

The Spanish Kangaroo

Lesson one




Café de Colombia (Colombian coffee), photo by Louise Correcha

Lesson one contents	Learning goal
1. Learning Spanish – practice makes perfect!	✓ Boost your Spanish skills with 10–15 minutes daily practice.
2. The Spanish alphabet – pronunciation	✓ Set strong foundations for your Spanish pronunciation now.
3. Five Spanish words you already know	✓ Boost your confidence and vocabulary by learning the Spanish pronunciation of five familiar words.

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Abbreviations and symbols used in the course:

Inf.	→	Informal
Form.	→	Formal
Coll.	→	Colloquial
Sing.	→	Singular
Pl.	→	Plural
♂	→	Masculine
♀	→	Feminine
↔	→	Equivalent
	→	Audio

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Welcome to *The Spanish Kangaroo*!

In this first lesson, you will learn some tips for how to study Spanish a little bit each day. You will also study the Spanish alphabet and how to pronounce the Spanish letters. Finally, you will learn how to pronounce five Spanish words that you already know (they are just like words in English, just pronounced differently!).

A note on how our course works

You might notice interesting structural differences between English and Spanish as you read this lesson. Some of the exercises might be quite challenging, too. This is intentional, and designed to help you improve more quickly. *The Spanish Kangaroo* is different to other courses, because it is not written in a way that matches particular language “levels”. We believe that this approach is old-fashioned and not as effective.

We wrote this course to suit a variety of language levels. We do not believe that beginner language learners can *only* be exposed to very simple structures. Similarly, we believe that advanced learners often benefit greatly from refreshing concepts that in traditional courses are often taught at beginner level and then forgotten (we have known students who have advanced Spanish grammar and vocabulary, for example, but really poor pronunciation that makes them impossible to understand outside the classroom).

The lessons have exercises throughout to help you retain the new language. There is no separate answer section – simply look back at the lesson content to check your answers as you go. A symbol will alert you to the accompanying audio. If you can, it’s a good idea to print this lesson – research has shown that we tend to learn complex information more easily when we read it from a printed page rather than a screen.

So, are you ready? Let’s go!

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1. Learning Spanish – practice makes perfect!

Learning goal

- ✓ Boost your Spanish skills with 10–15 minutes daily practice.

As they say, **practice makes perfect!** Our first suggestion is to commit yourself to listening to, speaking, writing, or reading in Spanish for **10–15 minutes every day**. Use the material in this course but also explore your local library, communities, or the internet to find other resources to practise your Spanish. The more you practise, the more you'll see, hear, and learn!

Making Spanish a daily habit will mean that your brain will regularly practise your skills, making learning easier. After all, what we don't practice, we forget. The more effort you put into learning Spanish, the more quickly you progress.

Suggestions for daily practice

So, what can you do for 10–15 minutes each day? You can:

- read this lesson again and/or listen to the audio file.
- try reading an article – or even just a couple of sentences – from a Spanish newspaper online (such as www.abc.es or www.eltiempo.com), keeping a dictionary or google nearby to help you search for unfamiliar words.
- sit down for 10 minutes in front of the news in Spanish on TV (SBS in Australia – www.sbs.com.au – broadcasts news from both Spain and Chile). Try to pick out words to write down and check in a dictionary.
- watch a Spanish movie (on the TV, at the cinema, or online) and try to pick out words to write down and check in a dictionary.
- listen to a Spanish song (see “Free Spanish songs” at www.redenglish.com.au for the lyrics and translations of 12 great songs in Spanish to get you started!).

There are many more ideas – it's really up to you!

Don't worry at all if you don't understand at first – even picking up one new word a day is progress. Also, don't tell yourself that you need a certain level before you can read a newspaper or listen to a song – that's just not true! The earlier you jump in, the better. Just immerse yourself in Spanish for at least these 10–15 minutes each day, and enjoy yourself! Comprehension *will* come.

Start making Spanish a daily habit from today!

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2. The Spanish alphabet – pronunciation

Learning goal

- ✓ Set strong foundations for your Spanish pronunciation now.

The pronunciation of the Spanish letters is quite straightforward. You will see that most of the sounds are quite similar to English sounds, but with the advantage that Spanish letters are always pronounced in the same way (unlike in English). [So, once you know the pronunciation of the individual letters, you can pronounce new words accurately.](#)



2.1 The Spanish vowels are short

The key thing to remember about Spanish vowels is that they have just [one pronunciation – short](#).

All you have to do is learn how to pronounce each of the five vowels, and then [pronounce them the same no matter where they come in a word](#) (often a tricky habit for English speakers in particular to break, so we advise doing the work to understand and try to get this important point right now).



2.2 Examples of vowel pronunciation

Letter	Explanation	Example Spanish words
A	Sounds like the ‘u’ in ‘umbrella’.	amar (to love) amarillo (yellow)
E	Short e, like in ‘egg’.	cerveza (beer) ego (ego)
I	Short i, like in ‘in’.	iris (iris) intenso (intense)
O	Short o, like in ‘on’ or ‘orange’.	olor (odour/smell) hola (hi/hello)
U	Sounds like the ‘oo’ in ‘book’.	uno (one) usual (usual)

2.3 Consonants – similar to English

The pronunciation of Spanish consonants is very similar to English, as you’ll see in the table below.

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2.4 Examples of consonant pronunciation

Letter	Explanation	Example Spanish word
B	The same as in English.	bacteria bote (boat) bus
C	When 'c' comes before a, o, u or a consonant, it is pronounced like 'k'. When 'c' comes before e or i , it is pronounced like 's'.* (Bonus – the above rules are <u>exactly</u> the same as when we pronounce an English 'c' like 'k' or 's'!) * Note that in some areas of Spain, the letter 'c' could be pronounced so that it sounds like English 'th' - for example: 'circo' sounds like 'thirko'.	caro (expensive) Corea (Korea) Cuba creativo (creative) cereal cinema
Ch	The same as in English.	Chile chocolate
D	The same as in English.	día (day) doctor
F	The same as in English.	fauna futuro (future)
G	When 'g' comes before a, o, u , or a consonant, it is pronounced like the 'g' in 'gate' or 'gorilla' (just like the rules in English). It is pronounced like h when it comes before e or i (the equivalent of when you would pronounce 'g' like a 'j' in English – e.g. genetic as opposed to gorilla).	gorila (gorilla) genética (genetic)
H	The letter 'h' in Spanish is silent.	Hindú héroe (hero) hospital
J	Sounds like an English 'h'. Note that in many parts of Spain, however, it sounds a bit more guttural, like the 'ch' in Scottish 'loch'.	jamón (ham) Jesús julio (July)
K	The same as in English.	kilómetro (kilometre) kilo
L	The same as in English.	litro (litre) león (lion)
LL	Sounds like the English 'y' (note that this can vary across different Spanish-speaking countries, maybe sounding like an English 'j', for instance).	llano (flat) lluvia (rain)

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M	The same as in English.	Malasia (Malaysia) mineral
N	The same as in English.	neutral normal
Ñ	Sounds like the 'n' in 'onion'.	uña (fingernail)
P	Sounds like the English 'p', but is slightly softer (less aspirated, meaning less of an air 'explosion' from the lips).	perfume piano popular
Q	Sounds like the English 'k'. The letter 'q' is usually followed in Spanish by the letter 'u', but the 'u' is <u>not</u> pronounced. Therefore 'queso' sounds like 'kesso', not 'kwesso'.	queso (cheese) quiero (I want)
R	A rolled or trilled 'r', which doesn't exist in English. It is slightly stronger when the 'r' is at the start of a word.	racional (rational) respeto (respect) Carlos (Charles)
RR	There is no similar sound in English. It's a stronger, longer Spanish 'r'.	carro (car) zorro (fox)
S	The same as in English.	situación (situation) Serbia
T	The same as in English.	tabú (taboo) tren (train)
V	Sounds like English 'b', but not pronounced too strongly.	video Venecia (Venice)
X	Pronunciation varies. Usually sounds like the English pronunciation ("ks") in the middle of a word. Can sound more like an "s" sound at the start of the word. It can also sound like an English "sh" in some countries. In some cases, "x" is pronounced like a Spanish "j" (for example, in "México", which can sound like "Méjico").	exacto boxeo (boxing) existencia xenofobia México
Y	The same as in English (note that this can vary across different Spanish-speaking countries, maybe sounding like an English 'j', for instance).	Yen yoga
Z	Sounds like English 's'. Note that many native speakers from Spain would pronounce the letter 'z' so that that it sounds like English 'th' - for example, 'zodiaco' would sound like 'thodiaco'.	zapato (shoe) zodiaco (zodiac)

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3. Five Spanish words you already know

Learning goal

- ✓ Boost your confidence and vocabulary by learning the Spanish pronunciation of five familiar words.

Given their shared origin, there are many Spanish and English words that are virtually the same. [Just remember that the pronunciation will be a bit different.](#) Here are five Spanish words that as an English speaker, you will recognise. The Spanish word comes first in each of the pairs below. There are also example sentences so that you can start building your Spanish vocabulary as well as your knowledge of structures that you could start to try to apply in different contexts.

[Pay attention to the difference between the English and Spanish pronunciation!](#)

- Animal – Animal**
El koala es un animal Australiano.
The koala is an Australian animal.
- Bacteria – Bacteria**
Hay bacterias de color azul, verde y rojo.
There are bacteria of blue, green and red colour.
- Cable – Cable**
El cable del computador es blanco.
The computer cable is white.
- Chocolate – Chocolate**
Me gustan las tortas de chocolate.
I like chocolate cakes.
- Decisión – Decision**
La decisión será tomada el próximo martes.
The decision will be made next Tuesday.

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Exercise – Five Spanish words you already know

Complete the following sentences with the equivalents of the italicised English words.

Note that some words other than the five words you already know are included to help you start to develop your Spanish vocabulary further. You can find the answers by reading the examples on the previous page carefully!

1. El koala es un _____.
The koala is an *Australian animal*.
2. Hay _____ de color azul, verde y _____.
There are *bacteria* of blue, green and *red* colour.
3. El _____ es _____.
The *cable* is *white*.
4. _____ las tortas de chocolate.
I like chocolate cakes.
5. La _____ será tomada el próximo _____.
The *decision* will be made next *Tuesday*.

End of lesson one



¡Bien hecho!
¡Hasta la próxima semana!

(Well done!
Until next week!)