



SPANISH GRAMMAR Cheat Sheet

A **quick** and **easy** guide to
Spanish Grammar

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About the author



Laura Carbonell, born in Pennsylvania and raised in Madrid, attended King's College (Madrid), Hopewell High School (Pittsburgh, Pa.), and the University of Pittsburgh. She has taught at Marshall Institute (Madrid), Casa Hispana, French-American School, the University of San Francisco, and is currently a full-time teacher at **Crystal Springs Uplands School**, all in San Francisco, California.

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Introduction

This is not a run-of-the-mill type Spanish grammar. This is the marrow, the essence of Spanish grammar. There are plenty of books out there that want to teach you Spanish the runaround way. There's no vocabulary here. You will find the grammatical foundation-bricks to set your Spanish on firm ground. As the title indicates, it's a *cheat sheet* to keep handy while studying, speaking or writing. This book is my dad's and my students' fault. I had always wanted to write this cheat sheet for years until my dad said: "Enough! It's time to do it". I know from personal experience that reading complicated texts is not my thing; I get confused with long, drawn-out explanations, resulting in my giving up all too soon, and that's the reason I have tried to simplify, as Thoreau would put it.

But let me explain where I'm coming from with this book. I was 15 when I started attending my father, Delfin Carbonell Basset, and grandfather Delfin Carbonell Picazo's language classes. They taught with such utmost precision and passion that their students were as engaged and enthralled as I was. This was no easy feat, at an age where attending classes was a drag. However, from them, I inherited my life-long passion for teaching languages. A gift that these two men handed down to me makes the following quote by Mark Twain true: "Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life".

Teaching and learning don't have to be a drag. Enthusiasm for the topic you teach will always engage students. Keep the grammar simple, straight to the point, and start practicing right away. I believe that if I find an activity boring, so will my students. But we need grammar. So, I finally sat

down and wrote a grammar cheat sheet for handy reference. Learners of Spanish will find here simple grammatical explanations with examples to help reference quickly and start using the language. Languages come alive with practice. If we don't use them, they are as dead as Latin or Sanskrit. Practice makes perfect. I hope this short guide will help.

Spanish Grammar Cheat Sheet

Basic grammatical terms

Términos gramaticales básicos

Adjetivo (adjective): dice algo del nombre (tells about the noun).

Adverbio (adverb): dice algo del verbo (tells about the verb).

Artículo (article): definido (definite): *el, la, lo*. Indefinido (indefinite): *un, una*.

Conjunción (conjunction): conecta palabras y frases (connects words and sentences).

Interjección (interjection): exclamación, *¡Ah! ¡Oh!* (exclamación).

Nombre (noun): representa cosas o personas (represents objects or people).

Objeto directo (direct object): lo que recibe la acción de un verbo intransitivo: *Compró un libro*. (That which receives the action of intransitive verbs: “He bought a book”).

Objeto indirecto (indirect object): para qué o quién es la acción de un verbo transitivo: *Le hice una pregunta*. (what/who receives the action of a transitive verb: “I asked him a question”).

Preposición (preposition): relaciona nombres (links nouns).

Pronombre (pronoun): ocupa el lugar del nombre (takes the place of the noun).

Sintaxis (syntax): orden de las palabras (word order).

Verbo auxiliar (auxiliary verb): verbos que ayudan a otros: *haber, ser, estar*. (Helping verbs: “have”, “be”).

Verbo intransitivo (intransitive verb): no lleva objeto directo: *Fracasó. Se rió. El viento sopla* (doesn’t have a direct object: “He failed”. “She laughed”. “The wind blows”).

Verbo transitivo (transitive verb). Necesita objeto directo: *Compré un coche* (needs a direct object: “I bought a car”).

Verbo (verb): indica acción (indicates action).

EXAMPLES:¹

- Nombre: *El **perro***.
- Pronombre: ***Él** corre despacio*.
- Adjetivo: *El perro **bonito***.
- Verbo: *El perro bonito **corre***.
- Adverbio: *El perro bonito corre **veloz***.
- Preposición: *El perro bonito corre veloz **hacia** la cuadra*.

- Conjunción: *El perro bonito **y** blanco corre veloz hacia la casa.*
- Artículo: ***El** perro bonito y blanco corre veloz hacia la casa.*
- Interjección: *Oh, el perro bonito **y** blanco corre veloz hacia la casa.*
- Verbo intransitivo: *Oh, el perro bonito y blanco corre veloz.*
- Verbo transitivo: *Oh, el perro bonito y blanco **lame** el hueso.*

Pronunciation (pronunciación)

Language is sound. The sounds of English and Spanish are different and, to be understood, it's essential to reproduce them well. This is not easy. Spanish vowels have no equivalent in English. The consonants /t/ /d/ /b/ /p/ /r/ /rr/ /j/ /h/ /v/ are drastically different in both languages and mispronouncing them gives the speaker away immediately as to their nationality. Luckily, we can outsource phonetics on line.

Most bilingual dictionaries carry voice pronunciations we can listen to again and again. In this case, listening makes perfect.

Articles (Artículos)

The: el, la, lo, los, la	
<i>El libro:</i> the book	<i>La mesa:</i> the table
<i>Los libros:</i> the books	<i>Las mesas:</i> the tables

Some nouns are **el**, others are **la**: **el** lápiz(pencil), **la** pluma (pen), **el** cuaderno (notebook), **la** mano (hand), **el** pie (foot), **la** puerta (door), **el** pupitre (desk).

✎ **NOTE:** always learn nouns with the article.

A, an, some: un, una, unos, unas	
<i>Un libro:</i> a book	<i>Una mesa:</i> a table
<i>Unos libros:</i> some books	<i>Unas mesas:</i> some tables
<i>Un euro:</i> an euro <i>Unos euros:</i> some euros	

Articles and adjectives (Artículos y adjetivos)

<i>El libro negro</i> <i>Los libros negros</i>	The black book The black books
<i>La mesa roja</i> <i>Las mesas rojas</i>	The red table The red tables
<i>Un libro negro</i> <i>Unos libros negros</i>	A black book Some black books
<i>Una mesa roja</i> <i>Unas mesas rojas</i>	A red table Some red tables

Adjectives agree in gender and number with the noun, and are placed after it.

► Lo is used:

Lo malo: The bad thing is.

Lo difícil: The difficult thing is.

Lo bueno: The good thing is.

Lo bonito: The nice thing is.

✎ **NOTE:** The article **un, una,** is **NOT** used before professions:

- *Soy médico.* I am **a** doctor.

- *Mi padre es profesor.* My father is **a** teacher.

Only used when an adjective is involved:

- *Soy un médico bueno.* I am a good doctor.
- *Mi padre es un profesor estricto.* My father is a strict teacher.

Demonstrative pronouns (Pronombres demostrativos)

This: here	That: there	That “over there”
<i>Este:</i> This (M) <i>Esta:</i> This (F)	<i>Ese:</i> That (M) <i>Esa:</i> That (F)	<i>Aquel:</i> That (M) <i>Aquella:</i> That (F)
<i>Estos:</i> These (M) <i>Estas:</i> These (F)	<i>Esos:</i> Those (M) <i>Esas:</i> Those (F)	<i>Aquellos:</i> Those (M) <i>Aquellas:</i> Those (F)

M: Masculine/ **F:** Feminine

Este: close to the speaker / **Ese:** close to the listener

Aquel: away from both listener and speaker

📌 **NOTE:** we have to make sure gender and number agree with the objects.

EXAMPLES:

- *Necesito **este** libro.* I need this book.

- *Necesito **esta** pluma.* I need this pen.
- *Quiero **ese** ordenador.* I want that computer.
- *Ana prefiere **esas** sandalias.* Anne prefers those sandals.
- ***Aquellas** plantas necesitan agua.* Those plants over there need water.

✎ **NOTE:** **esto**, this (one); **eso**, that (one), are the subject of the sentence.

- *Esto es bueno.* This (one) is good.
- *Eso no es importante.* That (one) is not important.

Possessive adjectives and pronouns (Adjetivos y pronombres posesivos)

<i>Mi (s):</i> my	<i>Mía/o (s):</i> mine
<i>Tu (s):</i> your	<i>Tuya/o (s):</i> yours
<i>Su (s):</i> his/her	<i>Suya/o (s):</i> his/her/yours (you, formal)
<i>Nuestro/a (s):</i> our	<i>Nuestro/a (s):</i> ours
<i>Vuestro/a (s):</i> your	<i>Vuestro/a (s):</i> yours
<i>Su (s):</i> their	<i>Suya/o:</i> theirs

(S): add “s” to form the plural

EXAMPLES:

- *Mi libro: **El** libro es mío.* My book. The book is mine.

- *Mi casa: **La** casa es mía.* My house. The house is mine.
- *Mis libros: **Los** libros son míos.* My books. The books are mine.
- *Mis mesas: **Las** mesas son mías.* My tables. The tables are mine.
- *Tu libro: **El** libro es tuyo.* Your book. The book is yours.
- *Tu mesa: **La** mesa es tuya.* Your table. The table is yours.
- *Tus libros: **Los** libros son tuyos.* Your books. The books are yours.
- *Tus mesas: **Las** mesas son tuyas.* Your tables. The tables are yours.
- *Su libro: **El** libro es suyo.* His/her/your (formal) book. The book is his/hers/yours (formal).
- *Nuestras aulas. **Las** aulas son nuestras.* Our classrooms. The classrooms are ours.

Verbs: Present tense regular (Verbos regulares, Presente)

-ar / -er / -ir conjugations: infinitives in English start with **to**: to help, to drink, to live, but in Spanish there are three infinitive endings: **-ar, -er, -ir**. They must be learnt by rote, parrot-like. There are three main verb endings: **-ar / -er / -ir**. Unlike English, the verb endings change depending on the subject and the verb. You normally don't need to use the pronoun since the verb ending tells you who does what. Natives use pronouns for emphasis.

Personal pronouns	-ar Cantar	-er Comer	-ir Vivir
Yo	Cant- o	Com- o	Viv- o
Tú	Cant- as	Com- es	Viv- es
Él, ella, usted	Cant- a	Com- e	Viv- e
Nosotros/as	Cant- amos	Com- emos	Viv- imos
Vosotros/as	Cant- áis	Com- éis	Viv- ís
Ellos/ellas/ustedes	Cant- an	Com- en	Viv- en

► **Repeat:** native speakers seldom use personal pronouns, except for emphasis: Canto en la ducha instead of yo canto en la ducha, as the ending **-o** means *yo*. Thus it is essential to memorize the tenses without the pronouns.

- *Cant**o** en la ducha.* I sing in the shower.
- *Com**emos** en un restaurante.* We eat at a restaurant.
- *Viv**e** en Hong Kong.* She/he lives in Hong Kong.

Usted and Tú

Usted is used when addressing someone older, or as a courtesy, when you meet someone for the first time, a stranger, at work, or someone of importance, addressing people by their surname: *Sr./ Sra. Martinez, Srta. Martinez* (unmarried). Unlike **tú** it's conjugated in the third person just like he, she: *él/ella*.

- *Sr. Ramirez, ¿Puedo hablar con usted?* Mr. Martinez, may I speak with you?

- *Pedro, ¿puedo hablar contigo?* Peter, may I talk to you?

You formal, informal, singular and plural: **Tú, usted, vosotros, ustedes / vos** (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica you is used for singular only. And stress on last syllable: *vos hablás, vos decís*).

► **TÚ: YOU** 2nd person singular conjugation.

Tú is used informally among friends, and people your own age. When you address someone by first name.

- *Juan, ¿vienes al cine con nosotros?* John, will you come to the movies with us?
- *Sr. López, ¿viene usted al cine con nosotros?* Mr. Lopez, will you come to the movies with us?

Important regular verbs