Verbs like Gustar

This is a good time to discuss the verb “gustar” because using it requires use of the IO pronouns.

Me gusta el cuarto............................................. I like the room.
Nos gustan los libros......................................... We like the books.

In English, the following sentences are correct:

I like the room
We like the books.

Examine the same sentences more closely.

I like the room.
I = subject of sentence
like = verb
the room = direct object

We like the books.
We = subject of sentence
like = verb
the books = direct object

In English, it is correct to construct a sentence that has the subject “liking” a direct object. In Spanish, this never occurs. In Spanish, a different construction is used.

English ..................... I like the room.
Spanish .................... The room is pleasing to me.

English ..................... We like the books.
Spanish .................... The books are pleasing to us.

The first thing you need to notice is that both versions really mean the same thing. They are merely different expressions of the same idea.

Idea ......................... My feelings with regard to the book are positive.

English Way ...............
I like the book.
Spanish Way .............
The book is pleasing to me.

The second thing to notice is that in English, the subject of the sentence is the person (I, we) while in Spanish the subject of the sentence is the object (room, books).

The room is pleasing to me.
Subject: The room

I like the room.
Subject: I
Finally notice that while the English sentence has a direct object, the Spanish sentence has an indirect object.

The room is pleasing to me.

me = Indirect Object

I like the room.

room = Direct Object

Let's study the following example:

Me gustan los libros.

Literal Translation ..... To me are pleasing the books.
Actual Translation ..... I like the books.

Notice that gustar is conjugated as “gustan” not “gusto.” A common mistake is to say “Me gusto los libros.” This is incorrect because the subject of the sentence is “los libros” even though it comes at the end. Remember, the verb is conjugated to agree with the subject of the sentence.

Me gustan los libros. (I like the books.)

Notice that the conjugation of gustar changes to “gusta” when the subject of the sentence is singular.

Me gusta el libro. (I like the book.)

Since the subject of the sentence must be either singular (book) or plural (books), the only forms of gustar you will use are “gusta” and “gustan.” This is true regardless of what IO pronoun appears in the sentence.

Me gusta el libro. I like the book.
Te gusta el libro. You like the book.
Nos gusta el libro. We like the book.
Me gustan los libros. I like the books.
Te gustan los libros. You like the books.
Nos gustan los libros. We like the books.

Remember, gustar becomes either gusta or gustan, depending upon whether the subject of the sentence is singular or plural. It has nothing to do with which IO pronoun is used.

Subject is singular — use gusta

Me gusta el libro.
Te gusta el libro.

Subject is plural — use gustan

Me gustan los libros.
Te gustan los libros.

Remember, the IO pronoun is not the subject of the sentence!

Nos gustamos ... incorrect!
Te gustas ... incorrect!
Here are some examples of the correct use of gustar. Notice that the only forms of gustar that appear are gusta and gustan, even though each of the IO pronouns is used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR SUBJECT</th>
<th>PLURAL SUBJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me gusta la casa</td>
<td>Me gustan las casas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te gusta el cuarto</td>
<td>Te gustan los cuartos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le gusta la silla</td>
<td>Le gustan las sillas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos gusta el hotel</td>
<td>Nos gustan los hoteles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Os gusta la comida</td>
<td>Os gustan las comidas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les gusta el reloj</td>
<td>Les gustan los relojes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look more closely at one example:

Le gusta la silla.

It is impossible to tell whether this means:

1. He likes the chair.
2. She likes the chair.
3. You (usted) like the chair.

For purposes of clarification, the sentence will often begin with a prepositional phrase that clarifies just who the IO pronoun refers to.

A él le gusta la silla. He likes the chair.
A Juan le gusta la silla. John likes the chair.
A ella le gusta la silla. She likes the chair.
A María le gusta la silla. Mary likes the chair.
A usted le gusta la silla. You (formal) like the chair.

As you can see, by adding a prepositional phrase, we remove the ambiguity of the “le” form.

You can also use a prepositional phrase to add emphasis, even if there is no ambiguity.

1. A Juan le gusta el café. John likes coffee.
2. A mí me gusta el té. I like tea.

In the first example, “a Juan” clarifies the ambiguous pronoun “le.” In the second example, there is no ambiguity. “Me gusta el té” can only mean “I like tea.” In this case, “a mí” adds emphasis, drawing attention to the fact that tea is what I like (as contrasted with what Juan likes).

Another way to look at it:

John likes coffee. Me, I like tea. A Juan le gusta el café. A mí me gusta el té.

Now that you know how to correctly use the verb gustar, here is a list of verbs that operate in the same manner:

aburrir ...................... to bore
fascinar ..................... To be fascinating to
bastar ........................ to be sufficient
importar ........................ to be important to
caber (mal) ........................ to (not) suit
interesar ........................ to be interesting to
dar asco ........................ to be loathsome
molestar ........................ to be a bother
disgustar .................. to hate something
parecer .................... to appear to be
doler (o:ue) .............. to be painful
picar ....................... to itch
encantar .................. to “love” something
quedar ..................... to be left over, remain
faltar ...................... to be lacking something
volver (o:ue) loco....... to be crazy about

The practice exercises focus on 5 useful verbs:
gustar
faltar
molestar
parecer
disgustar

Note that all of the other verbs listed above behave in the same fashion as the five practice verbs.

Let’s add a flashcard for the special verb “gustar“:

Verb Flashcards

19. A Juan le gusta el libro.
    A Juan le gustan los libros.

To “like“ something