

Form Language

[ODK Collect](#) and [XLSForm](#) support multi-language forms.

To add additional languages to your XLSForm, add columns of user-facing content with language-specific columns. All columns representing user-facing text or media can be multi-lingual:

- `label`
- `hint`
- `image`
- `audio`
- `video`
- `constraint_message`
- `required_message`

Each language column adds two colons and the language name, followed by the [two letter language code](#) in parentheses. For example:

- `label::English (en)`
- `hint::French (fr)`
- `image::Español (es)`

Note

The text shown in Collect's user interface (e.g., buttons, menus, dialogs) is controlled by application, not the form. See [user interface settings](#) for how to change the interface language.

XLSForm — Single language

survey			
type	name	label	hint
select_multiple colors	color_prefs	What colors do you like?	Select three.

choices		
list_name	name	label
colors	red	Red
colors	blue	Blue
colors	yellow	Yellow
colors	green	Green
colors	orange	Orange
colors	purple	Purple

XLSForm — Multiple languages

survey					
type	name	label::English (en)	label::Español (es)	hint::English (en)	hint::Español (es)
select_multiple colors	color_prefs	What colors do you like?	¿Qué colores te gustan?	Select three.	Selecione tres.

choices

list_name	name	label::English (en)	label::Español (es)
colors	red	Red	Rojo
colors	blue	Blue	Azul
colors	yellow	Yellow	Amarillo
colors	green	Green	Verde
colors	orange	Orange	Anaranjado
colors	purple	Purple	Púrpura

form-functions

What colors do you like?

Select three.

☐ Red

☐ Blue

☐ Yellow

☐ Green

☐ Orange

☐ Purple

form-functions

¿Qué colores te gustan?

Selecione tres.

☐ Rojo

☐ Azul

☐ Amarillo

☐ Verde

☐ Anaranjado

☐ Púrpura

Warning

There is no fallback language.

If you have specified languages for a column, the non-specific version of that column will be treated as if it were a separate language. (The Change Language menu will list it as `Default` .)

To avoid this, all columns that can be made multi-lingual need to be created as such for a multi-language form. For example, even if using the same image for a question prompt you will need a `image::*` column for each language. However, you may provide the same media filename for each.

Blank cells in a language-specific column will be blank in the form when that language is active, even if the "default" column has a value.

XLSForm
—
Multiple languages with media example

survey

type	name	label::English (en)	label::Español (es)	image::Español (es)	image::English (en)
text	coffee	Do you want coffee?	¿Quieres café?	mug_es.jpg	mug_en.jpg


Switching languages

If your form defines multiple languages and you know most of your data collectors will need to use the same one, you should set an explicit default language. You can do this in your XLSForm's **settings** sheet:

XLSForm — setting a default language

settings		
form_id	version	default_language
my_form	2024050301	Español (es)

Otherwise, Collect will default to the first language defined.

To switch between available languages on a form, go to  **Change Language**.



Note

Collect will remember the last language you switched to on a form, even if you switch device language.

Changing the form's language display will not change the device language. If you are in a context that requires switching languages often, make sure you know where to do this in your device's Settings menu.