

Chapter 1

You Already Know a Little Spanish

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the little Spanish you know
- ▶ Saying it right (Basic pronunciation)
- ▶ Using gestures
- ▶ Understanding typical expressions

If you're familiar with the term "Latin Lover," you may not be surprised to know that Spanish is called a Romance language. But the romance we're talking about here isn't exactly the Latin Lover type — unless you love to learn Latin.

Spanish (as well as several other languages such as Italian, French, Romanian, and Portuguese) is a Romance language because it has its origins in the Latin of ancient Rome. Because of that common origin, Romance languages have many similarities in grammar and the way they sound. (The fact that they all sound so romantic when spoken is purely a bonus!) For example, **casa** (*kah-sah*), the word for "house," is identical in looks, meaning, and sound whether you speak Portuguese, Italian, or Spanish.

The differences in the Romance languages are not terribly difficult to overcome, especially in South America. Any Spanish-speaking American can talk with a Portuguese-speaking Brazilian, and they will understand each other even if the other person sounds a bit funny. Still, each Romance language is different from its sister languages. Spanish is a language that comes from a region of Spain called Castile. So in Spain and some Latin American countries, such as Argentina, they call the language **castellano** (*kahs-teh-yah-noh*), which means Castilian.

This book concentrates on the Spanish spoken in Latin America. Throughout the book, we also explore the differences in the words used in these 19 countries and mention some variations in pronunciation. Latin America consists of all of the Western Hemisphere with the exception of Canada; the United States; the British and French-speaking Guyanas; and a few islands in the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, Haiti, and Curaçao, where English, French, or Dutch are spoken.

Part I: Getting Started

This chapter is the foundation for the other chapters in the book. Subsequent chapters in this book discuss pronunciation, gestures, and body language. We also give you a few quickie phrases that show Spanish speakers you're one of their bunch.

You Already Know Some Spanish

The English language is like an ever-growing entity that, with great wisdom, absorbs what it needs from other cultures and languages. English is also a language that is like a bouquet of flowers plucked from many different roots. One of these roots is Latin, which 2,000 years ago was spread all over Europe by the Romans and later by scholars of the Middle Ages.

Because all of these live elements exist in the root of the language, you can find many correspondences between English and Spanish in the words that come from both Latin and French roots. These words can cause both delight and embarrassment. The delight comes in the words where the coincident sounds also give similar meanings. The embarrassment comes from words where the sounds and even the roots are the same, but the meanings are completely different.

Among the delightful discoveries of similarities between the languages are words like **soprano** (*soh-prah-noh*) (soprano), **pronto** (*prohn-toh*) (right away; soon), and thousands of others that differ by just one or two letters such as **conclusión** (*kohn-kloo-see ohn*) (conclusion), **composición** (*kohm-poh-see-see ohn*) (composition), **libertad** (*lee-bvehr-tahd*) (liberty), **economía** (*eh-koh-noh-meeah*) (economy), **invención** (*een-bvehn-see ohn*) (invention), and **presidente** (*preh-see-dehn-teh*) (president).

Beware of false friends

The trouble begins in the world of words that French linguists have designated as *false friends*. You can't trust fool's gold, false friends, or all word similarities. Within the groups of false friends, you may find words that look very similar and even have the same root, yet mean completely different things. One that comes to mind is the word **actual**, which has very different meanings in English and Spanish. In English, you know that it means "real; in reality; or the very one." Not so in Spanish. **Actual** (*ahk-tooahl*) in Spanish means present; current; belonging to this moment, this day, or this year.

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So, for example, when you say *the actual painting* in English, you're referring to the real one, the very one people are looking at or want to see. But, when you say **la pintura actual** (*lah peen-too-rah ahk-tooahl*) in Spanish, you're referring to the painting that belongs to the current time, the one that follows present day trends — a modern painting.

Another example is the adjective “embarrassed,” that in English means ashamed or encumbered. In Spanish, **embarazada** (*ehm-bvah-rah-sah-dah*) is the adjective that comes from the same root as the English word, yet its use nowadays almost exclusively means “pregnant.” So you can say in English that you are a little embarrassed, but in Spanish you can't be just a little **embarazada**. Either you're pregnant or you're not.

Recognize some crossover influence

Word trouble ends at the point where a word originating in English is absorbed into Spanish or vice versa. The proximity of the United States to Mexico produces a change in the Spanish spoken there. An example is the word *car*. In Mexico, people say **carro** (*kah-rroh*). In South America, on the other hand, people say **auto** (*ahoo-toh*). In Spain, people say **coche** (*koh-chen*).

Here are just a few examples of Spanish words that you already know because English uses them, too:

- ✓ You've been to a **rodeo** (*roh-deh-oh*) or a **fiesta** (*feeehs-tah*).
- ✓ You've probably taken a **siesta** (*seeehs-tah*) or two.
- ✓ You probably know at least one **señorita** (*seh-nyoh-ree-tah*), and you surely have an **amigo** (*ah-mee-goh*). Maybe you'll even see him **mañana** (*mah-nyah-nah*).
- ✓ You already know the names of places like **Los Angeles** (*lohs ahn-Heh-lehs*) (the angels), **San Francisco** (*sahn frahn-sees-koh*) (St. Francis), **La Jolla** (*la Hoh-yah*) (the jewel), **Florida** (*floh-ree-dah*) (the blooming one), and **Puerto Rico** (*pooehr-toh ree-koh*) (rich harbor).
- ✓ You've eaten a **tortilla** (*tohr-tee-lyah*), a **taco** (*tah-koh*), or a **burrito** (*bvoo-ree-toh*).
- ✓ You fancy the **tango** (*tahn-goh*), the **bolero** (*bvo-leh-roh*), or the **rumba** (*room-bvah*), or you may dance the **cumbia** (*koom-bveeah*).
- ✓ You have a friend named **Juanita** (*Hooah-nee-tah*), **Anita** (*ah-nee-tah*), or **Clara** (*klah-rah*).

Part I: Getting Started

Reciting Your ABCs

Correct pronunciation is key to avoiding misunderstandings. The following sections present some basic guidelines for proper pronunciation.



Next to the Spanish words throughout this book, the pronunciation is in parentheses, which we call *pronunciation brackets*. Within the pronunciation brackets, we separate all the words that have more than one syllable with a hyphen, like this: (ka-sa). An underlined syllable within the pronunciation brackets tells you to accent, or stress, that syllable. We say much more about stress later in this chapter. In the meantime, don't let yourself get stressed out (pardon the pun). We explain each part of the language separately, and the pieces will quickly fall into place. Promise!

In the following section we comment on some letters of the alphabet from the Spanish point of view. The aim is to help you to understand Spanish pronunciations. Here is the basic Spanish alphabet and its pronunciation:

a (<i>ah</i>)	b (<i>bveh</i>)	c (<i>seh</i>)	d (<i>deh</i>)
e (<i>eh</i>)	f (<i>eh-feh</i>)	g (<i>Heh</i>)	h (<i>ah-cheh</i>)
i (<i>ee</i>)	j (<i>Hoh-tah</i>)	k (<i>kah</i>)	l (<i>eh-leh</i>)
m (<i>eh-meh</i>)	n (<i>eh-neh</i>)	ñ (<i>eh-nyeh</i>)	o (<i>oh</i>)
p (<i>peh</i>)	q (<i>koo</i>)	r (<i>eh-reh</i>)	s (<i>eh-seh</i>)
t (<i>teh</i>)	u (<i>oo</i>)	v (<i>bveh</i>)	w (<i>doh-bleh bveh</i>) (<i>oobv-eh doh-bleh</i>) (<i>Spain</i>)
x (<i>eh-kees</i>)	y (<i>ee gree eh-gah</i>)	z (<i>seh-tah</i>)	

Spanish also includes some double letters in its alphabet: **ch** (*cheh*), **ll** (*ye*), and **rr** (*a trilled r*).

We don't go through *every* letter of the alphabet in the sections that follow, only those that you use differently in Spanish than in English. The differences can lie in pronunciation, the way they look, in the fact that you seldom see the letters, or that you don't pronounce them at all.

Consonants

Consonants tend to sound the same in English and Spanish. We explain the few differences that you can find.

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Inside the Spanish-speaking world itself, you'll find that consonants may be pronounced differently than in English. For example, in Spain the consonant **z** is pronounced like the **th** in the English word *thesis*. (Latin Americans don't use this sound; in all 19 Spanish-speaking countries on this hemisphere, **z** and **s** sound the same.)



In the Spanish speaker's mind, a consonant is any sound that needs to have a vowel next to it when you pronounce it. For example, saying the letter **t** by itself may be difficult for a Spanish speaker. To the Spanish ear, pronouncing **t** sounds like **te** (*teh*). Likewise, the Spanish speaker says **ese** (*eh-seh*) when pronouncing the letter **s**.

Only a few consonants in Spanish differ from their English counterparts. The following sections look more closely at the behavior and pronunciation of these consonants.

The letter *K*

In Spanish, the letter **k** is used only in words that have their origin in foreign languages. More often than not, this letter is seen in **kilo** (*kee-loh*), meaning *thousand* in Greek. An example is **kilómetro** (*kee-loh-meht-roh*) (kilometer) — a thousand-meter measure for distance.

The letter *H*

In Spanish, the letter **h** is *always* mute. That's it!

The pronunciation brackets throughout this book often include the letter **h**. These h's generally signal certain vowel sounds, which we cover later in this chapter. In the pronunciation brackets, the Spanish **h** simply doesn't appear, because it's mute.

Following are some examples of the Spanish "h":

- ✓ **Huayapan** (*ooah-yah-pahn*) (name of a village in Mexico)
- ✓ **hueso** (*ooeh-soh*) (bone)
- ✓ **huevo** (*ooeh-bvoh*) (egg)

The letter *J*

The consonant **j** sounds like a guttural **h**. Normally you say **h** quite softly, as though you were just breathing out. Now, say your **h**, but gently raise the back of your tongue, as if you were saying **k**. Push the air out real hard, and you'll get the sound. Try it! There — it sounds like you're gargling, doesn't it?

To signal that you need to make this sound, we use a capital letter **H** within the pronunciation brackets.

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Now try the sound out on these words:

- ✓ **Cajamarca** (*kah-Hah-mahr-kah*) (the name of a city in Peru)
- ✓ **cajeta** (*kah-Heh-tah*) (a delicious, thick sauce made of milk and sugar)
- ✓ **cajón** (*kah-Hohn*) (big box)
- ✓ **jadeo** (*Hah-deh-oh*) (panting)
- ✓ **Jijón** (*Hee-Hohn*) (the name of a city in Spain)
- ✓ **jota** (*Hoh-tah*) (the Spanish name for the letter **j**; also the name of a folk dance in Spain.)
- ✓ **tijera** (*tee-Heh-rah*) (scissors)

The letter C

The letter **c**, in front of the vowels **a**, **o**, and **u**, sounds like the English **k**. We use the letter **k** in the pronunciation brackets to signal this sound. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **acabar** (*ah-kah-bvahr*) (to finish)
- ✓ **café** (*kah-feh*) (coffee)
- ✓ **casa** (*kah-sah*) (house)
- ✓ **ocaso** (*oh-kah-soh*) (sunset)

When the letter **c** is in front of the vowels **e** and **i**, it sounds like the English **s**. In the pronunciation brackets, we signal this sound as **s**. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **acero** (*ah-seh-roh*) (steel)
- ✓ **cero** (*seh-roh*) (zero)
- ✓ **cine** (*see-neh*) (cinema)



In much of Spain — primarily the north and central parts — the letter **c** is pronounced like the *th* in *thanks* when placed before the vowels **e** and **i**.

The letters S and Z

In Latin American Spanish, the letters **s** and **z** always sound like the English letter **s**. We use the letter **s** in the pronunciation brackets to signal this sound. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **asiento** (*ah-seeehn-toh*) (seat)
- ✓ **sol** (*sohl*) (sun)
- ✓ **zarzuela** (*sahr-sooeh-lah*) (spanish-style operetta)

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In Spain, **z** also has the sound of the *th* in *thanks*, rather than the **s** sound prevalent in Latin America.

The letters **B** and **V**

The letters **b** and **v** are pronounced the same, the sound being somewhere in-between the two letters. This in-between is a fuzzy, bland sound — closer to **v** than to **b**. If you position your lips and teeth to make a **v** sound, and then try to make a **b** sound, you'll have it. To remind you to make this sound, we use *bv* in our pronunciation brackets, for both **b** and **v**. Here are some examples:

- ✓ **cabeza** (*kah-bveh-sah*) (head)
- ✓ **vida** (*bvee-dah*) (life)
- ✓ **violín** (*bveeoh-leen*) (violin)

The letter **Q**

Spanish doesn't use the letter **k** very much; when the language wants a **k** sound in front of the vowels **e** and **i**, it unfolds the letter combination **qu**. So when you see the word **queso** (*keh-soh*) (cheese), you immediately know that you say the **k** sound. (You do not, however, pronounce it *kwa*, as you would when using the English *qu* sound.) Here are some examples of the Spanish letter **q**, which we indicate by the letter *k* in pronunciation brackets.:

- ✓ **Coquimbo** (*koh-keem-bvoh*) (the name of a city in Chile)
- ✓ **paquete** (*pah-keh-teh*) (package)
- ✓ **pequeño** (*peh-keh-nyoh*) (small)
- ✓ **tequila** (*teh-kee-lah*) (Mexican liquor, spirits)

The letter **G**

In Spanish the letter **g** has a double personality, like the English letter **c**. When you combine the letter **g** with a consonant or when you see it in front of the vowels **a**, **o**, and **u**, it sounds like the **g** in *goose*. Here are some examples:

- ✓ **begonia** (*bveh-goh-neeah*) (begonia)
- ✓ **gato** (*gah-toh*) (cat)
- ✓ **gracias** (*grah-seeahs*) (thank you)
- ✓ **pagado** (*pah-gah-doh*) (paid for)

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The **g** changes personality in front of the vowels **e** and **i**. It sounds like the Spanish **j**, which we signal with the capital *H* in our pronunciation brackets.

- ✓ **agenda** (*ah-Hehn-dah*) (agenda; date book)
- ✓ **gerente** (*Heh-rehn-teh*) (manager)

To hear the sound **g** (as in *goat*) in front of the vowels **e** and **i**, you must insert a **u**, making **gue** and **gui**. To remind you to make the goat sound (no, no, not *mmehehe*, but **g**) we use *gh* in our pronunciation brackets. Some examples:

- ✓ **guía** (*gheeah*) (guide)
- ✓ **guiño** (*ghee-nyoh*) (wink)
- ✓ **guerra** (*gheh-rrah*) (war)

Double consonants

Spanish has two double consonants: **ll** and **rr**. They are considered a singular letter, and each has a singular sound. Because these consonants are considered singular, they stick together when you separate syllables. For example, the word **calle** (*kah-yeh*) (street) appears as **ca-ll**e. And **torre** (*toh-rreh*), (tower) separates into **to-rre**.

The letter *LL*

The **ll** consonant sounds like the **y** in the English word *yes*, except in Argentina and Uruguay.



Argentineans and Uruguayans pronounce this consonant as the sound that happens when you have your lips pursed to say **s** and then make the **z** sound through them. Try it. Fun, isn't it? But really, the sound isn't that difficult to make, because you can find the English equivalent in words like *measure* and *pleasure*. The way you say those **s** sounds is exactly how **ll** is pronounced in Argentina and Uruguay.

Throughout this book, we use the sound like the English **y** in the word *yes*, which is how **ll** is pronounced in 18 of the 20 Spanish-speaking countries. In the pronunciation brackets, we use *y* to signal this sound.

Now try the **ll** sound, using the *y* sound, in the following examples:

- ✓ **brillo** (*bvree-yoh*) (shine)
- ✓ **llama** (*yah-mah*) (flame; also the name of an animal in Peru)
- ✓ **lluvia** (*yoo-bveeah*) (rain)

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The letter RR

The **rr** sounds like a strongly rolled **r**. In fact, every **r** is strongly rolled in Spanish, but the double one is the real winner. To roll an **r**, curl your tongue against the roof of your mouth as you finish the **r** sound. It should trill.



An easy way to make this sound is to say the letter **r** as though you were pretending to sound like an outboard motor. There. You have it! Spanish speakers take special pleasure in rolling their **rr**'s. One fun thing about **rr** is that no words begin with it. Isn't that a relief! In pronunciation brackets we simply signal this sound as *rr*.

Play with these words:

- ✓ **carrera** (*kah-rreh-rah*) (race; profession)
- ✓ **correo** (*koh-rreh-oh*) (mail, post)
- ✓ **tierra** (*teeeh-rrah*) (land)

The letter Y

This letter represents sounds that are very similar to those of **ll**. The people of both Argentina and Uruguay pronounce this sound differently from the rest of Latin America. We advise that you pronounce it as the English **y** in *yes* and *you*. In the pronunciation brackets, we signal this sound as *y*. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **playa** (*plah-yah*) (beach)
- ✓ **yema** (*yeh-mah*) (yolk; also finger tip)
- ✓ **yodo** (*yoh-doh*) (Iodine)



In Spanish, the letter **y** is never a vowel, always a consonant.

The letter Ñ

When you see a wiggly line on top of the letter **n** that looks like **ñ**, use the **ny** sound that you use for the English word *canyon*. The wiggly line is called a **tilde** (*teel-deh*). In pronunciation brackets, we show this sound as *ny*. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **cuñado** (*koo-nyah-doh*) (brother-in-law)
- ✓ **mañana** (*mah-nyah-nah*) (tomorrow)
- ✓ **niña** (*nee-nyah*) (girl)

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Vowels

If you want your Spanish to sound like a native's, you have to concentrate on your *vowels*.

The biggest difference between English and Spanish is almost certainly in the way the vowels are written and pronounced. By now, you may be well aware that one vowel in English can have more than one sound. Look, for instance, at *fat* and *fate*. Both words have the vowel **a**, but they're pronounced much differently from each other. The good news is that in Spanish, you always say the vowels one way, and one way only.

The upcoming sections discuss the five vowels — which are the only vowel sounds in Spanish. They are **a** (*ah*), **e** (*eh*), **i** (*ee*), **o** (*oh*), **u** (*oo*). Spanish sees each of these vowels by itself and makes other sounds by combining the vowels in twos.

The vowel A

As children, almost everybody sings their ABCs. In Spanish, the English **a** that starts off the song, is pronounced ah. The easiest way to remember how to pronounce the letter **a** in Spanish is to sing the chorus of the Christmas carol “Deck the Halls” to yourself. You remember the chorus, don't you? *Fa la la la la, la la, la la*. We write this sound as *ah* in the pronunciation brackets.

Following are some sample words to practice. Remember that you pronounce each and every **a** exactly the same way.

- ✓ **Caracas** (*kah-rah-kas*) (a city in Venezuela)
- ✓ **mapa** (*mah-pah*) (map)
- ✓ **Guadalajara** (*gooah-dah-lah-Hah-rah*) (a city in Mexico)

The vowel E

To get an idea of how the Spanish **e** sounds, smile gently, open your mouth a bit and say “eh.” The sound should be like the **e** in the English word *pen*. In our pronunciation brackets, this vowel appears as *eh*.

Try these:

- ✓ **pelele** (*peh-leh-leh*) (rag doll; puppet)
- ✓ **pelo** (*peh-loh*) (hair)
- ✓ **seco** (*seh-koh*) (dry)

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The vowel I

In Spanish the vowel **i** sounds like the **ee** in *seen*, but just a touch shorter. To give you an example, when English speakers say *feet* or *street*, the Spanish speaker hears what sounds like almost two i's.

We signal this sound as *ee* in our pronunciation brackets. Following are some examples:

- ✓ **irritar** (*ee-rree-tahr*) (to irritate)
- ✓ **piña** (*pee-nyah*) (pineapple)
- ✓ **pintar** (*peen-tahr*) (to paint)

The vowel O

The Spanish put their mouths in a rounded position, as if to breathe a kiss over a flower, and keeping it in that position, say **o**. It sounds like the **o** in *floor*, but a bit shorter. We signal this sound as *oh* in the pronunciation brackets.

Try practicing the sound on these words:

- ✓ **coco** (*koh-koh*) (coconut)
- ✓ **Orinoco** (*oh-ree-noh-koh*) (a river in Venezuela)
- ✓ **Oruro** (*oh-roo-roh*) (a city in Bolivia)
- ✓ **toronja** (*toh-rohn-Hah*) (grapefruit)

The vowel U

The fifth and last vowel in Spanish is the **u**, and it sounds like the **oo** in *moon* or *raccoon*, but just a touch shorter. *Oo*, we think you've got it! We write this sound as *oo* in the pronunciation brackets. Here are some examples of the **u** sound:

- ✓ **cuna** (*koo-nah*) (cradle)
- ✓ **cuñado** (*koo-nyah-doh*) (brother-in-law)
- ✓ **cúrcuma** (*koor-koo-mah*) (turmeric)
- ✓ **curioso** (*koo-reeoh-soh*) (curious)
- ✓ **fruta** (*froo-tah*) (fruit)
- ✓ **luna** (*loo-nah*) (moon)
- ✓ **tuna** (*too-nah*) (prickle pear)

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Isn't it **curioso** that, in Spanish, **fruta** is fruit and so is **tuna**?

The diphthongs

Good grief, you say, what's *that*?

Diphthong comes from Greek, where *di* means two, and *thong* comes from a very similar word meaning sound or voice. (Don't worry, we had to look it up in the dictionary ourselves.) Very simply, it means *double sound*. There. That's easier.

The Spanish word is **diptongo** (*deep-tohn-goh*). **Diptongos** are the combination of two vowels, from the Spanish-speaking point of view. For instance, **i** and **o** combine to make **io** as in **patio** (*pah-teeoh*) (courtyard or patio.)

Joining the weak to the strong



Diptongos are always made up of a weak and a strong vowel. Calling vowels "weak" or "strong" is a convention of the Spanish language. The convention comes from the fact that the so-called strong vowel is always dominant in the diphthong. To the Spanish speaker, **i** and **u** are weak vowels, leaving **a**, **e**, and **o** as strong ones.



To visualize this weak or strong concept, consider a piccolo flute and a bass horn. The sound of the piccolo is definitely more like the Spanish **i** and **u**, while the base horn sounds more like the Spanish **a**, **e**, and especially **o**.

Any combination of one strong and one weak vowel is a **diptongo** (*deep-tohn-goh*), which means that they will belong together in the same syllable. In fact, they're not only together, they're stuck like superglue; they can't be separated.

In the **diptongo**, the stress falls on the strong vowel (more about stress later in this chapter). An accent mark alerts you when the stress falls on the weak vowel. (More about accents later, too.) In the combination of two weak vowels, the stress is on the second one.

Try these examples of diphthongs:

- ✓ **bueno** (*bvooeh-noh*) (good)
- ✓ **cuando** (*kooahn-doh*) (when)
- ✓ **fiar** (*feeahr*) (sell on credit)
- ✓ **fuera** (*fooeh-rah*) (outside)
- ✓ **suizo** (*sooee-soh*) (Swiss)
- ✓ **viudo** (*bveeoo-doh*) (widower)

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Separating the strong from the strong

When two strong vowels are combined, they don't form a diphthong. Instead, the vowels retain their separate values, so you must put them into separate syllables. Here are some examples:

- ✓ **aorta** (*ah-ohr-tah*) (aorta) (See! Just as in English!)
- ✓ **feo** (*feh-oh*) (ugly)
- ✓ **marea** (*mah-reh-ah*) (tide)
- ✓ **mareo** (*mah-reh-oh*) (dizziness)

Did you notice in the previous list how changing one letter, in **marea** and **mareo**, for example, can change the meaning of a word? This letter phenomenon occurs in Spanish, just as in English. Finding such words is fun. In the case of the previous list, at least the two words come from the same root **mar** (*mahr*) (sea). And, associating the tide to one's dizziness isn't all that difficult. But in other places you can have oceans of difference. Here are some more examples: **casa** (*kah-sah*) (house) and **cosa** (*koh-sah*) (thing); and **pito** (*pee-toh*) (whistle), **pato** (*pah-toh*) (duck), and **peto** (*peh-toh*) (bib or breastplate.)

Pronunciation and Stress

In Spanish, one syllable is stressed in every word. *Stress* is the accent that you put on a syllable as you speak it. One syllable always gets more stress than the others. In single-syllable words, finding the stress is easy. But many words have more than one syllable, and that's when the situation becomes stressful.

Looking for stress, normally

Can you believe that you're *looking* for stress? In Spanish, the right stress at the right time is a good thing, and fortunately, stress in Spanish is easy to control. If you have *no* written accent, you have two possibilities:

- ✓ The word is stressed next to the last syllable if it ends in a vowel, an **n**, or an **s**. Here are some examples:
 - **camas** (*kah-mahs*) (beds)
 - **mariposas** (*mah-ri-poh-sahs*) (butterflies)
 - **pollo** (*poh-yoh*) (chicken)

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✓ The word is stressed on the last syllable when it ends in a consonant that is *not* an **n** or **s**. Look at these examples:

- **cantar** (*kahn-tahr*) (to sing)
- **feliz** (*feh-lees*) (happy)

If a word is *not* stressed in either of these two ways, the word will have an accent mark on it to indicate where you should place the stress.

Looking for accented vowels

One good thing about having the accent mark on a vowel is that you can tell immediately where the stress is, just by looking at the word.



The accent mark does not affect how the vowel is pronounced, just which syllable is stressed.

Here are some examples of words with accent marks on a vowel:

- ✓ **balcón** (*bahl-kohn*) (balcony)
- ✓ **carácter** (*kah-rahk-tehr*) (character, personality)
- ✓ **fotógrafo** (*foh-toh-grah-foh*) (photographer)
- ✓ **pájaro** (*pah-Hah-roh*) (bird)

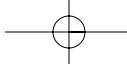
Understanding accents on diphthongs

An accent in a diphthong shows you which vowel to stress. Take a look at these examples:

- ✓ **¡Adiós!** (*ah-deeohs*) (Good bye!)
- ✓ **¡Buenos días!** (*bvooeh-nohs deeahs*) (Good morning!)
- ✓ **¿Decía?** (*deh-seeah*) (You were saying?)
- ✓ **tía** (*teeah*) (aunt)

¡Punctuation Plus

Did you notice the unfamiliar punctuation in **¡Buenos días!**, **¿Decía?**, and **¡Adiós!**? Spanish indicates the mood (or tone) of what you're saying both at



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the beginning and at the end of the phrase that is a question or an exclamation, as in **¿Decía?** (*deh-see-ah*) (You were saying?) or **¡Decía!** (*dehsee-ah*) (You were saying!).



As far as we know, Spanish is the only language that provides this sort of punctuation. However, this punctuation is very useful when you have to read something aloud because you know beforehand how to modulate your voice when the phrase is coming up.

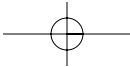
This punctuation is the verbal equivalent of making gestures, which you can see in the following examples:

- ✓ **¿Dónde está?** (*dohn-deh ehs-tah*) (Where is it?)
- ✓ **¡Qué maravilla!** (*keh mah-rah-bvee-yah*) (How wonderful!)

Some Basic Phrases to Know

The following phrases can get you through a number of awkward pauses as you think of the right word:

- ✓ **¡Olé!** (*oh-leh*) (Great!; Superb!; Keep going!) This very Spanish expression is used during bullfights in Mexico and Peru.
- ✓ **¿Quiubo?** (*kee oo-boh*) (Hello, what's happening?)
- ✓ **¿De veras?** (*deh bveh-rahs*) (Really?) This phrase signals slight disbelief.
- ✓ **¡No me digas!** (*noh meh dee-gahs*) (You don't say!) This phrase also means disbelief.



Part I: Getting Started



Fun & Games

Try to match these Spanish letters with the English letters they sound like. Draw a line from the Spanish letter to its English sound equivalent. Then give a Spanish word that uses that sound.

Spanish Letters	English Letter	Spanish Word
ll	e	
j	h	
i	s	
z	k	
q	y	

