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Expressions Using the Spanish Verb 'Ir'

Meanings aren't always what you might expect

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Like its English counterpart "to go," the Spanish verb *ir* can be used with an incredible variety of meanings. The meanings of phrases using *ir* can't always be determined logically merely by knowing the meanings of the individual words, so they are best learned through actual use or memorization.

Using 'Ir A' as a Type of Future Tense

By far the most common expression using *ir* is ***ir a*** followed by an infinitive. For most purposes, it is the equivalent of the English "to go to" followed by a verb. Thus "*voy a estudiar*" means "I am going to study."

This use of *ir a* is extremely common in Spanish, so much so that in some parts of Latin America it is the de facto future tense. It even has a name—the periphrastic future. (Something periphrastic uses more than one word.) Where it is in common use, it all but replaces the standard or [conjugated future tense](#) in standard speech.

In other words, a sentence such as "*Vamos a comprar la casa*" can be translated as either "We are going to buy the house" or "We will buy the house."

Other Phrases Using 'Ir'

Many of the other expressions using *ir* are formed by following *ir* with a prepositional phrase. Following are some of the most common.

Keep in mind that some of the expressions here can also be translated literally. For example, while *ir de* has two idiomatic definitions given here, it can also be translated literally. For example: *Mi tía va de trabajo a trabajo*. (My aunt goes from job to job.)

***ir a* (or, less commonly, *ir para*) + destination:** to go to (a place).

Fuimos a la playa. (We went to the beach.)

Quienes fueron a España? (Who went to Spain?)

***ir en* + vehicle:** to travel by (type of vehicle). Less commonly, the preposition *por* can be used instead.

Voy en autobús. (I am traveling by bus.)

Nos iremos en taxi, porque no quisiera depender de nadie. (We'll go away by taxi, because we don't want to depend on anybody.)

ir para + infinitive: to go to verb, to go in order to verb, to go for the purpose of verb.

Vamos para conocer a mis padres. (We are going in order to meet my parents.)

Quiero ir para aprender español. (I want to go in order to learn Spanish.)

ir para + type of job or career: to go to become someone with the stated type of job.

Pablo va para médico. (Pablo is going to become a doctor.)

Debe ir para el candidato presidencial. (She should go become a presidential candidate.)

ir + gerund: to be doing something, usually with the connotation of doing so gradually or laboriously.

Voy aprendiendo la lección. (I am slowly learning the lesson.)

Él va construyendo la casa. (He is gradually building the house.)

ir tirando: to manage or get by.

Vamos tirando por mucha ayuda. (We're getting by with a lot of help.)

Ahora con la crisis las cosas están malas, pero vamos tirando. (Things are bad with the crisis now, but we'll manage.)

ir andando, ir corriendo: to walk, to run.

Va andando a la escuela. (He is walking to the school.)

Fue corriendo a la escuela. (He ran to the school.)

ir de: to be about or be the subject of (when said of a book, movie, speech, etc.)

"El señor de los anillos" va de un hobbit. ("The Lord of the Rings" is about a hobbit.)

"Romeo y Julieta" va de amor. ("Romeo and Juliet" is about love.)

ir de: to think of oneself as.

Roberto va de inteligente. (Roberto thinks he's smart.)

Los jóvenes de esa escuela siempre van de invencibles. (The teens at that school always think they're invincible.)

ir de, ir con: to be dressed in.

Él va con camisa blanca. (He is wearing a white shirt.)

Ella va de azul. (She is dressed in blue.)

ir de compras: to go shopping.

Fuimos de compras. (We went shopping.)

Es imprescindible que vaya de compras antes. (It is vital that he has gone shopping earlier.)

ir por: to search for, to go in search of, to go for.

Vamos por una casa nueva. (We're off in search of a new house.)

Mis hijos iban por un regalo para mí y ya no regresaron. (My children went to get a gift for me and still haven't come back.)

¿Cómo + indirect object pronoun + ir?: How goes it (for you, him, her, etc.)? This concept can be expressed colloquially in many ways.

¿Cómo te va? (How's it going?)

¿Cómo le va a él? (How's it going for him?)

irse por las ramas: to beat around the bush, to get sidetracked.

El testigo se fue por las ramas. (The witness beat around the bush.)

Ella solía siempre irse por las ramas y nunca llegar al grano. (She would always ramble on and never get to the point.)