

Spanish Alphabet

Letter of the Alphabet	“Name” of the Letter	Pronunciation Examples
A	a	casa, taza
B	be	bien, bebé
C	ce	casa, cine
CH	che	chico, leche
D	de	día, verdad
E	e	mesa, cine
F	efe	café, fruta
G	ge	jugo, general
H	hache	hola, hijo
I	i	cine, hijo
J	jota	hijo, jugo
K*	ka	kilo, kiosko
L	ele	hola, leche
LL	elle	calle, llama
M	eme	mesa, llama
N	ene	noche, nada
Ñ**	eñe	señor, niño
O	o	niño, hola
P	pe	papá, peso
Q	cu	queso, quién
R	ere	señor, fruta
RR	erre	perro, carro
S	ese	casa, señor
T	te	taza, fruta
U	u	jugo, mucho
V	ve	vaso, vive
W*	doble ve	whiski
X	equis	México, excelente
Y	i griega	ya, Yucatán
Z	zeta	taza, azúcar

* These letters appear only in words of foreign origin.

** The diacritical mark over this letter is called a “tilde.” It is not used with any other letters in Spanish.

Spanish Vowels

Pronunciation Practice

A	casa	taza	bata
E	bebe	debe	leche
I	cine	hijo	misa
O	codo	moro	lloro
U	muro	punto	nube

Common Spanish Diphthongs

Some of the more common Spanish diphthongs are found in number words.

uno	1
dos	2
tres	3
cuatro	4
cinco	5
seis	6
siete	7
ocho	8
nueve	9
diez	10

Comments on Spanish Vowels and Comparisons to English Vowels

- The vowel system of American English is much more complicated than that of Spanish
- Spanish has 5 vowel phonemes and glides occur only in diphthongs, which are always represented in writing (compare **pena** and **peina**)
- Spanish vowel sounds are always clear and full, while consonants may be obscured or suppressed
- Spanish vowels do not have “length”; that is, they are not short or long

Spanish Consonants

Pronunciation Practice

B	less forceful than in English; often identical in sound to V	bien	bebé
C	has 2 sounds: like English S before E or I; like English K before A, O, U, or consonant	casa	cine
CH	like CH in chair	chico	leche
D	generally not as strong as English D; often like TH, especially between vowels and at end of word	día	verdad
F	same value as in English	café	fruta
G	has 2 sounds: like English H before E or I; like English hard G before A, O, U, or consonant	jugo	general
H	always silent (note that CH is a separate character)	hola	hijo
J	like an English H	hijo	jugo
L	same value as in English	hola	leche
LL	in most areas, pronounced as Y	calle	llama
M	same value as in English	mesa	llama
N	same value as in English	noche	nada
Ñ	like NY in English	señor	niño
P	similar to English, but not aspirated	papá	peso
Q	always followed by U; like an English K	queso	quien
R	pronounced with single flap except as initial sound, when it is trilled	señor	fruta
RR	trilled R sound	perro	carro
S	generally similar to English	casa	señor
T	unlike English, T is an unaspirated dental sound	taza	fruta
V	often identical in sound to B	vaso	vive
X	varies, but often like KS in English	excelente	exacto
Y	almost always like English Y	ya	Yucatán
Z	like an English S	taza	azúcar

English and Spanish Phonemes Compared

Consonants

English Consonant Phonemes	Examples	Spanish Consonant Phonemes*	Examples
/b/	bat, book	/b/	bueno, vino
/d/	did, dew	/d/	día, cada
/f/	foot, fire	/f/	fuerte, gafas
/g/	go, gull	/g/	grande, tengo
/h/	he, hat	/h/	gente, jardín, girar
/j/	jam, gym		
/k/	kid, action, chemical, antique	/k/	cola, poco, que
/l/	let	/l/	lado, hablar
/m/	me	/m/	mano, come
/n/	no	/n/	no, hermano
/p/	pan	/p/	peso, sopa
/r/	run	/r/	pero, fruta
/s/	sat, rice	/s/	cena, zapato, sol
/t/	ten	/t/	tomar, dato
/v/	very		
/w/	will	/w/	hueso, huevos
/y/	yes	/y/	llamar, yo, hielo
/z/	zoo, his		
/ch/	church	/ch/ or /ç/	chico, leche
/hw/	why	/ny/ or /ñ/	niño, señor
/ng/	song	/rr/	rico, perro
/sh/	she, machine		
/th/	thin		
/TH/	that		
/zh/	measure		

* These are the phonemes of General American Spanish, an homogenized form of Latin American Spanish. It will be accurate for almost all Spanish-speakers in the Midwestern US.

English and Spanish Phonemes Compared

Vowels

English Vowel Phonemes	Examples	Spanish Vowel Phonemes	Examples
/ā/	age	/a/	mal
/ē/	ease	/e/	vez
/ī/	ice	/i/	piso
/ō/	old	/o/	oso
/ū/	use	/u/	luz
/ǎ/	an	/ai/	hay
/ĕ/	end	/au/	causa
/ĩ/	in	/ei/	seis
/ǒ/	odd	/eu/	deuda
/ǔ/	up	/ia/	criada
		/ie/	tiene
/oi/	oil, boy	/io/	odio
/ou/	out, owl	/iu/	ciudad
		/oi/	hoy
/ōō/	too, rule	/ou/	lo humano
/ǒǒ/	good, pudding	/ua/	cuarto
		/ue/	bueno
/ǎ/	father, star	/ui/	cuidad
/â/	dare, air	/uo/	cuota
/û/	her, pearl		
/ô/	auto, off, order		
/ə/	about, occur, open		