

Helping Spanish Speakers Build English Vocabulary

By Matthew Gollub ©2007-11

Spanish speakers are in the position to quickly and easily attain English vocabulary. At least 40% of English words share Latin cognates. Below are **sophisticated** English words closely related to **common** Spanish expressions. Try introducing one or two a day. You'll not only boost your students' vocabulary; you'll train them to look for "handles" on words based on what they already know!

English word (in the sense of)

Think of this word in Spanish

abundant	abundante
accompany (go with)	acompañar
accord (agreement)	acuerdo
acute (keen)	agudo
agitate (to shake up)	agitar
aggregate (n. sum or total)	agregado
aggregate (v. to add or total up)	agregar
alimentary (of or related to food)	alimento
arbitrator (judge)	abitro
assure (make sure)	asegurar
augment (to add or increase)	aumentar
authentic (real)	auténtico
auxiliary (extra, substitute)	auxilios
benefit	beneficio
bilingual	bilingüe
blouse	blusa
board (a plane or ship, etc.)	abordar
cathedral	catedral
cause	causa
capacity (capability)	capacidad
castigate (punish)	castigar
certain (sure)	cierto
certainty	certitud
chauffeur (driver)	chofer
client (customer)	cliente
comestible (edible)	comestible, comer
congeal (freeze)	congelar
congealed (frozen)	congelado
concept	concepto
conduct (noun)	conducto
conduct oneself (verb)	conducirse
consult (check with)	consultar
continue (to keep going)	continuar

English word (in the sense of)

Think of this word in Spanish

converse (to talk)	conversar
corporal (physical)	corporal (del cuerpo)
culpable (guilty)	culpable
cultivate	cultivar
debilitated (weakened)	débil
diminish (reduce, make less)	disminuir
discount (n.)	descuento
discourse (n. speech)	discurso
disdain	desdén
disgust	disgustar
distinct	distinto
durable (long lasting)	durable
edifice (building)	edificio
employee	empleado
enamor of (to love)	enamorarse de
entire (whole)	entero
esteem (respect)	estimo
esteemed (respected)	estimado
exact	exacto
extraordinary	extraordinario
exigent (demanding)	exigente
fabulous	fabuloso
facile	fácil
facility	facilidad
fallacious	falaz (de fallar)
felicitous (happy, joyful)	feliz
ferocious	feroz
florist	florista
force (power)	fuerza
granary	granero
gratitude	gratitud
gratuitous (free)	gratuito
gusto (enjoyment)	gusto
humble	humilde
impeccable (perfect)	impecable (no hay pecado)
incarcerate (to put in jail)	encarcelar (echar en la carcel)
indigenous	indígena
inevitable (unavoidable)	inevitable (no se puede evitar)
infallible (perfect)	infalible (no se falla)
kilometer	kilómetro
labial (of the lips)	labios (de los)
labor (work)	labor

English word (in the sense of)

lament (regret)
lamentable (sorry)
lamentably
liberate (oneself)
liberated
limit
lunar
maintain
manual (by hand)
mark
master (expert)
mastery
matrimony (marriage)
matrimonial
medic (medical worker)
meter
modern
necessitate (to need)
negate (to deny)
nocturnal
note (to write down)
occupied
occupy (oneself)
occult (to hide or conceal)
occult (adj. not easily understood)
opine (to think, believe)
offer (sale)
passport
potential (possible)
potent
preoccupy (oneself)
preoccupied (worried)
precise
primary (first)
probable (likely)
prohibited
protect
rapid (quick)
reason
reasonable
recreation
reduce (make less)
remedy
respect

Think of this word in Spanish

lamentar
lamentable
lamentablemente
librarse
librado
límite
lunar (de la luna)
mantener
mano (de las manos)
marcar
maestro (also teacher)
maestría
matrimonio
matrimonial
médico
metro
moderno
necesitar
negar
nocturno
anotar
ocupado
ocuparse
ocultar
oculto
opinar
oferta
pasaporte
potencial (con la potencia)
potente
preocuparse
preocupado
preciso
primario
probable
prohibido
proteger
rápido
razón
razonable
recreo
reducir
remedio
respeto

English word (in the sense of)

Think of this word in Spanish

result in (turn out)	resultar
sacerdotal (priestly)	sacerdote (n. priest)
sacrament	sacramento
sane	sano (de mente)
secondary	segundario
select (choose)	seleccionar
sentiments (feelings)	sentimientos
siren (of the sea)	sirena (mermaid)
solicit (v. ask for)	solicitar
solicitation (n. request)	solicitud
solo (alone)	sólo
spaghetti	espagueti
stupendous	estupendo
sufficient (enough)	suficiente
succeed (happen)	suceder
surpass	superar
sustain (to hold, support)	sostener
system	sistema
temple	templo
testament	testamento
tremendous	tremendo
tourist	turista
transport (to move, ship something)	transportar (puerto tras puerto)
triumph (verb)	triumfar
triumph (noun)	trunfo
unique	único
unite (join together)	unirse
valor (courage)	valor
valorous (brave)	valeroso
value	valor
verdant (lush, green)	verde
veritable (true)	verdadero
veterinarian (animal doctor)	veterinario
vociferous (loud)	voz (vociferante)
zoological (about animals)	zoológico

Note: for more lists, search the Internet for “English Spanish cognates.”

WATCH OUT FOR FALSE COGNATES!

Attention teachers: Not all words that look related mean the same thing in English and Spanish. Explain to your students that there are certain false cognates or “amigos falsos.” Here’s a list of a few of the common ones.

Spanish word	English meaning
Asistir	Attend, not “assist”
Carpeta	Folder, not “carpet”
Desgracia	Misfortunate, not “disgrace”
Discutir	To argue, not “discuss” (especially in Mexico)
Embarazada	Pregnant, not “embarrassed”
Guardar	To put away, not “to guard”