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European Spanish

# Spanish

FOR

# DUMMIES®

## Learn to:

- Get to grips with basic grammar and vocabulary
- Speak Spanish on the go in a variety of everyday situations
- Communicate confidently on the telephone and in email



Perfect your pronunciation with the audio CD

**Pedro Vázquez Bermejo**

*BBC Spanish teacher*

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# ***Spanish For Dummies***<sup>®</sup>

**by Pedro Vázquez  
Bermejo and Susana  
Wald**



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# About the Authors

**Pedro Vázquez Bermejo** is a leading Spanish communicator, teacher, translator and interpreter living in London. He was born in the Spanish region of Extremadura (the land of the Conquistadores!) and grew up in Madrid, before settling down in London.

After studying sociology at Madrid's University Complutense in the late 1980s, Pedro developed a real passion for modern languages. He now specialises in teaching Spanish to all ages and levels of ability, from young multilingual children to retired enthusiastic academics. He holds both one-to-one and group sessions, including his innovative, absorbing and entertaining Spanish classes at the BBC headquarters in London.

The varied work Pedro has undertaken includes acting as a corporate interpreter and as a Spanish voiceover coordinator on educational interactive videos and multilingual historical role games. He is also a multilingual corporate image producer, and his work in this area has included producing some award-winning international corporate DVDs.

Pedro also holds a High Certificate in Foreign Commerce from the Chamber of Commerce of Madrid, and a masters degree in marketing and business administration.

Pedro is very personable and his excellent communication skills are imbued with warmth, humour and patience. He speaks in a standard Castilian Spanish accent, with pleasing and crystal-clear pronunciation. He also has a personal repertoire of Spanglish jokes and sayings, and is

capable of ‘talking the hind legs off a donkey’ – try translating that into Spanish! He is never short of ideas for keeping the language (**lengua** in Spanish) rolling!

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



# Authors'

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*Pedro Vázquez Bermejo*

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*Susana Wald*

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# Introduction

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As society becomes more international in nature, knowing how to say at least a few words in other languages becomes increasingly useful: low-cost airfares are making travel abroad a more realistic option, global business environments necessitate overseas travel or you just may have friends and neighbours who speak other languages.

Whatever your reason for acquiring some Spanish, this book can help. *Spanish For Dummies* gives you the skills you need for basic communication in Spanish. 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 For Dummies*.

## What's Special about Spanish?

Spanish is one of the great European languages, rich in heritage from more than nine centuries of existence. This language comes from the central region of Spain called **Castilla** (*kahs-tee-yah*) (Castile) and is also the language of much great literature.

The first European novel – as a matter of fact, the first novel in the modern sense – was written in Spanish by Miguel de Cervantes. You've probably heard about *Don Quixote*, the 'enthusiastic visionary'. His adventures have even become part of the English language: the word *quixotic* describes someone with an odd, eccentric or utterly-regardless-of-material-interests attitude.

Spanish is also the language of great poets. Many Nobel Prize winners in literature are Spanish-speaking, including the poets Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda.

When **Cristobal Colón** (Christopher Columbus) and other Spanish explorers came to the New World of the Americas, Spanish became the language of all the peoples from Florida to Tierra del Fuego at the extreme tip of South America (with the exception of Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken).

When you go to places such as Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras or Nicaragua, you speak in or are spoken to in Spanish. If you visit cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Bilbao, Seville, Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, Asuncion, Buenos Aires, Lima, Caracas, Bogota, Mexico City, Quito, San Juan and many, many others, all the people you find speak Spanish.

So you have several reasons to embrace this beautiful language. You may want to understand the culture and the people and you may also want some future new Spanish friends to understand you, in their own language.

## About This Book

Although you may think that 'Spanish is Spanish', things aren't quite that simple. The Spanish language carried to the New World by the **Conquistadores** (*kohn-kees-tah-doh-rehs*) (Spanish conquerors) developed over time in its own way, and at its own speed. Alternative words and conventions increased until the Spanish spoken in Latin American countries became, if not a different language,

certainly one with a very different personality to the standard Spanish spoken in Spain.

This book concentrates on standard, contemporary Spanish – known as **Castellano** – meaning the Spanish spoken in Spain itself, even in regions such as the Basque Country or Cataluña where it may not be the language that people habitually use. By getting to grips with **Castellano**, you can be understood anywhere in the Spanish-speaking world, including Latin America.

This book isn't a class that you have to drag yourself to twice a week for a specified period of time. You can use *Spanish For Dummies* however you want to, whether your goal is to know some words and phrases to help you get around when you visit the Canaries, Balearics or mainland Spain, or you simply want to be able to say, 'Hello, how are you?' to a Spanish-speaking friend. This book can help you reach moments of true understanding in a different language. Use the text as a language and cultural guide for those moments when you really need to know how and why things are done.

Go through this book at your own pace, reading as much or as little at a time as you like. Also, you don't have to trudge through the chapters in order; just read the sections that interest you. The only way to know and love a language is to speak it. Throughout the book, we give you lots of words, phrases and dialogues, complete with pronunciations.

If you've never taken Spanish lessons before, you may want to read the chapters in Part I before tackling the later chapters. Part I gives you some of the basics that you need to know about the language, such as how to pronounce the various sounds.

# Why We Wrote This Book

Language exposes you to every aspect of the human condition, allowing you to study the past, understand the present and ponder the future. Language sometimes changes the ways in which people express various emotions and conditions. People are connected through their ability to speak, but you can go one step further – to understanding – by being able to communicate in another language. Very few things are as exciting as that!

The best way to discover a new language is to immerse yourself in it. Listen to the way Spanish sounds, concentrate on the pronunciation and look at how it's written. By listening and repeating, you enter a new world of ideas and peoples. Acquiring Spanish through immersion really does feel like a sort of magic.

## Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy for you to navigate, we set up a few conventions:

- ✓ Spanish terms are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.
- ✓ Pronunciations, set in brackets in *italics*, follow the Spanish terms.
- ✓ Verb conjugations (lists that show you the forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order: **yo**, the 'I' form; **tú**, the 'you' (singular) form, **él**, **ella**, **usted**, the

‘he/she/it’ form; **nosotros**, the ‘we’ form; **vosotros**, the ‘you’ (plural/formal) form; and **ellos, ellas**, the ‘they’ form. Pronunciations follow in the second column. Here’s an example (of the verb **llevar**, meaning to take or carry):

Conjugation	Pronunciation
yo llevo	yoh <u>yeh</u> -boh
tú llevas	too <u>yeh</u> -bahs
él, ella , usted lleva	ehl, <u>eh</u> -yah, oos- <u>tehd</u> <u>yeh</u> -bah
nosotros llevamos	noh- <u>soh</u> -trohs yeh- <u>bah</u> -mohs
vosotros lleváis	boh- <u>soh</u> -trohs yeh- <u>bah</u> -ees
ellos , ellas llevan	<u>eh</u> -yohs, <u>eh</u> -yahs <u>yeh</u> -bahn

Studying a language is a peculiar beast, and so this book includes a few elements that other *For Dummies* books do not. Here are those new elements:

- ✓ **Talkin’ the Talk dialogues:** The best way to improve with a language is to see and hear how it’s used in conversation, and so we include dialogues throughout the book. The dialogues come under the heading ‘Talkin’ the Talk’ and show you the Spanish words, the pronunciation and the English translation.
- ✓ **Words to Know blackboards:** Memorising key words and phrases is also important in language, and so we collect the important words that appear in a chapter (or section within a chapter) and write them on a ‘blackboard’, under the heading ‘Words to Know’.