



# 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 very similar to an English B:

banda                      biblia                      vaca                      viva

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

<b>Ca = “Kah”</b> casa	<b>Ce = “Say”</b> cena	<b>Ci = “See”</b> cita	<b>Co = “Koh”</b> como	<b>Cu = “Kew”</b> cuenta
<b>Ga = “Gah”</b> gafas	<b>Ge = “Hay”</b> gente	<b>Gi = “Hee”</b> gigante	<b>Go = “Goh”</b> gota	<b>Gu = “Gew”</b> gusto

**H is always silent!**

hermana                      hijo                      hotel

**CC and X** are pronounced like “KS” (as in “Axis”)

acción                      atracción                      dirección                      exacto                      axioma

(Note: X can also be pronounced like an English H in proper names, like “Mexico”)

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

jamón                      jirafa                      joven

**LL and Y** are pronounced somewhere between an English Y (as in “Yellow”) and an English J (as in “Just”)

llave                      lluvia                      yema                      yo

(Note: Y by itself is pronounced “ee”)

**Ñ** is called “enyay” 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?                      quizás

**R** is pronounced three different ways:

1. In the middle or end 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

*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/>