

Hablando de gramática

por el señor Conner

Señor Conner is the author of the popular language series *BREAKING THE SPANISH BARRIER*. Each month he will feature a grammatical topic of interest to our readers. Do you have ideas of topics you would like to see covered? E-mail Señor Conner at: john@tobreak.com. You can also visit his website: www.tobreak.com.

How about a little quiz?

Last month, I finished writing my twelfth article for Think Spanish Magazine. Over this past year, we've looked at an incredible collection of topics: *por/para*, *ser/estar*, conjunctions, *acabar de*, *pretérito/imperfecto*, *cualquier/cualquiera*, the dieresis, the personal "a," the subjunctive mood after indirect commands, the progressive, definite articles, *pero/sino /sino que*, and numbers. That's quite a collection of great grammar!

As the summer winds to a close now, I thought it might be fun to have everyone take a little quiz. The following fifteen sentences will test your knowledge of some of these topics. So that I don't leave you all on your own (or if you missed any or all of the past issues!), I will write a little hint for you after each question. And, of course, the answers will appear at the end. ¡Buena suerte!

In September, we will begin again to tackle some great new topics and explore further some old ones. Keep sending in your wonderful suggestions for articles.

PRUEBA DE REPASO

Fill in the blank with the correct answer by conjugating the given verb, choosing between the alternatives offered, translating, making the word "agree" with the rest of the sentence, or by just leaving the space blank!

- 1) _____ sacar buenas notas hay que estudiar _____ muchas horas. (por/para)
Hint: Which do you want to use before an infinitive to mean "in order to"? Which of the two measures a QUANTITY of time, as opposed to a deadline?
- 2) El _____ día de la semana es el lunes. (1st)
Hint: Ok – cardinal number or ordinal number? And, remember that "día" is a masculine word! So, how will you translate the word "first"?
- 3) El partido de fútbol entre Italia y Estados Unidos _____ en Alemania en junio. (ser/estar)
Hint: First, this soccer game occurred in June ... use a past tense ... and does one use "ser" or "estar" to give the location of an EVENT?
- 4) Taylor Hicks no cantó mal, _____ muy bien. (pero, sino, sino que)
Hint: You want to say "but rather" here. You are directly contradicting the adverb "mal." Therefore, you must choose between "sino" and "sino que" Is there a conjugated verb after the comma in this sentence? Hmmmm. Your choice should be easy.
- 5) Conchita _____ Inés vienen esta noche para escuchar mi nuevo disco compacto de Chayanne. (and)
Hint: This looks like an easy one – a simple translation of the conjunction "and." However, beware! Can you use the word "y" before another word that begins with the letter "i"? I didn't think so!

Speaking of Grammar

- 6) Los chicos _____ de ver el partido de baloncesto entre Miami y Dallas cuando sus padres regresaron del restaurante. (acabar)
Hint: Remember, “acabar de” means to just have done something. It is used usually in the present tense or in the imperfect tense. Which will you choose and why?
- 7) Los chicos están _____ ahora, y por eso, no pueden ir con nosotros al cine. (dormir)
Hint: Do you remember how to form the progressive tense? It's simply a combination of a form of “estar” (or “continuar” or “seguir”) plus a present participle (the –“ing” form in English). Beware of verbs like “dormir,” which are stem changing!
- 8) Anoche _____ las tres y media de la noche cuando yo _____ por primera vez el video de Shakira y Wyclef Jean, “Hips Don't Lie”. (ser, ver)
Hint: Do you remember if you use the imperfect or the preterite for telling time in the past? Which one for COMPLETED actions? This should help.
- 9) ¿Prefieres que yo te _____ toda la torta de chocolate ahora mismo? (dar)
Hint: Here is an indirect command. The verb in the dependent clause has to be in the subjunctive mood. Don't forget the accent mark on your answer here!
- 10) No hablo bien _____ italiano, pero hablo _____ coreano perfectamente. (definite article or not?)
Hint: A definite article is used with the names of languages. However, one is NOT used when the word “hablar” IMMEDIATELY precedes it.
- 11) Anoche yo conocí _____ Rafael Márquez, el capitán de la selección nacional de fútbol de México. (personal “a” or not?)
Hint: A personal “a” must come between a verb and its direct object when that direct object is a person!
- 12) _____ chica que me invite a un concierto tendrá que hablar primero con mi mamá. Por eso no voy a un concierto _____. (cualquier/cualquiera)
Hint: Do you remember what “cualquier” means? Be very careful here. Both of the correct answers here may seem counter-intuitive. “Cualquiera” is very strange! It ALWAYS loses its ending before a noun – whether masculine or feminine! It NEVER loses its ending after a noun – whether masculine or feminine.
- 13) Tenemos que pasar _____ la playa donde mi hermano juega al voleibol. _____ un chico de dieciséis años, es un atleta extraordinario. (por/para)
Hint: Which do you use for movement through space (along)? Which do you use for an exception to a rule?
- 14) Mis padres no quieren que yo _____ a casa a medianoche. (volver)
Hint: Here is a classic indirect command. You know what to do!
- 15) ¡Caramba, José! _____ muy delgado. ¿Qué te pasó? (ser/estar)
Hint: Which do you use for a change from the norm ... some special “condition”? Clearly, in the sentence, the speaker feels that José is just not his usual self!

ANSWERS: 1) Para/por 2) primer 3) fue 4) sino 5) e 6) acababan 7) durmiendo 8) eran/vi 9) de 10) el/blank 11) a 12) Cualquiera/cualquiera 13) por/Para 14) vuelva 15) Estás