

## Writing Reference Sheet

These topics will be areas of heavy emphasis in future writing assignments.

### **muy/mucho/a(s)**

*Muy* is an adverb, translated as “very” in English. Adverbs modify verbs (although *muy* itself never modifies a verb, just as “very” does not), adjectives, or other adverbs.

*Shaquille O’Neal es muy alto.*

*Alto* is an adjective describing Shaq, and *muy* modifies it, telling us that he’s not just tall, but **very** tall.

*Tiffany toca muy bien el violín.*

*Bien* is an adverb that gives us more information about (modifies) the action of playing the violin. *Muy* modifies *bien*, telling us that she plays not just well, but **very** well.

*Mucho/a(s)* is often used as an adjective, translated as “much”, “many”, “a lot”, or “a lot of”. It’s an adjective of quantity, so it goes before the noun, and needs to agree.

*Compré muchas cosas en Target ayer.*

*Muchos estudiantes están enfermos hoy. Muchos no están en clase.*

*Mucho* can also be an adverb, describing how much or often something is done. Adverbs do not agree in gender with anything.

María practica **mucho**, pero canta muy mal.

### **but what about weather?**

When you say “tengo calor” or “hace frío” you’re not really saying “I **am** hot” or “It **is** cold”, but “I **have** heat” and “It **makes** cold”. So it would make no sense to say “I have **very** heat”, now would it? Use *mucho* or *mucha* with most weather expressions and all *tener* expressions.

### **bien/bueno/a(s)**

*Bueno/a(s)* is an **adjective** translated as “good” in English. Adjectives modify (give us more information about) nouns, which are persons, places, things, or ideas. You have to pay attention to gender and number agreement with *bueno/a(s)*.

*Anoche vi una película muy buena .*

*Tuve unas vacaciones muy buenas en Florida el año pasado.*

*Bueno* is one of the few adjectives that can be used in front of the noun. When it is used before a masculine noun, it is shortened to “*buen*”, as in “hace **buen** tiempo”, or “es un **buen** día para caminar en el parque”.

*Bien* is an **adverb**, translated as “well”. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

*Vamos a buscar una canción buena, porque Ricardo canta bien.*

The trouble with *bien* is that we are not consistent in English in the way we use the words “well” and “good” (or “bad” and “badly”, for that matter). In proper English, when someone asks “how are you”, the answer is supposed to be “well”, not “good”. When you answer “¿Cómo estás?” with “*Bien*”, you are saying “well” **not** “good”! “*Bien*” is short for “*estoy bien*”—so “*bien*” is modifying the verb “*estoy*”.

**Rule-of-thumb: in general, use “bueno/a” with *ser*, and “bien” with *estar*.**

## mal/malo/a(s)

Same deal: *mal* is an adverb meaning “badly”, and *malo/a(s)* is an adjective meaning “bad”.

## agreement of adjectives

You know about agreement of adjectives, you just need to remember to make them agree when needed.

## object pronouns

Always ask yourself whether or not what you have written “sounds right” in Spanish, and you’ll have no problem with object pronouns.

## ser/estar

use *ser* for a **characteristic** (you’re talking about the way something generally is) and *estar* for a **state** (you’re talking about the way something is at a particular point in time) or the **location** of something.

## having fun (or a good time)

Although people in Spanish-speaking countries rarely pass up an opportunity to celebrate, there is no word for “fun” in Spanish. There is therefore no phrase related to “having” fun: if it doesn’t exist, how can you “have” it? The concept in Spanish that is closest to the idea of “fun” in English is the word “diversión”, which could obviously be translated as “diversion” in English. In the Spanish language, enjoyable activities are seen as diversions, or distractions from the troubles of life. There is no expression for having a “good time” either. There are two ways to express that you “had fun” or “had a good time”, and neither uses the verb *tener*. Both are a bit complicated.

**Divertirse** (“to divert oneself”)

*Me divertí ayer—vi un partido de basquetbol muy bueno en la casa de mi amigo.*

**Pasarlo bien** (“to pass it well”—“it” refers to “time: *el tiempo*”)

*Lo pasé muy bien el verano pasado en mis vacaciones.*

## liking

There is no verb for “to like” in Spanish. *Gustar* means “to please”. Step one when you want to say that you “like” something is to figure out what the subject will be in the Spanish sentence:

To say “I like cheese”, you would actually have to translate the phrase “(the) cheese pleases me” and then write it basically backward—*Me gusta el queso*.

If you use a *gustar* phrase with a person that you know, you’re saying that you like that person not just as a friend, but *romantically*.

*Estoy triste; me gusta Sara, pero no sé si le gusta.*

*Me gustas mucho. ¿Quieres salir conmigo al cine?*

To say that you like a person as a friend, you’ll actually want to say that that person “falls on you well”:

*Tu amiga Emily me cae muy bien.*

*Me caes muy bien, pero no quiero ser tu novio.*

## verb forms

When you write, you want to use the same verb forms that you would have used in *Conjugemos* to say what you want to say. That’s why we did so much practice in *Conjugemos*, so you would USE those forms!

## possessives

There is no “*mi abuelo’s casa*” in Spanish. You know that sounds wrong, but if you aren’t asking yourself whether or not what you have written sounds right, that knowledge does you no good—so always ask yourself if what you have written sounds right in Spanish! The correct way to say this, just in case, is “*la casa de mi abuelo*”.

Also, don't forget that you need to make a possessive adjective agree with the *thing owned*, not the owner:

su carro = his car, her car, their car, or your car.

sus carros = his cars, her cars, their cars, or your cars.

### using infinitives

Infinitives, or un-conjugated verbs, have a "to" built into them. You know this, but make sure you take advantage of this knowledge. When you want to say "to work", for example, use "trabajar", because that's exactly what *trabajar* means. If you conjugate it, it no longer means "to work"!

Infinitives are also used when the verb becomes a noun.

I like running = running pleases me. Running is a noun in this case—the subject of the sentence, in fact—and it will be translated *Me gusta correr*. In English, we'd say it means "I like running", but we're not going to use *-ando* or *-iendo* to give us the *-ing* ending—again, the **infinitive** is used when the verb becomes a noun.

There are other expressions that turn verbs into nouns, like when we say "before studying" or "after eating". We are making "studying" and "eating" into events that things can be done before or after, just like we would say "before the wedding" or "after the game".

You would say "*antes de estudiar*", and "*después de comer*" in these two situations.