

*Your handy guide to
everyday words and expressions*

Spanish Phrases

FOR
DUMMIES[®]

A Reference for the Rest of Us!

- ✓ **Quick & easy approach gives you language fundamentals up front**
- ✓ **Words to Know section helps you find the right words fast**
- ✓ **Pronunciation key lets you talk the talk**

Susana Wald

*Coauthor of the bestselling
Spanish For Dummies*



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Susana Wald is a writer and simultaneous and literary translator in Hungarian, Spanish, English, and French. As a publisher, she has been working with books and authors for many years. She has been a teacher in Chile and in Canada and has known the joy of learning from her students and their untiring enthusiasm and tolerance. She also is an artist and has had her work shown in many countries in Europe and in North, Central, and South America.

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¿Y eso con qué se come?

Voy a ir de farra

Caer fatal

Nos divertimos en grande

Ver negro para

Pasó sin pena ni gloria

¡Así a secas!

¡La cosa va viento en popa!

Introduction

As society becomes more international in nature, knowing how to say at least a few words in other languages becomes increasingly useful. Inexpensive airfares make travel abroad a more realistic option. Global business environments necessitate overseas travel. You just may have friends and neighbors who speak other languages, or you may want to get in touch with your heritage by learning a little bit of the language that your ancestors spoke.

Whatever your reason for wanting to acquire some Spanish, this book can help. We're not promising fluency here, but if you want to greet someone, purchase a ticket, or order off a menu in Spanish, you need look no further than *Spanish Phrases For Dummies*.

About This Book

This book isn't like a class that you have to drag yourself to twice a week for a specified period of time. You can use this book however you want to, whether your goal is to know some words and phrases to help you get around when you visit the countries of Central or South America, travel to Spain, or you simply want to be able to say, "Hello, how are you?" to your Spanish-speaking neighbor. Go through this book at your own pace,

reading as much or as little at a time as you like. You don't have to trudge through the chapters in order, either; just read the sections that interest you.

If you've never taken Spanish lessons before, you may want to read Chapters 1 and 2 before tackling the later ones. These chapters give you some of the basics that you need to know about the language, such as how to pronounce the various sounds.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we've set up a couple of conventions:

- ✓ Spanish terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciations, set in *italics*, follow the Spanish terms. Stressed syllables are underlined in the pronunciation.
- ✓ Memorizing key words and phrases is important in language learning, so we collect the important words in a chapter or section into a list with the heading "Words to Know." Spanish nouns have genders, which determines which article each noun takes. In the Words to Know lists, we include the article for each noun so that you memorize it at the same time as the noun.

Also note that because each language has its own ways of expressing ideas, the English translations that we

provide for the Spanish terms may not be exactly literal. We want you to know the gist of what someone is saying, not just the words that are being said. For example, you can translate the Spanish phrase **de nada** (*deh nah-dah*) literally as “of nothing,” but the phrase really means “you’re welcome.” This book gives the “you’re welcome” translation.

Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, we had to make some assumptions about who you are and what you want. Here are the assumptions that we’ve made about you:

- ✓ You know no Spanish — or if you took Spanish back in school, you don’t remember a word of it.
- ✓ You’re not looking for a book that will make you fluent in Spanish; you just want to know some words, phrases, and sentence constructions so you can communicate basic information in Spanish.
- ✓ You don’t want to have to memorize long lists of vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- ✓ You want to have fun and learn a little bit of Spanish at the same time.

If these statements apply to you, you’ve found the right book!

Icons Used in This Book

You may be looking for particular information while reading this book. To make certain types of information easier for you to find, we've placed the following icons in the left-hand margins throughout the book:



This icon highlights tips that can make learning Spanish easier.



To ensure that you don't forget important stuff, this icon serves as a reminder, like a string tied around your finger.



Languages are full of quirks that may trip you up if you're not prepared for them. This icon points to discussions of these weird grammar rules.



If you're looking for information about Spanish-speaking culture and travel, look for these icons. They draw your attention to interesting tidbits about the countries in which Spanish is spoken.

Where to Go from Here

Learning a language is all about jumping in and giving it a try (no matter how bad your pronunciation is at first). So make the leap! Start at the beginning or pick a chapter that interests you. Just make sure that you have fun!

Chapter 1

I Say It How? Speaking Spanish

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the Spanish you already know
 - ▶ Saying it right (basic pronunciation)
 - ▶ Diving into some typical expressions
-

If you're familiar with the term "Latin Lover," you may not be surprised to know that Spanish is called a Romance language. But the romance we're talking about here isn't exactly the Latin Lover type — unless you love to learn Latin.

Spanish (as well as several other languages, such as Italian, French, Romanian, and Portuguese) is a Romance language because its origins are in the Latin of ancient Rome. Because of that common origin, Romance languages have many similarities in grammar and the way they sound. (The fact that they all sound so romantic when spoken is purely a bonus!) For example, **casa** (*kah-sah*), the word for "house," is identical in looks, meaning, and sound whether you speak Portuguese, Italian, or Spanish.

This book concentrates on the Spanish spoken in Latin America. Throughout the book, we also explore the differences in the words used in these 19 countries and mention some variations in pronunciation. Latin America consists of all of the Western Hemisphere with the exception of Canada, the United States, the British and French-speaking Guyanas; and a few islands in the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, Haiti, and Curaçao, where locals speak English, French, or Dutch.

You Already Know Some Spanish

The English language is like an ever-growing entity that, with great wisdom, absorbs what it needs from other cultures and languages. You can find many correspondences between English and Spanish in the words that come from both Latin and French roots. These words can cause both delight and embarrassment. The delight comes in the words where the similar sounds also give similar meanings. The embarrassment comes from words where the sounds and even the roots are the same, but the meanings are completely different.

Among the delightful discoveries among similarities between the languages are words like **soprano** (*soh-prah-noh*) (soprano), **pronto** (*prohn-toh*) (right away, soon), and thousands of others that differ by just one or two letters, such as **conclusión** (*kohn-kloo-see ohn*)

(conclusion), **composición** (*kohm-poh-see-see-ohn*) (composition), **libertad** (*lee-bvehr-tahd*) (liberty), **economía** (*eh-koh-noh-meeah*) (economy), **invención** (*een-bvehn-see-ohn*) (invention), and **presidente** (*preh-see-dehn-teh*) (president).

Beware of false friends

The trouble begins in the world of words that French linguists have designated as false friends. You can't trust fool's gold, false friends, or all word similarities. Within the groups of false friends, you may find words that look very similar to English words and even have the same roots, yet they mean completely different things. One that comes to mind is the word "actual," which has very different meanings in English and Spanish. In English, you know that it means "real, in reality, or the very one." Not so in Spanish. **Actual** (*ahk-tooahl*) in Spanish means "present; current; belonging to this moment, this day, or this year."

Another example is the adjective "embarrassed," that in English means ashamed or encumbered. In Spanish, **embarazada** (*ehm-bvah-rah-sah-dah*) is the adjective that comes from the same root as the English word, yet its use nowadays almost exclusively means "pregnant." So you can say in English that you're a little embarrassed, but in Spanish you can't be just a little embarazada. Either you're pregnant or you're not.

Some crossover influence

Word trouble ends at the point where a word originating in English is absorbed into Spanish or vice versa. The proximity of the United States to Mexico produces a change in the Spanish spoken south of the U.S. border. An example is the word “car.” In Mexico, people say **carro** (*kah-rroh*). In South America, on the other hand, people say **auto** (*ahoo-toh*). In Spain, people say **coche** (*koh-cheh*).

Here are just a few examples of Spanish words that you already know because English uses them, too:

- ✓ You’ve been to a **rodeo** (*roh-deh-oh*) or a **fiesta** (*feeehs-tah*).
- ✓ You may have taken a **siesta** (*seeehs-tah*) or two.
- ✓ You probably know at least one **señorita** (*seh-nyoh-ree-tah*), and you surely have an **amigo** (*ah-mee-goh*). Maybe you’ll even see him **mañana** (*mah-nyah-nah*).
- ✓ You already know the names of places like **Los Angeles** (*lohs ahn-Heh-lehs*) (the angels), **San Francisco** (*sahn frahn-sees-koh*) (St. Francis), **La Jolla** (*la Hoh-yah*) (the jewel), **Florida** (*floh-ree-dah*) (the blooming one), and **Puerto Rico** (*pooehr-toh ree-koh*) (rich harbor).
- ✓ You’ve eaten a **tortilla** (*tohr-tee-lyah*), a **taco** (*tah-koh*), or a **burrito** (*bvoo-ree-toh*).
- ✓ You fancy the **tango** (*tahn-goh*), the **bolero** (*bvo-leh-roh*), or the **rumba** (*room-bvah*). Or you may dance the **cumbia** (*koom-bveeah*).

✓ You have a friend named **Juanita** (*Hooah-nee-tah*), **Anita** (*ah-nee-tah*), or **Clara** (*klah-rah*).

Reciting Your ABC's

Correct pronunciation is key to avoiding misunderstandings. The following sections present some basic guidelines for proper pronunciation.



Throughout this book, you can find the pronunciation of a Spanish word next to it in parentheses, which we call *pronunciation brackets*. Within the pronunciation brackets, we separate all the words that have more than one syllable with a hyphen, like this: (*kah-sah*). An underlined syllable within the pronunciation brackets tells you to accent, or stress, that syllable. We say much more about stress in the section “Pronunciation and Stress” later in this chapter. But don’t let yourself get stressed out (pardon the pun). We explain each part of the language separately, and the pieces quickly fall into place. Promise!

In the following sections, we comment on some letters of the alphabet from the Spanish point of view to help you to understand Spanish pronunciations. Here is the basic Spanish alphabet and its pronunciation:

a (*ah*)

b (*bveh*)

c (*seh*)

d (*deh*)

i (*ee*)

j (*Hoh-tah*)

k (*kah*)

l (*eh-leh*)

m (*eh-meh*)

n (*eh-neh*)

ñ (*eh-nyeh*)

o (*oh*)

p (*peh*)

q (*koo*)

e (*eh*)

f (*eh-feh*)

g (*Heh*)

h (*ah-cheh*)

r (*eh-reh*)

s (*eh-seh*)

t (*teh*)

u (*oo*)

v (*bveh*)

w (*doh-bleh bveh*)
(*oo – bveh doh-buleh*)
(Spain)

x (*eh-kees*)

y (*ee gree eh-gah*)

z (*seh-tah*)

Spanish also includes some double letters in its alphabet: **ch** (*ch eh*), **ll** (*ye*), and **rr** (a trilled *r*).

We don't go through every letter of the alphabet in the sections that follow, only those that you use differently in Spanish than in English. The differences can lie in pronunciation, the way they look, in the fact that you seldom see the letters, or that you don't pronounce them at all.

Consonants

Consonants tend to sound the same in English and Spanish. We explain the few differences that you can find.



Inside the Spanish-speaking world itself, you find that you may pronounce consonants differently than in English. For example, in Spain, the consonant *z* is pronounced like the *th* in the English word *thesis*. (Latin Americans don't use this sound; in all 19 Spanish-speaking countries in the Western hemisphere, *z* and *s* sound the same.)



In the Spanish speaker's mind, a consonant is any sound that needs to have a vowel next to it when you pronounce it. For example, saying the letter *t* by itself may be difficult for a Spanish speaker. To the Spanish ear, pronouncing *t* sounds like **te** (*teh*). Likewise, the Spanish speaker says **ese** (*eh-seh*) when pronouncing the letter *s*.