

SPANISH PRONUNCIATION

Is Easier Than You Think

Spanish pronunciation is consistent and predictable. Learn the rules, and you can pronounce any word!

1 IF YOU SEE AN ACCENT MARK, FOLLOW IT.

When a Spanish word has a written accent mark over a vowel, that syllable receives the stress.

habló (ah-BLOH)
América (ah-MEH-ree-kah)
dólar (DOH-lahr)

2 WORDS ENDING IN A VOWEL, N, OR S

If a word has no written accent and ends in a vowel, **n**, or **s**, stress the next-to-last syllable.

iglesia (ee-GLEH-syah)
botella (boh-TEH-yah)
independencia (een-deh-pehn-DEN-syah)
hablas (AH-blahs)

3 MOST OTHER CONSONANT ENDINGS

If a word has no written accent and ends in a consonant other than **n** or **s**, stress the last syllable.

hablar (ah-BLAR)
reloj (reh-LOH)
juventud (hoo-behn-TOOD)

Three simple rules. No exceptions. Look at a word. Apply the rule. Say it with confidence!

WHY DO SOME SHORT WORDS HAVE ACCENTS?

Sometimes an accent mark doesn't change the pronunciation. It simply distinguishes words with different meanings.

él	=	he	👤
el	=	the	📖
tú	=	you	👤
tu	=	your	📖
sí	=	yes	✅
si	=	if	❓

Question words also carry accents when used as questions.

¿Cuántos libros tienes?
How many books do you have?

qué, quién, cuándo, dónde, cómo, por qué, etc.

★ ONE VERY GOOD HABIT

Pay attention to accent marks from the beginning. Pronounce words aloud and stress the correct syllable. Soon it will become automatic—and you'll read and say any Spanish word with confidence!

Spanish Pronunciation Is Easier Than You Think

One of the nicest things about learning Spanish is that pronunciation is remarkably consistent. English learners have to contend with such mysteries as *daughter*, *laughter*, *through*, and *thorough*. Spanish is far more cooperative.

Once you know how Spanish words are stressed, you can look at an unfamiliar word and usually know immediately which syllable receives the emphasis.

Rule 1: If You See an Accent Mark, Follow It

When a Spanish word has a written accent mark over a vowel, that syllable receives the stress.

habló — ah-BLOH^[SEP]América — ah-MEH-ree-kah^[SEP]dólar — DOH-lahr

The accent mark is part of the word's spelling. Don't leave it off.

In a sense, the written accent is Spanish saying, “**The normal rule doesn't apply here, so stress this syllable instead.**”

Rule 2: Words Ending in a Vowel, N, or S

If a word has **no written accent** and ends in a vowel, **n**, or **s**, stress the **next-to-last syllable**.

iglesia — ee-GLEH-syah^[SEP] **botella** — boh-TEH-yah^[SEP] **independencia** — een-deh-pehn-DEN-syah^[SEP] **hablas** — AH-blahs

This rule covers an enormous number of everyday Spanish words.

Rule 3: Most Other Consonant Endings

If a word has **no written accent** and ends in a consonant other than **n** or **s**, stress the **last syllable**.

hablar — ah-BLAR^[SEP] **reloj** — reh-LOH^[SEP] **juventud** — hoo-behn-TOOD

That's it. For determining which syllable gets the stress, those three rules will take you a very long way.

Then Why Do Some Short Words Have Accents?

Sometimes an accent mark doesn't change the normal pronunciation at all. Instead, it distinguishes two words that are spelled alike but have different meanings.

For example:

él = he^[SEP] **el** = the

tú = you^[SEP] **tu** = your

sí = yes^[SEP] **si** = if

These are called **diacritical accents**. You don't have to remember the grammatical name, but you do need to remember the accent.

Question words also normally carry accents when they are being used as questions:

¿Cuántos libros tienes?^[SEP] *How many books do you have?*

Other common examples include **qué**, **quién**, **cuándo**, **dónde**, **cómo** and **por qué**.

One Very Good Habit

When you're beginning Spanish, don't treat accent marks as decoration. Pay attention to them from the start. Pronounce words aloud and deliberately stress the correct syllable.

Once these basic stress rules become automatic, one of the biggest hurdles in learning a foreign language largely disappears. Instead of guessing how a new Spanish word should sound, you can usually **read it and say it with confidence**.

And that's considerably more than English ever promised anyone who tried to explain why *daughter* and *laughter* don't rhyme.