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- progress quickly beyond the basics
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**latin american**  
**spanish**  
juan kattán-ibarra

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## About the author

Juan Kattán-Ibarra was born in Chile and has travelled extensively in Latin America and Spain. He has degrees from the University of Chile, Michigan State University, Manchester University and the Institute of Education, London University. He taught Spanish at Ealing College in London and was an examiner in Spanish for the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the University of London School Examinations Board. He is now a full-time author.

He is the sole author of *Teach Yourself Spanish*, *Teach Yourself Spanish Grammar*, *Teach Yourself Improve Your Spanish*, *Conversational Spanish*, *Conversando*, *Panorama de la prensa*,

*Perspectivas culturales de Hispanoamérica, Perspectivas culturales de España*, and co-author of *Working with Spanish, Talking Business Spanish, Se escribe así, Sueños – World Spanish 2, Modern Spanish Grammar, Modern Spanish Grammar Workbook*, and *Spanish Grammar in Context*.

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## **Welcome to *Teach Yourself Latin American Spanish!***

This is a complete communicative course in Latin American Spanish, which assumes no previous knowledge of the language. It is designed for beginners as well as those who, having done a general Spanish course or one based on Peninsular Spanish, now wish to learn the language spoken in Latin America. The emphasis is first and foremost on *using* Spanish, but we also aim to give you an idea of how the language works, so that you can create sentences of your own.

Although the course has been written especially for people studying on their own, the material and exercises will also lend themselves to classroom use. The 13 units which make up this book provide ample opportunity to learn and practise the language used in practical, everyday situations, such as introducing yourself and others, giving personal information, making travel arrangements, ordering food, shopping, etc. Those travelling in Latin America, for business or pleasure, will find the material in this course particularly useful.

The course covers all four of the basic skills – listening and speaking, reading and writing. If you are working on your own, the audio recording will be all the more important, as it will provide you with the essential opportunity to listen to the Spanish spoken in Latin America and to speak it within a controlled framework. You should therefore try to obtain a copy of the recording if you haven't already got one.

## Use it or lose it!

Language learning is a bit like jogging – you need to do it regularly for it to be any good! Ideally, you should find a ‘study buddy’ to work through the course with you. This way you will have someone to try out your Spanish on. And when the going gets tough, you will have someone to chivvy you on until you reach your target.

## Understanding authentic Latin American Spanish

Don’t expect to be able to understand everything you hear or read straight away. If you listen to Latin American Spanish audio material, or watch a Latin American programme or film, or are able to get newspapers or magazines, you should not get discouraged when you realize how quickly native-speakers speak and how much vocabulary there is still to be learned. Just concentrate on a *small* extract – either a video / audio clip or a short article – and work through it till you have mastered it. In this way, you’ll find that your command of Spanish increases steadily. Look at the **Taking it further** section at the back of the book for sources of authentic Spanish.

## The structure of this course

The course book contains

- 13 course units
- self-assessment tests
- a reference section at the back of the book
- an audio recording (which you really need to have if you are going to get maximum benefit from the course)

## The course units

The course units are structured in the following way:

### Statement of aims

You will be told what you can expect to learn, both in terms of what you will be able to do in Spanish by the end of the unit, and in terms of the language points you will learn to handle.

## Presentation of new language

The language is presented through a series of dialogues, two, or more. These are on the recording  and also printed in the book. Some assistance with vocabulary is given before and after each dialogue including, where appropriate, regional variations of words used in the texts. The language is presented in manageable chunks, building carefully on what you have learned in earlier units. Most dialogues are followed by listening comprehension exercises, and there are transcripts of these exercises at the back of the book.

## Key phrases and expressions

Key phrases and expressions used in the dialogues and their English translations are listed in the **Key phrases** section.

## Description of language forms

In the **Grammar** section you will learn about the forms of the language, thus enabling you to construct your own sentences correctly.

## Practice

In this section you will be able to use the language that you have learned. Some of the activities here require mainly *recognition*, but you are also encouraged, right from the start, to *produce* both in writing and in speech, following specific guidelines and models.

## Information on Latin American Spanish and aspects of life and customs

At different stages in the course, you will find relevant information on language differences among the various countries, and about aspects of life and customs in Latin America. This information, found in the  section, is given in English.

## Testing yourself

The aim of this section is for you to test yourself and judge whether you have successfully mastered the language.

## Reference section

At the end of the book, there are sections that you can use for reference:

- a glossary of grammatical terms
- a grammar summary
- a list of irregular verbs
- a glossary of Latin American terms
- a pronunciation section
- transcripts of listening comprehension exercises
- a key to the activities and 'testing yourself'
- a Spanish–English vocabulary
- an English–Spanish vocabulary
- a 'taking it further' section
- an index of the grammar contents

## How to use this course

Make sure at the beginning of each course unit that you are clear about what you can expect to learn.

## Dialogues

Read the background information which is given before each dialogue. This sets the scene and the country. There are units based in Mexico (units 1–4), Colombia (units 5 and 6), Chile (units 7–9), Argentina (units 10 and 11) and Peru (units 12 and 13). You will find information on the main pronunciation features in each of these countries in the **Pronunciation** section starting on page 226.

Read, or preferably listen to the dialogue first, before you look at the text, noting the new language forms and vocabulary. You can then check the key words and expressions which follow the dialogue before you read or listen to it again. Do this several times until you feel confident with it, then turn to the accompanying exercise to test what you have learned. You will find the answers in the **Key to the activities** beginning on page 243. If you need an explanation of new language points at this stage, study the relevant paragraphs in the **Grammar** section.

When you listen to the recording, pay special attention to the pronunciation and intonation of the native speakers and try to imitate them. Don't be content with just listening. Spanish may

sound fast to you at first, but as you progress through the course you will find it easier to follow the speakers and imitate their speech.

## Key phrases

Try learning the key phrases, as these constitute the substance of the unit. You can cover up the English translations and produce the English equivalents of the Spanish. If you find that relatively easy, go on to cover the Spanish sentences and produce the Spanish equivalents of the English. You will probably find this more difficult. Trying to recall the context in which words and phrases were used may help you learn them better.

## Grammar

Here the grammatical content of the unit is explained in English and illustrated by means of examples, all with their English translation. The explanations are simple, but if you are daunted by grammar terminology, you can check the **Glossary of grammatical terms** to check the meaning of certain words.

In the **Grammar** section you will learn all major grammatical points, including all main tenses, from the frequently used present tense to the future and past tenses. You will also become familiar with the main grammatical differences between Latin American and Peninsular Spanish. Study the language points and note how they are used in the introductory dialogues as well as in the **Practice** exercises which follow.

## Practice

Most of the exercises here are communicative in nature, requiring you to take an active part in them. Work through each one following the instructions that precede them. Some of them are listen-only activities and are there to help you increase your capacity to understand different forms of spoken Latin American Spanish. The temptation may be to go straight to the **Transcripts** in the back of the book, but try not to do this. The whole point of listening exercises is to improve your listening skills. You won't do this by reading first. The transcriptions are there to help you if you get stuck, or used as reading practice only if you do not have access to the recording. The recordings, many of which are authentic interviews, offer a good opportunity to hear speakers from different parts of Latin America.

As you work your way through the exercises, check your answers carefully in the **Key to the activities** at the back of the book. It is easy to overlook your own mistakes. If you have a study buddy it's a good idea to check each other's answers. Most of the activities have fixed answers, but some are a bit more open-ended.

## Latin American Spanish

Spanish is the main means of communication for more than three hundred million people, most of them living in Latin America. Latin American Spanish differs from Peninsular Spanish, just as British English differs from American English or from that spoken in other parts of the world. Yet, despite these differences, educated speakers from all over the Spanish-speaking world understand each other.

The main differences between Latin American and Peninsular Spanish are in vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation. Differences in grammar also exist but are less marked. Naturally, there are language variations within Latin America itself, just as there are differences within Spain.

Latin American Spanish has borrowed a number of words from indigenous languages in the region. Some of these terms have found their way into Peninsular Spanish and even other European languages. Words like *tomate*, *chocolate* and *maíz*, among others, have their origin in the Americas. Apart from Spanish words which have acquired a different meaning in Latin America, the region as a whole sometimes shows preference for one Spanish word instead of another. By and large, however, most of the Latin American lexicon is Spanish in origin, and most standard words used in Spain will be understood in Latin America.

Some variations in Spanish within Latin America have their roots in the Spanish colonization of the region; others stem from the influence of Indian languages and from that of non-Spanish settlers, mainly African and European. This has given rise to distinctive linguistic areas within the region. The Spanish spoken in Mexico, for instance, sounds quite different from that spoken in the River Plate region, in countries like Argentina and Uruguay. This in turn differs from that of the Andean countries or that spoken around the Caribbean. In addition to using forms which will be understood in most Latin American countries,



*Teach Yourself Latin American Spanish* also explains some of the main differences between various forms of Spanish, including references to specific countries or areas, for example Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), River Plate (Argentina and Uruguay). Differences in pronunciation and intonation between major regions are demonstrated by means of the recording which accompanies the course. Information on regional differences is given in the **Pronunciation** section at the back of the book (p. 226).

# 01

## ¿cuál es su nombre?

What is your name?

**In this unit you will learn**

- how to use simple greetings
- how to introduce yourself
- how to ask and give personal information

## 1 En un hotel *In a hotel*

A tourist arrives at a hotel in Guadalajara, Mexico. Note the word *tengo* *I have*, and the phrase *¿Cuál es su nombre?* *What is your name?*, a formal way of asking someone's name.



<b>Turista</b>	Buenas noches.
<b>Recepcionista</b>	Buenas noches, señora. ¿Qué desea?
<b>Turista</b>	Tengo una reservación.
<b>Recepcionista</b>	¿Cuál es su nombre, por favor?
<b>Turista</b>	Ana González.
<b>Recepcionista</b>	Ah sí, es la habitación número quince.

buenas noches	<i>good evening</i>
¿qué desea?	<i>can I help you?</i>
una reservación/reserva	<i>a reservation</i>
por favor	<i>please</i>
la habitación	<i>room</i>
el número	<i>number</i>
quince	<i>fifteen</i>

## 1 Formal or polite forms of address: señora, señorita, señor

**Señora** *Mrs, madam*, is used for addressing older and married women. A younger and unmarried woman will be addressed as **señorita**, *Miss*. These two words are used with the first name, the surname or the full name, e.g. **señora María (Miranda)**. **Señor** *Mr, Sir*, used for addressing men, can only be used with the surname or the full name, not with the first name, e.g. **señor (Gonzalo) Palma**.