De + infinitive

Spanish · British English › Spanish

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The 'de + Infinitive' Construction – Expressing Condition and Cause

In Spanish, the '**de + infinitive**' construction is a really useful and elegant way to express a **condition** or a **cause**. It allows you to convey information concisely, often replacing longer subordinate clauses. It's a fantastic way to make your Spanish sound more natural and fluent!

De + infinitive

1. Expressing Condition (Condición)

When we use '**de + infinitive**' to express a condition, we usually translate it as '**If...**' or '**Should...**'. It's a shorter alternative to constructions with *si* (if). It can refer to the present, future, or a hypothetical past.

- **De + infinitive:** 'If...' (for present/future)
- **De no + infinitive:** 'If not...'
- **De haber + past participle:** 'If (it) had...' (for hypothetical past)

De llegar tarde, perderás el autobús.
If you arrive late, you'll miss the bus.

De haberlo sabido antes, no habría venido.
If I had known it earlier, I wouldn't have come.

2. Expressing Cause (Causa)

In this context, '**de + infinitive**' indicates the cause or reason for an action or state. We often translate it as '**upon...**', '**after...**', '**seeing...**', '**hearing...**', or '**due to...**'. It's similar to the gerund, but with an emphasis on the cause.

- **De + infinitive:** 'Upon...', 'After...', 'Seeing...', 'Hearing...' (immediate cause/reaction)
- **De tanto + infinitive:** 'Due to so much...' (cause resulting from excessive action)

De oír el ruido, se asustó el niño.
Upon hearing the noise, the child got scared.

De tanto trabajar, está agotado.
Due to working so much, he's exhausted.

Usage Type	Structure	Example (Spanish)	Translation (English)
Condition (simple)	De + infinitive	De estudiar, aprobarás.	If you study, you'll pass.
Condition (past)	De haber + past participle	De haberlo sabido, no habría ido.	If I had known it, I wouldn't have gone.
Cause (immediate)	De + infinitive	De verla, se alegró.	Upon seeing her, he cheered up.
Cause (intensive)	De tanto + infinitive	De tanto correr, se	Due to running so

Usage Type	Structure	Example (Spanish)	Translation (English)
		cansó.	much, he got tired.

Watch out! Don't confuse the **'de + infinitive'** construction with **'para + infinitive'** (which expresses purpose: 'in order to...') or **'al + infinitive'** (which expresses simultaneity: 'upon doing...', 'when...'). Each has its unique meaning! The key is the preposition **'de'**.

De estudiar mucho, aprobarás.
~~Para estudiar mucho, aprobarás.~~
'De + infinitive' expresses a condition ('If you study...'), whereas 'para + infinitive' expresses purpose ('In order to study...'), which doesn't fit the context.

Memory trick: Think of DE as **DE-fining** a condition or **DE-scribing** a cause!

Now that you know these constructions, try putting them into practice! The more you practise, the easier it will become to use them naturally. ¡Mucha suerte!

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

Circle the option that correctly fills each gap.

1. _____ ayuda, _____ sin dudar.
   If you need help, call without hesitation.
   Gap 1: A) De necesitar B) Si necesitarás C) En necesitar D) Para necesitar
   Gap 2: A) llámame B) llamaste C) me habías llamado D) llames

2. _____ frío, _____ el abrigo.
   If you feel cold, put your coat on.
   Gap 1: A) Para sentir B) De sentir C) En sentir D) Si sentirás
   Gap 2: A) pusiste B) pongas C) te habías puesto D) ponte

3. _____ su voz, te _____.
   If you listened to his voice, you would calm down.
   Gap 1: A) En escuchar B) Si escucharías C) De escuchar D) Para escuchar
   Gap 2: A) tranquilizarías B) tranquilizaste C) habías tranquilizado D) tranquilices

4. _____ a tiempo, no te _____ nada.
   If you arrive on time, you won't miss anything.
   Gap 1: A) Para llegar B) Si llegarás C) En llegar D) De llegar
   Gap 2: A) habías perdido B) perdiste C) hayas perdido D) perderás

5. _____ el libro, _____ la película.
   If you had read the book, you would have understood the film.
   Gap 1: A) Si habrías leído B) De haber leído C) Por haber leído D) Para haber leído
   Gap 2: A) entendiste B) entenderías C) habías entendido D) entiendas

6. _____, se cansó muy rápido.
   From running so much, he got tired very quickly.
   A) De tanto correr B) A tanto correr C) Para tanto correr D) Sin tanto correr

7. _____ tan feliz, me _____ mucho.
   If I saw her so happy, I would be really pleased.
   Gap 1: A) De verla B) En verla C) Si la vería D) Para verla

Gap 2: A) alegraría B) alegré C) alegre D) había alegrado

8. _____ el resultado, te _____ aliviado.
   If you saw the result, you would feel relieved.
   Gap 1: A) Para ver B) De ver C) Si verías D) En ver
   Gap 2: A) sentirías B) hayas sentido C) sentiste D) habías sentido

Part 2 — Fill in the gap

Write the missing word or phrase on the line.

1. _____ el empleo, me _____ de ciudad.
   If I get the job, I'll move to another city.

2. _____ el partido, no _____ de fase.
   If we lose the match, we won't advance.

3. _____ ir, _____ con tiempo.
   If you want to go, let me know in advance.

4. _____ el riesgo, no lo _____.
   If I had known the risks, I wouldn't have done it.

5. _____ pronto, _____ la oportunidad.
   If we don't decide soon, we'll miss the opportunity.

6. _____ videojuegos, le dolían los ojos.
   His eyes hurt from playing video games so much.

Part 3 — Translate

Write each word in Spanish on the line.

1. to prepare › _____
2. to comprehend › _____
3. to think › _____
4. to finish › _____
5. to enter › _____
6. to open › _____

Part 4 — Match the pairs

Write the letter of the matching translation next to each term.

	Term		Translation
1.	comprar	A	to buy
2.	resolver	B	to solve
3.	dudar	C	to know

4.	conocer	D	to doubt
5.	cambiar	E	to ask
6.	viajar	F	to receive
7.	recibir	G	to change
8.	preguntar	H	travel

Answer Key

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

1. Gap 1: A) De necesitar; Gap 2: A) llámame
2. Gap 1: B) De sentir; Gap 2: D) ponte
3. Gap 1: C) De escuchar; Gap 2: A) tranquilizarías
4. Gap 1: D) De llegar; Gap 2: D) perderás
5. Gap 1: B) De haber leído; Gap 2: B) entenderías
6. A) De tanto correr
7. Gap 1: A) De verla; Gap 2: A) alegraría
8. Gap 1: B) De ver; Gap 2: A) sentirías

Part 2 — Fill in the gap

1. De conseguir; mudaré
2. De perder; pasaremos
3. De querer; avísame
4. De haber sabido; habría hecho
5. De no decidir; perderemos
6. De tanto jugar

Part 3 — Translate

1. preparar
2. entender
3. pensar
4. terminar
5. entrar
6. abrir

Part 4 — Match the pairs

1. A (to buy)
2. B (to solve)
3. D (to doubt)
4. C (to know)
5. G (to change)
6. H (travel)
7. F (to receive)
8. E (to ask)