

COLORFUL SPANISH

A Short Glossary of Insults and Off-Color Street Spanish

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(Originally published in *Conversational Spanish*, my college-level textbook)

¡OJO! The material here is intended to inform adult students. It will not be of interest to all. Students that are offended by off-color allusions or crude language should skip this and any accompanying class discussions. Also, please note that this section is NOT an official part of this course. Regularly scheduled class time will not be used to cover this material. There will be no assignments or assessments over it. But... here's how it can help:

AVOID EMBARRASSMENT: Even if you do not cuss often, you may have done so unintentionally after picking up vile expressions that were mistaken for mild interjections. Hopefully this glossary will help to lessen that.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: This glossary can also help to give some insight into cultural values in the Spanish-speaking world. The information is off-color, but literal translations and vulgar slang expressions in English have been avoided. The translations and descriptions are presented in a technical and clinical manner.

HELP FOR TEACHERS: Many teachers that work with Spanish-speaking adolescents have found this material useful because a few kids will always try to test the limits with non-native Spanish-speaking adults. See the quick reference "Cheat Sheet" at the end of this document for portable help. There is also a list of sources for further reading at the end of this document.

B

baboso *NOUN (insult)* *fool, idiot. Literally "slug", a blathering (drooling) idiot.*

buey *NOUN (insult)* *ox, clod, or cuckold. This term, as well as most others on this list can be used in a friendly manner like the American expression "dude". The greeting "¿Qué pasó, huey?" is a common one among friends. Also, **huey** or güey.*

bruja *NOUN (insult)* *witch, old hag*

C

cabrón *NOUN (vulgar)* *"Billy goat" is the literal translation of this term, which does not seem all that insulting in English, but in Hispanic culture this is a very strong insult. A **cabrón** is a cuckold (In American slang 'cuckold' is shortened to 'cuck', or the adjective 'cucked'). A cuckold is a man that is being cheated on by his woman. It implies that he is either too stupid to realize it, or even worse, that he is powerless to stop it—a weak, socially*

*unaware and sexually inept fool that cannot keep or satisfy a woman. And his woman despises him so much she openly seeks sexual gratification elsewhere. In the culture that gave us the word machismo, being called a **cabrón** is an extreme insult.*

*Like most vulgarisms, this one can be used in less threatening ways, depending on the context and tone of the speaker. Calling someone a **carbrón** is often used in an admiring way among young men.*

chichi cabrón NOUN (vulgar) *This is a step up from a regular **cabrón**. It is a powerful insult that can precede violence. This term is rarely used in jest, and is used something like “f*cking bastard”.*

caca NOUN (not vulgar) *Although often mistaken as the translation of sh*t, and mistakenly used as a strong interjection by gringos, this means nothing more than “poo-poo”. If you really want a strong scatological reference, use **mierda** instead.*

caga NOUN (vulgar) *feces.*

cagado ADJECTIVE (vulgar) *Made of or covered with feces, “sh**y”. Can also mean angry, tired, or mad.*

cagar VERB (somewhat vulgar) *to defecate.*

carajo INTERJECTION (vulgar) *used like a very strong version of “hell” or damn”. A carajo is literally the male member of a bull, and so is vulgar. **Caramba** is a euphemism.*

chichar VERB (very vulgar) *to copulate. See **chingar**.*

chichas, chichis NOUN (vulgar) *breasts*

chichona NOUN (vulgar) *a large-busted woman*

chingar VERB (very vulgar) *This is the big one, the most common and strongest Spanish vulgarism you are likely to hear. It is particularly common in Mexico. Although roughly equal to the vulgar English term f*ck, it carries stronger and more violent connotations. Chingar usually means something more along the lines of “to rape” or “to have violent sex with”, but it can also mean something as mild as “screwed up” or “messed up.” The meaning depends on who says it, to whom it is said, as well as the tone and purpose of the statement.*

*As with its English equivalent, among the lower classes some form of **chingar** may be used in almost every sentence. Some typical uses and variations follow. See synonyms at **chichar, joder & manajar**.*

¡Chinga tu madre! *DIRECTIVE (very vulgar) This is one of the strongest insults in Spanish—these are fighting words. Perhaps “rape your mother!” would give the general idea, but even that would not quite convey the intensity or degradation expressed in this saying due to the object of the insult. In American culture, the strongest insult may be, “F*ck you!”, possibly because to Americans there is no one more important than the self. In typical U.S. culture, the individual tends to be the center of emotional, social and thought life. But in Hispanic culture, the mother has traditionally held that sacred space. In the Spanish-speaking world, the word **madre** is often loaded with psychosexual and religious meaning. To refer to a person’s mother in this way is an invitation to violence. See **hijo de...; hijo de puta; madre**.*

*This insult is so strong and so common that you will want to be careful with it. Even simple phrases containing the words “**tu madre**” may suggest this crudest of insults unwittingly. While this is not a hard and fast rule, you may want to avoid accidental allusions to it by substituting the word **mamá** instead of **madre**.*

You may have you heard someone honk this on a car horn. Interestingly, the five syllables of this insult, one long—two short—one long—one short (like the first part of the old “shave and a haircut...” door knock), are often honked on a car horn or whistled to insult or provoke someone from a distance. If a fellow motorist honks at you this way, it may not be a friendly greeting!

la chingada *NOUN (very vulgar) Literally, a woman on whom forcible coition has been performed. It also can refer to La Malinche, the Aztec mistress of and interpreter of Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conqueror of the Aztec empire. La Malinche is often thought of as the great betrayer of her people, as well as the mother of the first Mexican—a combination of European and indigenous peoples. According to some historians and sociologists, this combination of revulsion and respect leads to the ambivalence some Mexicans have about their heritage.*

¡Chinga cagada! *INTERJECTION (very vulgar) a strong and vile interjection involving both excrement and rape.*

chingadera *NOUN (very vulgar) a nuisance, a damned thing, a dirty trick, or a screw-up of some type; a f*ck up.*



¡Chingado! *EXPLETIVE (very vulgar) a vulgar expletive, like “F*ck!” in English*

¡Chingao! *EXPLETIVE (very vulgar) a shortened form of **chingado***

¡Chíngate! *DIRECTIVE (very vulgar) “Go f*ck yourself” a vile (and rather improbable) command*

Chingazo *NOUN (vulgar) a hard physical blow with the hand or a heavy object; also chingaso, chingadazo.*

tirar chingazos *EXPRESSION (vulgar) “To throw punches”, to get into a fight.*

chingón *NOUN (vulgar) usually used as a compliment—“El es muy chignón” means “he’s really something.”*

chingada *ADJECTIVE (vulgar) Used in expressions like, ‘**estar como la chingada**’ to be as ugly/mean/insensitive/timid/fast/etc. as one can be.*

¡Hijo de la chingada madre! *EXPLETIVE (very vulgar) When said with hateful intent, this is one of the strongest interjections, “son of the raped mother.” The late Mexican writer, diplomat and Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz in his most famous book, The Labyrinth of Solitude (a revered collection of essays explaining the Mexican psyche and Mexican history), explained that this is also the way some Mexicans traditionally have chosen to describe themselves and their heritage in a self-deprecating way.*

¡Vete a la chingada! *DIRECTIVE (very vulgar) a strong and vile insult, literally, “Go to the raped woman!” Used like “Go to hell!”, only more intense.*

chota *NOUN (derogatory) insulting slang for policeman, police. See **zopilote**.*

chupar *VERB to suck (inoffensive on its own, but used crudely with other words)*

¡Chúpame! *DIRECTIVE (very vulgar) an extremely vulgar and insulting directive*

¡Chúpame la verga! *DIRECTIVE (very vulgar) same as above, but even more so. See **verga**.*

¡Cierra el hocico! *DIRECTIVE (rude) a crude way of saying “Shut up!” literally, “Shut your muzzle or snout.”*

cochinadas NOUN (this word is not rude, it just refers to rude words) bad, dirty, vulgar or crude words. **tirar cochinadas** = to cuss. From cochino, pig.

coger VERB (vulgar in Mexico) literally, "to grab, take, pick up" In Mexican slang: "to have sex with." The word is not generally offensive outside of Mexico. Also **joder**.

cojones NOUN (vulgar) testicles, guts, balls, bravery. Also: **huevos**, cajones, bolas, pelotas

cola NOUN (rude) rear end, butt, a**; literally, "tail"

coño NOUN (very vulgar) female genitalia, c*nt; also can be used as a crude interjection used like "damn".

culo NOUN (very vulgar) a vulgarism for the rear end, like "a**"

¡Besa mi culo! DIRECTIVE (vulgar) "Kiss my a**!" This is a vulgarism, but I have heard it used in a funny way by replacing this expression with the tag line of the famous song *Bésame Fuerte*.

culero NOUN (very vulgar) a male homosexual. See synonyms under **joto**.

nada más sube el culo EXPRESSION (very vulgar) Said of a woman who can be easily persuaded to have intercourse. See **culo**.

¡Qué culo! EXPRESSION (very vulgar) "What a complete a** hole!"

tener el culo caliente EXPRESSION (very vulgar) Said of a woman who intensely and habitually desires sexual relations. See **culo**.

E

echar madres VERB (not vulgar) to curse, speak obscenities, literally, "to throw mothers" because the word **madre** is used in cursing so often

F

fregar VERB (not vulgar, just insulting) to annoy, to rub the wrong way



fregad@ ADJECTIVE (not vulgar, just insulting) damned, useless, stupid, lousy

fregada ADJECTIVE (can be used in a vulgar way) an adjective it can be said of a woman who looks prematurely old due to excessive sexual activity. As an interjection, it means “hell” or “damned.”

¡No me friegues! DIRECTIVE (not vulgar) Don't jerk me around!

H

hijo de ... INTERJECTION (connected with vulgarities) Any serious insult in Spanish will have more to do with an opponent's mother than with the direct recipient of the insult. Many violence-provoking Spanish insults involve some form of **hijo de...** See comments under **Chinga tu madre**.

¡Hijo de la chingada madre! EXPLETIVE (very vulgar) When said with hateful intent, this is one of the strongest interjections: “son of the raped mother.” The late Mexican writer and Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* explained that this is also the way some Mexicans choose to self-deprecatingly describe themselves and their heritage.

¡Hijo de puta! INTERJECTION (very vulgar) Son of a b*tch! This may not sound like much of an insult to an American's ear today, but it still packs a wallop in Spanish. Alan Riding, 20 year bureau chief for the *Wall Street Journal* in Mexico City, in his classic description of Mexican culture *Distant Neighbors*, says this expression is so insulting because of the powerful image of the Virgin Mary, of whom one's mother bears a reflection. It is one of the stronger insults in Spanish culture—accusing the opponent's mother of being prostitute. There are no exact parallels, but the American expression “mother-f*cker” may come close to it in intensity.

¡Hijo de tu madre! INTERJECTION (not vulgar) Son of your mother! This is an amusing and rather innocent interjection that sounds like it should mean something insulting because it involves the harmless elements of common vulgar phrases. Kids love using this one because they might get a rise out of an adult without saying anything technically bad that could get them in trouble.

huevos NOUN (vulgar) Literally “eggs”, figuratively “testicles.” Asking a waiter ¿Tiene huevos? Will likely get you an embarrassing response, so do not use the persona verb *tiene* and substitute the more abstract ¿Hay...? (Are there any...?) instead. Also, you may want to substitute safer words for eggs like *blanquillos* (little white things), or *yemas* (yolks). See **cojones**.

tener huevos *IDIOM (semi-vulgar) to be brave. See **huevos**.*

huevón / huevona *NOUN/ADJECTIVE (derogatory) lazy, no-account, good-for-nothing*

huey *NOUN (potentially derogatory) An ox, clod, or (worse) a cuckold (see **cabrón**)—an absolute idiot who does not know that his woman is cheating on him, or cannot prevent it due to his extreme weakness or impotence. The word **huey** is not necessarily an insult, and is frequently used as a greeting among adolescents. Also, **buey** or **güey**.*

I

indi@ *NOUN/ADJECTIVE (derogatory) Indian. This word is often used as an insult in a derogatory and racist manner from one Hispanic to another. It is also not used among the educated, who use **indígena** instead: La gente indígena de Guatemala.*

J

joder *VERB (very vulgar) to copulate by deception; to deceive, to cheat. Often a synonym for **chingar**.*

jodid@ *ADJECTIVE (very vulgar) messed up, f*cked up.*

jota *NOUN (vulgar) female homosexual, lesbian Also: tortillera, mamalona, machua.*

joto *NOUN (vulgar) male homosexual, gay man Also: mamalón, maricón, mariposa, pato, picaflor, **puto**, chupón, **culero**.*

M

madre *NOUN (not vulgar by itself) The word **madre** is involved in many serious insults in Spanish. The honor of the mother in Latino families is held in the highest regard and defended at all costs. Be careful, because even simple phrases containing the words **la madre** or **tu madre** may suggest a crude insult to the hearer. To avoid such accidental allusions use **mamá** instead. See additional comments under **chinga tu madre**, and **hijo de su madre**.*

maldit@ *ADJECTIVE (not necessarily vulgar) damned, infernal, blasted, darned, accursed*

manajar *VERB (very vulgar) to copulate. Be extra careful with this word because new learners of Spanish will often confuse it with the*



*common verb manejar, to drive. See the synonyms **chingar, chichar** and **joder**.*

maricón NOUN (*very vulgar*) male homosexual. See **puto, joto**.

mens@ NOUN (*insulting*) idiot, fool
ADJECTIVE (*insulting*) stupid, ignorant, foolish.
Also: bobo, idiota, imbécil, tonto, **huey**, chiflado, majadero

mierda NOUN (*vulgar*) excrement, feces, sh*t

¡Come mierda! DIRECTIVE (*very vulgar*) An extremely vulgar directive: "Eat sh*t!"

mojad@ NOUN (*derogatory*) Literally, "wet", but is used in a derogatory and racist manner; slang for an illegal alien, like the American slang "wetback"

N

nalgas NOUN (*not necessarily vulgar*) rear end, buttocks, posterior

¡Pela las nalgas! DIRECTIVE (*very vulgar*) Shove it up you're a**!

naranjas NOUN (*vulgar*) breasts; also: **chichas, chichis**, chupas, globos, mamas, mangos, melocotones, melones (*obviously you will want to be careful with words for fruit!*).

P

panocha NOUN (*very vulgar*) female genitalia. Also: **coño**, almejas, chocha, conejo, cosita, crica, papaya, pinocho, seta.

pedo NOUN (*vulgar*) flatulence; also a fight or an uproar

¡Anda bien pedo! DEROGATORY EXPRESSION (*vulgar*) He/She is really drunk.

¡Puro pedo! EXPLETIVE (*vulgar*) an interjection, used like "bull sh*t!"

pelón NOUN (*mild insult or teasing*) a bald person, see below.

pelón pelacas NOUN (*mild insult or teasing*) an expression making fun of people with bald heads or crew cuts. It implies that they are foolish. (How crazy is that?!)



pendejo *NOUN (vulgar)* *idiot, fink, coward, party-poooper, jerk, a** hole, or even f*cking idiot. Can be used in a fond or light-hearted way, or it can be one of the foulest of curses, depending upon the intent of the speaker. Literally, it means "pubic hair". Usually used for men.*

¡Qué pendejo! *EXPLETIVE (vulgar)* *what a jerk / a** hole / idiot!*

puro pendejo *NOUN (vulgar)* *a total bastard*

pendejada *NOUN (vulgar)* *a screw up, anything from a slight inconvenience to an incredible catastrophe—a **pendejada** can also be a silly story, a stupid stunt, a dirty trick, or an absolute f*cking disaster.*

pinche *ADJECTIVE (vulgar)* *damned, f*cking or worthless. Often paired with other vulgarities: ¡Pinche puta! ¡Pinche cabrón! ¡Pinche pendejo!*

pipí *NOUN (mild childish vulgarism)* *pee* *hacer pipí = to pee*

popó *NOUN (mild childish vulgarism)* *poop* *hacer popó = to poop*

puta *NOUN (very vulgar)* *female prostitute*

¡Hijo de puta! *EXPLETIVE (very vulgar)* *Son of a b*tch! See **hijo de...***

putero *ADJECTIVE (vulgar)* *a whole f*cking lot of*

puto *NOUN (very vulgar)* *male prostitute or homosexual. See synonyms at **joto**.*

T

tragosas *NOUN (vulgar)* *that which is swallowed; from tragar, to swallow.*

V

verga *NOUN (vulgar)* *male genitalia. Also: banana, bicho, chile, churro, chorizo, mango, palo, pito, pipí, pitón, polla, todo, tronco, or anything else with the approximate size and/or shape.*

¡Qué verga! *EXPLETIVE (vulgar)* *What a pr*ck!*

Z

zopilote *NOUN (pejorative insult)* *Slang for a police officer, the police in general, or any person who takes unfair advantage of the less*



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powerful. Literally “vulture” in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. See **chota**.

The Most Frequently Used Swear Words by Spanish-Speaking Tourette's Patients

These are the words that Spanish speakers with Tourette's syndrome tend to blurt out most often. Does this hint that they are also the most offensive swear words in Spanish-speaking culture? Maybe so. Those suffering from Tourette's are aware of what their societies frown upon, but are not able to control their inappropriate urges. Make sure that you do not use these inappropriately, you #!@% knuckleheads!*

**puta, mierda, coño, joder,
maricón, cojones, hijo de puta, hostia**

Hostia is the Spanish word for “host”, the blessed wafer in a Christian communion ceremony, the “body of Christ, given for you.” Referring to the host in an improper manner is a grave act of sacrilege—ininitely worse to devout Christians than mere cuss words.

Source: Pinker, Steven, The Stuff of Thought, Viking Press, 2007, p. 336



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Copy-&-Cut Cheat Sheet

Short List of Must-Know Spanish Cuss Words for Teachers

Cabrón	<i>S.O.B.</i>	¡Chinga tu madre!	<i>F*ck your mother!</i>
¡Chingao!	<i>F*ck!</i>	Culo	<i>*ss hole, *ss</i>
jot@	<i>f*gg*t</i>	pendej@	<i>idiot, “pubic hair”</i>
pinche	<i>damned</i>	put@	<i>prostitute, whore</i>
		¡Hijo de puta!	<i>Son of a b*tch!</i>

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 Those, plus bumping into folks in bars in Spanish-speaking countries over the years.