MEXICAN SPANISH FOR KIDS: GAMES, TOYS, NICKNAMES AND SNACKS

Having Latino children at home means having endless games, creative responses to unexpected situations, lots of chuches (Spanish word for snacks and candies) and foods loaded with sugar and spice (because México). No doubt there is a lot of laughter, and to understand them and share with the little ones at home, we present you everything you and your non-Spanish-speaking children need to know about kids in México.

Popular Games for Kids in México

As everywhere, games for kids are a must for all children. Away from the digital era, physical games are extremely popular among school children. Some of them are:

- **Pesca-Pesca / Las traes**
  This is our variation of the Tag Game, where one child is chosen to be the "tagger" and has to pass this "honor" to somebody else until everybody is too tired to continue. Another variation is Congelados (Frozen) where the tagged kid remains frozen until another kid from his own team unfrozen him/her.

- **Busca-Busca / Escondidas / Escondidillas**
  This is the well-known Hide and Seek game. One kid counts up to any given number (10 is usual, but it's open up to 100) while all the other kids hide away as well as they can. When you are found, you still have the chance to run to the base and touch it before the Seeker. Another variation of this game says that if you arrive first, you can save you and all your friends, yelling: **Base para mí y para todos mis amigos** (I save myself and all my friends). The first person to be found and not saved, becomes the seeker of the next round.

- **Lotería**
  Excellent game for long afternoons by the beach, it's our very unique version of Bingo, rather than numbers we have many of the very popular icons in México, such as the flamingo, the drunk, the watermelon, the rose, the cock or funny ones as the devil, the mermaid, the Indian, etc. As in bingo, when you make a line (in this case of four items) you can say **LOTERÍA** or **AQUÍ** to let people know that you won. Even

though you can use any object to put over the picture, the most popular pointers are black beans or small shells if you are lucky to be at the beach.

- **Canicas**
  Talking about popular games, this is very fun and common to find at carnivals during summer time. In this case, you are given from 5 to 8 marbles, to be pushed over a board with numbered holes, after getting all the marbles inside the different holes, you add up the numbers and the total will mean a present or gift from the many the stand has. This is excellent for kids to practice and try to get the marbles in the holes to add up the number they want for a gift.

- **La Víbora de la Mar**
  First, two children stand one in front of the other and hold their hands and extend their arms up, forming a bridge for the other children to get in line holding the shoulders of the kid in front of him/her. They run past each other while singing some variation of the song **"A la víbora de la mar, por aquí podrá pasar, los de adelante corren mucho y los de atrás se quedarán, se quedarán, se quedarán"** when the song stops the first two children lower their arms and whoever gets caught in the arms is out of the game, so on and so forth until only one child is left and wins.

If we want to know about Toys, these are some of them

- **Matraca:** It is almost a musical instrument, only to make as much noise as possible.
- **Trompo:** A wooden figure that is spun with a string tied around it.
- **Piñata:** Typical of birthday parties (and parties, in general), a cardboard box filled with sweets and small toys. Children hit it with sticks while blindfolded until the contents fell to the floor.
- **Papalote:** Just a kite like the ones you already know, but with a different name.

Nicknames for Children

Yes, just as there are nicknames for everyone in the world, children in México have nicknames by which you can call them, or refer to them. Let's take a look at a couple of these nicknames, each one is used in a different region and state:

- **Chavo.**
- **Chavito.**
- **Escuincle** (it is a very informal way and in some situations it can be derogatory).
- **Guache.**
- **Morro.**
- **Mocoso** (used for children who do things they are not old enough to do).
- **Chaparro** (for children of short stature, i.e. everyone).
- **Chaval.**
- **Creature.**
- **Chamaco.**

Likewise, since they are very young, it is customary to generate nicknames based on their names, so you will see that they call Ignacio "*Nacho*", *Teté* for Teresa, *Paco* for Francisco, *Chema* for José María, *Lulú* for Lucía, *Gigi* for Guillermina and thousands of other diminutives that help create more closeness with the children, some of them grow up and keep on with their nicknames.

Treats for Children (and the Young at Heart)

Chuches or Chucherías in México are a fundamental part of the culture, and kids don't go a single day without eating their snack full of sugar, spice or tamarindo, and lime. Familiarizing yourself with the names makes it easy to share with them, these are not corporate brands, some are almost traditional children's dishes.

- **Pulparindo:** It is a tamarind candy bar (very traditional sweet), it has acid and is spicy. It is optional to add chili, but it is very rare that they don't want to add it.
- **Pelón Pelo Rico:** Again, tamarind with sugar, but in a paste presentation with chili and sugar. It is one of the children's favorites, the paste comes out of the container as you squeeze the doll and eat the "hair" of the toy that is the tamarind paste.
- **Ricaleta:** This is a traditional chuchería that has been around for several generations. It is a paste made of sugar, acid and chili, distinguished by its chewing gum texture.
- **Tamborines:** Pink, drum-shaped, one of the presentations for the combination of chili with sugar. These come in the form of smaller candies than the rest.
- **Tama-roca:** In this opportunity, the chili is added to the tamarind pulp, turning it into a candy for young and old, children eat it alone and adults with a michelada

(beer).

- **Fruit popsicles with chili (enchiladas):** Mango, watermelon, peach, pineapple, tamarind (even corn), are coated with chili powder, in a popsicle (or chupetilla) presentation.
- **Palomitas (Popcorn) y algodón de azúcar (cotton candy):** In a more street-savvy slingshot, we have snacks such as cotton candy and popcorn, with of course spicy and sweet options.
- **Dorilocos:** Chips in salsa and lemon, chunks of carrot, cucumber, and jicama. They add peanuts, pork strips and, you guessed it right, spice in various presentations.

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Marlene Correa - 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



We hope this blog will help you and your non-Spanish-speaking children understand a little more about Mexican children and their world. If you want to improve your or your children's vocabulary, we have tutors for both, ready to teach you all this and more!