

Spanish Pronunciation Key

Stress Information

1. Words ending in a vowel, or n or s, the next to last syllable is stressed.
2. For words ending in a consonant other than n or s stress falls on the last syllable.
3. If the word has an accent mark, then that syllable is stressed, ignoring the rules above.

Syllable division involving two vowels

The vowels a, e, and o are "strong" vowels, and i and u are "weak". Where two vowels fall together, the following rules affect syllable division and accentuation:

1. A weak + strong combination belongs to one syllable with the stress falling on the strong vowel. For example in the word, "cierra" - /sierə/
2. A weak + weak combination belongs to one syllable with the stress falling on the second vowel. For example in the word, "fuimos" - /fuimos/
3. A strong + strong combination is divided into two syllables. For example, "empleo." - /Em-ple-o/
4. If the word has an accent mark, then that syllable is stressed. For example, "fluido" - /fluido/

Vowels

- **a** - like the a in "father" or "padre"
- **e** - for a syllable ending in a vowel, like the e in "they" or "José" ; for a syllable ending in a consonant, like the e in "get" or "pescado"
- **i** - like the i in "machine" or "arriba"
- **o** - for a syllable ending in a vowel, like the o in vote; for a syllable ending in a consonant, like the o in pot
- **u** - like the u in "rule" or "empuja" ; silent after q and in the groups gue and gui
- **y** - When used as a vowel, such as in the words "y" and "voy", it is pronounced like the Spanish i.

Diphthongs

- **ai, ay** - like the i in tide, For example "país" (country)
- **au** - like the ou in sound, For example "aula" (classroom)
- **ei, ey** - like the ey in they, For example, "reina" (queen)
- **eu** - like the vowel sounds in may-you, For example, "euforia" (euphoria)
- **oi, oy** - like the vowel sounds oh-ee, For example, "oído" (ear)

Semiconsonants

- **i, y** - like the y in yes. Examples: For example, "bien" (well)
- **u** - like with w in well. Examples: For example, "agua" (water)

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Consonants

- **b, v** - *When found at the beginning of a word or following a consonant, these are pronounced like a b. Otherwise, they have a sound which falls somewhere in between the English b and v sounds.*
- **c** - before a consonant or a, o, or u, like the 'c' in "coche" (car); before e or i like an 's' in "cine" (movie).
- **ch** - like the ch in "chocolate." Historically, the Spanish ch has been treated as a separate letter although this has recently been changed. Therefore, many dictionaries list words beginning with ch after the c's and before the d's.
- **d** - like the English d except between vowels and following l or n where pronounced like the 'th' in "this." *So remember - this dentalization is not a disorder, but a difference!*
- **f** - like the f in "flauta" (flute).
- **g** - before e or i, like the Spanish 'j' or ("h" in English); otherwise like the 'g' in "gracias" (thank you).
- **h** - silent!
- **j** - like an h but stronger; silent when at the end of a word
- **k** - like a k, *May be voiced as a "g" in the initial position of words!*
- **l** - like an l
- **ll** - like the y in "you" or "Me llamo" (I call myself)
- **m** - like an m
- **n** - like an n
- **ñ** - like the n in "onion" or "piña" (pineapple).
- **p** - like a p, *May be voiced as a "b" in the initial position of words!*
- **q** - like a k; always followed by a silent u - For example, "quince" (fifteen)
- **r** - pronounced with a strong trill at the beginning of a word and following an l, n, or s; very little trill when at the end of a word; and medium trill in other positions
- **rr** - strongly trilled, "perro" (dog)
- **s** - like an s, *May be interdentalized!*
- **t** - like a t - *Remember- dentalization or initial voicing are NOT disorders!*
- **v** - like a "b" - *Remember this is NOT stopping a fricative!*
- **w** - like a "w" - *Remember - there are a very few words in Spanish that begin with "w."*
- **x** - when between vowels, like the x in box; before a consonant, like an s
- **y** - like the y in "yes"
- **z** - like an s - *Remember, this devoicing is a cultural difference!*