

The Indirect Object

Gustar and the Indirect Object

Gustar means *to be pleasing to* and is used to express the idea of *liking* in Spanish.

Me gusta and *me gustan*

Me is the indirect object pronoun that means *to me*. In Spanish, there is no exact translation of *I like*. Compare the English construction with the Spanish construction.

Singular Noun as the Subject

English Construction	<i>I like this class.</i>
Spanish Construction	Me gusta esta clase. <i>To me is pleasing this class.</i>

Esta clase is a singular noun—the subject.

Gusta is the verb and agrees with the singular subject.

Me is the indirect object pronoun—the person to whom the action is occurring.

Me gusta la música.	<i>The music is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta el libro.	<i>The book is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta esta idea.	<i>This idea is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta la cerveza.	<i>The beer is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta el chocolate.	<i>Chocolate is pleasing to me.</i>

NOTE: In the Spanish construction, subjects retain their articles (**el, la, los, las**) even when the English translation doesn't include them (for example, **el chocolate**, English *Chocolate*—not *The chocolate*—in the example above).



A Word About Practicing Orally

It is essential to practice orally **me gusta** and all the forms to follow. The more you practice, the more natural it becomes.

Plural Noun as the Subject

If the subject of the sentence is a plural noun, **gusta** becomes **gustan** to agree with the plural subject.

English Construction	<i>I like the books.</i>
Spanish Construction	Me gustan los libros. <i>To me are pleasing the books.</i>

Los libros is the plural noun—the subject.

Gustan is the verb and agrees with the plural subject.

Me is the indirect object pronoun—the person to whom the action is occurring.

Me gustan las fiestas.	<i>The parties are pleasing to me.</i>
Me gustan los deportes.	<i>Sports are pleasing to me.</i>
Me gustan los perros.	<i>Dogs are pleasing to me.</i>

Verb as the Subject

Me gusta is also used when the subject is a verb. The verb form is the infinitive, no matter what the English translation is. When an infinitive is the subject, the singular **gusta** is used.

English Construction	<i>I like to swim.</i>
Spanish Construction	Me gusta nadar. <i>To me is pleasing to swim.</i>

Me gusta comer.	<i>To eat is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta bailar.	<i>To dance is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta ir al cine.	<i>To go to the movies is pleasing to me.</i>
Me gusta escribir y leer.	<i>To write and to read are pleasing to me.</i>

NOTE: **Gusta** remains singular even if it is followed by a series of verbs.

The only forms of **gustar** that you will need are the third-person singular, **gusta**, and the third-person plural, **gustan**.

To make a sentence negative, simply place **no** before the indirect object.

No me gustan las cucarachas. *Cockroaches are not pleasing to me.*
 No me gusta cocinar. *To cook is not pleasing to me.*



Review

- If the subject of the sentence is a singular noun or a verb, use **gusta**.

Me gusta el hotel.

Me gusta viajar.

- If the subject is a plural noun, use **gustan**.

Me gustan las vacaciones.

- If the sentence is negative, place **no** before the indirect object.

No me gustan los ratones.

Te gusta and te gustan

Te is the indirect object pronoun that means *to you*. When you use **te**, you are speaking in the familiar **tú** form.

English Construction	<i>You like his car.</i>
Spanish Construction	Te gusta su carro. <i>To you is pleasing his car.</i>

Singular Noun as the Subject

Te gusta mi idea.	<i>My idea is pleasing to you.</i>
¿Te gusta la puesta del sol?	<i>Is the sunset pleasing to you?</i>
¿Te gusta el teatro?	<i>Is theater pleasing to you?</i>
¿Te gusta España?	<i>Is Spain pleasing to you?</i>

Plural Noun as the Subject

Te gustan las flores rojas.	<i>Red flowers are pleasing to you.</i>
¿Te gustan las lecciones?	<i>Are the lessons pleasing to you?</i>
¿Te gustan tus cursos?	<i>Are your courses pleasing to you?</i>

Verb as the Subject

Te gusta viajar.	<i>To travel is pleasing to you.</i>
Te gusta descansar.	<i>To rest is pleasing to you.</i>
Te gusta cantar y bailar.	<i>To sing and dance is pleasing to you.</i>

Le gusta and le gustan

Le is the indirect object pronoun that means *to him (a él)*, *to her (a ella)*, or *to you (a Ud.)*.

English Construction	<i>He likes the wine.</i>
Spanish Construction	Le gusta el vino. <i>To him is pleasing the wine.</i>

Because **le** means *to him*, *to her*, and *to you*, it can have any of the following meanings.

The wine is pleasing to him.
The wine is pleasing to her.
The wine is pleasing to you.

To clarify this ambiguity, the sentence must begin with a prepositional phrase that clarifies the meaning of the indirect object pronoun **le**.

A él le gusta el vino.	<i>The wine is pleasing to him.</i>
A él le gusta cantar.	<i>Singing is pleasing to him.</i>
A él le gustan los libros.	<i>Books are pleasing to him.</i>
A ella le gusta el vino rosado.	<i>Rosé wine is pleasing to her.</i>
A ella le gusta escribir cartas.	<i>Writing letters is pleasing to her.</i>
A ella le gustan las montañas.	<i>The mountains are pleasing to her.</i>
A Ud. le gusta la cerveza.	<i>The beer is pleasing to you.</i>
A Ud. le gusta tomar un descanso.	<i>To take a break is pleasing to you.</i>
A Ud. le gustan las playas.	<i>Beaches are pleasing to you.</i>

You can also insert proper names and nouns in the prepositional phrase.

A Fernando le gusta la verdad.	<i>The truth is pleasing to Fernando.</i>
A María le gusta bailar.	<i>To dance is pleasing to Maria.</i>
A Roberto le gustan los carros nuevos.	<i>New cars are pleasing to Robert.</i>

Singular nouns can be inserted in the prepositional phrases.

A la mujer le gusta leer.	<i>To read is pleasing to the woman.</i>
Al hombre le gusta cocinar.	<i>To cook is pleasing to the man.</i>

Nos gusta and nos gustan

Nos is the indirect object pronoun that means *to us*.

English Construction	<i>We like to speak Spanish.</i>
Spanish Construction	Nos gusta hablar español. <i>To us is pleasing to speak Spanish.</i>

Nos gusta la torta de chocolate.	<i>Chocolate cake is pleasing to us.</i>
Nos gusta comer en el parque.	<i>To eat in the park is pleasing to us.</i>
Nos gustan nuestros maestros.	<i>Our teachers are pleasing to us.</i>

Les gusta and les gustan

Les is the indirect object pronoun that means *to them (a ellos, a ellas)* and *to you (a Uds.)*.

English Construction	<i>They like the film.</i>
Spanish Construction	Les gusta la película. <i>To them is pleasing the film.</i>

Because **les** means both *to them* and *to you*, the meaning of this sentence can be either of the following.

The film is pleasing to them.
The film is pleasing to you (pl.).

To clarify this ambiguity, the sentence must begin with a prepositional phrase that clarifies the meaning of **les**.

¿ A Uds. les gusta el café negro?	<i>Is black coffee pleasing to you?</i>
¿ A Uds. les gusta el presidente?	<i>Is the president pleasing to you?</i>
A ellas les gustan los hoteles.	<i>Hotels are pleasing to them.</i>
A ellos les gusta dormir bien.	<i>To sleep well is pleasing to them.</i>

Nouns and proper names can be inserted in the prepositional phrases.

A Sara y Enrique les gusta nadar.	<i>To swim is pleasing to Sara and Henry.</i>
A los niños les gustan los juguetes.	<i>Toys are pleasing to the children.</i>
A las niñas les gustan las lecciones.	<i>The lessons are pleasing to the girls.</i>

If you want to add emphasis to the constructions of **me gusta** and **te gusta**, add **a mí**, which emphasizes **me**, and **a ti**, which emphasizes **te**.

A mí me gusta el café.

Coffee is pleasing to me.

A ti te gusta el vino.

Wine is pleasing to you.

There is no ambiguity in these examples. **A mí** and **a ti** give the feeling of the emphasized pronoun in English: **I like coffee. You like wine.**



Exercise 10.1

Pronounce the examples aloud so you can become familiar with the sound.

Singular Subject

Singular Subject

Plural Subject

Me gusta el hotel.

Me gusta viajar.

Me gustan los hoteles.

Te gusta la clase.

Te gusta correr.

Te gustan las clases.

Le gusta el libro.

Le gusta escribir.

Le gustan los libros.

Nos gusta la comida.

Nos gusta comer.

Nos gustan las comidas.

Les gusta el programa.

Les gusta leer.

Les gustan los programas.



Exercise 10.2

*Complete the following sentences. Choose the correct indirect object pronoun, as indicated by the prepositional phrase in parentheses, then choose either **gusta** or **gustan**, depending on whether the subject is singular or plural.*

EXAMPLES (A mí) me gusta el helado.

(A él) le gustan las galletas.

(A nosotros) nos gusta el postre.

1. (A mí) _____ el café con azúcar.
2. (A ella) _____ el café negro.
3. (A María) _____ el té.
4. (A mí) _____ escribir libros.
5. (A mis amigos) _____ cocinar.

6. (A Susana y a Miguel) _____ viajar.
7. (A ellos) _____ comer en buenos restaurantes.
8. (A mí) _____ ir al teatro.
9. (A ti) _____ ir al cine.
10. (A nosotros) _____ salir los sábados.
11. (A Guillermo) _____ los restaurantes japoneses.
12. (A su amiga) _____ los restaurantes hindúes.
13. (A Uds.) _____ los restaurantes franceses.
14. (A mí) _____ las playas del Caribe.
15. (A ti) _____ las piscinas grandes.
16. (A tu hermana) _____ la ciudad.
17. (Al hermano de José) _____ el campo.
18. (A nosotros) _____ viajar.
19. (A Cecilia y a su familia) _____ conversar.
20. (A los niños) _____ aprender todo.
21. (A los adolescentes) _____ jugar deportes.
22. ¿(A Uds.) _____ el alcalde de su ciudad?

Verbs like *gustar*

You have just learned a very important form, not only to express the idea of *I like*, but for other verbs as well. The following verbs are used with an indirect object.

agradar *to be pleasing to* (very close in meaning to **gustar**)

¿No te agrada nadar?	<i>Isn't swimming pleasing to you?</i>
Me agrada vivir en el campo.	<i>To live in the country is pleasing to me.</i>

convenir *to suit someone, to be convenient (for)*

¿Te conviene tomar ese trabajo?	<i>Does it suit you to take that job?</i>
No nos conviene viajar ahora.	<i>It does not suit us to travel now.</i>

doler *to be painful, to hurt*

Me duele la cabeza.	<i>My head hurts me.</i>
Te duelen los dientes.	<i>Your teeth hurt you.</i>
¿A Uds. les duelen los pies si caminan mucho?	<i>Do your feet hurt you if you walk a lot?</i>

NOTE: In Spanish, the possessive adjective is not used with parts of the body and the indirect object pronoun.

encantar *to be enchanting to, to like very much*

Le encanta viajar.	<i>To travel is enchanting to him. (He loves traveling.)</i>
Le encanta visitar España.	<i>To visit Spain is enchanting to him.</i>

NOTE: **Encantar** is much stronger than **gustar**. **Encantar** cannot be used in the negative.

faltar *to be lacking (something), to be missing (something)*

A ellos les falta disciplina.	<i>They lack discipline.</i>
Aquí falta luz.	<i>Here there is no light.</i>

NOTE: **Faltar** can be used without the indirect object pronoun.

fascinar *to fascinate, to be fascinating (to)*

Nos fascina el baile flamenco.	<i>Flamenco dance fascinates us.</i>
Me fascinan estos dibujos.	<i>These drawings are fascinating to me.</i>

hacer falta *to need (something)*

Me hace falta tomar unas vacaciones.	<i>I need to take a vacation.</i>
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importar *to be important to, to matter*

No me importa.	<i>It is not important to me.</i>
A Sandra le importan sus amigos.	<i>Sandra's friends are important to her.</i>
No importa.	<i>It doesn't matter. / Never mind.</i>

NOTE: **Importar** can be used without the indirect object pronoun.

interesar *to be interesting (to)*

Les interesa estudiar.	<i>To study is interesting to them.</i>
Me interesa ir a museos.	<i>It interests me to go to museums.</i>

molestar *to bother, to annoy*

¿Le molesta si alguien fuma?

Does it bother you if someone smokes?

A él no le molesta nada.

Nothing bothers him.

parecer *to seem, to appear to be*

Me parece que es una buena escuela.

It seems to me that it is a good school.

Parece que va a llover.

It seems that it is going to rain.

NOTE: **Parecer** can be used without the indirect object pronoun.

quedar *to be left over, to remain*

Nos quedan veinte minutos.

We have 20 minutes left.

No me queda mucho dinero.

I don't have much money left.

¿Cuántas páginas nos quedan por leer?

How many pages are left for us to read?

NOTE: **Quedar por** + an infinitive = *to remain to be*.

sobrar *to have more than enough of (something)*

Me sobra comida para mañana.

I have more than enough food for tomorrow.

tocarle a alguien *to be someone's turn*

Cada vez que me toca a mí, gano.

Every time it's my turn, I win.

Cada vez que le toca a él, pierde.

Every time it's his turn, he loses.



Exercise 10.3

Complete the following sentences with the correct prepositional phrase, according to the words in parentheses.

EXAMPLE A él le gusta nadar. (*to him*)

- _____ le gusta el tenis. (*to her*)
- ¿_____ le gustan todos los deportes? (*to you*)
- _____ me gusta leer, pero me encanta escribir. (*to me*)
- Yo sé que _____ te gusta estudiar, pero _____ les gusta ir a fiestas. (*to you/to them*)

5. Parece que _____ le gusta cocinar. (*to no one*)
6. ¿ _____ le gusta limpiar su apartamento? (*to whom*)



Exercise 10.4

Change the following singular sentences to plural. Make sure both the subject and the verb are plural. The indirect object pronoun will remain the same.

EXAMPLE Me gusta su idea. Me gustan sus ideas.

1. Les encanta ese carro rojo. _____
2. Te agrada el programa. _____
3. Me gusta la silla. _____
4. Nos importa nuestro amigo. _____
5. Le fascina esa computadora. _____



Exercise 10.5

Translate the following sentences into English.

EXAMPLE Me gusta viajar. Traveling / To travel is pleasing to me.

1. A Susana le duele la cabeza. _____
2. Me falta un lápiz con que escribir. _____
3. ¿Por qué no te gusta bailar? _____
4. Nos fascinan los viajes exóticos. _____
5. A ella le interesan las noticias del día.

6. ¿A Ud. le molesta su perfume? _____
7. ¿A Uds. les importan las lecciones? _____
8. ¿Te conviene seguir tus estudios este año?

9. A él no le gusta manejar en la lluvia.

10. A ella no le gusta el clima caliente. _____