**Using the neuter pronouns: “ESO, ESTO”**

**The neuter demonstrative pronouns: Usually, demonstrative pronouns are used to point at an object: éste, "this one"; ése, "that one,"; and aquél, "that one over there." The neuter equivalents (esto, eso and aquello) are all unaccented, end in -o and have roughly the same meanings, but as is the case with the direct object lo, they usually refer to an idea or concept rather than an object or person. They can also refer to an unknown object. Here are some examples of its use:**

**•No olvides esto. "Don't forget this."**

**•No creo eso. "I don't believe that."**

**•¿Qué es aquello? "What is that over there?"**

**•¿Te gustó eso? "Did you like that?"**

**•No me gusta esto. "I don't like this."**

**Note that the final two sentences must refer to an event, situation or process rather than an object with a name. For example, if you're walking in a dark jungle and get a creepy feeling about something that might happen, no me gusta esto would be appropriate. But if you're sampling a hamburger and don't care for it, no me gusta ésta would be appropriate (ésta is used because the word for hamburger, hamburguesa, is feminine).**

**Ello: Ello is the neuter equivalent of él and ella. Its use these days is extremely rare, although you may find it in literature. It usually is translated as "it" or "this."**

**The neuter pronouns are never used to substitute for a specific noun. They are used to refer to an unknown object or to an idea or concept that isn't specifically named. (If you would have occasion to use a neuter plural, use the plural masculine form.) The use of eso is extremely common to refer to a situation that has just been stated.**

**Examples:**

**•¿Qué es esto? What is this [unknown object]?**

**•Esto es bueno. This [referring to a situation rather than a specific object] is good.**

**•El padre de María murió. Por eso, está triste. Mary's father died. Because of that, she's sad.)**

**•Tengo que salir a las ocho. No olvida eso. I have to leave at eight. Don't forget that.)**

**using “LO”**

**Meaning Often Depends on Which Part of Speech It Is**

**Lo is one of those words that doesn't always have a clear definition — and it can function in at least three different ways, as a subject pronoun, object pronoun or definite article. When you run across the word in a sentence and don't know what it means, you often need to figure out first how it is being used.**

**Here, in rough order of how common they are, are the ways that lo can be used:**

**As a masculine direct-object pronoun: In such cases, lo can be translated as either "him" or "it." The feminine equivalent is la.**

**•¿Pablo? No lo vi. Pablo? I didn't see him.**

**•El coche es muy caro. Quiero comprarlo. The car is very expensive. I want to buy it.**

**•Dámelo. Give it to me.**

**•No creo que lo hayas conocido. I don't think you've met him.**

**Note that in the above sentences where lo means "him," referring to a person, it would be very common in some areas, particularly in Spain, to use le instead of lo. The use of le as a direct object pronoun is known as leísmo.**

**As a neuter definite article: The definite articles in Spanish, typically el and la when singular, are the equivalent of the English "the." Lo can be used as a neuter definite article before an adjective to make an abstract noun. For example, lo importante can be translated as "the important thing," "that which is important" or "what is important."**

**•Lo bueno es que hemos sido más listos. The good thing is that we have been more clever.**

**•Lo barato sale caro. What seems cheap ends up expensive.**

**•Lo mejor es que me voy a casa. The best thing is that I'm going home.**

**•Lo mío es tuyo. What is mine is yours.**

**•El entrenador se especializa en lo imposible. The coach specializes in the impossible.**

**As a neuter direct-object pronoun: Lo can be used as an object pronoun to refer to something abstract, to an unnamed activity or situation, or to a previous statement:**

**•No podemos hacerlo. We can't do it.**

**•No lo comprendo. I don't understand it.**

**•Mi religión no lo prohibe, pero cada vez que lo hago, le doy las gracias al animal por darme vida. My religion doesn't prohibit it, but every time I do it, I give thanks to the animal for giving me life.**

**With ser and estar to refer to a preceding noun or adjective: This is especially common when answering questions:**

**--¿Es nueva tu computadora?. —No lo es. "Is your computer new?" "It isn't."**

**•—¿Estaban felices?. —Sí, lo están. "Were they happy?" "Yes, they were."**

**As part of lo que or lo cual: These phrases serve as relative pronouns usually meaning "that," "what" or "that which":**

**• (Título) La marihuana: Lo que los padres deben saber. (Headline) Marijuana: What parents ought to know.**

**•Mis padres me daba todo lo que yo necesitaba. My parents gave me everything that I needed.**

**•No puedo decidir lo que es mejor. I can't decide what is better.**

**•No todo lo que brilla es oro. Not everything that shines is gold.**

**As part of lo de: The phrase can be translated differently depending on the context, but generally means something like "the matter concerning":**

**•Los senadores republicanos fueron informados sobre lo de la CIA. The Republican senators were informed about the CIA matter.**

**•Lo de que las niñas japonesas se perdieron no era una mentira. The story about the Japanese girls getting lost wasn't a lie.**

**•Lo de Castro es todo pretextos y mentiras. Castro's way of doing things is all pretexts and lies.**

**In various phrases: Some examples: •a lo largo de, throughout**

**•a lo lejos, in the distance**

**•a lo loco, like crazy**

**•a lo mejor, probably**

**•lo sabe todo, to know it all**

**•por lo general, generally**

**•por lo menos, at least**

**•por lo pronto, for now**

**•por lo tanto, as a result**

**•por lo visto, apparently**

**Neither Masculine nor Feminine**

**Spanish Neuter Usually Refers to Concepts or Ideas**

**El and ella. Nosotros and nosotras. El and la. Un and una. El profesor and la profesora. In Spanish, everything is either masculine or feminine, right?**

**Not quite. True, Spanish isn't like German, where in terms of gender nouns fall into three classifications (masculine, feminine and neuter). Indeed, in Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine. But Spanish does have use for the neuter form, which can come in quite handy when referring to concepts or ideas.**

**The thing to keep in mind about Spanish's neuter form is that it is never used to refer to known objects or people, and there are no neuter nouns or descriptive adjectives. Here, then, are the cases where you'll see the neuter used:**

**Lo as the neuter definite article: Chances are that you're familiar with el and la, which usually are translated as "the" in English. Those words are known as the definite articles because they refer to definite things or people (el libro or "the book" refers to a specific book). Spanish also has a neuter definite article, lo, but you can't use it before a noun like you do el or la because there are no neuter nouns.**

**So when would you use lo? It is used before singular adjectives (and sometimes possessive pronouns) when they function as nouns, usually referring to a concept or category, not to a single concrete object or a person. If you're translating into English, there is no one way in which lo is always translated; you'll usually need to supply a noun, the choice of which depends on the context. In most cases, "what is" is a possible translation, although not always the best, for lo.**

**A sample sentence should help make this easier to understand: Lo importante es amar. Here importante is the adjective (generally in the masculine singular when used with lo) functioning as a noun. You could use a variety of English translations: "The important thing is to love." "What's important is to love." "The important aspect is to love."**

**Here are some other sample sentences with possible translations:**

**•Lo peor de mi casa es el baño. "The worst part of my house is the bathroom." "The worst thing in my house is the bathroom."**

**•Lo nuevo es que estudia. "What's new is that he's studying." "The new thing is that he studies."**

**•Me gusta lo francés. "I like French things." "I like what is French."**

**•Le di lo inútil a mi hermana. "I gave the useless stuff to my sister." "I gave the useless items to my sister." "I gave what was useless to my sister."**

**•Puedes pintar lo tuyo. "You can paint what's yours." "You can paint your things."**

**It is also possible to use lo in this way with some adverbs, but this usage isn't as common as the cases above: Me enojó lo tarde que salió. "It angered me how late he left." "The lateness of his leaving angered me."**

**Lo as a neuter direct object: Lo is used to represent an idea or concept when it is the direct object of a verb. (This may not look like a neuter use, because lo can also be used as a masculine pronoun.) In such usages, lo is usually translated as "it." No lo creo. "I don't believe it." Lo sé. "I know it." No lo comprendo. "I don't understand it." No puedo creerlo. "I can't believe it." In these cases, lo/"it" doesn't refer to an object, but to a statement that has been made earlier or that is understood**