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Spanish Essentials

FOR

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Learn:

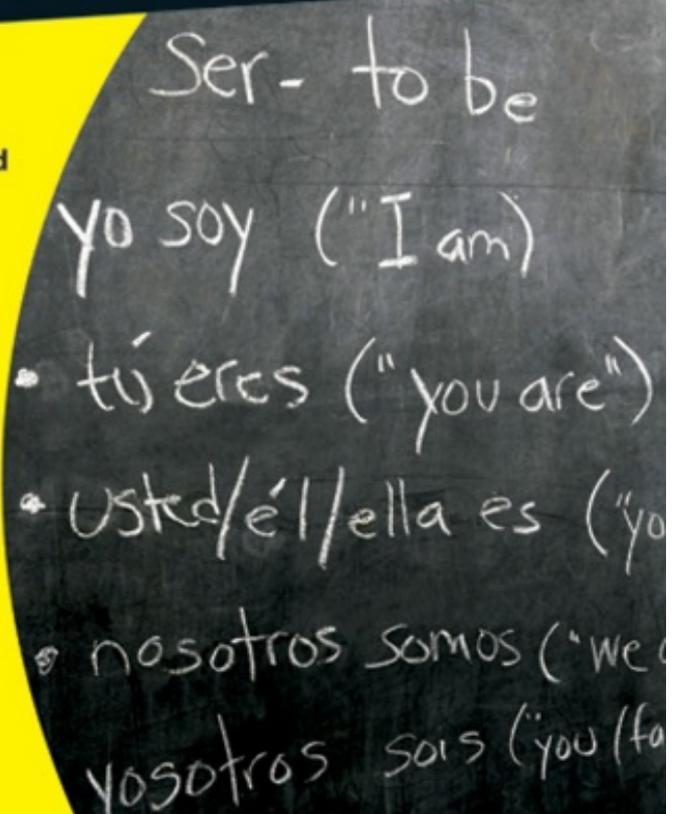
- The basics of Spanish grammar and sentence construction
- How to conjugate regular, irregular, and stem-changing verbs
- To express ideas about the past, present, and future

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Ser - to be

- yo soy ("I am")
- tú eres ("you are")
- usted/él/ella es ("you/he/she is")
- nosotros somos ("we are")
- vosotros sois ("you (pl.) are")

Spanish Essentials For Dummies®

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Spanish Essentials For Dummies[®]

by **Gail Stein, MA, and Cecie
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Introduction

As someone who's studying Spanish, you want to write and speak correctly and to master the many different verb tenses and conjugations. *Spanish Essentials For Dummies* can help you reach your goals painlessly and effortlessly as you enhance your Spanish language skills.

Spanish Essentials For Dummies presents you with all the grammar you need to know to communicate clearly. With the help of this book, you'll be ready to have a conversation about topics besides your name and the weather! And that's something to be proud of.

About This Book

Spanish Essentials For Dummies is a reference book for people who have some knowledge of the fundamentals of Spanish. If you want to get up to speed with language structures so that you can communicate comfortably and proficiently, this book is for you.

Each chapter presents a different topic that allows you to practice your communication skills. We include plenty of examples to guide you through the rules so you're exposed to colloquial, everyday, correct Spanish that native speakers expect to hear from someone using Spanish. For example, the Spanish language has its individual idioms and idiomatic expressions that give it color and flair. Here's a quick example: To say that it's sunny outside in Spanish, you remark, **Hace sol**. The literal English translation of this expression is *It is making sun*. Even my dear old grandma wouldn't have spoken English like that! Well, make sure you don't speak Spanish that way, either.

Conventions Used in This Book

In order to highlight the most important information and to help you navigate this book more easily, we've set up several conventions:

Spanish terms and sentences, as well as endings we want to highlight, are set in **boldface** to make them stand out.

English equivalents, set in *italics*, follow the Spanish example.

We use many abbreviations throughout the book. Don't let them throw you. For instance, you may find the following:

- **fem.:** feminine

- **masc.:** masculine
- **sing.:** singular
- **pl.:** plural

Foolish Assumptions

When writing this book, we made the following assumptions:

You have some knowledge of the fundamentals of Spanish grammar. You're looking for the opportunity to review what you've already mastered and are intent on moving forward to new areas of knowledge.

You want a book that's complete but isn't so advanced that you get lost in the rules. We try to explain the rules as clearly as possible without using too many grammatical terms.

You're boning up on Spanish verbs for your own edification, or your son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, niece, nephew, or special someone is studying Spanish and you want to help even though you haven't looked at a verb conjugation for years.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are those cute little drawings on the left side of the page that call out for your attention. They signal a particularly valuable piece of information. Here's a list of the icons in this book:



Remember icons call your attention to important information about the language — something you shouldn't neglect or something that's out of the ordinary. Don't ignore these paragraphs.



Tip icons present time-saving information that makes communication quick and effective. If you want to know the proper way to do things, check out the Tip icons first.



The Warning icon points out certain differences between English and Spanish that you may find confusing. If you want to know how Spanish constructions differ from those in English, these are the paragraphs you need to consult.

Where to Go from Here

One great thing about *For Dummies* books is that you don't have to read them chapter by chapter from the very beginning to the (not-so) bitter end. Each chapter stands on its own and doesn't require that you complete any of the other chapters in the book. This setup saves you a lot of time if you've mastered certain topics but feel a bit insecure about others.

So, jump right in. Get your feet wet. If you're not sure exactly where to begin, take a good look at the table of contents and select the topic that seems to best fit your abilities and needs. If you're concerned that your background may not be strong enough, you can start at the very beginning and work your way through the book.

Keep in mind that studying Spanish isn't a contest. Work at a pace that best suits your needs. Don't hesitate to read a chapter a second, third, or even a fourth time several days later. You can easily adapt this book to your learning abilities. Remember, too, that you need to have a positive, confident attitude. Yes, you'll make mistakes. Everyone does — as a matter of fact, many native Spanish speakers do all the time. Your main goal should be to write and speak as well as you can; if you trip up and conjugate a verb incorrectly or use the feminine form of an adjective rather than the masculine form, it isn't the end of the world. If you can make yourself understood, you've won the greatest part of the battle.

Chapter 1

Brushing Up on the Basics

In This Chapter

- Counting with cardinal and ordinal numbers
 - Expressing dates
 - Telling time
 - Reviewing parts of speech
-

Knowing numbers, expressing dates, relating the time of day, and recognizing parts of speech are essential Spanish skills you need in everyday life. Surely, the ability to communicate numbers, times, and dates is completely indispensable to you on a daily basis. Determining the correct part of speech to use helps you perfect your oral and written Spanish.

Counting Down

We start off this chapter with numbers because you need them in order to express dates and tell time. You use *cardinal numbers* (the more popular of the two) to count, to bargain with a merchant about a price, to express the temperature, or to write a check. You use *ordinal numbers* to express the number of a floor, the act of a play, or the order of a person in a race or competition.

Using cardinal numbers

You use cardinal numbers many times every day. As a matter of fact, you probably use them at least once an hour in the course of normal conversation or in writing. The Spanish cardinal numbers are as follows:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
0	cero	25	veinticinco (veinte y cinco)
1	uno	26	veintiséis (veinte y seis)
2	dos	27	veintisiete (veinte y siete)
3	tres	28	veintiocho (veinte y ocho)
4	cuatro	29	veintinueve (veinte y nueve)
5	cinco	30	treinta

6	seis	40	cuarenta
7	siete	50	cincuenta
8	ocho	60	sesenta
9	nueve	70	setenta
10	diez	80	ochenta
11	once	90	noventa
12	doce	100	cien (ciento)
13	trece	101	ciento uno
14	catorce	200	doscientos
15	quince	500	quinientos
16	dieciséis (diez y seis)	700	setecientos
17	diecisiete (diez y siete)	900	novecientos
18	dieciocho (diez y ocho)	1.000	mil
19	diecinueve (diez y nueve)	2.000	dos mil
20	veinte	100.000	cien mil
21	veintiuno (veinte y uno)	1.000.000	un millón
22	veintidós (veinte y dos)	2.000.000	dos millones
23	veintitrés (veinte y tres)	1.000.000.000	mil millones
24	veinticuatro (veinte y cuatro)	2.000.000.000	dos mil millones



You need to keep the following rules in mind when using cardinal numbers in Spanish:

Uno (*one*), used only when counting, becomes **un** before a masculine noun and **una** before a feminine noun, whether the noun is singular or plural:

- **uno, dos, tres** (*one, two, three*)
- **un niño y una niña** (*a boy and a girl*)
- **sesenta y un dólares** (*61 dollars*)
- **veintiuna (veinte y una) personas** (*21 people*)

You use the conjunction **y** (*and*) only for numbers between 16 and 99. You don't use it directly after hundreds:

- **ochenta y ocho** (*88*)
- **doscientos treinta y siete** (*237*)

You generally write the numbers 16 through 19 and 21 through 29 as one word. The numbers 16, 22, 23, and 26 have accents on the last syllable:

- 16: **dieciséis**

- 22: **veintidós**
- 23: **veintitrés**
- 26: **veintiséis**

When used before a masculine noun, **veintiún** (21) has an accent on the last syllable:

- **veintiún días** (21 days)

Ciento (100) becomes **cien** before nouns of either gender and before the numbers **mil** and **millones**. Before all other numbers, you use **ciento**. **Un** (one), which you don't use before **cien(to)** or **mil**, comes before **millón**. When a noun follows **millón**, you put the preposition **de** between **millón** and the noun. **Millón** drops its accent in the plural (**millones**):

- **cien sombreros** (100 hats)
- **cien blusas** (100 blouses)
- **cien mil millas** (100,000 miles)
- **cien millones de dólares** (100 million dollars)
- **ciento noventa acres** (190 acres)
- **mil posibilidades** (1,000 possibilities)
- **un millón de razones** (1 million reasons)

Compounds of **ciento** (**doscientos**, **trescientos**) must change to agree with a feminine noun:

- **cuatrocientos muchachos** (400 muchachos)
- **seiscientas muchachas** (600 muchachas)



With numerals and decimals, Spanish uses commas where English uses periods, and vice versa:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
6,000	6.000
0.75	0,75
\$14.99	\$14,99

Using ordinal numbers

You use *ordinal numbers* — those used to express numbers in a series — far less frequently than cardinal numbers, but they still have some very important

applications in everyday life. The following chart presents the Spanish ordinal numbers:

<i>Ordinal</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
1st	primero
2nd	segundo
3rd	tercero
4th	cuarto
5th	quinto
6th	sexto
7th	séptimo
8th	octavo
9th	noveno
10th	décimo



The following list outlines everything you must remember when using ordinal numbers in Spanish:

Spanish speakers rarely use ordinal numbers after 10th. After that, they usually use cardinal numbers in both the spoken and written language:

El siglo quince (*the 15th century*)

Ordinal numbers must agree in gender (masculine or feminine) with the nouns they modify. You can make ordinal numbers feminine by changing the final **-o** of the masculine form to **-a**:

la cuarta vez (*the fourth time*)

Primero and **tercero** drop the final **-o** before a masculine singular noun:

el primer muchacho (*the first boy*)

el tercer hombre (*the third man*)

In dates, **primero** is the only ordinal number you use. All other dates call for the cardinal numbers:

el primero de mayo (*May 1st*)

el doce de enero (*January 12th*)

Dealing with Dates

Dates are important parts of everyday life (in more ways than one!). To write out

dates in Spanish, you have to practice the days of the week, the months of the year, and numbers (see the preceding section).

Expressing the days of the week

If you hear **¿Qué día es hoy?** (*What day is it?*), you should respond with **Hoy es . . .** (*Today is . . .*) and then provide the name of one of the days listed here:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Monday	lunes
Tuesday	martes
Wednesday	miércoles
Thursday	jueves
Friday	viernes
Saturday	sábado
Sunday	domingo



Unlike the English calendar, the Spanish calendar starts with Monday.



Here are two more guidelines for talking about days of the week in Spanish:

Unless you use them at the beginning of a sentence, you don't capitalize the days of the week in Spanish:

Lunes y martes son días de vacaciones. (*Monday and Tuesday are vacation days.*)

You use **el** to express *on* when referring to a particular day of the week and **los** to express *on* when the action occurs repeatedly:

No trabajo el sábado. (*I'm not working on Saturday.*)

No trabajo los sábados. (*I don't work on Saturdays.*)

Naming the months of the year

If you hear **¿En qué mes . . .?** (*In what month . . .*), someone is asking you in what month a certain event takes place. We provide the names of the months in Spanish in the following list:

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
January	enero

February	febrero
March	marzo
April	abril
May	mayo
June	junio
July	julio
August	agosto
September	septiembre (or setiembre)
October	octubre
November	noviembre
December	diciembre



Like days of the week, the months aren't capitalized in Spanish:

Junio y julio son meses agradables. (*June and July are nice months.*)

Along with the months, you may also want to talk about the seasons of the year. In Spanish, the seasons are masculine except for **la primavera** (*the spring*):

el invierno (*the winter*)

la primavera (*the spring*)

el verano (*the summer*)

el otoño (*the autumn [fall]*)

Making a date

If you want to ask a passerby or an acquaintance about the date, politely inquire **¿Cuál es la fecha de hoy?** (*What is today's date?*) The person should respond with **Hoy es . . .** (*Today is . . .*) and then use the following formula to express the correct date:

day + **(el)** + cardinal number (except for **primero**) + **de** + month + **de** + year

The following is an example translation, using this formula:

Sunday, April 18, 2010: **Hoy es domingo, el dieciocho de abril de dos mil diez.**



Now that you have a handy formula, you need to know a few more details about writing dates in Spanish: