

Choosing Your Manner of Being: Ser or Estar?

Perhaps the most difficult part about using **ser** and **estar** correctly in a sentence is choosing which one to use. The concept of two different types of being — unchanging essential being and being that changes depending on various conditions — is easy enough to grasp, but when you encounter different types of being, trying to understand them as one or the other can be quite challenging.

This section provides some additional guidelines that can help you decide whether to use **ser** or **estar**.

Deciding when to use ser

You already know that you use the verb **ser** to describe the unchanging characteristics of a person, place, or thing, but what exactly does that mean? The following lists provide additional details to help you identify situations in which to use **ser**:

Origin and Nationality

Ella es de España. = She is from Spain.

Ella es española. = She is Spanish.

The Four P's: Personality, Physical Attributes, Profession, and Possession

Él es divertido. = He is fun.

Susana es baja. = Susana is short.

Mi padre es un médico. = My father is a doctor.

El carro azul es mío. = The blue car is mine.

Date and Time

Hoy es el seis de enero. = Today is of January 6th.

Son las nueve de la noche. = It is 9 p.m.

Relationships

Ellos son mis padres. = They are my parents.

Rafael es mi mejor amigo. = Rafael is my best friend.

Deciding when to use estar

You know to use the verb **estar** to describe the changing characteristics of a person, place, or thing, but what exactly does that mean? The following list provides additional details to help you identify situations in which to use **estar**:

Location

Su casa está en la avenida Juárez. = Her house is on Juarez Avenue.

El cine está cerca del centro. = The cinema is near the center of town.

Mood and Physical Condition

El profesor está enojado. = The teacher is angry.

Mi madre está emocionada. = My mother is excited.

Los estudiantes están aburridos. = The students are bored.

La señorita Martínez está enferma. = Miss Martinez is sick.

Choose the correct form of SER and ESTAR.

- a) Mi coche _____ nuevo pero ahora _____ en la casa.
- b) Juan _____ muy tranquilo pero ahora _____ enfermo.
- c) Mis amigos _____ argentinos pero hoy _____ en España.
- d) Ella _____ joven (Young) pero _____ cansada.
- e) María _____ camarera (waiter) en un hotel que _____ detrás de la universidad.
- f) Mis hermanos _____ en España y ellos _____ muy emocionados.
- g) Vuestro coche _____ rojo pero ahora _____ sucio (dirty).
- h) Agra _____ una ciudad (city) antigua y ellos _____ aquí (there) hoy.
- i) Pablo _____ un escritor famoso y _____ triste ahora.
- j) Los jugadores _____ cansados y ellos _____ en sus habitaciones.