

CONVERSATIONAL SPANISH

PRONUNCIATION AND BASIC GRAMMAR

A. SPANISH PRONUNCIATION

Each vowel has only one sound as given in section 1; the consonants are the same as in English except for those in the rules given in section 2.

The stress in the word is on the second to the last syllable if the word ends in a vowel or in an "l" or "g". If the word ends in any other consonant, the accent is on the last syllable. The exception is when the word has a written accent mark. Then the stress is on the accented syllable regardless of its ending.

Throughout the book, the phonetics for the vowels will be given the same way as in section 1 (therefore, if you see "ah" you will pronounce the "a" as in "father"). Other phonetics are given with English sounds in mind so that if you see a familiar English word in parentheses, pronounce the syllable as you would in English. There are a few exceptions and variations to the rules given which will not be covered in this book; however, there should be enough information to allow you to be understandable in Spanish. The "notes" section is provided for you to make notations of any commonly encountered problems.

1). Vowels

LETTER	ENGLISH SOUND	EXAMPLE
A	wh <u>at</u> or f <u>ath</u> er	<u>A</u> ya <u>l</u> a (Ah yah lah) pap <u>a</u> (pah pah)
E	l <u>e</u> t	Miguel (Mee gehl)
I	mach <u>i</u> ne	N <u>i</u> nfa (N <u>ee</u> n fah)
O	p <u>i</u> ano	<u>O</u> lga (O <u>h</u> l gah)
U	J <u>u</u> ne	<u>U</u> ribe (Oo <u>ree</u> beh)

When two vowels are together, they are pronounced either as a combined sound, or as two distinct syllables.

For example:

Oa and *ae* are pronounced as two separate syllables:

O <u>ch</u> oa	(Oh <u>ch</u> oh ah)
flame <u>a</u> do	(flah meh <u>ah</u> doh)

Other adjacent vowels form a "diphthong". The two vowels are pronounced as stated earlier, but without a separation.

d <u>ie</u> nte	(de <u>ee</u> yen teh)
tr <u>ei</u> nta	(tr <u>ai</u> n tah)
cu <u>ua</u> nto	(qu <u>ah</u> n toh)
pu <u>ue</u> rta	(p <u>wh</u> ere tah)
Mari <u>o</u>	(Mah <u>ree</u> yo)

If there is a stated accent on one of the two adjacent vowels, they usually will be pronounced separately:

Mar <u>í</u> a	Mah <u>ree</u> ah
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2). Consonants

LETTER	ENGLISH SOUND	EXAMPLE
C	<u>c</u> an but when or <u>ç</u> then <u>ç</u> at	Cantú (Kahn <u>too</u>) Cisneros followed by <u>i</u> (Sis <u>neh</u> rohs)

G	<u>g</u> o but when followed by <u>i</u> or <u>ç</u> then him	Garza (<u>Gahr</u> zah) Alergia (Ah <u>lehr</u> heeyah)
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H	(silent)	Huerta (<u>Where</u> tah)
J	<u>h</u> am	Jimenez (Hee <u>mehn</u> ehz)

The letter Q is always followed by *u*.
The *u* is silent.

Q	<u>q</u> uey	Esquivel (Ehs kee <u>vehl</u>) blanquear (blahn keh <u>ahr</u>)
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V	<u>v</u> et-if 1st letter <u>v</u> et- in other part of word	Vasquez (<u>Bahs</u> kehz) olvidar (ohl vee <u>dahr</u>)
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Some consonants not found in English:

LL	<u>ll</u> et	silla (<u>see</u> yah)
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ñ	<u>canyon</u>	Peña (<u>Pehn</u> yah)
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r r	strongly trilled R	Herrera (Ehrrr <u>reh</u> rah) cerrar (sehrr <u>rahr</u>)
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ch	<u>cheese</u>	chicle (chewing gum) (<u>cheek</u> le)
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B. BASIC GRAMMAR

In the dental office, it will be more important for you to understand and be understood than to speak Spanish correctly. The use of an incorrect form of a verb or an inappropriate gender designation, generally will not prevent you from being understood; however, you should be aware of some basic grammar to help you continue your learning.

1). Nouns

Gender

In Spanish, nouns are either masculine or feminine and any article, adjectives, adverb, or pronoun related to the noun must match in gender (and number). Most nouns that end in *a* are feminine, those that end in *o* are masculine; however, there are always exceptions.

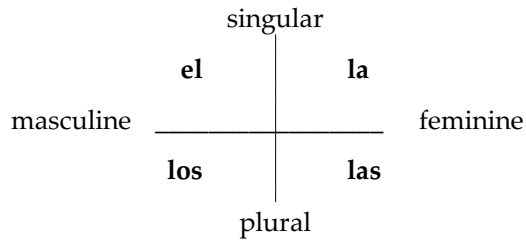
Number

To form the plural of a noun, add *s* if it ends in a vowel and *es* if it ends in a consonant. Some nouns remain the same in either singular or plural.

2). Articles

The definite article "the"

There are four different ways to say "the": *el*, *la*, *los*, and *las*. The correct choice depends on the gender and number of the noun:

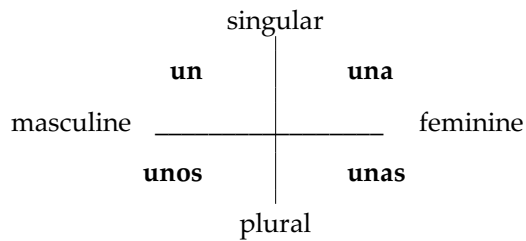


For example:

the suture	la sutura
the sutures	los puntos de sutura
the chair	la silla
the chairs	las sillas
the dentist (male)	el dentista
the dentist (female)	la dentista
the dentists (group)	los dentistas

The indefinite articles "a", "an"

There are four ways to say "a" or "an": *un, una, unos, and unas*. Again, the choice depends on the gender and number of the noun:



For example:

a filling	un empaste
some fillings	unos empastes
a face	una cara
some faces	unas caras
the toothbrush	el cepillo dental
the toothbrushes	los cepillos dentales
the tongue	la lengua
the tongues	las lenguas

3). Conjunctions

The word for "and" is "y" (ee), the word for "but" is "pero" (pe ro), the word for "or" is "o" (oh).

4). Prepositions

Common prepositions are as follows:

to, at	a
in, at, on	en
from, by, of	de
from, since	desde
until, up to	hasta que
for	por
for, in order	para
with	con
without	sin
before	antes de
after	después de
under	debajo de
above	arriba de
between, among	entre

Contractions

In some cases, the masculine article is joined with a preposition to form one word.

For Example

Let's go <u>to the</u> dentist	Vamos <u>al</u> (a+el) (male/female) dentista
We came <u>from the</u> dentist (male/female)	Venimos <u>del</u> (de+el) dentista

5). Pronouns

There are two ways to say you in Spanish. The informal *tú* (singular pronoun) is used with family, children, and close friends. The more formal *usted* (singular) should be used otherwise, especially when meeting an adult for the first time.

If someone says to you, "*Puede tutearme*", they are saying that you may use the *tú* form with them.

In the United States and Latin America, *ustedes* is used for the plural for both *tú* and *usted*.

All pronouns must agree in gender and number with the noun they replace.

Subject and Prepositional Pronouns

Subject pronouns are used infrequently as the verb conjugation indicates the subject. They may be used more to emphasize a statement or to clarify a subject.

With the preposition *con*, the pronouns *mí* and *ti* become *conmigo* (with me) and *contigo* (with you).

	<u>subject</u> <u>pronoun</u>	<u>prepositional</u> <u>pronoun</u>
I	yo	mí
you (sing.)	ti	ti
you (sing.)	usted (Ud)	usted (Ud)
he	él	él
she	ella	ella
it	eso/esa	eso/esa
we	nosotros/ nosotras	nosotros/ nosotras
you (pl.)	ustedes (Uds.)	ustedes (Uds.)
they	ellos/ellas	ellos/ellas

Direct Object Pronouns

These pronouns, (him, her, it, you, them) tell who or what receives the action of the verb. The Spanish pronoun must agree in gender and number with the noun it replaces.

	singular		
	lo	la	
masculine	_____		feminine
	los	las	
	plural		

For example:

I need toothpaste

I need it

Necesito pasta de dientes (pasta dental)

La necesito.

I want some dental floss.

I want it

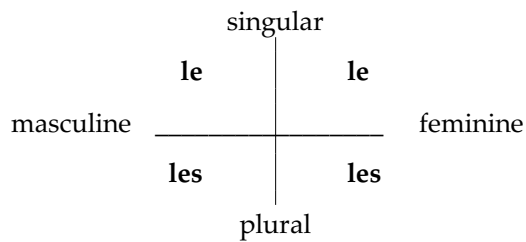
Quiero hilo dental

Lo quiero.

If the pronoun replaces both a masculine and a feminine direct object noun, *los* is used.

Indirect Object Pronouns

These pronouns, (him, her, it, you, them) tell for whom or to whom the action is performed. There is no gender difference with the indirect object pronoun, therefore, only the number must agree with the noun it replaces.



For example:

I can't give you an appointment for today.

No le puedo dar la cita para hoy.

Possessive Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
mine	mío(a)	míos(as)
yours (fam. sing.)	tuyo(a)	tuyos(as)
yours (polite form)	suyo(a)	suyos(as)
his/hers/its	suyo(a)	suyo(as)
ours	nuestro(a)	nuestros(as)
yours (fam. pl.)	su	sus
theirs	suyo(a)	suyos(as)

These pronouns are preceded by a definite article (*el, la, los, las*) if the noun is not included. The article and pronoun must agree in number and gender with the noun it describes.

For example:

my office	mi consultorio dental
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Demonstrative Pronouns

	Masc.	Fem.	Neut.
this	este	esta	esto
these	estos	estas	estos
that	ese/aquel	esa/ aquella	eso/ aquello
those	esos/ aquellos	esas/ aquellas	esos/ aquellos

These pronouns also follow gender and number of the noun they replace. The neuter pronouns refer to ideas, statements, and unidentified things. Neuter pronouns have no accents. "*Aquello*" is used for distant things or "that over there".

6). Adjectives

Adjectives usually follow the noun they describe. They are either masculine (end in *o*) or feminine (end in *a*) and agree with the noun they describe. With adjectives that end in *e* like *grande* (big), or a consonant, the adjective is the same for either gender. Adjectives also agree in number. As with nouns, if the adjective ends in a vowel, the plural is formed by adding, *s* to the end. If the adjective ends in a consonant add *es* to the end.

For example:

a famous dentist	un/una dentista	famoso/famosa
some famous dentists	unos/unas dentistas	famosos/famosas

the difficult treatment	el tratamiento difícil
the difficult treatments	los tratamientos difíciles

Comparative Adjectives

more	más
less	menos

For example:

He practices more than the others	El practica más que los otros
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Superlative Adjectives

best	mejor
worst	peor
youngest	menor, el más chico
oldest	mayor, el más grande
most	el/la más

For example:

John is the most famous of the group	Juan es el más famoso del grupo
She is the best.	Ella es la mejor.

Possessive Adjectives

	Sing.	Plur.
my	mi	mis
your (informal)	tu	tus
his/her/its	su	sus
our	nuestro(a)	nuestros(as)
your	su	sus
their	su	sus

These adjectives agree in gender and number with the items in possession or the noun they describe.

For example:

My house is your house.	<i>Mi casa es su casa.</i>
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7). Adverbs

Most adverbs in Spanish are formed from the feminine form of the adjective by adding *mente* to the adjective.

For example:

clearly	claramente
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If the adjective is the same for either gender add *mente* to the masculine form to obtain the adverb.

For example:

happily	felizmente
joyfully	alegremente

8). Verbs

The infinitive form of verbs end in *ar*, *er* or *ir*. Only a select number of verbs will be conjugated here and only in the present tense.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs maintain the same stem throughout all the conjugations and the endings (underlined) will always be as in the examples given here for the three different endings.

to	ar cepillar (brush)	er beber (drink)	ir abrir (open)
yo	me cepillo	beb	abro
tú	te cepillas	bebes	abres
él, ella, usted	se cepilla	bebe	abre
nosotros(as)	nos cepillamos	bebemos	abrimos
ellos(as), uds.	se cepillan	beben	abren

Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs have different stem changes and endings that do not follow specific rules and therefore must be memorized. Some of the more commonly used irregular verbs will be presented here.

The **verb "to be"** must be translated into one of three different irregular verbs which are used in the following way:

Ser: Use *ser de* to indicate origin, what something is made of and to indicate possession. Use *ser* to tie the subject to a noun, to indicate where an event took place, to describe a normal or permanent characteristic, and with time and date.

For example:

I am from Mexico	Soy de México
I am the dentist	Yo soy el/la dentista
What is your problem?	¿Cuál es su problema?

Estar: Use to express location, position, or a condition at that particular time.

For example:

I am in the office	Estoy en la oficina
How are you?	¿Cómo está(s)?

Haber: Use with compound tenses to indicate actions or events that have recently taken place and still affect the present.

For example:

How long have you had the problem? ¿Cuánto tiempo <u>ha</u> tenido el problema? (formal) ¿Cuánto tiempo <u>has</u> tenido el problema? (informal)
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	Ser	Estar	Haber
yo	soy	estoy	he
tú	eres	estás	has
usted	es	está	ha
él/ella	es	está	ha
nosotros(as)	somos	estamos	hemos
ustedes	son	están	han
ellos(as)	son	están	han

The following are other very common irregular verbs.

	tener to (have)	ir (go)	sentir (feel)	traer (bring)
yo	tengo	voy	siento	traigo
tú	tienes	vas	sientes	traes
él,ella,Ud	tiene	va	siente	trae
nosotros	tenemos	vamos	sentimos	traemos
ellos(as)	tienen	van	sienten	traen

Reflexive Verbs

If the action is done by a person/s to himself/herself/themselves, the pronoun *me, te, nos* or *le* must precede the verb.

to me	me
to you (informal)	te
to you (formal)	se
to us	nos
to them	se

For example:

I like my dentist	Me gusta mi dentista
I brush my teeth	Me cepillo los dientes
Did you brush your teeth?	¿Se cepilló los dientes?

9). Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions are those which have no literal translation, but are used very commonly. A few that might be needed in the dental office are the following:

right now	ahora mismo
in a second	en un segundo
to the letter (as with Rx)	al pie de la letra
as soon as possible	tan pronto como sea posible
it doesn't matter	no importa, no le hace

Many important idiomatic expressions are formed using the irregular verb *tener* (to have).

Tener que + infinitive verb means to have to or must do something.

For example:

I have to extract that molar. <i>Tengo que sacar esa muela.</i>
We need to do an exam <i>Tenemos que examinarlo(a)</i>

Tener ganas de +infinitive means to feel like doing something.

For example:

I feel like eating something sweet.
Tengo ganas de comer algo dulce.

Tener is also used to express to be + adjective.

Tener sueño	to be sleepy
Tener sed	to be thirsty
Tener hambre	to be hungry
Tener prisa	to be in a hurry
Tener frío	to be cold
Tener calor	to be hot
Tener razón	to be right
Tener cuidado	to be careful
Tener miedo	to be afraid

For example:

I am hungry
Tengo hambre

Be careful
Ten cuidado

Do you have pain?
¿Tienes dolor? (informal)

Tener is also used to describe a physical condition and age.

Tener dolor de cabeza	to have a headache
Tener dolor de	to have a stomach estómago ache
Tener dolor	to have a pain
Tener fiebre	to have fever
Tener treinta años	to be thirty years old

For example:

Do you have pain? Are you in pain?

¿Tiene dolor? (Formal)

I am thirty years old.

Tengo treinta años.

How old are you?

Cuántos años tiene(s)?

10. Negatives

To make a sentence negative, place no before the verb.

For example:

I do not feel well	No me siento bien
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Other negations: These are placed either before or after the verb.

Never / not ever	nunca / jamás
neither / nor	ni / ni
nothing, not anything	nada
no one / not anyone	ni uno / nadie
not either, neither	tampoco
none / not any	ningun / ninguno(a)

11. Questions

Questions are expressed by raising the voice at the end of the sentence. The most common means of asking a question is inverting the order of the subject and verb.

For example:

How are you?	¿Cómo está usted?
Are you in pain?	¿Tiene usted dolor?
	¿Le duele algo?

Note that an inverted (¿) precedes the sentence and a (?) follows.

Common questions:

What?	¿Qué?
Where?	¿Dónde?
When?	¿Cuándo?
Who?	¿Quién?
Why?	¿Por qué?
How?	¿Cómo?
How many?	¿Cuántos?
How much?	¿Cuánto?
What time?	¿Qué hora?
To whom? (Sin/Plu)	¿A quién/quienes?
For whom? (Sin/Plu)	¿Para quién/quienes?

12). Commands

Commands may be informal using *tú* or formal using *usted, ustedes*.

Informal commands: use the third person singular, present tense of the regular verb.

For example:

Juan muerde la gasa	Juan bites the gauze	Muerde la gasa	Bite the gauze
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Usually, the pronoun *tú* is omitted in the command.

Formal singular commands: use the first person singular, present form of the regular verb.

For regular verbs ending in *ar* drop the *o* (first person singular) and add *e*. The regular verbs ending in *er, ir* drop the *o* (first person singular) and add *a*. The pronoun *usted* or *ustedes* is usually not used in the command.

For example:

Use (<i>usted</i>) esa toalla	Use that towel
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(a formal command with verb *usar*)

Beba (<i>usted</i>) el agua	Drink the water
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(a formal command with verb *beber*)

¡Abra (<i>usted</i>) la boca!	Open your mouth!
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(a formal command with verb *abrir*)

The plural form of the command is made by adding *n* to the singular command form.

A negative command is formed by adding *no* before the verb.

For example:

No usen estas toallas	Don't use these towels
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Notes: