

RAE 2010 RULES

Translation of the new rules has proved difficult, but the following is as good as I can get it. It should be noted that dictionaries, grammars, and verb conjugation tables, in the main, have not caught up with the revised rules.

1. Exclusion of digraphs ch and ll from the alphabet:

(A digraph is a pair of characters used together to represent a single sound, such as "sh" in English.)

Ch and ll are definitely excluded from the alphabet because, in reality, they are not letters but digraphs, i.e. sets of two letters or graphemes representing a single phoneme. The Spanish alphabet is thus reduced to the following twenty seven letters: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ñ, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z.

Spanish is integrated with the rest of the languages of alphabetic writing, where single letters of the alphabet are considered simple signs, although they exist in all combinations of graphemes to represent some of its phonemes.

The elimination of the digraphs ch and ll from the alphabet does not in any way imply they will disappear from Spanish. These double letters continue to be used as before in writing the Spanish words, the ch digraph representing the phoneme /ch/ (chico [chíko]) and the ll digraph representing the phoneme /ll/ or, to yeístas* speakers, the phoneme /y/ (calle [kálle, káye]). The new feature is simply that they no longer count as letters of the alphabet.

* a yeísta is someone who pronounces ll as y.

Being combinations of two letters, words beginning with these digraphs or containing them are not alphabetised separately, but in places due to them within the c and l, respectively. The decision to adopt the universal Latin alphabetical order was taken at the Tenth Congress of the Association of Spanish Language Academies, in 1994, and has been applied since then in all academic works.

2. Proposal of a single name for each letter of the alphabet:

Some of the letters have several names with tradition and applicability in different parts of the Hispanic world. The new edition of the orthography, without the intention to interfere in the freedom of each speaker or country to continue using the name to which it is accustomed, aims to promote with a view to the future a process of convergence in the way of referring to the letters of the alphabet, the reason for what is recommended, for each one of these, a common unique name. The recommended common name is what appears in the following list under each letter.

a, A	b, B	c, C	d, D	e, E	f, F	g, G	h, H	i, I
<i>a</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>ce</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>efe</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>hache</i>	<i>i</i>
j, J	k, K	l, L	m, M	n, N	ñ, Ñ	o, O	p, P	q, Q
<i>jota</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ele</i>	<i>eme</i>	<i>ene</i>	<i>eñe</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>cu</i>
r, R	s, S	t, T	u, U	v, V	w, W	x, X	y, Y	z, Z
<i>erre</i>	<i>ese</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>uve</i>	<i>uve doble</i>	<i>equis</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>zeta</i>

The recommendation to use a single name for each letter does not in any way imply that the variants currently in use for some of them are incorrect, and which are discussed below:

v:

The letter v has two names: uve and ve. The uve name is the only one used in Spain, but is also known and used in much of America, where, however, the name ve is more widely seen. Spanish speakers using the name ve often accompany it with the adjectives corta, chica, chiquita, pequeña or baja, to distinguish in the spoken language between this letter and the letter b (be), pronounced exactly the same.

The fact that the name uve is differentiated without additions from the name of the letter b justifies its choice as the name for v throughout all the Hispanic world.

b:

The letter b is called simply be among those Spanish speakers who use the name uve for the letter v. Those who name v as ve (corta, chica, chiquita, pequeña or baja) commonly use for the b the complex names be larga, be grande or be alta, adding in each case the opposite adjective to that used to refer to the v.

w:

The letter w also has several names: uve doble, ve doble, doble uve, doble ve and doble u (the latter, a loanword from the English double u). Preference is given to the name uve doble as uve is the common name recommended for the letter v, and it is more natural in Spanish to position an adjective after a noun.

y:

The letter y is called i griega or ye. The name i griega, inherited from Latin, is the traditional and most widespread of this letter's designations, reflecting its origin and initial employment in loanwords from Greek.

The name ye was created in the second half of the nineteenth century by application of the word pattern followed by most of the consonants, which is to add the letter e the corresponding letter (be, ce, de, etc.). The choice of ye as the recommended name for this letter is justified by its simplicity, as it already differs, without needing qualifying, from the name of the letter i.

i:

The letter i, whose name is i, is also named i latina to distinguish it from the letter y when for this the traditional name i griega is used.

Unlike the word variants outlined above, all of them valid, alternative names that applied to some other letters in the past are not considered acceptable today; so it is advisable to finally dispose of the name ere for the r, and similarly the forms ceta, ceda y zeda for z. The only names valid today for these letters are, respectively, erre and zeta.

3. Replacement, by our own Spanish spellings of the etymological 'q' with an independent phonic value in those foreign words and latinisms fully adapted to Spanish (quorum> cuórum)

In the Spanish orthographic system, the letter q only has use as a component of the digraph (a pair of characters used together to represent a single sound) 'qu' to represent the phoneme (smallest unit of sound in a language) / k / before vowels e, i (queso [késɔ], quién [kién]).

This same phoneme is represented in the rest of the positions, with the letter c (canguro [kangúro], corto [kórto] cuenta [kuénta], acné [akné], tictac [tikták]), although in loanwords from other languages it also can appear represented by the letter k in any position (karaoke [karaóke], kilo [kílo], koala [koála], kurdo [kúrdo], búnker [búnker], anorak [anorák]).

It is, therefore, outside the Spanish orthography to use letter q as an independent grapheme (a letter or a number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme), with an independent phonetic value. Therefore, the loanwords of other languages, be they latinisms or foreign words, whose etymological spelling include a q which alone represents the phoneme / k /, if adapted to Spanish, must have that q replaced by our own letters of the Spanish orthography to represent the said phoneme.

In applying this standard, English words like quark or quasar, or Latin ones like quorum or exequatur, must be written in Spanish as cuark, cuásar, cuórum y execuátur.

In cases of keeping the etymological spellings with q, these words have to be considered natural (not adapted) foreign words and written, therefore, in italics and without an accent.

Although in the area of proper names (personal names and place names) original unadapted names are frequently used - or if the names come from languages that use another alphabet or other writing system, such as Arabic, Hebrew or Chinese - transliterations of the words to Latin script, without further adaptations, in the case of larger place names, such as the names of countries, it is convenient to use words fully adapted to the Spanish orthography.

To that end, applying the same standard as for common names, it is recommended to preferentially use the words Catar e Irak for the names of the two Arab countries, rather than Qatar and Iraq; the Arab original transcriptions of the original arab words use q in a manner alien to the Spanish orthography.

4. Elimination of the tilde from words with diphthongs and triphthongs: quion, truhan, fie, liais, etc.

As a result of the application of the RAE conventions regarding what constitutes a diphthong and triphthong, a limited group of words that had traditionally been written with a tilde to show that an apparent diphthong or triphthong is to be pronounced as two syllables (as well as being agudas ending in -n, -s or vowel) in the pronunciation of many Spanish speakers —those which contain a combination of vowels and are spoken with a hiatus (a break between two vowels coming together but not in the same syllable)— they are considered as monosyllables for purposes of graphic accentuation, according to their actual pronunciation for another large group of Spanish speakers —those who speak those same combinations as diphthongs or triphthongs—, and to be written, therefore, without an accent, being that the monosyllables are not graphically accentuated, except those bearing a diacritical accent (a diacritic is a mark that is placed over a letter to show that it should be pronounced in a particular way).

The words affected by this change are verbal forms like:

From *criar*: *crie*, *crio* (pron. [krié], [krió]), *crias*, *cria* (pron. [kriás], [kriá])

From *fiar*: *fie*, *fio* (pron. [fié], [fió]), *fias*, *fia* (pron. [fiás], [fiá])

From *fluir*: *flui*, *fluis*

From *freír*: *frio* (pron. [frió])

From *fruir*: *frui*, *fruis*

From *guiar*: *guie*, *guio* (pron. [gié], [gió]), *guias*, *guia* (pron. [giás], [giá])

From *huir*: *hui*, *huis*

From *liar*: *lie*, *lio* (pron. [lié], [lió]), *lias*, *lia* (pron. [liás], [liá])

From *piar*: *pie*, *pio* (pron. [pié], [pió]), *pisas*, *pia* (pron. [piás], [piá])

From *reír*: *rio* (pron. [rió]), *riais*

Nouns like: *guion*, *ion*, *muon*, *pion*, *prion*, *ruan* y *truhan*

And certain names, like *Ruan* y *Sion*.

Although the RAE publication of 1999, in which the above conventions were established, already states these words should be written without tildes, it is conceded that those who speak them as bisyllables may continue accenting them graphically.

However, with effect from the 2010 edition that option is annulled, as it breaks the principle of orthographic unity, so the words that are considered monosyllabic because they contain this type of diphthong or triphthong should mandatorily be now written without an accent.

This convention is purely orthographic, and in no way implies that speakers should change the way in which they pronounce these words, be it with a hiatus or as a diphthong.

5. Elimination of the tilde from the adverb solo & demonstrative pronouns, inc in cases of possible ambiguity:

The word *solo*, whether it is an adverb and equates to *solamente* (*Solo llevaba un par de monedas en el bolsillo*) or is an adjective (*No me gusta estar solo*), as well as the demonstratives *este*, *ese* y *aquel*, with their feminine and plural versions, functioning as pronouns (*Este es tonto*; *Quiero aquella*) or as adjectives (*aquellos tipos*, *la chica esa*), do not have to have an accent according to the general rules of accentuation, either treating them as *llanas* (stress on the penultimate syllable) ending in a vowel or -s, or in the case of *aquel*, as an *aguda* (stress on the last syllable) finishing in a consonant other than -n or -s.

Even so, the previous orthographic rules called for the use of the tilde in the adverb *solo* and the demonstrative pronouns to distinguish them, respectively, from the adjective *solo* and the demonstrative adjectives when, in the same statements, two interpretations were possible and could cause cases of ambiguity, as in the following examples: *Trabaja sólo los domingos* [he works only on Sundays], to avoid the confusion with *Trabaja solo los domingos* [he works alone on Sundays]; or ¿*Por qué compraron aquéllos libros usados?* (*aquéllos* is the subject of the phrase), compared to ¿*Por qué compraron aquellos libros usados?* (the subject of this phrase is not expressed, and *aquellos* is an adjective qualifying *libros*).

However, the traditional use of the tilde in the adverb *solo* and demonstrative pronouns does not comply with the fundamental requirement that justifies the use of diacritical tilde, which is to separate stressed or accentuated words from those unstressed or unaccented but otherwise identical words, as both *solo* and demonstratives are always stressed words in any of their functions. therefore, from now you can get rid of the tilde in these forms even in cases of ambiguity. The general recommendation is therefore to never use a tilde for these words.

Possible ambiguities can almost always be resolved by good communication skills, in terms of which usually only one of the two interpretive options is permissible. Actual cases where ambiguity occurs that communicative context is not able to resolve are rare and obscure, and can always be avoided by other means such as the use of synonyms (*solamente* or *únicamente*, in the case of the adverb *solo*), proper punctuation, the inclusion of some element that prevents the double meaning, or a change in word order to compels a unique interpretation.

6. Elimination of the diacritic accent on the disjunctive conjunction 'o' written between numbers:

Until now it has been recommended to give 'o' a tilde when appearing between two numbers, in order to avoid confusion with zero. This use of the diacritic tilde is not justified from the linguistic point of view, since the conjunction 'o' is unstressed (pronounced without accent), and is not justified from a visual point of view, since both typed and manual writing as the white spaces on both sides of the conjunction and its different shape and smaller height than the zero sufficiently prevent any confusion between both (1 o 2, frente a 102). Therefore, from now on, the conjunction 'o' will always be written without an accent, as befits its status as an unstressed one syllable word, irrespective of whether it appears between words, figures or signs: ¿*Quieres té o café?*; *Terminaré dentro de 3 o 4 días*; *Escriba los signos + o – en la casilla correspondiente.*

7. Rules on writing prefixes (including ex, which now receives the same treatment as other orthographic prefixes: exmarido, ex primer ministro):

For the first time explicit rules for writing prefixes are given.

Prefixes are components, not actual words, attached, that are put before a lexical base (a word or sometimes a multi-word expression) that provide various semantic values. The following summarizes the rules to be followed for the correct writing of prefixes in Spanish:

a) They are always written attached to the base that they affect when this is constituted of a single word:

antiadherente, antirrobo, antitabaco, cuasiautomático, cuasidelito, exalcohólico, exjefe, exministro, exnovio, expresidente, posmoderno, posventa, precontrato, prepago, proamnistía, probritánico, provida, superaburrido, superbién, supermodelo, vicealcalde, vicesecretario, etc.

In this case, it is not considered correct spelling to attach them with a hyphen (*X* anti-mafia, *X* anti-cancerígeno) or separated by a blank space (*X* anti mafia, *X* anti cancerígeno). If a word is formed with more than one prefix, they must equally be written without a hyphen:

antiposmodernista, requetesuperguapo.

b) They are attached to the base word with a hyphen when the word starts with a capital letter,

therefore a hyphen is used when the prefix precedes an initial or a single word proper name:

anti-ALCA, mini-USB, pos-Gorbachov, pro-Obama.

The hyphen is used in these cases to avoid the anomaly of, in our spelling system, a lower-case letter followed by a capital letter inside the word. It is also necessary to use the hyphen when the base is a number, in order to separate the sequence of letters from the figures:

sub-21, super-8.

c) They are necessarily written separated from the base when this is constituted of several words.

There are certain prefixes, such as ex-, pro- or anti-, which are particularly prone, due to their meaning, to be used with such bases:

ex relaciones públicas, anti pena de muerte, pro derechos humanos.

The same situation may also occur with other prefixes:

pre Segunda Guerra Mundial, super en forma, vice primer ministro.

Thus the same prefix can be written attached to the base, joined with a hyphen, or completely separated, according to the above factors:

antimafia, anti-OTAN, anti ácido láctico; provida, pro-OLP, pro derechos humanos; supercansado, super-8, super en forma, etc.

The rules set forth herein apply to all prefixes, including ex-. For this prefix up until now the rule was to write it separately - irrespective of the simple or complex form of the base - when, in the sense of 'what was but is no longer', it should go before nouns denoting occupations, positions, relations or alterable relationship, and other types of circumstantial situations of people.

With effect from this edition of the RAE rules, ex- must abide by the general rules for writing all prefixes and therefore be written attached to the base if it is univocal (exjugador, exnovio, expresidente, etc.), although the prefixed word can take a defining supplement or adjective behind it:

exjugador del Real Madrid, exnovio de mi hermana, expresidente brasileño, etc.;

and will be written separately from the base if this is plurivocal:

ex cabeza rapada, ex número uno, ex teniente de alcalde, ex primera dama, etc.

8. Equal treatment in the orthographic treatment of foreign words and latinisms, including idioms:

In the new orthography attention is given of the rules to be followed when words or expressions belonging to other languages are used in Spanish texts, the new principle in this sense being the comparison in spell treatment of all the loanwords (words or expressions of others languages that are incorporated into the Spanish vocabulary), whether they come from living foreign languages (foreign words) or in the case of Latin words or expressions (latinisms).

According to these rules, natural or unamended foreign words and latinisms - those that are used with their original spelling and pronunciation and that present graphic-phonological features different to Spanish orthography - should be written in Spanish texts with some kind of graphic mark indicating their foreign character, preferably in italics or quotes.

However, adapted foreign words and latinisms - those which do not present problems in adapting to the Spanish orthography or have had their original spelling or pronunciation modified to suit Spanish graphic-phonological conventions - are written without any type of emphasis and are subject to the Spanish rules of accentuation:

Me encanta el *ballet* clásico / Me encanta el *balé* clásico.
Juego al *paddle* todos los domingos / Juego al *pádel* todos los domingos
La reunión se suspendió por falta de *quorum* / La reunión se suspendió por falta de *cuórum*.

Thus, according to the new orthography, and as illustrated by the last example, loans from the Latin can only be written in plain font, and subject to the rules of accentuation of Spanish, when fully adapted to our orthographic system, as it is done with loanwords from other languages.

For their part, phrases or sayings in other languages that are used in Spanish texts must also be written in italics, or, failing that, in quotation marks, to indicate their foreign nature and their consideration as embedding of other languages in our tongue:

La historia tuvo un *happy end* de película.
Su bien ganada fama de *femme fatale* le abría todas las puertas.
La tensión fue *in crescendo* hasta que, finalmente, estalló el conflicto.

As stated in the new edition of the orthography, Latin phrases (fixed multi-word expressions in Latin that are used in all the languages of Western culture, including Spanish, with more or less close to the Latin literal meaning sense) should receive the same treatment as those from any other language. Therefore, they should be written, according to their nature as foreign expressions, italicized (or in quotes) and without graphic accents, as these do not exist in Latin script:

Así fue, *grosso modo*, como acabó aquel asunto.
Se casó *in articulo mortis* con su novia de toda la vida.
Renunció *motu proprio* a todos sus privilegios.
Decidieron aplazar *sine die* las negociaciones.
El examen *post mortem* reveló indicios de envenenamiento.
Las grandes potencias eran partidarias de mantener el *statu quo*.