

SIMPLIFIED BASIC SPANISH GRAMMAR

(and pronunciation) LESSONS ☺

PRONUNCIATION

✦ ALPHABET: What makes Spanish pronunciation easy is the consistency. The consonants and vowels ALWAYS have the same sound! The **a** is always **ah**; never short as in *cat*, long as in *cape* or a schwa as in *about*. Consider the many sounds the English **ou** has in these words: *tough* - schwa, *thought* - ah (aw if you are from Brooklyn☺), *through* - oo, *though* - long o, and *mouse* - ow. The Spanish **ou** would have only one! Even when you combine two vowels into a diphthong (one sound)... if the diphthong is pronounced slowly, each vowel sound still has the same sound as if it were standing alone. Example #1: **ei** = eh+ee. If you say these two sounds together quickly you'll get an English *long a* sound. Example #2: **ai (ay)** = ah+ee. If you say these two sounds together quickly you'll get an English *long i* sound.

a	ah	f	eh-feh	l	eh-leh	p	peh	u	oo
b	beh	g	heh	ll	eh-yeh	q	koo	v	oo-beh
c	ceh	h	ah-cheh	m	eh-meh	r	eh-reh	w	doh-bleh-beh
ch	cheh	i	ee	n	eh-neh	rr	eh-rreh	x	eh-kees
d	deh	j	hoh-tah	ñ	ehn-yeh	s	eh-seh	y	ee-gree-eh-gah
e	eh	k	kah	o	oh	t	teh	z	ceh-tah

Once you learn the sounds of each letter you can pronounce absolutely ANYTHING!

Spanish Letter	English Sound
b & v	b
ce, ci, z	seh, see, s (outside of Spain) theh, thee, th (in Spain)
d	like a th when at the end of a word
g	hard g as in "go" before a, o & u and an h before e & i
h	silent
j	h
ñ	ny (as in canyon)
qu	k (not kw like in English)
r	placement in the mouth is the same as an English d.
rr	r with a roll of the tongue

☆ STRESS (Not the kind you are feeling!☺): Just as in English, Spanish stresses a certain syllable in each word. Only one syllable is stressed.

- If a word ends in a consonant, except n or s, the stress falls on the last syllable.
- If a word ends in a vowel, n or s, the stress falls on the second to the last syllable.
- For words that do not follow these two rules, an accent is written over the stressed vowel so that you will know to emphasize the word. Example: **sábado**
You would normally stress the second to last syllable of a word ending in o but since there is an accent mark written on the third to the last syllable (the first a) then the emphasis is placed there.

NOUN GENDER: All nouns in Spanish have a gender. They are either **masculine** or **feminine**. It is very important to learn a noun's gender along with the noun itself because articles (*the, a*) and adjectives change depending on the gender of the noun they precede or follow. Notice that the **masculine** words are preceded by **el** and **feminine** words are preceded by **la** both of which mean **the**.

☆ Most words in Spanish that end in **-o** are **masculine**.
(also words that end in **-or, -ma**)

el cuerpo (<i>body</i>)	el invierno (<i>winter</i>)
el ojo (<i>eye</i>)	el frío (<i>cold / coldness – noun</i>)
el cuello (<i>neck</i>)	el viento (<i>wind</i>)
el brazo (<i>arm</i>)	el hermano (<i>brother</i>)
el estómago (<i>stomach</i>)	el abuelo (<i>grandpa</i>)
el verano (<i>summer</i>)	el hijo (<i>son</i>)
el otoño (<i>fall</i>)	

☆ Most words in Spanish that end in **-a** are **feminine**.
(also words that end in **-dad, -tad, -tud, -ción** and **-sión**)

la cabeza (<i>head</i>)	la primavera (<i>spring</i>)
la boca (<i>mouth</i>)	la familia (<i>family</i>)
la oreja (<i>ear</i>)	la hermana (<i>sister</i>)
la pierna (<i>leg</i>)	la abuela (<i>grandma</i>)
la muela (<i>tooth/molar</i>)	la hija (<i>daughter</i>)
la espalda (<i>back</i>)	la hora (<i>hour</i>)

☆ There are a few exceptions. (Here are the ones expressed in these lesson plans):
The word **día** ends in **-a** but is **masculine** → **el día**.
The word **mano** ends in **-o** but is **feminine** → **la mano**.

☆ Naturally words like **la madre** that refer to females are **feminine** while words like **el padre** that refer to males are **masculine**.

☆ Since the word **el día** (meaning *day of the week*) is masculine, all days of the week are also masculine: **el lunes, el martes, el miércoles, el jueves, el viernes, el sábado, el domingo**.

☆ Other words are best learned by memorizing the word with the article.

el pie **el calor** **el sol** **la noche** **la nariz** **la sed**

NUMBER (PLURALIZING NOUNS):

- ✧ Even though in English the word *the* does not become plural, *la* become *las* and *el* becomes *los* when pluralized.
- ✧ If a singular noun ends in a vowel, just add **-s** to make it plural: **el ojo** → **los ojos**, **la noche** → **las noches**.
- ✧ If a singular noun ends in a consonant, add **-es** to make it plural: **el sol** → **los soles**.
- ✧ Singular nouns that end in **-z** change the **z to c** and add **-es**: **la nariz** → **las narices**.

ADJECTIVES: In English, adjectives are always found in front of the noun, but most Spanish adjectives follow the noun they modify (describe). Adjectives in Spanish must agree in number (singular/plural) and gender (masculine/feminine) with the nouns they modify. Adjectives that end in **-o** have four forms and adjectives that do not end in **-o** have only two forms.

- ✧ These adjectives have four forms:

SINGULAR	PLURAL
negro, negra ,	negros, negras
blanco, blanca ,	blancos, blancas
amarillo, amarilla ,	amarillos, amarillas
rojo, roja ,	rojos, rojas
anaranjado, anaranjada ,	anaranjados, anaranjadas
morado, morada ,	morados, moradas
alto, alta ,	altos, altas
pequeño, pequeña ,	pequeños, pequeñas
gordo, gorda ,	gordos, gordas

- ✧ These adjectives have two forms: (These are both masculine and feminine.)
verde, verdes [Pluralize adjectives the same way you do a noun. If it ends in a vowel, add **-s**]
azul, azules [If it ends in a consonant, add **-es**]
marrón, marrones
grande, grandes

- ✧ Most adjectives are placed after the noun when describing.
el ojo azul (*blue eye*) los ojos azules (*blue eyes*)
la muela blanca (*white tooth*) **las muelas blancas** (*white teeth*)
el pie grande (*big foot*) los pies grandes (*big feet*)

- ✧ Some adjectives can come before.
Much**as** gracias.
(Literally "*Many thanks.*" → understood as "*Thank you very much.*")
Buen**as** **noches**. ["noche" is feminine]
(Literally "*Good nights*" → understood as "*Good evening*" and "*Good night*")
Buen**os** **días**. [Don't forget "día" is masculine]
(Literally "*Good days*" → understood as "*Good morning*")



Muy can be used before all adjectives to say very

muy pequeño	very small
muy gordo	very fat
muy blanco	very white
muy verde	very green
muy bien	very well

COMPARISONS: Comparisons are expressed as follows:

más [adjective] que

more [adjective] than

Ex: más alto que

literally **more tall than** but more common as **taller than**

más negro que	<i>blacker than</i>
más blanco que	<i>whiter than</i>
más amarillo que	<i>more yellow than</i>
más rojo que	<i>redder than</i>
más anaranjado que	<i>more orange than</i>
más morado que	<i>more purple than</i>
más alto que	<i>taller than</i>
más pequeño que	<i>smaller than</i>
más gordo que	<i>fatter than</i>
más azul que	<i>bluer than</i>
más marrón que	<i>browner than</i>
más grande que	<i>bigger than</i>



Remember that adjectives must agree in gender and number:

Andrea es más alta que Antonio. (“alta” is describing Andrea)

Antonio es más alto que Carlos. (“alto” is describing Antonio)

Pablo y Ricardo son más altos que Rosa. (“altos” is describing Pablo and Ricardo)

Ana y Silvia son más altas que Pepe. (“altas” is describing Ana and Silvia)

VERBS: This is where there is a lot of variance from English. Conjugation means to change a verb to fit a subject (and tense). Verbs are conjugated differently between the two languages.



A verb that has not been conjugated is called an “infinitive”. In Spanish an infinitive ends in **-ar**, **-er** or **-ir**. For example: **desayunar**, **almorzar**, **cenar**, **merendar**. In English an infinitive has the word “to” in front. The words on the line above in English mean: to eat breakfast, to eat lunch, to eat dinner, to eat a snack (respectfully). Other verbs used in these lesson plans include: (Notice the endings)

tener = to have

estar = to be (feel, be located)

llamar(se) (to be called/named)

pasar = to happen

hacer = to make, to do

llover = to rain

nevar = to snow

parar = to stop

mirar = to look at, to watch

escuchar = to listen to

venir = to come

ir = to go

ser = to be (defining)

decir = to say, to tell

tocar = to touch

doler = to hurt, to ache

gustar = to like (to be pleasing to)

☆ In English we have (in most cases) two conjugated forms of a verb in the present tense. For example: *I walk. He walks. Walk* is used for many subjects: *You walk. They walk. We walk. You all walk.* When the subject is singular then it becomes “walks”. (Ironic that a singular subject uses a verb with an “s” on the end ☺.)

☆ In Spanish there are 6 different verb endings in the present tense. The one you use depends on the subject. In the box below you will see how a conjugation box is set up. The singular subjects are on the left and the plural subjects are on the right. The rows are set up by 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person.

	Singular subjects	Plural subjects
1 st person →	yo = I	nosotros = we
2 nd person →	tú = you	vosotros = you guys
3 rd person →	él = he & ella = she	ellos & ellas = they

The 3rd person singular box has limitless subjects: he, she, it, the cat, the house, my friend, New Jersey, the school, etc. Any subject, as long as it is singular and in the 3rd person, fits here. The same hold true for the 3rd person plural box: they, the foxes, the students, my parents, the buildings, the paintings, the countries, etc.

☆ Each of these boxes will contain a different verb form once the verb is conjugated. Example:

	Singular verbs	Plural verbs
1 st person →	yo tengo = I have	nosotros tenemos = We have
2 nd person →	tú tienes = You have	vosotros tenéis = You all have
3 rd person →	él tiene = He has	ellos tienen = They have

Notice that English uses “have” for all forms except the 3rd person singular where it become “has”: He has, She has, The cat has, Robert has, My mother has, The park has etc.

☆ Other verbs used in these lesson plans that are already conjugated include:

tengo = I have	¡Para! = Stop!
estás = you are / you feel	¡Mira! = Look!
estoy = I am / I feel	¡Escucha! = Listen!
te llamas = you call yourself (your name is...)	¡Ven! = Come!
me llamo = I call myself (my name is...)	¡Ve! = Go!
hace = it makes	dice = says
llueve = it rains / it is raining	toca = touch
nieva = it snows / it is snowing	¿Qué te pasa? = What's happening to you? / What's the matter with you?
soy = I am	
es = (it) is	
son = (they) are	

✧ **NEGATIVES:** To make a verb negative, just put a “no” in front of it. In English it goes after the verb.

<u>No</u> tengo hambre.	<i>I <u>am not</u> hungry</i>
<u>No</u> estás bien.	<i>You <u>are not</u> okay.</i>
<u>No</u> estoy mejor.	<i>I <u>am not</u> better.</i>
<u>No</u> nieva.	<i>It <u>is not</u> snowing.</i>
<u>No</u> hace frío.	<i>It <u>is not</u> cold.</i>

✧ **TENER and HACER** (Expressing needs and telling the weather)

In English we say “*I am thirsty. I am hungry. I am cold. I am hot.*” We use the verb “to be” and adjectives: thirsty, hungry, cold and hot. In Spanish we use the verb **tener** (*to have*) and nouns to say the same thing: “**Tengo sed. Tengo hambre. Tengo frío. Tengo calor.**” **Sed, hambre, frío** and **calor** are nouns which means the sentences literally say “*I have thirst. I have hunger. I have coldness. I have heat.*”

The same thing happens when telling the weather. In English we say “It is hot. It is cold. It is windy. It is sunny.” Once again we use “to be” and adjectives. In Spanish we use **hacer** (*to make*) and nouns. **Calor** (*heat*), **frío** (*coldness*), **viento** (*wind*), **sol** (*sun*) are all nouns. We use **hace** (the singular form of the verb **hacer**) with these nouns. **Hace sol** literally means *It makes sun*. It seems odd to have “it” be the subject of the weather. In a sense it helps to think of the “it” as Mother Nature or Jack Frost both singular subjects.

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Literal translation</u>	<u>Comprehensible English</u> 😊
Hace calor.	<i>It makes heat. →</i>	<i>It is hot.</i>
Hace frío.	<i>It makes coldness. →</i>	<i>It is cold.</i>
Hace viento.	<i>It makes wind. →</i>	<i>It is windy.</i>
Hace sol.	<i>It makes sun. →</i>	<i>It is sunny.</i>

✧ **GUSTAR and DOLER** (Expressing like and pain)

Gustar is used with a noun to mean *to like something*. Literally, it means *to be pleasing to* and is used with an indirect object so the construction of the sentence is different than that of English. The verb will only be conjugated in the 3rd person singular or plural because it is agreeing with the noun (subject) that follows it. **Gusta** is used with singular nouns while **gustan** is used with plural nouns. The subjects in each structure are in **green**.

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Literal translation</u>	<u>Comprehensible English</u>
Me gusta el sol .	<i>The sun is pleasing to me.</i>	<i>I like the sun.</i>
Me gustan los chocolates .	<i>Chocolates are pleasing to me.</i>	<i>I like chocolates.</i>
No me gusta el invierno .	<i>Winter is not pleasing to me.</i>	<i>I do not like winter.</i>

To express pain, use the verb **doler** in the same way. It is also used with an indirect object and will only be conjugated in the 3rd person singular or plural because it is agreeing with the noun (subject) that follows it. **Duele** is used with singular body parts while **duelen** is used with plural body parts.

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Literal translation</u>	<u>Comprehensible English</u>
Me duele la cabeza.	<i>The head hurts me.</i>	<i>My head hurts.</i>
Me duelen los pies.	<i>The feet hurt me.</i>	<i>My feet hurt.</i>
No me duelen las muelas.	<i>The teeth do not hurt me.</i>	<i>My teeth do not hurt.</i>

DEMONSTRATIVES: This is a fancy name given words like *this* and *that*. In Spanish there are masculine and feminine forms to these words. To use them correctly you need to know the gender of the noun being used.

	THIS	THESE	THAT	THOSE
feminine →	esta	estas	esa	esas
masculine →	este	estos	ese	esos

To help remember which group is which think "THIS and THESE have **t's**"

Me gusta esta clase. *I like this class.* No me gusta esa clase. *I don't like that class.*

It is kind of difficult for me to make up sentences with vocabulary that you will know because the only nouns included in these lesson plans are body parts, family and seasons. ☺ For this reason I stuck in the lesson plans with the neuters **esto** and **eso**. Neuters are used when you don't know what something is and therefore cannot assign the correct gender to it. For example, you see a stain in the carpet and you ask the students "What is this?!" Since you don't know what it is (juice [el jugo], ink [la tinta], melted snow ☺ [la nieve], blood ☹ [la sangre], etc.) you cannot assign its correct gender. By using the neuter the students can just say **Me gusta esto** (*I like this*) and **Me gusta eso** (*I like that*) without worrying about gender.

TIME: The question **¿Qué hora es?** literally means *What hour is it?*

☆ "It is one o'clock" is said "**Es la una**" which literally means "*It is the first (hour)*". Notice that "la" and "una" are both feminine because the word "hora", which they represent, is feminine. The only number that is singular is "one". Since it is singular, the verb "es" (is) and the article "la" are both singular. Once the number to tell time is plural (2:00, 3:00, 4:00 etc), the structure (verb "son" and article "las") also become plural: **Son las dos. Son las tres. Son las cuatro**, etc.

☆ When you want to say "*It is time to [verb]*", you would use a verb in the infinitive form just as we do in English (marked by the "to"). You are saying "*It is the hour to [verb]*".

Es la hora de <u>desayunar</u> .	<i>It is time to eat breakfast.</i>
Es la hora de <u>leer</u> .	<i>It is time to read.</i>
Es la hora de <u>dormir</u> .	<i>It is time to sleep.</i>
Es la hora de <u>jugar</u> .	<i>It is time to play.</i>
Es la hora de <u>recoger</u> .	<i>It is time to clean up.</i>

ORDINAL NUMBERS: Ordinal numbers are used to express rank or position. They must agree in number with the noun to which they refer.

la segunda hija	the second daughter
el cuarto invierno	the fourth winter

The words **primero** and **tercero** drop the **o** in front of a masculine noun.

el primer hermano	the first brother	la primera hermana	the first sister
el segundo tren	the second train	la segunda hora	the second hour
el tercer libro	the third book	la tercera persona	the third person
el cuarto domingo	the fourth Sunday	la cuarta clase	the fourth class
el quinto día	the fifth day	la quinta muela	the fifth tooth (molar)
el sexto hijo	the sixth son (child)	la sexta hija	the sixth daughter
el séptimo lunes	the seventh Monday	la séptima noche	the seventh night
el octavo verano	the eighth summer	la octava casa	the eighth house

DATE: The structure for saying a date in Spanish goes from smallest increment (day) to medium sized increment ☺ (month) to the largest increment (year). It looks like this:

Es el (day) de (month) de (year).
It is the (day) of (month) of (year).

Example: Es el ocho de febrero de dos mil ocho.
The literal translation is: *It is the eighth of February of two thousand eight.*

They would actually write this date like this: 08-02-08 (which is not August 2nd ☺). Some students might think this is great but it will drive the rest wacko!

To say *Today is _____*, start with **Hoy** and then follow the date structure.
Hoy es el ____ de ____ de ____.

To say *My birthday is _____*, start with **Mi cumpleaños** then follow the date structure.
Mi cumpleaños es el ____ de ____ de ____.
Cumpleaños is pronounced *[koom-pleh-ahn-yohs]*

You can even cut the year out to make it simpler. **Es el (day) de (month).**

Months and days of the week are NOT capitalized in Spanish. The only things that are capitalized are proper nouns and the first word in a sentence (even with book titles!)

SEASONS: The seasons are simple.

Es verano.	<i>It is summer.</i>	Es otoño.	<i>It is fall.</i>
Es invierno.	<i>It is winter.</i>	Es primavera.	<i>It is spring.</i>

Students can put it together with the days of the week and the weather and say:

Hoy es lunes, el cuatro de febrero. Es invierno. Hace frío y nieva.
Today is Monday, the fourth of February. It is winter. It is cold and snowing.