CASTILIAN SPANISH – SPANISH WORDS, PHRASES, SAYINGS, AND GREETINGS

Someone said a long time ago that **"Spain is different"** Maybe he or she was talking about our historical background; a mix of **Roman, Arab, Cristian, Jew and Phoenician** cultures that you can admire when walking around the cities, taking a look at the most beautiful buildings and architecture such as the **Alhambra Palace** in Granada;"**la Sagrada Família**" in Barcelona; or the amazing art that can be found in "**el Museo del Prado**" in Madrid or "**el Museo Gugenheim**" in Bilbao.

Perhaps they were thinking about the incredible Mediterranean food such as **paella, tortilla de patatas** or **gazpacho** that can be found everywhere; or the wonderful **tapas** waiting for you in every little bar just around the corner. Some may say that Spain is different because of their festivities such as **Las Fallas, San Fermines** o la Tomatina, or they could even be thinking about the incredible weather and natural sights that can be found all around the country.

If you ask me, I will definitely say that **"Spain is different"** because of its **beautiful people** and in my opinion that's the main reason why learning Spanish is absolutely worth it.

Learning Spanish will allow you to experience the country from inside. That's why if you keep reading I would like to give you some tips regarding culture, slang, expressions and sayings that will be useful and handy during your Spanish learning journey.

¡Vamos que nos vamos!

Spanish Greetings:

To kiss or not to kiss…?

Have you ever wondered how we greet people in Spain? One important thing that you must learn before meeting Spanish people or traveling to Spain is that we normally say "hi" giving two kisses, one per cheek.

Whether you are greeting a close friend or someone is introducing you to a new person,

that's the way we greet people, but there are a few rules that you must follow…

- **Woman + Woman** – Two kisses
- **Woman + Men** – Two kisses
- **Men + Men** – It depends on how close you are with the other person. For example, I'm a man and I normally kiss my closest friends.

In a formal context such as your workplace, we will usually shake hands, unless you are close with your boss or workmates.

It is also important for you to know that our morning, afternoon, evening and night hours are slightly different from most of the countries.

Buenos días/Good morning – Most of Spanish people will consider that morning starts around 05 a.m and ends around 13h or 14h

Spanish lunchtime is around 14 or even 15h, from there we will start saying **"Buenas tardes"** to greet someone". We don't really have two different words for afternoon and evening, so be aware that our *tarde* will be ending around 20h to 21h.

As you may know, Spanish people usually have dinner around 21h and 22h, when most of the people in other countries are already thinking about going to sleep. Is at this time when we will start saying **"Buenas noches"**

Apart from these expressions, we will usually use the next to greet someone:

Neutral:

- **Hola** – Neutral
- **¿Cómo estás? (tú)** – Neutral
- **¿Cómo te va? (tú)** – Neutral
- **¿Qué tal te va todo?** – Neutral
- **¿Qué te cuentas?** – Neutral

Formal:

- **¿Cómo está? (usted)** – Formal
- **¿Cómo le va? (usted)** – Formal

Informal:

- **¿Cómo va la cosa?** – Informal
- **¡Buenas!** – Informal
- **¡Qué pasa!** – Informal

Spanish Slang:

- **Guay:** It basically means "cool" – Around the country
- **Vale:** OK – Around the country
- **Tío/a:** Buddy – Around the country
- **Colega:** Mate – Around the country
- **Quillo/a:** Buddy – Andalucia
- **Pisha:** Buddy – Andalucia
- **Nano:** Buddy – Valencia
- **Tronco/a:** Buddy – Madrid
- **Mazo:** A lot – Madrid
- **Molar:** To be cool – Madrid
- **Guiri:** Foreigner. Around the country
- **Chulo:** Nice – Around the country
- **Empanado/a:** A distracted person – Around the country
- **Bocachancla:** A person with a big mouth. – Around the country
- **Ir a pachas:** – Split the bill – Madrid
- **Flipar:** Freak out about someone or something – Around the country
- **Ligar:** To flirt – Around the country
- **Pecho frío:** A dispassionate person. Around the country
- **Papear:** To eat – Around the country
- **Chiquillo/a:** Boy or Girl – Andalucia
- **Patatibiris:** Crisps – Comunidad Valenciana
- **Papafrita:** Dummy – Andalucia
- **Fullero/a:** Trickster – Andalucia
- **Birra:** Beer – Around the country
- **Mindundi:** A person who is good for nothing – Around the country
- **Salao:** A funny person – Andalucia
- **Seco:** Not funny person – Andalucia
- **Tiquismiquis**: A picky person – Comunidad Valenciana
- **Mañaco/a:** A little kid – Comunidad valenciana

- **Tapear:** The action for going to have some "tapas" (snacks) – Around the country
- **Cubata:** Alcoholic drinks – Around the country
- **Sobremesa:** Spending time chatting on the restaurant table after having lunch or dinner – Around the country

Here you can see some examples of how this slang words are used in a sentence:

- **La película está guay** (The movie is really cool).
- **Vale, nos vemos a las ocho.** (Ok, see you at eight o'clock).
- **¿Cómo estás, tío/colega/quillo/pisha/nano/tronco?** (How are you, buddy?).
- **Tengo mazo de hambre** (I'm starving).
- **Esa ciudad mola mucho.** (This city is pretty cool).
- **Al guiri le gusta la paella.** (The tourist likes paella).
- **Ese reloj está muy chulo.** (This watch is really nice).
- **Hoy estoy un poco empanado** (Today I'm a little bit distracted).
- **Manuel es un bocachancla.** (Manuel has a big mouth. He can't keep a secret).
- **Vamos a pachas con la cuenta.** (Let's split the bill).
- **He flipado con esa historia.** (I freaked out with this story).
- **Está ligando con él.** (Is flirting with him).
- **No tiene pasión por nada. Es una pecho frío.** (She doesn't have ambition/aspirations for anything).
- **Vamos al restaurante a papear algo.** (Let's go eat something at the restaurant).
- **El chiquillo tiene 15 años.** (The kid is 15 years old).
- **Las patatibiris están muy ricas.** (The crisps are really yummy).
- **Es una papafrita.** (She is really dummy).
- **Siempre gana porque es un fullero.** (He always wins because he is a cheater).
- **Una birra, por favor.** (One beer please).
- **No le hagas caso, es un mindundi.** (Don't listen to him. He is a nobody).
- **Esa chica es muy salá.** (This girl is hilarious).
- **Ese chico es muy seco.** (This boy is not really friendly)
- **Ella es muy tiquismiquis con la comida.** (She is really picky about food).
- **Es un mañaco, siempre se está quejando.** (He is like a little kid, he is always complaining).
- **Esta tarde vamos a tapear con mis amigos.** (This evening we are going to have some tapas with my friends).
- **No beben cubatas cuando conducen.** (They don't have any drinks if they have to drive).
- **Después de comer, nos quedamos 3 horas de sobremesa.** (After eating, we

remained for 3 hours talking at the table).

Spanish Expressions:

- **Liarla parda** – To make a mess. For example, **"La ha liado parda en el trabajo"**
- **Estar al loro –** Loro means "parrot" in Spanish, but this expression doesn't have anything to do with this beautiful animal. We use it when we want someone to be aware of something that is about to happen. For example: **"El repartidor de Amazon tocará al timbre. Estate al loro"**
- **Pasarse tres pueblos:** If someone says something offensive without knowing, we will use this expression to let him or her to know. For example: **"Tuvo una discusión y se pasó tres pueblos"**
- **Tener mala leche:** Obviously, it doesn't mean that your milk is spoiled. We use it to talk about someone who is grumpy. For example: **"Mi profesor de español tiene muy mala leche"**
- **Se te ve el plumero:** When we are aware of the second hidden intentions that someone may have. For example: **"Se le vio el plumero cuando intentó hacer trampas cuando jugábamos al parchís"**
- **Hablar por los codos:** A person who is talkative beyond any limit. For example: **"A mi abuela le encanta contar historias. Habla por los codos"**
- **Comerse el coco:** When you overthink about something obsessively. For example: **"No paro de comerme el coco por el examen de matemáticas"**
- **Estirar la pata/Quedarse muñeco:** A vulgar way to say that someone passed away**.** For example: **"El actor de la película estiró la pata al final"**
- **Hacer la cobra:** Again animals. When someone who is about to be kissed, lean backwards, imitating the cobra's movement. For example: **"Ella hizo la cobra cuando intenté darle un beso"**
- **Dar calabazas:** Someone who has been dumped in a relationship. For example: **"Creo que María le ha dado calabazas a Pepe"**
- **Estar hasta las narices:** To be fed up or annoyed by something or someone's behavior. For example: **"Estoy hasta las narices de que los políticos sean corruptos en mi país"**
- **Tener mucho morro:** Someone extremely cheeky. Do you know someone like this? For example: **"Él tiene mucho morro. Nunca limpia el cuarto de baño"**
- **Flipar en colores:** To be super hyper amazed by something or someone. For example: **"He flipado en colores con la nueva temporada de The House of the Dragon"**

- **Ser un melón:** Even if I love melon, I don't want to be considered a melon. We use this sentence to talk about someone naive. For example: **"Ese chico es un melón, siempre pierde el dinero en el bingo"**
- **No importar un rábano:** I love food expressions. In this case, this could be translated as I don't give a damn. For example: **"No le importa un rábano el cambio climático"**
- **Estar como una cabra:** To be crazy. For example: **"Se ha tirado en paracaídas. Está como una cabra"**
- **Montar un pollo:** We are not talking about the famous "Pollos Hermanos" here. Montar un pollo is to make a scene in a public place or in front of others. For example: **"Ha montado un pollo porque no le dejaban entrar al club"**

Spanish Sayings:

- **Dar gato por liebre:** Literally means to "be getting a cat instead of a hare", but the real meaning would be to get something worse than promised or expected or to be ripped off. Have you ever had this experience when buying online?
- **Más vale maña que fuerza:** One of my favorites. In some situations (probably most of the time), it is better to use your intelligence instead of your physical strength.
- **A caballo regalado, no le mires el diente**: It would literally mean "Don't look at the tooth of a gifted horse". The real meaning is about not getting picky when you get a gift from someone. It is free, and it's been gifted with love...so be always thankful.
- **El que mucho abarca poco aprieta:** I have been there many times. Better to be focused on a few things rather than try to be involved in many things at the same time. The English version of this saying would be "Don't bite more than you can chew".
- **A quien buen árbol se arrima, buena sombra le cobija:** This saying could be talking about getting a good shade under a tree on a picnic day, but it means that if you get close to good and beautiful people you will be protected by their friendship.
- **Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo:** Literally means that "The devil knows more due to being old than by being a devil". The real meaning of this grandpa's favorite saying is that nothing can compete with the value of experience.
- **A quien madruga, Dios le ayuda:** God helps those who get up early. Really? I can't say that this is one of my favorite sayings. Being the first to do something will bring you some advantages. Same as the early birds that always catch the worm.
- **No por mucho madrugar, amanece más temprano:** This would be the opposite of the last saying. I like it more. No matter how early you get up, you can't make the

sun rise any sooner. In this case, the meaning is that things will take time to happen, no matter what.

- **Quien fue a Sevilla, perdió su silla:** If you went to Sevilla, you lost your chair. I know. It doesn't make any sense. The real meaning of this expression is that you may lose your place/work/spot if you move or if you go somewhere.
- **Al mal tiempo, buena cara:** Show the best of your faces even in a dark time. This saying is talking about facing problems with positivity and taking every setback as an opportunity to become a better you.
- **A palabras necias, oídos sordos:** Literally meaning "To foolish words, deaf ears". Basically, meaning that we shouldn't be listening to the negative and non-constructive comments people make about something. Let's play deaf and avoid negativity when someone says that you will never be able to....

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Francisco Asencio - and I wrote this article.

Stuck on this topic? Hire me for just 1 hour to start mastering it. Pass a test, improve basic vocabulary or improve your conversational level in Spanish.

Book a 1 Hour Lesson With Me



Lo mejor de lo mejor:

"Lo mejor de lo mejor" could be translated as "the best among the best". Here you can find a short list of suggestions that you must try, do, visit, watch or read, so you can get a better understanding about what Spanish culture and people is.

12 Things to know about Spain

Spain is a country that holds an incredibly rich history and is renowned for its diverse culture. From its vibrant cities to its delicious food, there are many things that make Spain truly unique. This list details some of the most iconic elements Spain is famous for, such as its music, festivals, museums and iconic people:

One City:	Granada
One Activity:	Camino de Santiago
One Museum:	Modern Art Museum Reina Sofía - Madrid
One place in the nature:	Albarracín
One Spanish Food:	Salmorejo
One Spanish drink:	Horchata
One Spanish Festival:	Fallas in Valencia
One Spanish Book:	La sombra del viento. Written by Carlos Ruiz Zafón
One Spanish Movie:	En los márgenes. Starring Juan Diego Botto, Penélope Cruz, and Luis Tosar.
One Spanish TV Show:	La Casa de Papel
One Spanish Song:	Entre dos aguas by Paco de Lucía
One Youtuber:	Ibai Llanos