

Basic Sentence Formation

Creating a Basic sentence

To create a basic sentence in Spanish, one needs to state the subject (person doing the action) followed by the action (a conjugated verb). Any additional information generally follows the verb. Remember to put descriptive words (adjectives) *after* the object or person that they are describing.

Juan habla.	(John speaks.)
María escucha música.	(Mary listens to music.)
Nosotros tenemos una casa grande.	(We have a large house.)

Making sentences negative

Sentences can then be made negative by simply placing a negative word (no, never, nobody) in front of the action being done. Note that there are no words in Spanish for “do/does/etc.” These are implied.

Juan no habla	(John does not speak.)
Juan nunca habla	(John never speaks.)
Nosotros no tenemos una casa grande.	(We don't have a large house.)

Even though the double negative is not used in English, its use is required in Spanish sentences with negative words following the verb. This is done by putting “no” in front of the verb and placing the negative word (such as never, nobody, none, etc.) after the verb.

Juan no habla nunca.	(“Juan never speaks.”)
El no conoce a nadie.	(“He doesn't know anyone.”)

Common negative expressions:

nunca...never
nadie...nobody
nada...nothing
ningún/a...none
no...no / doesn't / didn't
ni...nor

Forming Questions

Sentences can be turned into questions by simply placing the verb in front of the person or thing doing the action. Please note the use of the upside question mark (¿) which should precede the question. Also, remember that there is no “do” or “does” in Spanish when forming questions, but rather word order and voice inflection.

¿habla Juan?	(Does John speak?)
¿Tienes tú dinero?	(Do you have money?)

There are also several interrogatory words which are used to begin questions. When these are used, the noun usually follows the verb, as with regular sentences. All question words in Spanish carry an accent.

¿Quién?...Who?	¿Por qué?...Why?
¿Cómo?...How?	¿Cuándo?...When?
¿Qué?...What?	¿Cuál?...Which?
¿Dónde?...Where?	¿Cuánto/a(s)?...How much?

¿Cómo está usted?	(How are you?)
¿Dónde está el baño?	(Where is the bathroom?)
¿Cuándo es la fiesta?	(When is the party?)
¿Cuánto cuesta?	(How much does it cost?)