

The Spanish Letter G

Boot Camp Support Document (Module Two)

1. Overview

Spanish **G** has two predictable sounds: a **hard G** (like “go”) and a **soft G** (a breathy “h” sound). This document summarizes the complete pattern system.

2. The Two Sounds of G

Hard G

- Sounds like English **g** in *go, gum, get*
- Occurs naturally unless something forces it to soften

Soft G

- A breathy **h** sound
 - Occurs only before **E** and **I**
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3. When G Is Hard

- **ga** → *gato*
- **go** → *goma*
- **gu** → *gusano*
- **g + consonant** → *gloria, grande*
- **end of syllable** → *siglo, inglés*

Note: Hard G is the default. Spanish only softens G in very specific environments.

4. When G Is Soft

- **ge** → *gente*
- **gi** → *girar*

5. The Silent-U Patterns (Hard G Rescue)

Spanish uses **GU** to keep G hard before **E** and **I**.

- **gue** → *guerra*
- **gui** → *guitarra*

The **U** is silent. Its only job is to protect the hard G.

6. The Dieresis (ü)

When Spanish wants the **U** to be pronounced, it adds **ü**.

- **güe** → *vergüenza*
- **güi** → *pingüino*

This is the only time the U is pronounced in **gue/gui** combinations.

7. Why G Confuses Learners

- English soft G is different from Spanish soft G
 - Silent U is invisible but meaningful
 - Dieresis (ü) is unfamiliar
 - Words like *fotografía* mislead learners (G is followed by **a**, so it stays hard)
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8. Mini Reference Chart

Pattern	Sound	Example	Why
ga, go, gu	Hard	<i>gato, goma, gusano</i>	Natural hard G
ge, gi	Soft	<i>gente, girar</i>	Softening rule
gue, gui	Hard	<i>guerra, guitarra</i>	Silent U protects G
güe, güi	Hard + pronounced U	<i>vergüenza, pingüino</i>	Dieresis forces U to sound
g + consonant	Hard	<i>gloria, grande</i>	Consonant keeps G hard

9. One-Sentence Takeaway

Spanish G is hard when the syllable vowel is **A, O, or U**; soft when the syllable vowel is **E or I**; and uses a silent U (or ü) to control the sound.

10. Practice Words

- gato
- gente
- girar
- guerra
- guitarra
- vergüenza
- pingüino
- gloria
- gusano
- fotografía