

SYLLABICATION, STRESS, AND USE OF THE WRITTEN ACCENT

Syllabication

1. The basic rule of Spanish syllabication is to make each syllable end in a vowel whenever possible.
2. When attempting to divide a word into syllables, it is easier to look for the consonants and do the following:
 - a. If the consonants in a word occur singly, each consonant should go with the following vowel: **ca-sa, di-ga, ca-mi-na**
 - b. If there are two consecutive consonants, one will go with the preceding vowel and one with the following: **al-co-hol, can-tan-te, es-cue-la, ac-ción, in-no-va-ción**
 - c. If there are three consecutive or more consonants, the first two will remain with the preceding vowel and the third (etc.) will go with the following vowel: **obs-truc-ción, cons-cien-te**
 - d. The letter **h** always goes with the following vowel: **al-co-hol, pro-hí-be**
 - e. The following consonant combinations are never divided: **br-, dr-, rr-, tr-, bl-, ll-: a-bran, la-drón, bo-rra-dor, con-tra, ha-blar, man-te-qui-lla**
3. Diphthongs (vowel combinations: two weak ones or a weak one and a strong one) are not divided, unless the weak vowel has an orthographic accent. Weak vowels: **i, u**; strong vowels: **a, e, o**: **ciu-dad, sie-te, seis, cin-cuen-ta**. But: **re-ú-no, dí-a**

Stress

How you pronounce a specific Spanish word is determined by two basic rules of stress. Written accents to indicate stress are needed only when those rules are violated. Here are the two rules of stress.

1. For words ending in a vowel, **n**, or **s**, the natural stress falls on the next-to-last syllable. The letter **y** is not considered a vowel for stress purposes.

Es-**te**-ban **blan**-co es-**cu**-chen **ro**-ja es-**tu**-die

2. For words ending in *any other letter*, the natural stress falls on the last syllable.

pa-**pel** **ciu-dad** es-cri-**bir** re-**loj** es-**toy**

When these stress rules are violated by the word's accepted pronunciation, stress must be indicated with a written accent.

in-glés e-**léc**-tri-co es-tu-**dié** lla-ma-**rán** sim-**pá**-ti-co
ár-bol **Ló**-pez a-**zú**-car **hués**-ped a-**quí**

Note that words that are stressed on any syllable other than the last or next-to-last will always show a written accent. Particularly frequent words in this category include adjectives and adverbs ending in **-ísimo** and verb forms with pronouns attached.

gua-**pí**-si-mo es-pe-**rán**-do-te **pí**-de-se-las de-**vuél**-van-se-la