

## Por vs. Para

(Two Words That Mean “For” — But Not the Same!)

Spanish uses two different words—**por** and **para**—that can both translate to “for” in English, but they express **very different ideas**. Choosing the correct one depends on the **reason, purpose, or context** of the action.

A helpful way to think about them is:

**Para** → destination, purpose, goal (*toward* something)

**Por** → cause, means, movement, exchange (*because of* something)

Understanding the distinction between *por* and *para* helps students communicate intentions and explanations clearly and naturally.

### 1) Para — Destination, Purpose, or Goal

Use **para** when you’re talking about:

- a **destination** (toward a place or goal)
- a **purpose** or **intended use**
- a **deadline**
- or a **recipient**

**The “P.E.R.F.E.C.T.” acronym helps you remember:**

Letter	Meaning	Example
<b>P</b>	Purpose / goal (“in order to”)	<i>Estudio <b>para</b> aprender.</i> → I study <b>in order to</b> learn.
<b>E</b>	Effect	<i>Trabajo <b>para</b> ganar dinero.</i> → I work <b>to earn</b> money.
<b>R</b>	Recipient	<i>Este regalo es <b>para</b> ti.</i> → This gift is <b>for</b> you.
<b>F</b>	Future / deadline	<i>La tarea es <b>para</b> mañana.</i> → The homework is <b>for</b> tomorrow.
<b>E</b>	Employment	<i>Trabajo <b>para</b> una escuela.</i> → I work <b>for</b> a school.
<b>C</b>	Comparison	<i>Para un niño, lee muy bien.</i> → <b>For</b> a child, he reads very well.

**T** Toward / destination *Salgo **para** Madrid.* → I'm leaving **for** Madrid.

### Other examples:

- *Voy a la tienda **para** comprar pan.* → I'm going to the store **to buy** bread.
- *Este vaso es **para** agua.* → This glass is **for** water.
- *Necesito el proyecto **para** el viernes.* → I need the project **by Friday**.

## 2) Por — Cause, Method, Movement, or Exchange

Use **por** when you're talking about:

- **how** something happens
- **why** something happens (reason or cause)
- **movement through** time or space
- **exchange, duration, or agent** of an action

### The "A.T.R.A.C.T.E.D." acronym helps you remember:

Letter	Meaning	Example
<b>A</b>	Around a place	<i>Caminamos <b>por</b> el parque.</i> → We walk <b>around</b> the park.
<b>T</b>	Through / along / by	<i>Paso <b>por</b> tu casa.</i> → I pass <b>by</b> your house.
<b>R</b>	Reason / cause	<i>Estoy cansado <b>por</b> trabajar tanto.</i> → I'm tired <b>because of</b> working so much.
<b>A</b>	After (going for something)	<i>Voy al supermercado <b>por</b> pan.</i> → I'm going <b>for</b> bread.
<b>C</b>	Cost / exchange	<i>Pagué diez euros <b>por</b> el libro.</i> → I paid ten euros <b>for</b> the book.
<b>T</b>	Thanks / gratitude	<i>Gracias <b>por</b> tu ayuda.</i> → Thanks <b>for</b> your help.
<b>E</b>	Exchange / substitution	<i>Sustituyó a Juan <b>por</b> Pedro.</i> → He substituted Juan <b>for</b> Pedro.
<b>D</b>	Duration / time period	<i>Vivimos allí <b>por</b> cinco años.</i> → We lived there <b>for</b> five years.
<b>M</b>	Means / manner	<i>Viajamos <b>por</b> avión.</i> → We travel <b>by</b> plane.
<b>P</b>	Passive voice (by)	<i>Fue escrito <b>por</b> Cervantes.</i> → It was written <b>by</b> Cervantes.

### Other examples:

- *Lo hice **por** ti.* → I did it **because of / for** you.
- *Te cambio mi postre **por** tu fruta.* → I'll trade you my dessert **for** your fruit.
- *Hablamos **por** teléfono.* → We talk **by** phone.
- *Dormí **por** ocho horas.* → I slept **for** eight hours.

## 3) Por vs. Para: Side-by-Side Comparison

	<b>Por</b>	<b>Para</b>
<b>Meaning</b>		
<b>Cause / Goal</b>	Reason / because of	Purpose / in order to
Example	<i>Lo hice <b>por</b> ti.</i> → I did it <b>because of</b> you.	<i>Lo hice <b>para</b> ti.</i> → I did it <b>for</b> you (intended for you).
<b>Movement</b>	Through / along / by	Toward / to
Example	<i>Caminamos <b>por</b> el parque.</i>	<i>Salimos <b>para</b> el parque.</i>
<b>Time</b>	Duration	Deadline
Example	<i>Estudí <b>por</b> dos horas.</i>	<i>La tarea es <b>para</b> mañana.</i>
<b>Action</b>	Means / method	Goal / effect
Example	<i>Lo mandé <b>por</b> correo.</i>	<i>Trabajo <b>para</b> ganar dinero.</i>
<b>Exchange</b>	Substitute / trade	Recipient
Example	<i>Pagué cinco dólares <b>por</b> el libro.</i>	<i>El regalo es <b>para</b> mi madre.</i>
<b>Agent</b>	By (passive)	—
Example	<i>Fue escrito <b>por</b> García Márquez.</i>	—

## 4) Expressions with *Por*

<b>Expression</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>por favor</b>	please	<i>Por favor, ayúdame.</i>
<b>por ejemplo</b>	for example	<i>Por ejemplo, los lunes estudio.</i>
<b>por eso</b>	that's why	<i>Estoy cansado; <b>por eso</b>, no salgo.</i>
<b>por fin</b>	finally	<i>Por fin terminó la película.</i>
<b>por supuesto</b>	of course	<i>Por supuesto que sí.</i>
<b>por lo general</b>	generally	<i>Por lo general, estudio por la noche.</i>
<b>por todas partes</b>	everywhere	<i>Hay flores por todas partes.</i>
<b>por primera vez</b>	for the first time	<i>Visité España por primera vez en 2022.</i>

## 5) Expressions with *Para*

Expression	Meaning	Example
<b>para siempre</b>	forever	<i>Te recordaré para siempre.</i>
<b>para variar</b>	for a change	<i>Salimos temprano, para variar.</i>
<b>para entonces</b>	by that time	<i>Para entonces ya habremos llegado.</i>
<b>para mí / ti / él</b>	in my / your / his opinion	<i>Para mí, es importante.</i>
<b>no estar para bromas</b>	not in the mood for jokes	<i>No estoy para bromas hoy.</i>

## 6) Practice: Choose *Por* or *Para*

1. Este regalo es \_\_\_ ti.
2. Gracias \_\_\_ todo.
3. Caminamos \_\_\_ la playa.
4. Tengo que terminar el trabajo \_\_\_ mañana.
5. Estudio \_\_\_ ser médico.
6. Pagamos veinte euros \_\_\_ la cena.
7. Viajamos \_\_\_ tren.
8. Salimos \_\_\_ México el sábado.

### Answers:

1. para
2. por
3. por
4. para
5. para
6. por
7. por
8. para

## 7) Practice: Translate

1. I worked for three hours.
2. This letter is for you.
3. We walk through the park.
4. I study in order to pass.
5. Thank you for your help.
6. The book was written by Borges.

### Answers:

1. Trabajé **por** tres horas.
2. Esta carta es **para** ti.
3. Caminamos **por** el parque.
4. Estudio **para** aprobar.
5. Gracias **por** tu ayuda.
6. El libro fue escrito **por** Borges.

## 8) Quick Summary Chart

**Por = because of, by, through Para = in order to, toward, for**

Reason or cause

Purpose or goal

Duration of time

Deadline or specific time

Movement through / by

Destination or direction

Exchange / cost

Recipient

Means (by, via)

Employment

Passive voice (by)

Comparison / opinion

## Why *Por* and *Para* Matter

Mastering *por* and *para* helps learners:

- Express **purpose, motivation, direction, and cause** accurately
- Avoid direct English translation errors
- Sound more **natural, fluent, and precise**
- [Understand authentic Spanish speech and writing](#), where both are used constantly

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