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# Spanish Word Games

FOR  
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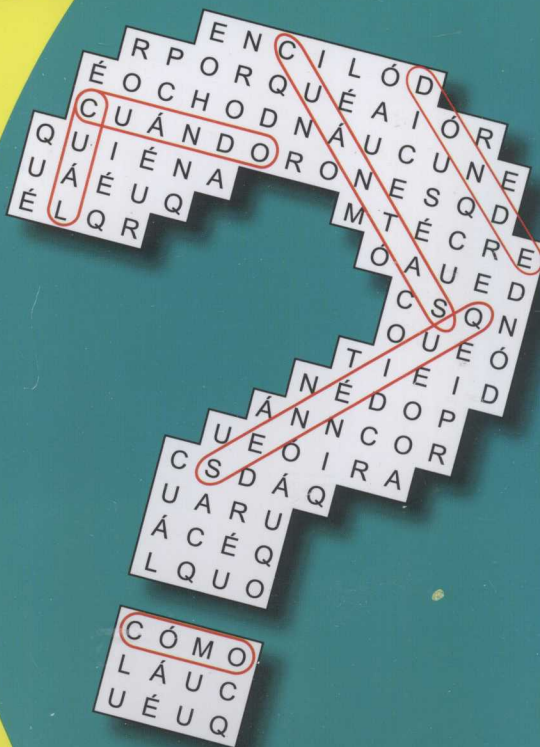
Build your grammar and  
vocabulary skills

**Adam Cohen**

Associate Editor, *Puzzler Brain Trainer*  
magazine

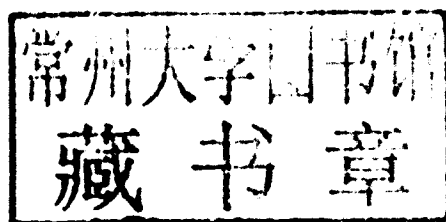
**Leslie Frates**

California State University



# *Spanish Word Games* FOR DUMMIES®

**by Adam Cohen and Leslie Frates**



  
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## About the Authors

**Adam Cohen** first encountered puzzles in the *New York Post*, where as a young child he regularly savored the Uncle Art's Funland puzzle feature. He later discovered the *Post*'s Wonderword and the crossword puzzle, and was so hooked he tried constructing them on his own. He was 15 when his first crossword was published in his high school newspaper, where he served as a regular contributor for two years. He has since graduated to newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, and the *New York Sun* (where he also served as a test-solver); *Games* and *World of Puzzles* magazines; and the *Uncle John's Bathroom Reader* series of puzzle books. In 2007, in his capacity as an employee of John Wiley & Sons, he constructed the crossword puzzle for the company's bicentennial *festschrift* volume *Knowledge for Generations*. In addition to constructing puzzles, Adam is a proofreader and editor for publishers of puzzle books. He is currently the associate editor of *Puzzler Brain Trainer* magazine, and a proofreader for the *Mind Stretchers* book series, published by Reader's Digest.

Listening to his mother (for once), Adam decided to study Spanish instead of German in high school and quickly fell in love with the language and culture. He placed in the National Spanish Examinations from 1987–1989 and 1991, and he was a contributor and editor to his high school's foreign language magazine *Polyglot*. For a Spanish sophomore-year public speaking assignment, he gave a talk on how to construct crossword puzzles, which synthesized two of his major interests and foreshadowed this book by about 20 years. He continued his studies by minoring in Spanish at the University of Pennsylvania.

When he isn't constructing or editing puzzles, Adam enjoys games — particularly those involving words, trivia, or casino chips — reading, movies, swimming, photography, and travel.

Adam was born, raised, and currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Leslie Frates** didn't grow up in a Spanish-speaking home but fell in love with the language when she was in first grade and decided in second grade that she wanted to be a Spanish teacher. Leslie has been living her dream, teaching Spanish for over 30 years, and currently is a lecturer at California State University, East Bay. She received her bachelor's degree in Spanish from CSUEB (back when it was known as Cal State Hayward), and her master's degree in Spanish from UC Berkeley.

Leslie has been a game and puzzle aficionada since childhood and met coauthor Adam Cohen at the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament in 2007. She parlayed her lifelong nerdiness into becoming a five-time undefeated champion on the TV game show *Jeopardy!* in 1991.

When not teaching or puzzling, Leslie enjoys doing counted cross-stitch, watching old movies on Netflix, and visiting her favorite city, Chicago.

Leslie is married to Bob, an attorney. Her son, Leland, is in graduate school, and has no interest in either Spanish or puzzles.

## ***Dedication***

*From Adam:*

To Hunter College High School in New York City, especially

- José Díaz, my first Spanish teacher, who introduced me to this beautiful language and culture with scholarship, dedication, and wit.
- The editorial staff of *What's What*, the newspaper that published my first crossword, for providing me with the first of many creative outlets for puzzles.

*From Leslie:*

To my parents, who supported and encouraged me in my nerdiness, dreams, and goals; bought that wondrous volume-a-week encyclopedia at the grocery store, which gave me my first keys to knowledge and a lifelong love of learning; and always let me sit under the cork tree and be happy.

To my husband, Bob, my best friend and biggest cheerleader, who is always by my side, giving me everything I ever hoped for.

To my son, Leland, who is our dream come true.

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*From Leslie:*

I thank Señor Jackson, my Spanish teacher in the second grade, who ignited in a little non-Hispanic girl in Hayward, California, the spark of Hispanophilia that has never dimmed, and who made me want to be a Spanish teacher, too.

I thank all my teachers along the way who inspired, enlightened, and informed me and have given me the opportunity to experience the joy of teaching, learning, and knowing.

The guidance and support of Acquisitions Editor Lindsay Lefevere, Project Editor Traci Cumbay, and Technical Reviewers Denise Sutherland and Alicia Añino gave me the confidence to bring this book to fruition.

The best thing about this entire project was, is, and will always be my loving friendship with Adam Cohen, whose faith in me, understanding, and enthusiasm can never be repaid in equal measure. There are not enough words of thanks in any language to express my gratitude to him.

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# Introduction

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**W**hile you were growing up, you acquired your native language (or languages) without any formal training or instruction. Your parents may have taught you the names of certain objects — animals, colors, or shapes, maybe — but they probably never sat down with you when you were a toddler and went over verb conjugation tables with you, or explained to you when to use *a* and when to use *an*, or why you pronounce the English word spelled *knight* as if it were *nite*.

In fact, without even realizing it, you spent much of your early years acquiring your native language by exploring your environment, by listening to and repeating the sounds around you, and even by babbling. While you were engaging in activities that may have seemed like play, you were actually focusing your energies on language acquisition.

If you study a second language, you probably do so in a much different fashion: maybe sitting in a classroom, writing exercises in a workbook, or memorizing lessons from a textbook. As much as you might enjoy these endeavors, we venture a guess that more traditionally fun activities, such as word games and puzzles, are a small part of your language-learning curriculum, if they're included at all.

In addition to being fun, puzzles and word games stimulate your brain (and evidence increasingly suggests that such stimulation may forestall the onset of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease). Engaging repeatedly in mentally stimulating activities is no doubt cerebrally nutritious, but activities that are different and approach things from new perspectives are particularly beneficial, because the brain loves novelty. Learning a new language, or taking a refresher course on what you might have learned a while ago, certainly qualifies as a novel activity. And learning a language using puzzles as a vehicle hits the trifecta: stimulation, novelty, and fun.

## About This Book

If you're a student of Spanish, you might wish that there were more lively and creative alternatives to some of the traditional vehicles of language learning, such as rote memorization, workbook exercises, or practice dialogs. We don't begrudge these techniques; indeed, the best way to learn a language (or just about anything else for that matter) is to present the material in a variety of different formats.

This book offers that lively and creative alternative, serving as another tool in your language-learning toolbox. It presents Spanish puzzles and word games specifically designed to reinforce Spanish sounds, spelling patterns, and vocabulary words as a means to help you improve your Spanish speaking, writing, and reading skills. While the puzzles are largely grouped according to subject matter, we did not structure this book as a traditional textbook, nor is it intended to serve as one. Jump in wherever you like. Do whatever puzzle grabs you at the moment. Enjoy yourself. (And if that means working straight through from front cover to back, then please be our guest.)

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

In order to write this book, we had to make a few assumptions about who you might be. We assume that you

- ✓ Have a basic familiarity with Spanish vocabulary and grammar.
- ✓ Would like to reinforce or improve your language skills.
- ✓ Have a curiosity about or interest in puzzles or word games; familiarity with them is helpful but not essential.
- ✓ Want to have fun!

Whether you're a current student of Spanish looking for some stimulating ways to spice up your classroom lessons, haven't studied Spanish in years but want to brush up your language skills in novel ways for your upcoming trip to Spain, or are a native speaker just looking for some fun linguistic challenges, the puzzles in this book reinforce your Spanish skills and strengthen your brain in a stimulating and entertaining way.

## ***How This Book Is Organized***

So that you can easily navigate this book, the upcoming sections describe briefly what you find within it.

### ***Part 1: Building Your Spanish Skills with Word Games***

The two chapters in this section provide a foundation for approaching the puzzles in this book for fun and education. Chapter 1 shows you why puzzles are effective vehicles for improving your Spanish,

and Chapter 2 helps you hone your solving skills so that you get the most out of the puzzles and learn as much Spanish as you can.

## ***Part II: The Puzzles***

If Part I is the appetizer, then Part II is the main course. Here you find more than 100 Spanish word games and puzzles. We divided them into chapters based on subject matter, and each puzzle focuses on a different topic. These puzzles engage you in a variety of formats that ask you not just to translate words from English to Spanish or vice versa but to think in Spanish, as well.

## ***Part III: The Solutions***

This section contains the answers to the puzzles in Part II. Check your work, brush up on translations, or take a peek at the answer that has you stumped.

## ***Part IV: The Part of Tens***

The puzzle challenges in Chapter 11 give your brain a strenuous workout. They include novel puzzle types and combinations of puzzle types featured elsewhere in this book. Because the words within the puzzles aren't organized by topic, the puzzles reflect the kind of real-world challenges a new speaker faces. The answers to the puzzles appear at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 12 contains additional practical tools and creative suggestions to help you continue to improve your Spanish capabilities.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***

The icons in the margins direct you to information that we feel is particularly worth noting. Here's what you find next to each of the icons we use:



Important details that you're likely to return to again and again as you work through the puzzles or continue your Spanish studies appear next to this icon.



You find this icon next to information that can save you time or enhance your puzzle and Spanish-language pursuits.

## *Where to Go from Here*

You can approach this book in a number of different ways. If you're interested in how puzzles can improve your Spanish, Chapter 1 is a good place to start. If you'd like more information about the different puzzle types in this book, with tips and strategies to help you approach them, we suggest beginning with Chapter 2. (And dive back into Chapter 2 whenever you get stuck or need to review basic solving techniques.)

If you're ready to tackle the puzzles head on, flip straight to Part II. The puzzles are organized by subject matter, and so you can concentrate on those topics that interest you. For example, if you'd like to review some introductory Spanish concepts, you may want to look at Chapter 3 first. If you're particularly interested in puzzles about Spanish culture, Chapter 8 might be a good starting point. If, on the other hand, you want to tackle the puzzles sequentially, we wouldn't dream of dissuading you.

This is your book and your experience; approach it however you see fit. Feel free to use this book in whatever way you find educational and fun!

# Part I

# Building Your Spanish Skills with Word Games

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"He hasn't solved any of the Spanish word games, but that doesn't mean he isn't building his vocabulary."

### *In this part...*

**U**sing puzzles to master Spanish or refresh your skills comes with a lot of benefits. In Chapter 1, we tell you about them. Chapter 2 describes all the puzzle types you encounter in the book, and gives you tips and strategies for solving each one.



## Chapter 1

# Mastering Spanish through Word Games and Puzzles

---

### *In This Chapter*

- Finding — and harnessing — your motivation
  - Building new brain capacity
  - Making the most of your studies
- 

**Y**ou have some Spanish floating around in your head, and it's not just the kind that you see on the menu of your favorite *taquería* or fast-food restaurant. Maybe you're taking a class right now, or maybe you took some Spanish in high school or college a million years ago. Maybe Spanish is linked to a hazy memory of childhood, of speaking with a relative or family friend from the mother country; perhaps you have Spanish-speaking friends or colleagues and would like to be able to appreciate the culture more. If you want to renew, relearn, and refresh the Spanish in your head, you'll be happy to know that puzzles and word games are a fun and effective way to do just that.

## *Tackling a New Language: It's Never Too Late*

The best time to learn a new language is right now! In fact, the most important thing you inherit as a member of the human race is the innate capacity to learn language. Each of us learns at least one during our lifetime, and some of us want to learn more than one.

Knowing another language enables you to see the world through the eyes of the speakers of that language, and they do see it differently. When you can grasp and appreciate others' understanding of the world, you can get out there and engage with all those other fascinating people and be receptive and ready to enrich your life experience.