



A SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO SER VS ESTAR

KEY DIFFERENCES, TIPS, USES & QUIZ



COMMON USES OF SER IN SPANISH

USE	SENTENCE	USE	SENTENCE
Identifying people or things	Él <u>es</u> Luis. He <u>is</u> Luis.	Physical & Personality Traits	Tú <u>eres</u> muy amable. You <u>are</u> very kind.
Material of something	La silla <u>es</u> de madera. The chair <u>is</u> made of wood.	Place of an event.	La fiesta <u>es</u> en mi casa. The party <u>is</u> at my house.
Occupation	Sandy <u>es</u> doctora. Sandy <u>is</u> a doctor.	Possession & Relationships	Yo <u>soy</u> su hermana. I <u>am</u> her sister.
Origin & Nationality	Ustedes <u>son</u> de Alemania. You guys <u>are</u> from Germany.	Time	El examen <u>es</u> en la tarde. The exam <u>is</u> in the afternoon.

COMMON USES OF ESTAR IN SPANISH

USE	SENTENCE
Actions in progress	<u>Estoy</u> comiendo. I <u>am</u> eating.
Conditions	Hoy <u>está</u> soleado. Today <u>is</u> sunny.
Emotions or states	<u>Estamos</u> ocupados. We <u>are</u> busy.

USE	SENTENCE
Location or position	Tú <u>estás</u> en España. You <u>are</u> in Spain.
Temporary occupation	July <u>está</u> de mesera. July <u>is</u> a waiter.

ACRONYMS DOCTOR & PLACE

SER = D.O.C.T.O.R.

- Descriptions
- Occupations
- Characteristics
- Time
- Origin
- Relationships

ESTAR = P.L.A.C.E.

- Place
- Location
- Actions in progress
- Conditions or states
- Emotions & Symptoms

SER VS ESTAR: THE GOLDEN RULE

I've found that the easiest way to summarize them is by identifying the questions they answer.

SER

Answers these questions:

- Who are you?
- What are you?
- Where are you from?
- What time is it?
- When and where is...?

ESTAR

Answers these questions:

- Where are you?
- How are you? / How are you doing?
- What are you doing?

Note: Although they're posed to "you", these questions apply to all people and things (subjects and objects).

EXPRESSING LOCATION: SER OR ESTAR

SER

Describes the location of an event.



La fiesta es en la casa de Jorge.
The party is at Jorge's.

ESTAR

Expresses the location of something.



La torre Eiffel está en París.
The Eiffel tower is in Paris.

EXPRESSING OCCUPATION: SER OR ESTAR

SER

Refers to a profession or long-term job.



Su papá es maestro.
His dad is a teacher.

ESTAR

Refers to temporary occupations.



Yolanda está de doctora en la farmacia local.
Yolanda is a doctor in the local pharmacy.

EXPRESSING CHARACTERISTICS: SER OR ESTAR

SER

Refers to inherent characteristics.
What someone is.



Marta es muy aburrida.
Marta is very boring.

ESTAR

Expresses how someone is or feels at a
specific moment.



Marta está aburrida.
Marta is bored.

ADJECTIVES THAT CHANGE MEANING IN SPANISH

Adjective	Ser	Estar
Abierto	Be open-minded	Be open
Atento	Be attentive	To pay attention
Bueno	Be good	Be tasty / Be attractive
Callado	Be shy or reserved	Be silent
Cerrado	Be close-minded	Be closed
Delicado	Be fragile	Be delicate (health)
Despierto	Be smart	Be awake
Grave	Be serious	Be seriously ill
Interesado	Be opportunistic	Be interested

Adjective	Ser	Estar
Malo	Be bad	Be sick
Listo	Be clever	Be ready
Orgullosa	Be proud	Be proud of
Rico	Be rich	Be tasty
Seco	Be dry (personality)	Be dry
Seguro	Be safe	Be sure
Verde	Be green	Be immature
Vivo	Be sharp	Be alive

SER VS ESTAR: CONJUGATION CHART

	Present	Preterite	Imperfect	Future	Conditional
Yo	Soy Estoy	Fui Estuve	Era Estaba	Seré Estaré	Sería. Estaría.
Tú	Eres Estás	Fuiste Estuviste	Eras Estabas	Serás Estarás	Serías Estarías
Él / Ella Usted	Es Está	Fue Estuvo	Era Estaba	Será Estará	Sería. Estaría.
Nosotros	Somos Estamos	Fuimos Estuvimos	Éramos Estábamos	Seremos Estandremos	Seríamos Estaríamos
Vosotros	Sois Estáis	Fuisteis Estuvisteis	Erais Estabais	Seréis Estaréis	Seríais Estaríais
Ellos / Ellas Ustedes	Son Están	Fueron Estuvieron	Eran Estaban	Serán Estarán	Serían Estarían

HAY VS SER VS ESTAR

HAY

Indicates the existence of something.



Hay un perro en el jardín.
There is a dog in the garden.

SER

Identifies & describes inherent qualities.



El perro es grande y blanco.
The dog is big and white.

ESTAR

Conveys location or temporary conditions.



Mi perro está en mi cuarto.
My dog is in my room.

SER VS ESTAR CONTEXTUAL OVERLAP & CONFUSION

Ser	Estar
<p><u>Date</u></p> <p>Hoy <u>es</u> cinco de mayo. Today <u>is</u> May 5th.</p>	<p><u>Date (informal)</u></p> <p>Hoy <u>estamos</u> a cinco de mayo. Today <u>is</u> the 5th of May.</p>
<p><u>Occupation</u></p> <p>Tú <u>eres</u> abogado. You <u>are</u> a lawyer.</p>	<p><u>Occupation (temporary)</u></p> <p>Tú <u>estás</u> de mesero. You <u>are</u> a waiter.</p>
<p><u>Personality & Physical traits</u></p> <p>Joe <u>es</u> alto. Joe <u>is</u> tall.</p>	<p><u>Conditions & States</u></p> <p>Joe <u>está</u> cansado. Joe <u>is</u> tired.</p>
<p><u>Place of an event</u></p> <p>La boda <u>es</u> en Toronto. The wedding <u>is</u> in Toronto.</p>	<p><u>Location of things or people</u></p> <p><u>Estamos</u> en Toronto. We <u>are</u> in Toronto.</p>

KEY POINTS: SER VS ESTAR IN SPANISH

- Both 'ser' and 'estar' mean 'to be', but have distinctive meanings and applications.
- In a nutshell, the difference between 'ser' and 'estar' is that ser refers to permanent or lasting traits, while estar refers to temporary conditions.
- 'Ser' is used to:
 - Identify people or things
 - Say the date and time
 - Describe people or things
 - Refer to the place of an event
 - Express origin or nationality
 - Talk about occupation
- 'Estar' is used to:
 - Talk about progressive actions
 - Express location and position
 - Describe conditions, emotions and states
 - Refer to temporary occupations

KEY POINTS: SER VS ESTAR IN SPANISH

- When referring to characteristics, 'ser' refers to identity or traits that make a person or thing what they are. 'Estar' expresses how something is at a particular moment.
- There are some adjectives whose meanings change depending on the verb you use.
- 'Ser' responds to the questions:
 - Who are you?
 - What are you?
 - Where are you from?
 - What time is it?
 - When and where is...?
- Meanwhile, 'estar' answers:
 - Where are you?
 - How are you? / How are you doing?
 - What are you doing?
- Neither ser or estar are used to say age.

LINK TO THIS GUIDE



[Ser vs Estar Simplified - Key Differences, Tips, Uses & Quiz](#)

RELATED GUIDES & RESOURCES TO CHECK OUT

[How & When to Use Estar: Usage Rules, Examples, & Practice](#)

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