

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3 #6

Asking Where Something Is in Mexico

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FORMAL SPANISH

1. ASHLEY: Disculpe joven, ¿dónde está el baño?
2. ATTENDANT: El baño está a la derecha.
3. ASHLEY: Gracias. ¿Y dónde está la salida?
4. ATTENDANT: La salida está a la izquierda.
5. ASHLEY: Gracias.

ENGLISH

1. ASHLEY: Excuse me, young man, where is the restroom?
2. ATTENDANT: The restroom is on your right.
3. ASHLEY: Thank you. And where is the exit?
4. ATTENDANT: The exit is on the left.
5. ASHLEY: Thank you.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
derecha	right	noun	feminine
salida	exit	noun	feminine
baño	restroom, toilet	noun	male
joven	young man	noun	masculine

Disculpe.	Excuse me.	expression	
dónde	where	adverb, interrogative adverb	
izquierda	left	prepositional phrase	feminine

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>Camina a la esquina y da vuelta a la derecha.</p> <p>"Walk to the corner and turn right."</p>	<p>Tuerzo a la derecha.</p> <p>"I turn right."</p>
<p>Hay una salida.</p> <p>"There is an exit."</p>	<p>Voy al baño.</p> <p>"I'm going to the bathroom."</p>
<p>El joven es guapo.</p> <p>"The young man is handsome."</p>	<p>Disculpe, ¿en dónde está la estación del tren?</p> <p>"Excuse me, where is the train station?"</p>
<p>Disculpe, creo que es mi asiento en el que usted está sentado.</p> <p>"Excuse me, I think this is my seat you are sitting on."</p>	<p>¿Disculpe, dónde está el banco?</p> <p>"Excuse me, where is the bank?"</p>
<p>¿A dónde irás mañana en la noche?</p> <p>"Where are you going tomorrow night?"</p>	<p>¿De dónde es ella?</p> <p>"Where is she from?"</p>

Al llegar a la calle principal, tuerces a la izquierda.

"Upon arriving at the main street, you turn left."

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

Disculpe, joven.

One may say in English "excuse me, sir" or "excuse me, ma'am," which translates as *disculpe joven* or *disculpe señorita*. In casual Spanish, one says *disculpa* and then directly the phrase. Normally, we only use *joven* and *señorita* with formal Spanish.

¿Dónde está...?

This is a key phrase that we use to find out the location of things.

For Example:

1. *¿Dónde está la cocina?*
"Where is the kitchen?"

Estar is the verb "to be," always followed by the article (feminine or masculine, singular or plural) and the noun.

a la derecha

A la derecha means "to the right," and we use it to signal the location of things relative to one's own position or the position of a third object.

a la izquierda

A la izquierda means "to the left," and we use it to signal the location of things relative to one's own position or the position of a third object.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is How to Ask for Directions (¿Dónde está...?)

¿Dónde está el baño? El baño está a la derecha.

"Where is the restroom? The restroom is on your right."

The key to finding out the location of things in Spanish is the word *dónde* ("where"). However, what goes after the question is the whole subject of this lesson. In order to express a question, the order of the words must be *dónde* + [verb] + [article] + [noun]. If you're asking where something "is," use the verb *estar* ("to be"). But we can use other verbs too (for example, *ser* ("to be"), *tener* ("to have"), etc). After the verb goes the noun, preceded by an article, depending on the gender and number of the noun.

Here are some examples.

For Example:

Masculine/Singular	Feminine/Singular
¿Dónde está el perro? ("Where is the dog?")	¿Dónde está la vaca? ("Where is the cow?")
¿Dónde está el piano? ("Where is the piano?")	¿Dónde está la trompeta? ("Where is the trumpet?")
¿Dónde está el parque? ("Where is the park?")	¿Dónde está la casa? ("Where is the house?")

When the noun that we are asking about is in the plural, the verb needs to be modified as well by adding a letter *-n* at the end (as in *está* à *están*):

Masculine/Plural	Feminine/Plural
¿Dónde están los perros? ("Where are the dogs?")	¿Dónde están las vacas? ("Where are the cows?")
¿Dónde están los pianos? ("Where are the pianos?")	¿Dónde están las trompetas? ("Where are the trumpets?")
¿Dónde están los parques? ("Where are the parks?")	¿Dónde están las casas? ("Where are the houses?")

We use indefinite articles for things and places of whose existence we are not certain, but

we'd like to find out where they are, such as "an ATM" or "a power outlet."

Masculine/Plural	Feminine/Plural
<i>¿Dónde hay un cajero?</i> ("Where can I find an ATM?")	<i>¿Dónde hay una farmacia?</i> ("Where can I find a drugstore?")
<i>¿Dónde hay un contacto?</i> ("Where can I find a power outlet?")	<i>¿Dónde hay una cafetería?</i> ("Where can I find a coffee shop?")

The information attendant responded in a similar way, but the grammatical order of the words is different to reflect an answer to a question: [article] + [noun] + [verb] + [answer]. For example, *el baño está a la derecha*. Here *a la derecha* ("to the right") is the answer to where the toilet is. But other answers are possible.

For Example:

1. *El baño está arriba.*
"The toilet is upstairs."

In the plural, the answer follows the same structure, except that the article, noun, and verb are plural.

For Example:

1. *Los perros están afuera.*
"The dogs are outside."

Notice the *-n* at the end of the verb *están*.

For Example:

1. *¿Dónde está la casa?*
"Where is the house?"
2. *La casa está a la derecha.*
"The house is on the right."

Examples from This Dialogue

1. *La salida está a la izquierda*
"The exit is on the left."

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Starting a Spanish Conversation on the Right Foot

Always start a formal conversation by using *disculpe* if you don't know the person. When approaching a stranger, it is best to greet the person with a smile and look the person in the eyes to show that you are truly investing yourself in the conversation. If possible, even if you are only asking a question, use the opportunity to joke or establish a personal connection. This will make people want to treat you better: in Latin America, business comes second to friendship. Also, never underestimate the person in the middle. Being a divided society, people have strong sensitivities about how they are treated.

Note that *disculpe* ("excuse me") is too formal to use with friends and family. In this case, you can use *perdón* or *perdona*: *Perdón, Ashley, ¿dónde está...?* or *perdona Ashley, ¿dónde está...?*