

# SPANISH ORTHOGRAPHY

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If you know your Greek roots, orthography means right or correct writing (orthos + graphein). In the past, in the United States, this was next to impossible if you wanted to write Spanish correctly. Unless you had special keys put in your typewriter, you had to manually write in the ~ on the n if you wanted an ñ or write in any accent mark. But now, with the advent of computers, this is no longer a valid excuse. We should insist that Spanish be written with the correct diacritical marks (accents). It is not Zuni, but Zuñi. It is not Chavez, but Chávez. etc. I notice that Carla Aragón spells her name correctly. ¡Bravo! Good for her!

I also remember a Jeopardy match where the contestant said that he was from Los Banos, California. When Alex Trebek asked if this was correctly pronounced Los Baños, the idiot said no, that it was Los Banos. A Spanish town with hot springs would probably be named Los Baños, meaning the baths, and not Los Banos, meaning the infertile ones. So, accents are important. They change the meaning of the word. Indeed, the ñ is a separate letter in the Spanish alphabet.

Fortunately, many word processing softwares offer a simple method for inserting these critical diacritical marks. With Word Perfect, you can use "insert symbol" right off the drop down menus on top. Others permit you to assign an unused key to each letter, such as "Alt n" for the ñ. Once assigned, you can just type along as you see fit. There are as many ways to do this as there are software packages. You may have to work at it to find out how yours works, but it will be well worth the effort.

If all else fails, as with most email programs, there is the Alt plus ASCII code method. Write these codes down on a card and keep it by your computer. For, all you have to do is hold the Alt key down while you type in the ASCII code. When you release the Alt key, the symbol will appear. The codes you'll need are:

## Symbol Code Example

Á 0193 Águila (eagle)	É 0201 Éter (ether)	Í 0205 Ístmico (isthmic)	Ó 0211 Óptimo (best)
Ú 0218 Útero (uterus, sorry)	Ñ 0209 Ñapa (a free thing)	á 0225 Márquez (name)	é 0233 Pérez (name)
í 0237 maíz (corn)	ó 0243 López (name)	ú 0250 Núñez (name)	ü 0252 agüero (water carrier)
ñ 0241 Oñate (name)	¿ 0191 upside down ?	¡ 0161 upside down !	

So when does one use these marks? I don't know all the rules but here are some to help you out.

1. The Ñ is rarely used. My Velázquez shows only nine words that start with that letter.
2. U after G is silent before E or I. When it is pronounced, you need a ü. Ex. águila (a-ghee-la eagle), agua (a-gwa water), but agüita (ag-wita little water).
3. Most Spanish words are accented on the penultimate (second to last) syllable and do not require an accent. When this rule is broken, an accent is required. Ex. salón, (hall), maíz (corn), Andrés, José.
4. Most names ending in S or Z of two syllables require an accent on the first syllable. Ex. Márquez, Sálaz, Sánchez, Móntes.
5. All questions and exclamations begin with the upside down symbols. Ex. ¿Donde? ¡Caramba!
6. When in doubt, consult your Velázquez.

GOOD LUCK