

Ser or estar?

Two ways to say "to be". Choose the one that fits your meaning.

YOUR GOAL

Describe who someone is, how they feel, and where things are.

ser

DOCTOR

Identity and defining features

D

Description

El coche es rojo.
The car is red.

O

Occupation

Soy dentista.
I'm a dentist.

C

Characteristic

Leo es generoso.
Leo is generous.

T

Time

Son las ocho.
It's eight o'clock.

O

Origin

Somos de Perú.
We're from Peru.

R

Relationship

Nora es mi prima.
Nora is my cousin.

estar

PLACE

Location, state, and ongoing action

P

Position

El gato está sentado.
The cat is sitting.

L

Location

Mi bolso está aquí.
My bag is here.

A

Action in progress

Estamos leyendo.
We're reading.

C

Condition

El té está frío.
The tea is cold.

E

Emotion

Estoy emocionada.
I'm excited.

For an action in progress, use estar + an -ando or -iendo form.
Some forms are irregular, such as leyendo.

Present-tense quick reference

	yo	tú	él / ella / usted	nosotros/as	vosotros/as	ellos / ellas / ustedes
ser	soy	eres	es	somos	sois	son
estar	estoy	estás	está	estamos	estáis	están

Vosotros/as is used mainly in Spain. Ustedes is used for plural "you" throughout Latin America.

DOCTOR and PLACE are memory aids. The meaning and context decide the verb.



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Make the choice.

Start with the meaning. Then choose *ser* or *estar* and the right present form.

Places and events

El museo está en el centro.

The museum is downtown.

La clase es en el museo.

The class takes place at the museum.

Use *estar* for a building's location, even if it is lasting. Use *ser* for where an event takes place.

Same adjective, different meaning

Él es aburrido.

He's boring.

Él está aburrido.

He's bored.

A trait and a state can use the same adjective. Think about the message you want to express.

Your turn

Fill each gap with a present form of *ser* or *estar*. Use the English meaning as your clue.

01 Yo _____ de Costa Rica.
I'm from Costa Rica.

03 Mis vecinas _____ médicas.
My neighbors are doctors.

05 La reunión _____ en la biblioteca.
The meeting takes place at the library.

07 Hoy _____ jueves.
Today is Thursday.

02 La mochila _____ en el coche.
The backpack is in the car.

04 Tú _____ escribiendo un mensaje.
You're writing a message.

06 Nosotros _____ nerviosos hoy.
We feel nervous today.

08 Para mí, esa película _____ aburrida.
In my opinion, that movie is boring.

Check your answers

1. **soy** Origin: where I am from.

3. **son** Occupation: what my neighbors do.

5. **es** Event location: where the meeting takes place.

7. **es** Time: naming the day.

2. **está** Location: where the backpack is.

4. **estás** Action in progress: *estar* + *escribiendo*.

6. **estamos** Emotion: how we feel today.

8. **es** Characteristic: I describe the movie as boring.

MAKE IT YOURS

Say two sentences about yourself: one with *ser* and one with *estar*. Explain why each verb fits.



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