

10 Reasons to Study Spanish

1. Communicate with 350 million native Spanish speakers worldwide.

Spanish is spoken by at least an estimated 350 million people around the world and is currently the 4th most commonly spoken language worldwide. Geographically, a large number of countries have Spanish as a dominant language: Spain, the United States, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Equatorial Guinea, the Philippines, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Colombia, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Knowing Spanish opens the door for you to communicate with 1/3 of a billion speakers worldwide!

2. Communicate with Spanish-speaking people at home.

If you live in the US, it is possible to maintain almost daily contact with native Spanish speakers in many cities or even in rural areas. As of 1995, 10% of all people living in the US were of Hispanic descent. In the past 10 years, this number has continued to increase.

53% of students learning languages in US colleges and universities are learning Spanish. You have the opportunity to use your language skills right at home.

3. Learn Spanish to enhance your travel experiences.

If you've ever dreamed of visiting far-off, exotic, tropical places, you don't have far to look when you consider the great number of Spanish-speaking countries that fit this description. Wherever you decide to go, be it to Central America, or to Spain, the mother country of the Spanish language, knowing the language will get you far. Knowing the language and culture of the land you visit will give you insights into the people and culture that a non-Spanish speaker would never have access to.

4. Use Spanish to improve your employment potential.

Know a second language? Great, you're hired! If you have proven yourself to be a capable employee with just the right job skills AND you speak a foreign language such as Spanish, you are much more likely to land that job of your dreams than if you are monolingual. In fact, many jobs today require a minimum of basic proficiency in another language.

With the world becoming ever more global, contact with people of other countries has increased tremendously in recent decades. Just having a basic knowledge may be all it takes to separate yourself from the crowd of applicants for the job you are pursuing. With the rapidly increasing Hispanic population, there are a multitude of career fields in the US that need Spanish speakers. Among them are nurses, social workers, teachers, salespeople, translators, and many more.

Internationally, people who speak Spanish often have opportunities to work in trade or business fields. Other options include diplomacy, interpretation, and security applications, which all require a sensitivity and proficiency of another language. And did

you know that bilingual employees often receive a larger salary than their non-Spanish speaking counterparts?

5. Learn Spanish to improve your knowledge of your own language.

Spanish is from the Romance language family of languages, its roots coming primarily from Latin, the language spoken by the Romans. As you might know, English, too has many words of Latin origin. Because of this, knowing Spanish helps speakers of English (as well as some other European languages) broaden their vocabulary in their native language. Often times, these same Latin roots are at the base of many sophisticated words in English, so Spanish learners can also become more proficient in English.

In addition, a recognition and understanding of these words of Latin origin is especially helpful in certain professions in science, medicine, law, and many others with specialized vocabulary, as the many centuries of Roman rule left their mark linguistically in these and other modern scientific and professional fields.

6. Learn Spanish to prepare for study abroad opportunities.

Many high schools, colleges, and universities offer study abroad opportunities. Many different types of programs are available to choose from and they vary in time from as little as a week of study to one semester, or even a whole year. Often, as little as one semester or one year of prior language study is all that is needed to qualify to participate in an exchange program. Not only does an exchange program give you the opportunity to use the Spanish you know, but also the opportunity to improve your language abilities on a daily basis. Constant exposure to the language and culture of the city in which you study is believed to be the key to true language mastery and helps pave the way to literacy and near native fluency.

7. Better appreciate Spanish-speaking cultures.

Apart from opening up access to art, literature, and history, knowledge of Spanish can help learners understand and appreciate day-to-day culture in the Spanish-speaking world. The ability to read and understand authentic Spanish -- whether that be in the newspaper, on television, in magazines, in letters from friends or pen pals, or on the street -- truly gives an "insider" view into the language and all of its different shades of meaning.

8. Learn Spanish to make lifelong friends.

As most people would probably recognize, the primary purpose of a language is to facilitate communication between people. However, what many people don't realize is that learning a foreign language, although intimidating at times, opens many doors to meeting new and exciting people that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Getting to know somebody by communicating with them in their own language is a great way to really get to know that person on a much deeper level than only through communicating with gestures or body language. Language study, practice, and exposure to the language are vital to effective and successful communication.

9. Learning Spanish makes acquiring the next foreign language easier.

It is often said by people who have become bilingual in Spanish or another language: Through hard work, perseverance, and lots of practice, the next language one learns is much easier to master by comparison. Learning a foreign language develops a whole set of mental, social, and cultural skills and this newfound awareness carries over to other languages when learned. Once Spanish has been learned to a proficient level, when the grammar concepts, vocabulary, and other facets of the language have become fairly automatic, picking up a new language comes much more effortlessly. The new languages studied, especially of European origin, tend to have a lot of recognizable, common elements that are more easily assimilated and expanded upon by tapping into previous language-learning experience. In fact, once you know Spanish, other languages in the Romance language family such as Italian, French, Portuguese, or even ancient Latin, will almost seem like "cousins" to the Spanish you've already learned!

10. Gain access to Spanish art, music, literature and film.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to view a film in its original language instead of watching it in a dubbed version? Are you tired of being distracted from enjoying a film by the need to read the film's subtitles? Have you wondered if the translation of the film is accurate or if you are missing out on the details in the film? Becoming proficient in Spanish would greatly enhance your enjoyment of such Oscar-winning films as *Belle époque* (1993), *All About My Mother* (1999), and *The Sea Inside* (2004).

In addition to deriving more enjoyment from films, a knowledge of Spanish would help gain access into the minds and times of the people responsible for some of the greatest literature in the Spanish-speaking world. Who hasn't heard of Miguel de Cervantes, whose novel, *Don Quixote* was not only groundbreaking in the 16th century when first published, but continues to fascinate and inspire current audiences?

What about Spanish music and art? Most people would recognize Cuban singing-sensation, Gloria Estefan, and Spanish cubist painter Pablo Picasso is known worldwide for his modern-style of art that has influenced the artistic community around the globe. In recent years, film stars from Spain and Latin America such as Penelope Cruz, Antonio Banderas, and Salma Hayek have become recognized not just at home, but in Hollywood as well.

(Adapted from http://www.vistawide.com/spanish/why_spanish.htm)