



Latin American Spanish

PHRASEBOOK & DICTIONARY

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Look out for the following icons throughout the book:



'Shortcut' Phrase

Easy to remember alternative to the full phrase



Q&A Pair

'Question-and-answer' pair – we suggest a response to the question asked



Look For

Phrases you may see on signs, menus etc



Listen For

Phrases you may hear from officials, locals etc

LANGUAGE TIP

Language Tip

An insight into the foreign language

CULTURE TIP

Culture Tip

An insight into the local culture

How to read the phrases:

- Coloured words and phrases throughout the book are phonetic guides to help you pronounce the foreign language.
- Lists of phrases with tinted background are options you can choose to complete the phrase above them.

These abbreviations will help you choose the right words and phrases in this book:

f feminine
inf informal
lit literal

m masculine
pl plural

pol polite
sg singular

See also p7 for the abbreviations of country-specific terms.

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Learn about Latin American Spanish, build your own sentences and pronounce words correctly.

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INTRO

Latin American Spanish

*español latinoamericano**es·pa·nyol la·tee·no·a·me·ree·ka·no*

Who speaks Latin American Spanish?

WIDELY UNDERSTOOD
BELIZE
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
SPAIN

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

MEXICO • GUATEMALA • HONDURAS
NICARAGUA • EL SALVADOR
COSTA RICA • PANAMA • CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
PUERTO RICO • VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA • ECUADOR • PERU
CHILE • BOLIVIA • PARAGUAY
URUGUAY • ARGENTINA

Why Bother

With an entire continent of gregarious Spanish-speaking locals to chat with, you don't want to be limited to 'gringo lingo' – and you'll find that revving up your *eres e·res* (r's) and grunting out your *jotas kho·tas* (j's) is fun.

Distinctive Sounds

The strong and rolled **r**, and **kh** (pronounced as in the Scottish *loch*).

Spanish in the World

Over the last 500 years, Spanish in Latin America has evolved differently to the

300 MILLIONspeak Latin American Spanish
as their first language**100** MILLIONspeak Latin American Spanish
as their second language

Spanish spoken in Europe. You'll recognise Spaniards by the 'lisp' in their speech – eg *cerveza* (beer) is *ser·ve·sa* across Latin America but *ther·ve·tha* in Spain.

Spanish in Latin America

There's no doubting the richness of the language that has lent itself to the 'magic realism' of world-famous authors such as Gabriel García Márquez. 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 below).

Language Family

Romance (developed from Vulgar Latin spoken by Romans during the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the 3rd to the 1st century BC). Close relatives include Portuguese, Italian, French and Romanian.

Must-Know Grammar

Spanish has a formal and informal word for 'you' (*Usted oo·ste* and *tú too* respectively). The verbs have a different ending for each person, like the English 'I do' vs 'he/she does'.

Abbreviations of country-specific terms used in this book

Arg	Argentina	Cub	Cuba	Par	Paraguay
Bol	Bolivia	Ecu	Ecuador	Per	Peru
CAM	Central America	Gua	Guatemala	Pue	Puerto Rico
Chi	Chile	Hon	Honduras	Sal	El Salvador
Cos	Costa Rica	Mex	Mexico	SAM	South America
Col	Colombia	Nic	Nicaragua	Uru	Uruguay
		Pan	Panama	Ven	Venezuela

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

ABOUT

LATIN AMERICAN SPANISH

Pronunciation

Latin American Spanish pronunciation differs from the Castilian Spanish spoken in Spain. The most obvious difference is the lack of the lisping 'th' sound which is found in Castilian Spanish. Pronunciation in Latin America also varies to an extent from country to country and from region to region (see p12). In this book we've used pronunciation guides which will allow you to be understood in all parts of Latin America. If you read them as if they were English, you should get your meaning across.

Vowel Sounds

Vowels are pronounced crisply. There are four vowel sounds that roughly correspond to diphthongs (vowel-sound combinations) in English.

SYMBOL	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	SPANISH EXAMPLE	TRANSLITERATION
a	father	agua	a·gwa
ai	aisle	bailar	bai·lar
ay	say	seis	says
e	red	bebé	be·be
ee	bee	día	dee·a
o	hot	ojo	o·kho
oo	moon	gusto	goo·sto
ow	cow	autobús	ow·to·boos
oy	boy	hoy	oy

Consonant Sounds

SYMBOL	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	SPANISH EXAMPLE	TRANSLITERATION
b	big	barco	bar·ko
ch	chili	chica	chee·ka
d	dog	dinero	dee·ne·ro
f	fun	fiesta	fye·sta
g	go	gato	ga·to
k	kick	cabeza, queso	ka·be·sa, ke·so
kh	as in the Scottish 'loch'	jardín, gente	khar·deen, khen·te
l	loud	lago	la·go
m	man	mañana	ma·nya·na
n	no	nuevo	nwe·vo
ny	canyon	señora	se·nyo·ra
p	pig	padre	pa·dre
r	run (strongly rolled, especially at the start of a word and as rr)	mariposa, ritmo, burro	ma·ree·po·sa, reet·mo, boo·ro
s	so	semana, zarzuela, cinco	se·ma·na, sar·swe·la, seen·ko
t	tin	tienda	tyen·da
v	very soft 'v' (between 'v' and 'b')	severo	se·ve·ro
w	win	guardia	gwar·dya
y	yes	viaje, llamada	vya·khe, ya·ma·da



Regional Variations

As mentioned previously, pronunciation varies across Latin America so you may expect to hear some of these variations as part of local accents:

The letters *ll* are pronounced as the 'y' in 'yes' in much of Latin America. Where this is the case, the **y** sound drops out altogether before the vowel sounds **e** and **ee**. Be alert, though: in Argentina and Uruguay you'll hear it pronounced as 'sh', in Colombia and Venezuela as the 'dg' in 'judge', and elsewhere you may hear it pronounced like the 'lli' in 'million' or the 's' in 'measure'. You'll hear the same range of sounds for the letter *y*.

In some parts of Latin America **s** is reduced to just a slight 'h' sound when at the end of a syllable or a word, so *tos tos* (cough) may sound like **to** followed by a barely audible 'h'.

Throughout Latin America there's confusion between the sounds **r** and **l** and you may hear one substituted for the other in a random way.

Word Stress

Latin American Spanish has stress. This means you emphasise one syllable in a word over another. Rule of thumb: when a word ends in *n*, *s* or a vowel, the stress falls on the second-last syllable. Otherwise, the last syllable is stressed. If you see an accent mark over a syllable, it cancels out these rules and you just stress that syllable instead. You needn't worry about these rules though, as the stressed syllables are always italicised in our pronunciation guides.

Reading & Writing

The relationship between Spanish sounds and their spelling is quite straightforward and consistent. The rules in the table opposite will help you read any written Spanish you may come across.

~ SPELLBOUND ~

c	before <i>e</i> or <i>i</i> pronounced as the 's' in 'so'; before <i>a</i> , <i>o</i> and <i>u</i> pronounced as the 'k' in 'kick'	c erveza, c ita c arro, c orto, c ubo	ser·ve·sa, see·ta <i>ka-ro, kor-to,</i> <i>koo-bo</i>
g	before <i>e</i> or <i>i</i> pronounced as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i> ; before <i>a</i> , <i>o</i> and <i>u</i> pronounced as the 'g' in 'go'	g ente, g itano g ato, g ordo, g uante	<i>khen-te,</i> <i>khee-ta-no</i> <i>ga-to, gor-do,</i> <i>gwan-te</i>
gue, gui, güi	as the 'g' in 'go' (the <i>u</i> is not pronounced unless there are two dots over the <i>u</i>)	g uerra, g uinda g üiski	<i>ge-ra,</i> <i>geen-da</i> <i>gwees-kee</i>
h	never pronounced	h aber	<i>a·ber</i>
j	as the 'ch' in the Scottish <i>loch</i>	j ardín	<i>khar-deen</i>
ll	generally as the 'y' in 'yes'	ll ave	<i>ya·ve</i>
ñ	as the 'ny' in 'canyon'	ni ño	<i>nee-nyo</i>
qu	as the 'k' in 'kick' (the <i>u</i> is not pronounced)	qu ince	<i>keen-se</i>
z	as the 's' in 'soup'	z orro	<i>so-ro</i>

~ SPANISH ALPHABET ~

A a	a	J j	<i>kho-ta</i>	R r	<i>e-re</i>
B b	<i>be lar-ga</i>	K k	<i>ka</i>	S s	<i>e-se</i>
C c	<i>se</i>	L l	<i>e-le</i>	T t	<i>te</i>
D d	<i>de</i>	M m	<i>e-me</i>	U u	<i>oo</i>
E e	<i>e</i>	N n	<i>e-ne</i>	V v	<i>be kor-ta</i>
F f	<i>e-fe</i>	Ñ ñ	<i>e-nye</i>	W w	<i>do-ble be</i>
G g	<i>khe</i>	O o	<i>o</i>	X x	<i>e-kees</i>
H h	<i>a-che</i>	P p	<i>pe</i>	Y y	<i>ee grye-ga</i>
I i	<i>ee la-tee-na</i>	Q q	<i>koo</i>	Z z	<i>se-ta</i>

ABOUT

LATIN AMERICAN SPANISH

Grammar

This chapter is designed to explain the main grammatical structures you need in order to make your own sentences. Look under each heading – listed in alphabetical order – for information on functions which these grammatical categories express in a sentence. For example, demonstratives are used for giving instructions, so you'll need them to tell the taxi driver where your hotel is, etc. A glossary of grammatical terms is included at the end of the chapter to help you.

Adjectives & Adverbs

Describing People/Things • Doing Things

Adjectives in Spanish have different endings depending on whether the noun they describe is masculine or feminine, and singular or plural (see **gender** and **plurals**).

~ ADJECTIVES ~

m sg	fantastic hotel	hotel fantástico ^o	<i>o·tel</i> fan·tas·tee·ko
f sg	fantastic meal	comida fantástica ^a	<i>ko·mee·da</i> fan·tas·tee·ka
m pl	fantastic books	libros fantásticos ^{os}	<i>lee·bros</i> fan·tas·tee·kos
f pl	fantastic cakes	tortas fantásticas ^{as}	<i>tor·tas</i> fan·tas·tee·kas

As the examples show, adjectives generally come after the noun in Spanish. However, adjectives of quantity (such as 'much', 'a lot', 'little/few'), and possessive adjectives ('my' and