



ana lomba  
early languages

Teachers' Edition

*Everything you need to craft creative Spanish classes for toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarten and elementary school children*

# Spanish for Preschoolers E-Guide

The Pro Guide to Teaching Spanish to Young Children



### INTRODUCTION

Dear Teacher,

It is hard to believe that it has been six years since the publication of the first edition of the Spanish for Preschoolers E-Guide.

That was a year of transition. I had struggled with the idea of discontinuing my *Sueños de colores* program for young children, but it was becoming evident that I needed to save the energy to take care of my youngest daughter, Marina, who is a special child with many medical and developmental needs. All of my *sueños de colores* for my program seemed to be going down the drain.<sup>1</sup>

During those first months I was quite confused and even anxious. Having a special child is a big change for anyone. My husband and I took turns going back and forth to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) where she spent big portions of her first two years – and we still had our other two children to care for! I loved my daughter, but I also felt a big vacuum in my life. All of a sudden I had become “Marina’s mom.” I seemed to be disappearing by the minute. This tension between love and responsibility on one hand and wanting to live a normal life on the other may be difficult to understand if you have never been in a similar situation.

The best piece of advice that I received was a wonderful letter from a friend of my mother, who also had a special child. She told me to push for myself because this would give me the strength I needed. She was right. Staying in a field that I love albeit in a different capacity (writing), has not only helped me keep my sanity but it has also turned me into a stronger mom for my children and a better companion for my husband and my friends.

In hindsight, I realize that the moments when I felt so lost and anxious were indeed *strikes of good fortune* that have geared me in strange and subtle ways to where I am today. This was the case when I first started my program in 1999 and I posted all those fliers around offering to teach Spanish to preschoolers, determined as I was to find ‘my true professional passion’ after years of lukewarm feelings about what I was doing. This was also true when I stopped teaching so that I could focus on the creation of teaching resources for parents and schools while I stayed at home taking

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<sup>1</sup> “Sueños de colores” is a Spanish expression for positive and creative dreams. I also used it because, although I am not a painter, I tend to dream a lot about colors and use them all around.



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care of my daughter. I loved teaching back then, and I love thinking and writing *even more* today.

In the same way, no matter where you are in your professional life, there will be moments when you are presented with unexpected new paths. If you give yourself the permission to try and explore, they may take you in exciting new directions. They will not necessarily be “easy,” as they were not for myself, but it is precisely because they are not easy that they may be even more rewarding.

I have written this guide with the new or “lost” teacher, in mind – I feel your pain! However, veteran teachers who are looking for new ideas and inspiration will likely find many useful suggestions to enhance their instruction.

My intention with this user-friendly guide is to provide beginning early language educators with a strong foundation to help them get started. The content reflects *my own personal journey* interpreting theories and approaches regarding early language learning and how this personal interpretation led to the creation of the *Ana Lomba’s Easy Immersion®* system. I invite you to use the parts of my approach that interest you and explore your own ways of doing things as well.

One of the first things that I did as I started writing this second edition was to take a few steps back from the many things that I have been doing over the last few years and reflect. Then, I took a pad of paper and made a list of the things that, in my opinion, would take a program *from fine to great, or better yet, to extraordinary*. I came up with a list of ideas that I think are very simple to implement and can be rolled out in early childhood classes *from day one*.

These “novice-to-pro” pieces of advice form the core of the e-guide. Among other things, you will learn how to:

- **Create a long-term plan.** No more Sunday night panic attacks worrying about what you are going to do this week or a few weeks down the road.
- **Engage the parents.** I will share some tips that will turn your students’ parents into your best fans and collaborators.
- **Follow your students’ passions.** Don’t waste your time thinking that you have to motivate your students to learn. Instead, plan with your students’ loves in mind.



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- **Borrow the best ideas.** Apply the best of various teaching approaches for better results.
- **Activate my “Language Propeller” strategy.** The propeller will help speed up learning according to the developmental stage of the children.
- **Avoid unproductive practices.** Or they may slow down or fully stop your students’ progress.
- **Be creative and have fun teaching.** So that you and your students will want even more of it!

On this last point, I believe that great teachers are first and foremost artists. Unfortunately, many teachers do not think about themselves as such, maybe because they have never been encouraged to use their creative talents – they have just been told to teach to the book. I frankly believe that this is nonsense, and it leads to a great dissatisfaction for both teachers as well as students. The creative mind is as important as the solid knowledge teachers need to have about their field. I hope that the content of this guide inspires you to bring out your creative you.

Before you start reading the guide, there are three more things that I would like you to keep in mind. The first one relates to you, the teacher. The second relates to the parents. The third one is about your students.

### 1. The Pursuit of Perfection Leads to Paralysis.

Even with the best of preparations, people get lost and make mistakes – it is just human nature! Instead of worrying too much about creating the perfect curriculum from the get-go, think about it in terms of versions. If this is your first time teaching and writing your curriculum, then this will be your version one (V1). Then there can be a V2, V3, and so on. You will improve as you go.

Realize as well that you cannot please everyone. Even when you give your best effort and feel that you have helped your students the best way you know, there will be parents who will complain or people that will not understand what you are doing. Do not take it personally. Instead, pay attention to the *constructive* criticism that you receive – that is, to the things that will *truly* help you improve what you are doing. Change those, and – frankly – ignore the rest.



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If you are a new teacher, expect even more criticism but take it easy on yourself. It takes an average of three years to really ‘get it,’ to find your true self in teaching. The first year is normally very tough for any teacher. Be aware of that and seek for as much collegial support as you can.

Aside from your colleagues in your school, I strongly encourage you to join Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, and get in contact with other early language educators around the USA and the world. If you do not know how to do it, follow me in those three platforms and befriend the other educators that are on my lists. There is no reason to be alone these days, and you will learn how to use these tools in no time!

My Twitter address is [@analomba](#)

Facebook page: [Ana Lomba Early Languages – English Page](#)

LinkedIn: [Ana Lomba](#)

### **2. Parents Are Your Best Partners in Early Language Education.**

While having the parents in class may not always be feasible, think about possible ways to engage them in the process of learning the language.

Parents have not typically participated in language education. This is not because they were unwilling or unable to give it a try, but because *they did not know how to do it*. It is time to change this, and there is no better time to reach out to parents than when they have young children. After all, parents do not need to speak like Cervantes in order to play with their toddlers in Spanish – and by doing so they will start building their own skills in a non-threatening way.

### **3. Spanish Is THE Fun Class!**

If I had to bet on two words that will be red hot in the educational world during the decade that is just starting, these words would be “motivation” and “creativity.” In my opinion, they are also highly interconnected.

In reference to the first word, “motivation,” it is time that we understand that the best type of motivation is the one that comes from within, that is, self-motivation. It is very hard to motivate people (children and adults alike) to do things they do not care about. It is much easier (and smarter) to find what makes them tick then go from there.



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On the second word, “creativity,” our field has had its challenges. Over the last decade the big budget dollars have been mostly allocated to the “fundamental” school subjects (whatever you personally feel about that classification). However, it is important to remember that *we, world language teachers, have also been more free to explore and express our creativity (and that of our students).*

Let’s not forget that. Let’s not stifle our field trying to compete with better funded, but also much more scripted subjects. Instead, *let us be unique.* Let us be the subject that every student looks forward to. This is the only self-sustainable and guaranteed way to grow.

Wishing you lots of creativity, fun, and success,

*Ana Lomba*

Parents’ Choice Award winning and best selling author, Ana Lomba, has been involved in world language education since 1990 as a teacher, consultant, advocate, entrepreneur, and mom. Ana has taught Spanish in early childhood, elementary, and middle school. She has also taught undergraduate courses while pursuing graduate studies at Binghamton University and Princeton University, and occupied leadership positions with state and national language organizations, including ACTFL, NNELL, and FLENJ. Through her company, *Ana Lomba Early Languages LLC*, Ana currently publishes resources to help parents and educators teach Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese to young children. Ana lives with her husband and three children in Princeton, NJ.

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I use this song when talking about farm animals, with the story of *The Red Hen*, as well as for other occasions.

### **Canción de “La gallina Turuleca” / “The Crazy Hen” Song**

Instructions: Sing only the part where it talks about the ten eggs that she laid. It goes like this:

La gallina Turuleca Ha puesto un huevo, ha puesto dos, ha puesto tres La gallina Turuleca Ha puesto cuatro, ha puesto cinco, ha puesto seis La gallina Turuleta Ha puesto siete, ha puesto ocho, ha puesto nueve, Déjala a la gallinita, déjala a pobrecita, déjala que ponga diez.	The crazy hen Has laid an egg, has laid two, has laid three The crazy hen Has laid four, has laid five, has laid six The crazy hen has laid seven, has laid eight, has laid nine Let the little hen, let the poor little hen, let her lay ten
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### **III. Story-Based Approaches**

These approaches use stories as the anchoring piece for the instruction. They may or may not use storytelling techniques in combination with the stories (by storytelling I mean that a human being, either the teacher or the student, is actually telling or acting out a story).

Stories are fabulous ways to introduce language in context. However, some story approaches ‘dissect’ the language too much and the result is a lack of authenticity. The language ends up sounding prefabricated and not fluent.

Do the stories need to be from the Spanish-speaking world? That depends on your intention with each particular story. However, there are dangers in using only one type of story:

- If you only use heavily cultural stories, your students may not identify or feel any connection with the characters in the stories.



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- If you use only stories of one region or of one social group, then your students may think that all the Spanish-speaking world is like that (i.e. you risk that your students start stereotyping).
- On the other hand, if you only use American stories translated into Spanish, then your students will not be exposed to the Spanish culture (or at least Spanish culture from other countries, since there is also a Spanish-US culture).

For all those reasons and more, a better way to go about this is to use a variety of stories.

Whatever you do, it is *very* important that you teach language that your students can use in their everyday life. Otherwise, it is going to be very difficult to build proficiency in the language.

Some examples of story-based approaches:

- TPRS (mentioned above for kinesthetic as well).
- Muzzy (a video and accompanying materials produced by the BBC).

### ***Sample Activity***

Here is an example of a storytelling (acting) activity that I use with my *Aladdin* unit (this is a unit for 5 to 7 year olds, but you could also do it with preschoolers):

#### **Solo en el desierto / Alone in the Desert**

Objective: Develop extended listening comprehension using vocabulary from the unit.

Materials:

- Backpack with water canteen, hat, sunscreen lotion, sunglasses, small blanket, matches (can be wet so that they don't present a risk).







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- Pictures of: a bonfire, the desert during the day, and the desert during the night. Alternatively, you could create a more elaborated desert stage.

### Instructions:

- You (the teacher) are going to pretend to be alone in the desert. Walk around the room and talk about the bright sun; put on the cap and sunglasses and pretend to put on the sunscreen, etc. Then the night comes and it is very cold. There is a sharp difference in temperature between day and night in the desert. Make a fire and cover yourself with the blanket.
- Ask questions at the end of the performance (e.g. “Is it hot or cold in the desert?” The answer is that it is very hot during the day but very cold during the night). Use gestures and pictures to help the children understand your questions. It is okay that they respond in English, but rephrase their answers in Spanish.

Estoy en el desierto.

No hay nadie (ponga su mano sobre los ojos en posición horizontal y mire alrededor).

¡Puf, qué sol hace!

Voy a mirar en la mochila.

¡Ah, tengo una gorra, qué bien!

Me pongo la gorra.

La arena está muy caliente.

¡Ah, me quemo los pies!

¡Qué calor tengo!

¡Ay, un alacrán! (Salte)

¡Puf, menos mal que no me ha picado el alacrán!

Etc.

I am in the desert.

There is nobody (put your hand over your eyes in horizontal position and pretend to look around).

Uff! The sun is so bright!

I am going to look in my backpack.

Ah! I have a hat. Great!

I put on my hat.

The sand is very hot.

Agh! My feet are burning!

I am so hot! Etc.

Oh! A scorpion! (Jump)

Puf. Good thing the scorpion didn't bite me.

Etc.

### IV. Auditory/Oral Approaches

In auditory/oral approaches you listen to shorter or longer pieces of speech and repeat after them. This can be a fantastic way to practice speech, but it can get quite tedious if abused, especially for young children.