

**Spanish
AS level**

General Introduction

Welcome to your AS level Spanish course. This Introduction should provide you with all the information you need to make a successful start to your studies.

The Specification (or Syllabus)

This course has been designed to give you a full and thorough preparation for the AS or A level Spanish specification, set by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). The specification at AS and A2 is assessed by examination only; there is no coursework.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the AS only award is **1696**.

The **Subject Code** for entry to the A level award is **2696**.

Private Candidates

The AQA specification is open to private candidates. Private candidates should contact AQA for a copy of '*Information for Private Candidates*' or access the information online at:

http://web.aqa.org.uk/admin/p_private.php



Oxford Open Learning

Arrangement of Lessons

General Introduction to AS Spanish

Following the Course

Grammar for AS

AS and A level System; AS Spanish Examination

AQA Aims (including how to order the specification)

Resources

Tips and Techniques

Module One: Media

1. Television
2. Advertising
3. Communication Technology

TMA A

Module Two: Popular Culture

4. Cinema
5. Music
6. Fashion/Trends

TMA B

Module Three: Healthy Living and Lifestyle

7. Sport/Exercise
8. Health and Well-being
9. Holidays

TMA C

Module Four: Family and Relationships

10. Relationships within the Family
11. Friendships
12. Marriage/Partnerships

TMA D

Module Five: AS Exam Practice

13. AS Unit 1 (Part 1) – Listening and Reading Test
14. AS Unit 1 (Part 2) – Writing Test

TMA E

15. AS Unit 2 – Speaking Test

TMA F

Following the Course

Course Content

The AS course has four topic modules - *Media, Popular Culture, Healthy Living/Lifestyle* and *Family/Relationships* - which correspond to the AQA AS specification. Each module is divided into three sub-topics, making twelve sub-topics in all. Each of the first twelve lessons looks at one of these sub-topics (see *Arrangement of Lessons* above). Three additional lessons teach skills to help you prepare for the AS examination. At the end of the course there is a *Spanish Grammar Glossary*, which gives definitions of all the grammar required at AS.

The course aims to build on IGCSE Spanish skills, and is progressive. It is better to work steadily through the course starting at Lesson One than to dip into it at random, as each successive lesson builds on skills acquired in previous lessons. Module One aims to revise some GCSE work in the context of the AS specification.

The AQA specification outlines the AS topics and sub-topics, with bullet points suggesting some things to cover within each sub-topic. The texts in this course, together with those in the recommended text book (see below), cover most of these bullet points, but you will need to do some independent research as well, to extend your knowledge within each topic.

Lesson Activities

Each of Lessons 1-12 deals with three or four grammar points in addition to the sub-topics. There are always eight activities, which practise the sub-topic and/or grammar covered:

Activity	1	Reading comprehension based on sub-topic
Activities	2-4	Grammar practice, reading comprehension or writing practice
Activity	5	Listening comprehension, to be used in conjunction with the CD
Activity	6	Grammar practice, reading comprehension or writing practice
Activity	7	Personal questions related to the context of the lesson, to practise spoken and written skills
Activity	8	Reading comprehension, usually based on a cultural text related to the sub-topic

You will find answers at the end of each lesson. Depending on the activity, you will either be given definitive right answers or, in the case

of more open-ended questions, a specimen, or suggested, answer. You do not send your answers to the exercises to your tutor.

Tutor-marked Assignments (TMAs)

There are six tutor-marked assignments, at regular intervals in your Spanish AS level course. The questions are similar to AQA AS questions and the mark schemes are based on AQA guidelines. When you undertake a TMA it is advisable to follow the timing suggested for each one so as to give yourself examination practice. Each of the first four TMAs follows a three-lesson topic module, and is designed to assess your understanding of that particular module. The final two TMAs are practice tests of Units 1 and 2 of the exam. TMA E is a Listening, Reading and Writing (Unit 1) Test and TMA F is a Speaking (Unit 2) Test, which is conducted over the phone with your tutor.

You should send all TMAs except TMA F to your tutor, who will return your marked script together with a set of Suggested Answers. Make sure you **write your name clearly** on your TMA answers, and that all the sheets of your assignment are firmly attached together. To these you should attach one of the TMA cover slips which are supplied with this course, taking care to fill in the relevant sections. (Note that some sections will be filled in by your tutor.)

Each TMA ends with some speaking practice. This is conducted over the phone with your tutor. You will need to arrange a mutually convenient time to do this. The speaking practice will be marked by your tutor and this mark will be included in your TMA total. **You should aim to do the speaking practice as soon as possible after completing the rest of your TMA, as you will not receive your marked script and Suggested Answers until you have done so.**

Experience shows that students who submit assignments are much more successful than those who don't. It is your primary means of gaining personal help with your studies, sorting out problems and maintaining motivation.

Look very carefully at every comment your tutor makes and try to understand *why* your tutor has given you particular marks. If you encounter problems when studying a lesson, please contact your tutor.

Course Materials

Text book

The AS level Spanish course is supplemented by the following textbook:

AQA AS Spanish, Jean Edwards *et al.* (Nelson Thornes, 2008); ISBN 978-0-7487-9810-0

You may wish to acquire this textbook to support your studies but please note that you should be able to view it “free” online, as part of your access to Kerboodle resources (see below). The textbook is exclusively endorsed by the AQA examination board to teach the first year of their A level specification, and you will find that it supplements the reading, speaking and writing exercises in this course.

While the course provides extensive coverage of all aspects of the specification, it is important to back this up by working through the textbook as well. As you work through the lessons you should extend your reading, listening, speaking and writing by looking up the references to the textbook in the course. These are given at the beginning of each lesson, and include the following symbol:



The written exercises in the textbook are for self-assessment and should **not** be sent to your tutor. The textbook also links to listening and other resources online at the Kerboodle website (**www.kerboodle.com**). You can use these to supplement your course and practice speaking and listening. You will also find answers to textbook exercises on Kerboodle.

We have purchased a subscription to Kerboodle on your behalf as a free additional resource. Your access details will be sent to you separately within a few days of receiving this course folder.

NB: Any queries about Kerboodle should be addressed to the Kerboodle helpdesk, of which details are given on the Kerboodle site.

Dictionary

In addition to the textbooks you also need a good dictionary. See the *Resources* section at the end of this *General Introduction* for suggestions.

The Listening CD

The Listening CD that comes with the course contains both practice and assessment listening materials. Each lesson has one listening practice activity, TMAs A-D all include two listening assessment exercises and TMA E includes four. Use the CD to practise your listening skills as much as possible.

The listening transcripts for the activities in the lessons can be found at the end of the course pack. The listening transcript for each TMA

listening assessment is sent to you together with the Suggested Answers.

All the audio-tracks can also be accessed online at <http://www.ool.co.uk/spanish-audio>.

Additional Practice

Grammar

The AS study year is notable for the introduction of almost all the grammar required at A level. Please see the *Resources* section at the end of this *General Introduction* for suggested grammar practice textbooks and the *Tips and Techniques* section for advice on keeping a verb book. Try and follow this and other advice as closely as possible. The *Spanish Grammar Glossary* will help you to understand the meanings of grammatical terms.

Vocabulary

The AS exam assesses a wide range of vocabulary related to each of the twelve sub-topics; however, there is no specific vocabulary list for AS. Candidates are advised to build up their own vocabulary lists for each sub-topic from their own reading. See the *Resources* section at the end of this *General Introduction* for suggested vocabulary books and the *Tips and Techniques* section for advice on building up your vocabulary.

The four skills

The AS exam assesses all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The OOL course teaches the four skills across the lessons, with opportunities to develop each one from the outset. It is therefore very important to do all the activities in each lesson, in order to practise all four skills. See the *Tips and Techniques* section for ways to approach activities testing these skills.

Exam format

It is a good idea to have prior knowledge of the format of the AS exams before you take them, and also to understand what the examiner is looking for. In addition to the guidance below, you are advised to read the detailed information about the format and mark schemes in Lessons 13 to 15, and to bookmark the A level Spanish 'Key materials' page on the AQA website as this includes links to past papers and other useful exam information:

http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/languages/spanish_materials.php?id=09&prev=09

Further Guidance

Don't just read through your lessons. Make notes as well. Note-taking has two main purposes:

1. to clarify and cement an idea in your own mind;
2. to give you something concise to come back to when you embark on assignments or revision.

Most distance learners find that they forget what they read, but the very act of writing something down helps you to focus on the underlying concept and to see how it relates to other aspects of the topic under consideration.

Don't underestimate the amount of time required for study if you are to achieve full understanding. Simply reading the lessons through once or twice is unlikely to be sufficient. You should go through them and follow up references to the textbook and syllabus. Learn also to use your dictionary and verb tables on a regular basis.

Do full justice to the self-assessment activities. Many of them are similar in form to the tasks in the examination. It is all too easy to convince yourself that you have understood a particular point and go straight on to the next section without making a proper formal attempt at the activity.

Don't just work out the answers in your head. Put them down on a piece of paper or word process them on your computer. And if they are wrong, work out *why* they are wrong before going on to the next section. To do this, go back over the relevant parts of the lesson or textbook using your dictionary. If you still do not understand why you have got something wrong, it may be time to contact your tutor.

AQA syllabus: Grammar for AS

The list below details the grammar structures you are required to know at AS level.

R = Recognition only; not for active use

Nouns: gender, singular and plural forms

Articles: definite and indefinite

Adjectives: agreement, position, apocopation (*buen, mal*), comparative and superlative, demonstrative (*este, ese, aquel*), indefinite (*alguno, cualquiera, otro*), possessive (*mi, mío*), interrogative (*cuánto, qué*), relative (*cuyo*), exclamatory (*qué*)

Adverbs: formation, comparative and superlative, interrogative (*cómo, cuándo, dónde*)

Quantifiers/intensifiers (*muy, bastante, poco, mucho*)

Pronouns: subject, direct and indirect object, position and word order, reflexive, relative (*que, quien, el que, el cual*), disjunctive/emphatic, demonstrative (*éste, ése, aquél, esto, eso, aquello*) indefinite (*algo, alguien*), possessive (*el mío, la mía*), interrogative (*cuál, qué, quién*)

Verbs: regular and irregular verbs, reflexive verbs, modes of address (*tú* and *usted*), radical-changing verbs, impersonal verbs, verbs + infinitive (with or without preposition), perfect infinitive, negative forms, interrogative forms, reflexive constructions (*se vende, se nos dice que*), uses of *ser* and *estar*

Verb tenses: present, perfect, imperfect, preterite, future, conditional, pluperfect, future perfect (R), conditional perfect (R), passive voice: present and preterite tenses, other tenses (R), imperative, present continuous, subjunctive mood: present, perfect, imperfect, pluperfect, uses of subjunctive (polite commands, negative commands, after verbs of wishing, command, request, emotion, to express purpose (*para que*), to express possibility/impossibility, after conjunctions of time (*cuando lleguemos*), in conditional sentences after *si*, all other common uses (R)

Prepositions: personal *a*, uses of *por* and *para*

Conjunctions: common, including *y, pero, o, porque, como, cuando*

Number, quantity and time: (constructions with *hace* and *desde hace*)

Grammar covered by AS course

While the order of the topics in this course follows the sequence of the AQA text book, the grammar points do not always coincide. At the start of each lesson, you will find textbook links for each grammar point. This means that you can revisit grammar, and that you get chances to practise the grammar in relation to different topics.

The grammar explanations in the course are thorough and you may not be able to take in everything. Don't worry; try and learn the basics and keep practising. A2, you will be able to hone your skills and build on what you have learnt at AS.

You will sometimes see more than four grammar points listed below for a lesson. This is because some are included within coverage of others. The *Spanish Grammar Glossary* at the back of the course pack gives definitions and lesson references.

Lesson One

- Present tense, regular verbs
- Pronunciation, accents and stress
- Adjectives

Lesson Two

- Present tense, irregular verbs
- *Ser* and *estar*
- Reflexive verbs
- Comparatives and superlatives

Lesson Three

- Direct and indirect object pronouns
- Immediate future
- Present continuous
- *Por* and *para*
- Nouns and articles

Lesson Four

- Present tense, more irregular verbs
- *Desde* and *hace*
- Perfect tense
- Uses of infinitives

Lesson Five

- Imperfect tense

- Pluperfect tense
- Past continuous
- Indefinites
- Personal *a*

Lesson Six

- The uses of *lo*
- Preterite tense
- Interrogatives and relatives

Lesson Seven

- Future tense
- Future perfect
- Demonstratives
- Adverbs and adverbial phrases

Lesson Eight

- Alternatives to *muy*
- Conditional tense
- Conditional perfect
- Possessives

Lesson Nine

- Prepositions
- Passive voice
- Prepositional pronouns

Lesson Ten

- Present subjunctive
- Negative constructions
- Verbs of obligation

Lesson Eleven

- Imperative tense
- Conjunctions
- Impersonal constructions

Lesson Twelve

- Idioms
- Imperfect subjunctive
- Perfect subjunctive
- Pluperfect subjunctive
- *Acabar de/volver a/soler*

The AS level and A-level System

A-levels allow for plenty of flexibility in the taking of exams. The two most popular options are:

- AS is completed at the end of one year and A2 at the end of the second year;
- AS and A2 are completed at the end of the same year.

Both of these options are open to students following the OOL Spanish A-level course.

Grading and Shelf-Life

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E. The full A level qualification will be graded on a six-point scale: A*, A, B, C, D and E.

To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units. For both qualifications, candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate. Individual assessment unit results will be certificated.

Unit results remain available to count towards certification, whether or not they have already been used, as long as the specification is still valid.

Candidates may re-sit a unit any number of times within the shelf-life of the specification. The best result for each unit will count towards the final qualification. Candidates who wish to repeat a qualification may do so by re-taking one or more units.

The AS Spanish Examination

This information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. Prior to the examination, students should contact the exam board for the latest information.

This course is designed to match the requirements of the AQA 1696 (AS level Spanish) specification. The exam consists of two papers (units).

AS Examination

Unit 1 (Unit code: SPAN1) - Listening, Reading and Writing

70% of AS, 35% of A level
2 hour written examination
110 marks

Available in May/June only.

The four AS topic modules – *Media, Popular Culture, Healthy Living/Lifestyle* and *Family/Relationships* - are examined in all three sections of Unit 1.

Notes on the three sections

Listening Section: Approximately 5 minutes of recorded material within the individual control of the candidate. Answer all questions.

Task involving transfer of meaning into English and 2-4 questions requiring short Spanish answers or non-verbal answers, such as matching and multiple choice.

Approximately 30 minutes.

Reading Section: 3-4 items requiring short Spanish answers or non-verbal answers. Also a cloze (gap-filling) test manipulating verbs, nouns and adjectives (10 sentences). Answer all questions.

Approximately 45 minutes.

Writing Section: One essay from a choice of three. Questions will be on three out of the four AS topic modules. Candidates must write a minimum of 200 words.

Approximately 45 minutes.

See Lessons 13 and 14 for more details.

Unit 2 (Unit code: SPA2T/V) - Speaking

30% of AS, 15% of A level
35 minute speaking test (including 20 minutes preparation time)
50 marks

Available in May/June only.

The four AS topic modules are examined over the two parts of Unit 1.

Notes on the two parts

Part 1: Discussion of a stimulus card: 5 minutes. Candidates have 20 minutes to prepare one of two cards given to them by the examiner. Each card covers a sub-topic of one of the four AS topics (*Media, Popular Culture, Healthy Living/Lifestyle* and *Family/Relationships*). The topics on the cards given by the examiner will not overlap with the candidate's choice of topic for discussion in Part 2.

Part 2: Conversation: 10 minutes. The conversation will cover the three AS topics not discussed in Part 1. The first topic will be chosen and prepared in advance by the candidate and can be any topic of his/her choice from the four AS topics. The other two topics are chosen by the examiner.

The tests are conducted either by a teacher at the examination centre or an external AQA examiner. All speaking tests are recorded and sent away to be marked by an AQA examiner.

See Lesson 15 for more details.

Mark Allocation in Unit 1: The Listening, Reading and Writing Test

- Section 1: Listening (35 marks)
- Section 2: Reading & Cloze Test (40 marks)
- Section 3: Writing (35 marks)

Mark Allocation in Unit 2: The Speaking Test

- Part 1: Stimulus Material (10 marks)
- Part 2: Conversation (25 marks)
- Overall: Knowledge of Grammar (15 marks)

Knowledge of Spanish-speaking culture and society

Candidates are not assessed at AS for knowledge of Spanish-speaking culture and society; therefore there is technically no requirement to study the four topics in this context. Having said this, AQA and OOL recognise that part of the attraction of studying a foreign language is that it provides the opportunity to find out about another culture and society, therefore much of the material used in the course and text book focuses on Hispanic society and culture.

AQA Aims

This new specification builds on the strengths of the previous specification and has been designed to encourage students to:

- develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, language learning;
- develop understanding of the language in a variety of contexts and genres;
- communicate confidently, clearly and effectively in the language for a range of purposes;
- develop awareness and understanding of contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of countries or communities where the language is spoken;
- consider their study of the language in a broader context.

The Spanish specification should also enable students to:

- derive enjoyment and benefit from language learning;
- acquire knowledge, skills and understanding for practical use, further study and/or employment;
- communicate with speakers of the language;
- take their place in a multilingual global society.

The AS specification should provide:

- a coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study for students who do not progress to further study in the subject;
- a sufficient basis for the further study of languages at degree level or equivalent.

The Assessment objectives are common to AS and A level. Candidates will be expected to:

- AO1 Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language
- AO2 Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language
- AO3 Show knowledge of and apply accurately the grammar and syntax prescribed in the specification

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

When candidates are required to produce written material in English, they must:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that the meaning is clear
- select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and to complex subject matter
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary where appropriate

At AS, QWC will be assessed in Unit 1 by means of the transfer of meaning task.

Shelf-life of this specification

This 'A' level specification is examined for the last time in June 2017. Exams in later years (June 2018 onwards) will be based on a new specification. So we advise you to take *all* your exams, AS and A2, by June 2017. If you delay beyond that date, you may find that some of your work is wasted and that a new set of learning materials is required. If in doubt, keep an eye on the AQA website for news of the new specification.

Studying the Specification

You should be sure to acquire your own copy of the specification, either via the AQA Publications Dept or from the website: www.aqa.org.uk.

The specification can be purchased from:

AQA Publications
Unit 2, Wheel Forge Way,
Trafford Park
Manchester
M17 1EH (Tel: 0870 410 1036)

AQA can also provide advice booklets on your course, including 'Supplementary Guidance for Private Candidates'. As you approach the examination, it will also be helpful to purchase specimen papers, and, when available, past papers from AQA, or download these from the AQA website.

Resources Section

ISBN – every book has its own unique number, and if you order a book you need to tell the bookshop the ISBN number.

English/Spanish, Spanish/English dictionaries

The dictionary below is the most popular size and is best-suited for A level:

Collins Concise Spanish Dictionary (HarperCollins; ISBN 978-0007261079)

If you intend to study Spanish at university, you may wish to buy a more comprehensive dictionary now:

Collins Spanish Dictionary: Complete and Unabridged (HarperCollins; ISBN 978-0007289783)

Spanish grammar books

Emily Spinelli, *English Grammar for Students of Spanish*, 5th edn (Hodder Headline, ISBN 978-0934034333). This is particularly helpful for those who have missed out on English grammar teaching, and it explains complicated-sounding terms such as ‘intransitive verb’ and ‘preposition’ in a clear and concise way.

Carolyn Burch, *Animo: Grammar Workbook and CD*, 2nd edn (OUP, ISBN: 978-0199153237). Highly recommended grammar practice textbook working up from GCSE level to AS and A2. You can do the exercises on the computer using the CD Rom.

Niobe O’Connor, *Help Yourself to Essential Spanish Grammar* (Longman, ISBN 978-0582287471). GCSE grammar revision and practice.

Mark Cholij, *Practice in Spanish Grammar: For students starting post-16 courses*, 2nd edn (Nelson Thornes; ISBN 978-0748723768). Easy to use, with lots of short exercises and GCSE grammar revision.

Abigail Lee Six, *Upgrade your Spanish* (Hodder Arnold, ISBN 978-0340761861). Explains the main mistakes in grammar made at A level, and how to correct them, with a 30-day revision programme.

Vocabulary book

Phil Turk, *Palabra for Palabra: New Advanced Spanish Vocabulary*, 5th edn (Nelson Thornes; ISBN 978-1444110012)

The standard A level vocabulary textbook. It provides key vocabulary for many of the topics prescribed by AQA and covered in your course and is particularly useful in preparing for your Writing and Speaking Exams.

Verb tables

The recommended dictionaries above include verb tables. See also:

501 Spanish Verbs, 7th edn (Barron's Educational Series; ISBN 978-0764197970). Comprehensive; one verb per page.

Collins Gem Spanish Verb Tables and Grammar, 3rd edn (Collins; ISBN 978-0007102020).

Reading starter books

To prepare yourself for A2, try to read some starter books during your AS year, such as:

Jean Yates, *Better Reading Spanish* (McGraw Hill; ISBN 978-0071391375). Stories progress in difficulty to build comprehension skills. Marginal word glossaries.

Angel Flores, *Spanish Stories* (Dover Publications; ISBN 978-0486253992). Dual language book. Short stories by Cervantes, Unamuno, Borges and others, in the original Spanish and a new English translation.

Reference

The following book is a source of fairly up-to-date information (more recent edition 2006) about all aspects of Spanish society.

John Hooper, *The New Spaniards*, 2nd edn (Penguin; ISBN 978-0141016092)

Recommended suppliers

As you know, you may acquire textbooks through the Oxford Open Learning website (www.ool.co.uk). If you have any trouble finding any of these books, we can also recommend the following suppliers:

Blackwell's Extra
International Mail Order Book Service
48-51 Broad St.
Oxford OX1 3BQ
Tel: 01865 792792
Fax: 01865 794143
www.bookshop.blackwell.co.uk

Grant and Cutler Ltd.
Modern Language Booksellers
113-119 Charing Cross Road
London WC2H 0EB
Tel: 020 7440 3248
www.grantandcutler.com

Also www.amazon.co.uk online bookshop

Using the Internet

All students would benefit from access to the internet. You will find a wealth of information on all the topics in your course. As well as the AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk), you should get into the habit of checking the Oxford Open Learning site (www.ool.co.uk) where you may find news, additional resources and interactive features as time goes by. Put it on your favourites list now! If you have not already done so, you may register for your free copy of *How to Study at Home*, our 200-page guide to home learning, or enrol on further courses, via the website.

Recommended Websites

www.languageskills.co.uk
GCSE revision as well as A level.

www.sunderlandschools.org/mfl-sunderland/spanish%20links.htm
Free resources updated on a regular basis. GCSE revision as well as A level.

www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/
Has free listening comprehension radio broadcasts with transcripts, also videos for GCSE standard work. Constantly updated. All levels.

www.spanishpod101.com
Excellent audio lessons. Free lessons available, or you can pay for a more comprehensive service.

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/spain.htm>
A directory of online Spanish news. Good for advanced reading comprehension.

www.lovefilm.com
Good collection of Spanish DVDs and English versions for rental. Subscribe for a small amount monthly.

es.yahoo.com

Search engine in Spanish, for researching topics of interest, and getting up to date with Spanish current affairs. Advanced.

TV websites: See Lesson One, *Television*, for details.

Tips and Techniques

Listening comprehensions

When tackling a listening exercise, read the question first. Look out for key words and phrases to help your understanding. Are there any clues in the questions as to what is happening, and who is talking, i.e. what is the context of the question?

Next, listen to the passage/dialogue all the way through. Perhaps the first time you won't understand a great deal of what is being said. Look out for extra clues – perhaps the speakers are asking questions, in which case their voices will rise (rising intonation). Perhaps their voices betray some emotion; happiness, relief, seriousness, anger or amusement.

The next stage is to play the passage/dialogue over in short sections, working on the questions as you go along. Don't just listen for the answers you are expecting; there may be 'twists' in what is said.

If you come across a phrase you don't understand, don't immediately go to the transcript, but rather play the phrase over again. Sometimes a second or third hearing helps the brain to 'unscramble' the words.

Once you have done your best, play the whole passage/dialogue over once again. You will notice now that there is an improvement in your comprehension compared with the first time.

Finally, check your answers in the back of the lesson. Only then turn to the transcript to see what you missed.

Reading Comprehensions

When tackling a reading comprehension passage, start by reading the title and questions for clues as to the context. They may tell you key information about the setting, the characters and the ideas in a passage.

Next, read the whole passage to get the gist, or main message. If you need to look up words in a dictionary (and nearly everyone does), choose a core of words, no more than 10% of the passage,

that are the most important. These are the key words that are either repeated or seem vital to an understanding of the passage. If after doing this, you still don't know what the passage is about, it is probably too difficult for you, and you should return to it at a later date when you have acquired a wider vocabulary and more grammar skills. Sometimes a verb can be difficult to recognise, in which case you should check a verb table or your verb book.

Finally, work through the passage again, answering the questions.

At AS there is no separate mark for grammar in the written comprehension questions in Unit 1: Listening, Reading and Writing. The marks are for understanding the content only. However, you do need to practise writing grammatically, in order to convey your answer clearly and unambiguously.

Essay Writing

Here is a typical essay question at AS level :

¿Qué deberían hacer los padres para tener una buena relación con sus niños?

First, plan your essay. A good idea is to use a planning grid. The grid should have three columns:

- main idea
- justification of the idea
- example(s) to back up your point

Here is a planning grid for the essay above.

¿Qué deben hacer los padres para tener una buena relación con sus niños ?		
Idea principal	Justificación	Ejemplo
1. Deberían respetar a sus niños	Los niños se portan bien si los padres les respetan	Llamar a la puerta antes de entrar en sus dormitorios/ Preguntar lo que quieren hacer durante el fin de semana
2. Deberían animar a sus niños a hablar de sus problemas	Si el niño habla con sus padres de sus problemas, se entienden mejor	Tener malas notas/El niño intimidado por sus compañeros
3. Deberían tener expectativas realistas	El niño sabe que puede complacer a sus padres aún si	¡No es Einstein!/No es un adulto

	no hace todo perfecto	
4. Deberían imponer límites	El niño necesita seguridad	La hora de volver a casa por la noche

You can see how this works if you look at the first idea in the grid:

- main idea; need to respect children
- justification; they behave well if you respect them
- examples; knock before entering their bedroom, consult them about leisure activities

You need 3 or 4 ideas for an AS essay. **If the question asks you for similarities and differences, or pros and cons, you should start by giving two or three points for one side and then move on to the other**, giving the same number of points if you can. This makes the essay clearer to follow.

It is best to jot down your ideas in Spanish. If you write down English ideas, translating them might prove too difficult. You can either conjugate the verbs (add the endings) at this stage, or use infinitives and work out the endings later.

Try to use impressive constructions that you are familiar with. Make sure you correctly agree adjectives.

Organise the paragraphs with connecting words. The easiest are: *primero* (first of all), *además* (in addition), *finalmente* (finally).

Next, write an introduction. When you have written the body of the essay write a general sentence or two to introduce the topic. Below is an introduction to the essay above. Notice that it uses the device of a rhetorical question to introduce the main body of the essay.

Muchos padres no se llevan bien con sus hijos. ¿Qué deberían hacer para mejorar la situación?

Finally, write a conclusion. Before writing the conclusion, read the essay through again. A conclusion should not contain new ideas, but should sum up the points you have made, and give an overall personal observation on the title. Below is a conclusion to the essay above.

A mi me parece lógico que los padres tendrán una buena relación con sus hijos cuando los hijos y los padres se entienden bien, y cuando los padres pueden confiar en sus hijos y viceversa.

Here is the complete version:

Muchos padres no se llevan bien con sus hijos. ¿Qué deberían hacer para mejorar la situación?

Primero, si los padres respetan a sus hijos, los hijos se portarán bien. Por ejemplo, es cortés llamar a la puerta antes de entrar en el dormitorio de su hijo. El fin de semana, hay que pedirle lo que a él le gustaría hacer.

Si el hijo vuelve del colegio de mal humor, hay que animarlo a hablar de sus problemas, porque el niño que comparte sus problemas con sus padres es más feliz. El niño quiere, sobre todo, los padres comprensivos y simpáticos. Quizás acaban de tener malas notas y quieren decirlo a sus padres. O, si sus 'amigos' lo tiranizan, lo que puede ser muy serio, debe absolutamente hablar con los padres.

Además, los padres que tienen las expectativas realistas van mejores que los padres que piden un comportamiento impecable. Si el hijo piensa que es imposible complacer a sus padres, ellos toman el riesgo de tener un hijo rebelde. Si, al contrario, elogian al niño, tendrá más confianza. Los padres tienen que recordar que el niño no es Einstein y que no puede siempre ser el mejor de la clase.

Finalmente, es importante imponer límites porque un niño necesita sentir seguro. Es sin duda difícil para los padres decir a su hijo que vuelva a casa a las diez de la noche, sobre todo si sus amigos tienen más libertad. Sin embargo, el hijo es la responsabilidad de los padres y ellos deben estar preparados para disciplinar a sus hijos. Buscar un compromiso siempre es la mejor solución: por ejemplo, por más que sigue las reglas, más libertad tiene.

A mi me parece lógico que los padres tengan una buena relación con sus hijos cuando los hijos y los padres se entienden bien, y cuando los padres pueden confiar en sus hijos y viceversa.

Speaking naturally

The most important thing about speaking a foreign language naturally is pronunciation and intonation. Listening to Spanish will help with this. Put Spanish radio on in the background and just let it play without paying too much attention to it.

Read through the section on pronunciation and stress in Lesson One until you feel comfortable with it and keep practising the sounds of Spanish.

Learn some words, e.g. *pues* and *bueno* to use as gap-fillers.

Don't rush into answers. Take your time and think things through before starting to answer. Say *¡Qué buena pregunta!* to

give yourself more time. Don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat something if you don't understand the question.

And finally, don't just say all verbs in the infinitive and all adjectives in the masculine singular. Practice conjugating verbs and agreeing adjectives little and often until you feel confident. Remember that you are expected to include a wide range of tenses and structures in your speaking.

Learning Verbs

A good tip when starting out on a language course is to keep a verb book. This is a large exercise book in which you write down the main verbs you come across. The course will point out lesson by lesson the main verbs you need to master for AS level, but you can add your own as you come across them. You can also buy a verb tables book (see *General Introduction, Resources*). The content of your own verb book is best arranged as follows:

Page	
1-2	Table of contents
3	regular <i>-ar</i> verb
4	regular <i>-er</i> verb
5	regular <i>-ir</i> verb <i>etc.</i>

Divide each page into six squares; one for each main tense, i.e. present, perfect, imperfect, preterite and future/conditional, and one for the present subjunctive mood. Leave a space at the top for the infinitive and a space at the bottom for notes on more advanced tenses/forms, such as the present participle, imperative, imperfect subjunctive, pluperfect, future perfect and conditional perfect.

Here is a completed page with an example of a regular *-ar* verb, *hablar* – to speak/talk:

Regular <i>-ar</i> verb: <i>hablar</i> to speak/talk	
Present (yo) hablo (tú) hablas (él/ella) habla (nosotros) hablamos (vosotros) habláis (ellos) hablan	Perfect he hablado has hablado ha hablado hemos hablado habéis hablado han hablado
Imperfect hablaba hablabas hablaba hablábamos hablabais	Preterite hablé hablaste habló hablamos hablasteis

hablaban	hablaron
Future/Conditional Hablar é/ía Hablar ás/ías Hablar á/ía Hablar emos/íamos Hablar éis/íais Hablar án/ían	Present subjunctive hable hables hable hablemos habléis hablen
Notes on other tenses Present participle – hablando Imperative – habla (tú), hablad (vosotros) Imperfect subjunctive - hablara Pluperfect – había hablado Future (cond.) perfect – habré/ía hablado	

Learning Vocabulary

One of the main differences between GCSE and A level Spanish is that at A level there is no defined list of vocabulary. A level students are expected to read as widely as possible within the subject areas, noting down vocabulary and learning it as they go along. There is no 'right' way to learn vocabulary. What works for you is the right way, so the following are suggestions only.

Using a Vocabulary Book

- Keep a vocabulary book. Add to it on a regular basis, perhaps weekly, perhaps every time you study.
- Set out your vocabulary book in two columns; Spanish one side, English the other. Cover up the English or the Spanish and try to translate the words in the other column.
- Use a good dictionary to check meaning. Be sure that you get the correct meaning, e.g. 'fan' can be 'ventilador' (the machine) or 'aficionado' (the person). If the translations of individual words don't make sense, it may be an expression. A good dictionary will include common expressions under the key word(s), e.g. 'dar los buenos días' doesn't mean 'give the good days', but rather 'say "good day/morning"'.
- Write down verbs in the infinitive, and give the English infinitive as the meaning, e.g. *dar* – to give.
- Write down nouns with their gender (*m* or *f*)
- Consider keeping separate sections for verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. or dividing your book alphabetically.
- If there are any irregularities, note them down, e.g. irregular verbs, noun plurals, adjectival endings.
- Try to pick out the key words in a passage. If you spend time looking up everything it becomes tedious.

Retaining vocabulary

- The lists of vocabulary at the end of each reading activity and listening transcript cover vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to you. Use them as a starting point for learning vocabulary.
- Set aside time to learn vocabulary. If you can make it part of your daily routine it is easier, for instance on the bus/train to work or school, or in your lunch hour.
- Learn a certain number of words per day, or per week. Write down a target, e.g. "I am going to learn 5/10 words a day".
- Try using the new vocabulary you have learnt in sentences, either in your head or written down. Answering the *Preguntas Personales* is a good way of doing this.
- Record the vocabulary on sound files. Play them back to yourself in the car, on your daily commute or at home.
- Write lists of vocabulary and pin them up round the house.
- Link new vocabulary to familiar words or sounds or give it an action or a tune. Try fitting words and phrases to a song you know well and singing it.
- Narrate your life as you live it (in your head!). Talk to yourself about your opinions on what is happening around you.
- Look out for newspapers, magazines and online information that interest you. Later on look out for good short stories and novels to read.
- Tune in to the sound of new words. Use the listening CD and material from the internet as well. If you have friends who are native Spanish speakers, ask them to say new words for you.

Using Accents

In Lesson One you will find a section on pronunciation, accents and stress. For those of you who wish to type your TMAs, here is a quick guide to including accents:

Method 1 - using the Alt key

Hold down the Alt key while typing in the following numbers on your number keyboard (ensure that 'num lock' is on):

á = 0225	Á = 0193	ñ = 164
é = 0233	É = 0201	Ñ = 165
í = 0237	Í = 0205	¡ = 0161
ó = 0243	Ó = 0211	¿ = 0191
ú = 0250	Ú = 0218	

Method 2 - using online accent keys

Go to www.spanish.typeit.org. Write your text in the box provided, then copy and paste it into a Word document.

Method 3 – using ‘insert symbol’ in your document

If you are using word processing software such as Microsoft Word, go to ‘Insert’ and from the drop-down menu choose ‘symbol’. In the ‘normal’ range you will find accents, the cedilla, and the inverted question/exclamation marks.

And finally...

Spanish is an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding subject. It is not just a useful educational qualification and it may well contribute to your professional life.

Buena suerte! We hope you enjoy the course.

JOANNA TOURAY with ALISON FISHER
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