

earworms

SPANISH GRAMMAR TIPS

One of the main impulses behind the earworms approach is to really get your brain used to the linguistic patterns, even the melody, of the target language. We do this by offering the target language, spoken by native speakers, with a direct literal translation as well as a correct English interpretation, and by breaking a sentence down so that you understand all its constituent elements. In this way you intuitively learn about the structure, i.e. the grammar, of the language.

As an inquisitive language student, however, you will no doubt be searching for 'the rules' that these patterns are based on, which will give you the tools to construct strings of vocabulary yourself. So here we have provided comments on the grammatical elements to help you to 'decode' the rules, gain a more complete picture, and to construct your own word groups.

The tips given here relate directly to the grammatical themes embedded in earworms Spanish Volumes 1 and 2.

1. Don't say 'I'

Notice that you don't actually have to use the word 'I' = **Yo** (pronounced 'Joe'). It is of course OK to say: **Yo quisiera***, or **Yo quiero (I want)**, **Yo tengo (I have)** or **Yo puedo (I can)**, but the 'o' at the end of **quiero**, **tengo** and **puedo** already signifies the so-called 'first person singular' = the 'I' form, so the 'I' can be left out without any misunderstanding.

In the same way it is not often necessary to use the word 'You' = **Usted**. The question: **Have you ...?** (Vol. 1, Track 3.) is actually **¿Tiene Usted ...?** but the **Usted** can be left out and it can still be understood **¿Tiene una mesa para dos?**. The question **Have you ...?** when speaking to a friend is **¿Tienes tú ...?**, but again the 'you', here 'tú' is usually left out.

Below in the 'Verbs' section, the words for I (yo), you (usted / tú / ustedes) and we (nosotros), are generally not spoken.

***(Yo) Quisiera = I would like ...**

By the way, the term **Quisiera** is super polite to the extent that you don't actually hear it that often among native speakers. They would tend to be more direct, using **quiero = I want**, or would simply say "**Un cafe por favor**".

2. Linguistic gender of nouns – feminine beer and masculine coffee!

For traditional rather than any logical reasons, things are grouped into masculine or feminine in Spanish. 'Un' is the masculine and 'una' feminine version of the English 'a'.

There are four words for 'the': 1. masculine 'el' (e.g. el coche = the car), 2. feminine 'la' (e.g. la señorina = the girl). 3. masculine plural 'los' (e.g. los coches = the cars) and 4. feminine plural 'las' (e.g. las habitaciones = the rooms).

Notice, to make a plural usually add an 's' or an 'es' pretty much like in English!

the hotel / the hotels = el hotel / los hotels

the room / the rooms = la habitación / las habitaciones

Guessing the gender

The linguistic gender of a thing is usually pretty easy to guess. If the word ends in 'o' like helado = ice cream, it is probably **masculine**, so 'un helado' or 'el helado'. If it ends in 'a' it is probably feminine e.g. 'casa', so 'la casa', 'una casa'. (Of course there are exceptions.) Also words ending in 'ión' tend to be feminine (habitación, televisión).

Just for fun, after listening to the earworms Spanish Vol. 1 + 2 a few times, test whether you now know the gender of most of the nouns. If you are not sure try applying the above rules:

café, té, cerveza, botella, vino, vaso, casa, poco, ensalada, mesa, cuenta, tarjeta, taxi, centro, aeropuerto, zapatería, par, banco, supermercado, oficina de turismo, parada de autobus, estación, museo, tren, kilómetro, autobus, estanco, maleta, habitación, baño, desayuno, problema (exception to the rule), frigorífico, camera, cartera, dolor, cabeza, helado, coñac, momento, vuelo, viaje, especialidades, comedor, maletas, semana, Rioja (vino), Rosado, carta, entrante, sopa, (mucha) hambre, filete, esposa, esposo, hijo, hija, hijos.

3. Adjectives

– Descriptive words often 'agree' with the nouns they qualify, like:

vino **tinto** / vino **blanco** = red wine / white wine

una **ensalada mixta** = a mixed salad

– Here are some other important adjectives (these ones come before the noun):

bueno (good)

poco / pocos (little or not much / few)

unos / unas (some)

bastante (quite a lot)

todo (all, every) e.g. todos los días = every day

primero/a (first)

ultimo/a (last)

otro (other, another)

4. Verbs: to have or not to have?

The verb 'have' (with: I, you, we)

I have (yo) **Tengo** ...
 you have (formal) (usted) **Tiene** ... (question: ¿**Tiene** ...? = Do you have ...?)
 you have (informal) (tú) **Tienes** ... (question: ¿**Tienes** ...? = Do you have ...?)
 you have (plural /formal) (ustedes) **Tienen** ... (question: ¿ **Tienen** ...? = Do you have ...?)
 we have (nosotros) **Tenemos** ... (question: ¿**Tenemos** ...? = Do we have ...?)

The question is the same as the statement, just with question marks added and some vocal intonation.

The negative: To make a negative is simple. Just add 'no' in front.

Examples:

I have = tengo

I don't have = no tengo (No tengo una mesa para dos.)

we have = tenemos

we don't have = no tenemos

Summary:

| Statement | Negative | Question |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|
| You have ... | You don't have ... | Do you have ...? |
| Tiene ... | No tiene ... | ¿Tiene ...? |

The verb 'want' (with: I, you, we)

I want (yo) **Quiero** ...
 you want (formal) (usted) **Quiere** ... (question: ¿**Quiere** ...? = Do you want ...?)
 you want (informal) (tú) **Quieres** ... (question: ¿**Quieres** ...? = Do you want ...?)
 you want (plural /formal) ... (ustedes) **Quieren** ... (question: ¿**Quieren** ...? = Do you want ...?)
 we want (nosotros) **Queremos** ... (question: ¿**Queremos** ...? = Do we want ...?)

For the Negative just add 'no'!

The verb 'speak' (with: I, you, we)

I speak (yo) **Hablo** ...
 you speak (formal) (usted) **Habla** ... (question: ¿ **Habla** ...? = Do you speak ...?)
 you speak (informal) (tú) **Hablas** ... (question: ¿ **Hablas** ...? = Do you speak ...?)
 you speak (plural /formal) .. (ustedes) **Hablan** ... (question: ¿ **Hablan** ...? = Do you speak ...?)
 we speak (nosotros) **Hablamos** ... (question: ¿ **Hablamos** ...? = Do we speak ...?)

The verb 'can' (with: I, you, we)

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| I can | (yo) Puedo ... | |
| you can (formal) | (usted) Puede ... | (question: ¿ Puede ...? = Can you ...?) |
| you can (informal) | (tú) Puedes ... | (question: ¿ Puedes ...? = Can you ...?) |
| you can (plural /formal) | (ustedes) Pueden ... | (question: ¿ Pueden ...? = Can you ...?) |
| we can | (nosotros) Podemos ... | (question: ¿ Podemos ...? = Can we ...?) |

'Do' and 'does' (it, they):

Questions are not made with **do** or **does** as in English, as you see above a question is the same as the statement but with question marks.

Two examples:

I) Statement: It costs ... = (él, ella) **Cuesta** ... (As above the 'it' = **él, ella** is generally left out.)

It costs 10 Euros = **Cuesta** diez euros.

Question: Does it cost 10 Euros? = ¿**Cuesta** diez euros? (lit.: Costs it 10 Euros?)

II) Statement: They cost 20 Euros = **Cuestan** veinte euros.

Question: Do they cost 20 Euros? = ¿**Cuestan** veinte euros? (lit.: Cost they 20 Euros?)

Do they have?

They have ... = (ellos/as) **Tienen** ... (question: ¿**Tienen** ...? = Do they have ...?)

As always, the statement and question are the same, apart from the question marks.

'Do they have fish?' = '¿**Tienen** pescado?'

What type of fish **do they have?** = '¿Qué tipo de pescado **tienen?**' (Vol 2. track 9)

5. Possessives (my, your, our, his, her)

As with 'you' there is a formal and an informal way (used to friends and family) of expressing '**your**'.

Your (formal) is '**su**' (**su maleta** = your suitcase). When talking to a friend you would say '**tu maleta**'.

My = mi (mis plural) ... **mi maleta**.

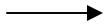
Our = **nuestra/o** depending on the gender of the object in question. Our suitcase is **nuestra maleta**.

As well as 'your', 'su' means 'his' and 'her'.

6. Me, him, her, us, you (i.e. when a person is the 'object' of a sentence)

In the sentence:

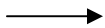
'**She** likes **him**.'



we call '**She**' the '**subject**' (the acting person) and '**him**' the '**object**', the person being acted upon.

Likewise:

He likes **her**.



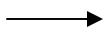
'**He**' = **subject** and '**her**' = **object**.

So now lets look at the Spanish **object** pronouns. (Pronoun means I, me, he, him, she, her etc.)

you (informal) = te

you (formal) = le

I'm glad to see **you**. = 'Me alegre de verte.' Or: 'Me alegre de verle.'



(Notice the object gets stuck on to the verb.)

me = me

him, her = le

us = nos

Can you tell **me** ? ¿Puede decirme ...?

Can you tell **him / her**...? ¿Puede decirle ...?

Can you tell **us** ... ? ¿Puede decirnos ...?

7. Different ways to say 'I am'

'**I am English**' and '**I am at home**' are two very different versions of 'I am'. Spanish recognizes this with two completely different words: 'soy' and 'estoy'.

– '**Soy**' describes **your personal attributes and characteristics** e.g.: I am English, I am a teacher. I am a friend of Pete's. I am from London.

– '**Estoy**' covers **where you are** and **how you feel at that moment**: I am in London. I am in the park. I am on holiday. I am happy. I am drunk.

The same rules apply to: You are / we are / they are / it is / he is / she is. There are two versions of 'to be'.

e.g.

The hotel **is** good. (attribute) El hotel **es** bueno.

The hotel **is** over there. (location) El hotel **está** allí.

8. Comparatives

slower (more slowly) – bigger – later – more interesting, less interesting, etc.

Comparatives are pretty simple in Spanish. E.g.:

slow = despacio **slower = más despacio** (lit.: more slowly)

big = grande **bigger = más grande**

late = tarde **later = más tarde** (By the way 'tarde' also means afternoon/evening.)

interesting = interesante **more interesting = más interesante**

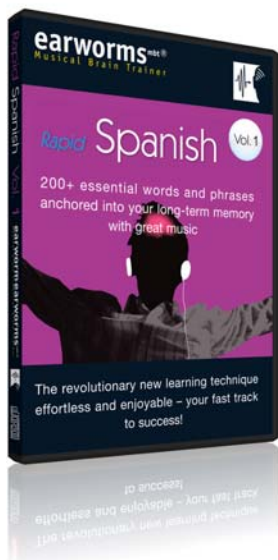
expensive = caro / cara **more expensive = más caro / cara**

difficult = difícil **more difficult = más difícil**

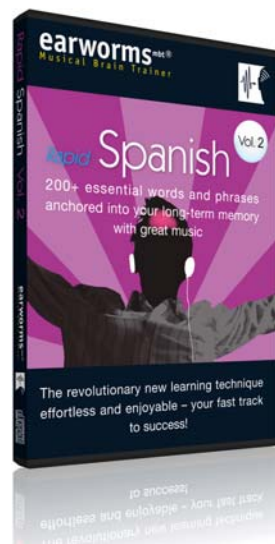
The expression '**More or less**' translates directly into '**Más o menos**', and **less expensive = menos caro**.

When actually comparing things in a sentence we use '**than**' as a joining word. This is '**que**' in Spanish.

This room is more expensive **than** the other. = Esta habitación es más cara **que** la otra.



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