

## **What are the main difficulties in learning Spanish for an English speaker?**

**1. In Spanish there are two verbs for "to be". "Ser" and "Estar"** You can read the explanations in a grammar book and understand them very well but it will be a long time before you will stop making errors when you speak. The usual explanation is that "ser" is used for permanent things and "estar" is used for temporary states. This is just a brief overview so I won't go into details but just to give you an example look at these two sentences in English. "I am boring" and "I am bored" The first means that you are a boring person the second means that you are temporarily bored by the situation you are in. These two sentences translated to Spanish would be "Soy aburrido" and "Estoy aburrido" respectively. For possessions you use "ser" eg "es mio" (it's mine) and for position you use "estar" eg "¿Dónde está?" (Where is it?)

**2. The second difficulty is that the subjunctive is used a lot in Spanish but hardly ever in English.** For example one of the most common uses of the subjunctive in Spanish is with "want". An easy structure for a foreigner learning English could be: "I want you to buy me a present" In Spanish you would have to say (literally) I want that you buy me a present. or "Quiero que me compres un regalo" - "You buy" would normally be "compras" but because you have to use the subjunctive you have to change it to "compres" which is the subjunctive form. Although the subjunctive is difficult, if you don't use it properly you will probably be understood so it's not such a big problem.

**3. All nouns in Spanish are either masculine or feminine.**

Eg. El libro = the book (masculine) La casa = the house (feminine)

Generally speaking masculine nouns end in "o" and feminine nouns end in "a". However, some of them are not regular: (here are some very common ones) la mano = hand - la foto = photo - el día = day - el mapa = map - el programa = program - el sistema = system - el problema = problem - el clima = climate

**4. Spanish has an informal and a formal form of address.**

Eg. What is your name? is:

Formal: ¿Cómo se llama usted?

Informal: ¿Cómo te llamas?

(literally. - What do you call yourself?)

It is very difficult to know which one to use and there are different social norms especially in South America. The formal form is becoming less used. If you ask a Spanish person to explain it to you each person will give you a different answer.

**5. The big problem with learning any language is understanding what people say when they are speaking fast.**

## **What are the easiest things about learning Spanish for an English speaker?**

### **1. In English there are 13 vowel sounds in Spanish there are only five (a, e, i, o, u)**

Spanish is a syllable timed language so the vowels stay the same length no matter where they are in a sentence. Imagine how difficult it is for a learner of English when most English words have a long and a short form or a strong and a weak form. Look at the sentence: *Do you think John would like to go for a drink?* In English this could be pronounced "De yu think John ud like tu go fe u drink?" This problem normally doesn't exist in Spanish because all the vowels are fully pronounced. Sometimes in regional accents some of the consonants are dropped for example in Andalucía they drop the final "s" from most words. There is also a widespread silent consonant in the past participles eg. "hablado" = spoken. Sometimes the Spanish do not pronounce the "ado" so "hablado" would be said as "hablao". However, Spanish pronunciation is quite easy to learn although it is difficult to speak without a foreign accent. Maybe, a good advice would be to learn the vowel sounds and then pronounce everything. If you have Spanish friends who speak a little English you may notice that they try / tend to over-pronounce. By the way, the Spanish word which contains all the vowel sounds is "murciélagó" which means bat (the one that flies not the baseball type).

**2. It is very easy to write in Spanish.** Once you have learned which sound corresponds to each letter you can easily write correctly in Spanish. The only difficult thing with writing is the accents.

**3. It is easy to make affirmative sentences, negative sentences and questions.**

**4. Just open any dictionary and you will find that 50% of the words are very similar.**

## **Why bother learning Spanish?**

The most spoken language in the world is Mandarin Chinese. This is followed by English and then Spanish. **If you know English and Spanish you will be able to speak to more than half the population of the world.**