

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Spanish is very consistent in its pronunciation, meaning that vowels and consonants (or combinations of letters) are pronounced in the same way no matter which word in which they appear. Spanish has many of the same sounds found in English, plus some special sounds you might not be used to hearing. The following chart will help you pronounce words in Spanish.

Spanish vowels and consonants		Approximate equivalent in English	notation in pronunciation key
a	a	long "a" as in "bar"	(a), (ah)
b	be	like English "b" but softer; don't close your lips all the way	(b)
c	ce	before a.o.u: [k]; before e.i: [s] (or in some places, [th] as in "three")	(k), (s)
ch	che	as in "church"	(ch)
d	de	softer than English "d"; more like "th" in "then"	(d), (th)
e	e	like "a" in "take" but shorter	(eh)
f	efe	like English "f"	(f)
g	ge	before a.o.u: [g] (as in "girl"); before e.i: like "h" in "help", but stronger	(g), (h)
h	hache	ALWAYS silent	
i	i	Like "ee" as in "feet", but shorter	(ee)
j	jota	like "h" in "help", but stronger (expel more air to make the sound louder)	(h)
k	ka	like English "k" ("k" doesn't occur in native Spanish words)	((k))
l	ele	like English "l"	(l)
ll	elle	like "y" in "yes" (in some places like "j" in "jam")	(y)
m	eme	like English "m"	(m)
n	ene	like English "n"	(n)
n	eñe	a "nyuh" sound, like you hear in "onion" or "union"	(ny)
o	o	like English "o" in "phone" but shorter	(o), (oh)
p	pe	like English "p" (but expelling less air)	(p)
q	cu	like English "k"; always followed by "u" but the "u" is silent	(k)
r	ere	usually like "dd" in "ladder"; at the beginning of a word or between vowels, "r" makes a rolled "rrr" sound	(r), (rr)
rr	erre	a rolled "rrr" sound	(rr)
s	ese	like English "s"	(s)
t	te	like English "t" (but expelling less air)	(t)
u	u	like "oo" in "moon", but shorter	(oo)
v	ve	see "b" above; the two letters are pronounced exactly alike	(b)
w	doble ve	like English "w" ("w" doesn't occur in native Spanish words)	((w))
x	equis	generally [ks] (as in "ax"), occasionally a strong "h" sound (see "j")	(ks), (h)
y	i griega	see the possible pronunciations of "ll" above; "y" has the same	(y)
z	zeta	variation like English "s" (or in some places, [th] as in "three")	(s)

Although word stress is indicated for you in this book, there are three simple rules that can help you figure out where the stress falls on any Spanish word:

1. If the word ends in a vowel, n, or s, stress the next-to-last syllable.
2. If the word ends in a consonant other than n or s, stress the last syllable.
3. Any exception to rules one and two has a written accent over the stressed vowel.

*The one exception is "x" which is pronounced, like a strong "h" in some Native American words.

Single vowels in Spanish are pronounced just as they are called. When there are combinations of 2 vowels, they are pronounced as follows:

(vowels)	(pronounced in <u>English</u> like)	(Spanish example)
ai/ay	“eye”	baile (dance)
au	“ou” in “cow”	causa (cause)
ia	“ya”	Francia (France)
io	“yo”	radio (radio)
ua	“wa” in “water”	agua (water)
ue	“way”	fuego (fire)
ui	“ooee” in “gooney”	ruinas (ruins)
ie	“e - eh” run together	tienda (store)