

Spanish Crash Course 101

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from SpanishForYourJob.com

Spanish Crash Course 101 Guide

Welcome! In this guide, we're going to cover practical tools to help you learn conversational Spanish you can use in everyday life without having to memorize lots of confusing conjugations.

Not to ace a test in school, but to focus on the few things that matter most. The key is being able to get your message across in real life and being able to handle interactions in without freezing if you can't understand what someone says in Spanish.

Let's get started!



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Use the 80/20 Principle to Focus on What's Truly Important and Learn Spanish Faster

The 80/20 Principle, also known as the Pareto Principle, is often applied in business and manufacturing, but it can also be used to learn languages faster.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



In his book, "The 80/20 Principle: The Secret to Achieving More with Less," Richard Koch explains that the "80/20 Principle" shows how a small percentage of inputs or efforts often produce a majority of results.

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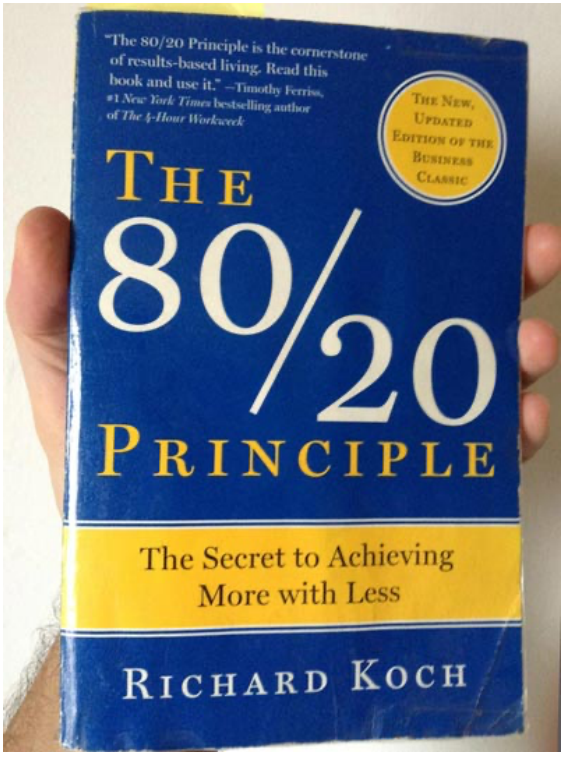
The author explains that in many areas of life and business, roughly 80% of outcomes come from 20% of inputs, such as 80% of progress coming from 20% of effort.



The key insight is not that the numbers must always be exactly 80 and 20, because these percentages can change, but that results are highly unbalanced.

By identifying and focusing on the few things that create the greatest impact, we can work more effectively and achieve better results with less effort.

When it comes to learning Spanish, the 80/20 Principle can help you in 2 main ways:

1- You can **focus on learning the few things that matter most** to learn Spanish faster, which we will cover in this guide.

2- You can **avoid the most common problems** faced by students who are getting started, and avoid wasting time and effort.

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Save Yourself the Unnecessary Frustration…

One of the most common problems to **avoid is trying to learn the wrong tenses at the wrong time**.

The most common example of this is trying to learn the preterite tense in Spanish too soon, as it is highly irregular for the most common verbs.

This makes the process unnecessarily frustrating when you are getting started and causes many students to quit.

Instead of trying to learn the preterite tense, start by using the present perfect to talk about things that happened in the past.

The present perfect is more predictable and much easier to learn when you are getting started.

YOUR NOTES:

Learn How to Avoid Drawing a Blank and Keep Control of a Conversation in Spanish

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



We've all experienced something like this at some point while learning a new language:

- You start by learning and practicing common phrases on your own for a while,
- One day, you decide to talk to someone who speaks the foreign language you are learning.

- You go ahead and confidently say a phrase you have practiced many times.
- The other person hears what you confidently said, assumes you are fluent, starts speaking VERY fast, and you do not understand what's being said, get nervous, and then you draw a blank.

It's so awkward and uncomfortable that you end up walking away feeling like a failure. It's awful! I get it!

If you do this enough times, you end up quitting because it's just WAY too frustrating.

But it doesn't have to be like that.

All you need is to allow yourself to be vulnerable and learn a few dependable tools to keep control of the conversation.

How to Avoid Drawing a Blank and Keep Control of a Conversation in Spanish

Here are the steps you can follow to avoid drawing a blank when you can't understand what someone says to you in Spanish:

- **Step 1:** Take a Moment to breathe, smile, and take things lightly.
- **Step 2:** Don't worry about making mistakes. View the situation as a game you win every time you practice Spanish.
- **Step 3:** Be vulnerable and let the other person know what's going on by speaking loud and clear, using a friendly tone of voice.
- **Step 4:** Use the words you already know, or what's around you, to get your message across, and do not take things too seriously (remember to smile!)
- **Step 5:** Focus on getting your message across, connecting with the other person, and having fun!

Tools to Keep Control of a Conversation:

Now, let's go over a few tools you can use to keep control of a conversation in Spanish.

Your Mindset:

Let's start with the way you think about the situation.

It is very important to remember that most people are nice and they want to help others. If you help them understand what's going on, they'll try to make things work for you.

Sometimes, when you approach a Spanish speaker you haven't met before and speak Spanish using a sentence you have rehearsed dozens of times, they'll probably think you're an advanced student, and they'll reply at full speed for 2 main reasons:

First, because your Spanish sounds great. So, take it as a compliment!

Second, because most people don't interact with Spanish students on a regular basis, and they just talk the way they normally do.

They're just trying to help by answering your question the way they usually talk with other native Spanish speakers.

However, they CANNOT read your mind, and **YOU** need to help them understand what's going on so **THEY** can help you.

Instead of freezing up and running away, you can use one of the following phrases to let them know you are in the process of learning Spanish and that you were unable to fully understand what they said.

First, we will review each phrase in Spanish, then in English, and then in Spanish again. So your mind can fill in the gaps and connect the pieces.

Phrases to Keep Control of a Conversation

- Disculpe, No entiendo. Estoy aprendiendo español.
- Excuse me, I don't understand. I'm learning Spanish.
- Disculpe, No entiendo. Estoy aprendiendo español.

- Repita por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.
- Please repeat. I'm learning Spanish.
- Repita por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.

- Otra vez por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.
- Again please. I'm learning Spanish.
- Otra vez por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.

- No entiendo. Repita por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.
- I don't understand. Please repeat. I'm learning Spanish.
- No entiendo. Repita por favor. Estoy aprendiendo español.

- ¿Puede hablar más lento por favor? Estoy aprendiendo español.
- Can you speak slower please? I'm learning Spanish.
- ¿Puede hablar más lento por favor? Estoy aprendiendo español.

- ¿Cuál es la palabra para esto?
- What's the word for this?
- ¿Cuál es la palabra para esto?

- ¿Puede escribir eso por favor?
- Can you write that down, please?
- ¿Puede escribir eso por favor?

- ¿Cómo se pronuncia eso?
- How do you pronounce that?
- ¿Cómo se pronuncia eso?

- No entiendo. ¿Puede explicar con otras palabras?
- I don't understand. Can you explain it in other words?
- No entiendo. ¿Puede explicar con otras palabras?

- ¿Qué es eso? ¿Me puede mostrar por favor?
- What is that? Can you show me please?
- ¿Qué es eso? ¿Me puede mostrar por favor?

Take some time to memorize these phrases. They are extremely useful, and they can rescue you the next time you are at risk of drawing a blank when you can't understand what someone says to you in Spanish.

YOUR NOTES:

Common Greetings, Goodbyes, and Courtesy Words in Spanish.

Learning how to greet someone, say goodbye, and use courtesy words is important when you are getting started with Spanish, because they are frequently used in everyday life. Plus, they will help you break the ice and be polite during your interactions.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



Common Greetings in Spanish

Here are some of the most common greetings in Spanish:

- Hola

- Hello

- Hola

- Bienvenido

- Welcome

- Bienvenido

- ¿Cómo va todo?

- How's everything going?

- ¿Cómo va todo?

- Buenos días

- Good morning

- Buenos días

- Buenas tardes
- Good afternoon
- Buenas tardes

- Buenas noches
- Good evening
- Buenas noches

YOUR NOTES:

Common Goodbyes in Spanish

Here are some of the most common goodbyes in Spanish:

- Adiós
- Goodbye
- Adiós

- Hasta luego
- See you later
- Hasta luego

- Hasta mañana
- See you tomorrow
- Hasta mañana

YOUR NOTES:

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Common Courtesy Words in Spanish

Now, let's review some of the most common courtesy words in Spanish:

- Por favor

- Please

- Por favor

- Gracias

- Thank you

- Gracias

- Muchas gracias

- Thank you very much

- Muchas gracias

- Gracias por…

- Thank you for…

- Gracias por…

Here's an example:

- Gracias por tu ayuda

- Thank you for your help

- Gracias por tu ayuda

Next on the list, we have a short phrase that is used after someone says thank you. I'm talking about:

- De nada

- You're welcome

- De nada

Next on the list, we have a short phrase to “say no” politely. Here it is:

- No, gracias

- No, thank you

- No, gracias

Finally, let's look at a few words you can use to refer to people whose name you don't know yet, people you've just met, or people you want to address respectfully.

The first 2 words are:

- Señor

- Sir

- Señor

- Señora

- Ma'am

- Señora

Next on the list, we have a few words that can be used to talk to young individuals:

- Joven

- Young man

- Joven

- Señorita

- Miss

- Señorita

Common Apologies in Spanish

Next, we will review a short list of words or phrases that can be used to apologize in Spanish.

The first word on the list can be used when you want to ask something or excuse yourself for doing something minor, like bumping into someone softly when walking in crowded areas, or when addressing someone you just met using a formal tone:

- Disculpe
- Excuse me
- Disculpe

Next on the list of courtesy words we have:

- Perdón
- I'm sorry
- Perdón

Next is the phrase:

- Lo siento

- I'm sorry

- Lo siento

Now, I'll go into a little more detail about when to use disculpe, perdón, and lo siento.

Generally, "disculpe" is used for minor things where you would say "oh, excuse me" or "oops, excuse me."

Much like it happens in English with "I'm sorry", depending on the tone of voice you use, "perdón" can be used to apologize for small mistakes as it happens in the phrases: "oh, perdón" or "ay, perdón."

In the case of "lo siento," it tends to be used for an apology that's more heartfelt, but this can vary depending on your tone of voice and body language.

For something simple, you could say "ay, lo siento," and for something more serious, you could say something like "ooohh... ¡LO SIENTO MUCHO!

Now, let's move on to the next phrase on the list:

- Está bien

- It's okay

- Está bien

You can use this phrase to say that something meets your expectations, as if saying "it's good" or "it's fine," but you can also use it to let someone know you accept a request, an apology, or that there's no need for them to worry about it.

For example, if you're walking in a crowded street and someone accidentally bumps into you and says "disculpe," you could casually reply with "está bien" as you smile to let the other person know there's no problem.

Which brings us to the last phrase in this section. Here it is:

- No hay problema

- There's no problem

- No hay problema

Sometimes I hear English speakers say the phrase "no problemo" and although Spanish speakers will understand what you mean, I want you to be aware of the correct phrase, which ends with the letter "a," like this: No hay problema

YOUR NOTES:

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Common Phrases to Talk about Yourself

Being able to introduce yourself and share a little about your life is a great way to break the ice and meet new people.

That's why learning simple phrases to talk about yourself is very useful when you are getting started with Spanish.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



Here are a few phrases you can use by replacing some of the details with your personal information.

- Hola, mi nombre es Robert
- Hello, my name is Robert
- Hola, mi nombre es Robert

- Soy de Estados Unidos
- I'm from the United States
- Soy de Estados Unidos

- Vivo en Los Ángeles, California
- I live in Los Angeles, California
- Vivo en Los Ángeles, California

- Soy Ingeniero
- I'm an Engineer
- Soy Ingeniero

- Trabajo en una oficina
- I work in an office
- Trabajo en una oficina

- Tengo 38 años
- I am 38 years old
- Tengo 38 años

- Me gusta viajar
- I like to travel
- Me gusta viajar

- No me gusta la comida picante
- I don’t like spicy food
- No me gusta la comida picante

- En mi tiempo libre, me gusta leer
- I like to read in my free time
- En mi tiempo libre me gusta leer

- Estoy aprendiendo español.
- I am learning Spanish.
- Estoy aprendiendo español.

- Mucho gusto en conocerte.
- Nice to meet you.
- Mucho gusto en conocerte.

YOUR NOTES:

Common Phrases to Ask Others about Themselves

Being able to ask others about themselves is a great way to break the ice and make new friends.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



Here are a few simple phrases you can use to ask others to talk about themselves.

The first one is an easy way to ask someone to reply to the question you just answered for them. Here it is:

- ¿Y tú?
- And you?
- ¿Y tú?

Here's an example.

Imagine someone asks you this question:

- ¿De dónde eres?
- Where are you from?
- ¿De dónde eres?

You could answer with the name of the country or city where you are from, and add this at the end accompanied by a friendly smile: "¿y tú? (And you?)

Here's an example:

- ¿De dónde eres?
- Where are you from?
- ¿De dónde eres?

- Soy de Nueva York. ¿Y tú?
- I'm from New York. And you?
- Soy de Nueva York. ¿Y tú?

And then the other person can tell you where he or she is from.

Now, let's review a few additional phrases to ask others about themselves:

- ¿Cuál es tu nombre?
- What is your name?
- ¿Cuál es tu nombre?

- ¿De dónde eres?
- Where are you from?
- ¿De dónde eres?

- ¿En qué ciudad vives?
- In what city do you live?
- ¿En qué ciudad vives?

- ¿A qué te dedicas?
- What do you do for a living?
- ¿A qué te dedicas?

- ¿En qué trabajas?
- What type of work do you do?
- ¿En qué trabajas?

- ¿Cuántos años tienes?
- How old are you?
- ¿Cuántos años tienes?

- ¿ Qué te gusta hacer en tu tiempo libre?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- ¿ Qué te gusta hacer en tu tiempo libre?

- ¿Hablas inglés?
- Do you speak English?
- ¿Hablas inglés?

- ¿Cuál es tu música favorita?
- What's your favorite music?
- ¿Cuál es tu música favorita?

This question is very versatile, because if you change the word music for something else; you can ask all sorts of things, for example:

- ¿Cuál es tu película favorita?
- What's your favorite movie?
- ¿Cuál es tu película favorita?

- ¿Cuál es tu comida favorita?
- What's your favorite food?
- ¿Cuál es tu comida favorita?

YOUR NOTES:

Learn the Most Commonly Used Words in Spoken Spanish

Words are the fundamental building blocks of a language. But there are so many Spanish words out there that learning vocabulary can feel overwhelming and confusing.

It's like trying to find the right book in a library with your eyes closed. Wouldn't it be easier if you had a clear path to follow so you could know where to get started? To have a clear path that would allow you to apply the 80/20 Principle to learn Spanish?

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



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That's why learning the top 100 words in spoken Spanish will accelerate your progress by allowing you to focus on words that are used frequently in everyday life.

To avoid making this guide too long, we will review the top 10 words in spoken Spanish, and at the end, I will give you a link to a list of the top 100 words in spoken Spanish.

Here are the top 10 words in Spoken Spanish:

1 - Number 1 on the list is the word:

"que"
which translates as the conjunction "that"

Here's an example:

- Recuerda **que** es importante
- Remember **that** it's important
- Recuerda **que** es importante

2- The second word on the list is:

- De
- It can be translated as “of,” “from,” “about” and is often used to convey possession, origin, material, or other characteristics.

Here are a few common examples:

- Necesito una taza **de** café
- I need a cup **of** coffee
- Necesito una taza **de** café

- Hablamos **de** historia en la clase
- We talked **about** history in class
- Hablamos **de** historia en la clase

- Ella es **de** Europa
- She is **from** Europe
- Ella es **de** Europa

- El libro **es de** María
- The book **belongs** to Maria
- El libro **es de** María

- La mesa **es de** madera
- The table **is made** of wood

- La mesa **es de** madera

3- Next on the list, we have the word:

- No
- Which translates as “No”
- No

An easy way to remember the correct pronunciation of the word “no” in Spanish, is to imagine there’s an “h” after the letter “o” so it goes from “no” in English, to “noh” in Spanish.

Here’s an example:

- **No** entiendo
- I don’t understand
- **No** entiendo

4- The next word on the list is:

- a
- “to," or “at” when talking about time
- a

Here are a few examples:

- Yo voy **a** aprender rápido
- I’m going **to** learn quick

- Yo voy **a** aprender rápido

- Nosotros vamos **a** la oficina
- We are going **to** the office
- Nosotros vamos **a** la oficina

- La clase es **a** las diez de la mañana
- The class is **at** 10 am
- La clase es **a** las diez de la mañana

5- Next on the list, we have the word:

- la
- Which means “the” when used for singular feminine nouns
- la

Here’s an example:

- La comida **es** deliciosa
- The food **is** delicious
- La comida **es** deliciosa

6 - The next word on the list is:

- el
- Which means “the” when used for singular masculine nouns
- el

Here’s an example:

- **El** café está caliente
- **The** coffee is hot
- **El** café está caliente

7- Next on the list, we have the word:

- es
- Which is the conjugation for “he is,” “she is,” and “it is” when talking about essential characteristics that are relatively permanent.
- es

Here are a few examples:

- Él **es** hombre
- He **is** a man
- Él **es** hombre

- Ella **es** inteligente
- She **is** intelligent
- Ella **es** inteligente

- Eso **es** importante
- It **is** important
- Eso **es** importante

8- The next word on the list is:

- y
- Which translates as the conjunction “and”
- y

Here’s an example:

- Me gusta el café **y** el té
- I like coffee **and** tea
- Me gusta el café **y** el té

9- Next on the list, we have the word:

- En
- Which is generally translated as “in,” “on,” or “at”
- En

Here are a few examples:

- Yo trabajo **en** una oficina
- I work in **an** office
- Yo trabajo **en** una oficina

- El plato está **en** la mesa
- The plate is **on** the table
- El plato está **en** la mesa

- Tú estás **en** casa
- You are **at** home
- Tú estás **en** casa

10- The last word on this list is:

- Lo
- Which is generally translated as “it” or “him” when used as a direct-object pronoun.
- Lo

Here are a few examples:

- ¿**Lo** entiendes?
- Do you understand **it**?
- ¿**Lo** entiendes?

- **Lo** entiendo
- I understand **it**
- **Lo** entiendo

- No **lo** recuerdo bien
- I don’t remember **it** well
- No **lo** recuerdo bien

Learn the Top 100 Words in Spanish:

If you would like to review the list of top 100 words in spoken Spanish for free, you can find them here:
SpanishForYourJob.com/CommonWords

Most Common Verbs in Spoken Spanish

If words are the fundamental building blocks of a language, verbs are the engine that moves things forward with actions.

By focusing on the top 50 verbs most commonly used in spoken Spanish, you'll be able to create useful sentences for everyday life by applying the 80/20 Principle to learn Spanish faster.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



Top Verbs in Spoken Spanish:

Here's a short list of the top 10 verbs in spoken Spanish to help you get started. The first one is:

- Estar
- To be (when used to talk about temporary characteristics)
- Estar

- Ser
- To be (when used to talk about permanent characteristics)
- Ser

- Ir
- To go
- Ir

- Tener
- To have
- Tener

- Haber
- To have (when used as an auxiliary verb)
- Haber

- Querer
- To want
- Querer

- Poder
- To be able to
- Poder

An example of this is:
- Yo puedo hablar
- I can talk

- Hacer
- To do
- Hacer

An example is:

- Yo he caminado
- I have walked

- Saber
- To know
- Saber

- Ver
- To see
- Ver

YOUR NOTES:

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Learn Shortcuts to Talk about the Present

After you memorize the most common verbs and vocabulary in spoken Spanish, the next step is to learn simple shortcuts for talking about the present.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



These shortcuts will enable you to talk about the present without having to memorize lots of verb conjugations when you are getting started.

Now, let's review the top 3 Shortcuts to Talk about the Present.

Shortcut #1:

- **Yo quiero** (I want) + **additional information** (nouns (people or things) or verbs (to talk about actions))

Here are a few examples:

First, let's use the shortcut with a noun:

- **Yo quiero** agua
- I want water
- **Yo quiero** agua

Now, let's review an example with a verb:

- **Yo quiero** descansar
- I want to rest
- **Yo quiero** descansar

Next, here's an example with a verb and a noun:

- **Yo quiero** comer ensalada
- I want to eat salad
- **Yo quiero** comer ensalada

If you want to express the opposite idea, and say that you do not want something or you do not want to do something, you just need to add the word “no” before “quiero” like this:

- **Yo no quiero** agua
- I do not want water
- **Yo no quiero** agua

- **Yo no quiero** comer tacos
- I do not want to eat tacos
- **Yo no quiero** comer tacos

YOUR NOTES:

Shortcut #2:

- **Yo necesito** (I need) + **additional information** (nouns (people or things) or verbs (to talk about actions))

Here are a few examples:

First, let's use the shortcut with a noun:

- **Yo necesito** comida
- I need food
- **Yo necesito** comida

Now, let's review an example with a verb:

- **Yo necesito** dormir
- I need to sleep
- **Yo necesito** dormir

Next, here's an example with a verb and a noun:

- **Yo necesito** hablar con mi amigo
- I need to speak with my male friend
- **Yo necesito** hablar con mi amigo

If you want to express the opposite idea and say that you do not need something or you do not need to do something, you need to add the word “no” before “necesito” like this:

- **Yo no necesito** comida
- I do not need food
- **Yo no necesito** comida

- **Yo no necesito** hablar con mi amigo
- I do not need to speak with my male friend
- **Yo no necesito** hablar con mi amigo

YOUR NOTES:

Shortcut #3:

- **Yo tengo que** (I have to) + **verb** + additional information

Here are a few examples:

- **Yo tengo que** trabajar
- I have to work
- **Yo tengo que** trabajar

- **Yo tengo que** esperar a mi amiga
- I have to wait for my female friend
- **Yo tengo que** esperar a mi amiga

If you want to express the opposite idea, and say that you do not have to do something, you just need to add the word “no” before “tengo” like this:

- **Yo no tengo** que trabajar
- I do not have to work
- **Yo no tengo** que trabajar

- **Yo no tengo** que esperar a mi amiga
- I do not have to wait for my female friend
- **Yo no tengo** que esperar a mi amiga

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Learn Shortcuts to Talk about the Future

After learning shortcuts to talk about the present, the next step is learning simple shortcuts to talk about the future.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



In case you're wondering, "Why focus on the future before learning how to talk about the past?" I'll explain it with a quick example:

For a moment, let's imagine you're visiting a Spanish-speaking country.

If you had to choose, what do you think is more important between these 2 scenarios:

1- Being able to talk about the flight you arrived on a couple of days ago?

Or

2- Being able to express yourself to make sure you catch your flight back home, which will leave in a few hours?

The second one, right? Making sure you get on your flight to go back home. Because usually, there's something you can do about things that haven't happened yet.

Although you will eventually learn to talk about the past, that's why it's important to focus on being able to talk about the future first.

Now, let's review the top 3 shortcuts to talk about the future:

Shortcut #1:

- **Yo voy a (I'm going to)** + **"verb"** + **additional information**

Here are a couple of examples:

- Yo **voy a** estudiar mañana
- I'm going to study tomorrow
- Yo **voy a** estudiar mañana

- Yo **voy a** estar en la oficina el lunes
- I'm going to be at the office on Monday
- Yo **voy a** estar en la oficina el lunes

If you want to express the opposite idea, and say that you are not going to do something, you just need to add the word "no" before the verb "voy" like this:

- **Yo no voy** a estudiar mañana
- I'm not going to study tomorrow
- **Yo no voy** a estudiar mañana

- **Yo no voy** a estar en la oficina el lunes
- I'm not going to be at the office on Monday
- **Yo no voy** a estar en la oficina el lunes

Shortcut #2:

- **Yo quiero (I want)** + **additional information** (nouns or verbs) + **time in the future**

Here are a few examples:

- Yo quiero (I want) + noun + time in the future

- Yo quiero pizza mañana
- I want pizza tomorrow
- Yo quiero pizza mañana

- Yo quiero (I want) + verb + time in the future

- Yo quiero dormir en la noche
- I want to sleep at night
- Yo quiero dormir en la noche

- Yo quiero (I want) + verb + noun + time in the future

- Yo quiero beber café en la tarde
- I want to drink coffee in the afternoon
- Yo quiero beber café en la tarde

Shortcut #3:

- **Yo necesito (I need) + additional information (nouns or verbs) + time in the future**

Here are a few examples:

Yo necesito (I need) + **noun** + **time in the future**

- Yo necesito ayuda en tres horas
- I need help in 3 hours
- Yo necesito ayuda en tres horas

Yo necesito (I need) + **verb** + **time in the future**

- Yo necesito dormir en la noche
- I need to sleep at night
- Yo necesito dormir en la noche

YOUR NOTES:

Learn Shortcuts to Talk about the Past

After learning shortcuts to talk about the future, you can move on and learn easy shortcuts to talk about the past.

Click the video below to practice your listening (opens a new window):



The first one is a basic shortcut you can use to talk about the past without using conjugations when you are getting started.

It's very simple, but it can help you get your message across.

Shortcut #1:

- **Using the word “antes” (which translates as “before”) after a verb in the infinitive (unconjugated)**

Here’s an example:

- Yo “comer” antes
- I “to eat” before
- Yo “comer” antes

This is a simplified way to express the idea: “I ate”

Here’s another example:

- Yo “estar” en Italia antes
- I “be” in Italy before
- Yo “estar” en Italia antes

This is a simplified way to express the idea: “I was in Italy.”

If you want to say the opposite, just add the word “no” before the verb, like this:

- Yo **no** “comer" antes
- I do not “to eat” before
- Yo **no** comer antes

Shortcut #2:

- **Using “words about the past” after a verb**

Here are a few examples:

- Yo “comer” más temprano
- I “to eat” earlier
- Yo “comer” más temprano

- Yo “comprar” frutas ayer
- I “to buy” fruit yesterday
- Yo “comprar" frutas ayer

If you want to say the opposite, just add the word “no” before the verb, like this:

- Yo **no** “comer” más temprano
- I do **not** “to eat” earlier
- Yo **no** “comer” más temprano

Here are some of the most common words used to talk about the past in Spanish:

- Antes
- Before
- Antes

- Earlier
- Más temprano
- Earlier

- Ayer
- Yesterday
- Ayer

- Anoche
- Last night
- Anoche

- En la mañana
- In the morning
- En la mañana

- At night
- En la noche
- At night

- En la tarde
- In the afternoon
- En la tarde

- Hace 1 año
- 1year ago
- Hace 1 año

- Hace tres días
- 3 days ago
- Hace tres días

YOUR NOTES:

Shortcut #3:

- **Using present tense verb conjugations + words about the past**

Here are a few examples:

- Yo trabajo en casa ayer
- I work at home yesterday
- Yo trabajo en casa ayer

- Yo como ensalada en la mañana
- I eat salad in the morning
- Yo como ensalada en la mañana

YOUR NOTES:

Shortcut #4:

- **Using "Yo he necesitado" (which translates as "I have needed") + noun or verb + time in the past**

Here are a few examples:

- Yo he necesitado ayuda ayer
- I have needed help yesterday
- Yo he necesitado ayuda ayer

- Yo he necesitado dormir anoche
- I have needed to sleep last night
- Yo he necesitado dormir anoche

- Yo he necesitado comer fruta en la mañana
- I have needed to eat fruit in the morning
- Yo he necesitado comer fruta en la mañana

If you want to say the opposite, just add the word "no" before "he necesitado" like this:

- Yo **no** he necesitado ayuda ayer
- I have not needed help yesterday
- Yo **no** he necesitado ayuda ayer

YOUR NOTES:

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Learn Shortcuts to Ask Simple Questions

Learning how to ask questions in Spanish is easier than most people think. In this section, we will go over a few shortcuts you can use to ask easy questions in everyday life.



Shortcut #1:

- **Change the intonation of regular statements (make it sound like a question by raising your pitch slightly at the end):**

Here's an example of a regular statement:

- Tú quieres agua
- You want water
- Tú quieres agua

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Now, let's use the same sentence one more time, but let's change the intonation by raising the pitch at the end to make it sound like a question. Here it is:

- ¿Tú quieres agua?
- You want water?
- ¿Tú quieres agua?

Here's another example. First, a regular statement:

- Tú hablas inglés
- You speak English
- Tú hablas inglés

Now, let's use the same sentence one more time, but raise the pitch at the end to make it sound like a question. Here it is:

- ¿Tú hablas inglés?
- You speak English?
- ¿Tú hablas inglés?

Let's look at the next shortcut to ask easy questions.

Shortcut #2:

- **When you need to simplify, ask questions without using conjugations:**

Let's imagine for a moment that you want to ask someone if he or she "needs" help, but you're not sure about the conjugation for the verb "necesitar" in Spanish.

Instead of getting stuck and staying silent, you can simplify and use the "unconjugated verb".

It is not grammatically perfect, but it will help you get your message across, and others will understand what you are trying to say.

Here's an example:

- ¿Tú "necesitar" ayuda?
- You "to need" ayuda?
- ¿Tú "necesitar" ayuda?

- ¿Tú "querer" comer?
- You "to want" to eat?
- ¿Tú "querer" comer?

Shortcut #3:

- **Focus on learning the most frequently used question words**

Learning the most common question words first is another way to leverage the 80/20 Principle to learn Spanish faster.

Here's the list of the most common words sorted by frequency:

- ¿Qué?
- What?
- ¿Qué?

- ¿Cuánto?
- How much?
- ¿Cuánto?

- ¿Cuántos?
- How many?
- ¿Cuántos?

- ¿Cuál?
- Which? / Which one?
- ¿Cuál?

- ¿Cuándo?
- When?
- ¿Cuándo?

- ¿Dónde?
- Where?
- ¿Dónde?

- ¿Quién?
- Who?
- ¿Quién?

- ¿Cómo?
- How?
- ¿Cómo?

- ¿Por qué?
- Why?
- ¿Por qué?

Take your time to memorize these question words because they are used frequently in everyday life.

Now, let's move on to the next shortcut on this list.

Shortcut #4:

- **Focus on learning shortcuts for the most frequently used question words.**

To help you learn how to ask questions more quickly, memorize common “question shortcuts” used with the most common question words to leverage the 80/20 Principle and learn Spanish faster.

Here are a few frequently used shortcuts for the top 3 question words in Spanish.

1- Let’s start with a few easy shortcuts that can be used with the following question word:

- ¿Qué?
- What?
- ¿Qué?

Here’s the first shortcut:

- ¿Qué es + esto?
- What is this?
- ¿Qué es + esto?

The second shortcut is:

- ¿Qué quieres + “verb”?
- What do you want + verb?
- ¿Qué quieres + “verb”?

Here are a few examples:

- ¿Qué quieres comer?
- What do you want to eat?
- ¿Qué quieres comer?

- ¿Qué quieres beber?
- What do you want to drink?
- ¿Qué quieres beber?

- ¿Qué quieres encontrar?
- What do you want to find?
- ¿Qué quieres encontrar?

The next shortcut for questions is:

- ¿Qué + hay + “place”?
- What + is there + “place”?
- ¿Qué + hay + “place”?

Here’s an example:

- ¿Qué + hay + ahí?
- What is there?
- ¿Qué + hay + ahí?

- ¿Qué + hay + en la bolsa?
- What is there in the bag?
- ¿Qué + hay + en la bolsa?

Here's the next shortcut with the question word "qué":

- ¿Qué hay + para + "verb"?
- What is there + to + "verb"?
- ¿Qué hay + para + "verb"?

Here are a few examples:

- ¿Qué hay + para + comer?
- What is there + to + eat?
- ¿Qué hay + para + comer?

- ¿Qué hay + para + beber?
- What is there + to + drink?
- ¿Qué hay + para + beber?

- ¿Qué hay + para + hacer?
- What is there + to + do?
- ¿Qué hay + para + hacer?

YOUR NOTES:

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2- Now, let's move on to review a few shortcuts that can be used with the following question word:

- ¿Cuánto?
- How much?
- ¿Cuánto?

Here's the first shortcut:

- ¿Cuánto + cuesta + "something"?
- How much + is the cost of + "something"
- ¿Cuánto + cuesta + "something"?

And here are a few examples:

- ¿Cuánto cuesta esto?
- How much is the cost of this?
- ¿Cuánto cuesta esto?

- ¿Cuánto cuesta eso?
- How much is the cost of that?
- ¿Cuánto cuesta eso?

- ¿Cuánto cuesta la botella de agua?
- How much is the cost of the water bottle?
- ¿Cuánto cuesta la botella de agua?

Here's another shortcut for questions that can be used with "cuánto":

- ¿Cuánto + necesitas + "of something"?
- How much + do you need + "of something?"
- ¿Cuánto + necesitas + "of something"?

Here are a few examples:

- ¿Cuánto necesitas de dinero?
- How much do you need of money (Which expresses the idea "how much money do you need?")
- ¿Cuánto necesitas de dinero?

- ¿Cuánto necesitas de tiempo?
- How much do you need of time (Which expresses the idea "how much time do you need?")
- ¿Cuánto necesitas de tiempo?

- ¿Cuánto necesitas de comida?
- How much do you need of food (Which expresses the idea "how much food do you need?")
- ¿Cuánto necesitas de comida?

3- Now, let's review a shortcut that can be used with the next question word:

- ¿Cuál?
- Which?
- ¿Cuál?

The question shortcut is:

- ¿Cuál + es + "additional information"?
- Which one + is + "additional information"?
- ¿Cuál + es + "additional information"?

Here are a few examples:
- ¿Cuál es mío?
- Which one is mine?
- ¿Cuál es mío?

- ¿Cuál es tuyo?
- Which one is yours?
- ¿Cuál es tuyo?

- ¿Cuál es más barato?
- Which one is cheaper?
- ¿Cuál es más barato?

- ¿Cuál es mejor?
- Which one is better?
- ¿Cuál es mejor?

YOUR NOTES:

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How to avoid getting stuck when you can't remember a specific word in Spanish



We've all been there at some point when learning a new language.

You start saying something and get stuck in the middle of a sentence when you can't remember a specific word you want to say.

Then, you freak out internally and start having an internal dialogue, trying to find the right word and reprimanding yourself for not being able to remember.

Feeling stuck when you can't remember a word in Spanish is normal, and it happens to everyone at some point. So, don't be too hard on yourself.

Instead of saying unkind words to yourself inside your head while desperately trying to remember the missing word, try using one of these tips to make things easier:

1- Use what you already know and flow around the missing word like water around a rock.

The biggest problem most Spanish students face is the temptation of wanting to say everything "just right" from the start, or almost perfectly using the exact word they would use in English.

This is a mental trap that leads to frustration because learning Spanish is a gradual process.

So, stop taking yourself SO seriously, and use what is available at that moment to get your message across, not to say a perfect sentence.

Instead of giving yourself a hard time by going into a mental scavenger hunt trying to find "the perfect word" you want to use, **just use the words you already know and describe the word that is missing**.

Stop creating resistance, and use the words you already know to flow like water around a rock.

For example, let's say you are at a restaurant and you want to ask for a spoon in Spanish, but you can't remember the correct word for it.

Instead of freaking out and freezing in the middle of a sentence while talking to a waitress, just let it go, simplify, and say something like this:

"I want one small metal thing to eat soup with my hand"

And here it is in Spanish:

- *"Yo quiero una cosa de metal pequeña para comer sopa con mi mano"*
- *"I want one small metal thing to eat soup with my hand"*
- *"Yo quiero una cosa de metal pequeña para comer sopa con mi mano"*

You don't have to say it exactly like that, just come up with something simple using the words you already know.

The important thing is that you simplify what you want to say and convey the main idea using the words you are able to remember.

Then, the waitress will probably reply with the word for spoon in Spanish and ask:

- ¿Cuchara?

This will remind you about the word you couldn't remember, and it will strengthen the association in your memory.

Here's the word one more time:

- Cuchara
- Spoon
- Cuchara

Like this, you get to do two things at the same time.

You get your message across without getting stuck, and you solidify vocabulary words in your mind.

Now, let's review another very useful tip you can use to get unstuck and make things easier for you.

YOUR NOTES:

2- Use Body Language:

Using body language can be a fantastic way to share your message when you're stuck on a word in Spanish.

You can use your hands or your body to mimic a specific action like "eating" or "running" and even to refer to a specific object whose name you can't remember.

Coming back to the example of asking for a spoon at a restaurant, you could say something like this:

- "Yo quiero esto"
- "I want this"
- "Yo quiero esto"

While you pretend to use a spoon to eat soup with your right hand, and then point to the imaginary object in your hand while saying this again:

- "Yo quiero esto"
- "I want this"
- "Yo quiero esto"

That will help the other person understand you want an object that can be used to eat soup, and they will quickly realize you're referring to a "cuchara," the word for "spoon" in Spanish.

The most important thing about using body language to get your message across in Spanish is to **NOT take yourself too seriously** and smile while you make funny faces, hand gestures, and even body postures to get your message across.

So, have fun with it!

Let's move on to the next tip.

YOUR NOTES:

3- Use visual aids and things around you

This is often overlooked, but it's a simple and powerful tool to get your message across whenever you can't remember a specific vocabulary word.

Let's imagine you are at a restaurant in a Spanish-speaking country, and you realize there's a fork on your table, but there's no spoon, and you'd like to request one.

You could call a waiter and say this:

- *"Yo quiero esto" (I want this)*

While you pick up the fork and draw a small imaginary circle around the top of the fork, or you could also place the palm of your hand at the end of the fork so it looks like a spoon.

That creative use of a fork would help the other person understand that you want a spoon.

- The key is getting creative!

Here's another example:

Let's imagine you are at a grocery store in a Spanish-speaking country, and you want to find a toothbrush, but you can't remember the exact word for it in Spanish.

You could call a store clerk and say this:

- *"¿Dónde está esto?" (Where is this?)*

While you grab something like a marker or a carrot near you to "brush your teeth in the air" to help the other person understand you want to find a toothbrush.

When the store clerk realizes you want a toothbrush, he'll probably say the word for toothbrush in Spanish, which is:

- Cepillo de dientes
- Toothbrush
- Cepillo de dientes

And then, he will probably show you where you can find one.

The main point is to improvise and be creative with the things around you to get your message across, even if you can't remember a specific vocabulary word.

Now, let's review one more tool you can use to get unstuck when you can't remember a word in Spanish…

4- Go old school, and carry a pen and paper with you at all times

Most people focus way too much on apps and smartphones, but often forget about one of the most effective methods of communication used by humans for thousands of years:

- I'm talking about scribbling on a piece of paper.

Just carry a small notepad with you, along with a pen or pencil, and make simple sketches whenever needed.

If we get back to the restaurant and grocery store examples we just talked about, making a simple sketch of a fork or a toothbrush would only take a few seconds, and it would help the other person understand how they can help you.

Give it a try, even if you don't consider yourself an artist. It works!

Additionally, if someone says a new word in Spanish, or they say the name of a place or a person, and you're not sure how to spell it, you could ask the other person to write it down in your notepad to make things easier for you.

It's simple and super useful!

If you want to ask someone to write something down, you can use this phrase:

- Escriba eso aquí, por favor

- Write that here, please

- Escriba eso aquí, por favor

Remember, what truly matters is helping the other person understand your message.

It's about connection, not perfection!

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YOUR NOTES: