



# **Spanish Grammar and Words & Phrases**

- The Municipal Courts Training Center in no way suggests that this material should be used as a substitute for the appointment of interpreters fluent in the Spanish Language.
- This presentation is meant to be a helpful resource when needing a Spanish phrase, word or help in pronunciation.

# Pronunciation

## Castillian and Latin American

- Unlike the United States where there are several versions of English but all versions are generally understood by anyone who speaks English, the major *dialects* of Spain and the Latin American countries are so distinct that each must be learned as a separate language.

# Pronunciation

- Catalán: a mixture of French, Italian, Spanish and Basque;
- Galician: a mixture of Portuguese, Basque, and Spanish;
- Castillian: the official dialect of Spain used in the courts, churches, schools and universities and the Spanish culture, generally; and
- Basque: a language more unto its own than a dialect.
  - These dialects are as different from each other as are French, German, and English.

# Pronunciation

- Fortunately, the Spanish spoken in Mexico, Cuba, Central and South America, Except Brazil (Portuguese), closely resembles the formal Spanish, Castillian.
- Basically, the same grammatical rules apply except for the pronunciation of three letters.

# Pronunciation

- Although the Spanish alphabet is virtually the same as the English, very few, if any, letters in Spanish are pronounced *exactly* the same as English.
- English vowels tend to be suppressed where Spanish vowels must be pronounced sharply and clearly.

# Pronunciation

- Although a rather simple lesson in pronunciation will help you “get by”, only by practice will you begin to feel comfortable in speaking (pronouncing) Spanish.

# Pronunciation

## Vowels

- A

- As *a* in *father*

- Pan – bread
- Hablar – to speak
- Casa – house
- Madre – mother
- Papel - paper

# Pronunciation

## Vowels

### ■ E

- As *a* in *bake* when at the end of a syllable
  - Padre – father
  - Necesario – necessary
  - De – of, from
- As *e* in *bet* when in a closed syllable (syllable ends in a consonant)
  - Usted – you
  - Sentir – to feel
  - Verdad – truth
    - with Ser - true
  - Decir – to say

# Pronunciation

## Vowels

### ■ I (Y)

■ As *i* in *laughing*,  
*machine*

■ Ir – to go

■ Libre – free, at liberty

■ Ficción - fiction

# Pronunciation

## Vowels

### ■ O

- As *o* in *obey* when at the end of a syllable

- As *ou* in *wrought*, *brought* when in a closed syllable

- Ojo – eye
- Malo – bad, evil
- Mano – hand
- Señora – woman, lady
  
- Señor – man
- Sombrero – hat
- Contra – against
- Consejo - council

# Pronunciation

## Vowels

- U

- As *oo* in *tool*

- Mucho – much
- Nunca – never
- Buscar – to look for
- Un(a) - one

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ B

- Softly with lips touching but a little air passing between them

- Not as forcefully as in English except as *b* in *bond* when the initial letter in a word or after *n* and *m*

- Trabajar – to work

- Beber – to drink

- Bastante – enough

- También – also, too

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ C

- As *c* in *comb* before *a*, *o*, *u*, or another consonant
  - Cómo – how
  - Café – coffee
  - Cabrito – small goat
  - Lección – lesson
- In Latin American Spanish, as *s* in *see* before *e* or *i*. As *th* in *thin* (Castillian) before *e* or *i*
  - Decir – to say
  - Cinco – five
  - Hacer – to do, to make

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ CH

■ As *ch* in *children*

- Mucho – much
- Muchacho – boy
- Chorizo – spicy pork  
sausage

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ D

- As in the English *d* except when between vowels and at the end of a word, pronounce like *th* in *they*
- Donde – where
- Todo – all
- Vender – to sell

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ F

■ As in the English *f*

- Falta – fault, want, lack
- Frío – cold
- Difícil – difficult

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ G

- As *g* in *garden* when before *a*, *o*, *u*, or a consonant

- As a guttural or throaty *h* before *e* and *i*

- Pagar – to pay
- Alguno – some person
- Gracias – thank you
- Guacamole - guacamole
  
- Gente – People
- General – general
- Gema – gem
- Gentil - gentle

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ H

- Is always silent

- Hoy – today
- Hay- there is, there are
- Hermano – brother
- Ahora - now

# Pronunciation Consonants

- J

- As *h* in *hall*

- Jardin – garden
- Ejemplo – example
- Juan – John
- Jalisco – Jalisco

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ K

- As in the English *k*

- Not found in Spanish-based words, only those based on another language

- Kilómetro – kilometer

- Kilogramo – kilogram

- Kiosco - kiosk

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ L

- As in the English *l*

- Libro – book
- Libre – free, at liberty
- Cozumel – Cozumel
- Fácil - easy

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ LL

- In Latin American Spanish, as *y* in *yellow*
- In Castilian, it is pronounced as *lli* in *million* and *William*

- Calle – street
- Llamar – to call
- Llegar – to arrive, to come
- Llevar – to carry
- Caballo - horse

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ M

■ As in the English *m*

- Minuto – minute
- Importar – to import
- Tomar – to take, to drink, to eat

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ N

■ As in the English *n*

- Mano – hand
- Negro – black
- Noche – night
- General – general

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ Ñ

■ As in *ny* in *canyon*  
and *lanyard*

- Pequeño – little
- Año – year
- Niña - girl

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ P

■ As in the English *p*

- Posible – possible
- Guapa – brave, stout of heart
- Rápido - quick

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ QU

- As in the English *k*
- Precedes only *e* and *i*

- Que – that, who, which
- Qué – what
- Querer – to wish, to  
want
- Aquí – here
- Quedar – to stay, to  
remain

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ R

- As in the English *r* but correctly pronounced
- When at the beginning of a word, slightly trilled

- Servir – serve
- Secreto – secret
- Rojo – red
- Río - river

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ RR

- As in the English *r*, but is pronounced with a stronger, more elongated trill

- Arroz – rice
- Irregular – irregular

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ S

- As *s* in *similar*

- Many persons will pronounce *mismo* (same) as a *z*, especially when said quickly

- Siglo – century

- Siempre – always

- Días – days

- Así – so, thus

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ T

- As in the English *t*

- However, tongue should touch back of upper teeth rather than frontal roof of the mouth

- Tener – to have

- Tener Que – to have to

- Sentir – to feel

- Tinta – ink, tint

- Tierra – earth, land

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ V

- As in the English *v*, but not pronounced as assertively as in English
- Very similar to the *Spanish b*
- The lips almost touch but air passes through them
- Vivir – to live
- Verde – green
- Uvas – grapes
- Juvenil – juvenile

# Pronunciation Consonants

- W

- Does not exist in Spanish

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ X

- When it occurs between vowels, pronounce like *gs*
- When it occurs before a consonant, pronounce like *s*

- Examen – to examine
- Éxito – result, outcome
- Existir – to exist
  
- Explicar – to explain
- Exclamar – to cry out, to exclaim
- Extremo – last, extreme

# Pronunciation Consonants

## ■ Z

- In Latin American Spanish, pronounced as the *s*

- In Castilian, pronounced like *th* in *earth*

- Zapato – shoe

- Paz – peace

- Riqueza – riches

# Diphthongs

- *A*, *e* and *o* are known as strong vowels. Two can never stand together to form a diphthong. They are always separated in pronunciation.
  - De-se-o – I desire
  - De-se-ar – to desire
  - I-de-a – idea

# Diphthongs

- *I* (*y*) and *u* are weak vowels and when one strong and one weak vowel or two weak vowels come together, a diphthong is formed.
  - Rui-do – noise
  - Siem-pre – always

# Diphthongs

- If, however, a weak vowel is accented (´), it is separated from the other vowel, weak or strong, and the diphthong is broken.
  - Dí-a – day
  - Rí-o – river
  - Ma-rí-a – Mary

# Diphthongs

- AI (AY)

- As in English *I*

- Jai alai – jai alai (game)

- Aire – air

- Hay – there is, there are

- AU

- As in *ou* in *out*

- Pausa – pause,  
intermission

- Pauperismo - poverty

# Diphthongs

- EI (EY)

- As *ey* in *they*

- Reina – queen

- Ley – law

- Peine – comb

- EU

- As in English long a/u

- Rhymes with *way to*

- Europa – Europe

# Diphthongs

- OI (OY)

- As *oy* in *toy*

- Hoy – today

- Oidor – listener

# Diphthongs

## ■ IA

- As *ya* in *yacht*

## ■ IO

- As *yo* in *yolk*

- Pronunciar – to pronounce
- Diabolo – devil, cunning person

- Silencio – silence
- Dios – God
- Lecciones - lessons

# Diphthongs

## ■ IE

■ As *ye* in *yellow* if in a closed syllable

■ As *ye* in *yea*, *ya* in *Yale* if in open syllable

■ Bien – well

■ Hierba – herb

■ Pie – foot

■ Quiero – I want

# Diphthongs

- UA

- As *wa* in *wash*

- UE

- As *we* in *went*

- UO

- As *wo* in *wore*

- Juan – John

- Agua – water

- Cualidad – quality

- Puente – bridge

- Pueblo – town, village

- Bueno – good

- Cuota – quota

- Antiguo – antique, old

# Diphthongs

## ■ IU

- As in English *you*, but pronounced with brevity

## ■ UI (UY)

- As English *we*

■ Ciudad – city

■ Viuda – widow

■ Cuidado – care

■ ¡Cuidado! – Be Careful!

■ Muy – very

■ Ruido – noise

# Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castilian

- The final *d* is many times not pronounced
  - Madrid – Madrid
  - Sed – thirst, drought
  - Verdad – truth

# Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castellian

- An *s* before a consonant or at the end of a word is often not pronounced
  - Dos Años – two years
  - Los Libros – the books
  - Buenos Noches – good night
- Although not absolutely correct grammatically, it is commonly heard and spoken in this manner.

# Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castellian

- *Z* is pronounced like the English *s*
  - Raza – race
  - Cadiz – Cadiz
  - Chorizo – a pork sausage

# Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castellian

- *C* before *e* or *i* is pronounced like the English *s*
  - Cinco – five
  - Necio – stupid, foolish

# Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castellian

- *Ll* is usually pronounced as *y* in *yes*
  - Caballo – horse
  - Amarillo – yellow

# Syllabication

- One consonant, including *ch*, *ll*, and *rr*, is always pronounced with the following vowel
  - Ciu-dad – city
  - Ha-ber – to have
  - Lla-mar – to call

# Syllabication

- Two consonants between vowels are usually separated
  - Car-ta – letter
  - Es-tá – he (she, it) is

# Syllabication

- Where there are two abutting consonants and the second one is *l* or *r*, they are generally inseparable
  - A-brir – to open, to begin
  - Li-bre – free, at liberty

# Accentuation

- Except in the case of a word ending in *n* or *s*, always stress the last syllable of words ending in a consonant
- Hablar – to speak

# Accentuation

- When words end in a vowel, *n* or *s*, stress the second-to-last syllable
  - Pluma – pen
  - Hablan – they speak
  - Cosas - things

# Accentuation

- If any syllable is accented with a ('), that syllable is pronounced with stress irrespective of the two rules above.
  - México – Mexico
  - América – America
  - Día – day

# Accentuation

- A diphthong comprised of a strong and weak vowel and showing no written accent (') is stressed on the strong vowel
  - Cuo-ta – quota
  - Bien – well
  - Guapo – bold, brave

# Accentuation

- A diphthong comprised of two weak vowels and showing no written accent is stressed on the second vowel
  - Rui-do – noise
  - Viu-do – widower

# Punctuation

- Spanish and English punctuation marks are generally alike except that questions begin with ¿ and end with ? while exclamations begin with ¡ and end with !

# Punctuation

- In writing dialogue, the dash (-) is used in lieu of quotation marks ("")
  - -Gracias, Ricardo-él dijo
    - “Thanks, Richard”, he said.

# Capitalization

- Unlike English, Spanish does not capitalize words of nationality used as adjectives
  - El libro español – the Spanish book

# Capitalization

- Languages are not capitalized
  - El inglés – English
  - El español - Spanish

# Capitalization

- Days of the week and months of the year are not capitalized
  - enero – January
  - junio – June
  - lunes – Monday
  - miércoles – Wednesday

# Capitalization

- The pronoun yo (I) is never capitalized except at the beginning of a sentence.

# Days

- lunes – Monday
- martes – Tuesday
- miércoles – Wednesday
- jueves – Thursday
- viernes – Friday
- sábado – Saturday
- domingo – Sunday

# Months

- enero – January
- febrero – February
- marzo – March
- abril – April
- mayo – May
- junio – June
- julio – July
- agosto – August
- se(p)tiembre –  
September
- octubre – October
- noviembre – November
- diciembre – December

# Numerals

- Zero - zero
- Uno (a) - one
- Dos - two
- Tres - three
- Cuatro - four
- Cinco - five
- Seis - six
- Siete - seven
- Ocho - eight
- Nueve - nine
- Diez - ten

# Numerals

- Once – eleven
- Doce – twelve
- Trece – thirteen
- Catorce – fourteen
- Quince – fifteen

# Numerals

- Diez y seis – sixteen
- Diez y siete – seventeen
- Diez y ocho – eighteen
- Diez y nueve – nineteen
- Veinte – twenty
- Veinte y uno – twenty one

# Numeralals

- Treinta – thirty
- Cuarenta – forty
- Cincuenta – fifty
- Sesenta – sixty
- Setenta – seventy
- Ochenta – eighty
- Noventa – ninety

# Numerals

- Cien / ciento – one hundred
- Doscientos(as) – two hundred
- Trescientos(as) – three hundred
- Cuatrocientos(as) – four hundred
- Quinientos(as) – five hundred

# Numerals

- Seiscientos(as) – six hundred
- Setecientos(as) – seven hundred
- Ochocientos(as) – eight hundred
- Novecientos(as) – nine hundred
- Mil – one thousand

# Numerals

- The word *un(o)* is the only **pure numeral** that has a masculine and a feminine form
  - Uno
  - Una
- Always use *cien* for 100 unless a lower number follows it
  - Ciento cuarenta amigos – one hundred forty friends

# Numerals

- The other hundreds agree in gender with the noun they modify, even when separated
  - Quinientas cincuenta y nueve botellas
    - Five hundred fifty nine bottles
- Never use the Spanish word *un(o/a)* with 100 or 1000
  - Do not say *un mil* or *un ciento*

# Ordinals

- Primero/a – first
- Segundo/a – second
- Tercero/a – third
- Cuarto/a – fourth
- Quinto/a – fifth

# Ordinals

- Sexto/a – sixth
- Séptimo/a – seventh
- Octavo/a – eighth
- Noveno/a – ninth
- Décimo/a - tenth

# Number of Nouns

- Unlike English where only nouns and a few other words have plural forms (this vs. these, my friend vs. my friends), almost all modifying words in Spanish change to show plurality.
- This is known as “agreement in number.”
  - Mi buen amigo – my good friend
  - Mis buenos amigos – my good friends

# Number of Nouns

- Generally, to pluralize a word, add *s* to words ending with a vowel and *es* to words ending in a consonant or a stressed vowel.
- There are some very rare exceptions such as the plural for *club* (club) is *clubs*.

# Number of Nouns

- Another exception are nouns ending in *z*.
- To pluralize these nouns, change the *z* to *c* and add *es*.
  - Juez – judge
  - Jueces - judges

# Gender

- Very few words in English are distinguished by sex (he vs. she) but Spanish nouns are all categorized as either masculine or feminine.
- Rule: Noun modifiers must agree in number and gender with the noun modified.

# Gender

- Generally, nouns ending in *o* are masculine while nouns ending in *a* are feminine.
- There are exceptions to this rule.
- El estado - state
- El día - day
- La corte - court
- La forma - form
- La policía - police
- El robo - theft
- El trabajo - work
- La idea - idea

# Gender

- Many nouns ending with other letters can be “genderized” by deduction
  - Señor is obviously masculine because it is Spanish for man
  - Día is masculine and must be modified by masculine modifiers
    - Many days is written *muchos días*
      - Note that the modifier must also agree in number

# Gender

- The definite article (the) also is a modifier and must agree in gender and number
  - El – masculine singular
  - Los – masculine plural
  - La – feminine singular
  - Las – feminine plural

# Gender

- The same rule is true for the indefinite article (a)
  - Un(o) – masculine singular
  - Unos – masculine plural
  - Una – feminine singular
  - Unas – feminine plural