

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3 #2 Formal Greetings in Mexican Spanish

CONTENTS

- 2 Formal Spanish
- 2 English
- 2 Vocabulary
- 3 Sample Sentences
- 4 Vocabulary Phrase Usage
- 4 Grammar
- 6 Cultural Insight

2

FORMAL SPANISH

1. ASHLEY: Buenos días señor Gómez.
2. SEÑOR GÓMEZ: Buenos días, Ashley.
3. ASHLEY: ¿Cómo está usted?
4. SEÑOR GÓMEZ: Muy bien, gracias ¿y usted?
5. ASHLEY: Muy bien, gracias.

ENGLISH

1. ASHLEY: Good morning, Mr. Gómez.
2. MR. GÓMEZ: Good morning, Ashley.
3. ASHLEY: How are you?
4. MR. GÓMEZ: I'm fine, thank you. And you? (Literally very well, thank you. And you?)
5. ASHLEY: I'm fine, thank you. (Literally, very well).

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
usted	you (formal)	pronoun	
muy bien	very well	phrase	

estar	to be (temporary conditions)	verb	
señor	Sir, Mr., gentleman	noun	masculine
buenos días	good morning	compound phrase	
y	and	coordinating conjunction	
cómo	how	adverb	
gracias	thanks, thank you	phrase, expression	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>¿Usted es Mexicano?</p> <p>"Are you Mexican?"</p>	<p>Ustedes hablan bien.</p> <p>"You all speak well."</p>
<p>Tocas muy bien la guitarra.</p> <p>"You play the guitar very well."</p>	<p>Hola, ¿cómo esta ud?</p> <p>"Hi, how are you?" (formal)</p>
<p>Aquel señor.</p> <p>"That gentleman."</p>	<p>Servido señor.</p> <p>"There you are, Sir."</p>
<p>¡Buenos días, señora! ¿Cómo está, usted?</p> <p>"Good morning, ma'am! How are you?"</p>	<p>Tú y yo somos amigos.</p> <p>"You and I are friends."</p>
<p>¿Cómo se dice?</p> <p>"How do you say it?"</p>	<p>Dime cómo usar el control remoto.</p> <p>"Tell me how to use the remote control."</p>

¿Cómo se llama usted?	¡Gracias por tu ayuda!
"What's your name?" (formal)	"Thank you for your help!"

Gracias por su ayuda.

"Thank you for your help."

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

Buenos días is an expression that depends on the time of day. Say *buenas tardes* ("good afternoon") between noon and dusk and *buenas noches* either as a greeting or as "good-bye" between dusk and when you go to sleep. In less formal situations, one does not say *buenos días* but simply *hola* or *¿qué tal?* ("What's up?").

Muy bien translates literally as "very well" and is an adverb that we use to describe the way things are or the way things are done, as in *estoy muy bien* ("I am very well"). However, when referring to something being "good" as an adjective, say *está bueno*. This means "it is good" or "it tastes good." The opposite of *muy bien* is *muy mal*, and you can say that when you are sad or not feeling very well. But try to keep it short and positive during greetings.

Gracias is the basic way of saying "thank you," but you can also say *muchas gracias* ("thank you very much") or *¡qué amable!* ("how kind of you").

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Learning How to Ask How Someone Is and the Formal Conjugation of the Verb *Estar*.

¿Cómo está usted? Muy bien, gracias. ¿Y usted?

"How are you? I'm fine, thank you. And you?"

In this lesson, we'll look at how to ask how someone is in Spanish.

Cómo está usted is the formal way of asking "How are you?" When speaking to a friend say *¿cómo estás?* but to your boss say *¿cómo está usted?* It is not necessary to add the word

usted as in *¿cómo está usted?* but you may if you want to. Another way of saying the same thing is *¿Cómo le va?* ("How is it going?")

1. *¿Cómo está usted?*
"How are you?" (formal)
2. *¿Cómo estás usted?*
"How are you?" (informal)

Let's look more closely at our verb in this construction, *estar*.

In our last lesson, we introduced the verb *soy*, "I am." However, *soy* refers to a permanent situation, such as "I am Thomas" or "I am American," whereas *está* ("you are") refers to a temporary situation, such as "you are happy" or "you are well." At this stage, we need to learn nothing more than the first and second persons, so let's conjugate the non-permanent verb *estar* ("to be") in those two forms: *yo estoy* ("I am") and *usted está* ("you are"). Now let's add the phrase *muy bien* ("very fine") at the end, and we have *yo estoy muy bien* ("I am very fine") and *usted está muy bien* ("you are very fine"). This basic conjugation of the verb *estar* forms the basic structure of a dialogue between two people without involving a third person. Alternatively, if we add the question *¿cómo?* ("How?"), we can ask the very useful question *¿cómo está usted?* ("How are you?").

Use of the Personal Pronoun *Usted*

When making a question in formal Spanish, put the verb before the pronoun. But when making an affirmation, put the verb after the pronoun.

For Example:

1. *Usted es Thomas.*
"You are Thomas."
2. *¿Es usted Thomas?*
"Are you Thomas?"

Examples from This Dialogue

1. *¿Cómo está usted?*
"How are you?"

Language Tip: Pronouncing *Usted*

Note that when we are pronouncing *Usted* the *-d* at the end should be stressed. It is a difficult sound to make, but pronouncing *usté* without the *-d* at the end conveys the impression of an uneducated person.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

How to Address Special People in Spanish

One of the reasons why Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* is one of the most emblematic novels in Latin American literature is because the author accurately captures the way people in Mexico use parables and ellipses to avoid being too direct when they speak. The best example of this is the existence in Spanish of the pronoun *usted*, a special way of saying "you" reserved for people of special hierarchy. Many have suggested that this term should disappear, for it makes the Spanish language extremely problematic at times. For example, you may accidentally address another person in the casual form *tú* and find that the other person was not comfortable, so you have to crawl back to *usted* in a discreet way. In the business world in Mexico, it is becoming more common to use the casual form *tú* with everyone, just as in English, but please double check.