

Spanish Pronunciation Guide

Spanish spelling is very phonetic, with a few exceptions. This means that if you know how to pronounce the letters of a word, it's relatively easy to sound out the word itself.

Rote learning is a memorization technique based on repetition. The idea is that one will be able to quickly recall the meaning of the material the more one repeats it.

Repeat Phrases: (RP) these are phrases that you are instructed to write out 20 times.

Example:

a = like ah in father

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a = like ah in father

a = like ah in father

20 times with pen, and paper.

Vowels

The vowels in Spanish are short crisp sounds. They are not dragged out like the English vowels.

(RP) Two vowels together is a diphthong so skip to bottom.

a

(RP) a = like ah in father

e

(RP1) e = e in pet sound when no accent mark.

(RP2) e = like ay in pay with accent mark é

i

(RP) like ee in see

o

(RP) like o in Oh My

u

(RP) like oo in Boo Boo.

y

(RP1) y = like ee in see

(RP2) y = like y in yes

- Very rarely used at the middle or ending of words.

Consonants

b

(RP) b= like b in bed

- sometimes like a soft V

c

(RP1) c = like k in kid

(RP2) ci = like s in supper

(RP3) ce = like s in supper

ch

(RP) ch = like ch in touch

- like Shush

d

(RP) d = like d in dog

- Sometimes like th in the

f

(RP) f = like f in fine

g

(RP) gi = like a throaty h

(RP) ge = like a throaty h

(RP) g = like g in go

gu, gü

when followed by another vowel, like 'Gw' in Gwen.

h

(RP) h = silent.

j
(RP) j = like a throaty h in ha

k
(RP) k = like k in kid

l
(RP) l = like l in love

ll
(RP) ll = like y in year

m
(RP) m = like m in mother

n
(RP) n = like n in nice
- and like n in anchor

ñ
(RP) ñ = like ny in canyon
- use your nasal nose sound.

p
(RP) p = like p in pig

q
(RP) q = like q in quiche

r, rr
Spanish has two 'r' sounds both of which are different from their counterpart in English.

- single **r**: This sound is created by putting the tip of the tongue up against where the front of the roof of the mouth meets the upper teeth, very similar to the action English speakers make to pronounce *l* or *d*. To an English-speaking ear, it may sound a bit like a combined "d-r". Take care to pronounce *r* separately when it follows a consonant; a blended English *tr* will not be recognized in the Spanish word *otro* ("other"), which should be pronounced more like "OHT-roh".
- rolled **r**: Written "r" at the beginning of the word, or "rr" between vowels (*cerro*). It's a multiply vibrating sound. Whereas most English speakers can learn to tap out a single

r, many adults learning Spanish find this sound impossible to produce; in this case, pronouncing it like a Spanish *r* or fumbling out a *d-r* will be better understood than pronouncing it like a long English *r*.

s

(RP1) s = like s in son
(RP2) s at end of word like sh
- sometimes like a Z

t

(RP) t = like t in top

v

(RP) v = like b in bed
- (but no aspiration) at the beginning of a word and after 'm'

w

(RP) w = like w in weight

x

(RP1) x = like x in flexible
(RP2) x = like ss in hiss at beginning of a word
(RP3) x = like a throaty h in the middle of words

y

(RP) y = like y in yes

z

(RP) z = z like s in supper
- or like th in thin

Diphthongs

Most diphthongs can be approximated by blending the first vowel into the second in a single syllable.

ai,

(RP) ai = like eye

ay

(RP) ay = like eye
au (RP) au = like ow in cow
ea (RP) ea = like ay-ah
ei (RP) ei = like ay in say
ey (RP) ey = like ay in say
eu (RP) eu = like eh-oo'
ia (RP) like = ee-ah
ie (RP) ie = like ee-eh
io (RP) io = like ee-aw
iu (RP) iu = like ew in few
oi (RP) oi = like oy in boy
oy (RP) oy = like oy in boy
ua (RP) ua = like wa in wash
ue (RP) ue = like we in well
ui (RP) ui = like ooey in phoey
uy (RP) uy = like ooey in phoey
uo (RP) uo = like wo in won't

Spanish accents

Spanish accents (tildes) can only be written over the five vowels (a, e, i, o, u), and the accent is written from lower left to upper right: á, é, í, ó, ú.

(RP) The Tilde is the mark on the ñ

Accents and stress

(RP) If a word is marked with an accent, then that syllable receives the stress.

Accents Changing Meaning of Words

An accent can also be used to differentiate between words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings:

(RP) Año = (year) ano = (anus, ass)

él (he) el (the)

té (tea) te (you) (ex: I can't see you)

tú (you) (ex: you want to go there) tu (your)

mí (me) mi(my)

dé (I give or he/she/it give; but in present of subjunctive) de (of)

sí (yes) si (if)

más (more/plus) mas (but)

Diaeresis

In the clusters "gue" and "gui", the 'u' serves only to change the sound of the consonant and is silent (*guitarra*), unless it bears a diaeresis, as in "güe" and "güi" (*pedigüeño*). In between vowels, it tends to be voiced and not guttural.