

Direct Objects, the Personal *a*, and Direct Object Pronouns

(Los complementos directos, la *a* personal,
y los pronombres de complemento directo)

A *direct object* is a thing or person that receives the direct action of the verb.

I eat **the tamales**.

Yo como **los tamales**.

Óscar kisses **his wife**.

Óscar besa a **su esposa**.

Notice that direct objects that are people or domesticated animals (and sometimes personified things) are signaled by the personal a.

Óscar kisses his wife.

Óscar besa a su esposa.

I walk my dog every morning.

Paseo a mi perro todas las mañanas.

Patriots love their country.

Los patriotas aman a su patria.

More information about the personal *a* follows on the next slide.

More on the personal *a*

Generally, the personal *a* is not used after the verb *tener*.

Óscar tiene una esposa muy bonita.
Óscar has a very pretty wife.

Nor is it used with a direct object that is an unspecified or indefinite person.

Buscamos una secretaria eficiente.
We're looking for an efficient secretary.

More on the personal *a*

The personal *a* followed by the definite article *el* contracts to form *al*.

Alicia visita *al* médico.

Alicia visits the doctor.

When the interrogative **quién(es)** requests information about the direct object, the personal *a* precedes it.

¿A quién llama Elisa? Whom is Elisa calling?

The personal *a* must be repeated before each human direct object in a series.

Visito *a* Emilio y *a* Lola. I visit Emilio and Lola.

Identifying a direct object

A direct object is a thing or person that answers what or whom, respectively, in the following equation:

SUBJECT + VERB + WHAT (WHOM)

Yo

como

DIRECT OBJECT

los tamales

Pronouns are particles (little words) that take the place of the object itself, so that the object does not have to be repeated ad nauseum . . .

Did you buy **the piano** ?

Yes, I bought **the piano** .

Did you pay a lot for **the piano** ?

Well, **the piano** wasn't cheap.

Can you play **the piano** ?

Yes, and my brother plays **the piano** too.

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the piano

the piano

the piano

the piano

the piano

the piano

Notice how many times “the piano” was repeated.

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A better, more concise way is to use pronouns instead of repeating the noun over and over.

Did you buy **the piano** ?

Yes, I bought **it** .

Did you pay a lot for **it** ?

Well, **it** wasn't cheap.

Can you play **it** ?

Yes, and my brother plays **it** too.

Direct object *pronouns* in Spanish, just as in English, take the place of the direct object itself, so that the direct object does not have to be repeated, and repeated, and repeated . . .

¿Compraste **el piano**?

Sí, **lo** compré.

¿Puedes tocar **lo**?

Sí, y mi hermano **lo** sabe tocar también.

The direct object pronouns in Spanish are as follows:

These are used exclusively for **people** —

me	nos
te	os

These are used for **people** and **things** —

lo, la	los, las
(lo, la)	(los, las)

Now let's see how pronouns replace things or people that are direct objects.

I eat the tamales.

Yo como los tamales.



Yo los como.

Notice that third-person direct object pronouns agree in gender and number with the noun they replace.

Now let's see how pronouns replace things or people that are direct objects.

Óscar kisses his wife.

Óscar besa a su esposa.



Óscar la besa.

Notice that third-person direct object pronouns agree in gender and number with the noun they replace.

Notice that the personal a goes away
when the direct object *noun* is replaced
by a direct object *pronoun*.

Óscar besa a su esposa.

Óscar la besa.

The diagram illustrates the replacement of the direct object noun 'su esposa' with the direct object pronoun 'la'. In the first sentence, 'Óscar besa a su esposa.', the preposition 'a' is circled in black. In the second sentence, 'Óscar la besa.', the pronoun 'la' is circled in red. An arrow points from the circled 'a' in the first sentence to the circled 'la' in the second sentence, indicating the replacement. Another arrow points from the underlined 'su esposa' in the first sentence to the same circled 'la' in the second sentence, indicating the replacement of the noun phrase.

PLACEMENT OF PRONOUNS

ALL object pronouns are placed either before a conjugated verb (except for *affirmative command forms*)

Óscar la besa.
(Óscar, bésala.)

or after an *infinitive* or *gerund* (*present participle*).

Óscar la va a besar.
Óscar va a besarla.

Óscar la está besando.
Óscar está besándola.

Direct object pronouns are commonly used in conversation when the object is established or known.

Again, this avoids needless repetition.

¿Dónde ves a **Jorge y a Sarita**? Where do you see Jorge and Sarita?

Los veo en clase. I see them in class.

¿Visitas a **tu abuela** con frecuencia? Do you visit your grandmother often?

Sí, la visito mucho. Yes, I visit her a lot.

Do not be misled into thinking that *los* and *la* in the above answers are the subjects of the sentences just because they appear in subject position. The subject of both answers, which is of course *yo*, is simply not expressed in these instances.

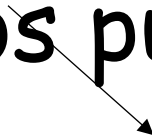
Be aware that object pronouns, just like verbs, must make a flip-flop transition when first and second persons are involved in the conversation.

¿Me vas a invitar a tu fiesta?



Sí, te voy a invitar.

¿Nos puedes ayudar mañana?



No, no los puedo ayudar.

In negative sentences, the direct object pronoun is placed between **no** and the conjugated verb.

Adolfo no la va a llamar.

Adolfo is not going to call her.

But, again, as in affirmative sentences, the object pronoun may be attached to the end of the infinitive or present participle.

Adolfo no va a llamarla.

FIN