Por or para? ¿Por o para?

Spanish has two words for for. Both often come out as for in English, but they look in different directions. **para** looks ahead, to a goal. **por** looks at the cause behind something, or the road it takes. On this sheet **por** is pink and **para** is orange.

por

the cause and the road

why? which way? how? for how much? for how long?

the road you take, the reason that pushes you

para

the point of the arrow: the goal

what for? where to? who for? by when?

Fui **por** el parque **para** llegar antes.
I went through the park to get there sooner.

Pagué cinco euros **por** las flores **para** mi madre.
I paid five euros for the flowers for my mum.

Salimos **por** la mañana **para** Toledo.
We set off for Toledo in the morning.

por: the cause, or the road

cause	**por** la lluvia	why? the reason · because of the rain
path	**por** el parque	which way? through, along · through the park
exchange	**por** diez euros	swaps and prices · for ten euros
duration	**por** dos horas	for how long · for two hours
means	**por** teléfono	how it gets there · on the phone
agent	**por** Cervantes	who did it, in the passive · by Cervantes
per	**por** hora	each, a · an hour, per hour
behalf	**por** ti	for someone's sake, in their place · for you, for your sake
time	**por** la mañana	a rough time of day · in the morning

para: ahead, to a goal

purpose	**para** aprender	what for? in order to · to learn
destination	**para** Madrid	where to? heading for · for Madrid, towards Madrid
recipient	**para** ti	who for? who gets it · for you, it's yours
deadline	**para** el lunes	by when? · by Monday
opinion	**Para** mí	in whose view? · for me, in my view
comparison	**para** su edad	for what you'd expect · for his age

Stuck? Ask one question

What for, where to, who for or by when? Then it's **para**.

Why, which way, how, for how much or for how long? Then it's **por**.

English for is no help: Gracias **por** el café, thanks for the coffee. Un café **para** Ana, a coffee for Ana. Same English word, two Spanish ones. Pages 2 and 3 show every use with examples.

Para: looking ahead La meta

para points forward. Every use is the same picture: a goal in front of you. A purpose, a place you're heading for, a person who'll get something, a deadline, a point of view, or the standard you measure against.

Purpose

in order to: **para** + infinitive

Vine **para** ayudar.
I came to help.

Ahorro **para** un coche.
I'm saving for a car.

Te lo digo **para** que lo sepas.
I'm telling you so that you know.

para que takes the subjunctive: sepas, not sabes.

Destination

where you're heading

Salgo **para** Madrid mañana.
I leave for Madrid tomorrow.

¿Vas **para** casa?
Are you heading home?

El tren **para** Sevilla sale a las diez.
The train for Seville leaves at ten.

Voy a Madrid names the place. **para** adds the idea of heading that way.

Recipient

who it's for, who gets it

Es **para** ti.
It's for you.

Tengo un regalo **para** mi madre.
I've got a present for my mum.

Una mesa **para** dos.
A table for two.

Also who you work for: an employer. More on page 4.

Deadline

by when

Lo necesito **para** el lunes.
I need it by Monday.

Tengo que leerlo **para** mañana.
I have to read it for tomorrow.

Para entonces ya estaré en casa.
By then I'll be home.

A point in time ahead of you, the finish line.

Opinion

in someone's view

Para mí, es la mejor serie.
For me, it's the best show.

Para ella, el inglés es fácil.
To her, English is easy.

¿Qué es lo más importante **para** ti?
What matters most to you?

Careful: **Por** mí, vale means fine by me, I don't mind.

Comparison

for what you'd expect

Para ser niño, habla muy bien.
For a child, he speaks really well.

Hace frío **para** ser julio.
It's cold for July.

Es alto **para** su edad.
He's tall for his age.

Measured against what's normal for a child, for July, for his age.

in order to is para, never por. English often drops the in order: I came to help, Vine **para** ayudar. After ir and venir, a works too: Vine a ayudar. **por** + infinitive gives the reason instead: Me multaron **por** aparcar mal, I got fined for parking badly.

In shows you'll hear pa. In fast, casual speech **para** is often cut to pa, written pa' in subtitles: ¿Pa' qué?, what for? Me voy pa' casa, I'm off home. Say it if you like; write **para**.

Por: cause and road La causa y el camino

3 · nine uses, with examples

por looks at what's behind or along the way. The reason something happens, the way you go, what you give in exchange, how long it lasts, how it's sent, who did it, how many per something, whose sake it's for, and roughly when.

Cause
because of, the reason

No salimos **por** la lluvia.
We didn't go out because of the rain.

Gracias **por** todo.
Thanks for everything.

Estoy preocupada **por** ti.
I'm worried about you.

Through, along, around
the road

Paseamos **por** el parque.
We went for a walk in the park.

¿Hay una farmacia **por** aquí?
Is there a chemist's round here?

Entró **por** la ventana.
He got in through the window.

pasar **por**: drop by. Pásate **por** mi casa.

Exchange and price
for, in return for

Lo compré **por** diez euros.
I bought it for ten euros.

Cambié mi bici **por** una guitarra.
I swapped my bike for a guitar.

What you give, and what you get back.

How long
for, during

Estudié **por** dos horas.
I studied for two hours.

Se quedó **por** una semana.
She stayed for a week.

Often left out, or said with durante: Estudié dos horas. You'll hear **por** here more in Latin America.

Means
how it gets there

Hablamos **por** teléfono.
We spoke on the phone.

Te lo mando **por** correo.
I'll send it to you by email.

Lo dijeron **por** la radio.
They said it on the radio.

Travel takes en: en tren, en coche.

By whom
the one who did it, in the passive

El Quijote fue escrito **por** Cervantes.
Don Quixote was written by Cervantes.

La casa fue diseñada **por** una arquitecta joven.
The house was designed by a young architect.

Speech prefers the active: Cervantes escribió el Quijote.

Per
each, a

Iba a cien kilómetros **por** hora.
He was doing a hundred kilometres an hour.

Son diez euros **por** persona.
It's ten euros a head.

Voy al gimnasio dos veces **por** semana.
I go to the gym twice a week.

dos veces a la semana is just as common.

For someone's sake
or in their place

Hazlo **por** mí.
Do it for me, for my sake.

Firmé **por** mi hermano.
I signed on my brother's behalf.

Hablo **por** todos.
I'm speaking for everyone.

Time of day
roughly when

Trabajo **por** la mañana.
I work in the mornings.

Nos vemos **por** la tarde.
See you in the afternoon.

Vienen **por** Navidad.
They're coming around Christmas.

With a clock time it's de: a las ocho de la mañana. Much of Latin America also says en la mañana.

por + infinitive: still to do

Queda mucho **por** hacer.
There's still a lot to do.

Eso está **por** ver.
That remains to be seen.

Set phrases Frases hechas

4 · you'll hear these in every show

por favor please
Un café, **por** favor.
A coffee, please.

por fin at last
¡**Por** fin! Ya estás aquí.
At last! You're here.

por eso that's why
Estaba cansada, **por** eso no vine.
I was tired, that's why I didn't come.

por supuesto of course
¿Puedo pasar? **Por** supuesto.
Can I come in? Of course.

por ejemplo for example
Come más fruta, **por** ejemplo manzanas.
Eat more fruit, apples for example.

por cierto by the way
Por cierto, ¿has visto a Luis?
By the way, have you seen Luis?

por si acaso just in case
Llévate un paraguas, **por** si acaso.
Take an umbrella, just in case.

por lo menos at least
Por lo menos llama a tu madre.
At least ring your mum.

por lo visto apparently
Por lo visto, se van a casar.
Apparently they're getting married.

por suerte luckily
Por suerte, nadie se hizo daño.
Luckily, nobody got hurt.

por ahora for now
Por ahora, todo bien.
So far, so good.

por casualidad by any chance
¿Tienes un cargador, **por** casualidad?
Have you got a charger, by any chance?

para siempre for ever
Te querré **para** siempre.
I'll love you for ever.

para nada not at all
¿Te molesta? **Para** nada.
Does it bother you? Not at all.

para colmo to top it all
Perdí el tren y, **para** colmo, empezó a llover.
I missed the train and, to top it all, it started to rain.

¿Por qué? or ¿Para qué? Why, or what for?

¿**Por** qué estudias español?
Why are you learning Spanish? What's the reason?
Porque me encantan las series. Because I love the shows.

¿**Para** qué estudias español?
What are you learning Spanish for? What's the goal?
Para entender las series sin subtítulos. To understand shows without subtitles.

Four spellings: ¿**por** qué?, two words with an accent, asks why. porque, one word, answers: because. ¿**para** qué? asks what for. el porqué is the reason: quiero saber el porqué, I want to know the reason.

Same sentence, different meaning

Lo hice **por** ti.
I did it for you: for your sake, because of you.

Lo hice **para** ti.
I made it for you: it's yours.

hacer is both do and make.

Trabajo **por** mi familia.
I work for my family: they're why I do it.

Trabajo **para** una empresa.
I work for a company: my employer.

Lo hago **por** dinero.
I do it for the money: money is the reason.

Lo hago **para** ganar dinero.
I do it to earn money: that's the goal.

Both are fine, from two angles: the reason behind, or the goal ahead.

Practice Práctica

5 · twenty lines · answers at the bottom

How: fill each gap with **por** or **para**. Say the line out loud, then check the answers in small print at the bottom.

1 Gracias _____ la ayuda.
Thanks for the help.

2 Toma, este regalo es _____ ti.
Here, this present is for you.

3 Estudio mucho _____ aprobar.
I study a lot to pass.

4 Paseamos _____ la playa.
We went for a walk along the beach.

5 Lo vendí _____ cien euros.
I sold it for a hundred euros.

6 Hay que terminarlo _____ el jueves.
It has to be finished by Thursday.

7 Mañana a las seis salgo _____ el aeropuerto.
Tomorrow at six I'm off to the airport.

8 Te llamo _____ teléfono esta noche.
I'll ring you tonight.

9 _____ mí, el verano es la mejor estación.
For me, summer is the best season.

10 Siempre leo _____ la noche.
I always read at night.

11 Vamos a cien kilómetros _____ hora.
We're doing a hundred kilometres an hour.

12 _____ ser extranjero, hablas muy bien.
For a foreigner, you speak really well.

13 Firmó _____ su madre, que estaba enferma.
He signed for his mum, who was ill.

14 Este libro fue escrito _____ una chica de dieciséis años.
This book was written by a sixteen year old girl.

15 Estuvimos en Roma _____ una semana.
We were in Rome for a week.

16 ¿Qué hay _____ cenar?
What's for dinner?

17 ¿ _____ qué no viniste ayer?
Why didn't you come yesterday?

18 Te cambio mi manzana _____ tu chocolate.
I'll swap you my apple for your chocolate.

19 Tiene que estar listo _____ las cinco.
It has to be ready by five.

20 Te escribo _____ darte las gracias.
I'm writing to thank you.

Answers

1 **por** the reason you're thankful
2 **para** who gets it
3 **para** in order to
4 **por** along: the road
5 **por** a price
6 **para** a deadline
7 **para** where you're heading
8 **por** how: the means
9 **Para** an opinion
10 **por** a part of the day
11 **por** per
12 **Para** for what you'd expect
13 **por** in her place
14 **por** who did it
15 **por** how long, or just leave it out
16 **para** what it's for
17 **Por** asking the reason
18 **por** a swap
19 **para** by when
20 **para** in order to

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in subtitles to see what it means.