

E I

- A:** a (*ah*)
B: be (*bay*)
C: ce (*say*)
CH: che (*chay*)
D: de (*day*)
E: e (*eh!*)
F: efe (*ehfêh*)
G: ge (*hey*)
H: hache (*ah-chay*)
I: i (*ee*)
J: jota (*hoe-tah*)
K: ka (*cah*)
L: ele (*el-lay*)
LL: elle (*eh-yeh*)
M: eme (*eh may*)
N: ene (*in-nay*)
Ñ: eñe (*in-yay*)
O: o (*oh! really short sound*)
P: pe (*pay*)
Q: cu (koo - rhymes with moon)
R: ere (*eh-day*)
RR: erre (er~eh – roll the “r”)
S: ese (*eh say*)
T: te (*tay*)
U: u (*oo - like in moon*)
V: ve (*bay*)
W: doble u or doble v (*doh blay oo*) or (*doh blay bay*)
X: equis (*eh-keys*)
Y: i griega (*ee - gree-eh-gah*)
Z: zeta (*say- tah*)

The chart to the left shows the capital letters along with name of each letter. (In parentheses I have added what the name of the letter sounds similar to in English so you can pronounce them easier)

It may interest you to know that not all authorities (or at least not all textbooks) agree on which letters make up the alphabet.

Some lists don't include *W* (sometimes referred to as *doble ve*) and *K*, which exist almost exclusively in words of foreign origin, such as *kilowatt*. And some lists count *RR* (*erre*), whose sound usually is different than that of *R*, as a separate letter.

The Academy also has ruled that while *CH* and *LL* are considered letters, for alphabetization purposes only they should not be treated that way. It used to be that dictionaries would list all the words beginning with *CH* separately, after the words beginning with *C*, so, for example, the word *achatar* would be listed after *acordar*. But in most modern dictionaries, the words are alphabetized as they would be in English (except that the *Ñ* comes after the *N*).

Note also that the letters *B* and *V* have exactly the same pronunciation, and their names are pronounced exactly alike. Some colorful expressions are used to indicate which letter is being used, such as *B de burro* and *V de vaca* (roughly, "B as in *burro*" and "V as in *vaca*"). Sometimes *B* is referred to as *be grande* ("big B") and the *V* as *uve* or *ve chica* ("little V").

You will find as you learn Spanish that vowels are often written with accents, as in *tablón*, and the *U* is sometimes topped with a dieresis or umlaut, as in *vergüenza*. However, vowels with such diacritical marks are not considered separate letters as they can be in some other languages.

Although, as in most languages, the sounds of the vowels can vary slightly with the letters before and after them, in general the sound remains the same regardless of the word it's in. All the vowels have basically one sound.

A is pronounced similarly to the "a" in "father" or the "o" in "loft." Examples: *madre, ambos, mapa*.

E is generally pronounced like the "e" in "met" when it is at the beginning or within a word. It is pronounced similarly to the Canadian "eh," kind of a shortened version of the "ê" in the English "café," when it is at the end of the word.

I is pronounced similarly to the "ee" in "feet" and the "e" in "me," although usually a little briefer. Examples: *finca, timbre, mi*.

O is pronounced is pronounced like the "oa" in "boat" or the "o" in "bone," although usually a little briefer. Example: *teléfono, amo, foco*.

U is generally pronounced like the "oo" in "boot" or the "u" in "tune." **Do not pronounced it like the "u" in "uniform."** Examples: *universo, reunión, unidos*. In the combinations *gui* and *gue*, as well as after *q*, the *u* is silent. Examples: *gula, guerra, quizás*. If the *u* should be pronounced between a *g* and *i* or *e*, an umlaut (sometimes called a dieresis) is placed over it. Examples: *vergüenza, lingüista*.

In Spanish *qui* sounds similar to the English word "key", *que* sounds like the name "Kay", and *gue* is similar to "gay"

Note the differences between the sounds of these consonants and their English counterparts in the following examples. Note also that these pronunciations are a guide only, as there are many subtle variations that can vary with locality.

- **B** and **V** are pronounced exactly the same. In fact, one of the few spelling problems that many Spanish speakers have is with these two letters, because they don't distinguish them at all from their sound. Generally, the *b* and *v* are pronounced like the "b" in "beach." When either of the letters is between two vowels, the sound is formed kind of like the English "v," except that the sound is made by touching the lips together instead of the upper teeth and lower lip. Examples: *bebé, ambos, vencer*.
- **C**, at least in most of Latin America, is pronounced like the "c" in "cereal" when it comes before an *e* or an *i*, and like the "c" in "car" when it is other positions. Examples: *complacer, hacer, ácido, carro, acabar, crimen*. **Note:** Although you will be understood if you use the Latin American pronunciation, in parts of Spain the *c* sounds like the "th" in "thin" when it comes before an *e* or *i*.
- **CH** is pronounced the same as the "ch" in "church." Examples: *chico, machismo, Chile*.
- **D** generally is pronounced somewhat like the "d" in "diet," although often the tongue touches the bottom of the teeth instead of the top. But when *d* comes between vowels, it has a much softer sound, kind of like the "th" in "that." Examples: *derecho, helado, diablo*.
- **F** is pronounced like the "f" in "fox." Examples: *eficaz, frío, frenes*.
- **G** is pronounced much like the English "g" in "go," except when it precedes an *i* or *e*. In those cases, it is pronounced like the Spanish *j*. Examples: *gordo, gritar, gigante, mágico*.
- **H** The letter *h* may be the easiest of all the Spanish letters to pronounce: It is **always** silent. But that doesn't mean the pronunciation of *h* doesn't sometimes trip up beginning Spanish students. Those who speak English as a first language often want to pronounce the letter when it is in a cognate, that is, a Spanish word that is more or less the same as English. For example, the *h* should **not** be pronounced in words such as *vehículo* (vehicle), *Habana* (Havana), *Honduras* and *prohibir* (prohibit), as tempting as it may be.
- **J** (and the *g* when before an *e* or *i*) can be difficult, as its sound, that of the German *ch*, is absent in English except for a few foreign words where it is sometimes retained, as in the final sound of *loch* or the initial sound of *Chanukah*. The sound is sometimes described as a heavily aspirated "h," made by expelling air between the back of the tongue and the soft palate. If you can't pronounce it well, you'll be understood by using the "h" sound of "house," but it's worthwhile to work on the correct pronunciation. Examples: *garaje, juego, jardín*.
- **K** has basically the same sound in Spanish, although somewhat softer. It is found primarily in words of foreign origin. Examples: *kilómetro, Irak*.
- **L** is always pronounced like the first "l" in "little," never like the second one. Examples: *los, helado, pastel*.
- **LL** is usually pronounced like the "y" in "yellow." There are some regional variations, however. In parts of Spain it has the sound of the "ll" in "million," and in parts of Argentina it has the "zh" sound of "azure." Examples: *llama, calle, Hermosillo*.
- **M** is pronounced like the "m" in "mother." Examples: *madre, música, embajada*.
- **N** usually has the sound of the "n" in "nice." If it is followed by a *b*, *v*, *f* or *p*, it has the sound of "m" in "empathy." Examples: *no, en, en vez de, andar*.
- **Ñ** is pronounced like the "ny" in "canyon." Examples: *ñiño, cañón, campaña*.
- **P** is pronounced like the "p" in "spot." Note that the "p" in "spot" is softer and less explosive than the "p" in "pot." Examples: *papas, padre, suponer*.
- **Q** is pronounced the same as the *k*. Note that the *u* following a *q* is not pronounced. Examples: *quetzal, siquiatria, que*.
- **R** and **RR** are formed by a flap of the tongue against the roof of the mouth, or a trill.
- **S** is pronounced like the "s" in "simple." You do not give it the "z" sound heard in "wears" and many other English plural words, although it can be slightly voiced (like a soft "z") when it comes before an *m*, *b*, *d*, *v*, *g*, *l*, *n* or *r*. Examples: *Susana, seres humanos, sencillo, fantasma*.
- **T** is pronounced like the "t" in "stop." Note that the "t" of "stop" is softer and less explosive than the "t" of "top." Examples: *todo, yate, temer*.
- **W** is pronounced like the "w" in "water." It is found primarily in words of foreign origin. Examples: *kilowatt, Zimbabwe*.
- **X** varies in sound, depending on the origin of the word. It is often pronounced like the "x" in "example" or "exit," but it also may be pronounced like the *s* or the Spanish *j*. In words of Mayan origin it can even have the English "sh" sound. Examples: *éxito, experiencia, México, Xela*.
- **Y** is generally pronounced the same as in English
- **Z** generally sounds like the "s" in "simple." In Spain it is often pronounced like the "th" in "thin." Examples: *zeta, zorro, vez*.