

**PRACTICE
MAKES
PERFECT™**

Spanish Conversation

- *Learn to speak fluently and spontaneously*
- *Build your conversational skills with real-life dialogues*
- *Practice with dozens of entertaining exercises*

Jean Yates, Ph.D.

desde, casi, hacer, parece, parece mentira, a
que, bueno, puede, ver, ya, sino, ¿ve
?, como, o sea, c
hecho, a propósito
ortar, quisiera, p
parte, ¿en serio
dicarse, aunque,
, acabar de, clar
ncluso, en efect
ntonces, estar c
rdo, hasta lueg
bastante, todo
rario, es decir, e
ni hablar, vamo
con razón, pare
se, lo important
de todos modo
e la pena, aseg
e, oye, pedir, p
puesto, solicita
estar, quedar co
ar, en cuanto, p
sierto, de acuerd
dar que, no dud
, no importa, cac
vez más, cualquie
ninguno, tampoc

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Spanish Conversation

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The author is indebted to Luis Colomer and Gladys Ilarregui
for their advice and constructive comments.

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Preface

Practice Makes Perfect: Spanish Conversation is designed to give you practice with the vocabulary and structures that are most often used in common types of informal conversations.

The book consists of twelve chapters, each one devoted to a particular conversational function. Each chapter begins with a typical conversation followed by a discussion of vocabulary and structures that are particularly important for the type of conversation in question. Certain expressions are repeated in other chapters so that you will become more familiar with them as they occur in different contexts. Following the discussion section are several sets of exercises to help you feel confident that you have understood the material. The exercises also give you practice in using new vocabulary and structures so that you will be able to use them in your own personal conversations. At the end of the book you will find two glossaries, the first listing alphabetically all the Spanish words in the book with their English translations, and the second listing the same words alphabetically in English with their Spanish translations.

Use this book, continue to practice your Spanish in conversations with your Spanish-speaking friends, and continue to learn and enjoy this beautiful language.

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Introducing yourself and others

1

Conversation: Meeting at a party

MARIO: Hola, **soy** Mario, el primo de Ana.

Hi, I'm Mario, Ana's cousin.

CECILIA: **Encantada**, Mario. También eres **del Perú**, ¿verdad?

I'm glad to meet you, Mario. You're from Perú too, aren't you?

MARIO: No, no soy **del Perú**, **sino** de Chile. Mi papá, que es peruano, fue a Chile a estudiar y **conoció** allí a mi mamá, que es chilena, y se quedó allí.

No, I'm not from Perú, I'm from Chile. My dad, who is Peruvian, went to Chile to study, and stayed there after he met my mother, who's Chilean.

CECILIA: ¿**Desde cuándo** estás aquí?

How long have you been here?

MARIO: **A ver**, llegué el 14 de este mes, **así que ya** llevo casi dos semanas aquí.

Let's see, I got here on the 14th of this month, so I've been here almost two weeks.

CECILIA: ¿Y qué te parece nuestra ciudad?

And what do you think of our city?

MARIO: Me encanta. Es preciosa. En comparación con las ciudades de mi país, me parece muy grande y espaciosa, muy verde. Y tú, ¿de qué parte eres?

I love it. It's beautiful. Compared to the cities in my country, it seems really spacious and green. And where are you from?

CECILIA: **Bueno**, nací aquí en esta ciudad. He viajado bastante y he vivido en Sudamérica, pero soy de aquí.

Well, I was born right here in this city. I've travelled quite a bit and I've lived in South America, but I'm from here.

MARIO: Viviste en Buenos Aires, ¿verdad?

You lived in Buenos Aires, right?

CECILIA: Sí. Y ¿cómo lo sabías?

Yes. How did you know?

MARIO: Porque hablas como una auténtica porteña. **Parece mentira** que seas **norteamericana**.

Because you talk like a true "Porteña." It doesn't seem possible that you're a North American.

Improving your conversation

Soy Mario

The most common way of introducing yourself or others is to use the verb **ser** plus your name or the name of the person you're introducing. You can then add something else about the person.

Hola, soy Mario.
Ella es Susana, mi esposa/novia/
amiga/hermana/mamá.
Ellas son Ana, Sonia y Gladys, mis
amigas/hermanas/primas.
Él es Jaime, mi esposo/novio/amigo/
hermano/papá.
Ellos son Miguel y Martín, mis amigos/
hermanos/primos.

Hi, I'm Mario.
This is Susana, my wife/girlfriend/friend/
sister/mother.
These are Ana, Sonia, and Gladys, my friends/
sisters/cousins.
This is Jaime, my husband/boyfriend/friend/
brother/father.
These are Miguel and Martín, my friends/
brothers/cousins.

Remember to use subject pronouns only if you're changing the subject of the conversation. If it is clear whom you are talking about, leave off the subject pronoun (**yo, usted, tú, él, ella, nosotros, nosotras, ustedes, vosotros, vosotras, ellos, ellas**).

¿Eres Jaime?
No, no soy Jaime.

Are you Jaime?
No, I'm not Jaime.

But if someone walks into a room and says, **¿Quién es Jaime?** (*Who is Jaime?*), he would identify himself by saying, **Soy yo./Yo soy Jaime.** (*It's me./I'm Jaime.*)

Encantada

This is a nice way of saying you are delighted or charmed to meet someone. Of course, a male would say **Encantado**. You could also say:

Mucho gusto.
Es un placer (conocerlo/conocerla).

I'm glad to meet you.
It's a pleasure (to meet you [male/female]).

And if the other person says **Mucho gusto** or **Encantado** or **Es un placer** first, you can answer, **Igualmente** (*Me, too*) or **El gusto es mío** (*The pleasure is mine*).

Conocer

Conocer means *to meet someone for the first time*, and also *to know*, in the sense of *already having met someone* or *having visited a place*.

Es un placer **conocer**te.
Ya **conozco** a tu hermana.
Desafortunadamente, no **conozco**
tu país.

It's a pleasure to meet you.
I already know your sister.
*Unfortunately, I've never been to
your country.*

Encontrarse

To meet, in the sense of running into people you already know, is **encontrarse**.

Siempre se **encuentran** en la biblioteca. *They always run into each other at the library.*

Encontrarse can also mean *to arrange to meet someone somewhere*.

Entonces, **nos encontramos** aquí a
las seis.

Then we'll meet here at six.

To meet, in the sense of *having a meeting or a get together*, is **reunirse**.

Nos vamos a **reunir** el viernes por la tarde.

We're going to meet on Friday afternoon.

Hace tiempo que no **nos reunimos**.

It's been a while since we got together.

To know, in the sense of *being aware of information*, is **saber**.

¿Quién **sabe** la respuesta a esa pregunta?
La **sé** yo, Srta. Jiménez.

*Who knows the answer to that question?
I know it, Miss Jiménez.*

Llamarse

Use this verb to ask for or to tell names. The verb, **llamar**—*to call*—is used with a reflexive pronoun here, and literally means *to call oneself*. It is perfectly all right to use the alternative expression, **¿Cuál es su nombre?** (*What is your name?*), which is more like English.

Remember that a reflexive pronoun always refers to the same person as the conjugated verb.

(yo) me _____o
(tú) te _____as/es
(usted/él/ella) se _____a/e

(nosotros/as) nos _____amos/emos/imos
(vosotros/as) os _____áis/éis
(ustedes/ellos/ellas) se _____an/en

¿Cómo se llama usted?/¿Cuál es su nombre?

What's your name? (to someone older, or someone completely unfamiliar)

¿Cómo te llamas?/¿Cuál es tu nombre?

What's your name? (to someone obviously near your age or your social circle)

¿Cómo se llama (él/ella)?/¿Cuál es su nombre?

What's his/her name?

¿Cómo se llaman (ellos/ellas)?

What are their names?

¿Cómo se llaman (ustedes)?

What are your names?

¿Cómo os llamáis (vosotros/vosotras)?

What are your names? (used only in Spain, to two or more people)

Me llamo...

The same verb is used for telling names.

Me llamo Sara./Soy Sara./Mi nombre es Sara.

I call myself Sara./I'm Sara./My name's Sara.

Se llama Martín./Es Martín./Su nombre es Martín.

He calls himself Martín./He's Martín./His name's Martín.

Se llama Elena./Es Elena./Su nombre es Elena.

She calls herself Elena./She's Elena./Her name's Elena.

Se llaman Jaime y Martín./Son Jaime y Martín./Sus nombres son Jaime y Martín.

They call themselves Jaime y Martín./They're Jaime and Martín./Their names are Jaime and Martín.

Se llaman Ana e Isabel./Son Ana e Isabel./Sus nombres son Ana e Isabel.

They call themselves Ana and Isabel./They're Ana and Isabel./Their names are Ana and Isabel.

¿Verdad?

Adding this or one of the following expressions to a statement is a way of affirming that your listener agrees with you.

¿Verdad?/¿Verdad que sí?/¿No es así?/¿No? *Right?/Isn't it?/Aren't you?*

del Perú

The names of the following countries are traditionally used with a definite article.

el Perú
el Ecuador

la Argentina
el Uruguay

Remember that **de** followed by **el** is always contracted to **del**.

Son **del** Ecuador.
Soy **de la** Argentina.

They're from Ecuador.
I'm from Argentina.

It is becoming common, however, to omit the article.

Son de Ecuador.
Soy de Argentina.

The article is always used with El Salvador, as that is part of the name of the country.

When referring to the United States, the use of **los** is optional.

Son de Estados Unidos.
Soy de **los** Estados Unidos.

They're from the United States.
They're from the United States.

Sino

This is a great word for correcting a negative statement or impression. It implies *but rather* in English. First, state what isn't true; then add **sino** and give the correction.

¿Eres Mario? No, no soy Mario, **sino** Jaime.

Are you Mario? No, I'm not Mario, I'm Jaime.
(I'm not Mario but rather Jaime.)

If there is a preposition in the construction, repeat it.

¿Vas al cine? No, no voy al cine, **sino** al teatro.

Are you going to the movies? No, I'm not going to the movies, I'm going to the theater.

If you are correcting a verb, or repeating the verb in the correction, use **sino que**.

¿Vas a estudiar esta noche? No, no voy a estudiar, **sino que** voy a trabajar.
¿Salen a las cinco? No, no salimos a las cinco, **sino que** salimos a las seis.

Are you going to study tonight? No, I'm not going to study, I'm going to work.
Are you leaving at five? No, we're not leaving at five, we're leaving at six.

Que y quien

Qué is used to ask the question *what*. **Quién** is used to ask the question *who* when the answer is expected to be one person. If the answer is expected to be more than one person, **quiénes** is used. To indicate more specifically which person has been mentioned, **que**—without a written accent mark—is used:

Mi hermana que vive en Chicago viene a visitarnos este fin de semana.

My sister who lives in Chicago is coming to visit us this weekend.

To further describe a person, in an appositive phrase, either **que** or **quien** (both without accent marks) can be used:

Mi hermana, que/quien es la madre de mis sobrinas, viene a visitarnos este fin de semana.

My sister, who is the mother of my nieces, is coming to visit us this weekend.

Remember that if there is a comma between the named person and *who*, you can use *quien*, but not otherwise. It's always safest to use *que*.

¿Desde cuándo... ?

To find out how long something has been going on, instead of using the present perfect tense, as in English, use the following expressions with the present or present progressive tense in Spanish.

¿Desde cuándo estudias/estás estudiando español? *How long have you been studying Spanish?*

¿Hace cuánto tiempo que estudias/estás estudiando español? *How long have you been studying Spanish?*

Or use the present tense of **llevar** + the gerund of the following verb.

¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando español? *How long have you been studying Spanish?*

Vivo/Estoy viviendo aquí desde febrero. *I've been living here since February.*

Vivo/Estoy viviendo aquí desde hace dos meses. *I've been living here for two months.*

Hace dos meses que vivo/estoy viviendo aquí. *I've been living here for two months.*

Llevo dos meses viviendo aquí. *I've been living here for two months.*

Similar expressions indicate the length of time that something has not occurred.

Hace mucho tiempo que no hablo español. *I haven't spoken Spanish in a long time.*

Llevo mucho tiempo sin hablar español. *I haven't spoken Spanish in a long time.*

Ya

Ya can mean *now* or *already*, but its meaning is usually expressed in English by rising intonation.

Llevo **ya** tres horas esperándote. *I've been waiting for you for three hours.*

Hace **ya** veinte años que vivimos en este país. *We've been living here for twenty years.*

A ver

This is used to indicate that you are making a calculation and implies "Let's see/Let me see/Let me think."

¿Hace cuánto tiempo que conoces a mi hermano? *How long have you known my brother?*

A ver, nos conocimos en la escuela secundaria, así que lo conozco desde hace seis años. *Let's see, we met in high school, so I've known him for six years.*

Así que

This indicates a logical conclusion, and can be translated as *so*, with the meaning of *therefore*.

Tus padres son mis tíos, **así que** tú eres mi primo hermano. *Your parents are my aunt and uncle, so you're my first cousin.*

Bueno

This is often used as a lead-in to a response that requires a little explanation. In this case it does not mean *good*, but more like *Well . . .* or *Actually . . .*

No estás casada, ¿verdad? *You're not married, are you?*
Bueno, no, pero sí estoy comprometida. *Well, no, but I am engaged.*

Parece mentira

This expression—literally, *It seems a lie*—is better translated as *It doesn't seem possible*. If you go on to say what doesn't seem possible, add **que** + a verb in the subjunctive. (See the Appendix.)

Following are examples of the subjunctive used with **parece mentira**:

Hace mucho calor. **Parece mentira** que estemos en pleno otoño. *It's so hot. It doesn't seem possible that we're in the middle of fall.*
El tiempo pasa rápido. **Parece mentira** que ya tengas doce años. *Time goes by so fast. It doesn't seem possible that you are already twelve years old.*

Norteamericano, -a

While people from the United States often refer to themselves as *Americans*, **americano** in Spanish refers to someone from any part of the Western Hemisphere. In fact, in Spain, **americano** usually refers to someone from Latin America. **Norteamericano** is someone from Canada or the United States (Mexicans are **mexicanos**), while **estadounidense** literally means *United States citizen*. It is common for people to use nicknames for certain nationalities or groups of people. For example:

porteño, -a	someone who lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina
nuyoricano	someone of Puerto Rican descent who lives in New York
chicano, -a	someone of Mexican descent who lives in the southwestern United States
hispano, -a	someone from a Spanish-speaking country
latino, -a	someone from a Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking country
gringo, -a	someone from the United States, especially in Mexico; it's not exactly a compliment, but isn't necessarily offensive.

Tú/Usted/Ustedes/Vosotros

All of these mean *you*—so easy in English! The choice of **tú** or **usted** can be tricky, as different regions, even within the same country, often have different customs regarding this. **Tú** is used more freely in Spain than in Latin America, where it is generally reserved to address children or people whom you consider your social peers. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of parts of Colombia where **usted** can be used for your closest friends and family members!

A rule of thumb is to use **usted** until you are asked to please “**¡Tutéame, que no soy tan viejo!**” (*Use “tu” with me, I’m not that old!*) Also, pay attention to what the natives say, or even ask for advice if you're not sure.

The choice between **vosotros** and **ustedes** is simpler, especially in Latin America, where **vosotros** is not used, so **ustedes** is the plural of both **tú** and **usted**. In Spain, **vosotros** is the plural form of **tú**, and **ustedes** is the plural form of **usted**.

EJERCICIO

1.1

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate forms of the verb **ser**.

1. María _____ preciosa.
2. Yo _____ tu mejor amigo.
3. Tú y yo ya _____ viejos.
4. Tú no _____ de aquí.
5. Juan y José no _____ ingenieros.
6. Tú y Luisa _____ muy listas. [form used in Spain]
7. Tú y Luisa _____ muy listas. [form used in Latin America]
8. Víctor _____ un actor muy bueno.

EJERCICIO

1.2

Choose the most appropriate word or expression to fill in each blank.

1. Conozco a Roberto, pero no _____ el nombre de su hermano.
conozco encuentra sé se
2. ¿_____ usted a qué hora se van a reunir?
Sabe Conoce Se Encuentra
3. ¿_____ Bolivia?
Reune Conoces Sabes Sabe
4. Nos _____ en el Bistrot a las seis y media.
conocemos sabemos encontramos conozco
5. Mi familia siempre _____ los domingos.
se reúne se encuentra se conoce sabe

EJERCICIO

1.3

Answer each question with the appropriate form of **llamarse**.

1. ¿Cómo te llamas? _____ Carolina.
2. ¿Cómo se llama tu hermano? _____ Claudio.
3. ¿Cómo os llamáis? _____ Margarita y Eva.
4. ¿Cómo se llaman ustedes? _____ Sonia y Marta.
5. ¿Cómo se llama ella? _____ Susana.

EJERCICIO

1.4

Choose **qué, quién, quiénes, que, or quien** to complete the following sentences.

1. Quiero invitar a la chica _____ vive en la esquina.
2. ¿_____ es el profesor _____ viene de España?
3. El profesor, _____ acaba de mudarse a nuestra vecindad, se llama Juan Díaz.
4. ¿_____ son los actores que te gustan más?
5. ¿_____ es esto?

EJERCICIO

1.5

Answer each question in a complete sentence.

1. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo que viven ustedes en este país? (cuatro años)

2. ¿Desde cuándo trabajan ustedes juntos? (el once de febrero)

3. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas nadando? (treinta minutos)

4. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo que no ve a su familia? (tres meses)

5. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas sin fumar? (dos semanas)

EJERCICIO

1·6

Circle the most appropriate word or expression for the blank space.

1. ¿Quién es esa chica? _____ mi amiga.
Ella es Ellas son Es Eres
2. ¿Cómo se llaman tus hermanos? _____ Germán y Javier.
Te llaman Se llaman Su nombre es Lo llamo
3. ¿Cómo te llamas? _____ Pepe.
Mi nombre es Me llama Se llama
4. Amiga, te presento a mi primo, Juan. _____.
Encantada Me gustas mucho Encantado El gusto es mío
5. ¿_____? Somos de la Argentina.
Dónde estás De dónde es De dónde son Dónde es
6. Tú eres de aquí, ¿_____?
desde cuándo así que no es así ya
7. No soy de aquí _____ México.
pero pero de sino sino de
8. Es tu novio, ¿verdad? No, no es mi novio _____ mi esposo.
pero pero es sino que sino
9. ¿Hace cuánto tiempo que estudias español? _____ cuatro años _____ español.
Hace... estudio Estudio... el Llevo... estudiando Desde... estudiando
10. Vivimos aquí desde hace veinte años. Sí, _____.
parece mentira a ver ya mucho gusto

EJERCICIO

1·7

Match the questions or statements in the left column with the most appropriate responses in the right column.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ ¿De dónde son ustedes? | a. Sí, vive aquí. |
| 2. _____ ¿Por qué no te gusta esta película? | b. Es de Bolivia. |
| 3. _____ Tu hermano trabaja aquí también, ¿verdad? | c. No, no trabaja, sino que estudia. |
| 4. _____ Hace ya veinte años que estamos casados. | d. Es muy feo. |
| 5. _____ ¿Cómo te llamas? | e. Somos estadounidenses. |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6. _____ Soy Marcos Jiménez. | f. A ver. Ya llevo seis meses viviendo aquí. |
| 7. _____ ¿Qué te parece este vestido? | g. Parece mentira. |
| 8. _____ ¿Desde cuándo vives aquí? | h. Soy Marcos Jiménez. |
| 9. _____ ¿De dónde es su esposo? | i. Es un placer. |
| 10. _____ Tu hermana vive aquí, ¿no es así? | j. Bueno, me parece un poco violenta. |

EJERCICIO

1·8

Fill in each blank with the present subjunctive form of the verb indicated.

- Parece mentira que (ser, nosotros) _____ vecinos.
- Parece mentira que (estar, tú) _____ aquí.
- Parece mentira que (tener, él) _____ dieciséis años.
- Parece mentira que (hacer, el tiempo) _____ 80 grados.
- Parece mentira que (trabajar, tú y yo) _____ juntos.
- Parece mentira que (correr, nuestros esposos) _____ el maratón.
- Parece mentira que (escribir, ella) _____ una carta tan larga.
- Parece mentira que (pensar, ustedes) _____ así.
- Parece mentira que (conocer, vosotras) _____ a mi papá.
- Parece mentira que (dormir, ellos) _____ durante todo el día.

EJERCICIO

1·9

Choose the most appropriate expression for each blank space.

- No tenemos dinero, _____ no podemos comprar flores.
sino a ver así que sino que
- Francisco no es mi primo, _____ mi novio.
sino sino que no es así así que
- ¿Por qué te vas? _____, tengo que irme porque mis padres me están esperando.
A ver Parece mentira Bueno Ya
- Parece mentira que _____ aquí.
estás eres son estén

¿Cómo se dice en español? *Translate each sentence into Spanish.*

1. What are your names?

2. You're from Ecuador, right?

3. No, we're not from Ecuador, we're from El Salvador.

4. How long have you been here?

5. We've been living here for two years.

6. You know our sister, right?

7. It doesn't seem possible that I don't know her.

Write a dialogue in which you introduce yourself and some friends to a new neighbor. Be sure to include as many of the new expressions as possible. Ask a Spanish speaker if your dialogue needs any corrections.

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Expressing opinions, likes, and dislikes

2

Conversation: Getting acquainted

LAURA: Hola, ¿eres Sara? Soy Laura. ¡Por fin nos conocemos! **Como** vamos a compartir el apartamento este semestre, **espero que** seamos compatibles.

SARA: Yo también lo espero. Veo por tu camiseta que eres aficionada de béisbol, pues ¡yo también!

LAURA: Bueno, la camiseta me la regaló mi hermano, que es beisbolista. Mira que en la parte de atrás, tiene la foto de todos los jugadores de su equipo. Imagínate que ganaron el campeonato de nuestra ciudad este verano.

SARA: ¡Fantástico! Te digo que aunque no soy muy atlética, **me encanta** ver béisbol, **ya sea** un partido entre dos escuelas o uno profesional. Soy más bien una espectadora que deportista. Y tú, ¿juegas algún deporte?

LAURA: Sí, juego al tenis. **De hecho** tengo una beca y voy a jugar para la universidad. Ahora dime tú, ¿qué más **te gusta** hacer?

SARA: Lo que más **me gusta** es bailar. Soy estudiante de baile clásico, pero también **me gustan** la salsa y el merengue y claro, todo lo que se baila en las discotecas.

LAURA: Entonces, tendremos que salir este mismo fin de semana para explorar los clubs de la ciudad.

SARA: ¡Y los restaurantes! **A propósito** de eso, ¿tienes hambre? Dicen que hay una excelente cocina internacional aquí. **¿Qué te parece** si vamos ahora mismo al restaurante mexicano en la esquina para probar los tacos y charlar más?

Hi, are you Sara? I'm Laura. Finally we meet! Since we're going to share the room this semester, I hope we'll get along OK.

I hope so, too. I see from your tee shirt that you're a baseball fan—I am too!

Well, the tee shirt was a present from my brother, who's a baseball player. Look on the back—it has a photo of all the players on his team. They actually won the city championship this summer.

Fantastic! I tell you, although I'm not very athletic, I love to watch baseball, whether it's a game between two schools or a professional one. I'm more of a spectator than an athlete. And you, do you play a sport?

Yes, I play tennis. As a matter of fact, I have a scholarship and I'm going to play for the university. Now, tell me, what else do you like to do?

What I like to do best is dance. I'm studying classical ballet, but I also like salsa, merengue, and of course, everything you dance at the discos.

Then we have to go out this weekend to check out the clubs in this city.

And the restaurants! Speaking of which, are you hungry? They say there's wonderful international cuisine here. How about going right now to the Mexican restaurant on the corner to try their tacos and talk some more?

LAURA: Ah, me encantaría. A mí **me gusta** mucho la cocina mexicana, sobre todo la picante. En realidad, me fascinan todas las comidas de otros países.

Oh, I'd love to. I like Mexican food a lot, especially the hot stuff. Actually, I love all ethnic food.

SARA: Parece que nos vamos a llevar muy bien. ¡No te imaginas lo contenta que estoy!

It looks like we're going to get along really well. You can't imagine how happy I am!

Más tarde:

SARA: Laura, ¿**qué te parece** la decoración de nuestro cuarto?

Laura, what do you think of the décor of our room?

LAURA: **Para serte sincera**, realmente no **soporto** ese color oscuro de las paredes. Prefiero los tonos claros. **Por otra parte, quisiera** cambiar la alfombra y las cubrecamas. ¿A ti **te gustan**?

To be honest, I really can't stand that dark color on the walls. I prefer light colors. Plus, I'd like to change the rug and the bedspreads. Do you like them?

SARA: No, estoy de acuerdo contigo. Con una buena pintura y unos pequeños cambios, este cuarto estará mucho más cómodo y acogedor.

No, I agree with you. With a good paint job and a few changes, this room will be much more comfortable and cozy.

Improving your conversation

Esperar que

Esperar que followed by the subjunctive means *to hope that something happens or somebody else does something*.

Esperamos que nuestro equipo gane el partido.

We hope our team wins the game.

Ella **espera que** vayas a la reunión.

She hopes you go to the meeting.

When someone hopes to do something himself or herself, use an infinitive after **esperar** instead of the subjunctive.

Esperamos ganar el partido.
Espero ir a la reunión.

*We hope we win the game.
I hope to go to the meeting.*

Other verbs used like this include **querer, preferir, necesitar, gustar, molestar**, and others.

Quiero que me acompañes.
No **quiero** ir sola.

*I want you to go with me.
I don't want to go alone.*

Prefieren que no hablemos.
Prefieren hablar ellos.

*They would rather that we didn't talk.
They prefer to talk./They would rather do all the talking.*

Me gusta que siempre llegues a clase a tiempo.

I like it that you always come to class on time.

Me gusta ir a tu casa.

I like to go to your house.

Necesitamos que nos ayudes.

We need you to help us.

Le molesta que hagan ruido.

It bothers him that they make noise.

Esperar can also mean *to wait*.

Espérame aquí.

Wait for me here.

Como

Como means *since* in the sense of *because*.

Como eres muy joven, no puedes ir con nosotros.

Since you're so young, you can't come with us.

Como has a number of other meanings.

- ◆ It is translated as *how* when used with **estar** and action verbs.

¿**Cómo** estás?

How are you?

No sé **cómo** haces eso.

I don't know how you do that.

- ◆ It is translated as *what . . . like* when used with **ser**.

¿**Cómo** eres?

What are you like?

- ◆ It can mean *like* in the sense of *approximately/about/more or less*.

Ella tiene **como** treinta años.

She's like thirty years old./She's about thirty years old.

- ◆ And it can mean *just like*.

Eres **como** una hermana para mí.

You're just like a sister to me.

Desde

Desde means *since* in the sense of time.

Te estoy esperando **desde** las siete.

I've been waiting for you since seven o'clock.

Ya sea

Sea is the present subjunctive form of **ser**. With **ya**, it can be translated as *whether*, in the sense of *whatever, whenever, whoever, however*.

Me puedes visitar cuando quieras, **ya sea** por la mañana, por la tarde o por la noche.

You can visit me when(ever) you want, whether it's in the morning, in the afternoon, or at night.

Invita a quien quieras, **ya sea** un chico o una chica.

Invite whomever you wish, whether it's a boy or a girl.

O sea

This is a common expression—so common that it is often used as a “crutch,” like *you know* or *I mean*. But it has a real function as well—to put something in different words to make it clearer.

Vengan temprano, **o sea**, a las ocho o las nueve.

Come early, in other words, at eight or nine.

De hecho

De hecho is one of a number of conversational markers that can be translated as *actually* or *as a matter of fact*. However, its function is limited to introducing a fact that serves as an example of what was just said. It's easy to translate this into English, but much trickier use it correctly in Spanish. Think of **de hecho** as meaning *as proven by the fact that . . .*

Mi papá es muy generoso conmigo.
De hecho, puedo comprar toda la ropa que quiera.
Ella es como parte de la familia. **De hecho**, celebra todos los festivos con nosotros

*My dad is very generous with me. As a matter of fact, I can buy all the clothes I want.
She is like family. As a matter of fact, she celebrates all the holidays with us.*

A propósito

This expression is used to add information to a conversation that relates to something said, but in a different context. It can be translated as *speaking of which . . .*

Tenemos que ir de compras para buscar un regalo para Carlos. Su fiesta de cumpleaños es mañana.
A propósito, ¿sabes si los niños están invitados?

*We have to go shopping to get a present for Carlos. His birthday party is tomorrow.
Speaking of which, do you know if the kids are invited?*

¿Qué te parece?

This is a way of asking someone's impression, feeling, or opinion about something. Literally it's *How does this seem to you?*

¿**Qué te/le parece** este cuadro?
(A mí) me gusta mucho/no me gusta/
me encanta/me parece muy feo.

*What do you think of this painting?
I like it/I don't like it/I love it/I think it's really ugly.*

¿**Qué te parece si...?** can be translated as *How about if we . . . /Do you think it would be a good idea to . . .?*

¿**Qué te parece** si llamamos a Carolina?
¿**Qué te parece** si le compramos un osito de peluche?

*How about if we call Carolina?
Do you think it would be a good idea to buy her a Teddy bear?*

Gustar and similar verbs

A number of verbs are used in Spanish with indirect object pronouns to indicate the effect of something or someone on somebody else. To use these verbs correctly, think about their literal translations into English, rather than their more natural translations. Remember that the subject of the sentence is the person or thing that *causes* the opinion or feeling, and the verb conjugation agrees with this subject. The person affected is indicated by the indirect object pronoun.

Me gusta la casa.
Me gusta Fernando.
A Ana le importan sus estudios.
A Ana le importas tú.

*The house appeals to me. (I like the house.)
Fernando appeals to me. (I like Fernando.)
Her studies are important to Ana. (Ana cares about her studies.)
You are important to Ana. (Ana cares about you.)*

Le fascinan las comedias.
Me fascinan Fernando y Tomás.

Comedies fascinate him. (He loves comedies.)
Fernando and Tomás fascinate me. (I'm fascinated by Fernando and Tomás.)

When the subject is a *thing* (rather than a *person*), it requires an article, whether it is singular or plural.

Me gusta **el** chocolate.
Me gustan **los** chocolates.

I like chocolate.
I like chocolates.

When using these verbs, a subject pronoun (**yo, tú, él, ella, nosotros, ustedes, ellos**) can replace the subject if it is a person or people, but it is omitted when the subject is a *thing*. Never use direct object pronouns with these verbs. (**Lo** and **la** can mean *it* in other places, but not here!)

Te gusta **el chocolate**?
Sí, me gusta.

Does chocolate appeal to you?
Yes, it appeals to me. (Yes, I like it.)

¿Te gusta **Fernando**?
Sí me gusta **él**.

Does Fernando appeal to you?
Yes, he appeals to me. (Yes, I like him.)

You can use the third person singular of this type of verb plus an infinitive to indicate that you *like to, love to, or don't like to* do something.

Me gusta esquiar.
Me encanta tocar la guitarra.
No me gusta levantarme temprano.

I like to ski. (Skiing appeals to me.)
I love to play the guitar. (Playing the guitar enchants me.)
I don't like to get up early. (Getting up early doesn't appeal to me.)

Other verbs used like this include:

molestar
fastidiar
impresionar
importar
doler
entristecer
aburrir

bother
annoy
impress
be important to
hurt
sadden
bore

Para serte sincero, -a

This expression is used to preface a statement that may seem a little uncomfortable, exactly like *to be honest with you*.

Tengo dos entradas para el concierto esta noche. ¿Quieres ir?
Para serte sincero, no soy aficionado de ese grupo. No me gusta su música.

I have two tickets to the concert tonight.
Do you want to go?
To be honest, I'm not a fan of that group.
I don't like their music.

Soportar

This is a real **falso amigo**—it does not mean *to support*, but rather *to tolerate*.

No quiero ir a la reunión. **No soporto** la actitud de ciertos colegas nuestros.

I don't want to go to the meeting. I can't stand the attitude of some of our coworkers.

To *support* can be expressed by several different verbs, each with a different function: **mantener**, **apoyar**, and **sostener**.

Mantener

Mantener means *to provide a living for someone*.

No sé cómo esa mujer **mantiene** a su familia con tan poco dinero.

I don't know how that woman supports her family on so little money.

Apoyar

Apoyar means *to provide moral or physical support*.

Mis padres **apoyan** mi decisión.
Apóyame, por favor. Se me ha torcido el tobillo.

*My parents support my decision.
Hold me up, please. I've twisted my ankle.*

Sostener

Sostener can mean *to give physical support*, and also *to maintain a position on something*.

Esta silla antigua **no sostiene** tanto peso.
El alcalde **sostiene** que los profesores merecen un incremento de sueldo.

*This old chair won't support that much weight.
The mayor maintains that teachers deserve a salary increase.*

Por otra parte

Por otra parte is used to give additional back-up to a positive argument. It can be translated as *in addition*, *plus*, or *furthermore*.

Esta casa es perfecta para nosotros.
Tiene mucho espacio, un jardín lindo y está cerca del centro. **Por otra parte**, está en un buen distrito escolar.

This house is perfect for us. It has a lot of space, a nice yard, and it's close to town. Plus, it's in a good school district.

If you want to give the meaning of *on the other hand*—indicating a contrasting argument—you need to precede it with **pero**.

Me gusta la casa y estoy de acuerdo en que tiene muchas ventajas. **Pero por otra parte**, está muy lejos de mi trabajo.

I like the house and I agree that it has a lot of advantages. On the other hand, it's a long way from where I work.

Quisiera

Quisiera is an imperfect subjunctive form (see the Appendix) that can be used instead of **quiero** for the sake of politeness or to indicate a wish that may seem impossible.

Quisiera una reservación para el 12 de marzo.
Quisiéramos ir en un crucero al Caribe.

*I would like a reservation for the 12th of March.
We would like to go on a Caribbean cruise.*