

IB Spanish B SL/HL 2026 — Complete Study Guide

IB SL/HL Study Guide

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Exam Overview

IB Spanish B assesses four language skills — reading, listening, writing, and (at HL) speaking — across two examination papers and an internal assessment component.

Paper 1: Receptive Skills

Paper 1 tests reading comprehension and (at HL) listening comprehension using authentic texts from Spanish-speaking contexts.

Component	SL	HL
Duration	1 hour 45 minutes	2 hours 5 minutes
Reading texts	3 texts, varied text types	4 texts, varied text types
Listening	Not included	Included (multiple audio extracts)
Marks	40	55

Text types tested: articles, advertisements, brochures, emails, interviews, blog posts, letters, reports, social media posts, and instructional texts.

Question types: multiple choice, true/false/not given, gap fill, matching headings, short-answer questions, and sentence completion.

EXAM ALERT

Paper 1 HL includes a listening component. You will hear each audio extract twice. The first listening is for general comprehension; the second is for specific detail. Do not write detailed notes on the first listening — focus on the main ideas.

Paper 2: Written Production

Paper 2 tests productive writing skills in Spanish. You must write in one of the text types studied in the course.

Component	SL	HL
Duration	1 hour 15 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes
Tasks	2 tasks (choose from 4 options)	2 tasks (choose from 5 options)
Word count per task	150–250 words	250–400 words
Marks	30	40

HL Individual Oral

The Individual Oral is an internally assessed speaking component worth 30 marks.

- Duration: approximately 15 minutes
- Preparation time: 15 minutes with the visual stimulus
- Structure: visual stimulus discussion (one theme) + general conversation (second theme)

- Conducted by the teacher; moderated externally

HL Written Assignment HL

A written task of 500 words based on a literary or non-literary text studied in class, plus a reflective statement (rationale) of 100–150 words. Worth 20 marks.

Theme 1: Identidades

Syllabus link: All students — SL and HL

Subtopics

- Personal identity: values, beliefs, personality, and self-perception
- Cultural identity: national, ethnic, and linguistic identity
- Language and identity: how language shapes who we are
- Stereotypes and prejudice: how they form and how to challenge them

Key Vocabulary — Identidades

MEMORISE THIS

Spanish	English
la identidad	identity
la autoestima	self-esteem
los valores	values
las creencias	beliefs
la herencia cultural	cultural heritage
la lengua materna	mother tongue
el bilingüismo	bilingualism
el estereotipo	stereotype
el prejuicio	prejudice
la diversidad	diversity
pertenecer	to belong
identificarse con	to identify with
la tradición	tradition
la comunidad	community
el orgullo	pride
la mezcla cultural	cultural mix
la discriminación	discrimination
rechazar	to reject
aceptar	to accept
la personalidad	personality

Cultural Context: Identity in the Spanish-Speaking World

El Día de los Muertos (Mexico): This festival (November 1–2) illustrates how Mexican identity blends pre-Hispanic indigenous traditions with Catholic observance. Families build altars (*ofrendas*) with photographs, food, and marigold flowers to honour deceased relatives. It is a powerful example of cultural identity that resists assimilation — the festival was inscribed on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2008.

Identity in Argentina: Argentina has a complex identity shaped by massive waves of European immigration (especially Italian and Spanish) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, alongside indigenous populations and African-descendant communities. The tango, born in Buenos Aires from this fusion, is itself a symbol of hybrid cultural identity.

IB TIP

When writing or speaking about cultural identity, always use specific examples from the Spanish-speaking world. Do not write in generalities — name a country, a tradition, or a cultural practice. The IB examiner rewards cultural awareness grounded in concrete knowledge.

Theme 2: Experiencias

Syllabus link: All students — SL and HL

Subtopics

- Daily routine and lifestyle
- Travel and tourism
- Festivals and celebrations
- Migration and displacement
- Sport, recreation, and leisure

Key Vocabulary — Experiencias

MEMORISE THIS

Spanish	English
la rutina diaria	daily routine
el ocio	leisure
el turismo	tourism
el viaje	journey / trip
la fiesta	festival / party
la celebración	celebration
la migración	migration
el desplazamiento	displacement
el refugiado / la refugiada	refugee
la nostalgia	nostalgia
el deporte	sport
la competencia	competition
el campeonato	championship
festejar	to celebrate
emigrar	to emigrate
integrarse	to integrate
la aventura	adventure
el destino	destination
la experiencia	experience
compartir	to share

Cultural Context: Carnival in the Spanish-Speaking World

Carnival (*el Carnaval*) is celebrated across Latin America and Spain in the days before Lent, but each country brings its own cultural expression:

- **Bolivia — Carnaval de Oruro:** Declared a UNESCO Masterpiece of Intangible Heritage. Features the *diablada* (devil dance), which blends indigenous Andean ritual with colonial Catholic tradition.
- **Uruguay — Carnaval de Montevideo:** The longest carnival in the world (40 days). Unique for its *murgas* (satirical theatre-music groups) that comment on politics and society.
- **Spain — Carnaval de Cádiz:** Known for *chirigotas* (humorous musical groups) that use sharp wit to lampoon current events.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Exam scenario: You are asked to write a blog post about your experience attending a Spanish-speaking festival.

Strong response elements:

- Name a specific festival (e.g., Carnaval de Oruro)
- Use first-person narrative: *Nunca olvidaré el momento en que...*
- Include sensory detail: *Los colores brillantes de los trajes me dejaron sin palabras.*
- Connect to a theme (identity or community): *Este carnaval me hizo entender la importancia de las tradiciones para mantener la identidad cultural.*

Theme 3: Ingenio humano

Syllabus link: All students — SL and HL

Subtopics

- Technology and media: social media, digital communication, AI
- Art and architecture: Latin American and Spanish artistic traditions
- Science and innovation: medical advances, environmental technology
- Language and communication: how language evolves, endangered languages

Key Vocabulary — Ingenio humano

MEMORISE THIS

Spanish	English
la tecnología	technology
la innovación	innovation
la inteligencia artificial	artificial intelligence
las redes sociales	social media
el medio de comunicación	media / means of communication
el impacto	impact
el avance científico	scientific advance
la creatividad	creativity
diseñar	to design
inventar	to invent
la obra de arte	work of art
el muralismo	muralism
el realismo mágico	magical realism
la brecha digital	digital divide
el algoritmo	algorithm
la privacidad	privacy
la lengua en peligro	endangered language
la desinformación	disinformation
el desarrollo	development
la patente	patent

Cultural Context: Gabriel García Márquez and Magical Realism

Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, 1927–2014) won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982. His novel *Cien años de soledad* (1967) is the defining text of magical realism — a literary style in which fantastical events are presented as ordinary, grounded in a vividly real social and political context. Magical realism is itself an expression of *Ingenio humano*: it uses artistic creativity to explore identity, history, and the human condition in Latin America.

Other key Spanish-language artists relevant to this theme:

- **Frida Kahlo** (Mexico): surrealist painter whose self-portraits explore identity, pain, and the female body
- **Diego Rivera** (Mexico): muralist whose large-scale public art celebrated workers and indigenous culture
- **Antoni Gaudí** (Spain): architect of La Sagrada Família; revolutionary fusion of Art Nouveau and Catalan Gothic

IB TIP

If you reference a specific author, artist, or work in Paper 2 or the Individual Oral, you earn credit for cultural breadth. However, never fabricate details — if you are unsure of a date or title, use a phrase like *una obra muy conocida* rather than inventing specifics.

Theme 4: Organización social

Syllabus link: All students — SL and HL

Subtopics

- Education systems and access to education
- Work and employment
- Politics and society: democracy, government, civil society
- Family structures: traditional and evolving models
- Law and justice

Key Vocabulary — Organización social

MEMORISE THIS	
Spanish	English
la educación	education
la enseñanza	teaching / instruction
el sistema educativo	education system
el empleo	employment
el desempleo	unemployment
el salario mínimo	minimum wage
la igualdad de oportunidades	equal opportunities
la democracia	democracy
el gobierno	government
los derechos humanos	human rights
la justicia	justice
la familia nuclear	nuclear family
la familia monoparental	single-parent family
la ley	law
la corrupción	corruption
la sociedad civil	civil society
el movimiento social	social movement
la huelga	strike
la brecha de género	gender gap
la pobreza	poverty

Cultural Context: Education Systems — Spain vs. Latin America

Spain: Education is free and compulsory from age 6 to 16. The *Bachillerato* (ages 16–18) prepares students for the *Selectividad* (university entrance exam). Spain has a high university enrollment rate but suffers from youth unemployment, which has driven many graduates to seek work abroad — a phenomenon called *fuga de cerebros* (brain drain).

Latin America: Education access varies dramatically by country and socioeconomic group. In countries like Chile and Colombia, public university systems coexist with expensive private institutions, creating a two-tier system. In Bolivia and Ecuador, bilingual intercultural education (*educación intercultural bilingüe*) has been introduced to preserve indigenous languages alongside Spanish.

⚠ EXAM ALERT

Paper 2 tasks on Organización social often ask you to write a report or formal essay. Always use **formal register** (no contractions, no slang, impersonal constructions). A common mark-loss error is slipping into informal language mid-task.

Theme 5: Compartir el planeta

Syllabus link: All students — SL and HL

Subtopics

- The environment: climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss
- Global issues: poverty, inequality, food security
- Health and nutrition: access to healthcare, nutrition, pandemics
- Water and energy: access to clean water, renewable energy

Key Vocabulary — Compartir el planeta

📖 MEMORISE THIS

Spanish	English
el medio ambiente	the environment
el cambio climático	climate change
la deforestación	deforestation
la biodiversidad	biodiversity
las emisiones de carbono	carbon emissions
el calentamiento global	global warming
las energías renovables	renewable energies
el agua potable	drinking water
la sequía	drought
la inundación	flood
la desigualdad	inequality
la hambruna	famine
la seguridad alimentaria	food security
sostenible	sustainable
la huella ecológica	ecological footprint
reciclar	to recycle
proteger	to protect
amenazar	to threaten
el ecosistema	ecosystem
la especie en peligro	endangered species

Cultural Context: Environmental Crises in Latin America

Deforestation of the Amazon: The Amazon rainforest spans nine countries, with approximately 60% in Brazil and significant portions in Peru, Colombia, and Bolivia. It is home to an estimated 10% of all species on Earth and is described as the “lungs of the planet.” Industrial agriculture (especially soy and cattle ranching), illegal logging, and mining are the primary drivers of deforestation. Indigenous communities — whose cultural identity depends on the forest — are the most directly affected.

Water Crisis in Latin America: Despite holding approximately 30% of the world’s fresh water, Latin America faces severe water access inequalities. Urban slums (*favelas* / *villas miseria*) often lack reliable clean water infrastructure. In Chile, a controversial Water Code system has privatised water rights, meaning large agricultural companies can purchase water allocations while rural and indigenous communities go without. Bolivia’s Lake Titicaca, a sacred indigenous site, faces pollution from mining runoff.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Exam scenario: A Paper 2 task asks you to write an article for a student magazine about a global environmental issue affecting Latin America.

Strong opening paragraph: *El Amazonas, conocido como el pulmón verde de nuestro planeta, está en peligro. Cada año, millones de hectáreas de selva tropical desaparecen debido a la agricultura industrial y la tala ilegal. Sin embargo, las consecuencias no son solo ambientales: los pueblos indígenas que han habitado estos territorios durante siglos pierden también su hogar, su cultura y su identidad.*

This opening establishes the topic, uses precise vocabulary, connects to two themes (environment + identity), and adopts a journalistic style appropriate for an article.

Paper 1 Exam Technique: Reading Comprehension

General Approach

1. **Read all questions before reading the text.** Knowing what to look for transforms how you read. Underline key words in each question (who, when, why, how many).
2. **Identify the text type and purpose.** Is it informative, persuasive, or descriptive? This shapes vocabulary choices.
3. **Use cognates strategically.** Many Spanish words resemble English equivalents: *comunicación, importante, problema, información, natural, tecnología*. Do not over-rely on cognates, but use them as anchors.
4. **Read for gist first, then re-read for detail.** On your first reading, identify the main idea of each paragraph. On the second reading, look for specific evidence to answer questions.

Question-Type Strategies

True / False / Not Given (or Verdadero / Falso / No mencionado):

EXAM ALERT

The most common Paper 1 error is confusing “False” with “Not Given.” A statement is **False** only if the text says the *opposite*. A statement is **Not Given** if the text gives no information about it — neither confirming nor denying. Read the text carefully for explicit contradiction before choosing “False.”

- True: the text explicitly states this
- False: the text explicitly says the opposite
- Not Given: the text says nothing about this point

Multiple Choice:

- Eliminate obviously incorrect answers first

- Watch for distractors that use words from the text but change the meaning
- The correct answer often paraphrases the text rather than copying it word for word

Gap Fill:

- Check surrounding context for **gender agreement**: if the gap is preceded by *la*, the answer must be feminine
- Check for **verb tense**: if the sentence describes a past event, you need a past tense form
- Check for **register**: a formal text will not have a slang gap fill

Short-Answer Questions:

- Answer in the same language as the question (Spanish to Spanish)
- Quote directly from the text where appropriate; this guarantees mark-scheme accuracy
- Do not add information not found in the text

HL Listening Strategies HL

IB TIP

Before the audio plays, read the questions and **predict content**. If a question asks *¿Cuál es la opinión de la entrevistada sobre...?*, you know to listen for opinion language: *creo que, en mi opinión, me parece que, considero que, estoy convencida de que*.

- On the first listening: note the general topic and speaker's attitude (positive/negative/neutral)
- On the second listening: focus on specific details required by the questions
- Numbers, names, and dates are prime listening targets — listen carefully for these
- False friends to watch: *actualmente* means “currently” (not “actually”); *sensible* means “sensitive” (not “sensible”)

Paper 2: Written Production Guide

Text Types and Their Conventions

Artículo (Article)

An article is a written piece for a magazine, newspaper, or website. It targets a defined readership.

Required features:

- **Headline (*titular*)**: punchy, attention-grabbing

- Subheadings (*subtítulos*): optional but effective for longer articles
- Journalistic register: factual, clear, occasionally uses rhetorical questions
- Address the reader directly: *¿Sabías que...?*, *Como lectores...*
- Third person or mixed perspective

Opening formula: *En los últimos años, [topic] se ha convertido en uno de los temas más debatidos de nuestra sociedad.*

Blog (Blog Post)

A blog is a personal, informal online publication.

Required features:

- Date header (e.g., *23 de abril de 2026*)
- First-person voice throughout
- Informal, conversational register
- Direct address to readers: *¡Hola a todos!*, *Como ya sabéis...*, *Os cuento...*
- Personal anecdote or opinion

Opening formula: *¡Buenas! Hoy quiero hablaros de algo que me tiene muy preocupado/a últimamente...*

Correo electrónico / Carta (Email / Letter)

The register depends on the recipient.

Formal (e.g., to a company, official, or unknown person):

- Opening: *Estimado/a señor/señora:* or *A quien corresponda:*
- Close: *En espera de su respuesta, le saludo atentamente,*

Informal (e.g., to a friend, pen pal):

- Opening: *¡Hola [name]!*, **Querido/a [name]:*
- Close: *Un abrazo,*, *Hasta pronto,*, *Con cariño,*

EXAM ALERT

Never mix formal and informal register in the same letter or email. Selecting the wrong register (e.g., writing informally to a company director) will cost you marks in the Language criterion, even if your Spanish is fluent.

Informe (Report)

A report is a formal, structured document presenting findings and recommendations.

Required features:

- Title (*Título del informe*)

- Clear sections with bold headings: *Introducción, Análisis, Conclusiones y recomendaciones*
- Impersonal constructions: *Se ha observado que..., Los datos muestran que...*
- Formal, impersonal register throughout
- Numbered sections or bullet points for recommendations

Key phrase bank: *Según los datos recogidos... / Se puede concluir que... / Se recomienda encarecidamente que... / Los resultados indican que...*

Ensayo (Essay)

A discursive essay requires a clear argument.

Required features:

- Introduction with clear thesis: *En este ensayo, argumentaré que...*
- Body paragraphs each with a topic sentence, evidence, and analysis
- Balanced argument (present both sides before defending your position)
- Conclusion that synthesises: *En definitiva..., En conclusión..., Para concluir...*

Word Count and Register

Level	Task length	Key risk
SL	150–250 words per task	Too short = lost marks on content
HL	250–400 words per task	Going below 250 loses content marks

MEMORISE THIS

Useful linking phrases for Paper 2:

Function	Phrase
Adding a point	Además... / También... / Asimismo...
Contrasting	Sin embargo... / No obstante... / Por otro lado... / A pesar de...
Giving an example	Por ejemplo... / En concreto... / Como ilustración...
Concluding	En conclusión... / En definitiva... / Para concluir...
Giving your opinion	En mi opinión... / Desde mi punto de vista... / Considero que...
Cause and effect	Debido a... / Como consecuencia... / Por lo tanto... / Por eso...

HL Individual Oral HL

Structure

Stage	Duration	Description
Preparation	15 minutes	Study the visual stimulus; prepare notes (no internet/dictionary)
Visual stimulus description	~2 minutes	Describe the image and connect it to one IB theme
Conversation on Theme 1	~5 minutes	Teacher asks questions on the theme raised by the visual
Conversation on Theme 2	~5 minutes	Teacher raises a second IB theme for open discussion
Wrap-up	~1 minute	Teacher may ask a closing question

Visual Stimulus Strategy

In your 15 minutes of preparation, organise your response to the visual under these four steps:

1. **Describe** what you see: objects, people, setting, mood, colours, actions
2. **Interpret** what the image communicates: what message or issue is being shown?
3. **Connect** to an IB theme: which of the five themes does this image relate to, and how?
4. **Give your opinion:** What do you think about the issue? What should be done?

WORKED EXAMPLE

Visual stimulus: A photograph showing a child using a smartphone while sitting at a dinner table; the rest of the family is talking without screens.

Strong opening (2 minutes):

En esta imagen veo a una familia reunida en la mesa para cenar. Los adultos están conversando entre ellos, pero el niño tiene la mirada fija en su teléfono móvil. La imagen transmite una sensación de distancia emocional a pesar de la proximidad física. Esto me conecta inmediatamente con el tema del Ingenio humano, específicamente con el impacto de la tecnología en las relaciones interpersonales y la vida familiar. En mi opinión, la imagen plantea una pregunta importante: ¿está la tecnología uniendo o separando a las familias?

Useful Phrases for the Individual Oral

MEMORISE THIS

Function	Spanish phrase
Describing the image	En esta imagen veo... / Lo que más me llama la atención es... / En el fondo/primer plano se puede ver...
Connecting to a theme	Esto me recuerda al tema de... / Esta imagen ilustra claramente... / Se relaciona con...
Giving your opinion	En mi opinión... / Desde mi punto de vista... / Creo firmemente que... / Estoy convencido/a de que...
Agreeing / adding	Estoy de acuerdo con... / Además, hay que tener en cuenta que...
Disagreeing	Sin embargo... / No estoy del todo de acuerdo porque... / Por otro lado...
Speculating	Es posible que... / Podría ser que... / Me imagino que...
Buying time	Es una pregunta muy interesante... / Déjeme pensar un momento... / Bueno, para responder a eso...

Practice Questions — Individual Oral Format

- *¿Qué ves en esta imagen?*
- *¿Cómo se relaciona con el tema de [Organización social / Compartir el planeta / Ingenio humano]?*
- *¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre el uso de las redes sociales entre los jóvenes?*
- *¿Crees que la tecnología une o separa a las familias?*
- *¿Qué medidas deberían tomar los gobiernos para proteger el medio ambiente?*

HL Written Assignment HL

Overview

The Written Assignment is based on a text studied in class (literary or non-literary).

You produce:

1. **A written task** of 500 words
2. **A reflective statement (rationale)** of 100–150 words

Task Types

- **Creative transformation:** Rewrite a scene from a different perspective, add a missing scene, or write a character's diary entry or letter
- **Analytical essay:** Analyse how the author uses language, structure, or theme
- **Interview:** Write a fictional interview with a character, the author, or a relevant real figure

Reflective Statement (Rationale)

The rationale explains your creative choices. It must answer: *What did I write? Why did I make these choices? How does this connect to the original text and its themes?*

Strong rationale structure:

1. Identify the original text and author
2. Explain the task type you chose
3. State your main creative or analytical decision (e.g., *Elegí escribir desde la perspectiva de...*)
4. Connect to a theme: *Esta perspectiva me permite explorar el tema de la identidad cultural de una manera más personal.*

IB TIP

The rationale is read by the examiner before the written task. A clear, confident rationale frames your task positively and shows you have engaged deeply with the text. Keep it concise — 100–150 words is enough.

Key Grammar for Writing Quality

1. The Subjunctive Mood

Use the subjunctive for:

- **Doubt or uncertainty:** *No creo que sea verdad.* (I don't think it's true.)
- **Emotions:** *Me alegra que hayas venido.* (I'm glad you came.)
- **Wishes and recommendations:** *Espero que el mundo sea mejor. / Es importante que protejamos el medio ambiente.*
- **After conjunctions:** *para que, aunque, a menos que, cuando* (referring to the future)

Present subjunctive formation (regular -ar): Remove *-o* from the yo form, add: *-e, -es, -e, -emos, -éis, -en* Example: hablar → hablo → habl- → *hable, hables, hable, hablemos, habléis, hablen*

MEMORISE THIS

Common subjunctive triggers:

- *quiero que..., espero que..., recomiendo que...*
- *es importante/necesario/urgente que...*
- *aunque* (when expressing concession about something uncertain)
- *para que* (so that) — always triggers subjunctive

2. Ser vs. Estar

Use <i>ser</i> for	Use <i>estar</i> for
Permanent characteristics	Temporary states
Identity and origin	Location (people and things)
Profession	Progressive tenses (<i>está hablando</i>)
Composition with <i>ser de</i> (<i>El anillo es de oro</i>)	Result of a process (<i>está hecho/a de</i>)
Time and dates	Results of a change

Examples:

- *El agua es esencial para la vida.* (permanent truth → ser)
- *El río está contaminado.* (result of a change → estar)
- *La profesora es inteligente.* (characteristic → ser)
- *Hoy está muy cansada.* (temporary state → estar)

3. Conditional for Recommendations

The conditional is ideal for reports and essays when making recommendations:

- *Sería necesario invertir más en energías renovables.*
- *Habría que revisar las políticas educativas.*
- *Podría ser beneficioso crear más zonas verdes en las ciudades.*
- *El gobierno debería tomar medidas más estrictas.*

4. Passive Voice

Use the passive to maintain formal, impersonal register in reports and articles:

Formation: *ser* + past participle (agrees with the subject in gender and number)

- *El problema fue causado por la deforestación.*
- *Las leyes son revisadas cada año.*
- *Los recursos fueron distribuidos de manera desigual.*

Alternatively, use the *se* passive for a more natural impersonal tone:

- *Se necesitan medidas urgentes.*
- *Se ha demostrado que el cambio climático es real.*

5. Reflexive Verbs

Reflexive verbs are frequent in Spanish B themes:

Verb	Meaning	Example
<i>identificarse con</i>	to identify with	<i>Me identifico con mi cultura.</i>
<i>sentirse</i>	to feel	<i>Se siente orgulloso de sus raíces.</i>
<i>adaptarse</i>	to adapt	<i>Los migrantes se adaptan al nuevo país.</i>
<i>preocuparse por</i>	to be worried about	<i>Me preocupo por el futuro del planeta.</i>
<i>comprometerse a</i>	to commit to	<i>El gobierno se comprometió a reducir las emisiones.</i>

Practice Questions

- ▶ Question 1: Identify the text type [2 marks]
- ▶ Question 2: True / False / Not Given [3 marks]
- ▶ Question 3: Identify the theme and subtheme [2 marks]
- ▶ Question 4: Write an opening sentence for a blog post [2 marks]
- ▶ Question 5: Subjunctive vs. indicative [2 marks]
- ▶ Question 6 (HL): Individual Oral visual stimulus strategy [4 marks]