Spain and Latin America España y Latinoamérica

One language. Spanish is spoken in Spain and across most of Latin America, with the same grammar and the same spelling everywhere. Neither side is more correct: think of British and American English. On this sheet, ES is Spain and LA is Latin America, with country names where they matter.

At a glance

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
How it sounds c before e, i, and z	gracias GRAH-thyahs th, as in think	gracias GRAH-syahs a plain s
You all, to friends page 3	¿Habláis español? Do you all speak Spanish?	¿Hablan español? Do you all speak Spanish?
You, to one friend page 3	¿Tú qué quieres? What do you want? (said everywhere)	¿Vos qué querés? the same, in Argentina, Uruguay and Central America
Just now page 4	Ya he comido. I've already eaten.	Ya comí. I've already eaten.
Everyday words page 5	el móvil mobile phone	el celular mobile phone
OK! page 4	¡Vale! OK, sure	¡Dale! · ¡Órale! OK, go on: Argentina · Mexico

Do they understand each other?

Yes, easily. People from Madrid, Mexico City and Buenos Aires talk, read and watch each other's shows with no trouble. The differences are like the ones between London and New York: a few sounds, a few words, one or two grammar habits.

Which one should I learn?

The one your shows use. Watching shows from Spain? Follow the ES column. From Mexico, Colombia or Argentina? The LA column. Learn one well and you'll understand the other after some listening.

Two dubbed tracks

Films and cartoons are often dubbed twice: once in Spain, labelled **castellano** or Spain, and once for the Americas, labelled **español latino**, much of it recorded in Mexico. Subtitles often come in both versions too, so check which one is on.

Latin America isn't one accent

Mexico, the Caribbean, the Andes, Chile and Argentina all sound different, and so do Madrid, Andalusia and the Canary Islands. The Canary Islands sound a lot like the Caribbean. This sheet shows the forms you'll hear most, with the country where it matters.

Sounds Los sonidos

Same word, two ways to say it. Spelling is the same everywhere; only the sound changes. The orange hints spell the sound in English letters, as in the Kitsumi Spanish pronunciation guide, and the pink part is what changes.

CAPS the stressed part
th th in think
s s in see
sh sh in ship
y y in yes
h a throaty h
(h) a soft breath, or nothing
rr a rolled r

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
c before e, i, and z the biggest difference	th, as in think. s stays s. cena **THEH-nah** zapato **thah-PAH-toh** cinco **THEEN-koh**	A plain s, the same as the letter s. cena **SEH-nah** zapato **sah-PAH-toh** cinco **SEEN-koh**
Words that sound alike house and hunting, sew and cook	Two different words. casa **KAH-sah** · caza **KAH-thah** coser **koh-SEHR** · cocer **koh-THEHR**	Said the same way: the sentence tells you which. casa **KAH-sah** · caza **KAH-sah** coser **koh-SEHR** · cocer **koh-SEHR**
ll and y one sound for most people	y as in yes, for both letters. calle **KAH-yeh** yo **yoh** llave **YAH-beh**	y as in yes in most countries. Argentina and Uruguay say sh, or zh as in measure. calle **KAH-sheh** yo **shoh** llave **SHAH-beh**
s at the end of a syllable before a consonant or a pause	A crisp s in the north and centre. In Andalusia and the Canary Islands it softens, as in the Caribbean. mismo **MEES-moh** buscar **boos-KAHR** estás **ehs-TAHS**	Crisp in Mexico and the Andes. In the Caribbean, on the coasts, in Chile and in Argentina it turns into a soft breath or disappears. mismo **MEE(h)-moh** buscar **boo(h)-KAHR** estás **eh(h)-TAH**
j and soft g the throaty h	A strong rasp at the back of the throat, as in Scottish loch. jamón **hah-MOHN** gente **HEHN-teh** ojo **OH-hoh**	Softer, often close to English h, especially in the Caribbean, Colombia and Central America. jamón **hah-MOHN** gente **HEHN-teh** ojo **OH-hoh**

Southern Spain: most of Andalusia and the Canary Islands use s for c and z as well, like Latin America. A few places in Andalusia do the opposite and say th for s too.

Both are correct: the th of Spain and the s of Latin America are both standard, on the news, in films and in class. Pick the one your shows use and stick to it.

You Tú, vos, vosotros, ustedes

Spain has one more you. For a group of friends, Spain says **vosotros**. Latin America says **ustedes** to every group, friends or not. In Spain, **ustedes** is the polite one.

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
One friend everywhere	tú with the -s form. In Argentina, Uruguay and Central America: vos, below **¿Cómo estás?** How are you?	
One person, polite older people, strangers	usted, with the él form. In Colombia and Costa Rica many people say usted to friends and family too **¿Cómo está usted?** How are you?	
You all, friends two or more people	vosotros, vosotras, with its own verb forms **¿Habláis español?** Do you all speak Spanish? **¿Qué queréis?** What do you all want?	ustedes, with the ellos form, for everyone **¿Hablan español?** Do you all speak Spanish? **¿Qué quieren?** What do you all want?
More you all your, you, and commands	**¿Es vuestra casa?** Is this your house? (to two or more) **Os quiero.** I love you all. **¡Venid aquí!** Come here, everyone!	**¿Es su casa?** Is this your house? (to two or more) **Los quiero.** I love you all. **¡Vengan aquí!** Come here, everyone!

The verb forms side by side

	hablar speak	comer eat	vivir live	tener have	querer want	ser be	ir go
tú	hablas	comes	vives	tienes	quieres	eres	vas
LA **vos**	hablás	comés	vivís	tenés	querés	sos	vas
ES **vosotros**	habláis	coméis	vivís	tenéis	queréis	sois	vais
ustedes	hablan	comen	viven	tienen	quieren	son	van

Easy to spot: vosotros forms end in -áis, -éis or -ís: **habláis**, **coméis**, **vivís**. For vos, drop the r, add s and stress the end: **hablás**, **comés**, **vivís**, with no stem change: **querés**, **tenés**.

LA Where you hear vos

Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay use vos every day, in speech, songs and shows. So do much of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica) and parts of Colombia and Venezuela. Everything else stays as with tú: **te**, **tu**, **¿Cómo te llamás?** After con, para and other little words, it's vos: **con vos**, **para vos**.

LA vos commands

Drop the r and stress the end. tú first, then vos:

habla · hablá **come · comé** **ven · vení**
di · decí **ten · tené** **haz · hacé** **sal · salí**

Chile has its own casual forms: **¿Cómo estái?** and **¿Qué querís?**.

Talk Hablar

Two pasts. Spain says **he comido** (I have eaten) for anything that happened today or this week. Most of Latin America just says **comí** (I ate).

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
Today, this week a time that isn't over	he, has, ha + the -ado, -ido form **Hoy he hablado con ella.** I talked to her today. **Esta mañana me he levantado temprano.** I got up early this morning.	the simple past **Hoy hablé con ella.** I talked to her today. **Esta mañana me levanté temprano.** I got up early this morning.
Just now it just happened	**Ya he comido.** I've already eaten. **¿Qué ha pasado?** What happened? **¿Lo has visto?** Have you seen it? (just now)	**Ya comí.** I've already eaten. **¿Qué pasó?** What happened? **¿Lo viste?** Have you seen it? (just now)
Yesterday, last year a time that's over	the simple past, in both **Ayer comí paella.** I had paella yesterday. **El año pasado fui a Lima.** Last year I went to Lima.	

Still used everywhere for ever and up to now: **¿Has estado en México?** (Have you ever been to Mexico?), **Nunca he visto la nieve.** (I've never seen snow.) The Canary Islands and the northwest of Spain also prefer the simple past, like Latin America.

Hear one word, know the country

Spain
¡Vale!
OK, sure

tío, tía
mate (literally uncle, aunt)

¡Qué guay!
how cool

¡Venga!
come on, also OK, bye

Mexico
¿Qué onda?
what's up?

¡Órale!
OK, wow, come on

¡Qué padre!
how cool

¿Mande?
pardon? (polite)

Argentina, Uruguay
che
hey

¡Dale!
OK, go on

re
very: re lindo

boludo
mate, only with close friends

Colombia
¿Qué más?
how are you?

¡Qué chévere!
how cool

parce
mate

¡Qué pena!
sorry, excuse me

Venezuela
¡Épale!
hey!

chamo, chama
kid, mate

pana
friend

¡Chévere!
great

Chile
¿Cachai?
get it?

po
softener: sí po, ya po

¡Bacán!
great

al tiro
right away

The Caribbean
asere
mate, in Cuba

¿Qué lo que?
what's up? in the Dominican Republic

¡Wepa!
yay! in Puerto Rico

¡Chévere!
great

Everywhere
pues
well...

o sea
I mean

bueno
well, OK

esto... · este...
um... in Spain · in Latin America

Words Palabras

Most words are the same. A few everyday things have their own name. Latin American words often change by country, so the notes say where. Everyone knows the other side's words from shows, so you'll be understood either way.

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
car	el coche	el carro · el auto
	carro: Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Central America, the Caribbean · auto: Argentina, Uruguay, Chile	
mobile phone	el móvil	el celular
potato	la patata	la papa
	The Canary Islands say papa too.	
bus	el autobús	el camión · el colectivo · la guagua
	camión: Mexico · colectivo: Argentina · guagua: the Caribbean and the Canary Islands. bus works almost everywhere.	
peach	el melocotón	el durazno
to drive	conducir	manejar
flat, apartment	el piso	el departamento · el apartamento
	departamento: Mexico, Argentina, Chile · apartamento: Colombia, Venezuela	
jumper	el jersey	el suéter

	ES Spain	LA Latin America
computer	el ordenador	la computadora · el computador
	computadora: Mexico, Argentina · computador: Colombia, Chile	
juice	el zumo	el jugo
glasses	las gafas	los lentes · los anteojos
	lentes: Mexico and many others · anteojos: Argentina	
T-shirt	la camiseta	la playera · la remera · la polera
	playera: Mexico · remera: Argentina, Uruguay · polera: Chile	
avocado	el aguacate	la palta
	Mexico, Colombia and Central America say aguacate, like Spain. palta: Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay	
ticket (bus, train)	el billete	el boleto
swimming pool	la piscina	la alberca · la pileta
	alberca: Mexico · pileta: Argentina, Uruguay · piscina: many others	
money (casual)	la pasta	la plata
	plata, literally silver: much of South America. dinero works everywhere.	

Same word, different thing

la tortilla
ES a thick potato omelette
LA a thin corn or flour flatbread, in Mexico and Central America

la torta
ES a cake
LA a filled bread roll in Mexico; a cake in Argentina and Chile

la guagua
ES a bus in the Canary Islands
LA a bus in the Caribbean; a baby in Chile and the Andes

el carro
ES a cart, a trolley
LA a car

Words to use with care

coger
Spain: to take, to catch, to grab (coger el autobús).
In Mexico, Argentina and many other countries it's rude slang. Say tomar el autobús, agarrar.

la concha
A shell, and a sweet bun in Mexico.
Rude slang in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.

el pico
A beak, a peak, and y pico: a bit after (las tres y pico).
Rude slang in Chile.

el bicho
A bug, any creepy-crawly.
Rude slang in Puerto Rico.

No need to worry: people know you're learning. If you're not sure, use the safe word: tomar for take, agarrar for grab.

Practice Práctica

6 · twenty items · answers at the bottom

How: for 1 to 10, say whether you'd hear it in Spain or in Latin America. For 11 to 20, give the other side's way of saying it. Say each one out loud, then check the answers in small print at the bottom.

Spain or Latin America?

1 ¿Qué queréis? ES or LA?

2 el ordenador ES or LA?

3 ¿Qué pasó? ES or LA?

4 el celular ES or LA?

5 la patata ES or LA?

6 Os quiero. ES or LA?

7 el jugo ES or LA?

8 Hoy he hablado con ella. ES or LA?

9 manejar ES or LA?

10 las gafas ES or LA?

Give the other one

11 el coche LA _____

12 ¿Hablan español? ES _____

13 Ya he comido. LA _____

14 el billete LA _____

15 el jersey LA _____

16 ¡Venid aquí! LA _____

17 el durazno ES _____

18 ¿Lo viste? ES _____

19 el aguacate LA _____

20 la piscina LA _____

Answers

1 ES
2 ES
3 LA
4 LA
5 ES
6 ES
7 LA
8 ES
9 LA
10 ES
11 el carro · el auto
12 ¿Habláis español?
13 Ya comí.
14 el boleto
15 el suéter
16 ¡Vengan aquí!
17 el melocotón
18 ¿Lo has visto?
19 la palta
20 la alberca · la pileta

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