

Written Accent Marks and Stress

Some words in Spanish have written accent marks over one of the vowels. The mark is called el acento. This mark is an indication that the syllable containing the accented vowel is stressed when the word is pronounced. Whenever you see an accent this is an indication that the syllable that is being stressed does not follow one of the two rules listed below.

- Words that end in a **vowel**, or **n** or **s** are stressed on the next to the last syllable.
Examples: gra-cias
e-xa-men
- Words that end in any other consonant are stressed on the last syllable.
Examples: es-pa-ñol
us-ted
- All words that are stressed on the third to the last syllable must have a written accent.
Examples: ma-te-má-ticas
ma-trí-cu-la
- When there are two consecutive vowels and there is a written accent; the vowel with the written accent is stressed.
Examples: día
biología
- Interrogative words and exclamatory words have a written accent on the stressed vowel.
Examples: ¿Cuál?
¿Quién?

Accent marks can also be used to help distinguish words that sound the same but have different meanings.

- Examples: sí (accent over the i) means yes.
si (no accent) means if.
él (Accent over the e) means he.
el (no accent) means the(masculine article).