

Decoding Distinctions: A Guide to English & Spanish Phonics

Discover the Differences, Connect the Languages!

FEATURES	SPANISH PHONICS	ENGLISH PHONICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR SPANISH SPEAKERS LEARNING ENGLISH
Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence	Generally very consistent; one letter usually corresponds to one sound	Less consistent; one letter can represent multiple sounds, and one sound can be represented by multiple letter combinations.	Students may struggle with English spellings that don't follow predictable sound-letter patterns. They may over-rely on sounding out words based on Spanish rule.
Vowel Sounds	5 primary vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u), relatively pure and consistent	Many more vowel sounds (around 14–15), including short, long, diphthongs, and r-controlled vowels.	Students may have difficulty distinguishing subtle differences between English vowel sounds, like /ɪ/ (bit) and /i:/ (beat). They may also struggle with vowel digraphs and diphthongs.
Consonant Sounds	Most consonant sounds exist in both languages, though some have slight variations in articulation.	Some consonant sounds do not exist in Spanish (e.g., /θ/ as in <i>thin</i> , /ð/ as in <i>this</i> , /ʒ/ as in <i>vision</i>).	Students may substitute similar Spanish sounds for unfamiliar English sounds. For example, they might pronounce <i>thin</i> as <i>tin</i> or <i>this</i> as <i>dis</i> .
Syllable Structure	Primarily open syllables (CV/consonant-vowel) are common. Simple syllable structures are the norm.	Some consonant sounds do not exist in Spanish (e.g., /θ/ as in <i>thin</i> , /ð/ as in <i>this</i> , /ʒ/ as in <i>vision</i>).	Students may have difficulty with English words containing consonant clusters or complex syllable structures. They might try to break them down into simpler CV syllables.
Stress	Stress usually falls on the second-to-last syllable unless marked with an accent.	Stress patterns are less predictable and can fall on different syllables depending on the word.	Students may misplace stress in English words, leading to pronunciation errors and potential comprehension issues.