

Overview

Population

Spain's estimated population is 46.4 million. However, there are 477 million native Spanish speakers worldwide, making it the second most spoken language in the world. Spanish is the official or main spoken language in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Venezuela and Uruguay. Although Spanish is the language taught in schools, there are many cultural and linguistic variations in pronunciation and usage from country to country. There are also many different regional languages and dialects spoken.

Climate

Spain has a predominantly warm Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and cooler winters with even temperatures.

Education System (for children from Spain)

The Spanish education system is divided into four stages, two of which are compulsory:

- Nursery and preschool (*educación infantil*): optional, 0 – 6 years old
- Primary (*educación or escuela primaria*): compulsory, 6 – 12 years old
- Compulsory secondary education (*educación secundaria obligatoria*): 12 – 16 years old
- Upper secondary education (*bachillerato*): optional, 16 – 18 years old.

SEN: Children with SEN may be educated in special schools or units only if their needs cannot be met by the special needs provision available in mainstream schools.

EFL: Learning English is given much importance in Spain and is taught in most primary schools. There are also many private international schools in Spain where lessons are in both English and Spanish.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

- In most Spanish-speaking countries, children start formal schooling in the calendar year of their 6th birthday. However, they may also have attended full time pre-school education from the age of three.
- In many South-American countries, the school year runs from March to November when children have their extended summer Christmas holidays, except in Mexico where school starts in August.

School day

- School hours vary from school to school, but are usually from 9am until 5pm with a two hour break for lunch, although an increasing number of schools don't have a lunch break and finish classes at 2pm. Lessons are usually divided into teaching periods of 45 minutes.
- In many schools, subjects are taught in the students' own classroom, even at secondary school, so they do not have to move from class to class.
- In Spain the school year generally starts in mid-September and runs through to mid-June. There are three terms of roughly 11 weeks with no half term breaks. Spain has amongst the longest school holidays of anywhere in Europe and a high number of public holidays.

Curriculum

- Generally speaking, children study the same subjects and cover similar content as in the UK. However, some topics can appear later in the school curriculum e.g. fractions may not be taught until secondary school.
- In most schools in Spain children can wear their own clothes and do not have a uniform. This also applies to PE kits which are not compulsory at many schools.
- Many parents have to pay a termly fee for school, as well as paying for all their children's books, notebooks, pens and pencils. They usually pay more for school lunches per day than here too.
- If children don't achieve the required grades at the end of the school year, they tend to go to revision classes in the summer holiday and re-sit their exams. If they still don't pass, they are expected to repeat a school year until they reach the necessary grade.

Literacy

- Children begin to study Spanish language and literature at Primary school (age 6). However from 4 years of age, children begin to learn to read and write if attending an *escuela infantil*.

Maths

- The Maths curriculum can vary in that certain concepts are taught at later key stages e.g. fractions and algebra.
- Children are usually not familiar with the different methods used here either such as number lines, partitioning etc.
- Children are taught column division and multiplication and more traditional methods. NB. A 'dot' is used to separate thousands from hundreds and a comma is used for decimals.

Science

- Because Spanish is a Latinate-based language, there are many scientific words which are similar to look at but very different to pronounce. However there are a lot of everyday words in science which are completely different e.g. heat, freeze, burn, environment, pour, etc.
- Young people have not really experienced practical science lessons and will need help to plan an investigation and how to record results and write it up.

Cultural sensitivities

- 'Please' and 'thank you' are used differently as the meaning is "could you do me a favour?" Therefore, if it is not a favour, it is not usual to say "por favor" and respond "gracias" as you are just doing your job. However, politeness is shown through the use of the polite form of address 'usted/es' (your grace/graces) which is translated as 'you' in English and thus not appreciated. Both children and parents alike will use polite forms when addressing school staff to show respect in first language.
- Spanish-speaking children have two surnames and this should be included in school information. Their first surname is their father's surname and their second surname is their mother's.
- PE – little girls usually wear earrings so parents need to be informed about health and safety requirements.

Parental involvement and attendance in Spain

- Generally speaking Spanish-speaking parents are very keen to support their children in school and love to have information regarding their children's progress.
- Parents often ask about the lack of homework because children are used to spending a couple of hours every night doing work after school. It is useful to set up a home-school communication book to keep parents informed about what is going on.
- Parents would not be fined for their child's non-attendance at school.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

- Although Spanish is the language of instruction in schools, there are many cultural and linguistic variations in pronunciation and usage from country to country and region to region.
- Regional languages and dialects are taught in schools and in some regions they are given more importance than learning Spanish, for example Catalan is the primary language taught in schools in the region of Catalonia.

Spellings

- Spanish is a phonetically spoken and written language and some of the letter sounds are different or don't exist so too much 'phonics' teaching may not be helpful for children who have already started to read in L1 e.g. 'v' which they pronounce as 'b'. It will also take children a long time to hear, recognise and produce new sounds correctly such as /i/ as in ship and /ee/ as in sheep.

Punctuation

- Inverted question marks (¿) and exclamation marks (¡) are punctuation marks used to begin interrogative and exclamatory sentences.
- Most of the time, the comma of Spanish is used much like the comma in English.
- A long dash is used to indicate speech.

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

- Spanish has more or less the same auxiliary verbs as English. The most common auxiliary verb in Spanish, 'haber' (to have) is used to form many tenses.
- Spanish has no equivalent auxiliary verb 'do' to create questions or negatives in the Simple Present or Past tense.

Ser and Estar

- Spanish has two verbs for 'to be'. This can lead to confusion of meaning in English e.g. I am bored v. I am boring.

Modal Verbs

- Spanish does not have modal verbs, but subtle shades of meaning concerning such things as the likelihood of an event or the moral obligation of an event are expressed using the subjunctive or certain verbs which express the same meaning e.g. 'deber' should, 'poder' could, 'tener que' to have to, 'soler' used to, etc.

Word order

- Like in English, a very common word order in Spanish is Subject + Verb + (rest of sentence).
- In Spanish, some adjectives can come before the noun, but the majority come after.

Gender

- Spanish nouns are masculine or feminine in gender, therefore, there is no equivalent to the subject pronoun 'it'.

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	Bienvenido/a
Hello	Hola
Thank you	Gracias
Please	Por favor
Goodbye	Adiós
See you	Hasta luego
Good morning	Buenos días
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes
How are you?	Cómo estás?

School Routine

School playground	El patio
School office	Oficina
Hall	Sala/comedor
School	Escuela/colegio
Assembly	Asamblea
Toilets	Aseos
School field	El campo
Classroom	Aula/clase
Registration	Pase de lista
Computer suite	Sala de ordenadores
Tutor group	Clase/tutor
Break time	Recreo
Outside	Afuera
Inside	Adentro
Fire drill	Simulacro de incendio
Packed lunch	Bolsa del almuerzo
School dinner	Comida del colegio
School nurse	Enfermera escolar
First aid room	Sala de primeros auxilios
Staff room	Sala de profesores
Lunchtime	Hora del almuerzo
School uniform	Uniforme del colegio
Library	Biblioteca
Reading book	Libro de lectura
Copy	Copiar
Label	Etiquetar
Colour	Colorear
Pen	Bolígrafo
Pencil	Lápiz

Days of the week

Monday	lunes
Tuesday	martes
Wednesday	miércoles
Thursday	jueves
Friday	viernes
Weekend	Fin de semana

Numbers

Zero	-	cero
One	-	uno
Two	-	dos
Three	-	tres
Four	-	cuatro
Five	-	cinco
Six	-	seis
Seven	-	siete
Eight	-	ocho
Nine	-	nueve
Ten	-	diez
How many?		Cuántos?
20	-	veinte
30	-	treinta
40	-	cuarenta
50	-	cincuenta
60	-	sesenta
70	-	setenta
80	-	ochenta
90	-	noventa
100	-	cien

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner	Trabaja en pareja
Use your dictionary	Usa tu diccionario
Do you understand?	Lo entiendes?
Talk about this at home	Habla de esto en casa
Translate these words at home	Traduce estas palabras en casa
You can write in Spanish	Puedes escribir en español
Write in sentences	Escribe en frases completas
Fill in the blanks	Rellena los espacios en blanco
Annotate	Anotar
Highlight	Resaltar
Draft	Borrador
Please be quiet	Silencio por favor
Come here please	Ven aquí por favor
Sit on the carpet	Sientate en la alfombra
Where does it hurt?	Donde te duele?
Well done!	Muy bien!