

Spanish Grammar and Reading Comprehension Test

Sample Questions

The Grammar Module

The grammar module of the Spanish Placement Test deals primarily with questions of syntax. Grammatical content of the texts used in first and second year courses was analyzed noting the stage at which certain concepts were introduced and when such concepts were reviewed in the second year. Test questions were written to measure those concepts which appeared to be important to beginning study at each course level. Great care was taken in writing questions to avoid ambiguity or arcane constructions, and problems which might require special knowledge of regional or dialectical differences. The general criterion was to write items based on constructions of acceptable grammar and high frequency of occurrence throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

Two different multiple-choice formats are used. For simpler concepts, two-choice questions are used. Questions of higher complexity are written using four-choice formats. In general, questions are phrased positively: e.g. “which of the following choices is correct.” For some types of constructions, however, the student is asked to select the work or phrase that would make the statement grammatically incorrect. To accomplish this, the committee used the following criteria:

1. no English to Spanish translation
2. no incorrect spelling or grammatically incorrect phrases in the distractors (grammatically incorrect choices would result only from the insertion of the “wrong” answer in the sentence)
3. limitations on lexical items to those typically found in high school texts, so that this does not become a vocabulary test
4. concentration on high frequency structures and on those which contrast with English
5. exclusion of items that contain a racial, cultural, or sexist bias
6. exclusion of items that require calculation or special cultural knowledge beyond the context of the question
7. no “trick”, contrived, or whimsical questions

It is clear that there are many types of syntactic constructions which allow for a variety of acceptable alternatives or, that under certain context could be interpreted differently. For this reason, several grammatical concepts are simply not covered in this test.

The following items are representative of the kind of questions students are asked to answer.

Examples of Spanish Grammar Items

Part 1

Select one of the two possible choices to fill the blank space in the sentence:

1. El señor Pérez es _____ dentista.
 - a. un
 - b. *No Change*

2. _____ es buena para la salud.
 - a. La fruta
 - b. Fruta

3. ¡Pobre Pablo! Hoy _____ enfermo.
 - a. está
 - b. es

4. No _____ cuándo vendrán.
 - a. conocemos
 - b. sabemos

5. No veo _____ nadie.
 - a. a
 - b. *No Change*

6. La señora Díaz tiene _____ tres hijos.
 - a. a
 - b. *No Change*

Part 2

Select the correct choice from the four answers given:

1. ¿Preparo el almuerzo? – No, ¡no _____ Ud.!
 - a. prepárelo
 - b. lo prepare
 - c. lo prepararé
 - d. los prepara

2. Pregúntele _____ quiere.
 - a. que
 - b. qué
 - c. cómo
 - d. quién

3. Los libros están en la tienda. ¿ _____ los va a buscar?
 - a. Qué
 - b. Quién
 - c. Cuáles
 - d. Cuánto

4. ¿Qué blusa prefiere usted? – Prefiero _____ .
 - a. el verde
 - b. la verde
 - c. lo verde
 - d. las verdes

5. _____ agradable de la fiesta era la comida.
 - a. Al
 - b. El
 - c. La
 - d. Lo

6. No cabía duda que ellos _____ .
- equivocarse
 - se equivocaran
 - se habían equivocado
 - se habrán equivocado

Part 3

Select the one choice which is NOT correct. Three of the choices will make the sentence grammatically correct. One will make it incorrect. Select the one that makes the sentence INCORRECT.

1. _____ los atletas.
- Los muchachos gustan
 - Los muchachos admiran a
 - A los muchachos les gustan
 - A los muchachos les encantan
2. El accidente _____ en frente de mi casa.
- fue
 - estaba
 - ocurrió
 - tuvo lugar

The Reading Module

An important consideration in the development of this module is comprehension of the sense of the text beyond a mere knowledge of Spanish. A large number of possible texts were considered. However, all technical, scientific, and other specialized materials, poetry and stylistically complex literature, biased or controversial readings, and texts that require wide experience in a Hispanic culture were all excluded. Passages which provided the best material for the reading test were ones which had an internal structure independent of their original purpose. As a rule, passages filled with facts but without a clearly stated point do not meet this criterion. Variety in subject matter and content was an important objective in selection of reading passages. Where possible, the various versions of the test have

included narratives, advertisements, public notices, anecdotes, jokes, character descriptions, and the like.

In all cases, the original text was edited to bring it within the range of the vocabulary of the representative high school texts. Every effort was made to produce a text in which comprehension was not dependent on a key word or phrase that could not be inferred from the context. English cognates were avoided if they were uncommon in Spanish usage. The authenticity of the original style was maintained wherever possible. Anglicized versions of the original Spanish were not used. Two to four questions are asked after each passage. At least one item is included which is considered an “easy” item on a basic fact. In addition, one interpretative item is included on the sense or intent of the text as a whole.

The following passage and accompanying questions are typical of the Spanish Reading Module.

Example of Spanish Reading Module

Para ayudar a los clientes a calcular sus gastos mensuales, les ofrecemos un plan de pago en cuotas fijas a todos ellos. Este programa les permitirá distribuir a plazos iguales el costo de la electricidad durante todo el año. La cuenta mensual se basará en el promedio de consumo durante un plazo de doce meses. Los primeros once meses se cobrará una cantidad fija; el último mes se ajustará la cuenta de acuerdo con lo que realmente se haya consumido.

1. Bajo este plan, es posible que cada mes se pague menos de lo que se debe.
 - a. Cierto
 - b. Falso

2. La ventaja de este plan es que uno sabe cuánto tiene que pagar cada mes.
 - a. Cierto
 - b. Falso

3. Se calcula el costo de un mes a base de lo que el cliente puede pagar.
 - a. Cierto
 - b. Falso

4. Según este programa, es posible que un cliente reciba dinero al fin del año.

a. Cierto

b. Falso