

Why Learn Spanish?

- More than 500 million people speak Spanish
- Spanish is the official language of 21 countries
- Spanish is the third most commonly spoken language in the world (after Chinese and English)
- Learning a language helps with critical thinking skills
- If you can speak Spanish and English, you can communicate with 80% of people on the planet!
- The United States has almost 40 million native Spanish speakers! By 2050, it will become the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.
- Learning Spanish gives you the tools to communicate with millions of Spanish-speakers both at home and abroad.
- In many fields including education, healthcare, business, and social work, Spanish skills are highly valued and in some cases, required.
- Studying a foreign language gives our brains much-needed exercise that has a positive impact on cognitive function, regardless of the ability level or age of the learner.
- Language is not only a means of communicating information, it is also a way of seeing and understanding the world. Studying Spanish unlocks a new way of thinking - about our community, our world, and our place in it.



The Benefits of Being Bilingual

There are numerous benefits to gain from speaking a second language, from professional and personal to health benefits. Moreover, learning a foreign language is just fun! The sooner you learn and the more frequently you use your second language, the greater the benefits will be.

Becoming bilingual can improve your competitiveness in the job market.

Knowing a second language makes your resume stand out and can boost you to the top of the interview list with potential employers.

Knowing a second language can open up new career opportunities.

Jobs as translators and interpreters are in the top 15 fastest-growing occupations in the United States, with nearly 25,000 translation and interpretation jobs expected to become available by 2020. This estimate does not even include jobs in the military, which actively recruits people with a variety of language skills.

Other fast-growing fields like travel and tourism, healthcare and national security need employees with bilingual language skills and the ability to work across cultures. Fields such as journalism, education and international development are always in search of bilingual employees. And knowing a second language can give you an edge if you want to apply for the Peace Corps or become a Foreign Service Officer.

Bilinguals can earn more money.

Salary.com found that jobs with pay differentials based on bilingualism usually pay 5-20% more per hour for bilingual employees.

Being bilingual opens up social and cultural opportunities.

Speaking another languages lets you interact with different people and better understand other cultures. This means you might have more opportunities to make friends, explore different hobbies and better understand your favorite foreign music, film and literature.

Travel can also be cheaper and more rewarding when you speak the language of the country you're visiting. You won't be limited to staying in expensive foreigner hotels, eating at restaurants where the staff speaks English or traveling with a tour group. You can go off the beaten path and really get to know the country and its people!



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Speaking another language gives you a new perspective.

Even if you don't travel abroad, becoming bilingual can help you see the world in a different way and understand yourself better.

Research has found that bilinguals *literally* see the world differently. People who regularly speak a second language perceive differences in color variations that are not recognized by monolinguals! How's that for a new perspective?

Many people who speak more than one language also report feeling "like a different person" when they speak the other language.

Speaking a second language improves problem-solving, multitasking and decision-making.

Numerous studies have found that bilingualism can improve brain functions like the ability to focus attention and perform mental tasks.

A study in Scotland and Italy found that bilingual children were "significantly more successful" than their monolingual peers in problem-solving and creativity tasks. Another study found that people who speak more than one language can process information more efficiently and easily.

As a bilingual, you are constantly choosing in which language to say a word, and this gives you a lot of practice choosing important information and ignoring extraneous details. This seems to help bilinguals do better at tasks that require multitasking and blocking out distractions.

Speaking another language can even help you make more rational decisions! A study conducted by a team of psychologists at the University of Chicago found that forcing people to rely on a second language when making decisions reduced their natural human biases. The scientists concluded that using a foreign language provided increased cognitive and emotional distance that allowed people to focus on the information rather than their own emotions.

The next time you want to make the most "rational" decision possible, consider thinking about it in a foreign language!

Bilingualism can slow the effects of old age.

The benefits of being bilingual are lifelong, but they seem especially important in old age. Cognitive flexibility—the ability to adapt to unfamiliar or unexpected circumstances—tends to decline as we age, but speaking a second language can block that decline or at least significantly delay it.

Research shows that bilingualism can improve cognition and delay dementia in older adults, particularly related to general intelligence and reading abilities.

