

Unit 1 (*Unidad 1*)

Alphabet, spelling and pronunciation (*Alfabeto, ortografía y pronunciación*)

The Royal Spanish Academy, founded in 1713, by the Duque d’Escalona, aims to preserve and improve the Spanish language. The Grammar (see bibliography) and Dictionary (*Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 2 vols., 22nd edn., Madrid: Espasa Calpe) published by it are the standards of the language, but this only applies to Spain. It can no longer legislate for the Spanish of the Americas which has a lexical richness and diversity which can be initially confusing and certainly challenging. But fear not, for compensation is at hand, the grammar of the various countries concerned is comfortably uniform and we must be grateful for this – and this includes the author. We must also be grateful to the Real Academia for helping to keep the language relatively stable.

- Level 1
- 1.1 Alphabet, spelling and pronunciation (*Alfabeto, ortografía y pronunciación*)
- 1.2 Stress (*El acento tónico*)

1.1 Alphabet, spelling and pronunciation

As with the grammar, Spanish pronunciation is happily uniform, with the consequence that once you have conquered the sounds, you are not enmeshed in the mire associated with, for example, the innumerable and irreducible irregularities of English pronunciation. Furthermore, the spelling system of the Spanish language is really quite easy compared to English. Aim for a perfect accent and real fluency. This will not only help you immeasurably in your communication with Spanish speakers but also allow you to appreciate more the written word, especially literature which is its highest expression.

Letters with pronunciation indicators (Letras con indicadores de pronunciación)
(See level 2, where all the comments below, notably on consonants, are considerably developed.)
la a (English *ah*), la b(e)(English *bay*), la b(e) grande (**M**), la c(e), ch(e), d(e) (English *th* as in *either, those*), e (like English *a* in *take*), (e)f(e), g(e) (when before *e* and *i*, as in English *horse* but more guttural; when before *a*, *o* and *u*, hard as in *gate* or *goat*), h (hache), i (like English *ee* as in *seek*), j (jota) (as in English *horse* but more guttural), k(a), (e)l(e), (e)ll(e), (e)m(e), (e)n(e), (e)ñ(e), o (like English *o* as in *hope*), p(e), q (cu), r (e)r(e), (e)rr(e) doble, doble r (e)rr(e) (**M**), (e)s(e), t(e), u (like English *oo* as in *food*), (u)v(e), la b(e) chica (**M**), w (uve doble), doble uve (**M**), x (equis) (*qui* sounds like the English *ki*), y (i griega) (when a vowel is equivalent to *î*), z (zeta/zeda)

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- NB
- i All letters are feminine
 - ii *Mayúscula* f. capital letter
 - iii *Minúscula* f. small letter
 - iv *La hache* = *h*
 - v As isolated letters, *r* and *rr* are the same sound, which explains the use of *doble* for *rr*
 - vi Before *e* and *i* the Iberian *c* sounds like the English *th* as in *thick*, while before *a*, *o* and *u* it sounds like the English *c* in *cut*. In all Spanish America and much of southern Spain, the *c* before *i* and *e* sounds like the English *ss*.
 - vii The Iberian *z* sounds like the English *th* as in *thick* but in all Spanish America and much of Southern Spain it sounds like the English *ss*
 - viii The *x* in México is pronounced as a *jota*
 - ix The *n* with the tilde is nearly always referred to as *la ñe*
 - x Great importance is attached to the vowels in Spanish. Their sounds are full and clear, while those of the consonants can be obscure and even be suppressed.

1.2 Stress

In Spanish, as in English, in words of two or more syllables, one is pronounced more forcibly than the others. This forcible utterance is called stress. In writing, it appears thus: *á, é, í, ó, ú*. As it would be laborious, unnecessary and even confusing to place an accent-mark over every written word, words are grouped into classes. Words coming into these classes do not need the written accent, and only the exceptions require it. Here are some of the basic rules governing the use of stress and the written accent. The rest will appear in level 2.

- i The greater part of words ending in a vowel are stressed (but not in writing) on the penultimate (next to last) syllable: *pero* (but), *perro* (dog), *lleva* (he/she takes), *carro* (M)/*coche* (car), *casa* (house), *bomba* (bomb/pump), *libro* (book)
- ii The greater part of words ending in *n* or *s* are stressed (but not in writing) on the penultimate: *to-man* (they take, you take), *ma-rgen* (margin/edge), *ima-gen* (image/picture), *vo-lumen*, *ma-rtes* (Tuesday), *cri-sis*
- iii The greater part of words ending in other consonants than *n* or *s* (including all infinitives) are stressed (but not in writing) on the last syllable: *es-pe-rar* (to hope / wait for), *de-cir* (to say), *al-fi-ler* (pin), *pe-ral* (pear tree), *pe-re-jil* (parsley, and extraordinarily the name of a rock, a Spanish possession a few hundred yards off the Moroccan coast), *al-tivez* (haughtiness), *ma-jestad* (majesty), *ma-gnitud*
- iv All exceptions to these rules require a written accent over the accented syllable: *ca-fé* (coffee/café), *pe-dís* (you ask), *re-vés* (setback), *en-con-tró* (she/he met/found), *cés-ped* (lawn), *ma-r-mol* (marble), *án-gel*, *di-fi-cil* (difficult), *fá-cil* (easy)
- v All words stressed on a syllable previous to the penultimate require an accent mark: *mú-sico* (musician), *hé-roe* (hero), *ré-gimen* (regime), *lí-ne-a* (line), *dá-ba-mos* (we used to give), *cre-pú-scu-lo* (twilight), *at-mós-fe-ra*, *gra-má-ti-ca* (grammar)
- vi There is a clear choice on two words: *oceano* / *océano*, *periodo* / *período*

Exercises Level 1
i Pronunciation drill (*ejercicio de pronunciación*)

Read aloud all the letters of the following sentences which are very common proverbs or expressions. It is best if you can find a Spanish speaker or a teacher of Spanish to

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help you with these sounds, at least initially. The proverbs are uncomplicated so you can easily work out their meaning and find a proper English equivalent from the rough translation:

- Empezar la casa por el tejado* – To begin (building) the house with the roof
Quien mala cama hace, en ella yace – He who makes a bad bed lies on it
Poderoso caballero es Don Dinero – Powerful gentleman is Mr. Cash
Más vale pájaro en mano que cien volando – Better a bird in your hand than a hundred flying
nadar como un pez – to swim like a fish
dormir como un tronco – to sleep like a log

ii Put in, where necessary, all the accents in the following passage. Also answer the questions on the passage:

Viajando a traves de la ciudad de Mexico
La ciudad de Mexico es una de las mas grandes del mundo, y como en toda gran ciudad, el transporte es muy diverso, y ofrece muchas opciones para viajar de un lugar a otro. Se puede viajar en automovil, taxi, colectivo, camion, bicicleta, y trolebus. La mayoria de la poblacion hace uso del transporte publico. Los vehiculos mas utilizados de manera privada son los automoviles y los taxis.

- a Is there a written accent if you put *opciones* in the singular?
b Is there a written accent on *ciudad* if you put it in the plural?
c Is there a written accent on *lugar* (correctly spelt here?), *camion* (correctly spelt here?), *trolebus* (correctly spelt here?) and *poblacion* (correctly spelt here?) if you put them in the plural?



Level 2

- 2.1 Diphthongs and triphthongs (*Diptongos y triptongos*)
2.2 Consonants (*Consonantes*)
2.3 Elision in speech (*Elisión/Sinalefa*)
2.4 Rules governing the use of written accents (*Reglas que determinan los acentos escritos*)
2.5 Spelling traps (*Trampas de ortografía*)
2.6 Orthographical changes with *y* and *o* (*Cambios ortográficos con y y o*)

2.1 Diphthongs and triphthongs

- (Spelling these two words is just one example of how much easier Spanish spelling is than its English counterpart.)
- We should pay particular attention to this subject, as its understanding is necessary for a grasp of the laws of the written accent.
- i Spanish diphthongs and triphthongs are indivisible combinations of vowels pronounced as single syllables, laying the stress on the more sonorous syllables, and passing rapidly over the weaker or less sonorous. If both vowels are weak (*i* and *u*), the stress falls on the last of the two, as: *ruido* (noise), *viuda* (widow)
- ii The gradual scale of the sonority or strength of the vowels is as follows: *a, o, e, i, u*, *A, o, e* are called strong vowels, while *i* and *u* are weak vowels

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- iii Diphthongs cannot be formed from the strong vowels alone, but are a combination of a strong and weak vowel, or of *i* and *u* combined. When two strong vowels combine, each is considered as a separate vowel: *real* (real/royal), *aéreo*, *héroe*, *oasis*
- iv Triphthongs are composed of one strong vowel between two weak ones
- v In brief, a Spanish diphthong consists of a vowel preceded or followed by either *i* or *u*. In a triphthong, one of the latter two is on each side of the strong vowel
- vi Examples of diphthongs – **ia**: *Asia*, *Santiago*; **ai**: *aire*, *caigo* (I fall), *fraile* (monk); **ie**: *miente* ((s)he lies), *piedra* (stone), *tiempo*; **ei**: *reina* (queen), *veinte*, *pleito* (lawsuit), *treinta*; **io**: *maniobra* (maneuver), *patriota*, *piocha* (pickaxe), *violento*; **oi**: *oigo* (I hear), *boina* (beret); **ua**: *cuanto*, *guante* (glove), *fragua* (forge); **au**: *pausa*, *cautela* (prudence); **ue**: *fuego* (fire), *punte* (bridge), *muestra* (sample); **eu**: *feudo* (fiefdom), *Europa*, *neutro*; **uo**: *cuota* (quota), *continuo*; **iu**: *triumfo* (triumph), *oriundo* (originating); **ui**: *buitre* (vulture), *ruido* (noise), *fuiste* (you were/went), *Luisa*
- vii Examples of triphthongs – **iai**: *cambiais* (you change), *variáis* (you vary); **iei**: *apreciéis* (that you should appreciate), *irradiéis* (that you should radiate), *contagiéis* (that you should infect); **uai**: *menguáis* (you diminish), *averiguáis* (you check out); **uei**: *amortigüéis* (that you should deaden), *santigüéis* (that you should bless)
- viii Since a diphthong or triphthong is, in pronunciation, treated as a single syllable, it requires a written accent as with a single vowel.
- ix In diphthongs containing a strong vowel, and in triphthongs, the accent mark belongs over the strong vowel; when placed over the weak one, the diphthong or triphthong disappears to become two syllables. Thus in *causa* and *Cáucasa*, *au* is a diphthong, but not in *saúco* (willow tree); *iai* in *variáis* is a triphthong but not in *temáis*. As we shall see later, in Spanish America, e.g. Mexico, triphthongs hardly exist, since the second person plural (*vosotros/os/vosotras/as*) is replaced by *Uds*. A lot easier, and certainly for Mexicans who find triphthongs quaint, rebarbative or just plain difficult to pronounce, with the result that the present author can become a figure of fun.
- x If a syllable requiring a written accent contains a diphthong or a triphthong, the accent must be placed over the strong vowel; *huésped* (guest), *después*, *estudiais*, *órganos* (listen to us). In the case of a diphthong, if both vowels are weak, the spoken accent falls on the second vowel. No written accent occurs here: *círculo*, *ruido*, *he huido* (I have fled).
- xi Whenever the weak vowel of a triphthong or diphthong is stressed, or the first vowel when both are weak, the written accent is placed over the said vowel, to show that there is no diphthong or triphthong: *ataúd* (casket, coffin), *país* (country), *increíble*, *raíz* (root), *poesía*, *día*, *leía* ((s)he was reading), *baúl* (trunk), *paraíso* (paradise)
- xii A mute *h* between two vowels does not prevent a diphthong. The written accent is accordingly placed: *barahúnda* (ruckus, bedlam), *ahínco* (earnestness), *ahíto* (full, stuffed), *búho* (owl), *prohiben* (they forbid), *rehúso* (I refuse), *retahíla* (string, series), *vahído* (dizzy spell)

2.2 Consonants

- i *F*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n* and *p* have at all times the same value in Spanish as in English: *fama*, *kilo*, *comer*, *madre*, *entre*, *padre*

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- ii *B* and *v* have the same sound as in English, depending on where they are in the word. When they are in an initial position, the *b* of *burro* is the same as the *b* of *but*, and the same goes for the *v* in *vaca*. However, when *b* and *v* are within a word and especially between two vowels, the lips are pressed lightly together, creating a kind of lisp: *haber*, *saber*, *lavar*, *cavar* (to dig)
- iii *C* has two sounds. Before *e* and *i*, it is pronounced like *th* in *thin*: *centro*, *encima*, *cielo*. In all other cases, it has the sound of *k*: *encanto* (charm), *cura* (priest), *cruz* (cross), *esclavo* (slave)
- iv However, in nearly all southern Spain and the whole of Spanish America, the pronunciation of *c* before *e* and *i*, as with *z* in all cases, is that of *c* as in *city* or *center*: *Centro* = *sentro*, *encima* = *ensima*, *cielo* = *sielo*, *caza* = *casa* (room for confusion here!), *zapato* = *sapato*, *durazno* = *durasno* (**M**). For Spanish American speakers of Spanish, the *th* sound of *c* and *z* is generally regarded as pedantic, affected and even archaic, harking back to colonial times
- v *Ch* is pronounced like *ch* in **church**: *muchacha*, *chica*, *chava* (**M**) (girl), *chévere* (**M**) (fantastic)
- vi *D* never has the decided English sound of *d*, but has a tinge of the sound of *th* in *then*: *ciudad*, *dar*, *desde*, *doler*, *hablado*, *pegado*. In many parts of Spain, when *d* occurs between two vowels, and especially in past participles of the *-ado* type, the *d* can disappear completely in the spoken language. Thus, *hablado* (spoken) ends up as *hablao*, *pasmado* (amazed) as *pasmao*, *pegado* (hit) as *pegao*. The practice is frowned upon by purists, and is not characteristic of Spanish America where, as we shall see in the section on verbs, the perfect tense *he hablado* (I have spoken) is largely replaced by the preterite *hablé* (I spoke). Mexicans, for instance, find it odd and even illiterate.
- vii *G* has two sounds. Before *e* and *i*, it has the sound of a strongly aspirated *h*. In all other cases it sounds like *g* in *go*: *gestión* (procedure), *gente*, *giro* (turn), *gimnasio*, *garage* (**M**) (second *g* as in American English), *gusto* (pleasure)
- viii In order to obtain the hard *g* of *gusto* before *e* and *i*, a *u* is inserted. In this case, the *u* is silent: *guiar* (to guide), *guisar* (to cook), *enseguida*, *pegue* (that he hits), *agregue* (that she should add). But if the *u* is retained as an independent sound, a diæresis is placed over it (i.e. *ü*) – *lingüista*, *agüero* (omen), *desagüe* (drain, wastepipe) – but here it has a swallowed sound as in *agua*
- ix *H* has a slight trace of aspiration before *ue*: *hueco* (hollow), *huevo* (egg)
- x *J* has in all cases the same sound as *g* has before *e* and *i*: *juicio* (judgment), *jerga* (slang), *jugar* (play), *enjambre* (swarm)
- xi *Ll had* until recently the sound of the letters *lli* as in the English *million*. But such a sound is considered pedantic by most Spanish speakers, and this includes all Spanish America, so that we end up with a double *y*, rather like the *y* in *your* but slightly elongated: *gallego* (Galician [in northern Spain]), *llamar*, *llorar*, *llover*, *pollo*
- xii *N* presents no problem for an English speaker
- xiii *Ñ* has the sound of the letters *ni*, as in *pinion*: *niño*, *señor*, *otoño*
- xiv *Q* occurs only before *ue* and *ui*, and sounds like *k*, the following *u* being always silent: *tanque* (**M** = gas tank in car), *quebrar* (to break), *parroquia* (parish)
- xv *R* has a roll, and a more marked roll (like a double *rr*) at the beginning of words: *regla*, *parar*, *mirar*, *enredar* (to confuse), *cortar*. If you have a Scottish accent, you will have no problem at all. When an initial *r* is preceded by an *s*, as in *los rayos* (rays) /

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- los rollos* (rolls), the *s* often disappears so that we end up with *lo- rayos/rollos*, and this is not only restricted to the untutored classes
- xvi *S* sounds like *ss* as in *hiss*. No real problem here, except for the immediately preceding comment
- xvii *T* is softer than the English *t*, and is pronounced with the tongue touching the palate more gently: *tratar* (to treat), *pato* (duck), *total*
- xviii *V*. See *b*
- xix *W*. An import found in, for example, *Wágn*er = *Vágn*er, *Wásh*ington = *Vásh*ington
- xx *X* requires considerable comment, notably for Mexico. In Spain, the sound is of *x* as in *axle*; *exacto*, *exigir* (to demand). However, when it precedes a *c* it frequently ends up as an *s*: *excelente* = *escelente*, *exceso* = *esceso*. Condemned by purists, it is in general practice, although formal speech would require *ex*celente. In Mexico, the *x* has three pronunciations. The first is as in Spain, i.e. between two vowels: *taxi*, *máximo*, *laxitud*. The second is like a *jota*, as in *México*, *Oaxaca* (city and state). The *jota* sound of the *x* overflows onto words like *xenofobia*. There is confusion whether the *x* of this word should be pronounced as an English *x* or a *jota*. One for the quiz program. Informed opinion is that this initial *x* should be pronounced as the English *x*. The third pronunciation is like an *s*. This pronunciation occurs not infrequently, especially with names of Aztec origin. Thus we have: *Xochitl*, *Xochimilco* (district in the south of Mexico City). Finally, the *x* of words like *excelente* and *explicar*, preceding a consonant, is like the English *x*, and not like an *s*, as in Spain.
- xxi *Y* has the same value as in English and, for *z*, see point iv above

2.3 Elision in speech

- i When a vowel at the end of one word immediately precedes a vowel at the beginning of the next word, the two vowels run together in speech. A mute *h* does not change this feature: *si_*es así, *cuesta_un* peso, *otro_año*, *su_hacienda*/hilo
- ii This also applies to three words: *Fue_ a_* Europa, *salió_ a_* España
- iii When the two vowels are the same, one is always lost in rapid speech: *la ayuda* = *l'ayuda*, *para agradecerle* = *par'agradecerle*. Note the very common, colloquial Mexican expression for **many**: *hasta pa'aventar pa'arriba* (*hasta para aventar para arriba*)

2.4 Rules governing the use of written accents

When one or more pronouns are added to any part of a verb so as to shift the accented syllable to the antepenultimate (two before the last one), or still farther from the end, the accent is marked: *para comérmelo* (for me to eat it all up), *para conseguírtelo* (to get it for you), *dándoselos* (giving them to her/him/them, you).

When two Spanish words are combined, each retains its original accent, whether written or not. This is especially common with adverbs: *cortésmente* (written accent on the first *e* and stress on the first two *e*'s), *naturalmente* (stress on second *a* and first *e* of *mente*), *correctamente* (stress on the first two *e*'s), *ferrocarril* (stress on *e* and *i*).

Where there are two monosyllables of identical form, the more emphatic one is distinguished by a written accent:

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<i>dé</i> , give (subjunctive of <i>dar</i>)	<i>de</i> , of, from	<i>té</i> , tea	<i>te</i> , you
<i>él</i> , he, him	<i>el</i> , the	<i>tú</i> , you	<i>tu</i> , your
<i>mí</i> , me	<i>mi</i> , my	<i>¡vé!</i> , go!	<i>ve</i> , sees (present of <i>ver</i>)
<i>más</i> , more	<i>mas</i> , but	(imperative of <i>ir</i>)	
<i>sé</i> , I know, be (imperative of <i>ser</i>)	<i>se</i> , one's self		
<i>sí</i> , yes, one's self	<i>si</i> , if		

Note also: *aun* (even), *aún* (still), and *solo* (alone), *sólo* (only)

Examples

Aun los más torpes lo entienden = Even the dumbest understand it
Aún no ha venido tu papá = Your father still hasn't come
Está solo/a = (S)he's alone
Tiene sólo cinco años = She's only five

To distinguish between the interrogative or exclamatory and the relative use of pronouns and adverbs, a written accent is placed on the first two. Frequently, Spanish speakers, even very literate ones, fail to observe this rule, so you could be in good company if you fail here too:

<i>¿cómo?</i>	how?	<i>como</i>	as, if	<i>¿cuál?</i>	which?	<i>cual</i>	which
<i>¿cuándo?</i>	when?	<i>cuando</i>	when	<i>¿cuánto?</i>	how much?	<i>cuanto</i>	as much
<i>¿dónde?</i>	where?	<i>donde</i>	where	<i>¿qué?</i>	what?	<i>que</i>	which, that
<i>¿quién?</i>	who?	<i>quien</i>	who, whom				
	whom?						

Examples

<i>¿Cómo puede hacerlo?</i>	Como no puede hacerlo ahora, será mejor esta tarde
<i>¿Cuándo vienes?</i>	Viene cuando puede
<i>¿Dónde está el chico?</i>	Sé donde está
<i>¿Quién lo ha hecho?</i>	Yo sé quien lo ha hecho
<i>¿Cuál de los dos viene?</i>	Yo sé cual de los dos viene
<i>¿Cuánto cuesta?</i>	Te doy todo cuanto quieras
<i>¿Qué has dicho / dijiste?</i>	Me dice que regresa mañana

A problem can arise, even for Spanish speakers, when the question is indirect, or a question is implied, as in:

Le pregunté cuándo volvería = I asked her/him when (s)he would come back
¿Por qué me preguntas dónde está la chava (M)? Why do you ask me where the girl is?

Notice also the upside-down question mark at the beginning of the sentence. The same happens with an exclamation mark/point: *¡Hóyle! (M)*, *¡Jolín!* (both = "Jeez! Heavens above!")

2.5 Spelling traps

Here are just a few Spanish words that have a near, and therefore misleading, spelling equivalent in English. There are many more. This small list serves to point out that you should be wary of skating over words without paying detailed attention to them:

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*a*tormentar, *c*acao, *c*entinela (sentry), *c*ómplice (accomplice), *c*onmemorar, *d*ignatario (dignitary), *e*jemplo, *é*xtasis, *f*emenismo, *f*eminino, *f*isonomía, *h*ipocresía, *i*ndependiente, *i*nmediato, *i*mmigrante, *i*mmunitario, *i*nventario, *l*iterario, *l*iteratura, *p*rofecía, *q*uimioterapia, *r*adiactividad, *r*esponsabilidad, *s*icomoro, *t*arifa, *t*enis, *v*ainilla

2.6 Orthographical changes with y and o

For the sake of avoiding the concurrence of two like sounds, *y* (and) is changed to *e* when the following word begins with *i* or *hi*. This also happens with *o* (or) which becomes *u* before initial *o* or *ho*.

Examples

<i>español e inglés</i>	Spanish and English
<i>padre e hijo</i>	father and son
<i>María e Isabel</i>	Mary and Elizabeth/Isabel
<i>plata u oro</i>	silver or gold
<i>vida u honor</i>	life or honor
<i>siete u ocho</i>	seven or eight

However, when a diphthong is involved, *y* does not change.

Examples

<i>madera y hierro</i>	wood and iron
<i>él y yo</i>	he and I/me
<i>limón y hielo</i>	lemon and ice

Note: There are almost no double consonants, except *ll* and *rr*.

Exercises Level 2

i Lee el siguiente párrafo en voz alta y en clase, e indica el uso de la sinalefa. Al escribir las palabras, pon un *–*, o sea subrayando el espacio entre las palabras apropiadas o dentro de una palabra:

A través de su historia, los Estados Unidos se han caracterizado como un gran crisol étnico. Esto quiere decir que, aunque la población está constituida de muchos grupos de personas de distinto origen, existe no obstante un pueblo norteamericano. Tradicionalmente, los inmigrantes se han asimilado a la cultura norteamericana después de una o dos generaciones. Debido a la insistencia de los padres, los hijos han hablado en inglés y, gradualmente, han adoptado las nuevas costumbres de la patria adoptiva.

ii Ejercicio de lectura. Lee las siguientes frases en voz alta y en clase con un acento o mexicano o español:

Hace un aire muy fuerte	Cierra la puerta	Veracruz es un puerto de mar
<i>It's windy</i>	<i>Close the door</i>	<i>Veracruz is a sea port</i>
El charro cruza el Río Bravo	¿Cuál es la causa del accidente?	Se oye un ruido en la recámara (M)

1 Alphabet, spelling and pronunciation

<i>The horseman crosses the Río Grande</i>	<i>What is the cause of the accident?</i>	<i>You can hear a noise in the bedroom</i>
Mi vecina es viuda desde hace dos años	Es necesario que cambiéis de coche (<i>this 2nd pl form not in M</i>)	No creo que apreciéis el valor de este libro (<i>this 2nd pl form not in M</i>)
<i>My neighbor has been a widow for two years</i>	<i>It is necessary you change cars</i>	<i>I don't think you appreciate the value of this book</i>
Es imposible poner una vaca en una baca (<i>confusion here?</i>)	El charro rasguea la guitarra	
<i>It's impossible to put a cow on a roof rack</i>	<i>The horseman strums the guitar</i>	

iii Intenta pronunciar estos trabalenguas (*tongue twisters*) que no tienen sentido:

Un tigre, dos tigres, tres tigres triscan trigo en un trigal
A tiger, two tigers, three tigers chew wheat in a wheat field

Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo en tres tristes trastos sentados en un trigal
Three sad tigers swallowed wheat on three sad pieces of trash sitting in a wheat field

Un tubo tiró un tubo y otro tubo lo detuvo. Hay tubos que tienen tubos pero este tubo no tuvo tubo
A tube threw a tube and another tube stopped it. There are tubes which have tubes but this tube did not have a tube

Aquí tienes otro trabalenguas que te permite practicar la **doble rr (M) / rr doble**. ¡Y tiene sentido!

Detrás de un carro corría un burro. (Puedes adivinar el sentido de esta frase)

iv Aquí tienes un pequeño trozo mexicano. Pon los acentos y la puntuación en su lugar correcto. Puntos, comas, y mayúsculas han sido insertados para ayudarte.

Cada vez que me visita mi cuate (*pal*), siempre me pregunta por que no tengo una buena chamba (*job*). Le pregunto Por que me preguntas siempre lo mismo. Me contesta Como tu cuate, puedo preguntarte cualquier cosa. Pero contesto a mi vez Quien te crees tu para preguntarme que chamba tengo. Bueno, si no quieres responderme, Donde trabajas y cual es tu trabajo. Me enoja (*annoys*) que insistas tanto. Yo se donde trabajo y como es y parale (*that's enough*). Cuando te vas

RB/JPL

Unit 2 (*Unidad 2*)

Definite and indefinite articles and gender of nouns (*Artículos definidos e indefinidos y género de sustantivos*)

- Level 1
- 1.1 The definite and indefinite articles (*Los artículos definidos e indefinidos*)
 - 1.2 General features of gender – masculine nouns (*Detalles generales de sustantivos masculinos*)
 - 1.3 General features of gender – feminine nouns (*Detalles generales de sustantivos femeninos*)
 - 1.4 Further features of gender (*Otros detalles de género*)
 - 1.5 Nouns of varying gender (*Nombres de género variable*)

1.1 The definite and indefinite articles

The articles in Spanish, as with all Romance languages, vary in form to indicate gender and number. In this unit we shall deal with gender. There are no available rules for determining the masculine and feminine genders of Spanish nouns. The gender of most Spanish nouns have, unfortunately, to be learnt, just as learners of English have to learn how to spell individual words. It is true that there is usually a reason for the gender assigned, but the origin is frequently obscure or untraceable. Nevertheless, there are some general considerations of great help to the learner. What is certain is that retaining the gender of nouns will help to prevent cerebral decay.

- i First we must look at how the definite and indefinite article are used before the noun:

	Masculine	Feminine
Definite article	<i>el</i> the	<i>la</i> the
Indefinite article	<i>un</i> a/an	<i>una</i> a/an

These articles are always placed before the noun:

<i>el hombre</i>	the man	<i>la mujer</i>	the woman
<i>un hombre</i>	a man	<i>una mujer</i>	a woman