

Games of Latin American origin

1. 1, 2, 3 Momia Es (1, 2, 3 Calabaza)

This playground game is called *1, 2, 3 Momia Es* in South America. In Mexico, the same game is called *1, 2, 3 Calabaza*. If you are in Spain, it is *1,2,3 Escondite Inglés* and in English it is *Red Light, Green Light*.

In the game, one player faces a wall or a tree with the rest of the group behind her at a distance. The group tries to move forward while her back is to them. She says *Un, dos, tres momia es* (or 1, 2, 3, calabaza) spins around, and tries to catch someone moving. Everyone must stand perfectly still, like a mummy (or a pumpkin), while she is watching. If she sees someone move, that person must return to the starting line. The first person to reach her takes her place.

1,2,3 Momia es is one of the active, traditional games in Spanish that you can play with kids of all ages.

2. Basta

This game is called *Basta* in Mexico, but it has lots of names: *Tutti frutti, ¡Mercadito!, Stop, Lápiz quieto, Animales con E, Alto el fuego, Ensalada rusa*. It is one of my go-to Spanish vocabulary games because it uses categories. Basically, it is the original, non-commercial version of Scattergories.

Check out my printable boards for [Basta for Spanish vocabulary practice](#) and more details on how to score the game.

If you're not using printable boards, everyone makes a game board with categories. Common categories include *nombre, cosa, animal, fruta o verdura, color, país o ciudad* and *apellido*. Categories can be anything though, including pop culture references like *marca, música, famosos/as*. When I play with children learning Spanish, I usually include *verbo* or *acción* as a category.

Next, players select a letter. One person says the alphabet very quickly and someone else stops her by saying *basta*. Whatever letter the person is saying when she hears *basta* is the letter for that round.

Basta is one of the traditional games in Spanish that you can use to review vocabulary. Make the categories fit the themes you have covered in class for a fun way to re-enter lots of words.

3. Tripas de Gato

Tripas de gato is one of the traditional games in Spanish you can play with a wide range of ages. Players take turns drawing lines between pairs of numbers (1 to 1, 2 to 2) without crossing or touching any other lines. This gets harder as the lines form a maze.

4. A Pares y Nones

Traditional games in Spanish teach basic concepts like numbers, and well as language. This game is played in classes in Mexico. If you are looking for traditional preschool Spanish games, this is a good one to try.

To play, everyone joins hands in a circle and walks singing the song. Then, the leader (teacher) calls out a number and everyone hurries to form a group with that number of people. I have also seen the game played using other traditional songs, like *Limón partido*.

This video shows *A pares y nones* with groups of different ages, so you can get a good idea of how it works. These are words that you hear in the video:

A pares y nones / Evens and odds
vamos a jugar. / We are going to play.
El que quede solo / Whoever is left alone,
solo quedará. / will stay alone.

5. ¿Quién Robó el Pan?

This is one of my favorite Spanish learning games. Like many traditional games in Spanish it has a chant in the form of a dialogue, and kids often play on a bus or when a group is waiting. Players clap and they recite a dialogue that uses high-frequency vocabulary, a regular -ar verb in the preterite and the verb *ser* in the preterite. If you are looking for traditional Spanish games for high school, this is a good choice.

This is the dialog:
Todos – Jorge robó pan en la casa de San Juan.
Jorge – ¿Quién, yo?
Todos – Sí, tú.
Jorge – Yo no fui.
Todos – Entonces, ¿quién?
Jorge – Ana
Todos – Ana robó pan en la casa de San Juan.
Ana – ¿Quién, yo?
Todos – Sí, tú.
Ana – Yo no fui.
Todos – Entonces, ¿quién?
Ana – Mari

Watch a [video of the traditional Spanish game ¿Quién robó el pan?](#)

6. Mar y Tierra

This is one of my favorite preschool Spanish activities. This is a very simple game, and it can be played inside if you have enough space and do not mind the jumping. Kids jump between two spaces designated *mar* and *tierra*.

To play, kids line up beside a line on the ground, so that they can jump sideways over the line. They can also face the line and jump forward and back. One side of the line is *mar* and the other side is *tierra*. A person who has been chosen to call first calls out *mar* and *tierra* as the players jump across the line (or in place) to be on the correct side.

You can see [videos of the traditional game Mar y tierra](#) here.

7. Hand-clapping Games

There are many traditional hand-clapping games. The simplest are based on one word, like *mariposa* or *chocolate*. Others are much more complicated.

Hand-clapping activities are great Spanish games for class because kids practice correct pronunciation and also learn vocabulary and structures. Here are links to posts about a few of the most common that I use with kids learning Spanish.

[Mariposa and Chocolate](#)

[Por aquí pasó un caballo and Estaba la Catalina
Marinero
Debajo del puente](#)

8. Piedra, Papel, Tijera

The game *rock, paper, scissors* is played all over the Spanish-speaking world. In most countries it is *pedra* (rock), *papel* (paper) o *tijera* (or scissors). In Peru, it is called *janquenpón*, from the Japanese yan-ken-pon, and in Chile it is called *cachipún*. This is the rhythm that you chant as you play: [piedra papel tijera](#)

9. Frío o Caliente

This is a one of the most versatile traditional Spanish games. It can be played anywhere, with any number of kids. Children play *Frío o caliente* in Spanish the same way they play *Hot or Cold* in English. There are just a few Spanish phrases to learn, and you can easily adapt the game to review Spanish vocabulary.

To play *Frío o caliente*, choose one person who will look for something. That person leaves the room, and the others hide a small object or choose something in the room.

When the person who is guessing returns, the others call out these Spanish phrases:

- Caliente, caliente – You are close.
- ¡Te quemas! (You are burning) – You are very close.
- Tibio, tibio (lukewarm) – You are at a middle distance.
- Frío, frío – You are farther away.
- Te estás congelando (You are freezing) – You are very far away.

You may want to set a time limit of two or three minutes. The game ends when the person finds the object or time runs out. Someone else leaves the room and the game starts again.

10. Veo, Veo

Veo, veo is the equivalent of *I Spy*, and it begins with a simple rhyme – a question-answer exchange.

- 1 – Veo, veo. / I see, I see
- 2 – ¿Qué ves? / What do you see?
- 1 – Una cosita. / A thing.
- 2 – ¿Qué cosita es? / What thing is it?

The game is great for practicing yes-no questions and all kinds of descriptive language. Read about several [variations of the game and a Veo, veo song](#).

11. La Traes

Tag has different names in different Spanish-speaking countries. In Mexico, it is called *la traes*, which translates roughly as “you have it.” In Spain, it is called *pilla-pilla* or *tú la llevas*. In Argentina, tag is *la mancha* and in Peru *las chapadas*. Of course there are many variations of tag, but these are the phrases used to play basic tag in Mexico.

Vamos a jugar a la traes. – Let’s play tag.

¿Quieres jugar a la traes? – Do you want to play tag?

¿Quién la trae? – Who is it? (Literally – Who is carrying it? / Who has it?)

>Yo la traigo. – I’m it. (Literally – I am carrying it. / I have it.)
¡Tú la traes! – You’re it. (Literally – You are carrying it. / You have it.)
Sofía la trae. – Sophia is it. (Literally – Sophia is carrying it. / Sophia has it.)
La base – safe (the place you cannot be tagged)
Me salvo/ A salvo – I’m safe.

12. ¿Lobo Estás?

¿Lobo estás?, or *Juguemos en el bosque*, is one of the best-known traditional games in Spanish. To play, children join hands and walk or skip in a circle. One child, the wolf, remains outside the circle, a short distance away. (An adult can also play the part of the wolf.)

The children in the circle walk and sing *Juguemos en el bosque mientras el lobo no está. Juguemos en el bosque mientras el lobo no está*. Then they stop and ask *¿Lobo, estás?* The wolf, answers by saying that he is putting on a piece of clothing and acts out putting it on: *Me estoy poniendo los pantalones*. The kids in the circle sing the song and ask again, until at some point the wolf answers: *Estoy con hambre. ¡Me los voy a comer a todos!* and chases the others.

Here are more detailed instructions for [¿Lobo estás?](#) with adaptations for language learners and a link to a video.

Children learn language and culture from traditional games in Spanish, so I encourage you to try these at home or in class. I hope you enjoy these fun Spanish games!

13. Chiviri cuarta

This was one of my favorite traditional Hispanic games when I was a kid! *Chiviri cuarta* is similar to hide and seek, but to win, the ones who hide have to touch a “base” before the one who’s seeking. So, players decide who’s going to seek and what the base will be (a rock, a wall, a tree, etc.). The seeker should count to 30 at the base and then go try to find the rest of the players.

The task of the hiders is to run to the base before the seeker finds them, touch it and scream *¡chiviri cuarta por mí!*

On the other hand, if the seeker finds or sees someone, they have to run to the base and scream *¡chiviri cuarta por* (insert name of the person they found)! The hider then loses and has to seek during the next round. The game ends once no one is hiding anymore.

Materials needed: a large space with hiding places

14. Sardina

This is another version of hide and seek. This time, only one person hides and the rest seek. Choose someone who hides, and the others count to 30 (or to any number they decide). When they finish, they start seeking separately. Every time someone finds the hider, they have to hide with them without telling anyone. This means the hiding space will have more people every time. The last person who finds the group loses.

Kids in Latin America love these kinds of traditional Spanish games, they awaken a sense of healthy competitiveness in kids—and they’re fun. For you, as a parent or teacher, this is a great opportunity to help your kids practice the numbers in Spanish as they count together!

Materials needed: a [big] place to hide

15. El repollo

This one's similar to hot potato. First, tell all the players to write down a question (in Spanish) on a piece of paper. Then, wrap all the papers around each other to form a ball that looks like cabbage. Next, the players have to throw the ball to each other and when the person in charge says "stop," the player who has the cabbage has to peel off a "leaf" and answer the question.

El repollo is one of the greatest traditional Hispanic games for practicing Spanish vocabulary. It is adjustable for every age and Spanish level.

Materials needed: blank sheets of paper and markers (or pens)

16. A pares y nones

This game means "evens and odds" in Spanish. You just need a group of people to play it (the more people, the more fun). The idea is to join hands in a circle and march together. If you'd like, sing or play a song while marching.

Then, the person in charge calls out a number, and everyone has to form a group of that number. It's one of the best and easiest traditional Hispanic games to practice numbers Spanish and have fun at the same time!

Materials needed: just a group of players

17. Cinco Marias/ Payanas

Similar to the game of Jacks, this [game](#) for 2-4 people is a popular pastime for children in Latin American countries. To play, find five small stones or pebbles. One player tosses the stones on the ground then picks one stone up, tosses it in the air and picks up one of the remaining stones before the first one hits the ground. If the player can do one successfully, he tosses the stones on the ground again, and tries to pick them up two at a time, then three at a time and so on until he has picked up all of the stones.

Sources:

- <https://www.spanish.academy/blog/8-traditional-hispanic-games-to-play-at-home-or-in-class/>
- <https://www.spanishplayground.net/12-traditional-games-spanish/>