

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Getting a handle on vowels, diphthongs, and consonants
- » Dealing with stress and accent marks
- » Identifying words that are the same in English and Spanish
- » Recognizing words that are very similar
- » Avoiding falling into traps

## Chapter **1**

# Sounding Like a Native Speaker

**S**ome people can pick up a foreign language and sound like a native with minimal effort, whereas others struggle to lose their hometown accent. The fortunate ones can imitate the Spanish speakers they've heard in their neighborhood, on TV, in the movies, or on a You Tube broadcast. If you're not among those lucky ones, and don't have a good ear for language, this chapter gives you the practice you need to perfect your pronunciation.

This chapter also presents Spanish words that you already know: words that English has borrowed from the Spanish. Surprisingly, your everyday vocabulary is filled with words that are the same, or almost the same, in both languages. You may realize that you already know quite a bit of Spanish — you just have to pronounce the words a bit differently.

# Pronouncing Properly

Naturally, when you speak Spanish, you want to sound as authentic as possible. The good news is that Spanish is quite easy to pronounce because it's a very phonetic language. What does that mean? Simply say each word exactly as you see it and put on your best Spanish accent. Chances are you'll sound more like a native than you could imagine.



REMEMBER

The Spanish alphabet contains all the letters of the English alphabet plus **ñ**, which follows the letter **n**. In 2010, the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia de la Lengua Española) removed the letters **ch** and **ll**, that were previously considered part of the alphabet.



PLAY THIS

(Track 1) This track gives you the chance to practice Spanish sounds. You'll hear each letter of the alphabet in English followed by its pronunciation in Spanish.

To lay a strong foundation for learning Spanish, read the following sections that discuss the correct ways to pronounce vowels, diphthongs, vowel combinations, and consonants.

## Voicing vowels

Unlike in English, each Spanish vowel is pronounced consistently. Table 1-1 gives you a breakdown to help you start.

TABLE 1-1

### Pronouncing Vowels

Vowel	English Sound	Spanish Example
a	ah as in <i>spa</i>	<b>papa</b> ( <i>pah-pah</i> ) ( <i>potato</i> )
e	eh as in <i>red</i>	<b>ella</b> ( <i>eh-yah</i> ) ( <i>she</i> )
i	ee as in <i>key</i>	<b>idea</b> ( <i>ee-deh-yah</i> ) ( <i>idea</i> )
o	oh as in <i>no</i>	<b>ojo</b> ( <i>oh-hoh</i> ) ( <i>eye</i> )
u	oo as in <i>do</i>	<b>uno</b> ( <i>oo-noh</i> ) ( <i>one</i> )

## Practicing diphthongs

It gets a little tricky when you confront *diphthongs*, or a combinations of two vowels. Table 1-2 can help put your concerns to rest.

**TABLE 1-2** Pronouncing Diphthongs

Diphthongs	English Sound	Spanish Example
ae, ai, ay	<i>ah-eh (ay)</i> as in <i>eye</i>	<b>aeropuerto</b> ( <i>ah-eh-roh-poo-eh-r-toh</i> ) ( <i>airport</i> ) <b>aire</b> ( <i>ah-eh-reh</i> ) ( <i>air</i> ) <b>ayuda</b> ( <i>ah-eh-oo-dah</i> ) ( <i>help</i> )
au	<i>ah-oh (ow)</i> as in <i>owl</i>	<b>autor</b> ( <i>ah-oh-tohr</i> ) ( <i>author</i> )
ea	<i>eh-ah</i>	<b>fea</b> ( <i>feh-ah</i> ) ( <i>ugly</i> )
ei, ey	<i>a</i> as in <i>day</i>	<b>seis</b> ( <i>seh-ees</i> ) ( <i>six</i> ) <b>rey</b> ( <i>rreh</i> ) ( <i>king</i> )
eo	<i>eh-oh</i>	<b>leo</b> ( <i>leh-oh</i> ) ( <i>I read</i> )
eu	<i>eh-oo</i>	<b>Europa</b> ( <i>eh-oo-roh-pah</i> ) ( <i>Europe</i> )
ia	<i>ee-ah</i>	<b>seria</b> ( <i>seh-ree-ah</i> ) ( <i>serious</i> )
ie	<i>ee-eh</i>	<b>siete</b> ( <i>see-eh-teh</i> ) ( <i>seven</i> )
io	<i>ee-oh</i>	<b>avión</b> ( <i>ah-bee-ohn</i> ) ( <i>airplane</i> )
iu	<i>ee-oo</i>	<b>ciudad</b> ( <i>see-oo-dahd</i> ) ( <i>city</i> )
oa, ua	<i>oo-ah (wah)</i> as in <i>watch</i>	<b>toalla</b> ( <i>toh-ah-yah</i> ) ( <i>towel</i> ) <b>agua</b> ( <i>ah-goo-ah</i> ) ( <i>water</i> )
oe, ue	<i>oh-eh (weh)</i> as in <i>wet</i>	<b>oeste</b> ( <i>oh-ehs-teh</i> ) ( <i>west</i> ) <b>cuento</b> ( <i>koo-ehn-toh</i> ) ( <i>short story</i> )
oi, oy	<i>oh-ee (oy)</i> as in <i>boy</i>	<b>oigo</b> ( <i>oh-ee-goh</i> ) ( <i>I hear</i> ) <b>soy</b> ( <i>soh-ee</i> ) ( <i>I am</i> )
ui, uy	<i>oo-ee (we)</i> as in <i>we</i>	<b>cuido</b> ( <i>koo-ee-doh</i> ) ( <i>I take care of</i> ) <b>muy</b> ( <i>moo-ee</i> ) ( <i>very</i> )
uo	<i>oo-oh</i> as in <i>woe</i>	<b>cuota</b> ( <i>koo-oh-tah</i> ) ( <i>quota</i> )

## Verbalizing consonants

Consonants are a snap to master because most are pronounced exactly the same as they are in English. They are: **b, d, f, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, w, y**. Note the exceptions in Table 1-3:

**TABLE 1-3** Pronouncing Consonants

Consonant	English Sound	Spanish Example
<b>c</b>	s before <i>e</i> and <i>i</i> (s in Latin America and <i>th</i> in Spain.  <i>k</i> elsewhere	<b>centro</b> ( <i>sehn-troh</i> ) ( <i>thehn-troh</i> ) ( <i>downtown</i> )  <b>cinco</b> ( <i>seen-koh</i> ) ( <i>theen-koh</i> ) ( <i>five</i> )  <b>casa</b> ( <i>kah-sah</i> ) ( <i>house</i> )
<b>g</b>	<i>h</i> before <i>e</i> and <i>i</i>  hard <i>g</i> elsewhere	<b>gente</b> ( <i>hehn-teh</i> ) ( <i>people</i> )  <b>gira</b> ( <i>hee-rah</i> ) ( <i>tour</i> )  <b>gordo</b> ( <i>gohr-doh</i> ) ( <i>fat</i> )
<b>h</b>	silent	<b>hora</b> ( <i>oh-rah</i> ) ( <i>hour</i> )
<b>j</b>	<i>h</i>	<b>junto</b> ( <i>hoon-toh</i> ) ( <i>together</i> )
<b>ll</b>	<i>y</i>	<b>llama</b> ( <i>yah-mah</i> ) ( <i>llama</i> )
<b>ñ</b>	<i>ni</i> as in <i>onion</i>	<b>niño</b> ( <i>nee-nyoh</i> ) ( <i>boy</i> )
<b>r</b>	slightly rolled <i>r</i>	<b>oro</b> ( <i>oh-roh</i> ) ( <i>gold</i> )
<b>rr</b>	rolled 2 or 3 times  at beginning of word  after <i>l</i> , <i>n</i> , or <i>s</i>	<b>carro</b> ( <i>kah-rroh</i> ) ( <i>car</i> )  <b>rico</b> ( <i>rree-koh</i> ) ( <i>rich</i> )  <b>alrededor</b> ( <i>ahl-rreh-deh-dohr</i> ) ( <i>around</i> )  <b>Enrique</b> ( <i>ehn-rree-keh</i> ) ( <i>Henry</i> )  <b>Israel</b> ( <i>ees-rrah-ehl</i> ) ( <i>Israel</i> )
<b>v</b>	similar to <i>b</i>	<b>vaca</b> ( <i>bah-kah</i> ) ( <i>cow</i> )
<b>x</b>	<i>s</i> followed by a consonant  <i>ks</i> followed by a vowel	<b>extra</b> ( <i>ehs-trah</i> ) ( <i>extra</i> )  <b>exacto</b> ( <i>ehk-sahk-toh</i> ) ( <i>exact</i> )
<b>z</b>	<i>th</i> in Spain  <i>s</i> in Spanish America	<b>zoo</b> ( <i>thoh</i> ) ( <i>zoo</i> )  <b>zoo</b> ( <i>soh</i> )



REMEMBER

In Spain the consonant *z* is like the English *th* as in them. The letter *k* is used only in words of foreign origin.

## Understanding Stress and Accent Marks

In Spanish, words are pronounced just like they sound. Take note of the following rules for how words are stressed:

- » Words ending in a vowel, an **n** or an **s** is stressed on the next to the last syllable:
  - **libro** (*lee-broh*) (*book*)
  - **bajan** (*bah-hahn*) (*they go down*)
  - **cuadernos** (*koo-ah-dehr-nohs*) (*notebooks*)
- » Words ending in a consonant (except **n** or **s**) are stressed on the last syllable:
  - **felicidad** (*feh-lee-see-dahd*) (*happiness*)
  - **hablar** (*ah-blahr*) (*to speak*)
- » When the preceding rules aren't followed, an accent is used:
  - **canCIÓN** (*kahn-see-ohn*) (*song*)



REMEMBER

The following diacritical marks help with stress and pronunciation:

- » A tilde (´), the most common, indicates that you put more stress on the vowel of the syllable containing the accent:
  - **interés** (*een-teh-rehs*) (*interest*)
- » A tilde de la ñ (~) is only placed above an **n** (which is considered a different letter):
  - **mañana** (*mah-nyah-nah*) (*tomorrow*)
- » A diaeresis (¨) is only placed above a u (which is considered a different letter):
  - **lingüista** (*leen-goo-ees-tah*) (*linguist*)

## Tackling Upside Down Punctuation

You may notice unfamiliar punctuation in phrases like ¡Buenos días!, ¿Decía?, and ¡Adiós! Spanish indicates the *mood* (or tone) of what you're saying both at 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! (*deh-see-ah*) (*You were saying!*).



GRAMMATICALLY SPEAKING

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. 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-bee-yah*) (*How wonderful!*)

# Recognizing Cognates

Cognates make it a bit easier to learn a foreign language. A *cognate* is a word that’s spelled exactly the same, or almost the same way in two different languages: in this case, Spanish and English. It may sound or be pronounced differently, and it may have an unfamiliar accent mark, but it has the same meaning in both.

This section presents you with lots of words that should be easily recognizable to you. After looking at the lists, you can see that you really know a lot more Spanish than you ever imagined!

Table 1-4 lists some a sample of nouns and adjectives that are the same in Spanish and English. As you study, you’ll come across even more. Use the pronunciation guide in the section, “Pronouncing Properly,” earlier in this chapter to hone your Spanish pronunciation skills.

**TABLE 1-4** Perfect Matches

Adjectives	Masculine Nouns	Feminine Nouns
<b>adorable</b> (ah-doh-rah-bleh)	<b>animal</b> (ah-nee-mahl)	<b>alpaca</b> (ahl-pah-kah)
<b>flexible</b> (flehk-see-bleh)	<b>cereal</b> (seh-reh-ahl)	<b>banana</b> (bah-nah-nah)
<b>general</b> (heh-neh-rah)	<b>chocolate</b> (choh-koh-lah-teh)	<b>capital</b> (kah-pee-tahl)
<b>horrible</b> (oh-rree-bleh)	<b>color</b> (koh-lohr)	<b>fiesta</b> (fee-ehs-tah)
<b>ideal</b> (ee-deh-ahl)	<b>corral</b> (koh-rrahl)	<b>pasta</b> (pahs-tah)
<b>invisible</b> (een-bee-see-bleh)	<b>doctor</b> (dohk-tohr)	<b>plaza</b> (plah-sah)
<b>irresistible</b> (ee-rreh-sees-tee-bleh)	<b>festival</b> (fehsh-tee-bahl)	<b>radio</b> (rrah-dee-oh)
<b>natural</b> (nah-too-rah)	<b>hospital</b> (ohs-pee-tahl)	
<b>original</b> (oh-ree-hee-nahl)	<b>hotel</b> (oh-tehl)	
<b>popular</b> (poh-poo-lahr)	<b>mosquito</b> (mohs-kee-toh)	
<b>regular</b> (rreh-goo-lahr)	<b>motor</b> (moh-tohr)	
<b>sentimental</b> (sehn-tee-mehn-tahl)	<b>patio</b> (pah-tee-oh)	
<b>sociable</b> (soh-see-ah-bleh)	<b>perfume</b> (pehr-foo-meh)	
<b>terrible</b> (teh-rree-bleh)	<b>soda</b> (soh-dah)	
<b>tropical</b> (troh-pee-kahl)	<b>taxi</b> (tahk-see)	

We explain masculine and feminine nouns in Book 2, Chapter 2 and adjectives in Book 2, Chapter 7.

## Using Almost Exact Cognates

Almost exact cognates are just that — they look so much alike in both languages that their meanings are unmistakable. They fall into three main categories (nouns, adjectives, and verbs), which should make them easy to remember. These sections take a closer look at these categories.

### Nouns that end in **-tion** and **-ción**

Nouns ending in *-tion* in English end in *-ción* in Spanish. Here's a list to give you some of the most examples:

- » **acción** (ahk-see-ohn) (*action*)
- » **atención** (ah-tehn-see-ohn) (*attention*)
- » **atracción** (ah-trahk-see-ohn) (*attraction*)
- » **celebración** (seh-leh-brah-see-ohn) (*celebration*)
- » **condición** (kohn-dee-see-ohn) (*condition*)
- » **ficción** (feek-see-ohn) (*fiction*)
- » **nación** (nah-see-ohn) (*nation*)

### Nouns that end in **-ary** and **-ario**

Nouns ending in *-ary* in English end in *-ario* in Spanish. Check out this list to show how similar the Spanish words are to English:

- » **aniversario** (ah-nee-behr-sah-ree-oh) (*anniversary*)
- » **contrario** (kohn-trah-ree-oh) (*contrary*)
- » **salario** (sah-lah-ree-oh) (*salary*)
- » **solitario** (soh-lee-tah-ree-oh) (*solitary*)
- » **secretario** (seh-kreh-tah-ree-oh) (*secretary*)
- » **vocabulario** (boh-kah-boo-lah-ree-oh) (*vocabulary*)

## Adjectives that end -ic and -ico/a

English adjectives that end in *-ic* end in **-ico** (or **-ica** for the feminine form) in Spanish. Here are some:

- » **auténtico** (ah-oh *tehn-tee-koh*) (*authentic*)
- » **clásico** (klah-see-koh) (*classic*)
- » **económico** (eh-koh-*noh-mee-koh*) (*economic*)
- » **irónico** (ee-*roh-nee-koh*) (*ironic*)
- » **mágico** (mah-*hee-koh*) (*magic*)
- » **público** (poo-*blee-koh*) (*public*)

## Adjectives that end in -ous and -oso/a

English adjectives that end in *-ous* end in **-oso** (or **-osa** for the feminine form) in Spanish like the following:

- » **curioso** (koo-*ree-oh-soh*) (*curious*)
- » **delicioso** (deh-*lee-see-oh-soh*) (*delicious*)
- » **misterioso** (mees-*teh-ree-oh-soh*) (*mysterious*)
- » **numeroso** (noo-*meh-roh-soh*) (*numerous*)
- » **precioso** (preh-*see-oh-soh*) (*precious*)

## Nouns that end in -ty and -dad

Some English nouns ending in *-ty* end in **-dad** in Spanish, such as the following:

- » **actividad** (ahk-*tee-bee-dahd*) (*activity*)
- » **autoridad** (ah-oh-*toh-ree-dahd*) (*authority*)
- » **nacionalidad** (nah-*see-oh-nah-lee-dahd*) (*nationality*)
- » **seguridad** (seh-*goo-ree-dahd*) (*security*)
- » **universidad** (oo-*nee-behr-see-dahd*) (*university*)

## Words that end in -ct and -cto

English words ending in *-ct* end in *-cto* in Spanish, including these words:

- » **acto** (*ahk-toh*) (*act*)
- » **conflicto** (*koh-fleek-toh*) (*conflict*)
- » **correcto** (*koh-rrehk-toh*) (*correct*)
- » **exacto** (*ehk-sahk-toh*) (*exact*)
- » **excepto** (*eh-sehp-toh*) (*except*)
- » **insecto** (*een-sehk-toh*) (*insect*)
- » **perfecto** (*pehr-fehk-toh*) (*perfect*)
- » **producto** (*proh-dook-toh*) (*product*)

## Similar noun and adjectives

Other nouns and adjectives follow no rules between English and Spanish but are easily recognizable (see Table 1-5 for a few of them):

**TABLE 1-5** Easily Recognizable Adjectives and Nouns

Adjectives	Masculine Nouns	Feminine Nouns
<b>confortable</b> ( <i>kohn-fohr-tah-bleh</i> )	<b>automóvil</b> ( <i>ah-oh-toh-moh-beel</i> )	<b>aspirina</b> ( <i>ahs-pee-ree-nah</i> )
<b>diferente</b> ( <i>dee-feh-rehn-teh</i> )	<b>banco</b> ( <i>blahn-koh</i> )	<b>blusa</b> ( <i>bloo-sah</i> )
<b>difícil</b> ( <i>dee-fee-seel</i> )	<b>grupo</b> ( <i>groo-poh</i> )	<b>computadora</b> ( <i>kohm-poo-tah-doh-rah</i> )
<b>elegante</b> ( <i>eh-leh-gahn-teh</i> )	<b>jardín</b> ( <i>hahr-deen</i> )	<b>dieta</b> ( <i>dee-eh-tah</i> )
<b>excelente</b> ( <i>eh-seh-lehn-teh</i> )	<b>limón</b> ( <i>lee-mohn</i> )	<b>familia</b> ( <i>fah-mee-lee-yah</i> )
<b>famoso</b> ( <i>fah-moh-soh</i> )	<b>parque</b> ( <i>pahr-keh</i> )	<b>hamburguesa</b> ( <i>ahm-boor-goo-eh-sah</i> )
<b>grande</b> ( <i>grahn-deh</i> )	<b>plato</b> ( <i>plah-toh</i> )	<b>guitarra</b> ( <i>gee-tah-rrah</i> )
<b>importante</b> ( <i>eem-pohr-tahn-teh</i> )	<b>presidente</b> ( <i>preh-see-dehn-teh</i> )	<b>música</b> ( <i>moo-see-kah</i> )
<b>imposible</b> ( <i>eem-poh-see-bleh</i> )	<b>programa</b> ( <i>proh-grah-mah</i> )	<b>opinión</b> ( <i>oh-pee-nee-ohn</i> )
<b>interesante</b> ( <i>een-teh-reh-sahn-teh</i> )	<b>restaurante</b> ( <i>rreh-s-tah-oh-rah-n-teh</i> )	<b>persona</b> ( <i>pehr-soh-nah</i> )
<b>moderno</b> ( <i>moh-dehr-noh</i> )	<b>teatro</b> ( <i>teh-ah-troh</i> )	<b>turista</b> ( <i>too-rees-tah</i> )

## Easily recognizable verbs

Lots of Spanish verbs are also recognizable despite the spelling differences. Although there are many different types of verbs, for now, look at those that are regular and whose present tense forms are discussed more thoroughly in Book 2, Chapter 4.

Here are **-ar** verb cognates:

- » **acompañar** (ah-kohm-pah-nyahr) (to accompany)
- » **adorar** (ah-doh-rahrr) (to adore)
- » **celebrar** (seh-leh-brahr) (to celebrate)
- » **entrar** (ehn-trahr) (to enter)
- » **invitar** (een-bee-tahr) (to invite)
- » **preparar** (preh-pah-rahrr) (to prepare)
- » **reparar** (rreh-pah-rahrr) (to repair)

Here are some **-er** verb cognates:

- » **comprender** (kohm-prehn-dehr) (to comprehend)
- » **responder** (rrehs-pohn-dehr) (to respond)
- » **vender** (behn-dehr) (to vend, to sell)

Here are some **-ir** verb cognates:

- » **decidir** (deh-see-deer) (to decide)
- » **describir** (dehs-kree-beer) (to describe)
- » **dividir** (dee-bee-deer) (to divide)
- » **persuadir** (pehr-soo-ah-deer) (to persuade)
- » **omitir** (oh-mee-teer) (to omit)
- » **recibir** (rreh-see-beer) (to receive)

## Dropping that -e!

Many words in Spanish begin with **-es**. Fortunately, for most of them, simply drop the initial **-e** to figure out their meaning (see Table 1-6):

TABLE 1-6

## Words That Drop the Initial -e

Spanish	English
<b>escándalo</b> (ehs-kahn-doh-loh)	<i>scandal</i>
<b>escultor</b> (ehs-kool-tohr)	<i>sculptor</i>
<b>espacio</b> (ehs-pah-see-oh)	<i>space</i>
<b>especial</b> (ehs-peh-see-ahl)	<i>special</i>
<b>esplendor</b> (ehs-plehn-dohr)	<i>splendor</i>
<b>estadio</b> (ehs-tah-dee-oh)	<i>stadium</i>
<b>estricto</b> (ehs-treek-toh)	<i>strict</i>
<b>estudiante</b> (ehs-too-dee-ahn-teh)	<i>student</i>
<b>estupendo</b> (ehs-too-pehn-doh)	<i>stupendous</i>
<b>estúpido</b> (ehs-too-pee-doh)	<i>stupid</i>

## Being Aware of False Amigos

False friends, also known as false amigos, are words in different languages that look very similar and even have the same root yet mean completely different things. Table 1-7 lists many words to watch out for:

TABLE 1-7

## False Friends

Spanish	English
<b>actual</b> (ahk-too-ahl)	<i>exact, real</i>
<b>arma</b> (ahr-mah)	<i>weapon</i>
<b>asignatura</b> (ah-seeg-nah-too-rah)	<i>subject</i>
<b>asistir</b> (ah-sees-teer)	<i>to attend</i>
<b>carpeta</b> (kahr-peh-tah)	<i>folder</i>
<b>codo</b> (koh-doh)	<i>elbow</i>
<b>constipado/a</b> (kohn-stee-pah-doh/dah)	<i>to have a cold</i>
<b>contestar</b> (kohn-tehs-tahr)	<i>to answer</i>

(continued)

**TABLE 1-7 (continued)**

Spanish	English
<b>embarazada</b> (ehm-bah-rah-sah-dah)	<i>pregnant</i>
<b>enviar</b> (ehn-bee-ahr)	<i>to send</i>
<b>envolver</b> (ehn-bohl-behr)	<i>to wrap</i>
<b>éxito</b> (ehk-see-toh)	<i>success</i>
<b>grapa</b> (grah-pah)	<i>staple</i>
<b>horno</b> (ohr-noh)	<i>oven</i>
<b>introducir</b> (een-troh-doo-seer)	<i>to insert</i>
<b>librería</b> (lee-breh-ree-ah)	<i>bookstore</i>
<b>mayor</b> (mah-yohr)	<i>older, bigger</i>
<b>once</b> (ohn-seh)	<i>eleven</i>
<b>pan</b> (pahn)	<i>bread</i>
<b>pie</b> (pee-eh)	<i>foot</i>
<b>recordar</b> (rreh-kohr-dahr)	<i>to remember</i>
<b>red</b> (rrehd)	<i>network</i>
<b>ropa</b> (rroh-pah)	<i>clothing</i>
<b>salado</b> (sah-lah-doh)	<i>salty</i>
<b>sensible</b> (sehn-see-bleh)	<i>sensitive</i>
<b>sin</b> (seen)	<i>without</i>
<b>sopa</b> (soh-pah)	<i>soup</i>
<b>vaso</b> (bah-soh)	<i>drinking glass</i>