

UIN Spanish Language Institute Course Syllabus: Novice (A1/A2)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a beginner Spanish course designed for students with little or no previous exposure to the Spanish language. Students will gain essential conversational, listening, reading, and writing skills to help them navigate everyday situations (e.g. greetings, exchanging personal information, ordering a meal, etc.).

The course contents and activities are aligned with the NOVICE proficiency standards outlined by the American Council on the Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) as well as the A1/A2 levels of the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). Students may use the proficiency charts found in the Language Competencies & Grading Rubrics section of this syllabus to determine if this course meets their language needs (pg. 6).

Academic Credit Equivalency: Study abroad courses with homestays provide an immersion environment in which language learning extends beyond the classroom. This four-week course entails 12 contact hours per day (240 total), the equivalent of **6 university credit hours**.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should be able to complete the following communication tasks:

1. Participate in short conversations with native Spanish speakers regarding familiar everyday topics (preferences, routines, work, family life).
2. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.
3. Develop brief (200-300 words) writing samples for everyday purposes (emails, texts, product reviews, etc.).
4. Create and deliver 2-3 minute oral presentations on familiar topics.

5. Identify and reflect on local cultural practices.

GRAMMATICAL FOCUSES

Week 1-2

Nouns and articles (Gender and Number)

Numbers (0-100)

Ser vs. estar

Gustar and similar verbs

Present tense regular verbs

Present tense irregular verbs

Stem changing verbs

Present progressive

Week 3-4

Direct object pronouns

Indirect object pronouns

Direct & indirect pronouns combined

Indefinite and negative words

Reflexive verbs

Preterit tense regular verbs

Preterit tense irregular verbs

Comparisons and superlatives

GRADES & ASSIGNMENTS

Written Assignments		Oral Assignments	
Grammar Quizzes (4)	20%	Conversation Prompts (7)	25%
Writing Samples (2)	15%	Culture Presentations (2)	15%
Participation	10%	Oral Exam (1)	15%

Grading Scale:

90 - 100 = **A** 80 - 89 = **B** 70 - 79 = **C** 61 - 69 = **D** 60 or below = **E**

Feedback

- Your instructor is **not** required to mark every error in your assignment but will provide at least 2 specific examples of frequent errors that they have noticed in your assignment.
- You should use the examples/feedback that your instructor provided as you review work again to identify these issues.
- It is your responsibility to contact the instructor if you do not understand the feedback or need extra help with a specific problem.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Participation (10%)

Participating in the course is vital to the learning process. Participation will be based on the following criteria:

- Attendance: Being present for the entire class period.
- Punctuality: Arriving to class on time.
- Class discussions: Engaging with peers and the instructor during in-class activities.
- Persistence: Students make an effort to speak Spanish the entire class.

If you anticipate not being able to participate in class according to the criteria outlined above, please contact your instructor beforehand.

Grading: Participation grades will be based on students' compliance with the four criteria outlined above. Total 40 points/each criterion is worth 10 points.

Writing Samples (15%)

Students will complete three writing samples in Spanish. The first writing sample will be a short biographic note (150 words) in which the student describes him/herself. The second sample will be an informal email addressed to a friend that provides highlights of the things they have done while in Costa Rica (250 words).

Each writing sample consists of two parts: a rough and final draft. The instructor will provide feedback on the rough draft within 1 week of the due date. Students should review the feedback and highlight the changes that were made in final draft.

If the student did not complete the rough draft of the composition, they will receive a 0 on that portion of the assignment. The student may turn in the “final draft” to receive half credit for the assignment.

When writing a composition, students may only use the grammar structures (example: present, past, future tenses) that they have reviewed up to that point in the course. If a student violates this rule, then he/she will have an obligatory meeting with the instructor. 50% may be deducted from the student’s work if he/she is suspected of using AI or a translator.

Grading: The writing sample rubric, found in this syllabus, will be used to grade this assignment.

Learning Outcomes Achieved

1. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.
2. Develop brief (200-300 words) writing samples for everyday purposes (emails, texts, product reviews, etc.).

Grammar Quizzes (20%)

The accelerated pace of this course makes it necessary to regularly monitor students’ understanding of the grammatical structures reviewed. This allows the instructor to modify the course pace and contents as needed. Grammar quizzes that cover previously reviewed grammatical structures will be given administered at the end of each week. The quizzes will be brief (10 minute) mastery checks administered in written format.

Grading: Individual quiz values will be indicated by the professor and may vary according to the quiz topic. However, the total weight of the quizzes in the final grade will be 20%.

Learning Outcomes Achieved

1. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.

Conversation Prompts (25%)

Each week you will be responsible for practicing different conversation prompts both in and outside of class (with host families, people you meet, etc.). Topics for conversation prompts will be based on everyday scenarios that you will encounter while living abroad. On Fridays, students will work with classmates to carry out a conversation prompt (5-7 minutes long) they have practiced that week.

Sample Conversation Prompts

Weeks 1-2

- Describe yourself and your family
- Share your phone number and/or email address.
- Describe your daily routine
- Ask for directions
- Order a meal

Weeks 3-4

- Share what you did over the weekend.
- Describe a television series you watched.
- Narrate what someone told you (me dijo/me dijeron)

Grading: The conversation prompt rubric, found in this syllabus, will be used to grade this assignment.

Learning Outcomes Achieved

1. Participate in short conversations regarding familiar everyday topics (preferences, routines, work, family life).
2. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.

Culture Presentations (15%)

You will complete two oral presentations. You must prepare a 2-minute presentation, in Spanish, that includes 4 Power Point slides. The presentation topics will be based on a cultural issue that has been previously presented in class by the instructor.

Your presentation will be graded on pronunciation, grammar, fluency, content, and quality.

Your slides should contain images related to your presentation and no more than 2 sentences. **Please do not read your slides.**

Grading: The presentation rubric, found in this syllabus, will be used to grade this assignment.

Learning Outcomes Achieved

1. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.
2. Create and deliver 2-3 minute oral presentations on familiar topics.
3. Identify and reflect on local cultural practices.

Oral Exam (15%)

The oral exam will be given the last week of class. The exam consists of a 10-minute conversation between you and your instructor based on conversation topics you have previously reviewed during the course. You should prepare for the conversation by preparing 4-5 questions for your instructor. Questions must incorporate grammar and vocabulary that have been reviewed thus far in the course. The conversation rubric will be used for the oral exam grade.

Grading: The conversation prompt rubric, found in this syllabus, will be used to grade this assignment.

Learning Outcomes Achieved

1. Participate in short conversations regarding familiar everyday topics (preferences, routines, work, family life).
2. Apply present and past tense grammatical structures in oral and written communication.

EXPECTED LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES & GRADING RUBRICS

NCSSFL-ACTFL CAN-DO STATEMENTS			
PROFICIENCY BENCHMARKS			
NOVICE PROFICIENCY BENCHMARK		INTERMEDIATE PROFICIENCY BENCHMARK	ADVANCED PROFICIENCY BENCHMARK
COMMUNICATION			
INTERPRETIVE	<i>I can</i> identify the general topic and some basic information in both very familiar and everyday contexts from words, phrases, and simple sentences in texts that are spoken, written, or signed.	<i>I can</i> understand the main idea and some related pieces of information on familiar topics from sentences and series of connected sentences in texts that are spoken, written, or signed.	<i>I can</i> understand the main message, the author's purpose, and supporting details on a wide variety of familiar and general interest topics in longer texts that are spoken, written, or signed.
INTERPERSONAL	<i>I can</i> participate in spontaneous spoken, written, or signed conversations on both very familiar and everyday topics, using words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions.	<i>I can</i> interact in spontaneous spoken, written, or signed conversations on familiar topics, creating sentences and series of sentences to ask and answer a variety of questions.	<i>I can</i> maintain spontaneous spoken, written, or signed conversations and discussions across various time frames on familiar and concrete unfamiliar topics using series of connected sentences and probing questions.
PRESENTATIONAL	<i>I can</i> share information on both very familiar and everyday topics, using a variety of practiced or memorized words, phrases, and simple sentences through spoken, written, or signed language.	<i>I can</i> provide information and express my thoughts about familiar topics, creating sentences and series of connected sentences through spoken, written, or signed language.	<i>I can</i> organize, express, and present information to an audience in a detailed way on concrete unfamiliar topics, using paragraphs across various time frames through spoken, written, or signed language.
NCSSFL-ACTFL CAN-DO STATEMENTS: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNERS © 2026			

Qualitative aspects of spoken language use - Table 3 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference levels

The chart in this table was designed to assess spoken performances. It focuses on different qualitative aspects of language use.

A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because".
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

Reference: www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-3-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-qualitative-aspects-of-spoken-language-use

Writing Sample Rubric			
Criteria	Excellent (90-100)	Good (80-89)	Keep Working (60-79)
Grammar	Writing sample contains grammatical structures reviewed in class. All verbs are conjugated correctly. There are no gender/number agreement errors	Writing sample contains few spelling and punctuation errors. Most verbs are conjugated correctly. There are few gender/number agreement errors	Writing sample contains many spelling and punctuation errors. Few verbs are conjugated correctly. There are many gender/number agreement errors
Punctuation	Writing sample does not contain spelling and punctuation errors.	Writing sample contains few spelling and punctuation errors.	Writing sample contains many spelling and punctuation errors.
Content	Responds to writing the prompt. Complies with instructions.	Mostly responds to writing the prompt. Complies with instruction.	Somewhat responds to writing the prompt. Does not comply with instructions.

Conversation Prompt Rubric			
Criteria	Excellent (90-100)	Good (80-89)	Keep Working (60-79)
Interaction	The student initiated several questions. The student provided complete responses to questions asked of him/herself.	The student initiated some questions. The student provided somewhat complete responses to questions asked of him/herself.	The student did not initiate questions. The student did not provide complete responses to questions asked of him/herself.
Grammar	The correct verb tense was used (present vs. past). There were no errors in subject verb agreement.	The correct verb tense was used (present vs. past). There were some errors in subject verb agreement.	There were several errors in the verb tense choice. There were many errors in subject verb agreement.
Vocabulary	The presenter used a variety of words reviewed throughout the course and related to the topic.	The presenter used some words reviewed throughout the course and related to the topic.	The presenter used very few words reviewed throughout the course.
Pronunciation & Fluency	The student always made him/herself understood. The student rephrased and repeated questions when necessary. The student did not struggle with common pronunciation issues. Examples /s/ vs. /z/; /l/; /h/	The student mostly made him/herself understood. The student rephrased and repeated information when there were misunderstandings. The student did not struggle with common pronunciation issues. Examples: /s/ vs. /z/; /l/; /h/	The student struggled to make him/herself understood. The student did not rephrase and repeat information when there were misunderstandings. The student struggled with common pronunciation issues. Example /s/ vs. /z/; /l/; /h/

Culture Presentation Rubric			
Criteria	Excellent (90-100)	Good (80-89)	Keep Working (60-79)
Preparation	It is apparent that the student practiced the presentation beforehand. The power point slides were effective and did not contain spelling and grammar errors.	The presentation seems to have been practiced. However, more review was needed. The power point slides were effective but contained some spelling and grammar errors.	The presentation was not practiced beforehand. The power point slides were not effective and contained many spelling and grammar errors.
Grammar	The correct verb tense was used (present vs. past). There were no errors in subject verb agreement.	The correct verb tense was used (present vs. past). There were some errors in subject verb agreement.	There were several errors in the verb tense choice and subject verb agreement.
Vocabulary	The presenter used a variety of words reviewed throughout the course and related to the topic.	The presenter used some words reviewed throughout the course and related to the topic.	The presenter used very few words reviewed throughout the course and needed more vocabulary related to the topic.
Pronunciation & Fluency	The student did not struggle with common pronunciation issues. Examples: /s/ vs. /z/; /ll/; /h/ The student executed the presentation without reading or relying on notes.	The student did not struggle with common pronunciation issues. Examples: /s/ vs. /z/; /ll/; /h/ The student executed the presentation with little reading and few notes.	The student struggled with common pronunciation issues. Examples: /s/ vs. /z/; /ll/; /h/ The student read the presentation.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a *tentative* schedule that may be modified by the instructor.

	Grammar Focus	Topics	Assignments
Week 1	- Nouns and articles - Numbers (0-100) - Ser and estar - Gustar and similar verbs - Present tense regular verbs - Comparisons and superlatives	<u>Self & Family</u> Describe yourself and your family Describe where you live Foods & Preferences Share your phone number and/or email address.	- Grammar quiz (Thursday) - Conversation prompts (Tuesdays & Friday) - Writing Sample 1 (draft)
Week 2	<u>Review</u> - Ser vs. estar - Present tense regular <u>New Forms</u> - Present tense irregular verbs - Stem changing verbs - Present Progressive - Reflexive Verbs	<u>Getting Around</u> Describe your daily routine Ask for directions Order a meal	- Grammar quiz (Thursday) Conversation prompt (Tuesdays & Friday) - Culture presentation #1 - Writing Sample 1 (final)

Week 3	<u>Review</u> • Present tense irregular • Reflexive verbs • Present progressive <u>New Forms</u> • Direct & indirect objects • Preterit tense regular verbs	<u>Narrating the Past</u> Share what you did over the weekend. Describe a television series you watched. Narrate what someone told you (me dijo/me dijeron)	• Grammar quiz (Thursday) • Conversation prompt (Tuesday & Friday) • Writing Sample 2 (draft)
Week 4	<u>Review</u> • Preterit tense regular/irregular • Direct & indirect objects <u>New Forms</u> • Preterit tense irregular verbs	<u>Concept Review</u> <u>Share what you did over the weekend.</u> <u>Describe a television series you watched.</u> <u>Narrate what someone told you (me dijo/me dijeron)</u>	• Grammar quiz (Thursday) • Conversation prompt (Tuesday) • Culture Presentation #2 • Writing Sample 2 (final) • Exam Oral