SER VS ESTAR (QUIZ/WORKSHEET INCLUDED)

Ser o Estar, esa es la cuestión

Guide on how to use the Spanish verbs Ser and Estar effectively 101.

There are many things in life that can make us feel accomplished, such as climbing to the top of a mountain, getting a gold medal in a marathon, a promotion at work, etc. You feel joyful because all your effort paid off, and you've succeeded! However, not that many things in life can be compared with the fulfilling sensation that you experience when you get to master the two most important Spanish verbs: "Ser and Estar".

These two verbs play an important role in the Spanish language, since they both mean "to be". Yes, you read it right. In Spanish, there are two separate words that can mean one single verb, and it is crucial to understand their differences to be able to use them correctly. In this article, we will first take a look at the use of Ser and Estar individually, and then we will discuss the differences between these two verbs, and how to pick one or another depending on what you want to express. So, enough said... Let's first take a look at the verb Ser!

The use of the verb Ser

We use **Ser in Spanish** mainly when we want to talk about some state that doesn't change and is permanent. Such as:

To identify people or objects:

- Ella es Martha. (She is Martha).
- She will always be Martha.
- Esa es mi mochila. (That is my bag).
- It will always be my bag.

To talk about occupation and nationality:

- Yo **soy** estadounidense. (I am american).
- Yo **soy** médico. (I am a doctor).

To talk about relationship and kinship:

- Ellos **son** muy buenos amigos. (They are very good friends).
- Él **es** mi papá. (He is my father).

To talk about physical characteristics and personality:

- Miguel **es** alto. (Miguel is tall).
- **Soy** un poco penoso. (I'm a bit shy).

To talk about time, quantity or prices:

- ¿Qué hora **es? Son** las dos de la tarde (What time is it? It's two in the afternoon).
- **Somos** dos personas. (We are two people).
- ¿Cuánto **es? Son** 40 pesos. (How much is it? It's 40 pesos).

To talk about the location and time of a single event:

- La cena **es** en casa de Sofía. (Dinner is at Sofia's place).
- ¿A qué hora **es** la clase? La clase **es** a las ocho de la mañana. (What time is the class? The class is at eight in the morning).

When stating a fact or giving your opinion on something:

- Lima **es** la capital de Perú. (Lima is the capital of Peru).
- **Es** importante aprender las conjugaciones de los verbos en español. (It is important to learn the conjugations of the verbs in Spanish).
- Ese restaurante **es** muy bueno, deberías ir. (That restaurant is very good, you should go).

Conjugation of Ser: Present Tense

Subject	Conjugation
Yo	soy
Tú	eres
Él/Ella/Usted	es
Nosotros	somos
Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	son

The use of the verb Estar:

We use Estar when talking about a **temporary** condition of someone or something. For example:

To express the location of someone or something:

- ¿Dónde **estás? Estoy** en Buenos Aires. (Where are you? I'm in Buenos Aires).
- ¿Dónde **está** la parada de autobús? **Está** aquí enfrente. (Where is the bus stop? It's right in front).

To talk about temporary physical or emotional states:

- ¿Cómo **estás? -Estoy** un poco cansado. (How are you? I'm a little tired).
- Martín **está** muy contento el día de hoy (Martin is very happy today).

To talk about temporary situations:

- El museo **está** cerrado. (The museum is closed).
- El día **está** nublado. (The day is cloudy).
- Los platos **están** sucios. (The dishes are dirty).

To talk about states of being:

- La mosca **está** muerta. (The fly is dead).
- Mi abuelo aún **está** vivo. (My grandpa is still alive).

Conjugation of Estar: Present Tense

Subject	Conjugation
Yo	estoy
Tú	estás
Él/Ella/Usted	está
Nosotros	estamos
Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	están

Ser vs Estar: Differences and Similarities.

So, when it comes to choose between one of these two verbs, that's when all the show begins! For English speakers this can be a little bit tricky since both Ser and Estar can be translated as "to be". However, there are some subtle differences we must take into consideration and that will eventually help us understand when to use one or the other. Let's take a look at these:

The first question that you have to ask yourself is whether what you're talking about is permanent or temporary, if it may change or not. For instance:

Manuel **es** una persona alegre. VS Manuel **está** alegre el día de hoy.

In the first sentence, "Manuel es una persona alegre", we're using Ser because we're talking about how Manuel normally is (Manuel is a cheerful person). It doesn't change, that's how he always is.

On the other hand, with "Manuel está alegre el día de hoy", we're stating how Manuel is feeling today (Manuel is feeling cheerful today). So, it might change.

Let's take a look at another example:

El hielo **es** frío VS La sopa **está** fría.

In the first sentence "El hielo es frío", we're stating a fact (Ice is cold). Ice will always be cold, that's its natural state.

In the second sentence "La sopa está fría", we're stating the temporary state of the soup right now (The soup is cold).

Even though we can use adjectives with both Ser and Estar, the meaning of the sentence changes depending on whether we use one of these verbs. Are we talking about something that won't change because that is its natural state of being? Or, are we talking about something that could change from one moment to another?

Some adjectives may even change drastically in their meaning, depending on whether we use Ser or Estar. For instance:

Ser bueno = To be a good person.

Estar bueno = To state that something is delicious.

Ser rico = To be a rich person.

Estar rico = Also used to state that something is tasty or delicious.

Ser listo = To be a clever person.

Estar listo = To be ready for something.

Lastly, let's take a look at this subtle difference between these two sentences:

Juan **es** delgado VS Juan **está** delgado.

So yeah, the main difference between Ser and Estar has everything to do with ch...ch...ch..ch... changes! Hope you understood that reference!

You might be wondering: But, hey! Things like my occupation and outward appearance may change throughout time... Why am I always supposed to say: "**Soy** cocinero", "Mi cabello **es** castaño"?

We feel you! That's actually a very interesting question. Things like your profession or your physical traits can be considered as your essential characteristics, even though they could eventually change from time to time. However, it is very unlikely that you change your profession or your height from one day to another, so they can be considered as your inherent traits. That's why we would use Ser for all these situations.

Let's get into practice! Quizzes/Worksheet

Exercise #1. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs Ser and Estar.

1. María_____mi prima. (Maria is my cousin).

2. Todos en mi familia_____ingenieros. (Everyone in my family is an engineer).

3. La casa_____muy sucia (The house is very dirty).

4. La Patagonia_____en el sur de Argentina. (Patagonia is in the south of Argentina).

5. Mis padres_____muy enojados conmigo. (My parents are very angry with me).

6. La gente_____muy amable en este lugar (People are very nice in this place).

7. ¡_____muy contenta de escuchar esta noticia! (I'm very happy to hear this new!).

8. Esa planta_____muerta. (That plant is dead).

9. El partido_____a las once. (The match is at eleven).

10. ¡ _____las cuatro de la tarde! Ya me tengo que ir. (It's four pm! I have to go now.)

11. No_____en mi casa en este momento. (I'm not at home right now).

Exercise #2. Choose the correct verb to describe the image.

Este **es / está** el lago de Atitlán. Este lago **es / está** en Guatemala, un país en Centroamérica. **Es / está** uno de los lugares más turísticos de este país. El lago **es / está** a 108 kilómetros de la ciudad capital. Cuando uno visita este lugar, puede ir a cualquiera

de los pueblos que **son / están** alrededor del lago. No hay que preocuparse por la distancia, ya que los pueblos **son / están** muy cerca el uno del otro. Los habitantes de este lugar **son / están** muy amables con los turistas que **son / están </strongde visita. Soy / Estoy muy contento de haber visitado esta maravilla natural.**

English version:

This is Lake Atitlan. This lake is in Guatemala, a country in Central America. It is one of the most touristic places in this country. The lake is 108 kilometers away from the capital city. When you visit this place, you can go to any of the villages around the lake. You don't have to worry about distance, since the villages are very close to each other. The inhabitants of this place are very kind with the tourists who are visiting here. I'm very happy to have visited this natural wonder.

***Answers to the exercises:**

Exercise #1:

1. María **es** mi prima.

2. Todos en mi familia **son** ingenieros.

3. La casa **está** muy sucia

4. La Patagonia **está** en el sur de Argentina.

5. Mis padres **están** muy enojados conmigo.

6. La gente **es** muy amable en este lugar

7. ¡Estoy muy contenta de escuchar **esta** noticia!

8. Esa planta **está** muerta.

9. El partido **es** a las once.

10. **¡Son** las cuatro de la tarde! Ya me tengo que ir.

11. No **estoy** en mi casa en este momento.

Exercise #2:

Este **es** el lago de Atitlán. Este lago **está** en Guatemala, un país en Centroamérica. **Es** uno de los lugares más turísticos de este país. El lago **está** a 108 kilómetros de la ciudad capital. Cuando uno visita este lugar, puede ir a cualquiera de los pueblos que **están** alrededor del lago. No hay que preocuparse por la distancia, ya que los pueblos **están** muy cerca el uno del otro. Los habitantes de este lugar **son** muy amables con los turistas que **están** de visita. **Estoy** muy contento de haber visitado esta maravilla natural.

Final thoughts.

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Javier Lee - and I wrote this article.

Stuck on this topic? Hire me for just 1 hour to start mastering it. Pass a test, improve basic vocabulary or improve your conversational level in Spanish.

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We strongly believe that, in order to get good at something, practice will always be your best ally. So don't worry if you still struggle a bit to choose between Ser or Estar when talking to your Spanish-speaking friends. Instead of worrying, why don't you book a lesson with one of our tutors to put right away into practice everything you just learned from this article?

From now on, pay particular attention when you hear Ser or Estar used in a sentence. Remember to put everything in context, and that will help you understand better why Spanish speakers are choosing one verb or the other.

We wish you the best with your Spanish learning journey, and remember: ¡Estamos aquí para ayudarte!