Put in Spanish: Poner vs Meter vs Colocar (+ Phrasal Verbs)

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Quick answer: The most common way to say "put" in Spanish is **poner**: *Pon el libro en la mesa* – Put the book on the table. Use **meter** when you put something *inside* something (*Mete la ropa en la maleta* – Put the clothes in the suitcase), and **colocar** when you place something carefully or in a specific position (*Coloque la caja aquí* – Place the box here).

English uses “put” for almost everything. Spanish splits it into a few verbs depending on *where* and *how* you put something. This guide shows when to use poner, meter and colocar, how to conjugate poner (it’s irregular), and the phrasal verbs like “put away,” “put off” and “put up with.” For clothes, see our separate guide to **put on in Spanish**.

Put in Spanish: the short version

English	Spanish	Example
to put (on a surface, in a place)	**poner**	*Puse las llaves en la mesa.* – I put the keys on the table.
to put in / inside	**meter**	*Mete la leche en el refrigerador.* – Put the milk in the fridge.
to place, to position	**colocar**	*Coloca las sillas en fila.* – Put the chairs in a row.
to put away / store	**guardar**	*Guarda tus juguetes.* – Put your toys away.
to put on (clothes)	**ponerse**	*Ponte la chaqueta.* – Put your jacket on.
to put off / postpone	**posponer / aplazar**	*Pospusimos la reunión.* – We put off the meeting.

Poner: the everyday word for “put”

Poner is your default. Use it for putting something on a surface or in a general place, and in lots of set expressions.

- *¿Dónde pongo las bolsas?* – Where do I put the bags?
- *Pon la mesa, por favor.* – Set the table, please. (literally “put the table”)
- *Pusieron un anuncio en el periódico.* – They put an ad in the paper.

- *Pon la tele.* – Turn on the TV. (*poner* also means to turn on a device)

Poner conjugation (irregular)

Poner is irregular: the yo form ends in **-go** (*pongo*), and the preterite has a new stem (*pus-*).

Pronoun	Present	Preterite (past)	Command
yo	pongo	puse	–
tú	pones	pusiste	¡pon!
él / ella / usted	pone	puso	¡ponga!
nosotros	ponemos	pusimos	¡pongamos!
vosotros	ponéis	pusisteis	¡poned!
ellos / ustedes	ponen	pusieron	¡pongan!

The past participle is **puesto** (*He puesto la ropa en la cama*). For every tense, see our full poner conjugation guide.

Meter: to put something inside

Use **meter** when something goes *into* a container, a hole, a pocket, a bag, a car or a machine. Meter is a regular -er verb.

- *Metí el dinero en el bolsillo.* – I put the money in my pocket.
- *Mete la tarjeta en el cajero.* – Put the card in the ATM.
- *¿Metiste el pastel al horno?* – Did you put the cake in the oven?
- *Meter un gol* – to score a goal

Many speakers would also say *Puse el dinero en el bolsillo*. Both are correct, but meter makes the "inside" idea clear.

Colocar: to place or position

Colocar means "to place" or "to position." It sounds more careful or more formal than poner, so you'll see it in instructions, at work and in stores. It changes c → qu before e: *coloqué, coloque*.

- *Coloque el producto en la caja.* – Place the product in the box.
- *Colocamos los letreros de seguridad en la entrada.* – We put the safety signs at the entrance.
- *Coloque al paciente de lado.* – Put the patient on their side.

Poner vs meter vs colocar

	Poner	Meter	Colocar
Meaning	to put (general)	to put inside	to place carefully
Tone	Everyday	Everyday	More formal, instructions
Irregular?	Yes (pongo, puse)	No	Spelling change (coloqué)
Example	*Pon el vaso aquí.*	*Mete el vaso en el lavaplatos.*	*Coloque el vaso a la derecha.*

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Phrasal verbs with “put” in Spanish

English phrasal verbs don’t translate word for word. Here’s what Spanish uses instead:

English	Spanish	Example
put away	guardar	*Guarda los platos.* – Put the dishes away.
put back	devolver a su lugar / volver a poner	*Vuelve a poner el libro en el estante.* – Put the book back on the shelf.
put down	dejar / bajar	*Deja eso en el piso.* – Put that down on the floor.
put off	posponer / aplazar / dejar para después	*No lo dejes para después.* – Don’t put it off.
put out (a fire)	apagar	*Apagaron el fuego.* – They put out the fire.
put up (a sign, a tent)	poner / colgar / armar	*Armamos la carpa.* – We put up the tent.
put up with	aguantar / soportar	*No aguanto el ruido.* – I can’t put up with the noise.
put together	armar / montar	*Armé el mueble solo.* – I put the furniture together myself.
put on (clothes)	ponerse	See put on in Spanish

Common expressions with poner

- **Poner atención** – to pay attention
- **Ponerse las pilas** – to get your act together (literally “put your batteries in”)
- **Ponerse de acuerdo** – to agree
- **Ponerse nervioso / triste / rojo** – to get nervous / sad / to blush
- **Poner un ejemplo** – to give an example
- **Poner música** – to put on some music

Common mistakes

- **× Yo pono → ✓ Yo pongo.** The yo form of poner ends in -go.
- **× Yo poní → ✓ Yo puse.** The preterite of poner is irregular.
- **× Pon fuera el fuego → ✓ Apaga el fuego.** “Put out” is apagar.
- **× Poner lejos (for “put away”) → ✓ Guardar.**
- **× Meter la mesa → ✓ Poner la mesa.** “Set the table” always uses poner.

Quick quiz: poner, meter or colocar?

Choose the best verb and conjugate it.

1. Yo siempre _____ (poner) las llaves en la mesa.
2. Ayer ella _____ (meter) la ropa en la lavadora.
3. Por favor, _____ (usted, colocar) la caja en el estante de arriba.
4. ¿Dónde _____ (tú, poner) mi teléfono anoche?
5. Los niños no quieren _____ (put away) sus juguetes.

▼ **Show answers**

1. pongo

2. metió
3. coloque
4. pusiste
5. guardar

Keep practicing

More everyday verbs that don't match English one to one: traer vs llevar, volver vs regresar vs devolver and recordar vs acordarse.

Frequently asked questions

What is the most common way to say "put" in Spanish?

Poner. Pon el vaso en la mesa means "Put the glass on the table." Use meter for putting something inside, and colocar for placing something carefully.

How do you say "put away" in Spanish?

Guardar. Guarda tus juguetes means "Put your toys away."

What is the past tense of poner?

The preterite of poner is irregular: puse, pusiste, puso, pusimos, pusisteis, pusieron. The past participle is puesto.

How do you say "put up with" in Spanish?

Aguantar or soportar. No aguanto el ruido means "I can't put up with the noise."

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