



When to Use Por vs Para in Spanish

Spanish Lesson

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Video transcript

Hey there and welcome to Ablas! The word 'for' can be translated two ways into Spanish: "por" and "para". But these words can mean other things as well. We'll go through all the examples you'll need to understand them, and there's a quick quiz at the end of the video. Be sure to download the PDF of today's lesson from the link in the description!

When to use 'por'

Let's start by seeing when we can use "por" with some examples.

The first situation is when you're giving a reason for something using 'because of'. For example: "Mi perro está triste por el calor." — which means "My dog is sad because of the heat."

You can also use it when travelling through or around somewhere – maybe you're wandering around Spain, or taking a stroll through the local park. "Caminamos por el parque." — "We're walking through the park."

Describing how long something takes is another situation – this most often translates to "during". "Estudiamos por la noche." We could also say: "Estudiamos durante la noche." Both of these mean: "We study during the night."

And lastly, it's also the correct way to say who did something. For example: "Esta carta fue escrita por mi abuela." — "This letter was written by my grandmother."

When to use 'para'

Now let's take a look at some more examples, this time using "para".

The first use case is when we're giving the purpose of something; in most cases, we can translate this to mean 'in order to'. "Ahorro dinero para ir de vacaciones." — "I save money in order to go on vacation."

Another example is when we're travelling to a place. "Mi hermana viaja para Londres." — "My sister is travelling to London."

We'd also use it when referring to deadlines, implying that something must be done by a certain date. "La tarea es para el viernes." — "The homework is due by Friday."

And the last situation is when something is done for someone, like when you're giving someone a gift. "Este regalo es para mi madre." — "This gift is for my mother."

Let's recap over the differences. "por" is used to give reasons, describe going through or around somewhere, tell us how long something lasts, and who did something. On the other hand, "para" gives the purpose, describes going towards somewhere, implies a deadline or end date, and tells us who is the intended recipient of something.

Common phrases

We'll now take a look at some common phrases with "por" and "para".

English	Spanish
We didn't win the game, but at least we tried.	No ganamos el partido, pero por lo menos lo intentamos.
There are many ways to learn languages, for example , by watching movies.	Hay muchas formas de aprender idiomas, por ejemplo , viendo películas.
In my opinion , the most important thing is family.	Para mí , lo más importante es la familia.
¿ Para qué necesitas tanto dinero?	What do you need so much money for ?

Story

Let's take it one step further by putting everything we've learnt into a short story.

English	Spanish
María was walking through the park during the morning, thinking about everything she needed to do.	María caminaba por el parque por la mañana, pensando en todo lo que necesitaba hacer.
She had to buy a gift for her sister and prepare a party for Saturday.	Tenía que comprar un regalo para su hermana y preparar una fiesta para el sábado.
At least twenty people would come to the celebration.	Por lo menos veinte personas vendrían a la celebración.
She went by the store to look for decorations.	Pasó por la tienda para buscar decoraciones.
Because of the day's heat, she decided to have an ice cream while shopping.	Por el calor del día, decidió tomar un helado mientras compraba.
The invitations had to be ready by Thursday, so María worked quickly.	Las invitaciones tenían que estar listas para el jueves, por lo que María trabajó rápidamente.
She called her parents to ask for help with the food.	Llamó a sus padres para pedirles ayuda con la comida.
Her mother, known for her desserts, promised to make a special cake for the occasion.	Su madre, conocida por sus postres, prometió hacer un pastel especial para la ocasión.
At least three more desserts would be needed for so many guests.	Por lo menos tres postres más serían necesarios para tantos invitados.

English	Spanish
Her father offered to buy the drinks, and her cousin José promised to bring snacks for everyone.	Su padre se ofreció para comprar las bebidas, y su primo José prometió traer bocadillos para todos.
María was tired because of all the work, but happy.	María estaba cansada por todo el trabajo, pero feliz.
Her sister deserved a special party for her graduation.	Su hermana merecía una fiesta especial por su graduación.
For her, no effort was too much.	Para ella, ningún esfuerzo era demasiado.
By Friday, everything would be ready.	Para el viernes, todo estaría preparado.

It's quiz time!

There were loads of examples in that story! Don't worry if you missed them – you can download the PDF of today's lesson which will include the full story. But now it's quiz time!

How do you say "at least" in Spanish?

- A. por lo menos
- B. para los menos
- C. por lo general

The correct answer is... por lo menos.

What does "por" mean in this sentence? "Las plantas murieron por falta de agua."

- A. because of
- B. during
- C. through

The correct answer is... because of.

Which sentence correctly indicates a deadline?

- A. La tarea es para el viernes
- B. La tarea es por el viernes
- C. La tarea es para Juan

The correct answer is... La tarea es para el viernes.

Your task

Well done for getting this far!

Now your task is to write a diary entry about your day in Spanish. Try to use at least 8 different examples of "por" and "para".

Be sure to leave a like if you enjoyed this video, and hit the subscribe button so you don't miss out on future videos. Our website is full of fun games across 7 languages, so head on over and put your skills to the test! Until next time, thanks for watching!