

SPANISH-LANGUAGE RECOMMENDATIONS AND GLOSSARY

INTRODUCTION

With approximately 60 million Spanish-speakers in the United States, and close to 600 million worldwide, it is imperative that we revisit how we think about Spanish communications in the United States. This document is meant to help you evaluate how you approach Spanish content, give you a foundation of terminology in Spanish used in politics in the United States, and provide you with general considerations to keep in mind. We recognize that Spanish is not one-size-fits-all and that words and phrases can hold different meanings depending on nationality, and even regionally across countries. There may be times when the word or phrase we recommend does not feel like a fit for the community you serve, so feel free to adapt to fit your community's needs.

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPANISH-LANGUAGE CONTENT

Change How You Think About Spanish Content

Though more and more campaigns and organizations are now seeking to integrate Spanish-language content into their programs, the need for this type of content continues to be misunderstood. Content in Spanish should not be seen as the sole way to reach or engage Latino voters nor should it be used as a tool to use exclusively with monolingual Spanish-speakers. Recent data from our work shows the potential benefits of engaging with bilingual Latinos in Spanish online. In a panel test, we saw Spanish creative significantly move bilingual audiences on vote intent and motivation to vote for 2022. We also suspect that investing in Spanish outreach in general can signal to other Latinos that a campaign or organization is invested in engaging with people like them. Communicating in Spanish can have effects beyond simply communicating a message to Spanish-dominant Latinos.

It is also important to recognize that many anglicisms have made their way from English to Spanish and have become a way of speaking in different parts of the United States. That is okay. Language evolves and changes to fit the culture of the country and community it is

spoken in. Be mindful of the context in which these anglicisms appear. For example, content that includes anglicisms from native Spanish-speaking messengers in a storytelling format will likely be received differently than communications from an organization that isn't trusted or seen as a regular messenger in Spanish.

Know Your Audience

You will produce your best content in Spanish when you understand WHO your audience is. Here are some questions to help you better identify your audience:

- Is this going to be used nationally or will it remain state-specific?
 - If state-specific, can you localize it even more?
- Is this for a specific nationality? For example, during the 2020 campaign cycle, groups like *Venezolanos con Biden* emerged and created specific content for Venezuelans.
- What is the purpose of this content? Will you want it to be in formal Spanish (*usted*) or informal Spanish (*tú*)? Using formal Spanish with older folks in the community is a sign of respect and something to take into account, particularly when doing direct voter outreach, like canvassing and phone banking. Additionally, there are countries where the formal use is more standard. This is why we continue to emphasize the importance of really knowing your audience and who you are speaking to. However, informal Spanish can be a better option for literature, websites, and digital content where individuals are learning about your organization or candidate on their own and/or if you are prompting them to take action such as voting, donating, etc.
- What medium will this content be used on? If you are translating content from English to Spanish, text tends to get longer, so keep that in mind when creating anything visual where more text can impact the design and user experience.
- When creating videos or audio, WHO will be your messenger? You want to make sure the messenger resonates with your target community, especially if you are speaking to a specific nationality or region.

Spanish-first Content versus English-to-Spanish Translated Content

We should all be striving to produce Spanish-first content whenever possible. There are ideas and words that only make sense in Spanish, and likely will resonate more. However, if you do find yourself having to translate copy from English to Spanish, here are a few basic things you should think about:

- Do not assume that the bilingual staff in your organization can take on translation responsibilities, especially if this was not something outlined in the job description from the beginning. Have a conversation with them about their comfort with the language – it is one thing to be able to catch glaring issues, but it is a very separate thing to expect

them to be experts. Often the best use of fluent Spanish speakers on staff is in reviewing copy that comes back from translators. Even if a translation is “correct,” it might not exactly fit your use case. A staffer close to the project might often be able to flag word choices or syntax that could use tweaking.

- If, as an example, you know that your audience will have a larger audience of South Americans in the East Coast, you should aim to find someone who has experience translating for a South American audience in the East Coast. Even here you will find many differences in the language, but it will be a much better approach than hiring a translator that mainly translates for largely Mexican audiences in the West Coast.
- Give your designated translator, whether in-house, freelancer, or part of a firm, enough time to turn around content. Allow your own team enough time to review or to go back and forth and answer any questions the translator may have.
- If you have a website, avoid using the Google Translate plug-in; instead hire a translator. Google Translate, though much better than before, often has mistakes that will likely translate word by word and not accurately transmit your original message.

If you have those basics down, here are other things to consider:

- Establish a style guide or other document that can serve as a reference across your organization for translators and Spanish-first copywriters so that you set a uniform way of how your organization talks about things in Spanish.
- When drafting content in English that will be translated to Spanish, ideally someone on your team can catch copy in English that won’t translate well. However, if your team does not have that capacity, encourage and empower the translator you’re working with to ask questions and make recommendations on how to change the copy to make more sense.
- Think about adapting your English-first content to Spanish instead of translating it word by word, unless you need the copy to match exactly for something like a poll or survey. Most people can adapt copy for digital programs or other mediums.

Should you use *latino*, *latine*, or *latinx* in Spanish when speaking directly to voters?

Though we know that language is always evolving, we need to meet people where they are and the reality is many Spanish speakers in the United States are not aware of gender neutral options like *latinx* or *latine*. We recommend that you stick to *latino* or *hispano* in Spanish. If there is opportunity to discuss one on one with individuals about non-gendered options, then do that. You can also choose to interchange *latinos/hispanos*, *comunidad latina/comunidad hispana*, *personas latinas/personas hispanas*, etc. throughout your content to have less masculine language.

When it comes to determining whether you use “hispano” or “latino,” remember to keep your audience in mind. There are certain parts of the country where one may resonate more than the other. For example, the City of Los Angeles celebrates Latino Heritage Month as opposed to Hispanic Heritage Month.

Summary

Approach content in Spanish with intentionality: it is obvious to people when content in Spanish is rushed, incorrectly translated, or an afterthought. Poorly translated content can give people the impression that they are just being pandered to, especially when it is not consistently used by campaigns/organizations. Bad Spanish content can backfire because it signals that there was not enough care put into competently engaging Latinos. When we are able to deliver content that actually speaks to people in their preferred language and that pushes them to engage with us, we will create a space where Latinos/Hispanics feel like they can have a voice in our political process.

COMMON GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Capitalization

Spanish does not capitalize in many instances in which English does. For example:

- days of the week:
 - Los centros de votación estarán abiertos de **lunes a viernes**.
- months:
 - Las elecciones presidenciales se llevan a cabo cada cuatro años durante el mes de **noviembre**.
- languages:
 - Nuestros miembros prefieren recibir información en **español**.
- nationalities:
 - Aunque ella es **mexicana**, le gusta más la comida **peruana**.
- religions:
 - Él creció yendo a una iglesia **católica** cerca de su casa.
- composition titles (only the first word and proper nouns)
 - El **presidente Joe Biden**, candidato del **Partido Demócrata**, comenzó su mandato el 20 de enero del 2021.

- **La Casa Blanca** estresó la importancia de trabajar juntos, sin importar si somos **demócratas** o **republicanos**, para solucionar los problemas que enfrentamos como país.
- introductory titles (e.g. **señora Wilson**) - except when abbreviated (e.g. **Sr. for señor, Dr. for doctor and Srta. for señorita**)

Dates

In Spanish, you write the day + month + year. This is different from the way we are used to writing dates in English (month + day + year). January 21, 2021 would be written 21 de enero del 2021 or 21 de enero de 2021.

GLOSSARY

The list of words below are meant to provide you with a framework of words you can use. When in doubt about whether or not the translation of a word in English will translate accurately, it is best to use words that describe what it is. For example, canvassing is typically the action of visiting people in their homes, so “visitar a votantes” is a way to translate that action. Another way to identify good Spanish substitutes is to check what news platforms are using to talk about the concept. For example, cancel culture appears many times across Spanish-speaking outlets as “cultura de la cancelación”.

Again, the more you know about your defined target audience and what they are familiar with, the easier this will be for you. However, when in doubt, there are great resources you can consult, such as [WordReference](#) and [SpanishDict](#).

Elections + Voting

Note: If you are creating content that is state specific, it may also be good to check how the Secretary of State or other government offices responsible for elections locally are talking about elections in Spanish, if at all. Depending on where in the country you are, even the language in English will vary for the name of *where* someone physically votes.

- **Absentee voting:** voto en ausencia
- **Ballot:** boleta, boleta electoral; more specific to Puerto Ricans, papeleta
- **Ballot curing:** corrección de boletas
- **Ballot drop-off:** devolver/entregar la boleta
- **Ballot drop-off box:** buzón de entrega de boletas, buzón electoral

- **Bipartisan:** bipartidista; less common, bipartidario
- **Campaign:**
 - campaña/campaña electoral (noun)
 - hacer campaña (verb)
- **Early voting:** votación temprana, votación anticipada, voto anticipado
- **Election:** elecciones, which in Spanish is more regularly said in plural form even if you are talking about one specific election
- **Election Day:** día de las elecciones
- **Endorsement:** respaldo o apoyo
- **Get Out The Vote (GOTV):**
 - movilización de votantes (noun)
 - movilizar a votantes (verb)
- **Incumbent:** actual, en funciones, ex: el actual congresista
- **Mail-in ballot:** boleta electoral por correo, boleta por correo
- **Polling location:** lugar de votación
- **Polls:** urnas
- **Primary:** elecciones primarias
- **Rally:** mitin, manifestación
- **Register to vote:** inscríbete a votar, regístrate a votar
- **Running for office:** postularse para (insert office name)
- **Runoff:** segunda vuelta
- **Third party:** tercer partido
- **Up and down the ballot:** a cada nivel de gobierno
- **Vote by mail:**
 - votar por correo (verb)
 - votación por correo (noun)
- **Voter:** votante
- **Voter file:** archivo del votante, padrón electoral
- **Voter suppression:** supresión del voto
- **Voter turnout:** participación electoral

Government + Policies

- **Abortion:** aborto
- **Advocacy:** one that many cannot agree on since the words in Spanish do not completely capture the concept. The two options below give an idea of when/how to use them.
 - defensa: when talking about advocacy as defending an issue or rights

- abogacía/promoción: when talking about pushing for a particular law and/or policy outcomes
- **Affordable Care Act (Obamacare):** Ley de cuidado de salud asequible
- **American dream:** sueño americano
- **Big Ag:** grandes corporaciones agrícolas, empresas gigantes agrícolas
- **Big Tech:** grandes corporaciones tecnológicas, empresas gigantes tecnológicas
- **Capitol riot:** asalto al Capitolio
- **Civil rights:** derechos civiles
- **Clean energy:** energía limpia, energía sostenible
- **Climate change:** cambio climático
- **Climate emergency:** emergencia climática
- **Climate hoax:** engaño sobre el clima
- **Corporate influence:** influencia corporativa
- **Corporate PAC:** comité de acción política corporativo [note that corporativo (masc.) matches comité (masc.) and not política (fem.) because it is an adjective for comité]
- **Corporation:** corporación
- **Cost of living:** costo de vida
- **Criminal justice:** sistema penal
- **Criminal justice reform:** reforma(s) al sistema penal
- **Critical race theory:** teoría crítica de la raza
- **Deductible:** deducible
- **Democracy:** democracia
- **Drug companies:** compañías farmacéuticas
- **Economy:** economía
- **Enforcement** (as in enforcing the law): aplicación de la(s) ley(es)
- **Entrepreneur:** empresario/a
- **Environment:** medioambiente
- **Environmental justice:** justicia ambiental
- **Filibuster:** Stays in English with italics *filibuster*
- **Fossil fuels:** combustibles fósiles
- **Gerrymandering:** manipulación de distritos electorales
- **Green New Deal:** Keep as Green New Deal since this is what the media usually refers to it as without translating
- **Guns:** armas de fuego
- **Gun violence:** violencia armada
- **Hard work:** trabajo duro/arduo
- **Hardworking people:** personas trabajadoras, gente trabajadora

- **Health care:** For this word, there are multiple variations depending on what specifically we are discussing in regards to health care.
 - sistema de cuidado de salud - when speaking about general health care system
 - cobertura médica - when speaking about coverage
 - seguro médico - when speaking about health insurance
 - atención médica - when speaking about literal care
- **Homelessness:** falta de vivienda
- **Housing:** vivienda
- **Immigration:** inmigración
 - Immigration reform: reforma migratoria
- **Inflation:** inflación
- **In-state tuition:** matrícula para residentes del estado (note: this may require more explanation than just the phrasing because not everyone understands the difference between in-state tuition and out-of-state tuition)
- **Insurrection:** insurrección
- **Job creation:**
 - creación de empleos, creación de trabajos (noun)
 - crear empleos, crear trabajos (verb)
- **Legislation:**
 - ley o legislación if enacted
 - proyecto de ley or propuesta de ley if proposed legislation
- **Level the playing field:** crear oportunidades equitativas
- **LGBTQ:** remains as LGBTQ, the acronym is well known
- **Lobbying:** cabildeo, presión política
- **Loophole:** vacío legal
- **Medicaid:** Many states keep it as Medicaid, but if using it for a specific state, check to see if the state calls the program something different. For example, CA calls the program Medi-Cal and that is more commonly understood. In MA, it is part of MassHealth.
- **Medicare for All:** Medicare para todos, because this actually seems to have made it through in Spanish media
- **Minimum wage:** salario mínimo
- **Oil drilling:** extracción de petróleo
- **Pathway to citizenship:** camino a la ciudadanía
- **Pension:** pensión
- **Pre-existing condition:** condición preexistente
- **Premium:** prima

- **Prescription drugs:** medicamentos recetados
- **Pro-choice:** a favor del derecho al aborto, derecho a decidir, derecho de la persona de decidir sobre su propio cuerpo
- **Pro-life:** Pro-vida seems to be recognized by many, but if hoping to use more progressive language can be written as antiderecho/antiderecho al aborto
- **Reproductive health:** salud reproductiva
- **Retirement:** jubilación (formal), retiro (more colloquial)
- **Rising costs:** alza de precios, costos crecientes
- **Safety net programs:** programas de seguridad social
- **Social Security (program):** el (programa de) Seguro Social
- **Student loan debt:** deuda de préstamos estudiantiles
- **Supply chain:** cadena de suministros
- **Supreme Court:** la Corte Suprema
- **Supreme Court Justice:** juez de la Corte Suprema
- **Surprise billing:** facturas sorpresa
- **Taxes:** impuestos
- **Tax reform:** reforma(s) al sistema fiscal
- **Unemployment:** desempleo
- **Voting rights:** derecho al voto
- **Voucher program:** programa de vales
- **Worker:** trabajador/a
- **Working class:** clase trabajadora, clase obrera

Misinformation + Disinformation

- **Cancel culture:** cultura de la cancelación
- **Censorship:** censura
- **Debunking:** desmentir
- **Disinformation:** desinformación
- **Fact-checking:** verificación de hechos
- **Malinformation:** malinformación
- **Media ecosystem:** ecosistema de medios
- **Media manipulation:** manipulación de los medios
- **Misinformation:** misinformación

Political identity

- **American:** estadounidense, as the standard to many people, particularly immigrants from Latin America for whom America extends beyond the United States; however if you know your audience will really resonate with americano, feel free to use that
- **Communism:** comunismo
- **Conservative:** conservador
- **Democrat:**
 - demócrata when talking about political affiliation
 - Partido Demócrata when talking about the official party name
- **Democratic Socialist:** socialista democrático
- **Far-left:** extrema izquierda
- **Far-right:** ultra derecha o extrema derecha
 - **Far-right groups:** grupos de extrema derecha, grupos de supremacía blanca
- **Fascism:** fascismo
- **Independent:** independiente
- **Liberal:** liberal
- **Libertarian:** libertario/a
- **Moderate:** moderado/a
- **Progressive:** progresista
- **Republican:**
 - republicano when talking about political affiliation
 - Partido Republicano when talking about the official party name
- **Socialism:** socialismo
- **White supremacy:** supremacía blanca

Organizing

- **Canvassing:** visitar a votantes, hablar con votantes en sus hogares
- **Direct voter contact:** contacto directo con votantes
- **Grassroots:** base comunitaria
- **Knock doors:** tocar puertas is the literal translation which can work if you're explaining to someone what canvassing would likely entail but would not recommend it as branding of an event
- **Organizer:** organizador/a
- **Phonebanking:** hacer llamadas
- **Text banking:** enviar mensajes de texto
- **Town hall (like a meeting):** foro, foro comunitario, reunión, reunión comunitaria
- **Union:** sindicato (formal), unión (more colloquial and often recognized by union members)

- **Yard sign:** This one really will matter depending on your geographic location and where you are trying to place it.
 - letrero o cartel para su
 - jardín
 - ventana
 - Etc

