

Basic Spanish Language & Culture

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Basic Spanish Language and Culture is a text that provides a step-by-step introduction to the elementary concepts of Spanish Grammar and builds on this knowledge to create a fun learning environment for Writing/Reading and Listening/Speaking. It combines detailed analysis and review of the different tenses of Spanish in a Comparative approach with the structures of English. And, for the first time in resources of this type, it includes a fun and agile description of the phonetics of Spanish and several engaging and dynamic pronunciation exercises to go with it.

Each Unit will help the student acquire a working mastery of the main tenses involved in the production of correct Spanish sentences in both academic and informal settings. The content of the text invites to constant reinforcement of the knowledge acquired in the classroom, with ample opportunities to further develop the different elements that are dealt with during the synchronous and in-person sessions throughout the semester.

Bienvenido al mundo del Español! Welcome to the World of Spanish!

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PART I

CHAPTER 1: GENDER AND NUMBER OF ARTICLES, NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES OF SPANISH

Chapter Outline

- [1.1 The Basics](#)
- [1.2 Nouns: Gender and Number](#)
- [1.3 Possessive Adjectives](#)
- [1.4 Gender and Number of Definite and Indefinite Articles](#)
- [1.5 Gender and Number of the Nouns](#)
- [1.6 Gender and Number of Adjectives](#)
- [1.7 General Rules for the Formation of Gender and Number of Spanish Words](#)

1.1 - The Basics

What is a noun?

A **noun** is any word that is used to NAME a person, place, or thing.

In Spanish, nouns take BOTH gender and number when referring to the elements they name.

In the case of gender, nouns, do not denote male or female attributes. The gender that they assume is just a grammatical feature. So things, people and ideas can be masculine or feminine, singular or plural.

One of the most important elements to understand and effortlessly apply when reading, listening, or speaking Spanish is the Gender and number of not only the Articles, but also the Nouns and the Adjectives that are used to modify them.

Let's illustrate this concept for a better comprehension by applying the Spanish rule to this English Sentence:

The white horses are eating in the pasture

LOS caballos blancos están comiendo en el potrero

The horses white are eating in the pasture

The very first thing you notice is that in Spanish the ADJECTIVE precedes the NOUN, whereas in English it is the opposite. So “Caballos” comes first and the adjective “blancos” comes after that.

And, as stated earlier, you will notice that the article is expressed as the Plural Masculine LOS, the noun horse is expressed in the plural, and the adjective “blanco” is also expressed as the masculine plural “BLANCOS”.

Let's move forward and look at the following pages for further illustration.

1.2 Nouns: Gender and Number

Nouns: gender (género)

Nouns in Spanish are considered to have “gender” and are classified as being either “masculine” or “feminine”. It’s easy to think of a noun such as “boy” as being masculine and “aunt” as being feminine:

Masculine	Feminine
el chico <i>the boy</i>	la chica <i>the girl</i>
el tío <i>the uncle</i>	la tía <i>the aunt</i>

The initial pattern that we can see from the examples above is that nouns referring to people that end in an “o” are masculine and nouns referring to people than end in an “a” are feminine.

Nouns referring to people that don’t end in an “o” or “a” will be masculine if they are males and feminine if they are females:

Masculine	Feminine
el hombre <i>the man</i>	la mujer <i>the woman</i>
el padre <i>the father</i>	la madre <i>the mother</i>

However, what might seem strange is to think of nouns such as “book” as being masculine and “window” as being feminine:

Masculine	Feminine
el libro <i>the book</i>	la ventana <i>the window</i>
el cuaderno <i>the notebook</i>	la mesa <i>the table</i>

Words such as “gender: masculine / feminine” are simply grammar terms that allow us to talk about how a language works. In fact, there is nothing inherently masculine about a book, nor anything inherently feminine about a table. Yet, nouns such as “libro / cuaderno” do end in an “o” just like “chico / tío”, which are masculine. Likewise, nouns such as “ventana / mesa” end in an “a” just like “chica / tía” which are feminine.

Therefore, the general rule is that most nouns that end in “o” are masculine, and most nouns that end in “a” are feminine—whether they refer to people or things. Words such as “gender: masculine / feminine” are simply grammar terms that allow us to talk about how a language works. In fact, there is nothing inherently masculine about a book, nor anything inherently feminine about a table. Yet, nouns such as “libro / cuaderno” do end in an “o” just like “chico / tío”, which are masculine. Likewise, nouns such as “ventana / mesa” end in an “a” just like “chica / tía” which are feminine.

There are other patterns to noun endings that will tell us if the noun is masculine or feminine:

Masculine

ends in **-o** el libro *the book*

ends in **-or** el doctor *the doctor*

Feminine

ends in **-a** la casa *the house*

ends in **-ora** la doctora *the doctor*

ends in **-ción, -dad, or -tad** la canción, la universidad, la libertad *the song, the university, the freedom*

When talking about grammar, rules help us understand how the language works; but there always seem to be exceptions to the rule:

1. Words ending in “-ista” can be either masculine or feminine:

-ista	males	-ista	females
el artista	<i>the artist</i>	la artista	<i>the artist</i>
el dentista	<i>the dentist</i>	la dentista	<i>the dentist</i>
el turista	<i>the tourist</i>	la turista	<i>the tourist</i>

2. A number of words of Greek origin ending in “-ma” are masculine:

el clima	<i>the climate, weather</i>
el idioma	<i>the language</i>
el problema	<i>the problem</i>
el programa	<i>the program</i>
el sistema	<i>the system</i>

3. Other words are irregular because they are opposite of the “ends in o/a rule”:

el día	<i>the day</i>	la mano	<i>the hand</i>
el mapa	<i>the map</i>	la radio	<i>the radio</i>
el planeta	<i>the planet</i>		

Nouns: number (número)

To make nouns plural, add -s to those ending in a vowel and -es if they end in a consonant. For nouns ending in a -z, change the -z to -c and then add -es.

Noun	Singular	Plural
ends in vowel	el libro	los libros
ends in vowel	el día	los días
ends in a consonant	la mujer	las mujeres
ends in a -z	la luz	las luces

When a plural noun refers to both genders then the masculine form is used:

Noun	Noun
el chico	<i>the boy</i>
la chica	<i>the girl</i>
los chicos	<i>the boys OR the boys and girls</i>

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1.3 Possessive Adjectives

In Brief: The use of these adjectives is similar between English and Spanish, with the exception that Spanish has plural forms, but English doesn't.

Possessive Adjectives

Singular	Plural	In English
mi	mis	my
tu	tus	your (fam.)
su	sus	his
su	sus	her
su	sus	your (formal)
su	sus	its
su	sus	their
nuestro(a)	nuestros(as)	our
vuestro(a)	vuestros(as)	your (fam; Spain)

Possessive adjectives appear immediately before a noun and they agree in number with the noun. If the noun that follows is singular, use the singular form of the possessive adjective. If the noun is plural, then a plural possessive adjective must be used.

Singular and Plural Possessive Adjectives

Singular	In English	Plural	In English
mi libro	my book	mis libros	my books
tu clase	your class	tus clases	your classes
su amigo	her friend	sus amigos	her friends

The “nuestro” and “vuestro” forms will agree with the noun that follows in both number (sg / pl) and gender (m / f). It doesn't matter who is speaking, or to whom one is speaking; what controls the use of the masculine and feminine forms is whether the noun itself is masculine or feminine.

Nuestro and Vuestro Agreement

Singular	In English	Plural	In English	Nouns
nuestro o libro	our book	nuestro s libros	our books	libro=m
nuestra a clase	our class	nuestra s clases	our classes	clase=f
vuestro o libro	your book	vuestro s libros	your books	libro=m
vuestra a clase	your class	vuestra s clases	your classes	clase=f



OJO: “vuestro” (your) and its variances are used in Spain only. In the Spanish of the Americas, “su/sus” (your) is used.

“Su” and “sus” have multiple meanings

Singular	Plural	Possible meanings
		his
		her
su	sus	your (formal)
		its
		their

When the context is clear there generally isn’t any ambiguity. For example, if we have been talking about my friend Lorena’s class schedule and I say “*her* English class is at nine”, I could simply say “*su* clase de inglés es a las nueve” and there wouldn’t be any confusion—you would know that “*su*” refers to Lorena. But without any real context the same phrase “*su* clase de inglés es a las nueve” could have several meanings: “his-her-your (formal)-their...class”. If you want to avoid possible confusion, use the following structure:

To clarify ambiguity of “su/sus”:

article: the + noun + of + pronoun

el, la, los, las + X + de + él, la, Ud., ellos, ellas, Uds.

Clarifying “su/sus” examples:

If context is clear: To avoid any ambiguity: English meaning is the same for both:

su libro	el libro de ella	her book
sus libros	los libros de ella	her books
su profesor	el profesor de Ud.	your professor
sus profesores	los profesores de Ud.	your professors
su clase	la clase de ellos	their class
sus clases	las clases de ellos	their classes



OJO: In English, we use an apostrophe 's' to show possession (John's class), but apostrophes do not exist in Spanish. Spanish does the following instead:
Equivalent of 's

article: the + noun + of + person

la + clase + de + John = John's class

More examples:

Los estudiantes de la profesora *The professor's students*

Las clases de Susana *Susana's classes*

El libro de mi amigo *My friend's book*

A final note: when talking directly to one person and addressing him or her in the Ud. form, you could use "su/sus" to express "your". But notice that the same forms in Spanish are used if you want to express 'your' and are addressing a group of people. Again, the singular/plural agreement occurs between "su" and the noun that follows it:

"Su" and "sus" meaning "your" examples:

su clase **your** class talking to 1 person - Ud.

sus clases **your** classes talking to 1 person - Ud.

su clase **your** class talking to a group - Uds. (the group has just 1 class)

sus clases **your** classes talking to a group - Uds. (the group has 2 or more)

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1.4 Gender and Number of Definite and Indefinite Articles

Género y número de los artículos

The English language has **two** kinds of articles.

Definite Article **Indefinite Article (any)**

The Spanish book. **A** book. **An** apple.

The Spanish language has the **two** articles as well, but they are characterized by:

- gender
- number

Both articles, **definite** or **indefinite**, must agree with the noun.

el libro verde.

El is the definite article, **libro** is the noun, **verde** is very specific.

⚠ Notice that all three are masculine/singular.

un libro.

Un is the indefinite article, **libro** is the noun.

⚠ Notice that both are masculine/singular.

los libros verdes.

Los is the definite article, **libros** is the noun, **verdes** is very specific.

⚠ Notice that all three are masculine/plural.

	Gender Singular	Gender Pural
The <i>Definite</i>	el/la (the)	los/las
The <i>Indefinite</i>	un/una (a, an)	unos, unas

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1.5 Gender and Number of the Nouns

Género y número de los sustantivos (nombres)

Noun

A **noun** is a person, place, or thing.

In Spanish, nouns are characterized by gender and number; in the case of gender, nouns, are NOT perceived by Spanish speakers as having male or female attributes; it is just a grammatical feature, masculine or feminine, singular or plural.

Los sustantivos singulares Singular Nouns

Masculino Masculine

- **MOST** nouns that end in **-o** are **masculine**

el curso	course	el laboratorio	laboratory	el estadio	stadium	el horario	schedule
el amigo	friend	el maestro	teacher	el baño	bathroom	el libro	book
el teléfono	telephone	el teatro	theatre	el gimnasio	gym	el escritorio	desk

- Exceptions of **SOME nouns that do not follow this common rule**: many nouns that do not end in **-o** but are **masculine**

el arte	art	el semestre	semester	el trimestre	trimester	el español	Spanish
el reloj	clock	el papel	paper	el lápiz	pencil	el examen	test/exam
el café	coffee	el autobús	bus	el hospital	hospital	el hombre	man

- Some nouns that end in **-a** or **-ma** that are **masculine**

el día	day	el idioma	language	el mapa	map	el planeta	planet
el drama	drama	el poema	poem	el problema	problem	el sistema	system
el programa	program						

Femenino Feminine

- **MOST** nouns that end in **-a** are **feminine**

la biblioteca *library* la cafetería *cafeteria* la librería *bookstore* la prueba *quiz*
la tarea *homework* la geografía *geography* la biología *biology* la música *music*
la física *physics* la pluma *pen* la silla *chair* la mesa *table*

- Exceptions of **SOME nouns that do not follow this common rule**: many nouns that do not end in **-a** but are **feminine**

la clase *class* la mujer *woman* la luz *light* la noche *night*
la mano *hand* la suerte *luck* la radio *radio* la piel *skin*

- Some nouns that end in **-ción, -sión, -dad, -tud** or **-tad** that are **feminine**

la lección *lesson* la conversación *conversation* la universidad *university*
la verdad *truth* la actitud *attitude* la amistad *friendship*

To make a noun plural

la clase	las clases
una clase	unas clases
la lección	las lecciones
una lección	unas lecciones
el problema	los problemas
un problema	unos problemas
la luz	las luces
una luz	las luces
la noche	las noches
una noche	unas noches
el hospital	los hospitales
un hospital	unos hospitales

- add -s if it ends in a **vowel**
- add -es if it ends in a **consonant**
- If it ends in **-z** eliminate the **-z** and add **-ces**



Remember:

The article must agree with the noun in number as well



Practícalo...

1. Definite articles
2. Indefinite articles
3. Singular to plural



Additional Practice

1. Write 8 masculine nouns that end in -o.
2. Write 8 feminine nouns that end in -a.
3. List 6 things you commonly see in a **classroom**.
4. List 6 things you commonly have in your **mochila** (backpack).

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1.6 Gender and Number of Adjectives

Género y número de los adjetivos

Adjectives

An adjective describes a noun.

A Spanish adjective agrees in gender and number with the noun it modifies, and ALMOST always follows the noun it describes.

Los colores *Colors*

negro/a
black

blanco/a
white

rojo/a
red

rosado/a
pink

morado/a
purple

amarillo/a
yellow

anaranjado/a
orange

Gender Neutrals

azul
blue

verde
green

marrón
brown

gris
grey

Checklist

1. Sentence Order
2. Gender
3. Number

Example: El libro negro

1. Sentence order: article noun adjective
2. Gender: masculine
3. Number: singular

- **Adjectives** that do not end in **-o** have the same form for describing both, masculine and feminine nouns.

El taco **excelente** La comida **excelente**

El poema **interesante** La clase **interesante**

El carro **gris** La mochila **gris**

El libro **verde** La mesa **verde**

- Gender specific **adjectives** to describe things, yourself and others.

barato o/a	<i>inexpensive</i>	pequeño o/a	<i>small</i>	feo a	<i>ugly</i>	rico a	<i>rich</i>
caro a	<i>expensive</i>	fantástico o/a	<i>fantastic</i>	viejo o/a	<i>old</i>	gordo o/a	<i>fat</i>
estupendo o/a	<i>terrific</i>	sincero o/a	<i>sincere</i>	simpático o/a	<i>nice</i>	tacaño o/a	<i>stingy</i>
delgado o/a	<i>thin</i>	guapo o/a	<i>handsome/beautiful</i>	hermoso o/a	<i>beautiful</i>		

Examples:

La casa maravillosa

El libro maravilloso

La chica estupenda

El chico estupendo

La mochila amarilla es hermosa **El carro** rojo es hermoso

- Other Adjectives

agradable	<i>pleasant</i>	alegre	<i>happy</i>	triste	<i>sad</i>	debil	<i>weak</i>
fuerte	<i>strong</i>	frágil	<i>fragile</i>	grande	<i>big</i>	horrible	<i>horrible</i>
joven	<i>young</i>	pobre	<i>poor</i>	difícil	<i>difficult</i>	inteligente	<i>intelligent</i>

Examples:

La chica **agradable** El chico **agradable**

La mujer **joven** El hombre **joven**



Escríbelo

Los adjetivos y el verbo *Ser* *Adjectives and the verb SER*

Ser (to be)

Yo	soy
Tú	eres
Usted, él, ella	es
Nosotros	somos
Ustedes, ellos(as)	son

The verb *ser* (to be), in Spanish is used with **adjectives** that describe **basic, characteristics or inherent qualities** of the noun they modify.

Examples:

- Soy alta. I am tall.

- **Eres** inteligente. **You** are smart.
- El perro **es** grande. The dog **is** big.



Escríbelo



Additional Practice

To describe yourself, choose five adjectives from below and form five sentences. Don't forget gender.

- alto
- rico
- simpático
- inteligente
- listo
- feo
- sincero
- estudioso
- joven
- viejo

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1.7 General Rules for the Formation of Gender and Number of Spanish Words

1. Nouns referring to males and/or ending in **-o** are **masculine**:

el hombre, el amante, el teléfono

2. Referring to females and/or ending in **-a, -ción, -sión, -tad, -dad, -tud** are **feminine**:

la mujer, la amante, la risa, la nación, la tensión, la libertad, la ciudad, la actitud

3. Different endings can be of either gender:

la clase, la parte, la paz, el lápiz, el reloj, el golpe, el café, el cristal, el avión

4. To refer to females, many nouns change the last vowel or add **-a** to the last consonant:

el compañero, la compañera, un profesor, la profesora

5. Many nouns, particularly those ending in **-ista**, have the same form and differ only by the article:

el / la estudiante, el / la indígena, el / la artista, deportista, turista, etc.

6. **mano, foto(grafía), and moto(cicleta)** are **feminine**:

la mano, la foto, la moto

7. **día, mapa, sofá** and **planeta** are **masculine**:

el día, el mapa, el sofá, el planeta

8. Many nouns ending in **-ma** (most of Greek origin) are **masculine**:

el programa, el problema, el sistema, el idioma, el clima, el poema, el tema, el dilema

(BUT: **la cama, la llama**, and other non-Greek words ending in **-ma** are feminine)

9. The names of days, colors, languages and cardinal points are **masculine**:

el lunes, el azul, el francés, el norte

10. Compound nouns, formed by combining a verb and a noun, are also **masculine**:

el salvavidas (life saver), **un paracaídas** (parachute), **los limpiaparabrisas** (windshield wiper), **el abrelatas** (can opener), etc.

Certain Gender Peculiarities/*Ciertos Aspectos Peculiares Del Género*

1. Feminine nouns that begin with stressed **a** or **ha** use a masculine article in the singular only, such as: **el hambre, el agua, el águila, el arma, el área, el alma, el hacha**, etc.

But they remain feminine in every respect: **el agua but el agua limpia – el águila but las águilas**

2. The meaning of some nouns changes according to their gender:

<i>el capital</i> (money)	<i>la capital</i> (city)
<i>el cuento</i> (short story)	<i>la cuenta</i> (check, bill)
<i>el mañana</i> (future)	<i>la mañana</i> (morning)
<i>el orden</i> (order, organization)	vs <i>la orden</i> (command)
<i>el policía</i> (policeman)	<i>la policía</i> (police force or policewoman)
<i>el Papa</i> (the Pope)	<i>la papa</i> (potato)

Formation of the Plural

1. Ending in vowel, add **-s**:

la mano, *el problema* → *las manos*, *los problemas*

2. Ending in a consonant or an accented vowel, add **-es**:

el papel, *la red*, *el rubí*, *la imagen* → *los papeles*, *las redes*, *los rubíes*, *las imágenes*,

3. Ending in an unstressed vowel +s, no change:

el lunes, *la crisis* → *los lunes*, *las crisis*

but stressed vowel +s, add **-es**:

el interés → *los intereses*

4. Ending in **-z** → **-ces**:

el lápiz, *la vez* → *los lápices*, *las veces*

Following the written accent rules, some words will lose or gain an accent in the plural:

reacción → *reacciones* *examen* → *exámenes*

alemán → *alemanes* *imagen* → *imágenes*

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PART II

CHAPTER 2: THE TWO SPANISH FORMS OF "TO BE" - THE VERBS "SER" AND "ESTAR"

Chapter Outline

- [2.1 The Basics](#)
- [2.2 The General Rules for the Conjugation of the Spanish Verbs Ser and Estar](#)
- [2.3 Uses of Ser and Estar](#)
- [2.4 The Verb SER: to be](#)
- [2.5 The verb ESTAR: "to be"](#)
- [2.6 Ser and Estar Practice](#)
- [2.7 The Present Tenses of Spanish](#)

2.1 The Basics

What is a verb?

A **verb** is a word that shows ACTION, OCCURRENCE, or STATE of Being (Existence).

An important foundation to better understand Spanish Verbs is that while in English and German VERBS are classified as **Regular** and **Irregular**, in the Romance Languages that derive most directly from Latin, (including Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French) verbs are classified into **groups by their infinitive endings. (In Spanish: AR – ER – IR)**

The Verb ‘to Be’ is one of the most irregular. It is also the most used as a vehicle for the conjugation of other forms, like the progressive. (To be+Ving)

Example:

She **is playing** Ella **está jugando**

They **are sleeping** Ellos **están durmiendo**

2.2 The General Rules for the Conjugation of the Spanish Verbs Ser and Estar



[Ser o no ser esa es la pregunta](#) by [romanok agreda](#). Licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic](#)

Summary: While in English we have one verb form, 'TO BE' – to assert existence, identification, location, time or action, in Spanish there are TWO VERBS to express these functions.

In this section, you will learn:

- The conjugation and uses of the verb ESTAR (to be)
- The prepositions of locations
- Differences between SER and ESTAR

Overview

Spanish has two verbs for *To be*: **SER** and **ESTAR**.

So, what's the difference?

Ser vs Estar

Estar

Estar has two main uses: **location** and **conditions**

You need estar for anything related to *location*.

Location Examples:

Ser

The verb Ser is used for **identification**.

Anything that identifies a person or an object needs the verb SER.

Identification Examples:

- Nosotros estamos en Boston
- el libro está en la mesa

Conditions are situations subjected to change, that is to say, they are temporary. (to be sick, dirty, tired, etc.)

Condition Examples:

- Yo estoy enfermo (I'm sick)
- Nosotros estamos enojados (angry)
- La pizarra esta sucia (dirty)



Notice that *estar* is irregular in the first person: Yo est-**oy**.

The rest is regular

- Yo soy Marcos,
- Ella es protestante,
- Nosotros somos inteligentes, altos, simpáticos

An additional use of *SER* includes **telling time**.

Time Example:

- Son las dos de la tarde

Prepositions of location:

All the prepositions go **before a noun**:

Example: La puerta está **cerca de** la pizarra

(The door is near the blackboard)

La mesa está **lejos de** la ventana (window)

El profesor está **en frente de** los estudiantes



Notice that almost all the prepositions need **DE** (of), except: entre, sobre, en, con.

After prepositions, the subject pronouns yo, tú become **Mí** and **Tí**, for instance:

La casa está delante **de mí** (the house is in front of me)

Marta está detrás **de ti** (Marta is behind you)

“[Verbs Ser/Estar \(To be\)](#)” by Roger Celis in [Spanish 101](#) by Lumen Learning is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

2.3 Uses of Ser and Estar

SER, from the Latin *essere* associated with the word *essence*, is used:

- To identify or define a subject (to say what something is):
*El hermano **es ingeniero**. **Es a ella** a quien busco. **Esto es** un problema.
Este poema **es para** mi abuelo. El programa **es sobre** arte.*
 - With '**de**' to denote origin, material, or ownership:
***Es de** madera. **Es de** Panamá. **Es de** Juan. **Son de** la clase alta.*
 - Only with adjectives that denote essential or defining qualities (including *pobre, rico, joven, viejo*):
*Nueva York **es grande**. Voy a **ser rico**.*
 - In expressions of time, dates, and for quantities:
***Son las** tres y media. Hoy **es** jueves **dos de** marzo. **Son treinta** dólares.*
 - In impersonal expressions:
***Es posible** saber eso. **Es importante** cuidar la salud.*
-

ESTAR, from the Latin *stare* associated with the words *state* and *station*, is used:

- To express location [*ubicación*] (to say *where* something is):
*El profesor no **está aquí**. El problema **está en** su actitud. Panamá **está al sur** de Centroamérica.
BUT: Use '**ser**' to describe where an event is taking place: *El concierto **es** aquí.**
 - With some adjectives and all adverbs, to describe states and conditions or a change in a characteristic:
***Está bien**. **Están tristes** porque el perro **está muerto**.
Estamos interesados en el tema. El país **está en una situación** difícil.
El rojo **está de moda** (in fashion). Las ventanas **están cerradas**.*
 - With a present participle¹ to express a continuing action:
***Estamos viajando**. **Van a estar durmiendo**.*
-

1. the present participle in English (-ing form of a verb) is the equivalent of the -ndo form, called **gerundio** in Spanish.

Some adjectives have different meanings when used with the two verbs:

<i>estar listo/a</i>	to be ready (state)	<i>¿Estás lista, María?</i>
<i>ser listo/o</i>	to be bright (defining quality)	<i>María es muy lista.</i>
<i>estar aburrido</i>	to be bored (state)	<i>Estoy aburrido con esta novela.</i>
<i>ser aburrido</i>	to be boring (defining quality)	<i>Esta novela es muy aburrida.</i>



Additional Practice

Additional information and practice is available on the website: [Spanish Grammar](#)

“[Uses of ser and estar](#)” in [Spanish 101](#) by Roger Celis is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

2.4 The Verb SER: to be

At a minimum, sentences consist of subjects (a person, place, or thing) and verbs (actions). When the verb is in its base or unchanged form, it is called the “infinitive”: to be, to run, to jump. In sentences, infinitives undergo changes.

In English, we don’t say:

*I **to be** tall or *They **to be** nice (* = non-standard).

When we make sentences with verbs, the verb changes, or is conjugated, so that the subject and verb match. In fact, what we do say is:

I **am** tall or They **are** nice

The verb “to be” is conjugated (changed) so that it matches with the subjects “I” and “they”.

Likewise, the infinitives of verbs in Spanish are conjugated when we make full sentences. The infinitive “to be” is “Ser” and it is conjugated, or changed when forming sentences:

(yo) soy	I am	(nosotros) somos	We are
(tú) eres	You are (sg, fam)	(vosotros) sois	You are (pl, Spain)
(él) es	He is	(ellos) son	They are
(ella) es	She is	(ellas) son	They are (fem)
Ud. es	You are (sg, form)	(Uds.) son	You are (pl, L.Am)

In the chart above, the subject pronouns (**yo, tú, él, ella, Ud., nosotros, vosotros, ellos, ellas, Uds.**) are in parentheses. This is to introduce the idea that subject pronouns are not necessary when conjugating verbs in Spanish. For example:

Yo	I	Tú	you
Yo soy	I am	Tú eres	you are
Soy	I am	Eres	you are

Both “**yo soy**” and just “**soy**” mean “**I am**”, and both “**tú eres**” and just “**eres**” mean “you are”. We will return to this idea when we get to more verb conjugations.

Examples with the verb SER conjugated:

Soy alto. *I am tall.*
Originalmente, soy de Oregon. *Originally, I'm from Oregon.*

We could also use the subject pronoun “**yo**” (I) and say:

Yo soy alto. *I am tall.*
Originalmente **yo** soy de Oregon. *Originally, I'm from Oregon.*
Él es mi amigo. *He's my friend.*



OJO (notice): to make a sentence negative, put “no” in front of the verb.

Ella **no** es mi novia. *She is **not** my girlfriend.*
Somos de los Estados Unidos. *We're from the United States.*
Vosotras sois muy intelegentes. *You (plural / fem) are very intelligent.*
(vosotros/as = used in Spain)
Son estudiantes. *They are students.*

Let's take a look at the last example: “**son**” is actually ambiguous by itself. Given a context, the statement “**son estudiantes**” might be the answer given to someone who asked “Who are they?”, pointing to a group of students. But “**son estudiantes**” could also mean “you guys are students”. If the context is not clear, the subject pronouns (**ellos, ellas, Uds.**) should be added to clarify:

Ellos son estudiantes. *They are students.*
Ellas son estudiantes. *They are students.*
(all female)
Uds. son estudiantes *You guys are students.*

Once the subject pronouns are used, there is no ambiguity.

“[The verb SER: to be](#)” in [First Year Spanish 1](#) by Paul Eckhardt is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

2.5 The verb ESTAR: "to be"

Several verbs in Spanish can take on the meaning of “**to be**”; we already looked at the verb “**ser**” and its conjugation pattern. We used “**ser**” to express where we are from and to identify our professions or status as students. The other primary verb in Spanish that means “**to be**” is the verb “**estar**”.

These two verbs—“**ser**” and “**estar**”—are not interchangeable in Spanish. There are several uses of the verb “**estar**”:

- to express how people are doing—their health and feelings (Mary is sad)
- to talk about the location of people, places and things (John is at home)
- to describe the condition of something (The plate is broken)
- to express “in the moment” actions—the progressive tense—or the -ing form of verbs (I am talking, she is working)

Notice that “**estar**” is an **-ar** ending verb, but it is slightly different in the “**yo**” form because of the **-oy** ending. Also, all conjugations except the “**yo**” and “**nosotros**” forms have a written accent over the letter “a”. In time, you will learn more about the rules of written accented vowels in Spanish.

Estar: to be

ESTAR	to be (singular)	ESTAR	to be (plural)
(yo) estoy	<i>I am</i>	(nosotros) estamos	<i>We are</i>
(tú) estás	<i>You are (familiar)</i>	(vosotros) estáis	<i>You are (Spain)</i>
(él) está	<i>He is</i>	(ellos) están	<i>They are</i>
(ella) está	<i>She is</i>	(ellas) están	<i>They are (fem)</i>
Ud. está	<i>You are (formal)</i>	(Uds.) están	<i>You are (L.Am)</i>

Two common uses of the verb “**estar**”:

In time we will look at all the uses of the verb “**estar**”; but let’s begin with two:

1. To express health and feelings:

Estoy enfermo. (male speaker)	<i>I'm sick.</i>
Ellos no están contentos	<i>They are not happy.</i>
María está triste.	<i>María is sad.</i>
¿Estás bien?	<i>Are you OK?</i>

2. To express location:

¿Dónde está el baño?	<i>Where is the bathroom?</i>
Juan no está.	<i>Juan isn't here.</i>
Estoy a la derecha de Ud.	<i>I am to the right of you.</i>
Estamos lejos de la ciudad.	<i>We are far from the city.</i>

Health and Feelings Vocabulary (Adjectives)

aburrido/a	<i>bored</i>	enojado/a	<i>mad; angry</i>
avergonzado/a	<i>embarrassed</i>	feliz	<i>happy</i>
cansado/a	<i>tired</i>	ocupado/a	<i>busy</i>
contento/a	<i>happy</i>	preocupado/a (por)	<i>worried</i>
enamorado/a (de)	<i>in love</i>	triste	<i>sad</i>

Location Vocabulary (Prepositions)

a la derecha (de)	<i>to the right of</i>	cerca (de)	<i>near</i>
a la izquierda (de)	<i>to the left of</i>	con	<i>with</i>
al lado (de)	<i>next to</i>	en	<i>in; on; at</i>
allí, allá	<i>there, over there</i>	encima (de)	<i>on top of</i>
aquí	<i>here</i>	entre	<i>between</i>
debajo (de)	<i>under(neath)</i>	lejos (de)	<i>far from</i>
delante (de) / enfrente (de)	<i>in front of</i>	sin	<i>without</i>
detrás (de)	<i>behind</i>	sobre	<i>on; over</i>



OJO: Notice that many prepositions have the word “**de**” after them: “**a la derecha de**” / “**cerca de**”. Prepositions with “**de**” after them can be used both with and without the “**de**”. The idea

is that **de** is needed if you continue to express something after it. Compare these similar sentences:

Los libros están debajo de la mesa. *The books are under the table.*

Los libros están debajo. *The books are underneath.*

In the first sentence above, **la mesa** is mentioned so we need to use **debajo de**. But in the second, there is no mention of what the books are under, so the **de** isn't used. And in the sentences below, **a la derecha de** is used because we mention the other object, **la mesa**. But in the last sentence, we don't say what **la silla** is to the right of, and so **de** is left of.

La silla está a la derecha de la mesa. *The chair is to the right of the table.*

La silla está a la derecha. *The chair is to the right.*

[“The verb ESTAR: “to be””](#) in [First Year Spanish 1](#) by Paul Eckhardt is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

2.6 Ser and Estar Practice



Let's Practice!

Activity 1: Conjugation of “**ser**”

Activity 2: Identifying concepts

Activity 3: Using the appropriate form of “**ser**”

Activity 4: Conjugation of “**estar**”

Activity 5: Identifying concepts

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2.7 The Present Tenses of Spanish

This will be good news for you as a student because it introduces a simplification. There are only two forms of the present in Spanish, *The Simple present tense* and *The Progressive present tense*.

It is important to notice here that another simplification of Spanish is, given the more complex declension (changing of the form to express a syntactic function) of Spanish verbs, the pronouns at the beginning of sentences are often times unnecessary and, therefore, omitted.

Examples:

Yo Juego	Juego Fútbol	<i>I play football.</i>
Ellos comen	Comen a las 6 de la tarde	<i>They eat at 6:00p.m.</i>
Nosotros trabajamos	Trabajamos de 9 a 5	<i>We work from 9 to 5.</i>

In short, the simple present form **Camino** may be translated as *I walk*.

As well as in English, the simple present is used to indicate an action that happens in the present, an action that is habitual, repetitive, customary, or facts and unchanging, scheduled or programmed occurrence (example: The concert STARTS at 5. Doors Open at 3.) or an expected behaviour. (Students leave cellphones in their backpacks during tests). Also undeniable Facts. (Water is expressed as H₂O) (Water boils at sea level at 100 degrees Celsius)

The *present PROGRESSIVE* is used in Spanish when speaking about a present, on-going action at the moment the speaker is referring to it and will involve the use of the verb **ESTAR** as an auxiliary, followed by the action verb of the sentence in the **GERUND** form.



Here is a useful tip: the *-ING* form of the English gerund is found in SPANISH in the suffixes **-ANDO** and **IENDO**.

Examples:

Jugando Hablando Corriendo Abriendo

Yo estoy jugando OR Estoy jugando	<i>I am playing.</i>
Ellos están corriendo OR Están corriendo	<i>They are running.</i>

PART III

CHAPTER 3 - THE TWO SPANISH FORMS OF "TO HAVE" - THE VERBS "TENER" AND "HABER"

Chapter Outline

[3.1 The Basics](#)

3.1 The Basics

For the purpose of this chapter, let's begin with an initial comparison between the structures of English and Spanish. The idea behind Perfect Compound Tenses is that these express two basic ideas in ONE sole structure:

- 1st – the time of the action or state being referred to and
- 2nd – the fact that such action or state is completed at the time it is being referred to.

Actually, there is nothing “perfect” about the structure. It was called perfect from the Latin “perfectus” which, in its original sense, meant “completed”. Expressed differently, if something is concluded or “perfected”, it needs no further work or attention. I like to say that if you see an auxiliary “have” in front (to the left) of a Verb, two things happen: First, the verb AUTOMATICALLY takes on its Past Participle form, and second, the meaning of that “have” is the equivalent of saying “before now”.

Example:

John **has** play**ED** chess. = John played chess *before now*.

Of course, this clause can be further developed:

John **has played chess** *all his life*.

So, now, let's turn our attention to the Spanish Compound Tenses, where the very first striking difference we find is the existence of TWO VERBS in Spanish (Haber/Tener) for the single English (Main Verb and Auxiliary) -HAVE.

First the conjugations:

Pronoun	Tener (the verb)	Haber (the auxiliary)
Yo (I)	Tengo	He
Tu (you-informal)	Tienes	Has
Usted (you-formal)	Tiene	Ha
El, ella (he, she)	Tiene	Ha
Nosotros (we)	Tenemos	Hemos
Ustedes (you)	Tienen	Han
Ellos, Ellas (they)	Tienen	Han

Then, the typical structures of the compound or PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

(Personal pronoun can be Omitted)	CaminAR	MordER	SalIR
Yo	HE caminado	HE mordido	HE salido
Tu	HAS caminado	HAS mordido	HAS salido
Usted	HA caminado	HA mordido	HA salido
El/Ella	HA caminado	HA mordido	HA salido
Nosotros	HEMOS caminado	HEMOS mordido	HEMOS salido
Ustedes	HAN caminado	HAN mordido	HAN salido
Ellos/Ellas	HAN caminado	HAN mordido	HAN salido

Can the verb **Haber** be the auxiliary of the verb **Tener**, just like in English the main verb 'Have' can be preceded by the modal form have?

Here is a fast, easy, graphic answer:

I have had	(Yo) he tenido
You have had - informal	(Tu) has tenido
You have had - formal	(usted) ha tenido
He/she/it has had	(el)(ella)(aquel)(aquella) ha tenido
We have had	(Nosotros) hemos tenido
You have had	(Ustedes) han tenido
They have had	(Ellos/Ellas) han tenido

Some key observations:

The suppression of the pronoun in these sentences is typical of the Spanish, where incessant repetition of the Subject is not necessary, because the form taken by the verb is indicative of the Pronoun expressed.

Look at the following sentences that confirm this:

1. He viajado muchas veces a Venezuela.
2. Hemos bebido mucho café.
3. Han encontrado muchas cartas de Beethoven.
4. Tomaron muchas fotos de Niagara Falls.
5. Llevaron dos docenas de sandwiches.
6. He trabajado mucho este mes.
7. Ha aprendido a cocinar pescado.
8. Ha perdido mucho dinero en ese negocio.

Pronouns: 1. **Yo** 2. **Nosotros** 3. **Ellos/ellas** 4. **Ellos/ellas** 5. **Ellos/ellas** 6. **Yo** 7. **El/ella** 8. **El/ella**

What uses does this Present Perfect have in Spanish?

The short answer is that we use it the same as we would in English, when we refer to an action that took place at a moment in the past that is not specified or at a period of time that is still going on (and that somehow has influence on the present).

Examples:

I have learned how to play the guitar. – He aprendido a tocar la guitarra.

(It is not known exactly when I learned, but it is still something I can do)

They have finished their work for today. – Han terminado su trabajo por hoy.

(They concluded their work and continue to have finished their tasks.)

Your professor will provide you with abundant exercises to practice your Spanish Present, past, future and conditional tenses, using these indications.

PART IV

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING SPANISH SUFFIXES

Chapter Outline

- [4.1 Recognizing Spanish Suffixes](#)
- [4.2 A Short History of Spanish](#)
- [4.3 Recognizing Spanish Prefixes](#)

4.1 Recognizing Spanish Suffixes

In the chapter dedicated to forms of verbs we covered three important suffix forms of Spanish that are the equivalent in English of our infinitive forming prefix TO.

Thus,

TO play becomes JUG**AR**

TO run becomes CORR**ER** and

TO sleep becomes DORM**IR**

In this chapter, we will turn our attention to other forms of Spanish that will provide us with a greater vocabulary, and a greater understanding of the language as a result of the awareness of the **meanings** of its **prefixes, roots, and suffixes**.

Now, Suffixes are lexical units (parts of a word) that are attached to the **end** of a word to form a **new** word with a **different** meaning. Most suffixes in the different languages allow the creation of nouns and adjectives from verbs or other parts of speech.

A few examples of the most frequently found **suffixes that change Verbs into Nouns** (the Name of the action rather than the action itself) are the following:

Suffix	Use	Example
-ción	All verbs ending in AR-ER-IR	Grabar - Grabación
-dicción	Verbs ending -decir	Contradecir - Contradicción
-ido	Many verbs ending in AR	LadRAR – ladrido, Chillar-Chillido, Zumbar - Zumbido
-miento	Some verbs ending in AR-ER-IR	Casar -casamiento, CreceR-Crecimiento, Seguir- Seguimiento
-ón	Some verbs ending in AR	Empujar – Empujón, Resbalar-Resbalón

Spanish Suffixes used **to create Nouns derived from adjectives**:

Suffix	Use	Example
-dad/ -tad	Create abstract nouns	Humilde-humildad; malo-maldad; sucio-suciedad
-bilidad	Changes adjectives ending in -ble	Amable-amabilidad; estable-estabilidad; culpable-culpabilidad
-edad	changes some bisyllable adjectives or those that end in -io or -ia	Breve-brevedad; nuevo-novedad; notorio-notoriedad
-ez	Creates abstract nouns	Sencillo-sencillez; tímido-timidez; brillante-brillantez
-eza	Creates abstract nouns	Bello-Belleza; triste-tristeza; grande-grandeza
-ismo	Speaks to a doctrine, system, movement or character trait	Social-Socialismo; individual-individualismo; Egoísta-egoísmo

And Suffixes used for words that refer to professions, instruments and roles or tasks. They will form Nouns and adjectives.

Suffix	Use	Example
-dor	Professions and roles	Presentar-Presentador; Trabajar-Trabajador
-dero	Professions and objects	Pan – Panadero; Colar-Coladero; fregar-fregadero
-ero	Professions, occupations, utensils	Pastel-pastelero; portar-portero
ista	Professions and conditions	Pensión-pensionista; ocular-oculista

Suffix Resources

- [The Most Useful Spanish Suffixes and Prefixes](#) by Keith at [Latin America Spanish Cafe](#)
- [Latch On: 18 Spanish Suffixes You'll Never Want to Let Go Of](#) by Francisco J. Vare at [FluentU](#)

4.2 A Short History of Spanish

Spanish and English share many common roots with LATIN. To the point that dozens of English Prefixes are exactly the same in Spanish. This brings us to a most necessary, if brief, history of the origins of Spanish.

The first occupants of the Iberian Peninsula arrived more than 1.2 million years ago. We know that the first written records of human activity in the region appeared about 2,200 years ago. The history of powerful North African rulers trying to conquer the Peninsula is long and intricate. Then in rapid succession, what would one day be Spain belonged to the Visigoths, the Christians, the Muslims, England and France among others.

After almost 900 years of Roman presence in almost all present-day Europe, the peninsula of Hispanica was the seeding ground for many dialects of Latin origin. Then, Roman Control of the peninsula entered a period of chaos as the Empire collapsed and Spain fell in the hands of the Visigoths. In 711 of the Christian Era, the Muslims attacked Spain from North Africa and gained a control that would last centuries. The north of Spain remained under Christian Control.

Things remained like this until those Christian forces fought the Muslims and managed to defeat their states by the mid-thirteenth century. Only Grenada remained in the hands of the Muslims. That brilliant centre of Arabic art, culture and religion then fell to Christian hands in 1492, the same year that Columbus arrived in America.

Then came the Spanish Domination by the Catholic federations of Aragon and Castile between 1250 and 1479 and finally Spain was United as a Kingdom under Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile from 1479 to 1516.

This brief summary of a very complicated and tortuous period of the History of Spanish can also be viewed from a linguistic point of view in four essential periods:

- a. Initial Visigoth and Celtic influences
- b. Impact of Celtiberian, Basque, Gothic and Arabic
- c. Almost one thousand years of Roman conquest and settlement with LATIN as the common base language of the conqueror and eventually of the conquered.
- d. Centuries of Arabic domination that brought the sounds and words of Arab to the common everyday language of the conquered.

The Spanish language then, is the result of multiple hybridizations (just like English). More than 75% of modern Spanish vocabulary is derived from LATIN. Some ancient roots were brought down from the Greek into Latin and then finally included in Spanish. In Spain, the language has been influenced by French, Catalan, Portuguese and Italian. Around the world, it mixed with and borrowed many aboriginal languages from the different territories where the Spanish Empire spread. English and Spanish share thousands of common Roots and affixes that make it easy to recognize words that come from one same ancestry and then adapted to each particular language. In [Chapter 6](#) you will see how these hundreds of words are classified.

Right now, have fun watching this video! Listen carefully to the words and notice the many similarities between Spanish and Arabic:

Annenberg Media. (2015, November 5). Similarities between Spanish and Arabic. [Video]. *YouTube*. <https://youtu.be/AOe4mkzBdCs>

4.3 Recognizing Spanish Prefixes

Because English and Spanish share so many years of Latin influence, we can learn thousands of Spanish words if we have the correct knowledge of the meaning of the PREFIXES of both languages.

Be careful, as the rules for the formation of words are highly dependent on historical occurrence and not every prefix can be matched with a Latin root to create a meaning. In other words, the knowledge of the meanings of these affixes is not a tool to form your own words. It is a good instant reference to UNDERSTAND words that are found in texts and everyday conversation.

So here are a few of the most common Spanish Prefixes that you should become acquainted with:

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
Mal-	Bad	Placed in front of verbs to express the action is done poorly Malgastar – to spend (gastar) poorly
Ben-	Good	In front of words to express action well done. Bendecir (to bless or speak well of) Beneficiar (to benefit).
Des-	Un-	The action of undoing something Descubrir (literally to uncover). Destapar vs Tapar
Dis-	Not	Not the same as DES. Expresses opposites or the concept of Not Doing something. Examples Discontinuar vs. Continuar. Disculpar vs. Culpar; Dislocar vs. colocar
Pre-	Before	Refers to things that come before (just like in English with the same Prefix). Presentar ; Predecir , preparar , presumir
Con-	With, Together	In Spanish the word con means with , so as a prefix it also means with or together with when added to verbs Convivir , contener , contratar .
Com-	With, Together	Similar to Con- Things that go together or work together. Compartir , comparar , combinar
Co-	With, Together	Similar to Con- and Com- Things that go together or work together Colaborar , cooperar , coordinar
Ex-	Out of	Very similar to its English equivalent. Pulling out of, removing from. Extraer , exportar
Re-	Again	Renacer , repasar , reunir , reforzar , rehacer
Sobre-	Over	Like the prepositions “over” or “above”. Sobresalir , sobrevivir
Sub-	Under	The opposite of sobre . subestimar , subrayar
Contra-	Against	In disagreement or against. Contradecir , contraatacar
Uni-	One, the whole	Unir , uniformar , unificar
Equi-	Equal	Equivaler , equilibrar , equiparar

Prefix Resources

- [The Most Useful Spanish Suffixes and Prefixes](#) by Keith at [Latin America Spanish Cafe](#)
- [16 Spanish Prefixes That'll Help You Understand Hundreds of New Spanish Words](#) by Hannah Greenwald at [FluentU](#)

PART V

CHAPTER 5: SUFFIXES THAT ARE THE EQUIVALENT OF SOME ENGLISH MODALS

Chapter Outline

[5.1 Spanish Suffixes that are Equivalent of Some English Modals](#)

5.1 Spanish Suffixes that are Equivalent of Some English Modals

Your professor has probably already mentioned these word terminations in the classes related to verb conjugation, future tense, and conditional tenses of Spanish.

In this short segment we will list these **suffixes** (*word endings*) of the Spanish Verbs that are the equivalent to **prefixes** (*words or particles placed before the verb*) that we use in English for the same purpose of changing the intention of the verb thus modified. We will also get into the detail of their forms in conjugation, so that by the end of this lesson you will be able to comfortably conjugate different Spanish verbs without complication or confusion.

Let's create a **visual** comparison between English and Spanish for greater clarity:

English

Will

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies and signifies the simple future of the verb so affected.

Example:

*Johnny plays in the park vs. Johnny **will** play in the park*

Would

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies to signify a conditional mood.

Example:

*Johnny plays in the park vs. Johnny **would** play in the park*

Should

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies to signify either a probability or a recommendation or advice.

Example:

*Johnny plays in the park vs. Johnny **should** play in the park*

Could

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies to signify either a probability or conditional ability.

Example:

*Johnny plays in the park vs. Johnny **could** play in the park*

Spanish

ré, rás, rá, remos, rán are the forms that appear at the end of Spanish words and that indicate the simple future is being used.

Example:

*Juanito juega en el parque vs. Juanito **jugará** en el parque*

ía, ías, íamos, ían are forms that appear at the end of the verb to signify a conditional mood.

Example:

*Juanito juega en el parque vs. Juanito **jugaría** en el parque*

Debería (s) (ían) (íamos)

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies to signify a probability or a recommendation or advice.

Example:

*Juanito juega en el parque vs. Juanito **debería jugar** en el parque.*

Podría (ías), (ían), (íamos)

This modal is placed **before** the verb it modifies to signify either a probability or conditional ability.

Example:

*Juanito juega en el parque vs. Juanito **podría jugar** en el parque.*

Please study, practice and work with this model, using different verbs.

Verb to swim

	Will	Would	Should	Could
Yo	Nadaré	Nadaría	Debería nadar	Podría nadar
Usted	Nadará	Nadaría	Debería nadar	Podría nadar
El, ella	Nadará	Nadaría	Debería nadar	Podría nadar
Nosotros	Nadaremos	Nadaríamos	Deberíamos nadar	Podríamos nadar
Ustedes	Nadarán	Nadarían	Deberían nadar	Podrían nadar
Ellos, ellas	Nadarán	Nadarían	Deberían nadar	Podrían nadar

Verb to run

	Will	Would	Should	Could
Yo	Correré	Correría	Debería correr	Podría correr
Usted	Correrá	Correría	Debería correr	Podría correr
El, ella	Correrá	Correría	Debería correr	Podría correr
Nosotros	Correremos	Correríamos	Deberíamos correr	Podríamos correr
Ustedes	Correrán	Correrían	Deberían Correr	Podrían correr
Ellos, ellas	Correrán	Correrían	Deberían Correr	Podrían correr

Verb to laugh

	Will	Would	Should	Could
Yo	Reiré	Reiría	Debería reír	Podría reír
Usted	Reirá	Reiría	Debería reír	Podría reír
El, ella	Reirá	Reiría	Debería reír	Podría reír
Nosotros	Reiremos	Reiríamos	Deberíamos reír	Podríamos reír
Ustedes	Reirán	Reirían	Deberían Reír	Podrían reír
Ellos, ellas	Reirán	Reirían	Deberían Reír	Podrían reír

PART VI

CHAPTER 6: COGNATES AND EXPANDING VOCABULARY

Chapter Outline

[6.1 Cognates and Expanding Vocabulary](#)

6.1 Cognates and Expanding Vocabulary

As we pointed out in one of the sections on Phonetics, many Spanish and English words have the same Latin root. **These words, also known as cognates, are similar or identical in form and meaning.** Learning to recognize and use cognates can help you identify unfamiliar words and phrases and recognize the general idea of a text when reading. It can also be a source of motivation and encouragement to learn more vocabulary as you study Spanish. I invite you to explore the following groups of cognates:

Group 1. Cognates that have exactly the same spelling and meaning as their English equivalents.

doctor mosquito natural terrible hospital real
humor musical idea banana horrible fatal
cruel chocolate animal popular regular hotel
ideal sentimental

Group 2. Cognates that have only minor differences with the spelling of their English equivalents.

A. When the difference is a written accent or stress mark (tilde):

Religión televisión región sofá Canadá visión América

B. When the difference consists of the addition of a final vowel:

arte novela dentista romanticismo importante
correcto bomba rancho restaurante elegante
persona presidente

Group 3. Cognates that follow a predictable pattern with the use of suffixes.

A. Spanish nouns ending in **-ción** and **-sión** have English counterparts ending in **-tion** and **-sion**.

participación rendición operación televisión conclusión
conversación autorización mutación explosión extensión

B. Spanish nouns ending in **-dad** have English counterparts ending in **-ty**.

Universidad popularidad curiosidad actividad autoridad realidad

C. Spanish nouns that begin with the *prefix es- plus a consonant*, many times correspond to English words that begin with a single letter **s plus a consonant**.

España **esn**ob **est**úpido **es**pecial **es**pectacular

D. In Spanish, there are cases when words take a double consonant. This only appears in the cases of **cc**, **rr**, **ll**, and **nn** and they reflect English words of the same meaning and origin.

*Let's remember that in Spanish the double **l** (ll) and the double **r** (rr) are separate letters of the alphabet. The double **n** only occurs when the prefix **in-** (equivalent of the English **-un**) is added to a word that begins with **n**: **innecesario** – **unnecessary**.*

For this reason, many words in Spanish appear with a single consonant, where their English equivalents have a double consonant:

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E. The Spanish ending **-oso** is often the equivalent of the English ending **-ous**.

numer**oso** maravill**oso** amor**oso** famos**o**
gener**oso** malici**oso** curi**oso** ambici**oso**

F. The Spanish ending **-mente** often equals the English ending **-ly**.

general**mente** rápid**amente** posibl**emente**
personal**mente** normal**mente** final**mente**

G. Some cognates do not follow a specific pattern but present spelling changes. However, the root origin is clearly identified for both languages and the word equivalent is immediately recognized.

elefante tigre Francia fotografía actriz examen
Japón teléfono patata danza automóvil limón

H. Finally, some Spanish words are directly borrowed from English and the source word is immediately recognized.

hamburguesa suéter fútbol béisbol rosbif
(hamburger) (sweater) (football) (baseball) (roast beef)



Prácticalo

PART VII

EL ARTE DE LA LENGUA ESPAÑOLA - FINE-TUNING YOUR PERCEPTION AND PRONUNCIATION OF SPANISH

Chapter Outline

[El Arte de la Lengua Española – Fine-Tuning Your Perception and Pronunciation of Spanish](#)
[Introduction](#)
[A Different Approach to the Recognition and Practice of Spanish Sound](#)
[The Consonant Sounds of Spanish](#)
[The 'Essential' Consonant Exercises](#)
[The Vowel Sounds of Spanish](#)

El Arte de la Lengua Española - Fine-Tuning Your Perception and Pronunciation of Spanish



Germán Gutierrez-Sanin

“Language production should not get in the way of opportunity and the engagement of foreign-born speakers of Spanish as they struggle to achieve successful inclusion as tourists or immigrants.”

Forward

The problems of poor pronunciation in Second Language Learners of Spanish have interested and intrigued me for many years. Many frustrated students who feel they will never be able to understand Spanish in a natural setting and hundreds of buckets of tears from those who have had to pay an unusually high emotional price for learning how to survive in Spanish-speaking communities, were my main motivation to deal with this subject in an orderly fashion. This workbook is the result of many victories and defeats in the battlefield of Listening and Speaking as well as thousands of hours dedicated to the observation and classification of poor pronunciation patterns by students of Spanish from many different countries.

Teaching phonics has changed greatly in the last 40 years. Unfortunately, not all the innovations in this regard have been beneficial. Many of the things that were taught with great success were dropped in the hasty pursuit of alternatives that initially looked more promising but have not produced results as desirable as originally expected. One of those sensitive “fallen” deities of old is the teaching of the principles of spelling. Spanish spelling has received the most atrocious indifference. Many teachers have told their students things like “This is so complicated to explain that it’s better just to memorize it”. **Included in the chapters of your *Basic Spanish Language & Culture* text are key simplified principles of good spelling that all students of Spanish should master.**

Although some of the earlier approaches are still valid and should not be eliminated from our modern classrooms, it is true that many of our paradigms of Schooling still date back to the late 1800’s. The classroom model as the universal approach to standardized teaching available for large populations clearly shows how these paradigms have led us to be successful in creating “factory-model” results that benefit only a few. The behaviourist approaches of Watson and Skinner and the priceless contributions of Dewey, Kolb, Kelly, Mumford and Juch were innovative and interesting in

the 1960's and 1980's but are quickly becoming outdated as new discoveries about the brain and the way it works have been uncovered. Scientists like Brian Jensen, Porter, Markakis and Gage in 1999, Sutoo and Akiyama in 2003, Tomporowski, also in 2003 and others like Kempermann and Jernigan have developed a new science of the brain: educational neuroscience. They recognize that to better take advantage of recent discoveries about how the brain actually works, we must integrate many different disciplines into the social construct of our classroom environment. In my permanent search for new solutions to the problems of Spoken Spanish, I came upon different theories of Speech and Speech Perception as well as many important contributions to this field from neurologists and linguists. Some of these are mentioned in the chapters ahead.

A true revolution is in the making as brain-based learning becomes the most recently established paradigm. The delicate interplay between emotional states and cognition is something that has not received a much-deserved attention. And we now have new and important evidence that visual and auditory systems can be retrained and “fine-tuned” to improve attention, speech, hearing and reading ability. This is also reflected in the Chapters of this book and explained at greater length as the topic unfolds.

However, more than the different discoveries and new resources available, my students have been my most significant inspiration. Their problems have become my challenges. Their apprehension has turned into my enthusiasm. To them I dedicate these exercises in the hope that, together, we will be setting a foot on new lands waiting to be explored in the thrilling planet of our brain.

Introduction

Before attempting to formulate a system for the study, acquisition and coordinated use of the sounds of Spanish, it is very important for us to realize that listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are systems of communication that work by social agreement. In other words, an entire social group has considered and adopted certain groups of sounds and symbols to represent the meanings that allow its members to communicate from the simplest everyday thoughts, feelings and ideas to the most complex and intricate situations and philosophical rationalizations of the human spirit.

Now, this is where time comes into the scene. History has certainly played a very important role in the evolution of all human languages. In fact, it probably has played an important part in the evolution of animal systems of communication as well. Since 2003, Dr. Simon Fisher and Prof. Tony Monaco, geneticists at the University of Oxford in England, have been studying a specific gene -called FOXP2- that is apparently the “missing link” between the advent of speech and prior systems of communication. This exciting new discovery will soon provide many new insights about how we humans learn a language.

For the time being, we must continue with what we have at present: The undisputed fact that spoken language can only be useful for communication if there is a collective agreement on the meaning of the spoken words, which in turn *are sequences of uttered sounds*. And written language can only be useful for spoken communication when there is an implicit agreement on both *the sound value of each of the written symbols* and the intonations that should be given to the sequences as a whole.

In the specific case of Spanish, this is a system that evolved from a series of historical events that should not be ignored when approaching the challenges implicated in teaching its writing and pronunciation. The following is a brief summary of these occurrences:



[Merida Hispania](#)
[Luisfpizarro](#) under [Pixabay License](#)

- From its very beginning, Spanish was the result of hybridising of tongues coming together as a result of a few wars and peace treaties. The language we know today is derived from a dialect of spoken Latin brought to the Iberian Peninsula by the Romans after their occupation of that territory at the end of the 3d Century B.C. – (They called the land Hispania). This dialect was called Vulgate Latin and was spoken by the lower classes in Rome since the time of Julius Cesar.
- Spanish is one of the “Romance” languages (also known as Neo-Latin languages). Italian is the closest language to Latin. Spanish follows and then Romanian and Portuguese. The most divergent but still following many of the characteristics of Vulgate Latin, is French.
- In the fourth century, during the fall of the Roman Empire, the Visigoths, a Germanic Group,

conquered areas of the Iberian Peninsula. These tribes spoke Latin.

- Then, in the Middle Ages, Muslim Moorish conquerors arrived in the peninsula and radically transformed the entire territory. Called Al-Andalus (At its greatest expansion, the Islamic states controlled modern day Portugal and most of Spain. This conquest lasted from 711 to 1492.
- The last stronghold of the Arab Empire was the Emirate of Granada (1238-1492). The Christian kingdoms from the North gradually reconquered the Peninsula.
- Hispano-Romance dialects borrowed hundreds of words from the Arabic. In the process of reconquering the Peninsula, the nuances of these dialects slowly displaced the net Arabic and embraced the higher forms of Latin. Celts and Iberians mixed with the local commoners and the language began taking its own unique “flavor”.
- Then came a strong wave of Castilian influence that, given the increasing power of that Kingdom, set the very first forms of Castilian or Castellano. This is the purest form of the language, and is the one that then expanded throughout the Modern Period of Spanish in the wake of the conquests of the Empire in the Americas.



[Muhammad I of Granada leading his troops during the Mudéjar revolt of 1264–1266, illustrated in the contemporary Cantigas de Santa Maria. Alfonso X in the \[Public Domain\]\(#\)](#)

A second important consideration is that behind each and every one of the written symbols of Spanish there is a history, a social and political circumstance, and a specific sound. **Phonemes** are elements of human Speech. They can only be heard. They cannot be read. Phonemes are units of sound. And their importance is absolute. The reason is simple: The typical phonemes of a given language are the elements that carry the *distinctive sound image* of that particular language.

Why is this so important? Because the simple, practical, and recurrent truth is that when learning a second language, those sounds that we cannot utter will not be encoded by our brain and, consequently, when we hear them in context, we will not *listen* to them. These sounds that we can't hear are the ones that keep us from perceiving the *acoustic image* of the language. One of the difficulties in teaching English phonics is precisely that there is no visual or “chalkboard value” for these units of sound. What we show our students in overhead projectors, hand-outs and boards are **GRAPHEMES**, the symbols that represent such phonemes. That is why we must now introduce a new system. One that will act as a bridge so our students can cross from the pasture of the *written* form to that other grazing land of *sounded* form.

Before I go on, allow me to insist that the one single most important challenge a language learner faces is the fact that those sounds that one cannot pronounce, one will not be able to hear...and those sounds that one cannot hear, one will not be able to pronounce.

New evidence from recent neurological findings and linguistic research suggests that exposure to the unfamiliar sounds of an unknown language is registered initially by the brain in the same way it would if it were noise: undifferentiated neural activity in reaction to un-encoded sound. Fred Genesee commenting on the findings at the Center for Research on Education Diversity and Excellence Santa Cruz CA. and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington

DC, said, “Neural activity is diffused, because the brain has not learned the acoustic patterns that distinguish one sound from another. As exposure continues, the listener (and the brain) learns to differentiate among different sounds and even among short sequences of sounds that correspond to words or parts of words. Neural connections that reflect this learning process are formed in the auditory (temporal) cortex of the left hemisphere for most individuals. With further exposure, both the simple and complex circuits (corresponding to simple sounds and sequences of sounds) are activated at virtually the same time and more easily.”

In the first levels of second language acquisition, the neural circuits that receive input from multiple external sources are activated in a weak, piecemeal, disorderly fashion. Acoustic perception is not clear enough to promote adequate reactions. Visual perception of phonetic elements doesn't seem to trigger recognition of the corresponding sound patterns. It's like receiving a very blurry and distorted satellite image from an unidentified source. Lots of information is flowing in at incredible speeds, but there is no way to decode, analyze and interpret a large percentage of the input. So, priceless facts are lost and precious time is spent in trying to retrieve the true picture of the transmission. With experience, practice and repetition of certain key elements, the brain will be able to encode key information with which it can then trigger instant recognition of the individual elements it needs to process an accurate perception of the entire message.

In my experience as a teacher, I have been able to observe that our students achieve significant results when they are provided with tools that help them initially to *hear* and then to *sound* the typical acoustic “images” of Spanish words. Once their brain is given the necessary information to encode these bits of sound, they will be prepared to decode their presence in contextual situations. Fred Genesee said, “What are the implications of these findings for teaching? First, effective teaching should include a focus on both parts and wholes. Instructional approaches that advocate teaching parts and not wholes or wholes and not parts are misguided, because the brain naturally links local neural activity to circuits that are related to different experiential domains.”



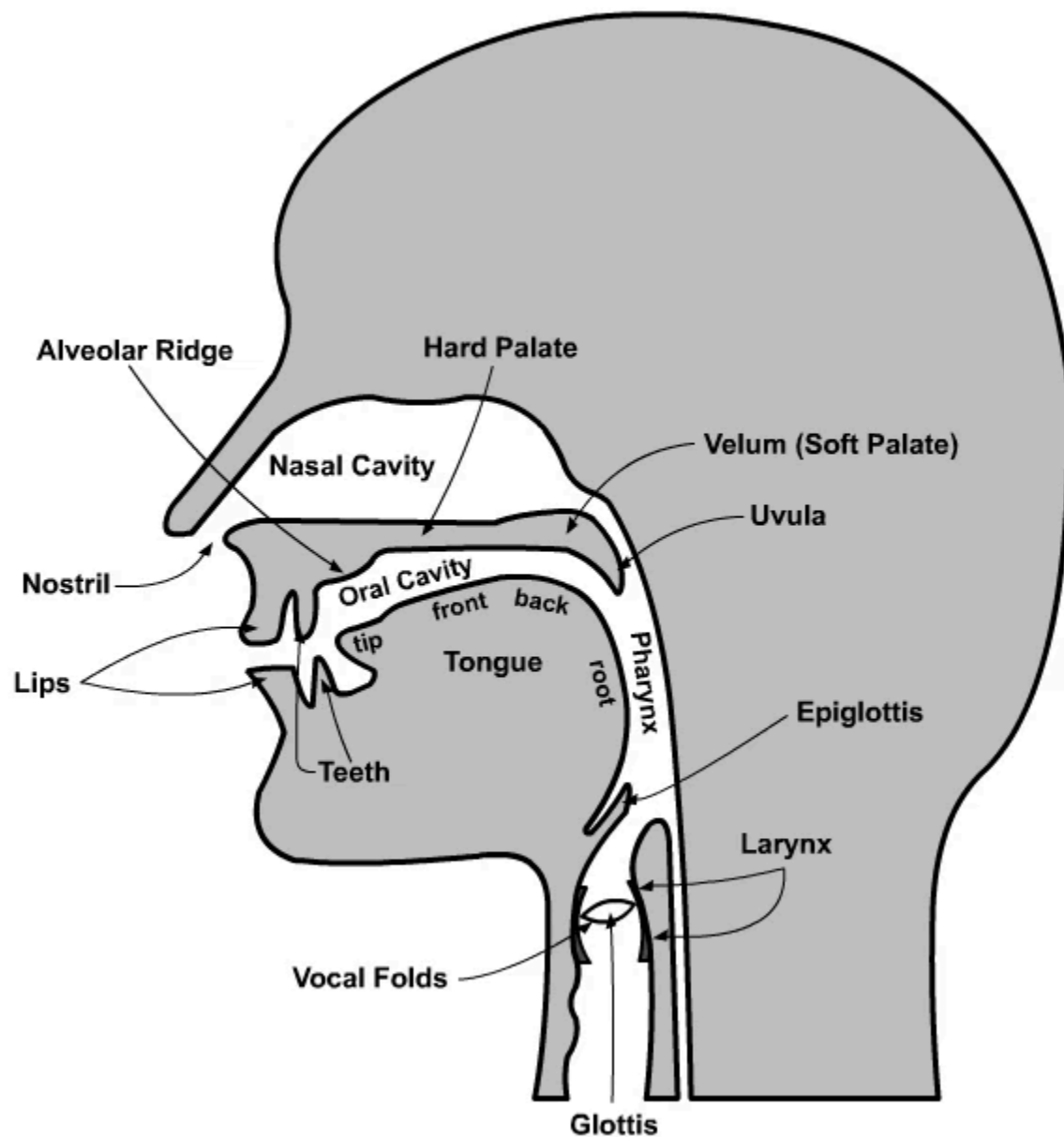
The sole purpose of this workbook, then, is to provide a first consistent encode-decode bridging tool for learners of Spanish as a second language. We wish you many hours of fine-tuning pleasure with these exercises and a fresh new “audition” of the Spanish Tongue.

A Different Approach to the Recognition and Practice of Spanish Sound

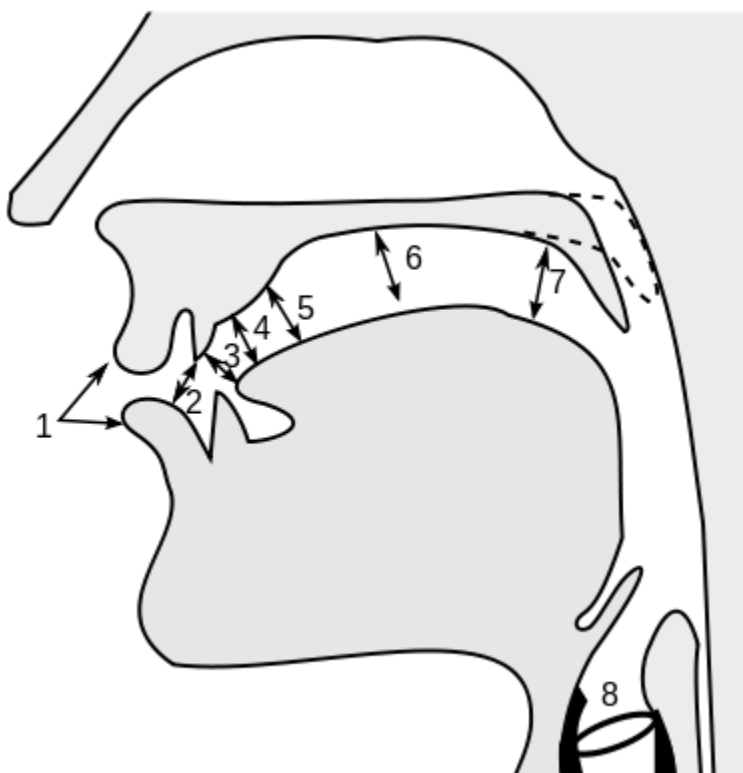
The Organs of Speech

- A. Front teeth interdental papilla, hard palate, soft palate
- B. Tongue
- C. Corners of the mouth

Refer to the following diagrams to see the organs of speech and the places of articulation.



Speech Organs by [MadBeppo](#)
under [CC BY-NC](#)



Places of Articulation:

1. Labial
2. Labiodental
3. Interdental
4. Alveolo-dental
5. Alveolo-palatal
6. Palatal
7. Velar
8. Glottal

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The Consonant Sounds of Spanish

Fine tuning the production of Spanish consonant “sounds” using basic consonant-vowel graphemes.



Initial Exercises

Please note: To use the practice record function you will need to be in Chrome.



Exercise One

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

B R A

D R A

F R A

G R A

K R A

P R A

S R A

T R A

V R A

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Two

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

B R E

D R E

F R E

G R E

K R E

P R E

S R E

T R E

V R E

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Three

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

B R I

D R I

F R I

G R I

K R I

P R I

S R I

T R I

V R I

Reminder for Exercise Three:

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Four

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

B R O

D R O

F R O

G R O

K R O

P R O

S R O

T R O

V R O

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Five

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

B R U

D R U

F R U

G R U

K R U

P R U

S R U

T R U

V R U

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Six

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

R A

RR A

R E

RR E

R I

RR I

R O

RR O

R U

RR U

Reminder for Exercise Six:

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Seven

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

Ñ A

ÑA ÑA

Ñ E

ÑE ÑA

Ñ I

ÑI ÑA

Ñ O

ÑO ÑA

Ñ U

ÑU ÑA

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Eight

Listen carefully and repeat.

Consonant-Vowel Graphemes Audio

RR A RA

RR A RE

RR A RI

RR A RO

RR A RU

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.

The whole point of exercises six and eight is to exercise what oftentimes is considered the toughest consonant sound challenge that Spanish poses for English Speakers: THE 'R'.

The "R" is pronounced in a completely different manner in Spanish and as we will see in the next few paragraphs, it is one of FIVE consonant sounds that we need to learn to identify and pronounce.

Close your eyes and think where your tongue is when you are saying an R in English. It is set in the back of the roof [the palate] and the tip of your tongue comes up and gets close to the roof of the mouth. Think of words like:

Robert – Rag – Rope – Ringo – Rest – Roam – Render -Wring

Now let's see what happens with Spanish.

What happens inside our mouth when we say R in Spanish? (Remember the name of the letter in the alphabet is "eRRe").

Well, the tip of the tongue comes up to the roof of the mouth and sits against the hard palate about 1 to 3 millimeters behind your front teeth, where it flattens and produces a vibration by letting air pass through the lifted tip of the tongue. At first it might be difficult for you because you have never before done something like this as a speaker of the English language.

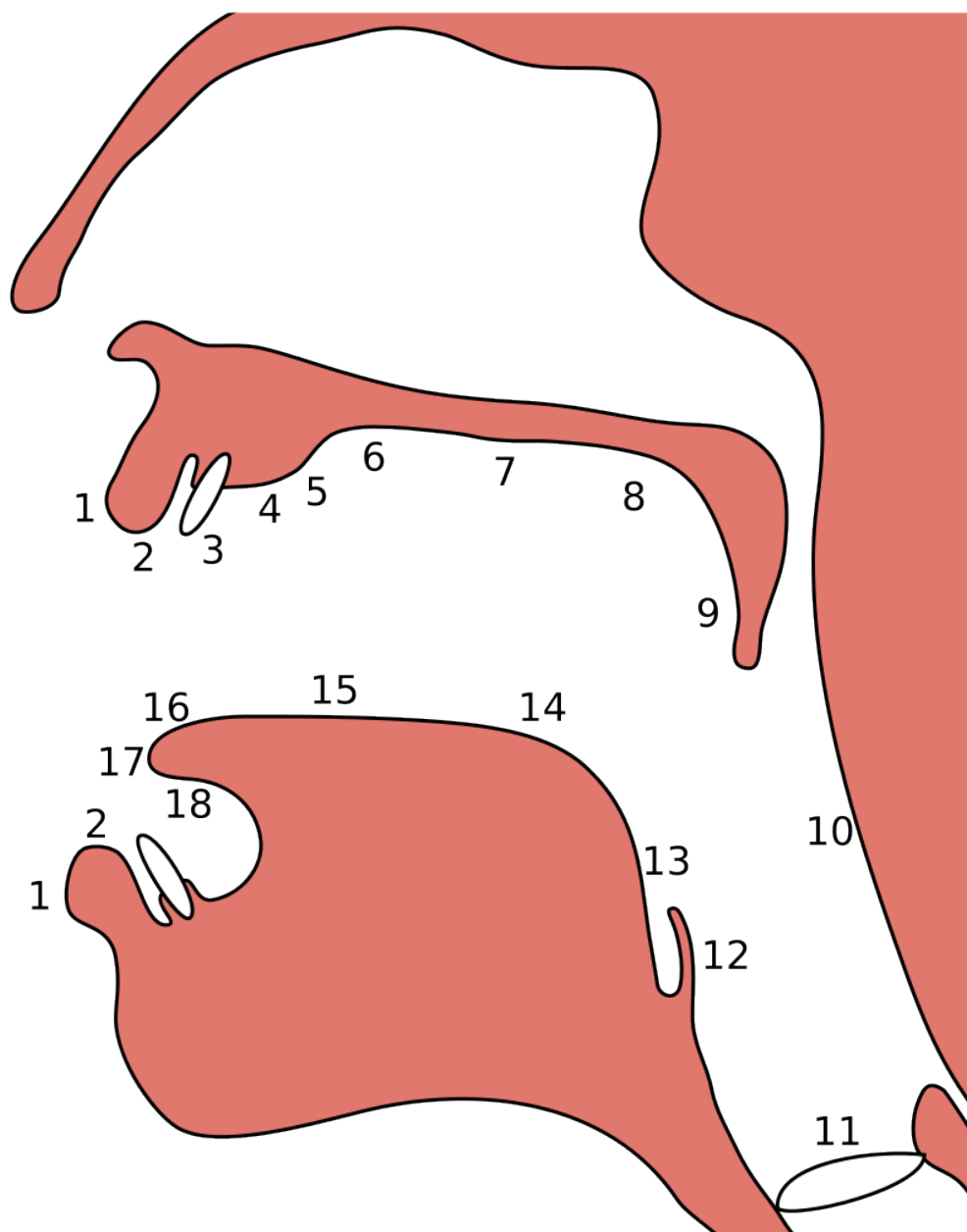
The 'Essential' Consonant Exercises

Now that we have practised those ten introductory exercises with the aim of giving your tongue a newly found flexibility, let's move on to the practice of those sounds that will make your pronunciation exquisitely close to that of native speakers of Spanish.

Let me be very clear: The significant difference in the pronunciation of Spanish words is determined by ***the place of articulation of the tip or the blade of the tongue on the hard palate*** when producing the sounds of the Consonants contained in those words.

It is important at this point to note that words will have Consonant points of articulation in different parts of the word: At the Beginning, in the Middle or at the End of a word. These are called *Initial*, *Medial*, and *Final* points of articulation.

In Articulatory Phonetics, the place of articulation of the consonant is the **point of contact** where an obstruction occurs in the vocal tract as a result of an active articulator (in this case the tongue) coming in touch with a "passive location" (In this case, a specific spot in the hard palate).



"Passive and Active Places of Articulation" :

1. Exo-labial, 2. Endo-labial, 3. Dental, 4. Alveolar, 5. Post-alveolar, 6. Pre-palatal, 7. Palatal, 8. Velar, 9. Uvular, 10. Pharyngeal, 11. Glottal, 12. Epiglottal, 13. Radical, 14. Postero-dorsal, 15. Antero-dorsal, 16. Laminar, 17. Apical, 18. Sub-apical
by [Rohieb](#) under [CC-BY-SA](#) license.

Now, let's narrow down the focus of our attention using the above graphic: In those cases where in English we would naturally articulate a consonant sound by placing the tip or blade of the tongue [17] and [16] roughly between the front of the hard palate, location marked with [4] and as back as [5], those sounds are articulated with the tip of the tongue [17] placed at [3] and as far back as between [3] and [4] in Spanish.

The above applies specifically to the letters T – D – N – L and R . This means, of course, that when

speaking in Spanish, the tongue will automatically and unconsciously articulate in the spot indicated, whenever these 5 consonants are voiced.

Consider the sentence : *Tendremos Dos Noches Libres*

Try to place your tongue at the point discussed, and you will hear the difference when saying this several times. I recommend you do this in front of a mirror.

Now let's turn our attention to the letter "T".

The Consonant "T"

Consider these English words that use the letter 't' and while you repeat them aloud, make sure you "feel" where you place your tongue every time you produce a 'T':

Take your time, Tony.

Tim took Tom to the doctor yesterday.

Terry takes the train to work.

If you listen with attention to the song "[Shallow](#)" sung by Bradley Cooper and Lady Gaga you will notice that the letter T produces a lot of air as their tongue goes to the roof of the mouth every time they sing it.

Instead, the Spanish 'T' will be right behind the teeth. In fact, our tongue will actually touch the teeth in these words:

Initial	Medial	Final
Totuma	ArTisTa	InTerneT
Teresa	SolisTa	CloseT
También	AmaTisTa	Complot
Teléfono	DenTisTa	RoboT
Tranvía	FlorisTa	SuperáviT
Televisor	FlauTisTa	ChaleT

The Consonant "D"

Consider these English words that use the letter 'd' and while you repeat them aloud, make sure you "feel" where you place your tongue every time you produce a 'D':

Donald diced a dozen apples.

Doctors have said diabetes can be controlled.

Didn't Donna decide to do a PhD in dentistry?

The Spanish D is also the subject of our attention in this workbook, because it is actually almost the same sound that we make in certain English "th" words (especially the article "the". It is almost the same as what we explained with the letter "T". While our English "D" is behind, the Spanish "D" is up front, and the tongue will actually touch your teeth.

Initial	Medial	Final
Dedo	AlaDo	ComeD
Dolor	ArmaDo	SaluD
Diadema	CerraDo	AluD
Diamante	CanDaDo	AtaúD
Dorado	HelaDo	AspiD
Dime	AuDitaDo	DaviD

The Consonant “L”

Consider these English words that use the letter ‘L’ and while you repeat them aloud, make sure you “feel” where you place your tongue every time you produce a ‘L’:

The *l*amp is litt*l*e.

A *l*ight *l*oad is a *l*ot better to carry.

Do you *l*ike *l*ooking at the *l*ights in the park?

The Spanish L is also the subject of our attention in this workbook because it is a very different consonant than the English. You see, in English the L has different positions in the Initial, Medial and Final positions. Compare the initial ‘L’ sound in the word LOST with the final ‘L’ in the word ALL. In the first case the tongue goes up and touches the palate a few millimetres behind the teeth. In the second case, the tongue rises **but does not touch the palate**.

So while our English “L” is in different positions depending on whether it is an Initial, Medial or Final consonant, the Spanish “L” is up front, and the tongue will actually touch your teeth.

Initial	Medial	Final
Lado	HaLcón	IniciaL
Linda	CoLa	BestiaL
Luna	CaLzado	ColegiaL
Lápiz	CoLegio	FemoraL
Laguna	ELefante	CanaL
Listo	HeLado	ArtificiaL

The Consonant “N”

Consider these English words that use the letter ‘N’ and while you repeat them aloud, make sure you “feel” where you place your tongue every time you produce an ‘N’:

Norman *n*amed his *n*son Norman.

Jennifer was *n*amed *n*anny of the year.

Nobody knows anything about Narnia.

The Spanish N is also the subject of our attention in this workbook. It has the same place of articulation of the Spanish 'T'

So while in our English "N" the tongue rises to touch the hard palate a few millimetres behind the interdental papilla of the front teeth, the Spanish "N" is up front, and the tongue will actually touch your teeth.

Initial	Medial	Final
Nado	ANa	PaN
Nido	CuNa	CorraN
Nunca	CueNta	ArmaN
Noción	CaNta	VuelaN
Norberto	PlaNeta	SilbaN
Neto	CuNeta	CierraN



Exercises

Please note: To use the practice record function you will need to be in Chrome.



Exercises Nine & Ten

Listen carefully and repeat.

Exercise 9 Audio Exercise 10 Audio

TAN	TAN TO
TEN	TEN TO
TIN	TIN TO
TON	TON TO
TUN	TUN TO

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Eleven & Twelve

Listen carefully and repeat.

Exercise 11 Audio Exercise 12 Audio

NANDO	DAN <u>DO</u>
NENDO	DE <u>NDO</u>
NINDO	DI <u>NDO</u>
NONDO	DO <u>NDO</u>
NUNDO	DU <u>NDO</u>

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Thirteen & Fourteen

Listen carefully and repeat.

Exercise 13 Audio Exercise 14 Audio

LANDO	NALDO
LENDO	NELDO
LINDO	NILDO
LONDO	NOLDO
LUNDO	NULDO

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Fifteen & Sixteen

Listen carefully and repeat.

Exercise 15 Audio Exercise 16 Audio

TALNO	RALNO
TELNO	RELNO
TILNO	RILNO
TOLNO	ROLNO
TULNO	RULNO

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.



Exercise Seventeen & Eighteen

Listen carefully and repeat.

Exercise 17 Audio Exercise 18 Audio

PRANDO	RANDO
PRENDO	RENDON
PRINDO	RINDO
PRONDO	RONDO
PRUNDO	RUNDO

Try making a recording of yourself to compare your pronunciation with the examples.

The Vowel Sounds of Spanish

Fine Tuning the Production of Spanish Vowel “Sounds” Using Basic Consonant-Vowel Graphemes

Let’s turn immediately to the fundamental elements that will make your pronunciation of Spanish accurate and intelligible to those listening to you.

While English vowels have a rather complicated 18 different sounds, depending on their location in a word and the nature of the vowels or consonants that surround them, Spanish has five very clear, open sounds.

They are flat, they have no diphthong sounds associated to their presence and they usually alternate after a consonant.

The alternating Consonant-Vowel, Consonant-vowel structure of Spanish words is in very direct contrast to the consonant-crowding nature of English words/sounds.

Compare:

Hamburguesas Y Bebidas
Mi Casa Tiene Dos Puertas

Hamburgers And Drinks
My House Has Two Doors

So while in English there are close to 18 different sounds of the vowel, depending on its location in a word, in Spanish there are 5 unique sounds that are **always pronounced**.

In English, we only truly voice (pronounce) the Vowels located in Stressed or “accent” Syllables.

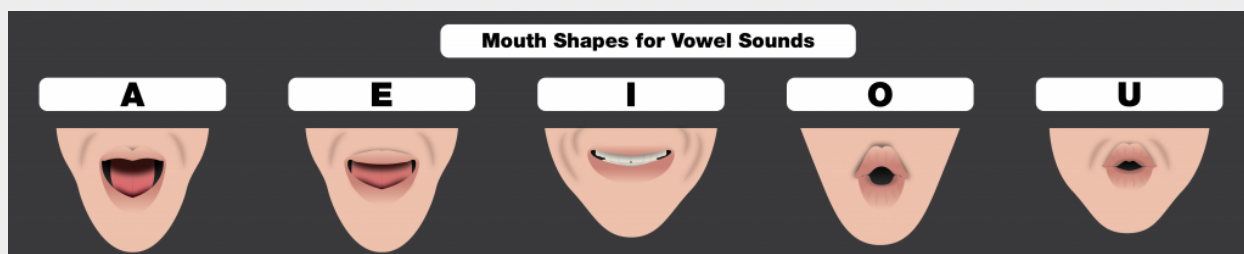
In Spanish we pronounce **All** Vowels, no matter their location in a word.

Compare:

Family
Newspaper
Runner
Jewellery
Butcher

Familia
Periodico
Corredor
Joyeria
Carnicero

The Five Sounds of Spanish Vowels:



A = Mi Mama Me Ama, Mi Papa Me Mima

E = El Enemigo Esta Encerrado

I = Inciamos Mi Incursion Inicial

O = O Lo Compones O Lo Olvidas

U = Un Auto Unicos Es Un Util Uber Usado



Notice that **ALL** vowels and consonants are pronounced, from left to right. All vowel sounds are Flat **and** there are no diphthong sounds attached to any of the vowels.



Let's practice these sounds in sentences that will help you with key vowel AND consonant sounds. They are all traditional fun tongue twisters that come from different regions in different countries in Latin America and in Spain.

Please note: To use the practice record function you will need to be in Chrome.

Tongue Twisters

Audio Introduction:

Now let's have some fun with tongue twisters in Spanish. Like in English, it's all about a repeating theme, a repeating sound.



Tongue Twister #1

This exercise focuses on the “**cua**” and “**cue**” sounds. Make sure you produce a heavy **K** sound with each “**c**” and the diphthongs UA and UE are heavily stressed in the vowels.

Quando cuentas cuentos, cuenta cuantos cuentos cuentas, cuando cuentas cuentos.

When you tell tales, count how many tales you tell when you tell tales

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Quando cuentas cuentos, cuenta cuantos cuentos cuentas, cuando cuentas cuentos.



Tongue Twister #2

This tongue twister focuses on the “co,” “po,” “pa,” and “é” sounds. The accented “**é**” is the stressed vowel in the words “**compré**” and “**pagué**” (where you put more force on the stressed syllable). Also, remember the other vowels are fully pronounced with flat open “o” and “a” values.

Compré pocas copas, pocas copas compré y como compré pocas copas, pocas copas pagué.

I bought few cups, few cups I bought and since I bought few cups, few cups I paid for

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Compré pocas copas, pocas copas compré y como compré pocas copas, pocas copas pagué.



Tongue Twister #3

This tongue twister focuses on the sound value represented by “ge”. Remember that when the “R” is single and in between vowels, it’s a light “r,” not a hard “r” (“rr”) sound, like in the word “ARROZ”

De generación en generación las generaciones se degeneran con mayor degeneración.

From generation to generation, the generations degenerate with greater degeneration

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

De generación en generación las generaciones se degeneran con mayor degeneración.



Tongue Twister #4

This tongue twister focuses on the “i” “a” “o” sounds. This one can be a little difficult because of the multiple PIR/PIN/PIPIRI sequences.

Tengo una gallina pinta pipiripinta gorda pipirigorda y sorda que tiene tres pollitos pintos pipiripintos gordos pipirigordos. Si la gallina no hubiera sido pinta pipiripinta gorda pipirigorda los pollitos no hubieran sido pintos pipiripintos gordos pipirigordos

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Tengo una gallina pinta pipiripinta gorda pipirigorda y sorda que tiene tres pollitos pintos pipiripintos gordos pipirigordos. Si la gallina no hubiera sido pinta pipiripinta gorda pipirigorda los pollitos no hubieran sido pintos pipiripintos gordos pipirigordos



Tongue Twister #5

This tongue twister focuses on the "ó" and "ón" sounds.

Un dragón tragón tragó carbón y el carbón que tragó el dragón tragón le hizo salir barrigón

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Un dragón tragón tragó carbón y el carbón que tragó el dragón tragón le hizo salir barrigón



Tongue Twister #6

This tongue twister focuses on the "i" "a" "o" sounds. This one can be a little difficult because of the diphthongs IERES/IERA/IERE/IERO

¿Cómo quieres que te quiera si quien quiero que me quiera no me quiere como quiero que me quiera?

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

¿Cómo quieres que te quiera si quien quiero que me quiera no me quiere como quiero que me quiera?



Tongue Twister #7

This tongue twister focuses on the double “rr” or rolled RR sound. Perhaps one of the most difficult consonant utterances of Spanish. It’s a popular and classic challenge taught to children at a young age.

Erre con erre cigarro, erre con erre barril, rapido corren los carros cargados de azucar al ferrocarril.

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Erre con erre cigarro, erre con erre barril, rapido corren los carros cargados de azucar al ferrocarril.



Tongue Twister #8

This tongue twister focuses on the “ll” sounds. This one can be a little difficult because of the position of your tongue inside your mouth. A little useful tip is to anchor the tip of your tongue against the lower teeth and then practice listening and repeating.

Yo lloro si lloras, si lloras yo lloro. tu llanto es mi llanto; y tu llanto, mi lloro. si tu ya no lloras, tampoco yo lloro.

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Yo lloro si lloras, si lloras yo lloro. tu llanto es mi llanto; y tu llanto, mi lloro. si tu ya no lloras, tampoco yo lloro.



Tongue Twister #9

This tongue twister focuses on the single “R” sounds. This one can be a little difficult because of the Alternating **CAMARÓ** – **CARAME** Phonemes.

Camarón, caramelo. caramelo, camarón. camarón, caramelo. caramelo, camarón.

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Camarón, caramelo. caramelo, camarón. camarón, caramelo. caramelo, camarón.



Tongue Twister #10

This tongue twister focuses on the non-plosive sounds of P. This one can be a little difficult as you force yourself to produce a very light sound of “P”. It will also demand concentration on the alternating value of Consonants and Vowels.

Pedro Pérez pereira, pobre pintor portugués, pinta pinturas por poca plata, para pasear por Portugal.

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Pedro Pérez pereira, pobre pintor portugués, pinta pinturas por poca plata, para pasear por Portugal.



Tongue Twister #11

This tongue twister focuses on the “tr” sound. The “r” sound is pretty difficult for new Spanish speakers – and even more difficult is the “rr” sound. Try your best to say this tongue twister yourself first, then listen to the audio to see if you got it right.

Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo en un trigal.

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo en un trigal.



Tongue Twister #12

This tongue twister focuses on the hard “r” sound (same as the “rr” sound). The hard “r” sound seems to be difficult for almost all non-native Spanish speakers. With practice you’ll be able to roll your “r” sounds — just be patient.

■ Un perro rompe la rama del árbol

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Un perro rompe la rama del árbol.



Tongue Twister

This tongue twister focuses on the “p” and “pl” sounds. These sounds aren’t too difficult but you must remember to keep your lips pursed for a very light “P” rather than the very plosive English sound of P (as in the words Parent, Please, Purse, Pierce).

■ Pancha plancha con cuatro planchas. ¿Con cuantas planchas pancha plancha?

Listen carefully again and then record yourself to hear your pronunciation. Can you match the recording?

Slow version

Fast version

Pancha plancha con cuatro planchas. ¿Con cuantas planchas pancha plancha?

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

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1.0	June 9, 2022	First Publication	N/A