

¡Hola!

Spanish at home, through play

A guide for parents of children aged 3 to 7

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A note for parents

Thank you for letting me play in Spanish with your child. This guide explains how my lessons work, what you can expect from a few hours a week, and how you can help at home.

The most important thing first: you don't need to speak Spanish. Children love doing what their parents do, so your interest and encouragement matter more than your level.

How I teach (5 points)

1. No pressure — No tests, and I never force a child to speak. Studies show that tests and speaking in front of others are what make children most nervous.

2. Through play — Your child chooses what to play and I join in with a goal ("guided play").

3. Understand first, then speak — Just like their first language; reading and writing come later.

4. With movement — Gestures and whole-body movement help them remember new words.

5. In their own play space — I come to where they play and we play as playmates, with a plan for every lesson.

What can you expect from a few hours a week?

The goal is understanding, some everyday phrases, a good ear for the sounds of Spanish, and enjoying the language.

Many children spend a while listening before they speak, and that's normal: they understand a lot first and speak more later.

Becoming bilingual takes much more exposure. Every child has their own pace, and I never compare children.

How to help at home: 12 ideas

These ideas come from research and expert guidance, mostly about English or a first language rather than Spanish. Every child is different.

1 You don't need to speak Spanish

What helps most is your encouragement and making Spanish a small part of everyday family life.

In a study of 521 Chinese parents, parents' encouragement and everyday use (not their level) went hand in hand with children's motivation (Nie & Mavrou, 2026; correlational).

2 Learn a little yourself

A few words, a greeting, this week's song. Let your child see you're interested.

Taiwan's Ministry of Education recommended that parents and children learn together at home (cited in Lan et al., 2011). Practical advice, not yet tested at this age.

3 Let your child teach you

Ask: "How do you say this in Spanish? Can you teach me?" If they don't want to, that's fine; if you make a mistake, laugh about it.

It gives them a real reason to use Spanish and shows that mistakes are okay. Your child may end up teaching you! (Emi's experience)

4 Look at progress together, without comparing

Ask what they played, sing the song they learned; notice what they understand, not only what they say.

At this age children understand first and speak much later.

5 Praise effort, not intelligence

"You tried a new word!" is better than "You're so smart!"

Praising effort was linked to more willingness to take on challenges years later (Gunderson et al., 2013; correlational).

6 A short, frequent "Spanish moment"

5 to 10 minutes: the class song in the car, at bath time or before bed.

Experts prefer short, frequent moments over long, occasional ones (a consensus, not a measured amount).

7 Look at the class picture book together

Point at the pictures, talk about the story in Chinese, and let your child say the Spanish words they know. I can record the audio for you.

Talking while reading helps word learning (Mol et al., 2008, first language); parents who don't speak Spanish can use pictures, gestures and voices.

8 Follow their interests and mood

If they don't want to today, try another day.

Responding to what a child is already paying attention to supports language learning (Harvard, "serve and return").

9 Don't test them or make them perform

No "How do you say...?" quizzes, no "Show Grandma!" If they want to show off, wonderful!

Tests and speaking in front of others are what make children most nervous (Nilsson, 2019, primary-school children).

10 Mixing Chinese and Spanish is fine

Don't correct it: calmly repeat the phrase in Spanish.

Mixing languages is normal, not confusion (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013).

11 Keep talking and reading a lot in Chinese

And in Taiwanese or another language, if you use it at home.

Speaking the language you're most comfortable in is what language specialists recommend; Chinese stays the main language at home.

12 Spanish videos: together and short

Choose songs your child knows from class, sing and move together, within screen-time limits.

Children learn less from video than from a person (Strouse & Samson, 2021); Taiwan's guidance is no more than 1 hour of screen time a day from age 2.

Frequently asked questions

Will my child become bilingual?

With a few hours a week, the goal is understanding, everyday phrases, a good ear and enjoying the language. Becoming bilingual takes much more exposure.

Will it confuse my child or slow down their Chinese?

Research shows that learning two languages doesn't confuse children or slow down their first language; mixing words is normal.

After several lessons my child barely speaks Spanish. Is that normal?

Yes. Many children spend a while listening; with a few hours a week it's expected that they understand a lot before speaking. If you're worried about their language in general (including Chinese), it's worth consulting a speech-language therapist (語言治療師).

When will they start reading and writing in Spanish?

Later: once they understand and speak, and are more confident reading Chinese. For now the goal is listening and speaking.

I don't know any Spanish. Can I help?

Yes. What helps most is your encouragement and making Spanish part of home life, not your level.

Does it help if I study a little?

It may: your child sees that you're interested too, and you can learn together. Practical advice; there are no studies measuring it at this age yet.

Will Spanish make my child smarter?

We don't promise that: research doesn't show a clear advantage. It can bring curiosity about other cultures and confidence.

Can videos or apps replace lessons?

Not really: children learn more from a person than from video. Videos work as an extra, together and short.

Is there a trial lesson for at-home kids classes?

No: I travel to your home, so travel time counts. That's why it's NT\$900 per hour, minimum 2 hours per lesson (Taipei).

What people say, and what research shows

"The earlier, the better"

For children who live in a language, starting early helps mainly with pronunciation. With a few hours a week, studies don't show that starting earlier is always better (Muñoz, 2011). So we don't rush: we want your child to enjoy Spanish.

"Two languages confuse children"

No. Mixing is normal, and counting both languages their vocabulary is similar to that of children who speak one (Byers–Heinlein & Lew–Williams, 2013).

"A foreign language makes children smarter"

Study results disagree and don't show a clear advantage, so we don't promise it.

Sources

Almost none of these studies are about Spanish or children in Taiwan; some are correlational or with older children. This guide is general information for parents, not medical or speech-therapy advice.

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