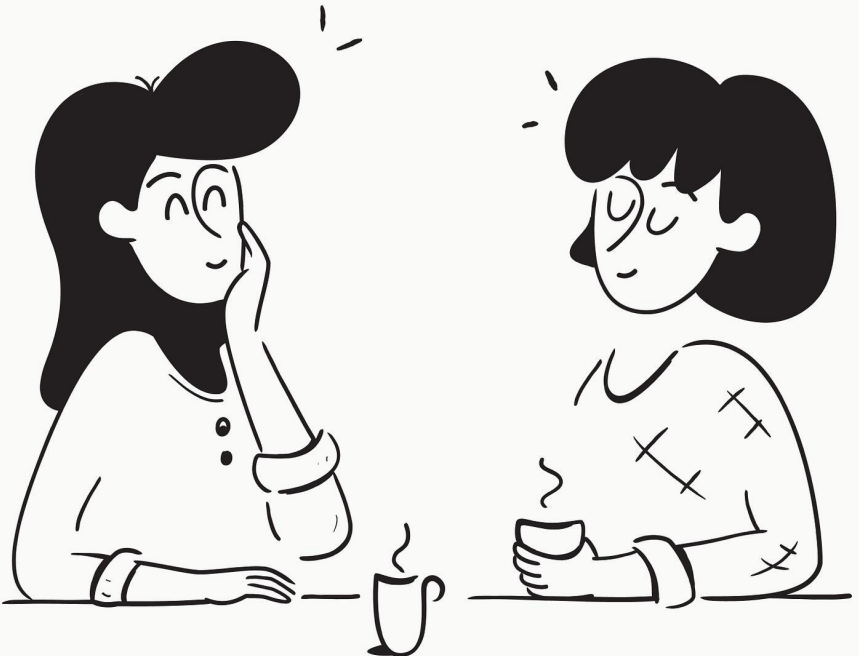


**Fluent with Stories.**

**Learn**  
**100 Must-Know Spanish Phrases**  
**Through Short Stories**

The fun way to learn real Spanish



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# Introduction

## So you want to learn Spanish?

Not the dusty textbook version that makes you sound like a time traveler from 1950, but the *living, breathing language* that real humans use every day?

You just hit the jackpot.

## About Us

At Fluent with Stories ([www.fluentwithstories.com](http://www.fluentwithstories.com)), we have one clear mission: to **transform Spanish learning from a structured academic exercise into pure entertainment**. We're passionate about creating learning experiences where you forget you're even "studying" because you're too busy enjoying the journey.

We believe language acquisition should be as natural and effortless as getting caught up in a good movie or an engaging conversation. That's why we've built everything around stories that pull you in, make you laugh, and keep you coming back for more... all while you're absorbing real Spanish as it's actually

spoken.

Our approach is simple: when Spanish feels less like a subject and more like a series of memorable adventures, fluency follows naturally. Because the most effective learning happens when it doesn't feel like learning at all.

## The Story Hack: Why Your Brain Has Been Waiting for This

Let's face it... memorizing phrase lists is about as thrilling as watching paint dry in slow motion. We've all been there, flashcards scattered across the table at 11 PM, desperately trying to burn "¿Dónde está la biblioteca?" into our brains while secretly knowing we'll probably never need it unless we're having a very specific emergency involving books.

Here's what your brain is actually wired for: context, emotion, and meaning. Stories deliver all three in a perfect package that your mind can't wait to unwrap.

Think about it... you still remember the plot of that movie you watched five years ago, but you've forgotten what you had for lunch last Tuesday. That's because stories stick. They create neural pathways that isolated vocab lists can't even dream of competing with.

## What You're Getting Here

This ebook contains **6 short stories across four proficiency levels (A1-B2)**, each one loaded with phrases that Spanish speakers actually use.

Each level features around 25 must-know phrases/expressions that will immediately upgrade your Spanish from *'please speak slowly'* to *'let me tell you a story'*.

Here's the breakdown:

- **A1 (Beginner):** Two stories with phrases so useful you'll deploy them within minutes of landing in a Spanish-speaking country
- **A2 (Elementary):** Two stories with expressions that help you navigate everyday situations without breaking into a cold sweat
- **B1 (Intermediate):** One story with phrases that make natives do a double-take (in a good way)
- **B2 (Upper Intermediate):** One story with idiomatic expressions that will have locals wondering if you've been secretly living among them

## How to Use This Without “Studying”

Here’s the magic trick: don’t try to memorize anything. Seriously.

Instead:

1. **Read the story** once for pure enjoyment. Just follow along and see what clicks.
2. **Read it again**, this time hunting for the bolded phrases.
3. **Check out the explanations** about each phrase: where we reveal what it actually means and how real Spanish speakers use it.
4. **Circle back to the story** a few days later and read it once more.

That’s it. No mind-numbing repetition. No writing each phrase until your hand cramps. Just let your brain do what millions of years of evolution designed it to do: absorb language through meaningful, engaging input.

## The “Too Real” Spanish Warning

You might notice some of these phrases don’t match what your Spanish teacher taught you. Good! That’s the whole point. We’re focusing on how people actually communicate!

## INTRODUCTION

Ready? ¡Vamos allá! (Let's go! ... and yes, that's your first must-know phrase. See how painless this is going to be?)

## La Reserva Perdida (A1)

Elena llega al hotel después de un viaje largo. Está cansada.

—Buenas tardes —dice Elena—. Tengo una reserva para hoy.

—**A ver...** —responde la recepcionista—. ¿Cuál es su nombre?

—Elena Martínez.

La recepcionista busca en la computadora.

—Lo siento, señorita. No veo su reserva.

—**¿En serio?** Hice la reserva por internet hace dos semanas.

—**No pasa nada.** Vamos a buscar una solución.

—**¡Qué horror!** —dice Elena—. Estoy muy cansada. **¿Me puede ayudar?**

—**Claro que sí. En un momento** busco si hay habitaciones disponibles.

Una señora en la recepción escucha la conversación.

—Hola, soy Carmen —dice la mujer—. **Encantada de conocerte.** Yo tengo una habitación con dos camas. Si quieres, puedes usar la otra cama.

—**¡Vaya sorpresa!** —responde Elena—. Es usted muy amable, pero...

—**No te preocupes** —dice Carmen—. Mi hija iba a venir,



pero canceló su viaje. La habitación es grande.

—**Bueno, pues...** —Elena no está segura.

—**¿Y eso?** —pregunta Carmen—. ¿Tienes miedo?

—**Es que...** no la conozco.

La recepcionista interviene:

—La señora Carmen es cliente habitual. Es una persona respetable.

—**¡Qué suerte!** —dice Carmen—. Tendrás donde dormir esta noche.

—Gracias —responde Elena—. Acepto su oferta.

Al día siguiente, Elena y Carmen desayunan juntas.

—¿Dormiste bien? —pregunta Carmen.

—**¡Qué bien!** Mejor que en mi casa.

Elena ha encontrado una nueva amiga.

\* \* \*

## Phrases from this story

**A ver...** - Let's see.../Let me think...

This is what Spaniards say when they're about to check something or need a moment to think. It's like when you're mentally scrolling through options. Next time someone asks you a question you need to ponder, start with "A ver..." to buy yourself some natural-sounding thinking time.

**¿En serio?** - Really?/Seriously?

Perfect for expressing disbelief without being rude. When your friend tells you they met a famous person, or when the waiter says they're out of your favorite dish... "¿En serio?" is your go-to reaction.

**No pasa nada** - It's no problem/Don't worry about it

This is the Spanish equivalent of "no worries" - possibly the most useful phrase to know! Spilled your drink? Arrived late? Made a mistake? "No pasa nada" tells everyone to relax. Spaniards use this constantly to reduce tension in potentially awkward situations.

**¡Qué horror!** - How awful!

When things go wrong and you want to express dismay without sounding too dramatic, "¡Qué horror!" is perfect. It's like saying "That's terrible!" but with a Spanish flair that acknowledges life's frustrations.

**¿Me puede ayudar?** - Can you help me?

This polite request for assistance works in practically any situation - from asking for directions to getting help with luggage. The "puede" makes it extra polite compared to the direct command "ayúdeme."

**Claro que sí** - Of course!

This enthusiastic "yes" shows more certainty than a simple "sí." When someone asks if you can do something and you're absolutely positive about it, "¡Claro que sí!" conveys your

confidence and willingness.

**En un momento** - In a moment

When you need just a little time before helping someone, this phrase buys you that time politely. It's like saying "I'll be right with you" - promising quick action without dropping what you're currently doing.

**Encantado/a de conocerte** - Nice to meet you

This is the warm, friendly way Spaniards greet new people. Remember to match the ending to your gender - "encantado" if you're male, "encantada" if you're female. It literally means "delighted to meet you" and sounds much more genuine than a simple "hola."

**¡Vaya sorpresa!** - What a surprise!

Use this when something unexpected happens - whether it's running into a friend on the street or receiving an unexpected gift. It works for both positive and negative surprises, with the tone of your voice making the difference.

**No te preocupes** - Don't worry

This reassuring phrase is perfect when someone is apologizing or seems anxious about something. It's like patting someone on the shoulder verbally and telling them everything's going to be fine.

**Bueno, pues...** - Well then...

This verbal bridge helps you transition between topics or thoughts, especially when you're hesitating about what to say next. It's similar to when English speakers say "so, anyway..." to fill a conversational gap.

**¿Y eso?** - How come?/Why's that?

A casual way to ask "why?" without sounding too direct or demanding. When a friend makes an unusual comment or decision, "¿Y eso?" gently asks for more information without interrogating them.

**Es que...** - The thing is.../It's just that...

This is the perfect introduction to an excuse or explanation. It softens whatever comes next. Whether you're explaining why you're late or why you can't attend an event, starting with "Es que..." makes your excuse sound more legitimate.

**¡Qué suerte!** - How lucky!

Use this to express that someone (maybe yourself!) has had good fortune. Found the last available hotel room? Got a seat on a crowded bus? "¡Qué suerte!" acknowledges that luck was on your side.

**¡Qué bien!** - How nice!/Great!

This versatile expression of approval works for everything from

someone sharing good news to tasting delicious food. It's like saying "that's wonderful!" but more authentically Spanish.

## El Mercado Local (A1)

David quiere cocinar algo especial para sus nuevos amigos españoles. Tiene una receta, pero necesita ingredientes.

David va al mercado local. **Está muy rico** el olor a comida fresca.

—Disculpe, señora. **Estoy perdido** —dice David a una mujer mayor—. **¿Por dónde queda** la sección de verduras?

—Ahí mismo, joven —responde la señora, señalando a la derecha.

—Muchas gracias. **¿Y hay alguno cerca** que venda azafrán?

—Sí, **a la vuelta**. El puesto de María.

David camina hasta el puesto de verduras donde un hombre organiza tomates.

—Buenos días —saluda David—. Necesito tomates y cebollas para una paella.

—Ahora mismo le atiendo —dice el vendedor—. **¿Cuántos** tomates necesita?

—Cuatro, por favor. Y **¿cuánto cuesta** un kilo de cebollas?

—Tres euros el kilo, son muy frescas.

—Mmm, es demasiado caro. **¿Hay algo más barato?**

—Tengo estas otras a dos euros. No son tan grandes pero tienen buen sabor.

—Perfecto, **me lo llevo**. Gracias.

Después, David busca el puesto de María para el azafrán. Es un pequeño puesto colorido con especias.

—¡Hola, guapo! **¿Qué tal todo?** —pregunta la mujer.

—**Más o menos**. Busco azafrán para mi primera paella —responde David.

—¿Paella y nunca has cocinado una? **¡Ni hablar!** Para principiantes el azafrán puro es complicado. ¿Sabes usarlo?

—Bueno, la receta dice que...

—**¡Qué va!** —interrumpe María moviendo la mano—. Tengo algo mucho mejor para ti. Una mezcla especial que no falla.

—**Como quieras**. Tú eres la experta aquí.

—**Vale, vale**. Te daré esta mezcla con colorante y un poquito de azafrán. Perfecto para empezar.

David saca su billetera para pagar. —**¿Tienes cambio?** Solo tengo un billete de cincuenta.

—Pues... ahora mismo no tengo suficiente. ¿Nos vemos luego? Puedes pasar después de hacer el resto de tus compras.

—De acuerdo. Y necesito todo para llevar, por favor. Volveré más tarde.

David regresa una hora después con cambio exacto.

Su paella será diferente a la de la receta, pero quizás incluso mejor.

\* \* \*

## Phrases from this story

### **Está muy rico** - This is delicious

While typically used to compliment food you're eating, this phrase also works for describing delicious smells and aromas. When you walk into a restaurant or kitchen with amazing smells wafting through the air, "¡Está muy rico!" perfectly captures that mouth-watering anticipation.

### **Estoy perdido/a** - I'm lost

Beyond its literal meaning of being geographically confused, Spaniards also use this to express feeling overwhelmed or confused in any situation. Whether you're actually lost in a new city or just feeling lost in a conversation, this phrase communicates your need for guidance.

### **¿Por dónde queda...?** - Which way is...?

This is your navigation lifesaver! More conversational than simply asking "¿Dónde está...?", this phrase asks specifically for the direction to take. It's like asking "How do I get to..." rather than just "Where is...".

### **¿Hay alguno cerca?** - Is there one nearby?

Perfect for asking about the proximity of any service or place - whether it's a bathroom, ATM, pharmacy, or in this case, a specific vendor. It's more specific than just asking if something



exists - you're asking if it exists nearby.

### **A la vuelta** - Around the corner

This spatial expression is wonderfully versatile in Spanish. While literally meaning “around the corner,” it can be used for anything that’s just a short distance away. It suggests something is close enough that you don’t need detailed directions.

### **¿Cuánto cuesta?** - How much does it cost?

This essential shopping phrase is your go-to for price inquiries. Unlike in some countries where prices are fixed, in many Spanish markets and small shops, asking “¿Cuánto cuesta?” is often the start of a friendly negotiation, not just a simple question.

### **¿Hay algo más barato?** - Is there something cheaper?

This practical question shows you’re still interested in buying, just not at that price point. It gives the vendor a chance to show you alternatives without the awkwardness of walking away. It’s like saying “I want to buy from you, but help me find an option in my budget.”

### **Me lo/la llevo** - I’ll take it

This is your verbal handshake to close a deal. More decisive than just saying “I want it,” this phrase literally means “I’m taking it with me” and signals the end of browsing or negotiating. It’s the Spanish retail equivalent of “sold!”

### **¿Qué tal todo?** - How's everything?

This friendly conversation starter is more general than asking specifically how someone is doing. It opens the door for them to talk about whatever is most relevant - their day, their family, their business, or just the weather.

### **Más o menos** - More or less

This delightfully non-committal response works in countless situations when things aren't great but also aren't terrible. It's perfect when you don't want to go into details or when the truth is somewhere in the middle. Think of it as the Spanish version of a shrug.

### **¡Ni hablar!** - No way!/Absolutely not!

This emphatic refusal is stronger than a simple "no." While it might sound confrontational to English speakers, in Spanish it's often used in friendly conversations to express playful exaggeration. In this story, the vendor uses it to emphatically steer David away from a mistake.

### **¡Qué va!** - Not at all!/No way!

Used to contradict someone else's statement or assumption, but in a friendly way. It's like saying "You've got it all wrong, but don't worry about it." It's less about disagreeing and more about correcting a misunderstanding with good humor.

### **Como quieras** - As you wish/Whatever you want

This flexible phrase can range from genuinely accommodating to slightly passive-aggressive, depending on tone. In positive contexts, it shows you're happy to defer to someone else's preference. It's the Spanish equivalent of "You're the boss!"

**Vale, vale** - Okay, okay

The repetition here is key - saying it twice shows either emphasis or slight impatience. It's like saying "Yes, I get it" or "Alright already!" While a single "vale" is neutral, "vale, vale" gives a hint of your emotional state while still agreeing.

**¿Tiene cambio?** - Do you have change?

An essential phrase for market shopping in Spain, where small vendors often struggle with large bills. Asking this before handing over a large bill is considered polite and practical, saving everyone the awkwardness of the vendor being unable to make change.

\* \* \*

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## La Búsqueda del Apartamento (A2)

Mateo miraba con desánimo el pequeño apartamento. Era el segundo que visitaba hoy con la Sra. Velasco, la agente inmobiliaria.

—**En mi opinión**, es demasiado oscuro —dijo mientras observaba las ventanas que daban a un patio interior.

La Sra. Velasco asintió.

—**Tiene razón**. Pero el precio es muy bueno para esta zona.

Mateo examinó las paredes con manchas de humedad y el suelo desgastado.

—**¿Se puede arreglar** todo esto? —preguntó, señalando los problemas.

—Sí, pero **¿cuánto tardaría?** Probablemente varias semanas —respondió la Sra. Velasco con honestidad.

Mateo suspiró y se acercó a la ventana.

—**Lo siento, no puedo** comprar este apartamento ahora —confesó—. **Me he quedado sin** trabajo y no tengo mucho dinero. Necesito tiempo para pensar.

La Sra. Velasco guardó los papeles.

—**Le entiendo**. Podemos buscar otro día.

—Antes de irnos, ¿tiene algún otro apartamento para ver?  
—preguntó Mateo—. Solo por curiosidad.

La Sra. Velasco miró su reloj.

—**Tengo prisa** porque tengo otra cita... pero tengo unos minutos para mostrarle uno más que está cerca.

—**Por supuesto.** Me gustaría verlo.

La Sra. Velasco lo llevó a un edificio cercano. Cuando abrió la puerta del apartamento, Mateo quedó impresionado. Era grande, con mucha luz y una terraza bonita.

—¡Vaya! Este es perfecto. ¿**Funciona ahora** la calefacción?  
—preguntó, mirando todo con interés.

—**Ya está hecho** el mantenimiento. Todo funciona bien  
—respondió la Sra. Velasco.

—**A propósito**, ¿cuánto cuesta?

—**En realidad**, es un 30% más caro que el anterior —confesó la Sra. Velasco.

Para su sorpresa, Mateo sonrió.

—Lo quiero. Quiero reservarlo ahora mismo.

—Pero... usted dijo que no tiene dinero y necesita tiempo para pensar.

—**No se preocupe por eso.** Este apartamento es perfecto y **mejor otro día** para dudar. Encontraré el dinero.

—¿Está seguro? —preguntó la Sra. Velasco, sorprendida.

—Sí. Mi padre me ayudará. ¿**Le parece bien** si firmamos ahora?

La Sra. Velasco sonrió mientras sacaba los documentos.

—**Todo saldrá bien.** A veces, cuando encontramos lo que realmente queremos, las soluciones aparecen solas.

## Phrases from this story

### **En mi opinión** - In my opinion

This is what Spaniards say when they want to share what they think without sounding too pushy. It's like starting with "I feel like..." in English, but a bit more formal. Next time you're asked about a restaurant or movie, start with "En mi opinión" to sound naturally Spanish.

### **Tiene razón** - You're right

This little phrase works magic in conversations! It's like giving someone a verbal high-five. When someone makes a good point about anything – from politics to which tapas to order – drop a "Tiene razón" and watch their face light up with validation.

### **¿Se puede arreglar?**

Can it be fixed? The universal question when something's broken! Whether it's a leaky faucet, a scratched car, or a torn shirt, Spaniards always want to know if there's hope. It's optimism wrapped in a practical question.

### **¿Cuánto tardaría?**

How long would it take? The follow-up question everyone asks after "Can it be fixed?" Spaniards are time-conscious and want to know exactly how long they'll be inconvenienced. Use this when planning anything from repairs to road trips.

**Lo siento, no puedo** - I'm sorry, I can't

This gentle refusal helps you say no without causing offense. Notice how it starts with an apology before the rejection? That's the Spanish way of softening the blow when turning down invitations or requests.

**Me he quedado sin** - I've run out of

A super handy phrase for daily life emergencies! Whether it's money, milk, or patience, this expression perfectly captures that moment when something important has disappeared from your life.

**Le entiendo** - I understand you

This empathetic phrase builds instant connection. It's like reaching across the conversation and saying "I get you." Spaniards use this to show they're really listening, not just waiting for their turn to talk.

**Tengo prisa** - I'm in a hurry

The ultimate Spanish excuse that works everywhere! Late for dinner? Need to end a conversation? Don't want to look at another apartment? "Tengo prisa" is your get-out-of-jail-free card that no one will question.

**Por supuesto** - Of course

This enthusiastic "yes" sounds way more sophisticated than a

simple “sí.” It shows certainty and willingness all at once. Use it when you want to sound positively confident about something!

**¿Funciona ahora?** - Does it work now?

The skeptical question everyone asks after a repair! There’s a hint of doubt built right in, showing you’ve been disappointed before. Perfect for testing appliances, WiFi connections, or anything that’s previously failed you.

**Ya está hecho** - It’s already done

These three magical words mean you can relax because the task is complete! It’s what we all hope to hear about repairs, paperwork, or any annoying task we’ve been waiting on.

**A propósito** - Speaking of which

This clever transition phrase lets you change topics without seeming random. It’s like building a conversational bridge to something you suddenly remembered or want to discuss.

**En realidad** - Actually

Use this to gently correct someone or introduce a surprising fact. It’s less confrontational than saying “You’re wrong.” Spanish speakers often use this before revealing the truth about a situation.

**No se preocupe por eso** - Don’t worry about that



This reassuring phrase instantly reduces tension! It's like verbal bubble wrap that protects against stress and anxiety. Use it when someone is overthinking a minor problem.

**Todo saldrá bien** - Everything will be fine

The ultimate comforting phrase when facing uncertainty! Spaniards use this to reassure others (or themselves) that despite current challenges, things will work out in the end. It's like a verbal pat on the back when life gets complicated.

## La Entrevista de Trabajo (A2)

Javier esperaba nervioso en la sala de recepción. **Estaba a punto de** tener su entrevista de trabajo cuando recibió un mensaje de su amigo.

—Señor Martínez, pase por favor —dijo la secretaria.

Javier guardó su teléfono y entró a la oficina con una sonrisa.

—Buenos días. **He perdido las llaves** de mi coche esta mañana y por eso casi llego tarde.

—**No es para tanto** —respondió la Sra. Romero mientras miraba su currículum—. ¡Vaya! Su CV es muy impresionante.

—Gracias.

—Dice aquí que habla cinco idiomas.

—Sí, hablo español, inglés, francés, alemán y... eh... japonés.

La Sra. Romero lo miró con interés.

—¡Fascinante! **Ya verá que** necesitamos personas con sus talentos. ¿Y trabajó en Empresas González durante tres años?

—Sí, fueron los mejores años de mi carrera —mintió Javier con una sonrisa.

—**¿Cuál es la especialidad** de Empresas González?

—preguntó la Sra. Romero.

—Eh... tecnología y servicios financieros.

—Interesante. Y conoce el programa FinanSoft 3000? **Es la costumbre aquí** preguntar sobre experiencia técnica específica.

Javier sonrió confiado.

—Sí, lo uso desde hace años. Es excelente para análisis financiero.

La Sra. Romero sonrió.

—Curioso, porque ese programa no existe. Lo inventé para la entrevista.

Javier se puso rojo.

—Oh, **todavía no** he terminado de explicar. Lo confundí con otro programa.

—**Así se hace en España?** ¿Inventar experiencia? —preguntó ella con tono serio.

—**Tranquilo**, puedo explicarlo —se dijo Javier a sí mismo mientras buscaba una excusa.

—**Me toca a mí** hacer las preguntas difíciles —continuó la Sra. Romero—. Mi hermana trabaja en Empresas González y dice que nunca ha trabajado allí.

Javier miró hacia la puerta.

—La verdad es que no tengo mucha experiencia real, pero aprendo rápido.

—**No es tu culpa** querer impresionar, pero valoro más la honestidad.

—**De todas formas**, sé usar computadoras muy bien —insistió Javier.

La Sra. Romero revisó nuevamente el CV.

—**Al final**, todos cometemos errores. ¿Por qué mintió?

—Llevo meses buscando trabajo. **Lo importante es que** quiero aprender y trabajar duro.

Para su sorpresa, la Sra. Romero sonrió.

—Aprecio su honestidad ahora. **¿Es típico de esta región** dar segundas oportunidades?

—No lo sé, pero lo agradecería mucho.

—Tenemos un puesto más básico donde podría empezar.  
¿Qué le parece?

Javier sonrió aliviado.

—Me encantaría. Prometo ser completamente honesto desde ahora.

\* \* \*

## Phrases from this story

### **Estaba a punto de** - I was about to

This perfect little time marker captures those “almost” moments in Spanish. Whether you nearly missed the bus or were just going to call someone when they called you, this phrase signals that timing interrupted your plans. Next time you want to explain what you were just about to do, this is your go-to phrase!

### **He perdido las llaves** - I’ve lost my keys

This universally relatable phrase explains one of life’s most common mini-disasters. Spaniards use this not just for actual keys, but as a metaphorical way to explain why they’re running late or flustered. It instantly generates sympathy because we’ve

all been there!

**No es para tanto** - It's not such a big deal

The Spanish equivalent of “no big deal” but with extra reassurance power! When someone is embarrassed or worried about something minor, these magic words instantly reduce the social tension. It's like saying “we're all human” without the cliché.

**Ya verás que** - You'll see that

This confident, forward-looking phrase adds certainty to predictions or plans. It's slightly reassuring and slightly boastful at the same time. Spanish speakers use it when they're convinced something will happen exactly as they describe.

**¿Cuál es la especialidad?** - What's the specialty?

This question cuts straight to what makes something unique or exceptional. Whether asking about a restaurant's best dish or a company's main focus, it shows you're interested in expertise and excellence rather than general information.

**Es la costumbre aquí** - It's the custom here

This phrase explains local traditions or practices without judgment. It acknowledges cultural differences while presenting them as normal. Perfect for explaining why things are done a certain way, from business practices to dinner times.

**Así se hace en España** - That's how it's done in Spain

A slightly more specific version of “es la costumbre aquí,” this phrase references Spanish national culture. It can be used sincerely to explain traditions or sarcastically to comment on questionable behaviors. Context and tone make all the difference!

**Tranquilo** - Calm down/Don't worry

This single word works like verbal chamomile tea. When tensions rise, this simple expression signals that there's no need for alarm. Spanish speakers often use it as self-talk in stressful situations, just like Javier does in the story.

**Me toca a mí** - It's my turn

This assertive phrase establishes whose turn it is to speak, act, or decide. It politely but firmly claims the spotlight. In an interview setting, it reminds the candidate who's in charge, but it's equally useful for board games or deciding who pays for coffee!

**Todavía no** - Not yet

These two small words carry big meaning in Spanish conversations. They acknowledge that something hasn't happened while suggesting it might in the future. It's more optimistic than a flat “no” and keeps possibilities open.

**No es tu culpa** - It's not your fault

This compassionate phrase immediately removes blame and

offers comfort. When someone feels responsible for a mistake or problem, these words lift the weight of guilt from their shoulders. It's emotional first aid in verbal form!

**De todas formas** - Anyway/In any case

This versatile transition phrase helps you pivot in conversation or indicate you're moving past a topic. It's like saying "regardless of what we just discussed..." and signals you're ready to move forward or change direction.

**Al final** - In the end

This philosophical little phrase introduces conclusions or outcomes. Spaniards use it to wrap up stories or summarize situations. It has a slightly fatalistic tone, suggesting that whatever happened was somehow inevitable.

**Lo importante es que** - The important thing is that

This clever phrase shifts focus to what really matters. Spaniards use it to cut through details and get to the heart of any situation. It's like saying "let's focus on the silver lining" but sounds more natural and less like a greeting card.

**¿Es típico de esta región?** - Is it typical of this region?

This culturally-aware question shows interest in local customs and traditions. Spaniards love talking about regional differences, so this question often leads to fascinating conversations about food, festivals, or business practices specific to different

areas.

\* \* \*

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## Una Cena de Cinco Estrellas (B1)

Ana revisó su apariencia en el reflejo de la puerta del restaurante. Ella mantenía un pequeño blog de comida, nada profesional, solo por diversión. Respiró hondo antes de entrar. “Novo” era el restaurante más elegante que había visitado para su blog.

—Buenas noches, señorita. ¿Mesa para uno? —preguntó el empleado con traje elegante.

—Sí, por favor —respondió Ana—. **A decir verdad**, preferiría una mesa con buena luz para poder tomar algunas fotos.

El empleado la condujo a una mesa perfecta, justo al lado de una ventana. Ana sacó discretamente su libreta y comenzó a tomar notas sobre la decoración. Luego fotografió el menú con su teléfono.

Un camarero se acercó y la observó con curiosidad mientras ella escribía en su libreta.

—¿Puedo ofrecerle algo de beber mientras decide?

—**¿Me recomienda algo?** —preguntó Ana con una sonrisa.

El camarero se quedó mirándola un momento más de lo normal.

—Por supuesto, señorita. Un momento, por favor.

Ana lo vio alejarse rápidamente hacia la cocina. De repente, notó cierto movimiento entre el personal. El camarero le susurraba algo al encargado, quien miró en su dirección con los ojos muy abiertos. Varios empleados entraron y salieron de la cocina apresuradamente.

**Para su asombro**, un hombre con uniforme de chef salió de la cocina y se dirigió directamente hacia su mesa. Parecía nervioso.

—Buenas noches, Señora Mendoza. **Es un placer conocerla** en persona. Sus críticas gastronómicas son legendarias —dijo el chef con una reverencia.

Ana abrió la boca para corregirlo, pero se detuvo. ¿Mendoza? ¿Crítica gastronómica? **Se quedó sin palabras**, sin saber cómo reaccionar.

*Estoy pensando si debería decir algo*, se dijo a sí misma.

—¿Disculpe? —preguntó el chef.

—Nada, nada —respondió rápidamente—. **Es muy amable de su parte** venir a saludarme.

Mientras tanto, su mente trabajaba a toda velocidad. La habían confundido con alguien importante. **Por un lado**, sería divertido seguir el juego y disfrutar de la experiencia; **por otro lado**, no era honesto engañarlos de esta manera.

—**Me temo que ha habido un malentendido** —comenzó a decir, pero fue interrumpida.

—**Sin previo aviso**, hemos preparado unos aperitivos especiales para usted —dijo el chef, haciendo una señal.

Dos camareros aparecieron con pequeños platos exquisitamente presentados. El aroma era irresistible.

—**Desde mi punto de vista**, nuestra cocina es una mezcla de tradición e innovación —explicó el chef mientras servían los platos—. **¿Cómo se prepara esto?** Se preguntará. Usamos

técnicas antiguas con un toque moderno.

Ana miraba los hermosos platos. **No sé qué hacer**, pensó. **Me siento culpable**. Pero cuando probó el primer bocado, casi gimió de placer.

—**Está delicioso** —dijo sinceramente.

—Me alegra que le guste —sonrió el chef—. **Me encantaría** explicarle cada detalle de nuestro menú.

A medida que avanzaba la noche, el trato especial continuaba. El gerente le trajo una botella de vino cara “cortesía de la casa”. *Nunca he probado algo así*, pensó Ana mientras saboreaba cada sorbo.

*En el fondo, sé que debería decir la verdad*, reflexionó. *No debería estar haciendo esto*, se repetía mientras disfrutaba del postre, un maravilloso dulce que se deshacía en su boca.

Al finalizar la comida, Ana se sentía como una reina. **Lo que quiero decir es que esta ha sido la mejor experiencia gastronómica de mi vida**, pensó mientras contemplaba la posibilidad de confesar.

—**¿Podría traerme la cuenta?** —preguntó finalmente.

El encargado parecía sorprendido.

—¡No, no, Señora Mendoza! **No es para tanto**. Ha sido un honor tenerla aquí.

Ana dudó un momento. **Voy a pensármelo**, se dijo. ¿Confesar o seguir con la mentira?

*Lo he decidido*, pensó. Si todos estaban tan felices creyendo que era la famosa crítica, ¿por qué decepcionarlos?

—**Por supuesto que sí**, entiendo —dijo con aire de importancia—. **Estoy completamente satisfecha** con mi experiencia. Pueden esperar una crítica muy positiva.

La cara del chef se iluminó de alivio.

—**Se lo agradezco enormemente**, Señora Mendoza —dijo

con sinceridad.

Al final, Ana salió del restaurante como una celebridad, con todo el personal despidiéndola en la puerta. Ya en la calle, sonrió para sí misma. Su pequeño blog tendría una entrada espectacular mañana... y quizás, solo quizás, volvería a visitar otro restaurante como la “famosa crítica Mendoza”.

\* \* \*

## Phrases from this story

**A decir verdad** - To tell the truth

Ever started a sentence with “honestly” in English? This is exactly the same thing. It’s like telling someone “I’m going to be real with you now.” Spaniards use it when they want to give their genuine opinion or confess something, especially if it’s a bit uncomfortable. “A decir verdad, I didn’t like that movie everyone’s raving about at all.”

**¿Me recomienda algo?** - Do you recommend something?

This is the magic phrase that turns Spanish waiters into your best food friends. Instead of ordering “the usual,” this question opens the door to culinary discoveries and shows you trust their judgment. What many tourists don’t know is that sometimes they’ll steer you toward whatever dish they need to finish that day... but that’s another story!

**Para su asombro** - To her amazement

When something leaves you speechless, this is your go-to phrase. It's like saying "I couldn't believe it" but with a more elegant touch. Spaniards use it when they want to emphasize that something completely surprised them. "Para mi asombro, my 3-year-old already knows how to read." Perfect for those moments when reality exceeds your expectations.

**Es un placer conocerla** - It's a pleasure to meet you

This is the formal version of "nice to meet you." It's used in professional situations or when meeting someone older or in a position of authority. What many students don't know is that in Spain, the formal "usted" is becoming less common, while in countries like Colombia or Mexico it's still very common in formal situations.

**Se quedó sin palabras** - She was speechless

Literally "she ran out of words," this expression perfectly describes those moments when your brain short-circuits from surprise. Spaniards are known for talking a lot and fast, so when a Spanish person is speechless... you know something truly shocking has happened!

**Estoy pensando si debería** - I'm wondering if I should...

This phrase is the verbal equivalent of scratching your head while considering options. It's a polite way to express indecision or "thinking out loud." Spaniards use it a lot when they

want to get others' opinions without directly asking for them. "Estoy pensando si debería change jobs..." (hoping someone will say "yes, do it!" or "no, you're crazy").

**Es muy amable de su parte** - That's very kind of you

An expression of gratitude with a touch of formality. Spaniards use it when someone does something for them that goes beyond what's expected. It's more formal than a simple "thanks" and acknowledges the other person's effort. It can also have a hint of surprise, like saying "wow, I wasn't expecting such kindness."

**Por un lado... por otro lado...** - On one hand... on the other hand...

This structure is the secret weapon of the indecisive. It allows you to present two different perspectives in an organized way. Spaniards use it constantly in debates or when they want to show they've considered all angles of a situation. "Por un lado, I want to save money; por otro lado, I really need a vacation."

**Me temo que ha habido un malentendido** - I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding

This is the polite way to say "you've got it completely wrong" without offending anyone. It's a diplomatic way to correct mistakes. Spaniards use it in professional situations or with strangers to soften the blow of a correction. The initial "me temo" adds a touch of empathy, like saying "I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this."

**Sin previo aviso** - Without warning

This expression adds instant drama to any narrative. It describes something that happens unexpectedly, with no one preparing you for it. “Sin previo aviso, my boss announced we’d all have to work on the weekend.” Spaniards use it to emphasize the surprising (and generally unpleasant) nature of an event.

**Desde mi punto de vista** - From my point of view

An elegant way to introduce your opinion without sounding too aggressive. It’s like saying “this is what I think, but I respect that you might think differently.” Spaniards use it a lot in conversations where there might be disagreement, like politics or soccer, to keep the peace while defending their position.

**¿Cómo se prepara esto?** - How is this prepared?

More than just a culinary question, this phrase shows genuine interest in local gastronomy. Spaniards are passionate about food, and asking about how a dish is prepared is almost a compliment to the chef. It’s also the perfect question to break the ice with your Spanish mother-in-law when you try her paella for the first time.

**No sé qué hacer** - I don’t know what to do

The universal confession of perplexity. Spaniards use it with a dramatic sigh when facing dilemmas, from choosing what to wear to a party to important life decisions. It’s often followed by an implicit request for advice. “No sé qué hacer with my

life... what would you do?"

### **Me siento culpable** - I feel guilty

A confession of remorse that Spaniards express less frequently than English speakers, but with more intensity when they do. Unlike Anglo-Saxon culture where guilt is almost a permanent state, Spaniards tend to feel guilty about specific and significant things. "Me siento culpable for not visiting my grandmother more often."

### **Está delicioso** - It's delicious

The highest compliment you can pay a Spanish cook. It goes beyond "it's good" and expresses genuine sensory pleasure. Spaniards take food very seriously, so this phrase is never used lightly. If you want to see a Spaniard smile, tell them this after trying their homemade tortilla de patatas.

### **Me encantaría** - I'd love to

More enthusiastic than a simple "I would like to," this phrase expresses desire and excitement. Spaniards use it to accept invitations they're genuinely excited about. "Would you like to come to dinner at my house this weekend?" "¡Me encantaría!" The conditional gives it a touch of courtesy that the direct "me encanta" doesn't have.

### **En el fondo, sé que** - Deep down, I know that

An introspective confession that acknowledges a truth we might



be avoiding. Spaniards use it when they finally admit something they've been denying. "I don't want to go to the doctor, but en el fondo, sé que I should." It's like admitting your conscience was right all along.

**Lo que quiero decir es que** - What I mean to say is...

This phrase is the lifesaver of anyone who feels they're not explaining themselves well. Spaniards use it when they want to clarify or reformulate something they just said. It's like hitting a reset button in the middle of a confusing conversation. "It's not that I don't like your idea... lo que quiero decir es que we could improve it."

**¿Podría traerme la cuenta?** - Could you bring me the bill?

A polite way to ask for the bill in a restaurant. Using the conditional "podría" instead of the direct "puede" makes it more courteous. It's important to know that in Spain, unlike in the US, waiters will never bring you the bill unless you specifically ask for it - you could sit there all night.

**No es para tanto** - It's not such a big deal

An expression that tries to minimize the importance of something, either to reassure someone or to reduce the drama of a situation. Spaniards use it when someone apologizes excessively or when they want to downplay an issue. "Sorry I'm 5 minutes late." "No es para tanto, I just got here too."

**Voy a pensármelo** - I'll think about it

The universal diplomatic response when you don't want to say yes or no immediately. Spaniards use it as a polite way to buy time when they need to consider a decision. Sometimes it's genuine, but other times it's simply a nice way of saying "probably not" without directly rejecting.

**Por supuesto que sí** - Of course

More emphatic than a simple "yes," this expression shows total agreement or willingness. Spaniards use it when they want to show enthusiasm or when something seems obvious to them. "Would you help me move on Saturday?" "¡Por supuesto que sí!" It's like saying "you didn't even need to ask."

**Estoy completamente satisfecha** - I'm completely satisfied

An expression of full satisfaction that goes beyond "I'm happy." In a restaurant, it's the highest compliment you can give. Spaniards are demanding when it comes to food, so when they say this, they really mean it. It's also used in customer service contexts when you have no complaints.

**Se lo agradezco enormemente** - I appreciate it greatly

An intensified way of saying thanks that expresses deep gratitude. It's more personal and emotional than a simple "thank you." Spaniards use it when someone has done something truly meaningful for them. The "enormemente" adds an almost physical dimension to the gratitude, as if it were so big it barely fits into words.

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## El Vecino del Violín (B2)

Alejandro dejó la última caja en el suelo y se quedó mirando por la ventana. Lo había conseguido. Después de cuatro meses recorriendo pisos por todo Madrid, finalmente tenía las llaves de su nuevo apartamento en Malasaña.

Suspiró. Esta vez no había errores. Cocina moderna. Ventanas que inundaban el salón de luz. Y sobre todo, silencio. Bendito silencio.

**Sin lugar a dudas**, este era el lugar perfecto.

—¿Quiere que le ayude con eso? —preguntó el transportista, señalando una lámpara.

—No, gracias. Ya me encargo yo.

Mientras colocaba sus libros en la estantería nueva, una sonrisa se dibujó en su cara. Jamás creyó que encontraría algo que encajara con todas sus manías. Su amigo Carlos ya le había advertido que era imposible.

“Eres demasiado quisquilloso,” le repetía cada vez que Alejandro rechazaba un piso. “Al final te quedarás sin nada.”

Pero **al fin y al cabo**, él era quien iba a vivir allí, no Carlos.

La primera noche fue mejor de lo esperado. Normalmente le

costaba dormir en sitios nuevos, pero esta vez cayó rendido.

**Dadas las circunstancias**, fue un milagro. Despertó fresco, con energía.

Encendió el portátil. Preparó café. Abrió el documento y...

**De buenas a primeras**, un violín empezó a sonar al otro lado de la pared.

Alejandro levantó la cabeza, sorprendido. Las notas atravesaban la pared como si fuera de papel. Melodía tras melodía, sin pausa.

Vaya, pensó. "Mi vecino tiene talento."

Al principio, la música le pareció agradable. Un fondo que acompañaba su trabajo. Pero una hora después, seguía sonando.

Y otra hora más... y otra.

Alejandro intentó concentrarse. De verdad que lo intentó. Pero era imposible.

**Por lo general** no me molestan los ruidos, murmuró para sí mismo mientras miraba la pared como si pudiera atravesarla con la mirada. *Pero esto... esto es demasiado.*

Decidió **hacerse el distraído**. Tal vez el músico pararía para comer.

Las doce. Las cuatro. Las seis.

Nada. La música seguía y seguía.

**Entre tanto**, su frustración iba en aumento. Y ese maldito violín no dejaba de sonar.

Siete horas de música ininterrumpida. ¡Siete! Esto ya estaba empezando a **sacar de quicio** hasta al mismísimo Buda.

Y entonces ocurrió. Una nota particularmente aguda. Un chirrido que hizo que Alejandro apretara los dientes.

**Fue la gota que colmó el vaso.**

Se levantó de un salto. ¿Quién demonios tocaba un violín durante siete horas seguidas? ¿Quién?

Salió al pasillo. Respiró hondo. Llamó a la puerta de al lado.

La música cesó.

Pasos acercándose.

La puerta se abrió.

Y allí estaba ella. Pelo oscuro recogido en un moño despeinado. Ojos grandes que lo miraban con curiosidad. Y un violín aún en la mano.

**Le dio un vuelco el corazón.**

Esto no estaba en sus planes. En su cabeza, el vecino ruidoso era un viejo cascarrabias. O un estudiante desconsiderado. No... ella.

—Eh... yo... soy tu vecino —balbuceó como un idiota.

Todo el discurso que había ensayado mentalmente se esfumó. Puf. **Quedándose en blanco** por completo.

—¡Ah! —exclamó ella con una sonrisa—. **Faltaría más** que viniera a saludar. Soy Juliana. Estaba practicando un poco. ¿Necesitas algo?

—Eh... ¿tienes sal? —fue lo único que se le ocurrió decir.

¿Sal? ¿En serio? **Metiendo la pata** a lo grande. Había venido a quejarse del ruido y acababa pidiendo sal como un completo idiota.

Juliana soltó una carcajada.

—**A pesar de todo** lo que tengo en esta cocina —dijo señalando hacia el interior—, sal es justo lo que me falta.

Hizo una pausa. Lo miró de arriba abajo.

—Pero oye, mi madre me ha traído paella y es demasiada para una persona. ¿Te apetece? **Así y todo**, podríamos conocernos un poco. Siempre es bueno saber quién vive al lado.

Alejandro parpadeó. ¿Había oído bien? ¿Le estaba invitando a comer?

—Yo... eh... claro. Gracias.

Entró en el apartamento. Mismo tamaño que el suyo, misma distribución. Pero ahí acababan las similitudes.

Donde el suyo era minimalista, este estaba lleno de vida. Carteles de conciertos, fotos por todas partes...

—**Según tengo entendido**, te acabas de mudar —comentó ella mientras servía la comida en dos platos.

—Ayer mismo —respondió él, observando todo—. Soy consultor. Trabajo desde casa bastante.

Hizo una pausa.

—**En cuanto a ti...** ¿eres música profesional?

Juliana sonrió con orgullo.

—Violinista en la Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid. Y **cabe destacar que** conseguí la plaza hace solo seis meses. Después de cinco intentos. La competencia es brutal.

**A medida que** avanzaba la tarde, Alejandro descubrió muchas cosas sobre Juliana: su pasión por Tchaikovsky, sus giras internacionales, y su sueño de convertirse en solista.

—**Por más que** me encanta la orquesta, algún día me gustaría tocar como solista —explicó—. **De ahí que** practique tantas horas. Por cierto, ¿te molesta el ruido?

—No, para nada —mintió él descaradamente—. La música es preciosa.

**Conforme a** lo que iba conociendo de Juliana, el sonido del violín comenzaba a parecerle más fascinante que molesto. La conversación fluía sin esfuerzo, y **cayó en la cuenta de que** hacía mucho tiempo que no conectaba así con alguien.

Cuando finalmente regresó a su apartamento, cerca de la medianoche, Alejandro sonrió.

**En definitiva**, jamás habría imaginado que su intención de quejarse por el ruido terminaría en una cena con su talentosa vecina.

**Vino a su mente** que tendría que agradecerle a ese violín, algún día, haberle presentado a Juliana.

\* \* \*

### Phrases from this story

**Sin lugar a dudas** - Without a doubt

This is what Spaniards say when they're completely sure about something. It's like when you put on your favorite jeans and know they look great without checking the mirror. Next time you're 100% convinced of something, drop a "sin lugar a dudas" to sound like a true native.

**Al fin y al cabo** - When all is said and done

Spaniards use this expression to conclude reasoning or justify a final decision. It's like saying "after considering all the pros and cons." Next time you want to explain why you made a decision after thinking it through, this phrase will come in handy.

**Dadas las circunstancias** - Given the circumstances

This phrase is used to contextualize a situation or justify an action based on the current situation. It's like when you justify ordering takeout because it's pouring rain outside. Use it when you want to explain that something is understandable or



appropriate due to the context.

### **De buenas a primeras** - Suddenly/Out of the blue

Spaniards use this expression when something happens unexpectedly, without prior warning. It's like when you're peacefully at home and suddenly the doorbell rings with a surprise visitor. Use it to describe unexpected situations that catch you off guard.

### **Por lo general** - Generally

This is how Spaniards express habits or what normally happens. It's like saying "on a typical day." If you want to describe your routines or what usually happens, this phrase is your perfect ally.

### **Hacerse el distraído** - To pretend not to notice

This expression describes when someone pretends not to notice something uncomfortable or problematic. It's like when you see your ex at the supermarket and suddenly find the cereal label fascinating. Use it to talk about situations where we conveniently choose to ignore something.

### **Entre tanto** - Meanwhile

Spaniards use this phrase to talk about what happens during a time interval. It's like the "meanwhile" in movies when they switch scenes. Perfect for connecting two actions that occur simultaneously.

**Sacar de quicio** - To drive crazy

This colorful expression describes when something irritates you to the point of losing patience. It's like when your neighbor drills the wall at 7 AM on a Sunday. Use it when something or someone is driving you crazy.

**Fue la gota que colmó el vaso** - It was the last straw

Spaniards use this phrase to refer to the final moment that exhausts patience. It's like when your car already has problems and suddenly a tire also goes flat: that final small incident that makes you lose your composure. Perfect for describing the point of no return in frustrating situations.

**Le dio un vuelco el corazón** - His/her heart skipped a beat

This beautiful expression describes that physical sensation when something surprises or deeply moves you. It's like that moment when you unexpectedly see someone you like. Use it to talk about moments that emotionally affect you or physically alter you due to their emotional intensity.

**Quedándose en blanco** - Drawing a blank

Spaniards use this phrase to describe when your mind goes empty at the most inopportune moment. It's like when you're introduced to someone important and suddenly forget even your own name. Perfect for those embarrassing moments of mental forgetting.

**Faltaría más** - Of course/Certainly

This emphatic expression shows willingness or enthusiastic acceptance. It's like saying "of course!" but with more style. Use it when you want to show that something is obvious or that you're more than willing to do something.

**A pesar de todo** - Despite everything

Spaniards use this phrase to indicate that something happens despite obstacles or difficulties. It's like when you still go running even though it's raining. Use it to show perseverance or continuity in the face of adversity.

**Así y todo** - Even so

This expression indicates that something happens despite what was mentioned before. It's like saying "even considering that." Perfect for when you want to introduce an idea that contrasts with what you just mentioned.

**Según tengo entendido** - As I understand it

Spaniards use this phrase to talk about information they believe is correct but without being completely sure. It's like a more elegant "as far as I know." Use it when you want to share information without committing 100% to its accuracy.

**En cuanto a** - Regarding/Concerning

This expression serves to change the topic or focus of the

conversation. It's like saying "changing the subject" but in a more sophisticated way. Use it to make smooth transitions between topics in a conversation or writing.

**Cabe destacar que** - It should be noted that

Spaniards use this phrase to emphasize important information. It's like putting a fluorescent marker over a crucial phrase in a book. Perfect for when you want to highlight a particularly relevant point.

**Por más que** - No matter how much

Spaniards use this phrase to express that something happens despite efforts against it. It's like when you try not to eat sweets but end up devouring a chocolate bar. Use it for situations where effort doesn't achieve the desired result.

**De ahí que** - That's why/Hence

This expression establishes an elegant causal relationship. It's like "therefore" but wearing a suit and tie. Perfect for explaining consequences or results in a more formal and sophisticated manner.

**Conforme a** - According to

Spaniards use this phrase to indicate that something is in line with or in accordance with certain norms or standards. It's like saying you're following a recipe to the letter. Use it when you want to express conformity or adherence to rules or

expectations.

**Cayó en la cuenta de que** - He/she realized that

This expression describes the exact moment of realizing something. It's like that "aha!" moment when you finally understand the ending of a complex movie. Perfect for those moments of illumination or sudden understanding.

**En definitiva** - In short/Ultimately

Spaniards use this phrase to summarize or conclude reasoning. It's like putting the final touch on an argument. Use it to close ideas or present conclusions after an explanation.

**Vino a su mente** - It came to his/her mind

This expression describes when an idea or memory spontaneously emerges. It's like when you suddenly remember where you left the keys you've been looking for all morning. Perfect for talking about those thoughts that appear without searching for them.

**Metiendo la pata** - Making a blunder/mistake

This colorful Spanish expression describes when someone makes an embarrassing mistake or social faux pas. It's like calling your teacher "mom" in front of the whole class. Use it when you or someone else has committed a major slip-up that makes everyone cringe.

### **Pese a que** - Despite the fact that

This phrase introduces a contrast between expectations and reality. It's like saying "even though" with a bit more formal flair. Next time you want to highlight how something happened contrary to expectations, drop this phrase into your Spanish conversation.

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