



GENDER OF NOUNS

Notes:

1. The written lesson is below.
2. Links to quizzes, tests, etc. are to the left.

A noun is a word used to denote a person, place, thing, or idea.

Person: John, girl, dentist

Place: garden, university, Venezuela

Thing: book, car, tomato

Idea: liberty, despair, intelligence

In Spanish, all nouns are either masculine or feminine.

Masculine	Feminine
el chico	la chica
boy	girl
el jardín	la universidad
garden	university
el libro	la revista

book

magazine

el miedo**la libertad**

fear

liberty

The idea that nouns have gender seems perfectly natural when the noun stands for a living creature. This is because in English, living creatures often have different names, depending upon whether they are male or female.

Masculine**Feminine**

man

woman

tiger

tigress

aviator

aviatrix

The following Spanish nouns all denote living creatures.

el gato

male cat

la gata

female cat

el perro

male dog

la perra

female dog

el chico

boy

la chica

girl

el abuelo

grandfather

la abuela

grandmother

How are all of these masculine nouns alike?

el gato

el perro

el chico

el abuelo

Hint: look at both the beginning and the ending of each line.

How are all of these feminine nouns alike?

la gata

la perra

la chica

la abuela

Hint: look at both the beginning and the ending of each line.

“El” and “la” both mean “the.”

el chico (the boy)

la chica (the girl)

el perro (the male dog)

la gata (the female cat)

Note: These two words (el, la) are called “definite articles.” You will learn more about them in a later lesson.

What do you notice about the last letter of these nouns?

Masculine	Feminine
gato	gata
perro	perra
chico	chica
abuelo	abuela

Nouns that end in -o are usually masculine. Nouns that end in -a are usually feminine. Notice the word **usually**! There are exceptions to these two rules and you will soon be learning them.

One cannot predict the gender of a noun that stands for a non-living thing. Try to predict whether the Spanish words for the following things are masculine or feminine:

Masculine or feminine?

book

house

money

window

One cannot predict the gender of a noun, except in the case of living creatures. Do not try to analyze the nature of the object, looking for some inherent masculinity or femininity. It won't work!

Take a guess. Do you think the Spanish word for “dress” is masculine or feminine? You might expect it to be feminine, since a dress is an article of clothing worn by females.

Actually, the word for “dress” is a masculine word:

el vestido

Take another guess. Do you think the Spanish word for “necktie” is masculine or feminine? You might expect it to be masculine, since a necktie is an article of clothing worn by males.

Actually, the word for “necktie” is a feminine word:

la corbata

When you learn a new noun, you should also learn its definite article (el, la). There are several reasons for this:

- Because you cannot predict the gender of most nouns.
- Because not every noun that ends in -o is masculine, and not every noun that ends in -a is feminine.
- Because many nouns end in letters other than o or a.
- Because the definite article (el, la) is your clue as to whether a noun is masculine or feminine.

Why do you care whether a noun is masculine or feminine?

Good question! As you shall see in upcoming lessons, Spanish places a great deal more emphasis on gender than does English.

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