



Beginners (A1)

Basic A1 Introduction

Lesson 3

The Spanish Alphabet

Introduction

The Spanish alphabet is very easy for English speakers, because it's the same alphabet.

Actually, compared to other languages, the pronunciation rules are very simple and quite regular. It's not hard to pronounce correctly when reading a Spanish text, because it's read phonetically almost letter by letter, so you just have to read what it's written without complex phonetic rules. Of course, to accomplish this, you will have to learn how every letter sounds in Spanish.

Similarities

1. They are alphabetic languages.
2. Both English and Spanish use latin characters.
3. We have the same vowels.
4. We have the same consonants, although Spanish has one more.

Differences

1. The English alphabet has 26 letters and the Spanish alphabet has 27 letters. The letter **ñ** comes after the letter *n*.
2. The pronunciation of the vowels in Spanish is different from English, and they are always pronounced the same way.
3. Accent marks can be added to the vowels, which most times change the meaning of the word and the pronunciation.
4. Some consonants are pronounced differently depending on the letter that goes after them. For example: "c" can be pronounced like "z" or "k".
5. English is not read phonetically, while Spanish is read phonetically.
6. English has more sounds and phonetic rules.

The alphabet and its pronunciation

In this section we will see the pronunciation of the 27 letters of the alphabet, including examples that will make it easier. We will also compare every letter with a similar sound in English, which will give you much more information and a faster and better way to learn Spanish pronunciation.

Letters	Sounds	Sound in English	Example
a	ah	cat	agua
b	be	blue	bien
c	c + a/o/u = k c + e/i = z	cat think	casa cielo
d	de	dollar	dedo
e	eh	pet	en
f	efe	final	fácil
g	g + a/o/u = g g + e/i = j	game hello	ganar gente
h	hache	honor	hola
i	ih	pit	sí
j	jota	hospital	jirafa
k	ka	cake	kilo
l	ele	language	lengua
m	eme	motel	motel
n	ene	new	nuevo
ñ	eñe	-----	niño
o	oh	pot	hola
p	pe	pet	perro
q	q	king	quien

r	erre	radio	radio, perro
s	ese	sea	sí
t	te	tomato	tomate
u	uh	put	una
v	uve	virus	virus
w	uve doble	wall	whisky
x	equis	exam	examen
y	y griega	yellow	yo
z	zeta	thank	zapato

Digraphs

A digraph is a combination of consonants that represents a single sound. They aren't considered letters of the Spanish alphabet.

Spanish has 5 digraphs.

Letters	Sounds	Examples
ch	che	China, chofer
ll	elle	llevar, llave
qu	ke, ki	queso, líquido
rr	erre	perro, correr
gu	ge, gi, gü	guerra, guía, bilingüe

Vowels

Vowels are pronounced quite differently in Spanish and English. Spanish rules are easier. Vowels in Spanish are always pronounced the same and they aren't silenced or shortened.

Letter	Sound in English	Example
a	map	ayer, gato
e	pet	en, entrar
i	pit	ir, idea
o	pot	otro, coche
u	put	uno, buscar

In Spanish there are five vowels and they are pronounced the same as they are written.

Vowel **a (ah)**: its sound is similar to **a** in **map** or **rap**.

Vowel **e (eh)**: its sound is similar to **e** in **pet** or **red**.

Vowel **i (ih)**: its sound is similar to **i** in **pit** or **similar**.

Vowel **o (oh)**: its sound is similar to **o** in **pot** or **son**.

Vowel **u (uh)**: its sound is similar to **u** in **put** or **book**.

Example in Spanish	Sound in English
ca sa (house)	cat
e studiar (to study)	rest
i sla (island)	hit
yo (hello)	dog
u no (one)	pull

Accent marks

In Spanish we can apply accent marks to the vowels. There is only one accent mark: “´”.

Vowel	Vowel with accent
a	á
e	é
i	í
o	ó
u	ú

Accents most times change the meaning of the word and the pronunciation.

Accents indicate which syllable has the stress when pronouncing the word.

We will study when to use an accent mark later on our more advanced courses.

Diphthongs

A diphthong is the union of two different vowels and they are pronounced in the same syllable. There is nothing special when pronouncing them, just say both letters one after the other in the same syllable.

Examples:

Spanish	English
quiero	I want
estudiar	to study
también	also, too
escuela	school

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