

# Spanish Alphabet and Pronunciation

The Spanish language is quite easy to pronounce since most letters (or phonemes) only have one sound. The list below will serve as a guide for how to pronounce each letter alone and in combination with other letters.

a	ah	Close to "ah." This sound does not exist exactly in English, but a close approximation can be found by saying "my" omitting the last "ee" sound.
b	beh	After a pause or the letters l, m, or n, it sounds much like an English b. However, in all other cases, the lips do not even touch, producing a more whisper like sound almost close to the pronunciation of the letter v.
c	ceh	Sounds like k in most cases. Before e or i, it sounds like an s (or th (thick) in many parts of Spain).
ch	cheh	Sounds like the ch in "cheese" in English.
d	deh	After a pause or the letters l, m, or n, it sounds much like an English d except you should place your tongue to your upper teeth instead of the roof of your mouth. However, in all other cases, the tongue touches nothing, creating a whispery th sound like "the".
e	eh	Close to "eh." This sound does not exist exactly in English, but sounds much like the a in mate.
f	effe	Sounds like the f in English.
g	ge	After a pause, or the letters l, m, or n, it sounds much like an English g. Before e or i, it sounds like a harsh h (much like the Spanish j).  In general, this sound is silent. However, words with foreign spelling and no Spanish equivalent, the breathy aspiration is maintained: Hawái, Hollywood, etc.
h	hache	* Many newly introduced words are written in italics to highlight their foreign origin (hámster, hip-hop, etc.).
i	i	Close to "ee", but short. Before vowels a, e, and o, it forms a y sound.
j	jota	Close to the English h sound, but it varies from country to country. In some places, the sound is very harsh in the back of the throat (like you are trying to spit something up). It never sounds like the English j.
k	kah	Uncommon in Spanish, but sounds much like the English k with less breath.
l	ele	Close to the English l, but with the tongue raised closer to the roof of the mouth rather than dipped down
ll	elle	While this is not considered a letter anymore by the RAE, it has a distinct y sound (like in use) in most countries. In other countries it can sound like the g in genre.
m	eme	Just like the English m.
n	ene	Just like the English n.
ñ	eñe	A completely separate letter from the n, it sounds much like the ni combination in onion or the ny combination in canyon.
o	oh	Close to "oh" as in so, but shorter.
p	peh	Close to the English, but with less breath aspirated
q	koo	Always followed by the letter u, it makes the same sound as the letter k
r	ere	Similar to the d sound in caddy in most cases. When following a pause or the letters l, n, or s or in the combination rr, it has a trilled sound.  * To trill the rr, try to say brr, but instead of using your lips, use your tongue. When you exhale, the tongue should be raised and widened so it touches the upper teeth.
s	ese	Just like the English s.
t	te	Softer than the English t, the tongue touches the teeth and there is no explosion of breath after moving the tongue away.
u	u	Close to the "oo" in food, but shorter.
v	veh	Much like the Spanish b where the lips do not touch and there is less aspiration.
w	doble veh	Not native to Spanish, but with the same pronunciation as the English w.  Between vowels and at the end of a word, it sounds like the English ks. At the beginning of a word, it sounds like the letter s.
x	equis	* Not too long ago, the x sounded more like the letter j which can still be seen in words such as Mexico and Oaxaca.  Most of the time, it sounds like the English y in yes. At the end of a word, it functions as a vowel and sounds like the letter i.
y	y griega	* Many books in Spain will say the sound is different from the ll, but the difference is small and you will be understood pronouncing both as y
z	zeta	Mostly pronounced like the English s, but can sound like the th in thin in many parts of Spain.

## Spanish Vowels

A	- ah	t <u>a</u> co
E	- ay	gr <u>a</u> nde
I	- ee	Dor <u>i</u> tos
O	- oh	y <u>o</u> y <u>o</u>
U	- ooh	R <u>u</u> gu

## Odd letters

ch	- chay	(ch <u>a</u> lupa
ll	- ay-yay	(tort <u>i</u> llo
ñ	- ayn-yay	(señ <u>o</u> ro
rr	- ayrrray	(bur <u>r</u> o