

> Soy plenamente consciente de los riesgos.
> *I'm fully aware of the risks.*

diametralmente opuesto/a
diametrically opposed

> Tenemos visiones diametralmente opuestas sobre la educación.
> *We have diametrically opposed views on education.*

profundamente arraigado/a
deeply rooted / ingrained

> Es una costumbre profundamente arraigada en la cultura andaluza.
> *It's a custom deeply rooted in Andalusian culture.*

ampliamente aceptado/a
widely accepted

> Es una teoría ampliamente aceptada por la comunidad científica.
> *It's a theory widely accepted by the scientific community.*

sobradamente conocido/a
very well known, all too familiar

> Sus opiniones sobre el tema son sobradamente conocidas.
> *His views on the subject are all too well known.*

manifiestamente mejorable
clearly in need of improvement
Polite, slightly ironic way to say something is bad.

> La atención al cliente es manifiestamente mejorable.
> *The customer service leaves a lot to be desired.*

terminantemente prohibido
strictly forbidden

> Está terminantemente prohibido fumar en el recinto.
> *Smoking is strictly forbidden on the premises.*

radicalmente distinto/a
radically different

> Hoy el sector es radicalmente distinto al de hace diez años.
> *Today the sector is radically different from ten years ago.*

sumamente agradecido/a FORMAL
extremely grateful
Perfect in formal emails.

> Le quedaría sumamente agradecida si pudiera responderme antes del viernes.
> *I would be extremely grateful if you could reply before Friday.*

harto difícil / complicado FORMAL
extremely difficult
Literary or formal; harto = very.

> Encontrar piso en el centro resulta harto complicado.
> *Finding a flat in the centre is extremely difficult.*

STEAL FROM THE PRESS

Read one opinion column in El País, El Mundo or elDiario.es a week and underline every verb + noun pair you'd have translated differently. Then use three of them in your next email or class. Collocations stick when you use them, not when you list them.

YOUR CROSS-LEVEL REFERENCE

Toolkit

The Speaky Toolkit

Your cross-level reference

The tools you'll come back to again and again, whatever your level: verbs and their prepositions, the complete speaking toolkit, Spain vs Latin America, register and emails, ser vs estar and verbs like gustar.

WITH THIS PART YOU CAN

- Get prepositions right after verbs
- Hold a real conversation: agree, disagree, interrupt, buy time
- Write emails in the right register
- Understand Spanish from every country

6 sections **985** words, phrases & structures

Keep it open while you speak.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

01 · The little words English speakers get wrong

Verbs + prepositions

Spanish verbs choose their prepositions, and they rarely choose the one English would. This is the master list: about 150 structures grouped by preposition, each with a natural translation, a level badge and, almost always, a real example. Don't learn the verb alone: learn the whole chunk ('acordarse de', 'pensar en', 'soñar con') and say the example out loud until it sounds normal.

Verb + a

'A' often points towards an action or a goal: start to, learn to, help to, get used to. Remember a + el = al.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
empezar a + infinitive A2	*to start doing / to begin to*	Also comenzar a (a bit more formal). Stem-changing: empiezo. **Empecé a estudiar español el año pasado.** *I started learning Spanish last year.*
aprender a + infinitive A1	*to learn to / to learn how to*	Never ~~*aprender cómo + inf for '~~;learn how to'. **Quiero aprender a cocinar.** *I want to learn how to cook.*
acostumbrarse a B1	*to get used to*	Followed by a noun or infinitive. **No me acostumbro a cenar tan tarde.** *I can't get used to having dinner so late.*
ayudar a + person / + infinitive A2	*to help (someone) do something*	Two 'a's are common: Ayudo a mi hermano a estudiar. **¿Me ayudas a llevar estas cajas?** *Can you help me carry these boxes?*
atreverse a B1	*to dare to*	Reflexive: me atrevo, te atreves... **No me atrevo a decírselo.** *I don't dare tell him.*
dedicarse a A2	*to do for a living / to devote yourself to*	The natural way to ask about jobs: ¿A qué te dedicas? **—¿A qué te dedicas? —Me dedico al diseño gráfico.** *"What do you do?" "I work in graphic design."*
negarse a B1	*to refuse to*	Stem-changing: me niego. **Se negó a firmar el contrato.** *She refused to sign the contract.*
oler a A2	*to smell of / to smell like*	Irregular: huele. Para 'smell good/bad' → oler bien/mal (no 'a'). **La cocina huele a café.** *The kitchen smells of coffee.*
saber a B1	*to taste of / to taste like*	Same verb as 'to know', different meaning. Sabe bien = it tastes good. **Este helado sabe a coco.** *This ice cream tastes of coconut.*
parecerse a B1	*to look like / to resemble (be similar to)*	Reflexive. Without 'se', parecer = to seem. **Te pareces mucho a tu madre.** *You look a lot like your mum.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
invitar a A2	*to invite to / to treat someone to*	Invitar a alguien a algo. 'Te invito' often means 'it's on me'. **Te invito a un café.** *Let me buy you a coffee.*
ir a + place / + infinitive A1	*to go to / to be going to*	ir a + inf = near future. a + el = al. **Mañana voy a ir al gimnasio.** *Tomorrow I'm going to go to the gym.*
volver a + infinitive A2	*to do something again*	Very natural; more common than 'otra vez' in many sentences. **No vuelvas a hacerlo, por favor.** *Please don't do it again.*
ponerse a + infinitive B1	*to start (suddenly) doing*	Suggests a sudden or decided start. **Llegó a casa y se puso a llorar.** *She got home and started crying.*
llegar a + place / + infinitive A2	*to arrive in/at · to manage to / to get to*	Llegar a + inf = to finally achieve or reach a point. **Nunca llegué a conocer a mi abuelo.** *I never got to meet my grandfather.*
jugar a A1	*to play (a sport or game)*	Spain: jugar al fútbol. Much of LatAm: jugar fútbol. **LatAm:** Spain: jugar al tenis · LatAm: also jugar tenis **Los domingos jugamos al pádel.** *On Sundays we play padel.*
asistir a B1	*to attend*	False friend: asistir ≠ assist (= ayudar). **Asistí a una conferencia sobre inteligencia artificial.** *I attended a talk on artificial intelligence.*
renunciar a B2	*to give up / to resign from*	Renunciar a un trabajo = to quit a job. Renunciar a un sueño = to give up a dream. **Renunció a su puesto para viajar por el mundo.** *He quit his job to travel the world.*
aspirar a C1	*to aspire to / to aim for*	Without 'a', aspirar = to vacuum or to inhale. **Aspira a ser directora de la empresa.** *She aims to become the company's director.*
contribuir a B2	*to contribute to*	Irregular: contribuyo. **El turismo contribuye a la economía local.** *Tourism contributes to the local economy.*
obligar a B1	*to force to / to make (someone) do*	Obligar a alguien a + inf. **Nadie te obliga a venir.** *Nobody's forcing you to come.*
animar a B1	*to encourage to*	Also animar alguien = to cheer someone up. **Mi profesora me animó a presentarme al examen.** *My teacher encouraged me to sit the exam.*
enseñar a A2	*to teach to / to show*	Enseñar a alguien a + inf. **Mi padre me enseñó a nadar.** *My dad taught me to swim.*
decidirse a B2	*to make up your mind to*	Stronger than 'decidir': after hesitation. **Por fin me decidí a cambiar de trabajo.** *I finally made up my mind to change jobs.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
arriesgarse a B2	*to risk / to take the risk of*	**No quiero arriesgarme a perder el vuelo.** *I don't want to risk missing the flight.*
limitarse a B2	*to just do / to limit yourself to*	Very common for 'he just...': se limitó a sonreír. **No contestó; se limitó a sonreír.** *She didn't answer; she just smiled.*
comprometerse a B2	*to commit to / to promise to*	Compare comprometerse con (commit to a person/ cause). **Se comprometió a entregarlo el lunes.** *He committed to handing it in on Monday.*
oponerse a B2	*to oppose / to be against*	Irregular like poner: me opongo. **Muchos vecinos se oponen al nuevo hotel.** *Many residents are against the new hotel.*
echarse a + infinitive B2	*to burst out (laughing/ crying) / to start*	Mostly with reír, llorar, correr, temblar. **Cuando lo vio, se echó a reír.** *When she saw him, she burst out laughing.*
acercarse a B1	*to approach / to come up to*	**Un chico se acercó a preguntarme la hora.** *A guy came up to ask me the time.*

Verb + de

'De' often marks the origin or the topic: remember of, complain about, stop doing, get tired of. Many of these verbs are reflexive.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
acordarse de A2	*to remember*	Reflexive + de. Recordar has no 'de': recuerdo su nombre / me acuerdo de su nombre. **¿Te acuerdas de Marcos?** *Do you remember Marcos?*
olvidarse de A2	*to forget*	Two options: olvidé las llaves / me olvidé de las llaves. **Me olvidé de llamarte, lo siento.** *I forgot to call you, sorry.*
depender de A2	*to depend on*	English 'on' = Spanish 'de'. ✗ ~~*depende en~~. **—¿Vienes? —Depende del tiempo.** *"Are you coming?" "It depends on the weather."*
dejar de + infinitive A2	*to stop / to quit doing*	Dejar de fumar = to quit smoking. **He dejado de tomar azúcar.** *I've stopped having sugar.*
tratar de + infinitive B1	*to try to*	Synonym of intentar (no prep). **Trata de llegar puntual, por favor.** *Please try to be on time.*
tratarse de B2	*to be about / to be a matter of*	Impersonal: always 'se trata de', never with a subject. ✗ ~~*El libro se trata de...~~ → ✓ El libro trata de... **No se trata de dinero, se trata de respeto.** *It's not about money, it's about respect.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
enamorarse de B1	*to fall in love with*	English 'with' = Spanish 'de'. ✗ ~~*enamorarse con~~. **Se enamoró de una chica de Valencia.** *He fell in love with a girl from Valencia.*
quejarse de B1	*to complain about*	**Siempre se queja del ruido de los vecinos.** *He's always complaining about the neighbours' noise.*
darse cuenta de B1	*to realise / to notice*	Realizar ≠ realise. Before a clause: me di cuenta de que… **Me di cuenta de que había perdido la cartera.** *I realised I'd lost my wallet.*
enterarse de B1	*to find out about / to hear about*	Very common in speech. ¿Te has enterado? = Have you heard? **Me enteré de la noticia por la radio.** *I heard the news on the radio.*
despedirse de B1	*to say goodbye to*	**Se fue sin despedirse de nadie.** *She left without saying goodbye to anyone.*
cansarse de B1	*to get tired of / to get fed up with*	**Me cansé de esperar y me fui.** *I got tired of waiting and left.*
encargarse de B2	*to be in charge of / to take care of*	Very useful at work: Yo me encargo = I'll handle it. **Lucía se encarga de las redes sociales.** *Lucía is in charge of social media.*
alegrarse de B1	*to be glad (about)*	+ que + subjunctive: me alegro de que estés bien. **Me alegro mucho de verte.** *I'm really glad to see you.*
arrepentirse de B2	*to regret*	Stem-changing e→ie. Spanish uses this verb where English uses 'regret'. **No me arrepiento de nada.** *I don't regret anything.*
burlarse de B2	*to make fun of*	Synonym (informal): reírse de. **No te burles de su acento.** *Don't make fun of his accent.*
disfrutar de B1	*to enjoy*	Both disfrutar algo and disfrutar de algo are correct; 'de' is very common. **Disfrutamos de unos días de sol.** *We enjoyed a few sunny days.*
hablar de A1	*to talk about*	See 'Same verb, different preposition' below. **¿De qué habláis?** *What are you talking about?*
presumir de B2	*to show off about / to boast about*	Can also be positive: presumir de hijos = to be proud of. **Siempre presume de coche.** *He's always showing off about his car.*
aprovecharse de B2	*to take (unfair) advantage of*	Negative. Without 'se de', aprovechar = to make the most of (positive). **Se aprovechan de los turistas.** *They take advantage of tourists.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
prescindir de FORMAL C1	*to do without / to dispense with*	Formal; frequent in work and news. **La empresa prescindió de veinte trabajadores.** *The company let twenty employees go.*
carecer de FORMAL C1	*to lack*	Formal. Never ~~*carecer algo~~. Irregular: carezco. **El informe carece de datos fiables.** *The report lacks reliable data.*
constar de C1	*to consist of / to be made up of*	Formal, for parts of a whole. Compare consistir en. **El examen consta de cuatro partes.** *The exam is made up of four parts.*
acabar de + infinitive A2	*to have just done*	Present = 'just': acabo de llegar = I've just arrived. **Acabo de ver tu mensaje.** *I've just seen your message.*
terminar de + infinitive A2	*to finish doing*	English uses -ing, Spanish uses infinitive. **Cuando termine de comer, te llamo.** *I'll call you when I finish eating.*
cambiar de B1	*to change (one thing for another of the same kind)*	No article: cambiar de trabajo/casa/idea/tema. **He cambiado de opinión.** *I've changed my mind.*
equivocarse de B1	*to get the wrong (…)*	Equivocarse de número/tren/día = wrong number/ train/day. **Perdone, me he equivocado de número.** *Sorry, I've got the wrong number.*
fiarse de INFORMAL B2	*to trust*	Informal synonym of confiar en. **No me fío de él.** *I don't trust him.*
desconfiar de B2	*to distrust / to be suspicious of*	**Desconfía de los correos que piden contraseñas.** *Be suspicious of emails asking for passwords.*
convencer de B2	*to convince to / to persuade of*	Convencer a alguien de + inf / de que… **Me convenció de ir a la fiesta.** *She talked me into going to the party.*
huir de B2	*to run away from / to flee*	Irregular: huyo. **Huyeron de la guerra.** *They fled the war.*
abusar de C1	*to overuse / to abuse*	Often 'overuse': abusar del azúcar, abusar de la confianza. **No abuses de su paciencia.** *Don't push your luck with her patience.*
avergonzarse de C1	*to be ashamed of*	Irregular: me avergüenzo. **No tienes por qué avergonzarte de tus orígenes.** *You've no reason to be ashamed of where you come from.*

Verb + en

'En' often marks where your mind or effort goes: think about, trust, insist on, consist of.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
pensar en A2	*to think about / of*	✗ ~~*pensar sobre~~ / ~~*pensar de (for '~~;think about'). **Estoy pensando en ti.** *I'm thinking about you.*
confiar en B1	*to trust / to rely on*	**Confío en ti.** *I trust you.*
creer en B1	*to believe in*	**¿Crees en el destino?** *Do you believe in fate?*
insistir en B1	*to insist on*	English '-ing' → Spanish infinitive: insistió en pagar. **Insistió en pagar la cena.** *He insisted on paying for dinner.*
consistir en B2	*to consist of / to involve*	English 'of' = Spanish 'en'. ✗ ~~*consistir de~~. **El trabajo consiste en atender a clientes.** *The job involves dealing with customers.*
fijarse en B1	*to notice / to pay attention to*	Fíjate = Look! / Notice... **¿Te has fijado en sus zapatos?** *Did you notice her shoes?*
quedar en + infinitive B1	*to agree to / to arrange to*	Different from quedar con (meet). **Quedamos en vernos el viernes.** *We agreed to meet up on Friday.*
tardar en + infinitive B1	*to take (time) to*	The time goes before 'en': tardo diez minutos en llegar. **¿Cuánto tardas en llegar al trabajo?** *How long does it take you to get to work?*
interesarse por / en B2	*to be interested in / to take an interest in*	'por' is more frequent; 'en' is also correct. For 'I'm interested in...' say me interesa... **Se interesó por mi proyecto.** *She took an interest in my project.*
participar en B1	*to take part in*	**Participé en un intercambio de idiomas.** *I took part in a language exchange.*
influir en B2	*to influence / to affect*	Irregular: influyo. ✗ ~~*influir a~~. **El clima influye en nuestro estado de ánimo.** *The weather affects our mood.*
convertirse en B1	*to become / to turn into*	For a big change of identity/state. **La afición se convirtió en su trabajo.** *The hobby turned into her job.*
transformarse en B2	*to be transformed into / to turn into*	**El antiguo mercado se transformó en un centro cultural.** *The old market was turned into a cultural centre.*
equivocarse en B1	*to make a mistake in*	Compare equivocarse de (wrong thing). **Me equivoqué en el último ejercicio.** *I made a mistake in the last exercise.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
entrar en A2	*to enter / to go into*	Spain: entrar en · LatAm: entrar a. Both correct. **LatAm:** Spain: entrar en · LatAm: usually entrar a **Entramos en el museo a las diez.** *We went into the museum at ten.*
especializarse en B2	*to specialise in*	**Se especializó en derecho laboral.** *She specialised in employment law.*
empeñarse en B2	*to insist on / to be determined to*	Often slightly negative: stubborn insistence. **Se empeña en hacerlo todo solo.** *He insists on doing everything himself.*
incidir en FORMAL C1	*to stress / to have an impact on*	Formal. Don't confuse with incidente. **La ponente incidió en la importancia de la formación.** *The speaker stressed the importance of training.*
basarse en B2	*to be based on*	Also 'basado en'. Avoid ~~*en base a in careful writing~~; prefer basándose en / a partir de. **La película se basa en una historia real.** *The film is based on a true story.*
dudar en + infinitive B2	*to hesitate to*	Compare dudar de (to doubt). **No dudes en llamarme.** *Don't hesitate to call me.*
coincidir en B2	*to agree on / to coincide in*	Coincidir con alguien = to bump into / to agree with someone. **Todos coincidimos en que fue un éxito.** *We all agreed it was a success.*
invertir en B2	*to invest in*	Stem-changing e→ie: invierto. **Invirtieron todos sus ahorros en el restaurante.** *They invested all their savings in the restaurant.*
meterse en INFORMAL B2	*to get into / to meddle in*	No te metas = stay out of it. **No te metas en mis asuntos.** *Mind your own business.*
molestarse en B2	*to bother to / to take the trouble to*	**Ni siquiera se molestó en contestar.** *He didn't even bother to reply.*

Verb + con

'Con' is the 'with' of company and contact, but also appears where English says 'of', 'to' or nothing at all: dream of, marry, count on.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
soñar con B1	*to dream of / about*	English 'of/about' = Spanish 'con'. ✗ ~~*soñar de~~. **Anoche soñé contigo.** *I dreamt about you last night.*
casarse con B1	*to marry / to get married to*	English has no preposition: 'marry someone'. **Se casó con un chico de Bogotá.** *She married a guy from Bogotá.*
contar con B1	*to count on / to have*	See 'contar vs contar con' below. **Puedes contar conmigo.** *You can count on me.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
hablar con A1	*to talk to / with*	**Tengo que hablar con mi jefe.** *I need to talk to my boss.*
quedar con A2	*to meet up with*	Very common in Spain for plans with friends. **LatAm:** Spain: quedar con · LatAm: also verse con, juntarse con **He quedado con Javi para tomar algo.** *I've arranged to meet Javi for a drink.*
enfadarse con A2	*to get angry with / to fall out with*	LatAm: enojarse con. **LatAm:** Spain: enfadarse · LatAm: enojarse **Se enfadó conmigo por llegar tarde.** *She got angry with me for being late.*
encontrarse con B1	*to bump into / to meet (by chance)*	Without 'con', encontrar = to find. **Me encontré con Ana en el súper.** *I bumped into Ana at the supermarket.*
cumplir con B2	*to fulfil / to comply with / to keep (a promise)*	Cumplir años = to have a birthday; cumplir con = meet obligations. **Hay que cumplir con los plazos.** *We have to meet the deadlines.*
chocar con / contra B2	*to crash into / to clash with*	Figurative too: chocar con alguien = to clash with someone. **El coche chocó contra un árbol.** *The car crashed into a tree.*
bastar con B2	*to be enough to / all you need is*	Impersonal: basta con + inf / noun. **Basta con rellenar este formulario.** *All you need to do is fill in this form.*
conformarse con B2	*to settle for / to make do with*	**No te conformes con poco.** *Don't settle for less.*
comprometerse con B2	*to commit to (a person, cause) / to get engaged to*	Compare comprometerse a + inf. **La empresa se ha comprometido con el medio ambiente.** *The company has committed to the environment.*
relacionarse con B2	*to socialise with / to be related to*	**Le cuesta relacionarse con gente nueva.** *He finds it hard to socialise with new people.*
toparse con C1	*to run into / to come across*	Often with problems or unexpected things. **Nos topamos con un atasco enorme.** *We ran into a huge traffic jam.*
amenazar con B2	*to threaten to*	**Amenazó con dimitir.** *He threatened to resign.*
salir con A2	*to go out with / to date*	Salir con alguien = to be dating them. **¿Desde cuándo sales con Diego?** *How long have you been going out with Diego?*
tropezar con B2	*to trip over / to come up against*	Literal and figurative. **Tropecé con un cable y casi me caigo.** *I tripped over a cable and nearly fell.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
acabar con B2	*to put an end to / to finish off*	See 'acabar' family below. **Hay que acabar con la corrupción.** *We have to put an end to corruption.*

Verb + por

'Por' marks the reason or the thing you fight, vote, worry or toast for.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
preocuparse por A2	*to worry about*	Also preocuparse de (Spain). ✗ ~~*preocuparse sobre~~. **No te preocupes por mí.** *Don't worry about me.*
interesarse por B1	*to take an interest in / to ask after*	Interesarse por alguien = to ask how someone is. **Se interesó por tu salud.** *He asked after your health.*
luchar por B1	*to fight for*	**Luchan por sus derechos.** *They're fighting for their rights.*
optar por B2	*to opt for / to choose*	**Al final optamos por el tren.** *In the end we opted for the train.*
decidirse por B1	*to decide on / to go for*	Between options. Compare decidirse a + inf. **Me decidí por el vestido azul.** *I went for the blue dress.*
apostar por B2	*to bet on / to back / to go for*	Very common in business and politics. **La ciudad apuesta por la bicicleta.** *The city is backing cycling.*
votar por / votar a B2	*to vote for*	Spain often uses votar a + party/person. **LatAm:** Spain: votar a / por · LatAm: votar por **¿A quién vas a votar?** *Who are you going to vote for?*
disculparse por B1	*to apologise for*	**Se disculpó por el retraso.** *He apologised for the delay.*
felicitar por B1	*to congratulate on*	Felicitar a alguien por algo. **Te felicito por tu nuevo trabajo.** *Congratulations on your new job.*
brindar por B1	*to toast / to drink to*	**¡Brindemos por los novios!** *Let's drink to the bride and groom!*
inclinarse por C1	*to lean towards / to favour*	**Me inclino por la segunda opción.** *I'm leaning towards the second option.*
esforzarse por / en B2	*to make an effort to / to strive to*	Irregular: me esfuerzo. **Se esfuerza por mejorar cada día.** *She strives to improve every day.*
abogar por FORMAL C1	*to advocate / to call for*	Formal, frequent in news. **La ONG aboga por una reforma de la ley.** *The NGO is calling for a reform of the law.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
preguntar por A2	*to ask about / to ask for (someone)*	Preguntar por alguien = to ask after someone / ask to see them. **Ha venido un señor preguntando por ti.** *A man came asking for you.*
pasar por B1	*to drop by / to go through*	Literal (pass by a place) and figurative (go through a hard time). **Pasaré por tu casa luego.** *I'll drop by your place later.*
dar las gracias por A2	*to thank for*	Dar las gracias a alguien por algo. **Te doy las gracias por todo.** *Thank you for everything.*
empezar por B1	*to start with / by*	Compare empezar a + inf (start doing). **Empecemos por lo más fácil.** *Let's start with the easiest bit.*
acabar por + infinitive B2	*to end up doing*	Synonym: acabar + gerund (acabó aceptando). **Acabó por aceptar la oferta.** *He ended up accepting the offer.*

Verb + para

'Para' marks purpose and destination: what something is for, what you're getting ready for.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
servir para A2	*to be used for / to be good for*	¿Para qué sirve esto? = What's this for? **Esta app sirve para aprender vocabulario.** *This app is for learning vocabulary.*
prepararse para B1	*to get ready for / to prepare for*	**Me estoy preparando para el DELE.** *I'm preparing for the DELE exam.*
estar para B2	*to be in the mood for / to be about to*	No estar para + noun = not be in the mood. In Spain also 'about to' (LatAm: estar por). **Hoy no estoy para bromas.** *I'm not in the mood for jokes today.*
quedar para + infinitive A2	*to meet up to (do something)*	Spain. Quedar para + activity. **Hemos quedado para cenar.** *We've arranged to meet for dinner.*
faltar para B1	*to be left until / to go until*	Impersonal: faltan tres días para… **Faltan dos semanas para las vacaciones.** *There are two weeks to go until the holidays.*
valer para INFORMAL B2	*to be good for / to be cut out for*	Informal. No valgo para esto = I'm no good at this. **No valgo para vender.** *I'm not cut out for sales.*

Same verb, different preposition = different meaning

Change the preposition and you change the meaning. These are the verbs where a tiny word makes a big difference.

hablar de / con / sobre

to talk about / to / about

VERB A2

Con = the person you talk to. De = the topic (everyday). Sobre = the topic, slightly more formal or precise (a talk, a book).

hablar con alguien — *to talk to / with someone*

› Ayer hablé con Sofía.
I talked to Sofía yesterday.

hablar de algo — *to talk about something*

› Siempre hablamos de política.
We always talk about politics.

hablar sobre algo — *to talk about / on (a topic, more formal)*

› La charla habla sobre el cambio climático.
The talk is about climate change.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Hablé a Sofía~~ → ✓ Hablé con Sofía. 'Hablar a' only means to address someone (speak to a crowd, or angrily).

pensar / pensar en / pensar de / pensar + inf

to think / think about / think of (opinion) / plan to

VERB B1

One verb, four structures. Pensar de is almost only used in questions about opinion.

pensar que… — *to think that (opinion)*

› Pienso que tienes razón.
I think you're right.

pensar en — *to think about (have in mind)*

› Siempre pienso en mi familia.
I always think about my family.

¿Qué piensas de…? — *What do you think of…? (opinion)*

› ¿Qué piensas de su nuevo novio?
What do you think of her new boyfriend?

pensar + infinitive — *to plan to / to intend to*

› Pienso viajar a Perú en verano.
I'm planning to travel to Peru in the summer.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Estoy pensando sobre ti~~ → ✓ Estoy pensando en ti.

quedar / quedar con / quedar en / quedarse

to be left, to arrange / meet up with / agree to / to stay

VERB B1

One of the most useful (and confusing) verbs in Spain.

quedar (place/time/result) — *to be (located) / to be left / to look (on someone)*

› Me quedan dos euros. · Esa camisa te queda genial.
I've got two euros left. · That shirt looks great on you.

quedar con alguien — *to meet up with someone*

› Quedé con Tom en la plaza.
I met up with Tom in the square.

quedar en + inf — *to agree to*

› Quedamos en llamarnos mañana.
We agreed to call each other tomorrow.

quedarse — *to stay / to keep*

› Me quedo en casa esta noche. · Quédate el libro.
I'm staying in tonight. · Keep the book.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Quedé en casa (for '~~;I stayed at home') → ✓ Me quedé en casa.

tratar / tratar de / tratarse de

to treat / to try to, to be about / to be a matter of

VERB B2

Tratar de has two meanings; tratarse de is impersonal (no person as subject).

tratar a alguien / algo — *to treat*

› Nos trataron muy bien en el hotel.
They treated us really well at the hotel.

tratar de + inf — *to try to*

› Trato de no comer tanto azúcar.
I try not to eat so much sugar.

tratar de + noun (book, film) — *to be about*

› La novela trata de una familia en la posguerra.
The novel is about a family after the war.

se trata de — *it's about / it's a matter of*

› No se trata de ganar, se trata de participar.
It's not about winning, it's about taking part.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*La película se trata de...~~ → ✓ La película trata de... / Se trata de una película sobre...

acabar / acabar de / acabar con / acabar por

to finish / to have just / to put an end to / to end up

VERB B2

Acabar is a small toolbox. Terminar works like acabar in the first two uses.

acabar algo — *to finish something*

› ¿Has acabado el informe?
Have you finished the report?

acabar de + inf — *to have just done*

› Acabamos de llegar.
We've just arrived.

acabar con — *to put an end to / to finish off*

› Esta crisis va a acabar conmigo.
This crisis is going to finish me off.

acabar por + inf / acabar + gerund — *to end up doing*

› Acabó por dejar la carrera. · Acabó dejando la carrera.
She ended up dropping out of her degree.

dar / dar con / darse cuenta de / dar a

to give / to find / to realise / to face (overlook)

VERB B2

Dar combines with many prepositions and gets very different meanings.

dar algo a alguien — *to give*

› Le di mi número.
I gave her my number.

dar con — *to find / to hit upon (after searching)*

› Por fin di con la solución.
I finally hit upon the solution.

darse cuenta de — *to realise / to notice*

› No me di cuenta de la hora.
I didn't realise what time it was.

dar a (window, door, room) — *to face / to overlook / to open onto*

› Mi habitación da al mar.
My room looks out over the sea.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Realicé que era tarde~~ → ✓ Me di cuenta de que era tarde.

contar / contar con

to count, to tell / to count on, to have

VERB B1

Contar = count numbers or tell a story. Contar con = rely on someone, or (formal) to have/feature.

contar — *to count*

› Cuenta hasta diez antes de contestar.
Count to ten before you answer.

contar algo — *to tell (a story, news)*

› Cuéntame qué tal el viaje.
Tell me how the trip went.

contar con alguien — *to count on someone*

› Cuenta conmigo para la mudanza.
Count me in for the move.

contar con algo (formal) — *to have / to feature*

› El hotel cuenta con piscina y gimnasio.
The hotel has a pool and a gym.

deber / deber de

must, should (obligation) / must (probability)

VERB C1

Careful Spanish distinguishes: deber + inf = obligation; deber de + inf = supposition. In speech many natives use deber + inf for both, but don't use deber de for obligation.

deber + inf — *must / should (obligation, advice)*

› Debes descansar más.
You should rest more.

deber de + inf — *must (I suppose that…)*

› Debe de ser muy tarde; no hay nadie en la calle.
It must be very late; there's nobody in the street.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Debes de pagar la multa (obligation)~~ → ✓ Debes pagar la multa.

soñar / soñar con

to dream / to dream of, about

VERB B1

Spanish uses con for both night dreams and life dreams.

soñar — *to dream (in general)*

› Esta noche he soñado mucho.
I had lots of dreams last night.

soñar con algo / alguien — *to dream about (asleep)*

› Soñé con mi antiguo colegio.
I dreamt about my old school.

soñar con + inf — *to dream of (wish)*

› Sueña con vivir en Buenos Aires.
She dreams of living in Buenos Aires.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soñé de ti / *Soñé sobre ti~~ → ✓ Soñé contigo.

No preposition in Spanish, but yes in English

English loves phrasal verbs and prepositions: look for, wait for, pick up. Spanish often packs the whole idea into one verb. Don't translate the little word.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
buscar A1	*to look for*	No 'para'. ✗ ~~*Busco para mis gafas~~. Estoy buscando piso en Madrid. *I'm looking for a flat in Madrid.*
esperar A2	*to wait for / to hope / to expect*	No 'para'. One verb, three English meanings. Te espero en la puerta. *I'll wait for you at the door.*
pedir A2	*to ask for / to order*	No 'por'. ✗ ~~*Pedí por la cuenta~~. ¿Pedimos la cuenta? *Shall we ask for the bill?*
escuchar A1	*to listen to*	No 'a' (except personal 'a' for people: escucho a mi madre). Me encanta escuchar podcasts. *I love listening to podcasts.*
mirar A1	*to look at*	No 'a' (except people: mira a ese chico). Mira esta foto. *Look at this photo.*
pagar A2	*to pay for*	The thing paid for goes straight after the verb. Yo pago los cafés. *I'll pay for the coffees.*
agradecer B1	*to be grateful for / to thank for*	Te agradezco la ayuda = Thanks for the help. Te agradezco mucho la invitación. *Thank you so much for the invitation.*
aprovechar B1	*to take advantage of / to make the most of*	✗ ~~*aprovechar de la oferta~~ → ✓ aprovechar la oferta. Aprovecha las rebajas. *Make the most of the sales.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
solicitar FORMAL B2	*to apply for / to request*	Formal. ✗ ~~*aplicar por un trabajo~~. He solicitado una beca. *I've applied for a grant.*
recoger A2	*to pick up / to collect / to tidy up*	English particle 'up', Spanish nothing. ¿Me recoges en la estación? *Can you pick me up at the station?*
apagar / encender A2	*to switch off / to switch on*	Also for lights and fires: apagar la luz. Apaga el móvil, por favor. *Switch off your phone, please.*
devolver A2	*to give back / to return*	Te devuelvo el libro mañana. *I'll give you the book back tomorrow.*
rellenar B1	*to fill in / to fill out*	Rellene este formulario, por favor. *Please fill in this form.*
aguantar B1	*to put up with / to stand*	Very common: No aguanto el calor. No aguanto a mi compañero de piso. *I can't stand my flatmate.*
averiguar B2	*to find out*	Voy a averiguar a qué hora abren. *I'm going to find out what time they open.*

Preposition in Spanish, but not in English

The opposite trap: English goes straight to the object (enter the room, marry someone, leave the office), Spanish needs a preposition.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
entrar en / a + place A2	*to enter / to go into*	English 'enter the room' → entrar en la habitación (Spain) / a (LatAm). Entró en la sala sin saludar. *He came into the room without saying hello.*
casarse con B1	*to marry*	✗ ~~*Se casó Laura~~ → ✓ Se casó con Laura. ¿Te quieres casar conmigo? *Will you marry me?*
acercarse a B1	*to approach / to go up to*	Nos acercamos al guía para preguntar. *We went up to the guide to ask.*
parecerse a B1	*to resemble / to look like*	Se parece a su padre. *He resembles his father.*
asistir a B1	*to attend*	Asistieron más de cien personas a la boda. *More than a hundred people attended the wedding.*
salir de + place A2	*to leave*	✗ ~~*Salí la oficina~~ → ✓ Salí de la oficina. (Or: dejar = leave something/someone.) Salgo de casa a las ocho. *I leave home at eight.*
jugar a A1	*to play (a game, a sport)*	Spain: jugar al ajedrez. For instruments use tocar. ¿Jugamos a las cartas? *Shall we play cards?*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
tocar + instrument A1	*to play (an instrument)*	No preposition, and never jugar. ✗ ~~*Juego el piano~~ → ✓ Toco el piano. Mi hermana toca la guitarra. *My sister plays the guitar.*
personal 'a' (ver a, conocer a, llamar a…) A1	*(no English equivalent)*	When the direct object is a specific person (or pet), add 'a'. Not with tener: tengo dos hermanos. Ayer vi a Diego en el metro. *I saw Diego on the metro yesterday.*
dudar de B2	*to doubt*	No dudo de tu palabra. *I don't doubt your word.*
disfrutar de B1	*to enjoy*	Disfruta de tus vacaciones. *Enjoy your holidays.*
cambiar de B1	*to change (job, house, opinion)*	Quiere cambiar de vida. *He wants to change his life.*
enfrentarse a B2	*to face / to confront*	Nos enfrentamos a un problema serio. *We're facing a serious problem.*
sobrevivir a B2	*to survive*	Sobrevivió a dos guerras. *He survived two wars.*
renunciar a B2	*to give up / to resign from*	No pienso renunciar a mis vacaciones. *I'm not going to give up my holidays.*
carecer de FORMAL C1	*to lack*	Carecen de experiencia. *They lack experience.*

LEARN THE CHUNK, NOT THE VERB

Write each verb with its preposition and a person or thing after it: 'soñar con alguien', 'depender de algo'. Then make one sentence about your own life. Five chunks a day, said out loud, beats fifty read in silence.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

02 · Everything you need to hold a real conversation

The Speaky Speaking Toolkit

Vocabulary gives you things to talk about; these phrases let you actually have the conversation. They're grouped by what you want to do (agree, disagree, interrupt, tell a story…) and ordered from simple to advanced inside each group. Every phrase has a level badge, a note on when to use it and, where it matters, its register: check it before you use a phrase at work or in an email.

Giving opinions

Creo que… A1

I think (that)…

The basic, safe way to give your opinion. OK everywhere.

> Creo que es una buena idea.
> *I think it's a good idea.*

Pienso que… A1

I think (that)…

Same as creo que, slightly more reflective.

> Pienso que deberíamos salir antes.
> *I think we should leave earlier.*

Para mí… A1

For me… / In my view…

Short and natural in conversation.

> Para mí, la mejor época es la primavera.
> *For me, the best time of year is spring.*

Me parece que… A2

It seems to me that… / I think…

Softer than creo que. Very frequent.

> Me parece que va a llover.
> *I think it's going to rain.*

Me parece bien / mal / genial… A2

I think it's fine / wrong / great…

To react to a plan or idea.

> —¿Quedamos a las seis? —Me parece bien.
> *"Shall we meet at six?" "Sounds good."*

En mi opinión,… A2

In my opinion,…

Neutral to formal. Good for work, presentations, essays.

> En mi opinión, el precio es demasiado alto.
> *In my opinion, the price is too high.*

Yo diría que… B1

I'd say (that)…

Gives an opinion with a bit of caution.

> Yo diría que tiene unos cuarenta años.
> *I'd say he's about forty.*

Desde mi punto de vista,… B1

From my point of view,…

Neutral/formal. 'Bajo mi punto de vista' is also heard, but 'desde' is preferred.

> Desde mi punto de vista, el problema es la comunicación.
> *From my point of view, the problem is communication.*

A mi modo de ver,… B2

The way I see it,…

Elegant and natural, OK for work.

> A mi modo de ver, nos falta tiempo, no dinero.
> *The way I see it, we're short of time, not money.*

Tengo la impresión de que… B1

I get the feeling that…

For an opinion based on intuition.

> Tengo la impresión de que no le caigo bien.
> *I get the feeling she doesn't like me.*

Estoy convencido/a de que… B1

I'm convinced that…

A strong, confident opinion.

> Estoy convencida de que lo vas a conseguir.
> *I'm convinced you're going to do it.*

No creo que + subjunctive B1

I don't think (that)…

Negative opinion: needs the subjunctive.

> No creo que sea tan difícil.
> *I don't think it's that difficult.*

Lo que pienso es que... B1
What I think is that...
To present your opinion clearly, often after listening.

> Lo que pienso es que hay que esperar un poco.
> *What I think is that we should wait a bit.*

Si te soy sincero/a,... INFORMAL B1
To be honest (with you),...
Before an honest or slightly uncomfortable opinion.

> Si te soy sincera, no me gustó nada la película.
> *To be honest, I didn't like the film at all.*

La verdad es que... A2
The truth is... / Honestly...
Extremely common filler-opinion in Spain.

> La verdad es que el hotel estaba genial.
> *Honestly, the hotel was great.*

Personalmente,... B1
Personally,...
Marks the opinion as yours, not universal.

> Personalmente, prefiero trabajar desde casa.
> *Personally, I prefer working from home.*

Considero que... FORMAL B2
I consider that... / I believe...
Formal; good for meetings, emails and essays.

> Considero que la propuesta es viable.
> *I believe the proposal is viable.*

Me da la sensación de que... B2
I get the sense that...
Softer than tengo la impresión.

> Me da la sensación de que están cansados.
> *I get the sense they're tired.*

Tal y como yo lo veo,... B2
As I see it,...
Natural and slightly elaborate.

> Tal y como yo lo veo, es una oportunidad.
> *As I see it, it's an opportunity.*

Soy de la opinión de que... FORMAL C1
I'm of the opinion that...
Formal, for debates and writing.

> Soy de la opinión de que la educación debería ser gratuita.
> *I'm of the opinion that education should be free.*

Me inclino a pensar que... FORMAL C1
I'm inclined to think that...
Nuanced, cautious opinion. Very C1.

> Me inclino a pensar que fue un malentendido.
> *I'm inclined to think it was a misunderstanding.*

No me cabe la menor duda de que... C1
I have no doubt whatsoever that...
Emphatic, slightly formal.

> No me cabe la menor duda de que ganará.
> *I have absolutely no doubt she'll win.*

Asking for opinions

¿Qué piensas? A1
What do you think?
The simplest way. Formal: ¿Qué piensa (usted)?

> Quiero cortarme el pelo. ¿Qué piensas?
> *I want to get my hair cut. What do you think?*

¿Qué te parece? A2
What do you think (of it)? / How does that sound?
Very common to ask about a plan, a thing or an idea.

> ¿Qué te parece si vamos al cine?
> *How about going to the cinema?*

¿Tú qué crees? INFORMAL A2
What do you reckon?
Informal, friendly.

> Yo me pido la paella. ¿Tú qué crees?
> *I'm going for the paella. What do you reckon?*

¿Y tú? A1
And you? / What about you?
To pass the question back.

¿Qué opinas de...? A2
What's your opinion on...? / What do you think of...?
Neutral, OK for work too.

> ¿Qué opinas del nuevo horario?
> *What do you think of the new timetable?*

¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre...? B1
What's your opinion on...?
Slightly more formal.

¿Estás de acuerdo? A2
Do you agree?
Checks agreement.

> Hay que reducir las reuniones. ¿Estás de acuerdo?
> *We need fewer meetings. Do you agree?*

¿Tú cómo lo ves? INFORMAL B1
How do you see it?
Very natural, warm.

> Yo lo veo complicado. ¿Tú cómo lo ves?
> *I think it looks tricky. How do you see it?*

¿Te parece bien? A2
Is that OK with you? / Does that work for you?
To check a plan. OK for work.

> Te mando el informe el lunes, ¿te parece bien?
> *I'll send you the report on Monday, does that work for you?*

¿A ti qué te parece? B1
What do you think?
Stresses 'you' — inviting a personal view.

¿Qué harías tú en mi lugar? B1
What would you do in my place?
Asking for advice and opinion.

> Me han ofrecido un trabajo en Lima. ¿Qué harías tú en mi lugar?
> *I've been offered a job in Lima. What would you do in my place?*

¿Tienes alguna opinión al respecto? B2
Do you have any view on that?
Neutral/formal, good for meetings.

Me gustaría saber qué piensas de... B2
I'd like to know what you think of...
Polite, OK for emails.

¿Cuál sería su postura al respecto? FORMAL C1
What would your position be on this?
Formal (usted). Interviews, meetings.

¿Hasta qué punto crees que...? C1
To what extent do you think...?
For deeper discussion.

> ¿Hasta qué punto crees que la tecnología nos aísla?
> *To what extent do you think technology isolates us?*

Agreeing

Sí, claro. A1
Yes, of course.
Simple, friendly agreement.

Vale. INFORMAL A1
OK.
Spain. The everyday 'OK'.
Spain. LatAm: okey, dale (Arg), sale (Mex).

> —Te llamo a las cinco. —Vale.
> *"I'll call you at five." "OK."*

De acuerdo. A1
Agreed. / OK.
Neutral; OK for work.

Estoy de acuerdo (contigo). A2
I agree (with you).
✗ ~~*Soy de acuerdo / *Estoy acuerdo~~.

> Estoy de acuerdo contigo: es demasiado caro.
> *I agree with you: it's too expensive.*

Tienes razón. A2
You're right.
✗ ~~*Estás correcto (unnatural in Spain~~).

> Tienes razón, mejor vamos en metro.
> *You're right, we'd better take the metro.*

¡Exacto! / ¡Exactamente! A2
Exactly!
Strong, enthusiastic agreement.

Yo también. / Yo tampoco. A1
Me too. / Me neither.
Agreeing with a positive / negative statement.
With gustar: a mí también / a mí tampoco.

> —No me gusta el frío. —A mí tampoco.
> *"I don't like the cold." "Me neither."*

Eso es. A2
That's it. / That's right.
Short confirmation.

¡Claro que sí! INFORMAL A2
Of course! / Absolutely!
Warm and energetic.

Pienso lo mismo. B1
I think the same. / That's what I think too.
Neutral.

Totalmente de acuerdo. B1
Totally agree.
Strong agreement.

> —Hay que contratar a más gente. —Totalmente de acuerdo.
> *"We need to hire more people." "Totally agree."*

Ahí le has dado. COLLOQUIAL B2
You've hit the nail on the head.
Informal, friends.

Sin duda. B1
Without a doubt.
Neutral, OK at work.

Por supuesto. A2
Of course.
Neutral, OK everywhere.

Lo mismo digo. B1
Same here. / Likewise.
Also as a reply to good wishes.

Ni que lo digas. INFORMAL B2
You can say that again. / Tell me about it.
Informal, with feeling.

> —Hace un calor horrible. —Ni que lo digas.
> *"It's horribly hot." "Tell me about it."*

Ya te digo. COLLOQUIAL B2
Tell me about it. / Absolutely.
Spain, informal. Very frequent.

> —Qué caro está todo, ¿eh? —Ya te digo.
> *"Everything's so expensive, isn't it?" "Tell me about it."*

Comparto tu opinión. FORMAL B2
I share your view.
Formal-ish; meetings, debates.

Coincido contigo / con usted. B2
I agree with you.
Neutral to formal, very good at work.

> Coincido contigo en que el plazo es muy corto.
> *I agree with you that the deadline is very tight.*

No podría estar más de acuerdo. B2
I couldn't agree more.
Emphatic.

Suscribo lo que dices. FORMAL C1
I fully endorse what you're saying.
Formal; debates, meetings.

Me has quitado las palabras de la boca. INFORMAL C1
You took the words right out of my mouth.
Informal, warm.

Partially agreeing

Sí, pero... A2
Yes, but...
The classic partial agreement.

Depende. A2
It depends.
Neutral. Add de + noun: depende del precio.

> —¿Vienes a la playa? —Depende del tiempo.
> *"Are you coming to the beach?" "It depends on the weather."*

Puede ser. A2
Could be. / Maybe.
Non-committal.

En parte sí. B1
Partly, yes.
Soft.

Tienes razón, pero... B1
You're right, but...
Polite before a counterpoint.

Hasta cierto punto. B1
Up to a point. / To some extent.
Neutral.

> —¿Te gusta vivir sola? —Hasta cierto punto.
> *"Do you like living alone?" "Up to a point."*

No del todo. B1
Not entirely.
Polite partial disagreement.

> —¿Lo has entendido? —No del todo.
> *"Did you understand it?" "Not entirely."*

Sí y no. B1
Yes and no.
Introduces a nuanced view.

Entiendo lo que dices, pero... B1
I see what you mean, but...
Respectful, great at work.

> Entiendo lo que dices, pero no tenemos presupuesto.
> *I see what you mean, but we don't have the budget.*

Estoy de acuerdo en parte. B1
I partly agree.
Neutral.

Eso es verdad, aunque... B2
That's true, although...
Concedes then adds nuance.

No digo que no, pero... INFORMAL B2
I'm not saying no, but...
Informal, soft.

Puede que tengas razón, pero... B2
You may be right, but...
+ subjunctive. Diplomatic.

> Puede que tengas razón, pero prefiero esperar.
> *You may be right, but I'd rather wait.*

Lo veo un poco distinto. B2
I see it a bit differently.
Very polite disagreement.

Admito que..., pero... B2
I admit that..., but...
Concession structure.

> Admito que es caro, pero la calidad es excelente.
> *I admit it's expensive, but the quality is excellent.*

Si bien es cierto que..., también... FORMAL C1
While it's true that..., it's also...
Formal, structured argument.

> Si bien es cierto que hay riesgos, también hay grandes ventajas.
> *While it's true there are risks, there are also big advantages.*

Con matices. C1
With some reservations. / Broadly, yes.
Short, sophisticated.

Disagreeing (politely → strongly)

Ordered from soft to strong. At work, stay in the first half of the list and always add a reason.

No, no creo. A2
No, I don't think so.
Soft, everyday.

No estoy de acuerdo. A2
I don't agree.
Neutral. Add a reason.

Yo no lo veo así. B1
I don't see it that way.
Polite and very natural.

> Yo no lo veo así: creo que es una oportunidad.
> *I don't see it that way: I think it's an opportunity.*

No sé, no me convence. INFORMAL B1
I don't know, I'm not convinced.
Soft, informal.

> No sé, la idea no me convence del todo.
> *I don't know, I'm not totally convinced by the idea.*

Perdona, pero no estoy de acuerdo. B1
Sorry, but I don't agree.
Polite; OK at work.

Yo pienso de otra manera. B1
I see things differently.
Neutral.

No es exactamente así. B1
It's not exactly like that.
Correcting gently.

Lo siento, pero no comparto tu opinión. B2
I'm sorry, but I don't share your view.
Formal-ish, meetings.

Con todo el respeto, creo que... FORMAL B2
With all due respect, I think...
Formal; prepares a strong disagreement.

> Con todo el respeto, creo que se equivoca.
> *With all due respect, I think you're mistaken.*

No lo tengo tan claro. B2
I'm not so sure about that.
Doubtful disagreement.

Eso no tiene nada que ver. B2
That's got nothing to do with it.
Direct.

¡Qué va! COLLOQUIAL B1
No way! / Not at all!
Spain, informal. Emphatic 'no'.

> —¿Estás cansada? —¡Qué va! Estoy genial.
> *"Are you tired?" "Not at all! I feel great."*

Para nada. INFORMAL B1
Not at all.
Informal, direct.

> —¿Te molesta la música? —Para nada.
> *"Does the music bother you?" "Not at all."*

En absoluto. B2
Not at all. / Absolutely not.
Neutral/formal. Careful: it means 'not at all', not 'absolutely'.

> —¿Le importa esperar? —En absoluto.
> *"Do you mind waiting?" "Not at all."*

¡Ni hablar! INFORMAL B1
No way! / Out of the question!
Strong refusal, informal.

> —¿Me prestas el coche? —¡Ni hablar!
> *"Will you lend me your car?" "No way!"*

¡Anda ya! COLLOQUIAL B2
Come off it! / Get away!
Spain, colloquial: disbelief.

> —Me ha tocado la lotería. —¡Anda ya!
> *"I've won the lottery." "Come off it!"*

Me temo que discrepo. FORMAL C1
I'm afraid I disagree.
Formal, polished.

Eso es discutible. C1
That's debatable.
Neutral/formal.

> Que sea la mejor solución es discutible.
> *Whether it's the best solution is debatable.*

Ahí no te sigo. INFORMAL C1
I'm not with you there.
Informal, friendly.

Estás muy equivocado/a. B2
You're very wrong.
Strong — use carefully.

¡De ninguna manera! B2
No way! / Absolutely not!
Very strong.

Ni de broma. COLLOQUIAL B2
Not a chance. / No way.
Colloquial, strong.

Giving examples

Por ejemplo,... A1
For example,...
The basic one.

> Hay muchas cosas que hacer, por ejemplo, visitar el Retiro.
> *There's lots to do, for example, visiting the Retiro park.*

como... A2
like... / such as...
Before a list of examples.

> Me encanta la fruta, como las fresas o el mango.
> *I love fruit, like strawberries or mango.*

Un ejemplo es... A2
One example is...
Neutral.

Mira, por ejemplo... INFORMAL B1
Look, for example...
Conversational.

Sin ir más lejos,... B2
Without going any further,... / To take an obvious example,...
Very Spanish, natural.

> Sin ir más lejos, ayer me pasó lo mismo.
> *Just yesterday, the same thing happened to me.*

Pongamos por caso... C1
Let's say... / Take, for instance...
Hypothetical example.

Por poner un ejemplo,... B1
To give an example,...
Neutral.

Es el caso de... B2
That's the case with...
Neutral/formal.

Fíjate en... INFORMAL B1
Look at... / Take...
Draws attention to an example.

> Fíjate en Japón: allí los trenes nunca llegan tarde.
> *Take Japan: trains there are never late.*

Pongamos que... B2
Let's say that... / Suppose...
Builds a hypothetical example.

> Pongamos que ganas la lotería. ¿Qué harías?
> *Let's say you win the lottery. What would you do?*

A modo de ejemplo,... FORMAL C1
By way of example,...
Formal, presentations.

Tal es el caso de... FORMAL C1
Such is the case of...
Formal writing.

Me viene a la cabeza... B2
What comes to mind is...
Natural when thinking of an example.

En concreto,... B1
Specifically,...
To narrow it down.

> Tengo un problema con el ordenador; en concreto, con el correo.
> *I've got a problem with my computer; specifically, with my email.*

Comparing & contrasting

más... que / menos... que A1
more... than / less... than
Basic comparisons.

> Madrid es más grande que Sevilla.
> *Madrid is bigger than Seville.*

tan... como A2
as... as
Equality.

> No es tan caro como pensaba.
> *It's not as expensive as I thought.*

igual que A2
the same as / just like
Neutral.

En cambio,... B1
On the other hand,... / Whereas...
Very frequent contrast.

> Yo soy muy organizado; mi hermano, en cambio, es un desastre.
> *I'm very organised; my brother, on the other hand, is a disaster.*

Por un lado... por otro (lado)... B1
On the one hand... on the other (hand)...
Structures a balanced view.

> Por un lado, el sueldo es bueno; por otro, el horario es horrible.
> *On the one hand, the pay is good; on the other, the hours are awful.*

Mientras que... B1
Whereas... / While...
Contrast in one sentence.

> Yo soy de mañanas, mientras que mi pareja es de noches.
> *I'm a morning person, whereas my partner is a night owl.*

A diferencia de... B1
Unlike...
Neutral.

> A diferencia de su hermana, ella es muy tranquila.
> *Unlike her sister, she's very calm.*

Al igual que... B2
Just like... / In the same way as...
Neutral/formal.

No tiene nada que ver con... B1
It's nothing like... / It has nothing to do with...
Strong difference.

Se parece bastante a... B1
It's quite similar to...
Neutral.

Es como... INFORMAL A2
It's like...
Informal comparison.

Es la noche y el día. INFORMAL B2
They're like chalk and cheese. / It's night and day.
Huge difference.

> Mi nuevo jefe y el anterior son la noche y el día.
> *My new boss and the old one are like night and day.*

Comparado con... B1
Compared with...
Neutral.

> Comparado con Londres, Madrid es barato.
> *Compared with London, Madrid is cheap.*

Sin embargo,... B1
However,...
Neutral/formal contrast.

> Es un buen piso. Sin embargo, está muy lejos.
> *It's a nice flat. However, it's very far away.*

En comparación con... B2
In comparison with...
Formal-ish.

Ni punto de comparación. INFORMAL B2
There's no comparison.
Informal, emphatic.

Por el contrario,... B2
On the contrary,... / Conversely,...
Formal-ish.

Ambos tienen sus pros y sus contras. B2
Both have their pros and cons.
Balanced conclusion.

Speculating & hypothesising

Watch the mood: puede que, es posible que and lo más probable es que need the subjunctive; a lo mejor and igual take the indicative.

Quizás / Quizá A2
Maybe / Perhaps
With indicative or subjunctive.

> Quizás llegue tarde.
> *Maybe I'll be late.*

A lo mejor INFORMAL A2
Maybe
Very common in speech; always with indicative.

> A lo mejor está enfermo.
> *Maybe he's ill.*

Igual COLLOQUIAL B1
Maybe / Probably
Spain, informal; with indicative.

> Igual mañana llueve.
> *It might rain tomorrow.*

Tal vez B1
Perhaps
Slightly more formal than quizás.

> Tal vez nos veamos en verano.
> *Perhaps we'll see each other in the summer.*

Puede que + subjunctive B1
It may be that... / Maybe...
Very frequent.

> Puede que tengas razón.
> *You may be right.*

Es posible que + subjunctive B1
It's possible that...
Neutral.

> Es posible que cambien la fecha.
> *They might change the date.*

Seguramente... B1
Probably...
Careful: means 'probably', not 'surely'.

> Seguramente está en el tráfico.
> *He's probably stuck in traffic.*

Probablemente... A2
Probably...
Neutral.

> Probablemente me mude el año que viene.
> *I'll probably move next year.*

Me imagino que... / Me imagino que sí. B1
I imagine... / I suppose so.
Natural speculation.

> Me imagino que estarás cansado.
> *I imagine you must be tired.*

Supongo que... A2
I suppose / I guess...
Very common.

> Supongo que vendrán en coche.
> *I guess they'll come by car.*

Debe de + infinitive B2
He/She/It must...
Logical deduction.

> Debe de estar agotada después del viaje.
> *She must be exhausted after the trip.*

Future of probability: Estará en casa. B1
He'll be at home. / He's probably at home.
The future tense can express a guess about the present.

> —¿Dónde está Javi? —Estará en el gimnasio.
> *"Where's Javi?" "He's probably at the gym."*

Conditional of probability: Serían las diez. B2
It must have been about ten.
Conditional = a guess about the past.

> Cuando llegó serían las once.
> *It must have been around eleven when he arrived.*

¿Y si...? A2
What if...?
To open a hypothesis.

> ¿Y si nos perdemos?
> *What if we get lost?*

Si + imperfect subjunctive, conditional B2
If I were..., I would...
Hypothetical present.

> Si tuviera más tiempo, aprendería italiano.
> *If I had more time, I'd learn Italian.*

Imagínate que... B1
Imagine that...
Opens a hypothetical scene.

> Imagínate que vives en una isla desierta.
> *Imagine you live on a desert island.*

Lo más probable es que + subjunctive B2
Most likely...
Strong probability.

> Lo más probable es que lleguen mañana.
> *Most likely they'll arrive tomorrow.*

No es de extrañar que + subjunctive C1
It's not surprising that...
Speculation + judgement.

Cabe la posibilidad de que + subjunctive FORMAL C1
There's a chance that...
Formal.

Todo apunta a que... FORMAL C1
Everything points to...
Formal, news.

> Todo apunta a que habrá elecciones anticipadas.
> *Everything points to an early election.*

Me da que... COLLOQUIAL B2
I've got a feeling that...
Spain, colloquial.

> Me da que no van a venir.
> *I've got a feeling they're not coming.*

A saber. INFORMAL B2
Who knows. / Goodness knows.
Informal shrug.

> —¿Dónde se habrá metido Marcos? —A saber.
> *"Where's Marcos got to?" "Who knows."*

Vete tú a saber. COLLOQUIAL C1
Who knows!
Informal, emphatic.

Expressing certainty & doubt

Estoy seguro/a. A2
I'm sure.
Basic certainty.

> —¿Seguro que cerraste la puerta? —Sí, estoy segura.
> *"Are you sure you locked the door?" "Yes, I'm sure."*

Seguro que... A2
I'm sure... / Surely...
Very common.

> Seguro que te va bien.
> *I'm sure it'll go well for you.*

Claro. A1
Of course. / Sure.
Everyday.

Está claro que... B1
It's clear that...
+ indicative.

> Está claro que necesitamos más tiempo.
> *It's clear we need more time.*

Estoy segurísimo/a. INFORMAL B1
I'm absolutely sure.
Emphatic.

Te lo aseguro. B1
I promise you. / Believe me.
Convincing.

> Es el mejor restaurante del barrio, te lo aseguro.
> *It's the best restaurant in the area, believe me.*

No hay duda de que... B2
There's no doubt that...
+ indicative.

Lo sé de buena tinta. INFORMAL C1
I have it on good authority.
Informal, idiomatic.

Pondría la mano en el fuego. INFORMAL C1
I'd stake my life on it.
Idiomatic certainty.

> Pondría la mano en el fuego por ella.
> *I'd stake my life on her.*

No estoy seguro/a. A2
I'm not sure.
Basic doubt.

No sé. A1
I don't know.
Basic doubt.

Tengo mis dudas. B1
I have my doubts.
Neutral.

Lo dudo. B1
I doubt it.
Short, neutral.

> —¿Crees que llegará a tiempo? —Lo dudo.
> *"Do you think he'll be on time?" "I doubt it."*

Dudo que + subjunctive B1
I doubt that...
Needs subjunctive.

> Dudo que lleguen a tiempo.
> *I doubt they'll make it on time.*

No lo tengo claro. B1
I'm not sure about it.
Neutral.

Ni idea. INFORMAL A2
No idea.
Informal.

> —¿A qué hora cierra? —Ni idea.
> *"What time does it close?" "No idea."*

No tengo ni idea. INFORMAL A2
I have no idea.
Informal.

No estoy del todo convencido/a. B2
I'm not entirely convinced.
Polite doubt; good at work.

Me extrañaría. B2
I'd be surprised.
Elegant doubt.

> —¿Crees que lloverá? —Me extrañaría, hace un sol increíble.
> *"Do you think it'll rain?" "I'd be surprised, it's gloriously sunny."*

Tengo serias dudas al respecto. FORMAL C1
I have serious doubts about that.
Formal.

Clarifying & asking for clarification

¿Cómo? A1
Sorry? / Pardon?
When you didn't hear.

¿Perdona? / ¿Perdone? A1
Sorry?
Polite; perdone = usted.

¿Puedes repetir, por favor? A1
Can you repeat that, please?
Essential for learners.

> Perdona, no te he oído bien. ¿Puedes repetir, por favor?
> *Sorry, I didn't hear you properly. Can you repeat that, please?*

¿Puedes hablar más despacio? A1
Can you speak more slowly?
Essential.

¿Qué significa...? A1
What does ... mean?
Vocabulary question.

> ¿Qué significa 'madrugar'?
> *What does 'madrugar' mean?*

¿Cómo se dice ... en español? A1
How do you say ... in Spanish?
Classroom essential.

> ¿Cómo se dice 'deadline' en español?
> *How do you say 'deadline' in Spanish?*

¿A qué te refieres? B1
What do you mean? / What are you referring to?
Asking for clarification.

> —Eso no es lo que acordamos. —¿A qué te refieres?
> *"That's not what we agreed." "What do you mean?"*

¿Qué quieres decir? A2
What do you mean?
Neutral.

O sea, que... INFORMAL B1
So, (what you're saying is)...
Checking you understood.

> O sea, que no vienes.
> *So you're not coming.*

¿Te refieres a...? B1
Do you mean...?
Checking.

> ¿Te refieres a la reunión de ayer?
> *Do you mean yesterday's meeting?*

Si no te he entendido mal,... B2
If I've understood you correctly,...
Polite, great at work.

> Si no te he entendido mal, la entrega es el jueves.
> *If I've understood you correctly, the deadline is Thursday.*

¿Me lo puedes explicar de otra manera? B1
Can you explain it another way?
Polite.

No sé si me explico. B1
I don't know if I'm making myself clear.
After explaining something.

¿Me explico? B1
Do you see what I mean?
Checking the listener follows.

Lo que quiero decir es que... B1
What I mean is...
Rephrasing yourself.

> Lo que quiero decir es que necesitamos ayuda.
> *What I mean is that we need help.*

Es decir,... B1
That is (to say),... / In other words,...
Neutral.

> Llego el 15, es decir, el próximo martes.
> *I'm arriving on the 15th, that is, next Tuesday.*

Me he expresado mal. B2
I didn't put that very well.
Correcting yourself.

Déjame que te lo explique. B1
Let me explain.
Neutral.

Dicho de otra manera,... B2
Put another way,...
Neutral/formal.

¿Podría aclararme...? FORMAL B2
Could you clarify...?
Formal, emails/meetings.

Me refería a... B2
I was referring to... / I meant...
Correcting a misunderstanding.

No me malinterpretes. B2
Don't get me wrong.
Before a delicate point.

> No me malinterpretes: me encanta tu idea, pero es cara.
> *Don't get me wrong: I love your idea, but it's expensive.*

En otras palabras,... B2
In other words,...
Neutral.

Buying time & fillers

Natives use fillers all the time. Using pues, a ver and es que instead of 'um' instantly makes you sound more Spanish.

Pues... INFORMAL A2
Well...
The king of Spanish fillers. Start an answer with it.

> —¿Qué hiciste ayer? —Pues... nada especial.
> *"What did you do yesterday?" "Well... nothing special."*

Bueno... A2
Well... / OK...
To start, to concede or to change direction.

> Bueno, ¿empezamos?
> *Right, shall we start?*

A ver... INFORMAL A2
Let's see...
Very common when thinking or organising.

> A ver... ¿dónde he puesto las llaves?
> *Let's see... where did I put my keys?*

Mmm, vamos a ver... INFORMAL A2
Hmm, let's see...
Thinking aloud.

Es que... INFORMAL A2
The thing is...
Introduces an excuse or explanation.

> Es que no tengo tiempo esta semana.
> *The thing is, I don't have time this week.*

Este... INFORMAL B1
Um... / Er...
Typical in Latin America.
LatAm. In Spain: eh..., pues...

O sea... COLLOQUIAL B1
I mean... / Like...
Very frequent in casual speech.

Déjame pensar. A2
Let me think.
Neutral.

Buena pregunta. B1
Good question.
Buys time politely.

¿Cómo te diría? INFORMAL B1
How can I put it?
Searching for words.

> Es una persona... ¿cómo te diría?... especial.
> *He's... how can I put it?... unusual.*

¿Cómo se dice...? A2
How do you say...?
Searching for a word.

Es una cosa que... A2
It's a thing that...
Describing something when you lack the word.

> Es una cosa que sirve para abrir botellas.
> *It's a thing you use to open bottles.*

Vamos, que... COLLOQUIAL B2
I mean... / Basically...
Spain, informal: rephrasing.

Digamos que... B2
Let's say that...
Approximating an idea.

> Digamos que no es mi plato favorito.
> *Let's say it's not my favourite dish.*

Nada, que... COLLOQUIAL B2
So, basically...
Spain, colloquial: starts a story or explanation.

> Nada, que al final no fuimos.
> *So basically, in the end we didn't go.*

¿Sabes? INFORMAL B1
You know?
Checks connection.

En plan... VERY COLLOQUIAL B2
Like...
Spain, very colloquial (young speakers). Understand it; use with friends only.

Tengo que pensarlo. B1
I need to think about it.
Polite delay.

Déjame que lo piense un momento. B2
Let me think about it for a moment.
Polite, OK at work.

Así, a bote pronto,... INFORMAL C1
Off the top of my head,...
Spain, informal.

Es una pregunta difícil de responder. B2
That's a hard question to answer.
Buys time, OK in interviews.

Showing surprise

¿De verdad? A1
Really?
Basic surprise.

¿En serio? INFORMAL A2
Seriously?
Very common.

> —Me voy a vivir a México. —¿En serio?
> *"I'm moving to Mexico." "Seriously?"*

¡No me digas! INFORMAL A2
No way! / You don't say!
Classic surprise.

> —Laura está embarazada. —¡No me digas!
> *"Laura's pregnant." "No way!"*

¡Qué sorpresa! A2
What a surprise!
Neutral.

¡Increíble! A2
Incredible! / Unbelievable!
Neutral.

¡Anda! COLLOQUIAL B1
Oh! / Wow!
Spain, informal, mild surprise.

> ¡Anda! ¿Tú por aquí?
> *Oh! What are you doing here?*

¡Qué fuerte! COLLOQUIAL B1
No way! / That's crazy!
Spain, colloquial.

> —Le han despedido por un tuit. —¡Qué fuerte!
> *"He's been fired over a tweet." "That's crazy!"*

¡No puede ser! B1
It can't be!
Disbelief.

¡No me lo puedo creer! B1
I can't believe it!
Strong.

¡Hala! COLLOQUIAL B1
Wow!
Spain, colloquial.

¡Vaya! INFORMAL B1
Wow! / Oh dear!
Surprise or mild disappointment, depending on tone.

> ¡Vaya! Se me ha olvidado el paraguas.
> *Oh no! I've forgotten my umbrella.*

¡Madre mía! INFORMAL B1
Oh my God! / Goodness me!
Very common in Spain.

> ¡Madre mía, qué cola hay!
> *Goodness me, what a queue!*

¡Quién lo iba a decir! B2
Who'd have thought it!
Surprise at an outcome.

¡Me dejas de piedra! INFORMAL B2
I'm stunned!
Idiomatic.

Me ha pillado por sorpresa. B2
It caught me by surprise.
Neutral, OK at work.

¡Lo que faltaba! INFORMAL B2
That's all I needed!
Ironic, negative surprise.

> Y ahora se va la luz. ¡Lo que faltaba!
> *And now there's a power cut. That's all I needed!*

¡Alucino! COLLOQUIAL B2
I can't believe it! / Mind-blowing!
Spain, colloquial.

Jamás lo habría imaginado. C1
I'd never have imagined it.
Neutral/formal.

Showing interest & active listening

Ah, ¿sí? A1
Oh, really?
Shows interest.

¡Qué interesante! A2
How interesting!
Neutral.

Ya. INFORMAL A2
Yeah. / I know. / Right.
Very common back-channel in Spain.

> —Hoy hay mucho tráfico. —Ya.
> *"There's a lot of traffic today." "Yeah."*

Claro, claro. INFORMAL A2
Sure, sure. / Of course.
Encouraging the speaker.

Sí, sí. INFORMAL A1
Yeah, yeah.
Back-channel.

¿Y qué pasó? A2
And what happened?
Invites the story to continue.

¿Y luego? INFORMAL A2
And then?
Invites continuation.

Cuéntame. INFORMAL A2
Tell me (more).
Warm invitation.

Te entiendo. A2
I understand. / I get you.
Empathy.

> Te entiendo, a mí también me pasa.
> *I get you, it happens to me too.*

Me imagino. B1
I can imagine.
Empathy.

> —Estuve seis horas en el aeropuerto. —Me imagino, qué horror.
> *"I spent six hours at the airport." "I can imagine, how awful."*

¡Qué bien! A1
That's great!
Positive reaction.

¡Qué pena! / ¡Qué lástima! A2
What a shame!
Sympathy.

> —No puedo ir a tu fiesta. —¡Qué pena!
> *"I can't come to your party." "What a shame!"*

¡No me extraña! INFORMAL B1
I'm not surprised!
Agreement + empathy.

¿Ah, sí? ¿Y eso? INFORMAL B1
Oh really? How come?
Asks for the reason.

Normal. INFORMAL B1
Fair enough. / Understandable.
Spain, informal.

> —Estoy agotada. —Normal, has trabajado doce horas.
> *"I'm exhausted." "No wonder, you've worked twelve hours."*

Ya veo. B1
I see.
Neutral.

Lógico. B1
Makes sense.
Neutral.

¿Y cómo te sentiste? B1
And how did you feel?
Deeper listening.

Vaya, lo siento mucho. B1
Oh, I'm so sorry.
Sympathy for bad news.

¡Qué rabia! INFORMAL B1
How annoying!
Empathy with frustration.

Sigue, sigue. INFORMAL B1
Go on, go on.
Encouraging.

Te sigo. B2
I'm with you. / I'm following.
Shows understanding.

¡Hombre, claro! INFORMAL B1
Well, of course!
Spain, informal (used for anyone).

Expressing emotions in conversation

¡Qué alegría! A2
How wonderful! / I'm so happy!
Joy.

Estoy muy contento/a de que + subj. B1
I'm very happy that…
Joy.

¡Me hace mucha ilusión! B1
I'm so excited about it! / It means a lot to me!
Very Spanish: happy anticipation.

> Me hace mucha ilusión ir a tu boda.
> *I'm really looking forward to your wedding.*

Estoy encantado/a. B1
I'm delighted.
Neutral.

Me da mucha pena. B1
It makes me really sad. / I feel really sorry about it.
Sadness, pity.

Estoy hecho/a polvo. COLLOQUIAL B1
I'm shattered / exhausted.
Spain, colloquial.

> Hoy he trabajado diez horas; estoy hecha polvo.
> *I worked ten hours today; I'm shattered.*

Estoy de bajón. COLLOQUIAL B2
I'm feeling down.
Spain, colloquial.

Me pone nervioso/a. B1
It makes me nervous.
Neutral.

Me da miedo. A2
It scares me.
Neutral.

Estoy harto/a de… INFORMAL B1
I'm fed up with…
Informal frustration.

> Estoy harta de este calor.
> *I'm fed up with this heat.*

Me saca de quicio. INFORMAL B2
It drives me up the wall.
Informal.

> Me saca de quicio que hable tan alto por teléfono.
> *It drives me up the wall when he talks so loudly on the phone.*

Estoy preocupado/a por… A2
I'm worried about…
Neutral.

¡Qué vergüenza! B1
How embarrassing!
Embarrassment.

> ¡Qué vergüenza! Le he llamado por otro nombre.
> *How embarrassing! I called him by the wrong name.*

Me siento fatal. INFORMAL A2
I feel awful.
Physically or emotionally.

Estoy que no me lo creo. INFORMAL B2
I can hardly believe it.
Joy/shock.

Me alegro mucho por ti. B1
I'm really happy for you.
Warm.

Estoy agobiado/a. INFORMAL B1
I'm overwhelmed / stressed.
Spain, very common.

> Tengo tres exámenes esta semana y estoy agobiada.
> *I've got three exams this week and I'm stressed out.*

Me emociona. B2
It moves me. / It touches me.
Careful: emocionar = to move emotionally.

Se me cae la cara de vergüenza. INFORMAL C1
I'm so ashamed. / I want the ground to swallow me up.
Idiomatic.

No me cabe la alegría en el cuerpo. INFORMAL C1
I'm over the moon.
Idiomatic joy.

Changing the subject

Por cierto,... A2
By the way,...
The most common way to switch topic.

> Por cierto, ¿has visto a Laura?
> *By the way, have you seen Laura?*

Cambiando de tema,... B1
Changing the subject,...
Clear topic change.

Hablando de... B1
Speaking of...
Links the new topic to the old.

> Hablando de viajes, ¿qué tal Lisboa?
> *Speaking of trips, how was Lisbon?*

Eso me recuerda que... B1
That reminds me...
Natural link.

> Eso me recuerda que tengo que llamar al dentista.
> *That reminds me, I have to call the dentist.*

Oye, una cosa... INFORMAL A2
Hey, one thing...
Informal.

Antes de que se me olvide,... B1
Before I forget,...
Neutral.

> Antes de que se me olvide, te he traído un regalo.
> *Before I forget, I've brought you a present.*

A propósito,... B2
By the way,... / Incidentally,...
Neutral.

Ahora que lo dices,... B2
Now that you mention it,...
Natural link.

> Ahora que lo dices, hace tiempo que no veo a Ana.
> *Now that you mention it, I haven't seen Ana for ages.*

Bueno, dejemos eso. INFORMAL B1
OK, let's leave that.
Closes a topic.

Pasando a otro tema,... B2
Moving on to another subject,...
Meetings.

Y hablando de otra cosa,... B2
And on a different note,...
Neutral.

No tiene nada que ver, pero... INFORMAL B2
This has nothing to do with it, but...
Honest topic jump.

Si me permitís cambiar de tema,... FORMAL C1
If you'll allow me to change the subject,...
Polite, group (Spain: vosotros).

Going back to a topic

Como te decía,... B1
As I was saying,...
Returning to your point.

> Como te decía, el problema es el precio.
> *As I was saying, the problem is the price.*

Volviendo a lo de antes,... B1
Going back to what we were saying,...
Neutral.

Volviendo al tema,... B1
Back to the subject,...
Neutral, meetings.

Lo que te estaba contando... INFORMAL B1
What I was telling you...
Informal.

¿Por dónde iba? B1
Where was I?
After an interruption.

> Perdón, me han llamado. ¿Por dónde iba?
> *Sorry, I got a call. Where was I?*

Retomando lo que decía Laura,... B2
Picking up on what Laura was saying,...
Meetings.

Pero bueno, a lo que iba... INFORMAL B2
Anyway, back to my point...
Informal.

Me he ido por las ramas. INFORMAL B2
I've gone off on a tangent.
Self-correction.

En cuanto a lo que comentabas antes,... B2
Regarding what you mentioned earlier,...
Neutral/formal.

Como decía al principio,... B2
As I said at the start,...
Presentations.

Retomando el hilo,... C1
Picking up the thread,...
Elegant.

Interrupting politely

Perdona, ¿puedo decir algo? A2
Sorry, can I say something?
Polite.

Perdona que te interrumpa, pero... B1
Sorry to interrupt, but...
Polite, very useful.

> Perdona que te interrumpa, pero ya es la hora.
> *Sorry to interrupt, but it's time.*

Un momento, por favor. A2
Just a moment, please.
Neutral.

Espera, espera. INFORMAL A2
Wait, wait.
Informal.

Si me permites,... B2
If I may,...
Polite.

Una cosa... INFORMAL B1
One thing...
Informal.

¿Puedo añadir algo? B1
Can I add something?
Meetings.

> Antes de terminar, ¿puedo añadir algo?
> *Before we finish, can I add something?*

Antes de que sigas,... B2
Before you go on,...
Neutral.

Disculpe que le interrumpa. FORMAL B2
Excuse me for interrupting.
Formal (usted).

Solo un apunte:... C1
Just one small point:...
Meetings.

Déjame terminar, por favor. B1
Let me finish, please.
Defending your turn.

Ahora te dejo hablar, pero... INFORMAL C1
I'll let you speak in a second, but...
Holding the floor.

Adding information

Y además... A2
And also... / And besides...
Basic.

También... A1
Also...
Basic.

Encima,... INFORMAL B1
On top of that,...
Informal, often negative.

> Llegó tarde y, encima, sin disculparse.
> *He was late and, on top of that, didn't apologise.*

Aparte de eso,... B1
Apart from that,...
Neutral.

> Aparte de eso, todo bien.
> *Apart from that, everything's fine.*

Por si fuera poco,... B2
As if that weren't enough,...
Emphatic addition.

> Perdí el tren y, por si fuera poco, empezó a llover.
> *I missed the train and, as if that weren't enough, it started raining.*

Y otra cosa:... INFORMAL B1
And another thing:...
Informal.

No solo... sino también... B2
Not only... but also...
Neutral.

Es más,... B2
What's more,...
Neutral.

> No me gusta. Es más, me parece una tontería.
> *I don't like it. What's more, I think it's silly.*

Por otra parte,... B2
Moreover,... / On the other hand,...
Neutral/formal.

Asimismo,... FORMAL C1
Likewise,... / Also,...
Formal; emails and writing.

> Asimismo, le adjunto el presupuesto.
> *I'm also attaching the quote.*

Cabe añadir que... FORMAL C1
It's worth adding that...
Formal.

Y no solo eso,... B2
And not only that,...
Spoken emphasis.

Emphasising

¡Es que...! INFORMAL B1
It's just that...! / Honestly...!
Emphatic complaint or explanation.

De verdad que... INFORMAL B1
Honestly... / Really...
Emphasis.

> De verdad que no lo sabía.
> *I honestly didn't know.*

Lo que más me importa es... B1
What matters most to me is...
Neutral.

Lo importante es que... B1
The important thing is that...
Neutral.

> Lo importante es que estáis bien.
> *The important thing is that you're all OK.*

Te lo juro. INFORMAL B1
I swear.
Informal.

> No he sido yo, te lo juro.
> *It wasn't me, I swear.*

¡Pero si...! INFORMAL B2
But...! (indignant)
Emphatic contradiction.

> ¡Pero si te lo dije ayer!
> *But I told you yesterday!*

Sobre todo,... B1
Above all,... / Especially...
Neutral.

Quiero dejar claro que... B2
I want to make it clear that...
Firm; OK at work.

> Quiero dejar claro que no es culpa del equipo.
> *I want to make it clear that it's not the team's fault.*

Hay que tener en cuenta que... B2
You have to bear in mind that...
Neutral.

Ni más ni menos. B2
No more, no less. / Exactly that.
Emphasis.

Insisto en que... B2
I insist that...
Firm.

Recalco que... FORMAL C1
I stress that...
Formal.

Hay que subrayar que... FORMAL C1
It should be emphasised that...
Formal.

Lo digo en serio. B1
I mean it.
Neutral.

Summarising & concluding

En resumen,... B1
In short,... / To sum up,...
Neutral.

> En resumen, el proyecto va bien, pero necesitamos más tiempo.
> *In short, the project is going well, but we need more time.*

Total, que... COLLOQUIAL B1
So, in the end... / Long story short...
Spain, informal, very common in stories.

> Total, que perdimos el tren.
> *Long story short, we missed the train.*

Al final,... A2
In the end,...
Neutral.

En fin,... B1
Anyway,... / Well,...
Wraps up, often with resignation.

> En fin, ¿qué le vamos a hacer?
> *Oh well, what can you do?*

Resumiendo,... B1
Summing up,...
Neutral.

En pocas palabras,... B2
In a nutshell,...
Neutral.

Al fin y al cabo,... B2
After all,... / At the end of the day,...
Very natural.

> Al fin y al cabo, es tu decisión.
> *At the end of the day, it's your decision.*

En definitiva,... B2
Ultimately,... / In short,...
Neutral/formal.

> En definitiva, fue un año difícil pero positivo.
> *Ultimately, it was a difficult but positive year.*

Para terminar,... B1
To finish,...
Presentations.

> Para terminar, quiero daros las gracias a todos.
> *To finish, I'd like to thank you all.*

Para concluir,... FORMAL B2
To conclude,...
Formal.

En conclusión,... FORMAL B2
In conclusion,...
Formal; writing.

A fin de cuentas,... C1
When all's said and done,...
Elegant.

Lo que quiero decir, en el fondo, es que... C1
What I'm really saying is...
Reflective conclusion.

Making suggestions

¿Por qué no...? A1
Why don't we/you...?
Basic suggestion.

> ¿Por qué no vamos al cine?
> *Why don't we go to the cinema?*

¿Vamos a...? INFORMAL A1
Shall we...?
Informal.

> ¿Vamos a tomar algo?
> *Shall we go for a drink?*

¿Qué tal si...? A2
How about...?
Very common.

> ¿Qué tal si pedimos pizza?
> *How about ordering pizza?*

Podríamos... A2
We could...
Polite.

> Podríamos cenar en la terraza.
> *We could have dinner on the terrace.*

¿Te apetece...? INFORMAL A2
Do you fancy...? / Do you feel like...?
Spain, very common.

> ¿Te apetece dar un paseo?
> *Do you fancy going for a walk?*

¿Y si...? INFORMAL A2
What if... / How about...?
Informal.

Te propongo... B1
I suggest... / How about...
Neutral.

> Te propongo un plan: playa por la mañana y museo por la tarde.
> *Here's a plan: beach in the morning and a museum in the afternoon.*

Se me ocurre que... B1
It occurs to me that... / I've had an idea...
Natural.

¿Qué te parece si + present? B1
How about if...?
Very common.

Una idea: ... INFORMAL B1
Here's an idea:...
Informal.

Sugiero que + subjunctive B2
I suggest that...
Neutral/formal.

> Sugiero que lo hablemos el lunes.
> *I suggest we discuss it on Monday.*

Lo mejor sería + infinitive B1
The best thing would be to...
Neutral.

> Lo mejor sería salir temprano.
> *The best thing would be to leave early.*

¿No sería mejor...? B2
Wouldn't it be better to...?
Soft counter-suggestion.

Propondría que + imperfect subjunctive FORMAL C1
I'd propose that...
Formal, meetings.

Giving advice

Tienes que... A1
You have to...
Strong advice.

> Tienes que probar el pulpo.
> *You have to try the octopus.*

Deberías... A2
You should...
The classic.

> Deberías descansar un poco.
> *You should get some rest.*

¿Por qué no pruebas a...? B1
Why don't you try...?
Soft.

> ¿Por qué no pruebas a estudiar por las mañanas?
> *Why don't you try studying in the mornings?*

Yo que tú,... INFORMAL B1
If I were you,...
Very natural. + conditional.

> Yo que tú, no le diría nada.
> *If I were you, I wouldn't say anything to him.*

Yo en tu lugar,... B1
In your place,...
+ conditional.

Te aconsejo que + subjunctive B1
I'd advise you to...
Neutral.

> Te aconsejo que reserves con tiempo.
> *I'd advise you to book well in advance.*

Te recomiendo que + subjunctive B1
I recommend that you...
Neutral.

> Te recomiendo que vayas en primavera.
> *I recommend you go in spring.*

Lo mejor es que + subjunctive B1
The best thing is to...
Neutral.

Si quieres mi consejo,... B1
If you want my advice,...
Neutral.

No te lo pienses. INFORMAL B2
Don't think twice.
Informal encouragement.

Más vale que + subjunctive B2
You'd better...
Firm.

> Más vale que te des prisa.
> *You'd better hurry.*

Hazme caso. INFORMAL B2
Take my word for it. / Listen to me.
Informal.

> Hazme caso y llévate un abrigo.
> *Listen to me and take a coat.*

Convendría que + imperfect subjunctive FORMAL C1
It would be advisable to...
Formal.

No estaría de más + infinitive C1
It wouldn't hurt to...
Elegant, soft.

> No estaría de más revisar el contrato.
> *It wouldn't hurt to check the contract.*

Making requests & polite softening

¿Puedes...? A1
Can you...?
Basic request.

¿Podrías...? A2
Could you...?
Polite; perfect for work.

> ¿Podrías mandarme el archivo?
> *Could you send me the file?*

¿Me pasas...? INFORMAL A2
Can you pass me...?
Informal, everyday.

> ¿Me pasas la sal?
> *Can you pass me the salt?*

¿Me dejas...? INFORMAL A2
Can I borrow...? / Will you let me...?
Informal.

Por favor. A1
Please.
Always useful.

Quería... A2
I'd like... (lit. I wanted)
Spain: polite in shops and bars.

> Quería un café con leche, por favor.
> *I'd like a white coffee, please.*

¿Te importa si...? B1
Do you mind if...?
+ present.

> ¿Te importa si abro la ventana?
> *Do you mind if I open the window?*

¿Te importaría + infinitive? B1
Would you mind...?
Very polite.

> ¿Te importaría cerrar la puerta?
> *Would you mind closing the door?*

¿Sería posible...? B1
Would it be possible to...?
Polite, OK for emails.

¿Me harías un favor? INFORMAL B1
Would you do me a favour?
Informal.

Si no es mucha molestia,... B2
If it's not too much trouble,...
Polite softener.

Te agradecería que + imperfect subjunctive B2
I'd be grateful if you could...
Polite, emails.

> Te agradecería que me avisaras antes.
> *I'd be grateful if you could let me know beforehand.*

Le ruego que + subjunctive FORMAL C1
I kindly ask you to...
Very formal (official letters).

> Le ruego que disculpe el retraso.
> *Please accept our apologies for the delay.*

¿Habría alguna posibilidad de...? C1
Would there be any chance of...?
Very polite.

Complaining politely

Perdone, pero hay un problema con... A2
Excuse me, but there's a problem with...
Polite start.

Creo que hay un error. A2
I think there's a mistake.
Neutral.

> Creo que hay un error en la cuenta.
> *I think there's a mistake in the bill.*

Esto no funciona. A2
This doesn't work.
Neutral.

> Perdone, el aire acondicionado no funciona.
> *Excuse me, the air conditioning isn't working.*

No estoy satisfecho/a con... B1
I'm not satisfied with...
Neutral.

Siento decirlo, pero... B1
I'm sorry to say this, but...
Softener.

Me gustaría hacer una reclamación. B1
I'd like to make a complaint.
Formal, shops/services.

> Me gustaría hacer una reclamación sobre mi pedido.
> *I'd like to make a complaint about my order.*

No es la primera vez que... B1
It's not the first time that...
Firm.

> No es la primera vez que pasa esto.
> *It's not the first time this has happened.*

Esperaba algo más de... B2
I expected more from...
Polite disappointment.

Le agradecería que lo revisaran. FORMAL B2
I'd be grateful if you could look into it.
Formal.

Entiendo que..., pero... B2
I understand that..., but...
Diplomatic.

No me parece normal que + subjunctive B2
I don't think it's acceptable that...
Firm but polite.

Quisiera presentar una queja formal. FORMAL C1
I'd like to make a formal complaint.
Formal.

Lamento tener que comunicarle que... FORMAL C1
I regret to inform you that...
Formal.

Apologising (casual → formal)

Perdón for a small bump, lo siento for real regret, disculpe / le pido disculpas for formal situations.

¡Perdón! A1
Sorry!
Quick everyday apology.

Perdona. / Perdone. A1
Sorry. / Excuse me.
tú / usted.

Lo siento. A1
I'm sorry.
Real apology or sympathy.

Lo siento mucho. A2
I'm really sorry.
Stronger.

Disculpa. / Disculpe. A2
Excuse me. / Sorry.
Polite; disculpe is formal.

¡Uy, perdona! INFORMAL A2
Oops, sorry!
Informal, small accidents.

Ha sido culpa mía. B1
It was my fault.
Taking responsibility.

> Lo siento, ha sido culpa mía.
> *Sorry, it was my fault.*

No volverá a pasar. B1
It won't happen again.
Neutral.

Siento llegar tarde. B1
Sorry I'm late.
Siento + infinitive.

> Siento llegar tarde, había un atasco.
> *Sorry I'm late, there was a traffic jam.*

Siento mucho lo de... B1
I'm so sorry about...
Sympathy or apology.

> Siento mucho lo de tu abuela.
> *I'm so sorry about your grandmother.*

Perdona, no era mi intención. B1
Sorry, I didn't mean to.
Neutral.

Te pido perdón. B1
I apologise to you. / Please forgive me.
Serious, personal.

Le pido disculpas por... FORMAL B2
I apologise for...
Formal (usted).

Lamento las molestias. FORMAL B2
I'm sorry for the inconvenience.
Formal, services.

> Lamentamos las molestias y le ofrecemos un descuento.
> *We're sorry for the inconvenience and would like to offer you a discount.*

Disculpe las molestias ocasionadas. FORMAL C1
We apologise for any inconvenience caused.
Very formal; signs, emails.

Thanking (casual → formal)

Gracias. A1
Thanks. / Thank you.
Basic.

Muchas gracias. A1
Thank you very much.
Basic.

Mil gracias. INFORMAL A2
Thanks a million.
Warm, informal.

¡Gracias por todo! A2
Thanks for everything!
Warm.

Gracias por + infinitive / noun A2
Thanks for...
Gracias por venir. Gracias por la ayuda.

> Gracias por venir.
> *Thanks for coming.*

Te lo agradezco. B1
I appreciate it.
Neutral.

> Te lo agradezco de verdad.
> *I really appreciate it.*

Eres un sol. INFORMAL B1
You're an angel. / You're a star.
Spain, informal, affectionate.

No sé cómo agradecértelo. B1
I don't know how to thank you.
Strong, warm.

Muy amable. A2
That's very kind (of you).
Neutral; OK with strangers.

Te debo una. INFORMAL B1
I owe you one.
Informal.

> Gracias por cubrirme hoy. Te debo una.
> *Thanks for covering for me today. I owe you one.*

Le agradezco mucho su ayuda. FORMAL B2
Thank you very much for your help.
Formal (usted).

> Le agradezco mucho su ayuda con el trámite.
> *Thank you very much for your help with the paperwork.*

Quedo muy agradecido/a. FORMAL C1
I'm very grateful.
Formal, emails.

Gracias de antemano. B1
Thanks in advance.
Emails.

> Gracias de antemano por su respuesta.
> *Thanks in advance for your reply.*

Replies: De nada. / No hay de qué. / A ti. A1
You're welcome. / Don't mention it. / Thank YOU.
How to answer thanks.

Persuading & convincing

Venga, ¡anímate! INFORMAL B1
Come on, go for it!
Informal.

> Venga, ¡anímate! Va a ser divertido.
> *Come on, go for it! It'll be fun.*

¡Venga, vamos! INFORMAL A2
Come on, let's go!
Informal, Spain.

Hazlo por mí. INFORMAL B1
Do it for me.
Informal, personal.

Créeme. B1
Believe me.
Neutral.

Piénsalo bien. B1
Think it over carefully.
Neutral.

¿Qué pierdes por intentarlo? B2
What have you got to lose by trying?
Persuasive question.

> Presenta tu candidatura. ¿Qué pierdes por intentarlo?
> *Apply for it. What have you got to lose by trying?*

Te vas a arrepentir si no... INFORMAL B2
You'll regret it if you don't...
Informal pressure.

Imagínate lo bien que... B2
Imagine how great it'll...
Paints a picture.

No te vas a arrepentir. B1
You won't regret it.
Neutral.

> Ven a la excursión, no te vas a arrepentir.
> *Come on the trip, you won't regret it.*

Lo mires por donde lo mires,... C1
Whichever way you look at it,...
Strong argument.

Convéncete de que... INFORMAL C1
Get it into your head that...
Informal.

Tiene muchas ventajas: por ejemplo,... B1
It has lots of advantages: for example,...
Neutral argument.

Está demostrado que... B2
It's been proven that...
Using evidence.

¿No te parece que...? B2
Don't you think that...?
Leading question.

Te lo digo por experiencia. B2
I'm telling you from experience.
Credibility.

Telling a story

A good story in Spanish moves with little words: resulta que, de repente, total que, al final. Use them as signposts.

Un día... A2
One day...
Opening.

¿Sabes lo que me pasó ayer? INFORMAL A2
Do you know what happened to me yesterday?
Natural hook.

Resulta que... INFORMAL B1
It turns out that... / So...
Spain, extremely common to start or develop a story.

> Resulta que el vuelo estaba cancelado.
> *So it turns out the flight was cancelled.*

Al principio... A2
At first...
Sequence.

> Al principio no entendía nada, pero ahora me encanta.
> *At first I didn't understand a thing, but now I love it.*

Primero... luego... después... A2
First... then... after that...
Basic sequence.

De repente,... A2
Suddenly,...
Twist.

> Estábamos cenando y, de repente, se fue la luz.
> *We were having dinner when suddenly the power went off.*

En ese momento,... B1
At that moment,...
Sequence.

Mientras tanto,... B1
Meanwhile,...
Parallel action.

Y entonces va y me dice... COLLOQUIAL B2
And then he goes and says...
Spain, colloquial storytelling.

> Y entonces va y me dice que se casa.
> *And then he goes and tells me he's getting married.*

Para colmo,... INFORMAL B2
To top it all off,...
Adds the last straw.

> Llegué tarde, sin batería y, para colmo, sin llaves.
> *I got there late, with a dead phone and, to top it all off, without my keys.*

Menos mal que... INFORMAL B1
Thank goodness...
Relief in a story.

> Menos mal que llevaba paraguas.
> *Thank goodness I had an umbrella.*

Por suerte / Por desgracia,... B1
Luckily / Unfortunately,...
Neutral.

Lo mejor de todo fue que... B1
The best bit was that...
Highlights.

> Lo mejor de todo fue que nos invitaron a cenar.
> *The best bit was that they treated us to dinner.*

No te lo vas a creer, pero... INFORMAL B1
You're not going to believe this, but...
Hook.

> No te lo vas a creer, pero he visto a Rosalía en el metro.
> *You're not going to believe this, but I saw Rosalía on the metro.*

Moraleja:... INFORMAL B2
Moral of the story:...
Humorous ending.

STEAL FIVE PHRASES A WEEK

Pick five phrases from different groups, write them on a sticky note and force them into your next conversation or class. When a phrase comes out without thinking, swap it for a new one. That's how a toolkit becomes your Spanish.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

03 · One language, many accents — and a few different words

Spain & Latin America

Spanish is spoken by more than 500 million people in over 20 countries, and every variety is correct. This book uses the Spanish of Spain as its base, but you'll travel, watch series and make friends from Mexico to Buenos Aires. Here are the grammar differences you'll notice first, the everyday words that change from country to country, and the handful of words that can get you into (funny) trouble.

Grammar, address & pronunciation

The big differences are few and easy to learn. Understand all of them; actively use the ones of the variety you're learning.

vosotros vs ustedes

you (plural)

PRONOUN A1

In Spain, 'you' plural has two forms: vosotros/as (informal) and ustedes (formal). In Latin America (and the Canary Islands and parts of Andalusia) ustedes is used for everyone, friends and strangers alike.

Spain, informal — *vosotros + -áis/-éis/-ís*

› ¿Vosotros qué queréis tomar?
What would you guys like to drink?

Spain, formal · Latin America, all situations — *ustedes + 3rd person plural*

› ¿Ustedes qué quieren tomar?
What would you all like to drink?

NOTE If you learn with this book, learn both forms: you'll need ustedes everywhere and vosotros to understand Spain.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: vosotros/ustedes · Latin America: ustedes only

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Ustedes queréis~~ → ✓ Ustedes quieren. Ustedes always takes the 3rd-person plural verb.

el voseo: vos sos

you (singular, informal) — vos

PRONOUN B1

In Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and much of Central America, people say vos instead of tú, with its own verb forms in the present and the imperative. It's standard, educated Spanish there, not slang.

tú (Spain, Mexico, most countries) — *tú eres, tú tienes, tú puedes*

› ¿De dónde eres? ¿Tienes tiempo?
Where are you from? Have you got time?

vos (Río de la Plata) — *vos sos, vos tenés, vos podés · imperative: vení, decime*

› ¿De dónde sos? Vení, que te muestro.
Where are you from? Come here, I'll show you.

NOTE Stress moves to the end: tenés, querés, podés, vivís. Pronoun te stays the same: ¿Vos te acordás?

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala...), parts of Colombia, Venezuela and Chile (colloquial)

he comido vs comí

I've eaten vs I ate

EXPRESSION A2

Spain uses the present perfect (pretérito perfecto) for anything that happened today, this week, this year, or 'ever'. Most of Latin America prefers the simple past (indefinido) in those cases too, much like American English.

Spain — *perfecto for today / unfinished time*

› Hoy he comido con Laura. ¿Has estado alguna vez en Perú?
I had lunch with Laura today. Have you ever been to Peru?

Latin America — *indefinido for most finished actions*

› Hoy comí con Laura. ¿Estuviste alguna vez en Perú?
I had lunch with Laura today. Have you ever been to Peru?

NOTE Both systems are correct. This book uses the Spain system; just be ready to hear the other one.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain (and parts of Bolivia, Peru): perfecto · most of Latin America: indefinido

el leísmo: le vi

I saw him (le instead of lo)

PRONOUN B2

In much of Spain, people use le instead of lo for a male person as a direct object: 'Le vi ayer' instead of 'Lo vi ayer'. The RAE accepts this for a male person in the singular. In Latin America lo is the norm.

Standard (everywhere) — *lo for him / it (direct object)*

› A Javi lo vi ayer. · El libro lo tengo yo.
I saw Javi yesterday. · I've got the book.

Spain (accepted leísmo) — *le for him (person only)*

› A Javi le vi ayer.
I saw Javi yesterday.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain (centre and north): frequent · Latin America: lo/la

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*El libro le tengo yo~~. Never use le for things or for feminine (~~*le vi a María~~ → ✓ la vi). If in doubt, use lo/la: always correct.

usted in daily life

you (formal)

PRONOUN A2

In Spain, tú is very widespread: shops, colleagues, even many bosses. Usted is kept for older people, very formal settings, and some customer service. In many Latin American countries (Colombia, Mexico, Central America, Chile...) usted is used more, and in parts of Colombia and Costa Rica even between friends and family.

› —¿Qué le pongo, señora? —Un café, por favor.
"What can I get you, madam?" "A coffee, please."

NOTE Safe rule: start with usted with older people and in formal contexts in Latin America; switch when they say 'tutéame' or use tú with you.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: tú very common · Colombia, Costa Rica: usted even with close people · Mexico: usted for respect

distinción vs seseo

'z/ce/ci' pronounced 'th' or 's'

EXPRESSION A1

In most of Spain, z and c (before e, i) sound like English 'th' in 'think': cerveza = 'therbetha'. In Latin America, the Canary Islands and parts of Andalusia, they sound like 's': 'serbesa'. Both are correct and educated.

› Gracias. Cinco cervezas, por favor.
Thank you. Five beers, please.

NOTE Choose one and be consistent. Don't mix 'th' and 's' in the same word.

Everyday words

The Spain word comes first, the Latin American alternatives in the note. You'll be understood almost everywhere with the Spain word, but knowing the local one is a lovely touch.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el coche (Spain) A1	*car*	el carro (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Central America) · el auto (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) **Hemos alquilado un coche para recorrer Asturias.** *We've hired a car to drive around Asturias.*
el ordenador (Spain) A1	*computer*	la computadora (most of Latin America) · el computador (Chile, Colombia) **Se me ha estropeado el ordenador.** *My computer's broken.*
el ordenador portátil / el portátil (Spain) A2	*laptop*	la laptop (Mexico, Central America) · la notebook (Argentina) · el computador portátil (Chile, Colombia)
el móvil (Spain) A1	*mobile / cell phone*	el celular (all of Latin America) **¿Me das tu número de móvil?** *Can I have your mobile number?*
el zumo (Spain) A1	*juice*	el jugo (Latin America) **Un zumo de naranja natural, por favor.** *A freshly squeezed orange juice, please.*
la patata (Spain) A1	*potato*	la papa (Latin America, Canary Islands, Andalusia). Spain: el Papa = the Pope. **¿Quieres patatas fritas?** *Do you want chips?*
las gafas (Spain) A1	*glasses*	los lentes (Mexico, many countries) · los anteojos (Argentina, Uruguay) **No encuentro mis gafas de sol.** *I can't find my sunglasses.*
conducir (Spain) A2	*to drive*	manejar (Latin America). In Spain manejar = to handle / manage. **¿Sabes conducir?** *Can you drive?*
aparcar (Spain) A2	*to park*	estacionar (Latin America; also understood in Spain) · parquear (Colombia, Central America, Caribbean) **Es imposible aparcar en el centro.** *It's impossible to park in the centre.*
coger (Spain) A2	*to take / to catch / to grab*	tomar, agarrar (Latin America). In several countries coger is a vulgar word — see 'Words that change meaning'. **Cogemos el metro.** *We'll take the metro.*
el piso (Spain) A1	*flat / apartment*	el departamento (Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru) · el apartamento (Colombia, Venezuela, Central America; also Spain for small or holiday flats) **Comparto piso con dos amigas.** *I share a flat with two friends.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el billete (Spain) A2	*ticket*	el boleto (Latin America) · el pasaje (travel ticket in many countries). El billete = banknote everywhere. **¿Has comprado ya los billetes de tren?** *Have you bought the train tickets yet?*
el autobús (Spain) A1	*bus*	el camión (Mexico) · el colectivo, el bondi (Argentina) · la micro (Chile) · la guagua (Canary Islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic) · el bus (widespread) **El autobús pasa cada diez minutos.** *The bus comes every ten minutes.*
el metro (Spain) A1	*underground / subway*	el subte (Buenos Aires). Metro is understood everywhere.
la piscina (Spain) A2	*swimming pool*	la alberca (Mexico) · la pileta (Argentina, Uruguay) **El hotel tiene piscina en la azotea.** *The hotel has a rooftop pool.*
la nevera / el frigorífico (Spain) A2	*fridge*	la heladera (Argentina, Uruguay) · el refrigerador, el refri (Mexico, Central America) · la nevera (Colombia, Venezuela) **Hay cervezas en la nevera.** *There are beers in the fridge.*
la chaqueta (Spain) A2	*jacket*	la chamarra (Mexico) · la campera (Argentina, Uruguay). Avoid chaqueta in Mexico — see 'Words that change meaning'.
la camiseta (Spain) A1	*T-shirt*	la playera (Mexico) · la remera (Argentina, Uruguay) · la polera (Chile) **Me he comprado una camiseta blanca.** *I've bought a white T-shirt.*
el jersey (Spain) A2	*jumper / sweater*	el suéter (Mexico, Central America, Colombia) · el buzo (Argentina: sweatshirt) · la chompa (Peru, Bolivia) · el chaleco (Chile) **Llévate un jersey, que por la noche refresca.** *Take a jumper, it gets cool at night.*
la falda (Spain) A1	*skirt*	la pollera (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay) **Esa falda te queda genial.** *That skirt looks great on you.*
los vaqueros (Spain) A1	*jeans*	los jeans (most of Latin America) · los pantalones de mezclilla (Mexico)
la americana (Spain) B1	*blazer / suit jacket*	el saco (Latin America)
las zapatillas de deporte (Spain) A2	*trainers / sneakers*	los tenis (Mexico, Colombia, Central America) · las zapatillas (Argentina, Chile, Peru)
los calcetines (Spain) A1	*socks*	las medias (Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay). In Spain medias = tights.
la cremallera (Spain) B1	*zip / zipper*	el cierre (Argentina, Chile, Peru) · el zíper, el cierre (Mexico)
el pijama (Spain) A1	*pyjamas*	la piyama (much of Latin America)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el bañador (Spain) A2	*swimsuit / swimming trunks*	el traje de baño (Latin America, also Spain) · la malla (Argentina, Uruguay) **No olvides el bañador.** *Don't forget your swimsuit.*
el bolso (Spain) A2	*handbag / bag*	la cartera (Argentina, Chile) · la bolsa (Mexico)
la cartera (Spain) A2	*wallet*	la billetera (Latin America) · el monedero = coin purse **Me han robado la cartera en el metro.** *My wallet was stolen on the metro.*
el bolígrafo / el boli (Spain) A1	*pen*	la pluma (Mexico) · la lapicera (Argentina, Uruguay) · el esfero (Colombia, Ecuador) · el lapicero (Peru, Central America) **¿Me dejas un boli?** *Can I borrow a pen?*
la gasolina (Spain) A2	*petrol / gas*	la nafta (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay) · la bencina (Chile) **La gasolina está carísima.** *Petrol is really expensive.*
la gasolinera (Spain) B1	*petrol station / gas station*	la bomba (Colombia, Venezuela) · la estación de servicio (widespread)
la matrícula (Spain) B1	*number plate / licence plate*	la placa (Mexico, Colombia, Central America) · la patente (Argentina, Chile)
el maletero (Spain) B1	*boot / trunk (of a car)*	la cajuela (Mexico) · el baúl (Argentina, Colombia) · la maleta (Chile)
el atasco (Spain) B1	*traffic jam*	el tráfico, el embotellamiento (Mexico, widespread) · el trancón (Colombia) · el taco (Chile) **Llego tarde, estoy en un atasco.** *I'll be late, I'm stuck in a traffic jam.*
la acera (Spain) B1	*pavement / sidewalk*	la banqueta (Mexico) · la vereda (Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay) · el andén (Colombia)
el camarero / la camarera (Spain) A1	*waiter / waitress*	el mesero (Mexico, Colombia, Central America) · el mozo (Argentina, Uruguay) · el garzón (Chile) **¡Camarero! La cuenta, por favor.** *Excuse me! Could we have the bill, please?*
vale (Spain) INFORMAL A1	OK	okey (widespread) · dale (Argentina, Uruguay, Caribbean) · sale (Mexico) · listo (Colombia) · de acuerdo (everywhere) **—¿Nos vemos a las ocho? —Vale.** *"See you at eight?" "OK."*
¡qué guay! (Spain) COLLOQUIAL A2	*how cool! / awesome!*	¡qué chévere! (Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Caribbean) · ¡qué padre! / ¡qué chido! (Mexico) · ¡qué bacán! (Chile, Peru, Colombia) · ¡qué copado! / ¡qué bueno! (Argentina)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
tío / tía (Spain, colloquial) COLLOQUIAL B1	*mate / dude / guy*	Also literally 'uncle/aunt'. Latin America: güey (Mexico, very colloquial) · che, boludo (Argentina, colloquial; boludo can be an insult) · parce (Colombia) · pana (Venezuela) · weón (Chile, very colloquial) **Tía, ¡qué bien te queda ese vestido!** *Girl, that dress looks amazing on you!*
el dinero A1	*money*	la plata (most of Latin America, colloquial) · la lana (Mexico) · la pasta (Spain, colloquial) · la guita (Argentina) **No tengo dinero suelto.** *I haven't got any change.*
el trabajo A1	*work / job*	colloquial: el curro (Spain) · la chamba (Mexico, Peru) · el laburo (Argentina, Uruguay) · la pega (Chile) **Mañana empiezo en un trabajo nuevo.** *I'm starting a new job tomorrow.*
los niños / los chicos A1	*kids*	colloquial: los chavales, los críos (Spain) · los chamacos, los chavos (Mexico) · los pibes (Argentina) · los chamos (Venezuela) · los cabros chicos (Chile) **Los niños están en el parque.** *The kids are at the park.*
enfadarse (Spain) A2	*to get angry / annoyed*	enojarse (Latin America) · in Spain both are understood **No te enfades, era una broma.** *Don't get annoyed, it was a joke.*
tener prisa (Spain) A2	*to be in a hurry*	estar apurado/a (Latin America) · ¡date prisa! (Spain) = ¡apúrate! (Latin America) **Lo siento, tengo prisa.** *Sorry, I'm in a hurry.*
charlar (Spain) A2	*to chat*	platicar (Mexico, Central America) · conversar (widespread) **Nos quedamos charlando hasta las tantas.** *We stayed up chatting until all hours.*
echar de menos (Spain) A2	*to miss (someone)*	extrañar (Latin America; also used in Spain) **Te echo de menos.** *I miss you.*
guapo/a (Spain) A1	*good-looking*	lindo/a, bonito/a (Latin America) · in Latin America guapo is understood but less used for everyday 'pretty' **¡Qué guapa estás hoy!** *You look lovely today!*
alquilar (Spain) A2	*to rent*	rentar (Mexico) · arrendar (Chile, Colombia) · alquilar (Argentina, widespread) **Queremos alquilar un piso cerca de la playa.** *We want to rent a flat near the beach.*
el ascensor (Spain) A2	*lift / elevator*	el elevador (Mexico) · el ascensor (most countries)
la habitación / el dormitorio (Spain) A1	*bedroom*	la recámara (Mexico) · la pieza (Chile, Argentina, colloquial) · el cuarto (widespread) **El piso tiene dos habitaciones.** *The flat has two bedrooms.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el salón (Spain) A1	*living room*	la sala (Latin America) **Estamos viendo la tele en el salón.** *We're watching TV in the living room.*
el aseo / el servicio (Spain) A2	*toilet (in a public place)*	el baño (everywhere, including Spain) · los sanitarios (Mexico, signs) **Perdone, ¿dónde está el servicio?** *Excuse me, where's the toilet?*
la manta (Spain) A2	*blanket*	la cobija (Mexico, Colombia, Central America) · la frazada (Argentina, Peru, Uruguay) **¿Me traes otra manta? Tengo frío.** *Could you bring me another blanket? I'm cold.*
la bombilla (Spain) B1	*light bulb*	el foco (Mexico, Ecuador, Peru) · el bombillo (Colombia, Venezuela) · la lamparita (Argentina). In Argentina la bombilla = the metal straw for mate.
el grifo (Spain) B1	*tap / faucet*	la llave (Mexico, Colombia, Central America) · la canilla (Argentina, Uruguay) · el caño (Peru) **Cierra el grifo mientras te lavas los dientes.** *Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth.*
el enchufe (Spain) B1	*socket / plug*	el tomacorriente (parts of Latin America) · el contacto (Mexico)
la tarta (Spain) A1	*cake*	el pastel (Mexico, much of Latin America) · la torta (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela). In Mexico una torta = a filled bread roll! **¡Qué rica la tarta de queso!** *This cheesecake is delicious!*
el bocadillo (Spain) A2	*baguette sandwich*	la torta (Mexico) · el sándwich (widespread) · el bocadillo in Colombia = guava paste sweet **Me he hecho un bocadillo de jamón.** *I've made myself a ham baguette.*
el melocotón (Spain) A2	*peach*	el durazno (Latin America) **Este melocotón está buenísimo.** *This peach is delicious.*
el albaricoque (Spain) B1	*apricot*	el chabacano (Mexico) · el damasco (Argentina, Chile, Peru)
la fresa A1	*strawberry*	la frutilla (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay)
la piña A2	*pineapple*	el ananá (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay)
el plátano (Spain) A1	*banana*	la banana (Argentina, Uruguay) · el banano (Colombia, Central America) · el guineo (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic). In much of Latin America plátano = plantain. **Desayuno un plátano y un café.** *I have a banana and a coffee for breakfast.*
el aguacate A2	*avocado*	la palta (Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay) **Me encanta la tostada con aguacate.** *I love avocado toast.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
la judía verde (Spain) B1	*green bean*	el ejote (Mexico) · la chaucha (Argentina, Uruguay) · la vainita (Peru, Venezuela) · la habichuela (Colombia)
las judías / las alubias (Spain) A2	*beans*	los frijoles (Mexico, Central America, Colombia) · los porotos (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) · las caraotas (Venezuela)
los guisantes (Spain) A2	*peas*	los chícharos (Mexico) · las arvejas (Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Peru)
el maíz / la mazorca A2	*corn / corn on the cob*	el elote (Mexico, Central America, corn on the cob) · el choclo (Argentina, Chile, Peru)
el tomate A1	*tomato*	el jitomate (central Mexico) · in Mexico el tomate (verde) can mean green tomatillo
el pimiento (Spain) A2	*pepper (vegetable)*	el chile (Mexico, Central America; usually hot) · el ají (Southern Cone, Peru, Colombia) · el morrón (Argentina, Uruguay: bell pepper)
el calabacín (Spain) B1	*courgette / zucchini*	la calabacita (Mexico) · el zapallito (Argentina, Uruguay) · el zapallo italiano (Chile)
el cacahuete (Spain) A2	*peanut*	el cacahuate (Mexico) · el maní (most of Latin America)
las gambas (Spain) A2	*prawns / shrimps*	los camarones (Latin America; in Spain camarón = tiny shrimp) **Pedimos unas gambas al ajillo.** *We ordered some garlic prawns.*
el cerdo A2	*pig / pork*	el puerco (Mexico, Central America) · el chancho (Argentina, Chile, Peru)
la mantequilla A2	*butter*	la manteca (Argentina, Uruguay). In Spain manteca = lard.
la nata (Spain) B1	*cream*	la crema (Latin America) · la crema de leche (Argentina, Colombia)
las palomitas A2	*popcorn*	el pochoclo (Argentina) · la canchita (Peru) · las cabritas (Chile) · las crispetas (Colombia) · las cotufas (Venezuela) **Compramos palomitas para la peli.** *We bought popcorn for the film.*
la pajita (Spain) B1	*straw*	el popote (Mexico) · el pitillo (Colombia, Venezuela) · el sorbete (Argentina, Peru) · la bombilla (Chile)
la fiambrera / el táper (Spain) B1	*lunchbox / food container*	la lonchera (Latin America, lunchbox) · el tupper / táper (widespread)
el sello (Spain) B1	*stamp*	la estampilla (Latin America) · el timbre (Mexico)
el sujetador (Spain) B1	*bra*	el brasier (Mexico) · el corpiño (Argentina) · el sostén (widespread)
ahora mismo A2	*right now*	ahorita (Mexico, Central America; can mean 'right now' or 'in a little while' — see below)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
¿Qué tal? INFORMAL A1	*How are you? / How's it going?*	¿Qué onda? (Mexico, Argentina, colloquial) · ¿Qué más? (Colombia) · ¿Qué hubo? / ¿Quiubo? (Colombia, Mexico, colloquial) · ¿Cómo andás? (Argentina)
¡Dígame! / ¿Sí? (Spain, answering the phone) A2	*Hello? (on the phone)*	¿Bueno? (Mexico) · ¿Aló? (Colombia, Peru, Chile, Venezuela) · ¿Hola? (Argentina, Uruguay) ¿Sí? ¿Dígame? *Hello? Who's calling?*
el ratón B1	*(computer) mouse*	el mouse (most of Latin America)
el correo electrónico / el e-mail A2	*email*	el mail (Argentina, Chile, colloquial) · el correo (everywhere)
caballero / señora A2	*sir / madam (addressing someone)*	Mexico: joven (to a young waiter or shop assistant) · Argentina: flaco/a (very colloquial). In Spain, a simple 'perdone' or 'oiga' usually does the job.

Words that change meaning (be careful)

A few everyday words mean something very different, sometimes rude, in another country. Nothing to panic about: natives make these mix-ups too, and usually laugh. Here's what to know.

coger *to take / to catch (Spain) · vulgar (parts of Latin America)*

VERB A2

In Spain coger is an everyday verb: coger el autobús, coger un resfriado. In Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela and several other countries it is a vulgar word for having sex, so a sentence like 'voy a coger el autobús' sounds very funny (or rude).

Spain — *to take / to catch / to pick up*

› ¿Coges tú el teléfono?
Can you pick up the phone?

Latin America (safe choice) — *tomar, agarrar*

› Voy a tomar el autobús.
I'm going to take the bus.

NOTE Safe everywhere: tomar (transport), agarrar (grab), recoger (pick up).

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Neutral in Spain, Colombia, Cuba, Peru… · vulgar in Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay…

concha *shell (most places) · sweet bun (Mexico) · vulgar (Southern Cone)*

NOUN B2

Concha means 'seashell' in standard Spanish, and in Mexico it's a popular sweet bread roll with a shell pattern. In Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Peru it is also vulgar slang for female anatomy, so in those countries people say caracol or caparazón for shells in casual talk.

Standard / Spain — *shell*

› Encontramos conchas en la playa.
We found shells on the beach.

Mexico — *sweet bread roll*

› Para desayunar, un café y una concha.
Coffee and a concha for breakfast.

NOTE Fine as a woman's name (Concha = Concepción) in Spain.

tortilla *potato omelette (Spain) · flatbread (Mexico, Central America)*

NOUN A1

In Spain, a tortilla (de patatas) is a thick omelette made with eggs, potatoes and often onion. In Mexico and Central America, a tortilla is the thin corn or wheat flatbread used for tacos.

Spain — *Spanish omelette*

› ¿Me pones un pincho de tortilla?
Can I have a slice of Spanish omelette?

Mexico — *corn / flour tortilla*

› Compré un kilo de tortillas para los tacos.
I bought a kilo of tortillas for the tacos.

torta *cake / flat cake (Spain, Southern Cone) · sandwich (Mexico)*

NOUN B1

In Spain a torta is a flat cake or biscuit-type pastry (and, colloquially, a slap or a crash). In Argentina, Chile and Uruguay it's a normal cake. In Mexico it's a filled bread roll, a sandwich.

Argentina / Chile — *cake*

› Hice una torta de chocolate para su cumple.
I made a chocolate cake for his birthday.

Mexico — *bread-roll sandwich*

› Una torta de jamón, por favor.
A ham torta, please.

Spain (colloquial) — *slap / crash*

› Se dio una torta con la bici.
He came off his bike.

guagua *bus (Canary Islands, Caribbean) · baby (Andes)*

NOUN B1

In the Canary Islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, la guagua is the bus. In Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, la guagua (or wawa) is a baby.

Canaries / Caribbean — *bus*

› Cogimos la guagua hasta la playa.
We took the bus to the beach.

Andes — *baby*

› La guagua está durmiendo.
The baby's sleeping.

pisto *vegetable stew (Spain) · money / booze (Central America, Mexico)*

NOUN B2

In Spain, pisto is a stewed dish of tomato, pepper, courgette and onion, a bit like ratatouille. In Guatemala and El Salvador it's colloquial for money, and in Mexico it's colloquial for an alcoholic drink.

Spain — *ratatouille-style stew*

› Hoy cenamos pisto con huevo.
We're having pisto with a fried egg tonight.

Mexico (colloquial) — *a drink (alcohol)*

› ¿Vamos por unos pistos?
Shall we go for a few drinks?

bicho *bug, creepy-crawly (most places) · vulgar (Puerto Rico)*

NOUN B1

In Spain and most countries, un bicho is any small animal or insect, and colloquially a mischievous kid ('¡Qué bicho!'). In Puerto Rico it's vulgar slang for male anatomy, so use insecto there.

Spain / most countries — *bug, small creature*

› Hay un bicho en mi ensalada.
There's a bug in my salad.

chaqueta *jacket (Spain, most countries) · vulgar (Mexico)*

NOUN B1

In Spain, chaqueta is the normal word for 'jacket'. In Mexico it's also slang for a sexual act, so Mexicans say chamarra for jacket. In a Mexican context, simply say chamarra.

Spain — *jacket*

› Llévate una chaqueta, que refresca.
Take a jacket, it's getting chilly.

Mexico — *chamarra = jacket*

› Ponte la chamarra.
Put your jacket on.

cajeta *caramel spread (Mexico) · vulgar (Southern Cone)*

NOUN C1

In Mexico, cajeta is a delicious goat's-milk caramel, similar to dulce de leche. In Argentina and Uruguay it's vulgar slang for female anatomy, so stick to dulce de leche there.

Mexico — *goat's-milk caramel*

› Crepas con cajeta, por favor.
Crêpes with cajeta, please.

ahorita *right now / in a bit (Mexico, Central America)*

ADVERB B1

Ahorita is the diminutive of ahora. In Mexico it can mean 'right this second' or 'in a little while… maybe'. Context and tone tell you which. 'Ahorita mismo' is more urgent; 'ahorita voy' often means 'I'll be there in a bit'.

Mexico — *in a bit (often)*

› —¿Me ayudas? —Ahorita voy.
"Will you help me?" "Coming in a minute."

Mexico — *right now (with mismo)*

› Hazlo ahorita mismo.
Do it right now.

NOTE Rarely used in Spain; there you'll hear ahora mismo or ahora.

ya mismo

right away (Spain) · soon, in a while (parts of Latin America)

ADVERB B2

In Spain, ya mismo means 'right now, immediately'. In some countries, such as Ecuador, it often means 'soon / in a little while'.

Spain — *right away*

› Lo hago ya mismo.
I'll do it straight away.

¿mande?

Pardon? / Yes? (Mexico)

INTERJECTION B1

In Mexico, ¿mande? is the polite way to say 'Sorry?' when you didn't hear, or 'Yes?' when someone calls you. In Spain it's rare and sounds old-fashioned or rural; people say ¿perdona?, ¿cómo? or ¿qué?

Mexico — *Pardon?*

› —Oye, Diego. —¿Mande?
"Hey, Diego." "Yes?"

vale

OK (Spain) · voucher (everywhere)

INTERJECTION A2

In Spain, vale is the everyday 'OK'. Everywhere, un vale is a voucher or coupon. In Mexico 'me vale' (and ruder versions) means 'I couldn't care less' — not the same as 'OK'.

Spain — *OK*

› —¿Te llamo luego? —Vale.
"Shall I call you later?" "OK."

Everywhere — *voucher*

› Tengo un vale de descuento.
I've got a discount voucher.

Mexico (colloquial) — *I don't care*

› Me vale lo que digan.
I don't care what they say.

pena *sorrow, pity (Spain) · embarrassment (Mexico, Colombia, Central America)*

NOUN B1

In Spain, ¡qué pena! = what a shame, and me da pena = it makes me sad. In Mexico, Colombia and Central America, me da pena usually means 'I'm embarrassed / I feel shy'.

Spain — *pity, sadness*

› Me da pena que te vayas.
I'm sad you're leaving.

Mexico / Colombia — *embarrassment*

› Me da pena hablar en público.
I'm embarrassed to speak in public.

pararse *to stop (Spain) · to stand up (Latin America)*

VERB B1

In Spain, pararse = to stop (moving). In much of Latin America, pararse also means 'to stand up' (Spain: levantarse, ponerse de pie).

Spain — *to stop*

› El reloj se ha parado.
The clock has stopped.

Latin America — *to stand up*

› Párate derecho.
Stand up straight.

tinto *red wine (Spain) · black coffee (Colombia)*

NOUN A2

Order un tinto in Spain and you'll get red wine; in Colombia you'll get a small black coffee.

Spain — *red wine*

› Un tinto de verano, por favor.
A tinto de verano (red wine and lemonade), please.

Colombia — *black coffee*

› ¿Nos tomamos un tinto?
Shall we have a coffee?

bravo *fierce, brave (Spain) · angry (Mexico, Colombia, Central America)*

ADJECTIVE B2

In Spain, un toro bravo is a fighting bull and el mar está bravo = the sea is rough. In several Latin American countries, estar bravo = to be angry.

Spain — *rough, fierce*

› Hoy el mar está muy bravo.
The sea is really rough today.

Colombia / Mexico — *angry*

› Mi papá está bravo conmigo.
My dad's angry with me.

fresa *strawberry (everywhere) · posh, preppy (Mexico, colloquial)*

NOUN B2

In Mexico, ser fresa describes someone a bit posh or snobbish. In Spain, the closest is pijo/a.

Mexico (colloquial) — *posh*

› Ese bar es muy fresa.
That bar is really posh.

PICK A BASE, STAY CURIOUS

Choose the variety you'll use most — Spain for Europe, Mexico for the US, Argentina if that's where your friends are — and be consistent with it, especially with vosotros/ustedes and vos/tú. Then train your ear with the others: series, podcasts and music from different countries. Any educated variety is 'real' Spanish, and all speakers understand each other.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

04 · Say the right thing in the right place

Register: formal, neutral & colloquial

The same idea can sound elegant, normal or very street, and native speakers notice instantly. This section shows you when to use tú or usted, how to open, write and close an email, and how one idea changes across three registers. You'll also meet the colloquial Spanish you'll hear in bars and on WhatsApp, plus what to say instead at work. Learn to understand everything; choose carefully what you use.

tú or usted?

The first register decision you make in Spanish, every single day. Spain and Latin America don't do it the same way.

tú (tutear)

you (informal) · to address someone as tú

PRONOUN A1

PATTERN **tutear a alguien · hablar de tú / tratar de tú a alguien**

In Spain, tú is the default with almost everyone: friends, family, colleagues (even your boss in most companies), people your age, shop assistants in casual places, and anyone who uses tú with you first. Using usted with a young person in Spain can sound cold or make them feel old.

with colleagues (Spain) — *normal in most workplaces, start-ups, schools, online classes*

› Marcos, ¿puedes mandarme el informe cuando lo tengas?
Marcos, can you send me the report when you've got it?

tutear — *the verb for 'using tú with someone'*

› En mi empresa todo el mundo se tutea, incluso con la directora.
In my company everyone uses tú, even with the director.

NOTE Golden rule: mirror the other person. If they use tú with you, use tú back.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: tú is very widespread · Latin America: tú is common among friends and family, but usted is used with more people (see next card) · Argentina, Uruguay and much of Central America: vos instead of tú

usted (hablar de usted)

you (formal)

PRONOUN A1

PATTERN **tratar de usted a alguien · hablar de usted · usted + 3rd person verb (¿Cómo está?)**

Usted shows respect and distance. In Spain you'll use it with older people you don't know, in very formal situations (official letters, a notary, a hospital consultant, a job interview at a traditional company), and with customers in hotels, banks or upmarket shops. It always takes the 3rd-person verb and the pronouns le/lo/la and su.

with an older stranger — *safe, polite, warm*

› Perdone, señora, ¿sabe usted dónde está la farmacia?
Excuse me, do you know where the chemist's is?

formal email — *standard with someone you've never met*

› Le escribo para solicitar información sobre su curso.
I'm writing to ask for information about your course.

NOTE Written abbreviations: Ud. / Vd. (usted), Uds. / Vds. (ustedes). In emails, write the full word.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America uses usted much more: often with colleagues, with in-laws, and in Colombia, Costa Rica or parts of Central America even between friends, couples and parents and children (el ustedeo). When in doubt in Latin America, start with usted.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Usted tienes razón~~ → ✓ Usted tiene razón. And keep it consistent: ✗ *~~¿Usted quiere tu café~~? → ✓ ¿Quiere su café?

¿Nos tuteamos? / Puedes tutearme

Shall we use tú? / You can call me tú

EXPRESSION A2

The polite way to move from usted to tú. In Spain it's usually the older or higher-status person who offers it, often very quickly. Accept with a smile: Vale, gracias.

› —Encantada, señor Ruiz. —Por favor, llámame Antonio y tutéame, que me haces mayor.
"Nice to meet you, Mr Ruiz." "Please, call me Antonio and use tú, you're making me feel old."

› ¿Le importa si nos tuteamos?
Do you mind if we use tú?

NOTE If someone says No me hables de usted, it means 'Don't be so formal with me'.

señor / señora · don / doña

Mr / Mrs, Ms · respectful title + first name

NOUN A2

Señor/señora go with the surname (el señor García, la señora López) and with usted. Don/doña are traditional titles of respect used with the FIRST name: don Manuel, doña Carmen. You'll hear them for older neighbours, in villages, and in very formal letters.

› **Buenos días, doña Pilar. ¿Qué tal su nieto?**
Good morning, Pilar. How's your grandson?

› **La señora Martín la atenderá enseguida.**
Ms Martín will be with you in a moment.

NOTE Talking ABOUT someone you need the article: El señor García no está. Talking TO someone, no article: Buenos días, señor García.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ *~~Don García~~ → ✓ don Andrés (first name) / el señor García (surname).

Spain or Latin America: a quick guide

when to use tú or usted

EXPRESSION A2

No rule fits every situation, but this works almost everywhere. Use usted: older strangers, official contexts, a first formal email, customers, anyone who uses usted with you. Use tú: friends, family, people your age, classmates, colleagues who use tú with you, anyone on social media. In Spain lean towards tú; in Latin America lean towards usted until invited otherwise.

Spain, shop or café — *tú is normal, even with strangers your age*

› **¿Me pones un café con leche, por favor?**
Could I have a white coffee, please?

Mexico or Colombia, shop — *usted is the safe, friendly choice*

› **¿Me regala un tinto, por favor?**
Could I have a black coffee, please? (Colombia)

NOTE Getting it 'wrong' is rarely a disaster. Too much usted sounds stiff; too much tú can sound a bit too familiar. People will correct you kindly.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: tú by default · Latin America: usted more often · Argentina/Uruguay: vos for tú

Emails — opening

From formal to informal. In Spanish emails and letters the greeting ends with a colon (Estimada Sra. López:), not a comma, and the text starts on a new line with a capital letter.

Estimado señor / Estimada señora: FORMAL B1
Dear Sir / Dear Madam,
Formal email when you don't know the person's name. Note the colon (:) after the greeting: that's the standard in Spanish emails and letters.

Estimado Sr. Martínez: / Estimada Sra. López: FORMAL B1
Dear Mr Martínez, / Dear Ms López,
The standard formal greeting when you know the surname. Sr. and Sra. are abbreviated with a full stop.

> **Estimada Sra. López: Le escribo en relación con la factura del mes de marzo.**
> *Dear Ms López, I'm writing regarding the March invoice.*

Estimado Pablo: / Estimada Lucía: B1
Dear Pablo, / Dear Lucía,
Polite but friendlier: a professional contact you've already met, a client you use first names with.

Estimados señores: / Distinguidos señores: FORMAL B2
Dear Sirs, / Dear Sir or Madam,
Writing to a company or department. Distinguidos is very formal and a bit traditional; Estimados is more common today.

Estimados/as: / Estimado equipo: FORMAL B1
Dear all, / Dear team,
A group email in a professional context. Estimado equipo de atención al cliente: works well for customer service.

A quien corresponda: FORMAL B2
To whom it may concern,
Certificates, references, letters to an unknown reader. Also: A quien pueda interesar (more common in Spain).

Buenos días: / Buenas tardes: A2
Good morning, / Good afternoon,
Very common in Spanish work emails: neutral, polite, works with clients and colleagues. Choose by the time you write.

> **Buenos días: Os confirmo la reunión del jueves a las diez.**
> *Good morning, Just confirming Thursday's meeting at ten.*

Hola, Laura: A2
Hi Laura,
The everyday greeting with colleagues and people you use tú with. In correct Spanish the name goes between a comma and the colon.

Hola a todos: / Hola, equipo: A2
Hi everyone, / Hi team,
Informal group emails at work or with classmates. Inclusive variants: Hola a todos y todas, Hola a todas (if it's all women).

Querida Ana: / Querido Javi: INFORMAL A2
Dear Ana, / Dear Javi,
Warm and personal: family, friends, a teacher you're close to. Never in a first work email: it means 'dear' as in 'beloved'.

¡Hola! / ¡Hola, Diego! INFORMAL A1
Hi! / Hi Diego!
Messages and emails to friends. Exclamation marks are fine here; the colon becomes optional.

¡Buenas! COLLOQUIAL A2
Hiya! / Hey!
Short for buenos días/buenas tardes. Friendly and casual: WhatsApp, a quick note to a colleague you know well.

¡Hola, guapa! / ¡Hola, guapo! COLLOQUIAL B1
Hi, lovely! / Hey, you!
Very common between friends in Spain (especially women). Affectionate, not flirty in this context. Never at work.
Spain & Latin America: Mainly Spain

Emails — body formulas

Ready-made sentences for the middle of the email. Le/su for usted; te/tu for tú.

Le escribo para... / Te escribo para... B1

I'm writing to...

The classic first line after the greeting. Le for usted, te for tú.

> Le escribo para confirmar mi reserva del 14 de mayo.
> *I'm writing to confirm my booking for 14 May.*

Me pongo en contacto con usted para... FORMAL B2

I'm contacting you to... / I'm getting in touch to...

More formal than Le escribo para. Perfect for a first contact with a company or an official body.

> Me pongo en contacto con usted para solicitar información sobre el máster.
> *I'm getting in touch to request information about the master's programme.*

En relación con... / Con respecto a... FORMAL B2

Regarding... / With reference to...

Introduce the topic of your email. Also: En respuesta a su correo del día 3...

> En relación con su consulta, le informo de que el curso empieza en octubre.
> *Regarding your enquiry, the course starts in October.*

Gracias por su mensaje. / Gracias por tu correo. A2

Thank you for your message. / Thanks for your email.

A natural way to start a reply. Le agradezco su rápida respuesta = Thank you for your quick reply (formal).

Adjunto... / Le adjunto... / Le envío adjunto... FORMAL B1

Please find attached... / I'm attaching...

Attaching documents. Adjunto is invariable here: Adjunto el contrato / Adjunto los documentos. As an adjective it agrees: los documentos adjuntos.

> Le adjunto el presupuesto que me solicitó.
> *Please find attached the quote you requested.*

Te paso... / Os paso... INFORMAL A2

Here's... / I'm sending you...

The relaxed version of Adjunto, for colleagues and friends: Te paso el enlace, Os paso las fotos.

> Te paso el enlace de la reunión.
> *Here's the link for the meeting.*

Le agradecería que + subjunctive FORMAL B2

I would be grateful if you could...

The most useful polite request in formal Spanish. The verb after que goes in the imperfect subjunctive.

> Le agradecería que me enviara la factura antes del viernes.
> *I'd be grateful if you could send me the invoice before Friday.*

¿Podría...? / ¿Podrías...? A2

Could you...?

A softer, everyday request. Conditional = polite.

> ¿Podría confirmarme la hora de la cita?
> *Could you confirm the time of the appointment?*

Le ruego que + subjunctive FORMAL C1

Please... / I kindly ask you to...

Very formal and slightly insistent: official notices, complaints, reminders.

> Le ruego que revise los datos y me confirme si son correctos.
> *Please check the details and confirm whether they're correct.*

Le informo de que... / Le comunico que... FORMAL B2

I'd like to inform you that... / Please note that...

Giving formal information. Careful: informar DE que, comunicar que (no de).

> Le informo de que su pedido ha sido enviado.
> *Please note that your order has been dispatched.*

Como le comenté... / Tal y como hablamos... B1

As I mentioned... / As we discussed...

Referring back to a conversation or call. Informal: Como te dije...

> Tal y como hablamos por teléfono, le envío la propuesta.
> *As we discussed on the phone, here is the proposal.*

Lamento comunicarle que... FORMAL B2

I'm sorry to inform you that... / I regret to tell you that...

Bad news, formally. Lamento + noun also works: Lamento las molestias.

> Lamento comunicarle que la plaza ya está cubierta.
> *I'm sorry to tell you that the position has already been filled.*

Disculpe la demora en responder. / Siento no haberte contestado antes. B1

Sorry for the delay in replying. / Sorry I didn't get back to you sooner.

Apologising for a late reply: formal version first, informal second.

Le recuerdo que... / Te recuerdo que... B1

Just a reminder that...

A polite reminder. Softer: Solo quería recordarte que...

> Te recuerdo que mañana no hay clase.
> *Just a reminder that there's no class tomorrow.*

Te cuento... / Os cuento... INFORMAL B1
So, here's the thing... / Let me fill you in...
Friendly way to start explaining something to colleagues or friends.

> Te cuento: al final la reunión se ha cambiado al lunes.
> *So, the meeting's been moved to Monday in the end.*

Perdona que te moleste, pero... INFORMAL B1
Sorry to bother you, but...
Informal and polite. Formal: Disculpe que le moleste, pero...

Emails — closing

From most formal to most affectionate. Put the closing on its own line, then your name.

Quedo a la espera de su respuesta. FORMAL B1
I look forward to hearing from you.
The classic last line before the farewell in formal emails. Informal: Espero tu respuesta / Ya me dirás.

Quedo a su disposición para cualquier consulta. FORMAL B2
Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.
Formal, offering further help. Also: Si tiene cualquier duda, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo.

Muchas gracias de antemano. B1
Thank you in advance.
When you've asked for something. Works in formal and neutral emails.

Atentamente, FORMAL B1
Yours sincerely, / Yours faithfully,
The most formal standard closing: official letters, complaints, applications. Can sound cold in a normal work email.

Un cordial saludo, / Reciba un cordial saludo, FORMAL B1
Kind regards, / Best regards,
The workhorse of professional Spanish: formal but friendly. Safe with anyone.

Saludos cordiales, FORMAL B1
Kind regards,
Same as Un cordial saludo; very common in business.

Sin otro particular, le saluda atentamente, FORMAL C1
Yours faithfully,
Very formal and traditional: official letters, legal and administrative contexts. You'll read it more than you'll write it.

Un saludo, A2
Best, / Regards,
Neutral: colleagues, clients you know, teachers. Probably the most used closing in Spain.

Saludos, A2
Regards, / Cheers,
Short and neutral. Saludos a tu familia = Say hi to your family.

Ya me dirás. / Espero tus noticias. INFORMAL B1
Let me know. / Looking forward to hearing from you.
Informal ending when you're waiting for an answer.

Hasta pronto, / Nos vemos, INFORMAL A2
Speak soon, / See you,
Friendly endings with people you'll see or write to again soon.

Un abrazo, / Un fuerte abrazo, INFORMAL A2
Hugs, / All the best,
Warm closing for friends, family and colleagues you get on well with. Common between men too and perfectly normal at work once there's trust.

Besos, / Un beso, / Besitos, COLLOQUIAL A2
Love, / Lots of love, / xx
Friends and family. Very common in Spain, even between people who aren't especially close. Never with a client.
Spain & Latin America: Typical of Spain; in Latin America 'Besos' is also used, often more among women and close friends

Same idea, three registers

The Spanish column is the formal or written word (news, official letters, reports). The note gives the neutral everyday word and the colloquial one. Use the neutral word by default; recognise the other two.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
fallecer B2	*to pass away / to die*	neutral: morir · colloquial: palmarla, estirar la pata (very colloquial, a bit irreverent) **Su abuelo falleció el año pasado.** *His grandfather passed away last year.*
residir B2	*to live / to reside*	neutral: vivir · colloquial: vivir, estar (Ahora estoy en Valencia) **Reside en Sevilla desde 2019.** *She has lived in Seville since 2019.*
obtener B1	*to get / to obtain*	neutral: conseguir, sacar (sacar una nota) · colloquial: pillar (Spain) **Obtuvo una beca para estudiar en Roma.** *She got a scholarship to study in Rome.*
adquirir B2	*to buy / to acquire*	neutral: comprar · colloquial: pillarse (Me he pillado unas zapatillas)
desempeñar un puesto C1	*to work as / to hold a position*	neutral: trabajar (de) · colloquial: currar (Spain) **Desempeña el puesto de directora financiera.** *She works as finance director.*
el empleo B1	*job / employment*	neutral: el trabajo · colloquial: el curro (Spain) **Busco empleo en el sector turístico.** *I'm looking for a job in tourism.*
rescindir el contrato (a alguien) C1	*to terminate someone's contract*	neutral: despedir · colloquial: echar, poner de patitas en la calle
percibir (un salario) C1	*to receive / to earn (a salary)*	neutral: cobrar, ganar · colloquial: sacarse (Se saca 3000 al mes)
los fondos / el capital B2	*money / funds*	neutral: el dinero · colloquial: la pasta (Spain), la plata (Latin America), la lana (Mexico)
de elevado coste C1	*expensive / costly*	neutral: caro · colloquial: carísimo, cuesta un pastón, cuesta un riñón **Es un tratamiento de elevado coste.** *It's a very expensive treatment.*
ingerir alimentos C1	*to eat / to consume food*	neutral: comer · colloquial: zamparse (to wolf down), jalar (Spain)
pernoctar C1	*to stay the night*	neutral: pasar la noche, dormir · colloquial: sobar (Spain, very colloquial: to sleep) **Pernoctaremos en un albergue.** *We'll stay the night in a hostel.*
hallarse en estado de embriaguez C1	*to be intoxicated*	neutral: estar borracho · colloquial: ir contentillo (tipsy), ir pedo (very colloquial, Spain)

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
sustraer C1	*to steal / to take (formal)*	neutral: robar · colloquial: mangar, chorizar (Spain, very colloquial) **Le sustrajeron la cartera en el metro.** *Her wallet was stolen on the metro.*
faltar a la verdad C1	*to lie / to not tell the truth*	neutral: mentir · colloquial: contar trolas (Spain), echarse un farol (to bluff)
incurrir en un error C1	*to make a mistake*	neutral: equivocarse · colloquial: meter la pata
ocasionar molestias B2	*to cause inconvenience*	neutral: molestar · colloquial: dar la lata, dar la tabarra (Spain) **Disculpen las molestias ocasionadas.** *We apologise for any inconvenience caused.*
mostrar su malestar C1	*to express displeasure / to get annoyed*	neutral: enfadarse (Spain), enojarse (Latin America) · colloquial: cabrearse, mosquearse (Spain)
sentir temor B2	*to be afraid*	neutral: tener miedo · colloquial: tener canguelo (Spain), cagarse de miedo (vulgar)
disfrutar B1	*to have a good time / to enjoy*	neutral: pasarlo bien · colloquial: pasarlo bomba, pasarlo pipa (Spain) **Disfrutamos mucho de la velada.** *We really enjoyed the evening.*
conversar B2	*to talk / to chat*	neutral: hablar, charlar · colloquial: pegar la hebra, enrollarse (Spain: to go on and on) **LatAm:** Mexico: platicar (neutral)
mantener una discusión B2	*to have an argument*	neutral: discutir · colloquial: tener una bronca (Spain), pelearse
dirigirse a B2	*to head for / to go to*	neutral: ir a · colloquial: tirar para (Spain: Tiro para casa) **Los pasajeros deben dirigirse a la puerta 12.** *Passengers should go to gate 12.*
abandonar (un lugar) B2	*to leave*	neutral: irse, marcharse, salir de · colloquial: largarse, pirarse (Spain)
acudir a B2	*to go to / to attend*	neutral: ir a · colloquial: pasarse por (to drop by) **Debe acudir a la cita con el DNI.** *You must bring your ID to the appointment.*
comunicar / informar B2	*to tell / to inform*	neutral: decir, avisar · colloquial: dar un toque (Spain: Dame un toque = give me a call/let me know)
ponerse en contacto con B1	*to get in touch with*	neutral: contactar con, llamar, escribir · colloquial: dar un toque, pegar un toque (Spain)
comprender B1	*to understand*	neutral: entender · colloquial: pillar (¿Lo pillas? = Get it?), coscarse (Spain)
el individuo B2	*man / person / individual*	neutral: el hombre, la persona · colloquial: el tío, el tipo (Spain), el pibe (Argentina), el chavo (Mexico) **Un individuo entró en el banco.** *A man walked into the bank.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
el menor B2	*child / minor*	neutral: el niño, el chico · colloquial: el crío, el chaval (Spain), el chamaco (Mexico)
los progenitores C1	*parents (legal/formal)*	neutral: los padres · colloquial: los viejos (affectionate; common in Latin America, a bit old-fashioned in Spain)
el/la cónyuge C1	*spouse*	neutral: el marido / la mujer, el esposo / la esposa · colloquial: mi chico / mi chica, mi churri (Spain, playful)
el/la docente B2	*teacher*	neutral: el profesor / la profesora · colloquial: el/la profe
el agente (de policía) B2	*police officer*	neutral: el policía · colloquial: el poli
el establecimiento B2	*business / premises (bar, shop…)*	neutral: el bar, la tienda, el local · colloquial: el garito (bar or club, often a bit dodgy)
el vehículo / el automóvil B2	*car / vehicle*	neutral: el coche (Spain), el carro, el auto (Latin America) · colloquial: el buga (Spain, slang, a bit dated)
el asunto / la cuestión B2	*matter / issue*	neutral: el tema · colloquial: el rollo (¿De qué va el rollo? = What's it all about?)
el objeto / el dispositivo B2	*thing / device*	neutral: la cosa, el aparato · colloquial: el chisme, el cacharro (Spain)
excelente B1	*excellent / great*	neutral: muy bueno, estupendo · colloquial: genial, guay (Spain), chévere (Venezuela, Colombia), padre (Mexico), bárbaro (Argentina)
deficiente B2	*poor / substandard*	neutral: malo · colloquial: chungo, cutre (Spain), una porquería **El servicio fue deficiente.** *The service was poor.*
resultar sencillo B2	*to be easy*	neutral: ser fácil · colloquial: estar chupado (Spain: Está chupado = It's a piece of cake)
resultar complejo B2	*to be difficult / complicated*	neutral: ser difícil, costar · colloquial: ser chungo (Spain), ser un marrón (a nasty job)
una gran cantidad de B1	*a large amount of / lots of*	neutral: mucho/a, muchos/as · colloquial: un montón de, mogollón de (Spain), un chorro de (Mexico)
en numerosas ocasiones B2	*on many occasions*	neutral: muchas veces · colloquial: mil veces, un montón de veces
a la mayor brevedad (posible) B2	*as soon as possible*	neutral: lo antes posible, cuanto antes · colloquial: ya mismo (Spain), en nada **Le rogamos que responda a la mayor brevedad.** *Please reply as soon as possible.*
por consiguiente B2	*therefore / consequently*	neutral: por eso, así que · colloquial: total, que… (Total, que nos fuimos.)

Colloquial Spain you'll hear (and when not to use it)

Everyday street Spanish from Spain: friends, series, WhatsApp. Understanding it makes a huge difference. Using it is fine with friends, but in a job interview, an email or with an older stranger, switch back to neutral.

tío / tía COLLOQUIAL B1

mate / dude · girl, babe

Calling a friend in Spain: ¿Qué pasa, tía? Also 'a guy / a woman': Un tío de mi clase. Use it only with friends and people your age. Its first meaning is still uncle/aunt.

> Tía, no te lo vas a creer.
> *Girl, you're not going to believe this.*

chaval / chavala COLLOQUIAL B1

kid / lad · girl

A young person. Neutral-ish and friendly, but not for professional writing.

> Es un chaval muy majo.
> *He's a really nice lad.*

majo / maja INFORMAL A2

nice / lovely (person)

Very common and safe in Spain to describe someone friendly. Fine almost everywhere except formal writing.

> Tu compañera de piso es majísima.
> *Your flatmate is so lovely.*

guay COLLOQUIAL A2

cool / great

Super common, especially among younger speakers. Fine with friends and relaxed colleagues.

> ¡Qué guay tu chaqueta!
> *Your jacket is so cool!*

(me) mola COLLOQUIAL B1

I love it / it's cool

Molar = to be cool, works like gustar: Me mola tu casa. ¿Te mola el plan? With friends only.

> Me mola mucho este barrio.
> *I really love this neighbourhood.*

flipar / estar flipando COLLOQUIAL B1

to be amazed / to not believe something

Positive or negative: Flipé con el concierto (it blew my mind). ¿Estás flipando? = Are you out of your mind? Me flipa = I love it.

> Flipé cuando me dijo el precio.
> *I couldn't believe it when he told me the price.*

currar / el curro COLLOQUIAL B1

to work / job

The everyday Spanish way to talk about work among friends. Never in a CV or a job interview.

> Mañana curro hasta las ocho.
> *I'm working till eight tomorrow.*

la pasta COLLOQUIAL B1

money / dosh

Money, colloquially. Un pastón = a fortune.

> Ese viaje cuesta una pasta.
> *That trip costs a fortune.*

pillar COLLOQUIAL B1

to catch / to get / to grab

A Swiss-army verb: pillar un resfriado (catch a cold), pillar el chiste (get the joke), pillar algo de comer (grab something to eat), Te pillo de camino (it's on my way).

> Pillo unas pizzas y subo.
> *I'll grab some pizzas and come up.*

¡Qué fuerte! COLLOQUIAL B1

No way! / That's crazy! / Wow!

Reacting to surprising news or gossip. Good or bad.

> —Se casan en junio. —¡Qué fuerte!
> *"They're getting married in June." "No way!"*

¡Qué pasada! COLLOQUIAL B1

That's amazing! / How awesome!

Very positive amazement: landscapes, concerts, food, a new flat.

> ¡Qué pasada de vistas!
> *What an amazing view!*

¡Vaya tela! COLLOQUIAL B2

Unbelievable! / Oh, for goodness' sake!

Mild disapproval or disbelief at a situation: ironic, not angry.

> Tres horas de retraso. ¡Vaya tela!
> *Three hours' delay. Unbelievable!*

¡Anda ya! COLLOQUIAL B1

Come off it! / Get away!

You don't believe what someone has just said (playfully).

> —Me ha tocado la lotería. —¡Anda ya!
> *"I've won the lottery." "Come off it!"*

¡Qué va! INFORMAL A2

Not at all! / No way!

A friendly, emphatic 'no'. Very frequent and acceptable in most informal speech.

> —¿Estás cansada? —¡Qué va!
> *"Are you tired?" "Not at all!"*

en plan... COLLOQUIAL B2

like... / sort of...

A filler and a way to quote or approximate, heavily used by younger people. Understand it; overusing it sounds like a teenager.

> Me miró en plan '¿y tú quién eres?'.
> *She looked at me like, 'And who are you?'*

estar rayado / rayarse COLLOQUIAL B2

to be stressed out / to overthink

Rayarse = to get worked up or obsess about something. No te rayes = Don't stress about it.

> Estoy rayado con el examen.
> *I'm really stressed about the exam.*

estar de bajón COLLOQUIAL B1

to be feeling down

A low mood, nothing too dramatic. Also: Me ha dado el bajón (sudden tiredness or sadness).

> Está de bajón desde que dejó el trabajo.
> *She's been feeling down since she left her job.*

estar hecho polvo INFORMAL B1

to be shattered / exhausted

Physically or emotionally destroyed. Widely used and acceptable with most people.

> Después de la mudanza estoy hecha polvo.
> *After the move I'm completely shattered.*

estar liado / liada COLLOQUIAL B1

to be busy / snowed under

Very useful excuse: Esta semana estoy muy liada. (Liarse con alguien = to get off with someone: careful!)

¡Qué rollo! / ser un rollo COLLOQUIAL B1

What a drag! / to be boring

Something boring or annoying. Un rollo can also be a long, boring speech: Me soltó un rollo...

> La reunión fue un rollo.
> *The meeting was a drag.*

dar palo COLLOQUIAL B2

to not feel like / to feel awkward about

Me da palo = I can't be bothered, or I feel embarrassed to do it.

> Me da palo llamarle otra vez.
> *I feel awkward calling him again.*

pasar de algo / alguien COLLOQUIAL B2

to not care about / to ignore

Paso = I'll pass / I'm not interested. Pasa de mí = He ignores me.

> Paso de ir a esa fiesta.
> *I can't be bothered going to that party.*

un marrón COLLOQUIAL B2

a pain / a nasty job

A problem or task nobody wants. Comerse el marrón = to take the blame or do the dirty work.

> Me ha tocado el marrón de hablar con el cliente.
> *I got stuck with the nasty job of talking to the client.*

mogollón (de) COLLOQUIAL B2

loads (of) / a lot

Mogollón de gente = loads of people. Me gusta mogollón = I really like it.

cuatro gatos COLLOQUIAL B2

hardly anyone

Literally 'four cats': only a handful of people were there.

> En la charla había cuatro gatos.
> *There was hardly anyone at the talk.*

chungo / chunga COLLOQUIAL B2

dodgy / tricky / bad

Something difficult, risky, of poor quality, or someone who's unwell: Está un poco chungo.

> Ese barrio es un poco chungo de noche.
> *That area's a bit dodgy at night.*

cutre COLLOQUIAL B2

tacky / shabby / cheap-looking

A cheap, poor-quality place or thing. Also stingy about someone.

> El hotel era bastante cutre.
> *The hotel was pretty shabby.*

¡Qué morro! / tener morro COLLOQUIAL B2

What a nerve! / to have a cheek

Someone takes advantage or is shameless. Tiene un morro que se lo pisa = He's got some nerve.

> Se ha ido sin pagar. ¡Qué morro!
> *He left without paying. What a nerve!*

ser un/a pesado/a INFORMAL B1

to be a pain / so annoying

Someone who insists too much or doesn't stop talking. ¡Qué pesado eres! (often affectionate).

ponerse las pilas INFORMAL B2

to get your act together

Literally 'put your batteries in'. Common even with colleagues in a friendly tone.

> Me tengo que poner las pilas con el español.
> *I need to get my act together with my Spanish.*

estar petado VERY COLLOQUIAL B2
to be packed / heaving
A place full of people. Also: estar a tope.

> El metro estaba petado.
> *The metro was rammed.*

el finde INFORMAL A2
the weekend
Short for el fin de semana. Totally standard in speech and messages.

> ¿Qué haces este finde?
> *What are you up to this weekend?*

¡Hala! / ¡Ostras! INFORMAL A2
Wow! / Oh my God! / Blimey!
Gentle surprise. Ostras is a polite substitute for a much ruder word; safe to use.

ser la leche COLLOQUIAL B2
to be amazing / to be too much
Positive or negative depending on tone: Este pueblo es la leche (amazing). Eres la leche (you're unbelievable!). Leave it for friends.

liarla COLLOQUIAL B2
to mess things up / to cause a scene
La has liado = You've really done it now. Also Se lio parda = All hell broke loose.

> Javi la lio en la cena de empresa.
> *Javi caused a real scene at the work dinner.*

¡Ni de coña! VERY COLLOQUIAL B2
No way! / Not a chance!
A strong, slightly rude 'no'. Understand it; use it only with close friends. Safer: ¡Ni hablar! / ¡Qué va!

Professional Spanish: what to say instead

The Spanish column is what to say at work; the note shows the casual version you might be tempted to use.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
Quisiera... / Me gustaría... A2	*I'd like...*	Instead of: Quiero... (can sound demanding to a client or supplier) **Quisiera reservar una sala para el jueves.** *I'd like to book a room for Thursday.*
¿Sería posible...? B1	*Would it be possible to...?*	Instead of: ¿Puedes...? / Hazme... Indirect, polite, impossible to misread as an order. **¿Sería posible adelantar la entrega?** *Would it be possible to bring the delivery forward?*
¿Le viene bien el martes a las diez? B1	*Does Tuesday at ten suit you?*	Instead of: ¿Quedamos el martes? (fine with friends)
¿Podríamos aplazar la reunión? B1	*Could we postpone the meeting?*	Instead of: ¿Lo dejamos para otro día?
Tengo un compromiso previo. B2	*I have a prior commitment.*	Instead of: No puedo, tengo un lío. (A polite, closed answer: no need to explain more.)
Ha surgido un imprevisto. B2	*Something unexpected has come up.*	Instead of: Me ha surgido un marrón. **Ha surgido un imprevisto y no podré asistir.** *Something has come up and I won't be able to attend.*
Esta semana tengo mucha carga de trabajo. B2	*I have a heavy workload this week.*	Instead of: Estoy hasta arriba / Voy fatal de tiempo.
Ha habido una incidencia con... B2	*There's been an issue with...*	Instead of: Hay un problemón / La hemos liado. Incidencia is the go-to word for 'issue' in Spanish companies. **Ha habido una incidencia con el servidor.** *There's been an issue with the server.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
Ha sido un error por mi parte; lo corrijo ahora mismo. B2	*That was my mistake; I'll correct it right away.*	Instead of: La he cagado (vulgar) / Me he colado (colloquial).
Disculpe las molestias. B1	*Sorry for the inconvenience.*	Instead of: Perdona el rollo.
Lamento el retraso en mi respuesta. B1	*Apologies for my late reply.*	Instead of: Perdón por tardar tanto.
En relación con su consulta... B2	*Regarding your enquiry...*	Instead of: Sobre lo que me preguntaste...
Tal y como acordamos... B2	*As agreed...*	Instead of: Como te dije... / Lo que hablamos...
Le confirmo que... B1	*I can confirm that...*	Instead of: Vale, sí. (Vale is fine in spoken Spanish at work in Spain, but too casual in a formal email.) **Le confirmo que la sala está reservada.** *I can confirm that the room is booked.*
Me temo que no va a ser posible. B1	*I'm afraid that won't be possible.*	Instead of: No, imposible. / ¡Ni de coña!
Entiendo su punto de vista, pero... B2	*I understand your point of view, but...*	Instead of: Ya, pero... (can sound dismissive)
No estoy del todo de acuerdo con este planteamiento. B2	*I don't entirely agree with this approach.*	Instead of: Eso es una tontería.
Lo consulto y le informo. B2	*I'll check and get back to you.*	Instead of: Ya te digo algo. / Ya veré.
Me pondré en contacto con usted en cuanto tenga noticias. B2	*I'll be in touch as soon as I hear anything.*	Instead of: Te doy un toque.
Le escribo para hacer un seguimiento de... B2	*I'm writing to follow up on...*	Instead of: ¿Qué hay de lo mío? / ¿Sabes algo? **Le escribo para hacer un seguimiento de nuestra propuesta.** *I'm writing to follow up on our proposal.*
¿Me lo podría repetir, por favor? A2	*Could you repeat that, please?*	Instead of: ¿Qué? / ¿Eh? / ¿Cómo?
Le agradezco mucho su ayuda. B1	*Thank you very much for your help.*	Instead of: ¡Mil gracias, eres un sol! (lovely with friends)
Me parece una propuesta muy interesante. B1	*It's a very interesting proposal.*	Instead of: ¡Mola! / ¡Qué guay!
Estaría encantado/a de colaborar. B2	*I'd be delighted to work together.*	Instead of: ¡Me apunto!
Le ruego disculpe el error. C1	*Please accept my apologies for the error.*	Instead of: Perdón, fallo mío. Very formal: for clients, complaints and official contexts.
Le recuerdo que el plazo vence el viernes. B2	*Just a reminder that the deadline is Friday.*	Instead of: Oye, que se acaba el plazo, ¿eh?

NEUTRAL IS YOUR SAFE ZONE

When in doubt, choose the neutral option: it works with friends and at work. Then listen to how the other person speaks and move one step up or down to match them. Mirroring register is what native speakers do without thinking.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

05 · Same adjective, different story

Ser & estar: same word, different meaning

Some adjectives change meaning completely depending on whether you use ser or estar. Estoy lista means you're ready; soy lista means you're clever. Each card shows both meanings with a real example. Study them in pairs and say both sentences out loud: the contrast is what sticks.

WHO YOU ARE VS HOW YOU ARE

Ser describes what something is: its identity, character or permanent qualities. Estar describes a state, a result or how something seems at a given moment. With these adjectives the gap is so big that the meaning changes: ser aburrido (boring, by nature) vs estar aburrido (bored, right now). If you're unsure, ask yourself: is this a characteristic, or a condition?

Adjectives that change meaning

Ordered roughly from the most common to the most advanced. The level badge tells you when each one usually appears.

listo *clever · ready*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS listo · lista · listos · listas

With ser it describes intelligence (a permanent quality). With estar it means ready or prepared.

ser listo — *clever, smart*

› Lucía es muy lista: lo entiende todo a la primera.
Lucía is really clever: she gets everything first time.

estar listo — *ready*

› ¿Estás lista? Nos vamos en cinco minutos.
Are you ready? We're leaving in five minutes.

NOTE Irony alert: ¡Pues estamos listos! = Well, we're in trouble now! Also: Te crees muy listo = You think you're so smart.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy listo para salir~~ → ✓ Estoy listo para salir.

aburrido *boring · bored*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS aburrido · aburrida · aburridos · aburridas

Ser aburrido = to be boring (it bores other people). Estar aburrido = to feel bored right now.

ser aburrido — *boring*

› La película es un poco aburrida.
The film is a bit boring.

estar aburrido — *bored*

› Estoy aburrido, ¿hacemos algo?
I'm bored, shall we do something?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy aburrido (when you mean '~~;I'm bored') → ✓ Estoy aburrido. 'Soy aburrido' = I'm a boring person!

malo *bad · ill · gone off*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS malo · mala · malos · malas · mal (before a masculine singular noun)

Ser malo = bad in quality, or a bad/evil person. Estar malo = to be ill (Spain), or to taste bad / have gone off (food).

ser malo — *bad (quality, character)*

› Este café es malísimo.
This coffee is terrible.

estar malo — *ill / sick*

› Hoy no voy a clase, estoy malo.
I'm not going to class today, I'm ill.

estar malo (food) — *tastes bad / has gone off*

› No te comas el yogur, está malo.
Don't eat the yoghurt, it's gone off.

NOTE Ser malo para algo / en algo = to be bad at something: Soy malísima para los nombres.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA 'Estar malo' for 'ill' is very Spanish; in Latin America 'estar enfermo' is more common.

bueno *good · tasty · (colloq.) hot*

ADJECTIVE · NEUTRAL; 'ESTAR BUENO' ABOUT PEOPLE IS COLLOQUIAL · A2

FORMS bueno · buena · buenos · buenas · buen (before a masculine singular noun)

Ser bueno = good (quality) or a good, kind person. Estar bueno = tasty (food), healthy again, and, about a person, physically attractive (colloquial).

ser bueno — *good, kind*

› Mi abuela es muy buena, siempre ayuda a todo el mundo.
My grandma is a really kind person, she always helps everyone.

estar bueno — *tasty*

› La tortilla está buenísima.
The tortilla is delicious.

estar bueno/a (person) — *hot, good-looking (colloquial)*

› Dice que el actor está buenísimo.
She says the actor is really hot.

NOTE Careful when complimenting people: Es buena (she's a good person) vs Está buena (she's hot). The second can sound crude.

rico *rich · delicious*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS rico · rica · ricos · ricas

Ser rico = to be rich. Estar rico = to taste good. About a baby or a child, ¡Qué rico! means 'How cute!'

ser rico — *rich, wealthy*

› Su familia es muy rica.
His family is very rich.

estar rico — *delicious*

› ¡Qué rica está la sopa!
This soup is delicious!

NOTE Rico en = rich in: un alimento rico en hierro (a food rich in iron).

despierto *sharp, quick-witted · awake*

ADJECTIVE · B1

FORMS despierto · despierta · despiertos · despiertas

Ser despierto = mentally sharp, alert, quick to catch on. Estar despierto = awake.

ser despierto — *sharp, bright*

› Es una niña muy despierta para su edad.
She's a very bright girl for her age.

estar despierto — *awake*

› ¿Sigues despierto? Son las tres.
Are you still awake? It's three o'clock.

atento *thoughtful, considerate · paying attention*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS atento · atenta · atentos · atentas

Ser atento = attentive to others, kind and thoughtful (a quality). Estar atento = to pay attention right now.

ser atento — *thoughtful, considerate*

› El camarero fue muy atento con nosotros.
The waiter was very attentive to us.

estar atento — *paying attention, alert*

› Estad atentos, que esto entra en el examen.
Pay attention, this will be in the exam.

NOTE Estar atento a = to keep an eye on: Estate atento al móvil.

orgulloso *proud, arrogant · proud of*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS orgulloso · orgullosa · orgullosos · orgullosas

Ser orgulloso is usually negative: too proud, arrogant, unable to say sorry. Estar orgulloso de is positive: proud of someone or something.

ser orgulloso — *proud (too proud), arrogant*

› Es demasiado orgullosa para pedir ayuda.
She's too proud to ask for help.

estar orgulloso de — *proud of*

› Estoy muy orgulloso de ti.
I'm really proud of you.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy orgulloso de mi hija~~ → ✓ Estoy orgulloso de mi hija.

interesado *self-interested · interested*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS interesado · interesada · interesados · interesadas

Ser interesado = to only do things for your own benefit (negative). Estar interesado en = to be interested in.

ser interesado — *self-interested, mercenary*

› No me fío de él, es muy interesado.
I don't trust him, he only looks out for himself.

estar interesado en — *interested in*

› Estoy interesada en el puesto de marketing.
I'm interested in the marketing position.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy interesado en la historia~~ → ✓ Me interesa la historia / Estoy interesado en la historia.

vivo *lively, sharp · alive*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS vivo · viva · vivos · vivas

Ser vivo = quick, clever, street-smart (sometimes a bit crafty); also bright, lively (colours, places). Estar vivo = to be alive.

ser vivo — *sharp, quick, lively*

› Es muy vivo para los negocios.
He's very sharp when it comes to business.

estar vivo — *alive*

› Menos mal que todos están vivos.
Thank goodness everyone's alive.

NOTE Colours: un rojo vivo = a bright red. En vivo = live (music, TV).

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mi abuelo todavía es vivo~~ → ✓ Mi abuelo todavía está vivo. (Estar is used even though being alive feels permanent; same with estar muerto.)

verde *green · unripe, inexperienced*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS verde · verdes

Ser verde = to be green in colour. Estar verde = unripe (fruit), and figuratively not ready, inexperienced.

ser verde — *green (colour)*

› Mi coche es verde oscuro.
My car is dark green.

estar verde — *unripe / not ready, inexperienced*

› Los plátanos están verdes. / Todavía estoy muy verde en alemán.
The bananas aren't ripe yet. / My German is still very basic.

NOTE Un chiste verde = a dirty joke. Un viejo verde = a dirty old man (colloquial).

negro *black · furious, fed up (colloq.)*

ADJECTIVE 'ESTAR NEGRO' IS COLLOQUIAL B2

FORMS negro · negra · negros · negras

Ser negro = black in colour. Estar negro (colloquial, Spain) = to be furious or fed up with something; it can also mean very tanned.

ser negro — *black*

› El vestido es negro.
The dress is black.

estar negro — *furious, fed up (colloquial)*

› Estoy negro con el tema del alquiler.
I'm absolutely fed up with the rent situation.

NOTE Ponerse negro = to get really angry, or to get very tanned. Verlo todo negro = to see the dark side of everything. Tenerlo negro = to have it tough.

moreno *dark-haired, dark-skinned · tanned*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS moreno · morena · morenos · morenas

Ser moreno = to have dark hair and/or darker skin (natural). Estar moreno = to be tanned.

ser moreno — *dark-haired / dark-skinned*

› Mi hermana es morena y yo soy rubio.
My sister has dark hair and I'm blond.

estar moreno — *tanned*

› ¡Qué moreno estás! ¿Has estado en la playa?
You're so tanned! Have you been to the beach?

NOTE Ponerse moreno = to get a tan.

molesto *annoying · upset, uncomfortable*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS molesto · molesta · molestos · molestas

Ser molesto = annoying, a nuisance (things, noises, situations). Estar molesto = upset, offended, or physically uncomfortable.

ser molesto — *annoying*

› Ese ruido es muy molesto.
That noise is really annoying.

estar molesto — *upset / uncomfortable*

› Está molesta conmigo porque no la llamé.
She's upset with me because I didn't call her.

NOTE Estar molesto is a soft, polite way to say 'annoyed', good for work.

cerrado *closed-minded, reserved · closed*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS cerrado · cerrada · cerrados · cerradas

Ser cerrado = closed-minded, or reserved and hard to get to know. Estar cerrado = closed (shops, doors).

ser cerrado — *closed-minded / reserved*

› Es una persona muy cerrada, no acepta otras opiniones.
He's very closed-minded, he doesn't accept other opinions.

estar cerrado — *closed*

› La farmacia está cerrada los domingos.
The chemist's is closed on Sundays.

NOTE Un acento cerrado = a strong (local) accent.

abierto *open, outgoing · open*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS abierto · abierta · abiertos · abiertas

Ser abierto = open-minded or outgoing and sociable. Estar abierto = open (shops), or open to something new.

ser abierto — *open-minded / outgoing*

› Mis padres son muy abiertos, puedo hablar de todo con ellos.
My parents are very open, I can talk to them about anything.

estar abierto — *open (place) / open to*

› ¿Está abierto el museo? / Estoy abierta a sugerencias.
Is the museum open? / I'm open to suggestions.

seguro *safe · sure*

ADJECTIVE A2

FORMS seguro · segura · seguros · seguras

Ser seguro = safe (places, things). Estar seguro = to be sure, certain. Ser seguro de sí mismo = self-confident.

ser seguro — *safe*

› ¿Es seguro el barrio por la noche?
Is the area safe at night?

estar seguro — *sure*

› ¿Estás seguro de que es aquí?
Are you sure it's here?

ser seguro de sí mismo — *self-confident*

› Es muy segura de sí misma en las entrevistas.
She's very self-confident in interviews.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Soy seguro que...~~ → ✓ Estoy seguro de que... (and don't forget the 'de').

delicado *delicate, sensitive · frail, in poor health*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS delicado · delicada · delicados · delicadas

Ser delicado = delicate, fragile (objects), sensitive (a topic), fussy or refined (a person). Estar delicado = in poor health, frail.

ser delicado — *delicate / sensitive*

› Es un tema delicado, mejor no hablar de él en la cena.
It's a sensitive subject, better not to talk about it at dinner.

estar delicado — *frail, unwell*

› Mi abuelo está delicado del corazón.
My grandfather has a weak heart.

grave *serious · seriously ill*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS grave · graves

Ser grave = serious, important (a problem, an injury, a situation). Estar grave = seriously ill.

ser grave — *serious*

› No es grave, solo es un golpe.
It's nothing serious, just a bump.

estar grave — *seriously ill*

› El conductor está grave en el hospital.
The driver is in a serious condition in hospital.

NOTE Una voz grave = a deep voice.

fresco *cheeky · fresh, cool*

ADJECTIVE 'SER UN FRESCO' AND THE IRONIC USE ARE COLLOQUIAL B2

FORMS fresco · fresca · frescos · frescas

Ser (un) fresco = cheeky, shameless, someone who takes liberties (Spain). Estar fresco = fresh (food), cool (temperature), or fresh and rested.

ser (un) fresco — *cheeky, shameless*

› ¡Qué fresco eres! Te has comido mi parte.
You've got some nerve! You've eaten my share.

estar fresco — *fresh / cool*

› El pescado está muy fresco. / El agua está fresquita.
The fish is really fresh. / The water's nice and cool.

¡Estás fresco si…! (ironic) — *you've got another think coming if…*

› Estás fresco si crees que voy a pagar yo.
If you think I'm paying, you've got another think coming.

NOTE Hace fresco = it's chilly.

parado *unemployed · standing still / standing*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS parado · parada · parados · paradas

Ser parado = shy, slow to act, lacking initiative (colloquial). Estar parado = stopped, not moving; in Spain also unemployed.

ser parado — *timid, lacking initiative*

› Es un poco parado, nunca da el primer paso.
He's a bit timid, he never makes the first move.

estar parado — *unemployed (Spain) / stopped*

› Lleva un año parada. / El tráfico está parado.
She's been out of work for a year. / The traffic is at a standstill.

NOTE El paro = unemployment (Spain): estar en el paro.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Latin America: estar parado = to be standing (Spain: estar de pie). Unemployed = estar desempleado/a, estar sin trabajo.

violento *violent · awkward, uncomfortable*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS violento · violenta · violentos · violentas

Ser violento = violent. Estar violento (Spain) = to feel awkward or embarrassed; una situación violenta = an awkward situation.

ser violento — *violent*

› Es una película muy violenta.
It's a very violent film.

estar violento — *awkward, uncomfortable*

› Estaba muy violenta en la cena con su ex.
She felt really awkward at the dinner with her ex.

NOTE Similar: estar incómodo/a.

decidido *determined · decided*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS decidido · decidida · decididos · decididas

Ser decidido = determined, resolute, someone who acts without hesitating. Estar decidido a = to have made up your mind to do something.

ser decidido — *determined, resolute*

› Es una mujer muy decidida.
She's a very determined woman.

estar decidido a + inf. — *to have made up your mind*

› Estoy decidido a dejar de fumar.
I've made up my mind to stop smoking.

católico *Catholic · (no estar muy católico) under the weather*

ADJECTIVE · 'NO ESTAR MUY CATÓLICO' IS COLLOQUIAL · B2

FORMS católico · católica · católicos · católicas

Ser católico = to be Catholic. No estar muy católico (colloquial, Spain) = to feel a bit unwell, or (of a thing) to be not quite right, a bit off. Almost always in the negative.

ser católico — *Catholic*

› Su familia es católica.
Her family is Catholic.

estar (no) muy católico — *under the weather / dodgy*

› Hoy no estoy muy católico, me voy a casa. / Esa gamba no está muy católica.
I'm feeling a bit under the weather today, I'm going home. / That prawn doesn't look quite right.

callado *quiet (person) · silent*

ADJECTIVE · B1

FORMS callado · callada · callados · calladas

Ser callado = a quiet, reserved person by nature. Estar callado = to be silent at a particular moment.

ser callado — *quiet by nature*

› Es muy callado, pero cuando habla es muy gracioso.
He's very quiet, but when he talks he's really funny.

estar callado — *silent*

› ¿Por qué estás tan callada hoy?
Why are you so quiet today?

nervioso *a nervous / restless person · nervous*

ADJECTIVE · A2

FORMS nervioso · nerviosa · nerviosos · nerviosas

Ser nervioso = nervous or restless by nature, someone who can't sit still. Estar nervioso = nervous now (before an exam, an interview).

ser nervioso — *restless, highly strung*

› Mi perro es muy nervioso.
My dog is very hyper.

estar nervioso — *nervous*

› Estoy nerviosa por la entrevista de mañana.
I'm nervous about tomorrow's interview.

NOTE Ponerse nervioso = to get nervous. Me pones nerviosa = You're getting on my nerves / making me nervous.

cansado *tiring · tired*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS cansado · cansada · cansados · cansadas

Ser cansado (things) = tiring. Estar cansado = tired. Estar cansado de = tired of / fed up with.

ser cansado — *tiring*

› Este trabajo es muy cansado.
This job is very tiring.

estar cansado (de) — *tired / fed up with*

› Estoy cansada de repetir lo mismo.
I'm tired of saying the same thing over and over.

NOTE Cansado as 'tiring' is common in Spain; cansador/a is used in some Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile).

claro *clear, light · obvious*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS claro · clara · claros · claras

Ser claro = clear (explanations, people who speak frankly) or light (colours). Estar claro = to be obvious, settled.

ser claro — *clear / light (colour)*

› La profesora es muy clara explicando. / Tiene los ojos claros.
The teacher explains things very clearly. / She has light-coloured eyes.

estar claro — *obvious, clear*

› Está claro que no quiere venir.
It's obvious he doesn't want to come.

NOTE ¿Está claro? = Is that clear? / Understood? Tenerlo claro = to be sure about something: Lo tengo clarísimo.

entretenido *entertaining · busy, occupied*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS entretenido · entretenida · entretenidos · entretenidas

Ser entretenido = entertaining, fun. Estar entretenido = busy, absorbed in something (and so not bored).

ser entretenido — *entertaining*

› El libro es muy entretenido.
The book is very entertaining.

estar entretenido — *kept busy, absorbed*

› Los niños están entretenidos con el puzle.
The kids are busy with the puzzle.

consciente *aware · conscious*

ADJECTIVE B2

FORMS consciente · conscientes

Ser consciente de = to be aware of / to realise. Estar consciente = to be conscious (not unconscious).

ser consciente de — *aware of*

› Soy consciente de que es un riesgo.
I'm aware that it's a risk.

estar consciente — *conscious, awake*

› El paciente está consciente.
The patient is conscious.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA In Latin America you'll also hear estar consciente de que… for 'to be aware'; it's correct there. In Spain, ser consciente de is the norm.

pesado *heavy, annoying · being a pain, heavy (feeling)*

ADJECTIVE B1

FORMS pesado · pesada · pesados · pesadas

Ser pesado = heavy (objects), or tiresome and annoying (people, tasks). Estar pesado = to be being annoying right now, or (food, body) to feel heavy.

ser pesado — *heavy / annoying (in general)*

› La maleta es muy pesada. / Tu primo es un poco pesado.
The suitcase is really heavy. / Your cousin is a bit annoying.

estar pesado — *being a pain right now / feeling heavy*

› ¡Qué pesado estás hoy con el fútbol! / Estoy pesada, he comido demasiado.
You're going on and on about football today! / I feel bloated, I've eaten too much.

THE SPEAKY TOOLKIT

06 · When the thing does the action

Verbs like gustar

Gustar is the most famous of a big family of Spanish verbs that work 'back to front': the thing you like, need or fear is the subject, and you appear as an indirect object pronoun (me, te, le…). Learn the pattern once and you unlock dozens of everyday expressions: me apetece, me cae bien, me cuesta, me da pereza. Read the structure tip first, then the cards, then check the mistakes at the end.

(A + PERSON) + ME/TE/LE/NOS/OS/LES + VERB + THING

Spanish says 'coffee pleases me': Me gusta el café. The verb agrees with the thing: gusta for one thing or an infinitive, gustan for plural things (Me gustan los gatos). The pronoun shows who: me, te, le, nos, os, les. Add a + person to emphasise or clarify: A mí me encanta, a ella no. A Diego le duele la espalda.

The essential verbs

These are the ones you'll use every week. Each card shows the pattern and the traps.

gustar *to like*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **me gusta + singular noun / infinitive · me gustan + plural noun**

Literally 'to be pleasing to'. The thing you like is the subject, so the verb agrees with it, not with you.

> **gustar + person** — *to like someone / to fancy someone*
>
> › Creo que le gustas a Diego.
> *I think Diego likes you. (= you are pleasing to Diego)*

› Me gusta el café, pero no me gustan los dulces.
I like coffee, but I don't like sweet things.

› ¿Te gusta bailar?
Do you like dancing?

NOTE With people, gustar often means 'to fancy'. For 'I like him as a person', say Me cae bien.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me gusta las películas~~ → ✓ Me gustan las películas.

encantar *to love (things, activities)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A1

PATTERN **me encanta(n) + noun / infinitive**

A stronger gustar: 'I love it'. It's already intense, so it doesn't take mucho.

› Me encanta esta canción.
I love this song.

› A Emma le encantan los mercados.
Emma loves markets.

NOTE For people you love, use querer: Te quiero. Encantar with people = to adore their company: Me encanta tu hermana.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me encanta mucho~~ → ✓ Me encanta. / Me gusta mucho.

interesar *to be interested in / to interest*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **me interesa(n) + noun / infinitive**

The most natural way to say 'I'm interested in'. The topic is the subject.

› Me interesa mucho la historia del arte.
I'm really interested in art history.

› ¿Te interesa venir al taller?
Would you be interested in coming to the workshop?

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Me interesa en la política~~ → ✓ Me interesa la política / Estoy interesado en la política.

importar *to matter / to mind / to care*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **me importa(n) · ¿te importa + infinitive? · ¿te importa que + subjunctive?**

Three key uses: what matters to you, asking permission politely, and saying you don't care.

> **to matter** — *something is important to you*
> › Me importa mucho tu opinión.
> *Your opinion matters a lot to me.*

> **¿Te importa…?** — *Do you mind…? (polite request)*
> › ¿Te importa cerrar la ventana?
> *Do you mind closing the window?*

> **No me importa** — *I don't mind / I don't care*
> › No me importa esperar.
> *I don't mind waiting.*

NOTE ¡No te importa! = It's none of your business! (rude). ¿A ti qué te importa? = What's it to you?

molestar *to bother / to annoy*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **me molesta(n) + noun / infinitive / que + subjunctive**

Talks about what bothers you. With que it needs the subjunctive.

- Me molesta el ruido de la calle.
  The noise from the street bothers me.
- Me molesta que llegues tarde.
  It annoys me when you're late.
- ¿Te molesta si pongo música?
  Do you mind if I put some music on?

NOTE Molestar is softer than English 'molest': it never has a sexual meaning. Perdona que te moleste = Sorry to bother you.

preocupar *to worry*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **me preocupa(n) + noun / infinitive / que + subjunctive**

What worries you is the subject. The reflexive version preocuparse por also exists: Me preocupo por ti.

- Me preocupa la salud de mi padre.
  I'm worried about my father's health.
- Nos preocupa que no conteste.
  We're worried that she's not answering.

DON'T CONFUSE Me preocupa el examen (the exam worries me) = Estoy preocupado por el examen (I'm worried about the exam).

doler *to hurt / to ache*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: DUELE, DUELEN · A1

PATTERN **me duele + singular body part · me duelen + plural · article, not possessive**

The body part is the subject. Spanish uses the article (la, los), not my/your.

- Me duele la cabeza.
  I've got a headache.
- Le duelen los pies de tanto andar.
  Her feet hurt from all the walking.

NOTE Figurative: Me dolió mucho lo que dijo = What he said really hurt me.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Mi cabeza duele / *Me duele mi cabeza~~ → ✓ Me duele la cabeza.

apetecer *to feel like / to fancy*

VERB · IRREGULAR: APETEZCO… BUT USED ALMOST ONLY IN 3RD PERSON: APETECE, APETECEN · A2

PATTERN **me apetece(n) + noun / infinitive / que + subjunctive**

A soft, very Spanish way to talk about desire or invitations. Perfect for suggestions: ¿Te apetece…?

› ¿Te apetece un café?
Do you fancy a coffee?

› Hoy no me apetece salir.
I don't feel like going out today.

SPAIN & LATIN AMERICA Spain: apetecer is everyday · Latin America: tener ganas de, provocar (Colombia, Peru, Venezuela: ¿Te provoca un café?), antojarse (Mexico: Se me antoja un helado).

quedar *to have left · to suit / fit · to be (located)*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **me queda(n) + noun · me queda bien/mal · quedar (location)**

A many-sided verb. Here are the gustar-type uses: what you have left, and how clothes look on you.

to have left — *remaining amount*

› Solo me quedan diez euros.
I've only got ten euros left.

quedar bien/mal — *to suit / fit (clothes)*

› Esa camisa te queda genial.
That shirt looks great on you.

quedar + time — *time left until*

› Nos quedan dos semanas de vacaciones.
We've got two weeks of holiday left.

NOTE Other meanings of quedar (to arrange to meet: quedar con alguien) work like normal verbs: He quedado con Ana.

faltar *to be missing / to lack / to need*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · A2

PATTERN **me falta(n) + noun / infinitive · faltar + time/quantity**

Something is missing, or there's still some left to do or to go.

› Me falta un botón de la chaqueta.
There's a button missing on my jacket.

› Nos faltan dos personas para el partido.
We need two more people for the match.

› Falta poco para Navidad.
It's not long till Christmas.

DON'T CONFUSE faltar = something is missing · echar de menos / extrañar = to miss someone emotionally: Echo de menos a mi familia.

COMMON MISTAKE ✗ ~~*Te falto (I miss you)~~ → ✓ Te echo de menos / Te extraño.

sobrar *to have too much / to be left over*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR) · B1

PATTERN **me sobra(n) + noun**

There's more than you need. The opposite of faltar.

› Nos sobró comida de la fiesta.
We had food left over from the party.

› Te sobra talento.
You've got talent to spare.

NOTE Sobra decir que… = It goes without saying that… Aquí sobro = I'm not wanted here.

hacer falta *to need / to be necessary*

EXPRESSION · IRREGULAR: HACE, HACEN / HIZO · A2

PATTERN **me hace(n) falta + noun · hace falta + infinitive · hace falta que + subjunctive**

A very natural alternative to necesitar. Hacer agrees with the thing needed.

› ¿Te hace falta algo del súper?
Do you need anything from the supermarket?

› Me hacen falta unas vacaciones.
I need a holiday.

› No hace falta que vengas.
You don't need to come.

parecer *to seem / to think (opinion)*

VERB · IRREGULAR: PAREZCO, PARECES… · A2

PATTERN **me parece + adjective / bien / mal · me parece que + indicative · ¿qué te parece…?**

The everyday way to ask and give opinions.

› ¿Qué te parece el nuevo jefe?
What do you think of the new boss?

› Me parece bien quedar a las ocho.
Meeting at eight sounds good to me.

› Me parecen caros estos zapatos.
These shoes seem expensive to me.

DON'T CONFUSE parecer (to seem) vs parecerse a (to look like): Te pareces a tu madre.

NOTE No me parece que + subjunctive: No me parece que sea buena idea.

caer bien / mal *to like / not like (a person)*

VERB · IRREGULAR: CAIGO, CAES… / CAYÓ · A2

PATTERN **me cae(n) bien/mal/fatal/genial + person**

How you feel about someone's personality. It's the natural way to say 'I like him / I can't stand her' without romance.

› Tu novio me cae muy bien.
I really like your boyfriend.

› Me caen fatal mis vecinos.
I can't stand my neighbours.

DON'T CONFUSE Me cae bien Marcos (I like him as a person) vs Me gusta Marcos (I fancy him).

costar *to find it hard to*

VERB · STEM-CHANGING O→UE: CUESTA, CUESTAN · B1

PATTERN **me cuesta + infinitive · me cuesta(n) + noun**

Besides 'to cost', costar means something is difficult for you.

› Me cuesta mucho levantarme temprano.
I find it really hard to get up early.

› Le cuestan las matemáticas.
He finds maths difficult.

NOTE Me cuesta creerlo = I find it hard to believe.

tocar *to be someone's turn · to win (lottery) · to have to*

VERB · REGULAR (-AR), SPELLING C→QU: TOQUÉ · B1

PATTERN **te toca + infinitive · me ha tocado + noun**

Gustar-type tocar: whose turn it is, what luck gives you, and what you're stuck doing.

turn — *it's your turn*

› Te toca fregar los platos.
It's your turn to do the washing-up.

luck — *to win / to get*

› ¡Le ha tocado la lotería!
She's won the lottery!

obligation — *to have to (bad luck)*

› Este finde me toca trabajar.
I have to work this weekend.

NOTE ¿A quién le toca? = Whose turn is it?

More verbs that work the same way

Same structure: pronoun + verb in 3rd person (singular or plural) + thing. Many expressions with dar describe feelings: me da miedo, me da pena, me da pereza.

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
sentar bien / mal B1	*to agree / not agree with (food) · to suit · to go down well/badly*	Food, clothes, or comments: Me sentó fatal lo que dijo. **No me sienta bien el café por la noche.** *Coffee at night doesn't agree with me.*
dar miedo A2	*to scare / to be scared of*	Me dan miedo las arañas (plural thing → dan). **Me da miedo conducir de noche.** *I'm scared of driving at night.*
dar pena B1	*to feel sorry / to be a shame*	Me da pena = I feel sad/sorry. ¡Qué pena! = What a shame! (In Mexico and Central America, dar pena also = to be embarrassed.) **Me da pena que te vayas.** *I'm sad you're leaving.*
dar igual A2	*to not mind / to not care*	Me da igual = I don't mind / It's all the same to me. Can sound indifferent: watch your tone. **—¿Pizza o pasta? —Me da igual.** *"Pizza or pasta?" "I don't mind."*
dar vergüenza B1	*to be embarrassed / to be ashamed*	Me da vergüenza hablar en público. Spain also: me da corte (colloquial). **Me da vergüenza cantar delante de la gente.** *I'm embarrassed to sing in front of people.*
dar asco B1	*to be disgusted by / to gross someone out*	Me dan asco las cucarachas. Strong: ¡Qué asco! **Me da asco el olor a tabaco.** *The smell of cigarettes disgusts me.*
dar rabia INFORMAL B1	*to annoy / to make someone mad*	Frustration more than anger. Me da rabia que + subjunctive. **Me da rabia perder el tren por un minuto.** *It drives me mad to miss the train by a minute.*
dar pereza INFORMAL B1	*to not be bothered / to not feel like it*	Laziness about a task. ¡Qué pereza! = Ugh, can't be bothered! **Me da pereza ir al gimnasio hoy.** *I can't be bothered going to the gym today.*
dar envidia B1	*to be jealous / envious*	Me das envidia = I'm jealous of you (often playful). Sana envidia = friendly envy. **Me da envidia tu viaje a Japón.** *I'm so jealous of your trip to Japan.*
hacer ilusión B1	*to be excited about / to really look forward to*	Very Spanish, no exact English equivalent: excitement plus emotional value. **Me hace mucha ilusión verte en verano.** *I'm so looking forward to seeing you in the summer.*
fascinar B1	*to fascinate / to love*	Even stronger than encantar. **Me fascina la arquitectura de Gaudí.** *I'm fascinated by Gaudí's architecture.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
aburrir A2	*to bore*	Me aburren las reuniones largas. Reflexive version: aburrirse (Me aburro). **Me aburre el fútbol.** *Football bores me.*
fastidiar INFORMAL B1	*to annoy / to bug*	Similar to molestar. ¡No fastidies! = You're kidding! (surprise). **Me fastidia tener que repetir las cosas.** *It bugs me having to repeat things.*
agobiar B1	*to stress out / to overwhelm*	Feeling suffocated by too much: crowds, work, heat. Reflexive: agobiarse (No te agobies). **Me agobian las tiendas en rebajas.** *Shops during the sales stress me out.*
sorprender B1	*to surprise*	Me sorprende que + subjunctive. **Me sorprende que no haya llamado.** *I'm surprised he hasn't called.*
alegrar B1	*to make happy / to be glad*	Me alegra que + subjunctive. Also reflexive: Me alegro de verte. **Me alegra mucho que estés aquí.** *I'm so glad you're here.*
extrañar B2	*to surprise · (Latin America) to miss*	Spain: Me extraña que no haya venido = I'm surprised he hasn't come. Latin America also: Te extraño = I miss you (normal verb structure). **Me extraña que el restaurante esté cerrado.** *It's strange that the restaurant is closed.*
convenir B2	*to be good for / to suit (be convenient)*	Irregular like venir: conviene, convino. Te conviene + infinitive = you'd better / it's in your interest. **Te conviene reservar con antelación.** *You'd be wise to book in advance.*
bastar B2	*to be enough*	Me basta con + noun/infinitive. ¡Basta ya! = That's enough! **Me basta con un café para empezar el día.** *A coffee's enough for me to start the day.*
pasar (¿qué te pasa?) A2	*to be up with someone / to happen to someone*	¿Qué te pasa? = What's wrong? Me pasa algo raro con el móvil. **¿Qué le pasa a Sofía? Está muy seria.** *What's up with Sofía? She's very serious.*
venir bien / mal B1	*to suit / be convenient (time, plans)*	¿Te viene bien el lunes? Me viene fatal = It's really bad timing for me. **¿Os viene bien quedar a las siete?** *Does seven suit you all?*
dar la gana COLLOQUIAL B2	*to feel like / to want (stubborn)*	Lo hago porque me da la gana = I'm doing it because I want to (defiant). No me da la gana = I don't want to, full stop. Can sound rude. **Hace lo que le da la gana.** *She does whatever she wants.*

SPANISH	ENGLISH	NOTES & EXAMPLE
molar COLLOQUIAL B1	*to love / to think something's cool*	Spain colloquial: Me mola tu chaqueta. ¿Te mola el plan? **LatAm:** Spain **Me mola mucho este bar.** *I really love this bar.*
chiflar / volver loco INFORMAL B1	*to be crazy about*	Me chifla el chocolate. Me vuelven loca las series coreanas. **A Tom le chiflan los videojuegos.** *Tom is crazy about video games.*
entusiasmar B2	*to thrill / to be really into*	Often in the negative: No me entusiasma la idea = I'm not wild about the idea. **No me entusiasma la idea de mudarme.** *I'm not wild about the idea of moving.*

Typical mistakes

The person is not the subject

✗ ~~*Yo gusto el café~~.

✓ Me gusta el café.

In Spanish the coffee is doing the pleasing. 'Yo gusto' means 'I am pleasing (to someone)'. Start with the pronoun: me, te, le, nos, os, les.

› **A Laura le gusta el té verde.**
Laura likes green tea.

REMEMBER Think 'coffee pleases me', not 'I like coffee'.

Agreement with the thing, not with you

✗ ~~*Me gusta los libros~~.

✓ Me gustan los libros.

The verb agrees with what you like: one thing (or an infinitive) → gusta; several things → gustan.

› **Me gusta la playa, pero me gustan más las montañas.**
I like the beach, but I like the mountains more.

Infinitives are always singular

✗ ~~*Me gustan bailar y cantar~~.

✓ Me gusta bailar y cantar.

Activities (infinitives), even several of them, take the singular gusta.

› **Nos encanta viajar y conocer gente.**
We love travelling and meeting people.

Mi vs me

✗ *~~Mi duele la cabeza~~. / *~~Mí gusta~~.

✓ Me duele la cabeza. / A mí me gusta.

Mi (no accent) = my. Mí (accent) = me after a preposition: a mí. The pronoun before the verb is always me.

› A mí me encanta el cine, ¿y a ti?
I love the cinema, what about you?

No possessive with body parts

✗ *~~Me duele mi espalda~~.

✓ Me duele la espalda.

The me already tells us whose back it is, so Spanish uses the article.

› ¿Te duelen los oídos?
Do your ears hurt?

Don't drop the pronoun with 'a + person'

✗ *~~A Javi gusta el fútbol~~. / *~~Él le gusta el fútbol~~.

✓ A Javi le gusta el fútbol. / A él le gusta el fútbol.

A + person is optional (for emphasis or clarity); the pronoun le/les is compulsory. And the person needs the 'a'.

› A mis padres les encanta caminar.
My parents love walking.

Agreeing and disagreeing: a mí también / a mí tampoco

✗ *—Me gusta el jazz. —Yo también.

✓ —Me gusta el jazz. —A mí también.

With gustar-type verbs, reply with a mí, a ti... : A mí también (me too), A mí tampoco (me neither), A mí sí / A mí no (I do / I don't).

› —No me gusta el picante. —A mí tampoco.
"I don't like spicy food." "Me neither."

REMEMBER Yo también works with normal verbs: —Vivo en Madrid. —Yo también.

Encantar is already 'a lot'

✗ *~~Me encanta mucho el helado~~.

✓ Me encanta el helado. / Me gusta mucho el helado.

Encantar already means 'to love', so mucho is redundant (some natives say it, but it's not recommended).

› Me encanta tu casa.
I love your house.

Faltar is not 'to miss someone'

✗ *~~Me faltas mucho~~. (for 'I really miss you')

✓ Te echo mucho de menos. / Te extraño mucho.

Faltar = something is missing or needed. For emotional missing, use echar de menos (Spain) or extrañar (Latin America, also understood in Spain).

› Echo de menos la comida de mi madre.
I miss my mum's cooking.

Gustar with people = attraction

✗ *~~Me gusta mi jefe~~. (meaning 'I get on with him')

✓ Mi jefe me cae bien.

Me gusta + person usually suggests you fancy them. For liking someone's personality, use caer bien.

› Tus amigos me caen genial.
I really like your friends.

Look it up

Master vocabulary index

5,336 main words and structures in alphabetical order, with the level where they appear and the page number. Nouns show their article after a comma.

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