

10 Grammatical Mistakes You Can Avoid

From [Gerald Erichsen](#),
Your Guide to [Spanish Language](#).
[Stay up to date!](#)

Some Trip Up Even Longtime Speakers

Unless you're something other than human, there's no way to learn and use a foreign language without making your share of mistakes — and getting caught at it. With expectations that you would rather learn of your mistakes in the privacy of your home rather than being corrected, here are 10 fairly common grammatical errors, listed in no particular order, that you should try to avoid:

- **Using *buscar para* instead of *buscar* to mean "to look for."** *Buscar* is best translated "to seek," which like *buscar* is not followed by a preposition. **Correct:** *Busco los dos libros.* (I am looking for the two books.)
- **Using *un otro* or *una otra* to mean "another."** The indefinite article isn't needed in Spanish. Neither is one needed before *cierto*, which can mean "a certain." **Correct:** *Quiero otro libro.* (I want another book.) *Quiero cierto libro.* (I want a certain book.)
- **Ending a sentence in a preposition.** Although some purists object, it's quite common to end sentences in English with prepositions. But it's a no-no in Spanish, so you'll need to recast the sentence to make sure the preposition's object comes after the preposition. **Correct:** *¿Con quién puedo comer?* (Whom can I eat with?)
- **Wrongly using *quien* in relative clauses to mean "who."** In English, we say "the car *that* runs" but "the boy *who* runs." In Spanish, we usually use *que* to mean both "that" and "who." There are a few instances, beyond the scope of this lesson, in which *quien* can be used to mean "who," but in many of them *que* can also be used, so *que* is often the safer choice. **Correct:** *Mi hija es alumna que estudia mucho.* (My daughter is a student who studies a lot.)
- **Forgetting to make the *cientos* portion of numbers feminine when required.** We say *cuatrocientos treinta y dos* to say "432" to refer to a masculine noun but *cuatrocientas treinta y dos* when referring to a feminine noun. The distinction is easy to forget because of the distance between the number and the noun being referred to. **Correct:** *Tengo quinientas dieciséis gallinas.* (I have 516 hens.)
- **Using *un* or *una* when stating someone's occupation.** The corresponding word, "a" or "an," is required in English but not used in Spanish. **Correct:** *No soy marinero, soy capitán.* (I am not a mariner, I am a captain.)
- **Using the wrong preposition.** The prepositions of English and Spanish don't have one-to-one correspondence. Thus a simple preposition such as "in" in English might be translated not only as *en* but also as *de* (as in *de la mañana* for "in the morning"), which typically is translated as "of" or "from." Learning proper usage of prepositions can be one of the most challenging aspects of learning Spanish grammar. A lesson in prepositions is beyond the scope of this article, although you can study some of them [here](#). **Correct:** *Le compraron la casa a mi padre.* (They bought the house from my father, *or, depending on the context*, they bought the house for my father) *Es malo con su esposa.* (He is mean to his wife.) *Mi coche chocó con su bicicleta.* (My car ran into his bicycle.) *Se vistió de verde.* (He dressed in green.)
- **Using possessive adjectives when referring to body parts and articles of clothing.** In English, we usually refer to a person's body parts or clothing using possessive adjectives. But in Spanish, the definite article (*el* or *la*) is used when the person the body part or item belongs to is obvious. **Correct:** *¡Abre los ojos!* (Open your eyes!) *El hombre se puso la camisa.* (The man put on his shirt.)
- **Wrongly using days of the week.** Days of the week are usually used with the definite article (singular *el* or plural *los*), and it isn't necessary to say that an event happens "on" a certain day. **Correct:** *Trabajo los lunes.* (I work on Mondays.)
- **Avoiding those redundancies that are required in Spanish but would be incorrect in English.** As noted in [this lesson](#), a redundant indirect object is sometimes required, and as [this lesson](#) points out, double (or even triple!) negatives are sometimes needed. **Correct:** *Juan le da una camisa a él.* (John is giving a shirt to him.) *No dijo nada.* (He said nothing.)

This About.com page has been optimized for print. To view this page in its original form, please visit:
http://spanish.about.com/od/learnspanishgrammar/a/gram_mistakes.htm

©2007 About, Inc., a part of [The New York Times Company](#). All rights reserved.