

# Participles as Adjectives in Spanish

*(Los Participios como Adjetivos)*

In Spanish, the **past participle** (participio pasado) can be used not only to form compound tenses, but also to function as an **adjective**. When used this way, the participle describes a **condition, result, or characteristic** of a noun.

Just like regular adjectives, participles must **agree in gender and number** with the nouns they modify. This allows speakers to express states such as “the door is closed,” “the homework is finished,” or “the windows are broken” with accuracy and detail. Understanding participles as [adjectives helps students describe situations clearly and naturally in Spanish](#).

## 1) Review: What Is a Past Participle?

The **past participle is a verb form** that expresses a **completed action or a resulting state**.

When used as an adjective, it describes **how someone or something is** as the *result* of an action.

### Verb    Meaning    Participle    English

cerrar	to close	cerrado	closed
romper	to break	roto	broken
abrir	to open	abierto	open
hacer	to do	hecho	done
escribir	to write	escrito	written

### Examples:

- *La puerta está cerrada.* → The door is closed.
- *Los platos están lavados.* → The dishes are washed.
- *El trabajo está hecho.* → The work is done.

## 2) Agreement Rules

When used as adjectives, **participles must agree** in **gender** and **number** with the nouns they modify.

Gender / Number	Ending	Example	Translation
Masculine singular	-o	<i>el libro cerrado</i>	the closed book
Feminine singular	-a	<i>la puerta cerrada</i>	the closed door
Masculine plural	-os	<i>los libros cerrados</i>	the closed books
Feminine plural	-as	<i>las puertas cerradas</i>	the closed doors

### Examples:

- *El documento está escrito.* → The document is written.
- *La carta está escrita.* → The letter is written.
- *Los documentos están escritos.* → The documents are written.
- *Las cartas están escritas.* → The letters are written.

## 3) Difference Between Participles with “Haber” vs. as Adjectives

Use	Auxiliary	Agreement	Example	Translation
<b>With haber</b> (compound tense)	<i>haber</i>	No agreement	<i>He escrito una carta.</i>	I have written a letter.
<b>As adjective</b>	none or with <i>estar/ser</i>	Agreement	<i>La carta está escrita.</i>	The letter is written.

### Rule:

- With *haber*, the participle **stays in masculine singular form** (no agreement).
- As an adjective (alone or with *estar/ser*), it **changes form** to match the noun.

### Examples:

- *Han roto la ventana.* → They have broken the window.
- *La ventana está rota.* → The window is broken.

## 4) Common Participles Used as Adjectives

Infinitive	Participle	Meaning (Adjectival Use)	Example
abrir	abierto	open	<i>La tienda está abierta.</i>
cerrar	cerrado	closed	<i>Las puertas están cerradas.</i>
romper	roto	broken	<i>El vaso está roto.</i>
hacer	hecho	done, made	<i>El trabajo está hecho.</i>
poner	puesto	placed, positioned	<i>El cuadro está puesto en la pared.</i>
escribir	escrito	written	<i>La carta está escrita.</i>
decir	dicho	said	<i>Las palabras dichas por el maestro...</i>
morir	muerto	dead	<i>El pez está muerto.</i>
cubrir	cubierto	covered	<i>La mesa está cubierta.</i>
resolver	resuelto	solved	<i>El problema está resuelto.</i>
ver	visto	seen	<i>Las películas vistas fueron interesantes.</i>
freír	frito	fried	<i>Los huevos fritos están deliciosos.</i>

## 5) Using “Estar” with Participles (Condition or Result)

When used with *estar*, the participle expresses a **temporary state or condition** — the *result* of an action.

### Examples:

- *La ventana está rota.* → The window is broken.
- *El café está preparado.* → The coffee is prepared.
- *Los niños están dormidos.* → The children are asleep.
- *La mesa está puesta.* → The table is set.

**Rule:** *Estar* + *participle* emphasizes **state** rather than the **action** itself.

## 6) Using “Ser” with Participles (Passive Voice)

When used with *ser*, the participle expresses the **passive voice** — showing who or what *performed* the action.

### Formula:

**ser + participle + por + agent**

### Example

*El libro fue escrito por García Márquez.*

*La canción fue compuesta por Shakira.*

*Los cuadros fueron pintados por Picasso.*

### Translation

The book was written by García Márquez.

The song was composed by Shakira.

The paintings were painted by Picasso.

With *ser*, the participle must **agree with the noun** in **gender and number**, just like with *estar*.

## 7) Using Participles Alone as Adjectives

Participles can function as **stand-alone adjectives** without *ser* or *estar*.

### Examples:

- *los niños dormidos* → the sleeping children
- *una persona cansada* → a tired person
- *una puerta cerrada* → a closed door
- *una ciudad destruida* → a destroyed city
- *una mujer sorprendida* → a surprised woman

Here, the participle describes the **noun’s state or characteristic**, not an action.

## 8) Participles vs. Adjectives from Verbs

Some participles have developed into **permanent adjectives** — they describe personality or state even if no action is implied.

Verb	Participle (Adjectival)	Meaning
cansar	cansado	tired

preocupar	preocupado	worried
aburrir	aburrido	bored / boring
interesar	interesado	interested
sorprender	sorprendido	surprised
confundir	confundido	confused
vestir	vestido	dressed
casar	casado	married

### Examples:

- *Estoy cansado.* → I'm tired.
- *Ella está casada.* → She's married.
- *Los estudiantes están aburridos.* → The students are bored.

## 9) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct participle and form it to agree in gender and number.

1. Las ventanas están \_\_\_\_\_ (cerrar).
2. Los niños están \_\_\_\_\_ (cansar).
3. El libro fue \_\_\_\_\_ (escribir) por Cervantes.
4. Las tareas están \_\_\_\_\_ (hacer).
5. La casa está \_\_\_\_\_ (limpiar).

### Answers:

1. cerradas
2. cansados
3. escrito
4. hechas
5. limpia

## 10) Practice: Translate

1. The door is open.
2. The dishes are washed.
3. The problem is solved.

4. The students are tired.
5. The letters were written by my grandmother.

### Answers:

1. La puerta está abierta.
2. Los platos están lavados.
3. El problema está resuelto.
4. Los estudiantes están cansados.
5. Las cartas fueron escritas por mi abuela.

## 11) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Wrong	Correct	Why
<i>Las puertas están cerrar.</i>	<i>Las puertas están cerradas.</i>	Must use participle as adjective.
<i>He abiertas las ventanas.</i>	<i>He abierto las ventanas.</i>	With <i>haber</i> , no agreement.
<i>Los platos están lavados.</i>	Correct!	Agreement in gender and number.
<i>La comida fue preparar.</i>	<i>La comida fue preparada.</i>	Passive voice requires participle.
<i>Las ventanas están abridos.</i>	<i>Las ventanas están abiertas.</i>	Irregular participle form.

## 12) Quick Reference Chart

Function	Formula	Agreement	Example	Meaning
As adjective	participle alone	Yes	<i>puerta cerrada</i>	closed door
With <i>estar</i>	<i>estar</i> + participle	Yes	<i>está abierta</i>	is open (state)
With <i>ser</i>	<i>ser</i> + participle	Yes	<i>fue escrita por...</i>	was written by...
With <i>haber</i>	<i>haber</i> + participle	No	<i>he abierto</i>	I have opened

## Why Participles as Adjectives Matter

Using participles as adjectives helps learners:

- Describe **conditions and results** naturally (*la puerta está abierta*)

- Form **passive voice** correctly (*fue escrita por...*)
- Build **rich, descriptive language** (*niños dormidos, personas cansadas*)
- Understand how **verb forms connect to adjectives**, deepening grammatical awareness

They're a bridge between **verb and adjective**, adding fluency, precision, and variety to Spanish communication.

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