

Indirect Object Pronouns

We have used the Pronouns a lot. These indicate who is doing the action in a sentence. The Indirect Object Pronouns, on the other hand, indicate who is receiving the action.

Pronouns		Indirect Object Pronouns	
yo (I)	nosotros (we)	me (me)	nos (us)
tú (you)	vosotros (y'all)	te (you)	os (y'all)
él (he)	ellos (they)	le (him/her)	les (them)
ella (she)	ellas (they)		
ud. (you)	uds. (you all)		

Usage

Here are some examples of how indirect object pronouns are used:

Yo te llamo. <i>I call you.</i>	Tú me llamas. <i>You call me.</i>	Ellos nos escuchan. <i>They listen to us.</i>
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--

Look at the verb endings. In each case, the Pronoun matches because it identifies who is doing the action. The Indirect Object Pronoun does not match the verb. It is only indirectly involved; it is receiving the action. Notice, however, that both come before the active (conjugated) verb. For example:

Yo me llamo Marcos. <i>I call me (myself) Marcos.</i>	<i>i.e. "My name is Marcos."</i>
--	----------------------------------

Yo te quiero. <i>I want you.</i>	<i>i.e. "I love you."</i>
-------------------------------------	---------------------------

¿Cómo te llamas? <i>How do you call you (yourself)?</i>	<i>i.e. "What is your name?"</i>
--	----------------------------------

An Important Detail

When members of the third person—él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas, ustedes—do the action to themselves, do not use "le" but "se."

Ella se llama Ana. <i>She calls herself Ana.</i>	Ellos se hablan. <i>They talk to themselves (each other).</i>
---	--

Mandatory Use of Indirect Object Pronouns

You must use Indirect Object Pronouns with certain verbs like *gustar* (to please), *chocar* (to displease), *encantar* (to enchant), *fascinar* (to fascinate) and *interesar* (to interest). Often you will see these written as *gustarse*, *chocarse*, *encantarse*, etc. The "se" on the end of the infinitive is there to remind us to use Indirect Object Pronouns. To avoid confusion, keep an eye on the verb endings. For example:

Tú me <u>gustas</u> . <i>You please me.</i>	<i>i.e. "I like you."</i>
--	---------------------------

¿Te <u>gusto</u> yo? <i>[Do] I please you?</i>	<i>i.e. "Do you like me?"</i>
---	-------------------------------

¿No te <u>encanta</u> el helado? <i>[Doesn't] ice cream enchant you?</i>	<i>i.e. "Don't you love ice cream?"</i>
---	---

Nos <u>fascinan</u> los planetas. <i>The planets (they) fascinate us.</i>
--

Notice that in questions, the Pronoun and Verb often switch places. Wherever you put the Pronoun, remember: the Indirect Object Pronoun always precedes the verb.

Other Uses of Indirect Object Pronouns

You can also use Indirect Object Pronouns with the Present Progressive and other Compound Verbs.

Yo te <u>hablo</u> .	<i>I talk to you.</i>	PRESENT
Yo te <u>estoy hablando</u> .	<i>I am talking to you.</i>	PROGRESSIVE
Yo te <u>quiero hablar</u> .	<i>I want to talk to you.</i>	COMPOUND VERB

Again, the Indirect Object Pronoun precedes the active (conjugated) verb. Notice that although "talking" is a physical action and draws our attention, "estoy" is really the active verb. To be talking is a Compound Verb.

If you prefer a more linear (left-to-right) translation, it is acceptable to add an Indirect Object Pronoun to the end of the Compound Verb. If you do this, add an accent mark to preserve the emphasis on the right syllable when read aloud. NEVER split a Compound Verb with an Indirect Object Pronoun.

RIGHT	Yo te <u>estoy hablando</u> . Yo <u>estoy hablándote</u> .
WRONG	Yo <u>estoy te hablando</u> .

RIGHT	Yo te <u>quiero hablar</u> . Yo <u>quiero hablarte</u> .
WRONG	Yo <u>quiero te hablar</u> .

Direct Objects

What if a thing receives the action, rather than a person? Easy. Just use one of the Direct Objects: *lo*, *la*, *los*, and *las*. Which one? That depends on the gender and number of the thing it represents. The rules about word order are the same as explained above, with Indirect Object Pronouns. For example:

Yo quiero el coche. <i>I want the car.</i>	Yo lo quiero. <i>I want it.</i>
Yo quiero los tacos. <i>I want the tacos.</i>	Yo los quiero. <i>I want them.</i>
Yo quiero la bufanda. <i>I want the scarf.</i>	Yo la quiero. <i>I want it.</i>
Yo quiero las cajas. <i>I want the boxes.</i>	Yo las quiero. <i>I want them.</i>

Added bonus: you just discovered how to say "it" in Spanish! Please note, however, that "it" can only be used as an object that receives the action. "It" cannot, ever, act as a pronoun does. For example:

Correct:	Es rojo.	("it" is implied)
Incorrect:	Lo es rojo.	(wrong— <u>never</u> do this!)

Using Indirect Object Pronouns with Direct Objects

What if both a person and a thing receive the action in a sentence? Is this possible? Of course. You might say, for instance, "I give you a rose." On the other hand, you might say, "I give a rose to you." Well, which is correct? The answer: either works in English, but not in Spanish.

The important question to ask, here, is: what's more important—people or things? People are, of course! So Indirect Object Pronouns (representing people, both do-ers and the do-ees) come before Direct Objects (representing things), followed by the active (conjugated) verb.

Yo te doy una rosa. <i>I give you a rose.</i>	Yo te la doy. <i>I give it [to] you.</i>
--	---

Note the order: "yo" (Pronoun) then "te" (Indirect Object Pronoun), then "la" (Direct Object), then "doy" (active verb). The exception would be in using Compound Verbs, as explained in the previous section, where the Indirect Pronouns and Objects can be added to the end:

Yo te la estoy dando.	OR	Yo estoy dándotela.
Yo te la quiero dar.	OR	Yo quiero dártela.

Another Important Detail

When using a direct object and an indirect object pronoun with the third person—él, ella, usted, ellos, ellas, ustedes—you must use "se" for the person. See the example below.

Yo le doy una rosa. <i>I give her a rose.</i>	Yo se la doy. <i>I give it to her.</i>
--	---

Why, you ask? Good question. Consider the alternative. Which flows better?

Correct:	Yo se la doy.
Incorrect:	Yo le la doy.

Now, doesn't "se la doy" just roll off your tongue? There is actually more to it than aesthetics. Sometimes people are referred to as objects in Spanish, like "the policeman" (*lo*) or "the waitress" (*la*). In that case, if not for "se", you would have a hard time distinguishing between the person and object involved, as you see below.

Incorrect: ~~Yo la la doy.~~

Quiz

Translate the following expressions:

1. I send them (the packages) to you.
2. She brings them (the flowers) to us.
3. We return it (the gift) to them.
4. Marcos throws it (the ball) to her.
5. They send it (the letter) to him.
6. You give it (the box) to me.

