



Pronunciation Guide

1. The 5 Basic Vowels (“Vocales”)

A = “ah” (as in “ball”) **E = “ay” or “eh”** (as in “may”) **I = “ee”** (as in “cheese”) **O = “oh”** (as in “Okay”) **U = “ew” or “oo”** (as in “New” or “Moon”)

To hear these vowels pronounced and used in words, go to this Quizlet list:

<https://quizlet.com/517907929/lss-pronunciation-the-5-vowels-flash-cards/>

2. The Consonants (“Consonantes”)

D, F, K, L, M, N, P, S, T, and W are the same as in English

B and V are both the same as an English **B**:

banda biblia vaca viva

C and G are pronounced differently depending on the **vowel that follows**:

Ca = “Kah” **Ce = “Say”** **Ci = “See”** **Co = “Koh”** **Cu = “Kew”**
casa cena cita como cuenta

Ga = “Gah” **Ge = “Hay”** **Gi = “Hee”** **Go = “Goh”** **Gu = “Gew”**
gafas gente gigante gota gusto

H is always silent!

hermana hijo hotel

CC is pronounced like **“KS”** (as in “Axis”)

acción atracción dirección

J is pronounced like an English **H** (as in “Hotel”)

jamón jirafa joven

LL is pronounced like an English **Y** (as in “Yellow”) or in some regions like a **G** (as in “Wage”)

llave lluvia

Ñ is called “enay” and is pronounced **“neyah”** (as in “Canyon”)

año niño

Q is pronounced like an English **K** (as in “kite”), and it is almost always followed by “u”

¿Por qué? quitar

R is pronounced **three different ways**:

1. In the middle of a word: With a slight roll of the tongue.
2. At the beginning of a word: With a harder roll of the tongue.
3. As a double-R (“RR”): With a very hard roll of the tongue.

raro caro pero
 carro perro

Both **S** and **Z** are pronounced like an English **S** as in “Sorry”

sabor seguro sitio sope
zapato zeta zika (virus) zorro

X is usually pronounced “**ks**” as in “**Talks**” but it also is pronounced like an English H in certain proper names (e.g. “Mexico”)

Y as a **consonant** may either be pronounced like an **English Y** as in “Yes” or like an **English J** as in “Just,” depending on the region.

ya yerno yo

Y by itself is pronounced “**ee**”

To hear these vowels pronounced and used in words, go to this Quizlet list:
<https://quizlet.com/517917491/lss-pronunciation-consonants-flash-cards/>

3. Stress on Syllables

The **next-to-the last syllable** is stressed in:

- all words that end in a vowel, or with an ia or io:
 - casa (KAH-sah)
 - casita (Kah-SEE-tah)
 - pollo (POH-yoh)
 - elefante (ay-lay-FAHN-tay)
 - noticia (noh-TEE-seeah)
 - anuncio (ah-NOON-seeoh)
- all words that end in “n” or “s”:
 - examen (ayks-AH-mayn)
 - equis (AY-kees)

The **last syllable** is stressed in all other words...

- verdad (bayr-DAHD)
- terminal (tayr-mee-NAHL)
- doctor (dohk-TOHR)
- actriz (ahk-TREES)
- azul (ah-SEWL)
- feliz (fayh-LEES)
- cantar (kahn-TAHR)
- comer (koh-MAYR)
- dormir (dohr-MEER)

...except words with an **accent mark** above the vowel, which is always stressed:

- café (Kah-FAY)
- balcón (bahl-KOHN)
- policía (poh-lee-CEEAH)
- geografía (hee-oh-grah-FEEAH)
- pájaro (PAH-hah-roh)
- colibrí (Coh-lee-BREE)

To practice these words, go to this Quizlet list: <https://quizlet.com/518002101/lss-pronunciation-accent-flash-cards/>

4. Diphthongs

Combinations of vowels use the basic vowel sounds, but the two vowels are **combined into a single sound**:

Diphthong:	Examples:	Diphthong:	Examples:
ai / ay	baile, hay	ie	bien, cielo
oi / oy	oír, hoy	io	idioma, medio
ui / uy	ruido, muy	iu	viuda, ciudad
ei	seis, veinte	ua	agua, cuando
eu	Europa, deuda	ue	bueno, puerta
ia	seria, novia	uo	antiguo, monstruo

Special Note: gue, gui, güe, güi

For “gue” and “gui”, the “g” has a hard sound and the “u” is silent

gue is pronounced “**gay**” as in guerra and sigue

gui is pronounced “**gee**” as in guitarra and guía

For “güe” and “güi”, the g has a hard sound and the “u” is pronounced

güe is pronounced “**gooway**” as in vergüenza and ambigüedad

güi is pronounced “**gooe**” as in bilingüe and lingüista

To practice these diphthongs, go to this Quizlet list: <https://quizlet.com/518002546/lss-pronunciation-diphthongs-flash-cards/>

5. Cognates

Words that are spelled the same in Spanish and English can be very helpful to learn and practice pronunciation. Here’s a suggested list:

Admirable	Favor	Peculiar
Accidental	Flexible	Probable
Actor	General	Profesional
Animal	Hotel	Simple
Capital	Ideal	Social
Casual	Inventor	Taxi
Color	Legal	Terror
Cultural	Liberal	Total
Doctor	Manual	Universal
Exterior	Normal	Violín

To practice these cognates, go to this Quizlet list: <https://quizlet.com/518004769/lss-pronunciation-cognates-flash-cards/>