



Bulletproof Guide  
to Your First Spanish  
Conversation

Hola!

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## BULLETPROOF GUIDE TO YOUR FIRST SPANISH CONVERSATION

Now that you are ready to have your first conversation in Spanish (or your first *comfortable* conversation), you will have to know what to say.

In the first article in the conversational Spanish series, we talked about how to [overcome the fear of speaking Spanish](#).

You have to have the right mindset because no matter how much you practice, it is hard to predict with 100% certainty how your first conversation in Spanish will go.

Although you cannot be prepared for every possible conversation topic, you can rest assured that you will have almost the exact same conversation with everyone you meet for the first time. Inevitably, you will be asked similar questions.

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### COMMON QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Below you will find some common questions and possible responses beyond the basic textbook examples you are usually given. The purpose is to sound natural and not like you are reading from a script.

***Tip:** In Spanish there are two ways to say you: the informal **tú** form or the formal **usted** form. As a general rule, **Usted** is used when you are first meeting someone, or with someone older than you. Therefore, for your first conversation, start off with the **usted** form, just to be safe. Generally, if the person you are speaking with responds in the **tú** form, it is safe to switch over.*

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In general, you should be able to introduce yourself and know how to respond when someone is introduced to you. Note down your preferred answer to the following questions, and practice your responses.

Here are some of the basic questions you should be prepared to respond to:

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### QUESTION 1) ¿CÓMO ESTÁS? (HOW ARE YOU? *INFORMAL*) ¿CÓMO ESTÁ USTED? (HOW ARE YOU? *FORMAL*)

Possible Responses:

- Estoy bien, gracias. ¿Y usted?  
*I am well, thanks. And you?*
- Todo bien  
*Everything is good*
- Más o menos  
*OK (Literally: more or less.)*
- No me siento bien  
*I don't feel well.*
- ¡Estoy genial!  
*I'm great!*

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### QUESTION 2) ¿CÓMO TE LLAMAS? ¿CÓMO SE LLAMA USTED? ¿CUAL ES TU NOMBRE? (WHAT IS YOUR NAME?)

Possible Responses (*obviously you would substitute your name* 😊)

- Me llamo Ángela  
*My name is Angela. (Literally: I am called Angela.)*

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- Mi nombre es Robert  
*My name is Robert*
- Soy Javier  
*I'm Javier*

To respond when someone tells you their name:

- Mucho gusto  
*Nice to meet you*
- Un placer conocerte (*informal*)  
*It's a pleasure to meet you*

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### QUESTION 3) ¿DE DÓNDE ES USTED? ¿DE DÓNDE ERES? (WHERE ARE YOU FROM?)

Possible Responses (*again, obviously you would substitute where you are from*):

- Soy de Estados Unidos  
*I'm from the United States*
- Nací en Florida pero me crié en Nueva York  
*I was born in Florida but I grew up in New York*
- Vivo en Costa Rica, pero mis padres son de Estados Unidos  
*I live Costa Rica, but my parents are from the United States*

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### QUESTION 4) ¿A QUÉ TE DEDICAS? ¿A QUÉ SE DEDICA (USTED)? ¿EN QUE TRABAJAS? ¿QUÉ HACES? (WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSION? WHAT DO YOU DO FOR WORK?)

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Possible responses:

- Yo soy maestra de inglés  
*I'm an English teacher*
- Soy enfermera  
*I'm a nurse*
- Trabajo como gerente  
*I work as a manager*

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### **QUESTION 5) ¿POR QUÉ QUIERE APRENDER ESPAÑOL? O ¿CÓMO/DÓNDE APRENDISTE ESPAÑOL? (WHY ARE YOU LEARNING SPANISH? OR HOW/WHERE DID YOU LEARN SPANISH?)**

This may not seem obvious, but you will almost always get asked why and how you learned Spanish. Native speakers are always curious as to how a non-native Spanish speaker learned and what piqued their interest in the language.

Possible responses:

- Aprendí en la universidad.  
*I learned in college.*
- Mi suegra solo habla español y quiero aprender para hablar con ella.  
*My mother-in-law only speaks Spanish and I want to learn in order to talk to her.*
- Quiero aprender español para ayudarme cuando viajo.  
*I want to learn Spanish to help me when I travel.*
- Estudio por mí mismo/misma en línea y con tutores vía Skype  
*I study on my own online and with tutors on Skype. (\*Note: a male would say "mismo" and a female would say "misma")*

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**QUESTION 6: ¿CÓMO ES TU FAMILIA? (WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY LIKE?)**

This is a general question for you to describe your family. You would usually respond by explaining who is in your household and/or how many brothers and sisters you have, etc.

Possible responses:

- En mi familia hay tres personas: mi esposo, mi hijo y yo.  
*There are 3 people in my family: my husband, my son and myself.*
- Tengo una familia pequeña y todos vivimos en la misma ciudad.  
*I have a small family and we all live in the same city.*
- Mi familia es muy unida. Mis hermanos, primos, y yo pasamos mucho tiempo juntos.  
*My family is very close. My brothers, cousins, and I spend a lot of time together.*

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**QUESTION 7: ¿QUÉ LE GUSTA HACER EN SU TIEMPO LIBRE? (WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?)**

This is a question about your hobbies and past times. Usually people will ask you what you like to do outside of work. This may or may not come up depending on how long your conversation is.

Possible responses:

- En mi tiempo libre, me gusta leer libros.  
*In my free time, I like to read books.*
- Me gusta correr, cocinar y hacer arte.  
*I like to run, cook, and make artwork.*

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- No tengo mucho tiempo libre, pero bailo cuando puedo.  
*I don't have much free time, but I dance when I can.*

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### QUESTION 8:¿QUÉ HACE AQUÍ EN COSTA RICA? (WHAT BRINGS YOU TO COSTA RICA?)

This is an example of a question you will hear when you are traveling.

Possible responses:

- Estoy aquí de vacaciones.  
*I'm here on vacation.*
- Estoy en San Jose para visitar a mis amigos.  
*I'm in San Jose to visit my friends.*
- Estoy en Costa Rica para mi trabajo.  
*I am in Costa Rica for work.*

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## GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION

So we've covered the 8 most common questions you will be asked in a conversation, with several examples of how to reply.

### So what's next?

Now it's time to come up with your answers to these questions.

1. **Look up vocabulary words** specific to you (your profession, your hobbies and interests, etc.) and include them in to the responses that feel most comfortable and natural to you.

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2. Write them down on index cards and review them regularly. Read them aloud until they become second nature so you will be able to **quickly recall the phrases you need in a real conversation**
3. Practice asking and answering these questions with a [tutor](#) or [conversation partner](#).
4. Attend a [Spanish meet-up](#) to test out your new conversation skills!
5. Check out the [Conversational Spanish series](#) on the blog

**Tip:** You may reach a point where you don't understand what's being asked. **Never feel bad** asking for clarification or repetition.

If you get lost at any point in the conversation, here is how you ask for clarification:

- ¿Cómo? (*Come again?*)
- ¿Lo siento, no te entiendo. (*I'm sorry, I don't understand you.*)
- ¿Puede repetir por favor? (*Could you please repeat that?*)
- ¿Qué significa eso? (*What does that mean?*)
- ¿Qué quiere decir...? (*What does .... mean?*)

**Note:** *I do not recommend asking people to speak slower. This may work when you are speaking to someone in a formal setting or for business, such as making a reservation or ordering in a restaurant. But for me this usually results in people speaking to me in English or finding someone who can. Also, never just say "¿Qué? (What?)" It's a little terse. Say ¿Cómo? instead. This sounds more polite.*

There you have it. All of the tips, tools and conversation topics you need to prepare for your first conversation in Spanish.

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So study, practice your answers, and then go out and have a conversation—new friends and adventures await.

¡Buena suerte! (Good luck!)

*Tamara Marie*

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### About by Tamara Marie, Certified Language Coach



Hola! I'm Tamara Marie. I'm a language coach trained to help you learn Spanish using efficient brain-based methods. I speak English (US native), Spanish (advanced), and Brazilian Portuguese (beginner). I have traveled throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and I'm the proud mom raising my son to be bilingual. I am a lifelong learner and love helping people learn languages.