

Class Notes

SER and ESTAR

Both **ser** and **estar** correspond to the English verb *to be*. They cannot be interchanged without producing a change in meaning or a grammatically incorrect sentence.

Ser is the basic verb *to be* in Spanish; **estar** is used only in special cases. It is therefore easier to list the special cases where **estar** is required – everything else is **ser**. The following illustrates the uses of **estar**.

ESTAR

1. Location

Estar is used to express where something or someone is.

Córdoba está en España.	Córdoba <u>is</u> in Spain.
Silvia está en la universidad.	Silvia <u>is</u> at the university.

2. Estar + ...ando

Estar is used as the auxiliary verb in progressive constructions.

Estoy gastando una fortuna.	I <u>am spending</u> a fortune.
Ellos estaban estudiando mucho.	There <u>were studying</u> a lot.
Ella estuvo viajando por un año.	She <u>was traveling</u> for a year.

3. Incidental condition

Estar is used to express how something or someone is at a particular time.

El gazpacho está muy rica.	The gazpacho <u>is</u> very good.
Jorge está cansado.	Jorge <u>is</u> tired.

Special Contrasts with SER and ESTAR

1. Some adjectives have one meaning when they are used with **ser** and a different meaning when they are used with **estar**. The following list illustrates some common examples. Notice that in every case **estar** + *adjective* refers to the state or condition someone or something happens to be in, while **ser** + *adjective* never does.

La bruja **es mala**.
The witch is wicked.

La bruja **está mala**.
The witch is sick.

La lección **es aburrida**.
The lesson is boring.

El estudiante **está aburrida**.
The student is bored.

Los aguacates **son verdes**.
Avocados are green.

Ese aguacate **está verde**.
That avocado is not ripe.

Lola **es lista**.
Lola is clever.

Tato **está listo**.
Tato is ready.

El camino **es seguro**.
The road is safe.

El chófer **está seguro**.
The driver is sure.

2. To express where an event happens, *ser* is used. *Estar* is used to express location.

El banquete **es** en el Hotel Imperial
The banquet is at the Imperial Hotel.

La comida **está** en la mesa.
Dinner is on the table.

El concierto **va a ser** aquí.
The concert is going to be here.

¿Dónde **está** la orquesta?
Where is the orchestra.

3. Both *ser* and *estar* can be used with adjectives that modify the subject, but the meaning is different depending on which verb is chosen. *Ser* is used to talk about characteristic qualities of the subject; *estar* is used to talk about incidental states or conditions.

El gazpacho **es bueno**.
Gazpacho is good.

Este gazpacho **está horrible**.
This gazpacho is horrible.

Las fiestas **son divertidas**.
Parties are fun.

Esta fiesta **está muy aburrida**.
This party is very boring.