

## *Nouns*

### **Gender of nouns**

1. In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine. Most nouns that end in **-o** are masculine and most nouns that end in **-a** are feminine. Articles must agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify. Masculine nouns take the definite articles **el** (singular) or **los** (plural). Feminine nouns take the definite articles **la** (singular) or **las** (plural).

Here are some examples.

El chico es alto.  
*The boy is tall.*

Los chicos son altos.  
*The boys are tall.*

La chica es baja.  
*The girl is short.*

Las chicas son bajas.  
*The girls are short.*

2. Not all nouns observe the final **-o/-a** gender rule. Some nouns that end in **-a** are masculine.

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| el día      | <i>day</i>      |
| el mapa     | <i>map</i>      |
| el drama    | <i>drama</i>    |
| el idioma   | <i>language</i> |
| el clima    | <i>climate</i>  |
| el poeta    | <i>poet</i>     |
| el problema | <i>problem</i>  |
| el programa | <i>program</i>  |
| el cura     | <i>priest</i>   |

3. Some nouns that end in **-o** are feminine.

|         |             |         |              |         |                   |
|---------|-------------|---------|--------------|---------|-------------------|
| la mano | <i>hand</i> | la foto | <i>photo</i> | la moto | <i>motorcycle</i> |
|---------|-------------|---------|--------------|---------|-------------------|

4. Certain endings imply that a noun is feminine. Most nouns ending in **-dad**, **-tad**, **-tud**, **-ión**, **-umbre**, and **-ie** are feminine.

|           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| la ciudad | <i>city</i> |
|-----------|-------------|

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| la voluntad    | <i>will</i>     |
| la muchedumbre | <i>crowd</i>    |
| la actitud     | <i>attitude</i> |
| la canción     | <i>song</i>     |
| la especie     | <i>species</i>  |

5. Nouns ending in –s or other consonants can be either masculine or feminine. It is best to memorize them.

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| el paraguas | <i>umbrella</i> |
| la crisis   | <i>crisis</i>   |
| el lunes    | <i>Monday</i>   |
| el papel    | <i>paper</i>    |
| la pared    | <i>wall</i>     |
| el rey      | <i>king</i>     |

6. The gender of some nouns is determined by the article, not the noun ending.

|               |                            |               |                              |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| el pianista   | <i>piano player (male)</i> | la pianista   | <i>piano player (female)</i> |
| el artista    | <i>artist (male)</i>       | la artista    | <i>artist (female)</i>       |
| el joven      | <i>young man</i>           | la joven      | <i>young woman</i>           |
| el estudiante | <i>male student</i>        | la estudiante | <i>female student</i>        |

7. Some nouns have only one gender for referring to males and females.

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| el individuo | <i>individual</i> |
| el ángel     | <i>angel</i>      |
| la persona   | <i>person</i>     |
| la víctima   | <i>victim</i>     |

### Use of articles

1. The meaning of certain nouns can change depending on whether they are preceded by the masculine definite article (**el**) or feminine definite article (**la**). Notice the differences in the following examples.

|            |                              |            |  |
|------------|------------------------------|------------|--|
| el capital | <i>money</i>                 | la capital | <i>capital city</i>                            |
| el corte   | <i>cut</i>                   | la corte   | <i>court</i>                                   |
| el guía    | <i>guide (male)</i>          | la guía    | <i>guide (female) or guidebook</i>             |
| el policía | <i>police officer (male)</i> | la policía | <i>police officer (female) or police force</i> |

2. To form the plural of a noun that ends in a vowel, add **-s**.

|             |                   |               |                    |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| el libro    | <i>the book</i>   | los libros    | <i>the books</i>   |
| la mesa     | <i>the table</i>  | las mesas     | <i>the tables</i>  |
| la pantalla | <i>the screen</i> | las pantallas | <i>the screens</i> |

3. To form the plural of a noun that ends in a consonant, add **-es**.

|             |                      |                |                       |
|-------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| la mujer    | <i>the woman</i>     | las mujeres    | <i>the women</i>      |
| la pared    | <i>the wall</i>      | las paredes    | <i>the walls</i>      |
| el profesor | <i>the professor</i> | los profesores | <i>the professors</i> |
| el reloj    | <i>the clock</i>     | los relojes    | <i>The clocks</i>     |

4. Nouns that end in **-z** have a special spelling change. To form the plural, change the **-z** to **-c** and add **-es**.

|          |                   |             |                    |
|----------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| el lápiz | <i>the pencil</i> | los lápices | <i>the pencils</i> |
| la luz   | <i>the light</i>  | las luces   | <i>the lights</i>  |

5. When forming the plural of some nouns you will have to add or delete a written accent mark to maintain the stressed syllable of the singular form.

|                 |                         |                    |                          |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| la lección      | <i>the lesson</i>       | las lecciones      | <i>the lessons</i>       |
| la conversación | <i>the conversation</i> | las conversaciones | <i>the conversations</i> |
| el joven        | <i>the young man</i>    | los jóvenes        | <i>the young people</i>  |
| el examen       | <i>the exam</i>         | los exámenes       | <i>the exams</i>         |