

SANDALWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Sr. ALFONSO

Reading Episode #1: formal vs informal

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Read the article below and apply the following: marking the text, selective highlighting, annotations.

How do you say "you" in Spanish? If you're new to learning Spanish, the answer isn't as simple as it may appear.

That's because Spanish, like many other languages, has several pronouns that you can address other people, all of which can be translated by the English word "you."

First and most obvious, there are singular and plural forms, which aren't distinguished in the English word, although we can usually tell which is meant. But more important to learning how the Spanish language is used, Spanish also has formal and informal (also called "familiar") ways of saying "you," the usage depending on the person you're talking to and/or the circumstances. The difference doesn't come across in translating to English, but if you use the informal "you" where the formal is required, you run the risk of sounding presumptuous or even arrogant.

First, here is a chart showing the various ways of saying "you" as the subject of a sentence:

Ways to say "you"	singular	plural
informal	tú	vosotros / vosotras
formal	usted / Ud. / Vd.	usteded / Uds. / Vds.

Here are simple examples of how these pronouns might be used:

- Katrina, ¿tú quieres comer? (Katrina, do you want to eat?)
- Sra. Miller, ¿Ud. quiere comer? (Mrs. Miller, do you want to eat?)
- Katrina y Pablo, ¿vosotros queréis comer? (Katrina and Pablo, do you want to eat?)
- Srs. Pérez, ¿Uds. quieren comer? (Mr. and Mrs. Pérez, do you want to eat?)

Important note: In the above sentences, the pronouns have been included for clarity and for explaining the pronoun usage. In real life, the pronouns would normally be omitted, because the context would make clear who the subject of each sentence is.

The basic rule: As a general rule — although keep in mind that there are exceptions — when speaking with one person you can use the informal forms under roughly the same circumstances where you can use a person's first name in English. Of course, when that is can vary with age, social status and the specific culture you are in.

More specifically, the singular informal tú is used when speaking with family members, children, pets, friends or close acquaintances, while usted is used when speaking with others. In most types of Christianity, tú also is used when addressing God in prayer.

On the other hand, tú can also be used contemptuously and arrogantly when speaking to a stranger.

Obviously, the use of tú suggests a certain amount of intimacy. But the degree of intimacy varies with region. In some places, people of similar social status will start using tú upon meeting, while in other areas doing so might seem presumptuous. If you're uncertain which to use, it is usually better to use usted unless or until the person starts speaking to you using tú, in which case it is usually okay to reciprocate (unless you're a child or the

person speaking to you is a police officer or other authority figure). Spanish even has a verb, *tutear*, meaning to address someone using *tú*. In a few areas, as in much of Colombia, *usted* is used even with close friends and family members.

Plurals: In Latin America, the informal plural, *vosotros*, is very rarely used, even when talking with family members, so *ustedes* is used in cases where you're talking to many people, regardless of formal or informal cases. In Spain, *vosotros* is the plural of *tú*.

The pronoun "vos": In some parts of Latin America, especially in Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina, the pronoun *vos* replaces or partly replaces *tú*, especially in spoken Spanish. In some areas, *vos* implies even greater intimacy than *tú* does, and in some other areas it has its own verb forms. As a foreigner, however, you're perfectly safe using *tú* even where *vos* is common.

Now answer these questions both in your own words, and using text evidence when necessary.

1. Why do you think it's important that there are two modes of speaking to people?

2. Provide an example situation where you would be using both "tú" and "usted" with the same person.

3. What difficulty arises when translating Spanish to English and vice versa if it deals with the pronoun "you"?

4. Provide an example of a person or group of people that, over time, you would change the way you address them, either from "tú" to "usted," or vice versa.

5. Explain the use of "ustedes" in Latin America.
