

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3 #3 Casual Greetings in Mexican Spanish

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INFORMAL SPANISH

1. ASHLEY: ¿Qué tal, Alex?
2. ALEJANDRO: ¡Hola, Ashley!
3. ASHLEY: ¿Cómo estás?
4. ALEJANDRO: Estoy bien ¿y tú?
5. ASHLEY: Todo bien.

ENGLISH

1. ASHLEY: What's up, Alex!
2. ALEJANDRO: Hello, Ashley!
3. ASHLEY: How are you?
4. ALEJANDRO: I'm fine, and you?
5. ASHLEY: Everything's fine.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
tú	you (informal)	pronoun	
todo	all, everything	noun, adjective	masculine

cómo	how	interrogative adverb, exclamation, masc. noun	
qué tal	What's up?	Idiom, adv.	
qué	what	interrogative adverb, adjective	
estar	to be	verb	
bien	fine / good	adverb, adjective	masculine - feminine

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Tú pensarás en como disculparte. "You will think about how to apologize."	Todo está bien. "Everything is fine."
¿Cómo se dice? "How do you say it?"	¡Qué tal, amigo! "What's up, my friend!"
¿Qué es esto? "What is this?"	Estoy ahí a las ocho. "I'll be there at eight o'clock."
(Yo) Estoy bien. "I am fine."	

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

Qué tal is a common greeting between friends. Other expressions in Mexico include *qué onda*, *qué hubo*, *qué pasó*, and *qué hay de nuevo*. They mean "What's up?" or "What's going on?" or "What's new?" These are all casual greetings.

Estoy bien means "I'm fine." It is a response to "How are you?" To make it more positive, say *estoy muy bien*, or *a todo dar* ("I'm great"). If you're feeling down, you can say *Estoy más o menos*, or in Mexico City slang, *estoy dos tres* ("I'm two-thirds...") To express dismay, say *estoy fatal* ("I couldn't be worse").

Todo bien ("all right") is a common, casual, and short response to *¿cómo estás?* ("How are you?"). *Todo bien* means "everything is well," so to say the opposite, "I'm doing awful," you can say *nada bien* ("nothing well") or *todo mal* ("everything bad").

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is to Teach You the Informal Conjugation of the Verb *Estar*.
¿Cómo estás? Muy bien, gracias ¿y tú?
"How are you? I'm fine, and you?"

Estoy bien is the first-person conjugation of *estar* plus the adverb *bien* ("well"). In the last lesson, we studied how to conjugate the verb *estar* ("to be") in the second person *usted* ("you"), as in *usted está* ("you are"). But now we are having a casual conversation with our friends, and we need to use the casual form *tú*. See how it changes:

Formal	Casual	Translation
<i>¿cómo está?</i>	<i>¿cómo estás?</i>	"How are you?"
<i>¿está usted bien?</i>	<i>¿estás bien?</i>	"Are you okay?"
<i>usted está aquí</i>	<i>estás aquí</i>	"You are here."
<i>¿dónde está usted?</i>	<i>¿dónde estás?</i>	"Where are you?"

As a general rule, when speaking formal Spanish, it is common to leave the word *usted* in the sentence, whereas in informal Spanish, it is more common to drop the word *tú*.

Remember that *estar* is different from the verb *ser* ("to be"), in that *ser* refers to permanent situations, whereas *estar* refers to temporary situations.

For Example:

Permanent	Temporary	"English"
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<i>Soy Americana.</i>	<i>Estoy en México.</i>	"I'm American."/"I'm in Mexico."
<i>Soy inteligente.</i>	<i>Estoy cansada.</i>	"I'm intelligent."/"I'm tired."
<i>Soy Ashley.</i>	<i>Estoy aquí.</i>	"I'm Ashley."/"I'm here."
<i>Soy artista.</i>	<i>Estoy contenta.</i>	"I'm an artist."/"I'm happy."

We use *soy* only when expressing permanent things, such as "I am American" or "I am intelligent." In contrast, we use *estoy* for things like "I'm happy" or "I'm tired."

Language Tip: Using Adjectives Correctly

Note that adjectives change their termination according to the gender and number of the noun they are modifying. So if we say "you are happy," we will say *tú estás **contenta*** if it is a girl and *tú estás **contento*** if it's a boy. If we want to say "you are Mexican," we say *eres mexicano* if it's a man and *eres mexicana* if it's a woman.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Careful Use of *Tú* in Mexico

It is common in Mexico to address people in the informal way *tú* when we have a personal relationship with them. It is also common to use their nicknames. So, for example, Alejandro is Alex, Jorge is George, María is Mari, and so on. Most names have already-defined nicknames, such as Pepe for José, Pancho for Francisco, Huicho for Luis, Chema for José María, etc. but we normally do not use these nicknames when approaching someone for the first time. In the street or in a professional setting, we may offend people of a higher age or rank if we suddenly engage them using *tú*. In Mexico, people say *tutear* to refer to the action of communicating with another in *tú* terms, a privilege reserved for people with a certain degree of trust. However, excessive use of the word *tú* in a conversation can give the impression that you are looking down on someone, as we often use *tú* in reprimands. For example, people may say *¿qué te crees tú?* ("who do you think you are?") or *oye tú* ("hey, you!"), stressing the word *tú* in a pejorative way.