

Los usos de PARA y POR

Escrito **por** el doctor Richard Gardiner **para** ustedes

Although the prepositions **para** and **por** may both be translated as *for* in English, they are not interchangeable. Each word has a distinctly different uses in Spanish, as outlined below.

In general, **para** is associated with *purpose, intention, or destination*. In addition to *for*, **para** often means *in order to*. **Por** can have many meanings beyond *for*, such as *through, along, by, around, on behalf of, for the sake of, because of, in exchange for*, to mention a few.

The uses of **para** and **por** have apparent similarities, which sometimes causes confusion. For example, in a single situation, you could ask ¿**para** qué? (for what purpose?) or ¿**por** qué? (for what reason?).

¿ Para qué viniste?	Why (for what purpose) did you come?
Vine para pedirte un favor.	I came (in order) to ask a favor of you.
¿ Por qué viniste?	Why (for what reason) did you come?
Vine porque necesitaba los boletos.	I came because I needed the tickets.

Often the use of either **para** or **por** will be grammatically correct, but the meaning will be different. Compare the following sentences.

Mario viaja para Cartagena. (destination)	Mario is traveling to (toward) Cartagena.
Mario viaja por Cartagena. (motion)	Mario is traveling through (in) Cartagena.

Vaya Ud. para el carro. (destination)	Go to/toward the car.
Vaya Ud. por el carro. (an errand)	Go get the car.

Uses of **para**:

1 - 4 ARE ALL UNDER THE "UMBRELLA" OF DESTINATION/GOAL/PURPOSE

1. **** the purpose of something, either an action (*para + infinitive, "in order to"*) or an object (*para + noun, "for"*) ****

Necesito mil dólares para pagar el viaje.	I need a thousand dollars (in order) to pay for the trip.
Vamos a Colombia para conocer el país.	We're going to Colombia (in order) to get to know the country.
Necesito los anteojos para leer.	I need the glasses (in order) to read.
La cámara es para sacar fotos.	The camera is for taking pictures.
Mi novio estudia para ser médico.	My boyfriend is studying to be a doctor.
Vamos al teatro para celebrar mi cumpleaños.	We are going to the theater (in order) to celebrate my birthday.
Este tenedor es para ensalada.	This fork is for salad.

2. **** a destination or direction toward a recipient (*person, place, or thing*) ****

Mañana me voy para Timbuctu.	Tomorrow I am leaving for Timbuctu.
¿A qué hora hay trenes para Roma?	What time are there trains for Rome?
Este boleto es para ti.	This ticket is for you.
Esos chiles son para la salsa.	Those peppers are for the salsa.

3. **** the recipient or beneficiary of something (*for whom or what something is intended*) ****

Compré una mesa para mi cuarto.	I bought a table for my room.
Compramos un collar para el perro.	We bought a collar for the dog.
¿Hay chocolates para mí?	Are there chocolates for me?
Trabajo para el Ministerio de Finanzas.	I work for the Ministry of Finance. (To work for <i>any</i> employer is correctly said as trabajar para .)

4. **** a goal for a point in the future, a time limit, a specific deadline (*by or for a certain time*) ****

Quiero el dinero para el sábado.	I want the money by Saturday.
El director quiere la presentación para el lunes.	The director wants the presentation for Monday.
Debo estar allí para el mes de abril.	I must be there by the month of April.
Necesito el pasaporte para esta tarde.	I need the passport for this afternoon.
Gilberto no llegará para mañana.	Gilberto won't be here by tomorrow.

5. **** to translate *for* when it means *considering, in view of, in spite of* ****

Para diciembre, hace buen tiempo.	For December, the weather is nice.
Javier es muy maduro para su edad.	Javier is very mature for his age.
Para ser tan joven, el chico tiene buenas ideas.	For being so young, the boy has good ideas.

6. **** to express opinion, reaction, or point of view ****

Este vino para mí sabe a vinagre.	This wine tastes like vinegar to me.
Para mi mamá, yo soy un genio.	According to my mother, I'm a genius.
Para los chinos, el chino es muy fácil de hablar.	For the Chinese people, Chinese is very easy to speak.

Uses of por:

***** "for" meaning *in exchange for******

Están cobrando \$200 por una entrada al concierto.	They're charging \$200 for one ticket to the concert.
¡Gracias por tu ayuda!	Thanks for your help! ("Thank you" in exchange for your help)
Cambié el suéter por uno más grande.	I exchanged the sweater for a bigger one.

***** "for" meaning *because of, on account of (a causa de)******

Tuve que cancelar el viaje por una emergencia.	I had to cancel the trip because of an emergency.
Llegamos tarde por la lluvia.	We were late because of the rain.
Por ser tan rubia, ella no puede estar mucho tiempo al sol.	Because of being so blond/light-skinned, she can't be in the sun for very long.

***** "for" meaning *for the sake of; on behalf of; in place of******

Te ruego, ¡hazlo por mí!	I beg you, do it for me! (for my sake)
Hablo por todos los que no tienen voz.	I speak for all those who have no voice.
Marta, estoy enferma y pido que tú trabajes el turno por mí.	Marta, I'm sick and I ask you to work the shift for me. (in my place, as my substitute)
Lo hizo por amor.	She did it for love.
No llores por mí, Argentina.	Don't cry for, Argentina. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_3wc2TFSCQ

***** an approximate location, time, motion, or direction (*through, around, along, by*)*****

El ladrón escapó por la ventana.	The thief escaped through the window.
Viajamos por toda Sudamérica.	We traveled all through South America.
Enrique va por la calle Juárez.	Enrique is going down Juárez Street.
Vamos a caminar por el lago.	Let's walk along/around the lake. (It could mean "through the lake" but logically not!)
Voy a pasar por tu casa a las 8:00.	I'll be by your house at 8:00.
Los chicos están por aquí.	The kids are around here (somewhere).
Mi socio trabaja por la tarde.	My business partner works in the afternoon. (also, <i>en la tarde</i>)

***** "for" meaning *duration of time******

Nuestros primos van a estar aquí por dos meses.	Our cousins are going to be here for two months.
No dormí por tres días.	I didn't sleep for three days.
Mis amigos piensan estudiar en Ecuador por un semestre.	My friends are planning to study in Ecuador for a semester.

***** "for" meaning *per or, in multiplication, times/multiplied by******

Iban a cien millas por hora.	They were going a hundred miles per (an) hour.
Voy al médico dos veces por semana.	I go to the doctor twice per (a) week.
Las almendras son seis dólares por kilo.	The almonds are six dollars per (a) kilo.
Dos por tres son seis.	Two times three is (equals) six.

***** "for" meaning *to get, to fetch, to pick up******

Pasamos por usted a las dos.	We'll come by for you at two.
Mamá fue al supermercado por pan.	Mom went to the store for bread.
¿Mandaste los paquetes por correo?	Did you send the packages by mail?
Hicimos las reservaciones por teléfono.	We made the reservations by phone.
Nos gusta viajar por tren.	We like to travel by train.
<i>Don Quijote</i> fue escrito por Miguel de Cervantes.	<i>Don Quixote</i> was written by Miguel de Cervantes.

***** "for" meaning *an emotion for someone or something******

Tengo respeto por mis amigos.	I have respect for my friends.
Tengo miedo por nuestro país.	I fear for our country.

***** "for" indicating *mistaken identity or a misjudgment******

¡Me tomaron por tu abuela!	They took me for your grandmother!
David pasa por estudiante.	David passes for a student.

***** *estar por + infinitive* meaning *to be about to do something, to be in the mood to, to feel like******

Estoy por salir.	I'm in the mood to go out. I am about to leave.
El médico estaba por cerrar la consulta.	The doctor was about to close the office.
¡Un momento! Estoy por terminar esta lista de reglas.	Just a minute! I'm about to finish this list of rules.

***** *for something remaining to be done: quedar por + infinitive******

Queda por ver.	It remains to be seen.
Muchas tareas quedan por hacer.	Many tasks remain to be done.

***** *to add the idea of motion to prepositions of location******

El gato saltó por encima del sofá.	The cat jumped over the sofa.
El niño corrió por debajo de la mesa.	The child ran under the table.