

Helpful tips to improve your Spanish grammar

From the editor of the new revised edition of the [Oxford Spanish Dictionary](#) - out this month.

1. **Revise the use of *ser* and *estar*** (= to be) in Spanish. This is one of the hardest things for English native speakers to master in Spanish. *Ser* expresses identity or nature as opposed to condition or state, which is normally conveyed by *estar*. For example, compare: *sé bueno* (be a good boy) and *mi padre es calvo* (my father is bald).

2. **Revise the use of the prepositions *por* and *para* in Spanish.**

Para = for

Example 1: *Este dinero es para ti* = This money is for you

Example 2: *Necesitamos habitaciones para ocho personas* = We need rooms for eight people

Por = As a result of, because of, for (when it means because of)

Example 1: *Tuvimos que cerrar las ventanas por los mosquitos* = We had to shut the windows because of the mosquitoes

Example 2: *Muchas gracias por todo lo que has hecho* = Many thanks for (i.e. because of) all you have done

3. **Remember to use the subjunctive form of a verb when expressing hopes, wishes, doubt and commands:** *Espero que venga* (I hope he/she comes); *Dile que venga* (Tell him/her to come); *Dudo que venga* (I doubt that he'll/she'll come).

4. When you talk of liking something or someone, **remember that with *gustar* the thing or person liked is the subject of *gustar*:** *me gustan los helados* (ice-creams like me = I like ice-creams); *me gusta el café* (coffee likes me = I like coffee).

5. **Remember that most of the time you don't have to use the Spanish for I, you, he, she, we, etc.** with verbs: *vamos al cine* (we are going to the cinema; you don't need to use *nosotros* = we). You do use these words for contrast; *nosotros vamos al cine pero ellos van al mercado* (We are going to the cinema, but they are going to the market).

6. **Words with double -mm- in English are almost always spelt -inm- in Spanish** (immaterial, *inmaterial*, immature, *inmaduro*, immigrant, *inmigrante*).

7. **Remember that nouns for citizens of countries, adjectives of nationality, days of the week, months of the year should all be spelt with small initial letters.**

8. **Don't fall into the trap of accenting *tí*** (pron. you), in spite of what you will see in print (many Spanish native speakers get this wrong and it should not be copied).