

How to Use SER and ESTAR in Spanish (¿Soy aburrido o estoy aburrido?) - English translation

Recurso de apoyo opcional: la traducción completa del episodio al inglés, con el vocabulario y la gramática señalados dentro del texto.

Antes de leer esto en lugar del español...

Escucha primero el episodio sin traducción. Este documento es una red de seguridad, no un sustituto: úsalo para confirmar lo que ya entendiste.

PALABRA en terracota = vocabulario destacado · *frase* en cursiva subrayada = punto de gramática.

INTRODUCTION (ENGLISH)

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

I'm Juan.

Let me ask you something.

Are you boring... or are you bored?

Careful... in Spanish, that's the same adjective.

The only difference... is one small verb.

Ser... or estar.

Today I'm going to tell you the true story of my friend Carol, from Chicago.

She mixed up these two little verbs three times.

On a date... at work... and in front of my mother's paella.

By the end of this episode, you will never confuse them again.

And as always, this episode comes with five free PDFs... link in the description.

Vamos allá.

MAIN STORY (TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH)

Uh... today I'm going to tell you about my friend Carol.

Carol is American... from Chicago.

I met her years ago, in a marketing class.

She is intelligent, she is fun... and she is very, very brave.

Well... brave, and a little crazy too.

And why do I say brave?

Well, because she came to Spain speaking almost no Spanish.

And she made a very important decision.

She decided to learn Spanish by speaking... speaking to everyone.

She dared to speak to anyone... from the very first day.

In the street, in the supermarket, at work.

And of course... she **PUT HER FOOT IN IT** many times.

Meter la pata means to make a mistake... usually a slightly embarrassing mistake.

Today I'm going to tell you about her three most famous mistakes.

All three with the same pair of verbs... ser and estar.

First story... the date.

Carol had a date with a local guy, from Valencia.

They had arranged to meet at eight, on a terrace in the city centre.

At first sight, the guy seemed very nice.

Carol was nervous... it was her first date in Spanish.

She arrived on time... of course, she's American.

But the guy arrived twenty minutes late.

Twenty minutes alone, with her drink... looking at her phone.

When the guy finally arrived, he asked her... how are you?

And Carol wanted to be honest.

She wanted to say... *I'm a little bored*.

But she said... *I'm a little boring*.

I'm boring.

Now... in Spanish, that doesn't mean you are bored at that moment.

It means that you are... a boring person.

In other words, Carol introduced herself on her first date as a boring person.

The guy laughed a lot.

And Carol went **AS RED AS A TOMATO**.

Luckily, the guy laughed with her... not at her.

And the date, in the end, went very well.

Second story... the office.

A few months later, Carol found a job at a small company.

A marketing company, of course... that's her field.

On her first day there was a very important meeting.

Her colleague Marcos was waiting at the meeting-room door.

Carol wanted to ask him if he was ready.

In English... are you ready?

And she asked him... *are you clever?*

Silence.

Marcos got **A BIT OF A FRIGHT**.

And he looked at her with a very, very strange expression.

Because ser listo means to be intelligent.

Carol asked a new colleague, on her first day... hey, are you intelligent?

Imagine the moment.

The correct question was... *are you ready?*

Estar listo means to be ready.

The same adjective, with ser or estar... changes completely.

There was a small **MISUNDERSTANDING**, yes.

A misunderstanding is when one person understands one thing... and you meant something else.

But after the meeting, Marcos explained the difference to her.

And today they are very good friends.

And now... the third story.

My favourite one... my mother's paella.

One Sunday, I invited Carol to eat at my parents' house.

Here in Valencia, Sunday paella is serious business.

In my house, paella is not debated... it is respected.

Very... very serious.

That day, my father was also **IN A VERY GOOD MOOD**.

My mother spent the whole morning in the kitchen.

When we arrived, the paella **LOOKED VERY GOOD**.

Tener buena pinta means that something looks good... just from looking at it.

Carol tried a spoonful... and closed her eyes.

She wanted to **PAY MY MOTHER A COMPLIMENT**.

She wanted to say... this is delicious.

And she said, with a huge smile... *your mother is very wealthy!*

Your mother... is... very wealthy.

Suddenly, everyone was looking at her.

Because in Spanish, ser rico means to have a lot of money.

In other words, Carol announced, in front of my whole family, that my mother had a lot of money.

My father almost **FELL OFF HIS CHAIR LAUGHING**.

My poor mother did not understand anything.

The correct sentence was... *the paella is delicious*.

Estar rico means that food tastes very good.

Afterwards, there was fruit for dessert.

Carol picked up a banana, looked at it... and said... this banana is green.

And that sentence was... perfect!

Está verde means it isn't ripe yet.

But pay attention... estar verde is also used with people.

For example, when I arrived in England... I was **VERY INEXPERIENCED** with English.

I was just starting... I lacked practice.

Well... and now, the trick.

I'm sure they taught you a famous rule in class.

Ser for permanent things... estar for temporary things.

Well, forget that rule.

It doesn't work.

A very clear example... estar muerto.

Nothing is more permanent than being dead.

And yet, we use estar.

It is normal to **GET THESE VERBS MIXED UP** at first.

But the real trick is much simpler.

Ser talks about your identity... what defines you.

I am Spanish... I am a teacher... I am a calm person.

Estar talks about your state... how you are now, or where you are.

I am tired... I am happy... I am at home.

Very important... for locations, always use estar.

Where are you?... I am in Valencia.

And for feelings too... I am nervous, I am in love, I am in a good mood.

I like to think about it this way.

Ser is the title of your book.

Estar is the page you are reading today.

The title does not change every day... the page does.

Do you see it?... It is not magic... it is logic.

Another famous pair, before we finish... malo.

Ser malo means to be a bad person... or to be of poor quality.

Estar malo means to be ill.

And with food, estar malo means to be **IN BAD CONDITION**.

If the milk smells awful... that milk is bad.

And Carol?

Well, Carol kept speaking... and kept making mistakes.

But every mistake stayed in her memory... forever.

Little by little, she began to **FEEL COMFORTABLE SPEAKING** Spanish.

Today her Spanish is fantastic.

And when a new friend confuses ser and estar... she corrects them with a smile.

So my advice is this... speak, speak a lot, and **DON'T BE AFRAID** of making mistakes.

Because nobody... nobody... forgets the day she called my mother wealthy.

CLOSING - VOCABULARY & GRAMMAR (ENGLISH)

Okay... let's slow down, and look at today's vocabulary.

Number one... meter la pata.

Literally... to put your paw in.

It means to put your foot in it... to make an embarrassing mistake.

Number two... ser aburrido, versus estar aburrido.

With ser, you are a boring person... that's your identity.

With estar, you are bored... right now.

One small verb... can save your dating life.

Number three... ser listo, versus estar listo.

Ser listo means to be clever.

Estar listo means to be ready.

So before a meeting, ask... ¿estás listo?

Never... ¿eres listo?

Number four... ser rico, versus estar rico.

Ser rico means to be wealthy.

Estar rico means to taste delicious.

Say... la paella está muy rica... and every Spanish mother will adore you.

Number five... estar verde.

Fruit that isn't ripe yet... está verde.

And a person who is just starting... is also verde.

I was very verde with my English once.

And number six... tener buena pinta.

It means to look good... to look promising.

A paella can tener buena pinta... and so can a plan.

Now... a little grammar.

Forget the old rule about permanent and temporary.

Think... identity, versus state.

Ser is for what defines you... your identity, your origin.

Estar is for your state... how you are, and where you are.

Here's a little rhyme... for how you feel, and where you are... always use the verb estar.

As always, this episode comes with five free PDFs.

Twenty expressions, the full transcript, a complete guide to ser and estar... and every sentence translated, one by one.

You'll find everything at [pocoapocopodcast dot netlify dot app](https://pocoapocopodcast.netlify.app)... link in the description.

That's all for today.

Thank you for listening... and remember, poco a poco... you're getting there.

Nos vemos en el próximo episodio.

Hasta pronto.