

English Grammar for Students of Spanish

*The Study Guide
for Those Learning Spanish*

Seventh edition

Emily Spinelli
University of Michigan-Dearborn
Executive Director, American Association of Teachers
of Spanish and Portuguese

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THE O&H STUDY GUIDES

Jacqueline Morton, editor

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Gramática española para estudiantes de inglés

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WHAT ARE DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS?

1 A **DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUN** is used in place of a direct object noun. It receives the action of the verb directly, without a preposition between the verb and the object. It answers the question *whom?* or *what?* asked after the verb (see *What is a Pronoun?*, p. 30 and *What are Objects?*, p. 138).

Paul saw *her*.
Paul saw whom? ANSWER: Her.
Her is the direct object of the verb *saw*.

IN ENGLISH

10 The direct object pronouns are different from the subject pronouns.

	SUBJECT PRONOUNS	DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS
SINGULAR		
1 st PERSON	I	me
2 nd PERSON	you	you
3 rd PERSON	{ he she it	him her it
PLURAL		
1 st PERSON	we	us
2 nd PERSON	you	you
3 rd PERSON	they	them

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Let us look at a few examples.

They saw *me*.
subject direct object
pronoun pronoun

She is watching *us*.
subject direct object
pronoun pronoun

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As you can see, the direct object pronoun is always placed after the verb.

IN SPANISH

As in English, the pronouns used as direct objects are different from the ones used as subjects. Unlike English, however, the form of the object pronoun often changes depending on whether it is a direct or an indirect object.

To choose the correct form here are the steps to follow:

1. Establish if the Spanish verb takes a direct or indirect object (see *Relationship of a verb to its object*, pp. 142-3).
 - If the Spanish verb takes a direct object, continue with this chapter.
 - If the Spanish verb takes an indirect object, go to the following chapter to learn the forms of indirect object pronouns (*What are Indirect Object Pronouns?*, p. 148).
2. Depending on the pronoun, follow the steps outlined under the examples below. Since the pattern of the Spanish direct object pronouns for *me, you, him, her, us* is different from the pattern for *it, them, you*, we have divided them into these two categories.

Unlike English where the direct object pronouns are placed after the verb, Spanish direct object pronouns are usually placed before the verb. Consult your textbook to learn more about the placement of direct object pronouns in Spanish.

Here are some examples with the verb **ver** *to see* (both the Spanish and the English verbs take an direct object).

Me, you (*tú* and *vosotros* forms), **him, her, us**

The direct object pronouns corresponding to *me, you, him, her, and us* have a word-for-word Spanish equivalent. Just select the form you need from the chart below.

DIRECT OBJECTS	
<i>me</i>	me
<i>you</i> [tú form]	te
<i>you</i> [vosotros form]	os
<i>him</i>	lo
<i>her</i>	la
<i>us</i>	nos

John sees me.

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to see* (**ver**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: direct object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *me*
4. SELECTION: **me**

Juan **me** ve.

John sees you.

Juan **te** ve. [tú form]

Juan **os** ve. [vosotros form]

Do you see John? Yes, I see him.

¿Ves a Juan? Sí, **lo** veo.

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Do you see Mary? Yes, I see her.
 ¿Ves a María? Sí, **la** veo.

John sees us.
 Juan **nos** ve.

It, them, you (*usted* and *ustedes* forms)

The direct object pronouns equivalent to *it*, *them* and *you* change depending on the gender of the ANTECEDENT; that is, the noun which they are replacing.

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	DIRECT OBJECTS	
	MASCULINE	FEMININE
<i>it</i>	lo	la
<i>you</i> [<i>usted</i> form]	lo	la
<i>them</i>	los	las
<i>you</i> [<i>ustedes</i> form]	los	las

Does John see the book? Yes, John sees it.

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to see* (**ver**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: direct object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *it*
4. ANTECEDENT: **el libro** (*book*)
5. GENDER OF ANTECEDENT: masculine
6. SELECTION: **lo**

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¿Ve Juan el libro? Sí, Juan **lo** ve.

Does John see the table? Yes, John sees it.

4. ANTECEDENT: **la mesa** (*table*)
5. GENDER OF ANTECEDENT: feminine
6. SELECTION: **la**

¿Ve Juan la mesa? Sí, Juan **la** ve.

Does John see the cars? Yes, John sees them.

4. ANTECEDENT: **los coches** (*cars*)
5. GENDER OF ANTECEDENT: masculine
6. SELECTION: **los**

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¿Ve Juan los coches? Sí, Juan **los** ve.

The pronoun *you* (formal) changes not only according to the gender of the person or persons you are addressing, but also according to whether you are addressing one or more persons.

Whom does John see? John sees you. [a male]

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to see* (**ver**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: direct object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *you*
4. NUMBER & GENDER OF *YOU*: masculine singular
5. SELECTION: **lo**

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¿A quién ve Juan? Juan **lo** ve.

Whom does John see? John sees you. [a female]

4. NUMBER & GENDER OF YOU: feminine singular

5. SELECTION: **la**

¿A quién ve Juan? Juan **la** ve.

Whom does John see? John sees you. [males or a mixed group]

4. NUMBER & GENDER OF YOU: masculine plural

5. SELECTION: **los**

¿A quién ve Juan? Juan **los** ve.

Whom does John see? John sees you. [females]

4. NUMBER & GENDER OF YOU: feminine plural

5. SELECTION: **las**

¿A quién ve Juan? Juan **las** ve.

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STUDY TIPS — DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS

Pattern (see *Tips for Learning Word Forms*, p. 5)

1. Look for similarities between direct object pronouns and other parts of speech.

What similarities can you think of?

- 1st pers. sing. & pl. and 2nd pers. sing. (**me, te, nos**): initial letters **m-**, **t-**, **n-** are the same as possessive adjectives (**mi, tu, nuestro**)
- 3rd pers. fem. sing. & pl. and 3rd pers. masc. pl. (**la, las, los**): same as definite articles (**la, las, los**)

Flashcards

On the subject pronoun flashcards, add sentences illustrating the pronoun's form as direct object.

ella	<i>she</i> (subject)
La veo.	<i>I see her.</i> (direct object)
ellos	<i>they</i> (subject, males or mixed group)
Los veo.	<i>I see them.</i> (direct object)

Practice

1. Since function determines a pronoun's form, it is important to learn direct object pronouns in a sentence.
2. Write a series of short Spanish sentences with masculine and feminine singular and plural nouns as direct objects. Rewrite the sentences replacing the direct object noun with the appropriate direct object pronoun.

Juan ve a Susana.	<i>John sees Susana.</i>
Juan la ve.	<i>John sees her.</i>

IN SPANISH

As in English, pronouns used as indirect objects are different from the ones used as subjects. Unlike English, however, the form of the object pronoun often changes depending on whether it is a direct or an indirect object.

To choose the correct form here are the steps to follow:

1. Establish if the Spanish verb takes a direct or indirect object (see *Relationship of a verb to its object*, pp. 142-3).
 - If the Spanish verb takes a direct object, go to the previous chapter to learn the forms of the direct object pronouns (*What are Direct Object Pronouns?*, p. 144).
 - If the Spanish verb takes an indirect object continue with this chapter.
2. Depending on the pronoun, follow the steps outlined under the examples below. Since the pattern of the Spanish indirect object pronouns for *me, you, us* is different from the pattern for *him, her, you, them*, we have divided them into these two categories.

Unlike English where the indirect object pronouns are placed after the verb, Spanish indirect object pronouns are usually placed before the verb. Consult your textbook to learn more about the placement of indirect object pronouns in Spanish.

Here are some examples with the verb **hablar** *to speak* (both the Spanish and the English verbs take an indirect object).

Me, you (*tú* and *vosotros* forms) **us**

The indirect object pronouns corresponding to *me, you, and us* are the same as the Spanish direct object pronouns.

INDIRECT OBJECTS	
<i>me</i>	me
<i>you</i> [<i>tú</i> form]	te
<i>you</i> [<i>vosotros</i> form]	os
<i>us</i>	nos

John speaks to me.

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to speak* (**hablar**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: indirect object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *me*
4. SELECTION: **me**

Juan **me** habla.

|
indirect object pronoun

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John speaks to you.

Juan **te** habla. [tú form]

Juan **os** habla. [vosotros form]

John speaks to us.

Juan **nos** habla.

Him, her, you (*usted* and *ustedes* forms), **them**

The indirect object pronouns equivalent to *him, her, you*, and *them* do not distinguish between gender; you can just select the form you need from the chart below.

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INDIRECT OBJECTS	
<i>him, her, you</i> [usted form]	le
<i>them, you</i> [ustedes form]	les

To whom is John speaking? John is speaking to him.

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to speak* (**hablar**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: indirect object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *him*
4. SELECTION: **le**

¿A quién **le** habla Juan? Juan **le** habla.¹

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To whom is John speaking? John is speaking to her.

¿A quién **le** habla Juan? Juan **le** habla.

To whom is John speaking? John is speaking to you. [one person]

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to speak* (**hablar**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: indirect object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *you*
4. SELECTION: **le**

¿A quién **le** habla Juan? Juan **le** habla.

To whom is John speaking? John is speaking to them.

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to speak* (**hablar**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: indirect object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *them*
4. SELECTION: **les**

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¿A quiénes **les** habla Juan? Juan **les** habla.

To whom is John speaking? John is speaking to you. [many persons]

1. IDENTIFY THE VERB: *to speak* (**hablar**)
2. FUNCTION OF THE OBJECT: indirect object
3. IDENTIFY THE PRONOUN: *you*
4. SELECTION: **les**

¿A quiénes **les** habla Juan? Juan **les** habla.

¹For the inclusion of “le” in the question, see p. 140.

SUMMARY

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To distinguish Spanish direct object pronouns from Spanish indirect object pronouns, be aware that:

- the following Spanish object pronouns have the same form when used as direct and indirect objects.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECTS	
<i>me</i>	me
<i>you</i> [tú form]	te
<i>you</i> [vosotros form]	os
<i>we</i>	nos

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- the following Spanish object pronouns have different forms when used as direct and indirect objects.

	DIRECT OBJECTS	INDIRECT OBJECTS
<i>him</i>	lo	le
<i>her</i>	la	le
<i>it</i>	lo, la	le
<i>you</i> [usted form]	lo, la	le
<i>them</i>	los, las	les
<i>you</i> [ustedes form]	los, las	les

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- the following Spanish direct object pronouns have a different form depending on the gender of the antecedent.

	DIRECT OBJECTS	
	MASCULINE	FEMININE
<i>it</i>	lo	la
<i>you</i> [usted form]	lo	la
<i>them</i>	los	las
<i>you</i> [ustedes form]	los	las

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STUDY TIPS — INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS

Pattern (see *Tips for Learning Word Forms*, p. 5)

When you learn indirect object pronouns, look for similarities with direct object pronouns as well as other parts of speech.

What similarities do you notice?

- 1st, 2nd pers. sing. & pl. (**me, te, nos, os**): same forms for direct and indirect object pronouns
- 3rd pers. sing. & pl. (**le, les**): same forms for masculine and feminine
- 3rd pers. sing. & pl. (**lo, la, las, los, le, les**): all begin with letter l-

Flashcards

On the subject pronoun flashcards, add sentences illustrating the pronoun's form as indirect object.

ella

Le hablo.

she (subject)

I speak to her. (indirect object)

ellos

Les hablo.

they (subject, males or mixed group)

I speak to them. (indirect object)

Practice

1. Since function determines a pronoun's form, it is important to learn indirect object pronouns in a sentence.
2. Write a series of short Spanish sentences with nouns as indirect objects. Rewrite the sentences replacing the indirect object noun with the appropriate indirect object pronoun.

Juan le da un regalo a Susana. *John gives a gift to Susan.*

Juan **le** da un regalo. *John gives her a gift.*
