

FOUR KEY STARTING POINTS FOR LEARNING SPANISH

1. Spanish is a phonetic language

Spanish is **almost perfectly phonetic**, which means you can trust what you see on the page. Once you learn the sound system, you can pronounce almost any word correctly just by looking at it.

Spanish spelling is consistent because:

- Each letter has one main sound.
- Stress rules are predictable.
- Accent marks tell you exactly where the stress goes.
- Diphthongs behave consistently and help you hear syllables clearly.

Even with a few exceptions — silent **h**, the two sounds of **c** and **g**, and regional variations — Spanish remains one of the most phonetic major languages in the world.

2. Spanish organizes meaning differently than English

The #1 habit to break is translating word-for-word. Spanish is not just English with different words. English builds meaning by stacking individual words in a row. Spanish does **not**. Spanish builds meaning inside:

- structures
- patterns
- relationships between words
- fixed expressions
- chunks

This means Spanish often expresses ideas with:

- different word order
- different emphasis
- different grammatical relationships
- different “packaging” of meaning

Examples:

- *Se me olvidó* (I forgot) → meaning is inside the structure, not the individual words.
- *A Juan le gustan las manzanas* (Juan likes apples) → meaning is inside the relationship, not the word “likes.”

3. Spanish uses chains of agreement to form consistent word alignment

Spanish keeps words connected through **agreement** — a matching system that makes sentences clear and coherent.

Agreement links:

- articles
- nouns
- adjectives
- pronouns

These must match in gender (masculine/feminine) and number (singular/plural). When they match, they form a **chain of agreement** — a visual and auditory alignment that helps learners understand structure instantly.

Examples:

- la casa blanca
- los libros interesantes
- las ideas nuevas

This chain is why **the article is essential**. It is the **gender signal** of Spanish. It tells the truth even when the noun ending doesn't:

- la mano (feminine ending in -o)
- el problema (masculine ending in -a)

4. Spanish verbs embed their key meaning in the ending

English verbs carry very little information in their endings. English relies on:

- helper verbs (do, will, can, have)
- pronouns (I, you, he, she)
- extra words to express time, intention, or possibility

Spanish does the opposite – it embeds meaning directly in the **verb ending**:

- **who** is doing the action
- **when** it happens
- **how** it happens (mood, aspect)
- whether the subject is even needed

**The ending carries the meaning. The ending carries the grammar.
The ending carries the structure.**