

# Spanish Pronunciation “Cheat Sheet”

## Vowel Sounds

- A – always pronounced “ah”, as in father ( Spanish example: **nada**)
- E – always pronounced as a short e, as in best, dress (Spanish example: **inglés**)
- I – always pronounced “ee”, as in feet, bee ( Spanish example: **sí**)
- O – always pronounced as a long o, as in **or**, **doctor**, but with the lips a little more rounded. It is always a pure vowel with no trace of the u sound which is present in the English pronunciation of “no”. (Spanish example: **foto**)
- U – pronounced “oo”, as in fool, pool. (Spanish example: **uno**) except in a combination where it is preceded by “g” and followed by “a” where has a “w” sound (Spanish example: **Guadalajara**). See also the rules for gue, gui, que, qui and for the dieresis mark.

Like English, Spanish has hard vowels (A, O, U) and soft vowels (E, I) which affect the pronunciation of C and G in front of the them.

## Consonant Sounds

- B – Similar to the English “b” but less plosive; between vowels it is pronounced very softly so that the lips touch only slightly. (Spanish example: **bebida**) It’s interchangeable with the pronunciation of “v”.
- C – As in English, before “a”, “o”, and “u” it is pronounced as a “k” as in **can**. (Spanish example: **cantar**) Before e or i, c is pronounced as an s as in **cent**. (Spanish examples: **centavo**, **ciudad**)
- CC – Pronounced very similar to the “cc” in **accident** (Spanish example: **accidente**)
- D – Similar to the English “d” in “bed” but with the tongue further forward; between vowels or as the last letter of a word it is pronounced similar to the “th” in “the” (Spanish example: **ciudad**)
- G – Before A, O, or U it is pronounced as the G in **gate** (Spanish example: **gato**) Before E or I it is pronounced like the English H but more emphatic. (Spanish example: **general**)
- H – Always silent in Spanish. (Spanish example: **hotel**)
- J – Always pronounced like the English H but more emphatic (Spanish example: **jalapeño**)
- LL – Always pronounced as the Y in **yes**.(Spanish example: **ella**)

- ñ – This Spanish letter is pronounced NY as in **canyon** (Spanish example: **español**)
- R – Similar to English (Spanish example: **hora**) except when it is the first letter of a word it is strongly trilled. (Spanish example: **Costa Rica**)
- RR – Always strongly trilled. (Spanish example: **arroz**)
- V – There is no difference between the “v” and the “b” (Spanish example: **video**)
- Y – Standing alone, it is pronounced “ee” as in **tree** (Spanish example: **cinco y media**, **San Ysidro**), that is, just like an “i” would be. Next to a vowel or between vowels, it is pronounced like the “y” in **yearn** (Spanish example: **vaya**, **hoy**)
- Z – Like the English S (Spanish example: **diez**, **Cortez**)
- QUE – pronounced ke as in **kept** (Spanish example: **¿Qué pasa?**)
- QUI – pronounced kee as in **keep** (Spanish example: **quince**)
- GUE – pronounced ge as in **get** (Spanish example: **guerro**)
- GUI – pronounced gee as in **geese** (Spanish example: **guitarra**)
- Sounds to focus on: vowels, h, j, ll, ñ, g, que/qui/gue/gui
- The remaining letters are pronounced as they are in English with only very slight variations.

## Syllable Emphasis and the Accent

Normally the syllable that is emphasized (or stressed) is either the last or next to last according to the following rules:

- Words that end in a consonant other than N and S have stress on the last syllable. Examples: **comer**, **verdad**.
- Words that end in a vowel, S, or N have stress on the next to the last syllable. Examples: **tacos**, **enchilada**, **hacen**.
- Many two-vowel combinations diphthong (see next section) unless one of them has an accent. Examples: **colonia**, **Mario**.

In Spanish, an accent on a vowel (á, é, í, ó, ú) serves two purposes:

- Overrides normal stress. Examples: **millón**, **cárcel**, **liberación**, **dólar**.
- Used to distinguish between identical words including interrogatives in questions. Examples: **si** (if) vs. **sí** (yes), **tú** (you) vs. **tu** (your), **él** (he) vs. **el** (the), **mí** (me) vs. **mi** (my). Interrogatives: **¿Qué quiere?** (what do you want) vs. **Hace lo que quiere**. (Do what you want)

Emphasis is very important for verbs: “hablo” means “I speak”, “habló” means “he spoke”.

## ***Diphthongs (not beachwear)***

A diphthong is where two vowels are pronounced as a single syllable. Spanish vowels are divided strong vowels (a, e, o) and weak vowels (i, u, and sometimes y). Hint: strong vowels have closed tops, weak vowels have open or pointy tops. You have a diphthong when there is a weak vowel involved. Strong and weak vowels affect pronunciation like this.

- Two Strong Vowels - No diphthong. Pronounced as two syllables with normal stress. (Example: “**empleado**”)
- A Strong Vowel and a Weak Vowel - Pronounced as a diphthong with emphasis on the strong vowel. (examples: **bien**, **seis**, **bueno**), **lengua**. The following diphthongs make special sounds: “ai” and “ay” sounds like “i” in might (example: **bailar**, **hay**), “au” like the “ou” in found (example: **causa**), “ei” and “ey” like “ey” in they (example **reina**, **ley**), “eu” like the vowel sounds in “may you” (example: **deuda**), “oi” and “oy” like “oy” in boy (example: **estoy**).
- Two Weak Vowels - Pronounced as a diphthong, emphasis on second vowel. (examples: **cuidado**, **ciudad**)
- Exceptions - When the pronunciation of a word does not follow these rules, an accent is placed on the stressed vowel. (Examples: **río**, **reír**)

## ***Diaresis (not what you get from drinking the water)***

The dieresis is two little dots that appear only above a “u” like this: “**ü**”. It is used to override the “gue”/“gui” rule and have the “u” make a “w” sound. Examples: **vergüenza**, **lingüístico**.

## ***“Top Ten” rules to be understood***

- |           |                      |           |                        |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1. Vowels | 4. emphasis          | 7. Soft g | 10. r at start of word |
| 2. ñ      | 5 h and j            | 8. y      |                        |
| 3. ll     | 6. que, qui, gue, gi | 9. rr     |                        |

## **Spanish Phrases**

Let's play a game	Vamos a jugar un juego
Join hands	Agárrense de las manos
Make a circle	Hagan un círculo
Run!	!Andale! ¡Córrele!
Come here!	¡Vengan acá! (plural)
Attention please	Atención por favor
We are going to sing	Vamos a cantar

Sing faster/slower  
I'm going to tell a story  
Put the crayons here  
Use the glue  
Glue it here  
Fold it on the line  
Everyone sit down  
Everyone stand  
Come to the meeting

Jesus is my Savior  
Jesus loves you  
Come back tomorrow  
Invite your friends  
Pleased to meet you  
Hello!  
How are you?  
Good morning  
Good afternoon  
Good evening (or night)  
My name is ...  
Please  
Thank you  
You're welcome  
Until later  
Goodbye  
Until tomorrow  
God bless you

What is your name?  
Do you speak Spanish/English?  
Good, tell me  
Please repeat.  
Slower.  
One word at a time.  
I don't understand  
What time is it?  
Where is the bathroom?  
I am lost

Canten más rapido/despacio  
Voy a contar una historia  
Pongan los colores aquí  
Use la goma  
Péguelo aquí  
Dóblelo en la línea  
Siéntense todos  
Pónganse de pie. -or- Levántense.  
Véngate al servicio (one child)  
Vénganse al servicio (multiple)  
Jesús es mi Salvador  
Jesús se ama (children: te amas)  
Vuelvan mañana (plural)  
Inviten a tus amigos  
Con mucho gusto  
¡Hola!  
¿Cómo está? (for children: estás)  
Buenos días  
Buenas tardes  
Buenas noches  
Me llamo ...  
Por favor  
Gracias  
De nada  
Hasta luego (most common)  
Adios  
Hasta mañana  
(for adults) Dios le bendiga (for children) Dios te bendiga  
¿Cómo se llama?  
¿Habla español/inglés?  
Bueno, dígame  
Repita, por favor  
Mas despacio.  
Una palabra a una vez.  
No comprendo  
¿Que hora es?  
¿Dónde está el baño?  
Estoy perdido (girls: perdida)