

## FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES

**Don't lose points on tests, quizzes and essays: proofread for these common errors!**

### **AGREEMENT**

**With Adjectives:** Always double-check your writing to make sure that adjectives requiring agreement in gender (most adjectives) and number (all adjectives) are correct.

Examples: **La alumna está contenta.**

**Los alumnos están contentos.**

**Los profesores son interesantes.**

(Note: "interesante" has no gender, but it must still agree in number.)

**With Verbs:** In addition to knowing the correct conjugation for all pronouns (*yo, tú, Ud.*, etc.), here are some common errors/misinterpretations of the correct conjugation:

- *Todo*, (everything) *todo el mundo* (everybody) = 3rd person singular.

***Todo está listo.*** (Everything is ready).

***Todo el mundo llega tarde.*** (Everybody arrives late.)

BUT:

*Todos / todas las clases*, etc. = 3rd person plural.

***Todos están en el gimnasio.*** (All [of them] are in the gym.)

***Todas las clases son divertidas.*** (All of the classes are fun).

- (*Juan*) *y yo...* = We, so use the *nosotros* form. Many students see the pronoun "yo" right before the verb form, do not read the whole sentence, and use the "yo" conjugation.

*Juan y yo somos amigos* (NOT "*Juan y yo soy amigos.*")

**With articles:** This is such a common error... and such an easy one to correct! The only thing you have to watch for are nouns which are irregular, i.e., which appear to be masculine or feminine because of ending in -a or -o, but which take a different article. Some examples of irregular forms, with the most common ones in red:

**el día el clima la mano el idioma el programa el mapa el sistema**

**el fantasma el poema el problema el planeta el tema el sofá**

DON'T FORGET: You must also use the equivalent forms with indefinite articles (*un, una*, etc.)

**un día, algún día.... (one day, some day...)**

ARTICLES WHICH GIVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS: Some nouns can have either gender article, depending on the meaning:

**el policía** = the (male) police officer

**la policía** = the police (force), the (female) police officer

**el radio** = the radio (apparatus)

**la radio** = the radio (as a form of media)

**el cura** = the priest

**la cura** = the cure

PROFESSIONS: Some names of professions only have one form, and we distinguish a man or woman in this profession by changing the article, but not the ending:

**el modelo, la modelo**

**el tenista, la tenista**

## FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES

### VERBS

**1. Reflexive Verbs:** Verbs ending in -se in the infinitive form require a reflexive pronoun, e.g., *me, te, se, nos, os, se*, which is put in front of the verb when the verb is conjugated (except for affirmative commands), regardless of the verb tense.

**levantarse** = (Yo) **me** levanto a las 7 de la mañana. / María y yo **nos** levantamos muy tarde.

Exception: Affirmative command = **Levántate**.

NOTE: The infinitive form of a reflexive verb can be "personalized."

Ex. **No quiero levantarme temprano**. In this case the *-se* is replaced by *-me* at the end of the infinitive to indicate to whom the infinitive applies.

**2. Verbs and phrases always followed by the infinitive form:** The following verbs (regardless of the verb tense) or phrases must always be followed by a verb in the infinitive form.

**deber** Debes **estudiar** más. / Debiste **estudiar** más el mes pasado.

**poder** No **puedo venir** a clase el lunes. / No **pude venir** a clase el lunes pasado.

**necesitar** Necesitan **practicar** más. / Necesitaron **practicar** más antes del partido la semana pasada.

**querer** ¿Quieres **ir al cine**?

**tener que** Tenemos **que llegar** a tiempo. / Tuvimos **que llegar** a tiempo el año pasado.

**hay que** Hay **que entregar la tarea** mañana.

**se prohíbe** Se **prohíbe comer** en la clase.

**preferir** María **prefiere usar** un bolígrafo. / María siempre **prefería usar** un bolígrafo.

**acabar de\*** Acabamos **de terminar**. \* acabar de + verb = to have just done something

**dejar de\*\*** El niño **dejó de hacer** ruido. \*\*dejar de + verb = to stop doing something

**tratar de\*\*\*** Trato **de hablar** español en la clase. \*\*\* tratar de + verb = to try to do something

NOTE: the reflexive form of this verb means "to be about..."

¿De **que se trata** la historia? = What is the story about?

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list, but it covers the majority of the forms you need to know, particularly for the first two levels of Spanish. See the following section for verbs like *gustar* which can also take the infinitive.

### 3. Verbs that take Indirect Object pronouns (*me, te, le, nos, os, les*)

Certain verbs in Spanish, such as *gustar*, always require an indirect object pronoun. The error frequently made by students is that they conjugate these verbs according to the person (indirect object pronoun). This is incorrect because the true subject of these verbs is indicated by what follows the verb, NOT by *me, te, le*, etc. This means the verb will (almost) always be in the 3rd person singular or plural. Here are some examples with the verb *gustar*:

WRONG

¿**Te gustas** el cine?

**Nos gustamos** estas canciones.

RIGHT

¿Te **gusta** el cine?

Nos **gustan** estas canciones.

Examples of other verbs that follow this rule: *interesar, molestar, encantar, aburrir*, etc.

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IMPORTANT: Some of these verbs, such as *aburrir*, also have a reflexive form, *aburrirse*.

If they do, the reflexive form does not follow these rules. You must use it like any other reflexive verb. Compare:

ABURRIR = to bore

*Me\* **aburren** estos libros.*

= These books **bore me**.

\**me* = indirect object pronoun

ABURRIRSE = to get/become bored

*Me\*\* **aburro** en esa clase.*

I get bored in that class.

\*\**me* = reflexive pronoun

ALSO: Verbs like *gustar* can have a verb as a direct object. In these cases, the verb like *gustar* is always conjugated in the 3rd person singular, and the direct object verb will be in the infinitive.

*Me gusta leer.* = I like reading. / *Me encanta ir al cine.* = I love going to the movies.

**4. Gerunds:** A gerund is a verb used like a noun. In English, we use the present participle, the *-ing* verb form, and also the infinitive with some verbs:

*I like reading.* / *I like to read.*

In Spanish, when the verb is used as a gerund, (to name an activity), you must always use the infinitive form. Compare:

I like **singing**.

Speaking in Spanish is fun. = **Es divertido hablando** español.

WRONG

= **Me gusta cantando**.

RIGHT

*Me gusta cantar.*

*Es divertido hablar en español.*

## FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES

**OTHER COMMON MISTAKES: The Top 25!** (some have been explained above, but bear repeating!)

English	Wrong translation	Right Translation
1. My name is Mary.	<i>Me llamo es María.</i>	<i>Me llamo María. OR Mi nombre es María.</i>
2. I am 16.	<i>Soy 16.</i>	<i>Tengo 16 años.</i>
3. She's a teacher.	<i>Ella es una profesora.</i>	<i>Ella es profesora.</i>
4. I am looking for my book.	<i>Estoy buscando para mi libro. Estoy mirando para mi libro.</i>	<i>Estoy buscando mi libro.</i>
5. I have to study.	<i>Tengo estudiar.</i>	<i>Tengo que estudiar.</i>
6. John is in the library.	<i>Juan es en la biblioteca.</i>	<i>Juan está en la biblioteca.</i>
7. It's cold today.	<i>Es frío hoy.</i>	<i>Hace frío hoy.</i>
8. She knows Mary.	<i>Ella conoce María.</i>	<i>Ella conoce a María.<sup>1</sup></i>
9. I went to school.	<i>Fue al colegio.</i>	<i>Fui al colegio.</i>
10. My friend plays the guitar.	<i>Mi amigo juega la guitarra.</i>	<i>Mi amigo toca la guitarra.</i>
11. She doesn't realize...	<i>Ella no realiza.</i>	<i>Ella no se da cuenta.</i>
12. ...in the morning	<i>... en la mañana</i>	<i>...por la mañana</i>
13. ...on Mondays/on Saturdays	<i>...en lunes/ en sábados</i>	<i>...los lunes/ los sábados<sup>2</sup></i>
14. ...my best friend	<i>...mi mayor amiga</i>	<i>...mi mejor amiga</i>
15. ...my older sister	<i>...mi hermana mejor</i>	<i>...mi hermana mayor</i>
16. ...at Susan's house ...John's car	<i>...en Susan's casa ...John's coche</i>	<i>...en (la) casa de Susan ...el coche de John</i>
17. Thanks for helping!	<i>¡Gracias para ayudando!</i>	<i>¡Gracias por ayudar!</i>
18. It's here.	<i>Lo está aquí.</i>	<i>Está aquí.<sup>3</sup></i>
19. I like it.	<i>Me gusta lo.</i>	<i>Me gusta.</i>
20. I have a problem.	<i>Tengo una problema.</i>	<i>Tengo un problema.</i>
21. another person	<i>una otra persona</i>	<i>otra persona</i>
22. Whom can we speak with?	<i>¿Quién podemos hablar con?</i>	<i>¿Con quién podemos hablar?</i>
23. My arm hurts.	<i>Me duele mi brazo.</i>	<i>Me duele el brazo.</i>
24. once (one time)/ twice	<i>un tiempo/ dos tiempos</i>	<i>una vez / dos veces</i>
25. What time is it?	<i>¿Qué tiempo es?</i>	<i>¿Qué hora es?<sup>4</sup></i>

1. Only with people. With places, you don't use the personal "a". = *Conozco Nueva York.*

2. Note that a day of the week that ends in -s already will not add -es even though it refers to a plural

3. "It", as a subject, is always "understood" in Spanish. The pronoun "lo" can mean "it" but only as a direct object, not a subject. // With verbs like *gustar*, the noun after the verb (really the subject of *gustar*) is either specific, *Me gusta el cine*, or if understood, simply left out:

*¿Te gusta el cine? ---Sí, me gusta mucho. (But not "Me gusta lo mucho.")*

4. "tiempo" is not "time" in this expression; "tiempo" is used to express the concept of time or the weather:  
I don't have time = *No tengo tiempo.* // What's the weaheer like? = *¿Qué tiempo hace?*