

Direct Object Pronouns: Part I

The object that directly receives the action of the verb is called the direct object.

Bill hit the **ball**.

"Ball" receives the action of the verb "hit."

Sherry reads the **book**.

"Book" receives the action of the verb "reads."

The direct object can also be a person.

Sherry hit **Bill**. (DO=Bill)

The direct object answers the question "what?" or "whom?" with regard to what the subject of the sentence is doing.

Bill hit the ball.

Bill hit **what**?

Bill hit the **ball**.

Sherry hit Bill.

Sherry hit **whom**?

Sherry hit **Bill**.

Often, it is desirable to replace the name of the direct object with a pronoun.

Example 1:

Paul bought the flowers. He took the flowers home and gave the flowers to his wife.

Example 2:

Paul bought the flowers. He took **them** home and gave **them** to his wife.

When the pronoun replaces the name of the direct object, use the following pronouns:

me (me)

te (you-familiar)

lo, la (him, her, it, you-formal)

nos (us)

os (you-all-familiar)

los, las (them, you-all-formal)

In an affirmative statement with one verb, the direct object pronoun comes immediately before the conjugated verb.

Tengo = I have

Tengo la pluma. = I have the pen.

La tengo. = I have it.

The pronoun (la) comes immediately before the verb (tengo).

Notice that if the subject of the sentence changes, this does not affect the direct object pronoun.

Juan la tiene.

Juan tiene = John has

Juan tiene la pluma. = John has the pen.

Juan la tiene. = John has it.

and

María la tiene.

María tiene = Mary has

María tiene la pluma. = Mary has the pen.

María la tiene. = Mary has it.

However, if the direct object of the sentence changes to a masculine noun, the masculine pronoun must be used.

Juan lo tiene.

Juan tiene = John has

Juan tiene el libro. = John has the book.

Juan lo tiene. = John has it.

but

Juan la tiene.

Juan tiene = John has

Juan tiene la pluma. = John has the pen.

Juan la tiene. = John has it.

Likewise, if the direct object of the sentence changes from singular to plural, the plural pronoun must be used.

Juan lo tiene.

Juan tiene = John has

Juan tiene el libro. = John has the book.

Juan lo tiene. = John has it.

but

María los tiene.

María tiene = Mary has

María tiene los libros. = Mary has the books.

María los tiene. = Mary has them.

Look at how Spanish and English are different.

"Lo tengo" and "La tengo" BOTH mean "I have it."

Differences:

1. "It" has two forms in Spanish: lo, la
2. "Tengo" one word in Spanish = two words in English (I have)
3. The word order is different. In Spanish, the pronoun (lo, la) comes before the verb; in English, the pronoun (it) comes after the verb.

■ When you try to translate literally from English to Spanish, sometimes it works very well:

John eats the soup.

John = Juan

John eats = Juan come

John eats the = Juan come la

John eats the soup = Juan come la sopa.

Other times, direct translation doesn't work so well:

I eat the soup.

I = Yo

I eat = Yo como

I eat the = Yo como la

I eat the soup = Yo como la sopa.

Because "como" means "I eat," the word "yo" is redundant. A better translation might be:

I eat the soup. = Como la sopa.

■ Sometimes, when you try to translate literally, you run into much bigger problems:

I eat it. (the soup - la sopa)

I = Yo

I eat = Yo como

I eat it. = Yo como la.

This is completely incorrect!

The correct translation would be:

I eat it. (the soup) = La como.

■ As you can see, directly translating sentences with direct object pronouns doesn't work, so...don't do it! There is a better, easier way.

■ Learn to translate groups of words, rather than individual words. The first step is to learn to view two Spanish words as a single phrase.

Try to think of each line as a single phrase, not two separate words:

la como

lo como

la leo

lo leo

la veo

lo veo

la tengo

lo tengo

la compro

lo compro

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Read each line again. Before you do, glance at the translation beneath it. Then, read each line thinking of it as a phrase that has the same meaning as the English phrase below it.

la como

I eat it (feminine DO - la sopa, la comida, etc.)

lo como

I eat it (masculine DO - el pollo, el arroz, etc.)

la leo

I read it

lo leo

I read it

la veo

I see it

lo veo

I see it

la tengo

I have it

lo tengo

I have it

la compro

I buy it

lo compro

I buy it

In the previous examples, it is clear that the subject of the sentence is "I" because the verbs are all conjugated in the "yo" form. With other verb forms, it is often desirable to add a word to clarify the subject.

Juan la come. (la comida)	Juan eats it.
María lo tiene. (el libro)	María has it.
El chico la compra. (la pluma)	The boy buys it.
La chica lo ve. (el edificio)	The girl sees it.
Ustedes lo leen. (el periódico)	You-all read it.

Now, some examples of plural direct objects.

Juan come dos sándwiches	Los come. or Juan los come.
María tiene tres libros	Los tiene. or María los tiene.
El chico compra dos revistas	Las compra. or El chico las compra.
La chica ve dos coches	Los ve. or La chica los ve.
Ella compra dos televisiones	Las compra. or Ella las compra.
Tenemos dos mesas	Las tenemos. or Nosotros las tenemos.

■ Now, some examples where the direct object is a person.

I know you Te conozco.

She loves him Ella lo ama.

She loves me Ella me ama.

Juan sees her Juan la ve.

They call us Ellos nos llaman.

We call them Los llamamos.

■ Just as no one has ever learned to ride a bicycle by reading about it, neither will you learn to use direct object pronouns simply by reading this lesson. The key to success, as always, is to practice, practice, practice.