Gustar and Verbs Like *Gustar*

(Los Verbos como "Gustar")

The verb **gustar** does not literally mean "to like." Instead, it means **"to be pleasing to,"** which is why sentences with *gustar* follow a different structure than English. Rather than saying "I like the book," Spanish expresses the idea as **"The book pleases me."**

Me gusta el libro.

Many other common Spanish verbs follow this same pattern. Understanding how *gustar* works makes it easier to use these similar structures accurately and naturally.

The verb **gustar** doesn't literally mean *"to like"* — it means **"to be pleasing to."** That's why sentences with *gustar* use a **different structure** from English.

Instead of saying "I like the book," Spanish says **"The book pleases me."**

Me gusta el libro.

1) The Logic of "Gustar"

English	**Spanish (literal translation)**
I like the book.	*Me gusta el libro.* → "The book pleases me."
We like the movies.	*Nos gustan las películas.* → "The movies please us."

So, the **thing liked** is the **subject**, and the **person who likes** is the **indirect object** (who receives the pleasure).

Formula:
Indirect object pronoun + gustar (conjugated) + subject

2) Indirect Object Pronouns

These pronouns show **to whom** something is pleasing (who likes it):

Pronoun	Meaning	Example
me	to me	*Me gusta el café.* → I like coffee.
te	to you	*¿Te gusta bailar?* → Do you like to dance?
le	to him / her / you (formal)	*Le gusta el fútbol.* → He/She likes soccer.
nos	to us	*Nos gustan los perros.* → We like dogs.
os	to you all (Spain)	*¿Os gusta la pizza?* → Do you all like pizza?
les	to them / you all	*Les gusta el arte.* → They like art.

Clarifying phrases like *a mí*, *a ti*, *a él*, etc., can be added for emphasis or clarity:

- *A mí me gusta el café.* → I (really) like coffee.
- *A Juan le gusta el fútbol.* → Juan likes soccer.
- *A ellos les gustan los museos.* → They like museums.

3) Conjugating *Gustar*

Gustar is conjugated according to the **thing liked**, not the person.

Subject (thing liked)	Verb form	Example
Singular noun / verb	**gusta**	*Me gusta el libro. / Me gusta leer.*
Plural noun	**gustan**	*Me gustan los libros.*

Examples:

- *Me gusta la música.* → I like music.
- *Me gustan los deportes.* → I like sports.
- *Te gusta bailar.* → You like to dance.
- *Nos gustan las películas cómicas.* → We like funny movies.

When using verbs (infinitives) after *gustar*, always use **gusta (singular)**:

- *Me gusta correr.* → I like to run.
- *Nos gusta viajar y aprender idiomas.* → We like to travel and learn languages.

4) Common Expressions with *Gustar*

Expression	Meaning	Example

Me gusta…	I like…	*Me gusta el helado.*
¿Te gusta…?	Do you like…?	*¿Te gusta el cine?*
No me gusta…	I don’t like…	*No me gusta el café.*
A mí también.	Me too.	*Me gusta el tenis. — A mí también.*
A mí tampoco.	Me neither.	*No me gusta estudiar. — A mí tampoco.*

5) Verbs Like *Gustar*

Many verbs follow the same structure as *gustar* — they use **indirect object pronouns** and are conjugated based on the **thing** or **action** that affects the person.

Verb	Meaning	Example
encantar	to love (something)	*Me encanta el chocolate.* → I love chocolate.
interesar	to interest	*Nos interesa la historia.* → History interests us.
importar	to matter / to be important	*¿Te importa si voy?* → Does it matter to you if I go?
fascinar	to fascinate	*A ella le fascinan los planetas.* → She’s fascinated by planets.
aburrir	to bore	*A ellos les aburre el museo.* → The museum bores them.
molestar	to bother / annoy	*Me molesta el ruido.* → The noise bothers me.
doler (o → ue)	to hurt	*Me duele la cabeza.* → My head hurts.
faltar	to lack / be missing	*Nos falta dinero.* → We’re missing money.
quedar	to fit / to have left	*Me queda bien la camisa.* → The shirt fits me well. / *Nos quedan dos días.* → We have two days left.
parecer	to seem / appear	*Me parece interesante.* → It seems interesting to me.
chocar	to dislike / annoy	*Me chocan los insectos.* → I can’t stand insects.
caer bien/mal	to (not) get along with someone	*Me cae bien tu amigo.* → I like your friend.

All these verbs use **me, te, le, nos, os, les** and usually have only **two conjugations** — singular (third person singular) and plural (third person plural).

6) Clarifying “A” Phrases

Because *le* and *les* can mean “to him,” “to her,” or “to them,” Spanish often adds clarification:

Spanish	English
A Juan le gusta el béisbol.	Juan likes baseball.
A ella le gustan los gatos.	She likes cats.
A ustedes les gusta bailar.	You all like to dance.
A mis padres les encanta viajar.	My parents love to travel.

Structure:
A + person + indirect object pronoun + verb + subject

7) Word Order and Emphasis

Word order in *gustar*-type sentences can vary slightly, but the meaning stays the same.

Sentence	Translation
Me gusta el cine.	I like the movies.
El cine me gusta.	I like the movies. (emphasis on *el cine*)
A mí me gusta el cine.	I like the movies. (emphasized: *me*)

A mí and *a ti* are often added for emphasis or contrast:

- *A mí me gusta el chocolate, pero a ti no.*

8) Using *Gustar*-Type Verbs in Other Tenses

Tense	Example	Translation
Preterite	*Me gustó la película. / Me gustaron las películas.*	I liked the movie(s).

Imperfect	*Me gustaba el fútbol.*	I used to like soccer.
Future	*Me gustará viajar.*	I will like to travel.
Conditional	*Me gustaría ir contigo.*	I would like to go with you.
Present Perfect	*Me ha gustado la comida.*	I have liked the food.

Me gustaría… is extremely common for **polite requests** or **soft suggestions**:

- *Me gustaría un café, por favor.* → I'd like a coffee, please.
- *¿Te gustaría ir al cine?* → Would you like to go to the movies?

9) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

1. A mí me _____ (gustar) el helado.
2. A ellos les _____ (encantar) los deportes.
3. ¿Te _____ (interesar) la historia?
4. Nos _____ (molestar) el ruido.
5. A mi madre le _____ (faltar) tiempo.
6. Me _____ (doler) los pies.

Answers:

1. gusta
2. encantan
3. interesa
4. molesta
5. falta
6. duelen

10) Practice: Translate

1. I love Spanish music.
2. The movie bores me.
3. My head hurts.
4. We like to travel.
5. Does it matter to you?
6. They are fascinated by animals.

Answers:

1. Me encanta la música española.
2. Me aburre la película.
3. Me duele la cabeza.
4. Nos gusta viajar.
5. ¿Te importa?
6. Les fascinan los animales.

11) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Wrong	Correct	Why
Yo gusto el chocolate.	*Me gusta el chocolate.*	Subject = what pleases, not who likes.
Me gustan bailar.	*Me gusta bailar.*	Infinitive is singular → *gusta*.
Le gustan a Juan el fútbol.	*A Juan le gusta el fútbol.*	Keep “a Juan” at the start for clarity.
Me encantan leer.	*Me encanta leer.*	Infinitives take singular form.
Nos gusta las películas.	*Nos gustan las películas.*	Plural subject → *gustan*.

12) Quick Reference Chart

Concept	Rule / Formula	Example
Structure	I.O. pronoun + verb + subject	*Me gusta el chocolate.*
Pronouns	me, te, le, nos, os, les	*Nos gustan los libros.*
Singular subject	gusta	*Te gusta la clase.*
Plural subject	gustan	*Te gustan las clases.*
Clarifiers	A + name / pronoun	*A Ana le gusta leer.*
Other verbs	encantar, interesar, molestar, doler, faltar, parecer, importar	*Nos interesa el arte.*