

# Español

# Pronunciación

Alfabeto

Vocales

Consonantes

Cognados

The Spanish letter	Name of the letter	Spanish sound of the letter	English sound equivalent
<b>A</b>	a	padre	father
<b>B</b>	be grande or be larga	bomba	bomb
<b>* C</b> * The letter C sounds like a "k" when it is followed by the vowels a, o and u: casa, cosa, cuchara. It is pronounced as an "s" when it is followed by the vowels i and e: ciudad, cebra. This occurs in English as well: carrot, cold and cucumber, but celery and city.	ce	1. Cadaver Composición 2. Cementerio Cigarro	Cadaver Composition Cemetery Cigar
<b>CH</b>	che	nacho	nacho
<b>* D</b> *When D is intervocalic (between two vowels) as in the word nada [nothing], or when it occurs at the end of a word, like verdad [truth], D is pronounced like the "th" in the English word "they": NAH-thah, ver-DATH.	de	detective	detective
<b>E</b>	e	español	-- pronounced like the "e" in 'egg'.
<b>F</b>	efe	fábrica	factory
<b>* G</b> * The letter G is hard (like the English G in "gate") when it is followed by the vowels a, o and u: gato, gordo, gusto. It is soft (like the English 'H') when it is followed by the vowels i and e: gimnasio, general. This occurs in English as well although with different "g" sounds: game, gone and gulp, but gentle and giraffe.	ge	1. Gobierno 2. General	Government --pronounced like the English letter "h"
<b>* H</b> * The H is always silent. You might try to pretend it is invisible too, when you see words with h's. For example, the verb hay is pronounced like the English word "eye", not like the horse-food! Alcohol is pronounced "al-col" as if there were no 'h' in the middle. Don't forget that ch is a separate letter that cannot be split.	hache	honor	honor (the letter "h" is always silent)



<b>i</b>	i	policía	police
<b>J</b>	jota	justicia [justice]	--pronounced like the English letter "h"
<b>* K</b> *K is a foreign letter and used only in words borrowed from other languages.	ka	kilómetro	kilometer
<b>L</b>	ele	legal	legal
<b>LL</b>	elle	llave [key]	--pronounced like the English letter "y", as in "yahoo"
<b>M</b>	eme	madre	mother
<b>N</b>	ene	nacionalidad	nationality
<b>Ñ</b>	eñe	cañón	canyon
<b>O</b>	o	votar	vote
<b>P</b>	pe	península	peninsula
<b>* Q</b> *Q never occurs without u, so think of Qu as one letter. Qu is always pronounced like a 'k'. It never makes the 'kw' sound as it does in English. Try to visualize a K every time you see Qu.	cu	qu = k química	Chemistry
<b>*r</b> *r occurs only within a word. It cannot begin a word.	ere	pariente [a relative]	--a 'tap' like the 'd' sound in the English word 'ladder'
<b>* rr</b> *Rr is spelled r when beginning a word: rojo [red], but is spelled rr when it occurs within a word: pelirrojo [redhead]	erre	radio	--a 'trill', extend the 'tap'
<b>S</b>	ese	sopa	soup
<b>T</b>	te	texto	text

<b>U</b>	u	uniforme	--pronounced like the English 'u' in 'tutor'
<b>*V</b> *V is pronounced the same as B. The names ve chica and be grande mean 'little b' and 'big b' respectively. A common native speaker error is to switch these letters when writing. Do not pronounce this letter like the English letter 'v'. Both V and B are pronounced like a softened version of the English letter 'b'.	ve chica/ve corta	vendaje	bandage
<b>*W</b> *W is a foreign letter and used only in words borrowed from other languages.	doble ve or uve doble	Washington	Washington
<b>X</b>	equis	excelente	excellent
<b>Y</b>	i griega	Yucatán Paraguay	Yucatan Paraguay
<b>*Z</b> *Z occurs only in front of strong vowels (A, O, U.) The Z "time-shares" the vowels with C. C also has a soft "S" sound in front of the weak Vowels (I, E.) Therefore, when the Z is placed in a position where it is faced with a weak vowel, it changes into the letter C. (for example, we spell pencil "lápiz" but the plural form pencils needs to change the Z to C "lápices.")	zeta	zapatos [shoes]	--an 's' sound, as in 'socks'



## VOCALES

Spanish has five simple vowels, represented in writing by the letters **a**, **e**, **i** (or **y**), **o**, and **u**. Their pronunciation is short, clear and tense.

- a** Similar in sound to the *a* in the English Word *father*, but more open, tense and short.  
Ana, papá, mamá, Clara, banana, hasta mañana
- e** Similar in sound to the *e* of English *met*.  
me, Elena, Pepe, Teresa, leche, el elefante es elegante
- i** (**y**) Pronounced like the *i* of English *pólice*  
y, Lili, difícil, Misisipi, mi, sí, Cristina, así, cafetería
- o** Similar in sound to the *o* of English *cord* or *cole*.  
no, solo, Antonio, oficina, olor, dos, toco, yo, como
- u** Pronounced like the *oo* in English *cool* or *fool* (never the sound of *oo* in English *book* or of *u* in English *cute* or *university*).  
tú, Raúl, Úrsula, Perú, único, universal, usted usa muchas uvas

## EJERCICIO

**El loro.** In both the Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon worlds, folk wisdom credits el loro, the *parrot*, with magical powers of speech. Try pronouncing the following words – if you do well, someone may exclaim ¡Habla como un loro! *You speak like a parrot!*

- |             |             |               |             |               |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. ocho     | 5. teléfono | 9. Panamá     | 13. oficina | 17. cine      |
| 2. Catalina | 6. repita   | 10. Unamuno   | 14. nene    | 18. octubre   |
| 3. Felipe   | 7. mesa     | 11. imposible | 15. somos   | 19. Agosto    |
| 4. café     | 8. Susana   | 12. tonto     | 16. loco    | 20. cafetería |

## PRONUNCIACIÓN. LOS DIPTONGOS

Nearly every stressed vowel in English is pronounced as a diphthong, a gliding from one vowel position to another. Spanish vowels, pronounced in isolation, are never diphthongs, but when two of them occur side by side, partial fusions sometimes result, and a diphthong is produced. Of the five Spanish vowels **i** and **u** are classified as *weak*; **a**, **e** and **o** are *strong*. Two strong vowels next to each other remain as two separate sounds, or syllables: leal, creo. Two weak vowels, or a weak plus a strong vowel, form a diphthong, that is, a single syllable with a glide from one sound to the other. Listen to the following examples, and repeat each one

- |    |                                     |         |  |
|----|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| ia | Patricia, Alicia, Santiago, gracias | iu      | triunfo, ciudad, viuda                 |
| ua | Juan, Eduardo, cuatro, Guatemala    | ui (uy) | Luis, muy, ruina                       |
| ie | Gabriel, Diego, empieza, cien       | ai (ay) | hay, aire, bailan, Jaime               |
| ue | Consuelo, Manuel, puedo, pues       | au      | Paula, aula, causa, Aurelio            |
| io | Mario, radio, adios, Antonio        | ei (ey) | rey, seis, treinta, veinte, ley, reina |
| uo | antiguo, cuota                      | eu      | feudal, Europa                         |
|    |                                     | oi (oy) | hoy, soy, oigo, estoico                |

## LOS TRIPTONGOS

Three vowels sometimes appear together. If the sequence is weak-strong-weak, the three vowels form one syllable, a triphthong. Listen and repeat. estudiáis, Uruguay.

## EJERCICIO

**Pronunciación.** Say the following words focusing your attention on the sounds of the vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs.

- |               |             |              |               |           |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1. Rusia      | 4. radio    | 7. Ecuador   | 10. Uruguay   | 13. Ruiz  |
| 2. Europa     | 5. béisbol  | 8. Guatemala | 11. Monterrey | 14. Juana |
| 3. restaurant | 6. Paraguay | 9. Venezuela | 12. Eduardo   | 15. Luisa |

## PRONUNCIACIÓN. LAS CONSONANTES

Many consonants are pronounced similarly in Spanish and English. Others are pronounced very differently.

- b, v** In Spanish, the letters **b** and **v** are pronounced precisely the same. At the beginning of a word, either one sounds much like and English *b*, whereas in the middle of a word it has a sound somewhere between *b* and *v* in English.  
Bogotá, Valencia, Verónica, burro, ventana, Eva, Sebastián
- c, z** In Spanish America the letters **c** (before *e* and *i*) and **z** are pronounced like an English *s*.  
Alicia, Galicia, Cecilia, Zaragoza, La Paz, pizarra, lápiz  
A **c** before **a**, **o**, **u**, or any consonant other than **h**, is pronounced like a *k*.  
inca, coca, costa, Cuzco, secreto, clase
- ch** The combination of **c** and **h**, **ch**, is a separate Spanish letter, with its own file in word lists and dictionaries. It is pronounced *ch* in English *change*, *check*, *chip*.  
chocolate, Chile, cha-cha-chá
- d** The letter **d** had two sounds. At the beginning of a word or after an **n** or **l**, it is somewhat like a **d** in English, but softer, with the tongue touching the upper front teeth.  
día, don, Diego, Miranda, Matilde  
In all other positions, it is similar to the *th* in the English word *then*.  
Felicidad, Eduardo, Ricardo, pared, estudiante
- g, j** The **g** before **i** or **e**, and the **j**, are both pronounced approximately like an English *h*.  
Jorge, Josefina, geología, Jalisco, ingeriería, region, página  
The **g** before **a**, **o** or **u** is pronounced approximately like the English *g* of *gate*.  
In the combinations **gue** and **gui** the **u** is not pronounced, and the **g** has the same sound as English *g*.  
amigo, amiga, gusto, Miguel, guitarra  
In the combinations **gua** and **guo**, the **u** is pronounced like a *w* in English.  
antiguo, Guatemala
- h** Spanish **h** is silent.  
La Habana, Honduras, Hernández, hotel, Hugo, habla (*speaks*)
- ll** The **ll** is a separate Spanish letter, with its own file in word lists and dictionaries.  
It's sound is much like that of *y* in English *yes*.  
llama, Vallejo, Sevilla, Murillo, silla
- ñ** The sound of **ñ** is roughly equivalent to the sound of *ny* in English *canyon*.  
señor, mañana, español
- q** A **q** is always followed in Spanish by a silent **u**; the **qu** combination represents the sound *k*.  
Quito, Enrique

**r** The letter **r** is used to represent two different sounds. At the beginning of a word or after **l**, **n**, or **s**, it has the same sound as **rr** (*see below*). Elsewhere, it represents an r-sound so soft that it is close to the **tt** in American English *kitty*, *Betty*.  
Patricia, Elvira, tortilla, Pilar, profesor, la carta (*letter*)

**rr** The letter sequence **rr**, while not a separate letter, and alphabetized in Spanish as in English, represents a special trilled sound, like a Scottish burr or a child imitating the sound of a motor. The same sound is represented by a single **r**, not **rr**, at the beginning of a word or after **l**, **n**, or **s**.  
arroz (*rice*), error, horror, horrible  
Rosa, Rita, Roberto, radio  
Enrique, Israel, alrededor (*around*)  
Listen to the difference between perro (*dog*) and pero (*but*).  
perro, pero      perro, pero

**x** The letter **x** represents several different sounds in Spanish. Before a consonant, it is pronounced like an English **s**.  
externo, texto  
Before a vowel it is like a **gs**.  
examen, existencia  
In many words **x** used to have the sound of the Spanish **j**. In most of these words the spelling has been changed, but a few words can still be spelled either way (with **x** or **j**): México (Méjico), Quixote (Quijote).

Don't forget that **ch** and **ll** are separate Spanish letters. When you are searching in a dictionary or vocabulary list for a word beginning with either letter, remember that they follow **c** and **l**, respectively.

<u>c</u> lase	<u>l</u> ibro
<u>c</u> oco	<u>l</u> upe
<u>ch</u> ocolate	<u>ll</u> ama

The same principle of alphabetization holds when the letter occurs in the middle of a word.

le <u>c</u> ción	si <u>l</u> ogismo
le <u>c</u> tura	si <u>l</u> ueta
le <u>c</u> he	si <u>l</u> la

## EJERCICIOS

Lea en voz alta. In pairs, read the following words to each other.

- |            |           |              |             |              |
|------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. silla   | 5. Rita   | 9. alcohol   | 13. jota    | 17. guitarra |
| 2. Murillo | 6. radio  | 10. Honduras | 14. página  | 18. geología |
| 3. Sevilla | 7. Israel | 11. Josefina | 15. Enrique | 19. Eduardo  |
| 4. Rosa    | 8. hotel  | 12. región   | 16. Miguel  | 20. Diego    |



## LOS COGNADOS

Cognates are words that are similar in spelling and meaning in two languages. Spanish and English share a very large number.

**A** Sometimes the words are identical in two languages.

chocolate    final    capital    doctor    horrible    lunar

**B** Sometimes the words differ only in minor or easily predictable ways.

1. Except for **cc**, **rr**, **ll**, and **nn**, doubled consonants are never used in Spanish.

official    *official*    materia    *matter*    profesor    *professor*

2. No word in Spanish can begin with **s-** plus a consonant. English words that begin that way often have cognates beginning with **es-**.

especial    *special*    español    *Spanish*    estatua    *statue*  
esquí    *ski*    escándalo    *scandal*

3. The endings **-ción** and **-sión** in Spanish correspond to the English endings **-tion** or **-sion**.

constitución    nación    television

4. The Spanish ending **-dad** corresponds to the English ending **-ty**.

actividad    realidad    Universidad

5. The Spanish endings **-ente** and **-ante** generally correspond to the English endings **-ent** and **-ant**.

presidente    accidente    restaurant    importante

6. The Spanish ending **-mente** generally corresponds to the English ending **-ly**.

finalmente    rápidamente    prácticamente

**C** Sometimes words in the two languages are spelled alike but have come to mean something very different. Such pairs are called *false cognates*.

actualmente	<i>at the present time</i>	éxito	<i>success</i>
asistir	<i>to attend</i> (class, etc.)	librería	<i>bookstore</i>
attender	<i>to assist, attend to</i> (someone)	lectura	<i>reading</i>
aviso	<i>warning</i>	nota	<i>grade; musical note</i>
bravo	<i>wild, fierce</i>	suceso	<i>event, happening</i>

Despite the hazards posed by false cognates, the existence of so many cognates in Spanish and English is a great resource to the language learner. Look for cognates in every new sentence and text you encounter.



# Pronunciation & the Rules for Accent Marks

Have you noticed that English-speakers tend to change vowel sounds to produce an "accent"? For instance, in the South, a "Sprite" becomes a "Sprahte"; in New York a "soda" becomes a "soder", in Western Pennsylvania an "orange" becomes an "arnge".

In Spanish, the vowels remain constant and it is the consonants that vary: Castillian Spanish-speakers use the "theta" sound for Ci, Ce and Z - it sounds like the "th" in the word "tooth". So in Madrid, the word zapatos sounds like `thah-PAH-tos'.

In Argentina and Uruguay, y and ll sound like the "zh" in rouge and garage, instead of the "y" sound used everywhere else. We will be learning standard Latin American Spanish in this course. Just keep in mind that you will hear regional differences among Spanish speakers.

## Vowels

There are only five vowels in Spanish, and they are always pronounced in the same manner.

A	E	I	O	U
(ah as in "father")	(eh as in "egg")	(ee as in "police")	(o as in "vote")	(u as in "flute")

The **O** is always long **O** (as in the English word "vote"). The long **O** is often the hardest vowel to keep straight. To practice keeping your vowel sounds clear, listen in the audio exercises to how the speakers pronounce words, and imitate their pronunciation carefully. Remember, there are no silent vowels. Cine is a two-syllable word: CI-ne ("SEE-neh")

## The three rules of pronunciation covering accent marks and basic word stress:

**Rule #1: Words that end in S, N or a vowel are stressed on the next to last syllable.**

For example:

es-tu-di-AN-te	PE-rr-os	pro-fe-SO-ra	re-Pi-tan
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**Rule #2: Words that end in all other consonants (not S or N) are stressed on the last syllable.**

For example:

bo-rra-DOR	re-LOJ	pa-RED	es-pa-ÑOL
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**Rule #3: Words that do not obey the first two rules require an written accent mark on the stressed syllable.**

For example:

es-cri-BIÓ	po-li-CÍ-a	lec-CIÓN	LÁ-piz
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## Vowel Grouping

There are two ways to categorize types of vowels:

### Grouping 1: How vowels relate to other vowels

<i>Strong vowels</i>	<i>Weak vowels</i>
A, E, O	I, U

### Grouping 2: How vowels relate to consonants (this is covered on the Alphabet Page)

<i>Strong vowels</i>	<i>Weak vowels</i>
A, O, U	I, E

### We're going to focus on Grouping #1 -How vowels relate to other vowels

Pairing vowels together will affect how a vowel is pronounced:

Strong vowels each count as a separate syllable and are voiced equally (pronounced as a separate syllable):

vi-de-o	ta-re-a	al-mo-ha-da* *remember the "h" is silent!
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However, a weak and a strong vowel count as one vowel sound and glide together.

This single sound is called a "diphthong".

sue-gra	far-ma-cia	i-dio-ta	oi-ga	Mau-ri-cio
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In a diphthong the stronger vowel will carry the stress and be pronounced louder. The weak Spanish **u** takes on an English **w** sound while the weak Spanish **i** will take on an English **y** sound.

When two weak vowels make a diphthong the stress rests on the second of the two weak vowels.

cuidado	viuda
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Any variation in pronunciation from these rules requires a written accent:

- The Stress should be on the second Weak vowel but isn't: **flúido**
- The Stress should be on the Strong vowel but isn't: **leído** **baúl**

**Accents marks also determine meaning.**

Accent marks change word meanings as much as changing any other letter would. When you see a one-syllable word wearing an accent mark, you know that there is another identical word but without the accent mark that means something completely different:

<b>si</b> without an accent mark means "if"  vs.  <b>sí</b> with an accent mark which means "yes"	<b>el</b> without an accent mark means "the"  vs.  <b>él</b> with an accent mark which means "he"	<b>tu</b> without an accent mark means your  vs.  <b>tú</b> with an accent mark which means "you"
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**All Interrogatives (question words) have accent marks**