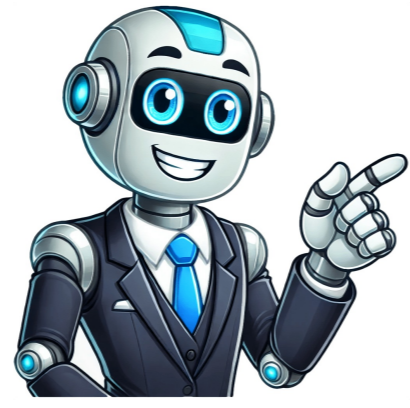Continue

The word que pops up frequently in Spanish and has many different English translations. Here are some of the things that que could mean. Interrogative Qué Qué (with an accent) can be an interrogative pronoun used to ask questions. It translates to "what...?": ¿Qué vamos a hacer? What are we going to do? ¿Qué comes? What are you eating? ¿Qué pasa? What's happening? You can also use qué in an indirect way, expressing what someone else asked: Te pregunta qué vas a comer. He's asking you what you are going to eat. Exclamatory Qué Qué (with an accent) can be paired with an adjective and used as an exclamation. The English equivalent is "how...!": ¡Qué bonita! How beautiful! ¡Qué inteligente eres! How smart you are! ¡Qué interesante! How interesting! ¡Qué verdes son! How green they are! You are not limited to adjectives. You can also pair qué with nouns. In this case the English equivalent is "what a...!": ¡Qué lástima! What a pity! ¡Qué clase tan interesante! What an interesting class! ¡Qué lío es! What a mess it is! ¡Qué sorpresa fue! What a surprise it was! Que as Conjunction See also: The Present Subjunctive: When? (Part 1) Que (without the accent) often appears as a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause. In this case it is translated as "that": Yo creo que ella dice la verdad. I believe that she is telling the truth. Es importante que escuchen bien. It's important that you listen well. See also: The Present Subjunctive: When? (Part 2) There are many other conjunctions the involve the word que. Here is a sampling: Spanish: English: ya que since antes de que before en caso que in case a menos que unless sin que without después de que after hasta que until mientras que while siempre que as long as Que as Relative Pronoun See also: Relative Pronouns in Spanish Que can be a relative pronoun used to describe a noun. As a relative pronoun que can be translated as "that," "which," or "who" depending on the circumstances: Carlos solo lee libros que tienen fotos. Carlos only reads books that have photos. ¿Dónde está el bolígrafo con que escribiste la carta? Where is the pen with which you wrote the letter? Yo vi a la chica que peleaba con Andrea. I saw the girl who used to fight with Andrea. Que in Comparisons See also: Comparatives and Superlatives in Spanish Que is used in many comparisons. It translates to "than" in English: Mi casa es más grande que tu casa. My house is bigger than your house. Alejandro aprende más rápidamente que Estéban. Alejandro learns more rapidly than Estéban. Ella gana más dinero que él. She earns more money than he. Mi hermana corre más que mi hermano. My sister runs more than my brother. Other Uses of Que Surprise, Disbelief, Desire, & Commands Que may be used at the start of sentences to express surprise, doubt, or desire. You may also see que at the start of commands. In these situations it has no translation: ¡Que viaja a Londres! He's traveling to London?! ¿Que sales con Javiera? You're going out with Javiera?! ¡Que te mejores pronto! Get well soon! ¡Que entres! Enter! Why do these sentences start with que? Here the que is functioning like a conjunction between two clauses, one of which has been omitted: ¡(Se dice) que viaja a Londres! ¿(Es verdad) que sales con Javiera? ¡(Espero) que te mejores pronto! ¡(Exijo) que entres! Lo Que See also: Relative Pronouns in Spanish While qué is an interrogative pronoun used in questions, lo que is a relative pronoun used in statements. Lo que means "what" but it may be beneficial to think of it as meaning "that which": No entiendo lo que la profesora enseña. I don't understand what the professor is teaching. Lo que pasó esta tarde me molesta mucho. What happened this afternoon really bothers me. Used with the subjunctive, lo que signifies the idea of "whatever": sea lo que sea whatever it is / whatever it may be venga lo que venga come what may El Que See also: Relative Pronouns in Spanish El que can be used in proverbs and sayings to mean "he who" or "the one who": El que tiene tejado de vidrio no tira piedras al de su vecino. He who has a glass roof should not throw rocks at his neighbor's. (Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.) Have conversations faster, understand people when they speak fast, and other tested tips to learn faster. More info The Spanish word que may appear small and insignificant, but don't be fooled by appearances! If you read or listen to anything in Spanish, we assure you that you will find que or qué everywhere. These two words are among the fundamental Spanish terms that every speaker needs to understand clearly! Qué and que are homonyms, meaning that they're pronounced exactly the same way. It's vital to recognize the difference between que v qué, however, depending on whether the final -e takes an accent mark called a tilde. In past posts, we've explored other Spanish homonyms whose main difference comes down to an accent, including por que vs porqué, cuanto vs cuánto, dónde vs dónde and como vs cómo. Today's post will be devoted to seeing in detail how que and qué work, and in which situations we should use each one. Que and Qué: Meanings The Spanish que without an accent mark may be translated as that, what, which, or who. It can act as a relative pronoun, a subordinating conjunction, and in comparisons. We will look at each of these uses in the following sections. The other word we're looking at is qué in Spanish, with the tilde. Qué mainly functions as an interrogative pronoun, and can be translated as what or how. We'll get into these uses further down in this post once we've finished with que. Recommended: How to Learn Spanish Fast in 2025 Que in Spanish Let's first go through the various uses of the unaccented word que in Spanish. Que as a relative pronoun Relative pronouns are used to link two or more ideas that could otherwise be expressed in two different sentences. We explain these in detail in our post on Spanish relative pronouns. As a relative pronoun, que in Spanish may be translated as that, who, whom, or which. It's invariable, so there's no need to match the gender or number of the noun it refers to. My teacher asked me about the book that I read – Mi profesora me pregunto sobre el libro que leí. Did you see the flowers that were falling from the trees. – Has visto las flores que caían de los árboles. I like the table [that] we bought yesterday. – Me gusta la mesa que compramos ayer. They are the firemen [who] they hired last year. – Ellos son los bomberos que contrataron el año pasado. I forget the restaurant in which we had dinner. – Yo olvido el restaurante en el que cenamos. Note that in English the relative pronouns can often be omitted, whereas in Spanish the que is obligatory. Que as a subordinating conjunction Que is used to introduce subordinate clauses in a similar way to the English conjunction that in sentences like "He said that it's true." Unlike is often the case with that in English, however, que cannot be omitted, just like we saw with que as a relative pronoun. My sister says [that] she's not coming today. – Mi hermana dice que no va a venir hoy. The kids know [that] their dad is happy. – Los niños saben que su papá está feliz. It was so much fun that I couldn't stop laughing. – Fue tan divertido que no pude dejar de reír. It seems like it's going to snow. – Parece que va a nevar. Que in comparisons Que is an essential component in phrases where we make comparisons. This use of que in English is translated as than. When we compare things, animals, or people in this way, we normally use the following structures: más / menos + adjective + que más / menos + adverb + que Sometimes you use direct translations of más and menos in English, as more and less, though in most instances you use superlatives. For more detail, check out our full post on comparisons in Spanish. My brother is taller than me. – Mi hermano es más alto que yo. My mom says that boys are less intelligent than girls. – Mi madre dice que los niños son menos inteligentes que las niñas. He sold more books in February than in March. – Vendió más libros en febrero que en marzo. The teacher speaks faster than the student. – El profesor habla más rápido que el estudiante. Now that we've covered the different uses of que, let's move on to the second word in our comparison of que v qué in Spanish. Qué in Spanish Qué in Spanish, with a tilde, means what? or what sort of? We can use it in both direct questions and indirect interrogative statements. In addition, qué in Spanish can also be used as an interjection in exclamative sentences. Let's now look at each qué meaning in turn. Qué in questions meaning What Whenever we need to ask about something where we're looking for a definition, a description, or to find out some information, we use qué in Spanish just like you use what in English. What is love? – ¿Qué es el amor? What will happen tomorrow? – ¿Qué sucederá mañana? What do you mean by that? – ¿Qué quieres decir con eso? What time is it? – ¿Qué hora es? Qué is just one of the Spanish question words. For the rest of them, along with a deeper explanation of how to pose questions in Spanish, check out our dedicated post on the Spanish interrogatives. Qué in indirect interrogative statements Interrogative statements are affirmative statements that express interrogation or ignorance. We use qué in these indirect questions, which usually also translates into English as what. He didn't know what to ask you. – No supo qué preguntarte. I asked him what movie he watched. – Le pregunté qué película vio. I don't know what you want for dinner. – No sé qué quieres de cenar. We never knew what they really needed. – Nunca supimos qué necesitaban de verdad. Qué in exclamative sentences Exclamative sentences in Spanish are used to express emotions or feelings. We use qué in such exclamations to emphasize adjectives or adverbs. This use of qué a great option whenever you need to praise someone's beauty or express amazement. Note that the English translations with this use may vary, as long as they still express the emphasis we intend. What a lovely day! – ¡Qué día tan hermoso! Gosh, it's late! – ¡Qué tarde se ha hecho! They really dance well! – ¡Qué bien bailan! What a beautiful landscape! – ¡Qué belleza de paisaje! For a deeper look at phrases like these, take a look at our dedicated post on Spanish exclamations and interjections. We can also recommend our post on Spanish compliments, which frequently take advantage of this same construction. Qué in some idiomatic expressions Idiomatic expressions are a vital part of any language. Spanish qué appears in many expressions that are used in common situations. In this section we list some of the idiomatic expressions with qué that are used by native speakers. English expression Spanish expression How are you? ¿Qué tal estás? What's Juan like as a father? ¿Qué tal es Juan como padre? What do you think of it? ¿Qué te parece? What on earth are you doing that for? ¿A santo de qué haces eso? What do I care? ¿A mí qué? So what? ¿A mí qué?, ¿Y qué? Pardon? ¿Qué? What's the point of that comment? ¿A qué viene ese comentario? What's that all about? ¿De qué va la cosa? What about the books that I lent you? ¿Y qué de los libros que te presté? Conclusion: Que v qué ¿Qué tal? At this point in our lesson, we're sure that you've come to understand the importance of que and qué in Spanish. What's more, now you know how to differentiate between que and qué in Spanish, so you're ready to express yourself like a pro! In a nutshell, que in Spanish may function as a subordinating conjunction, and as part of a comparative structure in Spanish. On the other hand, qué in Spanish is normally used in questions, interrogative statements, and exclamative sentences, while also appearing in a number of common idiomatic expressions. To see how well you've grasped the differences between que v qué, why not put your knowledge to the test with the following exercises? Exercises Based on the content of each sentence, choose que or qué accordingly. Answers and translations are below. 1. No sé que / qué hora es. 2. La película que / qué vimos se llama "La sociedad de la nieve." 3. ¿Qué / Que significa "ubicuo"? 4. La nieve es más fría que / qué la lluvia. 5. ¿Que / Qué te pareció el libro? 6. Los críticos dicen que / qué este es el mejor libro del año. 7. No sabemos qué / que hay en la caja. Answers 1. No sé que hora es. – I don't know what the time is. 2. La película que vimos se llama "La sociedad de la nieve." – The name of the movie [that] we watched is "The Society of the Snow". 3. ¿Qué significa "ubicuo"? – What's the meaning of "ubiquitous"? 4. La nieve es más fría que la lluvia. – The snow is colder than the rain. 5. ¿Qué te pareció el libro? – What do you think of the book? 6. Los críticos dicen que este es el mejor libro del año. – Critics say that this is the best book of the year. 7. No sabemos qué hay en la caja. – We don't know what is in the box. Spanish to EnglishPossible Results:See the entry forque.See the entry forque.Singularofqué(adjective)Indicative vs. Subjunctive Cheat Sheet 1. Que (pronoun): A word used in various languages, including Spanish, French, and Portuguese, as a relative pronoun meaning "that," "which," or "who." 2. Que (noun): A word that can represent a line or sequence of people or items waiting for their turn, often shortened from "queue" in English. 3. Que (interjection): An expression of disbelief, confusion, or inquiry, similar to "What?" in English, particularly in Spanish. The term "que" is multifaceted, appearing in various languages and contexts. It is an essential component of communication in languages like Spanish and French, serving as a pronoun, conjunction, or interjection. In English, "que" may refer to a line of waiting individuals or objects. Its versatility and ubiquity make it a fascinating subject for deeper exploration. "Que" Definition: What Does "Que" Mean? The word "que" is widely used across different languages, each with unique meanings and applications. Below, we delve into its definitions and contexts. Definition of "Que": Pronoun in Spanish and French In Spanish and French, "que" functions as a relative pronoun meaning "that," "which," or "who." This use is integral to forming complex sentences and linking clauses smoothly. Definition of "Que": Line or Sequence As a noun, "que" is a variation of "queue," referring to a line or sequence of people or items waiting. This usage is informal but common in English. Definition of "Que": Expression of Inquiry In conversational Spanish, "que" is often used as an interjection expressing confusion or surprise, translating to "What?" in English. Parts of Speech The word "que" operates as a pronoun, conjunction, and interjection in languages like Spanish and French. It connects clauses, questions, or exclamations, making it versatile in grammar. Its usage as a noun in English, meaning a line, is less common and often informal. How to Pronounce "Que?" Pronunciation varies depending on the language and context in which "que" is used. Below is an explanation for common usages: In Spanish and French, "que" is pronounced as /keh/, with a short and crisp vowel sound similar to "k" in "kettle." In English, when referring to a "queue," it is pronounced as /kyoo/, rhyming with "view." Phonetic Pronunciation: Spanish/French: /keh/ Synonyms of "Que": Other Ways to Say "Que" Synonyms help enhance understanding and usage flexibility. Here are several alternatives: That (English) Which (English) Who (English) Line (for "queue") What (for "que" as an interjection) Antonyms of "Que": Other Ways to Say "Que" Antonyms provide contrasting meanings. For "que," these may include: Not that Not who Not which Disorganized (opposite of a queue) Silence (opposite of an interjection like "que?") Examples of "Que" in a Sentence To better understand its usage, here are ten sentences featuring "que": My abuela always says, "¡Que calor!" when the weather is hot. (Meaning: How hot!) He asked, "¿Que pasa?" when he saw the commotion. (Meaning: What's happening?) She exclaimed, "¡Que linda!" when she saw the baby. (Meaning: How pretty!) They wondered, "¿Que hora es?" because they were late for the movie. (Meaning: What time is it?) I told him, "Que tengas un buen día," as he left for work. (Meaning: Have a good day.) Note: This is a shortened form of "Te deseo que tengas..." The server asked, "¿Que desea usted?" when taking our order. (Meaning: What do you want/wish?) She replied, "Que me traiga la cuenta, por favor." (Meaning: That you bring me the bill, please.) Note: "Que" introduces the subordinate clause expressing her desire. He said something like, "Que lastima," when he heard the bad news. (Meaning: What a pity/shame.) The children shouted, "¡Que divertido!" while playing in the park. (Meaning: How fun!) I thought to myself, "Que interesante..." during the lecture. (Meaning: How interesting...) Frequency of Use The frequency of "que" varies significantly by language. In Spanish and French, it is one of the most commonly used words, appearing in nearly every sentence. In English, as a variant of "queue," it is far less frequent but remains recognizable in casual contexts. Variants of "Que" "Que" has several variants, depending on the language or usage. Definition of "Que": Expression of Inquiry Qué (Spanish): Used as "what" in interrogative sentences. Queue (English): Refers to a line or sequence. Queer (English): In some contexts, shortened to "que" informally. Related Terms to "Que" Exploring related terms can expand understanding: Quebec (Place name) Queueing (The act of forming a line) Qu'est-ce que (French phrase meaning "What is it?) Etymology: History and Origins of "Que" The word "que" originates from Latin, where it means "and" or "that." Its evolution into Romance languages such as Spanish and French has given it a central role in grammar. The English use of "que" as a line derives from the Old French word cue, meaning tail, eventually evolving into the modern "queue." Derivatives and Compounds of "Que" Here are key derivatives and compounds: Queuing: The act of forming a line or sequence. Qu'est-ce que: A French phrase meaning "What is it?" Question: Derived from the root word "que." Common Misspellings of "Que" Common errors in spelling can arise due to pronunciation or lack of familiarity: 10 Idioms Similar to "Que" Here are idioms that express related concepts: What's up? Que sera, sera (What will be, will be) In line Hold the line At the end of the line Get in queue Queue up What's the story? Out of the queue All in a line 10 Common Questions About "Que" 1. What does "que" mean in Spanish? It means "that," "which," or "who." 2. How is "que" used as a relative pronoun, and "what" as an interjection. 2. How do you pronounce "que" in French? It is pronounced /keh/, with a short vowel sound. 3. What is the English equivalent of "que" in a line? In English, it is often a variant spelling of "queue." 4. Is "que" used in English grammar? No, "que" is not used in standard English grammar but may appear in informal contexts. 5. How is "que" used in French phrases? In French, "que" is integral to expressions like "Qu'est-ce que," meaning "What is it." 6. Does "que" have multiple pronunciations? Yes, it varies by language and context, such as /keh/ in Romance languages and /kyoo/ in English. 7. Can "que" mean "why" in any language? In some contexts, "que" can imply "why" when combined with other words, as in Spanish "¿Por qué?" 8. What role does "que" play in sentence structure? It connects clauses as a relative pronoun in languages like Spanish and French. 9. Is "que" used in mathematics? No, "que" does not have a specific mathematical use, unlike words like "difference." 10. What are common phrases featuring "que"? Examples include "Que sera, sera" (What will be, will be) and "Qu'est-ce que" (What is it?). Conclusion The word "que" is a dynamic term with applications in multiple languages, from grammar to casual conversation. Understanding its usage enriches communication skills and cultural knowledge. Explore further definitions and contexts to deepen your appreciation of language. With over 10 years of experience, HSA is where your goals merge with our teachers' passion: to improve your Spanish fluency. Custom-tailored to fit your needs, you choose your program, schedule, favorite teachers, pace of learning, and more.. Learn More Traditionally, cuál is used instead of qué when a definite group of options are provided. However, you may come across variations in usage depending on a speaker's age, the regional type of Spanish they speak, the context, and who they're addressing. Therefore, either of the following examples may be considered correct in certain contexts and/or by certain speakers of Spanish. examples ¿Cuál postre quieres? ¿Flan o arroz con leche? Which dessert do you want? Flan or arroz con leche? See also: Appendix:Variations of "que" From Latin quid. qué (interrogative) what (interrogative pronoun) qué qué (nonstandard) Alternative form of que (representing the Hispanic pronunciation) (clarification of this definition is needed) qué (Provence, Switzerland) qué (Provence) What? qué (que2, Zhuyin ㄑㄩㄝˊ) Hanyu Pinyin reading of 瞿 From Old Occitan que, from Latin quid, but also usurping some of the roles of Latin quod. qué which Synonyms: quin, qual qué (interrogative) what that, that which Onomatopoeic. (Brazil) IPA(key): /kwe/ qué Like many onomatopoeias, qué can be used repeatedly, such as in qué qué. Inherited from Latin quid. IPA(key): /kwe/ qué Like many onomatopoeias, qué can be used repeatedly, such as in qué qué. Inherited from Latin quid. IPA(key): /ke/ [ˈke] Rhymes: -e Syllabification: qué Homophone: que qué (interrogative) what; which (interrogative only) ¿Qué camisa quiere?Which shirt do you want? what; which No sabía qué hacerI didn't know what to do qué (before a noun) what a; such (used as an intensifier) ¡Qué lástima! — What luck! ¡Qué casa más bonita! — What a pretty house! ¡Qué mierda de tiempo! — What shitty weather! (before an adjective) how (used as a modifier to indicate surprise, delight, or other strong feelings) ¡Qué feo! — How ugly! ¡Qué alto! — He's so tall! ¡Qué guay! — That's so cool! qué what (interrogative only) ¿Qué ves? — What do you see? There are certain times where cuál would translate as "what" in English and would translate as "which". This can confuse English speakers. Here are some guidelines: If you are using a form of the verb ser, then unless you are asking the definition or meaning of something, you would use cuál even if in English, you would translate it as "what".¿Cuál es su nombre?What is your name? ¿Cuál es el problema aquí?What is the problem here? If in English, the interrogative pronoun "what" or "which" is operating as an adjective preceding the modified noun, then you would use qué and not cuál even if in English you might translate it as "which".¿Qué medicamentos ha tomado en el pasado, señor?Which medications have you taken in the past, sir? ¿Qué pobre señorita ha capturado tu corazón esta vez?Which poor young lady has captured your heart this time? ¿Qué color de la pintura prefieres para las paredes del baño, rosa o marrón? Which color of paint do you prefer for the bathroom walls, pink or brown? q (Internet slang, text messaging) qué • (ㄑ,) Spanish to EnglishPossible Results:See the entry forqué.See the entry forque.RELATED ARTICLESSpanish Exclamatory Words and Expressions