

Conocer vs. Saber

Both Conocer and Saber mean "to know" in English, but in Spanish they represent two different types of knowing.

Saber is to know a fact, particular information, or skill (how to do something).

Conocer is to know (be familiar) people, places and general concepts.

Conjugate each in the present tense as you see here:

CONOCER		SABER	
conozco	conocemos	sé	sabemos
conoces	conocéis	sabes	sabéis
conoce	conocen	sabe	saben

Notice that both verbs are irregular because they have "yo" forms that do not follow the typical pattern.

Conocer

We use Conocer to talk about a person, place or thing with which we are familiar or about which we have a general understanding. When you speak of knowing a person, remember to use the Personal "a". For example:

Sí, conozco a Rosa.	<i>Yes, I know Rosa.</i>
¿Conoces al novio de María?	<i>Do you know María's fiancé?</i>
Conoces San Francisco bien.	<i>You know San Francisco well.</i>
Andrés conoce un lugar bueno.	<i>Andrés knows a good place.</i>

We also use Conocer to talk about general concepts or subjects:

Conozco la poesía de Betancor.	<i>I'm familiar with Betancor's Poetry.</i>
Ella quiere conocer tu país.	<i>She wants to know your country.</i>
Me gustaría conocerte mejor.	<i>I would like to know you better.</i>
Conocer la hermosura es vivir.	<i>To know beauty is to live.</i>

Saber

Since Saber is all about facts—the who, what, when, where, why and how of situations and events—only Saber can be followed by a question word. For example:

Saben cuándo es el concierto.	<i>They know when the concert is.</i>
Tú sabes cuál es la calle, ¿no?	<i>You know which street it is, right?</i>
Sabemos qué tienes en la bolsa.	<i>We know what you have in the bag.</i>
Nico sabe dónde está la fiesta.	<i>Nico knows where the party is.</i>
Yo sé cómo lo haces.	<i>I know how you do it.</i>

Question words can come before either Conocer or Saber. For example:

¿A quién conoces del grupo?	<i>Who do you know from the group?</i>
¿Cómo conoces Berlin tan bien?	<i>How do you know Berlin so well?</i>
¿Cuál persona conoces mejor?	<i>Which person do you know better?</i>
¿Cuándo sabrás la respuesta?	<i>When will you know the answer?</i>
¿Cómo sabes tanto?	<i>How do you know so much?</i>
¿Qué sabes tú?	<i>What do you know?</i>

We also use Saber to express or describe what we know "how to do" by following it with an infinitive. For example:

Yo sé montar a caballo.	<i>I know how to ride a horse.</i>
Jessica sabe bailar bien.	<i>Jessica knows how to dance well.</i>
¿Tú sabes dibujar?	<i>Do you know how to draw?</i>
Ya sabemos nadar.	<i>We already know how to swim.</i>

Quiz

Translate the following to Spanish. Be sure to use the right verb!

1. I know Melinda. She's super-nice.
2. Do you know where the keys are?
3. She doesn't know anything.
4. Do you know Madrid?
5. Ken knows karate.
6. Do we know what we have to bring to the party?
7. He knows the car inside and out.
8. Do you guys know what time it is?
9. Do y'all know the Joneses? No? Well, keep up!

