AP SPANISH LANGUAGE

The Ultimate Student’s Guide to the AP Spanish Language Exam

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

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Introduction

AP Spanish Language is no walk in the park. Last year, less than 1 in 5 Spanish learners earned a 5 on the exam.

That’s why we’ve created this comprehensive study tool. It’s intended to be a helpful resource for any student planning to take the AP Spanish Language exam. By beginning here, you’ll have a better understanding of the test, and receive essential tools to set yourself up for success.

This guide starts by introducing the exam format, curriculum, and scoring guidelines. Then it includes a series of detailed content guides and crash course reviews. The last section features study tips and strategies to help you score every possible point on test day. With this eBook, you’ll be able to confidently take action in creating your study plan and framing your goals.

This book features information from the Albert Blog, where new academic resources are published every day of the week. Be sure to regularly check the blog and subscribe to hear about our new posts. You can also find tips and study guides for your AP classes, and admissions advice for your dream school on our blog.

E-mail us at hello@albert.io if you have any questions, suggestions, or comments!

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About Us

What is Albert?

Albert bridges the gap between learning and mastery with interactive content written by world-class educators.

We offer:

• Tens of thousands of AP-style practice questions in all the major APs
• A complete competitive online leaderboard to see where you stand compared to others
• Immediate feedback on each question answered
• An easy to access platform from any Internet-enabled device
• In-depth personal statistics to track your progress
• Intuitive classroom tools for teachers and administrators

Discover why thousands of students and educators trust Albert

Learn anything through interactive practice: College math and science, Advanced Placement®, SAT®, ACT®, GRE®, GMAT®, literature, social science, history, and more.

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Why Educators Love Us

We asked teachers how their students did after using Albert.

Here is what they had to say:

My students had an 81.2% passing rate - the previous year was 76% (the highest rate in our county)! I am thrilled. I had 64 students total, with 6 receiving 5s, 19 scoring 4s, 27 receiving 3s, 10 scored 2s and 2 received 1s.

Susan M., JP Taravella High

70% of my students scored 3 or higher. This is up from last year, and is also well above the national average. Needless to say, I am very happy with my students' success. I used Albert more intentionally this year. In the beginning of the year, I wanted students simply to answer questions and practice. Once they had 150-200 questions answered, we looked for trends, strengths, and weaknesses and worked on addressing them. Students were tasked with increasing their answer accuracy no matter how many questions it took, then they set their own goals (some wanted to focus around tone; others needed practice with meaning as a whole).

Bill S., Lapeer High School

Last year 40% passed with 3s and 4s. This year 87% passed, most had 4s and 5s. We used the stimulus-based multiple choice questions throughout the year and as review for the exam. I think it helped tremendously.

Alice P., First Baptist Christian Academy

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Why Students Love Us

We asked students how they did after using Albert.

Here is what they had to say:

I scored very well this year – four 5s and one 4. Albert helped me get used to the types of questions asked on the exam and overall my scores were better this year.

Robyn G., Chambersburg Area Senior High School

Last year was my first year taking an AP test, and unfortunately I did not do as well as I had hoped. The subject had not been my best, and that was definitely displayed on my performance. However this year, I made a much higher score on my AP test. The previous year had been AP World History and I had made a 2. For this year it was AP English Language, and I scored a 4. There was a definite jump in my score, because Albert pushed me to focus on my weaknesses and form them into strengths.

Charlotte R., Rome High

I scored a 4 on AP Biology, much higher than expected. Albert was an effective resource to guide me through AP Biology. Keeping up with it consistently all year as I learned the lesson in class was crucial to reinforcing my understanding and long-term memorization of Biology. After class each day, Albert helped to sink in the ideas that I was taught in the morning.

Lily O., Wake Forest High School

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Is AP Spanish Language Hard?

The AP Spanish Language and Culture test can be difficult. Learning a second language can be difficult in general, and being tested on five or more years of Spanish classes for them AP Spanish Language exam doesn’t make things any easier. In addition to learning all the rules and grammar that come with the language, you have to put yourself in the culture to understand other slang words and nuances that can change by region. Spanish can be particularly daunting because it is spoken by nearly half a billion people all over the world. All those different countries have different cultures, accents, and different meanings for different words.
Despite all this, AP Spanish is less difficult due to the fact that it employs a “neutral” Spanish that does not take place in the real world, but serves as a base from which you can understand other accents. This neutral Spanish helps you grasp basic concepts and speak the language at a relatively fluent level. Let’s take a look at the AP Spanish test to learn more about it.

**By the Numbers**

The AP Spanish Language and Culture test is by far the most commonly taken language AP test; over 150,000 students took the test in 2015 alone. This is because many school districts offer classes starting in middle school which students then continue straight until their final year of high school. Normally you will take Spanish 1 to 4 and be able to choose advanced placement courses at the higher levels. Anyone can take the exam regardless of whether or not they have studied Spanish.

According to the College Board’s own statistics, the following are the percentage of the scores received by the students who took the test in 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
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The chart presents some very surprising details about the AP Spanish Language and culture exam. Nearly 90% of students earn a passing score of 3 or higher, which is probably one of the highest passing rates of any AP exam. In addition, there are more people who received 4’s and 5’s than received 3. In fact, those who received a 3 represent the lowest percentage of all those with passing scores. However, despite the fact that this makes the exam look relatively easy, these percentages are misleading.

First of all, the high pass rate can be attributed to the dedication it takes to learn a language. Those who have studied for the exam have been taking classes for 4 or 5 years. This makes it hard to compare the Spanish language exam to other AP tests, such as that of AP Government, which has a pass rate of only 50% for the 2015 school year with an almost equal amount of students taking the test. The AP Government course is only taken for a semester or, more rarely, a year, before the exam is taken.

Secondly, this is misleading because colleges usually require a score higher than three to take credit and substitute that score for a college course. Most colleges only accept 4’s where some even only accept 5’s as passing scores to accept the test as college credit. This raises the difficulty curve to represent 62% of all students who took the exam. This number is the more representative number of those who truly “pass” the exam.

Overall, this means the exam requires a more advanced level of study in order to be used for college credit. Most students will need an AP Spanish Language study plan to get the 5. In order to figure out such a plan, you first need to look at the structure of the exam.
Exam Structure

The exam’s structure is about as complex as the language itself. The exam is meant to give a comprehensive evaluation of your knowledge of the Spanish language. Because of this, the test is one of the longer exams, running about 2 and half hours. The time is split up between two main sections, which are in turn split into a total of 6 separate subsections. Let’s go into more detail about the contents of the exam. It should be noted that when you go in to take the test you will hear the instructions read to you completely in Spanish. The structure of the exam is as follows.

Section I: Multiple Choice Reading, 95 minutes

The first section of the test is 95 minutes long and divided into two subsections. It represents half of the final score. All questions in this section are multiple choice and are meant to test aptitude in reading and listening. The first subsection is solely a reading section with printed texts. It is made up of 30 questions and is 40 minutes long. This means you will have 1 minute and 15 seconds for each question.

The second subsection is meant to evaluate both reading and listening skills. You first have to listen to an audio that is played by the proctor, and then read a text relating to the audio. There are 35 questions divided up among the different audios and their texts. This section is 55 minutes long when taking into account both the length of the audios and the time to answer questions.

Section II: Writing and Speaking, 90 minutes

The second section is 90 minutes long and divided into four subsections. The first subsection is an informal writing evaluation, usually in the form of an e-mail response. There is only one prompt, and you have 15 minutes to answer.

The second subsection is the formal writing prompt. This usually takes the form of a persuasive essay. You will have 1 prompt and 55 minutes to answer the prompt. This section is probably one of the hardest because you will have to be persuasive in a second language, which means you will have to manage a persuasive tone in Spanish.

The third subsection is the informal speaking part that is made up of a simulated conversation with the proctor. You will have to respond to 5 or 6 prompts, and you will have only 20 seconds to respond to each. Despite the speed and length of this section, it is easier because the language is simpler.

Finally, you will have the formal oral presentation. This subsection is meant to represent all accumulated skills that you have gathered in your Spanish language learning. It can be the most difficult because you only have 4 minutes to prepare for the single prompt. After you have prepared, you will have 2 minutes to give your presentation.

Content

The overall content of the exam is difficult to measure due to the vast amount of subject matter that is covered while learning a language. However, the College Board does require that specific content is reviewed over the length of the exam. In addition, the questions all come in specific formats that can help you prepare your AP Spanish Language study plan.

The reading part of the first section is made up of a few overall categories of texts. These texts are as follows:

- News and Journalism: Newspaper articles, headlines, magazines, etc.
- Announcements: Events, political announcements, and others.
- Advertisements: Magazine advertisements, newspaper classifieds, etc.
- Correspondence: E-mails and letters, both formal and informal.
- Maps: Usually in the format of giving directions or identifying locations.
- Tables: Graphics with specific information and statistics.

These materials are all authentic, and it can be quite difficult to figure out a comprehensive study plan to cover them all.

The audio part of the first section is made up of fewer categories of audio samples that are usually only a few minutes in length. These audios are:

- Interviews: You will have to identify what both the interviewer asks and the interviewee answers.
- Podcasts: Listen to informational podcasts and identify the subject matter.
- PSAs: Government and private organizations making announcements about a public concern or initiative.
- Conversations: Informal conversations between two people where you will have to identify the subject matter and responses.
- Brief Presentations: Informational presentations, similar to podcasts.

The audio is paired with texts that the student will use as supplementary information.

Finally, there is the free response section. These are generally more specific in their content, but more general on their subject matter. The student usually has to voice an opinion or makeup responses on the spot.

The writing section includes both the response and the persuasive essay. The e-mail response is generally very straightforward. The persuasive essay is a bit harder. The essay presents you with several graphs, texts, and other original information. The information in these texts usually forms several sides to an issue. You have to take a side and present your argument based on the information in the texts.

The final portion of the exam, the speaking section, is much shorter than the other parts of the exam, but also more difficult. This is because it is the most broadly general section of the exam where the student usually has to come up with an answer on the spot. The first part is the conversation in which you will be given an outline. This outline gives the format of the conversation and the student will have to respond accordingly, following the outline.

The second portion of the speaking part of the exam is similar to the first, but the student has more time to prepare. A prompt is given that is usually specific to the cultural differences between the student’s own community and a Spanish-speaking community. The student will prepare the presentation based on this and then give a small presentation with their conclusions and comparisons.

Skills Required

The AP Spanish language test is particularly difficult due to the vast amount of information the student has to utilize in the exam. However, you as the student have the advantage of having learned the language over the course of several years throughout your high school career. Because of this, you will be more prepared than you think to go into the exam. The following are a few skills you will have to practice outside of course study in order to get that 5.

Review Basic Concepts

This can seem a bit strange when coming out of Spanish IV, but the most difficult part of the exam will be refreshing the basic concepts of Spanish that have gone underutilized as you replace that memory with more recent knowledge of advanced aspects of Spanish. With the help of an AP Spanish language study guide, you can review these concepts in order to be more prepared for the exam. Here is a short list of some things you should review.

- Differences between preterit and imperfect tenses: the confusion between these two is a constant bane of foreign speakers of Spanish.
- Differences between ser and estar
- Review common irregular verbs and their conjugations: ser, estar, tener, poner, etc.
- The difference between por and para
- When the subjunctive mood and indicative moods are used: while this is not basic, it is important because the subjunctive mood is nearly non existent in English.

Listening Skills

As can be seen, about a quarter to a third of the final score rests on how well you can interpret what a Spanish speaker is saying. This means you will have to develop proper listening skills in order to answer the questions appropriately. This means taking the time to listen to Spanish speakers outside of class. This is one of the hardest skills to develop because it requires a greater effort outside of class.

Reading Comprehension

This goes along with listening skills, although to a lesser degree. A vast amount of the exam rests on being able to read a text and interpret it, mainly within the persuasive essay and reading multiple choice sections. Many of the instructions themselves are also in Spanish on the test.

Speaking Skills, Specifically Euphemisms

Finally, the main part of the speaking portion rests on your fluidity and grasp of Spanish concepts as you answer questions in Spanish. Given that you have a short amount of time to answer a question, you will need to be able to come up with an answer quickly. The main skill that needs to be developed for speaking is being able to come up with euphemisms. This means that if you don’t know the word for an idea you want to express, you should be able to quickly come with a description where that word can be understood.

Benefits

As we’ve said before, the Spanish language is spoken by nearly half a billion people throughout the world. This number includes over 44 million people in the United States alone. Learning the Spanish language can bring about benefits that you can take with you for a lifetime.
Communication

Learning Spanish will allow you to communicate with over half of the population of the Americas. You can also start following Spanish news and reading Spanish newspapers. Learning Spanish will also help you better understand social issues affecting the Spanish-speaking population of the United States as you can better connect with the people.

Employment Opportunities

Many jobs today require basic Spanish speaking skills in order to be hired as businesses are trying to garner more clients from the growing Hispanic population in the United States. You can use your Spanish skills to make yourself more desirable as a potential employee. This especially helps if you eventually have a position where you can work within Latin America.

Greater Understanding

One of the strangest and most interesting parts of learning a new language is that it makes you think in different ways. Studies have shown that learning a new language can help you with your critical thinking skills as well as your communication skills. It makes sense, given that learning a new language challenges you to be more expressive and think about what you are saying before you speak.

Next Steps

When you take the benefits into consideration and your opportunity to pass the test with flying colors, you might be wondering what will be the next steps to moving towards taking the Spanish test.
Create a College Board Account

The first step would be to create an account on the College Board website. Registration to the website is required to take the test, view your scores, and send out scores to universities and scholarships. The website also has helpful information about the exam in addition to what has been explained in this article.

Get a Study Guide

Study guides are packed with useful AP Spanish language tips that can be essential for getting the five on the exam. Looking for a study guide can also help you review basic skills to refresh yourself before the exam. This is also a good way to study up on complex issues and concepts. Finally, the study guide will include many study questions to help you practice and time yourself for the exam.

Websites such as albert.io even offer reading questions on a wide variety of topics. These topics are similar in format and theme in comparison to the questions given in the multiple choice sections of the actual AP test. The themes are also specialized to expand your vocabulary in areas that are not normally studied.

Watch Videos and Get Proactive

You should watch videos on YouTube and even try to make Spanish speaking friends in order to practice for the most difficult parts of the AP test. While an AP Spanish language study plan can help you, learning a language comes down to how much you actively practice with it. This includes listening to videos such as news stories or vlogs and having conversations with real people.

You can also get with a fellow student and practice the conversation portion of the exam to expand your vocabulary and help each other out. Here is an example of the conversation section, note that it is in Spanish, just like it would be in the AP exam:

Tú y tú compañero tienen que simular una llamada telefónica. El que llama tiene que proponer una reunión de amigos y el compañero pregunta sobre los planes. Contesta según el siguiente bosquejo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compañero 1</th>
<th>Contesta el teléfono</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compañero 2</td>
<td>Saludar; explicar el motivo de la llamada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reaccionar y preguntar por los detalles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explicar los detalles de la reunión</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Responda proponiendo otra hora y explicación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Acordarte con el nuevo horario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Saludar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saludo diferente al 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you want extra speaking practice, you can also change roles as well as the details of the meeting. You should use any chance you can get to speak and listen to Spanish in the days leading up to the AP Spanish language exam. With plenty of practice, you will be able to get a 5 and maybe even use your speaking skills in the future.
The AP Spanish Language and Culture test is a tough mixture of linguistic aspects and how they play into the cultures of the different Spanish-speaking countries in the world. Looking at the sheer content of what you have to study might seem overwhelming or impossible, but if you take a look a little deeper, you will see that this isn’t the case.

Learning a language is not the same as learning science or mathematics. Rather, it can be easier, as there are plenty of hard and fast rules in a language that you can stick to in order to understand how to speak that language. For example, conjugation almost always follows the same patterns, no matter what the verb.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

When you take this fact about language into consideration, things will suddenly get easier. You end up realizing these patterns and focusing on the exceptions to those patterns to actually end up learning the language. Spanish is no different.

Here are some ways you can get into creating an AP Spanish Language and Culture study plan that is suited to your needs and the rougher areas of the Spanish language. In addition, we will include some tips and reminders to keep in mind while you study.

What’s on the Exam?

One thing you absolutely have to keep in mind during your studies is that the AP is not a perfect gauge of your Spanish speaking skills. The AP test is actually created based on the course content the CollegeBoard has judged as necessary for learning the language. It then makes sense to look at what the CollegeBoard includes on the exam through their recommended course content.

The interesting thing about the CollegeBoard’s guidelines is how they do not focus on studying the grammatical aspects, but rather the cultural aspects of the language. This is probably why the course can be referred to as AP Spanish Language and Culture. Additionally, there is no grammar included on the exam itself, even though it is integral in formulating your answers.

First of all, let’s look at how the actual exam is set up. The following is the general build of the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Note that the total estimated time includes reading directions and listening to audio.

1. Multiple Choice Reading

   - 95 minutes long
   - Two subsections
     - First subsection: 40 minutes long and 30 questions; printed texts like flyers and e-mails.
     - Second subsection: 55 minutes long and 35 questions; audio listening followed by reading a text related to the audio and answering questions based on the relationship between the two.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

2. Writing and Speaking

- 90 minutes long
- Four subsections
  - First subsection: 15 minutes and 1 prompt; informal writing, such as writing a letter or e-mail.
  - Second subsection: 55 minutes and 1 prompt; persuasive essay presenting your side on a specific issue.
  - Third subsection: 5 prompts, 20 seconds each; recorded responses to a simulated conversation.
  - Fourth subsection: 1 prompt, 4 minutes for preparation and 2 minutes for response; recorded oral presentation.

The hardest part of the entire exam would probably be the persuasive essay, which is the most demanding when it comes to creating vocabulary on a specialized topic. The easiest would probably be the conversation exercise, because it is simple and easy to follow with the proctor.

No matter what section of the test you are on at the time, the CollegeBoard will present you with a demanding range of vocabulary that you should have studied throughout your years of studying the Spanish language. The following are some of the vocabulary categories or themes that the CollegeBoard requires a teacher to cover in their class:

1. Beauty and Aesthetics. Describing objects and their qualities. This can include artworks, social standards for beauty, or architecture. It can also include random daily aspects such as describing the weather or aspects of nature.

2. Contemporary Life. You will learn how to describe your daily life or habitual processes. Some of these processes include sending an e-mail, messaging, and navigating websites. You might also need to plan a trip or a special event, such as a party or school dance.
3. **Families and Communities.** You will describe the different relationships in your family or another family. These relationships will be either emotional (such as husband and wife) or genealogical (grandmother, cousin, sister, etc.). You will also need to talk about community events, community relationships, or other aspects of community.

4. **Global Challenges.** You will have to describe the societal, political, or scientific challenges that the world faces today. Examples of these challenges can be poverty, climate change, or natural disasters.

5. **Personal and Public Identities.** This category can be difficult to describe well, but it is basically the aspects of identity in society and societal roles. Examples of personal identities would be hobbies, interests, or physical characteristics. Public identities are professions, economic positions, or the role of the person in their society.

6. **Science and Technology.** You should have an understanding of basic aspects of science and technology. For technology, you should be able to describe navigating a computer, the web, and other relevant technologies, such as smartphones. As far as the sciences, you should be able to describe basic chemistry, biology, geography, geology, and meteorology.

Looking at these six categories, you may be wondering how you can study for such overarching content. Luckily, we are here to help you look through what you need to know with the ultimate goal of achieving a 5 on your test. In addition, we will give you some resources for review that will give you an idea of the relevant subjects and content that will be on the exam itself.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

Things to Consider

Looking at the sheer amount of content and knowledge that is required to take the test, you may feel overwhelmed right off the bat. However, the truth is that things are easier than you might think. If you find yourself in despair while looking at your study plan, take the following into consideration.

1. **AP Spanish Language and Culture vs. Other Exams.** Yes, the AP Spanish exam is packed with information, but that information has been covered through years of preparation. Most AP courses are studied throughout a year or just a semester, but AP Spanish is studied over the course of several years.

   The accumulated experience that you have from learning Spanish makes you more prepared than you think and it will really cut down on your vocabulary study time.

2. **Context clues and euphemism.** When it comes to both the reading and writing exercises, there are chances that you may come across or need a word that has slipped your mind. Whether you are reading or writing, there are ways to get around this problem and get to the point without having to skip the question.

   a. **Euphemism:**

   This will help you with speaking exercises as well as writing. Many people understand a euphemism as a way to say a bad word without actually saying it. However, a euphemism is actually a way to say anything without actually saying it and you probably do it every day when you speak Spanish in class.

   For example, if you are looking for the word for “notes” in Spanish (*apuntes*), you might say “*La cosa que escribo para estudiar*” (The thing I write to study). That is a euphemism. In a writing setting, you can say something like “*El científico que estudi apiedras dice...*” (The scientist that studies rocks says...) if you cannot find the word for “geologist” at that moment.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

Timing is key on the exam, so you should go for continuity of thought by using euphemisms instead of wracking your brain to help write more quickly.

b. **Context Clues:**

This is probably the key to learning any language. In fact, you probably even make use of this strategy when you are reading texts in English. Whenever you come across a word that you do not understand, you should always look at the context of the phrase surrounding the word and pull out details related to the word.

For example, say you do not understand the word “library.” You might read a sentence that says, “He went to the library to get some books so he can study.” You can get from the context of the sentence that a library is a place where books are stored.

Looking at context clues in reading exercises can definitely help you get the understanding of a particular word you are struggling to understand. Otherwise, you can also work on looking at the context of the entire article, especially if the particular word is a keyword for the rest of the article or text.

3. **Cognates.** English is an odd language that has both Germanic and Latin roots. Spanish is a Latin language that is derived from the Latin that Romans spoke. The shared Latin background of both English and Spanish has given rise to certain useful cognates.

Cognates are two words that have the same origins; in this case, the words in English that have a Latin origin that is shared with Spanish. You might have noticed that the easiest cognates to identify end with the suffix –ción in Spanish and –tion in English. The meaning of these words is obvious just by looking at them, such as “preparation” and “preparación.”

It is said that about 40% of all English words are Spanish cognates. That means if you come across a word that seems similar and makes sense in the context in which it is presented, then it probably means what you are guessing.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

These words are most often scientific or have prefixes or suffixes that are Latin-based in English. Other examples would be geografía/geography and repetir/to repeat.

However, beware of false cognates that look similar, but could portray a different or opposite meaning from what you want to say. The most common false cognate would be “embarrassed” and “embarazada.” “Embarazada” actually means “pregnant” in Spanish; if you want to say “I’m embarrassed,” you would actually say, “Tengo vergüenza” and not “Estoy embarazada.”

Keeping these three AP Spanish tips in mind will help you improve your Spanish and make your studies much easier. They will also play a huge role in how you take your exam, creating a way to answer a question that might otherwise give you a difficult time.

The Study Plan

Now that we have covered tips about the test and its content, studying for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam will now come down to figuring out what you already know and what you need to know. Because this is a language and not a concrete concept, it is much more difficult to identify your weak points. In any case, Spanish does have a few different areas that are not easily transferred into English that you absolutely have to study.

When you are studying, you should look at three particular concepts before moving on to review vocabulary or more extensive grammar rules. Here are the three most difficult problems that English speakers encounter in Spanish.

1. The Subjunctive Mood. This is definitely the hardest concept to grasp in Spanish. In fact, it is probably the last thing you will master to reach total fluency in Spanish. Luckily, the exam does not look for fluency, but rather competency in Spanish. Therefore, the subjunctive will be an important subject, but not absolutely critical to passing the exam.
The subjunctive is often mistaken for a tense, but it is actually a mood. The mood that we are most familiar with is called the indicative mood. In English, the subjunctive mood only exists in formal writing, such as “The manager asks that you be there at six.” The “you be” is the verb “to be” in the subjunctive mood.

In Spanish, the subjunctive mood is a much more commonly used aspect of the language. It is used to express wishes, desires, doubts, or possibilities in Spanish. It therefore occurs very frequently, even in normal conversation.

The subjunctive mood is the most important thing to study in Spanish because it is the hardest part of the language for English speakers to understand. Its frequency mixed with its difficulty makes it a priority on your study plan. You should also learn the subjunctive conjugation of the different verb endings as well as any irregular verbs.

2. Por/Para; Ser/Estar. These four words are often confused in English, mainly because their meaning translates to a single word. Ser and estar both mean “to be,” while por and para most often mean “for” in English (although they can mean many other things). This confusion often leads to the two words being used interchangeably when they should be used in specific contexts.

   a. Por/Para

These are two complicated words that are hard to understand and use when approaching Spanish from an English language mindset. The most important thing to remember is that they have separate contexts for use and neither word is interchangeable.

The good news is that “por” is easier to understand because it is used much more often and can be associated more closely to the word “for” in English. “Para” is more often used to express purpose and can be associated more closely with the phrase “in order to” in English.
An example of the distinction between the two words comes from the sentence “Estoy caminando por/para el parque.” Using “por” in this context would mean you are saying “I am walking through the park.” Meanwhile, using “para” would mean “I am walking in the direction of the park.” This is not a subtle difference and the distinction separates both words from their common association to the word “for” in English.

You should dedicate a good amount of time to these two words and make a point to include them in your Spanish practice to better understand how they are used.

b. Ser/Estar

These two words are even more difficult to understand than por and para. English speakers who are fluent in Spanish still commonly make errors in identifying which verb to use in certain contexts. Luckily, both of these verbs mean “to be” in English.

That being said, the easiest way to identify which word you should use comes from the permanence of “being.” That sounds philosophical, but it is actually really easy to understand. When describing something permanent or long-lasting, you should use “ser.” Likewise, when something is temporary or short lived, you should use “estar.”

For example, when a person describes what they do for work, they are probably hoping that the job will be permanent or last a lifetime. Therefore, “I am a teacher” would translate to “Soy profesor.”

A more complex version of this concept comes from the state of a person versus the quality of a person. A person’s state is temporary, whereas a person’s quality is permanent. In English, we distinguish this by changing the word order: A person can be happy or they can be a happy person.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

In Spanish, describing a person that is happy would be “La persona está feliz.” Meanwhile, a happy person would be “La persona es feliz.” In this way, you can see the difference in permanence between the two words.

Studying these two verbs will help you understand the common errors that occur among English speakers who are learning Spanish. The distinction is especially important because it can often be completely wrong (and therefore would make no sense) or completely change the meaning of the sentence.

3. Past Tense. The past tense in Spanish changes according to temporal aspects, much like ser and estar. The two most common past tense conjugations are the imperfect (preterite imperfect) or preterite (perfect preterite). They are often confused in English because the distinction simply does not exist.

The imperfect is used most often for actions that are being described in the past as continuous and without an indicated end. For example, “I worked on the project” would be “Trabajaba en el proyecto.” The use of the imperfect tense means that you are still working on the project today or otherwise lacks an action that indicated completion of the project.

The preterite therefore indicates a completed action in the past. As an example, “I worked on the project” would be “Trabajé en el proyecto.” In this case, you worked on the project until completion. The two aspects can work together to describe different events in the past and how they are related; for example, “Trabajaba en el proyecto, pero mi jefe me despidió.” In this case, the action was continuous until it was interrupted by another action. The continuous action (“I worked on the project...”) is interrupted by the completed action (“...but my boss fired me.”).

There are plenty of other aspects in the past tense in Spanish, and they play roles in both the indicative and subjunctive moods. The complexity of the past tense and the similarities between aspects makes it important to identify and study these common problems.
How to Study for AP Spanish Language Cont.

When you are working on your study plan, it is important to take the above three common problems into account. The three problems are absolutely imperative because they are the most commonly cited errors English speakers will make in the Spanish language. You are also almost sure to be tested on these three while you are taking the test.

Apart from working on these errors, you should also cover other things you might not understand or that might be difficult for you to grasp. These are most likely grammatical aspects, such as word gender, other tenses, or possibly problems with similar words.

Your Resources

Now that you have identified the weak points in your Spanish studies, it is important to find different resources to study Spanish and work towards getting a 5 on the exam. The best part about the AP exam is that it is structured with obvious patterns and identifiable themes. Therefore, there is a certain aspect of strategy that can be applied to studying for the AP Spanish exam.

1. Past exams

First and foremost, always look at the CollegeBoard website for information on the exam. The exam information page has all of the descriptions of the exam content and everything you should study before going in to take the exam. In addition, they provide invaluable resources such as a practice exam, past exams to review, and even feedback on real student answers for FRQ’s.

It should be noted that past exams will be less reliable the further back in time you go. This is particularly true of those exams that come from before 2009, because they contain grammar sections that are no longer on today’s exams. However, you can still use those sections to review grammar problems, if necessary.
2. Take other tests

While the exams from the CollegeBoard are great, they don’t really serve their purpose for learning and studying due to the fact that you cannot receive feedback for your answers. That is why you should use them as a starting point to understanding what you need to study, rather than using them solely to study.

When you have studied and you are ready to practice, you can head over to albert.io, which has Spanish tests for you to take. The tests have multiple choice questions that touch on the same exact topics that the CollegeBoard requires on the exams. The best part is that you receive feedback and reasoning when you get questions correct or incorrect.

Using a topical exam such as those from albert.io helps you to expand relevant vocabulary while also learning from your mistakes to be able to identify problems that require special study.

3. Spanish language media

As we have covered, listening and reading take up a significant portion of the exam. While it is easy to study for an exam by reviewing notes and reading study guides, you will most likely learn more from engaging with Spanish language media from all over the world.

The United States has a significant percentage of Spanish speaking citizens, which means that media in Spanish is very easy to come by. You can start reading newspapers or listening to the news while you are studying for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam.

Even further, you should search YouTube for channels that you are interested in. These channels can be related to hobbies or specific news that you want to learn about. As long as they are in Spanish, you will be learning.
Conclusion

The AP Spanish Language and Culture exam has tons of information that needs to be covered. However, thanks to your years of practice and dedication in your different Spanish classes, you will find yourself more prepared than you realize. While reviewing vocabulary flashcards and different verb conjugations can help, they won’t make you learn the language.

The key to learning Spanish actually comes from exposure. You should do everything possible to get out there and use the language, whether you are listening to the news or actively engaging in conversation. That way, you go into the test room with the confidence of knowing the language.
Ready to Score Higher?

Stop stressing about the AP Spanish Language Exam.

Albert has got your back!

With thousands of practice questions, personalized statistics, and anytime, anywhere access, Albert helps you learn faster and master the difficult concepts you are bound to see on test day.

Click below or visit https://www.albert.io

Start Practicing
So here’s the thing: the AP Spanish Language exam won’t be asking you grammar questions specifically, but graders will be watching your every grammatical move. But have no fear; we have all the tips you need to review the basics, and even the trickiest concepts. These aren’t all the topics in the Spanish language, but they are the most common on the exam; with these tools in hand, you’ll be well on your way to a 5 in May.
Let’s start with the basics: Verb Tenses

Present Tense

Take the infinitive form of a verb, chop off the last two letters, and add a new ending. It’s that simple!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-AR verb endings</th>
<th>-ER / -IR verb endings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-o</td>
<td>-o</td>
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<tr>
<td>-as</td>
<td>-es</td>
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<tr>
<td>-a</td>
<td>-e</td>
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</table>

Let’s start with the basics: Verb Tenses

Present Tense

Take the infinitive form of a verb, chop off the last two letters, and add a new ending. It’s that simple!

Here’s a simple example: the verb *hablar*.

*yo hablo*
*tú hablas*
*él/ella/Ud. habla*
*nosotros hablamos*
*vosotros habláis*
*ellos/ellas/Uds. hablan*
Now let’s go to the hard part:

**Stem Changes and Irregulars**

Some verbs carry changes in their stems...

here are the major patterns and examples.

- **e to ie**: querer (yo quiero)
- **o to ue**: dormir (él duerme)
- **e to i**: servir (tú sirves)
- **i to ie**: adquirir (ellos adquieren)
- **u to ue**: jugar (ella juega)

*Note:* stem-changing verbs only carry these changes in the singular forms and the 3rd person plural form (i.e., yo, tú, él/ella/Ud., ellos/ellas/Uds.). So, the stem remains the same in the nosotros and vosotros forms: nosotros queremos, vosotros jugáis, etc.

It is also important to remember the irregular verbs. Here are the most common:

**Verbs with irregular ‘yo’ form:**

1. **Dar**: doy, das, da, damos, dais*, dan
2. **Traer**: traigo, traes, trae, traemos, traéis, traen
3. **Ver**: veo, ves, ve, vemos, veis*, ven
4. **Decir**: digo, dices, dice, dicemos, dicéis, dicen

*note the accent change in vosotros form
Completely irregular verbs:

1. Ir: voy, vas, va, vamos, vais, van
2. Ser: soy, eres, es, somos, sois, son
3. Estar: estoy, estás, está, estamos, estáis, están
4. Tener: tengo, tienes, tiene, tenemos, tenéis, tienen
5. Haber: he, has, ha, hemos, háis, han

The Present Participle

The present participle (gerundio) is used to convey a progressive action. Think of it as the -ING form of verbs in English. To form the gerundio, simply add -ando (for -AR verbs) or -iendo (for -ER and -IR verbs) to the stem.

We use a form of the verb estar + the gerundio to show progressive action.

For example:

My mother is talking on the phone: Mi madre está hablando por teléfono.

If an -ER or -IR verb has vowel before the ending, you must add a ‘y’ to the stem in the past participle. Some common examples:

- Leer – leyendo
- Traer – trayendo
- Creer – creyendo
- Construir – construyendo
- Oír – oyendo

The Present Perfect

This tense is used to express that you have done something. To form the present perfect, use the following formula: haber + past participle.
Haber conjugation (present tense):

- *he*    *hemos*
- *has*    *habéis*
- *ha*    *han*

To form the past participle, add -ado (for -AR verbs) or -ido (for -ER / -IR verbs) to the stem.

For example, to say “I have talked to my grandmother on the phone,” we would say:

*He hablado* por teléfono con mi abuela.

There are a few common irregulars that are useful to know on the exam:

- *ver:* visto    *poner:* puesto    *hacer:* hecho    *abrir:* abierto
- *decir:* dicho    *volver:* vuelto    *romper:* roto    *ir:* ido
Preterite Tense

The preterite is used to convey actions in the past, usually those that have already been completed. We’ll go into more detail in the Preterite vs. Imperfect section, but for now, let’s focus on the preterite itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-AR verb endings</th>
<th>-ER / -IR verb endings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-é</td>
<td>-amos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-aste</td>
<td>-asteis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ó</td>
<td>-aron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-í</td>
<td>-imos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iste</td>
<td>-isteis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ió</td>
<td>-ieron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spelling Changes

Verbs ending in -car,-gar, and -zar carry changes in the ‘yo’ form of the preterite.

- car ‘yo’ ending changes to -qué; practicar: yo practiqué
- gar ‘yo’ ending changes to -gué; llegar: yo llegué
- zar ‘yo’ ending changes to -cé; empezar: yo empecé

If a verb ends in -ER or -IR, and there is a vowel right before the stem, there will be a spelling change and changes in accents. The two most common verbs that follow this pattern are:

Leer:
- lei leí mos
- leiste leíste is
- leyó leyeron

Creer:
- crei cré mos
- creiste créiste is
- creyó creyeron
Stem Changes

Stem changes will occur in -IR verbs only in the 3rd person preterite; these will be the same stem-changers as the present tense, but the change itself may be different.

Present: \( e \) to \( ie \) \( e \) to \( i \)  
Preterite: \( e \) to \( I \) \( e \) to \( I \)

This is hard to wrap your head around, but with a few examples it’s simple.

Let’s take preferir, which is an \( e \) to \( ie \) stem changer in the present.

Here’s the preterite conjugation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{preferí} & \quad \text{preferimos} \\
\text{preferiste} & \quad \text{preferisteis} \\
\text{prefirió} & \quad \text{prefirieron}
\end{align*}
\]

Here’s another example; servir maintains the same stem change, but only in the third person:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{serví} & \quad \text{servimos} \\
\text{serviste} & \quad \text{servisteis} \\
\text{sirvió} & \quad \text{sirvieron}
\end{align*}
\]

Irregulars

The hardest part of the preterite tense is the irregular verbs – there are a lot of them. These are common verbs that you’ll need to memorize in order to master the use of the past tense on the AP Spanish exam.
In these verbs, the stem changes, and the accents are dropped.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Preterite</th>
<th>Imperfecto</th>
<th>Pluperfecto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tener:</strong></td>
<td>tuv-</td>
<td>tuviste</td>
<td>tuvo</td>
<td>tuvimos</td>
<td>tuvieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estar:</strong></td>
<td>estuv-</td>
<td>estuviste</td>
<td>estuvo</td>
<td>estuvimos</td>
<td>estuvieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poder:</strong></td>
<td>pud-</td>
<td>pudiste</td>
<td>pudo</td>
<td>pudimos</td>
<td>pudieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poner:</strong></td>
<td>pus-</td>
<td>pusiste</td>
<td>puso</td>
<td>pusimos</td>
<td>pusieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Venir:</strong></td>
<td>vin-</td>
<td>viniste</td>
<td>vino</td>
<td>vinimos</td>
<td>vinieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ver:</strong></td>
<td>vi-</td>
<td>viste</td>
<td>vio</td>
<td>visteis</td>
<td>vieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hacer:</strong></td>
<td>hic-</td>
<td>hiciste</td>
<td>hizo</td>
<td>hicimos</td>
<td>hicieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dar:</strong></td>
<td>di-</td>
<td>diste</td>
<td>hizo</td>
<td>dimos</td>
<td>dieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ir/Ser:</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>fuimos</td>
<td>fueron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decir:</strong></td>
<td>dij-</td>
<td>dijiste</td>
<td>dijo</td>
<td>dijimos</td>
<td>dijeron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traer:</strong></td>
<td>traj-</td>
<td>trajiste</td>
<td>dijo</td>
<td>trajimos</td>
<td>trajeron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Producir:</strong></td>
<td>produj-</td>
<td>produjiste</td>
<td>dijo</td>
<td>produjimos</td>
<td>produjeron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Querer:</strong></td>
<td>quis-</td>
<td>quisiste</td>
<td>quiso</td>
<td>quisimos</td>
<td>quisieron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saber:</strong></td>
<td>sup-</td>
<td>supiste</td>
<td>quiso</td>
<td>supimos</td>
<td>supieron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you find the patterns, these are easy! The key to the preterite is practice.
Imperfect Tense

The imperfect is another form of the past tense, used for habitual actions and descriptions in the past. This tense is much simpler than the preterite, but the tricky part is using them together (more on this in the Preterite vs. Imperfect section). Here’s the good news: there are only three irregular verbs in the imperfect!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-AR verb endings</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-aba</td>
<td>-ábamos</td>
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<td>-abas</td>
<td>-abáis</td>
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<td>-aba</td>
<td>-aban</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ía</td>
<td>-íamos</td>
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Irregulars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ir</th>
<th>Ser</th>
<th>Ver</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iba</td>
<td>era</td>
<td>veía</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ibas</td>
<td>eras</td>
<td>veías</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iba</td>
<td>era</td>
<td>veía</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>íbamos</td>
<td>éramos</td>
<td>veíamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>íbais</td>
<td>erais</td>
<td>veías</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>íban</td>
<td>eran</td>
<td>veían</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preterite vs. Imperfect

This is one of the trickiest concepts in Spanish, and one of the most important to grasp for the AP exam. It can be tough to decide which form of the past tense to use, even after years of experience speaking Spanish. But there is good news: we have all the general rules you need to master the past tense. With these tools in your belt, you can tackle even the toughest narrative.

PRETERITE

1. One action that interrupts another (hint: ‘cuando’ often indicates this use)

   Estaba lavando los platos cuando entró mi mamá.

2. Action during a specific time period / with a definite beginning and end, no matter how long (two hours, the month of September, sophomore year of high school, etc.)

   Fuimos de vacaciones durante el mes de octubre.

3. Action that is completed or that happened only once (common examples that usually use preterite over imperfect: decir, entrar, salir, abrir, cerrar)

   Roberta me dijo que no le gustaba la camisa.

4. To indicate a sudden change in mood or state

   Me enojó la entrada de mi hermano.

5. An action that was repeated a specific number of times

   Se cepilló los dientes dos veces por esa mañana.

IMPERFECT

Any past action without a specific beginning or end

Cuando era niña, asistía a la escuela de mi barrio.

1. Habitual action

   Siempre me levantaba a las seis por la mañana cada día.
2. Action in progress

*Estaba* caminando por la calle.

3. Ongoing action that is then interrupted

*Estaba* contando el dinero cuando abrió la puerta.

4. Simultaneous actions

Carlos **conducía** y **hablaba** por teléfono.

5. Description

*Mi vestido para el baile formal* **era** azul.

6. To express the future in the past (I was going to do something)

*Iba a comprar* un traje nuevo antes de la entrevista.

7. Time, date, place, and weather (description of scene)

*Eran las dos de la tarde* y **hacía** mucho sol.

8. “would” or “used to” in English (not the conditional)

*Cuando era niña, jugaba* con mis vecinos.

As a general rule: the preterite is the norm for action verbs, with the imperfect as the exception; the imperfect is the norm for descriptive verbs, with the preterite as the exception.
In addition, there are certain verbs that have different meanings, depending on if you use them in the imperfect or the preterite. This is usually because the preterite often indicates that an action only happened one time, or that it is completed.

Here are some common examples that you should be able to recognize for the exam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRETERITE</th>
<th>IMPERFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saber</td>
<td>to find out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tener</td>
<td>to receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conocer</td>
<td>to meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Querer</td>
<td>to try to (and succeed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no querer</td>
<td>to refuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poder</td>
<td>to succeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These tenses (present, present perfect, preterite, and imperfect) are the most common indicative mood tenses on the AP Spanish Language exam. But you should be able to at least recognize the rest; let’s review them.

**Future Tense**

There are two ways to express the future in Spanish:

1. the informal future: **ir + a + infinitive**

   *This structure directly translates to “I am going to do something.”*

2. The simple future

   *This structure carries its own verb endings to express both “something will happen” and “something might happen.”*
The informal future is appropriate for most tasks. But the simple future could appear in sources on the AP exam, so you should be able to recognize it quickly.

To form the simple future, simply add the following endings to any infinitive:

- é   -emos
- ás  -éis
- á   -án

Irregulars

There are only a handful of irregular verbs in the future. Instead of adding the endings on to the infinitive as is, we have to change the stem of the verb.

Verbs replacing the vowel before the ending with a ‘d’:

- Tener (tendr-)
- Poner (pondr-)
- Valer (valdr-)
- Salir (saldr-)
- Venir (vendr-)

Verbs removing the last vowel of the infinitive:

- Poder (podr-)
- Querer (querr-)
- Saber (sabr-)
- Haber (habr-)

Verbs with completely irregular stems:

- Decir (dir-)
- Hacer (har-)
Conditional Tense

The conditional is used to convey hypothetical situations, or what “would” happen.

To form the conditional, simply add the appropriate ending onto the infinitive. -AR, -ER, and –IR verb endings

-ía   -íamos
-ías  -íais
-ía   -ían

Now that you have all the indicative tenses down, let’s move on to something tougher...

The Subjunctive Mood

Like the name of this section says, the subjunctive is not a tense, but a mood. What does that mean? Well, you can approach all the verb tenses from either the indicative mood, which conveys certainty or fact,, or the subjunctive mood, which conveys uncertainty or opinion.

Basically, any verb tense you can put in the indicative, you can also put in the subjunctive.

How do we form the subjunctive? It’s surprisingly simple.

1. Take the ‘yo’
2. Drop the ‘o’
3. Add the opposite ending

See? Three easy steps!
Let’s work through an example: the verb hablar.

First we take the ‘yo’ form of the verb in the present tense: hablo.

Next, we drop the ‘o’ off the verb to get the stem: habl.

Finally, we add the opposite present-tense ending: hable.

Since hablar is an -AR verb, the “opposite” ending is the –ER/-IR ending for the proper subject.

That’s for the first person singular; let’s try first person plural.

1. Hablo
2. Habl
3. Hablemos.

See? It’s that simple! There’s your present subjunctive.

Every subjunctive sentence has the same structure:

Subject + verb + que + 2nd subject + 2nd verb

The second subject must be different than the first, and the 2nd verb will then be the one in the subjunctive. Some examples are soon to follow. So when do we use this crazy subjunctive mood? There’s actually an easy trick you can use to remember:

WEIRDO.
Wishes / wants
Emotions
Impersonal expressions
Recommendations
Doubt
Ojalá
That’s all well and good, but what does WEIRDO really mean? Let’s go through some examples to find out.

**W** stands for wishes or wants. Pretty straightforward.

Ex. I want my brother to visit me: Quiero que mi hermano me visite.

**E** stands for emotions. Another pretty straightforward one.

Ex. It makes me angry that my roommate doesn’t do the dishes: Me enoja que mi compañero no lave los platos.

Impersonal expressions are simple: they convey a feeling but with no direct subject. This takes the form of “It is good that...” or “It is frustrating that...” etc.

Ex. It is unfortunate that the restaurant is closed: Es desafortunado que el restaurante esté cerrado.

**R** stands for recommendations or requests.

Ex. My mother asks me to clean my room: Mi madre me dice que limpie mi cuarto.

**D** stands for doubt; if there is uncertainty, the verb must be in the indicative.

Ex. I doubt that it is going to rain: Dudo que vaya a llover.

**O** stands for ojalá; this is a set expression that shows extreme hope.

Ex. I hope that the storm passes without harm: Ojalá que pase la tormenta sin daño.
Irregulars

If there is an irregular stem in the ‘yo’ form in the present, that change will carry through all present subjunctive forms. Ex. Hacer in the present takes the form *yo hago*, so hacer in the subjunctive will be *haga, hagas, haga, hagamos, hagáis, hagan*.

There are only six true irregulars in the present subjunctive; be familiar with them for the AP exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dar</th>
<th>Estar</th>
<th>Haber</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dé</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>haya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deis</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>hayas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>den</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>haya</td>
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<tr>
<td>demos</td>
<td>estemos</td>
<td>hayamos</td>
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<tr>
<td>estés</td>
<td>estén</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ser</th>
<th>Saber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vaya</td>
<td>sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>vayas</td>
<td>seas</td>
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<tr>
<td>vaya</td>
<td>sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>vayamos</td>
<td>seamos</td>
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<td>seáis</td>
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<td>sean</td>
<td>sepas</td>
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<td>sepan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Spelling Changes

There are some spelling changes, in order to preserve the sound of verbs; these happen in verbs ending in -ger, -gir, -car, -gar, and -zar. That may seem like a lot, but if you say the verbs in your head, you can hear how they should sound and adjust accordingly!
Here are some examples:

1. -ger: g to j

2. escoger: escoja, escojas, escoja, escojamos, escojáis, escojan

3. -car: c to qu

4. explicar: explique, expliques, explique, expliquemos, expliquéis, expliquen

5. -gar: g to gu

6. llegar: llegue, llegues, llegue, lleguemos, lleguéis, lleguen

7. -zar: z to c

8. empezar: empiece, empieces, empiece, empecemos, empecéis, empiecen*

*Note that stem-changing verbs still keep the pattern in which nosotros and vosotros have the regular stem.

Some helpful hints for the AP Spanish exam:

1. Creer que, pensar que, and saber que do NOT use the subjunctive; they express certainty.

2. No creer que and no pensar que DO use the subjunctive; they express uncertainty/doubt.

3. Decir que uses the subjunctive when used in the “command” context (i.e., my mom tells me to do the dishes), but uses the indicative in the “reporting” context (she told me there was an earthquake. Note that the former use is a recommendation, while the latter indicates certainty.)
The subjunctive is definitely challenging, but you have all the tools you need to use it. Plus, the more you can throw in (correctly) on the AP exam, the better the graders will score your proficiency!

**Object Pronouns**

Object pronouns are another little tactic you can use to amp up your proficiency score. So what are they? Object pronouns indicate who and what receives an action. You can use them to avoid repetition across sentences. There are two types: **direct** and **indirect**.

**Direct Object Pronouns**

DOPs indicate what receives the action of the verb. They answer the question “whom?” or “what?”

For example: Juan bought a book.

**What** did he buy? The book. Since the book is the thing being bought, it is the direct object.

Direct object pronouns are ways to replace this direct object in a sentence.

Usually you do this to avoid repeating a phrase like “the book” several times.

For example: Juan compró el libro. Ahora Julia tiene el libro.

Instead, we can say: Juan compró el libro. Ahora Julia **lo** tiene.

The direct object pronouns are: **lo**, **la**, **los**, and **las**.

They agree in number and gender with the direct object. (So in our example, “lo” agrees with “el libro” because there is one book and libro is a masculine noun).
Where do we place DOPs? There are a couple of rules:

1. Place the DOP before a conjugated verb.

   Juan lo compró.

2. When a conjugated verb is followed by an infinitive or the present participle, either place the DOP before the conjugated verb or attach it to the end of the infinitive/present participle.

   Juan lo está comprando.
   Juan está comprándolo.*

*Note: when adding a DOP to the end of an infinitive or present participle, you need to add an accent mark. Start at the last vowel and count two vowels backward.

Indirect Object Pronouns

IOPs indicate the indirect recipient of an action. They answer the question “to whom?” or “for whom?”

For example: The professor teaches Spanish to the students.

The students are taught, so they are the indirect object. (Can you tell what the direct object is? Spanish is the direct thing being taught).

The indirect object pronouns are the following:

   me      nos
   te      os
   le      les
IOPs agree with the subject; so the students would be replaced with “les.”

Example: Pablo regaló flores a María.

Pablo le regaló flores.

The same placement rules apply as those of direct object pronouns.

**When DOPs and IOPs are in the same sentence**

There are a couple of things to remember when using a DOP and an IOP in the same sentence.

1. Indirect object pronouns ALWAYS come before direct object pronouns. (Hint: I.D. card)

2. When both objects are in the third person, the IOP (le/les) is replaced by “se.”

For example: She gave the dress to Carla.

\[
\begin{align*}
Ella & \text{ dio el vestido a Carla.} \\
Ella & \text{ se lo dio.}
\end{align*}
\]

**Commands**

Commands are most likely to appear on the interpersonal writing and speaking portions of the exam – that is, the email reply and the conversation. There are two types of commands: **affirmative** and **negative**. Each of these has both formal and informal structures.

Commands can be broken down into four* main types: **tú affirmative**, **tú negative**, **Usted**, and **Ustedes**.

*There are also vosotros commands, but these will not be necessary on the AP exam.

Tú +

The affirmative tú command tells someone to do something. It’s easy to form; just use the third person singular (él/ella/Ud.) form of the verb in the present indicative.

For example, if your dad tells you to take out the trash, he might yell, “¡Saca la basura ahorrita!”

If your teacher tells you to speak Spanish on the AP exam, she might say, “Habla español en el exámen de AP.”

Easy, right? The tricky part comes in with the irregulars (there are quite a few). These are the irregulars that you should memorize for the AP exam:

- **Hacer**: haz
- **Poner**: pon
- **Ser**: sé
- **Decir**: di
- **Salir**: sal
- **Venir**: ven
- **Ir**: ve
- **Tener**: ten

Remember: these are only the informal commands, so if you are speaking to Ud. or Uds., the commands will be formed differently.

Tú -, Ud. +-, Uds. +-+

To form the tú negative (telling someone NOT to do something), and the positive OR negative Ud./Uds. Commands, we use the subjunctive.
Reminder: this means we

1. Take the ‘yo’
2. Drop the ‘o’
3. Add the opposite ending.

For the tú negative, for example, my mom might tell me not to go to bed late:

“Hijita, no te acuestes muy tarde por favor.”

Acostarse is an -AR verb, so the opposite 2nd person ending is -es.

To form the Ud. and Uds. commands, whether positive OR negative, we do the same thing, except we add the 3rd person endings.

I might ask my teacher to repeat what he said:

“Profesor, repita, por favor.”

Or your boss might ask you and your coworkers not to send personal emails at work:

“Por favor no manden los correos personales durante las horas del trabajo.”

If a verb is irregular in the subjunctive, that change will stay in the commands. For example:

ir – no vayas, vaya, no vaya, vayan, no vayan
Reflexive/Object Pronouns

If reflexive, direct, or indirect object pronouns are necessary, they have specific placement with commands.

1. Pronouns are added to the end of affirmative commands:

   *Profesor, por favor mándeme* un correo electrónico.

   *Hijo, acuéstate* pronto.

2. Pronouns are added to the beginning of negative commands, but after the ‘no’:

   *Dónde debo poner los platos sucios?*

   *No los ponga en la mesa.*

*Note: when adding pronouns to the end of commands, the same accent rules apply. Start at the last vowel, and count back two.*

Here’s a chart of a few commands for example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tú +</th>
<th>Tú –</th>
<th>Ud.</th>
<th>Uds.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hablar</td>
<td>habla</td>
<td>no hables</td>
<td>hable</td>
<td>hablen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comer</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>no comas</td>
<td>coma</td>
<td>coman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servir</td>
<td>sirve</td>
<td>no sirvas</td>
<td>sirva</td>
<td>sirvan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despertarse</td>
<td>despiértate</td>
<td>no te despiertes</td>
<td>despiértese</td>
<td>despiértanse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vivir</td>
<td>vive</td>
<td>no vivas</td>
<td>viva</td>
<td>vivan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tricky Differences

There are a couple of concepts in Spanish that always trip students up, even after years of classroom experience. It is important to learn the differences between when to use *ser* and *estar*, as well as *por* and *para*. Once you master these distinctions, writing and speaking effectively will be a piece of cake!

**Ser vs. Estar**

Both verbs mean “to be.” So why can’t we use them interchangeably? Well, they do have slightly different meanings, although choosing between them is by no means an exact science.

As a rule of thumb, *ser* is permanent and *está* is temporary. There are a couple of exceptions to this general rule, but it is a good starting point.

Here are the differences between *ser* and *estar*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SER</th>
<th>ESTAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishes permanent identity/characteristics (Ella es profesora, él es alto, el vestido es azul) · Expresses origin (Soy de España) · Time, day, date (Hoy es viernes, Son las ocho de la mañana) · Time or location of an event (El concierto es en el estadio) · Passive voice (El libro fue escrito por Gabriel García Márquez)</td>
<td>Location of an object (El libro está en la mesa) · Progressive tense (Yo estoy caminando a la escuela) · Description, especially when the condition has resulted from a change (La ventana está abierta) · Death, although this is permanent (Cervantes está muerto)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some general distinctions to keep in mind:

1. *ser* is the norm with adjectives, while *estar* indicates change
2. *ser* indicates objective reality, while *estar* indicates subjective opinion
3. *ser* describes inherent characteristics, while *estar* describes a condition or state that can change

Here’s an expert tip for the AP exam: **go with your gut!**

When it doubt, just say the sentence in your head to see what sounds right. Deep down, your brain knows. Trust it! Obsessing over *ser* and *estar* while you’re proofreading will only lead to you changing your answer to the wrong one. Instead, look for obvious errors, and trust your instinct on the more ambiguous parts.

**Por and Para**

Por and para both mean “for,” so how do we know which one to use? Lucky for you, we’re here to help you master the differences between these tough prepositions.

As a general rule, use the acronym DIDO for *para*; for everything else, use *por*. What does DIDO stand for?

- **Destination**
- **In order to**
- **Deadline**
- **Opinion**

Here are some more detailed distinctions, with examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POR</th>
<th>PARA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reason for an action (Trabaja duro por ser profesor = He works hard because he is a professor.)</td>
<td>objective or purpose of an action (Trabaja duro para ser profesor = He works hard in order to become a professor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ agent performing an action (Don Quijote fue escrito por Cervantes = Don Quijote was written by Cervantes)</td>
<td>§ effect of an action (Los niños juegan para no aburrirse = The kids play so they don’t get bored)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ cause of an action (Ellos fueron a la biblioteca por un libro = They went to the library for a book)</td>
<td>§ person that receives an action (El libro es para Usted = The book is for you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ duration (Yo estudié en la universidad por cuatro años = I studied at the university for four years)</td>
<td>§ deadline (Tengo que terminar un trabajo para mañana = I have to finish a paper by tomorrow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ movement through space and time (Pedro está caminando por la ciudad = Pedro is walking through the city)</td>
<td>§ movement toward a concrete objective (Pedro está caminando para la ciudad = Pedro is walking toward the city)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ time of day in which an action occurs (Yo voy a clase por la mañana = I go to class in the morning)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other specific uses for por and para:

**POR**

1. exchange: Yo pagué cien dólares por el vestido
2. “per”: Yo suelo conducir a 40 millas por hora
3. the way an action is carried out: El paquete llegó por barco
4. instead of: Mi amiga está enferma y voy a trabajar por ella.
5. on behalf of: PETA lucha por los derechos de los animales.
6. in search of: Fui a la tienda por pan.

**PARA**

1. comparison: Para ser actor, él es muy tímido.
2. opinion: Para mí, los amigos son más importantes que el dinero.
3. to arrive at the point of an action: Estoy para salir. (I’m getting ready to leave)
4. who you work for: Julio trabaja para el gobierno.

Well, there you have it: all the grammar tools and tricks you need to master for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Again, these are not the only concepts in Spanish – they’re more of a cheat sheet you can use to review. Make sure to focus on the concepts that give you the most trouble, like preterite vs. imperfect, conjugating the subjunctive, or deciding between ser and estar. Being able to recognize the more complex structures in readings and audio sources will really help your understanding on the exam. Plus, being able to use these structures will show AP graders just how much you know about Spanish. Prepare early, focus on the problem spots, and the grammar on the exam will be a breeze.

Buena suerte!
AP Spanish Language Vocabulary: 50 Words You Need to Know for a 5

By the time you are sitting down to take the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam in May, you will likely have taken anywhere from two to five years of Spanish classes. Throughout those years, you have learned countless vocabulary words, from the basics of describing yourself to the various food groups and even travel words. Naturally, it is difficult to determine which words are important to know for the exam. Here’s a list of 50 AP Spanish vocabulary words to add to your repertoire to push you one step closer to a 5! Each word is followed by a short example showing how it is used in a natural context.

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Transition Words

One of the most daunting aspects of the exam are the two written tasks, but these transition words can be used to strengthen your essays and are a great addition to an AP Spanish vocabulary list.

1. No obstante – nevertheless

   • Hay mucha nieve afuera. No obstante, hace calor por dentro.
   • There is a lot of snow outside. Nevertheless, it is warm inside.

2. Por lo tanto – therefore

   • Quiero obtener un 5 en mi examen de AP Spanish. Por lo tanto voy a estudiar todos los días.
   • I want to get a 5 on my AP Spanish exam. Therefore, I will study every day.

3. Desarrollar – to develop

   • Planeo desarrollar tres puntos.
   • I plan to develop three points.

4. De hecho – in fact

   • De hecho, hay muchos cambios en nuestra tecnología.
   • In fact, there are a lot of changes in our technology.

5. En cambio – in contrast

   • Yo, en cambio, preferiría un gato, no un perro.
   • I, in contrast, would prefer a cat, not a dog.
6. En realidad – actually

- En realidad, los cambios no son tan mal.
- In reality, the changes are not that bad.

7. Además – moreover

- Este cuadro tiene muy colores y además es muy expresivo.
- This painting has a lot of colors and moreover is very expressive.

8. En pocas palabras – in short / in a few words

- Quiero contarte la historia en pocas palabras.
- I want to tell you the story in a few words.

9. Por otro lado – on the other hand

- Es una casa bonita. Por otro lado, está en una calle ruidosa.
- It’s a pretty house. On the other hand, it is on a loud street.

10. Por supuesto – of course

- Por supuesto es importante que estudiar.
- Of course it is important to study.

11. Por ejemplo – for example

- Hoy, por ejemplo, el clima está nublado.
- Today, for example, the weather is cloudy.

12. Ambos – both

- Ambos chicos quieren ser doctores.
- Both boys want to be doctors.
AP Spanish Language Vocabulary:
50 Words You Need to Know for a 5 Cont.

13. Igualmente – similarly

• Las dos soluciones son igualmente razonables.
• The two solutions are equally reasonable.

Theme Words

The AP Spanish Language exam is centered around six main themes, and there are certain vocabulary words that are important to know for each.

Global Challenges

14. La natalidad – birthrate

• La natalidad no ha cambiado desde tres años.
• The birthrate has not changed for three years.

15. El pronóstico – forecast

• El pronóstico económico para España muestra crecimiento.
• The economic forecast for Spain shows growth.

16. La población – population

• Está estudiando la población de México.
• He is studying the population of Mexico.

17. El desafío – challenge

• El hambre es uno de los desafíos mundiales.
• Hunger is one of the global challenges.
18. Infraestructura – infrastructure
• Es importante que un país construya su infraestructura.
• It is important for a country to build its infrastructure.

Science and Technology

19. Predecir – to predict
• Es difícil predecir los cambios en la ciencia.
• It is difficult to predict changes in science.

20. La informática – computer science
• La informática es un campo en crecimiento.
• Computer science is a growing field.

21. El sitio – website
• El sitio tiene un diseño muy fácil de usar.
• The website has an easy-to-use design.

22. Los avances científicos – scientific advancements
• La salud ha sido ayudado por los avances científicos.
• Healthcare has been helped by scientific advancements.

23. El progreso – progress
• Eso será un verdadero progreso.
• That would be real progress.
AP Spanish Language Vocabulary: 50 Words You Need to Know for a 5 Cont.

Contemporary Life

24. El crimen – crime

• El crimen es un problema grave de las sociedades modernas.
• Crime is a serious problem in modern societies.

25. El desempleo – unemployment

• Los políticos quieren reducir el desempleo.
• Politicians want to reduce unemployment.

26. Trabajo comunitario – community work

• El grupo de estudiantes está haciendo trabajo comunitario.
• The group of students is doing community work.

27. La pobreza – poverty

• Algunas personas viven en absoluta pobreza.
• Some people live in absolute poverty.

Personal and Public Identities

28. La autoestima – self esteem

• Autoestima aplica no sólo a las mujeres, sino también a los hombres.
• Self esteem applies not only to women, but also to men.

29. Las creencias personales – personal beliefs

• A veces es difícil cambiar las creencias personales.
• Sometimes it is hard to change personal beliefs.
30. El filántropo – philanthropist

- Ella es un filántropo de los derechos humanos.
- She is a philanthropist for human rights.

31. El líder – leader

- El es un líder naturalmente.
- He is a natural leader.

32. La identidad étnica – ethnic identity

- Los mexicanos se preocupan mucho por su identidad étnica.
- Mexicans care a lot about their ethnic identity.

**Families and Communities**

33. Los valores – values

- No son solamente valores hispanos, son valores universales.
- They are not only Hispanic values, they are universal values.

34. El patrimonio – heritage

- Su patrimonio es muy importante para ella.
- Her heritage is important for her.

35. Las raíces – roots

- Echan raíces en su nuevo comunidad.
- They put down roots in their new community.
36. Portarse bien – behave well

- Los padres deben enseñar a sus hijos a portarse bien.
- Parents must teach their children to behave well.

**Beauty and Aesthetics**

37. La moda – style

- Cada persona necesita definir su propia moda.
- Every person needs to define their own style.

38. Agraciada – attractive

- Las personas en las revistas son agraciadas.
- The people in the magazines are attractive.

39. El tratamiento – treatment

- Algunas personas buscan tratamientos para el acné.
- Some people look for treatments for acne.

40. La armonía – harmony

- Necesito armonía en mi casa.
- I need harmony in my home.

41. El equilibrio – balance

- Esta pintura tiene un buen equilibrio de luz y oscuridad.
- This painting has a good balance of light and dark.
Power Verbs

Tired of using the same verbs every other sentence? Well, guess what? The exam graders are tired of reading the same words paper after paper. Put these verbs on your AP Spanish vocabulary list to add richness and uniqueness to your writing and speaking.

42. Señalar – to point out

- Él señaló su nuevo corte de pelo.
- He pointed out her new haircut.

43. Adquirir – to acquire

- Su tienda adquirió varios libros nuevos.
- Her store acquired various new books.

44. Soler – to be accustomed to

- Yo solí al clima cálido.
- I got accustomed to the warm weather.

45. Merecer – to deserve

- Este logro merece atención especial.
- This accomplishment deserves special attention.

46. Perdurar – to remain

- Cultura rural y antigua perdura en partes de Perú.
- Ancient rural culture remains in parts of Peru.
AP Spanish Language Vocabulary: 50 Words You Need to Know for a 5 Cont.

47. Destacar – to stand out
   • Es un hombre que destaca por su altura.
   • He is a man who stands out because of his height.

48. Concordar – to agree
   • Concordan con la mayoría de la lectura.
   • They agree with most of the lecture.

49. Comprobar – to prove
   • Es importante comprobar su punto en un ensayo.
   • It is important to prove your point in an essay.

50. Ponderar – to analyze
   • Él pondera la cuestión durante una hora.
   • He analyzed the question for an hour.

This is, of course, by no means an extensive list of words to know, but knowing these words, as well as reviewing crucial culture and grammar points, can put you one step closer to getting the score you want on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Let us know: are there any other words you think are crucial to know?
500 million people around the world speak Spanish, making it the second largest native language and the second most used language for international communication. The AP Spanish Language Exam tests the user’s proficiency in understanding how to read, write, and communicate in Spanish. There has been an increase in the number of test takers for the AP Spanish Language Exam in the last year, with about only 28% of those students scoring a 5. This three-hour exam can be daunting to face straight on without the proper preparation. If you’re wondering, “How long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?” you should continue reading so that you’ll know when the exam comes around. After reading these tips, you can manage your time and be on the path to earning a 5!
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?: Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

AP Spanish Language Exam Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AP Spanish Language Exam Duration: 3 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section I: Multiple choice</strong> 65 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hour 35 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part A:</strong> 30 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part B:</strong> 35 questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Print and audio texts (combined)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio texts only</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long is the AP Spanish Language Exam? Good question, for now. The AP Spanish Language Exam is about three hours long with two sections that each count for 50% of the exam score. The sections are as follows:

**Section I: Multiple Choice Questions**

In section I, you will have approximately an hour and 35 minutes to answer a total of 65 questions. Section I tests you on your interpretive communication, or your ability to understand what you are seeing, reading, and hearing.
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?:
Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

You will come across different written texts and audio texts that will be the subject of the questions you will have to answer. Each passage gives contextual information to the reader. Section I is further divided into two subsections:

**Part A: Print texts**

In part A, you will have about 40 minutes to answer 30 questions. This section will contain only printed texts, such as journal entries, news articles, announcements, etc.

**Part B: Print and audio texts**

Part B consists of two smaller sections: audio and text combined and audio only. In part B, you will have about 55 minutes to answer 35 questions. In the first part, you will come across printed texts that are accompanied by audio. Expect audio samples from interviews, podcasts, newscasts, etc. In the second part, you will come across questions based only on audio. Don’t worry; all audio passages play twice during the exam.

**Section II: Free Response Questions**

In section II, you will have around an hour and 28 minutes to respond to a total of four different tasks. This part tests you on your interpersonal communication, or your ability to speak and write effectively. Section II consists of two subsections:

**Part A: Written tasks**

Part A lasts a total of 70 minutes, comprising two tasks. In the first task, you will get one prompt, and you will respond to an email according to that prompt within 15 minutes. The second task is the persuasive essay, for which you will have a total of 55 minutes to answer the prompt. With that time, you will have about 15 minutes to read the sources given to you and 40 minutes to write the essay. The sources include a print article, a graph, and an audio recording related to the topic.
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?:
Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

Part B: Spoken responses

You will have 18 minutes to complete the two tasks in Part B. The first task is a recorded conversation, where you will have five prompts and 20 seconds to respond to each. Then, for the cultural comparison task, you will receive one prompt for which you’ll have four minutes of preparation and two minutes to answer. In the cultural comparison task, you will compare your community to a community in the Spanish-speaking world.

Tips to Manage Your Time

The exam doesn’t seem so bad once you break it up into individual parts. It is important that you know how to make the most of your time and how to organize yourself. Now that you know exactly what to expect on the AP Spanish Language Exam, it’s time for AP test time management tips!

Read the questions before reading the texts. This one will require some back-and-forth reading between the questions and the text, but it can certainly help, especially since you’re bound to go back and forth anyways. As soon as you begin, read the contextual information that introduces the text. This information will give you an idea of what kind of text you are reading. Then, skip over to the questions and understand what they are asking. That way, when you go back to read the passage, you will already know what to look for!

If you don’t understand it, skip it. It’s okay—we are only human. If you run into a difficult question, skip it and move on to the next one. The exam is timed, so it’s important not to waste too much time or fuss over one question. Just remember to go back to it and give it another try after you’ve finished the rest of the section. If the question still proves to be difficult, use the process of elimination to increase your chances of getting it correct.
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?:
Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

Write in your booklet! Yes, you are allowed to write in your booklet wherever there is free space. Use it! When you reach the audio-only part of the multiple choice section, things can get difficult. That’s where writing in your booklet can come in handy. First, remember that the audio plays twice, so don’t panic. Read the questions and understand what they are asking. Then, when the audio plays, create a bullet point list of all the key ideas in the audio. You can use this list to help you answer questions. Never listen to the audio and do nothing—that would be a waste of time.

Get ahead on the persuasive essay. In section II, the exam gives you one minute to read the instructions before the persuasive essay. By the time you are taking the exam, you should already be well-acquainted with the instructions, so you can skip reading them. If you are having trouble choosing a stance on the prompt, use the extra minute to get a head start on your reading. You have about 15 minutes to read the sources, so pace yourself carefully. Remember to underline key ideas for easy reference later!

Outline your essay. The essay requires much more work than any other written task in the exam. To organize your thoughts, use any free space or scratch paper, if provided, to create a rough outline once you have a stance on the prompt. Use the key ideas you underlined when reading to create the outline. It does not have to be perfect, but it will help guide you as you write your essay.

Get ahead on the spoken conversation. As with the persuasive essay, you are given one minute to read the instructions for the conversation task. Skip those, and read the outline of the spoken conversation instead. Based on the minimal information, create a bullet point list of possible phrases you can say. The spoken conversation tends to throw people off, but with a list, you can stand your ground and have something to use even when you are stuck.
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?:
Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

Get ahead on the cultural comparison. Again, you have a minute to read the instructions. Use the extra minute to read the prompt, and quickly create a T-chart. This T-chart will be helpful with comparing your community to one in the Spanish-speaking world since it will organize your thoughts and cut down on the amount of time you’ll be scrambling to figure out what to say. In this T-chart, list similarities and differences between the two communities. Make sure to be thorough with your explanations. Fill out the T-chart as much as possible. In fact, using a T-chart is exceptional, because you will have a rough draft for the structure of your presentation, which will help you score higher on this task! Here’s an example of a T-chart for this task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your community</th>
<th>Spanish-speaking community of your choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difference- My community doesn’t celebrate Day of the Dead.</td>
<td>Difference-This community does celebrate Day of the Dead (Explain: What? When? Why?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity- Strong family and community values</td>
<td>Similarity- Strong family and community values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference- This community relies on produce grown elsewhere</td>
<td>Difference- This community relies on locally grown produce (Explain: How is this important to the community?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Always be Doing Something. During the exam, it is important that you focus to the best of your ability. You must always be actively doing something. If the audio is playing, don’t just pay attention to the speaker; instead, write down what they are saying. In the multiple choice section, once the audio plays twice, you have roughly a minute per passage to answer the questions, so use the tips above to maximize your efficiency with the time you have.
How Long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?:
Tips to Manage Your Time for a 5 Cont.

You may have noticed that three of our tips involved getting a head start on the writing prompts. These tips are important because a minute can make a big difference. If you are studying for the AP Spanish Language Exam, you will become familiar with the instructions on each part of the exam. On the day you take your exam, this can be your greatest advantage. An extra minute can help you gather your thoughts or understand the text. It is always important to utilize the time you have. After reading this article, you should now be familiar with the duration of the exam. As a test for the reader: how long is the AP Spanish Language Exam?

Now that you know how to organize and make the best use of your time, focus on preparing for the test! Practice responding to some prompts from previous years’ exams while trying out these tips. Try beating your record as many times as possible. For study tips and more help on how to prepare for the AP Spanish Language Exam, check out this post!
How to Rock at AP Spanish Language Interpersonal Writing

Interpersonal writing sounds complicated, but it’s actually something we do all the time. All it means is that you’re communicating on paper with another person. On the AP Spanish Language exam, the interpersonal writing section is a reply to an email (even though you won’t be typing).

So what is the interpersonal writing section like? Well, it’s very similar to a real email interaction, only faster. You will be given 15 minutes to read an email and respond to it. The email could cover anything from an event invitation to a job offer, but it won’t be anything too complicated. Before the body of the email, you’ll be given information about the sender of the email and the main idea. Make sure you read this information!

To give you an idea, we’ll talk about a couple of the recent prompts. The 2015 interpersonal writing involved a scholarship opportunity to travel to a Spanish-speaking country. Students were asked a few questions about the challenges of such a program, and how the experience would impact their future. The 2014 exam involved an organization that combatted global environmental issues. Students were asked why they were interested in these issues and the proposed project, as well as previous experience.

You will need to prepare for interpersonal writing, but don’t worry. This is one of the most straightforward parts of the exam, and it’s easy to master if you’re prepared. We’ll give you all the tools you need to rock at interpersonal writing in May.
Here are the expert tips to conquering the email reply:

1. **Know your instructions.** Your main concern is to complete the task at hand. The prompt will direct you to answer all of the questions that the email brings up, as well as to ask for more detail about something in the message. Complete all the tasks, then [show off your grammar skills]!

2. **Maximize your time.** With a task this simple, your biggest enemy is the clock. But there’s good news: now that you know your instructions, you don’t need to listen while they’re being played! Use that extra minute to get started reading the email.

3. **Know some greeting phrases.** Go beyond the simple “Hola” and “Gracias.” Knowing some formal intro and outro phrases will bump up the graders’ view of your writing. Some examples to get you started:

   - **Querido:** this is a more informal greeting, so there are better choices for professional or business writing.

   - **Estimado:** this is an excellent greeting for professional emails, such as to a boss, teacher, or potential employer.

   - **Atentamente:** this is used in a similar way as “sincerely,” so it’s great for formal or informal correspondence.

   - **Cariñosos saludos:** this phrase is used in a similar way as “with warm regards;” it works in somewhat formal settings, such as writing an email to a teacher, but maybe not for a business executive.

   - **Con todo mi cariño:** this goodbye is best used when writing to close family or friends.
How to Rock at AP Spanish Language Interpersonal Writing Cont.

4. **Know your audience.** Make sure you are using the proper form of address and greetings. In other words, you wouldn’t close an email to a potential employer with “Besitos.”

5. **Know your tenses.** Identify immediately based on the email which tenses you should be working with. Present? Past? Future? Making sure your verb tenses match the context will give you a solid base for your content.

6. **Throw in subjunctive where you can.** We know the subjunctive is scary. But in such a simple task, you have the perfect place to show off your skills! While you’re reading, keep an eye out for where you might be able to use the subjunctive. Maybe they ask for a recommendation, or your opinion on a subject. Impersonal expressions are also a great way to jazz up your writing with a little subjunctive. Graders love it.

7. **Throw in culture where you can.** The email may ask you about a certain category, like music or literature. This is your chance to name-drop; your favorite artist is Juanes, or you just read an amazing novel by Gabriel García Márquez. These little additions can add that little touch to your writing that makes it stand out.

8. **Be creative.** Interpersonal writing prompts involve emails written to you, so you’ll have to write about yourself. They’ll often ask about previous experiences, or your own personal interests, so make it interesting! Stay on topic, but throw in unique facts where you can. Think of travel experiences you’ve had, or volunteer work you’ve done. And don’t stress if the prompt topic doesn’t apply to you – you can make yourself the ideal candidate! Even though the email is personal, it doesn’t have to be nonfiction. As long as you answer the questions, you’re golden.

9. **Check yourself.** Watch the clock and make sure to leave one or two minutes to proofread at the end of the section. Don’t obsess, just skim for obvious errors and correct them. Pay special attention to ser andestar, preterite and imperfect, and the use of the subjunctive – these are tricky for most people!
10. **Practice, practice, practice.** This section is easy to prepare for because we all write emails all the time. A few week before the exam, start practicing writing short emails in Spanish. Write notes to friends or postcards to family. Even find classmates to email back and forth! When you email your Spanish teacher questions about class, email them in Spanish; they’ll love it AND you’ll get great practice.

11. **Don’t sweat it.** Take a deep breath and have faith in yourself. This section is a confidence booster for a lot of students; it has simple instructions and usually a simple topic. Use this time to give yourself proficiency and culture points easily! Show off what you can do, because you can do a lot.

There you have it: 11 solid tips for mastering the [AP Spanish exam](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org) interpersonal writing. The key is to relax: you know what to do! Just make completing the task your priority; the rest will follow. With a little preparation, you can rock the interpersonal writing in May!
Ready to Score Higher?

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Start Practicing
How to Tackle
AP Spanish Language Informal Speaking

Speaking in Spanish can be challenging, especially on the speaking portions of the AP Spanish Language exam. However, speaking is, in fact, the best way to communicate in Spanish, and with a little practice you can master the art of Spanish conversation. Knowing many vocabulary words isn’t enough — we know you know your stuff! The key to speaking on the AP exam is to keep calm and apply your skills; if you address the prompts, you will perform with flying colors.

So what is the speaking like on the AP exam? Of the two speaking portions — presentational and interpersonal — interpersonal is often the most stressful for students. It is nerve-wracking to be tested on a conversation that isn’t in your native language. However, there’s good news: we’re here with all the strategies you need to sail smoothly through the informal speaking.

Here’s the setup: you will be read a set of instructions, which will also be printed in your booklet. You will then be given some time to look over the prompt and an outline of the conversation. The prompt will contain some basic information about who you are talking to and in what setting — for example, you are speaking with a train station employee at a ticket booth. Do not skip this information! After all, the most important part of any conversation is the people in it.

Next, look over the prompt tasks. You will have five or six opportunities to speak, depending on the prompt. Each opportunity will be labeled, and will contain a list of one or two tasks to be completed within your answer. You will have twenty seconds for each answer.
How to Tackle AP Spanish Language
Informal Speaking Cont.

We know this sounds like a lot, so we’ll break it down for you. Here is our list of expert tips on how to rock at informal speaking:

1. COMPLETE THE TASK

This is your number one priority during informal speaking! Each of your sections in the prompt will contain specific tasks, such as “ask for clarification,” “answer questions,” or “respond with details.” Some sections will contain two tasks. This is the most important thing to address during the exercise. Complete tasks immediately, and then fill the rest of the time with details. It is often helpful to check off the tasks as you complete them. If you do not complete all the indicated tasks, you will not receive credit for that answer.

2. Know your instructions

The instructions for this section will always be the same, so you don’t need to listen to them! Use the time while they are being read to start glancing over the prompt and thinking about your possible responses.

3. Know your audience

When you look at the prompt, identify whether you should use tú or Usted immediately. This may seem like a simple distinction, but it can really hurt you if you address a future employer or a teacher as Usted. As soon as you read the person’s title or role, jot down which form of address you will use at the top of the page.

4. Take notes – briefly

Obviously, until the conversation begins you won’t be able to answer questions or come up with responses. However, there are a couple of tricks you can keep up your sleeve. Write down key words or phrases that might go along with each task, what verb tenses you think you might be using, or whether you should be using the subjunctive.
For example, if one of the tasks asks for your opinion, you should write down “subjunctive” and maybe phrases like, “Me parece que” or “No creo que.” If the task is to make plans, you could write “Es posible que” or “Quiero que.” Don’t try to write full sentences; instead think of key words that might be helpful. The prompts will be somewhat open-ended, so be creative and go with what feels natural!

5. Fill up your time

The worst thing to have in your AP Spanish language informal speaking answers is silence. You only have twenty seconds to speak – that’s not a long time. Even if you repeat yourself a little, keep talking! Add some more details if you can, or ask more questions. It’s okay if you get cut off, as long as you have completed the tasks.

6. Use context clues

You’re not going to understand every word of every prompt. Instead, pay close attention to questions and focus on the words you do understand. These will give you context clues and key words. When in doubt, make an educated guess based on the task for that section, and the main idea of the prompt.

7. Self-correct

There’s no way to proofread a conversation, except as you go. Making mistakes or misspeaking is inevitable – and it’s completely normal in conversation. AP graders aren’t looking for perfection, they’re looking for communication. If you catch yourself making a mistake, just correct yourself! It’s simple. For example, if you say, “Hoy está viernes, lo siento, hoy es viernes...” and then continue, you will be fine.
8. Know your filler words

If you need to fill silence while you’re thinking, do so in Spanish. You shouldn’t be saying “um” or “let’s see” during this conversation. Know some filler words, or *muletillas*, that will keep the flow of the conversation going. Some examples to get you started:

- Pues
- Es que
- O sea
- Es decir
- Bueno
- Mira
- Entonces
- Así que

9. Circumlocution is your friend

What is circumlocution? Just a fancy word for talking around a word. If you can’t think of a certain word, just find a way to describe it that communicates the idea. With a short amount of time, you won’t be able to sit there and think of a specific word that’s on the tip of your tongue. So if you forget how to say “bus stop,” you can say “el lugar donde para el autobús.” This will be much faster than waiting for “parada del autobús” to come to mind.

10. Don’t be afraid to show off

If there is a chance to use a complex structure, do it! Use direct and indirect object pronouns, or add some commands. There will almost always be at least one opportunity to use the subjunctive – you should take it. AP graders love to see students use the subjunctive correctly, even with a simple impersonal expression like “es importante que.” If the task calls for your opinion, you shouldn’t dance around the subjunctive just to avoid a little more effort.
How to Tackle AP Spanish Language
Informal Speaking Cont.

11. Throw in cultural knowledge

If you can name-drop, you will score major points with the AP graders. For instance, if you are prompted to talk about your favorite movies, mention *El laberinto del fauno* or *Los diarios motocicleta*. If you’re making plans with a friend, mention that you’ve always wanted to visit *el parque retiro*. You won’t lose points if you say your favorite actor is Johnny Depp or your favorite movie is *Fast and Furious*, but it will be that much better if you mention things from Spanish-speaking cultures.

12. Practice, practice, practice – both listening and speaking

This portion of the exam will be a breeze if you’re prepared. Speak in Spanish with other classmates as often as you can, and try your hardest not to speak English in class. Even practice timed conversations with your classmates. Listening skills are also important – watch *telenovelas* or listen to radio broadcasts in Spanish to get used to different accents and speeds of speech. Plus, to get a better idea of the task itself, check out *AP Central* for past examples of informal speaking prompts.

13. Stay calm

Five to six answers means you have several chances to recover if you mess up. Not every answer has to be perfect; as long as you are completing the tasks, you can always improve on the next answer. Even the AP exam graders don’t expect you to flawlessly execute a conversation – they’re looking for communication skills. Everyday conversations contain mistakes, after all. It’s okay if you make a couple! If you’re still nervous, try picturing a real person on the other end of the conversation, instead of just a recording – it will feel more natural.

There you have it: 13 expert tips to tackling the AP Spanish informal speaking. There’s a lot to keep in mind, but the important things are confidence and preparation. Start practicing a few weeks or even months in advance – speaking in Spanish will start to feel natural, and the real thing in May will be a breeze. As long as you complete the tasks and focus on communication instead of perfection, you’ll be well on your way to a 5 on the AP Spanish Language exam.

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Perhaps it’s still a few months away, but still you’re thinking about studying for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. You might have heard that the exam is tougher than others, and you’re not a native Spanish speaker. Are there review books that will help you pass your class and the AP exam? What tools will you need besides a course textbook? Perhaps a teacher recommended a review book. No doubt you’re probably wondering which are the best AP Spanish Language and Culture review books for you.

It helps to know what you’ll need to study before making that decision. The three-hour AP Spanish Language and Culture exam contains two parts: a 95-minute multiple choice section of 60 questions and an 88-minute free response section of four questions. Each section counts for one-half of the exam.

The multiple choice section is broken down into two major sections:

1. Interpretive Communication: Print materials that examinees analyze for content, structure, vocabulary, culture information, interdisciplinary information, and point of view.
2. Interpretive Communication: Audio materials and audio paired with written material(s) that examinees respond to with analysis of content, structure, cultural information and interdisciplinary information

On the free-response portion of the exam, students must also write an interpersonal response to an email, write a persuasive essay, participate in a conversational exchange, and present a response to a prompt.

Since the CollegeBoard revised the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam in 2014, released past exams with answers and rubrics aren’t plentiful. However, a good review book will help you study. The best book depends on learning style. Some students learn best by understanding the entire subject, while others get overwhelmed with overkill. Some learn better by reading, others by hearing, and still others by doing. Unfortunately, the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam taps your proficiencies in all three learning styles.

**What You Should Look for in a Good AP Spanish Language and Culture Review Book**

**Completeness**: Obviously, it should cover what the course and exam covers without too much extraneous material.

**Alignment**: It should match the exam content. The practice exams should approximate the rigor, format, and style of the exam.

**Organization**: Content, formatting, and order should promote efficient absorption and retention.

**Practice tests**: There should be at least one that tests subject knowledge, contains audio practice, and familiarizes the test taker with the content, format, and style of the AP exam.

These AP Spanish Language and Culture review books contain both adequate exam material coverage and practice tests, and may be handy for the upcoming 2017 exam.

**Cracking the AP Spanish Language & Culture Exam with Audio CD, 2017 Edition: Proven Techniques to Help You Score a 5**

What the publishers claim:

It’s a 336-page guide with thorough and comprehensive coverage of content, strategies, tips, and self-assessment, which includes two practice tests with answers and translations, verb and grammar form drills, access to AP Connect for college and exam updates, audio CD for listening and speaking practice, tips on saving time and avoiding common traps.

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What users claim:

Past users claim success with Princeton for these reasons:

Completeness – It’s complete yet concise: everything you need to know for the test is in it, including a detailed step-by-step explanation of how to tackle the various questions.

Alignment – Users confirm the content is aligned with the CollegeBoard curriculum and prepares you for the AP exam. The audio part is especially helpful. This book gets you used to the format of the exam.

Organization – Users praise the content organized into steps. Wide margins allow for annotating and highlighting important notes.

Practice Exams – It has two tests with answers and translations that helped students pass the exam, as well as end-of-chapter drills.

What could be better

Some past users suggest more practice tests and recordings would be helpful, and grammar pretests have errors. The key criticism, however, is that the book needs supplementing.

Bottom line

The practice exam explanations and translations are fine study tools, but you’ll need supplemental materials. This AP Spanish language review book might be best for students with a little more lead time before the exam for a more thorough learning or relearning of the course components.

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**AP® Spanish Language and Culture All Access w/Audio: Book + Online + Mobile**

At 396 pages, this 2014 AP Spanish Language and Culture review book reads like a long crash course, identifying weaknesses and systematically focusing your study.

What the publishers claim:

Contains a study system customizable to your time, learning style, and knowledge online tools, 100 flashcards, and REA flashcards you create for pinpoint review quizzes that test your knowledge online and in-print access to two practice exams, audio, and quizzes strategic, pinpointed terms and test-taking pointers one online timed practice test with everything that the exam will cover and a detailed explanation of the answers.

What users say:

**Completeness**: It’s complete and useful, especially the grammar review since it includes exam essentials compiled by an experienced AP Spanish teacher. It’s a study pared down to the most significant information. Users found it most useful as a supplemental review right before the exam. The book includes online access to additional audio, quizzes, and tests.

**Alignment**: Some successful AP Spanish language test takers on the CollegeBoard forum recommend this review book as a final review before the test.

**Organization**: It begins with exam strategies, then moves to interpretive communication and interpersonal writing and speaking, finishing with presentation, exams, audio, and answers. The system logically reviews but focuses on personalizing study to an individual’s knowledge.

**Practice Exams**: The online test gives instant feedback on which topic you need to work on. From there, you can supplement with flashcards to hone in on your weak areas.

What could be better

It’s not detailed and needs updating. It only has one practice exam available by online access code that expires.

Bottom line

The book suits the two-week-before-exam reviewer best. When you’re in a time crunch, you need a system that economizes your study. Those with fundamental knowledge also benefit: for memorizing not for learning, or for topping off a more comprehensive review.

Barron’s AP Spanish Language and Culture with MP3 CD, 9th edition

A 504-page review, this 2017 edition covers the subject thoroughly. Written by a high school Spanish teacher, this is by far the most detailed content review.
What the publishers claim:

It’s a full, detailed, updated review reflective of the latest AP Spanish language exam with practices and review units with strategies for comprehension, writing, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar, two full-length AP practice exams with answer key and explanations, and MP3 CD for audio practice and comprehension, and a full-length bonus practice AP Spanish Language and Culture exam with answers and explanations.

What users say

Completeness: AP Spanish teachers use the review in class and like the high quality, challenging content, format, practice exercises and tests. Users like that it’s comprehensiveness with lots of practice questions, detailed grammar review with explanations, and a compact verb conjugations section. The same review exists with a CD-Rom included as an alternative audio source.

Alignment: Barron’s is known for creating tougher reviews, practices, and tests than what shows up on the exam, so it’s good preparation for scoring high on the actual exam.

Organization: The well-organized format shows a concerted effort by the authors to cover content, review, testing, explanation, translation, and supplementation with audio answers. One prized feature, the compact verb conjugation section at the end, pleased one user.

Practice Tests: There are two model tests with answers and explanations unless you get the supplement with one more. The explanations and audio are helpful.
What could be better

The audio uses only the Castilian accent, and the practices and exams are harder than the actual exam. Also, model responses, compositions, and presentations, as well as answer explanations would add more value to the review.

Bottom line

Use this book if you read it diligently over time. It’s not a last-minute cram and not for the student who learned the course material well taking the class. It might be overkill for the latter, and confusing for the former. If you need more work understanding the concepts and listening, this book, including the additional practice exam with explained answers, will help.
Barron’s AP Spanish Flash Cards, 2nd Edition

Barron’s AP Spanish Language FlashCards makes studying on the go easy and complete.
What the publishers claim:

You get 475 ringed flash cards pages weighing two pounds that cover the same content areas as Barron’s review book, including content organized in six sections: reading and listening comprehension, writing and speaking strategies, vocabulary, and grammar, arranged on 9 x 2.9 x 5 inch cards that allow freedom to arrange the cards how you like, and comes with access to audio and an online practice test. Use the cards with or without Barron’s book.

What users say:

Completeness: It covers the same subject as Barron’s review book, in-depth with practical demonstrations of how words are used and conjugated in sentences. However, it’s not as daunting as a book review since it’s packaged in smaller bites. The explanations on the back are useful facts per card as are the writing prompts.

Alignment: Also a Barron’s review, the rigor of the material and practice exam align with the exam.

Organization: The unique ability to remove cards from the ring as you master the facts on them allows customization of the content order to your study progress.

Practice Exam: The cards come with an online exam that is comparable to Barron’s review book exam.
What could be better

While the cards are convenient to travel with, they still do weigh close to two pounds. Additionally, users thought the cards contained too much material geared for advanced students. Some words lacked translations, and the small font made the dense material harder to read. One user wanted a sample essay to view.

Bottom line

Reviewing flashcards gives students that extra confidence and a final review before the exam. As a long-term study, however, you’re better off with the review book for more in-depth and foundational knowledge. If you have a good handle on the course, however, these might be just what you need for handy reference and review.
5 Steps to a 5: AP Spanish Language and Culture 2017

5 steps to a 5 approaches students from where they are in their study schedules. The 326-page book offers study schedules with reviews developed appropriately to each schedule.

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What the publishers claim:

The insider’s guide (written by a high school teacher and exam developer) instructs the student through a successful study approach to the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam by breaking down the study into five stages, and supplying an easy-to-follow instructional guide, with an MP3 audio listening and speaking component strategies, and two full practice exams.

What users say:

Completeness: The easy-to-read content clearly covers what you need to know for the exam, especially complete on the interpersonal and presentation activities. It’s a shorter review than Barron’s. The diagnostic helps gauge progress and hone in what knowledge you’re missing. In-depth explanations to answers on the practice tests and excellent review questions provide a complete study.

Alignment: Users claim to get those five scores and the explanation of and strategies for the 2014 update correspond to the real exam. Users claim the book seems easier than CollegeBoard released exams but surprisingly aligns fairly well with the rigor of the exam.

Organization: The content is straightforward and varied and the audio complements the content. The convenient appendix at the end has practical writing tips and handy phrases. It’s a great schedule to keep you on track.

Practice Exams: You get two full practice exams, and a 2018 version comes to market soon, with two more practice exams.

What could be better

It’s thin and less explained compared to other more in-depth reviews. It’s more useful as a refresher or refiner than a full learning tool.

Bottom line

This short study guide works more like an outline than a full review, but not quite as summary as flashcards. The student who needs a method and prompting throughout a relatively short three to six weeks study might find this method helpful to stay on track.

Final Verdict

The real challenge for AP Spanish Language and Culture exam test-takers lies in becoming fluent in another language, which happens beyond a review book. Language exams are tough. You not only have to know a language and the culture in which the language arises, but you also have to know yourself. Are you conversationally able to small talk? Introverts might find the conversational speaking difficult.

Also, becoming fluent in another language requires deep and long-term immersion. Many course and exam takers recommend listening to Spanish language television, audio books, online news websites, and podcasts. In other words, it’s not a last-minute study. It takes time until language sinks in and ceases to be a translation from one language to another in your head.

Ask yourself who you are and where you are in your studying for the exam. Are you a native speaker, who only needs more grammar and exam format practice? You might use REA’s course for cementing your grammar or 5 Steps to a 5. REA’s flash cards might work equally well for last-minute honing, while Barron’s might be overwhelming with information you already know.

You might use Barron’s flashcards if you learned well from your course and just need a brush-up. But neither will help as much with writing and presentation techniques as a full-blown review.

However, if you’re investing in a long-term study to thoroughly learn, understand, and retain everything you need to know for the exam, go for Barron’s review book. Memorize it, replay the audio, and take the practice exams for building more confidence going into the exam. This text is most complete. It’s more work, and the testing reaches high, but the challenge will give you confidence. The second best option is Princeton’s review since it’s more abbreviated but fuller than the others. It’s a popular review book but may need supplementing for a five score.

If you’re more in need of a study method and already have a good foundation in the course fundamentals, use 5 to a 5 or the REA course. The steps are clear and the material well designed for easy understanding. Maybe you didn’t get as much out of your AP class as you should have but don’t have a lot of time to invest. You might do well structuring yourself with these study guides and taking extra practice tests.

Unfortunately, the pre-2014 CollegeBoard’s released exams aren’t helpful, so practice with the best AP Spanish Language and Culture review books—and good luck!
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Start Practicing
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide

It’s almost time for the big day of your AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, but perhaps the difference between preterite and imperfect still confuses you, or you don’t quite feel prepared for the speaking section. No matter how comfortable you are with the language and topics covered on the exam, there is always room for improvement. The best way to improve is to practice, and this 30 day AP Spanish Language study guide provides just that to help you prepare to do your absolute best on this year’s exam.
About the Exam

The AP Spanish Language and Culture exam takes a total of 3 hours and is composed of two main parts. Part I is the multiple choice portion with 30 questions on reading comprehension and 35 questions on listening comprehension. This portion of the exam takes one hour and 35 minutes. Part II is the free response section (frq) made up of 4 tasks of both interpersonal and presentational speaking and writing, which takes another hour and a half to complete. This guide will help you gain confidence in all these sections through repeated practice. The CollegeBoard, the organization that writes and administers the AP exams, has selected 6 main themes that the material of the exam will be based on. Notice that all these themes are interrelated and one theme includes topics from all the others.

1. Global Challenges. In this theme, you must describe social, political or scientific challenges around the world, like poverty or global warming.

2. Science and Technology. This theme discusses basic aspects of science and its effects on the other themes.

3. Contemporary Life. Here, you must describe your daily life and habits, including events, school, holidays, and using the internet.

4. Personal and Public Identity. This theme describes social and personal roles and interests, like hobbies or jobs.

5. Families and Communities. For this theme, describe the relationships in a family and community and special events that occur throughout the year. This is similar to the Contemporary Life theme.

6. Beauty and Aesthetics. In this theme, you must discuss objects and their qualities, including things like art, beauty and architecture, as well as poetry and literature.
What You Need for this Guide

The most important resource is access to Albert.io’s AP Spanish Language study guide. This resource provides a large number of multiple choice practice questions and review material so you know what to expect on exam day. The guide is organized by the 6 themes and includes reading comprehension questions for each central theme. Specific sections will be suggested in this study schedule, but try to do as many as you can.

A notecard app like Quizlet or physical notecards, whatever works best for you. This will help you review your vocabulary words and any irregular or stem changing verbs you come across during your review.

Pen and paper, or better yet a notebook dedicated entirely to practicing multiple choice questions and writing prompts. Include a “Topics to Review” list on the first page with a list of things you are not entirely comfortable with to review over the weeks. Also create a page for each of the themes listed above where you can write topics that fall under each broad theme, and make notes on how they relate to each other.

The CollegeBoard AP Spanish Language guide gives information on the specific format and topics covered on the exam, so it’s nice to have as reference. The website also has a host of study resources including all the frqs from the past exams and select multiple choice practice questions. Specific sample questions from this website will be assigned throughout this study guide.

A Spanish/English dictionary, either a print book or online. Keep this on your desk as you study for quick and easy reference.
Optional (but helpful) Materials

A source for reading and listening material. A large part of the exam is listening and reading comprehension, so getting as much exposure to the language before the exam will definitely help. Great resources include BBC Mundo and Spanish Listening. Some specific resources will be assigned throughout the schedule, but extra practice will make the listening and reading assignments so much easier on test day.

Albert.io’s Ultimate Spanish Grammar Review

Either your school’s AP Spanish textbook or a review guide. The most popular guides are The Princeton Review and Barron’s. Use this for extra practice on any grammar topics that confuse you.

How to use this Plan

Try to spend at least 1-2 hours a day using this AP Spanish Language study guide to prepare for the exam. Remember, the more time you spend reviewing, the more likely you are to get the score you want on this challenging exam. Make sure you take breaks though; it’s important not to burn yourself out because that could work against you. A common time management technique that works for a lot of people is the Pomodoro technique where you take a 5 minute break for every 25 minutes you work. Try some different time management techniques to see what works best for you.

Structure of this Study Schedule

Week One is focused on learning what the exam covers and also includes an intensive grammar review with a few different topics per day. Review resources will be provided, but this is a great place to utilize your textbook or other review books for extra practice.
Weeks Two through Four are primarily practice on multiple choice and frq responses for each of the 6 central themes. Remember, practice is the best way to study for a performance based exam like AP Spanish, so give these weeks your all.

There are also a few things you should do every day to help prepare for the exam. Spend 15-30 minutes a day doing these key activities:

1. Listen to Spanish every day. Use the news resource listed under materials, or any other resources you can find, to gain exposure to the language. On most days, this will be included in the schedule, but if not, recommended sources will be given. Remember, since a major part of the exam is listening and reading comprehension, repeated exposure to the language can be the best way to prepare you, besides grammar practice.

2. Learn 7 new vocabulary words. Start with Albert.io’s Top 50 Words to Know for the AP Spanish Exam, then focus on vocabulary words you have trouble with. Make flashcards either on paper or with an app to help you master these words. Also focus on Angelisimos, words that sound like they are Spanish, but aren’t (like embarazada). Try to go back and review all your flashcards often.

3. Focus on word gender and accents, but not stress over them. These are definitely important for fluency in Spanish, but exam graders do not expect you to be perfect, and it is still possible to score well with a few missing accent marks or misplaced gender pronouns. However, for every new vocabulary word you learn, make sure to write the gender pronoun and correct accent marks on your flashcard.

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Week One

Day One

Today, the main goal is to familiarize yourself with the exam and the topics covered. Start by pulling up the instructions for the exam on the CollegeBoard website. These instructions never change, so you can save yourself crucial minutes by memorizing the instructions before the exam. Read over the directions and understand what each part of the exam requires of you. Try to memorize these today and look over them a few more times before exam day.

Then, again on the CollegeBoard website, look over the 6 central themes the exam focuses on. Albert.io’s study guide questions are broken down by these themes, so spend a few moments familiarizing yourself with this outline as well. In your notebook, write down each theme on a separate page, then brainstorm some topics under each theme. For example, under the Beauty and Aesthetic theme, you could write the names of some famous Spanish artists that come to mind. Continue adding to this list as you study so you have a bank of ideas come exam day.

To help set you up for a great month of review, also read over Albert.io’s AP Spanish Language study tips. This is a great resource that gives you insider tips on how to tackle each part of the exam.

End your study session with the daily tasks listed above. The recommended listening for this week is the YouTube show Extra in Español. This is a 13 episode show designed for Spanish learners and is a great way to gain exposure to what Spanish sounds like, an important part of the comprehension parts of the exam. Today, watch episodes 1 and 2.

Congratulations! You are done with Day One! You are on your way to Spanish mastery.
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Day Two

For today’s review material, go over the present tense, especially focusing on irregulars and stem changing verbs. Albert.io’s Grammar Study Guide will be helpful, but also reference your textbook and any study books you have purchased. Try to practice a few different sets using any resources you have until you feel comfortable.

Then, review the pronouns. Remember, there are two types of pronouns in Spanish, direct object pronouns and indirect object pronouns. Also review where these pronouns are placed in sentences, especially when they can be attached to infinitives. The resources above will help review these topics.

Finish out the day with your daily tasks. For listening, it is recommended watch episodes 3 and 4 of Extra en Español. Don’t forget to learn 7 new vocabulary words as well. A good tip is to write down any words from the show that you do not understand.

Day Three

Today, continue your grammar review, focusing on the difference between ser and estar and the difference between por and para. These are important distinctions that the exam graders expect you to be familiar with, but some students mess up again and again. Albert.io’s grammar study guide is a great place to start, but also use your own resources to supplement your review.

Then, do the daily review tasks. Optionally, continue to watch Extra en Español; do episodes 5 and 6 today.
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Day Four

Review the preterite and imperfect tenses today, especially focusing when to use either one. This is a major problem with a lot of Spanish learners, but you can master it with practice. Besides your textbook and the Albert.io grammar study guide listed above, this is a good resource to practice this distinction. If you want, watch episodes 7 and 8 of Extra en Español. Otherwise, make sure you continue learning 7 new vocabulary words every day and are getting some listening exposure.

Day Five

Continuing with grammar review, today focus on the future and conditional tenses. Learn the difference between the two as they both refer to the future, but the conditional tense is used for probability whereas the future tense is used for things that will occur. Try to practice a few different problem sets so you completely understand the difference and how to conjugate, especially irregular verbs.

Then, optionally, watch episodes 9 and 10 of Extra en Español for your daily listening task, and don’t forget your 7 vocab words for today.

Day Six

To round out the intensive grammar review, study the subjunctive mood. Some students struggle with the this topic, so take your time with it. Remember, the subjunctive is not a verb tense, it is a mood. That means that it does not refer to a specific point in time, but rather represents doubt in what you are saying. So, because of that, every tense (present, imperfect, conditional, etc.) has a subjunctive mood alternative. If you don’t feel entirely comfortable with this mood before the end of the day, write it down on your “Topics to Review” list and go over it at least once a week until you master it.
Then, if you want, finish the Extra en Español series with episodes 11 through 13 or use another source of listening practice. Again, write down 7 vocabulary words you do not understand from you listening.

Day Seven

Today is the last day of your first week of intensive review! Great job so far. On the first day, you looked at the central themes and instructions for the exam on the CollegeBoard website. Today, go back to the website and read over some stellar free response question answers from previous students just like you. Review at least 2 examples of each of the 4 frq question types and focus especially on the grader’s comments below the student’s response. Write down in your notebook what the readers particularly liked. Reading over examples of good responses is the best way to figure out how to get a 5 on the exam, and remember, if they did it, so can you! Starting tomorrow, you will begin working on AP Spanish multiple choice and frq practice questions based on the 6 themes listed above. Therefore, if you have any grammar topics you are still confused on, make sure you review those in addition to the assigned practice questions.

To finish today’s review, do your own listening practice, or browse around the BBC Mundo page. The best part about BBC Mundo is that the reporters have different accents and speak at different speeds, so try to listen to a few different news reports in whatever topic you like. There is not a specific speaking type on the AP exam; rather the exam writers like to include different accents and dialects in the listening portion of the exam. Listening to as many kinds of speakers before you sit down for the exam in May will definitely help your performance.
Week Two

From here on out, your review will focus mainly on multiple choice and frq practice with a bit of grammar review. You will work through the practice problems on Albert.io for the 6 AP Spanish themes as well as complete practice frq questions from the CollegeBoard website. As you practice each theme, write down topic ideas in your notebook and make sure to note anything you struggle with on the “Topics to Review” page.

Day One

For the next two days, focus on the first theme, Global Challenges. First, read over any notes you took about the theme and the topics under the theme you wrote down. Then, go to the Albert.io AP Spanish Multiple Choice study guide. Choose a topic under the Global Challenges category that interests you and answer at least 15 of the questions. As you go through the questions, write down any more ideas of topics under the theme you come up with in your notebook.

Writing is also a very important part of the AP Exam as 2 of the 4 free response questions require a written answer. So, to get extra practice, write a short paragraph in your notebook about the topic under Global Challenges you chose for today. Write a summary of the readings you practiced or just a reflection on how Global Challenges affect your life.

Then, do your daily tasks. Either revisit the BBC Mundo page or find your own resources. Don’t forget your vocabulary words. At this point, you can also start looking back at words you learned on day 1 and 2 to make sure you still remember them.
Day Two

Continue working on the Global Challenges theme. Today, pick another topic on the Albert.io study guide and do another 15 questions. By this point, you should have a good grasp of the format of the AP Spanish Language multiple choice question style. If you would like to practice writing, also write a small paragraph in your notebook as a reflection on what you reviewed today. If you can, try to incorporate as many verb tenses as possible for extra practice.

For today’s listening task, listen to the song “La Historia de Juan”. The website also includes some preterite and imperfect review if you want some more practice on this rather tricky topic. Then, learn today’s 7 new vocabulary words.

Day Three

Today is your first day of free response question practice. Staying with the Global Challenge theme, go to the CollegeBoard website and complete question 1 from both the 2014 and 2016 frq exams. Once you are done, read over the answer key and make any necessary revision to your answers. Notice that these were both informal writing; we will practice the formal writing and speaking sections later on.

Also take some time today to look over the vocabulary you have learned so far to make sure you still remember most of them. If you can, try to incorporate these words whenever you speak or write; it will help you remember them.

To round out your day of studying, practice some listening, either on BBC Mundo or another website and learn your 7 vocabulary words.
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Day Four

The next three days will be focused on the Science and Technology theme. Look over whatever you have written in your notebook about this topic to get some ideas about topics under this theme. Again, visit the Albert.io study guide page, choose a topic under this theme and do at least 15 of the practice questions. Try to do all of the easy questions and move to medium level questions if you are confident.

Then, again in your notebook, write a short paragraph summary of the topic you chose today. Include as many technical or theme-specific words that you can, especially any words you learned from today’s multiple choice practice questions.

Make sure to practice listening to Spanish, as well as your vocabulary, using whatever resources you’d like. As mentioned earlier, try to vary where you are getting your listening practice from to hear as many different accents or dialects of Spanish you can find.

Day Five

Complete your multiple choice practice for Science and Technology by picking another category in the study guide and completing at least 15 questions, more if you would like. Hopefully, reading and understanding has become easier for you. Remember to keep a dictionary on hand and write down any words you don’t understand to add to your daily vocabulary list.

If you are still a bit weak on your writing skills, also do some writing practice in your notebook by summarizing the reading you did for your multiple choice questions. Incorporate as many tenses as you can and try to include some new vocabulary words you have learned. Pay attention to accent marks and noun gender as well, but do not stress over these.
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Day Six

Time for another frq practice! This time, look over question 2 from the 2014, 2015 and 2016 exams available on the CollegeBoard website. Notice that these are all formal writing pieces, so pay careful attention to the requirements. Since there are three sample questions from this topic, create a short outline for two of them and only write out your complete answer for one of them. Make sure to read over the answer key when you are done to see what the graders were looking for. Take any relevant notes in your “Topics to Review” list or on the Science and Technology theme page in your notebook.

Then, to close out your study session, remember to do some listening and vocabulary practice as well. By now, understanding spoken Spanish should be a little easier than when you started out.

Day Seven

Awesome job so far; you are halfway through this review! Today’s task is going to be challenging, but you are ready. Go to the Barron’s website and take a full length practice exam. This exam is modeled closely after the real exam, so try to take it all in one sitting if you can to properly simulate exam conditions. The hardest part of the exam isn’t really the content but time management, so completing a full length exam before the real deal is key. Take note of any sections that take you longer than the time limit so you can target your practice in the next few weeks and get more efficient.

As you take the exam, notice that the instructions are exactly same as the ones you read on day one. Memorizing these directions can save you precious time on the exam, so try your best to understand them before test day. This can save you precious minutes on the AP exam.
Week Three

Day One

Now it is time to move on to the Contemporary Life theme. Once again, Albert.io is a great place for practice multiple choice questions, so pick a topic that interests you and answer at least 15 of the questions. If you noticed that the multiple choice section of the full length exam took a little too long for you to complete, try setting a time limit on each question so you can practice doing them faster and faster.

Also, if you are still a little weak in writing or speaking, practice those with this theme. Either write a short paragraph summarizing the topic you read about for the multiple choice questions, or record a 2-3 minute spoken summary, or do both!

For your listening practice, check out this song about the Dominican Republic that also includes some subjunctive review. The lyrics are also available on the website. Then, learn your new vocabulary words.

Day Two

Finish your multiple choice review of the Contemporary Life theme with another topic from Albert.io’s study guide. Congratulations on your dedication, you are doing a great job so far.

Like yesterday, if you need to, take some time to practice writing or speaking based on the topic you learned about in today’s reading comprehension.

If you’d like, visit BBC Mundo again and look for news stories relating to the topic you chose for today’s theme review. Otherwise, use another source for your listening practice, then review today’s vocabulary.
Day Three

Time for some more frq practice! Again, go to the CollegeBoard website and access question 3 from 2016 and question 4 from 2015 to practice the Contemporary Life theme. Review the answers and pay close attention to what the graders thought was important. Add any relevant information to the theme page in your notebook.

Since these are speaking portions, it is recommended to actually record your responses so you can go over them carefully when you look at the answer key.

Then, spend some time listening to Spanish using whatever resources you have available.

Day Four

Now, review the Personal and Public Identities theme. Choose a topic on the Albert.io study guide and complete at least 15 multiple choice questions. By this time, at least 5 questions should be from the “difficult” category and, remember, if you struggle with time management, give yourself a limited amount of time to answer each question. Then, if you want some extra speaking or writing practice, try summarizing the reading you did today. Remember, if you want to practice speaking, record yourself so you can listen to what you said again and see how you can improve.

The recommended listening exercise for today is from a hotel receptionist talking about her day. The audio also comes with preterite and imperfect practice. Of course, you could also use your own resources if you’d like, but don’t forget your 7 vocabulary words!
One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Day Five

It’s day two of the Personal and Public Identities theme, so choose another topic from the study guide and give it a try. Remember to write any topic ideas you come across on the theme page in your notebook. Having a list of ideas to talk or write about will come in handy during the test so you will always have something to talk about. Choose your own resources today for the listening practice and look over all the vocabulary you have learned so far to make sure you still remember most of them.

Day Six

Round out your review of the Personal and Public Identities theme by answering question 1 on the 2015 AP Spanish Language exam on the CollegeBoard website. This is an impersonal writing practice, so your response does not need to be too long. It is also recommended to time yourself to establish good time management and test taking skills.

Because today’s frq practice was a bit short, spend more time reviewing any grammar topics that still give you trouble. If none come to mind, practice commands, a common problem among Spanish learners and the subjunctive mood. Try to do at least one practice set for each topic. Again, browse your own resources for listening practice and keep up with your vocabulary lists.

Day Seven

You have been studying pretty hard for three weeks now, so today will be a little bit of a rest day. Keep up with your listening practice and your vocabulary, but only set aside about 30 minutes to do this. If you want, you can also review any grammar topics that still confuse you. A great way to practice is to play some grammar games. Your textbook or other review books might also have some good resources to use, but make sure to only spend an hour maximum on Spanish today; you do not want to burn out.

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One-Month AP Spanish Language Study Guide Cont.

Week Four

This is the final week of intensive studying, so pay careful attention this week. By this point, reading and listening to Spanish should be easier for you, but if not, increase your listening and reading time to 45 minutes a day or try listening to news broadcasts every morning.

Day One

Only two more themes to do! For the next few days, focus on the theme Families and Communities. Pick a topic on the Albert.io study guide and answer at least 15 questions, or go up to 20 for extra review.

Depending on your confidence level with the free response section of the exam, also spend some time speaking or writing in Spanish, reviewing the theme Families and Communities. Perhaps talk or write about your own community and compare it to a generic community in Spain or Mexico.

For listening practice, today’s recommendation is about two friends from Ecuador. The audio integrates preterite and imperfect practice as well, which is a great practice. Then, choose 7 vocabulary words to master to finish your study session.

Day Two

Today, complete the Families and Communities theme by doing 15 questions from another topic on the study guide. Hopefully by this point the difficult questions are hopefully not proving to be too hard, so try to make at least half of your practice questions today from the “difficult” category.

To learn a bit more about Hispanic culture, today’s recommended reading is all about holidays and festivals in Chile. The story also highlights some important vocabulary at the end you may want to review. Afterwards, review all the vocabulary you have learned so far to make sure you still remember most of them.
Day Three

Time for some more frq practice. Today, do question 3 from 2014, 3 from 2015, and 4 from 2016 from the CollegeBoard website. Since there are 3 questions, look over all of them, but only fully answer two of them. Again, since these are speaking questions, make sure you record your answers so you can go over them later. Carefully compare your answers with the key and make any notes or revisions necessary.

Then, if you need to, spend a bit more time today reviewing any grammar topics that confuse you or that you are not completely confident in.

Complete your study session by listening to whatever Spanish resources you would like and reviewing some vocabulary.

Day Four

For today, start working on the last theme for the exam, Beauty and Aesthetics. Like before, choose a topic under the theme and answer at least 15 of the questions. For more reading comprehension practice if you still feel a little weak in the topic, aim to answer 20 or more. Aim for at least 10 of these questions to come from the “difficult” section.

Visit BBC Mundo again today and listen to news stories on whatever interests you. Then, for some writing practice, try to summarize one of the stories you heard. Finally, do some vocabulary review to finish today’s review session.

Day Five

It’s the last day of multiple choice review for this study schedule (although more practice is always encouraged)! Choose another topic and, depending on your level of comfort with reading comprehension, answer anywhere from 15 to 20+ questions today.
For practice, listen to the poem “Instantes” and use the incorporated conditional practice. Also make note of any vocabulary from the poem that you do not understand. Finally, record a short audio summary of the poem, trying to use the conditional tense as well.

**Day Six**

To finish your frq review for this theme, do question 4 from the 2014 exam on the CollegeBoard [website](#) then do some listening practice using whatever resource you would like and review today’s vocabulary words.

Since there was only one frq question, either take the rest of the day off or use it to practice some last grammar topics that you are not completely confident on. Either use your textbook or [this website](#) for your grammar review. Regardless, only do an hour maximum of revision today and give yourself the opportunity to relax.

**Day Seven**

Congratulations on completing this intensive 4 week AP Spanish Language study guide! By this point, you should have a good grasp of the topics covered on the exam and comprehension, both reading and listening, should be much easier. If you’d like, take the day to review anything on your “Topics to Review” page and look over all the vocabulary you have learned so far.

Alternatively, watch your favorite movie translated into Spanish. Most movies on DVD or Netflix have Spanish dubbing and watching a movie you already know the plot to can help your comprehension immensely. Challenge yourself to turn of English subtitles as well!

Some recommendations are any of the *Harry Potter* movies, *Mean Girls*, or a Disney classic.
The Final Days

For the last two days of this 30 day AP Spanish study guide, and any remaining days leading up to the exam, look over anything you have written on your “Topics to Review” page. Use any resources listed on this page, or ones you find on your own, to review. Also go over the Albert.io study materials, focusing on any sections or themes you didn’t do too well on. Then, read over any topic ideas you have for each theme and try to familiarize yourself with relevant vocabulary for each of these themes. Remember to continue reading and listening to Spanish every day to keep up with your exposure. The more you read and listen, the better you will do on the exam.

Take the day before the exam off, or at least only read or listen to Spanish on this day. You don’t want to burn yourself out and perform poorly on an exam you have worked so hard to prepare for!

Day of the Exam Checklist

Congratulations! If you have successfully completed this AP Spanish Language study guide, you are well prepared to do your best on the exam. Don’t let all your preparations go to waste by not being organized on exam day. Here’s a checklist of things to remember on the big day. Your school or testing center might have specific guidelines, but this is a general list.

1. Get a good night’s sleep. Try not to study too much the night before and get to bed 15-30 minutes earlier than your normally would to help you wake up refreshed.

2. Eat breakfast. Even if it just a banana or smoothie, a breakfast with simple sugars and protein can help your mind perform at its best.

3. #2 pencils and pens. Remember, the free response essays must be done in pen, so make sure you bring a few so you don’t run out of ink.
Also be sure you have a few reliable, sharpened pencils and a good, smudge proof eraser for the multiple choice section.

4. Government-issued ID. This can be a driver’s license or school ID, but either way, the exam proctors will need to check your identity.

5. Analogue watch. Electronics are not allowed in the testing room, so if you want to keep track of your time, bring in an analogue watch. Most testing centers will have one, but you can never be too sure.

Remember, you can’t bring any notes or snacks into the exam room, so leave them at home or in your car.

**Summary**

The AP Spanish Language exam is definitely challenging and requires careful preparation, but don’t be discouraged. By following this study guide, you have worked hard and are well prepared to do your best. Relax and be confident!

Let us know, what are some of your favorite resources for studying for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam?
Ready to Score Higher?

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Start Practicing
The AP Spanish Language exam can be an intimidating obstacle for even the most astute and focused Spanish student. However, with steady preparation throughout the school year, and careful review in the spring prior to exam time, you will master both the written and oral portions of this conquerable exam! Keep in mind that while over 130,000 students took the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam last year, 85%* passed with a score of 3 or higher and over 50% passed with a 4 or 5, earning them valuable college credit. You, too, can be successful on this exam. So stay tuned and the following tips will help you along the way.

*Percentage based on 2019 exam data.
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

How to Study for AP Spanish Language & Culture Tips

1. **Start using Spanish.** This should seem like a no-brainer but year after year students enter the AP Spanish exam worried about, yes, that’s right, their *Spanish*. By the time you reach the AP level in a foreign language, you have had plenty of experience with the grammar, and possibly the literature, of the language you’re studying. You’re comfortable with Spanish so now surround yourself with it on a daily basis, honing skills that will become second nature by the time the test rolls around. Read the news in Spanish (BBC Mundo is a great source). Watch *telenovelas* – they’re addicting, so you might even get hooked on practicing Spanish! You can even find episodes of your favorite shows dubbed in Spanish, as an introduction to television in Spanish. Change your social media settings to Spanish, or put on a Spanish music station on Pandora. Listen to authentic sources, like radio shows and podcasts, to practice your audio skills – these are the kinds of sources that will be used on the exam, and they’ll give you practice with cultural ideas. Bonus tip: make sure to practice with sources from different countries to get the hang of trickier accents, like Argentine and *andaluz*.

2. **Listen.** There are so many ways to incorporate Spanish audio into your daily routine. Add fun, upbeat songs to your workout playlist. Aventura, Prince Royce, and Calle 13 are all fun, young artists that will introduce you to new dialects and words. Most major cities in the U.S. also have several Spanish-language radio stations. Test yourself. Follow a news story in Spanish and see how much you understand – more than you think!

3. **Speak.** Although production is probably the element of foreign language that frightens students the most, that doesn’t mean it has to be. The best way to learn Spanish is to speak it. When your teacher poses questions to the class, raise your hand! Don’t worry about making mistakes; the more you speak, the fewer mistakes you’ll make. This is the time to learn, and the experience will help calm your nerves during the actual exam. Like any activity, the more you practice, the easier and more natural it will become.
To practice this skill set in Spanish, we recommend Spanish-English conversational exchanges. These short cultural exchanges are widespread in the U.S. Spend fifteen minutes speaking English and in return, you get fifteen free minutes of practice in Spanish with a native speaker! Volunteering is also an excellent way to incorporate more Spanish. Organizations such as Habitat for Humanity often need people with good written and oral skills in Spanish.

4. Read. You don’t have to crack open Don Quixote to practice reading in Spanish. But likewise, just because this is the AP Spanish Language exam and not literature, doesn’t mean that your reading skills can be subpar. The multiple-choice section, for example, requires good reading skills at a fast pace. Lucky for you, Spanish is a robust language with hundreds of periodicals from El Mundo to People en Español. Try to read a couple of articles a week, picking out a few words or idioms from each that you don’t know. Other quick changes such as setting your computer and social media accounts to Spanish can be an extra daily dose of Spanish.

5. Don’t stress the accents. We’ll talk more about this below, but for now know that graders care much less about perfect spelling and accent usage than they do the real meat and potatoes content of your essays. They want to see solid arguments framed with topic sentences and always backed up with a clearly stated thesis.

   \[ \text{Paragraph} = \text{Transition word} + \text{Topic sentence} + \text{argumentation} \]

So don’t get lost in the details – it takes up time and you won’t be punished for little mistakes.

6. Vocabulary. You’re in AP Spanish so you (hopefully!) have a solid command of the Spanish Language. Still, what slips you up? Causes you to slow down when completing assignments or speaking in class? More likely than not, it’s an unknown vocabulary word or perhaps a word that you learned once and cannot recall. Well, there’s a solution for that.
7. **Rely on flashcards.** You guessed it: vocabulary cards. We already talked about the importance of reading and identifying unknown vocabulary words. What to do once you have a list? Make cards. Or charts. Or elaborate, colorful diagrams. Whatever helps you to remember new words. And remember: no English translations! Instead, write a description of the word in Spanish. Research shows that you will remember words faster (and access them faster come test day) if they have their own representation in your mind.

This: ![Cat](https://example.com/cat.png) el gato

Not this: ![Cat](https://example.com/cat.png) cat el gato

8. **A new one a day.** Plain and simple: learn a new word every day. Open up a dictionary and pick a word out. Use a daily flip calendar that introduces a vocab word a day. Use them all!

9. **Contextualize.** It’s not enough to maintain a hefty stack of vocabulary cards if you don’t know how/when to use them. Make sure to include an example sentence for each new word that really helps integrate the meaning in your mind.

10. **Don’t forget the details.** So you have your vocabulary list and even some example sentences. Still, you’re going to get stuck with these new words if you don’t note two things.
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

11. **Word gender**: If it’s a noun, you *must* memorize the gender and article (*el/la*). And what about the gender of those “exceptions”? *El agua* is feminine but *el idioma* is masculine – note the gender of the word in addition to its article.

12. **Verb conjugation**: Spanish is notorious for its tough verb conjugations. If it’s an irregular verb, make sure that you note all the conjugations (including subjunctive!). You never know when one will pop up.

*Insider tip*: Although on the AP Spanish Language exam graders are instructed to be forgiving for cosmetic errors like accents, grammatical gender (*el vs. la*), and even some tough irregular verb conjugations such as the subjunctive, your grader will be more impressed if you have a clean, error-free essay. So brush up on your accent marking and write the best essay that you can on test day.

13. **Exercise the weak spots**. In your AP Spanish Language class, you have undoubtedly been doing some practice exams. These are a great method for identifying your weak spots on the exam – the part of the exam that’s going to drag you down below the crucial 4 mark. Find the part of the exam, be it spoken, written, or otherwise, that you struggle with and *work* on it. Pay particular attention to it during practice exams and go over those responses with your teacher. Spend some time reviewing tough grammar. Do practice exercises for ideas like *por para*, preterite vs. imperfect, irregular verbs, and when to use the subjunctive. If you can use these structures correctly and consistently, you’ll score higher. You can also ask your teacher for specific areas that he/she would recommend you improve upon prior to the test.

*Insider tip*: What’s my structure again? The AP Spanish exam is comprised of three main areas: multiple choice, speaking, and written. Here they are, listed in order of appearance on the test: multiple choice, presentational/conversational speaking, short presentational writing (e-mail), and long presentational writing (essay).
Remember that once you complete one section, you can’t go back and change your answers. So move on and focus on the section at hand. At the same time, you can’t work ahead. So even if you’re especially nervous for the speaking section, focus on the questions in front of you. You can’t work ahead so there’s no benefit in being anxious about an upcoming section.

14. Review old exams. Previous exams are an AP student’s best friend. Why? Because the test makers shy away from too much creativity year to year. Previous tests are the key to predicting what to expect on your test this year. Yes, there will be an e-mail (interpersonal writing component). Yes, there will be an essay (presentational writing component). But not only should you examine these previous exams, you should also practice responses to these questions – and time yourself. Which brings us to...

15. Tick-tock, time yourself. The more you practice for the AP Spanish Language exam, the more you will see that time is of the essence. With so many components to the test, it’s understandable that time will go by quickly. Don’t let yourself fall into this trap and get stressed by time limits. Practice is great, but it’s all for nothing if you don’t also time yourself. Set a clock in front of you when you practice the interpersonal writing component – time passes very quickly and there’s a lot of information that must be included to warrant a 5! Use that clock again when practicing the speaking section. You have some big recording spots to fill with your oral Spanish – make sure you don’t leave three minutes of a recording empty without response. And don’t count on a clock hanging in the testing room; wear a watch (make sure it won’t make any noise during the exam), so you can keep track of your organizing, writing, and speaking time easily.

16. Teachers as resources. You may think that your AP Spanish teacher is only there as a source of infinite grammatical wisdom. But in fact, there may be no better person to speak with about the test than your own teacher! AP teachers have seen hundred of students come through their classrooms. What’s more, as we’ll explain below, many AP teachers grade the exams at summer institutes. Your teacher is a wealth of knowledge. Ask questions. Speak up. Take advantage of extra study sessions (or suggest them!).

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17. Make a study party! For some, studying alone works. Still, research shows that most students work better and achieve better results when reviewing in a group. Why? Because you can bounce ideas off of the various members, it breaks up the monotony of studying alone, and, because it can be fun! Exam review doesn’t have to be miserable. Be organized and stay on course, but make the time during review to also be with friends and classmates.

18. Play grader. Trade practice essays within the group and grade each other’s using the 0-5 AP rubric. Be encouraging, but tell each member what was lacking in the essay and most importantly, how to improve for the next one.

19. Divide and conquer vocab cards. Why make duplicate vocabulary cards? Split the vocabulary lists between the members of the group and have each member type up a set of review cards to share. Then, if you do want to practice on your own, simply make a copy of the group’s prepared cards.

20. Have a weekly objective. Try to meet once a week leading up to the test and then close to daily as the test approaches. For each meeting, come prepared with a topic to review. Put one or two people in charge of a new topic for each meeting. This way, you get a solid review of a cultural concept or verb tense, but don’t have to do all the review alone.

21. Skip instructions. You know what to do – skip them! That’s right, by the time you get to test day, you should be so familiar with the layout and structure of the exam, that you don’t need to review the instructions again. Get used to the format, the prompt style, and the instructions. During the exam, you will have a full minute each time the instructions are read; you don’t need to listen! Use that time to get started reading printed sources, skimming multiple-choice questions, and jotting down notes for the presentational prompts. Your familiarity with the instructions is your secret weapon. You’ll save yourself a good minute of test time!

Insider tip: At three hours, the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam is a long one. What are some strategies for getting through this exam and performing at your best, even at the end?
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

• Take a breather after every page of questions. This easy exercise will give your brain a brief respite from the tough job of reading all that Spanish!

• Make sure to stand up during break time. Working so fast and ardently can take a toll on your back and legs. You won’t be punished for standing up during the break, so get that blood pumping and jump to your feet occasionally.

• Eat a good breakfast/lunch on test day! It will be impossible to focus for all three hours of the exam if your stomach is grumbling. Give your brain the energy it needs – eat well the day of the test!

22. Know the themes. It’s the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Of course it’s important to review your past subjunctive and transition words for the essays, but if you aren’t knowledgeable about the cultural themes that the AP course is structured around, you cannot do well on the test.

Writing and speaking prompts, as well as multiple-choice questions, will tie in these common connections. According to CollegeBoard, the themes are as follows:

• Global Challenges / Los desafíos mundiales
• Science and Technology / La ciencia y la tecnología
• Contemporary Life / La vida contemporánea
• Personal and Public Identities / Identidades personales y públicos
• Families and Communities / Las familias y las comunidades
• Beauty and Aesthetics / La belleza y la estética

Knowing these categories alone won’t be much help, but you can use them as guidelines for your studying and your outside resources. Check out sources in each of these different topics to get familiar with cultural trends. Impress the graders not simply with your imperfect/preterit usage but also your cultural knowledge of the Spanish-speaking world.
23. Tune out and focus in. Too many students taking the AP Spanish Language and Culture and other high-stakes tests psyche themselves out by watching others during test time. “He’s writing more than me.” “She hasn’t stopped speaking!” Our advice: don’t worry about other people. Do the best that you can do. After all, you don’t know who’s looking at you thinking the same things!

24. Know the scoring guidelines. In front of every AP Spanish Language and Culture exam grader is a list of grading guidelines. What’s on them? How is your presentational writing section or interpersonal speaking section graded? This should not be a mystery to you – because the grading guidelines are posted right to the CollegeBoard website! If your AP Spanish teacher hasn’t provided you and your classmates with these guidelines, download them and bring some copies to class. Knowing how you will be graded and the specific criteria that graders are looking for will take a lot of the guessing out of the exam game. Know exactly what the graders look for and supply it for them in your written and speaking parts – get the points you deserve!

25. Prepare, prepare, prepare: Don’t wait until the last few days before the exam to review! Spend at least a couple of weeks ahead of time going over tricky grammar concepts, irregular verbs, and cultural patterns. The earlier you start studying, the more natural it will be to speak and write in Spanish when the time comes.

26. Manage your anxiety: Worrying about how you will score on the test can only lower your score. You’ve prepared for this exam with years of classroom experience, so you know you can speak Spanish! Instead of scaring yourself, focus on what you can do, and have the confidence that you will do it well.
AP Spanish Language and Culture Multiple Choice Tips

1. Don’t leave any stones unturned. Make sure to answer every single question! Inevitably you won’t know the answer to one question. Well, there’s no penalty for wrong answers so even if you’re unsure of an answer, go ahead and guess! Who knows, you might just get it right.

2. Use process of elimination. Remember in elementary school when you learned about the process of elimination? Well, it’s going to be your best friend on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Unsure of a question? At least narrow the potential responses down to two – then guess between them.

3. How best to listen. Just like in the written portion, each audio source will be played twice for you. Read the question closely prior to their playing. The first time, pause for comprehension. Only the second time should you try to capture notes.

4. Track the time. The multiple choice section is expansive and it’s easy to lose yourself in the answers. Make sure to take a deep breath every few questions. And keep track of time – making sure to fill in at least something for every question.

5. Summarize: For printed sources, write a short summary phrase at the end of each paragraph. This will help you understand the main ideas, and make it easier to refer back to the source for answers.

6. Check, but don’t obsess: Look over your responses, but go with your gut; unless you have direct evidence that your first answer is definitely incorrect, trust your instincts.

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The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

AP Spanish Language and Culture Free Response Tips

1. Don’t stop talking. If there’s one piece of advice that we can give to you concerning the presentational speaking section of the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam it’s this: don’t stop. You have six minutes and you need to use all of it. That can seem intimidating – you’re speaking in a second language, after all! But with practice, paying particular attention to your Spanish filler words (así que, podemos ver, es obvio que, etc.), you can speak for the entirety of that time. Follow these guidelines to learn how!

2. Fill in the blanks with speech. We already mentioned this above but it’s worth stating again. To have smooth delivery, particularly in the length presentational speaking component, it is essential that you use filler words and phrases. We already provided some above but here are some more. And don’t forget, when in doubt, in Spanish we don’t say “um” but “em”!

   Así que...
   Podemos ver...
   Es obvio que...
   Al otro lado...
   Entonces...
   Además de eso...

3. Organization is key. Like we said above, six minutes for the presentational speaking component may seem like a lot of time to fill with speech (Interpersonal speaking is twenty seconds for each response which poses a different sort of challenge.). So an important part of your preparation for the presentational speaking on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam should be how to organize your cultural comparison. Will you start with one country and then another before comparing? Will you start with the comparison and then go into more detail on each country? That is up to you to decide but the more you know the layout of your speaking, the easier the delivery will be.
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

4. **Don’t memorize verbs in linear order.** If you’re like most foreign language students, you’ve spent a hefty amount of time memorizing verb conjugations. *Yo tengo, tú tienes, ella tiene*, etc. Good, you’ve memorized your verbs. But can you use them in context? Or do you have to run through the list of conjugations (yo, tú, él, nosotros, ustedes) to get to the nosotros conjugation? What about the less familiar or irregular verbs? Know those too and be able to use them on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam.

You won’t have time when speaking during the exam to go through every conjugation. So, practice conjugations out of order. Make sure to practice less-used conjugations such as *usted*. And plus side: once you know your verbs that quickly, your writing will be faster too!

5. **Playback a recording of yourself.** One of the most consistent complaints from speaking section graders on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam is that students do not speak clearly enough. This is understandable – you’re nervous, time is passing quickly. You have a lot to say or maybe you’re unsure about some pronunciation. But you can’t get the points that you need to pass the exam if the grader can’t even understand you.

So, take steps to avoid this problem. Prior to the test, practice your vocabulary words with a clear, articulate pronunciation. Even go so far as to record yourself so that you know what you sound like (you can trade recordings with members of the study group that we talked about before). On test day, don’t let your nerves get the better of you. Speak slowly – even during the quick interpersonal speaking. If you’re unsure of a word, still be confident in your pronunciation so that the graders at least understand what you were trying to say.
6. **Use the appropriate register.** The register grading criterion is clearly marked on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam grading guidelines – what does it mean? You’ve learned the conjugations for tú and usted, vos and ustedes, even vosotros/as etc. by now. And you know that usted(es) is used for more formal situations such as speaking with a stranger while tú is used in less formal situations such as around friends and family. So be consistent with your usage of the pronouns in the simulated conversation section, in particular, when you are most likely to be (mock) speaking with someone else.

**Insider tip:** You will never be expected to know conjugations for vosotros or vos on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. But if you have experience in countries that use vos such as Argentina, Chile, or Venezuela or other countries such as Spain that use vosotros, feel free to use them.

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The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

AP Spanish Language and Culture Essay Tips & Advice

1. **Use your transitions.** We’ve talked about it since day 1 of AP Spanish Language and Culture. What do the graders look for? Long, disorganized paragraphs? Nope, they look for clean paragraphs with killer topic sentences all topped off with...a transition. Know them: *De esta manera, como resultado, además de eso.*

2. **Write legibly.** Who do you think is going to receive the higher score: the student who took his/her time, taking time to write each word in solid, black ink? Or the student who slopped all over the pages in impossible-to-read-me lime green pen? Write legibly and use a dark blue or brown pen. Pencil for notes – pen for text.

3. **Use tough structures correctly.** Certain structures are known to be difficult (I’m looking at you, future subjunctive) and graders almost always note their usage. So if you’re going to be brave and use them – make sure to use them right! If you’ve prepared for the exam, you should feel fairly comfortable using tough grammatical structures in written form – but make sure you have them correct!

4. **Incorporate sources!** I’ve said it once, I’ll say it again: USE YOUR SOURCES. The experts above commented on how many students, year after year, fail to use all three sources on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam! While graders will be forgiving to a certain extent – don’t make them work to find your sources and citations in the essays.

5. **And answer the questions.** This one hits home especially for the email. It’s a very fast turnaround time from receiving instructions to signing off on the email – so work fast! But, note that you’ve responded to every single question in the prompt. For example, the email always encourages you to respond with a question of your own – so make sure you include a question for your addressee! Just as with the sources, make sure to include answers to every single question to get full points for the interpersonal writing component.
6. Don’t get bogged down in details. Yup, we said it, don’t get bogged down. You’re not going to understand every single word of the prompts. Don’t let this bother you or cause you to lose confidence. Use the context around the word to figure out its meaning. Or, if possible, reduce the word to its root and see if you recognize any part of it. At the end of the day, you don’t have to understand every single line of every single prompt to do a stellar job in the written component.

7. Toss in the subjunctive whenever you can: The subjunctive mood is tough; even AP graders recognize that. So being able to use it every once in a while will showcase your language ability – play it up!

8. Take a side: The presentational writing is a persuasive essay, which means you should have some kind of argument in your thesis. Then, use the sources as evidence to support your position. Refer to both sides of the issue, but clearly focus on one – this will strengthen your argument.

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The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

Interpersonal and Presentational Speaking Tips

1. **When in doubt, keep talking:** You have a limited amount of time – use it! Even if you’re stumped, talking basically about the main idea fills silence, and it can even help you think of more things to say as you go.

2. **Fill it up:** Know your filler words! Instead of saying *but* or *ummmm* or *I mean*, know phrases like this in Spanish – they’re called *muletillas*. These are especially helpful in interpersonal speaking, which is more informal. Some helpful ones to keep in mind: *pues, bueno, mira, o sea, es decir*...

3. **Everybody makes mistakes:** If you catch yourself making a grammar mistake, self-correct! Even graders know we all mess up sometimes, so they like to see you fix your mistakes.

4. **Interpersonal Speaking:** This section can be tricky, but it’s simple if you’re prepared. Just think of it as a casual conversation – communication is the most important thing.

5. **Complete the task:** This is the first and most important objective of the section. Each portion of the prompt will have instructions with one or two tasks to complete – make sure you complete each one! Then show off what you can do in the remaining time. You only have twenty seconds, so follow instructions first and then fill up time.

6. **Know your audience:** Based on the description of the conversation, immediately identify if you should use *tú* or *Usted*. If you’re speaking to a friend, the informal is safe. But if you’ll be talking to a teacher, a boss, or someone giving you an interview, make sure you address them with the formal *Usted*.

7. **Outline:** During the instructions, look at the tasks for each part of the prompt. Jot down words you think might be useful – especially transitions – verb tenses, or places to use the subjunctive. For example, if one task is to make a complaint, you could jot down *Es desafortunado que...*
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

8. **Presentational Speaking:** Here’s the thing... this section of the exam is hard. It takes a calm mind and confidence in the language. But here’s the other thing: you can do well with the right strategy! Here are some expert tips to conquering the cultural comparison.

9. **Remember your surroundings:** No, not the testing room – the hypothetical classroom you’re speaking to in this section. The cultural comparison is a presentation, so it should be more professional and formal than the interpersonal speaking.

10. **Organization is key:** Don’t just toss out facts about two cultures at random. Start with a thesis or main idea, then go into similarities with supporting evidence, then differences with supporting evidence. Finish up with a brief conclusion that sums up your argument.

11. **Don’t script it:** When you’re taking notes, don’t try to write out everything you’re going to say. Go for an outline with key vocab words instead.

12. **Comparison is the name of the game:** Make sure to draw from both your own culture and the prompted Spanish-speaking culture. When you’re taking notes, it can often be helpful to make a Venn diagram, so you can visualize the similarities and differences.

13. **Familiarize yourself with a culture:** The prompt will ask you to compare your own culture with a Spanish-speaking culture with which you are familiar. This can be overwhelming, with so many choices. Before the exam, look into a few cultures that interest you, or even countries you’ve traveled to. Some examples that will have a lot of cultural resources are Spain, Mexico, and Argentina, but you can also explore other Spanish-speaking countries.

14. **Recognize patterns:** Be familiar with patterns across Spanish-speaking countries in attitudes, values, and practices. For example, consider the strong religious tradition in many of these cultures – how does this compare with your own experience? What about festivals? The role of the family?
15. **Know your transition words:** Like in many other parts of the exam, transition words can really help bump up your score because they show confidence with the language and material. Some especially helpful phrases for this section are además, por ejemplo, por otro lado, aunque, por el contrario...

16. **Bring in your opinion:** Even though this is a formal setting, the prompt will ask about your own experience, so talk about it! Don’t just give facts about the place you live; instead, talk about your personal experience with family, for example, and what that shows as a pattern in your culture.

**Start your AP Spanish Language Prep today**
Tips by AP Spanish Language Teachers

School is out and you may think your AP Spanish teacher checks out for the summer. To the contrary, most scoring for AP Spanish Language and Culture exams is done by AP Spanish teachers themselves! What does this mean for you? Well, teachers return to their classrooms after the AP exam grading having seen both sides of the test: the students and the responses. They know what students tend to do – and what graders do and do not want to see on the test.

Here is some of their expert knowledge:

1. **Do your best from the first day of class.** Foreign language is complex and takes many months and years of steady practice and commitment. “I always tell my students, you should be putting your best foot forward from day 1 of class. You can’t cram for a language – fluency takes time. Put the time in throughout the semester(s) and you’ll be rewarded come exam time.”

2. **6 minutes? Use it!** The experts back us up on this one! You have so much time for the speaking section so make sure you use that to your advantage. “When we grade the speaking section of the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, we must listen to the entirety of each recording – even if 3 of the 6 minutes are silent! I always encourage my students to use this to their advantage! Don’t babble, but practice forming coherent, oral arguments when we do our practice exams in class. 6 minutes is a lot of time, but with practice, it becomes easy to fill with well-formulated material in a foreign language.”

3. **6 pages? Don’t use it!** And make sure to be concise with writing! Graders simply read too many essays every day to manage your six-page essay, so only write what you really want to say. This will help with time management issues as well.
“For the writing section of the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, we grade upwards of 100 essays a day for multiple days in a row. Think that sounds tiring? It is. There is nothing worse than a long presentational writing component that carries on for pages without actually making a point. Sometimes they won’t even state a thesis. The test creators want to make sure that you have plenty of space to formulate your thoughts so they give you lots of pages. However, that rarely means that you need to fill out every single blank page. I have given out scores of 5 to essays that were only 2 pages.”

4. Save up your energy for the end. “The AP Spanish Language and Culture exam is notorious for its length and variety of content for which you must prepare: multiple choice, written, oral, etc. I think the most important advice that I give my students year after year is to not wear themselves out too much during the test. Save some energy up for the final sections, one of which is writing which is especially draining. And of course follow test-taking basics such as eating a good breakfast so you can perform your best.”

5. For Heritage speakers. Heritage speakers represent a unique group of test takers. But as this grader says, it doesn’t mean that they always have an advantage: “Many of my students speak Spanish as a first language, at home with their parents. They come to my class to learn how to write formally in Spanish, etc. Still, I tell them that much of the same advice I give to the students who are learning to speak Spanish applies to them: Think before you speak. Write out a well-formulated plan and thesis prior to writing an essay. Read the entirety of the question/prompt instead of assuming you know the answer. Do I think my students who speak Spanish as a first language have an advantage? Perhaps. But they also need to be careful to harness some of their knowledge in and follow the format of the test. I’ve seen several native speakers fail the AP Spanish exam for that very reason.”

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6. Even these count. “Don’t underestimate the power of practice tests! Every year the same result: those students who consistently take the practice tests, pass the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. Those students that don’t take the practice tests seriously: fail. That simple.”

7. And speaking of practice. Practice alone is not enough! Make sure to do full run-throughs of the exam, with your study group, for example, prior to taking the test. “Although helpful, when we do practice tests in class, we can only focus on one section of the test: written, oral, multiple choice, etc. This does not give you the authentic test-taking experience that is draining given the length and quantity of test material. So I give my students extra tests to do outside of class. It will take a whole afternoon – but after all, so will the test. Be as prepared as you can be. Practice the entirety of the test prior to test day instead of always breaking it up into chunks.”

8. Use idioms: More than just transition phrases, idioms can help showcase your language skills and confidence, especially in the interpersonal sections. Some examples to get you started: tener ganas de, con tal de que (+ subjunctive), tener la culpa, estar de acuerdo, and acabar de. Phrases like this are more than just vocabulary; they show connections and make communication clear. Thanks for the tip from Sra. C in Kentucky.

9. Bring in culture whenever possible: Now that the exam focuses on cultural elements and not just language, it can only help to throw in your knowledge of Spanish-speaking cultures wherever you can – especially in interpersonal writing and speaking. For instance, if you’re writing an email to your grandmother, make her in a Cuban neighborhood in Miami. In the speaking conversation, the prompt might ask you about examples in a category, such as music or books – here you could name-drop Juanes or Gabriel García Márquez. Thanks for the tip from Sra. C in Kentucky.
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

10. **Avoid anglicismos**: These are the false cognates and obvious English structures (like placing adjectives before nouns) that are dead-giveaway signs of English translation. The best way to avoid these anglicisms is to practice reading and listening to authentic sources – you’ll get used to Spanish structures and they will come naturally in your own writing and speaking. Thanks to Srta. D in Ohio for the tip.

11. **Know the three cultural Ps: productos, prácticas, y perspectivas**. These categories will better help you understand different aspects of Spanish-speaking cultures, so that you can draw on them specifically during the cultural comparison. *Productos* are things, whether tangible or intangible, that are important to a culture. They can include physical objects, like a house or a road, as well as laws, the education system, and other institutions. *Prácticas* are actions: festivals and celebrations, weddings, and daily interactions. *Perspectivas* are broader; they indicate how the people of a culture see the world. They include values and patterns of behavior and beliefs, such as the role of the family, religious tradition, the value of work, etc. Familiarizing yourself with these ideas will help you understand many parts of Spanish-speaking culture, instead of only knowing about the differences in laws or the different types of *ferias* in Spain. Thanks for the tip from Sra. A at Bloomington High School North.

12. **Directions**. You should know the directions, don’t waste valuable test-taking time reading them. But make sure you follow them! “You would think this would be obvious, but I see it all the time at institute when we’re grading the AP Spanish Language and Culture exams: students not following directions. How can you hope to get the right answer if you don’t know the question? This is especially critical for the written section, I think, where not only do you need to respond to a prompt, (and only that prompt – anything more/less will lose you points!) but you also must utilize all three sources provided.”

*Insider tip*: Graders are instructed not to punish students who forget to use one source. So, you can still get a very high score if you do forget about one. But don’t take that chance! Incorporate all three and get the grade you deserve.
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

13. Sources. We talked about the importance of knowing and incorporating your sources and the experts back us up: “And speaking of sources... use them all! I am always so disappointed by how many students I have to dock points for the silly reason that they didn’t incorporate the sources. Sometimes they have such nice theses and well-constructed arguments but no sources – at all! You cannot receive a passing score if you do not include at least one source.”

Insider tip: You do not need to explicitly cite the sources in your written essay. Sometimes doing so can even make your writing a little clunky. However, keep in mind that graders are looking to check off the three sources as one element of a good essay. Make it easy on them! Find some way to cite your sources clearly in your essay: boom, boom, boom. One less thing for you to lose points on.

14. Oh no, audio. We’ve said it before, speak clearly. Too often graders will not that they have a hard time just understanding students such as one grader of the audio section: “I sometimes struggle to just understand what the students are saying. Once in a while a student will speak far too fast, for example. Others are too quiet. As you record yourself, imagine yourself on the receiving end of the audio. Would you be able to understand yourself at that volume? That speed? I even go so far as to have my students record themselves speaking and play it back so that they can see how their speech comes across on a recording – not always how it seems!”

Are you a teacher or student? Do you have an awesome tip? Let us know!
The Ultimate List of AP Spanish Language and Culture Tips Cont.

The AP Spanish Language and Culture exam is a doozy. But every year more than 100,000 students take the test with almost half receiving a score of 4 or 5. They rely on excellent study habits beginning from day one of class, a great resource in their AP Spanish teacher, and sources like this list of exam tips. Come prepared to test day with not only your verb charts memorized but also a bunch of insider tips on how to beat the exam from the inside. Let’s recap:

- Use. Your. Sources. (Do we need to say it again?)
- Actually respond to the prompt!
- When in doubt, keep talking.
- When in doubt, stop writing.

Armed with this knowledge, there’s no way you can’t succeed on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam. On test day, perform your best knowing that you’ve done all you can to prepare: incorporating Spanish into your daily life, constant review of vocabulary, taking full practice tests. These are all the things that will get you to a passing grade on the exam. Ánimo!

Keep reading for great insider tips on other AP foreign language tests including the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam.

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