

Lesson on Gustar-Type Verbs

We learned about the verb **gustar** when we looked at the “John Likes Apples” example. Let’s review that concept so we can understand the pattern associated with similar Spanish verbs.

JOHN LIKES APPLES

This “John Likes Apples” example shows why word-for-word translation doesn’t really work. English and Spanish organize meaning differently, so if we try to match each word one by one, the sentence feels awkward or even wrong. Instead of chasing individual words, we focus on the whole idea and let Spanish express that idea in its own natural way.

1. John sees the apples.

Juan ve las manzanas.

2. John picks the apples.

Juan recoge las manzanas.

3. John washes the apples.

Juan lava las manzanas.

4. John prepares the apples.

Juan prepara las manzanas.

So far, as shown in #s 1-4, word-for-word translation works. Then we get to:

5. John likes the apples.

(See Next Page)

5. John likes the apples.

A Juan le gustan las manzanas.

(To John, the apples are pleasing)

Spanish does not treat “liking” as an action John performs — it treats it as a feeling the apples cause. In regular sentences (#s 1-4 above), John does the action. In *gustar*-type sentences, the apples cause the feeling. That’s why Spanish flips the subject, changes the order, and uses an indirect object

There are other Gustar-Type Verbs

These verbs all describe feelings that happen *to* someone, so Spanish uses the same pattern every time. The thing is the subject, and the person receives the feeling. **Because the thing is the subject, we only use the third-person forms — singular when the thing is singular, and plural when the thing is plural.** Even though these verbs *can* be conjugated in all persons, Spanish simply doesn’t use those other forms in this structure.

What Gustar-Type Verbs Have in Common

All of these verbs — **gustar, encantar, interesar, and parecer** — share one simple idea:

They describe feelings or reactions that happen *to* a person, not actions the person performs.

Because of that, Spanish builds the sentence in a different way. Instead of saying “*I like hamburgers,*” Spanish says:

“Hamburgers are pleasing *to me.*”

So all *gustar*-type verbs follow the same pattern:

- **The thing is the subject**
- **The person is the receiver**
- **The receiver is marked with an indirect object pronoun like *me, te, le, nos, les***
- **You can add *A* + person to clarify who receives the feeling**

This is why Spanish says:

A Juan le gustan las hamburguesas. *To Juan, the hamburgers are pleasing.*

All four verbs work exactly the same way. Only the feeling changes:

- **gustar** → pleasing
- **encantar** → delighting
- **interesar** → interesting
- **parecer** → seeming (often with an adjective)

Gustar

- Me gusta la hamburguesa. *I like the hamburger.*
- Me gustan las hamburguesas. *I like hamburgers.*

Encantar

- Me encanta la hamburguesa. *I love the hamburger.*
- Me encantan las hamburguesas. *I love hamburgers.*

Interesar

- Me interesa la hamburguesa. *The hamburger interests me.*
- Me interesan las hamburguesas. *Hamburgers interest me.*

Parecer

- Me parece buena la hamburguesa. *The hamburger seems good to me.*
- Me parecen buenas las hamburguesas. *The hamburgers seem good to me.*

Note: With *parecer*, Spanish likes to add an adjective to describe the opinion. The adjective matches the thing — not the person.

Indirect Object Pronouns (IOPs) for Gustar-Type Verbs

These pronouns tell us *who* receives the feeling. They never change with the verb — only with the person.

me

Meaning: *to me* Definition: Shows that I am the receiver of the feeling or opinion.

te

Meaning: *to you* (informal, singular) Definition: Shows that you (one person) are the receiver.

le

Meaning: *to him / to her / to you (formal)* Definition: Shows that one person (he, she, or usted) is the receiver.

nos

Meaning: *to us* Definition: Shows that we are the receivers.

les

Meaning: *to them / to you all* Definition: Shows that they (or ustedes) are the receivers.

A few small chunks to expand our sentences

1. **En general**

English: *Generally speaking* Definition: A broad, big-picture tendency. Used when talking about overall habits or impressions.

Pronunciation: *en hen-EH-ral*

2. **Por lo general**

English: *Usually* Definition: A habitual pattern — something that happens most of the time. Pronunciation: *por lo hen-EH-ral*

3. **Casi siempre**

English: *Most of the time / almost always* Definition: A strong frequency chunk indicating that something happens very often.

Pronunciation: *KAH-see SYEM-preh*

Using the Three Chunks with All Four Verbs

Learning Point: The repetitive use of the same content allows your brain to focus on the new verb pattern without being distracted by new vocabulary. When the nouns don't change, you can concentrate on the structure.

En general (generally speaking)

Gustar

- En general, me gusta la hamburguesa. *Generally speaking, I like the hamburger.*
- En general, me gustan las hamburguesas. *Generally speaking, I like hamburgers.*

Encantar

- En general, me encanta la hamburguesa. *Generally speaking, I love the hamburger.*
- En general, me encantan las hamburguesas. *Generally speaking, I love hamburgers.*

Interesar

- En general, me interesa la hamburguesa. *Generally speaking, the hamburger interests me.*
- En general, me interesan las hamburguesas. *Generally speaking, hamburgers interest me.*

Parecer

- En general, me parece buena la hamburguesa. *Generally speaking, the hamburger seems good to me.*
- En general, me parecen buenas las hamburguesas. *Generally speaking, the hamburgers seem good to me.*

Por lo general (usually)

Gustar

- Por lo general, me gusta la hamburguesa. *Usually, I like the hamburger.*
- Por lo general, me gustan las hamburguesas. *Usually, I like hamburgers.*

Encantar

- Por lo general, me encanta la hamburguesa. *Usually, I love the hamburger.*

- Por lo general, me encantan las hamburguesas. *Usually, I love hamburgers.*

Interesar

- Por lo general, me interesa la hamburguesa. *Usually, the hamburger interests me.*
- Por lo general, me interesan las hamburguesas. *Usually, hamburgers interest me.*

Parecer

- Por lo general, me parece buena la hamburguesa. *Usually, the hamburger seems good to me.*
- Por lo general, me parecen buenas las hamburguesas. *Usually, the hamburgers seem good to me.*

Casi siempre (most of the time / almost always)

Gustar

- Casi siempre, me gusta la hamburguesa. *Most of the time, I like the hamburger.*
- Casi siempre, me gustan las hamburguesas. *Most of the time, I like hamburgers.*

Encantar

- Casi siempre, me encanta la hamburguesa. *Most of the time, I love the hamburger.*
- Casi siempre, me encantan las hamburguesas. *Most of the time, I love hamburgers.*

Interesar

- Casi siempre, me interesa la hamburguesa. *Most of the time, the hamburger interests me.*
- Casi siempre, me interesan las hamburguesas. *Most of the time, hamburgers interest me.*

Parecer

- Casi siempre, me parece buena la hamburguesa. *Most of the time, the hamburger seems good to me.*
- Casi siempre, me parecen buenas las hamburguesas. *Most of the time, the hamburgers seem good to me.*

Some adjectives to use with *parecer*:

buena / buenas

Describes general quality.

Examples:

- Me parece buena la hamburguesa. *The hamburger seems good to me.*
- Me parecen buenas las hamburguesas. *The hamburgers seem good to me.*

rica / ricas

Meaning: tasty / delicious Describes flavor.

Examples:

- Me parece rica la hamburguesa. *The hamburger seems tasty to me.*
- Me parecen ricas las hamburguesas. *The hamburgers seem tasty to me.*

interesante

Meaning: interesting - Works for singular and plural (no gender change).

Examples:

- Me parece interesante la hamburguesa. *The hamburger seems interesting to me.*
- Me parecen interesantes las hamburguesas. *The hamburgers seem interesting to me.*

saludable

Meaning: healthy - Works for singular and plural (no gender change).

Examples:

- Me parece saludable la hamburguesa. *The hamburger seems healthy to me.*
- Me parecen saludables las hamburguesas. *The hamburgers seem healthy to me.*

Here are some additional Common Everyday Gustar-Type Verbs

- **importar** — to matter / to be important (*importa / importan*)
- **molestar** — to bother / to annoy (*molesta / molestan*)
- **faltar** — to be lacking / to be missing (*falta / faltan*)
- **doler** — to hurt (*duele / duelen*)
- **apetecer** — to feel like / to appeal (*apetece / apetecen*)
- **caer bien / caer mal** — to get along with / to rub the wrong way (*cae / caen*)
- **quedar** — to fit (clothes), to remain, to be left (*queda / quedan*)
- **sobrar** — to be left over (*sobra / sobran*)

- **tocar** — to be someone's turn (*toca / tocan*)
- **fascinar** — to fascinate (*fascina / fascinan*)
- **preocupar** — to worry (*preocupa / preocupan*)
- **encoger** — to shrink (clothes) (*encoge / encogen*)