

Por and Para – Transcript

Context

Hola y buenos días. Okay, in this lesson we're going to solve one of those big life mysteries – what's the difference between *por* and *para*? I mean, why have two words that mean the same thing anyway?

Well, the answer is that they don't mean the same thing at all. It just happens that, in some cases, they can both be translated with the English word “for.”

Let's get a good grip on these two words with a quick lesson.

Information

1. Like I said at the beginning, *por* and *para* can both be translated with the English word “for,” but they have very different meanings.
2. Let's start with *para*. We often use *para* to express the English concept of “destination.”
 - a. Destination in space – *Voy para la playa.* (I'm headed for the beach – [it's my destination])
 - b. Destination in time – *La composición es para el jueves.* (The composition is due on Thursday)
 - c. Destination with regards to people – *El regalo es para mi mamá* (The gift is for my mother [she is the intended recipient]).
 - d. Finally, a couple of stray things about *para*. We use it in front of infinitives to express “in order to” as in the example, *No es necesario tener crédito para comprar libros* (One doesn't need credit in order to buy books). In addition, we use *para* to say who someone works for (*Trabajo para IBM*). Finally, *para* is used to express descriptive contrasts from what people expect. I used to get this all the time at family reunions when my aunts would tug on my ear and say, “You're really tall for your age.” In Spanish, that would be *Eres muy alto para tu edad.*
3. When it comes to *por*, sometimes the easiest thing to do is eliminate *para* because *por* has a lot more uses and meanings. In addition to “for,” *por* can also be translated:
 - a. per – *cien kilómetros por hora, tres dólares por kilo.*

- b. through, along, by – *Voy por la playa.*
- c. in exchange for – *Me dan diez dólares por el libro.*
- d. during or at – *Estudiamos por la noche.*
- e. *Por* is also used to express a means of communication or travel (*Hablamos por teléfono* [ny phone]) or to indicate the object of an errand (*Voy por helado.*) Finally, when we use *por* with an infinitive to express “about to” (*El tren está por llegar* [The train is about to arrive]).

Review – Things to Remember

As you try to keep *por* and *para* straight, just remember that *para* is often associated with “destination” and that it commonly used with infinitives to express “in order to.” *Para* is also the word you’re looking for when you need to say that you work for someone. *Por*, on the other hand, has a wide variety of translations and is used to express the English words per, through along, by, and in exchange for. It’s also used to express a particular means of communication or travel.