

1.1

Nouns and articles



Spanish nouns

ANTE TODO

A noun is a word used to identify people, animals, places, things, or ideas. Unlike English, all Spanish nouns, even those that refer to non-living things, have gender; that is, they are considered either masculine or feminine. As in English, nouns in Spanish also have number, meaning that they are either singular or plural.

Nouns that refer to living things

Masculine nouns

el hombre *the man*

ending in **-o**

el chico *the boy*
el pasajero *the (male) passenger*

ending in **-or**

el conductor *the (male) driver*
el profesor *the (male) teacher*

ending in **-ista**

el turista *the (male) tourist*

Feminine nouns

la mujer *the woman*

ending in **-a**

la chica *the girl*
la pasajera *the (female) passenger*

ending in **-ora**

la conductora *the (female) driver*
la profesora *the (female) teacher*

ending in **-ista**

la turista *the (female) tourist*

- ▶ Generally, nouns that refer to males, like **el hombre**, are masculine, while nouns that refer to females, like **la mujer**, are feminine.
- ▶ Many nouns that refer to male beings end in **-o** or **-or**. Their corresponding feminine forms end in **-a** and **-ora**, respectively.



el conductor



la profesora

- ▶ The masculine and feminine forms of nouns that end in **-ista**, like **turista**, are the same, so gender is indicated by the article **el** (masculine) or **la** (feminine). Some other nouns have identical masculine and feminine forms.

el joven
the young man

el estudiante
the (male) student

la joven
the young woman

la estudiante
the (female) student

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Profesor(a) and **turista** are *cognates*— words that share similar spellings and meanings in Spanish and English. Recognizing cognates will help you determine the meaning of many Spanish words.

Here are some other cognates:
la administración,
el animal,
el apartamento,
el cálculo, el color,
la decisión, la historia,
la música,
el restaurante,
el/la secretario/a.

AYUDA

Cognates can certainly be very helpful in your study of Spanish. Beware, however, of “false” cognates, those that have similar spellings in Spanish and English, but different meanings:

la carpeta *folder*
el/la conductor(a)
driver

el éxito *success*
la fábrica *factory*

Nouns that refer to non-living things

Masculine nouns

ending in -o

el cuaderno	the notebook
el diario	the diary
el diccionario	the dictionary
el número	the number
el video	the video

ending in -ma

el problema	the problem
el programa	the program

ending in -s

el autobús	the bus
el país	the country

Feminine nouns

ending in -a

la computadora	the computer
la cosa	the thing
la escuela	the school
la maleta	the suitcase
la palabra	the word

ending in -ción

la lección	the lesson
la conversación	the conversation

ending in -dad

la nacionalidad	the nationality
la comunidad	the community

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The Spanish word for *video* can be pronounced with the stress on the *i* or the *e*. For that reason, you might see the word written with or without an accent: **video** or **vídeo**.

- ▶ As shown above, certain noun endings are strongly associated with a specific gender, so you can use them to determine if a noun is masculine or feminine.
- ▶ Because the gender of nouns that refer to non-living things cannot be determined by foolproof rules, you should memorize the gender of each noun you learn. It is helpful to learn each noun with its corresponding article, **el** for masculine and **la** for feminine.
- ▶ Another reason to memorize the gender of every noun is that there are common exceptions to the rules of gender. For example, **el mapa** (*map*) and **el día** (*day*) end in **-a**, but are masculine. **La mano** (*hand*) ends in **-o**, but is feminine.

Plural of nouns

- ▶ To form the plural, add **-s** to nouns that end in a vowel. For nouns that end in a consonant, add **-es**. For nouns that end in **z**, change the **z** to **c**, then add **-es**.

el chico → los chicos	la nacionalidad → las nacionalidades
el diario → los diarios	el país → los países
el problema → los problemas	el lápiz (<i>pencil</i>) → los lápices
- ▶ In general, when a singular noun has an accent mark on the last syllable, the accent is dropped from the plural form.

la lección → las lecciones	el autobús → los autobuses
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- ▶ Use the masculine plural form to refer to a group that includes both males and females.

1 pasajero + 2 pasajeras = 3 pasajeros	2 chicos + 2 chicas = 4 chicos
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CONSULTA

You will learn more about accent marks in **Lección 4, Pronunciación**, p. 123.


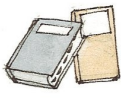


Spanish articles

ANTE TODO

As you know, English often uses definite articles (*the*) and indefinite articles (*a, an*) before nouns. Spanish also has definite and indefinite articles. Unlike English, Spanish articles vary in form because they agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify.


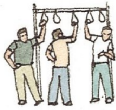


Definite articles

- ▶ Spanish has four forms that are equivalent to the English definite article *the*. Use definite articles to refer to specific nouns.

Masculine		Feminine	
SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR	PLURAL
			
el diccionario <i>the dictionary</i>	los diccionarios <i>the dictionaries</i>	la computadora <i>the computer</i>	las computadoras <i>the computers</i>

Indefinite articles

- ▶ Spanish has four forms that are equivalent to the English indefinite article, which according to context may mean *a, an, or some*. Use indefinite articles to refer to unspecified persons or things.

Masculine		Feminine	
SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR	PLURAL
			
un pasajero <i>a (one) passenger</i>	unos pasajeros <i>some passengers</i>	una fotografía <i>a (one) photograph</i>	unas fotografías <i>some photographs</i>

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Feminine singular nouns that begin with a stressed **a-** or **ha-** require the masculine articles **el** and **un**. This is done in order to avoid repetition of the **a** sound. The plural forms still use the feminine articles.

- el** agua *water*
- las** aguas *waters*
- un** hacha *ax*
- unas** hachas *axes*

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Since **la fotografía** is feminine, so is its shortened form, **la foto**, even though it ends in **-o**.



¡INTÉNTALO!

Provide a definite article for each noun in the first column and an indefinite article for each noun in the second column.

¿el, la, los o las?

1. la chica
2. _____ chico
3. _____ maleta
4. _____ cuadernos
5. _____ lápiz
6. _____ mujeres

¿un, una, unos o unas?

1. un autobús
2. _____ escuelas
3. _____ computadora
4. _____ hombres
5. _____ señora
6. _____ lápices

recursos



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Lección 1