

The Alphabet in Spanish

The alphabet in Spanish has more letters than in English. The English alphabet has 26 and the Spanish alphabet has 30. In learning the correct pronunciation of each letter, you will find that you can read anything in Spanish for the language is very phonetic and follows very definite rules. This, however, does not mean that you will understand what you read but you can sound like a native speaker.

Letters	Sounds of Letters	English Sound	Spanish Word
a	ah	<u>c</u> ot	a
b	b	ba <u>t</u>	be
c	k or s	<u>c</u> at, ci <u>t</u> y	ce (say)
ch	ch	<u>ch</u> in	che
d	d	<u>d</u> og	de
e	eh	pe <u>t</u>	e
f	f, ph	<u>f</u> oot	efe
g	g, h	<u>g</u> o,	ge
h	silent	silent	hache
i	ee	<u>f</u> ee <u>t</u>	i
j	breathy h	<u>h</u> ot	jota
k	k	ca <u>k</u> e	ka
l	l	<u>l</u> emon	ele
ll	y	<u>y</u> ellow	elle
m	m	<u>m</u> ind	eme
n	n	<u>n</u> o	ene
ñ	n	<u>o</u> nion	eñe
o	o	<u>c</u> oa <u>t</u>	o
p	p	<u>p</u> ot	pe
q	ku	<u>c</u> oo <u>l</u>	cu
r	r	<u>r</u> obe	ere
rr	trilled r	not in English	erre
s	s	<u>s</u> o	ese
t	t	<u>t</u> oe	te
u	oo	<u>c</u> oo <u>l</u>	u
v	v	<u>v</u> ie	ve
w	w	<u>w</u> e	doble ve
x	ks	<u>e</u> xi <u>t</u>	equis
y	y	<u>y</u> ellow	i griega
z	s	<u>s</u> uit	zeta

The "t" and "d" are pronounced with the tongue slightly between the teeth and not behind the teeth.

Pronunciación

You have probably already noted that there is a very close relationship between the way Spanish is written and the way it is pronounced. This makes it relatively easy to learn the basics of Spanish spelling and pronunciation.

Many Spanish sounds, however, do not have an exact equivalent in English, so you should not trust English to be your guide to Spanish pronunciation. Even words that are spelled the same in both languages are usually pronounced quite differently. It is important to become so familiar with Spanish sounds that you can pronounce them automatically, right from the beginning of your study of the language.

Las vocales (Vowels): *a, e, i, o, u*

Unlike English vowels, which can have many different pronunciations or may be silent, Spanish vowels are always pronounced, and they are almost always pronounced in the same way. Spanish vowels are always short and tense. They are never drawn out with a *u* or *i* glide as in English: *lo* ≠ *low*; *de* ≠ *day*.

- a*: pronounced like the *a* in *father*, but short and tense
- e*: pronounced like the *e* in *they*, but without the *i* glide
- i*: pronounced like the *i* in *machine*, but short and tense*
- o*: pronounced like the *o* in *home*, but without the *u* glide
- u*: pronounced like the *u* in *rule*, but short and tense

The *uh* sound or schwa (which is how most unstressed vowels are pronounced in English: *canal, waited, atom*) does not exist in Spanish.

A **Sílabas.** Pronounce the following Spanish syllables, being careful to pronounce each vowel with a short, tense sound.

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. ma fa la ta pa | 4. mo fo lo to po | 7. su mi te so la |
| 2. me fe le te pe | 5. mu fu lu tu pu | 8. se tu no ya li |
| 3. mi fi li ti pi | 6. mi fe la tu do | |

*The word *y* (*and*) is also pronounced like the letter *i*.

B **Palabras (Words).** Pronounce the following words, paying special attention to the vowel sounds.

1. hasta tal nada mañana natural normal fascinante
2. me qué Pérez Elena rebelde excelente elegante
3. sí señorita permiso terrible imposible tímido Ibiza
4. yo con cómo noches profesor señor generoso
5. uno usted tú mucho Perú Lupe Úrsula

C **Trabalenguas (Tongue-twister)**

Paso 1. Here is a popular nonsense rhyme, the Spanish version of "Eeny, meeny, miney, moe." (Note: The person who corresponds to *fue* is "it".) Listen as your instructor pronounces it.

Pin, marín
de don Pingüé
cúcara, mácara
títtere, fue.

Paso 2. Now pronounce the vowels clearly as you repeat the rhyme.