



In this Lesson

To understand the different applications of *a* in Spanish, I've divided this lesson into two sections:

1. **Section #1: Warm Up** → A review of its foundational uses.
2. **Section #2: Level Up** → A look at less obvious applications to deepen your understanding.

Section #1 Warming Up: Basic Applications

1. Express Direction

One of the most common applications of *a* is to convey direction or destination. To achieve this, we combine the preposition with verbs that express **movement** or **direction**, followed by a noun to indicate where someone or something is heading.

Below are some examples of directional verbs and the sentence structure used in this context:

Ir - To go

Girar - To turn

Llegar - To arrive

Venir - To come

Mudarse - To move out

Salir - To leave

[Verb] + **a** + **[det.]** + **[noun]**

Gira a la derecha en la siguiente calle.

Turn right onto the next street.

¿**Vas a la tienda**?

Are you going to the store?



Linda **llevó** a su perro **al** veterinario.
Linda took her dog to the vet.

Take Note: Use the contraction 'al' before singular masculine nouns.

2. Set the Time for Events

To indicate the time of an event using *a*, use the following formula:

[Noun] + [verb] + a + la/las + [hour]

La **reunión** empieza **a las** nueve y **termina a la** una.
The meeting starts at nine and ends at one.

Take Note: Use 'a la' for 1:00 and 'a las' for all other hours. To ask about the time of an event, use the question *¿A qué hora...?*

Section #2 Level Up: Native Applications

3. A Verb Phrases

A is also commonly used in **verb phrases** to link a conjugated verb with an infinitive. One of the most frequent examples is ***ir + a + [infinitive]***:

Voy a hablarle al rato.
I'm going to call her later.



Here are other common verb phrases you should know:

Verb Phrases 'A'	
Aprender a	To learn to
Empezar a	To start to
Ayudar a	To help to
Ponerse a	To set about doing
Acostumbrarse a	To get used to
Volver a	To do again

La próxima semana **voy a empezar a tomar** clases de baile.
Next week, I'm going to start taking dance classes.

Cuando **aprendió a cocinar**, Noé no **volvió a pedirme** ayuda.
Once he learned how to cook, Noé didn't ask me for help again.

4. Giving Commands

Spanish **impersonal commands** are commands not directed at anyone specific.

They can be formed using the following formula:

A + [infinitive verb]

¿Está todo claro? Bueno, ¡**a trabajar!**
Is everything clear? Alright, let's get to work!

¡Niños, **a comer!**
Kids, time to eat!



To command someone **directly**, use the **imperative mood** and ensure proper conjugation:

¡Niños, **vengan** a comer!
Kids, come eat!

5. Expressing Age

In Spanish, *a* can also express **someone's age** at the time of an event:

[Verb] + a + los + [number]

Tommy **aprendió** a hablar **a los ocho** meses.
Tommy learned to talk when he was eight months old.

Tu hermana **se graduará** **a los dieciocho**.
Your sister will graduate when she's eighteen.

Since *tener* is the Spanish verb used to express age, it can also be used to indicate a **person's age** at the time of an event. Just be sure to conjugate it in the correct tense or mood:

Tu hermana se graduará cuando **tenga** dieciocho.
Your sister will graduate when she's eighteen.

6. Indicating Frequency

The preposition *a* also expresses the **frequency of an action**. As shown in the following examples, *a* and *por* are interchangeable in this context

A + [article] + [noun]

Laura cocina tres veces **a la semana**.
Laura cooks three times a week.



Veo dos episodios **al día**.
I watch two episodes a day.

¿Cuántos libros lees **al año**?
How many books do you read per year?

Veo dos episodios **por día**.
I watch two episodes a day.

7. Expressing Manner

When followed by a noun, *a* can indicate the **manner** in which something is **done or prepared**, a usage commonly found in cooking contexts:

[Noun] + a + [article] + [noun]

Pedí el **pollo a la plancha**.
I ordered the grilled chicken.

Ale preparó **espagueti a la boloñesa y verduras al vapor**.
Ale made spaghetti Bolognese and steamed vegetables.

Here are some common expressions with *a* native speakers use to indicate **manner**:

Expressions of Manner	
A pie	<i>By foot</i>
A ciegas	<i>Blindly</i>
A mano	<i>By hand</i>
A propósito	<i>On purpose</i>
A gritos	<i>Shouting</i>
A escondidas	<i>In secret</i>



Me comí los chocolates de mi hermano **a escondidas**.
I secretly ate my brother's chocolates.

8. Estar A

Estar a is a versatile structure often used in daily life. Here are its key applications to remember:

a. Say **today's** date

Estamos + a + [date]

Estamos **a cinco de octubre**.
Today is October fifth.

Take Note: When expressing dates in Spanish, use 'de' before the month.

b. Express **distance**

[Estar] + a + [number]

El tren **está a dos** cuabras.
The metro is two blocks away.

Mis papás **están** como **a diez** minutos.
My parents are about ten minutes away.



c. Indicate price

[Estar] + a + [number/noun]

Los boletos **están a mitad** de precio.
The tickets are half price.

El pay **está a cincuenta** pesos.
The pie is fifty pesos.

9. Personal A

From the following statements, the second example uses **personal a**.

Estoy buscando mis llaves.
I'm looking for my keys.

Estoy buscando **a Tania**.
I'm looking for Tania.

With this structure, the preposition **a** **introduces** people or specific animals working as direct objects:

A + [name/ prepositional pronoun]

Estoy buscando **a Tania**.
I'm looking for Tania.

No encontré mis llaves
I didn't find my keys.

Sí encontré **a Tania**.
I did find Tania.



Personal 'A' Challenge

Check the following sentence and **complete** it by adding or omitting the personal a as needed:

Ayer vi ____ Lucía y ____ su perro. Me dijo que no vio ____ tus mensajes.

The **correct** answer is:

Ayer vi **a** Lucía y **a** su perro. Me dijo que no vio tus mensajes.
Yesterday, I saw Lucía and her dog. She told me that she didn't see your texts.

10. Indirect Object Duplication

Spanish indirect object duplication occurs when it's necessary to **clarify** or **emphasize** the indirect object—the person or thing affected by the action.

[IOP] + [verb] + a + [noun/prepositional pronoun]

Beto **nos** trajo unos dulces **a** Isabel y **a** mí.
Beto brought some candy to Isabel and me.

This structure is **also used** with verbs like *gustar*. Keep in mind that sentences with affective verbs follow an **OVS order**, starting with the object and ending with the subject.

A Irma y **a** Fátima **les** gustó la película.
Irma and Fatima liked the movie.



Challenge

1. Where are you going tomorrow?
2. Who did you visit last weekend?
3. How far is the supermarket from your house and how often do you go.?
4. What time do you usually eat dinner?
5. Who did you give something to? (duplication)
6. How old were you when you started driving?

Resources

- [This YouTube Lesson: 10 Ways to Use 'A' in Spanish: This 1 Words Confuses Most Learners](#)