

Spanish in English

Kron

Spanish

Spanish has had a less pervasive influence on the English language than some other European sources, but we have borrowed a substantial number of useful words from the Spanish culture of the Southwest. A number of unique American terms are actually mispronunciations of the original Spanish words: *vamoose*, *mus-*

tang, calaboose, lariat, buckaroo, and hoosegow are all coinages that evoke the bygone world of the American cowboy.

But as more Latin-Americans emigrate to the United States, bringing their culture and customs with them, we may see the introduction of some new Spanish terms. Learning some of these words borrowed from the Spanish will widen your cultural horizons and add spice and piquancy to your vocabulary.

aficionado (ə fish'yə nä'dō) fan; enthusiast; ardent devotee.

bonanza (bə nan'zə) stroke of luck; sudden source of wealth; spectacular windfall.

bravado (brə vä'dō) swaggering display of courage.

desperado (des'pə rä'dō) a bold, reckless criminal; outlaw.

duenna (dōō en'ə, dyōō-) chaperone; an older woman who serves as an escort for young ladies.

embargo (em bär'gō) a government order restricting commerce; any restraint or prohibition.

fiesta (fē es'tə) a festival or feast; any joyous or merry celebration.

incommunicado (in'kə myōō'ni kä'dō) in solitary confinement; without any means of communicating with others.

machismo (mä chēz'mō) an exaggerated sense of masculinity; boastful or swaggering virility.

lagniappe (lan yap', lan'yap) bonus; gratuity or tip.

peccadillo (pek'ə dil'ō) a minor offense; venial sin.

siesta (sē es'tə) a midafternoon rest; nap.

bodega (bō dā'gə) small grocery store; wineshop.

campesino (kam'pə sē'nō) a farmer or peasant.

caudillo (kou dē'lyō, -dē'yō) a head of state, especially a military dictator.

compañero (kom'pən yâr'ō) companion; partner; bosom buddy.

embarcadero (em bär'kə dâr'ō) a pier, wharf, or jetty.

garrote (gə rot', -rōt') to strangle or throttle.

guerrilla (gə ril'ə) a member of a small, independent band of soldiers that harass the enemy by surprise raids, sabotage, etc.

junta (hōon'tə, jun'tə) a small group ruling a country, especially after a revolutionary seizure of power.

peon (pē'ən, pē'on) a farm worker or unskilled laborer; a person of low social status who does menial work; drudge.

presidio (pri sid'ē ō') fort or garrison; military post.

ramada (rə mǎ'də) an open shelter with a thatched roof.

vigilante (vij'ə lan'tē) an unauthorized volunteer who takes the law into his or her own hands; a self-appointed avenger of injustice.

Spanish words have come into English via two routes, directly from European Spanish or from the Spanish of the Americas, often via borrowings into American English from those parts of the American West and South-west that were previously under Spanish control and which led to so many Spanish place names in California.

Spain's trading past is reflected in the **coconut** [L16th] from Spanish or Portuguese *coco* 'mask, head' from the three face-like indentations at the bottom of the nut. **Embargo** [E17th], from *embargar* 'arrest', originally meant to stop ships entering or leaving your ports. Also maritime is the **tornado** [M16th], originally meaning a violent thunderstorm in the tropical Atlantic. It comes from *tronada* 'thunderstorm', perhaps influenced by *tornar* 'to turn'. The **cockroach** [E17th] is a *cucaracha* in Spanish, a form that has been mangled by folk etymology in English to resemble more familiar words.

In 1605 Miguel de Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*, and it had been translated into English by 1612. The book was an affectionate satire on the earlier chivalric romances that had been popular throughout Europe and was an international hit. Quixote was named after *quijote* (earlier *quixote*), the cuisse or thigh-piece of a suit of armour. **Quixotic** had entered English by 1718. A less happy aspect of Spanish history is found in **guerrilla** [E19th], a diminutive of *guerra* 'war' and originally used of the partisans who waged irregular warfare against Napoleon's invasion of Spain.

Spanish architecture gives us the **patio** [M18th], originally the inner courtyard of a house, and Spanish heat the **siesta** [M17th] in the hottest part of the day, which goes back to Latin *sexta hora* 'sixth hour of the day'.

The British have been importing wine from Spain since at least the Middle Ages, although **sherry** is not recorded before the late 16th century. It gets its name from Xeres (now Jerez), the town near which it is produced. The original form was *sherries*, changed when the final 's' was misunderstood as a plural. The popularity of Spain as a tourist destination has introduced **sangria** [M20th], although an earlier form of red-wine drink was called *sangaree* [M18th]: both get their name from Spanish *sangría* 'bleeding' from the colour of the drink. **Paella** [L19th] gets its name from the shallow dish in which it is cooked, for it goes back to the Latin *patella* 'small shallow dish', which also gave us **patella** [L16th] as the anatomical name for the kneecap. **Tapas** [M20] were originally small, free savoury dishes served with drinks at a bar, traditionally served on a dish balanced on top of a glass, hence the name, for it literally means 'cover' or 'lid'. **Salsa** [M19th] is simply the Spanish for 'sauce'. In American Spanish this was extended to mean a saucy dance and its music [L20th]. **Bonanza** [E19th], Spanish for 'fair weather, prosperity' from Latin *bonus* 'good', was adopted into American English for a particularly successful mine, echoing **El Dorado** [L16th] 'the gilded one' that Sir Walter Raleigh believed was somewhere on the Amazon. Also introduced into American English are **cinch** [M19th], originally a saddle-girth used in Mexico (from Spanish *cincha* 'girth') and later transferred to mean something sure, safe, or easy; **macho** [M20] and its companion **machismo** [M20], again via Mexican Spanish but going back to Latin *masculus*, source also of **male** [LME] and **masculine** [LME]; **palomino** [E20th for the horse] from *paloma* 'little dove' referring to its colour; **ranch** [E19th] from *rancho* 'group of persons eating together', which originally referred to a building rather than land; and **vamoose** [M19th] from *vamos* 'let's go'.

See also...

Paella on the patio

Spain is a popular choice for Brits holidaying or moving abroad. This is hardly surprising when you see how many **Spanish** words in English are connected with relaxation and enjoyment.

SPANISH **paella** and **tapas** are perfect for outdoor dining on a **patio**, originally the name for an inner courtyard in a Spanish house. The dish of rice with chicken and shellfish, cooked in a large shallow pan, goes back to Latin *patella* 'a small shallow dish'—so the plate of food balanced on your knee has a close connection with **patella** as the anatomical name for the kneecap. **Tapas**, small savoury dishes served with drinks at a bar, used to come free, and were traditionally served on a dish balanced atop a glass. This was the origin of the name, since the word literally means 'cover' or 'lid'.

Sangria, a mixture of red wine, carbonated water, and a sweetener, would be just the drink for a patio meal. Its colour is the source of the name, which in Spanish means 'bleeding'. Although **sherry** has a typically British feel to it, the name comes from *vino de Xerez* or 'wine of Xerez'—the original name of Jerez in southern Spain, from which the drink came. After all this eating and drinking, a **siesta** or nap might be welcome. This Spanish word for a rest taken at the hottest time of the day goes back to Latin *sexta hora* 'sixth hour of the day'.

Certainly *not* relaxing, but traditionally Spanish, is a bullfight. A mounted bullfighter is called a **toreador**, from *toro* 'bull', and the bullfighter whose task is to kill the bull is the **matador**, a word which means literally 'killer'. It goes back ultimately to Persian *māt* 'dead', the origin of the *-mate* part of **checkmate** (see CHECK). An English proverb warns us not to put off till tomorrow what we can do today, but the relaxed Spanish have given us **mañana**, 'tomorrow', to express a more easy-going attitude to pressing schedules. You could respond to any protests about slackness with **que sera sera**, which indicates that you have no control over the future. The Spanish phrase, meaning 'what will be, will be', was popularized in English by the 1956 song '*Que Sera, Sera*', sung by Doris Day.

Spanish

Perceived national stereotypes sometimes account for the words that English borrows from other languages: French, for example, has contributed many words and expressions relating to romance and sex. In the case of Spanish, a number of loanwords (many originally adopted into American English from Mexican and Latin American varieties of the language) suggest a swaggering and ostentatious masculinity popularly associated with men from Spain and Spanish-speaking countries. These include *cojones*, *hombre*, *machismo*, *macho*, and *mano a mano*.

Many of the Spanish words that have entered the English language relate to specifically Spanish and South American culture, food, and clothing. Here is a sample: *adios*, *amigo*, *barrio*, *bolero*, *burrito*, *chorizo*, *flamenco*, *hacienda*, *nacho*, *paella*, *pampas*, *poncho*, *pueblo*, *salsa*, *sangria*, *siesta*, *sombrero*, *taco*, *tapas*, and *tortilla*. The vocabulary of bullfighting includes such terms as *banderillero*, *corrida*, *cuadrilla*, *matador*, *picador*, and *toreador*, and an *aficionado* was originally a devotee of bullfighting. Also quintessentially Spanish is the relaxed procrastination summed up by the word *mañana*.

Some other everyday English words of Spanish origin are *armada*, *bonanza*, *embargo*, *flotilla*, *guerrilla*, *incommunicado*, *marijuana*, *patio*, *peccadillo*, *plaza*, and *vigilante*.