

Spanish Grammar – The Verb *Gustar* (To Like)

In Spanish, the verb **gustar** works differently than the English verb “to like.” Instead of saying that a person *likes* something, **gustar** literally means “**to be pleasing.**” This means the **thing that is liked** becomes the **subject**, and the **person who likes it** becomes the **indirect object**.

So rather than saying “I like pizza,” Spanish expresses the idea as: “**Pizza is pleasing to me.**” → ***Me gusta la pizza.***

Understanding this structure helps students use *gustar* accurately and opens the door to other similar [verbs in Spanish](#).

1. The Structure of “Gustar”

The basic formula is:

(Indirect Object Pronoun) + (Verb Gustar) + (Thing Being Liked)

Indirect Object Pronoun Meaning

me	to me
te	to you (informal)
le	to him / to her / to you (formal)
nos	to us
os	to you all (Spain)
les	to them / to you all

2. The Two Main Forms of “Gustar”

Since *gustar* agrees with the **thing being liked**, not the person, it usually appears in only two forms in the present tense:

Form	Use	Example
gusta	when what’s liked is singular, or a verb	<i>Me gusta el chocolate.</i> → I like chocolate. <i>Me gusta leer.</i> → I like to read.
gustan	when what’s liked is plural	<i>Me gustan los gatos.</i> → I like cats.

Key Point:

- The verb agrees with the **thing liked** (*el chocolate / los gatos*), not with the **person** (*me*).

3. Examples by Pronoun

Pronoun	Example	Translation
me	<i>Me gusta la música.</i>	I like music.
te	<i>¿Te gustan los deportes?</i>	Do you like sports?
le	<i>A ella le gusta el arte.</i>	She likes art.
nos	<i>Nos gusta bailar.</i>	We like to dance.
os	<i>¿Os gusta el helado?</i>	Do you all like ice cream? (Spain)
les	<i>A ellos les gustan los libros.</i>	They like books.

Tip: The prepositional phrase (*A mí, A ti, A ella, etc.*) is often added for clarity or emphasis.

4. Adding Emphasis or Clarity

Because *le* and *les* can refer to several people (he, she, you, they), Spanish often includes a clarifying phrase:

Emphatic Phrase	Example	Translation
A mí	<i>A mí me gusta el café.</i>	I like coffee.
A ti	<i>A ti te gustan los perros.</i>	You like dogs.
A él / A ella	<i>A ella le gusta cantar.</i>	She likes to sing.
A nosotros	<i>A nosotros nos gusta el verano.</i>	We like summer.
A ellos	<i>A ellos les gusta viajar.</i>	They like to travel.

The pronoun (*me, te, le, nos, les*) **must still appear**, even if you add the clarifying phrase.

You can't say *A mí gusta el café* — it must be *A mí **me** gusta el café*.

5. Gustar + Verb Infinitive

When you like doing something, use **gustar + infinitive**.

The verb stays in its **singular form (gusta)** because the action itself is singular.

Examples:

- Me gusta leer. → I like to read.
- Te gusta bailar. → You like to dance.
- Nos gusta estudiar español. → We like to study Spanish.
- ¿Les gusta viajar? → Do they like to travel?

6. Gustar with Nouns

When using nouns, *gusta* or *gustan* must agree with the number of the thing(s) you like.

Examples:

- Me gusta el café. → I like coffee.
- Me gustan los libros. → I like books.
- ¿Te gusta la escuela? → Do you like school?
- Nos gustan los animales. → We like animals.

7. Other Verbs Like “Gustar”

Several other [Spanish verbs](#) work the same way as *gustar* — they use the same indirect object structure.

Verb	Meaning	Example
encantar	to love / to be delighted by	<i>Me encanta la música.</i> → I love music.
interesar	to interest	<i>Nos interesa la historia.</i> → History interests us.
importar	to matter	<i>¿Te importa?</i> → Does it matter to you?
fascinar	to fascinate	<i>A ella le fascinan los animales.</i> → Animals fascinate her.
molestar	to bother	<i>Me molesta el ruido.</i> → The noise bothers me.
doler (o→ue)	to hurt	<i>Me duele la cabeza.</i> → My head hurts.

These follow the exact same pattern as *gustar* — the thing is the subject, and the person is the indirect object.

8. Practice: Fill in the Blanks

1. A mí _____ el helado. (gustar)
2. ¿A ti _____ las películas románticas? (gustar)
3. A ella _____ bailar y cantar. (gustar)
4. A nosotros _____ los perros. (gustar)
5. A ellos _____ viajar. (gustar)

Answers: gusta, gustan, gusta, gustan, gusta

9. Why “Gustar” Matters

Understanding *gustar* unlocks a new level of communication. It lets you express:

- **Likes and dislikes**
- **Preferences and interests**
- **Reactions and feelings**

Mastering *gustar* also helps you understand other common verbs that share the same structure.

With *gustar*, learners can start forming **authentic, natural sentences** that express personal opinions — one of the first steps toward confident communication.

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