

SIX UNITS. A WORLD OF CONNECTIONS.

Spanish I culture notes

A beginner companion for your Spanish I classroom.

Organized around the six classroom units. Use this original review material alongside your teacher's class notes; it is a companion, not a complete course syllabus.

01 / Hola, mucho gusto

Introduce yourself, greet others, and start a conversation.

02 / La escuela de la vida

Talk about your school day, classroom, and learning routines.

03 / Mi familia es tu familia

Describe family, important people, and the connections you share.

04 / La comida es cultura

Explore food, express preferences, and order with courtesy.

05 / A pasarla bien

Share interests, talk about free time, and make plans.

06 / Caminando por el mundo

Explore places, ask for directions, and find your way.

How to use these notes

Read the context, notice the language, and try the comparison activity. Be specific about a place or community. A single example never describes everyone.

Name: _____ Class: _____

UNIT 01

Hola, mucho gusto

A greeting is a relationship

Spanish has several ways to address another person. Tú often signals familiarity; usted often signals formality or courtesy. These are useful starting points, not rules about someone’s age or personality. Usage varies across communities and relationships. You may also hear vos in places such as Argentina and Paraguay. Listen to the forms people use and ask respectfully when you are unsure.

Notice the language

Compare ¿Cómo te llamas? with ¿Cómo se llama usted? The meaning is similar, but the relationship and verb form change. You do not need to imitate every regional form to respect it.

Mucho gusto.	Nice to meet you.
¿Cómo está usted?	How are you? (formal)
¿Cómo estás?	How are you? (familiar)

Make a connection

Write two greetings: one for meeting a new adult visitor and one for meeting a classmate. Explain why you chose each form. Your choices may depend on the setting.

Source: RAE / ASALE: usted; vos. See the source notebook on page 8.

UNIT 02

La escuela de la vida

One classroom, many voices

A language does not belong to just one kind of student. UNESCO's work on multilingual education emphasizes the role of languages learners understand in access to education. In a Spanish classroom, different home languages and accents can be resources for learning. A useful comparison is not "Which school is normal?" but "What is similar, what is different, and what evidence do I have?"

Notice the language

Spanish words can overlap without being identical. La clase may mean the lesson or the group. El aula names a classroom. A translation is a starting point; the sentence helps you choose the meaning.

En mi escuela...	In my school...
¿Puedes repetir, por favor?	Can you repeat, please?
¿Qué significa...?	What does ... mean?

Make a connection

Compare two school schedules supplied by your teacher or found on school websites. Record the school and location. Notice subjects, start times, and breaks. Do not generalize from one schedule to an entire country.

Source: UNESCO: Languages in education. See the source notebook on page 8.

UNIT 03

Mi familia es tu familia

Families are not a single story

People describe family through relationships, care, and the people who matter to them. Avoid assuming that every family has the same structure or lives in the same household. When practicing Spanish, describe your own family, an invented family, or characters in a story. You never need to share personal details to demonstrate the language.

Notice the language

Watch this false friend: los parientes means relatives, not specifically parents. Los padres can mean parents. A cousin, grandparent, aunt, or uncle can be a pariente. Choose the word for the relationship you actually mean.

Esta es mi familia.	This is my family.
Mi abuela se llama...	My grandmother's name is...
Una persona importante para mí es...	An important person to me is...

Make a connection

Create a small relationship map for an invented family. Write four captions with mi or mis. Then describe one person without assuming that their role tells you their personality.

Source: RAE / ASALE: pariente. See the source notebook on page 8.

UNIT 04

La comida es cultura

Food carries knowledge

UNESCO recognizes traditional Mexican cuisine as a living community practice, not simply a list of famous dishes. Its description connects farming, cooking skills, shared customs, and knowledge passed between people. It highlights Michoacán as an example within Mexico. One meal can tell a story about ingredients, place, work, and family; it cannot represent every person in a country.

Notice the language

Food words do not always map neatly onto a single daily routine. La comida can mean food or a meal. Ask for context instead of assuming that everyone eats the same dishes or follows the same schedule.

¿Qué lleva este plato?	What is in this dish?
Me gusta porque...	I like it because...
Quisiera probar...	I would like to try...

Make a connection

Choose a dish from a named place. Identify two ingredients and one preparation technique from a reliable source. Explain whose knowledge makes the dish possible. Compare it with a dish meaningful to you.

Source: UNESCO: Traditional Mexican cuisine. See the source notebook on page 8.

UNIT 05

A pasarla bien

A shared activity, a local meaning

Enjoying free time can mean music, games, sports, reading, or spending time with others. These interests are personal; speaking Spanish does not determine what someone enjoys. To explore culture, start with a specific example: a local event, an artist, a club, or a community activity. Name the place and the people involved before making a comparison.

Notice the language

Your unit title, A pasarla bien, expresses the idea of having a good time. Another common expression is pasarlo bien. The object pronoun in these set expressions can vary in use. Keep the title your class uses and notice alternatives when you encounter them.

Me gusta escuchar música.	I like listening to music.
¿Qué haces en tu tiempo libre?	What do you do in your free time?
¿Vamos a bailar?	Shall we go dancing?

Make a connection

Find a Spanish-language event announcement from a named city. Identify the activity, date, and location. Write an invitation with vamos a. Explain what the announcement shows and what it cannot tell you about everyone who lives there.

Source: Language practice and comparison activity; original classroom material. See the source notebook on page 8.

UNIT 06

Caminando por el mundo

A route connects people

The Camino de Santiago is a network of pilgrimage routes associated with Santiago de Compostela in Spain. UNESCO describes the Camino Francés and routes of northern Spain as places of cultural exchange, especially during the Middle Ages. Routes are more than lines on a map: towns, buildings, travelers, and local communities help give them meaning. People may approach a route with different interests and motivations.

Notice the language

A map selects what to show. A tourist map may emphasize landmarks; a transport map may emphasize connections. Ask what a map is for before using it. In Spanish, *hay* introduces a place and *está* helps locate it.

¿Dónde está la plaza?	Where is the square?
El museo está cerca.	The museum is nearby.
Sigue todo recto.	Keep going straight ahead.

Make a connection

Locate Santiago de Compostela on a map of Spain. Mark a nearby city and a route between them. Write two location sentences. Distinguish a fact shown on the map from an assumption about the journey.

Source: UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Routes of Santiago de Compostela. See the source notebook on page 8.

KEEP EXPLORING

Your source notebook

These references support the cultural and language notes. Activities and comparison prompts are original. Accessed September 10, 2026.

01 / Hola, mucho gusto

RAE / ASALE: usted; vos

<https://www.rae.es/dpd/usted>

<https://www.rae.es/dpd/vos>

02 / La escuela de la vida

UNESCO: Languages in education

<https://www.unesco.org/en/languages-education>

03 / Mi familia es tu familia

RAE / ASALE: pariente

<https://dle.rae.es/pariente>

04 / La comida es cultura

UNESCO: Traditional Mexican cuisine

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/00400>

05 / A pasarla bien

Language practice and comparison activity; original classroom material

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UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Routes of Santiago de Compostela

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/669/>

A good culture question

Who? Where? When? What is the source? What can I observe, and what am I assuming? Keep those questions beside you as you explore.