

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Transitioning from English to Spanish grammar
- » Getting a handle on common expressions
- » Counting to ten, telling time, and making dates
- » Picking up Spanish words and phrases to use at home
- » Speaking Spanish in a public settings

Chapter **1**

Spanish in a Nutshell

Everyone wants to know Spanish, but learning it takes considerable time and effort. That's okay. Rome wasn't built in a day, and I didn't learn Spanish overnight.

However, you can wrap your brain around basic Spanish grammar and get up to speed on Spanish words and phrases in a matter of minutes. That's what this chapter is all about. Here I provide the short 'n' sweet version of the rest of this book, so you can start speaking and understanding Spanish immediately.

Tackling Basic Grammar

Studying grammar (language rules) is kind of a buzz killer. You want to start speaking Spanish *now*. But grammar is an essential component and actually provides a shortcut to learning and understanding a second language:

Vocabulary + Grammar + Practice = Fluency

Know the vocabulary and the grammar, and you're ready not only to state your business but also to ask questions and understand the answers.

Chapter 2 is chock full of basic Spanish grammar, but you don't need to know everything all at once. Start with the most basic phrase — a simple sentence, a noun followed by a verb, a person or thing performing an action.



REMEMBER

When constructing bare-bones sentences, follow a few basic rules of Spanish grammar:

- » The subject noun performs the action (the verb).
- » If you use an article, such as **el** or **la** (meaning *the*), it must agree with the noun in *gender* — masculine nouns use **el**, whereas feminine nouns use **la**.
- » The verb must agree with the subject noun in person (I, we, you, he, she, they) and number. In English, for example, *I walk to the store* but *He walks to the store*. The process of converting verbs into the different forms is called *conjugation*.

Conjugating a verb in Spanish is a process of changing the ending of the verb to match the subject pronoun or its equivalent in a sentence. Here's a sample with the Spanish verb **hablar** (*to speak*):

Subject Pronoun	Verb	English
yo (<i>I</i>)	hablo	<i>I speak</i>
tú (<i>you</i> [informal, singular])	hablas	<i>you speak</i>
Usted (<i>you</i> [formal, singular])	habla	<i>you speak</i>
él/ella (<i>he/she</i>)	habla	<i>he/she speaks</i>
nosotros/nosotras (<i>we</i>)	hablamos	<i>we speak</i>
Ustedes (<i>you</i> [formal, plural])	hablan	<i>you speak</i>
ellos/ellas (<i>they</i>)	hablan	<i>they speak</i>

Yeah, it gets more complicated than that. Spanish has irregular verbs that don't follow the rules (see Appendix B for examples). And like most languages, its verbs conjugate differently to reflect tense — as in past, present, and future tense. For now, however, knowing what this conjugation stuff is all about is a big step.

Easing Into Common Expressions



REMEMBER

In Chapter 3, I present numerous common Spanish expressions (as well as the scoop on pronunciations, greetings, introductions, and more) that enable you to speak Spanish pronto. Until then, here are a few essential and very common expressions:

¡Hola! (*joh-lah!*) (*Hello!*)

¿Qué pasa? (*¿keh-pah-sah?*) (*Hello, what's happening?*)

Adiós. (*ah-deeohs.*) (*Good-bye.*)

Por favor. (*pohr fah-bvohr.*) (*Please.*)

Gracias. (*grah-seeahs.*) (*Thank you.*)

Lo siento. (*loh seeehn-toh.*) (*I'm sorry.*)

¿Habla usted inglés? (*¿ah-bvlah oohs-tehd een-glehs?*) (*Do you speak English?*)

No hablo mucho español. (*no ah-bvlooh mooh-choh eh-spah-nyohl.*) (*I don't speak much Spanish.*)

Claro. (*clah-roh.*) (*I understand.* [Literally: *Clear.*])

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

Genial. Sigue así. (*Heh-nee-ahl. See-geh ah-see*) (*Great! Superb! Keep going!*)

¿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 indicates disbelief.

Expressing Numbers, Times, and Days

Navigating any country requires a knowledge of numbers, dates, times, and measurements. Without such knowledge, you can't possibly show up for dinner at the right time (let alone the right day of the week), and you can't ask for a specific number or amount of whatever it is you want. Chapter 4 brings you up to speed on all these topics in a hurry. Until then, the following can get you to your first date or meeting:

» **Ask *What day?*:** **¿Qué día?** (*¿keh dee-ah?*)

» **Ask *What time?*:** **¿A qué hora?** (*¿ah keh oh-rah?*)

- » **Name the days of the week starting with Monday:** **lunes** (*looh-nehs*), **martes** (*mahr-tehs*), **miércoles** (*meeehr-koh-lehs*), **jueves** (*Hooheh-bvehs*), **viernes** (*bveeehr-nehs*), **sábado** (*sah-bvah-doh*), **domingo** (*doh-meen-goh*).
- » **Count to 12 in Spanish:** **uno** (*ooh-noh*), **dos** (*dohs*), **tres** (*trehs*), **cuatro** (*kooah-troh*), **cinco** (*seen-koh*), **seis** (*sehees*), **siete** (*seeeh-teh*), **ocho** (*oh-choh*), **nueve** (*nooheh-bveh*), **diez** (*deehs*), **once** (*ohn-seh*), **doce** (*doh-seh*).
- » **Tell what hour of the day it is:** To say *It's 1:00*, use **Es la una** (*ehs la ooh-nah*). *It's noon* is **Es el mediodía** (*ehs ehl meh-deeoh-dee-ah*), and *It's midnight* is **Es la medianoche** (*ehs lah meh-deeah-noh-cheh*). For all other times of the day after 1:00, use **Son las** + the number; for example **Son las dos** (*sohn lahs dohs*) (*It's 2:00*).

Speaking Spanish around the House

Most people start learning Spanish on their own or by taking classes before venturing into Spanish-speaking territory. Either way, your house or apartment is a great place to pick up lots of useful Spanish vocabulary and phrases. Naming most of the rooms in your home is the first step:

- » **la cocina** (*lah koh-see-nah*) (*the kitchen*)
- » **el comedor** (*ehl koh-meh-dohr*) (*the dining room*)
- » **la sala** (*lah sah-lah*) (*the living room*)
- » **el baño** (*ehl bvah-nyoh*) (*the bathroom*)
- » **el dormitorio** (*ehl dohr-mee-toh-reeoh*) (*the bedroom*)

Your home is packed with all sorts of stuff, but only a few are bare essentials:

- » **la nevera** (*lah neh-bveh-rah*) (*the refrigerator*)
- » **el horno microondas** (*ehl ohr-noh mee-kroh-ohn-dahs*) (*the microwave*)
- » **el mando a distancia** (*ehl mahn-doh ah dees-tahn-seeah*) (*the TV remote control*)

Chapter 5 introduces you to Spanish words for most other household items and can even help talk you through numerous household activities.

Putting Spanish into Action

Eventually, you want to take your Spanish outside the safe confines of your home or classroom and start using it in your day-to-day conversations. The chapters in Part 2 provide you with words, phrases, dialogues, and more for common scenarios, including making small talk, asking for directions, and going shopping. The following sections provide a preview of what to expect.



REMEMBER

Use it or lose it. Actively pursue opportunities to speak Spanish. You may feel a little uncomfortable speaking it at first, but the more you practice and learn from your mistakes, the more fluent you become.

Making small talk

Much of the chatter you hear on a daily basis is small talk that typically commences with a question:

¿Cómo te llamas? (*¿koh-moh teh yah-mahs?*) (*What's your name?*)

¿Dónde vives? (*¿dohn-deh bvee-bvehs?*) (*Where do you live?*)

¿Qué hace usted? (*¿keh ah-seh oohs-tehd?*) (*What do you do?*)

¿Cómo está usted? (*¿koh-moh ehs-tah oohs-tehd?*) (*How are you [formal]?*)

¿Cuántos años tienes? (*¿kooahn-tohs ahn-yohs teeehn-ehs?*) (*How old are you [informal]?* [Literally: *How many years do you have?*])

To answer these questions, start with the following:

Me llamo . . . (*meh yah-moh . . .*) (*My name is . . .*)

Vivo en . . . (*bvee-bvoh ehn . . .*) (*I live in . . .*)

Yo soy un estudiante. (*yoh sohy oohn ehs-tooh-deeahn-teh.*) (*I'm a [male] student.*)

Estoy muy bien. (*ehs-tohy moohee beeehn.*) (*I'm very well.*) or **Estoy así así.** (*ehs-tohy ah-see ah-see.*) (*I'm so-so.*)

Yo tengo veinticinco años. (*yoh tehn-go bveheen-tee-seen-koh ahn-yohs.*) (*I am 25 years old.*)

This small sample of small talk phrases are great ice breakers, but they can't get you through an entire conversation. Check out Chapter 6 for more Spanish small talk questions, words, and phrases.

Asking for directions

Asking for directions in Spanish isn't all that difficult. The tough part is understanding the answer to your question. The most effective way to overcome this challenge is to bring up a map of the area on your cellphone and ask people to show you on the map:

Hola. ¿Por favor, puede Ud. decirme como llegar a . . . ? (*oh-lah. ¿pohr fah-bvohr, pooheh-deh oohs-tehd deh-seer-meh koh-moh yeh-gahr ah . . . ?*) (*Hello. Can you please tell me how to get to . . . ?*)

Por favor, enseñéme en este mapa. (*pohr fah-bvohr, ehn-seh-nyeh-meh ehn ehs-teh mah-pah.*) (*Please show me on this map.*)

¿Dónde estamos ahora? (*¿dohn-deh ehs-tah-mohs ah-oh-rah?*) (*Where are we now?*)

¿A cuánto estamos de . . . ? (*¿ah koohahn-toh ehs-tah-mohs deh . . . ?*) (*How far is it to . . . ?*)

Asking for and giving directions is ultimately more complex than the previous phrases. You need to know directional words for here and there, above, below, to the left, to the right, inside, outside, north, south, and so on. See Chapter 7 for details.

Eating out and buying food

Wrestling with a foreign language can really work up an appetite, so kill two birds with one stone — head to the market or a local Spanish or Mexican restaurant and rustle up some grub.



TIP

Whether you're at the market or a restaurant, pointing can help you get through your early experiences in ordering food and beverages. Accompany your pointing gesture with the following:

Yo quiero éste. (*yoh keeeh-roh ehs-teh.*) (*I want this one.*)

Eventually, you want to do more than the caveman ordering technique. In Chapter 8, I give you all the Spanish you need to know to make reservations at a **restaurante** (*rrehs-tahoooh-rah-n-teh*), order your meal and a beverage, and purchase groceries and fresh produce at the local **mercado** (*mehr-kah-doh*) (*market*) or **supermercado** (*sooh-pehr-mehr-kah-doh*) (*supermarket*).

Going shopping

Regardless of where you happen to be (either in your hometown or in a new locale), you need to buy stuff, and that's not as easy as it sounds when you're shopping in an area where Spanish is the official language. Knowing words for the bare necessities can help:

- » **la camisa** (lah kah-mee-sah) (*the shirt*)
- » **el champú** (ehl chahm-poooh) (*the shampoo*)
- » **la falda** (lah fahl-dah) (*the skirt*)
- » **el jabón** (ehl Hah-bvohn) (*the soap*)
- » **los pantalones** (lohs pahn-tah-loh-nehs) (*the pants*)
- » **el papel higiénico** (ehl pah-pehl ee-Heeeh-nee-koh) (*the toilet paper*)
- » **la pasta de dientes** (lah pahs-tah deh deeehn-tehs) (*the toothpaste*)
- » **los zapatos** (lohs sah-pah-tohs) (*the shoes*)

If you need more stuff than that or help with finding what you're looking for, head to Chapter 9, which features much more vocabulary along with verbs and phrases for getting help, trying on clothes, asking for specific colors and fabrics, and making comparisons.

Heading out on the town

Half the fun of traveling consists of exploring what activities and entertainment various areas have to offer. You don't want to sit around your room all day counting the geckos, so you need to know how to conjugate and use the verb **salir** (sah-leer) (*to go out, to leave*). And be sure to invite some of your new friends along with the verb **invitar** (een-bvee-tahr) (*to invite*).

Chapter 10 offers several ideas to use these verbs for making dates, going out on the town, having fun, and talking all about the good times you've had — in Spanish, of course!

Doing business

Speaking Spanish at work offers new opportunities for picking up additional vocabulary, phrases, and grammar. You're likely to be working in **la oficina** (lah oh-fee-see-nah) (*the office*); using **la computadora** (lah kohm-poooh-tah-doh-rah) (*the computer*), **el teléfono** (ehl teh-leh-foh-noh) (*the telephone*), and **el copiator** (ehl koh-peeah-dohr) (*the copier*); talking with your colleagues around

el enfriador de agua (ehl ehn-freeah-dohr deh ah-goohah) (*the water cooler*); and using all sorts of **material de oficina** (mah-teh-reeahl deh oh-fee-see-nah) (*office supplies*).

You also need to be able to find your way around the different buildings, rooms, and departments, such as **la sala de descanso** (lah sah-lah deh dehs-kahn-soh) (*the break room*), **el cuarto de almacenamiento** (ehl koohahr-toh deh ahl-mah-seh-nah-meeehn-toh) (*the storage room*), and **la salida** (lah sah-lee-dah) (*the exit*). And you want to know how to talk about various office activities, including making copies and using a computer.

Chapter 11 covers all this info and more, including introducing you to the imperative mood, so that you can delegate tasks with the command form of verbs. And speaking in the preterit tense is how you can talk about things that happened in the past.

Enjoying the great outdoors and more

All work and no play can be boring in any language, so in Chapter 12, I focus on Spanish words, phrases, and dialogue dealing with indoor and outdoor recreational activities. Here are a few examples to get you started:

¿Te gusta caminar? (¿teh goohs-tah kah-mee-nahr?) (*Do you like to walk (hike)?*)

¿Qué te gusta jugar? (¿keh teh goohs-tah Hoooh-gahr?) (*What do you like to play?*)

¿Juega al ajedrez? (¿Hooheh-gah ahl ah-Heh-drehs?) (*Do you play chess?*)

¿Te gusta leer? (¿teh goohs-tah leh-ehr?) (*Do you like to read?*)

Taking Spanish on the Go

Immersing yourself in a country where Spanish is the official language is perhaps the most effective way to become comfortable with conversational Spanish. That's why several chapters in this book are devoted to traveling with Spanish. The following sections bring you up to speed on the bare basics of what to expect in Part 3.

Preparing for a trip

The most enjoyable and hassle-free trips begin with proper preparation. You need to decide where you want to go with the verb **ir** (eer) (*to go*), secure **el pasaporte**

(ehl pahs-ah-pohr-teh) (*the passport*) and **el visado** (ehl bvee-sah-doh) (*the visa*) ahead of time, schedule **el vuelo** (ehl bvooh-eh-loh) (*the flight*), and **hacer la maleta** (ah-sehr lah mah-leh-tah) (*to pack your luggage*).

Chapter 13 covers all these items and more along with introducing you to a new verb tense for discussing your future travel plans.

Making sense of money

When traveling outside your home country, you need to deal with foreign currencies and be able to perform everyday financial transactions, such as getting **el dinero** (ehl dee-neh-roh) (*the money*) out of an ATM and using **la tarjeta de crédito** (lah tahr-Heh-tah deh kreh-dee-toh) (*the credit card*) or PayPal (peh pahl) to pay for stuff.

Chapter 14 provides plenty of guidance on how to manage your money and perform financial transactions in Spanish, whether you're dealing with a teller or an ATM. I also provide you with everything you need to know to get the best exchange rate for your dollar.

Getting around with local transportation

Unless you're planning on touring your country of destination on foot or bicycle (which can be interesting modes of travel), you need to be able to make your way around via plane, train, taxi, Uber, Lyft, bus, trolley, or other forms of public transportation. Start by asking,

¿Dónde está . . . ? (¿dohn-deh ehs-tah . . . ?) (*Where is . . . ?*)

followed by the mode of transportation you're looking for:

- » **el aeropuerto** (ehl ah-eh-roh-poohehr-toh) (*the airport*)
- » **la estación de tren** (lah ehs-tah-seeohn deh trehn) (*the train station*)
- » **el taxi** (ehl tahk-see) (*the taxi*)
- » **la estación de autobuses** (lah ehs-tah-seeohn deh ahooh-toh-bvooh-sehs) (*the bus station*)
- » **la oficina de renta de autos** (lah oh-fee-see-nah deh rrehn-tah deh ahooh-tohs) (*the car rental office*)

Then, you need to purchase a ticket or pay a fare, drive (if you're renting a car), and perhaps even deal with customs officers. And you have to do all these tasks on schedule. Turn to Chapter 15 for assistance.

Securing a place to stay

Even if you're out all day exploring, you need a place to crash and to store your belongings — you need a hotel or motel room or the equivalent. Sounds easy enough until you start dealing with the details, such as the cost per night, the location of the room, the size of the bed, and so on. The following questions can help you find a room that meets your needs and budget:

¿Tiene una habitación disponible? (¿teeeh-neh ooh-nah ah-bvee-tah-seeohn dees-poh-nee-bvleh?) (Do you have a room available?)

¿Es la habitación bastante grande para dos personas? (¿ehs lah ah-bvee-tah-seeohn bvahs-tahn-teh grahn-deh pah-rah dohs pehr-soh-nahs?) (Is the room large enough for two people?)

¿Tiene un baño privado? (¿teeeh-neh oohn bvah-nyoh pree-bvah-doh?) (Does it have a private bathroom?)

¿Tiene dos camas? (¿teeeh-neh dohs kah-mahs?) (Does it have two beds?)

¿Cuánto cuesta por una noche? (¿kooahn-toh kooehs-tah pohr ooh-nah noh-cheh?) (How much is the cost for one night?)

¿Acepta tarjetas de crédito? (¿ah-sehp-tah tahr-Heh-tahs deh kreh-dee-toh?) (Do you accept credit cards?)



TIP

Most of these questions can be answered **Sí**. (Yes.) or **No**. (No.), which should make understanding the answers easier.

If you need more than these basics to secure lodgings, head to Chapter 16, where I explain how to make reservations, check out the room before you check in, register, and ask for extra towels and other essentials.

Taking action during emergencies



REMEMBER

Hopefully, wherever you travel, you won't need to deal with any serious emergencies. But if you do, Chapter 17 offers assistance. The first thing is to let someone know you need help:

¡Por favor ayúdeme! (¡pohr fah-bvohr ah-yooh-deh-meh!) (Please help me!)

Then comes the tough part — describing the type of help you need. Chapter 17 is designed to get the help you need: whether you're experiencing a medical, law enforcement, legal, or general emergency (such as a fire); or you need guidance on how to help others.

FUN & GAMES

The following word search contains several Spanish words that I introduce in this chapter. I've listed the English translations here; find and circle the Spanish equivalents in the word search. (See Appendix C for the answer key.)



Good-bye

Now

Bathroom

City

Dining room

Day

Bedroom

Station

Thank you

We talk

I talk

Hello

Soap

Map

Refrigerator

Office

Train

Shoes

