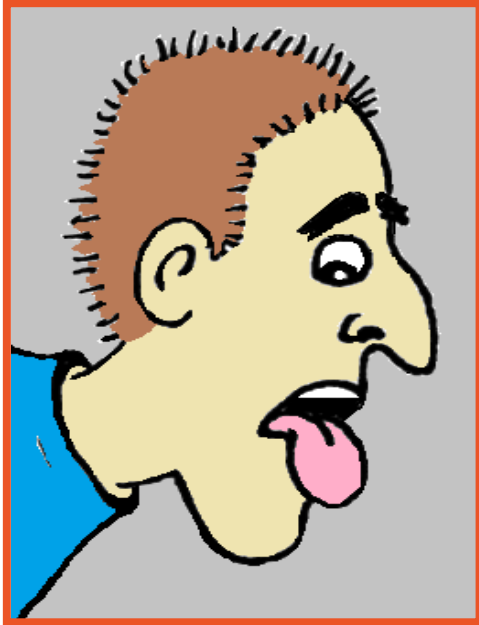


TRABALENGUAS

AUTHENTIC SPANISH TONGUE TWISTERS



In every language people challenge themselves with tongue twisters. Tongue twisters help children learn to pronounce tricky words and they will help you learn to pronounce Spanish too.

*Here are some traditional favorite **trabalenguas** (“work tongues”) from the Spanish-speaking world. Pick one or two that appeal to you and that have sounds you need to work on. Practice them until you can say them confidently without tripping over your tongue.*

*The **trabalenguas** in this collection are the ones that have been the most useful and enjoyable to my students.*

When I was learning Spanish I would memorize one tongue twister at a time and say it as often as I could at every stoplight whenever I was out driving until I had mastered it.

How are you going to get these? What's your plan?

CONTENTS

Trabalenguas #1: rr, tr, j, c

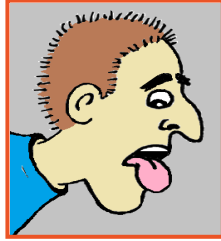
Trabalenguas #2: m, p, eight syllables, c

Trabalenguas #3: j, h, b & v, c & q (k sound), r & rr, p

Trabalenguas #4: tr, rr

Trabalenguas #5: rr, j

TRABALENGUAS #1



rr

Many English speakers need help training their tongues to pronounce the trilled **r** that is called for in the Spanish letter **rr**. Don't worry, you can be understood without saying the **rr** perfectly, but saying the **rr** correctly will help your fluency and confidence. This verse can help you to train your tongue to make that sound. Memorize it and say it often. I memorized this one on a freezing cold overnight train ride from Santiago, Chile down to Temuco with some friends. Afterwards, I got in the habit of saying this as many times as I could at stoplights, and it really helped me to get down the **rr**.

**Erre con erre cigarro,
Erre con erre barril,
Rápido corren los carros,
Los carros del ferrocarril.**

*rr with rr cigarette,
rr with rr barrel,
Rapidly run the cars,
The cars of the railroad.*

tr

If the **rr** is too much right now, try these two tongue twisters. The hard **tr** combination will give the tip of your tongue a similar workout, but it is a bit easier.

**Tres tristes tigres
Trillaron trigo en un trigal**

*Three sad tigers
Threshed wheat in a wheat field.*

**Contigo entro un tren con trigo,
Un tren con trigo contigo entro**

*With you I enter a train with wheat,
A train with wheat with you I enter.*

j

Remember that the Spanish **j** makes a sound like a harsh English **h**.

**Juan y los jugadores jóvenes
Y el jefe juegan un juego
Juntos en el jardín
En los jueves en junio y julio**

*Juan and the young players
And the boss (they) play a game
Together in the garden
On Thursdays in June and July*

c

This is a favorite in the Spanish-speaking world. It even trips up native speakers! It is often said as a chant, repeated several times and speeding up with each repetition.

**Compadre, cómprame coco
Compadre, no compro coco
Como poco coco como,
Poco coco compro**

*Compadre, buy me some cocoa
Compadre, I don't buy cocoa
Since little cocoa I eat,
Little cocoa do I buy.*

Compadre = The term the father and godfather of a child use with one another. It means co-father or close friend.

TRABALENGUAS #2



m

This first one is easy. It's a good introductory tongue twister for novice Spanish students.:

**A mí me mima mi mamá,
Mi mamá a mí me mima**

*My mother spoils me,
Me my mother spoils*

Here's a tougher one:

**Mi madre madrileña me menciona
A mi miles migas malas**

*My mother from Madrid mentions
To me thousands of bad little things*

p

I love this first one in the **p** category here—every single word starts with the same letter! Practice saying this without “puffing” out your p’s like we do in English. The Spanish **p** is less aspirated, the burst of air is less than with an English p. The Spanish **p** is produced with the lips, but **without** the extra burst of air. This makes it sound softer compared to English:

**Pedro Pablo Pérez Peña,
Pobre pintor portugués,
Pinta paisajes por poco precio,
Para poder pasar pronto para París**

*Pedro Pablo Pérez Peña,
Poor Portuguese painter,
Paints landscapes for a small price,
So that he can quickly go to Paris*

**Si Pancha planchaba con cuatro planchas,
¿Con cuántas planchas planchaba Pancha?**

*If Pancha ironed with four irons.
¿With how many irons did Pancha iron?*

**El que poca papa gasta
Poca papa paga**

*He that wastes few potatoes
Pays for few potatoes*

¡Ocho sílabas!

There are many Spanish tongue twisters that play with the creation of longer and longer words. Here's a favorite:

**Al arzobispo de Constantinopla
Lo quieren desconstantinoplizar
Al que lo desconstantinoplize
Buen desconstantinoplizador será**

*The archbishop of Constantinople
They want to unconstantinoplize
He who unconstantinoplizes him
Will be a good unconstantinoplizer*

c

**Cuando cuentas cuentos
Cuenta cuantos cuentos cuentas**

*When you tell stories
Count how many stories you tell*

**Cuando cuentas cuentos
Nunca cuentas cuantos cuentos cuentas
Porque cuando cuentas cuentos
Nunca cuentas cuantos cuentos cuentas**

*When you tell stories
Never count how many stories you tell
Because when you tell stories
You never count how many stories you tell*

Let's end with an easy but classic one. Five words that sound the same, but have different meanings!

¿Cómo como? ¡Como como como!

How do I eat? I eat the way I eat!

TRABALENGUAS #3



j

**En un juncal de Junquera
Juncos juntaban Julián.
Júntose Juana a juntarlos
Y juntos juntaron juncos.**

In a growth of rushes in Junquera
Julian gathered rushes.
Juana joined him to gather them
And together they gathered rushes.*

*Junquera = a town in Cataluña (northern), Spain

h

Practice not saying the h.

**El hábil Pablo habló bien
Ya que es hablador hábil.**

*The able Pablo spoke well
Since he is an able speaker.*

b & v

This is more of a pun because b and v are pronounced alike

**La bailarina baila como una ballena
Porque va llena de avellanes**

*The dancer dances like a whale
Because she is full of hazelnuts.*

c & qu

(k sound)

**¿Cómo quieres que te quiera
Si al que quiero que me quiera
No me quiere
Como quiero que me quiera?**

*How can you want me to love you
If the one I want to love me
Does not love me
The way I want him to love me?*

r & rr

**Los toros en su toril
Corren por el torre.**

*The bulls in their pen
Run through the tower.*

Un perro rompe la rama del árbol.

A dog breaks the branch of the tree.

p

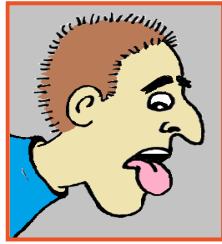
**Paco Pico, chico rico
Insultaba, como un loco,
A su tío, Federico
Y él le dijo,
¡Poco a poco, Paco Pico, poco pico!**

*Paco Pico, a rich boy
Insulted, like a crazy person,
His uncle Federico
And he said to him,
Little by little, Paco Pico, it hurts me less!*

**Pepe Pecos pica pepinos con un pico
Con un pico pica pepinos Pepe Pecos**

*Pepe Pecos hacks at cucumbers with a pick
With a pick Pepe Pecos hacks at cucumbers*

TRABALENGUAS #4



tr

Practice the hard Spanish **tr** sound — it is a baby step towards the trilled **rr**.

¡Qué triste estás Tristán
Tras tan tétrica trama teatral

How sad you are, Tristan
After such a gloomy theatrical plot

En tres trastos trozados,
Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo trillado
Tigre tras tigre, tigre tras tigre

In three broken bowls,
Three sad tigers were eating threshed wheat
Tiger after tiger, tiger after tiger.

Tres tristes tigres
Triscaban trigo en un trigal.
¿Cuál tigre triste triscaba menos
Si los tres triscaban igual?

Three sad tigers
Were crushing wheat in a wheat field.
Which sad tiger crushed less
If all three crushed the same?

Tras esos tres tristes trastos
Qué triste está Trinidad

After these three sad pieces of furniture
How sad Trinidad is.

Practice Rrrrrrr-rolling your R's Again

And remember to roll the "r" that starts and ends a word as well as the **rr**.

Corren los carros y carretas
Carreras cortas correteando

The cars and carts go fast
Rambling down short highways

Recia la rajada rueda rueda
Rudamente rugiendo rauda
Rueda rauda, recia rueda
Rauda, rauda, reciamente rueda

Vigorously the cracked wheel rolls
Rudely roaring rapidly
Rapidly it rolls, vigorously it rolls
Rapidly, rapidly, it vigorously rolls

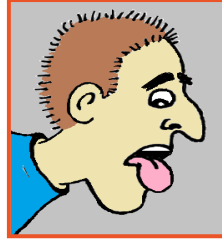
Dos ratas, tres ratones, y un robalo
Son los raros restos rescatados recientemente

Two rats, three mice, and a sea bass
Are the rare remains rescued recently.

Ayer un premio propuso
A Rosa Rizo por Narciso
Si aprende a rezar en ruso;
Y aunque esté un poco confuso,
Reza en ruso Rosa Rizo

Yesterday a prize was offered
To Rosa Rizo by Narciso
If she learns to pray in Russian;
And although she may be a bit confused,
Rosa Rizo prays in Russian.

TRABALENGUAS #5



More practice rrrrrrr-rolling your r's

**El perro de San Roque no tiene rabo
Porque Ramón Ramírez se lo ha robado
Y al perro de Ramón Ramírez
¿Quién el rabo le ha robado?**

*The dog from San Roque doesn't have a tail
Because Ramón Ramírez has stolen it from him.
And from Ramón Ramírez' dog,
Who has stolen the tail from him?*

**Erre con erre, no encuentro
Erre con erre, van tres
Otro animal en mi cuento
Con erre de rana, de burro, y de res**

*Rr with rr, I do not find
Rr with rr, there go three
Another animal in my story
With rr from frog, from donkey, and from cow*

**Un carro cargado de rocas
Corrió la carretera rugiendo,
¡Carric-carrac, carric-carrac!**

*A car loaded with rocks
ran down the road thundering,
Crick-crack, crick-crack!*

**—Podador que podas la parra,
¿qué parra podas?
¿Podas mi parra o tu parra podas?
—Ni podo tu parra ni mi parra podo,
que podo la parra de mi tío Bartolo.**

*"Pruner that prunes the grapevine,
What grapevine do you trim?
Do you trim my vine or is it your vine you trim?"
"Neither your vine nor my vine I trim,
In that I prune the vine of my uncle Bartolo."*

**Porra Parra tenía una perra
Y Guerra tenía una parra
La perra de pobre Porra Parra
Rompió la parra de Guerra**

*Porra Parra had a female dog
And Guerra had a grapevine
Poor Porra Parra's dog
Broke Guerra's grapevine*

**Así que Guerra agarró una porra
Y le dio un porrazo a la perra
Que era de Porra Parra,
Y rompió la parra de Guerra.**

*So Guerra grabbed a club
And clubbed the dog
That was Porra Parra's
And that broke Guerra's grapevine*

**La perra era de Porra Parra,
La perra rompió la parra,
La porra la agarró Guerra,
Y con la porra dio a la perra,
Un porrazo, Guerra.**

*The dog was Porra Parra's
The dog broke the grapevine,
Guerra grabbed the club
And with the club she gave to the dog,
A blow, Guerra.*

j

Remember that the Spanish **j** makes a sound like a harsh English **h**.

**Juan y los jugadores jóvenes
Y el jefe juegan un juego
Juntos en el jardín
En los jueves en junio y julio**

*Juan and the young players
And the boss play a game
Together in the garden
On Thursdays in June and July*