

PART I:

Reviewing and

Practicing the Basics

1

Spanish Sounds and Spelling

¿Cuánto sabe usted?

How Much Do You Know Already?



1. Why is there an accent on the word **sí**?
2. Which syllable is stressed in the word **tratamiento**?
3. Name one triphthong in Spanish.
4. How many consonants are there in the Spanish alphabet?
5. Which of the following are capitalized in Spanish: religions, months, or languages?

Vowels

Las vocales

There are two basic kinds of sound in any language: VOWELS and CONSONANTS. To become a fluent speaker in Spanish, you must know the following sounds by heart. Begin by repeating the five main vowels:

a (ah)	like <i>yacht</i>
e (eh)	like <i>met</i>
i (ee)	like <i>keep</i>
o (oh)	like <i>open</i>
u (oo)	like <i>spoon</i>

cha-cha-cha
excelente
dividir
loco
Lulú

Remember that Spanish vowels are produced by expelling air from the mouth without blockage, and there is no "gliding" of the vowels as there is in English. Also bear in mind that Spanish sounds are usually made toward the front of the mouth instead of back.



A, **e**, and **o** are known as the strong vowels, **i** (or **y**) and **u**, as weak vowels. A DIPHTHONG is the blending of two vowels into a single syllable. The sound of each vowel, however, should be heard distinctly. A diphthong may be formed of a strong vowel and a weak vowel, or vice versa, or of two weak vowels, but never of two strong vowels. The usual Spanish diphthongs are:

DIPHTHONG	ENGLISH EXAMPLE	SPANISH EXAMPLE
ai or ay	<i>aisle</i>	el aire (<i>air</i>)
au	<i>house</i>	el aula (<i>classroom</i>)
ei or ey	<i>they</i>	la ley (<i>law</i>)
eu	<i>wayward</i>	Europa (<i>Europe</i>)
ia	<i>yard</i>	enviar (<i>to send</i>)
ie	<i>yes</i>	tienda (<i>store</i>)
io	<i>yore</i>	el apio (<i>celery</i>)
iu	<i>you</i>	la viuda (<i>widow</i>)
oi or oy	<i>toy</i>	doy (<i>I give</i>)
ua	<i>want</i>	el guante (<i>glove</i>)
ue	<i>way</i>	la muestra (<i>sample</i>)
ui or uy	<i>week</i>	muy (<i>very</i>)
uo	<i>woke</i>	la cuota (<i>dues</i>)

A TRIPHTHONG is a blending of three vowels into a single syllable. The most common combinations in Spanish are:

TRIPHTHONG	ENGLISH EXAMPLE	SPANISH EXAMPLE
iai	<i>yipe</i>	cambiáis (<i>you change</i>)
iei	<i>yea</i>	enviéis (<i>that you send</i>)
uai or uay	<i>wise</i>	Paraguay
uei or uey	<i>wait</i>	el buey (<i>ox</i>)



LA PRÁCTICA 1

Read this list of words aloud. Be sure to focus on each vowel sound:

el pan	la cuadra	confiáis
la pera	la abuela	enfriéis
el coco	la nieve	decíais
el tomate	la criada	continuéis
la espinaca	el afeitte	Uruguay
la lechuga	la causa	actuéis
la uva	la mercancía	
la ensalada	el viudo	
el encurtido	el yeso	
el trigo	el yodo	
el batido	el suizo	
la leche	el cuarto	
la limonada		
el vino		

Consonants

Las consonantes

Consonants are produced by blocking the air partially or completely in speech. As a rule, most of these sounds are pronounced the way they are written:

SPANISH LETTER	ENGLISH SOUND
c (after an e or i)	s as in <i>Sam</i> (cigarro)
ch	ch as in <i>China</i> (chica)
d (between vowels, final)	th as in <i>that</i> (nada, verdad)
g (after an e or i)	h as in <i>Harry</i> (general)
h	silent, like the <i>k</i> in <i>knife</i> (hola)
j	h as in <i>hot</i> (Juan)
ll	y as in <i>yes</i> (llama)
ñ	ny as in <i>canyon</i> (niño)
q (followed by ue or ui)	k as in <i>kit</i> (tequila)
r (beginning, after l, n)	“rolled” <i>r</i> (Rosa, amarillo)
rr	“rolled” <i>r</i> (carro)
v	b as in <i>blue</i> (viva)
z	s as in <i>sun</i> (cerveza)

Generally, **b, d, f, k, l, m, n, p, s, t** and **y** are similar to their English equivalents: **bobo, dogo, foro, kilo, loro, mono, nodo, poro, solo, topo, yo-yo**. There are very few words in Spanish that begin with **w** or **x**: **whiskey, xerografia**.

Remember that **gue** is pronounced like the *gai* in *gai-ly* and **gui** is pronounced like the *gee* in *gee-zer* (la **guerra**, el **guisante**).

With very few exceptions, Spanish is pronounced the way it's spelled, and vice-versa. So pronounce each sound the same way every time the corresponding letter appears.





LA PRÁCTICA 2

Pronounce these common words. Remember to sound out each letter:

el amigo	el macho
el amor	la mujer
el carro	el pollo
el español	el quince
la experiencia	la plaza
el general	el zapato
la granja	el guerrero
el señor	el hombro
la reina	el amor
el hada	el queso
la bondad	el niño
el guiso	la victoria
la vida	el rastro

Syllabication and Stress

El silabeo y la acentuación

A SYLLABLE is a piece of a word that must contain at least one vowel. To divide Spanish words into syllables, here are some general rules:

- A single consonant (including **ch**, **ll**, and **rr**) is pronounced with the following break in syllables: **ca-be-za**, **mu-cha-cho**, **ce-bo-lla**, **gue-rra**.
- Combinations of two consonants between vowels are generally separated: **car-ta**, **cin-co**, **tar-de**.
- However, the combination is usually inseparable if the second consonant is **l** or **r**: **ta-bla**, **li-bro**, **pue-blo**.
- When three or more consonants are together between vowels, generally the last one joins the next vowel (unless it is **l** or **r**): **ins-ti-gar**, **cons-tan-te**, **in-glés**.
- Diphthongs and triphthongs form no separate syllables: **i-gual**, **ca-yen-do**, **oi-go**, **Pa-ra-guay**, **con-ti-nuéis**.

- When two strong vowels are together in a word, they are separated into syllables: **cre-er**, **em-ple-an**, **le-o**.
- There is also separation when there is an accented weak vowel before or after a strong vowel: **co-mí-an**, **grú-a**, **tí-a**.
- The letter **y** is considered a consonant when a vowel follows it, and it remains with that vowel when the word is divided: **a-yu-da-mos**, **a-yu-na**, **a-yer**.

The rules for STRESS or accentuation in Spanish simply state that accented (´) parts of words should always be pronounced louder and with more emphasis (**olé**). If there's no accent mark, the last part of the word is pronounced louder (**español**). For words ending in a vowel, or in **n** or **s**, the next to the last part of the word is stressed (**importante**). A written ACCENT MARK either denotes an exception to the rules above or a need to distinguish words that are similar in spelling but different in meaning:

TIP

Accent marks are frequently found on verb endings, question words, and demonstratives:

verb endings: **volvió**,

preparándome, **traíganos**

question words: **¿Qué?**, **¿Cuánto?**, **¿Cómo?**

demonstratives: **ése**, **aqué**, **ésto**

japonés

ends in **s**, so it normally should be stressed on the second to last syllable; an accent indicates that it is an exception.

dé

is the command *give*; without an accent, it is the preposition **de** which means *of* or *from*.



LA PRÁCTICA 3

Divide these words into syllables:

1. milla mi-lla
2. extraño
3. tío
4. escribir
5. construcción
6. enviáis
7. Uruguay
8. carro

9. miércoles _____
10. pagaréis _____
11. nuestro _____
12. reímos _____
13. dieciséis _____
14. ciudad _____
15. viene _____

Add an accent to those words that require one. Leave the others blank:

16. soledad _____
17. averiguais _____
18. violin _____
19. diecisiete _____
20. aula _____
21. ruido _____
22. tunel _____
23. examen _____
24. frances _____
25. murcielago _____
26. caracter _____
27. buho _____
28. capitulo _____
29. dame _____
30. vivi _____

The Alphabet and Spelling Conventions

El abecedario y las convenciones del deletreo

Take a few moments to review the ALPHABET (**el abecedario**) in Spanish.

Letter	Pronunciation
a	(ah)
b	(beh)
c	(seh)
ch	(cheh)*
d	(deh)
e	(eh)
f	(eh'-feh)
g	(geh)
h	(ah'-cheh)
i	(ee)
j	(hoh'-tah)
k	(kah)
l	(eh'-leh)
ll	(eh'-yeh)*
m	(eh'-meh)
n	(eh'-neh)
ñ	(ehn'-yeh)*
o	(oh)
p	(peh)
q	(koo)
r	(eh'-reh)
rr	(eh'-rreh)
s	(eh'-seh)
t	(teh)
u	(oo)
v	(veh)
w	(veh doh'-bleh)
x	(eh'-kees)
y	(ee-gree-eh'-gah)
z	(seh'-tah)

TIP

This question is useful when you are practicing spelling words in Spanish:

¿Cómo se deletrea?

How do you spell it?

¿Cómo se deletrea su nombre en español?

How do you spell your name in Spanish?

*These letters have been removed from the official Spanish alphabet. However, people still refer to them when spelling out a word. Also remember that Spanish dialects do vary, so some texts will provide different pronunciation guides from the ones listed above.

Spanish utilizes many of the same PUNCTUATION MARKS as English (period, comma, semicolon, etc.). However, when writing exclamations or questions in Spanish, you must include an upside down mark at the beginning.

¿Cómo está?

¿Es usted estudiante de español?

¡Caramba!

¡Adiós!

There are also some differences in the use of CAPITAL LETTERS (**las mayúsculas**) in Spanish. These are the general rules:

- The first word of a sentence is always capitalized:

¿Cómo está?

- Proper names of people, places, and things are capitalized:

Carlos es de Cuba.

- Days of the week and months of the year are **not** capitalized:

lunes, el diez de mayo

- Religions, nationalities, and languages are **not** capitalized:

Juan es español, católico y habla el español.

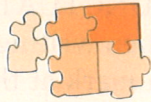
- In titles of books or works of art, only the first word is capitalized:

Me gustó La casa de los espíritus.

- Most abbreviations are capitalized:

E.E.U.U., Ud., Uds., Sr., Sra., Srta., Dr., Dra., etc.

POR SU CUENTA



This exercise with **trabalenguas** (tongue-twisters) will not only help your pronunciation skills, but you can acquire new Spanish words as well. How fast can you say these one-liners without hurting yourself?

Tres tristes tigres trillaron trigo en un trigal.

Three sad tigers threshed wheat in a wheat field.

Compre poca capa parda, porque el que poca capa parda compra poca capa parda paga.

Buy only a little brown cape, for he who buys only a little brown cape pays only for a little brown cape.

Ñoño Yáñez come ñame en las mañanas con el niño.

Squeamish Yáñez eats yams in the mountains with the child.
