

Verbs like Gustar

This is a good time to discuss the verb “gustar” because using it requires use of the IO pronouns.

Me gusta el cuarto..... I like the room.

Nos gustan los libros..... We like the books.

In English, the following sentences are correct:

I like the room

We like the books.

Examine the same sentences more closely.

I like the room.

I = subject of sentence

like = verb

the room = direct object

We like the books.

We = subject of sentence

like = verb

the books = direct object

In English, it is correct to construct a sentence that has the subject “liking” a direct object. In Spanish, this never occurs. In Spanish, a different construction is used.

English I like the room.

Spanish The room is pleasing to me.

English We like the books.

Spanish The books are pleasing to us.

The first thing you need to notice is that both versions really mean the same thing. They are merely different expressions of the same idea.

Idea My feelings with regard to the book are positive.

English Way I like the book.

Spanish Way The book is pleasing to me.

The second thing to notice is that in English, the subject of the sentence is the person (I, we) while in Spanish the subject of the sentence is the object (room, books).

The room is pleasing to me.

Subject: The room

I like the room.

Subject: I

Finally notice that while the English sentence has a direct object, the Spanish sentence has an indirect object.

The room is pleasing to me.

me = Indirect Object

I like the room.

room = Direct Object

Let's study the following example:

Me gustan los libros.

Literal Translation To me are pleasing the books.

Actual Translation I like the books.

Notice that *gustar* is conjugated as "gustan" not "gusto." A common mistake is to say "Me gusto los libros." This is incorrect because the subject of the sentence is "los libros" even though it comes at the end. Remember, the verb is conjugated to agree with the subject of the sentence.

Me **gustan** los libros. (I like the books.)

Notice that the conjugation of *gustar* changes to "gusta" when the subject of the sentence is singular.

Me **gusta** el libro. (I like the book.)

Since the subject of the sentence must be either singular (book) or plural (books), the only forms of *gustar* you will use are "gusta" and "gustan." This is true regardless of what IO pronoun appears in the sentence.

Me gusta el libro I like the book.

Te gusta el libro You like the book.

Nos gusta el libro We like the book.

Me gustan los libros I like the books.

Te gustan los libros You like the books.

Nos gustan los libros We like the books.

Remember, *gustar* becomes either *gusta* or *gustan*, depending upon whether the subject of the sentence is singular or plural. It has nothing to do with which IO pronoun is used.

Subject is singular — use gusta

Me gusta el libro.

Te gusta el libro.

Subject is plural — use gustan

Me gustan los libros.

Te gustan los libros.

Remember, the IO pronoun is not the subject of the sentence!

Nos gustamos ... incorrect!

Te gustas ... incorrect!

Here are some examples of the correct use of *gustar*. Notice that the only forms of *gustar* that appear are *gusta* and *gustan*, even though each of the IO pronouns is used.

SINGULAR SUBJECT

PLURAL SUBJECT

Me gusta la casa	Me gustan las casas.
Te gusta el cuarto.....	Te gustan los cuartos.
Le gusta la silla.....	Le gustan las sillas.
Nos gusta el hotel	Nos gustan los hoteles.
Os gusta la comida.....	Os gustan las comidas.
Les gusta el reloj	Les gustan los relojes.

Look more closely at one example:

Le gusta la silla.

It is impossible to tell whether this means:

1. He likes the chair.
2. She likes the chair.
3. You (usted) like the chair.

For purposes of clarification, the sentence will often begin with a prepositional phrase that clarifies just who the IO pronoun refers to.

A él le gusta la silla.....	He likes the chair.
A Juan le gusta la silla	John likes the chair.
A ella le gusta la silla	She likes the chair.
A María le gusta la silla	Mary likes the chair.
A usted le gusta la silla.....	You (formal) like the chair.

As you can see, by adding a prepositional phrase, we remove the ambiguity of the “le” form.

You can also use a prepositional phrase to add emphasis, even if there is no ambiguity.

1. A Juan le gusta el café
2. A mí me gusta el té.....

In the first example, “a Juan” clarifies the ambiguous pronoun “le.” In the second example, there is no ambiguity. “Me gusta el té” can only mean “I like tea.” In this case, “a mí” adds emphasis, drawing attention to the fact that tea is what I like (as contrasted with what Juan likes).

Another way to look at it:

John likes coffee. Me, I like tea..... A Juan le gusta el café. A mí me gusta el té.

Now that you know how to correctly use the verb *gustar*, here is a list of verbs that operate in the same manner:

- aburrir..... to bore
- fascinar
- bastar
- importar..... to be important to
- caer bien (mal)
- interesar..... to be interesting to
- dar asco
- molestar..... to be a bother

disgustar to hate something
parecer to appear to be
doler (o:ue) to be painful
picar to itch
encantar to “love” something
quedar to be left over, remain
faltar to be lacking something
volver (o:ue) loco..... to be crazy about

■ The practice exercises focus on 5 useful verbs:

gustar
faltar
molestar
parecer
disgustar

Note that all of the other verbs listed above behave in the same fashion as the five practice verbs.

■ Let’s add a flashcard for the special verb “gustar”:

■ Verb Flashcards

19. **A Juan le gusta el libro.**
A Juan le gustan los libros.

To “like” something