

How to Greet People in Spanish (¿Doy dos besos o doy la mano?)

Cada frase del episodio en español, con su traducción al inglés justo debajo.

INTRODUCTION (ENGLISH)

Hi, and welcome back to Poco a Poco Podcast — español fácil, with English explanations.

Hi, and welcome back to Poco a Poco Podcast — español fácil, with English explanations.

Today we're talking about something that trips up almost every visitor to Spain.

Today we're talking about something that trips up almost every visitor to Spain.

The first five seconds of meeting someone.

The first five seconds of meeting someone.

Do you shake hands?

Do you shake hands?

Do you go in for a kiss?

Do you go in for a kiss?

How many kisses?

How many kisses?

Which side first?

Which side first?

I still remember getting this wrong.

I still remember getting this wrong.

More than once.

More than once.

And today, I'm not doing this alone.

And today, I'm not doing this alone.

For the first time on the podcast, I'm joined by a friend of mine.

For the first time on the podcast, I'm joined by a friend of mine.

Isabel.

Isabel.

She's from Spain, and she's lived here her whole life.

She's from Spain, and she's lived here her whole life.

Which means she's going to correct me.

Which means she's going to correct me.

A lot.

A lot.

Quick thing before we start.

Quick thing before we start.

If you want the five free study documents for this episode, the link is in the episode description.

If you want the five free study documents for this episode, the link is in the episode description.

Okay.

Okay.

Let's get into it.

Let's get into it.

CUERPO (ESPAÑOL → ENGLISH)

Bueno... os voy a contar algo que me pasó muchas veces.

Well... I'm going to tell you something that happened to me many times.

Cuando llegué a Inglaterra, para estudiar en la universidad, pasó algo curioso.

When I arrived in England, to study at university, something curious happened.

La primera persona que conocí me dio la mano.

The first person I met shook my hand.

Un apretón de manos.

A handshake.

Muy formal.

Very formal.

Muy correcto.

Very proper.

Y yo pensé: vale, así se hace aquí.

And I thought: okay, this is how it's done here.

Pero luego, años después, viví un año en Tokio.

But later, years after, I lived a year in Tokyo.

Y en Japón, nadie te toca.

And in Japan, nobody touches you.

Una reverencia.

A bow.

Una distancia educada.

A polite distance.

Nada de manos.

No hands.

Nada de besos.

No kisses.

Así que llegó un momento en el que yo ya no sabía qué hacer.

So there came a point where I no longer knew what to do.

Con nadie.

With anyone.

En ningún país.

In any country.

Y entonces volví a España.

And then I came back to Spain.

Y mi amiga Isabel me enseñó algo.

And my friend Isabel taught me something.

Aquí hacemos las dos cosas.

Here we do both things.

Y ninguna de las dos.

And neither of them.

Eso no tiene ningún sentido, Juan.

That makes no sense, Juan.

Aquí depende.

Here it depends.

Depende de quién sea la persona.

It depends on who the person is.

Ya, eso es lo que no entendía.

Right, that's what I didn't understand.

Mira.

Look.

Si es la primera vez que conoces a alguien, en un contexto formal.

If it's the first time you're meeting someone, in a formal context.

Por ejemplo, en el trabajo.

For example, at work.

Ahí, normalmente, se da la mano.

There, normally, you shake hands.

Pero si te presentan a un amigo de un amigo.

But if you're introduced to a friend of a friend.

En una fiesta, por ejemplo.

At a party, for example.

Ahí, casi siempre, dos besos.

There, almost always, two kisses.

Uno en cada mejilla.

One on each cheek.

¿Y entre chicos?

And between guys?

Entre dos hombres, normalmente, la mano.

Between two men, normally, the hand.

A no ser que ya se conozcan bien.

Unless they already know each other well.

Que sean amigos de verdad.

That they're real friends.

No solo conocidos.

Not just acquaintances.

Eso es lo que más me costaba entender.

That's what I found hardest to understand.

La diferencia entre un conocido y un amigo.

The difference between an acquaintance and a friend.

En Japón, eso no importaba tanto para saludar.

In Japan, that didn't matter as much for greeting.

Pero aquí, sí.

But here, it does.

Claro.

Of course.

Y por eso, cuando te presentan a alguien nuevo.

And that's why, when you're introduced to someone new.

Es importante saber quién te está presentando.

It's important to know who's introducing you.

Si un amigo tuyo te presenta a otra persona.

If a friend of yours introduces you to another person.

Ya casi es como un amigo tuyo también.

They're almost already a friend of yours too.

Tengo otra duda.

I have another question.

Si voy a una fiesta con quince personas, ¿saludo a todo el mundo con dos besos?

If I go to a party with fifteen people, do I greet everyone with two kisses?

Sí.

Yes.

A todo el mundo.

Everyone.

Uno por uno.

One by one.

No puedes entrar y decir "hola" solo una vez, para todos.

You can't walk in and say "hi" just once, for everyone.

Eso, aquí, no funciona.

That doesn't work here.

Bueno, eso al principio me agotaba un poco.

Well, that exhausted me a bit at first.

Quince personas, treinta besos.

Fifteen people, thirty kisses.

Exacto.

Exactly.

Y luego, cuando te vas, otra vez.

And then, when you leave, again.

Otra vez treinta besos.

Thirty kisses again.

Sí.

Yes.

Es un poco así.

It's a bit like that.

Pero se hace rápido, con costumbre.

But it becomes quick, with practice.

Y da igual si no vas a hablar con esa persona en toda la noche.

And it doesn't matter if you're not going to talk to that person all night.

El saludo es aparte.

The greeting is separate.

Es como... un ritual de entrada.

It's like an entrance ritual.

Y de salida.

And an exit one.

¿Y con la familia?

And with family?

Ah, eso es distinto.

Ah, that's different.

Con la familia, casi siempre, un abrazo.

With family, almost always, a hug.

Un abrazo de verdad, no un saludo rápido.

A real hug, not a quick greeting.

Incluso con familia que no ves mucho.

Even with family you don't see much.

Yo eso al principio no lo entendía bien.

I didn't really understand that at first.

En Japón, ni siquiera los hermanos se abrazan tanto.

In Japan, even siblings don't hug that much.

Aquí, es casi obligatorio.

Here, it's almost mandatory.

Hay otra palabra que tienes que aprender ya mismo.

There's another word you need to learn right now.

"Buenas".

"Buenas."

Solo eso.

Just that.

"Buenas".

"Buenas."

Sirve para todo.

It works for everything.

Para entrar en una tienda.

To walk into a shop.

Para saludar en un bar.

To greet someone at a bar.

Para saludar a alguien que no conoces de nada.

To greet someone you don't know at all.

Es informal, corto, y funciona siempre.

It's informal, short, and always works.

A mí, al principio, me parecía demasiado informal.

At first, it seemed too informal to me.

Como si fuera de mala educación no decir la frase completa.

As if it were rude not to say the full phrase.

Pero no.

But no.

Aquí, "buenas" es completamente normal.

Here, "buenas" is completely normal.

Incluso con gente mayor.

Even with older people.

Incluso en el trabajo.

Even at work.

Hay otra cosa que a mí me sorprendió mucho.

There's another thing that really surprised me.

En la calle, con los vecinos.

On the street, with neighbors.

Si te cruzas con un vecino en la escalera, dices "buenos días".

If you pass a neighbor on the stairs, you say "good morning."

Aunque no lo conozcas de nada.

Even if you don't know them at all.

Aunque no sepas ni su nombre.

Even if you don't even know their name.

En Japón, eso también existe, un poco.

In Japan, that exists too, a little.

Pero en Inglaterra, a mí me parecía raro al principio.

But in England, it seemed strange to me at first.

Como si hablar con un desconocido fuera... sospechoso.

As if talking to a stranger were suspicious.

Aquí no.

Not here.

Aquí, no saludar es lo raro.

Here, NOT greeting is what's strange.

Es casi de mala educación.

It's almost rude.

Yo también tengo una historia, ¿eh?

I have a story too, you know?

Una vez conocí a un turista en Valencia.

Once I met a tourist in Valencia.

Un chico muy educado, de Alemania.

A very polite guy, from Germany.

Y cuando nos presentaron, él me dio la mano.

And when we were introduced, he shook my hand.

Muy formal.

Very formal.

Muy serio.

Very serious.

Y yo, sin pensarlo, fui directa a los dos besos.

And I, without thinking, went straight for the two kisses.

Chocamos.

We collided.

Literalmente.

Literally.

Su mano y mi cara.

His hand and my face.

No.

No.

Eso es exactamente lo que me pasó a mí.

That's exactly what happened to me.

Pero al revés.

But the other way around.

¿Y qué hiciste después?

And what did you do afterward?

Nada.

Nothing.

Nos reímos los dos.

We both laughed.

Y ya está.

And that was it.

Eso también es importante.

That's important too.

Si te equivocas, no pasa nada.

If you get it wrong, it's fine.

Te ríes, y sigues.

You laugh, and move on.

Nadie se ofende por esto.

No one gets offended over this.

¿Y ahora, con turistas, qué haces?

And now, with tourists, what do you do?

Ahora, espero un segundo.

Now, I wait a second.

Antes de moverme.

Before moving.

Por eso, lo mejor es esperar un segundo.

That's why it's best to wait a second.

Ver qué hace la otra persona.

See what the other person does.

Y seguirle.

And follow their lead.

¿Y el "qué tal"?

And "qué tal"?

Porque a mí, al principio, me parecía una pregunta real.

Because at first, it seemed like a real question to me.

No, no.

No, no.

"Qué tal" no espera una respuesta larga.

"Qué tal" doesn't expect a long answer.

Es solo una manera de saludarse.

It's just a way of greeting each other.

De reconocerse.

Of acknowledging each other.

De decir: te veo, existes, hola.

Of saying: I see you, you exist, hi.

En inglés, "how are you" a veces es parecido.

In English, "how are you" is sometimes similar.

Pero en español, se usa todavía más como saludo automático.

But in Spanish, it's used even more as an automatic greeting.

Entonces, ¿qué contesto?

So, what do I answer?

"Bien, ¿y tú?"

"Fine, and you?"

Y ya.

And that's it.

Eso rompe el hielo.

That breaks the ice.

No hace falta más.

Nothing more is needed.

Ah, y una cosa más.

Ah, one more thing.

El tú y el usted.

The "tú" and the "usted."

Eso es otro episodio entero, Juan.

That's a whole other episode, Juan.

Ese lo dejamos para otro día.

We'll leave that for another day.

Vale, vale.

Okay, okay.

Última pregunta.

Last question.

¿Cómo sé si le caigo bien a alguien?

How do I know if someone likes me?

Eso se nota en la cercanía.

You can tell by the closeness.

Si alguien guarda las distancias contigo, probablemente todavía sois conocidos.

If someone keeps their distance with you, you're probably still just acquaintances.

No amigos.

Not friends.

Pero si empieza a acercarse más, a bromear.

But if they start getting closer, joking around.

Ahí, ya os estáis empezando a llevar bien.

Then, you two are starting to get along.

Como nosotros.

Like us.

Como nosotros.

Like us.

Amigos de toda la vida.

Lifelong friends.

¿Sabes qué he aprendido, después de tantos años fuera?

You know what I've learned, after so many years abroad?

Que la forma de saludar dice mucho de un país.

That the way people greet says a lot about a country.

Más que muchas otras cosas.

More than many other things.

En Inglaterra, la distancia.

In England, distance.

En Japón, el respeto.

In Japan, respect.

Y aquí, en España, la cercanía.

And here, in Spain, closeness.

No hay una manera correcta.

There's no one correct way.

Solo maneras distintas de decir lo mismo.

Just different ways of saying the same thing.

"Me alegro de verte."

"I'm glad to see you."

Eso es bonito.

That's nice.

Bueno, creo que ya sabemos saludar.

Well, I think we now know how to greet people.

Gracias, Isabel, por acompañarme hoy.

Thanks, Isabel, for joining me today.

Un placer.

My pleasure.

De verdad.

Really.

Ha sido muy divertido.

This was really fun.

Hasta la próxima.

Until next time.

Y gracias también a todos vosotros, por escuchar hasta el final.

And thanks to all of you too, for listening until the end.

CLOSING (ENGLISH)

Okay, let's break down what we just heard.

Okay, let's break down what we just heard.

First: "dar dos besos" — to give two kisses.

First: "dar dos besos" — to give two kisses.

The nuance is in the "when," not the "how."

The nuance is in the "when," not the "how."

In Spain, it's standard for friends and semi-formal situations.

In Spain, it's standard for friends and semi-formal situations.

It says nothing about how close you actually are.

It says nothing about how close you actually are.

Second: "un apretón de manos" — a handshake.

Second: "un apretón de manos" — a handshake.

Reserved for first meetings and formal contexts.

Reserved for first meetings and formal contexts.

Third: "romper el hielo" — to break the ice.

Third: "romper el hielo" — to break the ice.

In Spanish, "¿qué tal?" itself IS the ice-breaker.

In Spanish, "¿qué tal?" itself IS the ice-breaker.

It's a ritual, not a real question.

It's a ritual, not a real question.

Fourth: "un conocido" versus "un amigo."

Fourth: "un conocido" versus "un amigo."

This distinction quietly decides how you greet someone, every time you see them.

This distinction quietly decides how you greet someone, every time you see them.

Fifth: "presentar" — to introduce someone.

Fifth: "presentar" — to introduce someone.

When a friend "te presenta" to one of their friends, there's an implied social contract.

When a friend "te presenta" to one of their friends, there's an implied social contract.

And sixth: "llevarse bien" — to get along.

And sixth: "llevarse bien" — to get along.

It's reflexive and reciprocal, which brings us to today's grammar point.

It's reflexive and reciprocal, which brings us to today's grammar point.

Reflexive, reciprocal verbs: saludarse, conocerse, llevarse bien, abrazarse, despedirse.

Reflexive, reciprocal verbs: saludarse, conocerse, llevarse bien, abrazarse, despedirse.

These describe something two people do to each other, not to themselves.

These describe something two people do to each other, not to themselves.

"Nos saludamos" means we greeted each other, mutually.

"Nos saludamos" means we greeted each other, mutually.

Isabel said: "ya os estáis empezando a llevar bien" — you two are starting to get along.

Isabel said: "ya os estáis empezando a llevar bien" — you two are starting to get along.

And "nos presentaron" — we were introduced to each other, again with "se."

And "nos presentaron" — we were introduced to each other, again with "se."

Before we go, a quick word about the website.

Before we go, a quick word about the website.

Every episode comes with five free PDF study guides: Vocabulary, Transcript, Grammar, Translation, and a sentence-by-sentence document.

Every episode comes with five free PDF study guides: Vocabulary, Transcript, Grammar, Translation, and a sentence-by-sentence document.

This episode's Grammar PDF has something extra: twenty ready-to-use phrases for introducing yourself in Spanish, and for keeping a conversation going afterward.

This episode's Grammar PDF has something extra: twenty ready-to-use phrases for introducing yourself in Spanish, and for keeping a conversation going afterward.

You'll also find a page about me, from Valencia, to England, to Tokyo, and back.

You'll also find a page about me, from Valencia, to England, to Tokyo, and back.

Everything is free, and the link is in the episode description.

Everything is free, and the link is in the episode description.

Thanks for listening, and... nos vemos pronto.

Thanks for listening, and... nos vemos pronto.