How Galician sounds Pronuncia

1 · read it out loud

The trick: Galician is spelled much the way it sounds. x is sh, h is silent, b and v sound the same, and there's no j at all. Learn the table and you can read almost any word.

Letters	Sounds like	Example
x	sh in shop	**xente / xoves** people / Thursday
ch	ch in chips	**chave / chamar** key / call
ñ	ny in canyon	**mañá / viño** tomorrow / wine
nh	only in unha and its family: the ng in sing, then a	**unha / algunha** a, one / some (f)
n at the end	also like the ng in sing	**can / non** dog / no, not
ll	lli in million; many people say a y	**muller / billete** woman / ticket
z, ce, ci	th in think	**zapato / cinco** shoe / five
g, gu	g in go; before e and i the u is silent	**galego / guía** Galician / guide
h	always silent	**home / hoxe** man / today
b, v	the same sound, a soft b	**vaso / bo** glass / good
r, rr	a quick tap; rolled at the start of a word and as rr	**rúa / terra** street / land
e, o	open or closed: the spelling doesn't show which	**festa / mesa** party / table
ei, oi, ou	two vowels in one beat: day, boy, so	**oito / dous** eight / two

e · o

open or closed, written the same

festa open, as in bed · **mesa** closed, as in day

porta open, as in hot · **boca** closed, as in so

á é í ó ú

the accent shows the stress

café ca-FE · **mañá** ma-NYA

fácil FA-cil · **avión** a-bee-ON

Open and closed: e and o each have two sounds, open and closed, and the spelling doesn't show which. Don't worry about it at first: listen and copy, and you'll be understood either way.

Stress: words ending in a vowel, -n or -s stress the last but one syllable: CA-sa, XO-ves. The rest stress the last: fa-LAR, pa-PEL. An accent marks the exceptions: café, mañá, fácil.

Local accents: in some areas g sounds like a breathy h (the gheada), and in others z and c sound like s (the seseo). Both are natural; this sheet follows the standard.

How words work Gramática

Every noun is masculine or feminine

o · os · un
masculine: often ends in -o
o neno, the child · un neno, a child

a · as · unha
feminine: often ends in -a
a casa, the house · unha casa, a house

not always
learn the article with the word
o día, the day · a man, the hand

The little words join up

	+ o	+ a	+ os	+ as	
de	do	da	dos	das	of, from
en	no	na	nos	nas	in, on
a	ao	á	aos	ás	to
con	co	coa	cos	coas	with
por	polo	pola	polos	polas	by, through

You'll see them everywhere: Vivo na cidade, I live in the city. Vou ao mercado, I'm going to the market. Vou á praia, to the beach: á with an accent is a + a. A casa do Xoán, Xoán's house.

More than one

a casa → as casa**s**
after a vowel: -s

o can → os can**s**
after n: -s too

o animal → os anima**is**
-l becomes -is

o papel → os pape**is**
-el becomes -eis

a flor → as flor**es**
after r: -es

a luz → as lu**ces**
after z: -ces

Verbs change for each person: ser, estar, falar

	ser, to be	estar, to be	falar, to speak
eu	son	estou	falo
ti	es	estás	falas
el, ela, vostede	é	está	fala
nós	somos	estamos	falamos
vós	sodes	estades	falades
eles, elas, vostedes	son	están	falan

Two verbs for be: ser says what something is, estar where or how it is: Son médica, I'm a doctor; Estou na casa, I'm at home; Estou canso, I'm tired. The ending says who, so eu is often left out.

ti, vostede and vós: ti is for friends, family, children and people your age. Vostede is the polite you for older strangers and formal moments, and it takes the el, ela verb: Como está? For a group, vós is the friendly you and vostedes the polite one.

Saying no and me: non goes before the verb: Non falo inglés. In a plain sentence, me, te and the like go after the verb and join it: Chámome Ana, my name is Ana. After non or a question word they move in front: Non me chamo Ana. Como te chamas?

One past: everyday Galician has no have done form. One past does both jobs: Comín, I ate or I've eaten. Xa comín, I've already eaten.

The first 258 words As primeiras palabras

How: learn five a day, then listen for them in Galician films and series. *Pink italics* say how a word is used, not what it means.

Greetings and survival

Ola
hi, hello

Bos días
good morning

Boas tardes
good afternoon, good evening

Boas noites
good night; also good evening

Adeus
goodbye

Ata logo
see you later

Ata mañá
see you tomorrow

Grazas
thank you

Moitas grazas
thank you very much

De nada
you're welcome

Por favor
please

Desculpe
excuse me, sorry *(polite)*

Síntoo
I'm sorry

Si / Non
yes / no *(non is also not)*

Que tal?
how are you? how's it going?

Moi ben, e ti?
very well, and you?

Como te chamas?
what's your name?

Chámome ...
my name is ...

Encantado / Encantada
nice to meet you *(said by a man / a woman)*

Benvido / Benvida
welcome *(to a man / a woman)*

Falas inglés?
do you speak English?

Non entendo
I don't understand

Non sei
I don't know

De acordo
OK, agreed

Bo proveito!
enjoy your meal!

Saúde!
cheers! *(it means health)*

Question words

que
what

quen
who

onde
where

de onde
where from

cando
when

por que
why *(two words; porque is because)*

como
how

canto / canta
how much *(cantos, cantas: how many)*

cal
which, what

Canto custa?
how much is it?

Me and you

eu
I

ti
you, to a friend

el / ela
he / she

nós
we

vós
you, to more than one

eles / elas
they *(men or mixed / women)*

vostede
you, polite *(see page 2)*

o meu / a miña
my *(o meu pai, a miña nai)*

o teu / a túa
your, to a friend

este / esta
this *(m / f)*

Little words

e
and

pero
but

ou
or

moi
very *(moi ben, very well)*

moito
a lot, much

un pouco
a little

só
only, just

xa
already; now

aínda
still, yet

aquí
here

aí / alí
there, near you / over there

con
with

sen
without

porque
because

tamén
also, too

quizais
maybe

Through the day: bos días until lunch, boas tardes after it, boas noites once it's dark. Ola works at any time.

Si without an accent: si is yes, and non is both no and not: Non, grazas. No, thanks. Non sei, I don't know.

People and time Xente e tempo

Family

a nai
mother, mum

o pai
father, dad

os pais
parents *(plural)*

o irmán
brother

a irmá
sister

o fillo
son *(os fillos, children)*

a filla
daughter

o avó
grandfather, grandad

a avoa
grandmother, gran

o tío
uncle

a tía
aunt

o marido
husband

a familia
family

People

o home
man

a muller
woman; also wife

o rapaz
boy, young man

a rapaza
girl, young woman

o neno
child, kid *(a nena, girl)*

o amigo
friend *(f: a amiga)*

a xente
people *(always singular)*

o profesor
teacher *(f: a profesora)*

o médico
doctor *(f: a médica)*

o veciño
neighbour *(f: a veciña)*

When

hoxe
today

mañá
tomorrow *(a mañá, the morning)*

onte
yesterday

agora
now

despois
later, after

a tarde
afternoon, evening

a noite
night

o día
day

a semana
week

a fin de semana
weekend *(fin is feminine)*

o mes
month

o ano
year

a hora
hour; time *(Que hora é? What time is it?)*

Days of the week

luns
Monday

martes
Tuesday

mércores
Wednesday

xoves
Thursday

venres
Friday

sábado
Saturday

domingo
Sunday

Things

os cartos
money *(always plural)*

o móbil
mobile phone

a chave
key

o coche
car

o libro
book

a mesa
table

a cama
bed

a porta
door

a fiestra
window

o billete
ticket

Getting around

o autobús
bus

o tren
train

o avión
plane

o aeroporto
airport

á esquerda / á dereita
on the left / on the right

todo dereito
straight on

Numbers

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	20
cero	un / unha	dous / dúas	tres	catro	cinco	seis	sete	oito	nove	dez	once	doce	vinte

21	30	100	1,000
vinte e un	trinta	cen	mil

Numbers: 1 and 2 have a feminine form: un rapaz, unha rapaza; dous rapaces, dúas rapazas. From 21 on, e joins the parts: vinte e un, trinta e dous.

Days are small: days and months take no capital letter: luns, xaneiro. O luns is on Monday, and os luns is on Mondays.

Food, places, verbs Comer, lugares, verbos

Food and drink

a auga
water

o café
coffee *(café con leite, white coffee)*

o té
tea

o leite
milk

a cervexa
beer

o viño
wine *(viño tinto, red wine)*

o pan
bread

o queixo
cheese

a carne
meat

o peixe
fish

o ovo
egg

o polbo
octopus *(polbo á feira: with paprika and olive oil)*

a empanada
a filled pie, sliced and shared

a froita
fruit

a mazá
apple

o almorzo
breakfast

o xantar
lunch, the main meal

a cea
dinner, supper

Teño fame
I'm hungry

A conta, por favor
the bill, please

Places

a casa
house, home *(na casa, at home)*

a escola
school

o traballo
work, job

o restaurante
restaurant

o baño
toilet, bathroom

a tenda
shop

a cidade
city

a vila
town

a aldea
village

a rúa
street

a praza
square

a estación
station

o hospital
hospital

a praia
beach

o mar
sea

o río
river

o galego
Galician, the language

Verbs: dictionary / I do it

ser / son
be

estar / estou
be *(how or where you are)*

ter / teño
have

ir / vou
go

vir / veño
come

comer / como
eat

beber / bebo
drink

ver / vexo
see

facer / fago
do, make

durmir / durmo
sleep

falar / falo
speak

entender / entendo
understand

saber / sei
know *(a fact)*

coñecer / coñezo
know *(a person or place)*

querer / quero
want; also love

poder / podo
can

aprender / aprendo
learn

traballar / traballo
work

vivir / vivo
live

mercar / merco
buy

pagar / pago
pay

Describing words

bo / malo
good / bad *(f: boa, mala)*

grande / pequeno
big / small

quente / frío
hot / cold

novo / vello
new, young / old

caro / barato
expensive / cheap

doado / difícil
easy / hard

contento / triste
happy / sad

bonito / feo
pretty / ugly

canso
tired

branco / negro
white / black

vermello / azul / verde
red / blue / green

amarelo
yellow

Two forms: the dictionary form ends in -ar, -er or -ir, and most verbs make the I form with -o: falar, falo. The everyday ones are irregular, so learn both forms together.

Describing words agree: they come after the noun and match it: un neno contento, unha nena contenta.

Show words Palabras de series

Reactions

Home!
oh, come on! hey! *(see below)*

Muller!
the same, said to a woman *(see below)*

Ai, miña nai!
oh my! *(it means oh, my mother)*

Claro!
of course!

De verdade?
really? seriously?

Que ben!
how nice! great!

Ben feito!
well done!

Vaia!
oh dear! wow!

Imos!
let's go! come on!

Ollo!
watch out! *(it means eye)*

Pois ...
well ..., so ... *(see below)*

Nin de broma!
no way! *(it means not even as a joke)*

Que pena!
what a shame!

Noraboa!
congratulations!

Parabéns!
happy birthday!

Non pasa nada
never mind, it's fine

Xa está!
that's it! done!

The big scenes

Quérote
I love you

Bótote de menos
I miss you

Déixame en paz
leave me alone

Axuda!
help!

Agarda!
wait!

Non marches!
don't go!

Que pasou?
what happened?

Que pasa?
what's going on? what's up?

Cala!
be quiet! shut up! *(rude)*

Tranquilo / Tranquila
calm down, don't worry *(to a man / a woman)*

Boa sorte!
good luck!

Todo vai saír ben
it'll all be fine

What to call people

meu amor
my love, darling

neno / nena
mate, love *(it means kid)*

señor / señora
sir / madam; Mr / Mrs

don / dona
before a first name, to be polite: dona Carme

Home! and Muller!: home means man and muller means woman, but on their own they work like hey or come on. Home is said to anyone: Home, claro! Well, of course! Muller is said to a woman: Muller, non! Oh, no!

Pois: a little word you'll hear everywhere. It opens an answer, like well or so: Pois non sei. Well, I don't know. Pois si! means yes, indeed!

Ollo!: it means eye, and it's how you say careful or watch out: Ollo co coche! Watch out for the car!

Practice Práctica

How: cover the grey lines with a strip of paper. Read the Galician out loud, then slide it down to check. Can you read every line without peeking? You've got it.

Questions: keep the same word order and let your voice go up at the end: Falas galego? Do you speak Galician?

Like: Gústame o café. I like coffee, word for word coffee pleases me. With non the me moves in front: Non me gusta o café.

Read these sentences

1. Ola, chámome Ana.
   Hi, my name is Ana.

2. De onde es?
   Where are you from?

3. Desculpe, onde está o baño?
   Excuse me, where is the toilet?

4. Canto custa isto?
   How much is this?

5. Un café con leite, por favor.
   A white coffee, please.

6. Falo un pouco de galego.
   I speak a little Galician.

7. Hoxe fai moito frío.
   It's very cold today.

8. Mañá imos á praia.
   Tomorrow we're going to the beach.

9. Onte comín polbo á feira.
   Yesterday I ate polbo á feira.

10. Non me gusta o café.
    I don't like coffee.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in subtitles to see what it means.