

# TRABALENGUAS: AUTHENTIC SPANISH TONGUE TWISTERS

In every language, people challenge themselves with tongue twisters. Here are some traditional favorites from the Spanish-speaking world. Pick one or two that appeal to you and practice them until you can say them confidently without tripping over your tongue.

## TRABALENGUAS #1



### rr

Most English speakers need help learning the Spanish sound **rr**. Don't worry, you can be understood without saying it perfectly, but saying the **rr** correctly can help your fluency and confidence. This verse may help you to train your tongue to make that sound. Memorize this verse and practice saying it often to train your tongue.

**Erre con erre cigarro,  
Erre con erre barril,  
Rápido corren los carros,  
Los carros del ferrocarril.**

*rr with rr cigarette,  
rr with rr barrel,  
Rapidly run the cars,  
The cars of the railroad.*

### tr

If the **rr** is too much right now, try these. The hard **tr** combination will give the tip of your tongue a similar workout, but it is a little easier.

**Tres tristes tigres  
Trillaron trigo en un trigal**

*Three sad tigers  
Threshed wheat in a wheat field.*

**Contigo entro un tren con trigo,  
Un tren con trigo contigo entro**

*With you I enter a train with wheat,  
A train with wheat with you I enter.*

### C

This one is a favorite in the Spanish-speaking world. It is often said as a chant that goes faster and faster with each repetition. It even trips up native speakers!

**Compadre, cómprame coco  
Compadre, no compro coco  
Como poco coco como,  
Poco coco compro**

*Compadre, buy me some cocoa  
Compadre, I don't buy cocoa  
Since little cocoa I eat,  
Little cocoa do I buy.*

**Compadre** = The term the father and godfather of a child call one another; co-father; a very close friend

## TRABALENGUAS #2



### m

**A mí me mima mi mamá  
Mi mamá a mi me mima**

*My mother spoils me,  
Me my mother spoils*

**Mi madre madrileña me menciona  
A mi miles migas malas**

*My mother from Madrid mentions  
Thousands of bad little things*

### p

*I love this one—every word starts with the same letter! Practice saying this without “puffing” out your p’s like we do in English:*

**Pedro Pablo Pérez Peña,  
Pobre pintor portugués,  
Pinta paisajes por poco precio,  
Para poder pasar pronto para París**

*Pedro Pablo Pérez Peña,  
Poor Portuguese painter,  
Paints landscapes for a small price,  
So that he can quickly go to Paris*

**Si Pancha planchaba con cuatro planchas,  
¿Con cuántas planchas planchaba Pancha?**

*If Pancha ironed with four irons.  
¿With how many irons did Pancha iron?*

**El que poca papa gasta  
Poca papa paga**

*He that wastes few potatoes  
Pays for few potatoes*

### ¡Ocho sílabas!

*There are many tongue twisters like this one that play on the Spanish tendency to create gargantuan verbs from unlikely nouns:*

**Al arzobispo de Constantinopla  
Lo quieren desconstantinoplizar  
Al que lo desconstantinoplize  
Buen desconstantinoplizador será**

*The archbishop of Constantinople  
They want to unconstantinoplize  
He who unconstantinoplizes him  
Will be a good unconstantinoplizer*

### C

**Cuando cuentes cuentos  
Cuenta cuantos cuentos cuentas**

*When you tell stories  
Count how many stories you tell*

**¿Cómo como? ¡Como como como!**

*How do I eat? I eat the way I eat!*

## TRABALENGUAS #3



j

En un juncal de Junquera  
Juncos juntaban Julián.  
Júntose Juana a juntarlos  
Y juntos juntaron juncos.

*In a growth of rushes in Junquera\*  
Julian gathered rushes.  
Juana joined him to gather them  
And together they gathered rushes.*

\* *Junquera* = a town in Cataluña (northern), Spain

### ***Practice not saying the h***

El hábil Pablo habló bien  
Ya que es hablador hábil.

*The able Pablo spoke well  
Since he is an able speaker.*

### ***This is more of a pun because b and v are pronounced alike***

La bailarina baila como una ballena  
Porque va llena de avellanes

*The dancer dances like a whale  
Because she is full of hazelnuts.*

### ***c & qu (k sound)***

¿Cómo quieres que te quiera  
Si al que quiero que me quiera  
No me quiere  
Como quiero que me quiera?

*How can you want me to love you  
If the one I want to love me  
Does not love me  
The way I want him to love me?*

### ***r and rr***

Los toros en su toril  
Corren por el torre.

*The bulls in their pen  
Run through the tower.*

Un perro rompe la rama del árbol.

*A dog breaks the branch of the tree.*

p

Paco Pico, chico rico  
Insultaba, como un loco,  
A su tío, Federico  
Y él le dijo,  
¡Poco a poco, Paco Pico, poco pico!

*Paco Pico, a rich boy  
Insulted, like a crazy person,  
His uncle Federico  
And he said to him,  
Little by little, Paco Pico, it hurts me less!*

Pepe Pecos pica pepinos con un pico  
Con un pico pica pepinos Pepe Pecos

*Pepe Pecos hacks at cucumbers with a pick  
With a pick Pepe Pecos hacks at cucumbers*

## TRABALENGUAS #4



### tr

*Practicing the hard "tr" sound can help because it is close to a trilled "r"*

**¡Qué triste estás Tristán  
Tras tan tétrica trama teatral**

*How sad you are, Tristan  
After such a gloomy theatrical plot*

**En tres trastos trozados,  
Tres tristes tigres tragaban trigo trillado  
Tigre tras tigre, tigre tras tigre**

*In three broken bowls,  
Three sad tigers were eating threshed wheat  
Tiger after tiger, tiger after tiger.*

**Tres tristes tigres  
Triscaban trigo en un trigal.  
¿Cuál tigre triste triscaba menos  
Si los tres triscaban igual?**

*Three sad tigers  
Were crushing wheat in a wheat field.  
Which sad tiger crushed less  
If all three crushed the same?*

**Tras esos tres tristes trastos  
Qué triste está Trinidad**

*After these three sad pieces of furniture  
How sad Trinidad is.*

### rr

*Practice rrrrrr-rolling your R's again. Remember to roll the r that starts and ends a word, as well as the rr.*

**Corren los carros y carretas  
Carreras cortas correteando**

*The cars and carts go fast  
Rambling down short highways*

**Recia la rajada rueda rueda  
Rudamente rugiendo rauda  
Rueda rauda, recia rueda  
Rauda, rauda, reciamente rueda**

*Vigorously the cracked wheel rolls  
Rudely roaring rapidly  
Rapidly it rolls, vigorously it rolls  
Rapidly, rapidly, it vigorously rolls*

**Dos ratas, tres ratones, y un robalo  
Son los raros restos rescatados recientemente**

*Two rats, three mice, and a sea bass  
Are the rare remains rescued recently.*

**Ayer un premio propuso  
A Rosa Rizo por Narciso  
Si aprende a rezar en ruso;  
Y aunque esté un poco confuso,  
Reza en ruso Rosa Rizo**

*Yesterday a prize was offered  
To Rosa Rizo by Narciso  
If she learns to pray in Russian;  
And although she may be a bit confused,  
Rosa Rizo prays in Russian.*

## TRABALENGUAS #5



**rr**

*More practice rrrrrrr-rolling your r's*

**El perro de San Roque no tiene rabo  
Porque Ramón Ramírez se lo ha robado  
Y al perro de Ramón Ramírez  
¿Quién el rabo le ha robado?**

*The dog from San Roque doesn't have a tail  
Because Ramón Ramírez has stolen it from him.  
And from Ramón Ramírez' dog,  
Who has stolen the tail from him?*

**Erre con erre, no encuentro  
Erre con erre, van tres  
Otro animal en mi cuento  
Con erre de rana, burro, y res**

*Rr with rr I do not find  
Rr with rr, there go three  
Another animal in my story  
With rr from frog, donkey, and cow*

**Un carro cargado de rocas  
Corrió la carretera rugiendo,  
¡Carric-carrac, carric-carrac!**

*A car loaded with rocks  
ran down the road thundering,  
Crick-crack, crick-crack!*

**j**

*Remember that the Spanish j makes a sound like a harsh English h*

**Juan y los jugadores jóvenes  
Y el jefe juegan un juego  
Juntos en el jardín  
En los jueves en junio y julio**

*Juan and the young players  
And the boss play a game  
Together in the garden  
On Thursdays in June and July*