

DAMANES.COM: VIDEO 01

When we travel to a foreign country, whether on business or on vacation, most of our interactions are **face-to-face conversations**: at the airport, at the hotel or ordering our lunch at the restaurant.

We may have studied a lot of grammar but if our pronunciation is unintelligible, all our efforts will have been in vain, because we have not successfully established any **real communication**.

This is why it is so important to learn pronunciation well from the beginning. If we learn to speak correctly, we can **connect with other people** more easily and really enjoy the experience of getting to know other places and other people.

In this first video we make a brief introduction to the most basic aspects of Spanish pronunciation: **the alphabet, vowel sounds and consonant sounds**.



THE BASICS OF SPANISH PRONUNCIATION

Well, hey there, welcome to this video.

Today we are talking about the basics of Spanish pronunciation.

This is just an introductory video, we will study the pronunciation of Spanish more thoroughly in future videos.

THE ALPHABET

The English alphabet has 26 letters and the Spanish one has 27.

Both alphabets are exactly the same, with the peculiarity that the Spanish one has one more letter: ñ.

We will go through the Spanish alphabet in another video. For now, let's talk about the vocalic sounds and the consonant sounds in Spanish.

VOCALIC SOUNDS:

In Spanish there are 5 vowels: a, e, i, o, u. Their sound is full, clear and short.

Each vowel has only one sound. Listen to how the vowels are pronounced and, if you want to, you can repeat them.

A: alma, casa, ama, Panamá, atar.

E: ese, mete, de, en, emprender.

I: ir, bicicleta, difícil, fin, insistir.

O: como, corro, sonido, moto, poner.

U: un, sueño, muro, luna, tumbar.

CONSONANT SOUNDS:

In Spanish there are **22 consonants**.

In some cases, the sound of a consonant changes depending on the letter that follows. These are the Spanish consonant sounds.

B and V

B and **V** have the same sound in Spanish.

They sound like the letter B in **BOAT**.

The sound of English V does not exist in Spanish.

Here we have some examples:

B: beber, bueno, Bilbao, cobrar.

V: vivir, vuelo, Valencia, elevar.

K, C and QU

We can find the sound K in:

- **The letter K itself** (not very common in Spanish).
- **The letter C, followed by the letters A, O and U; or by another consonant, like L or R (any consonant except H).**
- **The combination of Q and U followed by the letters E or I** (here, the letter U is silent but must be present).

Let's see some examples:

K: kilómetro, karate, kiwi.

C: Calcular, comida, cumpleaños.

Clavar, clon, crítica, crema.

QU: Queso, quitar.

C and Z

We can find the sound /θ/, like in THICK or THINK in the following cases:

- The letter **C** followed by the letters **E** or **I**.
- The letter **Z** followed by the letters **A**, **O** and **U**.

Let's see some examples:

C: Celebrar, celibato, parecer.

Circo, ciudad, publicidad.

Z: Zarza, zorro, zurrón.

Note:

C and Z are pronounced as the letter S in some parts of southern Spain and south America.

Some people say *Sebolla* instead of *Cebolla* or *Sapato* instead of *Zapato*.

This is called **SESEO** and does not belong to the neutral pronunciation of Spanish, so I encourage the use of the more academic pronunciation **Cebolla** and **Zapato**.

G

We can find the sound /g/ in these two cases:

- The letter **G** followed by the letters **A**, **O** and **U**.
- The letters **GU** followed by **E** or **I** (the letter **U** is silent here).

Let's see some examples:

Ganar, golosina, gustar.

Guepardo, Guerra, guitarra.

GÜE and GÜI

The dots that you can see on the letter U are called '*diéresis*'.

These dots are used when we have the combination of letters **GUE** or **GUI** and change the way that they sound.

In normal situations the letters GU followed by the vowels E or I have a silent U, like in **GUERRA** or **GUITARRA**. But, when we use the dieresis, the letter U is not silent anymore, we have to pronounce the sound of this U like in the following examples:

desagüe, bilingüe, halagüeño, cigüeña.

pingüino, lingüista, piragüista, agüita.

J

We can find the sound /J/ in these cases:

- **The letter J.**
- **The letter G followed by E or I.**

Here we have some examples:

J: Jaleo, jeringuilla, jilguero, jota, jumento.

G: General, Getafe, gitana, Gijón.

R

The sound R can be strong or soft.

They are very different and sometimes difficult for a native English speaker.

We can find the **STRONG R** sound when we have:

- **The letter R before any vowel at the beginning of the word.**
- **The letter R after the letters L, N and S.**
- **The double R between two vowels.**

Here we have some examples:

Ratón, religión, ribera, rodilla, rueda.

Alrededor, enredar, Israel.

Carro, perro, marrano.

We can find the **SOFT R** sound when we have:

- **One single letter R between two vowels.**
- **The letter R after some consonants like B, C, D, F, G, K, P, T.**
- **The letter R at the end of the word.**

Here we have some examples:

Pera, camarón, arena.

Brazo, cráneo, drenar, francés, gracias, Kremlin, protestar, truco.

Poder, collar, dulzor.

CH and LL

Some years ago, **CH** and **LL** were two more letters of the Spanish alphabet.

But in 1994 the Association of the Spanish Language Academies decided to exclude them from the alphabet.

They are considered **digraphs**, they keep their pronunciation but are not part of the alphabet anymore.

Their pronunciation is not difficult.

CH sounds like /CH/. We can find many words with this sound, like the following examples:

Apache, chimenea, chulería.

LL is very similar, but not exactly the same as the letter **Y**.

There are many words that contain this digraph, like:

Llave, llenar, cabello, lluvia.

Y

The sound of the Y in Spanish is very similar to the sound of the Y in English words like **BEYOND**.

It's a bit different from the sound of the LL, but many times the difference is very small and people tend to pronounce them the same.

Anyway, words like **yema, yegua** or **yate** have a little different sound than **llave, llenar** or **lluvia**.

Sometimes, using the letter Y or the LL can change the meaning of a word.

Arroyo is a noun (a small stream), while **Arrollo** is a verb (I run over, I knock down)

Ñ

This is the only letter that we have in the Spanish alphabet that doesn't exist in the English one. In fact, you don't even have it on the keyboards of your computers (you have to use some keyboard shortcuts like Alt+164 to be able to write one).

The wavy line that is drawn above the letter N to turn it into an Ñ is called “**virgulilla**” and is not used in any other letter.

Eñe could be a difficult sound to learn because there is not any English word with a similar sound, but there are ways to get it.

Some words like **onion** are pretty close, but it's not the same.

You can take some French words like **cognac**, **champagne** or **mignon** and pay attention to the sound of the letters **gn**. That's the sound that we are looking for. In fact, **Cognac**, in Spanish is **Coñac**.

If you practice starting with these French words, you will be able to say the name of my country: España!

There are many words with Ñ in the Spanish vocabulary, like:

Apañar, buñuelo, caña, dueño, campaña.

H

H is a very important letter in the Spanish alphabet, it's part of the digraph CH but you can also find it by itself in words like: **HORA, HUESO, HABANA.**

It's not only used at the beginning of the word, you can find it anywhere, like in **CACAHUETE** or **ALCAHUETA.**

As you can see, H is a silent letter, it has no sound but, if a word has an H in it, please, don't forget to write it down because it's a misspell that nobody likes to see.

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The rest of the consonant sounds in Spanish are easy to learn because they are not much different from the ones that you are used to hear in English:

/d/ dinosaurio, dinero, dentista.

/f/ fuego, fantasma, fiera.

/l/ lavadora, libro, lectura.

/m/ madre, miércoles, maravilloso.

/n/ nuez, Navidad, nervioso.

/p/ pánico, periódico, paella.

/s/ sencillo, siesta, sendero.

/t/ trabajar, tirano, tregua.

/w/ wolframio, whiskería, wagneriano.

/x/ axila, xilófono, boxeo.

And this is the end of this video.

Thank you for watching.

I'll see you in the next video.