Spanish Grammar
and Words & Phrases
The Municipal Courts Training Center in no way suggests that this material should be used as a substitute for the appointment of interpreters fluent in the Spanish Language.

This presentation is meant to be a helpful resource when needing a Spanish phrase, word or help in pronunciation.
Pronunciation

Castillian and Latin American

- Unlike the United States where there are several versions of English but all versions are generally understood by anyone who speaks English, the major *dialects* of Spain and the Latin American countries are so distinct that each must be learned as a separate language.
Pronunciation

- Catalán: a mixture of French, Italian, Spanish and Basque;
- Galician: a mixture of Portuguese, Basque, and Spanish;
- Castillian: the official dialect of Spain used in the courts, churches, schools and universities and the Spanish culture, generally; and
- Basque: a language more unto its own than a dialect.

- These dialects are as different from each other as are French, German, and English.
Pronunciation

- Fortunately, the Spanish spoken in Mexico, Cuba, Central and South America, Except Brazil (Portuguese), closely resembles the formal Spanish, Castillian.

- Basically, the same grammatical rules apply except for the pronunciation of three letters.
Pronunciation

- Although the Spanish alphabet is virtually the same as the English, very few, if any, letters in Spanish are pronounced exactly the same as English.

- English vowels tend to be suppressed where Spanish vowels must be pronounced sharply and clearly.
Pronunciation

- Although a rather simple lesson in pronunciation will help you “get by”, only by practice will you begin to feel comfortable in speaking (pronouncing) Spanish.
Pronunciation
Vowels

- A
  - As *a* in *father*

- Pan – bread
- Hablar – to speak
- Casa – house
- Madre – mother
- Papel - paper
**Pronunciation**

**Vowels**

- **E**
  - As *a* in *bake* when at the end of a syllable
  - As *e* in *bet* when in a closed syllable (syllable ends in a consonant)

- Padre – father
- Necessario – necessary
- De – of, from
- Usted – you
- Sentir – to feel
- Verdad – truth
  - with Ser - true
- Decir – to say
Pronunciation
Vowels

- I (Y)
  - As *i* in *laughing*, *machine*
  - Ir – to go
  - Libre – free, at liberty
  - Ficción - fiction
Pronunciation

Vowels

- O
  - As o in obey when at the end of a syllable
  - As ou in wrought, brought when in a closed syllable

- Ojo – eye
- Malo – bad, evil
- Mano – hand
- Señora – woman, lady
- Señor – man
- Sombrero – hat
- Contra – against
- Consejo - council
Pronunciation
Vowels

- U
  - As oo in tool

- Mucho – much
- Nunca – never
- Buscar – to look for
- Un(a) - one
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **B**
  - Softly with lips touching but a little air passing between them
  - Not as forcefully as in English except as *b* in *bond* when the initial letter in a word or after *n* and *m*

- **Trabajar** – to work
- **Beber** – to drink
- **Bastante** – enough
- **También** – also, too
Consonants

- **C**
  - As *c* in *comb* before *a*, *o*, *u*, or another consonant
  - In Latin American Spanish, as *s* in *see* before *e* or *i*. As *th* in *thin* (Castillian) before *e* or *i*

- **Cómo** – how
- **Café** – coffee
- **Cabrito** – small goat
- **Lección** – lesson
- **Decir** – to say
- **Cinco** – five
- **Hacer** – to do, to make
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **CH**
  - As *ch* in *children*
  - Mucho – much
  - Muchacho – boy
  - Chorizo – spicy pork sausage
Pronunciation
Consonants

- D
  - As in the English *d*
    except when between
    vowels and at the end
    of a word, pronounce
    like *th* in *they*
  - Donde – where
  - Todo – all
  - Vender – to sell
Pronunciation
Consonants

- F
  - As in the English f
  - Falta – fault, want, lack
  - Frío – cold
  - Difícil – difficult
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **G**
  - As *g* in *garden* when before *a*, *o*, *u*, or a consonant
  - As a guttural or throaty *h* before *e* and *i*

- Pagar – to pay
- Alguno – some person
- Gracias – thank you
- Guacamole - guacamole
- Gente – People
- General – general
- Gema – gem
- Gentil - gentle
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **H**
  - Is always silent
  - Hoy – today
  - Hay- there is, there are
  - Hermano – brother
  - Ahora - now
Pronunciation
Consonants

- J
  - As h in hall
  - Jardin – garden
  - Ejemplo – example
  - Juan – John
  - Jalisco – Jalisco
Pronunciation
Consonants

- K
  - As in the English \(k\)
  - Not found in Spanish-based words, only those based on another language

- Kilómetro – kilometer
- Kilogramo – kilogram
- Kiosco - kiosk
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **L**
  - As in the English *l*
  - Libro – book
  - Libre – free, at liberty
  - Cozumel – Cozumel
  - Fácil - easy
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **LL**
  - In Latin American Spanish, as *y* in *yellow*
  - In Castillian, it is pronounced as *lli* in *million* and *William*

- Calle – street
- Llamar – to call
- Llegar – to arrive, to come
- Llevar – to carry
- Caballo - horse
Pronunciation
Consonants

- M
  - As in the English \textit{m}
  - Minuto – minute
  - Importar – to import
  - Tomar – to take, to drink, to eat
Pronunciation
Consonants

N
- As in the English \( n \)

Mano – hand
Negro – black
Noche – night
General – general
Pronunciation
Consonants

Ñ
- As in ny in canyon and lanyard
- Pequeño – little
- Año – year
- Niña – girl
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **P**
  - As in the English *p*

- **Posible** – possible
- **Guapa** – brave, stout of heart
- **Rápido** - quick
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **QU**
  - As in the English *k*
  - Precedes only *e* and *i*

- Que – that, who, which
- Qué – what
- Querer – to wish, to want
- Aquí – here
- Quedar – to stay, to remain
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **R**
  - As in the English *r* but correctly pronounced
  - Servir – serve
  - Secreto – secret
  - Rojo – red
  - Río - river

- When at the beginning of a word, slightly trilled
Pronunciation
Consonants

RR

- As in the English r, but is pronounced with a stronger, more elongated trill

- Arroz – rice
- Irregular – irregular
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **S**
  - As *s* in *similar*
  - Many persons will pronounce *mismo* (same) as a *z*, especially when said quickly

- Siglo – century
- Siempre – always
- Días – days
- Así – so, thus
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **T**
  - As in the English *t*
  - However, tongue should touch back of upper teeth rather than frontal roof of the mouth
  - Tener – to have
  - Tener Que – to have to
  - Sentir – to feel
  - Tinta – ink, tint
  - Tierra – earth, land
Pronunciation
Consonants

- **V**
  - As in the English *v*, but not pronounced as assertively as in English
  - Very similar to the *Spanish b*
  - The lips almost touch but air passes through them

- **Vivir** – to live
- **Verde** – green
- **Uvas** – grapes
- **Juvenil** – juvenile
Pronunciation
Consonants

- W
  - Does not exist in Spanish
Pronunciation
Consonants

X

- When it occurs between vowels, pronounce like gs

- When it occurs before a consonant, pronounce like s

- Examen – to examine
- Éxito – result, outcome
- Existir – to exist
- Explicar – to explain
- Exclamar – to cry out, to exclaim
- Extremo – last, extreme
Pronunciation
Consonnants

- **Z**
  - In Latin American Spanish, pronounced as the *s*
  - Zapato – shoe
  - Paz – peace
  - Riqueza – riches

- In Castillian, pronounced like *th* in *earth*
Diphthongs

- A, e and o are known as strong vowels. Two can never stand together to form a diphthong. They are always separated in pronunciation.

- De-se-o – I desire
- De-se-ar – to desire
- I-de-a – idea
Diphthongs

- \( I \) (y) and \( u \) are weak vowels and when one strong and one weak vowel or two weak vowels come together, a diphthong is formed.

- Rui-do – noise
- Siem-pre – always
Diphthongs

- If, however, a weak vowel is accented ('), it is separated from the other vowel, weak or strong, and the diphthong is broken.

  - Dí-a – day
  - Rí-o – river
  - Ma-rí-a – Mary
Diphthongs

- **AI (AY)**
  - As in English *I*

- **AU**
  - As in *ou in out*

- Jai alai – jai alai (game)
- Aire – air
- Hay – there is, there are
- Pausa – pause, intermission
- Pauperismo - poverty
Diphthongs

- **EI (EY)**
  - As *ey* in *they*
  - Reina – queen
  - Ley – law
  - Peine – comb

- **EU**
  - As in English long a/u
  - Rhymes with *way to*
  - Europa – Europe
Diphthongs

- OI (OY)
  - As oy in toy
- Hoy – today
- Oidor – listener
Diphthongs

- **IA**
  - As *ya* in *yacht*

- **IO**
  - As *yo* in *yolk*

- **Pronunciar** – to pronounce
- **Diablo** – devil, cunning person
- **Silencio** – silence
- **Dios** – God
- **Lecciones** - lessons
Diphthongs

- **IE**
  - As ye in *yellow* if in a closed syllable
  - As ye in *yea, ya* in *Yale* if in open syllable

- **Bien – well**
- **Hierba – herb**
- **Pie – foot**
- **Quiero – I want**
Diphthongs

- **UA**
  - **As wa in wash**

- **UE**
  - **As we in went**

- **UO**
  - **As wo in wore**

- **Juan – John**
- **Agua – water**
- **Cualidad – quality**
- **Puente – bridge**
- **Pueblo – town, village**
- **Bueno – good**
- **Cuota – quota**
- **Antiguo – antique, old**
Diphthongs

- **IU**
  - As in English *you*, but pronounced with brevity

- **UI (UY)**
  - As English *we*

- Ciudad – city
- Viuda – widow
- Cuidado – care
- ¡Cuidado! – Be Careful!
- Muy – very
- Ruido – noise
Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castillian

- The final *d* is many times not pronounced
  - Madrid – Madrid
  - Sed – thirst, drought
  - Verdad – truth
Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castillian

- An *s* before a consonant or at the end of a word is often not pronounced

  - Dos Años – two years
  - Los Libros – the books
  - Buenos Noches – good night

- Although not absolutely correct grammatically, it is commonly heard and spoken in this manner.
Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castillian

- **Z** is pronounced like the English *s*
  - **Raza** – race
  - **Cadiz** – Cadiz
  - **Chorizo** – a pork sausage
Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castillian

- C before e or i is pronounced like the English s
  - Cinco – five
  - Necio – stupid, foolish
Latin American Pronunciation Rules That Differ From Castillian

- *Ll* is usually pronounced as *y* in *yes*
  
  - *Caballo* – horse
  
  - *Amarillo* – yellow
Syllabication

- One consonant, including *ch*, *ll*, and *rr*, is always pronounced with the following vowel
  - Ciu-dad – city
  - Ha-ber – to have
  - Lla-mar – to call
Syllabication

- Two consonants between vowels are usually separated

- Car-ta – letter
- Es-tá – he (she, it) is
Syllabication

- Where there are two abutting consonants and the second one is $l$ or $r$, they are generally inseparable

- A-brir – to open, to begin
- Li-bre – free, at liberty
Accentuation

- Except in the case of a word ending in *n* or *s*, always stress the last syllable of words ending in a consonant

- Hablar – to speak
Accentuation

- When words end in a vowel, *n* or *s*, stress the second-to-last syllable
  - Pluma – pen
  - Hablan – they speak
  - Cosas - things
If any syllable is accented with a ('), that syllable is pronounced with stress irrespective of the two rules above.

- México – Mexico
- América – America
- Día – day
Accentuation

- A diphthong comprised of a strong and weak vowel and showing no written accent (') is stressed on the strong vowel
  - Cuo-ta – quota
  - Bien – well
  - Guapo – bold, brave
Accentuation

- A diphthong comprised of two weak vowels and showing no written accent is stressed on the second vowel
  - Rui-do – noise
  - Viu-do – widower
Punctuation

- Spanish and English punctuation marks are generally alike except that questions begin with ¿ and end with ? while exclamations begin with ¡ and end with !
Punctuation

- In writing dialogue, the dash (–) is used in lieu of quotation marks ("")

- Gracias, Ricardo–él dijo

- “Thanks, Richard”, he said.
Capitalization

Unlike English, Spanish does not capitalize words of nationality used as adjectives

- El libro español – the Spanish book
Capitalization

- Languages are not capitalized
  - El inglés – English
  - El español - Spanish
Capitalization

- Days of the week and months of the year are not capitalized
  - enero – January
  - junio – June
  - lunes – Monday
  - miércoles – Wednesday
The pronoun yo (I) is never capitalized except at the beginning of a sentence.
Days

- lunes – Monday
- martes – Tuesday
- miércoles – Wednesday
- jueves – Thursday
- viernes – Friday
- sábado – Saturday
- domingo – Sunday
Months

- enero – January
- febrero – February
- marzo – March
- abril – April
- mayo – May
- junio – June
- julio – July
- agosto – August
- se(p)tiembre – September
- octubre – October
- noviembre – November
- diciembre – December
Numerals

- Zero - zero
- Uno (a) - one
- Dos - two
- Tres - three
- Cuatro - four
- Cinco - five
- Seis - six
- Siete - seven
- Ocho - eight
- Nueve - nine
- Diez - ten
Numerals

- Once – eleven
- Doce – twelve
- Trece – thirteen
- Catorce – fourteen
- Quince – fifteen
Numerals

- Diez y seis – sixteen
- Diez y siete – seventeen
- Diez y ocho – eighteen
- Diez y nueve – nineteen
- Veinte – twenty
- Veinte y uno – twenty one
Numerals

- Treinta – thirty
- Cuarenta – forty
- Cincuenta – fifty
- Sesenta – sixty
- Setenta – seventy
- Ochenta – eighty
- Noventa – ninety
Numerals

- Cien / ciento – one hundred
- Doscientos(as) – two hundred
- Trescientos(as) – three hundred
- Cuatrocientos(as) – four hundred
- Quinientos(as) – five hundred
Numerals

- **Seiscientos(as)** – six hundred
- **Setecientos(as)** – seven hundred
- **Ochocientos(as)** – eight hundred
- **Novecientos(as)** – nine hundred
- **Mil** – one thousand
Numerals

- The word *un(o)* is the only pure numeral that has a masculine and a feminine form
  - *Uno*
  - *Una*

- Always use *cien* for 100 unless a lower number follows it
  - *Ciento cuarenta amigos* – one hundred forty friends
Numerals

- The other hundreds agree in gender with the noun they modify, even when separated
  - Quinientas cincuenta y nueve botellas
    - Five hundred fifty nine bottles

- Never use the Spanish word *un(o/a)* with 100 or 1000
  - Do not say *un mil* or *un ciento*
Ordinals

- Primero/a – first
- Segundo/a – second
- Tercero/a – third
- Cuarto/a – fourth
- Quinto/a – fifth
Ordinals

- Sexto/a – sixth
- Séptimo/a – seventh
- Octavo/a – eighth
- Noveno/a – ninth
- Décimo/a - tenth
Unlike English where only nouns and a few other words have plural forms (this vs. these, my friend vs. my friends), almost all modifying words in Spanish change to show plurality.

This is known as “agreement in number.”

- Mi buen amigo – my good friend
- Mis buenos amigos – my good friends
Number of Nouns

- Generally, to pluralize a word, add \textit{s} to words ending with a vowel and \textit{es} to words ending in a consonant or a stressed vowel.

- There are some very rare exceptions such as the plural for \textit{club} (club) is \textit{clubs}.
Another exception are nouns ending in *z*.

To pluralize these nouns, change the *z* to *c* and add *es*.

- Juez – judge
- Jueces - judges
Gender

- Very few words in English are distinguished by sex (he vs. she) but Spanish nouns are all categorized as either masculine or feminine.

- Rule: Noun modifiers must agree in number and gender with the noun modified.
Gender

- Generally, nouns ending in *o* are masculine while nouns ending in *a* are feminine.

- There are exceptions to this rule.

- **El estado** - state
- **El día** – day
- **La corte** – court
- **La forma** – form
- **La policía** – police
- **El robo** – theft
- **El trabajo** – work
- **La idea** – idea
Gender

- Many nouns ending with other letters can be “genderized” by deduction
  - Señor is obviously masculine because it is Spanish for man
  - Día is masculine and must be modified by masculine modifiers
    - Many days is written *muchos días*
      - Note that the modifier must also agree in number
The definite article (the) also is a modifier and must agree in gender and number.

- **El** – masculine singular
- **Los** – masculine plural
- **La** – feminine singular
- **Las** – feminine plural
Gender

- The same rule is true for the indefinite article (a)
  - Un(o) – masculine singular
  - Unos – masculine plural
  - Una – feminine singular
  - Unas – feminine plural