Mexican Greetings: Formal, Casual and Slang Hellos

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Quick answer: In Mexico, the most common way to say hello is **hola**, often followed by **¿qué tal?** or **¿cómo estás?** Among friends you'll constantly hear the slang greeting **¿qué onda?** ("what's up?"). In shops and with strangers, Mexicans usually greet with **buenos días**, **buenas tardes** or simply **buenas**.

Greetings in Mexico are warm, polite and full of local flavor. Here's how to say hello in Mexican Spanish: the formal and casual greetings, Mexican slang, how to reply, and

the greeting customs (kiss, hug or handshake?) that visitors and learners should know.

Common Mexican greetings

Greeting	Meaning	When to use it
Hola	Hello / Hi	Anytime, anyone
Buenos días	Good morning	Until about noon; polite with everyone
Buenas tardes	Good afternoon	Noon until dark
Buenas noches	Good evening / good night	After dark
Buenas	Hi (short for any of the above)	Shops, neighbors, quick hellos
¿Qué tal?	How's it going?	Friendly, neutral
¿Cómo estás? / ¿Cómo está?	How are you? (informal / formal)	Everyday
¿Cómo te va?	How's it going for you?	Friendly
Mucho gusto	Nice to meet you	Meeting someone new

Mexican slang greetings

These are what you'll hear among friends, coworkers and young people. Save them for casual situations.

- **¿Qué onda?** – What's up? The classic Mexican greeting. Literally "what wave?"
- **¿Qué pasó? / ¿Qué pex?** – What's up? / What's happening? (*qué pex* is very casual)
- **¿Quiubo? / ¿Qué hubo?** – Hey, what's up?
- **¿Qué hay?** – What's new?
- **¿Qué cuentas?** – What's new with you? (literally "what do you tell?")
- **¿Qué transa?** – What's up? (street slang)
- **¿Qué milanesas?** – A playful pun on *¿qué más?* (what else?). Milanesa is a breaded steak.

Want more? Read our full guide to **Mexican Spanish phrases and slang**.

Formal greetings in Mexico

Mexicans tend to be very polite, especially with older people, at work and in service situations. Use *usted* and titles:

- **Buenos días, señor / señora.** – Good morning, sir / ma'am.
- **¿Cómo está usted?** – How are you?
- **Mucho gusto. / Es un placer.** – Nice to meet you. / It's a pleasure.
- **A sus órdenes.** – At your service. Very common in shops and offices.
- **Don / Doña + first name** – A respectful way to address older people (*Buenos días, doña Carmen*). See **señora vs señorita vs doña**.
- **Licenciado / Ingeniero / Doctor** – Professional titles are often used in greetings at work.

How to answer a Mexican greeting

They say	You can answer
¿Qué onda?	*Nada, aquí nomás. ¿Y tú?* – Nothing, just here. You?
¿Cómo estás?	*Bien, gracias. ¿Y tú?* – Good, thanks. And you?
¿Qué tal?	*Todo bien. / Muy bien.* – All good. / Very well.
¿Qué cuentas?	*Pues, nada nuevo.* – Well, nothing new.
Mucho gusto.	*Igualmente. / El gusto es mío.* – Likewise. / The pleasure is mine.

Greeting customs in Mexico

- **Kiss on the cheek:** Women commonly greet women and men with one light kiss on the right cheek. Men greet men with a handshake.
- **Hug with back pat:** Friends and family often greet with an *abrazo*, sometimes with a couple of pats on the back.
- **Greet everyone:** When you walk into a small shop, waiting room or elevator, say *buenos días* or *buenas* to everyone. Skipping it can seem rude.
- **"Provecho":** If you walk past people eating, it's polite to say *¡provecho!* (enjoy your meal).
- **Answering the phone:** Mexicans often answer with **¿Bueno?** instead of *hola*.

Mexican ways to say goodbye

- **Nos vemos / Ahí nos vemos** – See you
- **Ahí nos vidrios** – A playful "see ya" (vidrios = glass, a pun on *vemos*)
- **Al rato** – See you in a bit
- **Cuídate** – Take care

- **Que te vaya bien** – Hope it goes well

More farewells: 30+ ways to say goodbye in Spanish.

Mexican greetings vs other countries

Every Spanish-speaking country has its own flavor. Compare with Colombian Spanish, Ecuadorian Spanish and Castilian Spanish from Spain, or start with our general guide to greetings and farewells in Spanish.

Frequently asked questions

How do you say hello in Mexico?

Hola , buenos días or buenas tardes . With friends, ¿qué onda?

What does “¿qué onda?” mean?

It means “what’s up?” It’s the most typical casual Mexican greeting.

Why do Mexicans answer the phone with “bueno”?

It’s simply the custom in Mexico. ¿Bueno? works like “Hello?” on the phone.

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