

### EL vs LA: Words That Change Meaning & Feminine Nouns That Use EL

#### PART 1

#### Words that change meaning with EL and LA

In A-level Spanish, the article is not optional. In many cases, changing EL to LA changes the meaning of the word completely. These words frequently appear in reading, listening, translation and speaking exams.

#### Core A-level examples

el cura → priest

la cura → cure / treatment

el orden → order / organisation

la orden → command

el capital → money / assets

la capital → capital city

el cometa → comet

la cometa → kite

#### Advanced A-level exam traps (highly recommended)

These words are common in texts, articles and exam questions, but often misunderstood.

el pendiente → earring / pending issue

la pendiente → slope

el guía → guide (person, male or female)

la guía → guidebook

el radio → radius

la radio → radio (device / medium)

el parte → report / official statement

la parte → part / section

el margen → margin (figurative / academic)

la margen → riverbank

el moral → mulberry tree

la moral → morals / ethics

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**Cultural & media-related vocabulary (useful for reading topics)**

These often appear in media, culture and society units.

el editorial → editorial article

la editorial → publishing house

**Media & society vocabulary (A-level nuance)**

el titular → headline (media context)

el titular / la titular → holder / owner (of a role, account, position)

(article agrees with the person)

Example:

- el titular de la cuenta (male account holder)
- la titular de la cuenta (female account holder)

**A-level tip:**

Not every change from EL to LA changes meaning, sometimes it shows gender agreement.

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**Other common A-level contrasts**

el frente → front / battlefront  
la frente → forehead

el final → ending  
la final → final (sports match)

el corte → cut / interruption  
la corte → court / royal court

el cólera → cholera  
la cólera → anger / rage

**A-level reminder:**

If you ignore the article, you may misunderstand the whole sentence.

**PART 2 Feminine nouns that use EL (pronunciation rule)**

Some nouns are feminine, but use EL in the singular because they begin with a stressed A or HA sound. The gender does not change.

**Key examples (very common at A-level)**

el agua fría  
el alma pura  
el arma peligrosa  
el aula moderna  
el águila blanca  
el hacha afilada  
el hambre extrema

Adjectives remain feminine

✗ el agua frío (incorrect)

**PART 2 Feminine nouns that use EL (pronunciation rule)**

**Additional exam-relevant examples**

el área urbana  
el acta oficial  
el alba clara  
el ansia constante  
el ave migratoria

**In the plural → they return to LAS**

el agua → las aguas  
el alma → las almas  
el arma → las armas  
el aula → las aulas

**Important contrast: when we DO use LA**

These nouns begin with “a”, but the a is not stressed, so LA is used:

la actitud  
la atención  
la aventura  
la ayuda  
la alegría

This rule is about sound, not spelling.

FINAL EXAM REMINDER

In A-level Spanish, articles carry meaning. Small grammatical details make a big difference in exam accuracy.

**How to use this resource:**

Use this sheet as a reference for A-level Spanish revision, to support reading and listening papers, and to improve grammatical accuracy in writing and speaking