

# Ser vs. Estar

Both verbs mean 'to be', but they are used in different ways.

Remember the mnemonic: DOCTOR SELF

D	Description	(la casa <i>es</i> amplia)
O	Origin	( <i>son</i> de Argentina)
C	Character	(Tomás <i>es</i> tacaño)
T	Time	( <i>son</i> las tres y cinco)
O	Occupation	(mi padre <i>era</i> professor)
R	Relationship	( <i>somos</i> amigas)

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S	State	(la ventana <i>está</i> rota)
E	Emotions	( <i>estaba</i> muy contento)
L	Location	(el cine <i>está</i> cerca del banco)
F	Feelings	(la pobre <i>está</i> enferma)

## A few more tips...

When the verb "to be" is followed by a noun, the verb *ser* is always used. In this instance, it might be helpful to think of the verb as equivalent to an "equal" sign, such as  $a = b$ . This type of sentence is always referring to essential characteristics, since the verb is "linking" what comes before the verb to what comes after the verb.

John is a doctor.

John = doctor.

Juan *es* médico.

When the verb "to be" is followed by an adjective, the verb used depends upon the meaning.

When referring to an essential characteristic, use *ser*. When referring to a state or condition, use *estar*.

La sopa *está* fría ..... The soup is cold.

Los elefantes *son* grandes ..... The elephants are big.

When the verb "to be" is followed by an adjective, the verb can actually change the meaning of the adjective.

El profesor *está* aburrido ..... The professor is bored.

El profesor *es* aburrido ..... The professor is boring.

Distinguishing between origin, location, and "to take place."

To describe origin, or where something is from, use ser.

To describe location, or where something is located right now, use estar.

To tell where an event is taking place, use ser.

**Mónica es de España. (origin)**

**Mónica está en Venezuela. (location)**

**La fiesta es en la casa de Mónica. (taking place)**