

# 1

# Carne o pescado

Meat or fish

In this unit you will learn to:

- ✓ Use nouns.
- ✓ Recognize their gender and form the plural.
- ✓ Use nouns relating to people.
- ✓ Go shopping in a Spanish or Latin American market.
- ✓ Write a shopping list of food and drink items.

CEFR: Nouns (A1); Can understand short, simple texts containing high frequency vocabulary (A2); Can write short, simple notes relating to personal needs (A2).

## Masculine and feminine, singular and plural nouns

|          | Masculine nouns |                      | Feminine nouns |                    |
|----------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Singular | el piso         | <i>the flat</i>      | la mesa        | <i>the table</i>   |
|          | el café         | <i>the coffee</i>    | la calle       | <i>the street</i>  |
|          | el señor        | <i>the gentleman</i> | la señora      | <i>the lady</i>    |
|          | el padre        | <i>the father</i>    | la madre       | <i>the mother</i>  |
| Plural   | los pisos       | <i>the flats</i>     | las mesas      | <i>the tables</i>  |
|          | los cafés       | <i>the coffees</i>   | las calles     | <i>the streets</i> |
|          | los señores     | <i>the gentlemen</i> | las señoras    | <i>the ladies</i>  |
|          | los padres      | <i>the parents</i>   |                |                    |

## Meaning and usage

Nouns are words which name things (*carta letter*), people and animals (*hermano brother*), places (*plaza square*), abstractions (*felicidad happiness*). In Spanish they are either masculine (m) or feminine (f), and this is their *gender*. They can also be singular (sing.), naming just one thing, or plural (pl.), referring to more than one thing. This is known as their *number*. In the sections on gender and number that follow, nouns will be shown with the definite article, the Spanish forms for *the*: *el* for masculine and *la* for feminine. Plural forms will be preceded by *los* (m) and *las* (f):



It is important to know a noun's gender as words that go with it, such as articles and adjectives, also have gender and must agree with it: *el vestido negro* (the black dress), *la camisa negra* (the black shirt).

# Nouns and their forms

## Gender

- 1 most nouns ending in **-o** are masculine and most of those ending in **-a** are feminine: **el libro** (m) (*book*); **la casa** (f) (*house*). There are many exceptions to this rule, among them the following: **el clima** (*climate*), **el día** (*day*), **el idioma** (*language*), **el mapa** (*map*), **el pijama** (*pyjamas*); **la mano** (*hand*), **la radio\*** (*radio*), **la foto** (*grafía*) (*photo*).  
(\***el radio** in some Latin American countries)
- 2 the following endings usually correspond to masculine nouns: **-aje, -ambre, -án, -ón, -or**: **el equipaje** (*luggage*), **el calambre** (*cramp*), **el huracán** (*hurricane*), **el rincón** (*corner*), **el color** (*colour*).
- 3 the endings that follow normally correspond to feminine nouns: **-ción, -sión, -ie, -dad, -tad, -tud, -umbre**: **la canción** (*song*), **la ilusión** (*illusion*), **la teleserie** (*TV series*), **la verdad** (*truth*), **la libertad** (*liberty, freedom*), **la juventud** (*youth*), **la muchedumbre** (*crowd*).
- 4 the following categories of nouns are usually masculine: languages, days of the week, colours, fruit trees, rivers, oceans and mountains: **el inglés** (*English*), **el lunes** (*Monday*), **el azul** (*blue*), **el naranjo** (*orange tree*), **el Támesis** (*the Thames*).
- 5 the following are usually feminine: islands, letters of the alphabet: **la Isla de Pascua** (*Easter Island*), **la efe** (*the letter 'f'*).
- 6 a small number of nouns change meaning according to their gender: **el policía** (m) (*policeman*) – **la policía** (f) (*the police*); **el cura** (m) (*the priest*) – **la cura** (f) (*the cure*).



### A Show the gender of each noun by giving the correct article **el** (m) or **la** (f).

- |               |               |             |                  |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|
| ___ naranjo   | ___ chocolate | ___ cocina  | ___ salud        |
| ___ ración    | ___ nombre    | ___ flor    | ___ leche        |
| ___ fiambre   | ___ jamón     | ___ garaje  | ___ nacionalidad |
| ___ arroz     | ___ mostaza   | ___ calamar | ___ azafrán      |
| ___ explosión | ___ libertad  | ___ especie | ___ problema     |

### B In each group of nouns, identify which noun is of a different gender. Give its gender.

- |   |            |            |           |          |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | televisión | telenovela | teleserie | programa |
| 2 | mañana     | día        | noche     | tarde    |
| 3 | calle      | parque     | cine      | puente   |
| 4 | nación     | pasión     | avión     | estación |
| 5 | pie        | mano       | brazo     | ojo      |
| 6 | vista      | panorama   | poema     | idioma   |

|    |          |         |          |        |
|----|----------|---------|----------|--------|
| 7  | vanidad  | amistad | honor    | virtud |
| 8  | color    | verde   | dolor    | sangre |
| 9  | norte    | sur     | gente    | oeste  |
| 10 | Amazonas | Rin     | Baleares | Sena   |



When you are not sure of the meaning of a word, look it up in the dictionary and take a note of it. Having to look up a word helps to fix it in your mind.



## Gender of nouns referring to people

### C Answer the questions.

- 1 If **el hijo** means *the son*, who is **la hija**?
- 2 If you have an appointment with **la doctora**, will you be seeing a man or a woman?
- 1 most nouns referring to male human beings are masculine and most of those referring to females are feminine. To form the feminine of nouns that refer to people change the **-o** to **-a** or add **-a** to the consonant: **el hermano** (*brother*) – **la hermana** (*sister*); **el inglés** (*the Englishman*) – **la inglesa** (*the Englishwoman*).



Some cultural differences exist in this area when naming professions, with some people still using the masculine form for certain occupations: **el/la médico** (*male/female doctor*); **el/la arquitecto** (*male/female architect*).

- 2 some nouns have different forms for males and females: **el marido** (*the husband*) – **la mujer** (*the wife*); **el padre** (*the father*) – **la madre** (*the mother*).
- 3 nouns ending in **-a**, among them those ending in **-ista**, are invariable: **el/la atleta** (m/f) (*athlete*); **el/la dentista** (m/f) (*dentist*); **el/la guía** (m/f) (*guide*).
- 4 most nouns ending in **-e** and **-nte** are invariable: **el/la conserje** (m/f) (*caretaker*); **el/la estudiante** (m/f) (*student*); **el/la gerente** (m/f) (*manager*). Common exceptions are: **el cliente** (m) – **la clienta** (f) (*client*); **el dependiente** (m) – **la dependienta** (f) (*shop assistant*); **el jefe** (m) – **la jefa** (f) (*boss, manager*).
- 5 a few nouns have a fixed gender (regardless of the sex of the person): **la estrella de cine** (m/f) (*film star*); **el personaje** (m/f) (*character*); **la persona** (m/f) (*person*); **la víctima** (m/f) (*victim*).



Words naming animals function more or less in the same way as for people: **el gato** (*male cat*) – **la gata** (*female cat*); **el perro** (*male dog*) – **la perra** (*female dog*). But **el caballo** (*horse*) – **la yegua** (*mare*); **el toro** (*bull*) – **la vaca** (*cow*).



**D Match the male noun with its female equivalent and give the meaning of both.**

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| el profesor   | la turista     |
| el portugués  | la duquesa     |
| el trabajador | la actriz      |
| el rey        | la niña        |
| el turista    | la marroquí    |
| el hombre     | la portuguesa  |
| el niño       | la mujer       |
| el duque      | la reina       |
| el marroquí   | la trabajadora |
| el actor      | la profesora   |

## Number



**E Give the plural forms for:**

- 1 el estudiante (*student*)
- 2 la moto (*motorbike*)
- 3 la plaza (*square*)

- 1 nouns ending in a vowel form the plural by adding **-s**: **el coche** (*car*) – **los coches** (*cars*); **la iglesia** (*church*) – **las iglesias** (*churches*).
- 2 nouns ending in a consonant form the plural by adding **-es**: **el reloj** (*watch*) – **los relojes** (*watches*); **la ciudad** (*city*) – **las ciudades** (*cities*).
- 3 nouns ending in **-z** change **-z** to **-c** and add **-es**: **el pez** (*fish*) – **los peces** (*fish*); **la voz** (*voice*) – **las voces** (*voices*).
- 4 nouns ending in **-i** and **-u** add **-es**: **marroquí** (*Moroccan*) – **marroquíes** (*Moroccans*); **hindú** (*Hindu*) – **hindúes** (*Hindus*). But note **el menú** (*menu*), **los menús** (*menus*).



**F If the plural form for el inglés (Englishman) is los ingleses (English people), what is the plural form for the following:**

- 1 el alemán (*the German man*)
- 2 el escocés (*Scotsman*)
- 3 el galés (*Welshman*)
- 5 nouns with an accent on the last syllable lose this when forming the plural: **la canción** (*song*) – **las canciones** (*songs*); **el francés** (*the Frenchman*) – **los franceses** (*French people*).

- 6 nouns ending in **-en**, with the stress on the penultimate syllable, add an accent in the plural form to keep the stress in the same position:  
**el examen** (*exam*) – **los exámenes** (*the exams*);  
**el joven** (*the young man*) – **los jóvenes** (*young people, youth*).



Some words do not change for number, among them surnames and generally nouns ending in **-s** with an unstressed last syllable: **los Castro**, **el/los paraguas** (*the umbrella/umbrellas*).

- 7 for the plural of nouns referring to people which involve members of both sexes, use the plural form of the masculine noun: **el padre** (*the father*) – **los padres** (*the parents*); **el sobrino** (m) (*nephew*) – **los sobrinos** (m) (*nephews and nieces*).

- 8 a few common Spanish nouns are singular where English would use a plural:  
**la ropa** (*clothes*), **la gente** (*people*):

**La gente está muy descontenta con la situación económica.** (*People are very unhappy with the economic situation.*)



**G Give the plural of the following nouns together with *los* or *las*.**

|                  |                  |                     |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| el libro _____   | el bar _____     | el color _____      |
| la silla _____   | la ciudad _____  | la superficie _____ |
| la región _____  | el avión _____   | la nación _____     |
| el escocés _____ | el francés _____ | el alemán _____     |
| el hotel _____   | el mes _____     | la ley _____        |
| el café _____    | el té _____      | el viernes _____    |

**H Give the singular of the following nouns together with *el* or *la*.**

|                     |                    |                      |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| las revistas _____  | las nubes _____    | las flores _____     |
| los países _____    | los sofás _____    | los tranvías _____   |
| los días _____      | los pies _____     | los menús _____      |
| las actrices _____  | las luces _____    | las veces _____      |
| los jóvenes _____   | las imágenes _____ | los orígenes _____   |
| los autobuses _____ | los andenes _____  | los cumpleaños _____ |



If you are not sure whether or not a noun requires a written accent, say it out loud. The written accent tells you that stress is not regular, i.e. it does not fall on the penultimate (last but one) syllable. If stress falls on the penultimate syllable, there is no need for a written accent.

I Use this exercise to check that you know how to talk about your close relatives in Spanish. Give the Spanish for:

- |                          |       |               |       |                 |       |
|--------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 the married couple     | _____ | husband       | _____ | wife            | _____ |
| 2 the parents            | _____ | father        | _____ | mother          | _____ |
| 3 the children           | _____ | son           | _____ | daughter        | _____ |
| 4 the siblings           | _____ | brother       | _____ | sister          | _____ |
| 5 the grandparents:      | _____ | grandfather   | _____ | grandmother     | _____ |
| 6 the grandchildren      | _____ | grandson      | _____ | granddaughter   | _____ |
| 7 uncle(s) and aunt(s)   | _____ | uncle         | _____ | aunt            | _____ |
| 8 nephew(s) and niece(s) | _____ | nephew        | _____ | niece           | _____ |
| 9 cousins                | _____ | (male) cousin | _____ | (female) cousin | _____ |



J Answer the questions about members of the family.

Everyone is living longer these days, so who is your **bisabuelo**? And what does that make you? And who might your **tía abuela** be?



You may like to create a family tree, your own or an imaginary one, then write sentences in Spanish describing the relationships between the different people; for example: **Pepe es mi hermano y el tío de mis hijos.**



## Reading

K Read the first paragraph of the text. Is the following statement true or false? If it is false, correct it in Spanish.

El turista siempre reconoce las frutas y hortalizas que ve en los mercados latinoamericanos.

a lo largo de      along, the length of      a lo mejor      perhaps

Una de las muchas atracciones para un turista que visita un país latinoamericano son los mercados al aire libre. A lo largo de varias calles hay puestos que venden de todo para todas sus necesidades. A lo mejor lo que más le interesa al visitante es la artesanía regional. Pero también le pueden interesar las cantidades de diversos productos del campo: piñas, mangos, melones, sandías y otras frutas y hortalizas a veces difíciles de reconocer por alguien que viene de otro punto del planeta, y que no está acostumbrado a ver estos productos en su lugar de origen.