

Little words, big job!
They tell us WHO or WHAT is receiving the action.

Those Little Pronouns Keep Moving: Before the Verb or After It?

Spanish object pronouns go **BEFORE** a conjugated verb.
They attach to the end of an **infinitive**.

1 BEFORE A CONJUGATED VERB	2 INFINITIVE? ATTACH IT!	3 TWO VERBS? YOU GET A CHOICE!
One conjugated verb → pronoun goes BEFORE it. Lo compro. I buy it. La conozco. I know her. Te llamo. I call you. Nos ven. They see us.	Infinitive → attach pronoun to the END . Quiero comprarlo. I want to buy it. Necesito verla. I need to see her. Voy a ayudarte. I'm going to help you. Puedes llamarme. You can call me.	Conjugated verb + infinitive → pronoun can go in EITHER place. Lo quiero comprar. I want to buy it. or Quiero comprarlo. I want to buy it. Te voy a llamar. I'm going to call you. or Voy a llamarte. I'm going to call you. Me voy a lavar. I'm going to wash myself. or Voy a lavarme. I'm going to wash myself.

4 COMMANDS CHANGE RULES	5 -ANDO / -IENDO FORMS	QUICK REFERENCE
Affirmative command → ATTACH IT . ¡Cómelo! Eat it! ¡Mírame! Look at me! ¡Díme! Tell me!	Negative command → PUT IT BEFORE . ¡No lo comas! Don't eat it! ¡No me mires! Don't look at me! ¡No me digas! Don't tell me!	- One conjugated verb → pronoun BEFORE. - Infinitive → attach pronoun to the END. - Two verbs → pronoun can go BEFORE the conjugated verb or ATTACH to the infinitive. - Affirmative command → attach it. - Negative command → put it BEFORE. -ando / -iendo → either BEFORE the helping verb or ATTACH to the end.

Remember: Before a conjugated verb. Attach to an infinitive.

English says: I see **him**. → Spanish says: Lo veo. → Different order, same meaning. Get used to it—Spanish likes it this way! ☺ ¡Tú puedes!

OBJECT PRONOUNS

me	me
te	you (informal)
lo	him / it (masc.)
la	her / it (fem.)
nos	us
os	you (plural, Spain)
los	them (masc.)
las	them (fem.)
les	you (plural) / them

They may be little, but they do a **BIG** job!

Those Little Pronouns Keep Moving: Before the Verb or After It?

Spanish has another habit that can puzzle English speakers: little object pronouns such as **me, te, lo, la, le, nos, los, las** and **les** seem to move around.

Sometimes they're **before** the verb:

- **Lo compro**--I buy it.
- But sometimes they're attached **after** the verb:
- **Quiero comprarlo**--I want to buy it.

Fortunately, there is a pattern behind the movement.

First, What Is an Object Pronoun?

An object receives the action of a verb.

Consider:

Compro el libro--I buy the book.

El libro is receiving the action. Once everyone knows which book we're talking about, we don't have to keep repeating it.

English substitutes **it**:

I buy it.

Spanish does the same:

Lo compro.

The little word **lo** stands in for **el libro**.

That's an object pronoun.

Before a Conjugated Verb

Here's the most important rule:

When you have **one conjugated verb**, the object pronoun normally goes **before it**.

- **Lo compro**--*I buy it.*
- **La conozco**--*I know her.*
- **Te llamo**--*I call you.*
- **Me ayuda**--*He helps me.*
- **Nos ven**--*They see us.*

This feels strange to English speakers because English puts the object after the verb:

I see him.

Spanish says, literally:

Him I see.

Lo veo.

Don't fight it. That's simply where Spanish likes to put the pronoun.

Infinitive? Attach It to the End

Now suppose the verb remains in its infinitive form—the form ending in **-ar**, **-er**, or **-ir**.

The pronoun can attach directly to the end:

- **comprar + lo -- comprarlo**--*to buy it*
- **ver + la -- verla**--*to see her*
- **ayudar + te -- ayudarte**--*to help you*
- **llamar + me -- llamarme**--*to call me*

So we can say:

- **Quiero comprarlo**--*I want to buy it.*
- **Necesito verla**--*I need to see her.*
- **Voy a ayudarte**--*I'm going to help you.*

The pronoun simply hitches a ride on the end of the infinitive.

Two Verbs? You Often Get a Choice

Here's a nice feature of Spanish.

When you have a conjugated verb followed by an infinitive, the object pronoun can often go in **either** of two places.

Consider:

Lo quiero comprar.

or:

Quiero comprarlo.

Both mean:

I want to buy it.

Here's another:

Te voy a llamar.

or:

Voy a llamarte.

Both mean:

I'm going to call you.

Notice what Spanish does **not** allow:

Quiero lo comprar. ✗

You can't simply stick the pronoun between the verbs wherever you please.

It goes either:

BEFORE the conjugated verb

or

ATTACHED to the infinitive.

That's the pattern worth remembering.

Reflexive Pronouns Follow the Same Idea

You've already met this behavior in our discussion of reflexive verbs.

Me voy a lavar--*I'm going to wash myself.*

Or:

Voy a lavarme.

Both are correct.

Similarly:

Me quiero acostar.

or:

Quiero acostarme.

I want to go to bed.

Those little **me, te, se, nos** reflexive pronouns follow many of the same placement rules.

So you've actually been doing this already.

Commands Turn Things Around

Here's another useful wrinkle.

With an **affirmative command**, attach the pronoun to the end:

- **¡Cómelo!--***Eat it!*
- **¡Mírame!--***Look at me!*
- **¡Dime!--***Tell me!*

But with a **negative command**, the pronoun moves back in front:

- **¡No lo comas!--***Don't eat it!*
- **¡No me mires!--***Don't look at me!*

Spanish apparently believes that if you're going to boss somebody around, the pronouns should get involved too.

Pronouns Can Also Ride on an -ando or -iendo Verb

When Spanish uses an **-ando** or **-iendo** form, the pronoun can also attach to the end.

Estoy comprándolo--*I'm buying it.*

Or the pronoun can go before the conjugated helping verb:

Lo estoy comprando.

Both are correct.

Similarly:

Estoy ayudándola.

or:

La estoy ayudando.

I'm helping her.

You may notice that attaching the pronoun sometimes requires a written accent to preserve the original pronunciation. Don't worry about mastering that detail yet. Just recognize why the accent appears.

The Easy Rule

When those little Spanish pronouns start wandering around the sentence, remember this:

- **ONE CONJUGATED VERB → pronoun BEFORE**
 - **Lo compro**--*I buy it.*
- **INFINITIVE → pronoun can ATTACH**
 - **Quiero comprarlo**--*I want to buy it*
- **CONJUGATED VERB + INFINITIVE → often EITHER POSITION**
 - **Lo quiero comprar**--**Quiero comprarlo.**
- **AFFIRMATIVE COMMAND → ATTACH IT**
 - **¡Cómelo!**
- **NEGATIVE COMMAND → PUT IT BEFORE**
 - **¡No lo comas!**

At first, Spanish object pronouns can seem like little words with wheels attached. But they're not moving randomly.

Learn where they like to park, and one more Spanish mystery becomes considerably less mysterious.