
Accents in Spanish

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All words with multiple syllables have a certain syllable where there is more emphasis than others. Read the following and see where more emphasis is placed:

also, penguin, running, saxophone, democracy, exceptional, require, decide, castle, inspiring, desperation

There are rules that help us to know where to place emphasis or stress in a word. We will learn these for Spanish.

When we talk about accents in Spanish, we can refer either to the actual written accent on a vowel, or we are talking about the syllable where most emphasis is placed (whether or not there is a written accent). The written accent is also known as the tilde.

The following rules will tell us where natural accents fall in Spanish words, and where we have to put actual written accents in order to keep the proper pronunciation for a word.

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1. When a word ends in a vowel, 's' or 'n,' the stress falls on the second-to-last syllable (penultimate syllable).

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casa ca-sa

manzanas man-za-nas

desierto de-sier-to

lunes lu-nes

caminan ca-mi-nan

origen o-ri-gen

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2. When a word ends in a consonant other than 's' or 'n,' the stress falls on the last syllable.

capaz

ca-paz

mirar

mi-rar

color

co-lor

ciudad

ciu-dad

papel

pa-pel

reloj

re-loj

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When a word is pronounced differently than what the above rules indicate, we have to include a **written accent** to highlight the stressed syllable. You will slowly recognize over time how words should sound, and then you will know if they match the above rules or not, and therefore know when to put a written accent.

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canción can-ción

cárcel cár-cel

huésped hués-ped

tenéis te-néis

lápiz lá-piz

rápido rá-pi-do

Plurals:

As a general rule, when making a word plural, you want to retain the original stress of the singular word. If necessary, add a written accent to achieve this. You might also remove the written accent if it is no longer necessary.

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lápiz	<u>lá</u> -piz	→	lápices	<u>lá</u> -pi-ces
origen	o- <u>ri</u> -gen	→	orígenes	o- <u>rí</u> -ge-nes
canción	can- <u>ción</u>	→	canciones	can- <u>cio</u> -nes

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1. morado

2. quizas

3. victoria

4. examen

5. conversacion

6. influencia

7. vela

8. boton

9. profesores

10. Gonzalez

11. trabajais

12. examenes