

“TO BE” OR “TO BE” ???



As mentioned in the instructions for **Activity for Teacher** on the previous page, the word *es* in Spanish means “is.” It comes from the Spanish verb *ser* which means “to be.” Interestingly enough, Spanish actually has TWO verbs that both translate into English as “to be.” The other verb is *estar*. There are very specific guidelines that determine the usage of one of these verbs over the other. Volumes of books and articles have been written considering the differences between the two. As we do not wish to delve into complex grammar explanations here, we will discuss the difference between the two verbs in very broad terms.

Es is the third person singular and, therefore, has several possible subjects. For example, you may say: *María es*, which means “Maria is.” *Rodrigo es*, means “Rodrigo is.” The word *él* is the subject pronoun for “he.”* *Ella* is the subject pronoun for “she.” So you may write, *él es* (he is) or *ella es* (she is). You may also simply write *es* (without a subject at all) and that means “it is!” (The subject in this latter sentence is implied and does not need to be translated). *Es imposible*, for example, translates into English as “It’s impossible.”

Now, to the question of WHEN do you use *es*? You will use this verb when you want to describe AN INHERENT CHARACTERISTIC OF YOUR STUDENT. What is Maria like as a person? She is intelligent and pleasant. These are adjectives that describe Maria’s personality. *María es inteligente y agradable*.

OK, so what about *está*. You will use *está* when you are describing THE MANNER IN WHICH A STUDENT IS CURRENTLY BEHAVING. How is Maria acting today? She is quiet and tired. These are NOT adjectives that normally describe Maria’s personality. *María está callada y cansada*. This is behavior that, more than likely, will CHANGE sooner or later.

In summary, *es* is used to describe WHO the student is, and *está* is used to describe HOW the student is acting or behaving.

* Make sure to include the accent mark over the *é*. It distinguishes this word from *el* which means ‘the’ for masculine nouns.



ACTIVITY FOR TEACHER

Would you use *es* or *está* in the following comments?

(The entire translation of each sentence appears at the bottom of this page).

1. Ana is an emotional girl _____
2. Paco is sick today. _____
3. Jose is absent. _____
4. Rita is very intelligent. _____

1. Ana es una chica emocional. 2. Paco está enfermo (mal) hoy. 3. José está ausente. 4. Rita es muy inteligente.

Adjectives more commonly used with *es*

Below is another list of adjectives. These adjectives are more commonly used with *es*. Remember that *es* indicates an inherent characteristic of a personality. These are words that describe what your students are like. (You certainly may use *está* with this list of adjectives, but only if you wish to convey current behavior or attitude). Simply begin your sentence with your student's name, followed by the word *es*. You may wish to use *muy* (which means 'very' and is placed before your adjective) or *un poco* (which means 'a little' and is also placed before the adjective). Remember that *poco* does not reflect gender. Finally, if you wish to describe what your student is NOT, simply add the word *no* BEFORE *es*. Here are a few sentences to better illustrate the sentence structure and to assist you as you build your own sentences.

Ana es cariñosa. Gustavo es muy tímido. Ísabel es un poco deseosa. Rita no es muy amable.

affectionate	<i>cariñoso/a</i>	lively	<i>animado/a</i>
anxious	<i>ansioso/a</i>	mean	<i>antipático/a</i>
appreciative	<i>agradecido/a</i>	nervous	<i>nervioso/a</i>
brave	<i>valiente</i>	nice	<i>simpático/a</i>
calm	<i>tranquilo/a</i>	polite, well-mannered	<i>bien educado/a</i>
capable	<i>capaz</i>	proud	<i>orgullosa/a</i>
charming	<i>encantador/a</i>	quiet	<i>callado/a</i>
clever	<i>ingenioso/a</i>	reasonable	<i>razonable</i>
conceited, vain	<i>creído/a</i>	rude	<i>grosero/a</i>
destructive	<i>destrutivo/a</i>	sedentary	<i>sedentario/a</i>
disobedient	<i>desobediente</i>	self-confident	<i>seguro/a de si mismo/a</i>
eager	<i>deseoso/a</i>	sensible	<i>sensato/a</i>
fair	<i>justo/a</i>	sensitive	<i>sensible</i>
friendly	<i>amable</i>	shy	<i>tímido/a</i>
fun	<i>divertido/a</i>	stingy	<i>tacaño/a</i>
funny	<i>gracioso/a</i>	talkative	<i>hablador/a</i>
hardworking	<i>trabajador/a</i>	unbearable	<i>insoportable</i>
inattentive	<i>destaneto/a</i>	unfriendly	<i>poco amable</i>
lazy	<i>perezoso/a</i>	weak	<i>débil</i>



Adjectives that don't reflect gender

As mentioned on page 4, adjectives that end in *-r* add an *-a* to the end in order to refer to feminine gender, i.e., *conservador* or *conservadora*.^{*} You probably have also noticed the few adjectives that end in the letters *-e* and consonants other than *-r*, such as *capaz*, *triste*, *liberal*, etc. These adjectives do not reflect gender either and describe both a male and a female. Additionally, there are a few adjectives that will seem feminine in form to you because they end in the letters *-ista*. These adjectives do not reflect gender either, and there is no need to change the *-a* to an *-o*. This, of course, is an exception to what we know about the "gender rule." Here is a list of adjectives that end in *-ista*:

egoísta (selfish)
optimista

idealista
pesimista

individualista
realista

^{*} Exceptions include *inferior* and *superior* which don't add the *-a*.