

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3 #13 Responding to Questions in Spanish, Part 2

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FORMAL SPANISH

1. OFFICER: ¿A dónde va, señorita?
2. ASHLEY: Voy a México D.F.
3. OFFICER: ¿A qué va?
4. ASHLEY: A trabajar y estudiar español.

ENGLISH

1. OFFICER: Where are you going, Ma'am?
2. ASHLEY: I'm going to Mexico City.
3. OFFICER: What are you going for?
4. ASHLEY: To work and to study Spanish.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
qué	what	adjective, pronoun, adverb	
trabajar	to work	verb	
señorita	young lady, miss, ma'am	noun	feminine
dónde	where	adverb, interrogative adverb	

a	to, at	preposition	
español	Spanish	adjective	masculine
ir	to go	verb	
estudiar	to study	verb	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>¿Qué tienes?</p> <p>"What do you have?"</p>	<p>A mí no me gusta trabajar en este restaurante.</p> <p>"I do not like to work in this restaurant."</p>
<p>Disculpe, señorita.</p> <p>"Excuse me, miss."</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>	<p>¡Vamos a la playa!</p> <p>"Let's go to the beach!"</p>
<p>¿Hablas español?</p> <p>"Do you speak Spanish?"</p>	<p>Me va bien.</p> <p>"It's going well for me."</p>
<p>Estoy estudiando en la biblioteca.</p> <p>"I am studying at the library."</p>	

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

señorita

In business Spanish, people rarely use *señorita*, or "Miss." The correct form is *Licenciada*, *Doctora*, *Ingeniera*, or whatever the person's profession is. However, in everyday use with strangers, women address each other as *señora* ("Madam") or *señorita* ("Ma'am"), depending on their estimated age (*señorita* for younger women).

Español

Español is the name of the "Spanish language." We can also call it *el idioma español*. Its proper name is *Castellano*, the original language used in the region of Castille, currently Spain. It is the second most spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese. *Español* can also be a "person (man) from Spain."

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is to Learn How to Ask Questions Using *a dónde* and *a qué*.

¿A dónde va, señorita? Voy a México D.F.

"Where are you going, Ma'am? I'm going to Mexico City."

Asking *¿a dónde?*

The word *a* refers to a direction or a focal point. Questions starting with *¿a dónde?* seek to know where the action of the verb is aimed. See the following examples.

For Example:

Question	Verb	"English"
<i>¿A dónde*</i>	<i>vas?</i>	"Where are you going?"
<i>¿A dónde</i>	<i>caminas?</i>	"Where are you walking?"
<i>¿A dónde</i>	<i>ves?</i>	"Where are you looking?"

* Sometimes we substitute *a dónde* ("where to") for *hacia dónde* ("toward where") when we want to put emphasis on the direction, such as where someone is walking to, looking to, etc.

Responding to *¿a dónde?*

The answer begins with the conjugated verb, followed by the direct object composed of *a* +

article + noun.

For Example:

Verb	Answer	"English"
<i>Voy*</i>	<i>a la escuela</i>	"I'm going to school."
<i>Camino</i>	<i>a mi casa</i>	"I'm walking home."
<i>Miro</i>	<i>al cielo</i>	"I'm looking to the sky."

* Note that these verbs are all in the first person. For the second and third person, change the verb accordingly: *voy-vas-va*; *camino-caminas-camina*; *miro-miras-mira*. Also note that *a el* becomes *al*, as in *miro al cielo*.

Asking ¿a qué?

Questions starting with *¿a qué?* seek to know the reason why the person is taking the action. See the following examples.

For Example:

Question	Verb	"English"
<i>¿A qué*</i>	<i>vas?</i>	"What are you going for?"
<i>¿A qué</i>	<i>vienes?</i>	"What are you coming for?"
<i>¿A qué</i>	<i>esperas?</i>	"What are you waiting for?"

* Sometimes we substitute *a qué* ("what for") for *qué* ("what") in the case of verbs such as *esperar* ("to wait") or *hacer* ("to do"). So, you would say *¿qué esperas?* and *¿qué haces?* Sometimes we can exchange *qué* for *quién* ("who"), as in *¿a quién esperas?* ("Who are you waiting for?")

Responding to ¿a qué?

We form the answer with the same conjugated verb, followed by another verb or the purpose of the action (*a* + verb) or (*a* + action).

Verb	Answer	"English"
<i>Voy*</i>	<i>a comer</i>	"I'm going to eat."
<i>Vengo</i>	<i>a escuchar</i>	"I'm here to listen (I come to listen)."
<i>Espero</i>	<i>a que termine</i>	"I'm waiting for it to end."

* Note that these answers do not refer to places but to the purpose of the actions since they respond to the question *qué* ("what") and not *dónde* ("where"). For the second and third person, change the verb accordingly: *voy-vas-va*; *vengo-vienes-viene*; *espero-esperas-espera*.

For Example:

1. *¿A qué vienes?*
"What are you here for?"
2. *Vengo a escuchar.*
"I'm here to listen."

Examples From This Dialogue

1. *¿A qué viene?*
A trabajar y estudiar español.
2. "What are you going for?"
"To work and to study Spanish."

CULTURAL INSIGHT

How Big Is Mexico City?

In Daniel Hernandez's book *Down and Delirious in Mexico City*, one can find a good depiction of this megacity: "One of the most feared and least understood cities in the world:

chaotic on the one hand, and addictive on the other, underdeveloped and ultramodern." People from all over the country have a love-hate relationship with *chilangos* or *defeños*, the residents of the capital. On one hand, it is a cauldron of cultures, open and non-judgmental. Yet, on the other, no one city exists, but rather it is many. Indeed, in early times, Mexico D.F. (standing for Federal District, a term coined to distinguish it from other states of the union of inferior status), was limited to the historic center. Now, the outgrowth of the city has absorbed many towns in its path, and the 20 million plus city has now merged with some neighboring states. It is said to be the second or third largest city in the world.