

TO BE – SER ESTAR

The verb TO BE (SER/ ESTAR) is one of the most important verbs in Spanish. The usage of this verb is similar in English but you need to be aware that there are some exceptions. For example, when giving or asking for someone's age. You don't say how old are you? You say how old have you?

See the table below for some examples of the usage of the verb SER and ESTAR.

SER	
Is used to express occupation. ¿Cuál es tu ocupación? What is your occupation? - Soy carpintero I am a carpenter.	Is used to express place of origin. ¿De dónde eres? Where are you from? - Soy de Colombia. I'm from Colombia.
Is used to express the material something is made of. ¿De qué material es la mesa? What's the table made of? - Es de madera. It's made of wood.	Is used to express nationality. ¿Es ella puertorriqueña? Is she Puerto Rican? - No, es guatemalteca. No, she's Guatemalan.
Is used to express possession. ¿De quién es la pluma? Whose pen is it? - Es de Emilio. It's Emilio's.	Is used to express the relationship of one person to another. ¿Quién es Rogelio? Who is Roger? - Es el esposo de Marta. He's Martha's husband.
Is used with certain impersonal expressions. - Es importante practicar cada día. It is important to practice every day. - Es necesario hablar mucho. It is necessary to speak a lot.	Is used to tell where an event is taking place. - La película es en el cine. The movie is at the theatre. - La fiesta es en el club Fantástico. The party is in the Fantastic Club.
Is used to express religious or political affiliation. ¿Son los García bautistas? Are the Garcias Baptists? - No, son católicos. No, they're Catholics. ¿Es el gobierno socialista? Is the government socialist? - No, es comunista. No, it is communist.	Is used to express the hour, day, and date. ¿Qué hora es? What time is it? - Son las dos. It is two o'clock. ¿Qué día es hoy? What day is today? - Hoy es lunes. Today's Monday. ¿Qué fecha es hoy? What is the date today? - Es el cinco de mayo. It is May fifth.

ESTAR

Is used to express locations or physical locations.

- ¿Dónde estás?
Where are you?
- Estoy en el laboratorio.
I'm in the laboratory.
- ¿Dónde está el banco?
Where's the bank?
- Está en la calle Laurel.
It's in Laurel street.

Note: The one exception to this rule is that *ser* is used to tell where an event is taking place. (La fiesta es en mi casa.)

Is used with many idiomatic expressions. These are just a few.

- estar de acuerdo
to be in agreement
- estar de pie
to be standing
- estar en camino
to be on the way
- estar en las nubes
to daydream

Is used with adjectives to express a state or condition ("how" something is just now, not permanently).

- ¿Cómo está la sopa?
How's the soup?
- La sopa está fría.
The soup is cold.
- ¿Cómo estás tú?
How are you?
- Estoy muy bien, gracias.
I am very well, thanks.
- ¿Cómo te sientes?
How do you feel?
- Estoy cansado.
I am tired.
- Estoy feliz.
I am happy.

One thing that you need to keep in mind is that although the usage of the verb TO BE in English is similar in Spanish, the singular and the plural forms between the two languages are different, specially the plural.

In English the verb TO BE plural is **ARE (for all the plural pronouns)**, but in Spanish we have different forms for each pronoun. For example:

ENGLISH	SPANISH	
TO BE	SER	ESTAR
We are	Nosotros somos	Estamos
They are	Ellos son	están
You are (Spain only)	Vosotros sois	Estáis
You are (Latin America)	Ustedes son	Están

My best advice to you is that although we do not say the pronouns all the time as for example:

¿De dónde eres? Soy de España (normal speaking) Yo soy de España (unusual), you should say the pronouns all the time. This will help you to memorize what pronoun goes with what. However, just remember that when you say the pronouns, you don't need to say the name as well. For example:

- Maria is a teacher.
- Maria ella es profesora (**incorrect**)
- Ella **es** profesora (**correct**) or Maria **es** Profesora