



All the proper or common nouns that do not have a biological gender are considered **NEUTER** and are replaced by *it*.

The city of Buenos Aires is lovely. I enjoyed visiting *it*.

noun neuter pronoun

**IN SPANISH**

All nouns — common nouns and proper nouns — have a gender; they are either masculine or feminine. Do not confuse the grammatical terms “masculine” and “feminine” with the terms “male” and “female.” Only a few Spanish nouns have a grammatical gender tied to whether they refer to someone of the male or female sex. Most nouns have a gender which must be memorized.

The gender of common and proper nouns based on **BIOLOGICAL GENDER** is easy to determine. These are nouns whose meaning can only refer to one or the other of the biological sexes, male or female.

MALES → MASCULINE	FEMALES → FEMININE
Paul	Mary
boy	girl
brother	sister
stepfather	niece

The gender of all other nouns, common and proper, cannot be explained or figured out. These nouns have a **GRAMMATICAL GENDER** that is unrelated to biological gender and which must be memorized. Here are some examples of English nouns classified under the gender of their Spanish equivalent.

MASCULINE	FEMININE
money	coin
dress	shirt
country	nation
Peru	Argentina
Wednesday	peace

As you learn a new noun, you should always learn its gender because it will affect the spelling and pronunciation of the words related to it. Textbooks and dictionaries usually indicate the gender of a noun with an *m.* for masculine or an *f.* for feminine. Sometimes the definite articles are used: **el** for masculine or **la** for feminine (see *What are Articles?*, p. 17).

80

ENDINGS INDICATING GENDER

Gender can sometimes be determined by looking at the end of the Spanish noun. In the lists that follow there are endings that often indicate feminine nouns and others that indicate masculine nouns. Since you will encounter many nouns with these endings in basic Spanish, it is certainly worthwhile to familiarize yourself with them.

FEMININE ENDINGS

90

-a	la casa, la biblioteca	house, library
-dad, -tad	la ciudad, la libertad	city, liberty
-z	la nariz	nose
-ión, -ción	la reunión, la nación	meeting, nation
-umbre	la costumbre	custom
-ie	la especie	species

MASCULINE ENDINGS

Any ending except those provided in the “Feminine endings” list above. In particular:

100

-l	el papel	paper
-o	el libro	book
-n	el jardín	garden
-e	el parque	park
-r	el dolor	pain
-s	el interés	interest

To help you remember these endings note that for the masculine endings the letters spell “loners.”

110

There are, of course, exceptions to the above rules. For instance, **mano** (*hand*) is a feminine word even though it ends with the letter -o and **día** (*day*) is a masculine word even though it ends with the letter -a. Your textbook and instructor will point out the exceptions that you will need to learn.

**CAREFUL** — Do not rely on biological gender to indicate the grammatical gender of Spanish equivalents of nouns that can refer to a man or a woman. For instance, the grammatical gender of the noun “**persona**” (*person*) is always feminine, even though the person being referred to could be a man or a woman.