

This table is simply a method I'm using to sort out some of the phrases I'm learning in Spanish 111. I know, I should just memorize them! Still, this is how I learn.

	increasing definiteness →		
	know how to/can/ wish could/ would like to/	should/ like to/love to/ feel like/want to/ prefer to/ plan to	need to/have to/ am/ am going to
“right now”	sé (saber) puedo (poder)	debo (deber) me gusta me encanta	necesito (necesitar) tengo que (tener) está ____ndo (estar)
“sometime in the future”	quisiera me gustaría	tengo ganas de prefiero (preferir) quiero (querer) pienso (pensar)	voy a

Here's what I'm thinking:

A lot of these would be used in pairs, separated by pero. And (maybe?) it's more likely that that pair will be in the above order, left to right. So:

Sé comer con un tenedor, pero **prefiero** usar los manos.
I know how to eat with a fork, but I prefer to use my hands.

Debo trabajar, pero ahora **estoy viendo** la televisión.
I should work, but right now I'm watching television.

Me gusta salir a bailar, pero **debo** quedarme en casa hoy.
I like to go out dancing, but I should stay at home today.

Debo trabajar, pero después, **tengo que** comer.
I should work, but first I have to eat.

Me gustaría viajar a Costa Rica, pero ahora **pienso** viajar a Canadá.
I would like to travel to Costa Rica, but for now I'm planning to travel to Canada.

Quisiera viajar a Costa Rica, pero voy a ir a Canadá.
I wish I could travel to Costa Rica, but I'm going to go to Canada.

Pienso viajar a Canadá, pero antes de saliendo **necesito** conseguir un pasaporte.
I'm planning to travel to Canada, but before I leave I need to get a passport.

Of course, I guess we could have:

Me gustaría quedarme y comer, pero no **puedo**.
I'd like to stay and eat, but I can't.

Deber and quiero/me gusta/encanta seem very interesting to me. The meaning changes depending upon the order. (And intonation.)

No **debo** comerlo, pero **me encanta** el chocolate.
I shouldn't eat it, but I love chocolate.

Me encanta el chocolate, pero no **debo** comerlo.
I love chocolate, but I shouldn't eat it.

In the first case, the implication is that I WILL eat the chocolate anyway. In the second case, I'm not going to eat the chocolate. Sort of a "battle of the wills" here. The second stated action wins. Same thing with deber/querer.

Debo vestirme, pero **quiero** seguir trabajando con la computadora.
I should get dressed, but I want to keep working on my computer.

Quiero seguir trabajando con la computadora, pero **debo** vestirme.
I want to keep working on my computer, but I should get dressed.

It seems to me when we say, "I want to/need to/should X, but I need to/have to/will Y," then the "Y" is the implied winner.

Additional thoughts:

quisiera and **me gustaría**. **Quisiera** used instead of **quiero** because what is wished for probably won't happen. ("If I won the lottery...") That's the subjunctive. The conditional of **gustar** is being used because it refers to something that hasn't happened yet and might not, but certainly could.

BH 12/6/03