

# English Sounds That Are Challenging for Spanish Speakers

English and Spanish have many sounds and letters in common. These provide an important foundation for students' literacy development. However, some sounds will be new to Spanish speakers. Students may need extra practice identifying and pronouncing sounds on this list.



Vowels			
Short Vowels	/ă/ map	/ĭ/ lip	/ŭ/ tub
Vowel Teams	/oŏ/ book	/aw/ paw, pause	
R-Controlled Vowels	/ar/ car, art	/er/, /ir/, /ur/ her, fur, third	/or/ fork
Other	/u/ cube	/ə/ (schwa) the, above	

Consonants					
Single Sounds	/v/ vacuum*	/z/ zebra	/j/, /g/ juice, gentle	/r/ ran	
Digraphs	/sh/ sheep	/ng/ sing	/th/ three	/wh/ whisper	/zh/ seizure

Consonant Blends								
Two Letters	sl slide	sm smoke	st stop	sp spine	sk skip	sn snack	sw swing	sc scarf
Three Letters	spr spring	str struck	sts nests	scr scrap	spl splash	shr shrug		

\*Some Spanish speakers pronounce "v" as /v/ ("viola"); others pronounce it as /b/. (The Spanish word "vaca" might be pronounced as "baca.")

\*\*Note that some letter pairs do appear together in Spanish, although not as a digraph. They are often in separate syllables. For example, you might find 'ng' in the word "mango," 'sl' in the word "isla," and 'st' in the word "este."

This resource was reviewed by Drs. Elsa Cárdenas-Hagan and Karen Ford. See more tips and resources here: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/literacy>

