Your notes

GCSE Spanish: revision notes

Sounds and spelling

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Vowels and stress

- Spanish vowels are short and pure, and always sound the same: a (as in "ah"), e (as in "bed"), i (as in "see"), o (as in "hot"), u (as in "moon").
- Every vowel is pronounced, even at the end of a word: noche (no-che), grande (gran-de).
- If a word ends in a vowel, n or s, stress the second-to-last syllable: casa, hablan, zapatos. Otherwise, stress the last syllable: hablar, ciudad, español.
- A written accent shows a stress that breaks the rule: música, café, canción, árbol.
- Accents can also change meaning: si (if) and sí (yes), el (the) and él (he), tu (your) and tú (you).

Consonants

- j sounds like a strong h from the throat (as in "loch"): jamón, joven, ojo. g before e or i makes the same sound: gente, página.
- Elsewhere g is hard: gato, gordo. In gue and gui, g stays hard and the u is silent: guitarra.
- h is always silent: hola, hablar, hermano.
- ll sounds like the y in "yes": llamar, calle. y sounds the same (yo), but as a word on its own, or at the end of a word, it sounds like "ee": y (and), hoy.
- ñ sounds like the "ny" in canyon: España, mañana, niño.
- In Spain, z, and c before e or i, sound like the "th" in "think": zapato, cinco, gracias. In Latin America they sound like s.
- qu sounds like k, and the u is silent: que, quiero. c before a, o or u also sounds like k: casa, como.
- r is a single tap (pero); rr, and r at the start of a word, are rolled (perro, rojo). b and v sound almost the same (vivir, beber).

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Spelling and reading aloud

- ¿ and ¡ open questions and exclamations: ¿Cómo estás? ¡Qué bien!
- ch sounds like the ch in "church": chico, mucho.
- Spanish spelling follows sound closely, so you can usually spell a word you hear.
- Words that look like English are said the Spanish way: hotel (silent h, stress on -tel), hospital (silent h, stress on -tal), chocolate (four syllables: cho-co-la-te).

Key terms

el acento	written accent: the mark on á, é, í, ó, ú that shows stress
la sílaba	syllable
la eñe	the letter ñ
la tilde	the mark on ñ (also a name for the written accent)
la jota	the letter j, said like a strong h
la erre	the rolled rr sound
los signos de interrogación	question marks: ¿ at the start and ? at the end
los signos de exclamación	exclamation marks: ¡ at the start and ! at the end

Quick questions

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

1. How is "j" pronounced in "jamón"?
2. Which letter is always silent in Spanish?
3. How does "ñ" sound, as in "España"?
4. How does "ll" usually sound, as in "calle"?
5. Where is the stress in "hablan"?
6. Where is the stress in "ciudad"?
7. Why does "música" have a written accent?
8. What is the difference between "si" and "sí"?

Answers

1. like a strong h from the throat
2. h
3. like the "ny" in canyon
4. like the y in "yes"
5. on the second-to-last syllable (HA-blan)
6. on the last syllable (ciu-DAD)
7. The stress breaks the usual rule
8. si means if and sí means yes

Your notes

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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