

Spanish Pronunciation

Natural Versus Artificial Stress

Do Spanish words seem hard to pronounce? Don't worry, there are a few keys that can help you master Spanish pronunciation. Natural stress helps you identify the part of the word you naturally emphasize a little more. Look at the following English words:

ACcents are not COMplicated
SPANish is EASy



In Spanish, the most common endings for words are **S, N, or vowels (a,e,i,o,u)**—and the natural stress is on the **second to last syllable**. You can hear this over and over again in La Bamba. Listen to which letters you hear emphasized in each word:



para
PAH-rah

bailar
bye-LAHR

la
lah

bamba
BAHM-bah

in order to dance the bamba



una
OO-nah

poca
POH-kah

de
day


gracia
GRAH-sya

a little bit of grace

Natural Stress, cont.


Listen to how strange these words sound if you pronounce them wrong:

2nd to last syllable
↓

para	PAH-rah		correct correct correct correct
bamba	BAHM-bah		
poca	PO-kah		
gracia	GRAH-sya		

last syllable
↓

(pah-RAH)	incorrect!!
(bahm-BAH)	incorrect!!
(po-KAH)	incorrect!!
(grah-SYA)	incorrect!!



Even when a word has many syllables, the **natural stress** for words ending in **S, N, or a VOWEL** is still on the second to last.

2nd to last syllable
↓

marinero	mah-ree- <u>NEH</u> -roh
arriba	ah-R <u>REE</u> -bah
necesita	neh-seh- <u>SEE</u> -tah

last syllable
↓

bai <u>LAR</u>	to dance
necesi <u>TAR</u>	to need
con <u>TROL</u>	to control
reali <u>DAD</u>	reality

For words ending in a consonant besides N or S, the stress is on the **last syllable**.

Artificial Stress or Accent Marks

When a word goes against the rules it needs an accent mark.

Since both words end in either an S, N, or a vowel, the natural stress would be on the second to last syllable. →

2nd to last
syllable

seré
I will be

capitán
captain

last syllable

seh-RAY

kah-pee-TAHN



The stress of capitán would fall on the "i" (ka-PEE-tahn) but since this is not how the word is pronounced, you need an accent mark.

One Syllable Words

Accent marks are only used when a word has multiple meanings. Otherwise 1 syllable words HAVE NO ACCENT MARK!!



por
POHR

ti
TEE

seré
seh-RAY

for you I'll be

The Spanish Alphabet

Vowels

As you can hear in La Bamba, Spanish uses sounds familiar to English speakers. However, they do use some letters differently. Here are some ways to remember the pronunciation of Spanish letters.

how to say
letter's name

A (ah) father, koala, latte



E (eh) elf, effort, beg



I (ee) martini, bikini



O (oh) only, toes



U (oo) guru, truce



Tricky 2 Vowel Combinations

"I" before A, E, or O sounds like English "Y"

gr <u>a</u> cia	=	grahs- <u>y</u> a
qu <u>i</u> en	=	kyen
oc <u>i</u> o	=	ohs- <u>y</u> o

"U" before A, E, or I sounds like "W"

ig <u>u</u> ana	=	ig <u>w</u> a-na
bu <u>u</u> eno	=	b <u>w</u> e-no
cui <u>u</u> ado	=	kw <u>u</u> ee-dado

EXCEPTIONS:

•After **"Q"** the **"U"** is silent

que = kay

quince = keen-say

•In **"GUE"** and **"GUI"** the **"U"** is silent

guerra = geh-rra

guisar = gee-sahr

Vowel Sounds from La Bamba



U	<u>u</u> na	(oo)
O	p <u>o</u> ca	(po)
	s <u>o</u> y	(soy)
	marin <u>e</u> ro	(roh)
	n <u>o</u>	(no)
	c <u>o</u> sita	(koh)
	y <u>o</u>	(yo)
	<u>o</u> tra	(oh)
	por	(pohr)
I	ar <u>i</u> ba	(ree)
	marin <u>e</u> ro	(ree)
	cos <u>i</u> ta	(see)
	ir <u>e</u>	(ee)
	neces <u>i</u> ta	(see)
	t <u>i</u>	(tee)
E	neces <u>e</u> ta	(neh—seh)
	d <u>e</u>	(day)
	ir <u>e</u>	(ray)
	s <u>e</u>	(say)
	ser <u>e</u>	(seh—ray)
A	ar <u>a</u> ba	(ah—bah)
	bail <u>a</u> r	(bye—lahr)
	bam <u>a</u>	(bahm—bah)
	grac <u>i</u> a	(grah—ya)
	otr <u>a</u>	(trah)
	cosit <u>a</u>	(tah)
	par <u>a</u>	(pah—rah)
	l <u>a</u>	(lah)
	necesit <u>a</u>	(tah)

Rules for Spanish Consonants

	how to say letter's name			
C	(say) ci or ce	turns into an <u>S</u>	cielo = <u>S</u> YEH-loh sky	
	ca, co, cu	just like English	casa = <u>K</u> AH-sah house	
G	(hay) ge, gi	like <u>H</u>	gente = <u>H</u> EN-tay people	
	go, gu	just like English	gordo = <u>G</u> OHR-doh fat	
H	(ah-chay)	always <u>silent</u>	hombre = <u>O</u> HM-bray man	
J	(ho-tah)	like <u>H</u>	joyas = <u>H</u> O-yahs jewels	
LL	(ehl-yay)	like <u>Y</u>	llave = <u>Y</u> A-vay key	
Ñ	(ehn-yay)	sounds like <u>NY</u>	señal = seh- <u>NY</u> ahl sign	
RR	(er-ray)	lots of <u>RRRR!</u>	carro = KAH- <u>r</u> roh car	
V	(oo-bay)	same as <u>B</u>	vaca = <u>B</u> AH-kah cow	
Z	(seh-tah)	like an <u>S</u>	zapato = <u>s</u> ah-PAH-toh shoe	

Who are you talking about? People Words

These words identify A PERSON or PEOPLE.

yo
tú
él
ella
usted
nosotros
ustedes
ellos

(yo)
(too)
(ehl)
(AY-yah)
(oo-STED)
(noh-SOH-trohs)
(oo-STEh-days)
(AY-yohs)

I
you
he
she
you (formal or polite)
we
you all
they

yo
I



él
he



tú
you



nosotros
we



usted

you
polite formal
(often written as Ud.)



ellos
they



ella
she



ustedes

you all
(often written as Uds.)



In some countries like Argentina, **VOS** is used instead of **tú**

In Spain they often use **VOSOTROS** for you all

Intro to Command Verbs

Cielito Lindo is a great song to practice the command form of verbs. Commands are when you are telling (not asking!) somebody to DO something. Here are patterns for someone you would call "tú." For irregular informal commands, see pg. 82.



canta

KAHN-tah

y

ee

no

no

llores

YOH-rays

sing and don't cry



Commands are important because if you go to a Spanish speaking country, they are one of the first things you will hear!

verb ending



AR

cantar to sing

DO!

-a

canta

DON'T DO!

-es

no cantes



ER

aprender to learn

-e

aprende

-as

no aprendas

IR

vivir to live

-e

vive

-as

no vivas

Contrasting commands and regular verbs

Do you dance?

Dance!

You don't dance?

Don't dance!

¿Tú bailas?

¡baila!

¿No bailas?

¡No bailes!

Formal Commands

Have you heard any expressions lately with the word **"VIVA"**? ¡Viva Las Vegas! ¡**VIVA MÉXICO!** ¡Viva la Revolución! These expressions use the formal command, the one used for Ud., or people you are showing respect for by using the formal tense. It is also used for generic proclamations where you are enthusiastically telling the world you want something to happen! The tense used for "you all" also follows a similar pattern. To make a negative command for these tenses, just add the word **"NO"** before it.

You'll also find that these commands follow the same patterns as the subjunctive found in Guantanamera, p. 63

AR
cantar

-e
cante
Ud.: SING!

-en
canten
Uds.: SING!

ER
aprender

-a
aprenda
Ud.: LEARN!

-an
aprendan
Uds.: LEARN!

IR
vivir

-a
viva
Ud.: LIVE!

-an
vivan
Uds.: LIVE!



(tomar)
(mirar)
(recordar)
(esperar)
(comer)
(abrir)

tome
mire
recuerde
espere
coma
abra

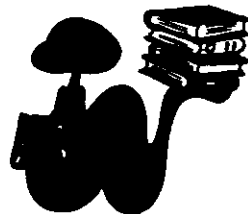
take!
look!
remember!
wait!
eat!
open!



Cognates

Cielito Lindo contains several **COGNATES—WORDS THAT ARE EASY** to translate and recognize in English. Listen to the following words from the song:

clase	class
parte	part
estudiante	student
escuela	school
examen	exam



va

vah

a

ah

la

lah

escuela

ehs-KWAY-lah

goes to school

You can apply these formulas to many other English words to find their equivalents in Spanish:

	Spanish		English
-a	problema	—	problem
-o	paraíso	—	paradise
-ado/ada	complicado	-ed	complicated
-ario	diccionario	-ary	dictionary
-ción	nación	-tion	nation
-dad	humanidad	-ty	humanity
-fía	geografía	-phy	geography
-ia	farmacia	-y	pharmacy
-io	matrimonio	-y	matrimony
-ista	artista	-ist	artist
-mente	personalmente	-ly	personally
-orio	dormitorio	-ory	dormitory
-oso	fabuloso	-ous	fabulous