Spanish

for Better Travel in Latin America

More practical than a dictionary, this is the ideal travel companion for your next trip in Latin America. Designed specifically for travellers, both business and pleasure, it will help you get your message across and understand the locals.

- Phonetic transcription of every word and expression;
- Introduction to Spanish grammar to better understand the mechanics of the language;
- Full index in English and Spanish;

Spanish for Better Travel in Latin America, because if you can speak the language, you're halfway there.

Travel better, enjoy more

ULYSSES
Spanish
for Better Travel in Latin America
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Spanish spoken in North, Central and South America, as well as in the Caribbean, is called "Latin-American Spanish" which is a little different from "Castilian Spanish" spoken in Spain. And just like all languages, Spanish has its own share of regional subtleties and shades of meaning which you can easily learn to grasp by listening carefully to people. As some sounds have no equivalent in English, we have introduced a simple phonetic transcription system to allow you to pronounce them and be able to communicate with people during your holiday. To make things easier, we have deliberately skipped over the international phonetic alphabet established by specialists (too hard for mere mortals) to give you a "natural and intuitive" system using common or easily recognizable symbols. They are often put together in an unusual way, but with a little practice, you will soon get the knack of it.

The main linguistic aspects common to Latin-American Spanish are the following:

The **seseo**: consonants *c*, *z* and *s* are all pronounced *s*.
The **yeismo**: consonants *y* and *ll* are both pronounced *y*.
*r* and *l* are sometimes confused and are both pronounced *l*.

Some consonants such as *d* and *s* are not always pronounced when at the end of a syllable:

*dedo* [deho]
*desde* [dehde] [dehde]
*pasas* [pasah] [pasa]

**Archaisms**: words no longer in usage in Spain, such as *lindo* for *hermoso* (nice).
**Americanisms:** words from Indian languages, which can have different meanings depending on the country: *Guagua:* bus (in Cuba), baby (in Central America)

*Voseo:* the use of the pronoun *vos* (plural you) instead of *tú* (singular) and the corresponding verb forms for the second person singular: *vos* (*amás, temés, partís*). The *voseo* is only used in Argentina and Uruguay, and is unknown elsewhere in Latin America.

**Sounds**

The syllables in **bold** print indicate the tonic accent (stressed syllable).

**Consonants**

Consonants are pronounced similarly to English except the following:

/b/ Pronounced **b** or sometimes a soft **v**, depending on the region or the person: *bañadera* [bahnyahdehrrah] or [vahnyahdehrrah] (bathtub).

/c/ Pronounced **s** before **e** and **i**: *cerro* [sehrroh]. Pronounced **k** before **a, o** and **u**: *carro* [kahroh]. The **c** is also hard before consonants, except for the letter **b** (see below).

/ch/ Pronounced as in English: *leche* [lehcheh]. Until 1995, it was considered a separate letter and is still often listed separately in dictionaries and telephone directories.

/d/ Pronounced a soft **d** like in door: *dar* [dahr] (give). **D** is usually not pronounced when at the end of a word.
/g/  Follows rules similar to c;  
Pronounced h before e and i: gente [hehn teh].  
Pronounced as in English before a, o and u: golf.  
Pronounced wa or with a slight g sound before u: agua [ahg wah] (water).  
The g is also hard before consonants.

/h/  Never pronounced: hora [oh rah].

/j/ Pronounced as a guttural h: naranja [nah rahn hah].

/l/ Pronounced y as in yen: llamar [yah mahr]. Until 1995, it was considered a separate letter and is still often listed separately in dictionaries and telephone directories.

/ñ/ Pronounced like the ni in "onion", or the ny in "canyon": mañana [mah nyah nah].

/qu/ Pronounced k: aquí [ah kee].

/r/ Slightly rolled, as the Irish pronunciation of r. Always heavily rolled at the beginning of a word


/s/ S is always pronounced s: casa [kah sah].

/t/ Always pronounced t: ruta [root ah] (route) and not [roo dah].

/v/ Pronounced b: vino [bee noh].

/z/ Always pronounced s: luz [loos].
Vowels

/a/ Always pronounced **ah** as in "part", and never **ay** as in "day": faro [fahroy] (headlight, lighthouse).

/e/ Always pronounced **eh** as in "elf" and never **ey** as in "grey" or **ee** as in "key": helado [ehlahdoh], except when it precedes two consonants, in which case it is pronounced **eh**: encontrar [enkohntrahr].

/i/ Always pronounced **ee**: cine [seeneh].

/o/ Always pronounced **oh** as in "cone": poco [pohkoh].

/u/ Always pronounced **oo**: frutas [frootahs].

/y/ Usually pronounced **ee**: y (ee), but this consonant can also sound like the **y** in "yen": playa [plahyah].

**PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTIONS USED IN THIS BOOK**

In this conversation guide, you will find that words and sentences are divided into three columns or three lines in each section. The **first column** usually features the word in English. Facing it, in the **second column**, is the Spanish equivalent. Finally, the **third column** is reserved for the phonetic transcription, which shows you how to pronounce the word. This phonetic transcription has been developed with English-speakers in mind and is meant to be as simple as possible. Occasionally, you will also find Spanish words in the first column, their English equivalents in the second column and the phonetic transcription in the third. This will make it easier to find the meaning of a Spanish word you might hear or read.
There are also two indexes at the end of the guide. The first lists the English words featured in this guide and the second lists the Spanish words. Don't forget to use them!

You will also notice that sentences, in addition to being translated in Spanish, are followed by a phonetic transcription to help you pronounce them correctly. Below, you will find a phonetics chart. Don't forget that each letter is pronounced as in English. For example, the letter *p* in the phonetics chart is pronounced like the English *p* and represents the letter *p* in Spanish; the letter *k* in the phonetics chart is pronounced like the English *k*, but can be used to represent the Spanish *c*, *k* or *qu*.

### Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Phonetic Transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>bar</td>
<td>[bar]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>fin</td>
<td>[feen]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>gana</td>
<td>[gahnah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ge</td>
<td>gente</td>
<td>[hehn-teh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gi</td>
<td>gitano</td>
<td>[heetahnoh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>hambre</td>
<td>[ahmbrehr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>mujer</td>
<td>[moo-hehr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>kilo</td>
<td>[kee-loh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca</td>
<td>casa</td>
<td>[kahsah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co</td>
<td>color</td>
<td>[koh-lohr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cu</td>
<td>cuchara</td>
<td>[koo-chah-rah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu</td>
<td>que</td>
<td>[keh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>luz</td>
<td>[loose]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>mal</td>
<td>[mahl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>[noh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>par</td>
<td>[pahr]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Phonetic Transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>haba</td>
<td>[ahbah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>vela</td>
<td>[vehlah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ima</td>
<td>[leemah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ozono</td>
<td>[ohsoohnoh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>computadora</td>
<td>[cohmpootadora]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In vowel combinations, each vowel sound is pronounced separately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Phonetic Transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ae</td>
<td>aéreo</td>
<td>[aehrehoeh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>caimán</td>
<td>[kaheeemahn]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ay</td>
<td>bay</td>
<td>[ah-ee]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>autobús</td>
<td>[ah-oootohboos]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea</td>
<td>real</td>
<td>[rrehahl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>leer</td>
<td>[leehr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
<td>peinar</td>
<td>[peheenahr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eo</td>
<td>creo</td>
<td>[krehoeh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu</td>
<td>feudal</td>
<td>[fehoodahl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>día</td>
<td>[deeah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ie</td>
<td>piedra</td>
<td>[peeehdrah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>io</td>
<td>mio</td>
<td>[meeoeh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iu</td>
<td>ciudad</td>
<td>[seeooodah]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* r (slightly rolled)
* rr (rolled)

The sound 'r' is slightly rolled, while 'rr' is rolled. 'cara' is pronounced [kahrah], 'razón' as [rrason] at the beginning of a word, 'dar' as [dahrr] at the end of a word, 'perro' as [pehrrooh], and 'vino' as [beenoh].
THE TONIC ACCENT

The Spanish tonic accent is lexical, which means that the word always has the same stress no matter where it is situated within a sentence. In English, the word loses its stress depending on the group of words (syntactic accent).

In Spanish every word has a stressed syllable, the tonic accent (not always written), a very important feature necessary for making yourself understood. As most words are stressed on the second to last syllable, an accent written over a given syllable indicates it is stressed, regardless to where it is placed. So a change in the tonic accent changes the meaning of a word or the tense of a verb, as in the following examples:

cantará (future)
cantara (subjunctive)
cántara (noun)
calculó (past tense)
calculo (present tense)
cálculo (noun)
depósitó (past tense)
depósito (present tense)
depósito (noun)
All words ending in a vowel with no written accent are stressed on the second to last syllable: amigo, casa, barco.

Words ending in n or s with no written accent are also stressed on the second to last syllable: amigos, hablan.

All other words ending in a consonant (except n or s) with no written accent are stressed on the last syllable: alcohol, mentol, azul, nariz, correr, usted, estoy, reloj

USEFUL ADVICE

◆ Read aloud.

◆ Listen to Latin-American songs and try to understand some of the words.

◆ Associating ideas will help you remember words and the language system. For example, in Spanish, you will notice that an o ending usually indicates a masculine word, whereas an a ending is almost always feminine: the name "Julio" (Julio Iglesias) is masculine; "Gloria" (Gloria Estefan) is feminine.

◆ Make links between English and Spanish. For example, "last" is último in Spanish, which resembles the word "ultimate" in English.

◆ Try to identify words stemming from the same simple form: rápido and rapidamente ("quick" and "quickly"). This is an easy way to increase your vocabulary.
**MASCULINE AND FEMININE**

In Spanish, masculine words usually end in *o* and feminine words, in *a*.

For example:

*La luna*  
*El castillo*  

**However there are some exceptions.**

For example:

*El sol* (masculine)  
*El corazón* (masculine)  
*La mujer* (feminine)  
*La calle* (feminine)  

**OMISSION OF THE PERSONAL PRONOUN**

In Spanish, the personal pronoun is usually omitted. So, to say "I travel a lot.", you usually say *Viajo mucho* and not, *Yo viajo mucho*.

For example:

*Voy a la playa.*  
*Andamos juntos.*  

*I'm going to the beach.*  
*We're going together.*
THE NEGATIVE FORM

The negative form is very easy in Spanish. All you have to do is put **no** before the verb:

- *No voy a la playa.*  
  *I'm not going to the beach.*
- *No come carne.*  
  *He (she) doesn't eat meat.*
- *¿No vienes conmigo?*  
  *Aren't you coming with me?*

The personal pronoun can be used in the negative form to emphasize the meaning. You must therefore insert **no** between the personal pronoun and the verb.

For example:

- *Tú no vas a la discoteca.*  
  *You aren't going to the discotheque. (The others are going, but not you.)*
- *Yo no quiero verte.*  
  *I do not want to see you.*

THE DEFINITIVE ARTICLE

**Masculine singular:**

- *el libro*  
  *the book*
- *el árbol*  
  *the tree*

**Feminine singular:**

- *la tienda*  
  *the shop*
- *la flor*  
  *the flower*

The Spanish plural definite article has a masculine and a feminine form concording with the word they designate.
For example:

**Feminine plural:**

- Las flores  
  the flowers  
- Las bibliotecas  
  the libraries

**Masculine plural:**

- Los árboles  
  the trees  
- Los libros  
  the books

---

**THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE**

In Spanish, the indefinite article agrees both in gender and number with the noun it modifies:

**Masculine:**

- Un amigo  
  a friend  
- Unos amigos  
  friends, some friends  
- Un vaso  
  a glass  
- Unos vasos  
  glasses, some glasses

**Feminine:**

- Una amiga  
  a friend  
- Unas amigas  
  friends, some friends  
- Ola  
  wave  
- Unas olas  
  waves, some waves
In Spanish, the subject pronouns are similar to those in German, French and Italian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>yo (I)</td>
<td>nosotros (we)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>tú* (you),</td>
<td>Vosotros** (you),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>usted (you)</td>
<td>ustedes (you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>él (he)</td>
<td>ellos (they – masc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ella (she)</td>
<td>ellas (they – fem.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As in most European languages, Spanish has a familiar form and a polite form for the second person, both singular and plural.

**Vosotros** is a Castilian Spanish form practically never used in Latin America. **Ustedes** is the third person plural meaning **you** (plural) and is used for both the familiar and the polite form.

The polite form is commonly used for entrance formalities, banking, hotels, restaurants, transportation and shopping. If you are speaking to a single person, use **usted** and the verb in the third person singular:
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