

'Onda' in Mexican Spanish.

Here's a bonus for y'all.

Because who doesn't love a bonus, right?

So yeah, here are **ALL** the different uses of 'onda' in Mexican Spanish.

Enjoy :)



TO DESCRIBE A STATE OF MIND

Agarrar la onda / Cachar la onda - To get the idea 

'Una onda' is literally 'a wave' (think the electronic kind!).

But in Mexican Spanish it normally translates better as 'vibe'.

So, 'agarrar la onda' means something like 'to get the vibe'.

And in plain English?

To get (the idea).

Melisa - No le **agarro la onda** a TikTok. ¿Qué chiste tiene hacer bailecitos?

Joaquín - ¡Hay un montón de contenido de todo tipo! Mira, te enseño.

Melisa - I **don't get** TikTok. What's so interesting about people dancing?

Joaquín - There's all kinds of content! Here, let me show you.

You can also use it when the person you're speaking to just doesn't understand something -

Sabina - No entiendo por qué Óscar se me queda viendo tan raro...

Nacho - Pues porque le gustas. **No agarras la onda**, ¿verdad?

Sabina - I **don't get** why Óscar keeps looking at me like that...

Nacho - Because he likes you. **You just don't get it**, do you?

Se me fue la onda - I got distracted

If someone tells you that '*se te fue la onda*' (or '*you've lost the vibe*'), they're **NOT** saying you're no longer cool!

Phew!

It just means that your head is in the clouds **OR** that you're forgetful!

En una llamada

Hugo - ¿Qué pasó, Adri? ¿Dónde estás? Llevo media hora esperándote.

Adriana - ¡Híjole, perdóname! **Se me fue la onda** de que íbamos a vernos hoy!

During a phone call

Hugo - What happened, Adri? Where are you? I've been waiting for you for half an hour.

Adriana - Damn, I'm sorry! **I totally forgot** that we were going to see each other today!

Sofía - Entonces, ¿qué opinas?... **Se te fue la onda**, ¿verdad?

Danilo - La verdad, sí. ¿Qué dijiste?

Sofía - So, what do you think?... **You got distracted**, didn't you?

Danilo - I did, to be honest. What did you say?



Sacar de onda - To be confused / worried / upset ▶

Ever had a strange feeling in your stomach when you were upset or worried?

Well, you, my friend, were '*sacado de onda*'.

Pablo - Estoy muy **sacado de onda**.

Lilia - ¿Por qué?

Pablo - Mi jefe anda raro conmigo. ¡Espero que no me vaya a correr!

Pablo - I'm really **worried**.

Lilia - Why?

Pablo - My boss has been acting weird around me. I hope he's not gonna fire me!

Anny - No te vayas a **sacar de onda** con lo que te voy a decir...

Néstor - ¡Ya me pusiste nervioso!

Anny - Don't get **upset** about what I'm gonna tell you ...

Néstor - You've already made me nervous!



¿Qué es eso?

AS A GREETING

Qué onda - What's up

So, this one's so important that it's got its own category.

I know we've already touched on it elsewhere in the course, so I won't repeat myself.

It's just the Mexican version of 'what's up'.

Here are some more examples -

En una llamada telefónica

Samantha - ¡Qué onda, pá! ¿Cómo han estado?

Carlos - ¡Sam! Qué gusto escuchar tu voz, hija. Tu mamá y yo estamos muy bien.

During a phone call

Samantha - What's up, dad! How have you guys been?

Carlos - Sam! It's so nice to hear your voice, sweetheart. Your mom and I are doing great.

Ernesto - ¿Qué onda contigo? ¿Por qué estás tan de malas?

Miriam - Disculpa... Dormí apenas cuatro horas. Muero de cansancio.

Ernesto - What's up with you? Why are you in such a bad mood?

Miriam - Sorry ... I only slept for four hours. I'm absolutely knackered.

TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE'S CHARACTER OR BEHAVIOR

Buena onda - Cool / Nice 

'Buena onda' literally means 'good vibe' and it's normally used to describe someone 'kind', 'nice', 'good' or 'cool'.

Yep, the kind of person that'd make a great pal!

En la escuela

Olga - Ay, ¡qué mensa! Olvidé mi lonch.

Miranda - No te preocupes, compra algo en la cafetería; yo te lo disparo.

Olga - ¡Gracias! Qué **buena onda** eres.

At school

Olga - Oh, I'm such a moron! I forgot my lunch.

Miranda - Don't worry, buy something at the cafeteria, my treat!

Olga - Thank you! You're so **kind**.

Tu hermano es el chico **más buena onda** del equipo de fútbol. 

Your brother is the **coolest** guy on the soccer team.

RUPERT'S TOP TIP

You might also hear 'buena ondita' (yep, another diminutive!) which means the same thing but is a bit more cutesy.

En buena onda - Seriously / As a friend ▶

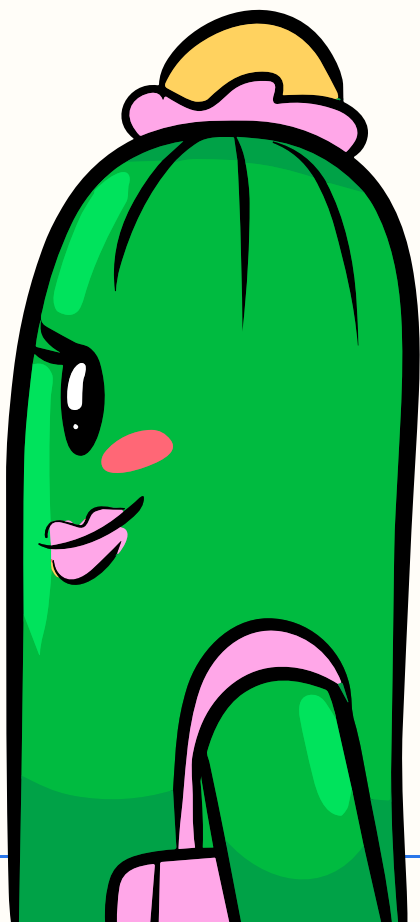
This one's a versatile phrase used to persuade someone in a friendly way **OR** to soften the blow of a harsh/blunt opinion.

Friendly persuasion

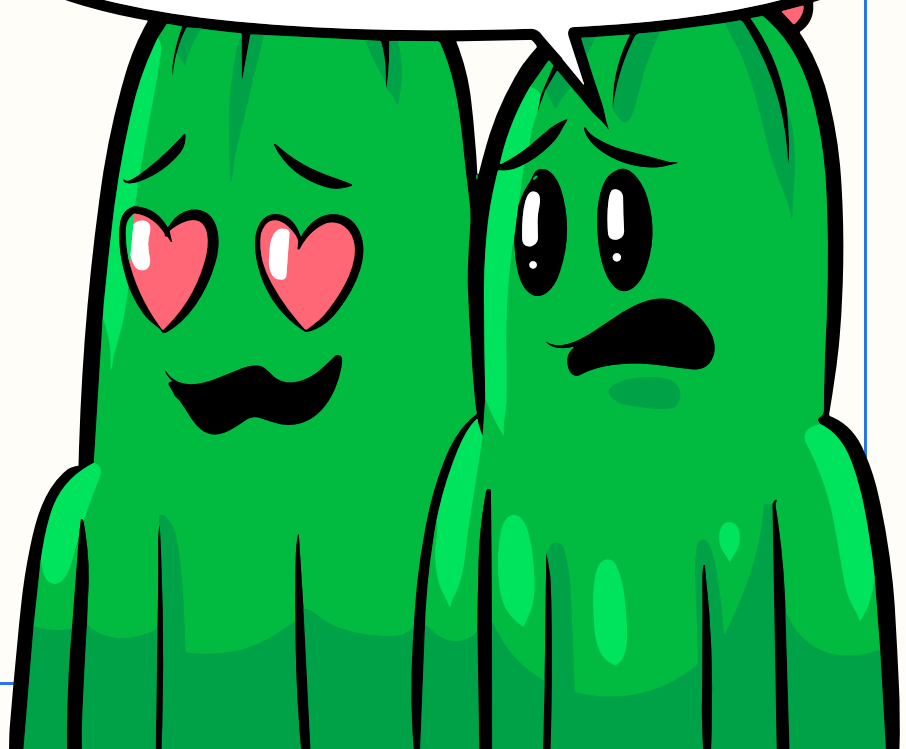
Ándale, en buena onda. = Come on, seriously. ▶

Softening a harsh/blunt opinion

Te lo digo en buena onda. = I'm telling you this as a friend. ▶



**Quizás no le gustes, wey...
te lo digo en buena onda.**



Mala onda – Mean / Uncool ▶

Following the same logic, 'mala onda' (or 'bad vibe' in English) refers to someone 'disagreeable' or whose actions are seen as 'hostile' or 'malicious'.

Hugo - ¿Quieres ir a la fiesta de Paco?

Manolo - La verdad, no. Se me hace una persona muy **mala onda**; siempre habla mal de sus propios amigos.

Hugo - Do you want to go to Paco's party?

Manolo - Not really. I think he's **awful**; he's always criticizing his friends.

And when used as an interjection, it usually refers to an "unfortunate" event or circumstance -

¡Qué mala onda! ¡Se canceló el concierto del viernes! ▶

Damn! Friday's concert has been cancelled!

RUPERT'S TOP TIP

As with 'buena onda', you might also come across the diminutive form: **mala ondita**.

And if someone calls you 'mala ondita', they're basically saying you're a 'meanie'.

No, no te voy a prestar mi labial.



Ándale, no seas mala ondita.

La onda de + a person - Someone's deal

'La onda' (as in 'THE vibe') can also be used to talk about a person's job, attitude, studies, hobbies and/or interests - i.e., what someone **DOES**.

Haciendo planes entre amigos

Nadia - ¿Quieres ir a ver la Fórmula 1? Escuché que hoy hay descuentos en los boletos.

Pepe - No, gracias. Eso es más la **onda** de Marco, ¿por qué no le dices a él?

Making plans with friends

Nadia - Do you wanna go see the Formula 1? I heard the tickets are cheap today.

Pepe - No, thanks. That's more Marco's **thing**, why don't you ask him?

¿Cuál es la **onda** de Ramiro? ¿Se dedica al teatro igual que tú? 

What's Ramiro's **deal**? Does he do theater like you?

La onda - The best / The coolest

HOWEVER, when used to describe a person, 'la onda' is a bit like saying that someone's a 'big deal', 'hotshot', 'boss' and the likes.

So, we're not talking about someone 'nice' or 'cool' here (as in 'buena onda') but "THE coolest" person around!

En un concierto

Paulo - Tu hermana es la **onda**. ¡No puedo creer que nos consiguiera pases para conocer a la banda!

Mario - ¡Ya sé! En verdad que se lució.

At a concert

Paulo - Your sister's **the best**. I can't believe she got us backstage passes to meet the band!

Mario - I know! To be honest, she outdid herself.



Tirar mala onda - To be mean

There's actually an expression to describe acting in a '*rude*', '*mean*' or '*ill-intentioned*' way, and that's '*tirar mala onda*' (which literally translates as '*to throw a bad vibe*' in English!).

Hermana - Ya ví que le estás **tirando mala onda** a mi novio. ¿Pues qué te hizo?

Hermano - Trato de no hacerlo, pero en verdad me cae muy mal.

Sister - I just realized **how rude** you are to my boyfriend. What did he do to you?

Brother - I try not to, but I really don't like him.

No le **tires mala onda** a tu hermano; está chiquito y te admira un montón.

Don't **be mean** to your brother; he's only little and he admires you a lot.

SEX, FLIRTING, AND ALL THAT NONSENSE

Tirar la onda - To flirt / To hit on someone ▶

If someone throws ('tira') la onda (or 'THE vibe') your way, then they're hitting on you!

Dos amigos echando el chisme en una fiesta

Raúl - ¿Ya viste que Alexis le está **tirando la onda** a Rui?

Jazmín - ¡Sí! ¿Pero sabías que Rui quiere volver con su ex?

Two friends gossiping at a party

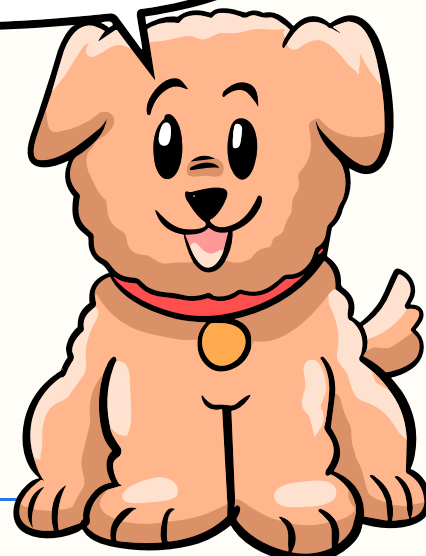
Raúl - Have you seen that Alexis is **hitting on** Rui?

Jasmine - Yup! But did you know that Rui wants to get back with his ex?

RUPERT'S TOP TIP

You might also hear ' *echar el perro/los perros*'.

What the heck am I doing here?!



Tener ondas con + a person - To have a fling / affair ▶

Depending on context, '*tener ondas con alguien*' (or '*to have vibes with someone*' in English) can refer to '*dating*' (especially in the early stages, when there isn't yet a firm commitment), **OR** '*having an affair*'.

César - ¿Por qué ya no se hablan Alba y tú?

Nuria - Ah, es que **tuvimos ondas** hace un tiempo, pero no funcionó.

César - Why don't you and Alba speak anymore?

Nuria - Oh, it's because **we dated** a while back, but it didn't work out.

Omar - ¿Por qué se separaron Gilberto y Daniela?

Mildred - ¿No supiste? Al parecer Gilberto **tuvo ondas** con una chica equis.

Omar - Why did Gilberto and Daniela split up?

Mildred - Didn't you hear? Apparently Gilbert **had an affair** with a random girl.



MISCELLANEOUS

Poner onda - To set the mood (in decline) ▶

Although youngsters might find this phrase a bit cringe, '*poner onda*' is still used as a way of saying '*set the mood*' (which usually involves choosing a cool playlist and buying some '*chelas*', or '*beers*').

Onda - Sort of / Around ▶

Some people use '*onda*' in the same sense as '*sort of*' or '*kind of*', such as in '*es onda vintage*' ('*it's kinda vintage*'), or as a synonym of '*close to*' or '*around*', like in '*te veo onda siete*' ('*I'll see you around seven*').

HOWEVER, the word '*tipo*' ('*type*' in English) has become much more popular over the last few years.

Tener onda - To have a vibe ▶

'*Tener onda*' refers to a '*vibe*' you get from something or someone.

Esa casa tiene una onda misteriosa. ▶

That house has a mysterious vibe.

¿Cuál es la onda? - What's the deal? / What's going on? ▶

If your pal asks, '*¿Cuál es la onda?*', well, they're just trying to understand what's going on!

Andar en ondas raras – To be involved in unusual or suspicious activities



'Raro' means 'weird' in Mexican Spanish, so 'anda en ondas raras' or 'anda en una onda rara' just mean that someone's getting involved in unusual or suspicious activities.

Uh-oh.

Estar en onda – To be cool / hip



A few decades ago, 'estar en onda' or 'estar en la onda' (which roughly translate to 'to be in the vibe' in English) were **VERY** popular ways of saying 'to be cool'.

It's not such a common phrase anymore, but you'll still hear it thrown around from time to time.

The irony wasn't lost on the Latin Spanish dubbing team of The Simpsons, who translated Abe's (Homer's dad) rant about losing his "mojo" as follows:

Abe Simpson a Homero adolescente

Yo sí **estaba en onda**, pero luego cambiaron la onda. Ahora la onda que traigo no es onda, y la onda de onda, me parece muy mala onda. ¡Y también te va a pasar a ti!

Abe Simpson to teen Homer

I used **to be cool**, but then they changed what cool was. Now my vibe isn't cool anymore and what's cool seems weird and scary. It'll happen to you!



Estar fuera de onda - To be old fashioned / obsolete / out of the loop (in decline)



Similarly, we have '*estar fuera de onda*' (or '*to be out of the vibe*' in English), which is, of course, the opposite of '*estar en la onda*'.

En una comida familiar

Madre - Uy, yo ya **estoy fuera de onda** con esas cosas de los toctoc.

Hijo - Claramente, má. ¡Se dice TikTok!

At a family dinner

Mother - Oh, **I'm so out of touch** with those toctoc thingies.

Son - Clearly, mom. It's called TikTok!