



THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SPANISH

EVERYDAY VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR TO HELP YOU
SURVIVE IN SPANISH (AND THEN SOME!)



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CHAPTER ONE

GREETINGS

GREETINGS

While you may know “hola”, there are a number of other common Spanish greetings. Spanish speakers use different greetings depending on the time of day, including:

- Buenos días (good morning)
- Buenas tardes (good afternoon)
- Buenas noches (good evening/good night)

Note: You can also say “Buenas” or “muy buenas” a shortened version of the above three greetings, suitable in any informal situation.

There are, of course, other ways of greeting someone. Formal greetings use the formal form “usted”, including:

- ¿Cómo está **usted**? (How are you?)
- ¿Cómo **le** va? (How’s it going?)
- ¿Qué **hace**? (What are you doing?)

Informal greetings use the informal form “tu”, including:

- ¿Cómo **estás**? (Hello, how are you?)
- ¿Cómo **te** va? (How’s it going?)
- ¿Qué **haces**? (What are you doing?)

Another extremely common informal greeting is ¿Qué tal? which roughly means “What’s up?”

Common responses to these questions include:

- Bien, gracias. / Muy bien. (Well, thanks. / Very well.)
- Como siempre. (As always.)
- Más o menos. (Okay, so-so.)
- Todo bien. (All good, great.)
- Nada. (Nothing.)

When meeting someone for the first time, you can say “mucho gusto” (nice to meet you) or “encantado/encantada” (how do you do).

GREETINGS

When leaving somewhere, you can use the same expressions to say goodbye as you used to say hello, given the time of day:

Buenos días (good morning)

Buenas tardes (good afternoon)

Buenas noches (good evening/good night)

Other common ways to say goodbye include:

Adiós (Bye)

Hasta luego/hasta más tarde (See you later)

Hasta mañana (See you tomorrow)

Hasta pronto (See you soon)

Hasta la próxima (Until next time)

Hasta ahora (See you in a minute)

Nos vemos. (See you soon/ See ya)

A few more formal ways to end a conversation or phone call include:

Que tenga un buen día. (Have a nice day!)

Encantada de haberle visto. (Pleased to have seen you.)



Practice pronouncing these greetings and more with this video from the Transparent Spanish YouTube channel.



CHAPTER TWO

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
Yo	I
Tú	You (singular, informal)
Usted	You (singular, formal)
Él/Ella	He/She
Nosotros	We
Ustedes	You (plural)
Ellos/Ellas	They (masculine/feminine)

Spanish personal pronouns serve the same purpose as in English, but they can be a bit trickier for a few reasons.

First, many speakers do not use personal pronouns in spoken Spanish. This is because the verb conjugation will identify the subject. A pronoun is usually only used when referring to a third person (he, she, or they). As you get more familiar with verb conjugations (which we'll cover in this eBook), you'll find this less confusing.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Second, Spanish uses different forms of address depending on the level formality required:

Tú -- Use tú with friends, peers, children, and people younger than you.

Usted – Use usted with your boss, people older than you, or any adults you do not know.

Third, Spanish pronouns vary based on location. In the table above, we've given the most common Latin American pronouns. But in Spain, "vosotros" is used for the plural, informal "you."



Then there's the confusing concept of "voseo". In the Southern Cone (Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay) and some parts of Central America, "vos" is used as the single "you". Learn more about the rules dictating the Spanish "voseo" in [this blog post](#).



CHAPTER THREE

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

DEFINITE ARTICLES

In English, when referring to a specific object, we use one article: *the*. (The cats, the bottle, the sky, etc.) In Spanish, there are four ways to say the:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
El	Masculine, singular
La	Feminine, singular
Los	Masculine, plural
Las	Feminine, plural

We can see these pronouns in action when describing a dog:

El perro (the male dog)

Los perros (the male dogs)

La perra (the female dog)

Las perras (the female dogs)

In those examples, it's pretty obvious when to use the masculine or feminine pronoun—depending on the gender of the dog. But all Spanish nouns have gender, whether it's an animate object or not. Unfortunately, there's no rule governing noun gender—it's just something you have to memorize.

Examples:

El vestido (the dress) → “Dress” may seem like a feminine noun, but it's masculine.

La corbata (the tie) → Again, “tie” might seem like a masculine noun, but it's feminine.

DEFINITE & INDEFINITE ARTICLES

INDEFINITE ARTICLES

In English, when referring to a unspecified object, we use *a*, *an*, or *some* . (a flower, an apple, some cupcakes, etc.) In Spanish, there are four ways to say the:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS	
Un	Masculine, singular
Una	Feminine, singular
Unos	Masculine, plural
Unas	Feminine, plural

We can see these pronouns in action when describing a dog:

Un pero (a male dog)

Unos perros (some male dogs)

Una perra (a female dog)

Unas perras (some female dogs)

Examples:

Un sombrero (a hat)

Una puerta (a door)

Unos lápices (some pencils)

Unas manzanas (some apples)



Learn more about noun gender in Spanish in this [quick grammar video](#).



CHAPTER FOUR

VERB CONJUGATIONS

VERB CONJUGATIONS

-AR VERBS

The first group of verbs, known as –ar verbs, includes verbs that end in –ar, such as trabajar (to work), hablar (to talk), and mirar (to look at). To conjugate –ar verbs, drop the –ar from the end of the verb (this forms the “root”) and append the correct conjugation suffix. The suffix changes depending on the subject performing the verb, so it’s important to memorizing these endings.

Verbs ending in –ar are conjugated using the following endings:

Singular		Plural	
Yo	-o	Nosotros	-amos
Tú	-as	Vosotros**	-áis
Él/Ella/Usted*	-a	Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	-an

*Note: Usted (you) used the same conjugation as él/ella (he/she), *NOT* tú. Same goes for ustedes using the same conjugation as ellos/ellas.

**Note: Remember, vosotros is only used in Spain.

Trabajar (to work)

Yo trabajo

Tú trabajas

Él/Ella/Usted trabaja

Nosotros trabajamos

Vosotros trabajáis

Ellos/Ellas trabajan

Hablar (to speak)

Yo hablo

Tú hablaas

Él/Ella/Usted habla

Nosotros hablamos

Vosotros habláis

Ellos/Ellas hablan

VERB CONJUGATIONS

-ER VERBS

The second group of verbs, known as –er verbs, includes verbs that end in –er, such as comprender (to understand) or correr (to run). To conjugate –er verbs, drop the –er and add the following endings:

Singular		Plural	
Yo	-o	Nosotros	-emos
Tú	-es	Vosotros**	-éis
Él/Ella/Usted*	-e	Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	-en

*Note: Usted (you) used the same conjugation as él/ella (he/she), *NOT* tú. Same goes for ustedes using the same conjugation as ellos/ellas.

**Note: Remember, vosotros is only used in Spain.

Comprender (to understand)

Yo comprendo	Nosotros comprendemos
Tú comprendes	Vosotros comprendéis
Él/Ella/Usted comprende	Ellos/Ellas comprenden

Correr (to run)

Yo corro	Nosotros corremos
Tú corres	Vosotros corréis
Él/Ella/Usted corre	Ellos/Ellas corren

VERB CONJUGATIONS

-IR VERBS

The third group of verbs, known as –ir verbs, includes verbs that end in –ir, such as vivir (to live) or escribir (to write). To conjugate –ir verbs, drop the –ir and add the same endings as –er verbs (with the exception of vosotros, for the Castilian Spanish learners among us!)

Singular		Plural	
Yo	-o	Nosotros	-emos
Tú	-es	Vosotros**	-ís
Él/Ella/Usted*	-e	Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	-en

*Note: Usted (you) used the same conjugation as él/ella (he/she), *NOT* tú. Same goes for ustedes using the same conjugation as ellos/ellas.

**Note: Remember, vosotros is only used in Spain.

Vivir (to live)

Yo vivo

Nosotros vivemos

Tú vives

Vosotros vivéis

Él/Ella/Usted comprende Ellos/Ellas viven

As you can see, the different verb endings indicate the subject of the sentence—“vivo” indicates that the subject is “I”, because it ends in “o”. That’s why many Spanish speakers drop the personal pronouns. More often than not, you’ll hear:

Escribo. (I write.)

Partemos. (We leave.)

Trabajas. (You work.)

Vivéis. (You live.)

Ella habla. (She speaks.)*

Ellos corren. (They run.)*

*Note: You should still use the pronoun in the third person, unless you’ve already determined who you’re talking about.



CHAPTER FIVE

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

We hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the last chapter was a bit of an over-simplification of conjugation Spanish verbs. There are many exceptions in the form of stem-changing verbs, or verbs whose stems change when conjugated in the present. You'll want to memorize the following rules to help you manage the exceptions.

1.e→ie verbs

In some verbs, "e" becomes "ie" in the stem when conjugated, except in the nosotros and vosotros forms.

Example: **empezar** (to begin)

Yo emp**ie**zo

Tú emp**ie**zas

Él/ella/usted emp**ie**za

Nosotros(as) empezamos*

Vosotros(as) empezáis*

Ellos, ellas, ustedes emp**ie**zan

The following verbs are all "e→ie" verbs:

advertir (to warn)	despertarse (to wake up)	perder (to lose)
apretar (to tighten)	digerir (to digest)	preferir (to prefer)
atender (to pay attention)	divertirse (to have fun)	querer (to want)
atravesar (to go through)	encender (to light)	sentarse (to sit)
calentar (to heat)	entender (to understand)	sentirse (to feel)
cerrar (to close)	extender (to stretch)	sugerir (to suggest)
comenzar (to start)	herir (to hurt)	temblar (to tremble)
concertar (to set a date)	hervir (to boil)	tender (to spread out)
confesar (to confess)	mentir (to lie)	transferir (to transfer)
convertir (to convert)	negar (to deny)	tropezar (to stumble)
defender (to defend)	pensar (to think)	

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

2. o→ue verbs

In some verbs, “o” becomes “ue” in the stem when conjugated, except in the nosotros and vosotros forms.

Example: **almorzar** (to have lunch)

Yo almuerzo

Tú almuerzas

Él/ella/usted almuerza

Nosotros(as) almorzamos

Vosotros(as) almorzáis

Ellos/ellas/ustedes almuerzan

The following verbs are all “o→ue” verbs:

acordar(se) (to remember)

acostar(se) (to lie down, to go to bed)

apostar (to bet)

colgar (to hang)

comprobar (to confirm)

contar (to tell, to count)

desenvolver (to unwrap)

devolver (to give back)

doler (to hurt)

dormir (to sleep)

encontrar(se) (to meet, to find)

envolver (to wrap)

forzar (to force)

morder (to bite)

morir (to die)

mostrar (to show)

mover (to move)

poder (to be able to)

probar (to try)

recordar (to remember)

resolver (to solve)

rodar (to roll)

soler (to be used to)

soltar (to let go, to release)

soñar (to dream)

volar (to fly)

volver (to come back)

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

3. e→i verbs

In some verbs, “e” becomes “i” in the stem when conjugated, except in the nosotros and vosotros forms.

Example: pedir (to ask)

Yo pido

Tú pides

Él/ella/usted pide

Nosotros(as) pedimos

Vosotros(as) pedís

Ellos/ellas/ustedes piden

The following verbs are all “e→i” verbs:

competir (*to compete*)

impedir (*to stop*)

rendir (*to produce, yield*)

servir (*to serve*)

vestir(se) (*to (get) dressed*)

despedir (*to say goodbye*)

medir (*to measure*)

repetir (*to repeat*)

teñir (*to dye*)

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

4. c→zc verbs

In some verbs, “c” becomes “zc” in the stem when conjugated, but ONLY in the first person “yo” form.

Example: parecer (to seem)

Yo parezco

Tú pareces

Él/ella/usted parece

Nosotros(as) parecemos

Vosotros(as) parecéis

Ellos/ellas/ustedes parecen

The following verbs are all “c→zc” verbs:

abastecer [to supply]

agradecer [to thank]

amanecer [to dawn]

anochecer [to get dark]

aparecer [to appear]

conducir [to drive]

conocer [to know, to meet]

crecer [to grow]

deducir [to deduce]

empobrecer [to make poor]

enriquecer [to get rich]

envejecer [to age]

establecer [to establish]

fallecer [to pass away]

favorecer [to favor]

fortalecer [to strengthen]

inducir [to induce]

introducir [to insert]

merecer [to deserve]

nacer [to be born]

obedecer [to obey]

ofrecer [to offer]

permanecer [to remain]

pertenecer [to belong]

producir [to produce]

reducir [to reduce]

rejuvenecer [to rejuvenate]

seducir [to seduce]

traducir [to translate]

STEM-CHANGING VERBS

There are other irregular verbs that change in the present tense for pronunciation purposes. The verbs keep the same sound but add or change a letter:

Ending: -car

Spelling change: C for QU

Before: E

Example: buscar – busqué, busque

Ending: -ger, -gir

Spelling change: G for J

Before: A/O

Example: recoger – recojo, recoja;

Ending: -gar

Spelling change: C for GU

Before: E

Example: entregar – entregué, entregue

Ending: -guir

Spelling change: deletion of U

Before: A/O

Example: conseguir – consigo, consiga

Ending: -zar

Spelling change: Z for C

Before: E

Example: utilizar – utilicé – utilice

Ending: -quir

Spelling change: QU for C

Before: A/O

Example: delinquir – delinco, delinca

Ending: -cer, -cir

Spelling change: C for Z

Before: A/O

Example: vencer – venzo, venza



CHAPTER SIX

NUMBERS 1-100

NUMBERS 1-20

0	Cero
1	Uno
2	Dos
3	Tres
4	Cuatro
5	Cinco
6	Seis
7	Siete
8	Ocho
9	Nueve
10	Diez
11	Once
12	Doce
13	Trece
14	Catorce
15	Quince
16	Dieciséis
17	Diecisiete
18	Dieciocho
19	Diecinueve
20	Veinte



Practice pronouncing these numbers with our video on [Spanish Numbers 1-20](#).

NUMBERS 1-100

After 20, the numbers follow a formula. Memorize the numerals of ten (twenty, thirty, etc.), then add the single digits to form bigger numbers.

For example, twenty is veinte. So twenty-one is veintiuno, twenty-two is veintidós, etc.

Starting from 30 upwards, use “y” to combine the tens place with the digit. For example, thirty is treinta, so thirty-one is treinta y uno.

20	Veinte	Twenty
30	Treinta	Thirty
40	Cuarenta	Forty
50	Cincuenta	Fifty
60	Sesenta	Sixty
70	Setenta	Seventy
80	Ochenta	Eighty
90	Noventa	Ninety
100	Cien*	One hundred

*When we use the number 100 in isolation we call it “**cien**” but when it is combined with other units or tens (from 101 to 199), then it changes to “**ciento**” as in “**ciento uno**” (101).



CHAPTER SEVEN

SER VS. ESTAR

SER VS ESTAR

One challenge for Spanish learners is distinguishing when to use **ser** or **estar**, both of which translate into “**to be**” in English. But first, let’s start with their conjugations:

SER (to be)			
Yo	soy	Nosotros	somos
Tú	eres	Vosotros	sois
Él/Ella/Usted	es	Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	son

ESTAR (to be)			
Yo	estoy	Nosotros	estamos
Tú	estás	Vosotros	estáis
Él/Ella/Usted	está	Ellos/Ellas/Ustedes	están

Generally, **ser** is used with adjectives expressing **permanent** characteristics, including nationality, physical appearance and personality.

On the other hand, **estar** is used with **temporary** states or conditions, such as emotions.

Example:

El café **es** caliente. (Coffee is hot.)

In this case, use **ser** because coffee is usually hot.

Los cafés **están** fríos. (The coffees are cold.)

In this case, use **estar** because the coffees were hot but have become cold, which is not their normal condition.

SER VS ESTAR

WHEN TO USE SER

- Origin or Nationality

Soy de Honduras. (I am from Honduras.)

- Occupation

Él **es** un bombero. (He is a firefighter.)

- Possession

Es mi perro. (It's my dog.)

- Telling Time* and Place

Es la una. (It is 1:00.)

Son las dos. (It is 2:00.)

La fiesta **es** a su casa. (The party is at her house.)

- Essential Characteristics**

El libro **es** largo. (The book is long.)

Ella **es** rubia. (She is blonde.)

La salsa **es** picante. (Salsa is spicy.)

Tú eres muy joven. (You are very young.)

*Note: When telling time, 1:00 uses the third personal singular (es), while all other times using the third person plural (son.)

**Note: Essential characteristics may not be permanent, but they describe the nature of the subject rather than describing the subject at a given moment. For example, the subject of the sentence “you are very young” will not be young forever, but for many years to come, he or she will be considered young.

SER VS ESTAR

WHEN TO USE ESTAR

- Temporary State or Condition

Estoy enferma. (I am sick.)

Estamos perdidos. (We are lost.)

No **estoy** casado. (I am not married.)

- Emotions

Estás muy triste hoy. (You are very sad today.)

- Location

No **están** en casa. (They are not at home.)

Note that your choice of **ser** or **estar** can change the meaning of a sentence:

Elena **está** aburrida.

Elena is **bored**.

Elena **es** aburrida.

Elena is **boring**.

Marco **está** cansado.

Marco is **tired**.

Correr un maratón **es** cansado.

Running a marathon is **tiring**.

La manzana **está** verde.

The apple is **unripe**

Las manzanas Granny Smith **son** verdes. Granny Smith apples are **green**.

¿**Estás** listo para ir al cine?

Are you **ready** to go to the movies?

Ese niño **es** muy listo.

That little boy is very **clever**.



CHAPTER EIGHT

NEGATION

NEGATION

There are many ways to negate a sentence in Spanish.

The most common negation involves simply placing “no” before the verb.

María **no** conoce a Carlos. (Maria does not know Carlos.)

No tengo bastante tiempo. (I don’t have enough time.)

Beyond “no”, there are other common negative words:

Nadie (nobody, no one)

Nada (nothing, not anything)

Ninguno, Ninguna* (none, not any)

Nunca (never)

Ni... ni... (neither... nor...)

Tampoco (neither, not either)

*Note: Ninguno changes to “ningún” before masculine singular nouns.

These words can be used alone before the verb, just like “no”.

Nadie habla español aquí. (**Nobody** speaks Spanish here.)

Nada puede detenerme. (Nothing can stop me.)

Nunca bebo leche. (I **never** drink milk.)

NEGATION

In Spanish double and even triple negatives are allowed and, in many cases, necessary.

No hay **nadie** aqui. (No one is here.)

No tiene **ninguna** esperanza. (He doesn't have any hope.)

No lo se. Ella **no** lo sabe **tampoco**. (I don't know. She doesn't know either.)

If you use this double negative construction, any words that follow must be negative. For example, in English, we would say "I don't have *anything*." But in Spanish, you must say "I don't have *nothing*."

No tenemos **nada**. - We don't have anything. (literally nothing)



CHAPTER NINE

ASKING QUESTIONS

ASKING QUESTIONS

Question Words	
Qué	What
Por qué	Why
Cuándo	When
Dónde	Where
Cómo	How
Cuál	Which
Quién	Who
Cuánto(a)	How much
Cuántos(as)	How many

To ask a question in Spanish, place one of the question words above at the beginning of the sentence. Note that Spanish questions begin with an inverted question mark.

Examples:

¿**Qué** estás diciendo? [*What are you saying?*]

¿**Por qué** ella se fue tan temprano? [*Why did she leave so early?*]

¿**Cuándo** vas a darme la respuesta? [*When are you going to give me the answer?*]

¿**Dónde** te vas a quedar en tus vacaciones? [*Where are you going to stay during your vacation?*]

¿**Cómo** estás? [*How are you?*]

¿**Cuál** tren debo tomar? [*Which train do I take?*]

¿**Quién** quiere ir conmigo? [*Who wants to go with me?*]

¿**Cuánto** tiempo necesitas para hacer eso? [*How much time do you need to do that?*]

¿**Cuántos** libros tenemos que comprar? [*How many books do we have to buy?*]

ASKING QUESTIONS

For simple yes or no questions, you don't even need a question word. An inverted question mark will indicate a question in writing, while intonation is key to indicating a question in spoken Spanish. Raise the pitch of your voice the same way you would when asking a question in English. For example:

She's pregnant.

She's *pregnant*? → Emphasizing the end of the sentence turns it into a question.

Word order in yes or no questions is flexible. For example, both of the following questions mean the same thing: *Does she speak English?*

¿Ella habla ingles?

¿Habla ella ingles?

If you're worried about your intonation, you can also indicate you're asking a question by added some kind of question statement at the end.

Ella habla ingles, **¿no?** (She speaks English, **doesn't she?**)

Ella habla ingles, **¿verdad?** (She speaks English, **right?**)

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