**Spanish Essentials - The Alphabet**

**Introduction**

**The Alphabet, spelling and pronunciation.**

Here you can see at a glance the Spanish key language related to the alphabet, spelling and pronunciation.

First of all the VOWELS – **Las vocales**

Spanish has the same five vowels as English, but Spanish vowels are generally shorter (in duration) than their English counterparts.

Take the letter ‘**o’**. When you say the letter o in English, you tend to stretch it out and add a bit of an ‘uh’ sound at the end. In Spanish, **‘o’** is much shorter and is pronounced with rounded lips from start to finish (think on the words ‘Octupus’ ‘fork’).

Vowel Example English

a araña spider

e elefante elephant

i isla island

o once eleven

u uno one

**The Alphabet**

Listen to people pronouncing the Spanish alphabet by clicking on the audio icons. The key language is summarised in the table.

**The Spanish letter names**: **ADD AUDIOS AND ICONS make an interesting graphic to introduce the name of the letters. THIS LIST OF LETTERS must be presented in a better visual style.**

A - B C D E F

a (a), be (b), ce (c), de (d), e (e), efe (f),

G H I J K L

ge (g), hache (h), i (i), jota (j), ka (k), ele (l),

M N Ñ O P Q

eme (m), ene (n), eñe (ñ), o (o), pe (p), cu (q),

R S T U V W

erre (r), ese (s), te (t), u (u), uve (v), doble uve (w),

X Y Z

equis (x), ye (y), zeta (z)

**Pronouncing the Spanish Alphabet**

Spanish letter name pronunciation—how to pronounce the Spanish alphabet—is as follows:

Click the audio icon to listen to the pronunciation of the words

**Letter Name SPA PLEASE ADD ICONS and Audios**

**LETTER LETTER NAME(S) PRONUNCIATION TIPS**

A a Just say ah!: Ah!

**Amiga** – Friend

**Margarita** (daisy – Margaret)

**Alemania** (Germany)

B be It sounds like an English b, but softer.

Not too much pressure in the lips, much like the Spanish v. Also, it is called ‘**be larga**’, ‘**be grande**’ or ‘**be de burro**’.

**Bastante** – quite – a lot of

**Barbero** – Barber

**Bailar**

C ce This letter has two sounds, and it will depend

of the vowel that follows it.

It will sound like the English ‘**k’** when it is

followed by **‘o’ ‘a’ ‘u’**.

**Cosa** – thing

**Casa** – house

**Cuenta** – bill

But, before the vowels **‘e’** or **‘i’**, it sounds like an s (or like the ‘**th’** in **‘th**ink**’** in many parts of Spain.)

**C**ero – Zero (0) – Spain (**th**ero) Not Spain (**s**ero)

**C**irco – Circus – Spain (**th**irco) Not Spain (**S**irco)

Ch che While this is not considered a letter anymore

by the Real Academia de la Lengua, it sounds like the ch in ‘church’.

**Ch**ocolate

Ar**ch**ivo – archive

**Ch**ivo - goat

D de It sounds much like an English d, but place your

tongue against your upper teeth instead of the roof of your mouth when pronouncing it.

**D**ia – day

A**d**uanas – customs

A**d**ornos - decorations

E e This letter sounds like the eh: Eh?

**Elefante** – elephant

**Teclado** – keyboard

**Mercado** - market

F efe It sounds like the English f and replaces

the ‘ph’ in many words (e.g. **ph**oto= **f**oto)

**f**aro- lighthouse

**f**ós**f**oro - match

**f**iloso**f**ía - philosophy

So**f**ía - Sophia

G ge Very special letter be aware of the spell

changing and the variable in the pronunciation.

**G** letter usually sounds much like an English **g**.

But, before ‘**e’** or ‘’**i**, it sounds like a harsh English ‘**h’**. It's very similar to the j in Spanish.

**The sounds of the G as GA GUE GUI GO GU**

**GÜE GÜI**

El sonido suave de la G se escribe así

**GA, GO, GU**,

Gato - cat

Gorro – type of hat

Gusano – worm

**GU**E, **GU**I, (la letra ‘**u**’ no suena)

**gu**epardo - cheeta

**gu**erra - war

**gu**itarra - guitar

**GÜE, GÜI**, (la letra **‘u’** si suena)

pin**gϋ**ino

y ci**gϋ**eña.

The sound of **G** as ‘**H’** in English

Ge /he/– Gi /Hi/

**G**ente – people

**G**itana – gypsey

**G**eneral - general

**G**emelo - twin

H hache This letter is silent. (hotel = /otel/)

However, in words adopted from other languages (especially proper nouns), the original breathy aspiration sound is maintained. For example, Hawái – Henry.

I ee This letter sounds like English ee but shorter.

J jota(hota) This letter sounds close to the English h sound,

though it varies from country to country. But, It never sounds like the ‘**j’** in English judge. We could say it is the laughing letter: ha, ha 😊 (ja-ja)

**j**oven - young

**j**unta – board of members

**j**inete - rider

**j**arra - jug

**j**efe - chief

K ca This letter is uncommon in Spanish words, but

It sounds like the English k.

**NOTE:** The letters "k" and "w" are used only in words and names coming from foreign languages (kilo, folklore, whiskey, William, etc)

L ele This letter sounds close to the English l, but

with the tongue raised to the palatal or the roof of the mouth.

Ll elle While this is not considered an independent

letter anymore by the RAE (Real Academia de la Lengua), it sounds like the ‘**y’** sound in English **‘yellow’** in many places. In some countries it can also be pronounced like the ‘j’ (judge). You may also hear it called ‘doble ele’.

M eme It sounds just like the English m.

N ene just like the English n.

Ñ eñe **Important!** A completely separate letter from

the n, this letter sounds much like the **ni** in **onion** or the **ny** in **canyon**.

A**ñ**o – year

Ara**ñ**a – spider

Espa**ñ**a- Spain

Espa**ñ**ol- Spanish

O o It sounds close to the **o** in so, but shorter.

P pe This letter sounds close to the English ‘p’,

but with more explosiona and less breath.

Q (qu) cu This letter is always followed by the letter u

and sounds like English k.

r ere This letter sounds a bit like hu**RR**ay!

rr erre The Spanish **rr** is essentially many rolling **rrrrrr**

all in a row.

S ese This letter sounds just like the English s.

T te The **t** is typically pronounced with the tongue

touching the top teeth. The Spanish t is softer or less explosive than the "t" practice the sound ‘stop’.

U u This letter sounds close to the **oo** in cook.

V ve This letter sounds much like the Spanish b.

The lips do not touch and there is less aspiration. You may also hear it called ve corta, ve chica, ve de vaca.

W doble ve This letter is not native to Spanish, but sounds

similar to English w. Also called uve doble or doble u.

X equis This letter is pronounced like the ks in English

socks. However, in place and person names (especially those from México), it can be pronounced like a raspy English h, an s, or even the sh in English show.

Y i griega Most of the time, this letter sounds like the y in

English yes. At the end of a word, it sounds like the letter i (hay/ hoy). You may also hear it called ye.

Z zeta In Latinoamerica this letter is mostly

pronounced like the English **s**, but can sound

like the ‘**th’** in English **thought** in many parts of

Spain.

**Important information.**

Changes to the letter names: As of November 28, 2010, "W" is now officially called "doble uve" (although in the past it has also been called "uve doble," "doble ve," and "doble u"), and "Y" is now officially called "ye" (although it has traditionally been called "i griega" ["Greek i"]). These new official Spanish letter names are considered recommendations, not requirements (i.e., the traditional letter names are not considered "wrong"), but the expectation of the Real Academia Española (Spanish Royal Academy, or RAE) is that teachers will teach the official version.

**Exception sounds**

Spanish is a phonetical language and it can be easy to understand and transcribe (in other words: read what you see and transcribe what you hear) but there are a few exceptions you need to be aware of:

ñ - This is pronounced as ‘ny’ - España - Spain

ll - This is pronounced as a ‘y’ - me llamo - my name is…

v - This is pronounced as a ‘b’ - veinte – twenty.

Be aware that in some countries, the native speakers could make the phonetical difference between V /v/ and B /b/. All of this depends of the particular ways of the language regional accents and use.

j - This is pronounced as a ‘h’ - junio - June

h - This letter is always silent - hamburguesa - hamburger

**Cognates**

Cognates are the words that exist in two (or more) different languages. Usually, these words share the same root or origin. You might have noticed that there are lots of words in Spanish many of the words look or sound like they would in English. Since Spanish and English both have Latin roots there are a magnificent number of words that are the same or very close in both languages, but these words may be pronounced differently. Listen carefully to these few examples:

Words ending in -or : ADD AUDIOS and ICONS

Actor

Doctor

Director

Interior

factor

admirable

brutal

capital

criminal

cultural

diagonal

general

global

conclusión

confusión

decisión

dimensión

abominable

admirable

flexible

horrible

**Useful questions about the Alphabet**

Listen to people asking questions about Spanish words by clicking on the audio icons. The key language is summarised in the table.

Pregunta Question

¿Cómo se escribe? How do you spell that?

(lit. How is that written?)

¿Cómo se escribe tu nombre? (informal) How do you spell your surname?

¿Cóme se escribe su apellido? (formal) How do you spell your surname?

‘Gato’ se escribe con la ‘g’ o con la ‘c’? Do you spell ‘gato’ with ‘g’ or ‘c’?

‘Hola’ si escribe con la ‘H’, ¿verdad? ‘Hola’ is written with ‘H’, isn’t it?

¿Cómo se dice? How do you say that?

¿Cómo se dice ‘surname’ en Espanol? How do you say ‘surname’ in Spanish?

¿Cómo se pronuncia? How do you pronounce that?

¿Cómo se pronuncia esta palabra? How do you pronounce this word?

¿Qué significa ‘casa’? What does ‘casa’ mean?

**Spelling and Pronunciation (basic phonetics)**

Complete the sentences (Alphabet)

In the dialogues below, first listen to the dialogue then select the correct expression. You can use this exercise to practice your reading and audio comprehension.

Simón, ¿cuál es tu dirección?

Via del chorro número 30.

Via del churro?

No via del **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Word to be Heard and transcribe**) chorro.

c-h-o-r-r-o

¿Y cuál es tu apellido?

Mi apellido es Castrillón.

¿Cómo se escribe?

Se escribe \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Word to be listen and transcribed** **C-A-S-T-R-I-LL-ó-N**. con acento en la ‘o’.

.

Hola Simona, ¿vives cerca?

Sí, vivo en la Plaza Socorro \*\*\*\*\*\* número 32.

¿Podrías repetir el nombre de la plaza por favor?

Si seguro. Plaza **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(socorro).**

¿Hola, cómo te llamas?

Cecilia?

¿Como deletrea su apellido?

Está escrito **R \*\*\*\* (Rueda).**

Reconstruct the text I (spelling and pronunciation C: /s/-/th/ and /k/)

Fill in the table below by dragging the following words into the appropriate column marked by according to their sound.

**NOTE; i need to add an audio to as feedback of the exercise**

cigarra - celeste - incertidumbre - ciego - receta - alcachofa - enciclopedia correr - arco - clavo - caliente - Lucia – costilla - seca - rica

-C- /s/-/th/ /k/

Identify the double consonants (spelling and pronunciation)

**In the following passage there are some missing words. Drag and drop the correct word to complete the story and then listen carefully to the correct pronunciation. Once you have found all the the missing words, you’ll hear the passage read out.**

Mi abuela Mariana cuando era niña vivía en un pueblo donde había un castillo muy grande y hermoso.

El propietario era polaco y volvía de vacaciones todos los veranos. Este señor tenía una familia numerosa: siete hijos y dieciocho nietos. Su hermana, en cambio, no estaba casada, pero venía a la familia de su hermano todos los veranos para pasar dos semanas juntos.

En el castillo había muchos dormitorios, varios salones, una biblioteca y una gran terraza donde se celebraba una gran fiesta a la que estaban invitados todos los lugareños.

En el valle estaban los camellos y el payaso, que comían yogur y cebolla, no tardan en unirse a esta peculiar escena. ¡Qué raro parece todo! Mejor me voy a hacer **yoga** a la llanura con Rosa Rosales. Así que con el jinete de los mariachis montamos los caballos y nos fuimos lejos de allí.

Rosa Rosales cuidaba los animales que vivían en el parque jardín: perros, gatos, caballos, pavos reales y gallinas. También había un loro viejo, pero ese vivía en una jaula especial, y se enojaba mucho si uno de los otros animales se acercaba demasiado a su jaula y decía palabras terribles.

**General Practice**

listen to the following sentences and transcribe them. Once you have achieved the correct spelling the audio can be played.

**El jinete montó el caballo**

**Burbuja de jabón**

**General del ejército**

**Estudio geometría en el colegio**

**La gente se queja por gusto**

**Juego al ajedrez**

**Es un ser maligno y repugnante**

**Estudio geografía y geometría**

**Color rojizo**

**Me gusta la gente de esta región**