



Spanish Pronunciation Guide

Guía de pronunciación

Alphabet *Alfabeto*

Letter	Spanish Name
a	a
b	be
c	ce
d	de
e	e
f	efe
g	ge
h	hache
i	i
j	jota
k	ka
l	ele
m	eme
n	ene
ñ	eñe
o	o
p	pe
q	cu
r	erre
s	ese
t	te
u	u
v	ve
w	doble ve
x	equis
y	i griega
z	zeta

Vowels and Diphthongs *Vocales y diptongos*

- A diphthong, also known as a “gliding vowel,” is a single-syllable sound made up of multiple vowels.

Vowel	Pronunciation
a	ä (as in “ball”)
e	“eh”/ā (as in “may”)
i	ē (as in “grease”)
o	ō (as in “load”)



Diphthong	Pronunciation
u	oō (as in “cool”)
ay/ai	ī (as in “cry”)
au	äoō/“ow” (as in “owl”)
ey/ei	ā (as in “bay”)
eu	aōō (as in “deus ex machina”)
ia	yä (as in “Maya”)
ie	yā (as in “yay”)
io	yō (as in “yodel”)
iu	yoō (as in “skew”)
oy/oi	“oy” (as in “ploy”)
ou	ō (as in “though”) (only found in foreign words)
ua	wä (as in “swat”)
ue	wā (as in “wait”) exceptions: que: kā (as in “okay”) gue: gā (as in “game”)
ui/uy	wē (as in “weep”)/oōē (as in “buoy”) exceptions: qui: kē (as in “key”) gui: gē (as in “geezer”)
uo	wō (as in “woe”)

Consonants Consonantes

Consonant	Pronunciation
b/v	b (be larga) v (be corta) soft “bv” (“humming b”) (as in “bevel”)
c	ca, co, cu: “hard c” (as in “camera”) ce, ci: “soft c” (as in “celery”)
ch	“ch” (softer than in English) (as in nonchalant)
d	soft “dth” (as in “boredom”)
f	f (as in “faint”)
g	ga, go, gu: “hard g” (as in “gas”) ge, gi: “soft g” (as in “hay”)
h	silent
j	h (as in “harp”)
k	k (only found in foreign words; softer than in English — no puff of air)
l	l (as in “lamb”)
ll	y- (as in “yam”)
m	m (as in “mop”)
n	n (as in “nod”)
ñ	“ny-” (as in “canyon”)



p	p (as in “patter”)
q	k (as in “marker”)
r	r (as in “rest” or “murmur”)
rr	“rolling r”
s	s (as in “nestle”)
t	t/th (softer than “t” but harder than “th”) (as in “cattle”)
w	same as b/v (only found in foreign words)
x	“ks” (as in “exam”) “h” (as in “ham”) “ch” (as in “sheer”)
y	y- (as in “yap”)
z	“th” (Spain) “s” (Latin America)

Accent and Stress Rules *Reglas de Acentos y Estrés*

As in English, in Spanish each word consisting of more than one syllable carries stress, or emphasis, on a certain vowel in a certain syllable. The principles governing stress in Spanish are as follows:

- 1) If a word ends in a **vowel, n, or s**, the default stress falls to the penultimate (i.e., second-to-last) syllable.
ex: mer-CA-do
- 2) If a word ends in any consonant other than n or s, the default stress falls to the ultimate (i.e., last) syllable.
ex: ver-DAD

With few exceptions, any word whose actual pronunciation is the same as its default pronunciation need not carry an accent. However, when the actual and default pronunciations of a word differ, the vowel/syllable that “steals” stress must bear an accent.

ex: último
Default Pronunciation: ul-TI-mo
Actual Pronunciation: UL-ti-mo
Therefore, the u in the first syllable must bear an accent.
último

Accents are often necessary for some verb conjugations and forms. Here are a few of many examples:

- 1) When pronouns (e.g., object, reflexive) are appended to the ends of gerunds, accents are often necessary in order to preserve the original stress.
Ex: Estoy buscando (bus-CAN-do) mi reloj.
Estoy buscándolo (bus-CAN-do-lo).
- Ex: Me estoy cepillando (ce-pi-LLAN-do) los dientes.
Estoy cepillándomelos (ce-pi-LLAN-do-me-los).
- 2) When pronouns are appended to the ends of commands, accents are often necessary in order to preserve the original stress.



Ex: Por favor, diga (DI-ga) a mí donde ha escondido el tesoro.
 Por favor, dígame (DI-ga-me) donde ha escondido el tesoro.

- 3) Some verb conjugations require accents in order to keep the stress on the same vowel/syllable as in the other conjugations.

Ex: hablar (imperfect)

<i>Yo</i>	hablaba (ha-BLA-ba)	<i>Nosotros</i>	hablábamos (ha-BLA-ba-mos)
<i>Tú</i>	hablabas (ha-BLA-bas)	<i>Vosotros</i>	hablabais (ha-BLA-bais)
<i>Él/Ella/Ud.</i>	hablaba (ha-BLA-ba)	<i>Ellos/Ellas/Uds.</i>	hablaban (ha-BLA-ban)