Your notes

GCSE Spanish: revision notes

Customs, festivals and celebrations

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Festivals in Spain

- **la Navidad** (Christmas): **la Nochebuena** (Christmas Eve) is the big family dinner. On **el Día de Reyes** (6 January), los Reyes Magos (the Three Kings) bring presents, and people eat el roscón de Reyes (a ring-shaped cake).
- **la Nochevieja** (New Year's Eve): people eat las doce uvas (twelve grapes), one on each chime of midnight, for good luck.
- **la Semana Santa** (Holy Week, before Easter): procesiones (processions) go through the streets, especially in Seville.
- las Fallas (Valencia, March): huge figures are displayed in the streets and burned (quemar) on the last night, with fireworks.
- la Tomatina (Buñol, August): a huge tomato fight. San Fermín (Pamplona, July): los encierros (the running of the bulls).

Festivals in Latin America and beyond

- el Día de los Muertos (Mexico, 1 and 2 November): families remember loved ones who have died, with altars (altares), flowers, candles and sugar skulls (calaveras de azúcar).
- el Carnaval, for example in Cádiz or Tenerife: people dress up (**disfrazarse**) and there are parades (desfiles).
- el Ramadán and el Eid, Diwali, Janucá (Hanukkah), el Año Nuevo chino.
- Personal celebrations: **el cumpleaños** (birthday), el santo (the day of the saint you are named after), la boda (wedding), la quinceañera (a girl's 15th birthday party in Latin America).

Useful phrases

- **celebrar** (to celebrate), **regalar** (to give as a present), **el regalo** (present), recibir regalos (to get presents), decorar el árbol (to decorate the tree).
- reunirse con la familia (to get together with the family), comer una comida tradicional, ir a la iglesia / a la mezquita / a la sinagoga / al templo.
- ¡Feliz Navidad! (Happy Christmas!) ¡Feliz Año Nuevo! (Happy New Year!) ¡Feliz cumpleaños! (Happy birthday!)
- Mi fiesta favorita es... porque... (my favourite festival is... because...).

Grammar to use

- The imperfect for what used to happen: cuando era pequeño/a, abría los regalos por la mañana (I used to open my presents in the morning).
- The preterite for one event: el año pasado celebramos **la Navidad** en casa de mis abuelos.
- Se + verb for what people do: se come turrón (people eat nougat), se lanzan tomates (tomatoes are thrown).
- Dates: el seis de enero, el uno (or primero) de noviembre, el veinticinco de diciembre.

Key terms

la fiesta	festival (also party)
celebrar	to celebrate
la Navidad	Christmas
la Nochebuena	Christmas Eve
la Nochevieja	New Year's Eve
el Día de Reyes	6 January, when the Three Kings bring presents
la Semana Santa	Holy Week (before Easter)
los fuegos artificiales	fireworks
el desfile	parade
regalar	to give (a present)
el regalo	present
disfrazarse	to dress up (in costume)
el cumpleaños	birthday
el día festivo	public holiday

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What do people eat at midnight on Nochevieja in Spain?

Your notes

2. Who brings presents to children in Spain on 6 January?
3. What happens at la Tomatina?
4. What is burned at las Fallas in Valencia?
5. What does "los fuegos artificiales" mean?
6. What does "disfrazarse" mean?
7. How do you say "Happy birthday" in Spanish?
8. What does "regalar" mean?

Answers

1. twelve grapes
2. the Three Kings
3. People throw tomatoes at each other
4. huge figures made for the festival
5. fireworks
6. to dress up in a costume
7. ¡Feliz cumpleaños!
8. to give as a present

What to do next

Practise 14 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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