



≡ *Fast Talk*
**Latin American
Spanish**

GUARANTEED TO GET YOU TALKING





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Before You Go

Although it is possible to get by in major Latin American cities without speaking Spanish, just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience – you could dance the night away at a salsa club, taste the best local dishes or find a gorgeous beach off the tourist trail.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

The sounds of Spanish can almost all be found in English, and if you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English you'll be understood. The stressed syllables are indicated with italics.

★ The few sounds that do differ from English include the strong and rolled **r**, and the harsh and throaty **kh** (as in the Scottish *loch*).

★ Also note that the Spanish **v** is soft, pronounced almost like a 'b' (with the lips pressed together), and that *ll* is generally pronounced as the 'y' in 'yes' (see also p65).

★ If you're familiar with the sound of European Spanish, you'll notice that Latin Americans don't 'lisp' – ie the European Spanish **th** is pronounced as **s** in Latin America.

MUST-KNOW GRAMMAR

The structure of Spanish holds no major surprises for English speakers since the two languages are quite closely related.

★ Spanish has a formal and informal word for 'you' (*Usted oo-ste* and *tú too* respectively). When talking to someone familiar or younger than you, use the informal *tu* form.

Phrases in this book use the form that is appropriate to the situation.

Where both forms can be used, they are indicated by **pl** and **inf** respectively.

Note that in some countries you may hear *vos* **vos** used instead of *tú*.

★ Spanish distinguishes between masculine and feminine forms of words, eg *bello/bella* **be·yo/be·ya** (beautiful), indicated in this book by **m** and **f**.

★ Verbs have a different ending for each person, like the English ‘I do’ vs ‘he/she does’. Travellers don’t need to worry too much about this though – if you use the dictionary form of a verb in all contexts, you’ll still be understood.

REGIONAL VARIATION

Influenced by indigenous languages, Latin American Spanish varies slightly from country to country, especially when it comes to vocabulary. In this book country-specific terms are indicated with abbreviations (see p95).

Fast Talk Spanish

Don’t worry if you’ve never learnt Spanish (*español* **es·pa·nyol**), or Castilian (*castellano* **kas·te·lya·no**) as it’s also called, before – it’s all about confidence. You don’t need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you’ll be amazed how many prompts you’ll get to help you build on those first words. You’ll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.

5.

Phrases to Learn Before You Go

1. Can you recommend private lodgings? ¿Puede recomendar una casa particular?

pwe-de re-ko-men-dar oo-na ka-sa par-tee-koo-lar

Staying with locals will give you a true Cuban experience and an opportunity to sample hearty home-cooked dishes.

2. I'd like the fixed-price menu, please. Quisiera el menú del día, por favor.

kee-sye-ra el me-noo del dee-a por fa-vor

Eateries in Guatemala and Mexico usually offer a fixed-price meal which may include up to four courses and is great value.

3. Where can I get a shared taxi/minibus? ¿Dónde se puede tomar un colectivo?

don-de se pwe-de to-mar oon ko-lek-tee-vo

Cheap transport options in Peru and other countries are shared taxis or minibuses – ask locally as there are no obvious stops.

4. Where can we go salsa/tango dancing? ¿Dónde podemos ir a bailar salsa/tango?

don-de po-de-mos eer a bai-lar sal-sa/tan-go

In dance-crazy Colombia and Argentina you won't be lacking in dance-hall options, but you may want a local recommendation.

5. How do you say ... in your language? ¿Cómo se dice ... en su lengua?

ko-mo se dee-se ... en su len-gwa

Among hundreds of indigenous languages in Latin America are Quechua, Aymara, Mayan languages, Náhuatl and Guaraní.

10.

Phrases to Sound Like a Local

What's up? ¿Qué más? (Col) ke mas

What's up? ¿Qué bolá asere? (Cub) ke bo·la a·se·re

Cool! ¡Chévere! (Col/Ven) che·ve·re

How cool! ¡Qué chido! (Mex) ke chee·do

No problem. No hay drama. no ai dra·ma

Get on with it! ¡Ponte las pilas! (Arg) pon·te las pee·las

It's messed up. Está en llama. (Cub) es·ta en ya·ma

Come off it! ¡No manches! (Mex) no man·ches

No way! ¡Ni hablar! (Arg) nee a·blar

Of course! ¡Claro! kla·ro