

Ser & Estar
Saber & Conocer
Study Guide
Test
3/2/20

The Verbs “to know”: *Ser* vs. *Estar*

Although the Spanish verbs “ser” and “estar” both mean “to be,” they are used quite differently. In very broad terms, “ser” is used to describe conditions or situations that do not tend to change. “Estar” describes conditions that tend to be temporary, and it also indicates location.

Ser expresses:	Estar signifies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ A subject’s physical characteristics, personality traits, or conditions that generally do not change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mi perro Sparky es pequeño y divertido.</i> <i>My dog Sparky is little and fun.</i> ○ <i>Los chicos en el equipo de fútbol son atléticos y agresivos.</i> <i>The boys on the soccer team are athletic and aggressive.</i> ♦ Where a subject is from (<i>ser de</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>La actriz Penelope Cruz es de España.</i> <i>The actress Penelope Cruz is from Spain.</i> ○ <i>Mis padres son de Miami.</i> <i>My parents are from Miami.</i> ♦ A subject’s profession, nationality, religious or political affiliations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mis abuelos son profesores.</i> <i>My grandparents are teachers.</i> ○ <i>La cantante Shakira es colombiana.</i> <i>The singer Shakira es Colombian.</i> ○ <i>¿Es católico el Papa?</i> <i>Is the Pope Catholic?</i> ♦ The date, the day of the week, and the time; a day of some particular significance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Hoy es jueves, el 6 de agosto, y también, es nuestro aniversario.</i> <i>Today is Thursday, August 6, and also, it is our anniversary.</i> ○ <i>Son las dos y media.</i> <i>It is two o’clock.</i> ♦ Possession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>El vestido azul es de Juan.</i> <i>The blue suit is Juan’s.</i> ○ <i>El collar de oro es mío.</i> <i>The gold necklace is mine.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ A temporary feeling or mental state a subject is experiencing; some characteristic a subject displays that is not permanent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Estoy muy preocupada.</i> <i>I am very worried.</i> ○ <i>Estás muy bonita en ese traje de baño nuevo.</i> <i>You look very pretty in that new bathing suit.</i> ○ <i>El bebé está enfermo hoy.</i> <i>The baby is sick today.</i> ♦ Where a subject is located. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Emilio está en Colorado ahora.</i> <i>Emilio is in Colorado now.</i> ○ <i>Los restaurantes están muy cerca de mi casa.</i> <i>The restaurants are very near my house.</i> ○ <i>Estamos en la clase de química.</i> <i>We are in chemistry class.</i>

The verbs **conocer** and **saber** in Spanish frequently confuse English speakers since they both mean **To Know**. However, these verbs are NOT interchangeable since they have different meanings and are used depending on the context.

When to use **conocer**

A) Conocer is used with knowing people or having an acquaintance with them. It means you are familiar with someone.

- Conozco a Juan.
means *I know Juan* (because I have met him in person).

Note that the preposition 'a' (known as personal a) is used when **conocer** is followed by a person (it's a direct object).

- Conozco **a** la maestra de inglés.

B) Conocer is also used for saying you have been to, visited or have knowledge about a place.

- Conozco Italia.
(means that I know about Italy since I have visited the country.)
- Diego conoce un buen lugar donde comer en ese pueblo.
Diego knows a good place to eat in that town.

C) Conocer can also mean to meet (for the first time).

- Es un gusto conocerlo. (*Nice to meet you*)
- Yo conocí a Eduardo en la conferencia el año pasado.

D) Conocer can be used in the negative to show that you don't know someone or haven't been somewhere.

- Mis padres no conocen a mi amiga.
My parents don't know (haven't met) my friend.
- Ella no conoce Londres.
She doesn't know (hasn't been to) London.

When to use **Saber**

A) Saber is also used when you know facts about certain information.

- Ella sabe quién va a ir a la reunión.
She knows who is going to the meeting.
- ¿Sabes que Angélica tiene dos hijos?
Did you know that Angelica has two sons?

B) You will often see the verb **saber** followed by *qué, quién, dónde, cuándo, cuál, por qué, cómo, que*.

- No sé qué almorzar hoy. (I don't know what to eat for lunch today.)
- Juana sabe cuándo viene su suegro. (Juana knows when her father in law is coming.)
- ¿Sabes dónde están mis llaves? (Do you know where my keys are at?)
- Ella sabe por qué estoy feliz. (She knows why I am happy.)
- Ellos saben cuál ejercicio tienen que hacer. (They know which exercise they need to do.)

C) saber is used with abilities and skills that are learned like Conducir (to drive), pintar (to paint) etc. To say you **know how to** do something, you use **saber + Infinitive**.

- ¿Sabes hablar portugués?
Do you know how to speak Portuguese?
- Mi hermana sabe conducir.
My sister knows how to drive.
- Ustedes saben hablar español.
You know how to speak Spanish.

D) Saber can also be used in the negative to show that you don't know something or are ignorant about something.

- No sé la dirección de tu departamento.
I don't know the address of your apartment.
- Mario no sabe nada de inglés.
Mario doesn't know any English.

Conocer vs. Saber

Compare:

- No conozco la capital de Francia.
(means I haven't been there)
- No sé cuál es la capital de Francia.
(means I don't know what the capital is)

In Summary

Basically the difference can be summarized as:

Conocer: To be familiar with (or met) a person or visited a place

Saber: To know a fact or information. To have the ability to do things (skills).