



# Cuban Spanish



**¡Este carro es un cacharro!**  
*This car is a piece of junk!*

**¿Dónde está la parada de la guagua?**  
*Where is the bus stop?*

**Includes: 21 language lessons**

# ***Cuban Spanish***

**Ilse Rubio-Longin**

Adapted for English speakers  
by Shannon Cottin-Bizonne

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B.P. 25  
94431 Chennevières sur Marne cedex  
France

This phrasebook doesn't claim to be a substitute for a language course, but if you devote a bit of time to reading it and learning a few useful phrases, you'll quickly find that you're able to participate in basic exchanges with Cubans, enriching your travel experience.

**A word of advice: don't aim for perfection! Those you're speaking to will forgive any mistakes and appreciate your efforts to communicate in their language. The main thing is to leave your inhibitions behind and speak!**

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## Getting started

### ➤ Day 1

#### Con la familia y los amigos *With family and friends*

- Buenos días, señor. Estoy buscando a mi tía y a mi amigo.**  
*bwaynohs deeahs senyör aystoy booskahndoh ah mee teeah ee ah mee ahmeegoh*  
good days sir. I-am looking to my aunt and to my friend (m.)  
*Hello, sir. I'm looking for my aunt and my friend.*
- ¿Un hombre y una mujer extranjeros?**  
*oon ohmbray ee oonah moohayr ekstrahnhayrohs*  
a man and a woman foreign  
*A foreign man and woman?*
- ¡Sí, una turista y un turista comprando un mapa, sellos y una flor.**  
*see oonah tooreestah ee oon tooreestah kohmprahndoh oon mahpah sayohs ee oonah flor*  
yes a tourist (f.) and a tourist (m.) buying a map, stamps and a flower  
*Yes, a female and male tourist buying a map, some stamps and a flower.*

#### Notes

Spanish nouns are either masculine or feminine. If a noun ends in **-o** it is usually masculine; if it ends in **-a** it is usually feminine: **amigo** (m.) and **amiga** (f.) *friend*. However, there are exceptions: for example, **un mapa** *map* (m.) or **un turista** (m.). Some other typical masculine noun endings are **-r**, **-l** or **-n**, and

typical feminine endings are **-d**, **-ción** or **-z**. The gender of a noun has an impact on certain other words used with it (e.g. articles and adjectives), which must change form to agree with the noun: **una turista extranjera** *a foreign tourist* (f.).

This means that there are four forms of the articles *the* and *a(n)*:

	Masculine	Feminine
<b>Singular</b>	el <i>the</i> / un <i>a, an</i>	la <i>the</i> / una <i>a, an</i>
<b>Plural</b>	los <i>the</i> / unos <i>some</i>	las <i>the</i> / unas <i>some</i>

The plural **unos/unas** *some* is usually omitted when talking about something generally (as in **sellos stamps** in line 3). Note that feminine nouns beginning in **a** in which the word stress falls on the first syllable, such as **agua** *water*, use a masculine article for ease of pronunciation: **el agua**. Nonetheless, the word remains feminine, so an adjective would be in the feminine: **el agua fría** *the cold water*.

### Practice—Translate the following sentences:

1. Hello, sir!
2. I am looking for a map.
3. el agua
4. un hombre / una mujer

### Answers:

1. ¡Buenos días, señor!
2. Estoy buscando un mapa.
3. water
4. a man / a woman

## Conversing

### ➤ First contact

Cubans tend to address people in a friendly, casual way, using the informal **tú** (*you*) rather than the formal **usted**. All the same, we recommend that you use the respectful **usted** with officials or older people out of courtesy unless they ask you to use **tú**.

### Greetings

Good morning! (6:00 a.m. – midday)	¡Buenos días!	<i>bwaynohs deeahs</i>
Good afternoon! (midday – 6:00 p.m.)	¡Buenas tardes!	<i>bwaynahs tahrdays</i>
Good evening! / Good night!	¡Buenas noches!	<i>bwaynahs nochays</i>
Hi!	¡Hola! / ¡Buenas!	<i>ohlah / bwaynahs</i>

The colloquial **¡Hola!** and **¡Buenas!** are widely used between friends, like *Hi!* in English. The typical greeting is a handshake or, with friends and family, a friendly hug and a kiss on the cheek.

### Saying goodbye

Goodbye!	¡Hasta luego! ¡Adiós!	<i>ahstah lwaygo ahdyohs</i>
See you later!	¡Hasta luego! / ¡Hasta más tarde!	<i>ahstah lwaygo / ahstah mahs tahrdays</i>
See you tomorrow!	¡Hasta mañana!	<i>ahstah mahnyahnah</i>
See you soon!	¡Hasta la próxima! / ¡Hasta pronto!	<i>ahstah lah prohkseemah / ahstah prohntoh</i>
See you! (very informal)	¡Nos vemos!	<i>nos behmohs</i>
Ciao! (very informal)	¡Chao!	<i>chow</i>

<i>Have a good day!</i> (inf.) / (formal)	¡Qué te vaya bien! / ¡Qué le vaya bien!	<i>kay tay bahyah byen /</i> <i>kay lay bahyah byen</i>
<i>Take care!</i>	¡Cúidese mucho!	<i>kweeday say moocho</i>

## Addressing someone

<i>ma'am, Ms / ladies</i>	señora / señoras	<i>sehnyorah/-ahs</i>
<i>sir, Mr / gentlemen</i>	señor / señores	<i>sehnyor / sehnyorays</i>
<i>miss / young ladies</i>	señorita / señoritas	<i>sehnyoreetah/-ahs</i>

You might also hear Cubans using **compañero/compañera** (m./f.) *comrade*, a term that was introduced after the Cuban Revolution. Equally, even strangers may be addressed with affectionate terms such as **mi corazón** *my heart*, **mi vida** *my life* or **cariño** *dear*.

## Offering wishes

Welcome is expressed with an adjective that agrees in gender and number with the person welcomed.

<i>Welcome!</i>	¡Bienvenido(s)! (m.) ¡Bienvenida(s)! (f.)	<i>byenbehneedoh(s)</i> <i>byenbehneedah(s)</i>
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Here are some other wishes:

<i>Good luck!</i>	¡Buena suerte! / ¡Mucha suerte!	<i>bwaynah swayrtay /</i> <i>moochah swayrtay</i>
<i>I hope it goes well!</i> (inf.) / (formal)	¡Qué te vaya bien! / ¡Qué le vaya bien!	<i>kay tay bahyah byen /</i> <i>kay lay bahyah byen</i>
<i>Have a nice trip!</i>	¡Buen viaje!	<i>bwen byahhay</i>
<i>Bon appétit! Enjoy your meal!</i> (inf. / formal)	¡Qué te aproveche! / ¡Qué le aproveche!	<i>kay tay ahprobaychay /</i> <i>kay lay ahprobaychay</i>
<i>Happy Birthday!</i>	¡Feliz cumpleaños!	<i>fehlees</i> <i>koomplayahnyohs</i>
<i>Merry Christmas!</i>	¡Feliz Navidad!	<i>fehlees nahbeeda<sup>d</sup></i>
<i>Happy New Year!</i>	¡Feliz Año Nuevo!	<i>fehlees ahnyo nwaybo</i>

## Agreeing and disagreeing

<i>Absolutely!</i>	¡Positivo!	<i>pohseeteebo</i>
<i>Of course!</i>	¡Claro!	<i>klahro</i>
<i>Yes, with pleasure!</i>	¡Sí, con mucho gusto!	<i>see kohn moocho goosto</i>
<i>Yes. / OK.</i>	¡Sí. / Okay.	<i>see / OK</i>
<i>All right.</i>	De acuerdo.	<i>day ahkwayrdoh</i>
<i>Maybe.</i>	A lo mejor.	<i>ah lo mayhor</i>
<i>No.</i>	No.	<i>no</i>
<i>No way! / Not at all!</i>	¡De ninguna manera!	<i>day neengoonah</i> <i>mahnayrah</i>

<i>Good idea!</i>	¡Buena idea!	<i>bwaynah eedayah</i>
<i>Exactly.</i>	Exactamente.	<i>eksahktahmentay</i>
<i>You're right.</i>	Tienes razón. /	<i>tyehnnays rrahsohn /</i>
(inf.) / (formal)	Tiene razón.	<i>tyehnnay rrahsohn</i>
<i>It's not like that.</i>	No es así.	<i>no es ahsee</i>
<i>I don't like it/that.</i>	No me agrada. /	<i>no may ahgrahdah /</i>
	No me gusta.	<i>no may goostah</i>
<i>I don't want it/that.</i>	No lo quiero.	<i>no lo kye<sup>h</sup>ro</i>

## Asking questions

*What?* and *Which?* are **¿Qué?** (**¿Qué pasa?** *What's happening?*) and **¿Cuál?** (**¿Cuál quieres?** *Which do you want?* **¿Cuál es su número?** *What is your number?*). The term for please is **por favor**.

<i>When?</i>	¿Cuándo?	<i>kwahndoh</i>
<i>Where?</i>	¿Dónde?	<i>dohnday</i>
<i>Why?</i>	¿Por qué?	<i>por kay</i>
<i>Who?</i>	¿Quién?	<i>kyen</i>
<i>For what?</i>	¿Para qué?	<i>pahrah kay</i>
<i>How?</i>	¿Cómo?	<i>komo</i>
<i>How long?</i>	¿Cuánto tiempo?	<i>kwahntoh tyempo</i>
<i>How much?</i>	¿Cuánto?	<i>kwahntoh</i>

## Thanking, excusing & apologizing

<i>Thank you (very much).</i>	<b>(Muchas) gracias.</b>	<b>(moochahs) grahsyahs</b>
<i>You're welcome.</i>	<b>De nada. / Por nada.</b>	<b>day/por nahdah</b>
<i>Pardon me!</i>	<b>¡Perdón!</b>	<b>payrdohn</b>
<i>Excuse me!</i> (inf.) / (formal)	<b>¡Disculpa! / ¡Disculpe!</b>	<b>deeskoolpah / deeskoolpay</b>
<i>I'm sorry.</i>	<b>¡Lo siento!</b>	<b>lo syentoh</b>

## Making yourself understood

<b><i>Do you speak ... (formal)</i></b>	<b>¿Habla...</b>	<b>ahblah</b>
<i>English?</i>	<b>inglés?</b>	<b>eenglays</b>
<i>French?</i>	<b>francés?</b>	<b>frahnsays</b>
<i>German?</i>	<b>alemán?</b>	<b>ahlehmanh</b>
<i>Italian?</i>	<b>italiano?</b>	<b>eetahlyahno</b>
<i>Spanish?</i>	<b>español?</b>	<b>espahnyol</b>

In Spanish, subject pronouns are often left out because the verb conjugation signals who the subject is. It's not a mistake to include the subject pronoun, but using it emphasizes it in a sentence.

*I don't understand.*

**No comprendo.**

*no comprendoh*

*Could you (formal) repeat that?*

**¿Puede repetir?**

*pwayday RRehpehteer*

*Could you (formal) speak more slowly?*

**¿Puede hablar más lentamente / más despacio?**

*pwayday ahblahr mahs lentahmentay/dehspahsyoh*

*What does ... mean?*

**¿Qué significa ...?**

*kay seegneefeeekah*