

Demonstratives

In this lesson, we will discuss demonstratives of two types: demonstrative adjectives and demonstrative pronouns. The first step in clearly understanding these two topics is to review the differences between "adjectives" and "pronouns."

adjective: describes a noun

pronoun: takes the place of a noun

In the following sentences, the words in bold all function as adjectives, since they all describe the noun "book."

Give me the **red** book.

Give me the **big** book.

Give me **that** book.

Give me **this** book.

Notice that adjectives answer the question "Which?" in relation to the nouns that they modify. (Which book? The red book. The big book. That book. This book.)

In the following sentences, the words in **bold** all function as pronouns, since they all take the place of a noun.

Maria is next; give **her** the ball.

Juan is here; say hello to **him**.

That pencil is yours; **this** is mine.

This book is mine; **that** is yours.

Notice that pronouns replace a noun. ("her" replaces "Maria" - "him" replaces "Juan" - "this" replaces "pencil" - "that" replaces "book")

As you have just seen, the words "this" and "that" can function as both adjectives and pronouns.

This book is mine. (adjective)

This is mine. (pronoun)

That book is yours. (adjective)

That is yours. (pronoun)

In Spanish, the only difference between demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives is that demonstrative pronouns have a written accent.

Juan reads **this** book. (adjective) Juan lee **este** libro.

Juan reads **this**. (pronoun) Juan lee **éste**.

That statue is Greek **Esa** estatua es griega.

That is American **Ésa** es americana.

Spanish has three words where English only has two. In English, we say “this” or “that” depending upon whether the object is close to us or not. In Spanish, we also say “this” and “that,” but there is another, separate word used to mean “that one over there.” This form is used when the object is more than just a short distance away, for example, on the other side of the room. Here are the three forms for “this” “that” and “that one over there.”

este this
ese that
aquel that one over there

Remember, the demonstrative pronouns are the same as the demonstrative adjectives, except that the pronouns have a written accent.

this
este (adjective)
éste (pronoun)

that
ese (adjective)
ése (pronoun)

that one over there
aquel (adjective)
aquél (pronoun)

Also remember that in Spanish, adjectives have four forms: masculine singular, masculine plural, feminine singular, feminine plural. For example the adjective “short” has four forms in Spanish: bajo, bajos, baja, bajas.

el chico **bajo** los chicos **bajos**
la chica **baja** las chicas **bajas**

The demonstrative adjectives also have four forms:

este libro (this book)
estos libros (these books)
esta pluma (this pen)
estas plumas (these pens)

ese libro (that book)
esos libros (those books)
esa pluma (that pen)
esas plumas (those pens)

aquel libro (that book over there)
aquellos libros (those books over there)
aquella pluma (that pen over there)
aquellas plumas (those pens over there)

Here are the corresponding demonstrative pronouns:

éste (this one - masculine)

éstos (these ones - masculine)

ésta (this one - feminine)

éstas (these ones - feminine)

ése (that one - masculine)

esos (those ones - masculine)

esa (that one - feminine)

esas (those ones - feminine)

aqué (that one over there - masc.)

aquellos (those ones over there - masc.)

aquélla (that one over there - fem.)

aquellas (those ones over there - fem.)

Each demonstrative pronoun also has a neuter form. They do not change for number or gender, they do not have a written accent, and they are used to refer to abstract ideas, or to an unknown object.

esto (this matter, this thing)

eso (that matter, that thing)

aquello (that matter/thing over there)