

## Por y Para

The tendency to translate too literally leads to serious problems with the prepositions POR and PARA. These are often translated to "for" but this does not provide an accurate idea their versatility.

---

### • POR •

A. Identifies the agent (the **entity that acts**) in passive expressions:

La puerta fue arreglada por el carpintero.  
*The door was fixed by the carpenter.*

B. Identifies the **manner or means**:

El dentista me sacó el diente por fuerza.  
*The dentist pulled my tooth out by force.*

Me envió la carta por avion.  
*She sent the letter by airmail.*

Llevó al niño por la mano.  
*She led the child by the hand.*

C. Identifies the place **by or through** which an action takes place:

Entraron por la puerta de atrás.  
*They came in the back door.*

Andabamos por la playa.  
*We were walking along the beach.*

D. Identifies a **period of time** during which an action takes place:

Saqué el libro por 10 días.  
*I checked out the book for 10 days.*

Estuvieron en Perú por 3 semanas.  
*They were in Peru for 3 weeks.*

E. Identifies an **indefinite time** or place:

Ocurrió por aquí.  
*It happened around here.*

Saldrán por diciembre del año que viene.  
*They will leave around December of next year.*

F. Identifies the **exchange** of one thing for another:

Pagé 50 dólares por el libro.  
*I paid \$50 for the book.*

Voy a cambiar este lápiz por uno nuevo.  
*I'm going to trade this pencil for a new one.*

G. Identifies **rates** and other units of **measurement**:

por docena; por ciento  
*by the dozen; percent*

La velocidad permitida es 55 millas por hora.  
*The speed limit is 55 miles per hour.*

H. Identifies things done "**on behalf of**", "in the name of", or "in the place of".

Habló elocuentemente por su amigo.  
*She spoke eloquently on behalf of her friend.*

Votaron por Nixon y Reagan.  
*They voted for Nixon and Reagan.*

Escribo esta carta por mi hermano.  
*I'm writing this letter for my brother.*

Siento mucha compasión por los pobres.  
*I feel a lot of sympathy for the poor.*

I. Identifies the **reason or motive** behind an action:

Lo hacen por vanidad.  
*They do it out of vanity.*

No fue admitida por ser comunista.  
*She wasn't admitted because she was a communist.*

J. Is used after the verbs IR, VENIR, MANDAR, VOLVER to identify the immediate object of a command.

Ella me mandó a la tienda por pan.  
*She sent me to the store for bread.*

Vine por el pago.  
*I came for my pay.*

K. Identifies **opinion**, estimation, and acceptance:

Lo tengo por hombre de talento.  
*I take him for a man of talent.*

Los dejaron por muertos.  
*They left them for dead.*

L. Following an infinitive, identifies **what has not yet been done** or what is left to do:

Todavía quedan dos cartas por escribir.  
*There are still two letters to write.*

Mi tarea queda por terminar.  
*My homework still has to be finished.*

M. With ESTAR, when the subject is a person, it means to be **in favor of** or to tend to:

Estoy por ir.  
*I'm in favor of going.*

Estamos por creer que es tonto.  
*We're inclined to believe that he is stupid.*

N. Is used in **exclamations** and other popular phrases:

Por el amor de Dios.  
*For the love of God.*

Por eso	<i>therefore, for this reason</i>
Por lo visto	<i>apparently, by what I can see</i>
Por lo general	<i>generally</i>
Por lo menos	<i>at least</i>
Por ahora	<i>for now</i>
Por ejemplo	<i>for example</i>
Por favor	<i>please</i>
Por fin	<i>finally</i>

---

• PARA •

A. Expresses **purpose**:

Busco una pluma para escribir una carta.  
*I'm looking for a pen to write a letter.*

Estudio para (ser) abogado.  
*I'm studying to be a lawyer.*

B. Expresses **destination** or **direction**:

Salió ayer para Barcelona.  
*He left yesterday for Barcelona.*

Caminas para el capitolio, pero luego doblas a la izquierda.  
*You walk toward the capitol, but then you turn left.*

C. Indicates "**usage**":

Este cántaro es para el vino y ese es para el agua.  
*This pitcher is for wine and that one is for water.*

D. Identifies **a point in time** or **time limit** in the future:

Lo difícil dejaremos para mañana.  
*We'll leave the hard part for tomorrow.*

Te pagaré para el quince del mes que viene.  
*I'll pay you by the 15th of next month.*

E. Expresses **implied comparisons**:

Para un extranjero, usted sabe mucho de nuestras costumbres.  
*For a foreigner, you know a lot about our customs.*

La alaban poco para lo que merece.  
*They praise her little compared to what she deserves.*

F. Expresses something that is not **generally** true, but can be applied in certain cases:

Para la duquesa, no es nada; para mi es todo.  
*To the duchess it is nothing; for me it is everything.*

Esto para nosotros es muy importante.  
*For us, this is very important.*

Para mi, vino muy tarde.  
*It seems to me that she came very late.*

G. With ESTAR meaning to be **at the point of**:

Estabamos para salir.  
*We were about to leave.*