

Pronunciation Guide

Spanish sounds are relatively easy to master because they resemble the sounds of English, and because Spanish letters and letter combinations are generally pronounced phonetically (unlike English letters and letter combinations, which may be pronounced in a variety of ways—**car** versus **cat**; **tough** versus **through**). When speaking Spanish, if you stress the wrong syllable or mispronounce a word, don't worry—you'll still be understood and your efforts will be appreciated.

Stress and Accents

Here are the rules for stress in Spanish:

1. If the word ends in a vowel (*a, e, i, o, u*), *n*, or *s*, stress the next-to-the-last syllable:

ventana (window) *behn-tah-nah*

joven (young) *boh-behn*

espejos (mirrors) *ehs-peh-bohs*

2. If the word ends in a consonant other than *n* or *s*, stress the last syllable:

pared (wall) *pah-rehd*

comedor (dining room) *koh-meh-dohr*

3. Any exceptions to the preceding rules have accent marks to help you place the stress correctly:

buró (nightstand) *boo-roh*

lámpara (lamp) *lahm-pah-rah*

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Here are the three accent marks in Spanish:

- ´: This accent goes above a vowel to indicate that the syllable is stressed.

ático (attic)

ah-tee-koh

inglés (English)

*een-gleh*s

- ~: The tilde goes above an *n* to produce the *ny* sound in **union**:

baño (bathroom)

bah-nyoh

bañera (bathtub)

bah-nyeh-rah

- ¨: The umlaut is used on the letter *u* in *diphthongs* (combinations of vowels) to show that each vowel is pronounced separately:

nicaragüense (Nicaraguan)

nee-kah-rah-goo-eh-n-seh

Vowels

The sound of each Spanish vowel consistently remains the same and is pronounced the way it is written.

Vowels

Vowel	Sound	Example	Pronunciation
a	ah	mesa (table)	<i>meh-sah</i>
e	eh	estufa (stove)	<i>ehs-too-fah</i>
i	ee	piso (floor)	<i>pee-soh</i>
o	oh	techo (roof)	<i>teh-choh</i>
u	oo	ducha (shower)	<i>doo-chah</i>

Diphthongs

A diphthong is generally (but not always) a combination of one weak vowel (*i* or *u*) and one strong vowel (*a*, *e*, or *o*) that appear in the same syllable.

Diphthongs

Diphthong	Sound	Example	Pronunciation
ai	ah-ee	aire (air)	<i>ah-ee-reh</i>
au	ah-oo	auto (auto)	<i>ah-oo-toh</i>
ay	ah-ee	hay (there is/are)	<i>ah-ee</i>
ei	eh-ee	veinte (twenty)	<i>beh-eeen-teh</i>
eo	eh-oh	video (VCR)	<i>bee-deh-oh</i>
eu	eh-oo	euro (euro)	<i>eh-oo-roh</i>
ia	ee-ah	limpiar (to clean)	<i>leem-pee-abr</i>
ie	ee-eh	siete (seven)	<i>see-eh-teh</i>
io	ee-oh	patio (patio)	<i>pah-tee-oh</i>
iu	ee-oo	ciudad (city)	<i>see-oo-dahd</i>
oi	oh-ee	oigo (I hear)	<i>oh-ee-goh</i>
ua	oo-ah	cuarto (room)	<i>koo-abr-toh</i>
ue	oo-eh	dueño (owner)	<i>doo-eh-nyoh</i>
ui	oo-ee	cuidar (to care for)	<i>koo-ee-dahr</i>
uo	oo-oh	cuota (quota)	<i>koo-oh-tah</i>

Consonants

Most Spanish consonants are pronounced in the same way as they are pronounced in English.

Consonants

Consonant	Sound	Example	Pronunciation
b (beh)	b	balcón (balcony)	<i>bahl-kohn</i>
c (seh)+ e or i	s	césped (lawn)	<i>sehs-pehd</i>
c (seh)+ a, o, u	k	cocina (kitchen)	<i>koh-see-nah</i>
ch (cheh)	ch	chimenea (fireplace)	<i>chee-meh-neh-ab</i>
d (deh)	d	desayuno (breakfast)	<i>deh-sah-yoo-noh</i>
f (eh-feh)	f	fecha (date)	<i>feh-chah</i>

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Consonant	Sound	Example	Pronunciation
g (heh)+ e or i	h	gente (people)	<i>hehn-teh</i>
g (heh)+ a, o, u	g	garaje (garaje)	<i>gab-rah-heb</i>
h (ah-cheh)	silent	horno (oven)	<i>ohr-noh</i>
j (hoh-tah)	h	julio (July)	<i>boo-lee-oh</i>
k (kah)	k	kilo (kilo)	<i>kee-loh</i>
l (eh-leh)	l	lávabo (sink)	<i>lah-bah-boh</i>
ll (eh-yeh)	y	silla (chair)	<i>see-yah</i>
m (eh-meh)	m	muebles (furniture)	<i>moo-eh-blehs</i>
n (eh-neh)	n	no (no)	<i>noh</i>
ñ (eh-nyeh)	ny	niño (child)	<i>nee-nyoh</i>
p (peh)	p	pasillo (hall)	<i>pah-see-yoh</i>
q (koo)	k	quince (fifteen)	<i>keen-seh</i>
r (eh-reh) (within a word, rolled a little)	r	televisor (TV set)	<i>teh-leh-bee-sohr</i>
r (eh-rreh) (r at the begin- ning of a word, rolled a lot)	rr	reloj (clock)	<i>rreh-loh</i>
rr (eh-rreh) (rolled a lot)	rr	terrazza (terrace)	<i>teh-rrah-sah</i>
s (eh-seh)	s	sala (room)	<i>sah-lah</i>
t (teh)	t	tienda (store)	<i>tee-ehn-dah</i>
v (beh)	soft b	veinte (twenty)	<i>beh-een-teh</i>
w (doh-bleh beh)	w	western (western)	<i>wehs-tehrn</i>
x (eh-kees)	ks	excusa (excuse)	<i>ehks-koo-sah</i>
y (ee gree-eh- gah)	y	yo (I)	<i>ee-oh</i>
z (seh-tah)	s	zapato (shoe)	<i>sah-pah-toh</i>