

Chapter 1

Brushing Up on the Basics

In This Chapter

- ▶ Counting with cardinal and ordinal numbers
- ▶ Expressing dates
- ▶ Telling time
- ▶ Reviewing parts of speech

Knowing numbers, expressing dates, relating the time of day, and recognizing parts of speech are essential Spanish skills you need in everyday life. Surely, the ability to communicate numbers, times, and dates is completely indispensable to you on a daily basis. Determining the correct part of speech to use helps you perfect your oral and written Spanish.

Counting Down

We start off this chapter with numbers because you need them in order to express dates and tell time. You use *cardinal numbers* (the more popular of the two) to count, to bargain with a merchant about a price, to express the temperature, or to write a check. You use *ordinal numbers* to express the number of a floor, the act of a play, or the order of a person in a race or competition.

Using cardinal numbers

You use cardinal numbers many times every day. As a matter of fact, you probably use them at least once an hour in the course of normal conversation or in writing. The Spanish cardinal numbers are as follows:

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<i>Number</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
0	cero	25	veinticinco (veinte y cinco)
1	uno	26	veintiséis (veinte y seis)
2	dos	27	veintisiete (veinte y siete)
3	tres	28	veintiocho (veinte y ocho)
4	cuatro	29	veintinueve (veinte y nueve)
5	cinco	30	treinta
6	seis	40	cuarenta
7	siete	50	cincuenta
8	ocho	60	sesenta
9	nueve	70	setenta
10	diez	80	ochenta
11	once	90	noventa
12	doce	100	cien (ciento)
13	trece	101	ciento uno
14	catorce	200	doscientos
15	quince	500	quinientos
16	dieciséis (diez y seis)	700	setecientos
17	diecisiete (diez y siete)	900	novecientos
18	dieciocho (diez y ocho)	1.000	mil
19	diecinueve (diez y nueve)	2.000	dos mil
20	veinte	100.000	cien mil
21	veintiuno (veinte y uno)	1.000.000	un millón
22	veintidós (veinte y dos)	2.000.000	dos millones
23	veintitrés (veinte y tres)	1.000.000.000	mil millones
24	veinticuatro (veinte y cuatro)	2.000.000.000	dos mil millones



You need to keep the following rules in mind when using cardinal numbers in Spanish:

- ✔ **Uno** (*one*), used only when counting, becomes **un** before a masculine noun and **una** before a feminine noun, whether the noun is singular or plural:
 - **uno, dos, tres** (*one, two, three*)
 - **un niño y una niña** (*a boy and a girl*)
 - **sesenta y un dólares** (*61 dollars*)
 - **veintiuna (veinte y una) personas** (*21 people*)
- ✔ You use the conjunction **y** (*and*) only for numbers between 16 and 99. You don't use it directly after hundreds:
 - **ochenta y ocho** (*88*)
 - **doscientos treinta y siete** (*237*)
- ✔ You generally write the numbers 16 through 19 and 21 through 29 as one word. The numbers 16, 22, 23, and 26 have accents on the last syllable:
 - 16: **dieciséis**
 - 22: **veintidós**
 - 23: **veintitrés**
 - 26: **veintiséis**
- ✔ When used before a masculine noun, **veintiún** (*21*) has an accent on the last syllable:
 - **veintiún días** (*21 days*)
- ✔ **Ciento** (*100*) becomes **cient** before nouns of either gender and before the numbers **mil** and **millones**. Before all other numbers, you use **ciento**. **Un** (*one*), which you don't use before **cient(to)** or **mil**, comes before **millón**. When a noun follows **millón**, you put the preposition **de** between **millón** and the noun. **Millón** drops its accent in the plural (**millones**):
 - **cient sombreros** (*100 hats*)
 - **cient blusas** (*100 blouses*)
 - **cient mil millas** (*100,000 miles*)
 - **cient millones de dólares** (*100 million dollars*)

- **ciento noventa acres** (*190 acres*)
- **mil posibilidades** (*1,000 possibilities*)
- **un millón de razones** (*1 million reasons*)

✓ Compounds of **ciento** (**doscientos**, **trescientos**) must change to agree with a feminine noun:

- **cuatrocientos muchachos** (*400 muchachos*)
- **seiscientas muchachas** (*600 muchachas*)



With numerals and decimals, Spanish uses commas where English uses periods, and vice versa:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
6,000	6.000
0.75	0,75
\$14.99	\$14,99

Using ordinal numbers

You use *ordinal numbers* — those used to express numbers in a series — far less frequently than cardinal numbers, but they still have some very important applications in everyday life. The following chart presents the Spanish ordinal numbers:

<i>Ordinal</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>1st</i>	primero
<i>2nd</i>	segundo
<i>3rd</i>	tercero
<i>4th</i>	cuarto
<i>5th</i>	quinto
<i>6th</i>	sexto
<i>7th</i>	séptimo
<i>8th</i>	octavo
<i>9th</i>	noveno
<i>10th</i>	décimo



The following list outlines everything you must remember when using ordinal numbers in Spanish:

- ✓ Spanish speakers rarely use ordinal numbers after 10th. After that, they usually use cardinal numbers in both the spoken and written language:

El siglo quince (*the 15th century*)

- ✓ Ordinal numbers must agree in gender (masculine or feminine) with the nouns they modify. You can make ordinal numbers feminine by changing the final **-o** of the masculine form to **-a**:

la cuarta vez (*the fourth time*)

- ✓ **Primero** and **tercero** drop the final **-o** before a masculine singular noun:

el primer muchacho (*the first boy*)

el tercer hombre (*the third man*)

- ✓ In dates, **primero** is the only ordinal number you use. All other dates call for the cardinal numbers:

el primero de mayo (*May 1st*)

el doce de enero (*January 12th*)

Dealing with Dates

Dates are important parts of everyday life (in more ways than one!). To write out dates in Spanish, you have to practice the days of the week, the months of the year, and numbers (see the preceding section).

Expressing the days of the week

If you hear *¿Qué día es hoy?* (*What day is it?*), you should respond with **Hoy es . . .** (*Today is . . .*) and then provide the name of one of the days listed here:

English	Spanish
Monday	lunes
Tuesday	martes
Wednesday	miércoles
Thursday	jueves
Friday	viernes
Saturday	sábado
Sunday	domingo



Unlike the English calendar, the Spanish calendar starts with Monday.



Here are two more guidelines for talking about days of the week in Spanish:

- ✓ Unless you use them at the beginning of a sentence, you don't capitalize the days of the week in Spanish:

Lunes y martes son días de vacaciones. (*Monday and Tuesday are vacation days.*)

- ✓ You use **el** to express *on* when referring to a particular day of the week and **los** to express *on* when the action occurs repeatedly:

No trabajo el sábado. (*I'm not working on Saturday.*)

No trabajo los sábados. (*I don't work on Saturdays.*)

Naming the months of the year

If you hear *¿En qué mes . . . ?* (*In what month . . .*), someone is asking you in what month a certain event takes place. We provide the names of the months in Spanish in the following list:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>January</i>	enero
<i>February</i>	febrero
<i>March</i>	marzo
<i>April</i>	abril
<i>May</i>	mayo
<i>June</i>	junio
<i>July</i>	julio
<i>August</i>	agosto
<i>September</i>	septiembre (or setiembre)
<i>October</i>	octubre
<i>November</i>	noviembre
<i>December</i>	diciembre



Like days of the week, the months aren't capitalized in Spanish:

Junio y julio son meses agradables. (*June and July are nice months.*)

Along with the months, you may also want to talk about the seasons of the year. In Spanish, the seasons are masculine except for **la primavera** (*the spring*):

el invierno (*the winter*)

la primavera (*the spring*)

el verano (*the summer*)

el otoño (*the autumn [fall]*)

Making a date

If you want to ask a passerby or an acquaintance about the date, politely inquire **¿Cuál es la fecha de hoy?** (*What is today's date?*) The person should respond with **Hoy es . . .** (*Today is . . .*) and then use the following formula to express the correct date:

day + **(el)** + cardinal number (except for **primero**) + **de** + month + **de** + year

The following is an example translation, using this formula:

Sunday, April 18, 2010: **Hoy es domingo, el dieciocho de abril de dos mil diez.**



Now that you have a handy formula, you need to know a few more details about writing dates in Spanish:

- ✓ You express the first day of each month with **primero**. You use cardinal numbers for all other days:

el primero de enero (*January 1st*)

el siete de enero (*January 7th*)

- ✓ Use **el** to express *on* with Spanish dates:

Partimos el once de octubre. (*We are leaving on October 11th.*)

✓ In Spanish, you express years in thousands and hundreds, not only in hundreds:

1492: **mil cuatrocientos noventa y dos** (*fourteen hundred ninety-two*)



In Spanish, when dates are written as numbers, they follow the sequence day/month/year, which may prove confusing to English speakers — especially for dates below the 12th of the month. You write *February 9th* as 2/9 in English, but in Spanish it's 9/2.

When speaking of dates in everyday language, the words and expressions that follow may come in handy:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>a day</i>	un día	<i>day before yesterday</i>	anteayer
<i>a week</i>	una semana	<i>yesterday</i>	ayer
<i>a month</i>	un mes	<i>today</i>	hoy
<i>a year</i>	un año	<i>tomorrow</i>	mañana
<i>in</i>	en	<i>tomorrow morning</i>	mañana por la mañana
<i>ago</i>	hace	<i>tomorrow afternoon</i>	mañana por la tarde
<i>per</i>	por	<i>tomorrow night</i>	mañana por la noche
<i>during</i>	durante	<i>day after tomorrow</i>	pasado mañana
<i>next</i>	próximo(a)	<i>from</i>	desde
<i>last</i>	pasado(a)	<i>a week from today</i>	de hoy en ocho
<i>last (in a series)</i>	último(a)	<i>two weeks from tomorrow</i>	de mañana en dos semanas
<i>eve</i>	la víspera	<i>within one (two) week(s)</i>	dentro de una (dos) semana(s)

Telling Time

Knowing how to understand, speak, and write time-related words and phrases is a must for anyone who's studying a foreign language and planning to put these studies to use (to do some traveling one day, for instance).

If you hear **¿Qué hora es?** (*What time is it?*), someone wants to know the time. You should start by responding with the following:

Es la una + 1 o'clock hour or **Son las** + any time after 1.

To express the time after the hour (up to and including half past the hour), use **y** (*and*) and the number of minutes. Use **menos** (*less*) + the number of the following hour to express the time before the next hour (after half past the hour).

You can also express time numerically (as shown in the third example here):

Es la una y media. (*It's 1:30.*)

Son las cinco menos veinte. (*It's 4:40.*)

Son las cuatro y cuarenta. (*It's 4:40.*)

If you want to discuss at what time a particular event will occur, you can use a question — **¿A qué hora . . . ?** — or answer with **A la una** or **A las** + any time after 1:

¿A qué hora vienen? (*At what time are they coming?*)

A la una. (*At 1:00.*)

A las tres y cuarto. (*At 3:15.*)

The following chart shows how to express time after and before the hour:

Time	Spanish
1:00	la una
2:05	las dos y cinco
3:10	las tres y diez
4:15	las cuatro y cuarto or las cuatro y quince
5:20	las cinco y veinte
6:25	las seis y veinticinco
7:30	las siete y media or las siete y treinta
7:35	las ocho menos veinticinco or las siete y treinta y cinco
8:40	las nueve menos veinte or las ocho y cuarenta
9:45	las diez menos cuarto or las nueve y cuarenta y cinco

<i>Time</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
10:50	las once menos diez or las diez y cincuenta
11:55	las doce menos cinco or las once y cincuenta y cinco
noon	el mediodía
midnight	la medianoche

When expressing time, the words and expressions we present in the following table may come in handy:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>a second</i>	un segundo	<i>in an hour</i>	en una hora
<i>a minute</i>	un minuto	<i>in a while</i>	dentro de un rato
<i>a quarter of an hour</i>	un cuarto de hora	<i>until ten o'clock</i>	hasta las diez
<i>an hour</i>	una hora	<i>before nine o'clock</i>	antes de las nueve
<i>a half hour</i>	media hora	<i>after seven o'clock</i>	después de las siete
<i>in the morning (a.m.)</i>	por la mañana	<i>since what time?</i>	¿desde qué hora?
<i>in the afternoon (p.m.)</i>	por la tarde	<i>since eight o'clock</i>	desde las ocho
<i>in the evening (p.m.)</i>	por la noche	<i>one hour ago</i>	hace una hora
<i>at what time?</i>	¿a qué hora?	<i>early</i>	temprano
<i>at exactly nine o'clock</i>	a las nueve en punto	<i>late</i>	tarde
<i>at about two o'clock</i>	a eso de las dos	<i>late (in arriving)</i>	de retraso

Focusing on Parts of Speech

Too many people try to translate word for word from English to Spanish. And that just doesn't work. Why? Because a Spanish word may have many applications depending on its usage (for example, as a noun or as an adjective) in the sentence. In addition, many idiomatic phrases, when used properly, distinguish a native speaker from someone who's unfamiliar with the language. (An *idiomatic* phrase is a phrase

used in a particular language whose meaning can't easily be understood by a literal translation of its component words. An English example is "It's raining cats and dogs.")

Using nouns

A *noun* is the part of speech that refers to a person, place, thing, quality, idea, or action. Here are some examples of nouns in action:

- ✔ Person: *The boy is friendly.* (**El muchacho es amable.**)
- ✔ Place: *I want to go home.* (**Quiero ir a casa.**)
- ✔ Thing: *I would like to see that book.* (**Quisiera ver ese libro.**)
- ✔ Quality: *I admire her courage.* (**Admiro su coraje.**)
- ✔ Idea: *Communism is a political theory.* (**El comunismo es una teoría política.**)
- ✔ Action: *The plane's departure is imminent.* (**La partida del avión es inminente.**)

In everyday speaking/writing, you use nouns most often in the following forms:

- ✔ As the subject of a verb:
María speaks Spanish. (**María habla español.**)
- ✔ As the direct object of a verb:
I see María. (**Yo veo a María.**)
- ✔ As the indirect object of a verb:
I speak to María. (**Yo le hablo a María.**)
- ✔ As the object of a preposition:
I went out with María. (**Yo salí con María.**)



Unlike English nouns, all Spanish nouns have a gender: masculine or feminine. All words you use to qualify or describe a noun must agree with the noun with respect to gender. We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 2.

Substituting pronouns

A *pronoun* is a part of speech used in place of a noun. The following list outlines the pronouns we discuss in this book:

- ✓ *Subject pronouns* (see Chapter 3) are followed by the verb expressing the main action in the sentence (*I, you, he, she, it, we, they*):

You are nice. (Ud. es simpático.)

- ✓ *Interrogative pronouns* (see Chapter 5) ask a question (*who, which, what, and so on*):

Who is that? (¿Quién es?)

- ✓ *Direct object pronouns* (see Chapter 2) replace direct object nouns; they answer whom or what the subject is acting upon. The direct object pronouns are **me, te, lo, la** (**le** in Spain), **nos, (os** in Spain), **los, and las** (**les** in Spain):

I'll be seeing you. (Te veo.)

- ✓ *Indirect object pronouns* (see Chapter 2) replace indirect object nouns; they explain to or for whom something is done. They include **me, te, le, nos, (os** in Spain), and **les**:

He wrote to me. (Me escribió.)

- ✓ *Reflexive pronouns* (see Chapter 3) show that the subject is acting upon itself (**me, te, se, nos, [os** in Spain]):

He sees himself in the mirror. (Él se ve en el espejo.)

- ✓ *Prepositional pronouns* (see Chapter 4) are used after prepositions (**mí, ti, él, ella, Ud., nosotros, vosotros** (in Spain), **ellos, ellas, Uds.**):

They're going to the movies without me. (Van al cine sin mí.)

Acting with verbs

A verb is a part of speech that shows an action or a state of being. In Spanish, as in English, verbs change from their infinitive form (they're conjugated, in other words) as follows:

- ✓ To agree with the person performing the action (*I, you, he, she, it, we, they*)

- ✔ To indicate the time when the action was performed (past, present, future)
- ✔ To indicate the mood (indicative, subjunctive, imperative, conditional) of the action



The *infinitive* of the verb is its “raw” form — its “to” form — before it’s conjugated. Infinitives in Spanish have three different endings, and you conjugate them according to these endings (**-ar**, **-er**, and **-ir**) when a subject is present or is implied. We give you lots more information about verbs in Chapters 3, 6, 7, and 8.

Describing with adjectives

An *adjective* is a part of speech that describes a noun:

The house is white. (**La casa es blanca.**)

A Spanish adjective can have other applications, too, which we outline in the following list:

- ✔ A *possessive adjective* tells to whom the noun belongs:
It’s my book. (**Es mi libro.**)
- ✔ A *demonstrative adjective* shows *this*, *that*, *these*, or *those*:
That film is good. (**Esa película es buena.**)
- ✔ An *interrogative adjective* asks the question *whose*, *which*, or *what*:
Whose car is that? (**¿De quién es ese coche?**)
- ✔ A number (cardinal or ordinal; see the “Counting Down” section earlier in this chapter) is an adjective that gives a specific amount:
I need a pen. (**Necesito un bolígrafo.**)
It’s his tenth birthday. (**Es su décimo cumpleaños.**)

Clarifying with adverbs

An *adverb* is a part of speech that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb:

- ✔ Modifying a verb: *You speak quickly.* (Ud. habla **rápidamente**.)
- ✔ Modifying an adjective: *Her grandmother is very old.* (Su abuela es **muy** vieja.)
- ✔ Modifying an adverb: *They eat too slowly.* (Ellos comen **demasiado** despacio.)

Joining with prepositions

Prepositions are words used before nouns or pronouns to relate them to other words in the sentence. Prepositions connect the following:

- ✔ Noun to noun: *I need that piece of paper.* (Necesito esa hoja **de** papel.)
- ✔ Verb to verb: *The child begins to laugh.* (El niño empieza **a** reír.)
- ✔ Verb to noun: *She studies with her friends.* (Ella estudia **con** sus amigas.)
- ✔ Verb to pronoun: *What do you think about them?* (¿Qué piensas **de** ellos?)