



Intercambioidiomas

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PRONINCIATION

Pronunciation and how to improve:

Pronunciation is a physical process that can only be improved by actually forming the sounds and checking that we are actually doing it properly. As Spanish speakers you have a distinct disadvantage when it comes to learning English as you are used to having a phonetically based language that is pronounced exactly as it is written. To learn English well, you need to accept that there are far more rules to pronunciation than in Spanish and you need to practice producing the sounds.

This booklet will specifically look at individual sounds; the worksheets and the recordings will help you to practice producing them through a method known as 'DRILLING'. It is essential that these sounds are practiced both with individual words and also in full sentences. We will also recommend some different activities to improve individual sounds and suggest the frequency that you should do them.

At C1 level the examiners are very strict with pronunciation but you can have a trace of a Spanish accent so long as you are intelligible, it is not essential to seem native, but it needs to be clear that you speak English frequently and you would be understood by any native. The Cambridge assessment states "*the candidate is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly*". This basically means that if the examiner can understand you with ease and your intonation is correct, you will pass this part of the evaluation. In fact, it is quite rare for Spaniards to fail the pronunciation element of the exam.

A good exercise at the beginning of the course is to write out words that you have trouble pronouncing in a way that you understand.

E.g. The verb iron = /hay-n/ How = /H-au/ (voiced H sound)

You need to remember that pronunciation is a physical process, you need to imitate other people and practice how to produce the sounds needed to pronounce English well. Try taking difficult words and relating the sounds to similar sounds in your language. That way, you will remember how to say them well.

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Between = pingüino

Also, you should practice tongue twisters (see final page)

Activities:

1. Record your own voice

You should record your voice producing these sounds. It is essential to listen a lot to the way you produce sounds and to try to produce the sounds better. You should focus first on the sound, next on words and then full sentences.

For example: SH = SHIP = THE **SHIP** SET SAIL LAST WEEK FROM PORTSMOUTH.

2. Listen and imitate

You cannot separate listening and speaking, it is one and the same, but the first is passive and the latter is active. The more you listen the better you will be at recognising sounds, however, it is essential to put all of this into practice and actually make the sounds with your mouth.

It is recommendable to choose an accent (that of your tutor for example) and try to imitate their accent and way of speaking. You cannot imitate all accents at one. *It is like trying to sound Andalus and Basque at the same time.*

3. Drilling

Drilling is about taking a sound and repeating it so many times that it becomes second nature (you can do it without thinking). It needs to be done with the tricky sounds that Spanish people find hard to produce.

4. Repeat and repeat again.

Your pronunciation will not improve in a week, you need to practice a lot and repeat sounds frequently. It is a long process and can take several weeks to produce sounds in the way that you want to, you must be patient.

5. Use rhythm and rhyme

We strongly recommend using rhymes such as tongue twisters to improve your pronunciation. They are easier to remember and work more effectively than individual words. Music is great too!

6. Associate sounds with similar sounds in your own language or with strange contexts that you can relate to and imitate.

Individual sounds:

S

To pronounce the S well it is essential to think of it like the s at the beginning of snake. You cannot make it soft or even omit it. You must mark the sound and pronounce it clearly.

To form the sound you need to use your teeth and not your lips.

SH

The SH sound in English is what you hear what someone wants you to be quiet in the cinema, SHHHHHHHH! It is a strong sound that is very different from the S sound.

It is formed using your lips and not the teeth.

R

The R sound in English is very soft compared to Spanish and is always pronounced in the same way at the beginning and in the middle of the word. At the end it is often not pronounced or even converted into an A sound by many British people. Americans tend to pronounce it in a stronger fashion.

The R sound is produced using your mouth only, your tongue does not move and must be still!

U

The U sound in English is generally pronounced like a soft A sound. For us the Spanish U is OO.

The U sound is produced with the throat and with the mouth half open, it is not a forced sound.

CH

The CH sound in English is like what you hear at a concert, CHECK, CHECK! It is a strong sound that is clearly different from the S or SH.

The CH sound is produced with the lips and a little of the teeth.

J

The J sound in English is like a mixture between the Spanish LL and CH. It is a strong sound that that is made exclusively with the mouth and not the back of the throat.

Z

To get the Z sound in English you need to think of bees or wasps and the BUZZING sound that they produce.

It is produced with the tongue at the back of the teeth and the teeth together.

W

The W sound is a tricky sound for Spanish speakers. WOULD tends to be a constant issue in language learning. If you take the word WIN for example as the **WI** is the same as pingüino.

The W sound is produced with the lips and sounds nothing like a G or a B!

AW/AU

The AW sound is the same as the OR sound in English. We never pronounce it like the Spanish AU; this sound for us would be like OWW!

We use our lips to produce the AW sound.

Tongue twisters (say them over and over):

Red lorry, yellow lorry.

She sells sea shells on the sea shore. The shells she sells are surely seashells.

Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Silent letters:

Spelling in English is hard to handle at the best of times, but later, when you read it can be almost impossible to know how to pronounce some words.

Here is a list of words that contain silent letters:

Silent B

*Examples: **lamb, climbing, plumber, limb, crumb, dumb, comb, bomb, thumb, climb, tomb, debt, doubt, debtor, doubtful, subtle, subtleness***

Silent H

*Examples: **what, when, where, whether, why, hour, honest, honour, heir, ghost, honest, while, white, rhythm***

Silent K

*Examples: **Knob, Knot, Knickers, knuckle, knack, knight, knife, knee, know, knock, knowledge, knead***

Silent L

*Examples: **calm, half, talk, walk, would, should, could, calf, salmon, yolk, chalk, folk, balm***

Silent P

*Examples: **Psychiatrist, pneumonia, pneumatic, psychotherapy, psychotic, psychologist, pseudonym, Pterodactyl***

Silent S

*Examples: **Island, isle, aisle, islet***

Silent T

*Examples: **fasten, witch, castle, christmas, mortgage, listen, often, whistle, thistle, bustle, hasten, soften, rapport, gourmet, ballet, butcher***

Silent U

*Examples: **biscuit, league, guide, circuit, guess, guidance, guitar, guest, guild, guard***

Silent W

*Examples: **wrangle, wriggle, wrap, write, wrong, wring, wreck, wrestle, wrap, wrist, who, whose, whom, whole, whoever, answer, sword, two***

Tips to improve

1. You should listen and read at the same time. Use the TV with subtitles, audio books or even study books with the dialogue in paper form. This way you will get used to hearing how words are pronounced as well a written.
2. Read out load and get others to listen and correct you.
3. Use frequency phrases. A great way is to practice and review target vocabulary. You should apply vocabulary that you have difficulty with to contexts that you understand and can remember.