

## SOME IDIOMATIC SPANISH VERBS

### CABER

This very irregular verb means literally "to be able to be contained" or, as we would say, "to hold" or "to fit".

e.g. **En esta sala cabe treinta alumnos.**

This room holds thirty pupils.

**No cabemos todos en el coche.**

We won't all fit in the car // The car does not hold us all.

Note A common phrase is:

**No cabe duda.**

There is no doubt.

(*Literally*: there is no room for doubt)

### DAR

**Doy las gracias a alguien por algo**

To thank someone for something

**Dan los buenos días.**

They say good morning.

**Dan las buenas noches.**

They say good night.

**Damos un paseo en coche.**

We go for a drive.

**Dan las doce.**

It is striking twelve

**El reloj dio las doce.**

The clock struck twelve.

**Todo el mundo daba palmadas.**

Everybody was clapping

**Me di con él en la calle.**

I ran into him in the street

**No nos dimos cuenta de que llovía.**

We didn't realize that it was raining

**Daba de comer a los animales**

He was feeding the animals.

**Las ventanas dan a la calle.**

The windows look on to the street

**Di puntapiés al balón.**

I kicked the ball

**Se dieron prisa**

They hurried

**Da la vuelta al mundo.**

They go round the world

**Se dio por vencido**

He considered himself defeated

**Lo mismo me da**

It's all the same to me.

### DEJAR

**dejar la casa, la ciudad etc**

to leave the house the city etc

**Dejaron la habitación juntos**

They left the room together

**dejar olvidado algo**

to leave something behind, to forget

**Mi esposa dejó olvidado el pasaporte**

My wife forgot her passport.

**dejar atrás a alguien**

to leave someone behind:

**El caballo negro dejó atrás al blanco**

The black horse left the white one behind

**dejar + infinitive a alguien**

to allow, to let

**Antes de entrar dejen salir a los demás**

Before getting in, let the others come out

**Dejar caer algo**

to drop (let fall) something

**E hombre dejó caer la llave**

The man dropped the key

**dejar de hacer algo**

to stop doing something

**No puedo dejar de trabajar**

I cannot stop working

**no dejar de hacer algo**  
**No dejes de venir mañana**

not to fail to do something  
 Don't fail to come tomorrow

## **DOLER**

Doler (ue)  
 Me duele la cabeza

to ache to pain  
 I have a headache (lit. "my head is paining me")

Me duelen los dientes, las muelas  
*Note: the noun "dolor" (a pain, ache), is also used*  
 Tengo un fuerte dolor de cabeza  
 No puede consolarnos en nuestro dolor

I have a toothache  
 I have a splitting headache  
 He cannot console us in our grief

## **ECHAR**

**Echar a correr**  
 **echar una carta al buzón**  
 **echar de menos una cosa**

to begin to run  
 to post a letter  
 to miss something (realize / feel out of sorts that something is missing)  
 We miss the television  
 When we counted the money we missed one dollar.  
 to miss someone.  
 They miss their mother.

**Echamos de menos la televisión**  
**Al contar el dinero echamos de menos un dólar**  
 **echar de menos a alguien**  
**Echan de menos a su madre**

## **ESTAR**

**estar contento, triste**  
**estar malo, enfermo**  
**estar sano y salvo**  
**estar seguro**  
**estar listo para salir**  
**estar loco de furia**  
**estar de buen (mal) humor**  
**estar de compras**  
**estar de vacaciones**  
**estar de servicio**  
**estar de vuelta**  
**estar de maestro de médico, etc.**  
**estar para comer, estar a punto de comer**  
**¿A cuántos estamos?**  
**Estamos a quince**  
**¿Está el señor Rodríguez?**

to be happy, sad (temporarily)  
 to be ill  
 to be safe and sound  
 to be sure  
 to be ready to go out  
 to be mad with rage  
 to be in a good (mad) mood  
 to be (out) shopping  
 to be on holiday  
 to be on duty  
 to be back  
 to be working as a teacher, as a doctor, etc.  
 to be about to eat, on the point of eating  
 What is the date today?  
 It's the fifteenth  
 Is Mr. Rodríguez at home?

## GUSTAR

### Gustar

Me gustan las naranjas

to give pleasure

I like oranges

(Literally: Oranges give me pleasure)

Me gusta nadar

I like swimming

(Literally: Swimming gives me pleasure)

Note:

**Tendré mucho gusto en hacerlo**

I'll do it with great pleasure

**Lo haré con mucho gusto**

"" "" ""

## HABER

1. Used with a past participle to form compound tenses:

**¿Han comprado ustedes la pintura?**

Have you bought the paint?

2. Used in the forms **hay** (there is/are) and **había**, (there was/were), and other tense forms **hubo**, **habrá** etc

**Hay tres coches en la calle.**

There are three cars in the street

**Había muchos niños en la fiesta.**

There were many children at the party

3. **hay que** followed by the infinitive denotes necessity:

**Hay que trabajar mucho**

It is necessary to work hard

**Habrán que correr para llegar a tiempo**

We'll have to run to arrive in time

4. **haber de** followed by the infinitive is nearly as strong as **deber**, to have to

**He de ir a Madrid esta tarde**

I am to (have to) go to Madrid this afternoon

**Habíamos de volver por la orilla del río**

We had to return along the bank of the river

## HACER

**¿Qué tiempo hace?**

What the weather like?

**Hace buen (mal) tiempo.**

The weather is fine (bad)

**Hace frío (calor)**

It is cold (hot)

**Hace un tiempo espléndido**

It is marvellous weather

**Hace sol (lluvia)**

It is sunny (rainy)

**¿Cuánto tiempo hace que están ustedes aquí?**

How long have you been here?

**Hace dos horas que estamos aquí**

We have been here for two hours

**Llegaron hace media hora**

They arrived half a hour ago

**Hágame el favor de cantar**

Please sing

**Hicieron muchas preguntas a los**

They asked the students many questions

**alumnos**

**Hace falta una prueba definitiva**

**Vamos a hacer las maletas**

**La gente hacía cola en la calle**

**Después de hora y media hizo alto**

**No le hicimos caso**

**No se había hecho daño**

**Los madrileños hacen regalos a los guardias**

**Los soldados hicieron fuego contra el enemigo**

**El árbitro hizo señas de que encendieran las luces**

**Hago lo posible**

**Se va haciendo famoso**

**No les haga espera**

**Haré entrar a los visitantes**

A definite proof is needed

Let's go and pack the suitcases

The people were lining up in the street

After an hour and a half he stopped

We paid no heed to him

He had not hurt himself

The people of Madrid give presents to the policemen

The soldiers fired against the enemy

The referee made a signal for them to switch on the lights

I do my best

He is becoming famous

Don't keep them waiting (Don't make them wait)

I will show the visitors in

## **PONER**

**poner la mesa**

**ponerse los zapatos, el sombrero etc**

**ponerse pálido**

**ponerse a jugar**

**ponerse en pie**

**ponerse en camino**

**ponerse en marcha**

**poner en marcha el motor**

**poner en libertad**

**poner huevos**

**ponerse de acuerdo**

**el sol se pone**

**la puesta del sol**

*Note:*

**El sol sale**

**La salida del sol**

to set the table

to put on one's shoes, hat, etc.

to turn pale

to begin to play

to stand up

to begin a journey, to set off down the road

to set off, to start out

to start the engine

to set free

to lay eggs

to come to an agreement

the sun sets

sunset

the sun rises

the sunrise

## **SER (TO BE)** (compare with ESTAR)

**es feliz, triste**

**es joven, vieja**

**son ricos, pobres**

**es médico**

**es verdad; ¿no es verdad?**

**somos aficionados al fútbol, a los toros**

he is happy, sad (by nature); he is a happy / sad person

she is young, old

they are rich, poor

he is a doctor (profession)

it is true; isn't it (so)?

we are keen on football, bullfighting;

we are football/bullfighting fans

¿Qué hora es?

What time is it?

**SOLER** (to be in the habit of, usually, used to)

Use only in the present and imperfect

**Suelen cenar a las diez**

They have dinner at ten o'clock

*Literally:* they are in the habit of having dinner at ten o'clock

**María solía ir a misa todos los días**

Mary went to mass every day / Mary used to go to mass every day

**TENER**

**Tengo frío, calor**

to be (feel) hot, cold

**Tienes razón**

You are right

**No tenía razón**

He was wrong

**Tengo sed, hambre**

I am thirsty, hungry

**Tenemos sueño, vergüenza**

We are sleepy, ashamed

**Tener miedo de algo (de alguien)**

To be afraid of something (someone)

**Tuvo éxito**

He was successful

**Tuvo lugar**

It took place

**Tener ganas de hacer algo**

To feel like doing something

**Tenía sesenta años**

He was sixty years old

**¡Ten cuidado!**

Be careful!

**Tenían prisa**

They were in a hurry

**tener suerte**

to be lucky

**Tuvo la suerte de ganar la lotería**

He had the luck to win the lottery

**Tener la intención**

to intend

**Tenías la intención de robarme**

You had the intention to rob me

**Tener la ocasión de**

to have the chance opportunity to

**Tener en cuenta**

to bear in mind, to take into account

**Tener presente que**

to bear in mind that

**Tuvo que trabajar**

She had to work

**Aquí tiene usted el billete**

Here is the ticket

**¿Qué tiene usted?**

What is the matter with you?

**Mi hermana tiene los ojos verdes**

My sister's eyes are green (My sister has green eyes)

**VALER**

valer

¿Cuánto vale el coche

Más vale no ir a Bogotá

No vale nada

valer la pena

No vale la pena ir al extranjero

¡Válgame Dios!

to be worth

How much is the car? (same as "Cuánto cuesta el coche?")

It is better not to go to Bogotá

It's worth nothing

to be worth the while

It's not worth it to go abroad

Good Heavens

**SOME ENGLISH VERBS DIFFICULT TO TRANSLATE CORRECTLY****TO ASK**

1. pedir algo

Pido pan

Hemos pedido vino tinto

2. pedir algo a alguien

Les pidieron dinero

3. pedir a alguien que + *subjunctive*

Les pido que se marchen en silencio

Me pidió que le trajera las cartas

4. Preguntar

- ¿Adónde vas? - preguntó

Pregunté por qué no habían venido antes

5. hacer preguntas

Les hizo preguntas difíciles.

6. Preguntar por alguien

Preguntó por el director

7. rogar

rogar a alguien que + *subjunctive*

Le rogué que dejara el paquete en la puerta

Se ruega no fumar

to ask for something

I am asking for bread

We have ordered red wine

to ask someone for something

They asked them for money

to ask someone to do something

I ask them to go away silently

He asked me to bring him the letters

to ask (as a question)

"Where are you going?", he asked

I asked why they had not come before

to ask questions

He asked them difficult questions

to ask for (to see) someone

He asked for (to see) the director

to ask (for something to be **done**)

to ask someone to (do something)

I asked him to leave the packet at the door

No smoking

## TO BECOME

With adjectives

Gradual growth or change: **hacerse**

**Se hace cada día más fuerte**

He is becoming stronger every day

Definite or sudden change: **ponerse, volverse**

**Se puso pálido, alegre**

He became pale, jolly

**Se puso roja como una cereza**

She became as red as a cherry

**Se han vuelto locos**

They have gone (become) mad

Accidental: **quedar(se)**

**Quedó estupefacto de la noticia**

The news left him stupefied

**Había quedado ciego de un accidente**

He had become blind after an accident

Certain verbs already have the idea of "becoming":

**Oscurecía, anochecía**

It was becoming (getting) dark

**Enriqueció**

He became rich

With nouns

**llegar a ser, venir a ser + noun**

**Llegó a ser capitán**

to become (as a matter of course)

He became captain

**hacerse + noun**

**Se ha hecho médico, general, etc.**

to become (personal effort)

He has become a doctor, a general, etc.

**ser de + noun or pronoun**

**¿Qué ha sido de ellos**

to become of

What has become of them?

## TO GET

One verb expresses the idea of **get + adverb or adjective**. You can see that there are sometimes one-word synonyms in English as well.

to get down

**bajar (descend)**

to get up

**levantarse**

to get up early

**madrugar**

to get dressed

**vestirse (to dress oneself)**

to get lost

**perderser (to lose oneself)**

to get into the train

**subir al tren**

to get to the station

**llegar a la estación (to arrive)**

to get out

**salir**

to get something out

**sacar algo**

to get into the house

**entrar en la casa (enter)**

to get to know someone

**conocer a alguien**

to get angry

**enfadarse (anger oneself?)**

to get something done

**mandar hacer algo**

to get someone to do something

**mandar hacer algo a alguien**

e.g. Le mandé al estudiante traer la tiza

**I got the student to bring the chalk**

to get something

**conseguir algo**

to get ready

**prepararse**

to get rich

**enriquecerse**

## TO GO

to go to Venezuela  
 to go to bed  
 to go to sleep  
 to go away  
 to go abroad  
 to go back home  
 to go downstairs  
 to go into the cinema  
 to go into the cave  
 to go on reading  
 to go out of the room  
 to go up the elevator  
 to go with someone  
 to go shopping  
 to go on holiday  
 to go by air  
 to go by car  
 to go by train  
 to go by bicycle  
 to go on foot  
 to go on horseback  
 to go mad  
 to go pale

**ir a Venezuela**  
**acostarse (ir a la cama)**  
**dormirse**  
**irse, salir, marcharse**  
**ir al extranjero**  
**volver / regresar a casa**  
**bajar la escalera**  
**entrar al cine**  
**penetrar en la caverna**  
**seguir leyendo (continue reading)**  
**salir de la sala**  
**subir en el ascensor**  
**acompañar a alguien, ir con alguien**  
**ir de compras**  
**ir de vacaciones**  
**ir en avion**  
**ir en coche**  
**ir en coche**  
**ir en bicicleta**  
**ir a pie**  
**ir a caballo**  
**volverse loco, enloquecer**  
**ponerse pálido, palidecer**

## TO KNOW

### saber

**Yo no lo sé todo**  
**Sabemos que nuestra madre está enferma**  
**Supo que estallará la guerra**  
**No sé nadar**  
*Note:*  
**No puedo nadar**

to have knowledge of (facts, info. skills)  
 I don't know everything  
 We know that our mother is ill

He knew the war would break out  
 I can't (I don't know how to) swim.  
 I can't swim ( am unable because of physical reasons)

### conocer

**Conozco a su primo**  
**¿Conoce usted Madrid?**  
*Note this special meaning in the preterite*  
**La conocí en España**

to be acquainted with (people, places, works of art)  
 I know his cousin  
 Do you know Madrid?  
 I met (got to know) her in Spain



## TO NEED

Necesito un diccionario

Necesitábamos dinero

Me hace falta un abrigo ("abrigo" is the subject)

Nos hacen falta muchas cosas

faltar

Me falta un sello para completar la colección.

I need a dictionary

We needed money

I need an overcoat (

We need many things

to be missing

I need one stamp to complete the collection  
(One stamp is missing)

## TO PLAY

Game: **jugar a + game**

**Jugaban al fútbol**

**Mi amigo juega al tenis los jueves**

Musical instruments: **tocar**

**La señorita estaba tocando el piano**

**Sabe tocar la trompeta**

Acting a role: **desempeñar (un papel)**

**Mi tío desempeñaba el papel de gerente**

Also: **Quería representar el papel de Hamlet**

They were playing football

My friend plays tennis on Thursdays

The young lady was playing the piano

He can play the trumpet

My uncle acted as a manager

He wanted to play the part of Hamlet

## TO PUT

Puso el libro en la mesa

Metió los guantes en el bolsillo

Me pongo el sombrero (reflexive)

Enciendo la radio

Apago la vela

He put the book on the table

He put his gloves **into** his pocket

I put **on** my hat.

I put on (turn on) the radio

I put out the candle

## TO SUCCEED

To succeed in doing something (manage to do it)

**El prisionero logró escaparse**

To be successful

**Tuvimos mucho éxito en el examen**

**lograr, (conseguir) hacer algo**

The prisoner succeeded in escaping / managed to escape

**tener éxito**

We were very successful in the examination

## TO TAKE

the simple act of taking into one's possession:

**¡Tome esto!**

to consume, eat, drink:

**¿Qué vas a tomar**

**Los ingleses toman el té a las cuatro**

to take a bus, taxi etc:

**Tomamos el metro**

to carry

**Yo mismo llevaré la maleta a casa**

**La ambulance me llevó al hospital**

**tomar**

Take this!

**tomar algo**

What are you going to have?

The English take tea at 4 o'clock

tomar

We took the subway

**llevar**

I myself will take the suitcase home

The ambulance took me to hospital