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**An Introduction To Spanish Grammar**

**By Steven Muller**

When learning a new language, it is always useful to be familiar with its main grammatical units.

This constitutes the first necessary step in order to understand and create meaningful speech.

Here are the main grammatical elements in Spanish and some useful information about them:

**Nouns:** A noun is a word which is mostly used to refer to a person or thing. All nouns in Spanish have a gender, meaning that they are either masculine or feminine. For example, "niño" (boy) is masculine and "niña" (girl) is feminine. The best way to identify gender is undoubtedly experience, although here are some general guidelines which may be useful at the beginning: usually nouns ending in -o are masculine and nouns ending in -a are feminine. Of course there are always exceptions.

For example, "mano" (hand) and "radio" (radio) are feminine. On the other hand, words of Greek origin ending in -ma, such as "dilema" (dilemma) or "problema" (problem) are masculine. When you are learning new vocabulary, it is recommendable that you learn a noun together with its corresponding article. That will help you to remember their gender. For example "la niña", "la mano" or "el problema" and "el niño".

**Adjectives:** Adjectives are used to qualify a particular noun, to say something about it. It is important to remember that in Spanish they are usually placed after the noun. Since adjectives are always related to a noun, they have to agree with them in gender and number.

This means that if you want to say something about the noun "niño", which is masculine and singular, the adjective that you use will also have to be masculine and singular. Thus, you can say "niño alto" (tall boy), "niño pequeño" (small boy), etc. If, on the other hand, if you were talking about a girl, you would have to say "niña alta" and "niña pequeña".

**Pronouns:** Pronouns substitute for nouns. For example, you can say "la niña está aquí" (the girl is here) or "ella está aquí" (she is here). In this case "ella" is substituting for "la niña". The subject pronouns in Spanish are "yo" (I), "tú/usted/vos" (singular you), él (he), ella (she), nosotros (we), vosotros/ustedes (plural you), ellos (they).

The singular and plural "you" are used differently depending on the dialect of Spanish that you are using. It is important to remember that subject pronouns are frequently omitted in Spanish, since the ending of the verb already indicates this. Thus, native speakers would say "estoy aquí" (I'm here) rather than "yo estoy aquí".

Verbs: Verbs indicate actions. Usually when you enumerate a verb, you use what is called the infinitive, for example "hablar" (to speak). In Spanish there are three different types of verbs, depending of how their infinitive ends. These different categories are called conjugations.

Thus, there are verbs ending in -ar, such as "hablar", in -er "comer" (to eat) and in -ir "dormir" (to sleep). As mentioned before, verbs in Spanish have different endings depending on who the subject of the action is. These endings will vary from one conjugation to the other. For example, with the verb "hablar", the singular "you" is "(tú) hablas", whereas with "comer" it is "(tú) comes". This can obviously

be complicated for learners at the beginning, but once you get used to it, you will have no problem communicating effectively.

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## **Learning Spanish Grammar and the verb "Gustar"**

**By Patrick Jackson**

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Learning Spanish Grammar and the  
Verb "Gustar"

If there's one verb that gave me a lot of trouble when I first started learning Spanish grammar that verb was

"gustar." Many of the Spanish lessons and Spanish classes that I took in order to learn Spanish only confused me even more about the use of "gustar." "Gustar" means "to be pleasing to" or "to find pleasant." But in many instances, Spanish speakers use it the same way that we use the verb "to like."

For example, in Spanish you don't literally say: "I like the dog."

In Spanish you would say:

"Me gusta el perro".

That literally means "the dog is pleasing to me."

Actually, it means "it pleases me the dog."

It may sound strange to your English–hearing ears.

But you will get used to it. Let's try it.

I like the house.

Me gusta la casa.

I don't like the car.

No me gusta el carro.

You like the table.

Te gusta la mesa.

He likes the screen/monitor.

Le gusta la pantalla.

We like the bridge.

Nos gusta el puente.

They like to lie.

Les gusta mentir.

If you want to say "I like the dogs," a couple of changes have to take place. Can you guess what those changes are? Of course dog ("perro") must now become plural ("perros"). But the article ("el") must also become plural ("los"). And the verb must change from third person singular ("gusta") to third person plural ("gustan").

Let's try it:

I like the dogs.

Me gustan los perros.

You like the lakes

Te gustan los lagos.

She likes the streams

Le gustan los arroyos.

We like the rivers.  
Nos gustan los ríos.

They like the waterfalls.  
Les gustan las cataratas.

The following is the manner that we add clarity or emphasis, or mention the name of the person or persons that the object is pleasing to.

A Carlos le gusta nadar.  
Carlos likes to swim.

A mí me gusta la playa.  
I like the beach.

A ti te gusta la orilla del mar.  
You like the seashore.

The boys like the forest.  
A los chicos les gusta el bosque.

They like the pool.  
A ellos les gusta la piscina.

There are quite a few verbs in Spanish that follow the same construction as the verb "gustar."

Here are just a few.

Importar (to be important to)  
Interesar (to be interesting to)  
Faltar (to be lacking to)  
Molestar (to bother or to annoy – note that this word does not mean to "molest")  
Encantar (to like)

I have also been confused about when to use "gustar."  
Despite what the textbooks say, you can use "gustar" to indicate that you like someone as in "being physically attracted to someone."  
For example,

Tú me gustas.

I like you.

Me gusta Carmen.

I like Carmen.

But if you want to say that you like someone as in "I get along well with (name)," there's a different way to say it.

Me cae bien Carmen.

I like Carmen or I get along well with Carmen. Literally, it means "Carmen falls well on me."

No me cae bien María.

I don't like María or I don't get along well with María.

No me caes bien tú, Or, Tú no me caes bien.

I don't get along well with you.

Let's do a few exercises with "gustar." Translate the following sentences adding emphasis on the person or persons that the object is pleasing to. The answers appear below.

1. I like the cats.
2. You like the wedding. (Add emphasis to "you" using the familiar form of "you.")
3. Joseph likes the building.
4. We like the shirts.
5. All of you like the insects. (Add emphasis to "all of you")

Answers:

1. A mí me gustan los gatos.
2. A ti te gusta la boda.
3. A José le gusta el edificio.
4. A nosotros nos gustan las camisas.
5. A ustedes les gustan los insectos.

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Patrick Jackson is the founder of Learning Spanish Like Crazy. A unique method of learning Spanish that combines recorded lessons and live tele-classes. Subscribe today to his Free Learning Spanish Grammar Ezine: [mailto: pat-jackson@aweber.com](mailto:pat-jackson@aweber.com) Website:

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